

**THE IMPACT OF RUSSIAN ENLIGHTENMENT
ON SERBIAN CULTURE**
The main outlines

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The French Enlightenment of the 18th century was the spiritual successor of Descartes' rationalism and English empiricism. It gave the main inspiration to the radical political and cultural changes of the whole Europe. Descartes himself escaped to draw possible logical consequences from his philosophical method in the field of moral and politics. But consequent development of the method suggested of critical inquiry soon raised not only the suspicion to scientific knowledge, but to all forms of social beliefs and institutions. Very soon the whole corpus of critical reasoning spread over the European continent influencing all people who considered themselves progressive and modern. A different kind of followers were united around the idea of Reason.

The first echo of some form of Rationalism and Enlightenment sprung among Serbs (living in Austrian empire in the broad space between Danube, Budapest and Temisvara) through the great resonance of Spiritual *reglament* by which Peter the Great subordinated the Russian church. Feofan Prokopovich (1681–1736) who was the author of this edict, as a follower of Bacon, Descartes and Christian Wolf, introduced a purely rational element in organizing civil society. Very soon his works were brought by S. Javorski to Eparhy of Sremski Karlovci, the cultural center of Serbs in Vojvodina. At that time educated Serbs were speaking the so-called Russian-Slavonic language (some kind of mixture of Russian Slavonic and Serbian), and could relatively easily apprehend Russian books. The familiarity of the same religious pattern and similar need for radical reform attracted many educated Serbs to see in Russian radical reform an inspiration for resolving domestic problems concerning civic life, education, taming religious superstitions, etc.

The most known Serbian enlightened figures in the first half of century inspired by the Peter The Great were Petrenija Pavlovic, Zaharije Orfelin, and Mojsije Petrovic.

But since the middle of century the fundamental ideas of Continental Rationalism were developed among Serbian population mainly through the German, or more precisely Austrian sources. Namely, German cultural orientation was brought through elimination of Russian religious and school books, elimination Russian elements in language and transforming Russian-Slavonic into Serbian-Slavonic and finally 1774 transforming of those two sophisticated languages into a simple language of illiterate masses. School reform completely eliminated the traces of Russian language and as obligatory books in Serbian School in Austria introduced primary books which simultaneously consisted of German and Serbian texts.

The most autonomous and most unique person who brought the Enlightenment among Serbs was Dositej Obradovic, surely the most educated Serb intellectual of that time. Actually he brought direct ideas of English and French Enlightenment and made tremendous influence on Serbian *intelligentsia* not only in Vojvodina, but also in Serbia. His works and influence would be considered in more details.