

THE SOCIOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION OF ARCHIBALD REISS

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INTRODUCTION

Rudolph Archibald Reiss is recognised worldwide as a prominent criminalist, forensic scientist, creator of modern forensic photography, as well as a great friend of the Serbian people, which he proved during the First World War. In our country, Reiss was remembered for his efforts to document and publish the struggles of the Serbs during World War I. He tirelessly strived during World War I and immediately after its end to share the truth about the suffering and struggles of the Serbian people with Europe and rest of the world. His extensive records about civilian suffering, brutalities, massacres and material damages in Serbia, at the time occupied by German, Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian troops, helped reveal the true harsh realities faced by the Serbian people and shed light on the crimes committed against the Serbs during the war, about which Reiss submitted exhaustive expert reports at the Paris Peace Conference. In his monograph, through eight chapters, Šuvaković highlighted Reiss's influence in shaping Serbia's reputation in the international community, but also pointed out – and this is what is completely new and original – Reiss's sociological and criminological contributions that can be found both in his reports and in his post-war works. Reiss established the narrative of Serbs as a small, but fierce and freedom-defending people, who bought their liberty at a great cost. His legacy remains essential in Serbia's collective memory, and his bond with the Serbian people was so strong that he moved to Serbia in November 1918, where he was later buried.

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*THE SOCIAL THOUGHT OF REISS, PRESENTED IN EIGHT CHAPTERS
OF THE MONOGRAPH*

In the opening section, Professor Šuvaković provides a methodological framework for a more clear understanding Reiss's perspective on the 'woman question' for which some criticized him. He emphasises that social phenomena must be analysed within their specific historical milieu, particularly from the perspective of the socio-political context of that time. In the 19th century, women did not have the opportunity to be educated, nor did they have the right to vote – this right they gradually gained only during the 20th century or, more precisely, after the First and Second World Wars. Switzerland only granted women the right to vote in 1971. Therefore, we cannot fully assess Reiss's attitude from the perspective of the contemporary social context, because the only methodologically correct way to do so is "from the point of view of the era in which that person lived and worked" (Šuvaković, 2025, p. 15). In fact, this chapter, it should be pointed out, is not dedicated to discussing Reiss's views on the 'women's issue;' rather, Šuvaković used this example to point out the methodological errors of contemporary authors who consider events that occurred in the past from the perspective of modernity.

In the second chapter of the book, Šuvaković points out "the elements of Reiss's enduring contribution to the development of our sociology" (Šuvaković, 2025, p. 12), based on Reiss's observations and analysis of interwar Yugoslav society, which were compiled in a short study "Hear, Serbs," published posthumously in 1997, although it was written in 1928. Professor Uroš Šuvaković systematically outlines Reiss's sociological contribution through his analysis of social stratification, and the development of applied and specialised sociologies in Serbia, and through his contribution to sociological understanding of the interwar portrait of Serbian society. Šuvaković points to the relevance of Reiss's work and his ability to establish the basic tendencies of the development of Serbian society, and predict the consequences if "these tendencies are not stopped" (Šuvaković, 2025, p. 33-34).

In the third chapter, the author of the monograph confirms the continued relevance of Reiss's work in modern times through various examples of the moral decline of the political and intellectual elites, as well as forms of socio-political pathology, such as: partisanship, cronyism, party police, power grabbing, party corruption, and systemic corruption. These issues remain equally relevant in contemporary Serbia, "at least as they are perceived by its citizens" (Šuvaković, 2025, p. 49), whereby the author of the monograph emphasises the strong development of these phenomena in post-October 5th Serbia.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the criminological merits of Reiss and the significance of his reports for both the international community and Serbia. Reiss's findings were published in journals worldwide. His abstract reporting style strictly followed ethical guidelines, offering cautiously and objectively made descriptions "using the highest knowledge and methods known to criminology at that time" (Šuvaković, 2025, p. 67).

The fifth chapter is dedicated to Archibald Reiss's sociological, political, and criminological analysis of the crimes committed by Bulgarians during

World War I in the regions of Macedonia, southern Serbia, and Kosovo and Metohija. Reiss investigated the 'Komita question' and proved it was not an authentic movement of "rebels against oppressors," but, rather, that it was about bandits who escaped prosecution for their crimes by fleeing to Bulgaria. There, under the influence of Greater Bulgarian forces, they were recruited voluntarily or forcibly, into Komita's units, which later carried out acts of banditry and crimes in these territories within the Kingdom of SCS.

In the sixth chapter, Šuvaković reveals the reasons why Reiss wanted to leave Serbia in 1928. However, this issue has been almost passed over in silence in our historiography. He publicly expressed his dissatisfaction and disappointment with the state of society at the time due to deep-rooted socio-pathological phenomena. He particularly pointed out the problematic and negligent attitude towards war veterans and Serbian heroism, and that "exactly such behavior" would put the Serbian people "in the predicament of reliving a new slavery, suffering" (Šuvaković, 2025, p. 110). Through both his practical actions and the writings that he left behind, Reiss clearly advocated for the development of a culture of remembrance among Serbs – a culture he considered underdeveloped, particularly within the urban middle class, in contrast to the peasantry, who had self-organised to erect monuments to local heroes from its own midst, accompanied by ceremonies at which Reiss was very often present. The commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Salonika Front breakthrough and the withdrawal of invitations for French veterans of Salonika to participate in the event prompted Reiss to announce his intention to depart the Kingdom SCS. However, at the request of the Association of War Invalids, he refrained from doing so.

Archibald Reiss believed that education was a significant part of the state apparatus, which could greatly contribute to the development of Serbian national consciousness. The seventh chapter presents his comments on the education and upbringing of youth, the quality of educational staff, youth organisation, and informal socialisation. Reiss believed that only the upbringing and education of youth based on work, truth, and law could ensure the continuous growth and development of society, in order to be "for the collective good of the nation" (Šuvaković, 2025, p. 145). Reiss criticised the abuse of university autonomy, party activity at the university, the educational policy of the Kingdom of SCS in general, etc., and it is on the basis of this criticism that Šuvaković concludes that he may be freely considered a forerunner in founding the sociology of upbringing and education within the Yugoslav framework.

The eighth chapter is a historical vertical that Dr Šuvaković constructs between the actions of Archibald Reiss and the new testimony of a Swiss man, Dick Marty, regarding fresh crimes against Serbs. Archibald Reiss and Dick Marty (Marty, 2010; Marty, 2019) demonstrated a true act of courage and professionalism, because they stood on the side of the truth at a time when this was not part of mainstream discourse.

Due to its specific geopolitical position, Serbia is often faced with attacks from both external and internal enemies. Hence, the value of this monograph is enormous. Professor Šuvaković, in a readable and easily understand-

able writing style, reminds us that the lessons from our past should not become obsolete and that they can, like lighthouses, shed light on the socio-pathological phenomena that continue to worry contemporary Serbian society. His act of pointing out Reiss's social contribution, especially in an era of contemporary tensions, sends a message to the Serbian people, and especially to intellectuals, that the lessons of the past must not be forgotten and that Serbia's strength lies in our conscious commitment to serve the interest of the common social good, i.e. the good of our people, and not merely the good of any one individual.

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