

Evaluating Articles in Serbian Newspapers (Застава, Србски Народ, and Српске новине) About the Herzegovina Uprising in the Framework of the Great Eastern Crisis (1875-1878)

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The Eastern question is an international diplomatic issue that arose in the 19th century, and the Great Eastern Crisis was one of the most dynamic periods during its development. The rebellion that broke out in Herzegovina in 1875 developed quickly and started a new crisis that would become an international problem with the intervention of the Great Powers within the framework of the European balance of power. The April Uprising of 1876, the 1876 Montenegrin-Ottoman War, the 1876 Serbian-Ottoman War, the Constantinople Conference of 1876, and Pan-Slavism made their weight felt in the process that followed, one which also left the Ottoman Empire in a difficult situation and resulted in the Russ-Turkish War (1877-1878).

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The uprising that broke out in the Nevesinje District of Herzegovina in July 1875 had great consequences on the fate of the Ottoman Empire. In the beginning of the revolt, the public opinion was provoked by the Pan-Slavic supportive groups in Serbia and Montenegro and began to demand support for the uprising and its leaders. The rebels' plan was to liberate the Nevesinje region first and then widen their activities into the other parts of Herzegovina.

Russia showed the greatest interest in the Eastern question. With the 1774 Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, Russia gained the right to present itself as the protector of the Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire, and Russia's rival was the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Meanwhile, Great Britain and France defended the survival of the Ottoman Empire due to their economic interests in the Mediterranean. Montenegro's covert support for the uprising alongside Russia's involvement caused it to become a big issue in Europe. When the Ottoman army proved unable to suppress the revolt, the Sublime Porte accepted a meeting with the rebels upon the request of the European states. However, the Sublime Porte rejected the plea for Bosnia-Herzegovina to become an autonomous province under the administration of a Christian governor. Because the rebels were covertly supported by Montenegro and Serbia with weapons and volunteers, the Serbian-Ottoman War in 1876 was unpreventable.

Immediately after Serbia declared war on the Ottoman Empire, Montenegro followed suit. The two principalities were in competition for leadership regarding the South Slavic unification. The material and moral support from the Russian Pan-Slavists, such as the activities of the Russian ambassador Nikolay Ignatyev in Istanbul and the Russian consuls in the Balkans, increased the Pan-Slavic pressure on the Serbian and Montenegrin principalities. This Slavic repression left Serbian Prince Milan Obrenović in doubt about how to handle the situation and what attitude to take regarding his desire to support the revolts but not to engage in direct conflict with the Sultan. The Montenegrin Prince Nikola Petrović openly showed his pro-war sentiments. From his perspective, war was the only acceptable solution. Prince Milan Obrenović knew that Serbia was not ready for war, and the Great European powers could be presumed to remain unsupportive regarding the outbreak of war due to their own interests.

Despite having no allies, the Serbs and Montenegrins started the war with great enthusiasm. However, the same can be said about the Ottomans. The warring parties

saw this as a “war of nations and religions” (Скоко & Опачић, 1981, pp. 121–122) and were highly motivated to fight. In the face of the successes of the Ottoman forces, the Serbs entered into a strategy of protecting their own lands. Serbia agreed to an armistice and sought the support of European states to stop the war (Бабац, 2011, pp. 70–77). Serbs didn’t receive any support from the Greeks and Romanians, nor did the Montenegrins want to fight except in Herzegovina where Ottoman forces were insignificant. Thus, the Serbs were defeated and suffered heavy losses. At the end of the conflict, Serbia mobilized one-sixth of its total population, of which one-tenth were killed or wounded in the province (Stavrianos, 2005; Скоко & Опачић, 1981, p. 127). The wars of the Ottoman Empire with Serbia and Montenegro (1876) were an important phase of the Balkan Crisis. These wars were one of the causes of the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) and meant not only the loss of the Balkan peninsula territories for the Ottoman Empire but also a change in the balance of power in Europe.

The Eastern question was an unavoidable topic for the Serbian intellectual elite. The most prominent members of the Serbian intelligentsia discussed solutions on how to end Ottoman rule in the territories where Serbs made up a majority of the population. When the Herzegovina Uprising broke out in 1875, important Serbian newspapers informed about the recent events in Herzegovina and sympathized with the rebellions, demanding war against the Ottomans. Serbian politicians and the public saw war as the only solution for the Balkan people to the Great Eastern Crisis.

The first to propose a discussion on the Eastern question and talk about a solution was the Serbian writer, journalist, and politician Jakov Ignjatović. He made significant contributions to the constitution of the Serbian national ideology. Ignjatović’s first pamphlet on the Eastern question appeared in Pest in 1856 under the title “The Christian Word on the Resolution of the Eastern Question.” He called on the Christians living in the Balkans to raise a common and universal revolt and to overthrow the Ottoman’s rule (Ковачевић, 1987, p. 177). Another important Serbian politician was Mihailo Polit-Desančić, who wrote a discussion on the Eastern question in German in order to inform the foreign public about the situation in the Balkans and the defended Serbian agenda (Микавица, 2007, Srpski biografski rečnik, 7, 2018, pp. 167–173). A confederation of states in the Balkans was an organic solution for Polit-Polit-Desančić (Полит-Десанчић, 1986, p. 166). Svetozar Miletić (1826-1901) was one of the most prominent Serbian national ideologists and leaders of the 19th century, and discussing the

Eastern question and the status of Serbs in Austro-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire was his main occupation. He worked on some plans for the further organization of the state and the establishment of mutual relations with other Balkan states, thus supporting the idea of a confederation of Balkan states (Милетић, 1999, p. 16). Miletic and Polit-Desančić shared this idea, which was also a part of *Načertanije* (1844), the Serbian foreign policy program (see Bataković, 1994, pp. 157–183). The work of Vladimir Jovanović regarding the development of political ideas in Serbia occupied an important place. Jovanović's approach toward resolving the Eastern question was a bit different (Јовановић, 1863). Jovanović had more personal and political ties to liberal civic circles in Western Europe than any politician of his time. He believed that the Christian peoples of the Balkans were strong enough to overthrow the Ottoman rule in Europe on their own through rebellion and war (Јовановић, 1863, p. 30).

These Serbian political thinkers, politicians, and journalists were responsible for creating public opinion among the Serbs. This study analyzes the articles from three Serbian newspapers, *Застава* [Flag], *Србски Народ* [Serbian People], and *Српске новине* [Serbian News] with regard to the Herzegovina Uprising. These newspapers were important because they were widely read among the Serbs living in the Principality of Serbia as well as in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and provide valuable information about the main standpoints of Serbian national inspiration and the important events that took place during the uprising, the the Serbian-Ottoman and Montenegrin-Ottoman wars. The Serbian press in Austria-Hungary also showed great interest in the uprisings. No edition of *Застава*, *Србски Народ*, or *Српске новине* occurred that did not report on rebel clashes with Ottoman troops or diplomatic events related to these provinces (Васин, 2012, pp. 141–142).

Застава was a newspaper published by the Serbs in Vojvodina between 1866-1929. The newspaper was initiated by Svetozar Miletic. *Србски Народ* was first published in 1869 in Sremski Karlovci, Serbia by Jovan Grujić Jota. This newspaper's main purpose was to confront the writings of Svetozar Miletic and be the opposition. *Новине српске* (later known as *Српске новине*) was first published under the editorship of Dmitry Davidović in 1834. The newspaper started to be called *Српске новине* in 1845 and became the official newspaper of the Principality of Serbia. Miletic's newspaper *Застава* was definitely the most influential newspaper among Serbs in Austria-Hungary. Upon analyzing the articles in *Србски Народ*, it clearly had a pro-governmental

status and supported the views of the Obrenović dynasty (Србски Народ, August 21, 1875). Also, the study was able to mainly find reports in the newspapers about the military successes of the rebels or the diplomatic activities of Prince Milan Obrenović and Prince Nikola Petrović (Српске новине, July 21, 1875). From July 1875 until Serbia and Montenegro entered into war with the Ottoman state in June 1876, the Serbs in Austria-Hungary had the opportunity to follow the lives of their compatriots in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Застава, July 23, 1875).

The attitudes of the political leaders of Serbs that were living in Austro-Hungary can be seen in the newspaper articles. They showed much concern toward the issues of uprising, rebels, and constantly approving the pro-war status of Serbia with the Ottoman Empire. In addition, one could read something about the mission that Austria-Hungary had to fulfill in protecting Christians and European civilization in general within the newspaper's pages (Србски Народ, August 26, 1875). Articles found in the Serbian newspapers reacted very vigorously to all these events from the beginning of the Herzegovina Revolt, with information about the battles and heroes found on every page (Васин, 2012, p. 144; Микавица, 2015) Застава was at the forefront of forming the public opinion of Serbs in Austria-Hungary, but it also had a wider influence on the political debate in Serbia itself and even in Montenegro (Застава, July 27, 1875; July 30, 1875).

Even before the story of the rebellion began in Nevesinje, the newspaper Застава had been writing daily about the atrocities and crimes the Ottomans committed against the Serbian population in its reports on the situation in Bosnia in the first half of 1875 (Застава, August 15, 1875). Застава developed the most intense campaign to support the wars of Serbia and Montenegro against the Ottoman Empire (Застава, May 18, 1876). Unlike Застава, the conservative newspapers Србски Народ and Српске новине were more careful when writing about the news from Bosnia and Herzegovina and informing the public about attacks by Ottoman troops on Serbian civilians near Nevesinje; this was an attempt by government officials to calm the situation on the front. The idea that Austria-Hungary was aiming to occupy a part of Bosnia-Herzegovina could be found circulating in the articles (Србски Народ, December 15, 1875; Костић, 2015; Крестић, 1980; Пејчић, 2014).

The important matter discussed here involves the attitudes of the Serbian newspapers toward the Ottomans. In every article published in these newspapers, the Ottomans were called Turks. The word Ottoman was used only to address the state or the government, but the words Turks and Turkish were applied all the time. The Serbian newspapers criticized the Ottoman rule and every atrocity that had been done by the Ottoman or their army toward the Serbs or the general populace in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the revolts. The main discourse of all three analyzed newspapers in the context of the Herzegovina Uprising was anti-Ottoman (i.e., anti-Turkish). The discourse in these newspapers was the signature of the writers and the editors. As was already mentioned, the writers and the editors were prominent figures, journalists, and politicians from the Principality of Serbia and from Vojvodina. United, these men fought not with sword but with pen for the idea of liberating the Serbian people and other Christians from Ottoman rule. Using the written word and its influence, they were able to defend their political attitudes and further use their writing to mobilize and create the desired mass opinion in the Principality of Serbia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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