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Review

THE PRESSURE OF THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN EMPIRE ON MONTENEGRO TO RENOUNCE ITS NATIONAL POLICY IN HERZEGOVINA

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ABSTRACT:

Montenegro had to renounce its national policy in Herzegovina after the Berlin Congress (1878) at the request of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It had to stay neutral no matter what was happening in Herzegovina. It was a difficult situation for the official Cetinje but the unwanted political and economic moves of a powerful neighbor had to be taken into consideration. Therefore, Prince Nikola conducted very cautious policy especially during the occupation (1878) and the Uprising in 1882. However, no matter to what extent Montenegro expressed its neutrality, it secretly followed and helped the Uprising in Herzegovina and Krivošije.

KEY WORDS:

Montenegro, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Herzegovina, borders, policy

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SAŽETAK:

Poslije Berlinskog kongres (1878) na zahtjev Austro-Ugarske, Crna Gora morala se odreći nacionalne politike u Hercegovini. Povodom bilo kakvih dešvanja u Hercegovini morala je držati neutralan stav. To je bila teška odluka za zvanično Cetinje ali moralo se voditi računa o neželjenim političkim i ekonomskim potezima moćnog susjeda. Knjaz Nikola je zato vodio veoma obazrivu politiku posebno u vrijeme sprovođenja okupacije (1878) i ustaničkog vrenja 1882. godine. Ma koliko je deklarativno iskazivala neutralnost Crna Gora potajno je pratila a i pomagala ustanak u Hercegovini i Krivošijama.

Ključne riječi:

Crna Gora, Austro-Ugarska, Hercegovina, granica, politika.

The Montenegrin policy towards Herzegovina was the dominant issue in the relations between Montenegro and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the first years after the Berlin Congress. Vienna explicitly demanded from Montenegro to renounce its national policy in Herzegovina and take a neutral position in all the matters relating to this area (Andrijašević, Rastoder, 242). This request of the Austro-Hungarian Empire forced Prince Nikola to direct national policy towards Polimlje, the Sanjak of Novi Pazar and northern Albania, or to the areas which remained parts of the Ottoman Empire after the Berlin Congress. It was understandable since these kinds of activities towards Herzegovina, occupied by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, were politically very dangerous. The Austro-Hungarian Empire did not allow any interference in the matters of Herzegovina and even denied the right of Montenegro to act as a protector of the Orthodox population in the areas under its occupation. Montenegro had to change its national policy towards Herzegovina because of the unenviable position towards the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in which it found itself. Montenegro had only carried out intelligence activities, but with great cautious. Authorities in the border areas towards Herzegovina had the obligation to regularly submit reports on all events in this area. In addition to Montenegrin information providers in Herzegovina, who worked for money, local authorities also received information from peasants from Herzegovina who came to Montenegro because of the trade (Andrijašević, 7-8).

Official Montenegro had to conduct a very cautious policy towards the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The reason for that was Montenegrin disappointment with the behavior of Russia at the Berlin Congress towards its demands. It was expected from Russia not to give up at least when it comes to the cession of the coastal part to Montenegro, since the issue of the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was certain. The development of international events at the time and immediately after the Berlin Congress, strengthened the position of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Balkans and convinced Montenegro that relying on it would insure its positions on the southeast and eastern borders, since Russia had lost its position in resolving the *Eastern issue*, especially when it came to the Plav-Gusinja Affair.

Montenegrin politics and its attitude towards the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Empire should be observed from that aspect. It is also necessary to point out the economic dependence of Montenegro

to the Austrian market. Such policy had put Montenegro in a difficult position, especially regarding the attitude towards the Herzegovinian rebels. Those changes were hard to explain to the Herzegovinian rebels and their leaders who, from the beginning of the war between Montenegro and Turkey (1876), fought on the side of the Montenegrin army and represented almost one-fourth of it. All the achieved successes were left without result since they had to return under the power of the new occupier. There was a strong desire among the Herzegovinian rebels to continue the fight, this time in cooperation with the former rivals, the Herzegovinian Muslims, who also made attempts to connect with the Herzegovinian leaders and fight the Austro-Hungarian occupation together. In the statement they sent to Prince Nikola, the Herzegovinian leaders wrote: "We started the rebellion saying that we will be with Montenegro or none of us will left and our intention is to say the same today" (Kapidžić. 14-15).

The official Cetinje was under the watchful eye of the Austro-Hungarian deputy in Cetinje, Baron Temel, from the very beginning of the occupation. He skillfully used the complex international position of Montenegro and managed to unscrupulously impose his influence on the official Cetinje (Martinovic, 123).

Attempts of collaboration between the Herzegovinian rebels and Muslim leaders manifested in the action of the two leaders of the rebellion, Jovan Džombe and Šćepan Papić, who wrote a letter to the "every known and famous Muslim and Christian" to oppose the Austrian occupation. They hoped for the assistance of Montenegro.

Austrian Vice-consul in Trebinje, Vuk Vrčević, monitored the development of the situation in Herzegovina and submitted reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna on how Montenegrin emissaries are going through Herzegovina and urge the Muslim population to unite with the rebels in Montenegro for the possible attack and defense, especially in order to resist the occupation from the Austrian troops (Kapidžić, 15)

The Muslim population in Herzegovina opposed more to the Austro-Hungarian occupation than the Christian population. Korjenčići were the strongest opponents of the entry of the Austro-Hungarian army. They were the only ones who provided stronger resistance to the entry of the Austro-Hungarian army into Trebinje. The role of Omer Šehović, who gave a strong resistance to the Austrian

army, was particularly noticeable and expected help from Montenegro. Commander Vuko Pejović, once reported to Mašo Vrbica: “Omer Šehović wrote a letter to Nikola Andriin and other leaders in Grahovo, and this was written in it: “To Nikola Andriin and the other judges of the Prince in Grahovo. If you are asking about our affairs, ćesar entered Trebinje today with an army. We had 50 people dead and wounded and others became slaves in Korjenići. If you had ever thought about helping us, help us today, if you dare. This should stay ours and not ćesar’s and it seems to us that if it would remain ours we would not lose anything...” (Kapidžić, 15)

Prince Nikola demanded from the rebels to hand over Klobuk to Montenegro, which they were willing to do, not knowing that the Montenegrins intended to hand it over to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Montenegrin plans with Klobuk were related to correction of the border towards Herzegovina and Albania. Montenegro counted on the Austrian support in getting the coast to Bojana and in exchange they would give Klobuk.

Prince Nikola held the Herzegovinian leaders under strict supervision in Grahovo from 17 August to 28 September 1878. Montenegrin Prince stopped further resistance activities of the leaders of Herzegovina and was thanked for “loyalty” by Count Andraši, through his emissary Temel, and offered a sum of “several thousand guilders” to maintain the peace and discipline of the rebellion army in Herzegovina until the arrival of the Austro-Hungarian occupying army. It was the reason why there was much less resistance to the Austro-Hungarian troops in Herzegovina than it was in Bosnia. The Austro-Hungarian army entered almost empty places because the population mostly escaped and later returned to their homes (Kapidžić, 251). Under the direct order of Prince Nikola and the command of Vojko Petar Vukotić, Herzegovinian rebels surrendered in Trebinje in 1878. (Petrović, 538). Prince Nikola said: “How happy and solemn was the moment when the Herzegovinian and Montenegrin army united at Crni kuk in 1876, that sad was this in Trebinje. Herzegovinians laid down arms with tears in their eyes and it was a day of great sorrow throughout Montenegro”(Petrović, 538).

Prince Nikola did not give up on Herzegovina easily. He explained his great sacrifice, in particular the act of laying arms over, with a desire to prove to Austria, and other forces, that he obeyed unconditionally their decisions. He did it in order to emphasize his true expectation that all the obligations from the Berlin Congress to his Montenegro would be carried out without delay (Petrović, 538).

The new border between Montenegro and occupied Herzegovina left many issues unresolved. Montenegro constantly raised the issue of this border, but Vienna did not show the will to resolve it (Rakocevic, 16).

Riots occurred only a few years after the occupation of Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Namely, as early as 1881 there was a rebellion in Krivošije and Herzegovina, the areas under the Austro-Hungarian rule. The long accumulated dissatisfaction peaked in November 1881, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire declared a general military obligation.

The Austro-Hungarian authorities hoped that the dissatisfaction of the people would be channelled in the other way and that the uprising in Herzegovina would not happen. But all of these efforts remained unsuccessful. In the second half of 1881 rebel troops were formed in Herzegovina, led by the protagonist from the previous uprising Stojan Kovačević, who even managed to stay in Krivošije for some time. Many Herzegovinian leaders moved to Montenegro or Krivošije. At the end of January 1882, a mass uprising occurred in Bileća, Nevesinje and Gacko counties, both consisted of the Orthodox and the Muslim population. Since the beginning of the Uprising, a military cordon was established towards the Montenegrin border and it was also established from the Montenegrin side, at the request of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Baron Temel exerted pressure on the official Montenegro to publicly declare towards the Uprising. He believed that only Cetinje could pacify the Uprising. In January 1882, Prince Nikola called a military assembly in Danilovgrad, attended by Baron Temel. Regarding the Herzegovinian Uprising, he declared: "We are no longer obliged to the Herzegovinian brothers, who I love as well as you. The Austro-Hungarian Empire is not the same as Turkey, even Montenegro is not the former Montenegro anymore, the Austro-Hungarian administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina is just and good. If the Herzegovinians reject the Military Law, it's worse for them. No country can exist without an army"(Kapidzic, 111).

Any military intervention would mean interfering in the internal affairs of the Monarchy and Prince Nikola tried to avoid that. The Austro-Hungarian Empire used its position to separate Herzegovina from Montenegro as much as possible. When the border was established, it was strategically designed to disable any connection between the former rebels from the two sides. Also, Vienna could

frustrate any active move from Cetinje through closing the border, introducing new customs duties, banning the import of products, all of which would be disastrous for the poorly developed Montenegrin economy. The Montenegro's loan with Vienna banks in 1881 was closely linked with this issue. The Austro-Hungarian Empire used the economic influence to suppress the formerly dominant position of Russia in Cetinje (Vasin, 329).

Despite the formal decision of Prince Nikola that Montenegro would remain neutral towards the Uprising, Baron Temel took precautionary measures to prevent it from happening. In his reports to the Vienna court, he emphasized how important it was to give recognition and hold the Minister of Internal Affairs, Duke Mašo Vrbica, on the side of the Austro-Hungarian interests. Temel considered Vrbica, "the most skilled and active administrative force in the Prince's Government." He especially pointed out his working skills and underlined that, in addition to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, public affairs, post and telegraph also belonged to Vrbica. According to Temel, Vrbica was attacked in the country and abroad because of his connections with the Austro-Hungarian deputy. The position of Mašo Vrbica was also difficult because of the fact that his sons were admitted to school in Vienna. Temel advocated for Vrbica's son Petar, who showed little success in the Oriental Academy.

The Austro-Hungarian government took seriously and entirely agreed with Temel's view of the situation in Montenegro. Temel's influence in Montenegro grew considerably and could be felt at all kinds of events.

Although Mašo Vrbica was portrayed as the safest and most loyal man to the Austro-Hungarian interests in Montenegro, a double figure of Montenegrin politics could precisely be seen on his work. Vrbica, who was reproached for pro-Austrian acting in Montenegro, should also be connected to maintaining the most delicate ties of Montenegro with the Herzegovinian rebels. His attitude was wavering and often seemed pro-Austrian, according to the documents given to the insight of Temel himself, when the neutrality of Montenegro was needed to be demonstrated. At the same time, his efforts on maintaining the Uprising and giving moral and material help to the rebels were surprising (Kapidzic, 265).

Many of the Montenegrin leaders did not agree with Montenegro being neutral. Against such a position was first of all Lazar Sočica, who followed the

development of the Uprising from Piva and had always found ways to provide assistance to the rebels and their families, despite the official policy in Montenegro. Mašo Vrbica begged, ordered and even threatened Sočica to arrest Stojan Kovačević, because of the interests of Montenegro, but Sočica did not even think about doing so. When Novak Ramov Jovović was ordered to find and capture Stojan Kovačević with his soldiers on the territory of Montenegro, people from Piva refused to give people for the reinforcement of cordon, because Duke Sočica was not there and they did not obey anyone else's orders. Constantly accused by the Austro-Hungarian Empire of helping the rebels, Sočica was eventually called to come to Cetinje, where he had to give statements and was interrogated together with several other leaders from Piva and Grahovo. On the request of Baron Temel, he was temporarily removed from all functions in Piva and Đoko Pejović was named as his successor because it was believed that he was willing to unconditionally execute decisions from Cetinje. In protest, Duke Sočica left Goransko and retreated to his property in Drobnjak (Dutina, Mastilović, 401).

The establishment of a border cordon between the Montenegrin and Austrian side was one of the measures supposed to ensure Montenegro's neutrality towards the events in Herzegovina. Temel particularly insisted on this. While the Uprising was in the process of development, an Agreement was reached between Baron Temel and the Montenegrin government on acting of the Austrian army in the persecution of the rebels at the border and the acting of the Montenegrin army on the cordon. The Austro-Hungarian army had the right to persecute rebels to the very borderline. The Montenegrin guard was supposed to stand on the borderline. The Border Agreement was supposed to preserve the sovereignty of both countries. According to the Agreement between Stanko Radonjić, the Montenegrin Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Baron Temel, Austrian soldiers would persecute the rebels to the border where the Montenegrin soldiers would disarm and send them to internment in the interior of the country (DAC.262).

These measures, accepted by Montenegro, were very unpopular among the people and many Montenegrin leaders, such as the previously mentioned Lazar Sočica.

Due to the lack of ammunition, intolerable hunger and great pressure from the Austro-Hungarian army throughout Herzegovina, some rebel leaders began to come to Montenegro as early as June 1882, although Duke Vrbica asked the

border authorities to prevent the rebels crossing the border and in that way keep the Uprising alive. The prominent uprising leaders Stojan Kovacevic and Djoko Radovic were in Niksic in September 1882, from where they were interned in Podgorica, upon the request of Baron Temel. The last significant rebellion troops, under the command of Salko Forta, went to Montenegro in November 1882. The Austro-Hungarian authorities could start with the pacification of the rebellious regions and negotiate with Montenegro about the repatriation of refugees (Dutina, Mastilović, 402).

Montenegro was reluctant to renounce the right on having the full control over the events in Herzegovina and established a border commissariat in Grahovo in 1895, with the task to have full control over the Orthodox population in Herzegovina.

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