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# **WAR, PEACE AND NATION-BUILDING (1853–1918)**

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## THE STRUGGLE OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE IN KOSOVO AND METOHİJA FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY UNDER THE TURKISH RULE DURING THE 19<sup>th</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES

**Abstract:** After falling under Turkish rule and losing state independence, the Christian Serbs obtained the status of the *rayah* deprived of the rights enjoyed by the Muslim population. Religious discrimination, social dependence, economic and physical inequality made the life of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija difficult and uncertain. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly after the Serbian-Turkish wars of 1876–1878, their position became unbearable – prosecution and violence became organised. In an environment of utter lawlessness, which is why they often could not even make ends meet, the Serbs frequently resorted to emigration or conversion to Islam, which usually, ultimately led to Albanisation. Serbia undertook numerous measures to preserve national consciousness among the Serbian population. It first did so informally, only to, finally, institutionally bolster its activities in Old Serbia and Macedonia – by opening consulates in the Ottoman Empire. The task of Serbian consular representatives in Kosovo and Metohija was to help the Serbs in terms of their physical protection, as well as to help them preserve their faith and nation and dissuade them from embracing Islam. This paper focuses on the measures that Serbia undertook to that end, and on how the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija fostered their national identity on their own.

**Keywords:** Kosovo and Metohija, Turkish rule, Serbs, Serbia, consulate, national identity.

During the centuries under the Turkish rule, the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija<sup>1</sup> managed to preserve their national identity. The modern Serbian national ideology

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<sup>1</sup> The present-day name of the autonomous province in southern Serbia – Kosovo and Metohija was not used in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The broader term Old Serbia, whose Kosovo and Metohija is the central part, was used in the Principality and later the Kingdom of Serbia, and by domestic and foreign researchers. The area of Kosovo and Metohija in the Ottoman Empire was not a separate administrative-territorial unit, but was part of the Kosovo Vilayet (a vilayet was the largest administrative-territorial unit in the Ottoman Empire; for more information about the administrative division of the Ottoman Empire and organisation of the Kosovo Vilayet see: M. Јагодић, *Српско-албански односи у Косовском вилаету (1878–1912)*, Београд 2009, 1–15).

and spirituality are founded on the Kosovo idea – the idea of the Kosovo suffering and the Kosovo cult.<sup>2</sup>

After falling under Turkish rule and losing state independence, the Christian Serbs mainly obtained the status of the *rayah* deprived of the rights enjoyed by the Muslim population. The bulk of Serbian aristocracy either embraced Islam or went to the neighbouring Christian countries. Religious discrimination, social dependence, economic and physical inequality made the life of the Serbs in these areas difficult and uncertain. The restoration of the Patriarchate of Peć, after being under the jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archbishopric, i.e. the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople for a hundred years, implied the restoration of the spiritual life of the Serbs and their return to the historical scene. Church dignitaries spiritually strengthened the Serbian people. Orthodoxy and the cult of St Sava were the cornerstone of the Serbian national being, as well as the Kosovo cult – defying slavery and giving one's life for freedom. It was on these principles that the Serbian people – who took part in great European wars against Turkey and suffered fatal consequences of defeats – developed their aspiration to freedom. The Albanians fought on the Turkish side in these wars, using the opportunity to seize the ravaged Serbian lands.<sup>3</sup> They were loyal keepers of the Turkish order in the European part of the Ottoman Empire and the main tool in suppressing liberation movements of the Serbian and neighbouring peoples. The Albanian national movement emerged at the time of the Great Eastern Crisis (1875–1878).<sup>4</sup> The League of Prizren, founded in 1878 in Prizren, acted against the Serbs as it saw the Serbian national policy as the main reason for Albanian troubles. The League was not autochthonous, but served the interests of the Ottoman Empire, for the sake of its preservation, but was also an important element in the achievement of objectives of the great European powers, primarily Austria-Hungary and Great Britain, in the Balkans.<sup>5</sup> The main determinant of the League's political and religious activity was its pan-Islamic character.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See: P. Самарџић, *Косово и Метохија: успон и пропадање српског народа*, in: *Косово и Метохија у српској историји*, Београд 1989, 5–8; Д. Батаковић, *Косово и Метохија у српско-арбанашким односима*, Београд 2006, 5–6 и 27.

<sup>3</sup> Although the Turkish onslaught in some parts of Kosovo and Metohija had “the character and scope of annihilation” and although the Albanians penetrated into the ravaged Serbian villages already in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Turkish cadastre censuses show that not even in the 15<sup>th</sup> century did they reach 10% of the area of present-day Kosovo and Metohija” (М. Пешикан, *Стара имена из доњег Подримља*, Ономатолошки прилози VII (1986) 92–95). The great ethnic shift took place only in the later centuries (М. Пешикан, *Зетско-хумско-рашка имена на почетку турскога доба (други део)*, Ономатолошки прилози IV (1983) 218–243).

<sup>4</sup> The dates given in the text follow the new calendar. Only the dates in the notes are given by the old calendar – they refer in the documents to the time of their creation.

<sup>5</sup> А. Раствовић, *Велика Британија и Косовски вилајет 1877–1912. године*, Београд 2015, 66.

<sup>6</sup> С. Терзић, *Стара Србија: (XIX–XX век): драма једне цивилизације: Рашка, Косово и Метохија, Скопско-тетовска област*, Нови Сад–Београд 2012, 116.

The Circassians, who settled in Kosovo after the Crimean War, also took part in the prosecution of the Serbian population.

Apart from this, the Bulgarian Exarchate inflicted immeasurable damage to the Serbian national question. The Bulgarians who during the early 1830s initiated the activity to obtain a national church and to have their nationality recognised, declared in 1860 church independence from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. With the help of the great powers, they obtained from the Porte the recognition of the independence of their church, called the Exarchate.<sup>7</sup> Immediately after the recognition of the Bulgarian Church in Turkey, it became obvious that the Bulgarian national programme by far exceeded the Bulgarian ethnic area. The Exarchists showed the pretensions to place under the jurisdiction of their Church not only the area of the Tarnovo Patriarchate, but also the areas of the former Patriarchate of Peć and the Ohrid Archbishopric. Authorised by the Porte to organise cultural-educational and church life of the Slavic population in Macedonia, the Exarchate tried to impose the Bulgarian national idea, language and culture on the Serbian population in the central parts of Old Serbia.<sup>8</sup> As a tool of Greater Bulgarian policy, the Exarchists were intolerant and violent towards the Serbian people in Old Serbia and Macedonia. They endeavoured to obliterate the traces of Serbian culture and Serbian name, and strengthen the Bulgarian name and Bulgarian national consciousness. In many Serbian areas in Old Serbia and Macedonia, the Serbian people also often saw in Exarchian bishops who held Slavic church services the victory over the loathed Greek bishops. Bulgarian agents were promising to Serbs protection in all aspects and the opening of Serbian national schools. However, the moment they solidified their influence in a particular place, their anti-Serbian attitude became apparent. The Exarchate managed to place their teachers in Gnjilane, Mitrovica, Velika Hoča, Orahovac and other places of Old Serbia. The Bulgarian Exarchate carried out its activity in Old Serbia with the blessing of the Turkish authorities, who considered the Serbian people in those areas to be Bulgarians (Bulgarian Millet).<sup>9</sup> Serbia undertook serious steps to eliminate the dangerous Bulgarian influence which spread across Old Serbia within a short time.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly after the Serbian-Turkish wars of 1876–1878, the difficult position of the Serbian people under the Turks in Kosovo and Metohija became almost unbearable. The Turkish authorities on the one hand and the Kosovo Albanians supported by the Muhaxhir on the other, engaged in systemic violence against the Serbs. Prosecutions gained an organised form and were aimed at

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<sup>7</sup> С. Недељковић, *Косово и Метохија у плановима бугарске пропаганде (1870–1878)*, Српске студије 4 (2013) 62.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, 62–63.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, in the Kosovo salname (yearbooks) for 1894, the entire Serbian population in the Priština, Novi Pazar and Peć Sanjaks and a part of the Prizren Sanjak was classified as Bulgarian, although the educational authorities of the vilayet issued a ruhsatnâme with a note that those were Serbian schools (Ђ. Микић, *Између балканских суседа и великих сила*, Историја српског народа VI–1, Београд 1994, 316.

complete obliteration of the Serbian people. Thefts, blackmails, murders, burning of houses and schools, plundering of churches, seizure of estates and cattle, seizing and raping of women and children, kidnapping and Turkisation of girls, abuse of monks and priests, life without legal protection, the lack of right to carry arms in the conditions when the non-Christians carried them freely and used them without restraint – was the reality of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija.<sup>10</sup> Even when the Turkish authorities wanted to protect the Serbs, they were too weak. In an environment of utter lawlessness, which is why they often could not even make ends meet, the Serbs in Old Serbia frequently resorted to emigration or conversion to Islam, which usually, ultimately led to Albanisation.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to preserving the lives of the Serbs, Serbia invested serious effort in maintaining the national consciousness among the Serbian population. It did so first through the Board for Schools and Teachers in Old Serbia<sup>12</sup> (1868–1876), then through the Prizren Theological Seminary<sup>13</sup> (from 1871) and the St Sava Society<sup>14</sup> (1886–1891). Finally, it strengthened its activity in Old Serbia and Macedonia institutionally – by opening consulates in the Ottoman Empire. Serbia opened its first consulate in 1887 in Skopje, and then in Thessaloniki. In 1888, it opened a consulate in Bitola, and in 1889, in Priština.

The Serbs were enthusiastic about the opening of the consulate in Priština. The gaze of the Serbian people was fixed on Serbia and its representative in Kosovo – the Priština consul.

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<sup>10</sup> See: М. Стијовић, *Косово и Метохија уочи Балканског рата*, Први балкански рат 1912/1913. године: Друштвени и цивилизацијски смисао (поводом стогодишњице ослобођења Старе Србије и Македоније 1912): међународни тематски зборник 1, Ниш 2013, 235–246.

<sup>11</sup> About genocide intentions towards the Serbian population and such practice see: М. Јагодић, *Српско-албански односи*, 209–217, Д. Батаковић, *Анархија и геноцид над Србима 1897–1912*, in: *Косово и Метохија у српској историји*, Београд 1989, 249–280.

<sup>12</sup> About the Board for Schools and Teachers in Old Serbia see: Н. Вулићевић, *Одбор за школе и учитеље у Старој Србији: оснивање, организација и циљеви (1868–1876)*, Српске студије 4 (2013) 209–230; Ј. К. Ђилас, *Српске школе на Косову и Метохији од Немањића до 1912*, Приштина 2000, 165–166; С. Недељковић, *Деловање Одбора за школе и учитеље у српским областима у Македонији од 1868. до 1876. године*, Вардарски зборник 8 (2011) 283–307.

<sup>13</sup> About the Prizren Theological Seminary see: П. Костић, *Просветни и културни живот православних Срба у Призрену и његовој околини у XIX и почетком XX века (са успоменама писца)*, Скопље 1933, 43–54; А. Новаков, *Стубови српске просвете: Српске средње школе у Османском царству 1878–1912*, Београд 2017, 45–191; *Споменица педесетогодишњице призренске Богословско-учитељске школе: 1871–1921*, Београд 1925.

<sup>14</sup> About the St Sava Society see: М. Војводић, *Рад „Друштва Светог Саве“ 1886–1891*, Братство 2 (1998) 33–44; Ђ. Микић, *Делатност Друштва светог Саве на Косову (1886–1912)*, Наша прошлост 8–9 (Краљево 1975) 61–87.

When they arrived in Old Serbia, the consuls found the spiritually already weakened people, on the one hand, and determined, bellicose, pious, traditional, industrious and entrepreneurial people, on the other hand.<sup>15</sup>

From the very beginning, the Consulate worked not only on physically protecting the Serbian people, but also on preserving the Serbian national being, strengthening and developing national consciousness, respecting own history and tradition, cultural and educational advancement of the Serbian people, in which it played the key role. It also worked on the spiritual unity of the Serbian people divided into several states. It did so primarily through schools, books and reading rooms. The task of Serbian representatives in Old Serbia was to help the Serbs preserve their faith and dissuade them from embracing Islam, which was an increasingly common phenomenon. The extent to which the Serbs were converting to Islam is well-illustrated by Consul Miroslav Spalajković (in his report to Minister of Foreign Affairs Žujović): “It is today an indisputable truth that there is commotion among the entire population, who speak the Albanian language and bow before Islam, from Mitrovica to Epirus. Leaving aside real Albania and real Albanians, it is for us of utmost importance to observe the “Arnautluk”, i.e. “the Arnauts”, who live in a direct contact with the Serbs in Old Serbia and are almost all, without exception, of our origin and have not forgotten our language”.<sup>16</sup>

One of the strongest expressions of the Serbian national consciousness at the time were Serbian schools. They were not only educational institutions, but also, as noted by an officer of the Serbian Consulate in Priština: “The bedrock around which the people gathered, made deals and helped each other”.<sup>17</sup> The spirit of the Serbian people was to be strengthened through education and culture. Therefore, as future Vice-Consul Branislav Nušić proposed on the eve of the start of operation of the Consulate, Serbia worked, through its consulates, on the opening of new schools and maintaining the old ones, establishing and supporting church-school municipalities, printing Serbian books and opening a printing press for those needs, and opening in Serbia special schools for the education of Serbian students born in Old Serbia and Macedonia.<sup>18</sup>

In his report to Minister Grujić of 7 February 1890, Branislav Nušić<sup>19</sup> wrote that in Priština, which had a Serbian school for twenty years, the Serbs were “rather literate”, and that they liked to read and gladly obtained books when circumstances allowed.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See: М. Стијовић, *Менталитет Срба на Косову и Метохији уочи ослобођења од турске владавине*, in: *Косово и Метохија у контексту балканских народа и држава*, књ. 2, Историја, Лепосавић 2016, 121–131.

<sup>16</sup> *Документи о спољној политици Краљевине Србије 1903–1914 (ДСПКС)*, I–3/II, прир. Љ. Алексић-Пејковић, Београд 2014, бр. 401.

<sup>17</sup> Ђ. Микић, *Политичка, културна и привредна стремљења*, Историја српског народа VI–1, Београд 1994, 294.

<sup>18</sup> С. Д. Недељковић, *Српски народ у Старој Србији и Македонији у националним плановима Краљевине Србије (1885–1889)*, in: *Државност, демократизација и култура мира*, Ниш 2015, 62.

<sup>19</sup> The then scribe at the Consulate in Skopje and chief clerk of the Consulate in Priština, later Vice-Consul in Priština.

<sup>20</sup> Б. Перуничкић, *Писма српских конзула из Приштине 1890–1900*, Београд 1985, 83.

The importance that Serbia attached to Serbian schools in Turkey is also seen in the words of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1897: "The task of schools as educational institutions in the Turkish Empire is not identical to the task of schools in the Kingdom [...]. In Serbia, they are merely educational institutions which serve exclusively the purposes of national education. In Turkey, the aim of advancing Serbian education is to awaken and, where it is awakened, to strengthen the Serbian national consciousness, and to make gains that will ensure the success of the sacred idea of the unification of the Serbian tribe".<sup>21</sup>

The aim of the educational work, as emphasised by Consul Milan Đ. Milojević, was to encourage the Serbian people "to come to senses, to understand that they represent a single ethnic unit, to become more aware of their strength and support they have in Serbia", and "the prepared educational workers are the most reliable when it comes to the implementation of our national programme".<sup>22</sup>

This was, in fact, a very difficult period for Serbian education in Kosovo and Metohija. Until 1876, the Serbs enjoyed relative freedoms in opening their schools, owing to the pressures of the Great Powers after 1856 and Turkish reforms. However, after the 1876–78 wars, the circumstances significantly deteriorated. Spurred by the Bulgarian propaganda, the Turkish authorities in Old Serbia and Macedonia did everything to hinder the work of schools, allegedly according to law.<sup>23</sup> Many schools ceased to work.<sup>24</sup> Those that remained<sup>25</sup> were allowed to teach Serbian children literacy, but without the use of the Serbian name. The authorities, and the Turkish and Albanian population did not leave at peace Serbian teachers and pupils.<sup>26</sup>

During Consulate's work, the number of schools almost doubled. Schools were opened even in the area of Peć and Ibarski Kolašin, where the Turkish terror was the fiercest.<sup>27</sup> Under the Sultan's irade of 1893, Serbian schools could be opened everywhere where it was possible to prove before the Turkish authorities that the Serbs lived there. This was particularly used by the Serbs in the Kosovo Vilayet, where the Serbian nationality was indisputable, and they opened a larger number of schools in a relatively short time.<sup>28</sup>

The Serbs showed great perseverance in maintaining their national identity, and were therefore interested in schools and education. Owing to such perseverance and

<sup>21</sup> Ђ. Микић, *Политичка, културна и привредна стремљења*, 299.

<sup>22</sup> *ДСПКС*, V–2, прир. М. Војводић, Београд 1985, бр. 71.

<sup>23</sup> М. Стијовић, *Српско школство на Косову и Метохији према извештајима Српског конзулата у Приштини*, Косовско-метохијски зборник 4 (2011) 100.

<sup>24</sup> М. Војводић, *Стојан Новаковић и Владимир Карић*, Београд 2003, 78.

<sup>25</sup> According to a report of Petar Kostić, the administrator of the Prizren Theological Seminary, sent to the Serbian envoy in Constantinople, in the school year of 1884/85, there were only 20 male and two female primary schools in Old Serbia (М. Војводић, *Србија и албанско питање крајем XIX века*, in: *Србија и Албанци у XIX и почетком XX века*, Београд 1990, 70).

<sup>26</sup> М. Стијовић, *Српско школство*, 100.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, 103.

<sup>28</sup> М. Војводић, *Србија и албанско питање*, 74–75.

great efforts of the Serbian Government and the Consulate, education, after all, was advancing.

National history<sup>29</sup> was taught in Serbian schools, with a particular focus on the period of the free Serbian state before the Turkish occupation and the “new liberation”.<sup>30</sup> Serbian epic folk songs were taught, notably those from the Kosovo cycle. In the Sunday-Holiday School, whose curriculum was prepared by Branislav Nušić, particular attention was devoted to learning, singing and reciting of patriotic songs, “for the sake of better awakening of patriotism”.<sup>31</sup> Students also got acquainted with Serbian geography, Serbian literature etc. All this strengthened the patriotic spirit of the Serbian youth.

The Prizren Theological Seminary was the most important Serbian school in Kosovo and Metohija. Although it was established in difficult circumstances, it yielded significant results. Step by step, it became the educational seat of the Ottoman Serbs, participated in the restoration of Serbian education and strengthened the Serbian national consciousness – not only in Prizren and the environs, but wider as well. The door of the Seminary read that it was an Orthodox Serbian seminary, which at the time, when the Serbian name was not mentioned anywhere, meant a lot. The very fact that an Orthodox Serbian seminary existed in Old Serbia helped the Serbian people feel more secure, nationally more conscious and stronger. The people from Old Serbia would say: “This is not insignificant, the time has come when the Serb dares to call himself the Serb”.<sup>32</sup> They believed that the time of liberation came or was coming. The Prizren Theological Seminary played an important educational and spiritual mission – it educated teachers, who spread literacy among the people, and priests, who baptised and married the Serbs, helping them preserve the Orthodox faith. This significantly slowed the process of conversion. In addition to being the place for the education of priests and teachers, until the establishment of the Serbian Consulate in Priština, the Seminary was the only link between the Serbian

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<sup>29</sup> National history was not officially taught and was not a part of official curricula or textbooks. Upon the order of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued through the Consulate, teachers taught it secretly, according to a special programme sent through the Consulate (Архив Србије (АС), Министранство иностраних дела (МИД), Конзулат у Приштини (несређена грађа), Министарство иностраних дела – Конзулату у Приштини, пп бр. 5377, 17. октобар 1909. године). If a representative of the Turkish authorities came by, students would hide their notebooks with accounts of national history and patriotic songs (J. K. Ђилас, *Српске школе*, 249).

<sup>30</sup> For instance, the curriculum for the third grade of girls’ school envisaged that Serbian history be spoken about at history classes and that the “župan period be covered very briefly and the Nemanjić period somewhat more comprehensively”, and that the “uprising and new liberation” be emphasised “more strongly” (*Програм за троразредне девојачке школе*, АС, МИД, Конзулат у Приштини (несређена грађа)).

<sup>31</sup> J. Поповић, *Живот Срба на Косову 1812–1912*, Београд 1987, 263.

<sup>32</sup> З. Р. Поповић, *Пола столећа*, in: *Савременици о Косову и Метохији 1852–1912*, Београд 1988, 265.



government, under whose management it worked all the time, and the schools of Kosovo and Metohija. It was also the only institution reporting about the life of the local Serbs. Even later, when the Consulate developed an entire network of commissioners, the reports of the Seminary head and other employees were a precious source of information about the situation in the field. Moreover, books, magazines, papers which spread liberation ideas were arriving through the Seminary. Its library kept the magazines such as *Letopis Matice srpske*, *Vesnik srpske crkve i Srpski sion*, or papers such as: *Srpske novine*, *Srpska Zastava*, *Srbobran* etc.<sup>33</sup>

From the establishment of the Seminary, there was not a single example of group Islamisation, and individual conversions were also often prevented. Had this been the only result of its activity on the propaganda-political front, the Seminary justified its existence.<sup>34</sup>

The schools in Kosovo and Metohija were also the place of almost all cultural events. These events enabled the Serbs to learn about their national culture and history, and to develop their national and patriotic consciousness. Orthodoxy and the cult of St Sava were fostered. In 1897, Stevan Matijašić<sup>35</sup> reported to the Ministry that he had ordered that all schools in Old Serbia celebrate St Sava – including the schools in villages, and not only in towns as it had been the case that far. He stated it was done so – each, even the smallest school marked the holiday that year “with an official service, Serbian songs, patriotic declamations”.<sup>36</sup> According to the Programme for the celebration of St Sava in the Seminary in 1903, the choir of theology students sang the *Serbian Anthem* and played the *Serbian March*. Students recited the songs *The Serb*, *Hey, Kosovo*, *A Lonely Serbian Girl*, and sang *The Serbian Oro* and *Where is Serbian Vojvodina*, and the folk poem *St Sava* while playing the gusle, etc.<sup>37</sup> This is also described in the Consulate’s report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1908: “The children recited some declamations in the entirely patriotic and Serbian spirit”.<sup>38</sup>

The Serbian national literary heritage was also preserved and cherished among the people, especially those works that boosted the spirit and patriotism of the Serbian people, and awakened liberation aspirations. Describing the marking of a St patron’s day by the Patrnoić family from Prizren, teacher Mihailo Popović emphasised that the local citizens knew well folk poems, particularly those relating to the “Serbian St patron’s day and the strengthening of faith and patriotism” – they spoke them by heart.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> А. Новаков, *Стубови српске просвете*, 158–159.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, 188.

<sup>35</sup> A scribe, the chief clerk of the Priština Consulate at the time.

<sup>36</sup> АС, МИД, Конзулат у Приштини (несређена грађа), С. Матијашић – Ђ. Симићу, пп бр. 62, 7. март 1897. године.

<sup>37</sup> АС, МИД, Конзулат у Приштини (несређена грађа), Програм прославе у Богословији Призренској на дан Св. Саве, 14. јануар 1903. године.

<sup>38</sup> АС, МИД, Конзулат у Приштини (несређена грађа), Конзулат у Приштини – Министарству иностраних дела, пп бр. 58, 16. јануар 1908. године.

<sup>39</sup> *Споменица педесетогодишњице*, 85–86.

The Orthodox Church played a highly important role in the development of education and preservation and development of the national consciousness of the Serbs. That is why the church question was among the most important questions of the Serbian people in Turkey. As the Church in Turkey also carried the mark of ethnicity, the Serbian government invested great effort to have the Serbs, instead of the Greeks, become the bishops in the Raška-Prizren Eparchy (including the Skopje Eparchy). Owing to strong Serbian diplomatic activity, this happened in 1896, when the Serb Dionisije was appointed Metropolitan instead of the Greek Meletius.<sup>40</sup> The Serbs were thrilled. According to witnesses, on his first visit to Priština, he was welcomed “as Christ in Jerusalem!”<sup>41</sup>

Another Consulate’s task was to care about the language, as an element of national identity, particularly when used for propaganda purposes. In Catholic Janjevo, where the local population was recorded as Serbian, the Catholic propaganda endeavoured to spread the Croatian name. In 1899, Consul Svetislav Simić reported that the new teacher tried to introduce in the Church, instead of Italian, the national language, “which, according to him, is Croatian”, and tried to open a reading room in Janjevo, which would contain many Croatian papers, coming from the Austrian Consulate in Skopje. This attempt of the Austrian propaganda failed as the priests of Janjevo opposed it, and the local population did not desire such novelties either.<sup>42</sup>

Uniform textbooks for all Serbs, with the same conceptual framework, were very important for the spiritual unity of the entire Serbian people. This is why the Serbian government tried to supply the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija with books.

The consulates were also opening bookshops, something that the Serbs were very happy about. The first bookshop was opened in Priština in 1890, offering to the Serbs, as Nušić wrote, consolation and “the hope that, after all, there is Serbian God who does not allow that the holy Serbian script be destroyed”.<sup>43</sup> This bookstore boosted the supply of books in Serbian schools and ensured that books were more available to the people.<sup>44</sup> As the experience with the Priština bookshop was positive, other bookshops were opened in Prizren and Mitrovica.<sup>45</sup>

The consulates also supported the establishment and work of Sokol societies. They saw in them one of the chances to ensure the integrity of national culture, which was one of the pillars of national identity. They believed these societies could serve as the basis for the healthy organisation of the Serbian people and as intermediaries of

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<sup>40</sup> М. Стијовић, *Рашко-призренски митрополити и Српски конзулат у Приштини*, Црквене студије 15 (Ниш 2018) 571.

<sup>41</sup> Ј. Поповић, *Живот Срба*, 116.

<sup>42</sup> АС, МИД, Политичко-просветно одељење (ППО), 1899, Р. 229, Светислав Симић – Сими Лозанићу, пп бр. 252, 7. јул 1899. године.

<sup>43</sup> Б. Перуничкић, *Писма*, 89.

<sup>44</sup> About the Serbian bookshop in Priština see: В. Зарковић, *Отварање прве српске књижаре у Приштини 1890. године*, Баштина 28 (Приштина–Лепосавић 2010) 167–182.

<sup>45</sup> М. Стијовић, *Српско школство*, 111.

cultural enlightenment – by combining gymnastic exercises with short lectures in the Serbian language, history etc. The Sokol societies were considered conducive to helping the entire Serbian people in Turkey get closer, and to gradually becoming a political organisation.<sup>46</sup> And what was very important – the Turks did not observe these societies with mistrust. The Serbian youth enthusiastically embraced Sokol societies, which were spreading very fast. In 1910, Vice-Consul Milan Rakić reported about the existence of Sokol societies in Priština, Prizren, Peć and Mitrovica, which numbered together over 600 members.<sup>47</sup>

The statement of Pera Todorović, sent by King Aleksandar Obrenović to visit Old Serbia in 1898 and ascertain on the spot “the state of the Serbian cause in Old Serbia”, speaks volumes about the efforts and means invested by the Kingdom of Serbia in strengthening the national consciousness: “The cost may be higher than worth?... Our material sacrifices are enormous. They are so huge compared to the poor state of our country that this question can be posed quite seriously. Is it worth spending two million a year, to achieve the results and successes we have achieved, within the past ten years or so?... Can Serbia endure this? Wouldn't it be cleverer to entrust the army with all this and let it conquer one day with arms the things we want to conquer by cultural means now?”<sup>48</sup> It turned out that both were necessary – investment in education and culture, and strengthening of national consciousness, which helped prevent the de-Serbianisation of the Serbian people, and, at least to an equal extent – investment in arms and physical liberation of the Serbian people, which eventually took place in 1912.

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<sup>46</sup> АС, МИД, Конзулат у Приштини (несређена грађа), Јован М. Јовановић – Миловану Ђ. Миловановићу, пп бр. 1356, 22. јун 1910. године.

<sup>47</sup> ДСПКС, IV-2/1, прир. Љ. Алексић-Пејковић и К. Џамбазовски, Београд 2015, бр. 227.

<sup>48</sup> Пера Тодоровић, *Српска ствар у Старој Србији: Успомене на краља Милана*, Београд 1997, 71.

Milun Stijović

**LA LOTTA DEL POPOLO SERBO IN KOSOVO E METOHIA  
PER SALVARE L'IDENTITÀ NAZIONALE SOTTO IL DOMINIO TURCO  
ALLA FINE DEL XIX E ALL'INIZIO DEL XX SECOLO**

**Riassunto**

Con la caduta sotto i turchi e la perdita dell'indipendenza statale, i serbi cristiani ebbero lo status della popolazione secondaria privata dei diritti che aveva la popolazione musulmana. La discriminazione religiosa, la dipendenza sociale, la disuguaglianza economica e fisica resero la vita dei serbi in Kosovo e Metohija difficile e insicura. La loro posizione nel XIX secolo, e soprattutto dopo le guerre serbo-turche del 1876-1878, diventò insopportabile - persecuzioni e violenze assunsero una forma organizzata. In condizioni di totale assenza di leggi, che spesso non permetteva loro nemmeno la nuda sopravvivenza, i serbi cercavano spesso la salvezza emigrando o accettando l'Islam, il che, alla fine, portò all'albanizzazione.

La Serbia cercava di proteggerli fisicamente, ma anche di rinforzarli nella loro fede e nella nazione e di dissuaderli dall'accettare l'Islam. Si fecero numerose iniziative per mantenere la consapevolezza nazionale tra la popolazione serba, prima attraverso il Comitato per le chiese e le scuole nella Serbia antica, poi attraverso il Seminario teologico di Prizren e la Società di San Sava, e, infine, attraverso i suoi consolati nell'Impero Ottomano. Dopo Skopje, Salonico e Bitola, fu aperto il consolato a Pristina (1889) la Serbia lavorava sulla conservazione dell'essere nazionale serbo, sul rafforzamento e sullo sviluppo della coscienza nazionale, sulla devozione alla propria fede, sul rispetto della propria storia e tradizione, sull'elevazione culturale ed educativa del popolo serbo, insistendo anche sull'unità spirituale del popolo serbo, diviso in diversi stati. Lo faceva, soprattutto, attraverso scuole, libri, sale di lettura, librerie e società di falconieri.

La Chiesa ortodossa serba ebbe un ruolo cruciale nella conservazione dell'essere nazionale serbo e nello sviluppo della coscienza nazionale tra i serbi durante tutto il periodo, dalla perdita dello stato al suo ristabilimento. Ecco perché la questione della chiesa era una delle questioni più importanti del popolo serbo in Turchia, e per questo il governo serbo fece dei grandi sforzi per far occupare le sedi vescovili delle diocesi di Raska-Prizren e Skopje dai serbi anziché dai greci, cosa che riuscì a fare nel 1896 con la nomina del Vescovo Dionisio.

Tutte queste misure - investire nell'istruzione, nella cultura e nella diffusione della coscienza nazionale, contribuirono a mantenere la coscienza nazionale tra il popolo serbo e a prevenirne in gran parte la sua disintegrazione (denazionalizzazione), insieme al fatto, di grandissima importanza, della liberazione fisica del popolo serbo in Kosovo e Metohija accaduta nel 1912.

**Parole chiave:** Kosovo e Metohija, governo turco, serbi, Serbia, consolato, identità nazionale

Милун Стијовић

БОРБА СРПСКОГ НАРОДА НА КОСОВУ И МЕТОХИЈИ  
ЗА ОЧУВАЊЕ НАЦИОНАЛНОГ ИДЕНТИТЕТА ПОД ТУРСКОМ ВЛАШЋУ  
КРАЈЕМ 19. И ПОЧЕТКОМ 20. ВЕКА

Резиме

Падом под Турке и губитком државне независности Срби хришћани добили су статус раје лишене права које је имало муслиманско становништво. Верска дискриминација, социјална зависност, економска и физичка неправедност чинили су живот Срба на Косову и Метохији тешким и несигурним. Њихов положај је у 19. веку, а нарочито после Српско-турских ратова 1876–1878. године, постао неподношљив – прогони и насиља су добили организован вид. У условима потпуног безакоња који им неретко нису омогућавали ни голо преживљавање, Срби су често спас тражили у исељавању или примању ислама, што је, углавном, у крајњем исходу водило арбанашењу.

Србија је настојала да их физички заштити, али и да их одржи у њиховој вери и нацији и одврати од примања ислама. Предузимала је бројне кораке како би одржала националну свест код српског становништва. Прво је то чинила преко Одбора за цркве и школе у Старој Србији, затим преко Призренске богословије и Друштва Светог Саве и, на крају, преко својих конзулата у Османском царству. После Скопља, Солуна и Битоља, отворен је конзулат у Приштини (1889). Он је радио на очувању српског националног бића, на јачању и развијању националне свести, на привржености својој вери, поштовању сопствене историје и традиције, на културном и просветном уздицању српског народа. Радио је и на духовном јединству српског народа подељеног у више држава. Чинио је то, пре свега, преко школа, књига, читаоница, књижара, као и соколских друштава.

Српска православна црква је била од пресудног значаја за очување српског националног бића и развој националне свести код Срба за све време од губитка државе до њеног поновног успостављања. Зато је питање цркве спадало међу најважнија питања српског народа у Турској и због тога је српска влада улагала велике напоре да владичанске столице Рашко-призренске и Скопске епархије уместо Грка почну заузимати Срби, што је и успела 1896. године, када је на то место постављен владика Дионисије.

Све ове мере – улагање у просвету, културу и ширење националне свести, допринеле су да се одржи национална свест код српског народа и да се у великој мери спречи расрбљавање (денационализација српског народа), али је, уз то, великог значаја имало физичко ослобођење српског народа на Косову и Метохији 1912. године.

**Кључне речи:** Косово и Метохија, турска власт, Срби, Србија, конзулат, национални идентитет