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THE SERBS  
AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR  
1914–1918

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ROBERT SETON-WATSON – MARY EDITH  
DURHAM POLEMICS ON THE RESPONSIBILITY  
FOR THE GREAT WAR

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**Abstract:** This paper considers the opposing views of two British scholars with regard to Serbia's responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War based on the previously unpublished archive documents and correspondence between Mary Durham and Professor Seton-Watson. And while Mary Durham argued that Serbia bore the sole responsibility for the outbreak of the Great War as its government had assisted the members of Young Bosnia in every possible way, Seton-Watson refuted such accusations, believing that responsibility lay with Austria-Hungary.

**Keywords:** Mary Durham, Seton-Watson, Serbian Government, Gavrilo Princip, Young Bosnia, war responsibility, First World War

In the year in which we are celebrating the centenary of the First World War, the largest war conflict in the history of mankind to that date, a part of European historiography is again preoccupied with the question of guilt for its outbreak. A fresh torrent of accusations is being levelled at Serbia, purporting that it bears key responsibility for the start of the war. On the other hand, Austria-Hungary and its protector, Germany, are being absolved of guilt. At work here is forced historical engineering, a re-tailoring and counterfeiting of facts; an attempt, in effect, to reinterpret the role of the Balkans, and Serbia in particular, with regard to crucial reasons for the outbreak of the Great War.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, such revision has formally never even stopped. It has been ongoing from 1914 onwards, in order to become topical almost invariably at times of great crises, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s, or at the time of commemorating some of the major anniversaries of the Great War. Alongside such charges of Serbia's responsibility, dangerous stereotypes have of late been peddled such as that Gavrilo Princip was a terrorist, and Young Bosnia a terrorist association of militant Serbian nationalist from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Anglo-Saxon historiography has been at the forefront of such stereotype spreading, starting from Mary Durham, British anthropologist and self-proclaimed expert on the Balkans in the first half of the 20th century, through studies by Dennis Hupchick and the latest books published by historian Mark Cornwall,

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<sup>1</sup> M. Bjelajac, *1914–2014: Zašto revizija? Stare i nove kontroverze o uzrocima Prvog svetskog rata*, Beograd, 2014, 6.

writer of chapters in the 2010 *Companion to World War One*, Timothy Snyder, John Ott, Christopher Clark, Margaret MacMillan, Sean McMeekin and others. Fortunately, there are also such high professional historians who, based on diplomatic materials and historical sources, refute the thesis on Serbian responsibility for the start of the First World War. Among them is Jean-Jacques Becker, French historian and Professor emeritus at the University of Paris X-Nanteree, who in his book *L'Année 14* (first edition published in 2004) argued that the Serbian Government bore no responsibility at all for the Sarajevo assassination.<sup>2</sup>

Accusations that Serbia and the Serbian people were responsible for the outbreak of the Great War were first put forward by Mary Durham at the peak of the war on 13 December 1914 in a voluminous letter she sent to her friend George Bernard Shaw in response to a series of his texts in which he voiced his anti-war views, strongly opposing Great Britain's participation in the war. In subsequent war years, Durham continued to write and act publicly in a similar tone.

She campaigned against Serbia even more vehemently after the Great War ended, provoking a response from Professor Seton-Watson who in early 1920 launched a public polemic, but also engaged in written correspondence with this unusual woman – the first mention of her in the Foreign Office files from 1908 reads: “inadvisability of corresponding with”. Their correspondence would span the subsequent several years, lasting, to be more precise, until 1929.<sup>3</sup> In the course of the polemics, Professor Seton-Watson used scientific arguments, referring to archive materials of different origin (Austrian, Serbian, German, British), to refute Durham's claims on the responsibility of the Serbian government and Serbia for the outbreak of the First World War. Their correspondence on different subject matters has not been published to date and is little known to our public. It contains twenty letters on twenty-nine pages (mostly typewritten, and only a smaller part handwritten) kept in the Seton-Watson collection, that is in the personal correspondence fund held in *The School of Slavonic and South East European Studies* library in London, item SEW 17/6/9.

Mary Durham continued the polemics initiated by Seton-Watson in March 1920, when she published a text in *The New Europe* revue, founded by Seton-Watson himself, complaining of the pro-Serbian bias of the magazine, and accusing Watson and the editorial of being heavily subsidised by Yugoslav authorities to promote their cause. She also wrote that Seton-Watson and the *The New Europe* “tirelessly maintain the innocence of the Serbian Government with regard to its involvement in the Sarajevo crime. For this reason, thousands of people have been talked into giving an immense amount of money to help the innocent Serbia”. The insinuation at Seton-Watson's bribery is clear.

<sup>2</sup> J. J. Becker, *L'Année 14*, Paris, 2013<sup>2</sup>, 48–49.

<sup>3</sup> A. Rastović, *Velika Britanija i Srbija 1903–1914*, Beograd, 2005, 338.



In her letters from 1924, 1925, 1926 and 1929, Mary Edith Durham came out with well-known accusations from her familiar arsenal that the Serbian Government was responsible for the outbreak of the First World War, that Nikola Pašić and Stojan M. Protić, as Minister of the Interior Affairs, knew precisely who the assassins of the Austrian Heir Apparent were, that is, that Protić, in compliance with the government's decision, issued an order to frontier guards to stop the would be murderers from crossing the border into the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, that is Austria. Frontier guards responded that "the youths have already crossed the border". This led Durham to conclude that had their identity not been known with precision, frontier guards would not have replied the way they had.<sup>4</sup> She set out this assumption in a letter to Seton-Watson dated 4 December 1920. Interestingly, in that same letter she confessed that she had first learnt of the idea of "Big Serbia" in 1900 and had supported it herself at first until she realized the "retrograde effect on Europe in general the Great Serb scheme might have".<sup>5</sup> She also believed that Great Britain was responsible for the creation of the Yugoslav state and for "having put the civilized Croat and Dalmatian under the Serb".<sup>6</sup>

In letters to Seton-Watson dated 6 and 14 March 1925, she reiterated her favourite thesis that the Serbian Government knew all about the murder of Franz Ferdinand, i.e. that the murder had been planned in Serbia by Chief of the Serbian General Staff Intelligence Service, Dragutin Dimitrijević Apis, referring to the testimony of one Arnold Foster who had spent time in Belgrade and had had the chance to speak to a large number of people who had confirmed to him that the Serbian government had known all about the murder and did not hesitate to say so. "Had Pasic & Co. been unaware of the plot, they could say so in a few words. They cannot. That is they can only do it by denouncing as a liar poor old Ljuba (Ljuba Jovanović, author's comment)".<sup>7</sup> She is referring here to the former Radical Party Education Minister from 1914 who wrote an article, imbued with personal hostility to Pašić, claiming that in late May or early June 1914 Pašić had allegedly told government members that "certain persons are making ready to go to Sarajevo to kill Franz Ferdinand".<sup>8</sup> Durham will frequently quote this statement by Jovanović as one of key pieces of evidence that it was precisely the official policy of Serbia that was behind the Sarajevo assassination. It was not until Ljuba Jovanović and Nikola Pašić had an open confrontation in 1926 that

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<sup>4</sup> School of the Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES), Seton-Watson Collection (SEW), Individual Correspondence Files 17/6/9, Durham to Seton-Watson, December 4, 1924.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> V. Ćorović, *Odnosi između Srbije i Austro-Ugarske u XX veku*, Beograd, 1992,

Pašić publicly stated Jovanović “was lying when he claimed that the Government knew of the assassination or that at least some of its ministers did”.<sup>9</sup>

Mary Durham went a step further noting that in Serbia “they are now proud of a plan successfully carried through”.<sup>10</sup> Referring to Great Britain’s entente with Russia, she added that the prevailing opinion in her country was that the purpose of the alliance was to break up Germany, with Serbs opening the game for achieving that objective.<sup>11</sup> She also informed Professor Seton-Watson that she had received a large dossier of files from the Salonica Trial with incriminating facts against the Serbian government. For instance, although the Serbian Government claimed that Milan Ciganović, who also went under the surname of Danilović, was a railway official, according to Austrian data, he had left service as early as 1914 and worked as spy and agent provocateur for the Serbian government.<sup>12</sup>

She claimed that by organizing the Salonica Trial, “the Serb Government evidently tried to suppress all evidence”<sup>13</sup> of its involvement in the Sarajevo crime and to clear itself from all responsibility. With regard to the warning sent by Nikola Pašić to Austrian officials through Jovan M. Jovanović, Serbian Minister to Vienna, that the Austrian Heir Apparent may be attacked during the forthcoming military manoeuvres, that is, that there was a possibility for him to be fired upon by one of his own troops, she believed this was only Serbian government’s “bluff to see how far Serbia could terrorise the Austrian authorities”.<sup>14</sup>

Another interesting letter is the one dated 4 December 1926 in which she informed Seton-Watson of her talks with two revolutionaries. One of them, whom she called Nenadović, told her a lot about Vladimir Gaćinović, a member of Young Bosnia, who was trained in Belgrade, but his expenses for journeys to and from Belgrade, Sarajevo and Vienna, as well as his university and living expenses, were not defrayed by his father, since Gaćinović was a sponsored protégé of the Belgrade revolutionaries. The other member of the Black Hand spoke of Apis with respect and admiration, considering him one of the world’s great men who had his agents everywhere and had unrivalled organizing power. She also came out with an interesting assumption that Pašić wanted to use the assassination to further his political goals. “It is possible that he believed Austria ‘dared not fight’ and that he therefore concentrated on retaining power himself as

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<sup>9</sup> M. Bjelajac, *op. cit.*, 124.

<sup>10</sup> SSEES, SEW, 17/6/9, Durham to Seton-Watson, March 14, 1925.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> SSEES, SEW, 17/6/9, Durham to Seton-Watson, March 6, 1925.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*



this successful coup would have undoubtedly made him extremely popular and more powerful than ever.”<sup>15</sup>

In several letters written during 1929, she accused Seton-Watson of trying to amnesty the Serbian government from its intention to cover up its role in the Sarajevo assassination during the 1917 Salonica Trial, and that in his book on the murder of Franz Ferdinand, when describing the important role played by Vladimir Gaćinović in the Bosnian revolutionary movement, he did not mention that Gaćinović was a member of the Black Hand. In these letters too, she reiterated that Serbia was not innocent of Franz Ferdinand’s murder.<sup>16</sup>

As the debate of the two British scholar deepened and got increasingly personal, turning into an “open war”, even the famous Arnold Toynbee offered to step in as an arbitrator. In his letter of 8 February 1929 to Seton-Watson he offered collaboration on a collection of Yugoslav documents on the assassination of Franz Ferdinand to be published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London in which Durham repeatedly appeared during the polemics, expressing her, as Professor Seton-Watson pointed out, repulsive charges against Serbia. However, in his response to the letter dated 12 February 1929, Seton-Watson rejected this proposal. He was not disposed to admit Mary Durham’s title as a serious student of history, accusing her of “methods of controversy, her reckless and infamously untrue charges against all and sundry”.<sup>17</sup> At one point, he even called her a “poisonous woman”.

On her part, Durham responded vehemently, attacking Seton-Watson’s reputation as a scholar and accusing him of being the initiator of the “childish squabbling” that ran between them. She said that she had started working on the South Slav question and championing the rights of South Slavs a long time ago, much before Seton-Watson, and that she had been a strong proponent of recognizing legitimate territorial claims of Serbs.

A further deepening of their enmity and debate would encourage Mary Durham to publish her 1925 book *The Serajevo Crime*, in which she reiterated all of her earlier charges regarding Serbian responsibility for the Great War. She claimed that “the connection of the criminals with Belgrade was completely established” through Serbian government officials Milan Ciganović and Voja Tankosić, as well as Dragutin Dimitrijević Apis, who gave an impetus to the act.<sup>18</sup> She justified the ultimatum set by the Austrian government to Serbia, including even its most contentious provision on the participation of Austrian officers in the inquiry of the assassination in Serbian territory. “To those of us who were used to Serb methods and intrigues this demand seemed the one most necessary paragraph of the note, which was in every point justified by

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<sup>15</sup> SSEES, SEW, 17/6/9, Durham to Seton-Watson, December 4, 1926.

<sup>16</sup> SSEES, SEW, 17/6/9, Durham to Seton-Watson, March 8, 1929.

<sup>17</sup> SSEES, SEW, 17/6/9, Seton-Watson to Toynbee, February 12, 1929.

<sup>18</sup> M. Durham, *The Serajevo Crime*, London, 1925, 94–96.

the circumstances.”<sup>19</sup> She also made a number of conclusions fully supporting Austria’s views on Serbian responsibility for instigating and organizing the Sarajevo assassination. She believed Austria was right to accuse Dimitrijević, Tankosić and Milan Ciganović of participating in the assassination, that the Serbian government was responsible for its failure to uncover and arrest the first two and for allowing the third to flee and thus be spared punishment for the crime. She also believed that research findings of Professors Stanoje Stanojević and Herman Wendel rightly confirmed that members of Black Hand leadership were aware of the conspiracy ten days before the crime took place.<sup>20</sup> According to her, Serbs bore the sole responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War.

Not long after Durham, Seton-Watson also published a book in which he expressed his views regarding responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War. Seton-Watson paid great attention to relevance of historical documents and archive materials, believing that they best corroborate the fact that Serbia had no connection with the Sarajevo assassination and can therefore bear no responsibility for the outbreak of the Great War. On several occasions, he urged the Serbian Government and “Radical Party leaders” heading the government at the time of start of the First World War to shed light on a number of ambiguous issues that concerned Serbia directly, as it was “high time for Belgrade to understand that silence on this subject matter will be understood abroad as a confession of guilt.”<sup>21</sup> Seton-Watson’s friend Milan Ćurčin, editor of the *Nova Evropa* (*New Europe*) journal, held a similar view, warning Serbian authorities that the “Sarajevo assassination was a test before the international public.” He addressed the public in April 1929 saying it was necessary for the Serbian side to start publishing documents on responsibility for the Great War. He was surprised that Serbs were silent in the face of German and Austrian efforts to charge Serbia with responsibility for the Sarajevo assassination and the outbreak of the war.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 12–13.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 200–201.

<sup>21</sup> “Odgovornost za rat”, *Nova Evropa*, vol. XIX. No. 8, 26 April 1929, 210.

<sup>22</sup> Milan Ćurčin wrote: “Some of our ‘lazy patriots’ and optimistic journalists still believe, or at least claim to believe, that no one is any longer interested in our ‘scribbling’ about the causes of the Great War, the blame for which the Germans would like to shift to or at least share with Serbia and Russia, and France and Great Britain; they also say this matter was resolved once and for all by the Peace Treaties of Versailles. However, we now see that the international public has not ceased to discuss this matter, considering it from all possible points of view, analysing it down to the smallest detail; as a result, scholarly literature on the responsibility for the Great War or its causes, and everything related therewith, is becoming boundless, and there are not only magazines dedicated solely to this subject matter, but there are also publicists, and “expert” scholars who write about nothing else”. “Odgovornost za rat”, *Nova Evropa*, vol. XIX. No. 8, 26 April 1929, 209.



Seton-Watson's book, *Sarajevo, A Study in Causes of the Great War*, was published in Zagreb in 1926. It was based on materials from Berlin and Viennese archives and British documents which he helped publish. Already in the foreword, he expressed his belief that his readers would renounce Ljuba Jovanović's claim that official Serbia was aware of the planned conspiracy as unreliable, as three undeniable facts point to the contrary: that the Sarajevo assassination was only the final outcome of a spontaneous movement widespread in Bosnia and Herzegovina, irrespective of Serbia's action; that, in the years before the war, Austria had, on its side, been systematically preparing to overthrow Serbia, and that, finally, it decided to persist in its aggressive stance, once it was assured of German assistance.

Analyzing a rich pool of documents and different aspects of this complex problem, he reached a conclusion that claims regarding official participation of Serbia in the assassination were groundless as the assassination was an act committed by individuals, members of the Black Hand organization, which, at that point, was in major conflict with the Belgrade government. He, therefore, believed that the Serbian government bore no responsibility for the Sarajevo assassination. He presented a dozen conclusions, saying, among other things, that the occupation of Bosnia created a permanent conflict of interests between Austria and Serbia, which remained latent under the Obrenovićs' rule, but flared up after Petar Karadjordjević's accession and was rendered still more acute by the annexation of Bosnia and Serbia's double victory in the Balkan Wars; that the murder of Franz Ferdinand was the culminating incident in a series of terrorist acts perpetrated against representatives of Austria in Croatia and Bosnia by Yugoslavs who were natives of the Dual Monarchy and acted on their own initiative; that from the very first Count Berchtold treated the assassination as an excellent pretext for war and a good opportunity to win public opinion to his side. His original design was a surprise attack on Serbia, without previous declaration of war. Watson also concluded that the only persons in the Austrian government of the time who opposed the war were Emperor Franz Joseph and Count Tizsa, but that even their momentary hesitation was caused by uncertainty as to German support of their war intentions. Once German support was almost guaranteed, they embraced the war option. In addition, according to Seton-Watson, the inquiry at Sarajevo was an after-thought, designed to impress Europe, when attempts to prove the official Austrian version failed. Berchtold did all in his power to conceal his actual intentions from Europe, in order to lull it into a false sense of security and to confront it with accomplished facts, thereby preventing efforts to stop the war. He also accused Berlin, which, so far from restraining, effectively encouraged Vienna's war preparations, urging the need for precipitating hostilities. Moreover, by deliberate action, Berlin and Vienna had by 23 July prepared fully for the war, and nothing short of a miracle could have saved Europe from the impending calamity. He also concluded that from 1908 until 1914 Austria had intended to attack Serbia on four occasions (1908, 1912–1913, in the winter of 1913 and immediately



before the Sarajevo murder).<sup>23</sup> Finally, he expressed his belief that Serbia had the good will to resolve the misunderstanding with its Western neighbour, corroborating this by the fact that the Serbian government had offered for the entire case to be investigated before The Hague International Court on three occasions, but that Vienna rejected any mention of this. Writing about Seton-Watson's capital work supporting the Serbian Government and state policy, in the May edition of the *Nova Evropa* for 1926 Milan Čurčin wrote that this "represents a most brilliant accusation against Austria-Hungary". Professor Seton-Watson expressed his view regarding Austria's responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War in an interesting text "Who is Responsible for the Murder of Franz Ferdinand" published in the *Nova Evropa* in May 1925. He wrote that we must assign the main guilt for the death of the Austrian Heir Apparent to "Austria-Hungary, who, by a policy of repression at home and aggression abroad, had antagonized all sections of the Yugoslav race".<sup>24</sup>

In her letters to Seton-Watson, in addition to the question of Serbia's responsibility for the Great War, Mary Durham touched on a number of other issues as well. Most importantly, this included the Albanian question, as Durham, being a staunch supporter of Albanian independence, often reiterated that during the Balkan Wars, and the First World War, Serbs had run a policy of extirpation of the Albanian race, to which "campaign" she had been witness.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, Durham accused Nikola Pašić that he did not create Yugoslavia, but actually carried out his original aim of making Great Serbia, and that a mass of evidence showed the pitiable conditions in Montenegro, Croatia and Macedonia. A great majority of people lived under much harsher rule than before. She then concluded this situation was likely to become a danger to Europe.<sup>26</sup> She believed that the solution was to overthrow Nikola Pašić, discontinue his policy of forced Serbization and give local autonomy to various groups, as the only way of ensuring European peace in a country she believed to have been "built upon a foundation of crime and lies".<sup>27</sup> She also made charges against, as she said, "the terrible engine Pašić's army is", on the basis of witness accounts of a Serbian refugee in London who told her that "here in England it is easy to be civilized. But when I go back I shall commit terrible atrocities in Macedonia."<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, the first accusations purporting that Serbia was responsible for the outbreak of the Great War, that is that the Serbian government directly in-

<sup>23</sup> Seton-Watson, *Sarajevo. A Study in Causes of the Great War*, Zagreb, 1926, 209–211.

<sup>24</sup> "Seton-Watson, Ko je odgovoran za ubistvo Franje Ferdinanda?", *Nova Evropa*, No. 14 and 15, 11 May 1925, 438.

<sup>25</sup> SEW 17/6/9, Durham to the Secretary of The Serbian Society, February 25, 1926.

<sup>26</sup> SEW 17/6/9, Durham to Seton-Watson, March 6, 1926.

<sup>27</sup> SEW 17/6/9, Durham to Seton-Watson, February 14, 1929.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

structed the assassins of the Austrian Heir Apparent, were voiced by Mary Durham as early as in late 1914. She repeated these groundless assertions throughout the war, and in particular after the war ended. This aggressive campaign provoked Seton-Watson to start a debate and correspondence with her which would last throughout the second decade of the 20th century. In his letters, public appearances and finally in his book on the causes of the Great War, he relied on a vast pool of documents to refute all of his rival's claims that Serbia and the Serbian government had organized the Sarajevo assassination and had therefore triggered the First World War or been responsible for its start. Durham was deliberately silent regarding facts and documents indicating that the highest circles of the Austrian government had planned to attack Serbia much before the assassination. For instance, from the moment he assumed his function in 1906, Chief of Austrian General Staff, Conrad von Hötzendorf, advocated the destruction of the Kingdom of Serbia. In the Serbian state, he saw a threat to Austrian strategic goals in the Balkans, and a "permanent hearth" of aspirations and machinations.<sup>29</sup>

In a letter to Baron Aehrenthal, Austrian Foreign Affairs Minister, dated 18 December 1907, he gave a clear outline of his views regarding the future of Serbia, pointing out that already during the 1878 occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina it had become clear to him that the "resolution of the Yugoslav issue lies in Serbia alone, that is, in a sweeping action with the overarching goal of annexing Serbia".<sup>30</sup> In the same letter, Hötzendorf argued that Austro-Hungarian troops should enter Niš, the Serbian city in the south, as this would ensure Austrian influence on North-Western Balkans, and Balkans at large.<sup>31</sup> Some weeks before the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, during talks with the German Foreign Affairs Minister, Baron Lexa von Aehrenthal said that "Serbia should disappear and be divided among Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary."<sup>32</sup> The part belonging to Austria would, together with its South Slav provinces, form a single core within the monarchy.<sup>33</sup>

All Austria needed was a pretext for war, and the assassination created conditions for realizing the idea of a general war. A note with ten requests, which practically represented an ultimatum to official Serbia, was drawn up; commenting on this note in a letter to Maurice Bunsen, British Ambassador in Vienna,

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<sup>29</sup> S. Terzić, Austrougarski mit o "Velikoj Srbiji" i njegova moderna upotreba, in: *Velika Srbija. Istine, zablude, zloupotrebe*, Zbornik radova sa Medjunarodnog naučnog skupa, Beograd, 2003, 318.

<sup>30</sup> V. Ćorović, *Odnosi između Srbije i Austro-Ugarske u XX veku*, Beograd, 1992,<sup>2</sup> 207.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> M. Vojvodić, Srbija i aneksiona kriza 1908–1909, in: *Stogodišnjica aneksije Bosne i Hercegovine*, Banjaluka, 2009, 124.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*



Edward Grey, Chief of Foreign Office, called it “the worst ultimatum ever sent by a state to another independent state”.<sup>34</sup>

Immediately after the Austrian Heir Apparent and his wife were murdered, the highest political circles in Austria started accusing Serbia of the assassination. For instance, Count Alexander Hoyos, chief of cabinet of Leopold Berchtold, Foreign Affairs Minister, accused the Serbian government of Franz Ferdinand’s murder saying that “even if it did not instigate it, the assassination was committed under its tolerant eye.”<sup>35</sup> Baron Stork, Charge d’Affairs of the Austrian Embassy in Belgrade, was even more explicit. He claimed that “pan-Serb propaganda nourished under the aegis of the Government and the agitation which for so many years has been carried on in the press, are the true culprits for this catastrophe... The cult of Miloš Obilić as a national hero from the Battle of Kosovo (1389) who, with his two companions, stabbed emperor Murad is likely to have served as a model to Sarajevo assassins as well, inculcated with the ideas of pan-Serb agitation. Moreover, indirect blame for the assassination also lies with Serbian university professors and the Propaganda Department of the Serbian Foreign Affairs Ministry”.<sup>36</sup> Further, general O. Potiorek, noted in the wake of the assassination that the “true causes of the accident which may well be only a herald of future unrest are to be looked for in Serbia”.<sup>37</sup>

After the Sarajevo assassination, Germany encouraged Vienna to take energetic measures against Serbia. The German Emperor Wilhelm II also believed that it was high time to resolve the Serbian issue. His sentence is famous: “Serbs must be dealt with and quickly. Everything is understood of itself and as clear as day”.<sup>38</sup> In his address to members of the Reichstag of 3 August 1914, Emperor Wilhelm II also said the following typical sentence: “Submitting to insatiable urges of nationalism, the Russian Government has stood by a state which caused the calamity of this war by plotting a criminal assassination”.<sup>39</sup>

The conflict with Serbia was only to serve as a pretext for a final settling of scores between Germany, and Russia and France, i.e. for the outbreak of a great war.<sup>40</sup> Berlin believed that Russia was not ready for war and that it would need several years to arm its forces. This opportunity could not be missed.

Also illustrative of Germany’s true intentions is the ambitious, so-called September Programme of the German Government from 1914. This was supposed to be a lightning-speed war that would end with quick victories. The plan

<sup>34</sup> B. D., vol. 11, The Outbreak of War, N° 91, Grey to M. Bunsen, July 24, 1914, 73.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 666.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> V. Ćorović, *Odnosi između Srbije i Austrougarske*, 670.

<sup>39</sup> M. Bjelajac, *op. cit.*, 13.

<sup>40</sup> M. Radojević, Lj. Dimić, *Srbija u velikom ratu 1914–1918. Kratka istorija*, Beograd, 2014, 85.



involved great territorial enlargements in Western and Eastern Europe, major colonial conquests and large economic demands on defeated countries. In all these plans, the Balkans and Serbia played a key role. The Serbian state was supposed to shrink territorially and come indirectly under the German sphere of influence.

Finally, anti-Serbian views of Mary Durham and her charges against Serbia should not come as a surprise, as her anti-Serbian activity dates as far back as 1911 when she openly placed herself in the service of resolving the Albanian question, championing scientific and political affirmation of Albanians and the struggle for independence of the Albanian state.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> A. Rastović, *op. cit.*, Beograd, 2005, 338.

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