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The First Serbian Uprising (1804-1813) and the Greek-Serbian relations during that period

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Abstract

The First Serbian Uprising was the first successful insurrection of a Christian population in the Ottoman Empire. However, its national character was not prominent from the beginning. The revolutionary period in Serbia started as a spark of local unrest and evolved to become a claim for independence. Its significance for the Balkan region is being underlined by its interconnection and influence on other movements in the area and mostly on the Greek case.

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Introduction

This piece of work is aiming to discuss the incident of the First Serbian Uprising and the subsequent creation of a communication between the two national movements of the Greeks and the Serbs- the first two claims for independence appearing in the region of the Balkans. Although, the topic appears to be self-explanatory on the surface, it is valuable to dwell deeper in the Serbian case because of the ambiguity of its goal and its various backpedallings and implications, which still led to some modest successes, but also to some devastating defeats. The Serbian nationalism is an interesting case, because although being the first to appear, it led to the creation of an independent state many decades later.

The Serbian case can be considered, also as a useful tool to understand the balance of power in the international system at the time and how the intervention of external factors affected the various national movements that were to follow. This paper covers all the above aspects in a brief manner, in order to make connections and to draw some conclusion on the nature of the uprising and on its influence in the Balkans, but in Europe as well.

In the first chapter of the first part, the actual events of the First Serbian Uprising are being described and an effort is made to understand better the motives behind the choices of the actors. In the second chapter of the first part, the aspect of the Serbian diaspora is being discussed as it is considered of substantial importance for the shaping of the Serbian national movement. In the third chapter of the first part, the international setting is being described, mainly by the outlook of the Ottomans.

In the smaller second part, the issue of Greek-Serbian collaboration is being approached. In the first chapter of the second part, there is a short description of the ways with which the Greeks contributed to the Serbian Uprising. In the second chapter of the second part, the Greek hope for a collaboration with the Serbs in their plans for independence is being outlined.

For this paper, there were used books from libraries as well as books from online sources. Also, a number of articles was used along with some online sources.

Part 1: The Serbian claim for independence

A. The First Serbian Uprising: A series of events from 1804 to 1813

In the popular historical discourse, the First Serbian Uprising of 1804 has gained the important status of being the first national uprising claiming independence in the Balkans and the first sign of Christian defiance of the Muslim authority of the Ottoman Empire. The Serbs, despite gaining independence much later- not until 1878- were the first in the region to imagine themselves as an independent nation and the first to connect their identity to a “glorious past” of the Serbian Empire with its strong religious and cultural symbols and the figures of heroic administrators- historical elements that gave them a strong basis for their claim to create an independent state.

However, this portrayal of the Serbian national movement, which sprung in an already shacking Ottoman Empire, does not justify the actual causes of the uprising. The reality that led to the First Serbian Uprising creates questions about the nature of the initiative and its real goals, when the first spark appeared. Also, it forces the modern observer to wonder about the words we use in retrospection to describe the event of Serbian insurgency against the “foreign” Ottoman administration. Was it a revolution of an oppressed nation already aware of its roots, its history and its past? Or a local uprising of dissatisfied, terrorized peasants? Another question would be if we are faced with a result of encouragement by the Great Powers of the time, which were looming over the ongoing weakening of the Ottomans- something that later was understood by historians as the rise of an “Eastern Question”. The ways to explain the appearance of a Serbian national movement vary indeed. By exploring the events of the Serbian Uprising, the personalities and backgrounds of the people involved, the reality of the contested area and the stance of the international players we could reach a number of conclusions that lead to no concrete answer.

This first chapter is an effort to describe the internal factors and players that encouraged the initial uprising of 1804. It is an introduction on the local events and actors that make part of what we understand today as the so called “Serbian Revolution” and the journey of the national movement up to 1815, which signaled the creation of the autonomous Principality of Serbia and the loss of the Sanjak of Smederevo by the Ottoman Empire.

The revolted Serbs initially were not aiming for independence but only for a mere protection of their rights and property against the janissaries. Their armed struggle was not aimed against the legitimate Ottoman administration but against the local lords, the Dahis.¹

The Serbs of the much contested Pashalik between the Habsburg Empire and the Ottomans were not considered serfs and they were enjoying a much less violent life than other subjects of the Ottoman Balkans. For the most part throughout the Ottoman rule the division between the Muslim administrators and the Serbian population was rather distinct. The majority of the Serbs were peasants, living in the countryside, while the Muslims had occupied mainly the big towns². However, the living standards in this culturally well-protected rural Serbian society reflected a sense of stability and not one of poverty and exclusion.

Under Sultan Selim III's reformatory regime- which will be discussed in a following chapter- the peasantry cooperated openly with the Ottoman establishment. According to Glenny,

*“The ties were so close that (the official central administrator of the Pashalik, Hadži Mustafa was known as the ‘mother of the Serbs’”.*³

The Christians in the Sanjak of Smederevo were even allowed to carry weapons.

In 1793 and 1796 Selim III proclaimed firmans, giving additional rights to the Serbian people. Among other things, local Serbian rulers with the title of ober-knez were allowed to collect taxes. In addition, the freedom of trade and religion were granted.

¹ Djordjevic, D. *Revolutions des peuples balkaniques 1804 – 1914*, Institut d'Histoire Beograd. Octavo, Belgrade, 1965, p. 24.

² Σκοπετέα Ε. *Το πρότυπο βασιλείο και η Μεγάλη Ιδέα*. Αθήνα: Πολύτυπο, 1988.

³ Glenny, M. *Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers, 1804-1999*, London: Granta Books, 2000, p. 9. Glenny's book has been excessively used in this first chapter due to personal choice, since from the writer's perspective it provides a simple, but clear and insightful picture of the First Uprising to the reader who is trying to explore the Serbian case for the first time.

Nonetheless, the presence of the janissaries in the area proved to have a detrimental effect. As Ranke suggests⁴ the infantry corps of the Sultan had rebelled to such an extent in the Pashalik of Belgrade that they had established their own administration- with its highest rank being the Dahis- and were in a course of collision with the rest of the Ottoman Turks. The janissaries were imposing a “tyrannical dominion” over the country and seemed to be terrorizing the Serbian peasants through tax collection and other violent practices⁵.

As Laskaris informs us⁶, the establishment of the janissaries had been forbidden by the Porte in 1793 and Selim was planning to banish them from the region as a sign of support to the local administrator, Mustafa Pasha. Apart from the Sultan’s reformatory spirit, these choices were probably connected with the fact that the Pashalik of Belgrade had returned under Ottoman rule only in 1771 after the end of the Austro-Turkish war with the Treaty of Sistova. Selim wanted to avoid the exit of the scared Serbian peasant population to the Habsburg Empire.

Other rebelling powers tried, nevertheless, to seize the opportunity of a weakened central Ottoman administration. Osman Pazvantoglu, the governor of the Vidin district had launched a series of raids against the Serbs without the permission of the Sultan in fear of a possible collapse of the control the janissaries had in the region. This led to a feeling of instability and insecurity in the local communities⁷.

The janissary forces and the local knez had various collisions until order was restored. Selim III, apparently underestimated the danger of the janissary existence in the area and in 1799 they were allowed to return, since the Ottoman administration characterized them as local Muslims from the Sanjak of Smederevo. At first, their return was peaceful and they seemed to accept Hadži Mustafa’s rule. Unrest was sparked again when in 1801, a janissary murdered a Serb in Šabac over a tax dispute. He was arrested and

⁴ Ranke, Leopold von. *The History of Serbia and the Servian Revolution*. London: Bohn, 1853, p. 104.

⁵ Ranke, Leopold von. *The History of Serbia and the Servian Revolution*. London: Bohn, 1853, p. 104.

⁶ Λάσκαρις, Μιχαήλ Θ. *Έλληνες και Σέρβοι κατά τους απελευθερωτικούς των αγώνας: 1804-1830*. Αθήνα: Π. Ξένου, 1936, p. 11.

⁷ Ranke, Leopold von. *The History of Serbia and the Servian Revolution*. London: Bohn, 1853, pp. 108-119.

brought to justice. No matter how trivial this incident seems now, it was enough to trigger processes that led to the assassination of Mustafa Pasha the same year⁸.

This was not a one-time demonstration of disobedience. The central authority of the Sultan over the peripheral parts of the Ottoman Empire was declining dramatically at the time. The Dahis were now ruling the Pashalik of Belgrade without any control from Selim III.

The oppressed Serbs decided to send a petition to the Porte, secretly but the janissary rulers discovered about it quickly. As Ranke states⁹, the Dahis were worried that Selim might make use of Serbian forces to send them away from the sanjak. In fact, the Dahis also found out about a conspiracy against them forged in 1803, organized by the Serbs and Mustafa Pasha's associates, who had contacted an officer in the Habsburgian administration. To ensure their survival in the Pashalik of Belgrade, the janissary rebels decided to prove their power in the most forceful manner.

In January 1804, the janissaries carried out what is known as the slaughter of the knezes. A total of 72 notable Serbs were assassinated, and their heads were put on public display.

It is obvious that the role of the janissaries in what came to develop as the First Serbian Uprising was crucial. The Serbian population was not asking for the removal of the Ottoman administration as a whole, but for the reestablishment of the previous reformative regime of Selim III, so that they could continue their lives peacefully. As Glenny notes,

“The leaders of the uprising expressed their unquestioning loyalty to the Porte”¹⁰.

⁸ Ćorović, V. “Početak ustanka u Srbiji”, *Istorija srpskog naroda*, Ars Libri: 1997, http://www.rastko.rs/rastko-bl/istorija/corovic/istorija/7_2_1.html.

⁹ Ranke, Leopold von. *The History of Serbia and the Servian Revolution*. London: Bohn, 1853, pp. 119-120

¹⁰ Glenny, M. *Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers, 1804-1999*, London: Granta Books, 2000, p. 8.

The Orašac Assembly in February 1804 signaled the beginning of the resistance against the local tyrants with the gathering of 300 Serbian chiefs. Djordje “Karadjordje” Petrović was appointed leader of the Serbian rebels after they all raised their "three fingers in the air" and thereby swore oath.

Karadjorde or “Crni Djordje”, named after his dark skin, was one of the most appropriate figures to serve the cause of the insurrecting Serbs. Born in Sumadija in 1752- a region close to the border with the Habsburg Empire- had served in the Serbian Free Corps, a volunteer militia of ethnic Serbs created by the Habsburgs to fight the Ottoman Empire during the Austro-Turkish war of 1787-1791. As a pig trader, he had established himself financially through his connections across the Ottoman border (an aspect that will be discussed in the next chapter) and as the story has it he was led to become a hajduk, since in his youth he had murdered a Turk. Despite his many successes, Karadjordje was coming from a poor family of peasants as many of the Serbian leaders of the uprising, such as Stanoje Glavas.

As already mentioned, this uprising didn't gain a distinct nationalistic character until later, after the first victories against the Ottoman troops. The year 1805 can be seen as a turning point. According to Bataković,

“Serbian insurgents were encouraged by a series of victories against regular Ottoman troops (at Ivankovac in 1805; at Mišar and at Deligrad in 1806), but also by the capture of Belgrade, the most important fortress in the region (January 1807). In a petition sent to the Russian Emperor in 1806, they claimed that if Russia decided to send its troops to the Balkans, then ‘all Serbs from Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, Dalmatia and Albania would joyfully unite and would, within a brief space of time create a new army of 200,000-strong troops.’”¹¹

¹¹ Batakovic, D. T. *The 1804 Serbian Revolution: A Balkan-size French Revolution*, Paper presented at the AAASS, Boston, December 2004, <http://www.batakovic.com/en/full-story/21/2012/02/22/the-1804-serbian-revolution -a-balkan-size-french-revolution.html>

This opening to the Russians seems to be connected to what Laskaris describes as a lack of support from the Habsburgian administration, which forced the revolted Serbs to send ambassadors to Russia¹². In the same time the Sultan was becoming dissatisfied with the persistence of the uprising and he decided to give an end to it by urging the local pasha to bring the peace back to the sanjak of Smederevo.

Karadjordje started realizing there was a need for him to legitimize his power, while the claims of the revolted Serbs were growing and were heading towards the direction of a claim for independence. While there was no great national idea behind the Serbian initiatives, the notion of the glorious memory of the medieval golden age of the Serbian Kingdom had been preserved in the consciences of the population, especially through the ecclesiastical education and the ethnic character of religion depicted even by the sanctified kings¹³. Again as Bataković describes,

“The insurgents used the medieval coat of arms of the Nemanjićs, while the Praviteljtvujušči sovjet in 1805 held its sessions in Smederevo - ‘the capital of our despots and emperors’ – and rallied under the image of Emperor Stefan Dušan (1331-1355). The official letters and acts send by the leader of the Serbian revolution, Karageorge to local insurgent commanders and his proclamations and correspondence with representatives of the Great Powers were usually signed ‘in the name of the whole Serbian nation’¹⁴.

By 1806, the Serbs had managed to gain autonomy status under Karadjordje. It is true that for the Ottoman Porte, it was difficult to react effectively due to the general breakdown of authority in the Empire. Its administrative, military and fiscal foundations in were being gradually destroyed¹⁵. The Serbs had, also managed to turn

¹² Λάσκαρις, Μιχαήλ Θ. *Έλληνες και Σέρβοι κατά τους απελευθερωτικούς των αγώνας: 1804-1830*. Αθήνα: Π. Ξένου, 1936, p. 14.

¹³ Jelavich, Barbara. *History of the Balkans*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 91.

¹⁴ Batakovic, D. T. *The 1804 Serbian Revolution: A Balkan-size French Revolution*, Paper presented at the AAASS, Boston, December 2004, <http://www.batakovic.com/en/full-story/21/2012/02/22/the-1804-serbian-revolution -a-balkan-size-french-revolution.html>

¹⁵ Pavlowitch, S. *Serbia: the history behind the name*, p.29.

to a variety of possible allies except the Austro-Hungarians and the Russians. They even tried to approach Napoleon, who at the time had gained control over territories around Ljubljana and Kotor¹⁶. The revolted Serbs received at the same time some support in money and other forms by Serbian merchants who lived in the Croatian territory, by the Phanariot diaspora Greeks and by the Danubian principalities. Again citing Batakovic,

*“Disappointed by Austrian hesitation and Russian attempts to fully control Serbian insurrection to their own ends, Karageorge’s highest hopes turned to a possible alliance with France. After entering Dalmatia and getting established in Illyrian provinces that stretched from Ljubljana to Dubrovnik, the French were considering Bosnia the key Ottoman province for transportation of their goods towards Asia Minor during the continental blockade, while Serbia, seen under Russian influence, was considered a possible threat to global French interests. However, it was in 1809, after Serbian insurgents experienced heavy defeats on several fronts, Karageorge offered Emperor Napoleon to enter Šabac (a Serbian town on the border with Bosnia) with his troops and help them negotiate with the Sublime Porte”.*¹⁷

Unfortunately for the luck of the Serbian initiative, as Pavlowitch suggests, the Empires were more interested in keeping the Serbs away from their affairs, rather than in offering them actual help. The international environment was not encouraging towards their possible independence- an issue we will briefly touch upon in a following chapter. During the period of the First Serbian Uprising the Russians were involved in two big military conflicts, which had a direct effect on the future of the Serbs. Being the winner of the 1806-1812 Russo-Turkish war, Russia managed to gain a truce with the Serbs along with the territorial gains of the principalities of Moldavia and Bessarabia. The

¹⁶ Ibid., p.30.

¹⁷ Batakovic, D. T. *The 1804 Serbian Revolution: A Balkan-size French Revolution*, Paper presented at the AAASS, Boston, December 2004, <http://www.batakovic.com/en/full-story/21/2012/02/22/the-1804-serbian-revolution-a-balkan-size-french-revolution.html>.

treaty of Bucharest was to the benefit of the Serbs who could negotiate now further with the Porte¹⁸.

However, when Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812, the tsar concluded the treaty, restoring the previous Serbian regime of local administration. The Serbs were left expecting more Russian help but they were left alone against the Ottomans. As Laskaris implies, Karadjordje and the Serbs lost time in the negotiation process, while rejecting a reestablishment of the old order. This offered the opportunity to the Porte to avoid implementing the treaty of Bucharest and a good chance to resolve the issue of the Serbian insurgency by using force. In July 1813, the Ottoman troops invaded Serbia. Foreseeing defeat, many Serbian rebels fled to find refuge in the Habsburg Empire or Russia. Arriving to Belgrade, the Ottomans faced little resistance and the city was captured.

The uprising was devastated and the Serbs lost all that they had gained, since the previous Ottoman regime was fully re-established and the Turkish population returned to the area. Only a few of the leading participants of the First Uprising remained in the Pashalik of Belgrade and collaborated with the Ottomans. One of them was Miloš Obrenović, who later became the leader of the Second Serbian Uprising. He decided to negotiate with the Sultan since he understood that the Serbs were not anymore in shape to resist the power of the Ottoman army. Despite the collapse of the First Uprising in 1813, the tensions in the Pashalik of Belgrade persisted.

In September 1814, a revolt was launched by veteran rebel of the First Uprising Hadži-Prodan in the Požega nahija. He was aware that the Ottomans were planning to arrest him, so he insisted that it would be best to resist them. Obrenović felt that the time was not right for an uprising and did not provide assistance. The revolt soon failed and Hadži-Prodan fled to Austria. After the failure of the revolt, the Ottomans inflicted more persecution against the Serbs, such as high taxation and forced labour.

The local conditions inevitably led to a second revolutionary outbreak. The national council proclaimed open revolt against the Ottoman Empire in Takovo on the 24th of

¹⁸ Λάσκαρις, Μιχαήλ Θ. *Έλληνες και Σέρβοι κατά τους απελευθερωτικούς των αγώνες: 1804-1830*. Αθήνα: Π. Ξένου, 1936, pp. 17-18.

April 1815. Obrenović was chosen as the leader. When the Ottomans discovered the new revolt they sentenced all of its leaders to death. The Serbs fought in battles at Ljubić, Čačak, Palež, Požarevac and Dublje and drove the Ottomans out of the Pashalik of Belgrade.

In mid-1815, the first negotiations began between Miloš Obrenović, now the sole recognizable representative of the Serbs, and Marashli Ali Pasha, the Ottoman governor. Obrenović managed to get a form of partial autonomy for Serbs, and, in 1816, the Turkish Porte signed several documents for the normalization of relations between Serbs and Turks. The result was the acknowledgment of a Serbian Principality by the Ottoman Empire. Miloš Obrenović received the title of Prince of Serbia. Although the principality paid a yearly tax to the Porte and had a garrison of Turkish troops in Belgrade until 1867, it was, in most other matters, an independent state.

It seems, indeed that the Second Serbian Uprising was a lot more successful than the preceding efforts of Karadjordje. However, this is not fully accurate. While Karadjordje and his men had managed to achieve a lot more given the circumstances under which the uprising had started, Obrenović was negotiating from a different position, since the reality of the international system was a lot different in 1815. In a way, as Laskaris suggests.

*“The political situation in Europe was a lot more encouraging for the Serbs”.*¹⁹

In 1815, Napoleon had been defeated and Russia was emerging as a much stronger player in the international system. As we will discuss in a following chapter, the Russian position had been fortified enough to cause anxiety to the Ottoman Porte. This gave the Serbs a good opportunity to negotiate for their autonomy. It would have been a lot riskier for the Ottomans to have to face from such a weak position a Second Uprising within their peripheral territories, especially during a time that unrests were not uncommon.

¹⁹ Λάσκαρις, Μιχαήλ Θ. *Έλληνες και Σέρβοι κατά τους απελευθερωτικούς των αγώνες: 1804-1830*. Αθήνα: Π. Ξένου, 1936, pp. 21.

To conclude, this brief narration on the events of the two Serbian Uprisings can possibly lead the contemporary observer to a series of conclusions. Always speaking in terms of internal actors and procedures, the Serbs were not guided by a nationalistic spirit or a great idea initially, but by a need for survival and security against the oppression of the janissaries.

Also, it is important to stress that while the Orthodox church was a strong and influential institution for the ethnic Serbs, its contribution was probably smaller than it could have been. While as Glenny suggests the monasteries could claim some guarantorship over the Serbian identity, the local religious leading figures preferred to remain by the side of the Turkish rulers, increasing the alienation of the peasantry from an institution that seemed to be safe-guarding the higher Slavic culture. It is useful to remember that the Serbian Church was not using the vernacular at the time but Slavoserbian.

In addition, the weakening position of the Ottoman Empire had both a positive and a negative effect on the First and Second Serbian Uprising. Positive in the sense that the Serbs got far enough to claim autonomy due to the inability of the Ottomans to face accordingly their internal and external enemies, but negative in the sense that they were always in a hurry to resolve the Serbian issue in the most hasty way as possible, giving little space to the Balkan nation to negotiate for a better position. The international system was more encouraging to Serbian autonomy after the second uprising, but the fact that the Serbs, the first Balkan Christian people who claimed independence gained the actual status more than 70 years after their uprising is a fact that creates questions on how the external actors viewed this territory in particular and the rest of the Balkan territory in general.

B. The terminology of the “Serbian Revolution”

Responsible for the coining of the term “Serbian revolution” is Leopold von Ranke, the prominent 19th century scholar²⁰. Ranke’s history of the Serbian Revolution was

²⁰ Leopold von Ranke (1795 – 1886) was born in Thuringia, a small German town to a lawyer father. He attended one of the most renowned public schools of the country, Schulpforta. He studied philology and theology at the University of Leipzig. He got his first teaching position in 1818 in a Frankfurt high school where he taught classical languages. Ranke acquired recognition already by his first work *The*

originally published in 1829 with a length of 416 pages. In 1879 the German title was reissued in a lengthier edition of 558 pages and an expanded title – “Serbia and Turkey in the 19th century”.²¹ This extensive work is a detailed account on the actual events of the first and second Serbian uprising. In addition, Ranke contributes three chapters in the beginning of the *History of Serbia* to the pre – Ottoman history of the Serbian population, the subjugation of the Serbs to the Ottoman rule and subsequently to the way of living in the Ottoman Empire. Ranke also covers in his book on Serbia the rule of Milos Obrenovich – contributing a number of chapters in his administrative work and the internal issues of autonomous Serbia – to the rule of his son Michael Obrenovich and finally to the rise of Alexander Karageorgevich.

The German historian acquired the majority of his information by one of the most important figures of the Serbian uprising, Vuk Karadzich, who provided his notes and thoughts on the matter²². The Serbian linguist met the German historian in Vienna in 1827 through a Slovenian director of the Hofbibliothek, Jernej Kopitar, who was also the Imperial Censor for Illyrian (Slavonic) Correspondence. Kopitar had developed

History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations, which was published in 1824. Ranke produced throughout his lifetime 54 volumes in total. Most importantly and selectively, his most famous works are *Die römischen Päpste in den letzten 4 Jahrhunderten*, *Französische Geschichte*, *Englische Geschichte: vornehmlich im sechzehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert*, *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation*. One of his major contributions in historiography is the introduction of the critical historical method which promotes the notion that the historians task is to show what actually happened (wie es eigentlich gewesen). Ranke suggested that history has no final goal and that it doesn't have to be defined specifically, but abstractly. He, also saw no relationship of superiority between historical periods as time progresses. Known for his religious views, Ranke saw that history can offer to man a small understanding of God's plan, however he perceived complete knowledge not possible within human standards. His work focuses largely on the great powers of the time and he always limited himself to European history, while following the Ottoman one as a factor that affected the objects of his studies. For more on Ranke see the works of Georg Iggers, like *The Image of Ranke in American and German Historical Thought, History and Theory*, 1962. Also, see Von Laue, Theodore H., *Leopold Ranke: The Formative Years*, Princeton University Press, 1950.

²¹ Ford L. Franklin, *Ranke: Setting the Story Straight, Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Massachusetts Historical Society, Third Series, Vol. 87, 1975, pp. 57-75, p. 62. Ranke's work was originally published in German as *Die serbische Revolution: aus serbischen Papieren und Mittheilungen*.

²² A probably not popular opinion suggests that Vuk Karadzich's contribution was a lot bigger. He is referred to as possible co- author of Ranke's history of the Serbian uprising by some writers in Ford L. Franklin, *Ranke: Setting the Story Straight, Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Massachusetts Historical Society, Third Series, Vol. 87, 1975, pp. 57-75, p. 63 -64. Ranke's biographers mention the German historian as the only writer of the final work. However, Ford justifies the absence of Karadzich's authoring role as a political choice, since at the time the first and the second editions were published, Milos Obrenovich and Alexander Karageorgevich were subsequently in power and his possible participation in the volume might have caused their dissatisfaction. This is not, however, proven.

personal relations of a kind of sponsorship with Karadzich, who had been in exile in Austria since the defeat of the first Serbian uprising in 1813. Ranke and Karadzich seem to have grown close, as the historian mentions in some of his papers his meetings with him²³. As Ford underlines²⁴, the history of the first Serbian uprising is the only work of Slavonic history Ranke has produced, which probably gives more significance both to his interest in the subject and to his personal relationship with Karadzich.

In the introduction of the 1847 edition of the English translation of *Die serbische Revolution*, the translator, Mrs. Alexander Kerr, shares that Ranke had expressed his hope that,

*“His history of the Servians may excite an interest for the Christians under the Turkish rule”*²⁵

This statement demonstrates an obvious sensitivity in connection with the Serbian matters. While it is not possible to fully look into neither the motives of Ranke to write the history of the Serbian uprisings nor into his choice of terminology – since this escapes the goals and abilities of this paper – it is still maybe useful to at least raise the question why he chooses the term “revolution” for the Serbian case and to assign importance to a local event very far from his reality.

A first observation that could be made is that the German historian is writing in a period strongly affected by the post effects of the French Revolution (1789), after the Vienna Congress and the defeat of Napoleon (1815) and while the Ottoman Empire is shaken by another Christian revolt – the Greek one. Writing in the “Age of Revolution”, as Eric Hobsbawm has named the period from 1789 to 1848 in the first volume of his trilogy on *the Long 19th Century*²⁶, he is witness to the rise of nationalisms and claims of independence not only in the Balkan region but all around Europe. With the additional influence of Vuk Karadzich’s experience transmitted to him face to face, he sees the Serbian uprising as a claim of shaping nature to the nation of the Serbs.

²³ Karadzich is mentioned in Ranke’s *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, Das Briefwerk and Neu Briefe*.

²⁴ Ford L. Franklin, *Ranke: Setting the Story Straight, Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Massachusetts Historical Society, Third Series, Vol. 87, 1975, pp. 57-75, p. 64.

²⁵ Ranke, Leopold von. *The History of Servia and the Servian Revolution*, London: Bohn, 1853, p. vii.

²⁶ Hobsbawm, E. J. *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996.

In parallel, Ranke seems to be aware that the Serbian insurrection is the first sign of a secessionist tendency from the part of the Christian population within the Ottoman Empire in such a large scale. The impact of the Serbian initiative is seen as a source of land sliding events and is parallelized with the way the French Revolution became a catalyzing factor for the developments in the European continent in the years to come.

A second observation could be that the German historian seems to underscore the religious factor. The hope he expressed, as quoted earlier, is maybe revealing of his religious and conservative views. Although this will not be discussed here and cannot be proven, the interest of Ranke could reflect the existence of a notion that there was a Muslim “Other” in a Europe that wished to identify itself as Christian.

A final suggestion – probably a far reaching assumption – is that the interest of a German historian dealing with diplomatic history of the European powers could stem from the first indications that the Ottoman Empire was to fall apart and this subsequently created a question not only of territorial belonging or of pledge of alliance with one of the major players of the international setting for the Balkan peoples, but also a perception of how these peoples could be considered part of a common European identity.

Since Ranke, a lot of historians have produced works on describing the events after 1804 in the Serbian territory. Although, there is, in general, no debate between the students of the Serbian case about the actual facts of this period, the reader of the bibliography can observe variations in how different writers choose to call the years up to 1813 and then from 1813 to 1815. It is often that the term “*revolution*” is replaced by other words such as “*uprising*” or “*insurrection*”. Also, “*revolt*” seems to be used interchangeably and in rarer cases one can come across the term “*struggle for liberation*”, but it is suspected that this term belongs to more dated texts with ideological connotations. Of course, in many cases the different names for the Serbian initiative are used in the same text to describe the same thing.

To give a few examples from the main bibliography used for this paper, Barbara Jelavich and Stefan Pavlowitch in most parts prefer the term “*uprising*”²⁷. Laskaris²⁸, who writes many years before, in 1936, uses the word “*revolt*”/ “*revolution*” and so does Stavrianos²⁹, who writes in 1958. Batakovic opts for the same term, however, this is obviously done in comparison with the French Revolution and in connection with whatever connotations about the nature of the uprising this may have³⁰. In the English, French and Greek editions of Dimitrije Djordjevic’s works on the Serbian case “*insurrection*” and “*revolution*” are both used³¹. An interpretation of this could be that the term “*Serbian revolution*” is used to describe the total of events that unfolded during the period of time we are discussing, while the “*Serbian insurrection*” is used to describe the local movements of the Serbian people. This is, though, only an unfounded speculation. Conclusively, the examination of the bibliography leads to the thought that modern writers are more aware of the “*uprising*”/ “*revolution*” debate, since the literature of revolutions and national/social movements has expanded a lot the past century. In the same time, probably because of this awareness, the English speaking bibliography seems to favour the term “*uprising*”. No certain explanation is provided for this choice, but it is nevertheless a choice. The Greek language seems to encourage the usage of the term “*revolution*” (“*επανάσταση*”), although “*insurrection*” is also met in the form of “*εξέγερση*”, while “*αγώνας για την ανεξαρτησία*” (“*struggle for independence*”) is sparsely seen, too. It is important to underline that it is an easily created tendency from a Greek perspective to use such terminology, always through seeking parallelism and common elements with the Greek experience, which is also widely called a “*revolution*”.

To be more objective and to do justice to the case we are exploring, it is of great importance to note, at this point, how the Serbian nation has picked to call this series of events that admittedly has been recognized by historians and sociologists as the

²⁷ See selectively for example: Jelavich, Barbara. *History of the Balkans*, Pavlowitch, S. *Serbia: the history behind the name*, Glenny M. *The Balkans: Nationalism, War & the Great Powers*.

²⁸ Λάσκαρις, Μιχαήλ Θ. *Έλληνες και Σέρβοι κατά τους απελευθερωτικούς των αγώνες: 1804-1830*.

²⁹ Stavrianos, L. S. *The Balkans, 1815-1914*.

³⁰ Batakovic, D. T. *The 1804 Serbian Revolution: A Balkan-size French Revolution*, Paper presented at the AAASS, Boston, December 2004, <http://www.batakovic.com/en/full-story/21/2012/02/22/the-1804-serbian-revolution -a-balkan-size-french-revolution.html>.

³¹ Djordjevic, Dimitrije, Fischer-Galati Stephen. *The Balkan Revolutionary Tradition*.

turning point for Serbia's nation building. The national experience – no matter how it is shaped, be it by the choice of an official administration, by cultural figures, by the people themselves or by any other factor – should not be ignored because it offers a different level of understanding. In the Serbian language, the term “*ustanak*” is used in the national discourse to describe the first and second wave of the uprising. This is equivalent to the Greek “*εξέγερση*” and to the English “*insurrection*”. Possibly, the choice reflects the fact that the First and Second Serbian Uprising did not result to full independence.

Therefore, insurrection or revolution? In uprisings, the upheaval is generally characterized by a lack of an ideological context or a goal for social change. The claim is not something new, but the preservation of the past, of safety, of what had been considered as unshakable. In opposition, revolutions are dynamic movements demanding to reshape the social and economic structures, to change the conditions of power, to create new elites. They are radical and they seek to introduce lifechanging conditions for the individuals that experience them³². It is important to keep in mind that revolutions are products of modernity.

It would be rather arbitrary to reach a final conclusion here on whether the Serbian initiative was a revolution or an uprising of local character. As mentioned previously, its value has been recognized and noted the last two centuries and is always treated as the starting point for the creation of the Serbian national state. In the same time, we can always reflect on the matter and consequently suggest – while following the series of events – that the First Serbian Uprising with which we dealt almost entirely in this paper was a spark that started with the nature of a local insurrection against the oppression of the Dahis, but with the involvement and the contribution of certain figures and

³² An interesting and thorough analysis on the terminological issue of revolutions and uprisings with a special focus on the Balkan region has been written by Olga Katsiardi – Herring as part of the article «*Από τις εξεγέρσεις στις επαναστάσεις των Χριστιανών υποτελών της Οθωμανικής Αυτοκρατορίας στη Νοτιοανατολική Ευρώπη, περ. 1530 – 1821. Μια απόπειρα τυπολογίας*», where a lot of classic definitions can be traced. A popular definition of revolution can be found in Giddens, A., *Κοινωνιολογία*, Gutenberg, 2002, p.655. Also, useful bibliography on the matter of revolutions I have come across, but escape the goals of this paper are Tilly, Charles. *European Revolutions 1492-1992*. Great Britain: Blackwell, 1996, Moore, Barrington. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. USA: Beacon Press, 1966, Foran, John, ed. *Theorizing Revolution*. New York: Routledge, 1997 and Skocpol, Theda. *States and Social Revolutions*. USA: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

circumstances it lived enough to evolve into a national movement with all the characteristics of a revolution since it brought along many social changes and quite notably this can be observed by the gradual “exodus” of the Serbian peasantry to the city³³ .

³³ Σκοπετέα Ε. *Το πρότυπο βασίλειο και η Μεγάλη Ιδέα*. Αθήνα: Πολύτυπο, 1988.

C. An exploration of the transformative role of the Serbian diaspora

In the previous chapter, the internal factors that influenced the Serbian Uprisings were discussed. In this second chapter, there will be an effort to approach an issue of external character which was, however, crucial for the shaping of the Serbian nationalism and the Serbian claims for independence. This issue that is being demonstrated in several ways is connected to the Empire bordering with the Ottomans- the Habsburg Empire.

As mentioned before, the Pashalik of Belgrade was a territory much contested between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires and could be described as constantly moving from the one side of the border to the other for almost a century. Starting with the Treaty of Karlowitz, the Ottoman authority over the sanjak of Smederevo was recognised in 1699. After 18 years under Ottoman rule, the Austro- Turkish war of 1716-1718 resulted in the Treaty of Passarowitz which brought the Pashalik of Belgrade under Austro-Hungarian administration. Thus, the territory was renamed as the “Kingdom of Serbia” under the Habsburg crown. The next Austro-Turkish war (1735-1739) brought the contested area again under Turkish administration with the Treaty of Belgrade. The Pashalik remained under Ottoman rule for at least 48 years until the Habsburgs tried to reclaim it with the Siege of Belgrade in 1787 which gave way for another Austro-Turkish war. The Treaty of Sistova ended the battles which lasted from 1787 to 1791, bringing the Pashalik for a final time under the Ottoman administration before the outbreak of the First Serbian Uprising.

As a result, the population of this territory had been largely affected by the general instability and the conflicting experience of having belonged both to the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman one. The Serbs under the Habsburgs seemed to be enjoying different standards of living. While life under the Ottomans was not insufferable, the Austro-Hungarians offered different freedoms, especially in trading and in expression.

Notably, the Serbs were using the Habsburg Empire as a place of refuge every time they felt their rights were diminishing. Historically, two large waves of Serbian Migration towards the Austro-Hungarian territories can be traced. The first occurred during the years of the Great Turkish War (aka War of the Holy League, 1683- 1699).

Organized under the Patriarch Arsenije III Charnojevic, it was the result of the Ottoman oppression against the Christian Serbs that followed the retreat of the Habsburgs from the Ottoman territories in the Balkans. The Second Serbian Migration was triggered by the fall of the Habsburg Kingdom of Serbia in 1739, following the end of the second Austro-Turkish war.

As Traian Stoianovich notes in his work on the trading activities of the Balkan people³⁴, that the Austro-Hungarian administration soon realized the trading power of the Serbs, who were mostly pig traders. Also, as he mentions furthermore this occupation and presence in the Habsburg territory was not lacking a transformative character since,

“By 1800, very many -if not most- former Ottoman merchants, resident in the various Habsburg provinces acknowledged political allegiance to the Habsburg monarchy”.

It is useful to remember the ties that the leader of the First Serbian Uprising, Karadjordje Petrovic had with the Habsburg trading community and his involvement in the actual efforts of the monarch to reclaim the territory where the Pashalik of Belgrade stood. Vojvodina³⁵ had at the time a large merchant community, which constituted a vital link between the Serbian populations of the two and Empires. We can say that Karadjordje, born as we mentioned near the constantly changing border, had been shaped and affected more by the mentality that was characterizing the subjects of the Habsburg Empire and it was more natural to him to lead an insurrection against the Ottomans, who by the time had started to be portrayed as oppressors. Since the education and the environment of the Habsburg territories was in general more in touch with the ideas of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, the subjects of the Habsburg monarchy had more opportunities to be influenced by the western ideas that carried along with them the notion of self-determination, of freedom and of the nation. The Serbian peasants under the Ottoman Empire had less chances to become aware of such ideas in

³⁴ Stoianovich, T. *Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant*, Journal of Economic History, June 1960, pp. 234-313, p. 298.

³⁵ Glenny, M. *Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers, 1804-1999*, London: Granta Books, 2000, p. 7.

comparison to the more cosmopolitan Serbian traders and scholars of the Habsburg territories.

This is the reason why the ideological concept of national pride and self-determination behind the two Serbian Uprisings did not develop in the Ottoman territories, but among the Serbian diaspora, which was mostly situated across the border. Citing once more Batakovic,

“The absence of the strong intellectual leadership among the peasant rebels, whose main ideologist was the priest Matija Nenadović, who relied on Serbian medieval traditions, was compensated by political support coming from the enlightened Serbian elite from the neighboring provinces of Habsburg Empire”³⁶.

One of the most important intellectuals of the two Serbian Uprisings, linguist, philosopher and poet Dositej Obradovic had been educated and had lived for a significant part of their lives as members of the Serbian diaspora. He was born Dimitrije Obradović in 1739 to poor parents in the village of Tschakowa in the region of Banat, then part of the Habsburg Empire.

As the initiative of the uprising was widening, secret relations were established between the insurgents and prospering Serbian merchants in the neighboring provinces of Habsburg Empire while purchases of weapons and ammunition were negotiated. As stressed by local Habsburg officials, the Serbs of Southern Hungary bordering Serbia had not only welcomed the insurrection but started to link their own future to a possible restoration of a Serbia as a sovereign state.

Dositej Obradović, wrote during the same time nationalistic poetry that inspired the insurgents and echoed the desire for independence. Obradović understood the Serbian

³⁶ Batakovic, D. T. The 1804 Serbian Revolution: A Balkan-size French Revolution, Paper presented at the AAASS, Boston, December 2004, <http://www.batakovic.com/en/full-story/21/2012/02/22/the-1804-serbian-revolution-a-balkan-size-french-revolution.html>

initiative as a chance to revive the hopes for the liberation of Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro and other neighboring lands³⁷.

Batakovic describes very accurately based on Obradovic's biography the ideas behind the work of the intellectuals of the Serbian diaspora, who were trying to underline the distinct characteristics that would boost the credibility of the right of the Serbs to self-determination. Batakovic writes that,

“While referring to the restoration of the medieval Serbian Empire of Stefan Dušan Serbian intellectuals were, also drafting fresh territorial claims, based on ideas of modern national identity that involved common language and shared cultural, religious and historical traditions. Nevertheless, D. Obradović, the first considered language as the key factor in defining the modern national identity, one that transcended religious affiliation. As Obradović stressed: ‘the part of the world in which the Serbian language is employed is no smaller than the French or the English territory, if we disregard very small differences that occur in the pronunciation – and similar differences are found in all other languages. [...] When I write of peoples who live in these kingdoms and provinces, I mean the members both of the Greek and of the Latin Church and do not exclude even the Turks [Bosnian Muslims] of Bosnia and Herzegovina, inasmuch as religion and faith can be changed, but race and language can never be”.

The main argument of this chapter is that the Serbian diaspora provided for the strengthening of the foundations of the Serbian claim to independence, which initially a local insurgency of peasants. The Habsburg Serbs managed to refine and give meaning and a distinct goal to the efforts of the local chiefs and rebels. This conclusion does not underestimate the contribution of local actors such as Vuk Karadjic, who never got the opportunity to study and live in the Habsburg territories, but still contributed

³⁷ Batakovic, D. T. The 1804 Serbian Revolution: A Balkan-size French Revolution, Paper presented at the AAASS, Boston, December 2004, <http://www.batakovic.com/en/full-story/21/2012/02/22/the-1804-serbian-revolution-a-balkan-size-french-revolution.html>

largely with his cultural and actual efforts to the Serbian cause. However, the Serbian diaspora was the most potent vehicle of ideas that pushed the nationalistic ideal forward and inside the consciences of the Serbs under Ottoman rule.

C. Understanding the international setting

In order to understand better the events of the two Serbian Uprisings, it is important to grasp the situation of the international system during the period 1804-1815. The international political developments and the clash of interests between the Great Powers of the time influenced to an important extent the ability of the Serbs to negotiate for their possible autonomy. In the same time the internal situation in the territories of each major actor and its ability to maintain power affected the fate of the first Balkan people to fight for its independence.

To this direction, this chapter will deal, firstly, with the internal situation in the Ottoman Empire and the challenges it was faced with and how it was interconnected with the other international players and especially Russia from which the Serbs expected much anticipated assistance. Of course, one cannot omit from this narrative the Napoleonic Wars which caused significant political, military, ideological and economical changes in the entire European continent. Therefore, the Napoleonic Wars should be also touched upon.

During his reign Selim the III (1789-1807) was faced with many external and internal challenges, which affected his outlook towards how he managed the peripheral territories of the collapsing Ottoman Empire. Realizing that the Ottoman administration system was becoming outdated and was creating problems in managing a large territory with many different peoples in a changing international setting, Selim decided to carry out during the last decade of his reign a series of reforms with special attention paid to the military.

The old military system was apparently by then in a state of collapse. That's the reason why Selim made a conscious effort to incorporate the new-style Ottoman elites into the circles of power in Istanbul and to rationalize the military system as much as possible giving it a more bureaucratic character.

The Sultan attempted to reorganize the janissaries, to gather new troops from Anatolia, to organise special small troops of infantry and to introduce several new techniques that would enforce the efficiency of the Ottoman military. Most notably, Selim III aimed to reconstitute the rapid-fire cannon corps, to procure officers from Prussia, France and other countries and to translate important European texts on military science, in order to contribute to the modernisation of the armed forces. In addition, he introduced a new army, the Nizam-i Cedid. This new army was his answer to the rebellions he faced within the janissary forces, which proved too difficult to reform. He initiated a system of recruitment and training of soldiers that challenged the guild-like structure of the traditional army. Other reforms focused more on the economic system and the taxation system in production of goods. Selim III decided to reorganise the treasury by creating the Orad-i Cedid or New Avenue.

Nonetheless, the obstacles that Selim III faced from the part of other Ottoman administrators were much greater than his will for reforms in a stagnating Empire. He realised the extent of corruption too late. The local lords and land owners were already too powerful to bypass and so his reformation initiative had little success and led to more disobedience towards his leadership.

At the moment of the Serbian Uprising, Selim had also already faced a French invasion in Egypt (1798) and now he could see Napoleon aiming to expand himself towards the eastern European territories. The Sultan was looking forward to a collaboration with the French Empire, however the international setting did not allow his plans to materialize. As Aksan states for example,

“Selim III’s Francophilia was tested once again when he wavered over recognising Napoleon Bonaparte as Emperor of France (1804). Pressured by British and Russian diplomacy, he refused to do so. Napoleon broke off relations, and the Ottomans were forced to rely on Russia, allowing warships through the straits, and further intervention of Russia on behalf of Ottoman Orthodox subjects. Russophile princes (called hospodars instead of Voyvodas, in recognition of the Russian influence) were appointed in the Principalities as a result of the Russo-Turkish Treaty of Alliance, signed by tsar and sultan in October 1805. Two secret articles proposed by the Russians and rejected by the Ottomans continued the decades-long and unresolved

problem of the Russian presence in the Principalities and the Caucasus. That problem was a sub-text of the next round of Russo-Ottoman engagements on the Danube beginning in December 1806”.

Russia during this time seemed to be using the case of the Christian Orthodox Serbs to put pressure on the Ottomans, especially during the period 1804-1812, with little gains for the actual people. This is the reason why the Serbian rebels expected initially the biggest support from the Russian side and this is also the reason why they expressed such distrust and disappointment towards the face of external benefactors later in their history of self-determination. Nevertheless, the Serbian Uprising continued in an intense enough manner in order to force Selim to search for allies.

When Napoleon won the battle of Austerlitz (1805) Selim recognised his authority as an emperor (1806), hoping that the French would offer their assistance in handling the Serbian Uprising.

As Aksan narrates,

“Selim III immediately sent his courtier Muhib Efendi to Paris as Ambassador (1806–11). He also expelled the hospodars from the Principalities. That prompted the Russians to blockade the Adriatic, and send further help to the Serbs. War preparations continued through 1805–06, by the Russians in Bessarabia, by Kara George in Serbia, and the Ottomans in Bosnia and Macedonia. In mid-August 1806, under severe pressure, Selim III reversed his policies yet again and reinstated the Russian-approved hospodars in the Principalities. In September 1806, worried about war between ally Russia and the Ottomans, the British ambassador demanded that the straits be reopened to the Russian warships”.

Russia seemed powerful enough to dictate the reactions of the Ottoman Empire since its influence was spreading all around the Ottoman periphery. In 1806, the Russians declared war and Moldavia, initially more worried by French proximity and influence on Selim III than Ottoman belligerence. Meanwhile, Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I (1801–25) signed the Treaty of Tilsit in July, 1807, after the Russian loss at Friedland in June. The treaty was an agreement that France would join Russia in its war against the Ottomans, if a peace initiative was going to fail, and they would divide the Ottoman

European territories among themselves. Eastern Europe would become a Russian sphere of influence.

Selim's diplomatic strategy didn't seem to pay off, since he was found with little to none external support, especially in handling the Serbian Uprising. His reign was connected to the rise of what is nowadays called the "Eastern Question"- the first discussion of the possible future of the territories under Ottoman rule. Selim put a conscious effort through his reform attempts and his diplomatic rapprochements to stay a strong player in the international setting, since he could foresee the signs of crumbling in the Ottoman Empire.

To be fair, Selim was not the only one faced with the challenge of ruling such a large territory, full of diversity, in a time that there were a lot of external dangers and risks. Catherine the Great and her successors faced in Russia similar problems that they attempted to tackle through reforms.³⁸

³⁸ Most of the information for the rule of Selim the III in this chapter is taken from Aksan, V. *Ottoman Wars 1700-1870: An Empire Besieged*, Pearson Education, 2007.

Part 2: *Greek-Serbian relations (1804-1820): A case of common interests?*

A. *The Greek armed presence in the Serbian struggle for independence*

It can be said that in general the cohabitation of the Greeks and the Serbians in the Serbian territory was rather peaceful due to the shared Orthodox religion and the status of subjugation under the Ottoman rule. Of course, the two communities were faced with small disputes over everyday matters and were antagonistic in terms of trading and other economic activities.³⁹

During the Serbian Uprising a substantial number of Greeks seem to have taken part in the armed struggle. Among the men fighting next to Karadjordje one could find many militants of Greek origin, the most notable of them being Yorgakis Olympios, who would later participate in the Greek War for Independence. The Greeks, however did not only support the Serbian cause militarily. Many of them offered money to support the Serbian struggle.

According to Laskaris⁴⁰, there are three aspects on which one should focus in connection to the contribution of the Greeks to the Serbian Uprising. The first one has to do with the activities of Konstantinos Ipsilantis, the leader of Vlachia. Ipsilantis was loyal to his allegiance to Russia and he contributed as a mediator between the Russians and the Serbs. The prince of Vlachia was also in contact with the Sultan in an effort to maintain his trust, while advising him to handle the issue of the Serbs with mediocrity and lenience. The Porte seemed to be trusting towards Ipsilantis's face and often appointed him with duties that he would always carry out to the benefit of the Serbian Uprising. Of course, his goal was to safeguard also the Russian interests. Once interestingly enough, the administrator of Vlachia received a request from the Ottomans

³⁹ See Stoianovich, T. *Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant*, *Journal of Economic History*, June 1960, pp. 234-313.

⁴⁰ Λάσκαρις, Μιχαήλ Θ. *Έλληνες και Σέρβοι κατά τους απελευθερωτικούς των αγώνες: 1804-1830*. Αθήνα: Π. Ξένου, 1936, pp. 28.

along with the leader of Moldavia, Alexandros Mourouzis, to send representatives to Serbia in order to give an end to the uprising. Ipsilantis planned to send the Vlach representatives in time, so that they could secretly convince the Serbians to continue their struggle against the Ottomans and to follow the Russian administration's plan. Indeed the Serbs were convinced to continue their fight against the Porte and Laskaris presents this as a turning point for the Serbian Uprising. The Russian administration was also very trusting towards Ipsilantis, since his opinion on the matter of the Serbian revolt was always taken into consideration.

The second important factor was the participation of Greek warlords from Northern Greece in the armed Serbian struggle. Already from 1806, the Ottoman administration was faced with a eruptive situation. The Greek communication with the Serbs had led to the rise of a revolutionary spirit, so the Ottomans decided to strip the Greeks of Thessaloniki off their arms⁴¹.

The third factor that is substantial for the better understanding of Greek- Serbian military relations during the period of the First Serbian Uprising is the intervention of Ioannis Kapodistrias for the benefit of the Serbian cause. Kapodistrias seemed to be very supportive of the Serbian autonomy. This was demonstrated through his efforts for the implementation of the Treaty of Bucharest, but also through his desire to discuss the Serbian issue even at the conference of Vienna.⁴²

A way to read into the major Greek interest in the Serbian Uprising- despite the fact that it was an Orthodox people, living in the same region- is that the Greeks had already started to imagine a same initiative for themselves and they wanted to keep the Serbs by their side. Also, they were both aiming to secure a common ally, Russia. Of course, it is a far- fetching assumption that the warlords of Northern Greece had something like this in mind. However, the first signs of such a tendency appeared only a decade later

⁴¹ Λάσκαρις, Μιχαήλ Θ. *Έλληνες και Σέρβοι κατά τους απελευθερωτικούς των αγώνες: 1804-1830*. Αθήνα: Π. Ξένου, 1936, pp. 39.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

than the First Serbian Uprising in the form of Philiki Eteria, which was founded in Odessa, in 1814.

The communication between the two uprisings is undeniable. What one can perceive though is that the Serbian Uprising had more of an impact on the Greeks, who were preparing for their own opportunity to revolt against the Ottoman rulers. As the first Christian uprising in the Balkans, the value of the First Serbian Uprising is understandably beyond any signs of Greek contribution through military and financial assistance. The Serbs inherited to the Greek warlords the operational knowledge of how to bring their own insurgency into life. This is probably one of the reasons that the Greeks turned to their Serbian allies to ask for collaboration at the start of the Greek insurrection.

*B. Russia as a Greco-Serbian meeting point: communications
between the Serbs and the Filiki Eteria*

According to Stephanos Papadopoulos⁴³, the members of the Philiki Eteria had considered giving a pan-Balkan character to their uprising against the Ottoman rule. The founding members of the Eteria had considered a lot of different plans. One of them was the so called “General Plan” which involved some kind of Serbian participation. This involvement probably was being considered vital, given the experience of the Serbs and the impact their uprising had had on the Ottomans. Also, in the summer of 1815, a de facto autonomous Serbian state had been created and it had enough military power to support the Greek cause. Despite the fact that the Greeks were forced to rely mostly on their forces in Moldavia and Vlachia, the Serbs were treated as the spine of the revolutionary plan towards independence.

Karadjordje, the leading figure of the Serbian Uprising has been documented to have had discussions with the members of the Philiki Eteria. After escaping the sanjak of

⁴³ Ελληνοσερβικό Συμπόσιο. Συνεργασία Ελλήνων και Σέρβων κατά τους απελευθερωτικούς αγώνες 1804-1830. Saradnja izmedju Srba i Grka za vreme svojih oslobodilačkih pokreta 1804-1830. Παπαδόπουλος, Σ. «Το Σχέδιον Γενικό της Φιλικής Εταιρείας και οι επαφές με τους Σέρβους», Θεσσαλονίκη: Ίδρυμα Μελετών Χερσονήσου του Αίμου, 1979.

Smederevo, following the devastation of his bid for national freedom, the Serbian leader had remained stranded and stripped of his power. However, he was still receiving information on Serbia, through the knez Vojcha Vulichevic. Karadjordje's vision of full independence was not in line with what Milosh Obrenovic had settled for. This is why he agreed to meet with the members of the Philiki Eteria and become a member himself. The secret meetings took place in Jassy in May 1817. Karadjordje, however, didn't make it home in order to promote the Greek cause. He was murdered two months later under Obrenovic's orders. The members of the Philiki Eteria did not give up, nevertheless, and they approached Obrenovic in hope of materializing their plan. The Serbian leader seemed to agree initially with the Greek suggestions, as implied by a letter of his, sent in 1819. Later on, however, Obrenovic started avoiding to give a final answer. His communication with the Ottoman Porte had made him too uncertain over whether he would need to take military action or not. In the same time, the Serbian leader probably was dissatisfied with the Greek "General Plan". As Papadopoulos suggests, the terms of the plan were not pointing towards a common uprising, fair and equal but rather to an effort to make the Serbs sacrifice more men and resources.

Conclusions

The incident of the First Serbian Uprising as described in the respective chapter wouldn't really match with our notions of how a nationalistic movement would operate in its path towards independence. The initial Serbian insurrection seems to be far from a conscious, pre-planned uprising with a patriotic character. After all, the revolted peasants led by a number of outlaws, mostly "trained" at the other side of the border, did not have an ideological goal in 1804. Their goal was to recapture the control of their communities from the threat of the janissary rule and to regain the privileges that the Sultan had provided, in an effort not to lose himself control over these same people.

The area of the Pashalik of Belgrade was much disagreed upon and the Ottomans were already in a weak state to handle an uprising effectively. The Ottoman Serbs, having maintained their traditions and stories of the medieval Kingdom of Serbia had already some understanding of their distinct history that could work as their basis for a national movement along with the Orthodox religion and the Slavic language. However, they needed the external influence of their compatriots, the Serbs of the Habsburg territories, who had received a more liberal education and had been closer to the so called "western" ideas.

Of course, the Serbs were not free to decide for their fates, as it is obvious how much affected the two Serbian Uprisings have been by the interests of the Great Powers and the collisions among them. The Serbian people were only allowed to maintain their gains if their supposed allies thought it was beneficial to them to negotiate their possible autonomy or independence. Otherwise, they were left on their own.

Although the First Uprising was the most influential and the biggest game-changer in the territories of the Ottoman Empire, the Second one led to the acquisition of autonomy under Milosh Obrenovic, only because the international environment after the end of the Napoleonic wars was more favourable to the creation of autonomous regions. After all, the end of the Ottoman Empire seemed to be close.

As for the influence of the movement in the Balkan region, it is proven that the Serbian Uprisings inspired and shook other populations under the Ottoman rule. The Greeks were the first to realize the grandiosity of what the Serbs had achieved and who were willing to take the risk of a nationalist struggle.

The Greeks, mostly in the higher political ranks of the educated, but also in the ranks of the actual Greek fighters, tried to assist the Serbian population in any way possible. But the reverse effect was of even greater importance. The Greek movement inherited from the Serbian predecessors the know-how of an uprising, the challenges and a possible ally. However, it is important to note that the Greek national uprising from its beginning had a clear goal of aiming towards independence and self-determination against the Ottoman rule.

The Serbian case in connection with the Greek example is an interesting subject that offers a fruitful ground for discussion. In this paper for example there was no real consideration of the religious aspect or the role of the church which would be very interesting to examine, given that it was one of the few if not the only really official formation connecting the two states at the time.

Also, another interesting topic for analysis would be the examination of the first history of the Serbs which was written in Greek by Triantafyllos Doukas. It is intriguing to see that from early on, only years after the two revolutions, historical research was being conducted on the topic of the Serbian uprising from Greek scholars.

Nevertheless, it is also probably useful to note that the state of the contemporary bibliography on the Serbian Uprisings is rather bleak, especially in the Greek language but also in the English one. Most of the books used for this paper were written mostly during the 19th century and the contemporary English speaking bibliography does not really focus on the various aspects of the uprising but on Serbia as a whole, which means that the Serbian independence movement is only part of a larger piece of work.

Due to a lack of proficient understanding of the Serbian language it was too difficult to examine in depth the Serbian bibliography on the matter, but it is natural that more work must have been done from the part of the Serbs on their national history.

In this paper, there was an effort to collect as much bibliography as possible in connection with the Greek-Serbian relations during the period of the two Uprisings and on the events of the actual revolt.

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