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ON THE INFLUENCE OF AUSTRIAN PROPAGANDA IN HERZEGOVINA AND THE INSURGENT ATTITUDE OF CHRISTIANS IN THE COVERAGE OF THE DAY MAGAZINE (1861–1865)¹

Abstract

*The Moscow weekly *The Day*, a Slavophile magazine for society, criticism and culture, was published between 1861 and 1865. The subject of the analysis of our work is the writing of *The Day* magazine about the influence of Austrian propaganda and the insurgent mood in Herzegovina in the first half of the 60s of the 19th century. Despite the official prohibition on writing and publishing articles containing political issues, Russian consular reports from Mostar, Dubrovnik, Sarajevo, and other places were published on the pages of *The Day*. They wrote about the progress of the uprising in Herzegovina and foreign influence on Christians and their goals. Editor in chief of *The Day* was the prominent Russian Slavophile I. S. Aksakov. In addition to the reports of Russian consuls from the Balkans, *The Day* also published*

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literary and historical texts, reviews and polemics on current topics in Russian society.

Keywords: *The Day, Russian consular reports, uprising in Herzegovina, Austrian propaganda.*

In the early 60s of the 19th century, Emperor Alexander II (1855–1881) in his desire to modernise the country, ensure progress and peace, began implementing state and economic reforms aimed at the recovery of the country, whose numerous internal weaknesses had surfaced during the Crimean War (1853–1856). After the end of the war and the signing of the unfavourable decisions of the Treaty of Paris (1856), the prevailing opinion in Russia was that the political impotence of the country was a consequence of insufficient development and the absence of reforms, whose implementation would prevent new military failures and the possible revolution in the country. At that time, the reform of the countryside, i.e. the abolition of serfdom (1861), was considered the most important as it freed over twenty million Russian peasants. In the following years, judicial and administrative reforms, university reform, censorship and military reforms, as well as numerous others were implemented (Miljukov, Senjobos, Ezenman 2009, 474–475).

Under these circumstances, on October 15, 1861, the first issue of the Moscow weekly *The Day* (Russian: День) was published. The magazine, started with the idea of forming a Slavophile view towards contemporary challenges and problems, was published and edited by a prominent Slavophile, Ivan Sergejevich Aksakov. Due to the prohibition on dealing with political topics, the magazine contained a literary, regional, review, Slavic and mixed section. The pages of *The Day* were dominated by texts about the role of the nobility in pre-reform Russia, a series of articles by I. S. Aksakov on current topics from contemporary Russian society, as well as consular reports on political and social conditions in the Balkans (Нижегородское отделение Российского общества историков – архивистов [НОРОИА]. 2000). The idea of founding a magazine with a Slavophile focus was not new. A few years earlier, the director of the Asiatic Department of the MID, Yegor Petrovich Kovalevsky (1856–1861), had proposed to I. S. Aksakov to start a new magazine that would promote the concept of Slavic and Orthodox unity (Blaine 1970, 290). However, in the cooperation between Kovalevsky and the Russian diplomat Alexander Fyodorovich Gillferding in the spring

of 1859, in the Slovenian section of the newspaper Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti, only selected reports of the Russian consuls from Sarajevo and Mostar were printed (Тепић 1988, 543). The newly appointed director of the Asiatic Department, the young general Nikolay Pavlovich Ignatyev (1861–1864), using his family and godfathers connections with the Russian court, obtained the consent of Tsar Alexander II to publish political announcements in *The Day* magazine, so that Russian society would stop being informed about socio-political circumstances in the Orthodox countries of the Balkans through the biased reporting of the German and French press about the position of Christians in that part of Turkey. Thanks to the cooperation between Aksakov and Ignatyev, the Slovenian section of *The Day* published uncensored reports of Russian consuls from different parts of the Balkans, which were sent to the editorial office from the Asiatic Department (Хевролина 2009, 124, 125). Their cooperation continued in the following years, and Aksakov considered Ignatyev an influential person whose help was necessary for his “subjugated magazine” (Фетисенко 2023, 110).

The Day magazine was published until 1865, and the reasons for its short run are partly related to the firm agreement with the views of the conservative and reactionary press on current events in Russian political and social life. For instance, during the days of the student protests in 1861, I. S. Aksakov called on the participants to leave the streets and return to the classrooms, while during the Polish Uprising (1863) he supported the policy of the (tsarist) government, as a result of which a message was sent to the public that *The Day* magazine was actively fighting against revolutionary and democratic principles. Articles, reports and other texts were most often published without the author’s signature, which is why they were attributed to the editor’s personal opinion. Although the magazine had about 4,000 readers in 1862, their number decreased year after year. At the end of 1865, due to the poor interest of the readers and financial losses, I. S. Aksakov made the decision to close it down. Despite the subsequent decline in popularity that led to the closure of the magazine, it can be said that *The Day*, in the period from 1861 to 1865, provided the public with the most precise and accurate information about the state of Orthodox Christians in the Balkans. This fact is not surprising if we consider that Russian consuls and officials of the MID, such as A. F. Gillferding, V. I. Lamanski and others used to publish their reports in *The Day*.

In the middle of the 19th century, several peasant rebellions and uprisings occurred in the Balkans, mainly of the Serbian peasantry which were not politically organised but the causes of their outbreak were related to social dissatisfaction. It can be said that the most important uprising of that kind was the one that broke out in 1852 in Herzegovina, in the regions east of Trebinje all the way to the Montenegrin border, under the leadership of Duke Luka Vukalovic. The order of the Turkish authorities in 1852 to confiscate weapons from the peasants and collect the remaining taxes and levies served as a reason for the outbreak of the aforementioned uprising, which lasted intermittently until 1862. The uprising in Herzegovina was reactivated in 1860, and unification with Montenegro was highlighted as the main goal. This uprising could not have lasted for many years without support from neighbouring Montenegro, so Montenegrin troops also took part in the uprising. At the same time, in the fall/winter of 1860/61, Montenegrins were attacking all the way towards Podgorica and rebellions broke out in Banjani and Rudine, which involved almost the entire border in these conflicts (Историја српског народа V-1 1994, 470,476, 480). During the outbreak of the uprisings of the Balkan Christians, beliefs on the Russian side were very often mixed as to whether the uprising should be supported or allowed to happen independently. For instance, it happened that during the outbreak of the Crimean War, a potential Christian uprising in Turkey was seen as a mitigating circumstance for the Russian side. Therefore, in the fall of 1853, the uprising was included in Russia's official war plan. However, Russia's position in the Balkans in 1853 differed in many ways from its Balkan policy in the early 1860s. In the meantime, the Russian protectorate over the Orthodox Christians in Turkey ceased to exist, and Russia's policy in the Balkans in those years largely depended on the attitude of the French government, whose interests it aligned itself with (Екмечић 1997, 53). While the official policy of the Russian government pointed to caution and maintaining of the status quo in the Eastern Question, numerous organisations and associations close to Slavophile circles operated in Russia, supporting and looking with delight at the rise of Christian uprisings in that part of Turkey. Russian historian Tarle attributed such an attitude to a "Slovenophile fantasy" to which a large number of Russian intellectuals and diplomats belonged (Екмечић 1997, 53). Immediately after the end of the Crimean War, the Moscow Slavic Charity Committee (1857/58) was founded in circles close to the Moscow Slavophiles, within which Moscow Slavophiles, such as the

editor of *The Day* magazine I. S. Aksakov, M. P. Pogodin, N. A. Popov and others worked (Блажић 2012, 302). The Charity Committees were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire and the Asiatic Department and served as an informal means of the Russian government to regain its former influence among the Balkan Christians.

The first issue of *The Day* was published in the fall of 1861, at a time when the uprising in Herzegovina entered its final phase, with the active interference of the European powers, France, Russia and the Habsburg Monarchy. Although the Habsburg policy towards the East, until 1866, tended to maintain the status quo, ever since the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815) when the Adriatic Coast was granted to the Habsburg Monarchy, the military tended to expand the territories in that direction and occupy the Bosnian Pashaluk. The November report of the Russian consul K. D. Petkovich from Dubrovnik, who spoke about current events in Herzegovina and the heroic struggle of the “Orthodox, poorly armed Herzegovinian Slavs under the leadership of Luka Vukalovic”, was published by *The Day* on December 23, 1861 in issue 11. The report brings exceedingly interesting information about the Austrian interference in the conflicts behind which “some kind of goal was visible, however not completely obvious at the moment”, but without any doubt the Austrians wanted to occupy Sutorina and thus round off their borders in Herzegovina. However, Consul Petković concluded that all attempts to win over the leader of the insurgents did not produce the desired effect on Vukalovic, who did not give up his goal and fought bravely against the Turks. The consular reports published in *The Day* provided a new and more credible picture of the events in Herzegovina, creating the impression that “the Slavs raised their voices in Aksakov’s newspaper” and drew the attention of the Russian public to their struggle against the Turkish yoke at the same time. In a way, *The Day* realised the earlier idea of editor Aksakov, providing the Balkan Slavs with a much-needed “living word” and support in their struggle, about which he wrote to his family earlier, during his stay in Cetinje in the summer of 1860 (Вихрова, Дмитриев, Егоров 2017, 125). The reports of the Russian consuls, apart from the topic of the uprising and the Soviet position of Christians, brought many interesting analyses of the Austrian policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. In an earlier report of consul Petković from 1860 to his colleague Balabin in Vienna, it was mentioned that Bosnia and Herzegovina, surrounded on three sides by

Austrian territory, was completely dependent on that country. In 1860, in cooperation with the Port, the Habsburg Monarchy began building a road from Mostar to the Austrian border, and also worked a lot on the construction of a steamboat connection across the Neretva River from Trieste to Metković (Кондратьева 1963, 208). The Habsburg Monarchy found a way to expand its influence in Herzegovina by mass granting citizenship to the population that moved to the territory of Dalmatia while fleeing the Turkish oppression. Consul Bezobrazov wrote about concrete examples in January 1862, in a report for director Ignatyev, in which he mentions the imposition of Austrian citizenship on the inhabitants of Ljubuški and Duvno. The same report mentions Austrian agents who persuaded Muslims and Orthodox to report to Austrian administrators for the passport issuance (Кондратьева 1963, 209).

Focused on the events in Herzegovina and occupied by the start of military operations against Montenegro, Turkey seemed not to be fully aware of the danger coming from the Austrian side. Therefore, according to Petkovic's report of November 14, 1861, published in issue 11, the entry of the Austrian troops in Suturin produced a great shock and surprise for the commander-in-chief, Serdar-Ekrem (РНБСПб, МфГ1/23, н. 11). The increased activity of Austrian agents in Herzegovina is the subject of interest in the February report on Slovenian-Turkish relations, which was published at the beginning of April in *The Day*, issue 26, officially without signature, and whose author was the secretary of the Russian consulate in Dubrovnik V. V. Makushev. In his opinion, the events in Herzegovina could not be resolved without the mediation of European powers, while at the same time he expresses surprise at Turkey's attempts to reach a positive agreement between the two conflicted parties through the mediation of Austrian agents. Makushev also states that "in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the name of an Austrian is far from popular, it can honestly be said that an Austrian in these provinces is the same as a Turk". In Makushev's opinion, it was unthinkable that Porta should manage to resolve the matter quickly with the help of Austrian collusions, and even if that happened, who could guarantee that the uprising would not flare up again in a few months (РНБСПб, МфГ1/23, н. 26).

The news about the Turkish looting of the Duži monastery and the escape of the Orthodox monastic brotherhood to Austrian territory is the subject of analysis in the report by V. V. Makushev, where special attention is paid to the attitude of the Austrian authorities towards the defected monks. In the detailed report of the diplomat Makushev, which

was published on April 28, 1862, in issue 29 of *The Day*, the reason for the looting of the monastery is the accusation by the Turkish authorities for the cooperation of the monks with the rebellious Christians. Fearing for their safety, the monks took refuge on the Austrian side, where the local authorities showcased all their “benevolence” by imprisoning the monks in the fortress and then putting them under police control (РНБСПб, МфГ1/23, н. 29). We find similar descriptions of the “pacifism” of the local Austrian authorities and “concern” for the fate of the Herzegovinian Christians in April 1862 in the text of the Russian historian and Slavist V. I. Lamanski, whose introduction *Herzegovina affairs* cites examples of bribery, promises, benefits and of cooperation with Vukalovic’s enemies, who tried to win over “simple-minded Herzegovinians” (РНБСПб, МфГ1/23, н. 31). Under the circumstances of several years of unrest and the Montenegrin-Turkish war, which began in April 1862, the Russian consulate in Mostar represented the only refuge for Orthodox Christians from the violence of the local Turkish authorities. Of the three consulates located in Mostar, the Russian consulate had a special influence on the Christians, because their diplomats provided support and were the most active in matters concerning the Christian population. Given this, the Russian consulate in a short time incurred the wrath of Muslims by pointing out numerous abuses of the local authorities, as well as rumours that the Russian government supported the uprising in Herzegovina through its agents. The bad mood and “wild fanaticism” of local Muslims towards Russian agents and diplomats is noted in the example of the unseemly insults toward the Russian consul Bezobrazov while he was visiting the shops of Mostar accompanied by the consular officials. The moment he entered a shop, two Turks followed him in, insulting the consul and his entourage with the words “Moscow infidel” and in the end one of them physically attacked the consul’s guard. After this incident, Consul Bezobrazov demanded from the Turkish Pasha that the participants be punished, but his request was not fulfilled until colleagues from the Austrian and English consulates intervened (РНБСПб, МфГ1/23, н. 41). The aforementioned incident cemented the general belief that the Austrian consulate followed the instructions of its government and “saw all events through the eyes of the Turkish governors” (РНБСПб, МфГ1/23, н. 41).

Considering that Russia could not get involved in the struggle of Christians in Herzegovina, help in the form of finances and material necessities came through the Asiatic Department and Russian agents

on the ground. A public donation drive to help Montenegrins affected by the war was launched in the *Journal de St. Petersburg*, the official gazette of the Russian government. A similar campaign was launched by the newspaper *Contemporary Word*. The temporary suspension of *The Day*, in the period from June 2. to September 1, 1862, prevented the Slovenian Board's editorial from supporting such an action in the same way. After the ban was lifted, in issue 35, *The Day* joined the initiative and enabled "subscriptions in favour of poor Orthodox Slavs, defending their faith and independence" (РНБСПб, МфГ1/23, н. 35)

The Austrian government invested a lot of energy to silence the uprising in Herzegovina, as well as the war between Montenegro and Turkey, and therefore it intervened in Constantinople as well. Austrian diplomacy worried that "the uprising of the poor Balkan rayah" could become part of a broader, European story about national movements, especially if it is taken into account that Austria was aware of the plans for the Garibaldists' landing on the Adriatic coast (Ekmečić 1964, 20, 21).

In the short report of the consulate's secretary in Mostar, V. S. Jonin describes the situation in that province after the suppression of the uprising and the end of the Montenegrin-Turkish war. The confusing state of affairs in that province rested on a fragile peace, which resembled a respite until the next conflict between the oppressed Christians and "Muslim fanaticism", whose relations were filled with mutual enmity. The violence of Muslims against Christians, even if it was sanctioned by the Turkish authorities, was a reason for retaliation and expression of anger towards Christians. According to the information from the Russian consulate, Turkish boys physically assaulted Orthodox children on their way back from school; it was forbidden to leave the houses after curfew, and a stricter police patrol was instated. Life in Herzegovina was made difficult by the division of Christians into Orthodox and Catholics and the numerous abuses by Austrian agents. (РНБСПб, МфГ1/23, н. 27) Consular reports cited numerous examples of attacks on Christians and abuse by Turkish authorities from which even the Russian consular flag could not protect them. Taking that into account, it was hard to believe that anything could have changed peacefully in Herzegovina and other Serbian countries under Turkish rule (РНБСПб, МфГ1/23, н. 41).

Despite its short run time (1861–1865), strict censorship, the prohibition on writing about political topics, numerous critiques and the months-long suspension of publishing new issues, *The Day* reached a remarkable part in the social life of Russia. In the period when it had

been published, *The Day* provided to its readers the most reliable news and analyses of events in the lives of the Balkan Slavs. The importance of the articles published by this magazine is all the greater if we consider the fact that it used to publish the reports of officials of the Asiatic Department and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire. The dominant topics that were represented in the period from 1861 to 1865 were related to the events in Herzegovina in the last stage of Luka Vukalovic's uprising, but also the actions of the Austrian government in the aforementioned regions. The reporting of *The Day* magazine showed that the plans of the Austrian government in Herzegovina exceeded the need to preserve the borders and establish peace in that part of the Ottoman Empire. *The Day* served the purpose of shaping the views of Slavophiles on current events, so there was a general belief that it approached current events in a too "Slovenophile" way. Regardless of this, no Russian newspaper had informed the public more precisely and in detail about the situation in the Balkans in the decade that preceded the national liberation and unification of the people in the Balkans.

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О ВЛИЯНИИ АВСТРИЙСКОЙ ПРОПАГАНДЫ В ГЕРЦЕГОВИНЕ И ПОВСТУЖИТЕЛЬНЫХ НАСТРОЕНИЯХ ХРИСТИАН В ОСВЕЩЕНИЯХ ЖУРНАЛА «ДЕНЬ» (1861–1865)

Аннотация

В 1861–1865 годах издавался московский еженедельник «День» — славянофильский журнал для общества, критики и культуры. Предметом анализа нашей работы является написание журнала «День» о влиянии австрийской пропаганды и повстанческих настроениях в Герцеговине в первой половине 60-х годов 19 века. Несмотря на официальный запрет на написание и публикацию статей политического содержания, на страницах «Дня» публиковались отчеты российских консульств из Мостара, Дубровника, Сараево и других мест. Они писали о ходе восстания в Герцеговине и иностранном влиянии на христиан и их целях. Главным редактором «Дня» был видный русский славянофил И. С. Аксаков. Помимо репортажей российских консулов с Балкан, «День» публиковал также литературно-исторические тексты, рецензии и полемику на актуальные темы российского общества.

Ключевые слова: *«День», отчеты российского консульства, восстание в Герцеговине, австрийская пропаганда.*