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THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SO-CALLED DEPORTATION EN MASSE OF THE SERBS FROM KOSOVA IN 1690

Since 1687, Austria's emperor, Leopold I, strove to urge the Balkan peoples into a general insurrection against the Ottoman Empire. On September 6 of the same year he promised the Balkan peoples liberation, liberty of religion, privileges and other rights under his flag (Privilegia iure, religionem et libertatem salvas, semper et integras).

The final attempt of the Ottoman Empire to hinder the penetration of the Austrian army was unsuccessful. The Ottoman Army consisting of 10 000 people, aided by the mutesarif of the Prizren Sandjak and that of Dukagjin, Mahmut Bey Mahmutbegolli (of Peja), concentrated its forces in Bosnia (1688). But the Bosnians and "Serbs" (Schismatics)* agreed to attack the Ottoman army with numerous forces. Henceforth, being allegedly attacked by an enormous Christian (Austrian) army the Ottoman army withdrew from its positions.

According to British sources, the Austrian general Piccolomini arrived in Prishtina and Klina, following the occupation of Shkup, where 6 000 Albanians (from the Drenica region) with 1 300 carts and thousands of livestock came over to Piccolomini's side. Then, Piccolomini went to Prizren, where he was received by the archbishop of the diocese of Shkup at the head of 8 000 Albanian insurgents, the Albanian Pjetër Bogdani (the Archbishop of Albania and the Patriarch of Clements). Pjetër Bogdani was archbishop of the Catholics of Albania (= Kosova) and other territories of present day Serbia and Macedonia, comprised in the diocese of Shkup, as well as patriarch of the Orthodox Albanians of Kelmendi.

Austrian sources too, testify that Piccolomini was received in Prizren by 6 000 Albanians, amongst whom there were also people who up till then had been with the Ottoman Empire, but on that occasion vowed loyalty to the Emperor of Austria. Piccolomini was welcomed in Prizren, the capital of Albania (zu Prizren, der Hauptstadt in Albanien) by Pjetër Bogdani, archbishop of Shkup and patriarch of Clements (Orthodox Albanians of the Greek-Byzantine rite recognised the Pope of Rome as their superior).

The Vatican sources, among others, say "The Archbishop Pjetër (Bogdani) (...) was delighted at the progress of the Imperial Army towards Shkup. His nephew, the archmonk Gjon Bogdani, said that the Archbishop Pjetër himself went to welcome General Piccolomini and saw him off so far as his hometown of Prizren. Likewise, an anonymous contemporary said that the archbishop (Pjetër Bogdani) brought to General Piccolomini 6 000 Albanians. Henceforth, the general's army mounted to more than 20 000 Albanian and "Serbian" volunteers. As mentioned above, participating in the uprising were: from Prishtina 5 000 Albanians and Serbs, from Peja 3 000 Albanians, from Klina and Drenica 6 000 Albanians, from Prizren 6 000 or 8 000 Albanians, "Serbs" and Orthodox Wallachians, as well as "Turks", i.e. about 22 000 insurgents. The jesuit Vagner mentioned also that "patriarch Clementinorum", the archbishop

Pjetër Bogdani, had agreed with general Piccolomini on the aid to be given by the Albanians”.

On this occasion an essential question is put forth. What indeed represented the insurgent army - (of volunteers) of 20 000 - 22 000 warriors, under the command of the archbishop Pjetër Bogdani, and which according to historic sources of the time, was called, mainly, an army of Albanians, Serbs and Turks?

If we take into consideration the historical data of the relators of the Papacy and other historical sources (Shtjefën Gaspri, M.Bici, M.Mazreku, F.Bardhi, E.Çelebiu, and so on), it follows that at the end of the 17th century, Kosova (we are speaking of the current province of Kosova) had approximately 300 000 inhabitants. Out of them, according to their religion, 1 % were Catholics, 49 % Moslems, and 50 % Orthodox. Whereas from the ethnic national point of view, they were mainly Albanians and Wallachians. The Albanians of the Catholic faith, of the Greek-Byzantine rite, as the Clements were, recognising the Pope of Rome as their superior and Muhhamadams (converted to Muhammadans during the 15th-17th centuries) are marked with the name Albanian-Alban-Arnaud; with the name “Serb”, except a small number of Serbs, there were registered mainly “schismatized” Albanians, Wallachians during the 15th-17th centuries; and with the nema “Turk” there are registered Albanians and Wallachians converted to Muhammadans, during the 15th-17th centuries.

At that time the nomination “Serb” or “Turk” did not indicate the national pertaining. They indicated religious pertaining. Indeed these two nominations were created by the Papacy and were used by the West, as well. Even the Albanians themselves appropriated these baptisms.

The Ottoman sources prove that during these events the following cities and villages joined the uprising: Peja, Prizreni, Tetova (Kalkandeleni), Stipi, Prishtina, Vuciterna, Kosova (Belasica), Yenipazar, Kumanova etc. On this occasion a considerable part of the Moslem population that was loyal to the Porte was liquidated.

Taking into consideration these most varied pieces of data we draw the conclusion that the population of Kosova, the Albanians of the Muhammadan, Orthodox and Catholic confessions (the latter were few in numbers) then the “Serbs”, Wallachians, even the “Turks” joined the Austrian army en masse, hoping that it would bring freedom, tranquility, law and order and religious and national liberty; Pjetër Bogdani who was defined archbishop of Albania, respectively of the archbishopric of Shkup, comprising also the territory of present day Kosova and patriarch of the Clements, who at that time belonged to the Greek-Byzantine rite, was the principal leader of the entire population of Kosova, without distinction as to religion and nationality. He was at the head of a struggle to win political, national and religious independence, under the shadow of the Austrian Emperor, and in his manifesto addressed to this population, he promised to grant them all these liberties, if they fought against the Ottoman Empire. But many historians, exploiting the term “patriarch of the Clements”, which in fact was dedicated only to Pjetër Bogdani, strive to draw the conclusion that it applies to the patriarch of the Patriarchate of Peja, Arsenije III Çernoviç. On the contrary, the patriarch Arsenije III, under the pressure of Mahmut Bey, the Pasha of Peja, an Albanian from Peja, at the time had left for Nikshiq. Fearing that the patriarch had gone through Nikshiq to Cetinje to subdue the Republic of Venice, Piccolomini ordered the monks, when the Austrians occupied Peja on about

November 4, 1689, to call him in. Due to the Austrians' attitude, the patriarch was compelled to return soon after.

After Piccolomini's death (November 1690), the Duke Gjergj Kristian did not behave humanely either with the "Serbs" or with the Albanians. His rude behaviour led a part of them to go over to the side of the Osmanlis. By the end of November of 1689, the Duke Kristian, together with the Albanian and "Serb" volunteers, triumphed over the Osman Army near Shtip, but on their way back he ordered the burning of the city. This duke aroused even greater embarrassment in the Albanians, when he strove to disarm them in Prizren and when he ordered the burning of some villages in Luma. Pjetër Bogdani strove as well as he could to calm the discontent of his compatriots, but he died in Prizren on December 8 upon his return from Luma.

Henceforth, after Piccolomini's death, the course of events went in favour of the Ottoman Empire. The newly-appointed sadrazem, the Albanian Mustafa Pasha Kypriylu (1688-1691), introduced a new spirit, a new enthusiasm and new people into the Ottoman administration, through his military and financial reforms.

The first step in this high post was the issuing of the so-called adaletname - edikt (official ordinance) which annulled the damage on the raja, established order on the tax system and annuled a series of levies, revised the account books of the Spahis, reduced the incomes of the top officials, revoked the custom that the senior officials sent gifts to the Sultan for Bajram, etc. Thanks to these measures the state ensured enormous incomes. On the other side, he prepared determinedly for war. Very soon the Sultan Sulejman II nominated Kypriylu supreme commander of the army. The Turkish army started to progress in all directions. First, it stamped out the uprising of Karposh, whom they fixed on a stake and threw in Vardar. Hence, only the fortress of Kacanik remained in the hands of the Austrians. The Tatass penetrated Kosova. All these events occurred at such rapid that the Duke from Holstein did not know what to do, particularly considering the fact that he had few soldiers at his disposal. On December 27, 1689, he convoked the military Council in Prishtina. There was nothing left for the council to decide but to call on "the Albanian militia" (albanesische Militz) formed by General Piccolomini, which continued to operate although it was reduced in number due to the rude behaviour of the Duke of Holstein.

In the battle of Kacanik (01 - 02.01.1690) the whole military unit, under the command of colonel Shtraser was destroyed, because in the final moment the Albanian volunteers, discontent from the rude behaviour of Shtraser, went over to the side of the Ottoman army. Several Counts, and princes, even Shtraser himself lost their lives on the battle-field. Following this victory the defenders of Kacanik surrendered. The Austrian and Hungarians were released to go home, and the local insurgents were liquidated. Then Novoberda and Prishtina were easily occupied, taking into possession the equipments and storhouses of the Austrians.

After the battle of Kacanik, the Albanian from Ioannina, Tome Raspasani, who replaced Pjetër Bogdani, with the remnants of the conquered army, and with a part of the "Piccolomini" chivalrous regiment and a part of the "Albanian - Serb militia" under the command of sub colonel Anton Znoric, who was supposed to be a Wallachian, remained in Prizren. As soon as he arrived in Nish, the new commander of the Austrian army, Count Veteran, immediately sent the order to Prizren that all the garrisons with the francescan Tome Raspasnai retreat through Yeni Pazar for

Belgrade, because they could not defend Prizren¹. The army of Mahmut Pasha increased with the new Albanian volunteers. These forces of Mahmut Pasha drove out the Austrian army and "the Albanian-Serbian Militia", still loyal to Austria, and took their equipment. The remnants of the conquered army, led by Anton Znoriqi and Tome Rاسpasani, withdrew to the Panonia plain (Vojvodina).

After conquering Prizren, Mahmut Pasha's way to Peja was opened, because the Austrian army had retreated from there. The patriarch Arsenije III together with some monks fled with the Austrians through Yeni Pazar and Studenica for Panonia.

When the news on the defeat of the Austrian army and the fleeing of patriarch Arsenije III spread, the chieftain of the Kuci Albanian tribe, sent his messenger to Peja, who returned with the news that Peja had been plundered and that the patriarch with some monks on horseback and some others on foot had left, and that they had taken a small part of the precious things of the Patriarchate. The other part was plundered by the "Turks".

Meanwhile, in February 1690, Tome Rاسpasani handed the commander-in-chief, Ludvig Baden, a Memorial on Albania, respectively on Kosova, which was called Albania (Memoire sur l'Albania), where besides the report on the Albanians (he implies the Albanians of Kosova), particularly the Clements, he proposes to the Austrian emperor to invite the Albanians and "Serbs" to rise against the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, Tome Rاسpasani proposed to invite, through an Emperor's letter, the patriarch Arsenije III Černojević, who had fled to Belgrade that with his authority he should call on the Albanians - Clements and "Serbs" (Orthodox - schismatics - Albanians and Wallachians of the Serbian church), to take up arms.

On April 6, 1690, the emperor Leopold I, launched the renowned manifesto which invited all the peoples of this area, particularly the Albanians, to whom he promised various privileges and liberties. But on the same day, on April 6, 1690, the Emperor Leopold, taking into account the proposal of Rاسpasan's Memorial, addressed a letter to the patriarch Arsenije III, inviting him to influence with his authority the Albanians (of Kosova) and its "Serbs", to take up arms against the Ottoman Empire. Hence, even in the letter addressed to the patriarch of the Patriarchate of Peja, the Albanians are first mentioned, then the "Serbs". But no second Albanian-Serb insurrection was organised. The rude behaviour of General Holstein shook the confidence in Austria. On August 14, 1690, General Veteran was compelled to quit Nish and withdraw from Serbia, because the attacks of the Ottoman army were unbearable.

The news on the "Turks" reprisals and revenge on the raia, who had taken the side of the Austrian, caused the migration of a part of the population; of course of those who were part of the Austro-Ottoman War. A great part of Kosova's population moved out, but they were mainly, except those of Kosova, from the territories of Yeni Pazar, Serbia, Macedonia, etc., not only "Serbs", but also Albanians, Bosnians, Wallachians, etc. Therefore, Kosova was not emptied only because of the "Serbian" population in the time of the so-called "Great Serbian influx from Kosova headed by the patriarch Arsenije III Černojević" (1690), as some Serb, unobjective historians try to prove.

Based on the aforesaid, I think it should be called the "Great Serbian influx

from Kosova", but the "Influx of the Christian population from these areas of the Balkans", because included were also Albanians, Wallachians, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Greeks, gypsies, etc.; that is, from these categories of Balkan society of that time, who in one way or another took part in the Austro-Ottoman War (1683-1699).

At the end of the 17th century, Kosova's population was reduced a great deal. But this phenomenon was a consequence of three factors: the active participation of Kosova's population in the prolonged, grave Austro-Ottoman wars (1683-1699) and the staging of this war on its territory, and the plague epidemic which played havoc causing the death of many people so that there were not enough people capable of burying the dead. On this occasion there were food shortage to that extent that for the first time in the history of the Kosovars the population was obliged to eat dog meat. And finally, was the consequence of the retreat beyond Sava and the Danube of a part of the population, together with the Austrian army led by the Albanian priest Tome Raspasani, "the Serb" and the Wallachian Anton Znoriqi, be them members of the "Albanian-Serbian" militia, or insurgents and members of their families, who did not pass onto the side of the Ottoman army as the majority did. The patriarch Arsenije III Černojević did not lead the population of Kosova. He became the leader of the population that moved out, but only from Belgrade. It should be made clear that this population belonged to the Orthodox religion ("Serbian", Albanians, Wallachians, Bulgarians) and to the Catholic one (Albanian).

*We have underscored even elsewhere that the term "Serb" in the Western documentation of that time on Kosova does not have only ethnic content, but religious as well. It implies that the Orthodox (schismatics) were dependent on the Serbian church, respectively the Patriarchate of Peja.

Hence, from the ethnic point of view, these "Serbs" were often Orthodox Albanians, under religious dependency on the Serbian Patriarchate of Peja.

1. But Mahmut Pasha attacked Prizren before the order had reached there.

