

TEODORA TOLEVA, *VLIJANIETO NA AVSTRO – UNGARIJA ZA SÁZDAVANETO NA ALBANSKATA NACIJA (1896–1908)* [THE INFLUENCE OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY ON THE FORMATION OF THE ALBANIAN NATION, 1896–1908]. SOFIA: SIELA NORMA AD, 2012, pp. 573.

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The formation of the Albanian nation was a long process, which began considerably later than what was the case with other nations in the Balkan Peninsula. Some historiographical works attach great importance to certain events, for example the meeting of the the Albanian League in Prizren. However, this process took place under foreign influence. One of the European great powers which actively affected this process in the 19th and 20th century was Austria — Hungary. It is precisely that influence that is the theme of Teodora Toleva's Ph.D. dissertation *The Influence of Austria — Hungary on the*

Formation of the Albanian Nation, 1896 — 1908. This book is an extended version of her doctoral dissertation awarded at the University of Barcelona.

The book is divided into several parts. At the beginning there are some introductory texts of Georgi Markov, Vrbán

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Todorov (Sofia, Bulgaria), Augustin Colomines Companis (Barcelona, Spain) and Leopold Auer (Vienna, Austria) about the book and the author who belongs to both Spanish and Bulgarian historiography. The book consists of introduction, ten chapters and conclusion.

The author points out in her introduction that she has unearthed valuable and fairly unknown source material during her research in Viennese archives which made possible an in-depth approach to this subject. This is especially important because of the fact that some of these sources were used fragmentarily and interpreted with a view to confirming certain judgments (Stavro Skendi, Peter Bartl, George Castellan, Hans Dieter Schanderl etc.). The chronological frame of the book covers the period from 1896, when three secret conferences were held in Vienna, to the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, which brought about a partial change in the Austro-Hungarian policy towards the Ottoman Empire. This was the period when the policy of the adjacent Slavic countries towards the Dual Monarchy became less predictable, Russian influence in the Balkans was growing, and the influences of Italy, France, Great Britain and other states were not negligible as well. It was then that the Albanian question and its instrumentalisation for the purpose of achieving Austria-Hungary's political goals became prominent.

The first three chapters are dedicated to the structure of diplomatic and intelligence services of the Habsburg Monarchy (from 1867 onwards Austria-Hungary), its policy to the Albanian question and the impact of that policy on a much wider area. The author explains how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, one of the three joint ministries in Austria-Hungary came into being and highlights its importance because it was practically directly subordinated to the monarch. The ministry comprised of a network of diplomatic le-

gations, consulates, viceconsulates, which often recruited a large number of agents in their respective areas in order to collect important information. Toleva highlights the importance of the 1896 secret conferences intended to organize Austria-Hungary's political activities amongst the Albanians. The significance of these meetings and the Albanian question in general was indicated by the involvement of two most prominent officials, the minister of foreign affairs Goluchowski, and the minister of finance Benjamin Kallay who was well-versed in Balkan affairs. The resolutions made on these occasions showed how seriously Austria-Hungary approached an analysis of the Albanian question. Nothing was left to chance, which the "Memorandum on Albania" made clear; this document consisted of contributions made by a number of people, and it was finally compiled by Baron Zweidineck. The author points out that the memorandum has not been much used in historiography, or has been used selectively in order to prove certain claims. The memorandum was not favourable to the Ottoman Empire. Zweidineck considered its decomposition inevitable, and the formation of an Albanian Principality under Austro-Hungarian protectorate the only means of preventing Serbia and Montenegro from partitioning the Ottoman territory. The memorandum envisaged an active propaganda in the area between Montenegro, Bosnia and Serbia in the north, the Adriatic Sea in the west, Preveza, Ioannina, Argirocastro and Kastoria in the south, and Priština and Ohrid in the east (the villayets of Scutari, Kosovo, Monastir and Ioannina). Zweidineck noted that Albanian population was divided into tribes, which used many different dialects, and a few literate people used different alphabets. The Albanians were frequently embroiled in mutual feuds, and they were divided into Muslims, Orthodox and Roman Catho-

lics. Their tribal way of life and local interests suppressed the sense of common ethnic origin. Toleva underscores that Benjamin Kallay played a great role in the shaping of the memorandum; he believed that Serbia's aggrandizement was possible only in the south, and only in the area up to Novi Pazar, which was, in his view, a sufficient compensation for its renouncing Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was predicted that the Roman Catholic Church would also be involved in this project, particularly the monastic orders of Jesuits and Franciscans whose monasteries were situated in the area inhabited by Albanians. In addition, propaganda activities were envisaged through the medium of press, magazines and books in which the Austro-Hungarian consular network would have a special role. Zweidineck also enclosed the ethnic and religious population tables for this area. The fact that Toleva has published most of the text of the memorandum provides this book with an additional value, since it cuts the ground from under arbitrary interpretations.

In the fourth chapter, the author argues that the resolutions of the secret conferences, and especially the memorandum, denoted Austria-Hungary's renouncing of the principle of legitimacy, which had already been undermined by the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878. Austro-Hungarian diplomacy had no confidence in the allegedly friendly governments (the Ottoman Empire, Italy), although it tried not to cause major doubts about its intentions at the Sublime Porte. Therefore, it was intent on gaining the Muslim Albanians by guaranteeing their rights, while Italy's influence exercised through Roman Catholic priests educated in the Pontifical College in Scutari was supposed to be suppressed by the education in Albanian language and alphabet, which was yet to be codified.

The fifth chapter deals with the uprising of the Miriditi tribe in 1897 and

the peaceful liquidation of that rebellion. The reports on these events sent by Austro-Hungarian consul in Skadar, T. Ippen, contained information about the important centers for the future propaganda amongst the Muslims. In his opinion, new consulates should be opened in Berat and Tirana. The author explains, on the basis of numerous sources, how the consuls created a network of confidential agents through the agency of which they exerted influence in the field and obtained information about the Albanian population which was then forwarded to Vienna. In that way, the consuls in Skoplje, Bitolj (Monastir), Prizren and Durazzo carefully watched over the proceedings of the Albanian League assembly held in Peć in 1899. This was also a clear indication of how little confidence the Austro-Hungarian diplomacy had in the Ottoman Empire's ability to keep control over its possessions — the said assembly was organised by the Porte.

The following chapter details the activities of Austro-Hungarian consuls. They used to travel across the country during the summer months, and make acquaintances and connections usually through the extensive distribution of money. However, their reports were not always optimistic. They described the great differences between certain tribes, their religious division, the lack of national awareness and almost non-existent desire for education in Albanian language.

The next three chapters demonstrate the primary reliance of Austro-Hungarian propaganda on the Roman Catholic Albanians. The authors of the memorandum and other documents stemming from the secret conferences of 1896 referred in this connection to the previous peace treaties concluded by the Sublime Porte, which had assigned to the Habsburg Monarchy the right of protection over the Roman Catholics in the Ottoman Empire. Detailed consular reports contained the lists

of all Roman Catholic buildings in the territories inhabited by Albanians. Unlike other diplomats from the predominantly Roman Catholic countries, their Austro-Hungarian colleagues were especially interested in Roman Catholics of Albanian ethnicity alone. The use of religious factor for propaganda purposes, the establishment of a network of agents, as well as the effect of bribery were reflected in the interesting example of Monsignor Primo Docchi from the parish of St. Alexander, who spread Austro-Hungarian propaganda among the Miriditi, particularly through literary works. The consular reports bore witness as to the existence of some twenty various alphabets and a few dialects used amongst the Albanians, but Vienna was persistent, despite all the difficulties, in its endeavours to create a common Albanian language and alphabet. The main goal was to gradually suppress the Italian — but also Greek and Serbian — schools.

The tenth chapter also discusses the importance of press and the idea of launching a newspaper in the Albanian language. The newspaper "Albania" published in Brussels and edited by the Albanian emigrant, Faik Bey Konica, was a result of such endeavours. However, the articles about Albanian history and folk literature published in this newspaper were written in Vienna. The low level of

literacy of Albanian population made this publication fail in reaching its objectives.

The conclusion reiterates the most important findings of this study and points out the facts that shaped the unique development of the Albanian nation. The decisive factors were the great powers' policies in the Balkans and the basic characteristics of the Albanian population, especially its religious, tribal and linguistic division. The Austro-Hungarian diplomacy was particularly influential through its consular network and propaganda activities. The author suggests that Albanian population in the late 19th and early 20th century had not formed a nation as yet. At the end of the book there are appendices such as consular reports, ethnographic maps and tables, which show religious and ethnic composition of the regions which the Albanians populated, along with other national and ethnic groups.

Teodora Toleva's book is a new and useful contribution to historiography on the Albanian question, and therefore the Balkan history. Founded on numerous first-hand, mostly unpublished and Vienna-based, sources, which are frequently reproduced in the text, it sheds light on the seriousness with which Austria-Hungary approached the Albanian issue as part of its plans for establishing control over the Balkan Peninsula.