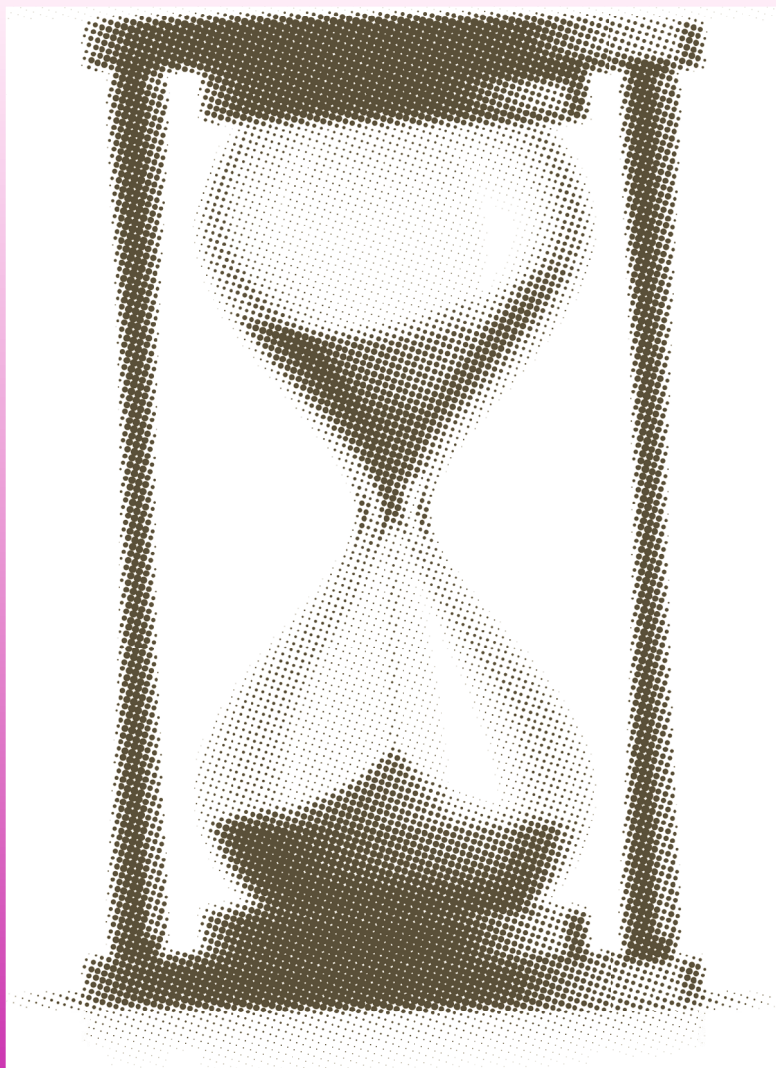


# Zgodovinski časopis

HISTORICAL REVIEW

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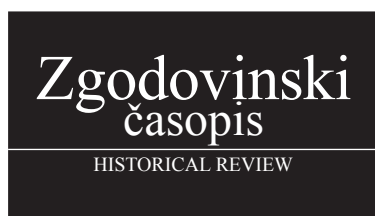
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# Razprave



# Srđan Mladenov Jovanović

## The Warmongering 'First Serbian Daily': The Daily 'Politika' during the First Balkan War of 1912–13

**Srđan Mladenov Jovanović**, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Nankai University in Tianjin, Tongyan Road 38, Jinnan District, Tianjin, P.R. China 300350, smjovanovic@nankai.edu.cn.

**The Warmongering 'First Serbian Daily': The Daily 'Politika' during the First Balkan War of 1912–13**

*Historical Review*, Ljubljana 74/2020 (161), No. 3-4, pp. 426–440, 65 notes

Language: En., (Sn., En., Sn.)

Though the Balkan wars have seen their share of scholarly interest, the media that supported them have been at the hub of academic research significantly less often. In this article, we confront the warmongering rhetoric of one of the oldest dailies of the Balkans, the *Politika*, dividing its discourse in several topical categories, wherein the daily promulgated the official Serbian ideology against the Ottoman Empire and Albanians. Putting the Serbian army in the front of most reporting, it was framed as noble and patriotic, whilst the enemy forces were oft seen as cowardly and lacking in military competence. Both the Ottomans and the Albanians were depicted as lacking in human characteristics and civilized behavior.

**Key words:** Politika, Balkan wars, warmongering, Serbia, newspaper reports

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**Vojnohujskaški »prvi srbski dnevnik«: »Politika« v času prve balkanske vojne 1912–13**

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Kljub precejšnjemu interesu, ki ga je znanstvena srenja izkazovala balkanskima vojnima, so bili mediji redkeje v središču akademskih raziskav. Članek se posveča vojnohujskaški retoriki Politike, enem najstarejših dnevnikov na Balkanu. Časnikov diskurz je razdeljen na nekaj tematskih kategorij, s katerimi je časopis širil uradno srbsko ideologijo, uperjeno proti Otomanskemu cesarstvu in Albancem. Časnik je v ospredje poročanja postavil srbsko vojsko, jo predstavil kot plemenito in domoljubno, medtem ko so bile sovražne sile označene za strahopetne in brez vojaških kompetenc. Dnevnik je tako Turkom kot Albancem očital pomanjkanje človeških lastnosti in omike.

**Ključne besede:** Politika, balkanski vojni, hujskaštvo, Srbija, časopisna poročanja

## Introduction: the historical context of the First Balkan War and the press

Much has been written on the Balkan wars, with Richard Hall's *Balkan Wars* probably taking the central spot under the scholarly spotlight.<sup>1</sup> The wars have been written about in a broad sense by many, including very early works by Schurman, written in 1916,<sup>2</sup> many others concentrating on diplomacy and international relations,<sup>3</sup> with others tackling a wide range of issues.<sup>4</sup> From the point of view of the media as the object of interpretation, their historical relevance and influence on historical processes, be they of short or long term, the situation is rather different, with no comprehensive volumes. This is probably due to the fact that most traditional historians tend to see the press as a foundation of information, as simple primary sources, rather than a crucial social factor that could shape lives, events and policies throughout history; often forgetting that 'by presenting the world in language, journalists construct meaning upon which citizens can act'.<sup>5</sup> Granted, the influence of the print media<sup>6</sup> is far more extensive and encompassing – and with it, more relevant for research – at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially when compared with the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Nonetheless, we cannot dismiss the importance of the printed press, especially in connection to significant socio-political and military instances, such as the Balkan Wars.

When it comes to the Balkan Wars – to provide the context – as Dubravka Stojanović wrote, they have 'provided convenient historical events for constructing a mythic national and historical awareness in Serbia',<sup>7</sup> up to the point of the same nationalist discourse that was established in 1912 being used in the wars of the 1990s and the breakup of Yugoslavia,<sup>8</sup> with many scholars – especially from the discipline of history – calling the wars of the Yugoslav secession 'Balkan Wars' as well,<sup>9</sup> or simply 'the Third Balkan War'. From a Serbian perspective of 1912 and

<sup>1</sup> Hall, *Balkan Wars (1912-1913)*.

<sup>2</sup> Schurman, Gould, *The Balkan Wars*.

<sup>3</sup> For early works, see Helmreich's 1938 volume: Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of...*

<sup>4</sup> Gerolymatos, *The Balkan wars*; Ginio, *Mobilizing the Ottoman*; Yavuz and Blumi, *War and Nationalism*

<sup>5</sup> Broersma, *Journalism as performative*.

<sup>6</sup> For media influence onto politics, see: Robinson, *Theorizing the influence*, Walgrave, Soroka, and Nuutemans, *The mass media's*.

<sup>7</sup> Stojanović, *The Balkan Wars*, p. 275.

<sup>8</sup> Jovanović, *The Ottoman Empire*.

<sup>9</sup> Naimark and Case, *Yugoslavia and its*, Riedlmayer, *Crimes of War*; even outside of the field of history: Freedman and Abazović, *Growing up*.

post-1912, it can be said that 'according to Serbian patriots, the victories against the Ottoman army (in the First Balkan War) ended centuries of national slavery and avenged 'Tsar' Lazar's epoch-making defeat at the Field of Blackbirds (Kosovo polje), 1389.'<sup>10</sup> Serbia quickly joined the war against Turkey – that was officially started by Montenegro – in order to expand its territories, especially in Macedonia and Kosovo, that were (and still are) seen as the cradle of the nation and the seat of the old Serbian medieval state. In other words, the Balkan wars – especially the first – were remembered in a positive light by the population of Serbia,<sup>11</sup> as they were seen as the culmination of the long war against the oppressing Ottoman Empire ever since the Uprising of 1804,<sup>12</sup> commonly referred to as 'five hundred years under the Turkish yoke'. However, what Newman called 'the darker realities of the Serbian state during 1903-14'<sup>13</sup> are missing to nonexistent in Serbian historiography, with a few notable, recent exceptions, most notably Dubravka Stojanović. Based on a corpus of sources found in the National Library of Serbia, we shall tackle these 'darker realities' through the lens of the printed press in 1912, concentrating on the daily *Politika*, which had, as we shall show in the paragraphs to come, been crucial in providing official support for the governments military and (lack of) diplomatic actions, justifying them to their readership. We were especially interested in the topical choices and particular discursive instances that were found within the bodies of the text, that pertain to a positive view of the war from a Serbian perspective, and a negative view of enemy combatants. In other words, we will be investigating what we have dubbed 'warmongering propaganda', via which the *Politika* urged and called for war, and supported political and military decisions of the state.

### **Politika in its early days**

The printed press in Serbia developed with a delay, if compared to its development with other European countries; according to some scholars, this delay went as far as two centuries.<sup>14</sup> The daily 'Politika' was founded in 1904 by one Vladislav Ribnikar (1871-1914), a Slovene who had attended universities of Sorbonne and Humboldt prior to his venture into journalism.<sup>15</sup> It is often dubbed as one of the 'oldest and most prestigious dailies' in Serbia and the Balkans.<sup>16</sup> Surprisingly, the daily has seen few to none scholarly works concentrating on it, and most have been about its reporting from the wars of the Yugoslav secession in the nineties within a broader research topic.<sup>17</sup> In scholarship, it is known as a daily that 'has always

<sup>10</sup> Newman, *Civil and military*, p. 114.

<sup>11</sup> Newman, *Civil and military*, p. 115.

<sup>12</sup> Király, *East Central European*, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Newman, *Civil and military*, p. 116.

<sup>14</sup> Barović, *Istorija tabloida*, p. 114.

<sup>15</sup> Barović, *Značaj Vladislava S*, p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> Michalak, *Albańska Golgota-exodus*, p. 103; ; see also: *Bitwa pod Kumanowem*.

<sup>17</sup> *Politika* is mentioned in a socio-political context in Dubravka Stojanović's work:

been close to the government, pleasing the rulers and compromising journalistic principles whenever new political orders were introduced'.<sup>18</sup> The pro-government stance has relatively recently seen scholarly production after the breakup of Yugoslavia, when the *Politika* supported Slobodan Milošević uncompromisingly, including opening space for the so-called *Pisma čitalaca* rubric, or Letters by the Readers, in which staunch nationalist, pro-government texts were published on a regular basis.<sup>19</sup> Most of the war-related production from 1912-13 was to be found on the front page, in the first text of the daily, where the war took the spotlight for the entirety of its duration. Several themes could be identified as iterating, seen in many issues from October 1912, such as warmongering and support for the war, praise of the Serbian army, an atrocity-concentrating rhetoric that served to justify the attack, denigration of the Turkish army's competence, as well as an anti-Albanian discourse that justified the attack on 'Old Serbia'. Having in mind the strained diplomatic relations with Austria-Hungary at the time, criticism of Austria was present as well. We shall now concentrate on the abovementioned themes, looking into how they were tackled and presented to the readership by engaging the rhetoric of *Politika* in late 1912 and early 1913.

It would be of prudence to note that the *Politika* was not the only quotidian to engage warmongering rhetoric at that time. Similar discourses could be encountered in the contemporary papers such as *Pravda* and *Pijemont*, and especially the four main *war periodicals* that were founded in order to comment on the Balkan War, namely the *Ilustrovana ratna kronika*, *Balkanski rat u slici i reči*, and *Ilustrovani Balkan*.<sup>20</sup> As the fulcrum of this article, however, we have chosen the *Politika* due to its fame and size, as it was and is a daily that has followed Serbia (and consequently Yugoslavia) for over a decade; Aleksić called it 'influential and powerful'.<sup>21</sup> Censorship and governmental influence have been an issue in the Serbian press ever since its establishment in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; after the fall of the ruling Obrenović dynasty in 1903, nevertheless, the New Law on the Press had been established in 1904, drastically prohibiting censorship. This indicates the editorial wish to report in a warmongering fashion, instead of being forced to.<sup>22</sup> Aleksić also reports that this was the first instance of war that *Politika* reported on, being that it was founded but a decade before the First Balkan War.

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Stojanović, *Private Yugoslavism*, as well in Srdja Pavlović's research on the paranormal within the Serbian media in: Pavlović, *Mirror, Mirror*. A more detailed analysis is found in Rupar's work on the daily: Rupar, *Journalism, political change*. An encomiastic approach, citing only a few references, highly uncritical, is found in Barović's short paper on Ribnikar: Barović, *Značaj*.

<sup>18</sup> Rupar, *Journalism, political change*, p. 2. See also Markotich's review of the governmental influence on the media in Serbia for Radio Free Europe: Markotich, *Government Control*.

<sup>19</sup> There is scholarly research on the media – *Politika* included – tackling similar issues during the reign of Slobodan Milošević, as the government support of the media was significant during the 1990s, including even today's day and age, see: Thompson, *Forging war*, Jovanović, *You're Simply the Best*.

<sup>20</sup> Miljković, *War Poetry*.

<sup>21</sup> Aleksić, *Mobilizatorska uloga*, p. 75.

<sup>22</sup> Aleksić, *Mobilizatorska uloga*, p. 63.

### Warmongering rhetoric

Scholarship on the media has established that the media have the tendency of supporting conflict and violence of a ruling party;<sup>23</sup> the case of the *Politika* in 1912-13 will show no larger difference, as warmongering was the primary pathos upon which a plethora of articles were written. Mind that the relations between Turkey and Serbia at the time have been strained, to say the least, and that the *Politika* wrote negatively on Turkey for years before the First Balkan War. As just one example, the article from 16 September 2010, titled *The Manhunt on Serbs*, wherein Turkish authorities were accused of hunting Serbs for what *Politika* considered unfounded allegations of banditry – whether there was a basis for these allegations, we shall probably never know.

On 5 October 1912, the *Politika* published an article entitled 'The Beginning of the War',<sup>24</sup> in which it claimed that the Serb armies have been mobilized due to the Turks' 'challenge', pegging the blame on the attacked side. It further claimed that Serbia (including other Balkan states) did all it could within the realm of diplomacy, that it tried to 'keep the peace', but it was impossible due to Turkey itself.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Turkey was to blame for being attacked. Now the 'holy war for the freeing of Christians has begun, and its success is doubtless. The result of the war will be formulated in three words: Asians to Asia'. The same article furthermore engaged in a strong rhetoric against pacifism and pacifists, even though, at the very beginning of the text, it boasted Serbia's dovishness and commitment to peace in several paragraphs. There is talk about 'poor pacifist dreams', where these 'poor pacifists cannot even hold a single congress without war starting in some place', arguably even denying pacifism itself as a concept. War was thus presented as inevitable. Running to the contrary, *Politika* claimed that 'there is only one way to make peace certain, and that is that everybody, according to the old Latin proverb, should prepare for war'. The 2 October edition pegged the blame squarely on Turkey, and even though the war was started by Montenegro, with Serbia joining (together with Bulgaria and Greece), the readers could see that 'with frivolous recalcitrance did Turkey attack Serbia'.<sup>26</sup> Even months after the breakout of the war, *Politika* wrote against peace. In the 3 February 1913 issue, the first page writes about the attempts of the Turkish government to broker a peace in London and Vienna. The *Politika* wrote that the Porta's efforts were in vain, as 'we have ceased peace talks and continued the fight ... now, after new battles and new Turkish defeats, we shall definitely not cede to new Turkish terms'.<sup>27</sup> From a discourse-analytical perspective, the use of the all-encompassing 'We' served to indicate the unity of the combatants, the people and the press, an all-round national unity about the singular course of action, which was the continuation of the war.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Lynch, *Peace journalism*, p. 543.

<sup>24</sup> *Politika*, *Početak rata*, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Nota bene: article titles and text have been translated by the author.

<sup>26</sup> *Politika*, *Šta se čeka*, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> *Politika*, *Turska posla*.

<sup>28</sup> See: Amossy, *The argumentative dimension*.

In order to justify the warmongering rhetoric, Turkey was often represented in an extremely negative fashion, such as in the 2 October 1912 issue, when the *Politika* wrote that 'the Turks have done all they can in order to weed out all that is best and most honorable within Serbia'.<sup>29</sup> War 'had to happen' in order to prevent 'the weeding out of the Christian population in Turkey'.<sup>30</sup> War was presented as being 'in the name of justice, culture and freedom', and Serbia 'in this war did its duties completely'; note that this can be seen as typical in discourses that justify military action.<sup>31</sup> The connotation conveyed that Turkey was a land without justice, culture and freedom, juxtaposing it as the discursive Other, against which military action needed to be taken. Furthermore, the view of the Orthodox bulwark against Islam, as a sort of 'antemurale Christianitatis', was argued to have been rather strong at that time in many Orthodox countries of the Balkans.<sup>32</sup>

### Rhetoric of atrocities

Y. Dogan Cetinkaya was correct to concentrate on what he called 'atrocities propaganda' in the Ottoman Empire,<sup>33</sup> tackling the Ottoman propaganda in which the government accused other warring sides of gruesome misconduct.<sup>34</sup> Other authors have also tackled more exact, localized issues, such as Šlaus *et al*, who concentrated on the 15th century Čepin massacre.<sup>35</sup> Yet the same type of 'atrocities propaganda' was seen on the Serbian side, much of it coming from the textual production of the *Politika*. An alleged account of Ottoman atrocities, in which, on the first page, gruesome details were put into place, listing by name and surname people who have had their 'noses cut off alive', been 'cut to pieces', 'decapitated and impaled', including an old man, who has allegedly had his eyes gouged out, while a baby was eviscerated (*Politika*, October 2, 1912).<sup>36</sup> The same issue claimed that 'numerous slaughters and bestiality that they have committed upon the Christian population'. It is impossible to know about the veracity of these claims, but due to the sheer severity of the alleged actions, especially impalement (that has not been practiced for centuries) and the claim of the evisceration of an infant, the truthfulness of the text has to be questioned. It has been accepted that during the First Balkan War, all warring sides committed atrocities.<sup>37</sup> Violence from the

<sup>29</sup> *Politika*, Šta se čeka, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Politika*, *Srpski zahtevi*, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Hodges and Nilep, *Discourse, war and terrorism*.

<sup>32</sup> Kolstø, *Media discourse*.

<sup>33</sup> Çetinkaya, *Atrocity Propaganda*.

<sup>34</sup> Whilst there were atrocities on all sides of the conflict, the Ottoman Empire tended often to be seen in a more negative than a positive light. To present both sides, we can recommend Berdal Aral's work on the idea of human rights in the Ottoman Empire, its similarities and differences of *Human Rights as Perceived in the Ottoman Empire*.

<sup>35</sup> Šlaus *et al*, *The harsh life*.

<sup>36</sup> *Politika*, 2nd October 1912.

<sup>37</sup> Hall, *Balkan Wars (1912–1913)*, p. 136–138.

side of Turkey did escalate in the early 20th century (especially after the Ilinden Uprising),<sup>38</sup> whilst the freedom of assembly and expression diminished drastically from 1909.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, the *Politika* consistently mentioned only the crimes committed against the Serbian population; from its point of view, it was a just war, with a clear romantic division of Good versus Evil. Sources, however, tell us that violence was conducted by all sides, as 'Bulgarian, Serbian, Greek and Ottoman forces committed mutual acts of violence including large-scale destruction and arson of villages, beatings and torture, forced conversions and indiscriminate mass killing of enemy non-combatants'.<sup>40</sup> In Pezo's words, 'violence, forced migration, and government efforts to establish new pillars of population policies during and after the Balkan Wars affected large territories of the Balkan region and, to varying degrees, all ethnic groups who lived there'.<sup>41</sup> What is more, it has been noticed that it was Serbian authorities who were encouraging local officers and agents to make normal life for the local Muslim population difficult,<sup>42</sup> leading to a significant increase in the number of refugees in Istanbul, perhaps even several hundreds of thousands.<sup>43</sup> On all of these, *Politika* was silent up to a fault.

### The brave Serb combatants and the incompetent Turks

The 14 November 1912 edition of the *Politika* wrote about the siege of Adrianople (Jedrene/Edirne), a significant military action during the First Balkan War,<sup>44</sup> wherein the bulk of the Bulgarian troops were engaged in combat, with the addition of some of the Serbian forces. The discourse went into the direction of praise for the Serb forces, riddled with denigration of the opposing warring side. 'For those three weeks, there were almost no days when the Turks did not pay for their attempts to leave Adrianople', it was written, 'it is almost inexplicable what these attempt of theirs are supposed to mean, as it is clear that all the Turkish armies of Adrianople would be destroyed in two days if it only dared to leave Adrianople'. The Turks were portrayed as losers by default. 'After all, if it [Turkey] does not surrender, it faces destruction in any way'.<sup>45</sup> The 12 December 1912 issue spoke that 'Turkey needs to come to terms with the fact that it has been beaten' and that it should 'save what can be saved',<sup>46</sup> whilst the 8 November issue wrote that 'the Turks were simply decimated. Their already demoralized troops have been

<sup>38</sup> Gawrych, *The culture and politics*, p. 308. Note the importance of the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie uprising in Macedonian history, when an organized revolt was staged against the rule of the Ottomans in 1903.

<sup>39</sup> Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman*, p. 285-286.

<sup>40</sup> Ungor, *Mass Violence*, p. 76.

<sup>41</sup> Pezo, *Violence, Forced Migration*, p. 58.

<sup>42</sup> Boeckh, *Von den Balkankriegen*, p. 165.

<sup>43</sup> Halaçoğlu, *Balkan harbi Sırasında*.

<sup>44</sup> See: Adanır, *Non-Muslims*.

<sup>45</sup> *Politika*, *Opsada Jedrena*, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> *Politika*, *Odugovlačenje*, p. 1.



completely destroyed'.<sup>47</sup> In order to boast the perception of the competence of the attacking army, the *Politika* wrote that Turks claimed Adrianople is invincible, and that Germans claimed it was one of the most fortified points in Europe. To stress the resilience of the army, the text claimed that 'over 500 cannons are spitting fire on our troops', that still endure. The fighters from the Timok region were additionally described as 'mountainous, small and tough soldiers ... who remind all too well of the Japanese by their fortitude these days'. Nevertheless, the majority of the combatants on the side of the Balkan league during the siege of Adrianople were Bulgarian,<sup>48</sup> rather rarely figuring in the textual production. The occasional report, however, such as the one on 18 October 1912, mentions that the Bulgarians have reached Adrianople, and that the fall of Adrianople was only 'a question of time',<sup>49</sup> but praise for Bulgarian troops was seldom seen. To the contrary, the 25 January 1913 issue, in the 'The Key to Success' text, Bulgarians were depicted in a rather negative fashion: 'Chauvinist Bulgarian papers, together with the foreign press, hostile to us, consistently underrepresent the success of Serbian weaponry and the importance of our victories ... In several newspapers, they go as far as to claim the Bulgarians did everything, and Serbs – nothing!'. These Bulgarian 'chauvinists' were seen to 'ignore Serbian sacrifice and Serbian blood, as if Serbian blood was not as precious as Bulgarian!'.<sup>50</sup> The Serbian army was presented as coming to aid to Bulgaria, that has not had so much success; without the Serbian army, there would be no victory.

In the 14 October 1912 edition, encomiastic rhetoric targeted Serbian combatants. Officers were praised for their 'sincere wishes' to 'liberate the Serbian tribe'. In Kumanovo, 'Serbian officers have shown examples of largest energy and courage', as the 'largest of our officers, commanders of battalions and regiments, put their chests out towards enemy fire together with the smallest'. To those who have died on the field of battle, *Politika* showed more praise, calling them heroes 'that will always be spoken of', examples of 'patriotism and courage'; 'our pride is strong, when we know how eagerly and gladly they die for the freedom of their brethren. Their deeds are great, and the only compensation for their great feats will be the gratitude of the Serbian People'.<sup>51</sup> The combatants were presented as patriotic cannon fodder, for lack of better words, with the 'Serbian People', with large caps, emphasizing the importance of the ethnic, national element. The Whole took utter precedence over the Individual. The 25 October 1912 issue published an article devoted entirely to the army's officer corps, entitled 'Our officers.'. Praise of their courage and sacrifice was the running pathos of the text, where they were presented as 'looking like a torrent to the defending Turks'. The war plan of the army is reported as a 'masterpiece of military skill'. The whole of Europe 'stands

<sup>47</sup> *Politika*, *Sukob dva interesa*, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> See primarily: *The Bulgarians at Adrianople*, also: Wasti, *The 1912–13 Balkan Wars*; see also: Hall, *Balkan Wars (1912-1913)*.

<sup>49</sup> *Politika*, *Bitka na Kumanovu*, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Politika*, *Ključ uspeha*, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Politika*, *Srpski junaci*, p. 1.



in awe, and the excellent officer corps and our fearless army are to thank for that'. An essential praise of death for one's people and country is given yet again, as the officers 'did their duty and the cost of their own lives', 'under a rain of bullet fire'.<sup>52</sup> Death for the nation was consistently portrayed as noble, courageous and positive. Praise for 'brotherly Montenegro'<sup>53</sup> is seen in the *Politika* as a common trope as well, though the rhetoric cannot compare for the encomiastic discourse on Serbian troops. On 18 October 1912, the article 'The Results so Far.' mentions the 'small, but heroic Montenegro' that 'keeps winning battles'.<sup>54</sup>

Turks were regular antagonists of the rhetoric. On 18 January 1913, *Politika* wrote that the Turks 'have been tricking everybody' at the peace talks at Catalca. They 'attack their enemies from the back', they are 'tireless in tricking their opponents'.<sup>55</sup> The 'government of Constantinople' is seen as having exchanged 'political wisdom for murders and riots'.<sup>56</sup> The constant depiction of Turkey and Turks in a negative light was matched and overshadowed by the depiction of Albanians, which were commonly accused of a wide range of transgressions and being less than human, lacking in civilization and judgment alike, to what we shall now turn our attention.

### Albanians in Politika

Albanians were seen as subhuman more often than not. As one of the goals of the First Balkan War was to create the mythological Great Serbia and reclaim the lands of Kosovo and Metohija (a goal that has fueled violence by the end of the 20th century as well), known together with Macedonia as 'Old Serbia' (*Stara Srbija*), populated mostly by Albanians, a staunch anti-Albanian rhetoric needed to be created. Thus, as just one example out of many, the 20 November 1912 edition spoke about the belligerence of the Albanian nation, a nation that 'cannot be proved in ways other than force'. The Albanians were depicted as 'a group of wild, separate tribes', that can 'attain state unity only by means of force', as 'about their competence for a normal, administrative, common life with obligations, we shall not even speak'. Their 'character, and their primitive feelings prove always and everywhere that they are always dominated only by instinct, which explains the habits and customs of this "nation"; the subhuman animalization ripe in almost every second sentence. This 'rule of instinct makes them lack reflexion and judgment, which raise one to a higher form of life, towards more general principles of rule and behavior'. The very mention that they are 'incompetent' to be 'raised to a higher form of life' speaks volumes about the depiction of the Albanians as intrinsically inhuman. That is why the Albanian is presented as 'tricky, both politically and in a religious sense', and that is why 'they are present in all possible faiths',

<sup>52</sup> *Politika, Naši oficiri*, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Politika, Šta se čeka*, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Politika, Bitka na Kumanovu*, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Politika, Prekid primirja*, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> *Politika, Turska i Balkan*, p. 1.

as they are seen as a people who cannot keep faith in a single religion.<sup>57</sup> The 19 December 1912 issue wrote that Albanians are ‘uncultured, a people without any national consciousness, without culture and tradition’, which now create problems to the whole of Europe, especially Serbia, in which it was claimed that an ‘ethnic unity in Albania is just a myth. The Albanians have neither the unity of type, of language or faith. They have randomly been Pagan, Orthodox Christian, Muslims, Catholics ... It is a far stretch to talk about a nationality ... they do not constitute a people’.<sup>58</sup> Albanians were discursively denied anything that could constitute an element of nationhood, from religion, via language, to nationality and ethnicity.

In order to shift the responsibility from the discourse on Albania – indicating that the writers were aware of their own rhetoric – the 28 October 1912 edition pegs the blame onto Austria: ‘the question of Albania is an artificially made one. Austria made it’. Albania is ‘created out of many tribes – different by faith, customs and ways of life – with patriarchal governance’,<sup>59</sup> even though Serbia itself was a patriarchal society.<sup>60</sup> Austria was blamed for trying to create the Albanian state due to the fact that Serbia was winning in the war, and the support for Albania and Albanians was seen with Serbia in the spotlight. Though Austria-Hungary did try to stifle Serbia’s war efforts – mostly via diplomacy and discourse – it remains an open question of whether the support for Albania was solely conducted for these purposes. The 8 November 1912 issue described Austria’s interests as ‘not having a particularly ethical foundation’ for its actions.<sup>61</sup> Another article from 1 November 1912 inquires about ‘what Austria wants’, saying that Austria has ‘interests in ruling over us’ and that its idea of supporting the creation of an independent Albanian state is ‘absurd’.<sup>62</sup> Given the political context at the time and the strained Austria-Serbia relations (that will result in the outbreak of the Great War but two years later), this comes of no surprise, especially with the Serbian disparagement of Albanians.

The 9 December 1912 issue spoke about Albania as ‘being comical’ as a state, ‘if the state existed at all’. It furthermore needed to be ‘divided between Serbia and Greece’ in order for Serbia to ‘secure peace in the future’.<sup>63</sup> The phrase ‘the Albanian question’ was used often, such as in the 28 December 1912 issue. The Albanians were presented as invaders on the ancient holy land of Kosovo: ‘In Kosovo, which was the center of the Serbian tsardom in the Middle Ages, and which was populated by Serbs only forty years ago, the Albanians have multiplied in numbers, driving away the poor Serbian people with their monstrosities’.<sup>64</sup> War was thus a necessary endeavor that would free the seat of the medieval Serbian state and those Serbs who were populating the region. On 28 January 1913, an article entitled ‘Is there any justice?’ was published on the front page, writing about a ‘vital question for

<sup>57</sup> Politika, *Nova nacija*, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> Politika, *Šta je Albanija*, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> Politika, *Albanija*, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> See, for instance: Halpern, Kaser, and Wagner, *Patriarchy in the Balkans*.

<sup>61</sup> Politika, *Sukob dva interesa*, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Politika, *Šta hoće Austrija?*, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Politika, *Srpski zahtevi*, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> Politika, *Evropa i Balkan*, p. 1.

the Serb people – the question of restraining Albania'; the 'Albanian question will be the most difficult of questions'. Serbia was said to have engaged in war against Turkey 'to free the suffering Serbian people', yet in the very next sentence, the goal of the war was rhetorically shifted towards 'freedom from Albanians': the Serb army 'has spilled so much blood, lost so many sons, fought as we have never fought before in order to free our brethren of Albanian murderers and evildoers'.<sup>65</sup> The position of the discursive Other shifted as was deemed necessary in order to support the necessary discourse. There was a bountiful choice of enemies, both within the war, as well as without.

### Conclusion

The *Politika* has played the part of a combined Yes Man and Town Crier for the government since its inception. Support for government policies and actions was a defining moment in the daily's rhetoric during the First Balkan war; *Politika* will continue in the same direction during the age of Communism, shifting from nationalism to Communism, and vice versa in the 1990s, during the breakup of Yugoslavia, presenting wide avenues for further research. In this article, we have presented *Politika's* support for the main governmental action of late 1912 – the decision to engage in military combat against Turkey, together with Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria. The war was depicted as just and necessary. The 16 January 1913 issue wrote that the 'Balkan war does not only represent the victory of competent nations over incompetent ones and the freeing of the slaves that have been tortured for five centuries: it has its own great moral significance ... No war in the past hundred years had such deep meaning and great consequences'. Turks were presented as an 'incompetent nation' that got what it deserved. A significant amount of textual production was given to Albania, whose people were, more often than not, portrayed in a significantly worse manner than even the Turks; they were denied humanity. Serb combatants were praised, enemy combatants were denigrated. The war was 'just', the armies 'brave' and 'noble. Giving one's life for such a noble cause was deemed virtuous and brave. Similarities are found in the other media (such as the Illustrated War Chronicle, for instance), that are yet to see scholarly research.

Interestingly enough, the *Politika* reported less on Turkey after the Balkan Wars, and concentrated on depicting Austria negatively. An occasional article against Turkey was still to be found, such as the 31 March 1914 article 'Turks threaten!' (p. 2), regarding a diplomatic incident, but the general pathos of the reporting turned towards Austria as the 'Other', indicating plentiful avenues for further research.

<sup>65</sup> *Politika, Ima li pravde?*, p. 1.

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## POVZETEK

**Vojnohujskaški »prvi srbski dnevnik«: »Politika« v času prve balkanske vojne 1912–13**

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Časnik *Politika* se sam pogosto oglašuje kot »najstarejši srbski dnevnik«. Vsekakor je bil eden prvih časopisov, ki se je prilagodil takrat rastočemu evropskemu dnevnočasopisnemu izdajateljstvu, vendar je bil vedno znan tudi po svoji provladni drži. Med prvo balkansko vojno v letih 1912–13 je širil vojnohujskaški svetovni nazor v skladu z vladnim prizadevanjem za obrambo pred osmanskimi vplivi na Balkanu in za vnovično pridobitev ozemlja, takrat poimenovanega »južna Srbija«, t. j. današnje Kosovo in Severna Makedonija. Skoraj stoletje pozneje je časopis podpiral srbska prizadevanja v času vojn ob razpadu Jugoslavije. Članek se posveča retoriki časopisa med prvo balkansko vojno in jo kategorizira v skladu z najpogostejšimi temami v arhivu Narodne knjižnice Srbije. V Narodni knjižnici Srbije so v zadnjem času digitalizirali vrsto pomembnih zgodovinskih virov, nakar so *Politiko* umaknili iz svoje digitalne knjižnice, zato tovrstne raziskave dandanes terjajo več napora. Glavne ugotovitve razkrivajo, da je *Politika* povzdigovala srbske enote, jih prikazovala kot pogumne, domoljubne in herojske ter pogosto omalovaževala vpliv zaveznikov (posebej Bolgarije in bitke pri Adrianoplu). Albance je prikazovala kot necivilizirane podljudi brez človeških lastnosti. Podobno je poročala tudi o turški vojski, jo opisovala kot strahopetno in nesposobno.





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