

# FAILED CONSPIRACY: Organisation and Preparation of the Serbian Uprising against Ottoman Rule in 1840–1841

*Original Scientific Article*

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*This paper shows and analyses preparations for Serb uprising against Ottoman rule in 1840 and 1841. It explains Niš rebellion of 1841 was just a part of uprising planned for much wider area, but accomplished only in The sancak of Niš. The role of prince Nikola Vasojević in uprising preparations was indicated. How the uprising was financed and what was the role of prince Miloš Obrenović remain unanswered questions. The paper is mostly based on Serbian, Russian, British, French and Austrian sources.*

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**Key words:** Niš Rebellion, 1841, Nikola Vasojević, uprising, prince Mihailo.

NUMEROUS INTERNAL CRISES WERE SHAKING Ottoman Empire from Treaty of Adrianople in 1829 to establishing of Straits Convention in 1841. Reasons were twofold. Traditional Muslim elites in provinces provided armed resistance to centralization and administrative reforms conducted by the Porte, trying to preserve their former privileges. Christian population, *rayah*, was starting rebellions motivated by social, economic and national reasons, having nearby desirable examples of the Principality of Serbia and independent Kingdom of Greece. No doubt, the biggest challenge the Empire was facing were two Egyptian crises. Great European powers, with an exception of France during the Second Egyptian Crisis 1839–1841, followed in that period the policy of protecting Otto-

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man Empire and, after secession of Greece, of respecting its territorial integrity. Russia, which was considered protector of Balkan's Orthodox Christians, since bilateral agreement with Turkey concluded in Hünkâr Iskelesi in 1833 until Straits Convention between Russia, Great Britain, France, Austria and Prussia in 1841 was formal ally and the protector of the Bosphorus Empire. The principle of legitimism, proclaimed at the Congress of Vienna and for the first time contested regarding the Eastern Question on the subject of the Greek revolution, had been confirmed again. Under such circumstances, without support of one or more big powers, prospects of successful Balkans Christians' rebellion against the Ottoman rule were, objectively speaking, non-existent (Anderson 1956, 71–109; Shaw, Shaw 1977, 26–58; Popović 1996, 161–165).

Formal constitution and territorial defining of autonomous Principality of Serbia was finished in 1833. As a Christian and national Serbian principality and a state where villagers were land owners, Serbia was a role model for the rayah in surrounding Ottoman provinces. Hoping to improve their social and economic position and even to conjoin their territory to Serbia, Christians from neighboring Ottoman regions started several unsuccessful uprisings since 1833. Aware of current international relations, but also of the necessity to consolidate Serbia, Serbian ruler Miloš Obrenović did not support those uprisings, but at the same time maintained relations with both Christian leaders and local Turkish pashas, retaining his influence over them. The same policy towards neighboring Christians was continued by his son and successor, prince Mihailo Obrenović (Stojančević 1981, 238–240; Ljušić 1986, 381–393). Among those uprisings, the most important was the Serbian uprising in Niš, Leskovac, Pirot and Prokuplje that lasted from 17th to 23rd of April 1841<sup>1</sup>, and is known as the Niš Rebellion. It was fully elaborated in literature (Романски 1912; Дамянов 1992; Andrejević 2003; Stojančević 1971; Stojančević 1981), even its particulars (Nedeljković 2012). Certain authors considered the Niš Rebellion to be only a part of an uprising planned to include a much wider area which, due to certain conditions, was not accomplished anywhere else except for the sancak of Niš (Stojančević 1971, 159–161; Stojančević 1981, 242; Дамянов 1992, 27–29). Since wider background of the prepared uprising was not thoroughly researched, this paper has intention to, as much as conspiratorial character of this topic and scarce sources allow, elucidate in wider sense the

1 All dates in main text are given according to the new calendar, in the footnotes when sources of Serbian origin are cited according to both old and new calendar.

preparations and the organization of the Serbian uprising against Ottoman rule of 1840–1841, the one that started in April 1841 only in the sancak of Niš. For the purpose of clarity, the exposition is divided into two entities. In the first one new and already known facts regarding preparations and organization of the uprising are discussed, in the second one the role of self-proclaimed prince of the upland tribe of Vasojević, Nikola Radonjić Vasojević, is considered.

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The centralization of the state and reforms based on contemporary European models conveyed by sultan Mahmud II brought in 1830s a breakdown of power of hereditary Muslim elites in the Balkans – the captains in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albanian pashas in northern Albania, Metohija, Kosovo, basin of Južna Morava and Vardar. At the same time, the Ottoman Empire was defeated in the war against Russia and forced to form an alliance with its traditional enemy, it lost Greece formally and Serbia *de facto*. On the other hand, the position of Christians did not improve at all, on the contrary. At the beginning of the Second Egyptian Crisis in 1839, sultan Mahmud II died and was succeeded by sixteen-years-old Abdulmecid. Shortly after, in November of the same year, Imperial Rescript of Gülhane was proclaimed, in which the sultan promised the introduction of new legislation that would guarantee equal legal security of life, property and honor, equitable and statutory taxations and the imposition of general obligation to serve in the regular army. Anyway, provisions of this Imperial Rescript were not enforced immediately and everywhere, partly because of lack of actual administrative capacities, partly because of lack of political willingness. Therefore, the Imperial Rescript of Gülhane remained an unfulfilled promise, as far as regions and times discussed in this paper are concerned (Shaw, Shaw, 55–61, 83–88; Anderson 1956, 107–108; Stojančević 1971, 45–68; Popović 1996, 161). The consequences of this briefly enumerated events were twofold. Muslims of Balkan provinces regarded sultans Mahmud II and Abdulmecid as traitors of tradition and Empire foundations; their sympathies were predominantly on the side of the Egyptian outlaw and potential throne usurper, Mehmed Ali Pasha (Muhammad Ali of Egypt). Christians were disappointed by unfulfilled promises proclaimed by the Imperial Rescript of Gülhane and that reinforced their belief that realistic improvement of their position could be expected only if they extricate from Ottoman rule.

Mihailo Obrenović received the *berat* naming him Serbian prince in 1839 in Wallachia, where he resided in emigration together with his father. In November of the same year he traveled to Istanbul to visit the sultan, and via Edirne, Sofia and Niš came to Serbia in March 1840 to seize power (Ljušić 1995, 141–146). In March and April 1840, customs outpost Raška, which, among other regular duties, was also collecting intelligence on conditions in surrounding Ottoman provinces from secret informants, merchants and travelers, came to knowledge that news spread among Serbs and Turks of Novi Pazar kaza that sultan added to Serbia “Novi Pazar, Niš, Mitrovica, Vučitrn, Priština to Prizren and Bosnia”. Of course, such propaganda encouraged Serbian hopes and caused disquiet among the Turks, determined not to give up land without a fight. It is unknown who exactly was spreading such news.<sup>2</sup>

In May 1840 outpost Raška was informed that Serbs in vicinity of Novi Pazar are very upset because of tyranny. Several Serbian village chiefs from Turkey gathered in the same month at Vasilina Česma, point at southwest border of Serbia, and conveyed to the stationed clerks that Serbs cannot abide Turkish tyranny and that they were determined to defend themselves from it. They required from prince Mihailo to help with ammunition and flour and therefore they sent to him as their assignees merchants from Sjenica, Nikola Filipović and Bogdan Nikolić. In then Serbian capital Kragujevac they handed the prince an appeal asking “to rescue our people (of Sjenica, Novi Pazar etc.) from Turkish tyranny”. The prince answered them to expect no assistance from Serbia and that they would themselves be responsible for negative consequences such an uprising might cause. The two assignees returned to Sjenica. Since local Turks found out their reason for the trip to Serbia, their lives were in danger and towards the end of 1840 they were forced to escape to Serbia. Convinced that no “business” (uprising) – will take place, “at least in the next year” i.e. 1841, they asked the prince to let them transfer their families permanently from Turkey to Serbia for security reasons, which was granted. Not all their compatriots shared that conviction. Outpost Raška on February 22 1841 received news that “Serbs across the border, Turkish subjects, have united and are planning to attack the Turks because of Turkish tyranny”. Some

2 Arhiv Srbije (Archives of Serbia) (AS), Ministarstvo inostranih dela (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (MID)-Vnuterno odeljenje (Interior Department) (V), 1840, 1840, F 4 R 101, Ministry of Interior to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, № 541, 1/13. 4. 1840 and s№ 696, 1/13. 5. 1840.

time later, on March 13, 1841, priest Mihailo Bačanin from the village of Trebići in Novi Pazar kaza, very close to the Serbian border, sent an appeal to Serbian authorities on behalf of “all local people to escape from Turkish tyranny and”, especially significant, “to be taken under protection of Serbian state”<sup>3</sup>

Baron Lieven, a Russian diplomat who was, in 1840, in an official mission in the Ottoman capital, received two collective complaints of Christians from Skopje and Prizren regions, written in June and August of that year. Complaining of various atrocities committed by Turkish authorities and the Albanians, Christians addressed the Russian emperor for protection.<sup>4</sup> In November 1840, a monk, Dimitrije Arsenijević from Monastery Gorioč in the village of Istok, Metohija, visited Kragujevac. On November 20 he submitted an appeal to prince Mihailo, obviously written upon dictation by some Serbian clerk because of its civic orthography, not used at the time in the region Arsenijević came from. It was emphasized in the appeal that Serbian people suffer “ultimate violence” from Turks, and “Christian monasteries” are exposed to never ceasing demands. Relatively close to Gorioč were monasteries Pečka patrijaršija, Dečani and Devič. The monk asked the prince to help him travel to Constantinople, so he could ask the Porte and Patriarchate to obtain “some mercy” for the local population and monasteries. He intended to seek protection from the state and ecclesiastical authorities in the Ottoman capital, for “violence that Turks now practice in those districts has no limits”. Several “districts” were mentioned, meaning *kazas* or *nahias*. Further on in the appeal, he mentioned “all the Serbs living in the Old Serbia” hoped prince Miloš will liberate them from Turkish rule, and now transferred the same hope to prince Mihailo. This statement is important for it is a testimony of the wish of the Serbs from that part of Turkey to join Serbia, but for further exposition in this paper even more important is the use of the term “Old Serbia”. In numerous sources of Serbian

3 AS, MID-Inostrano odeljenje (Foreign Department) (I), 1840, F 1 R 90, Ministry of Interior to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, s№ 775 and 776, 14/26. 5. 1840; Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ministry of Interior, i№ 710, 20. 5/1. 6. 1840; 1841, Delovodni protokol (Book of Protocol) (DP), № 389; Ministarstvo unutrašnjih dela (Ministry of Interior) (MUD)-Sanitetsko odeljenje (Health Department) (S), 1840, 1840, F 6 R 509; isto, 1841, DP, № 219, 255, 519, 1037.

4 Российский государственный архив древних актов (РГАДА), Ф. 3 (Разряд III), Оп. 1 (Дополнения), ед. хр. 7, People's demands from Skopje and surroundings addressed to the Russian emperor, 15/27. 6. 1840; people's demands from Prizren and surroundings addressed to the Russian emperor, 13/25. 8. 1840. My gratitude to Danko Leovac, who provided these documents.

origin from the period 1839–1841 we examined, we never found another example of use of this term by Serbs from Serbia or Turkey. Finally, Arsenijević wrote his compatriots gave him empowerment to ask from the prince mercy or “riddance”. He confirmed his credibility by presenting original letters of recommendation by competent episcopate, most probably for the Porte or Patriarchate, and they are among the documents we examined. That fact proves authenticity of his statement. Since Arsenijević was Turkish subject, the prince helped him obtain from the Belgrade pasha a travel document for the journey to Constantinople, and paid his travel expenses. He ordered Serbian unofficial representative in Constantinople, Jovan German, to give support to Arsenijević and to facilitate his reception at the Russian embassy (Ljušić 2011, 47–49).<sup>5</sup> Mentioned data do not confirm an uprising was being prepared in Skopje, Prizren and Peć kazas in 1840, but definitely confirm that Christians were upset and discontented. Anyway, once the Niš Rebellion was crushed, a group of ten rebel “leaders or commanders” escaped on April 29 1841 to Serbia near Aleksinac. Among them was a monk, Antim Arsenijević from Dečani monastery, and reports of the Serbian border authorities state he happened to be in Vlasotince at the time of the uprising, collecting benefactions for the monastery.<sup>6</sup> The fact Antim was emphasized as one of the rebel leaders brings about the question was he really in Vlasotince for the named reason, or maybe came there because of the uprising, for that would imply certain connection between the rebels and the Serbs of Metohija. Unfortunately, that is the only contemporary source, so this question remains unanswered. According to a single, but fully authentic testimony from 1875, in uprising preparations on his territory, probably in Kosovo, a merchant from Priština, Vasilije Đorđević, was engaged, and for that reason he traveled to Belgrade.<sup>7</sup> Regrettably, no other data on his involvement are available. When organizing the uprising in Kosovo is discussed, several documents exaggerate the role of former Vučitrn teacher, certain Marko Avramović. Anyway, the author of all these sources is Marko himself. On the other hand, independent sources testifying on him present image of a self-seeking person, with plenty of criminal acts and frauds in his biography. Therefore we consider

5 AS, MID-I, 1840, F 2 R 33.

6 AS, MUD-S, 1841, F 3 R 163, Quarantine station Aleksinac to Ministry of Interior, № 366, 17/29. 4. 1840; Andrejević 2003, 112.

7 AS, Ministarstvo prosvete – Prosvetno odeljenje (Ministry of education – Educational department), 1875, F 9 R 103.

that his role in uprising organization in Kosovo cannot be trusted and accordingly will not be presented. Of course, that does not mean preparations and organizing did not take place there. The uprising had been prepared, but no rebellion erupted (Popov 1870, 435–436; Peruničić 1968, 237–238, 242–243).<sup>8</sup>

Since preparations and organization around Niš, Leskovac, Pirot and Prokuplje were presented in full detail in the existing literature, primarily according to deposition of one of the rebel leaders, Stanko Atanasković of Vlasotince (Stojančević 1971, 160–161; Andrejević 2003, 65–70; Nedeljković 2012, 17–18; Vučković 1957, 25–26),<sup>9</sup> we will discuss them just briefly, denoting certain additions and corrections. Chief organizer of the conspiracy was a priest from the village of Gradnja in Leskovac kaza, Đorđe Stojković<sup>10</sup>. The village of Gradnja is situated in the region of Poljanica, close to the source of Veternica river, south of Leskovac. Stojković entered Serbia near Aleksinac, in April 1840. Upon request by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was taken to Kragujevac on June 10. Together with the priest, the Commissioner of Aleksinac district sent to the capital several letters he received from Turkey.<sup>11</sup> There is a high probability that among them was an appeal from Christians of Leskovac and villages of Leskovac *nahia* sent to prince Mihailo. In it, they metaphorically announced their wish to adjoin Serbia, specified they can not stand Turkish tyranny any more, enumerated different examples of maltreatment and asked the prince to intervene at the Porte on their behalf (Milićević 1884, 47–48). Đorđe Stojković remained in the capital until June 16. For his temporary place of residence monastery Vračevšnica was first appropriated, later on Kalenić.

8 AS, Mitropolija beogradska (Metropolitanate of Belgrade) (MB), 1842, № 664; 1843, № 282, 315; MID-V, 1841, F 4 R 102; MUD-S, 1840, DP № 1312, 1570, 1578, 1866, 1873, 1881, 1943; 1841, DP № 257, 297, 508; MUD-Policajno odeljenje (Police Department) (P), 1839, DP № 1475; Pokloni i otkupi (Presents and Purchases) (PO), 74/3, 78/149; Ilija Garašanin, № 782; Arhiv Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti (Archives of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts) (ASANU), Društvo srpske slovesnosti, 1851, № 40; РГАДА, Ф. 3 (Разряд III), Оп. 1 (Дополнения), ед. хр. 8, Lieven to NN, 3/15. 4. 1841.

9 NB, GJ, R 558/V/12, Original from interrogation of Stanko Atanasković, 22. 10/3. 11. 1842, Beograd.

10 Existing literature erroneously cite his surname as Janković, according to a Turkish report translated into German, where Serbian names and toponyms were, as a rule, were misspelt (Stojančević 1971, 159; Andrejević 2003, 65; Nedeljković 2012, 17; Романски 1912, 92).

11 AS, MID-V, 1840, F 4 R 22; F 4 R 101, Ministry of Interior to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, s№ 696, 1/13. 5. 1840.

Both monasteries are in vicinity of Kragujevac. Serbian authorities permitted him to return to Turkey on March 31 1841.<sup>12</sup> He spent eleven months in Serbia, working on the uprising organization. From Serbia, Stojković contacted certain prominent Serbs from surroundings of Niš, Leskovac, Prokuplje and Pirot and convened with them on several occasions in the second half of 1840 at the border near Aleksinac, sometimes in the presence of Aleksinac district commissioner and other Serbian officials of lower rank. The uprising was agreed upon at those meetings; people from Turkey, each one in his own region, were spreading conspiracy network. Familiar with all these activities and actively supporting them was priest in ordinary of prince Mihailo, Pavle Karano–Tvrković, an escaped leader of a former Serbian rebellion in Bosnia (Stranjaković 1932, 266–267; Popović 1950, 381–382, 405–410). Among persons Đorđe met with were Miloje Jovanović from the village of Kamenica near Niš, who was later killed in the uprising, Nikola–Koca Cvetković from Leskovac and Stanko Atanasković from Vlasotince. In December 1840, upon agreement with Đorđe, a delegation of five Serbs from Niš and surroundings came to the border near Aleksinac, aiming to go to Kragujevac and complain to prince about the position they were in, and ask from him advice and help. They reported to the border authorities that people in Niš and its surroundings were ready for rebellion. They were allowed neither in Serbia, nor in front of the prince. From prince's office they were informed not to expect any help, but to travel to Constantinople and submit their complaints to the Porte, with support from local Serbian diplomatic representative (Andrejević 2003, 67–68).<sup>13</sup> Available sources do not explain if any of them really visited the Ottoman capital. Anyway, Russian diplomat baron Lieven who was at the time in Constantinople, on January 25, 1841 informed the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, count Nesselrode, that situation of Christians is desperate in all of the Balkans, and critical in The sancak of Niš, since Christians are exposed to all forms of maltreatment. He emphasized that Muslims in the Balkans were united against reforms, they opposed the Imperial Rescript of Gülhane, and as a special enemy of the Christians he singled out the commander of The sancak of Niš, *muhasil* Mustafa Sabri Pasha. After that,

12 AS, MB, 1840, № 351; 1841, № 160.

13 AS, MID-I, 1840, F 1 R 90, Head of the Aleksinac County to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, № 2121, 30. 11/12. 12. 1840; Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Head of the Aleksinac County, i№ 1737, 7/19. 12. 1840; MID-V, 1840, F 4 R 22, Ministry of Interior to Prince Mihailo, s№ 1884, 7/19. 12. 1840.



baron Lieven was sent from Constantinople to Serbia to mediate in solving some Serbian internal political problems. He passed through the sancak of Niš, gathering on his way information on local situation, and on February 24 he wrote that Christian population in the sancak of Niš should be given financial support and efforts should be made to have Mustafa Sabri Pasha replaced. In that record he mentioned Nikola Srndaković, one of the leaders of the Niš Rebellion from region of Zaplanje in vicinity of Niš, but it remains unclear if some money was sent to him or anybody else.<sup>14</sup> Baron Lieven entered Serbia near Aleksinac on March 16, spent some time in Kragujevac, on March 28 went to Belgrade, and via Zemun he proceeded to Russia.<sup>15</sup> By all accounts, in Serbia he received Nesselrode's instruction to warn prince Mihailo not to meddle at all into possible rebellions in the Ottoman Empire. He told the prince that no connections between the rebels and official Serbia may be revealed, situation was different and required different approach than that in 1833, when after Serbian rebellions in Turkey prince Miloš adjoined six nahias to Serbia. On the other hand, Lieven suggested to the prince to maintain secret connections with Christians in the Ottoman Empire, explicitly mentioning Milivoje Jovanović. During his stay in Serbia, Lieven personally talked to the priest Đorđe Stojković and another conspirator, Stamenko Cakić from the village of Jastrebac near Vlasotince and, according to the account of Stanko Atanasković, he gave them certain encouragement regarding the planned uprising. Whether from them or somebody else, Lieven received one report saying that the uprising was prepared and that in each town and many villages the most prominent people were appointed to be rebel leaders. He was aware of the fact that at the beginning of April, just before the uprising, a delegation of eight conspirators from Turkey visited Belgrade and secretly conveyed to prince Mihailo all complaints on Turkish terror. According to Lieven's cognizance, the uprising was organized not only in Niš, but also in Priština and Prizren sancaks.<sup>16</sup> That same delegation of eight or only some of its members also addressed in Belgrade the Russian consul asking for

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14 РГАДА, Ф. 3 (Разряд III), Оп. 1 (Дополнения), ед. хр. 8, Lieven to Nesselrode, 13/25. 1. 1841; Lieven's note 12/24. 2. 1841. My gratitude to Danko Leovac who provided these documents.

15 AS, MUD – P, 1841, DP, № 1041, 1088.

16 РГАДА, Ф. 3 (Разряд III), Оп. 1 (Дополнения), ед. хр. 8, Nesselrode to Lieven, 2/14. 3. 1841; Lieven to Prince Mihailo, 17/29. 3. 1841; NN to Lieven, 1/14. 4. 1841; Lieven to NN, 3/15. 4. 1841. My gratitude to Danko Leovac who provided these documents.

Russian support, but he unambiguously denied it, advising them to surrender to sultan's will (Кудрявцева 2002, 186).

Russian politics should be considered in a context of the fact that in 1840, in negotiations with Great Britain and later Austria and Prussia, Russia waived its right to renew the Treaty of Hünkâr Iskelesi (Unkiar Skelessi) that was expiring in 1841, in order to spoil British-French entente and isolate France in the Second Egyptian Crisis. Filip Brunov, Russian diplomat who led negotiations with Great Britain in 1840, and baron Lieven suggested to Nesselrode even in 1840 that it would be favorable for Russia to have an outbreak of Christian rebellion that Turks would crush, for Russia could use it to prove Turkey that it still, despite its contract obligations, controls Christians, and by that also the Ottoman possessions in Europe. Lieven even considered Russia should incite such a rebellion, in case none is forthcoming. Nesselrode denied these suggestions, fearing for the faith of Christians, for Russia objectively could not save them from Turkish reprisals.<sup>17</sup> Lieven's opinion on desirable Russian policy explains why he, against Nesselrode's instructions, gave certain encouragement to the conspirators.

According to testimony of Stanko Atanasković, priest Đorđe Stojković and Stamenko Cakić also talked to princess Ljubica, mother of prince Mihailo, who promised them "big help". She told them to secretly deliver written and signed statements with complaints and requests, and to unanimously start the uprising afterwards. One such statement that we managed to find was signed by 27 persons from Leskovac nahia, first among them Stanko Atanasković. They "on behalf of all the Serbs in Bulgaria" adduced to the prince, to whom the statement was addressed, they can no longer tolerate tyranny so are determined to commence the uprising and asked him to "embrace them under his rule".<sup>18</sup> This deed of princess alone is enough to raise suspicions on possible involvement of prince Miloš in the whole conspiracy. Mentioned statement is indeed addressed to the prince, but it does not specify which one, so it could have been addressed to either Mihailo or Miloš. The text itself is such that it can be interpreted equivocally, intended for Mihailo or Miloš. The single document of Serbian origin known to us that indicates

17 РГАДА, Ф. 3 (Разряд II), Оп. 1 (Дела, относящиеся до внутренней и внешней политики России), ед. хр. 101, Secret correspondence Brunov-Nesselrode on Eastern Question 1840; Ф. 3 (Разряд III), Оп. 1 (Дополнения), ед. хр. 7, Lieven to Nesselrode, 15/27. 9. 1840.

involvement of prince Miloš in the conspiracy is the letter of princess Ljubica to her husband, written on January 22 1841 in Kragujevac. First she informed him that “certain letters from Vidin” arrived lately to Kragujevac and in them “some people” report they have reliable knowledge prince Miloš intends to cause wobbling in all of Bulgaria and, after conquering Niš and Vidin, to adjoin them to Serbia. The rest of that letter markedly proves those statements are a result of plot by unnamed prince’s enemies.<sup>19</sup> This letter can be interpreted as a princess Ljubica’s warning to her husband that the secret was disclosed. Romanian historian Konstantin Veliki presented solid arguments, although not undeniable proof, that prince Miloš, together with a Wallachian dignitary, organized the so called First Braila rebellion in July 1841. As a matter of fact, in the Wallachian border town of Braila one company was assembled with intention to cross the Danube, start the uprising in Bulgaria and join Niš region rebels. In overall commotion, prince Miloš would arrange to return to the Serbian throne, while his ally hoped for the Wallachian throne (Велики 1968, 75-82). The attempt failed, and also commenced only after it became general knowledge Niš rebellion was crushed. Anyway, it has to be taken into account that the Niš Rebellion started before the plan, and during the summer of 1841 certain rebel commanders tried to revive uprising in the sancak of Niš. Finally, it was just in 1841 that the Porte insisted that prince Miloš move out of Wallachia. Therefore, indications on prince Miloš’s involvement in the conspiracy do exist, but so far cannot be proved for the period before 1841.

Based on the authentic and reliable records from a book from the Church of St Jovan in the village of Gornji Matejevac, financial aspect of uprising preparations in the sancak of Niš is known. Organizers had at their disposal 18,000 emperor ducats, 30,000 zwanzigs and 15,000 rubles. This huge amount, at the meeting held on March 30, 1841 in that church, in the presence of thirty conspirators including the author of the record, a teacher from the nearby village of Draževac, Marko Popović, and Stanko Atanasković, was entrusted to three men from that village, Žika Đorić, Iga Šićerkov and Randel Eličić. The uprising commenced prematurely on April 17, and the rebels were not well supplied with weapons and equipment, so the money remained unused. According to a statement of Žika Đorić of May 8, 1841, they buried the money in some cellar when they realized that the uprising had failed. Stanko Atanasković and another man present at that

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19 AS, PO, 70/197.

meeting, Stojan Čavdar, asked in 1845 from mentioned three to give them the money to take it to Serbia, to hand it over to the State Treasury, for it was, as they stated “people’s money”, so they should entrust it to the Serbian prince, for he will sometime in the future use it for their liberation. Žika, Iga and Randel did not deliver the money, but reported Stanko and Stojan to Turkish authorities. It is not known what happened with the money. Marko Popović finished his writings in 1845 with the message that anyone who read them in the future, at the time Gornji Matejevac was adjoined to Serbia, report these three to the Serbian court, so they be requested to return the money. Prevailing opinion in the literature is that the money was collected from voluntary contributions of people of the sancak of Niš (Andrejević 1988, 246–257; Andrejević 2003, 71; Nedeljković 2012, 18). That explanation does not seem probable. Even if organizers managed to collect that sum from people, they would collect it in Turkish groschen, kind of money that was usual in everyday use, and not in ducats, rubles and zwanzigs. Therefore, it leaves open a question who and when gave the money to the rebellion organizers. Legacy that the author of this record left to future generations clearly testifies that the wish of all rebels was to adjoin Serbia.

Stanko Atanasković finished a part of his deposition on uprising organization with the words that an anonymous spy disclosed preparations to the Turks, so organizers, fearing retaliation, decided to start clashes earlier than planned. Muhasil of Niš, Mustafa Sabri Pasha, reacted right away. Having in mind that he had not enough army available, he employed irregular troops comprised of local Albanians, little artillery he had in Niš and managed, with horrible brutality towards Christians, to crush the uprising. It was only later that the Porte concentrated in Niš huge military power, and that supports the opinion it was convinced that the rebellion was not just a local one (Andrejević 2003, 75–122; Stojančević 1971, 151–159; Nedeljković 2012, 19–23). Quick defeat of the Niš Rebellion, followed by terrifying burning and plunder of Christian settlements, and absence of any help decidedly prevented outbreak of rebellions elsewhere. According to the report of Mustafa Sabri Pasha to the Porte, it is evident he knew pretty much everything about uprising preparations: that the organizer was priest Đorđe, that he stayed long in Serbia and met with the prince, baron Lieven and the Russian consul, that the delegation of Christians from regions of Prizren, Skopje, Đakovica, Peć and Novi Pazar visited Serbia and submitted its appeals, he knew names of members

50 | of that delegation, even that prince Mihailo did not support the uprising, but some

influential people from Serbia did. He informed the Porte that twelve “priests” from all provinces were sent to incite rayah uprising in Bosnia (Романски 1912, 91–93). Having that in mind, it is evident he expected an uprising on the whole territory of Old Serbia. Accordingly, from Ottoman point of view, his reaction was understandable.

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As far as it is known to us, until now in Serbian historiography only Vladimir Stojančević presented hypothesis that duke Nikola Vasojević took part in preparations of the general uprising against Ottoman rule by “Serbian people of Novi Pazar, Priština and Peć sancaks in 1840 and 1841, as well as regions of upper Lim basin”, although without concrete proofs (Stojančević 1972, 155). We consider that assumption to be correct, so here we will try to support it with certain arguments.

Nikola Vasojević (1797–1844) was born in the village of Lopate in Vasojević tribe. Since 1804 he lived with his family in Russia, where he finished military school and became a military engineering officer. He had a captain rank in 1830 when he happened to be in Constantinople, where he met members of Serbian delegation that negotiated autonomy of Serbia with the Porte. Upon their invitation he switched to serve Serbia, where as an engineer he worked on determining and mapping of Serbian–Turkish border. He did not stay long in Serbia, but switched to Ottoman employ as a military engineer in charge of terrestrial roads. His duty enabled him to travel throughout European Turkey. According to his own statement, from June 1835 to September 1837 he constantly resided in Preveza with his family, but was traveling frequently. During an official trip to Shkodër (Skadar) and Shkodër sancak in 1835, he visited Montenegro and met metropolitan Petar II Petrović Njegoš who, at that occasion, issued a charter on Vasojević’s alleged noble origins. That enabled him to take the title of “prince” (knjaz)<sup>20</sup>. On the following year he was in Bitola and Debar. Finally in 1837, upon recommendation of British consul in Preveza, colonel Saunders, he was given post of British vice consul for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, resident in Novi Pazar (Durković–Jakšić

<sup>20</sup> For further exposal it is important to highlight the difference between terms “knez” and “knjaz” in Serbian language of 19th century. “Knez” mostly denoted village chieftain of Serbs in Turkey, while “knjaz” (prince) denoted a country ruler. In Serbia, the title “knjaz” was held only by Miloš and Mihailo, while title “knez” disappeared once Serbia achieved autonomy.

1956, 28–32; Guberinić 1997, 11–32; Vasojević 1897, 191). On that same year Great Britain posted a consul in Belgrade, colonel Hodges.<sup>21</sup> Vasojević was officially subordinated to British consulate in Preveza. From there he started his journey to Novi Pazar in November 1837. He traveled via Shkodër and Cetinje, where he reconvened with Njegoš in the spring of 1838. During the dinner with the Metropolitan, he caused an incident with some derogatory remarks about prince Miloš. Njegoš informed Miloš about that, Miloš informed Hodges, and Hodges informed the Foreign Office. Among his superiors, that caused suspicion concerning his abilities, even his intentions.<sup>22</sup> Vasojević came to Novi Pazar for the first time probably at the end of March or in April 1838, to find accommodation. After that he traveled to Mostar and Travnik to officially present himself to local *viziers*, and returned to Novi Pazar in July, when the consulate became operative. In Novi Pazar Vasojević opened a school for Serbian children and, upon instructions of the Foreign Office, received complaints submitted by Serbs who complained about the position they were in. Already at that time he had an idea to found the Principality of Vasojević – Holmia and required from his tribe to submit to him as their ruler. Besides, he was spreading rumors he had authority from Great Britain and France to provide independence of Montenegro.<sup>23</sup> Arrival of the British Vice Consul in their town and his activities caused hatred among local Muslims, who accused him of conspiring with prince Miloš to usurp their land. Due to death threats, Vasojević was forced at the beginning of October to escape from Novi Pazar to Serbia.<sup>24</sup> He went to Belgrade, leaving his family in the border Serbian village of Baljevac, accommodated in the house of Lazar Tošić, Commissioner of Studenica District. He stayed in Belgrade until November 5 with Colonel Hodges. He ex-

21 The opening of British consulates in the Balkans inland resulted from British–Russian rivalry concerning the Eastern Question. It was only in 1837 that East India Company opened regular steamship line to India that led through the Mediterranean, with land transport over Suez isthmus, and through the Red Sea to the Indian ocean (Rodky 1923, 58–60). The Balkans and Ottoman Empire in general became hinterland of the emerging British “Imperial Route”.

22 AS, S/GB (Microfilmed reports of British consuls from Serbia), Foreign Office (FO) 78/337, Hodges to Foreign Office, 19. 5. 1838, Belgrade, p. 231; 78/339 Saunders to Foreign Office, 27. 1. 1838, Preveza.

23 AS, S/GB, FO 78/339, Foreign Office to Saunders, 11. 5. 1838; 78/337, Hodges to Palmerston, 12. 11. 1838, Belgrade, p. 321.

24 AS, S/GB, FO 78/337, Hodges to Foreign Office, 11. 10. 1838, Belgrade, p. 299; Nikola Vasojević to Prince Miloš, 21. 9/3. 10. 1838, Raška.

pressed bad opinion of prince Miloš, favoring his opposition, especially prince's brother Jevrem Obrenović.<sup>25</sup> He never returned to Novi Pazar, but at the end of November he visited Vasojevići. During his stay in the Ottoman Empire he met French travel writer Ami Boué, and helped him in his work (Durković–Jakšić 1957, 31–38; Guberinić 1997, 32–52; Radosavljević 2006, 352–354; Mijatović 1892, 68; Popović 1929, 295).

Suspicious concerning his loyalty and expulsion from Novi Pazar caused the discharge of Vasojević from British service in December 1838, something Hodges informed him of in January 1839.<sup>26</sup> That is why Vasojević on February 2 left from Baljevac to Preveza, to explain himself to Saunders. He traveled the route that included Novi Pazar, Peć, Đakovica, Shkodër, Berat, Ioannina, Preveza. He did not find the consul in Preveza, since he was on a leave. Vasojević returned to Serbia on May 8, 1839, crossing the border at the quarantine Mokra Gora. On his way back through Kosovo he received one complaint of Serbian chieftains and leaders from Vučitrn, Kopaonik and Kolašin nahias of Turkish terror and heard that they were determined to use force to defend themselves.<sup>27</sup> After he moved with his family (wife Anastasija, sons Altoman, Svetislav, Branislav, daughter Jelisaveta and stepson Nikola Ivanović Vasojević<sup>28</sup>) from Baljevac to Belgrade, he decided to travel to London and address Foreign Office regarding his position. Failing to achieve anything in the British capital, Vasojević came to Paris at the beginning of 1840 (Durković–Jakšić 1957, 36–38; Guberinić 1997, 52–65).

In Paris he submitted to the French government multiple memoranda. Presenting himself as a leader of independent upland tribes in the middle of European Turkey, he offered France to establish an influence zone and military alliance in case of war against Russia. Vasojević's memoranda were extremely anti-Russian. Especially significant is the memorandum of May 13, 1840. In it he claimed he

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25 AS, S/GB, FO 78/337, Hodges to Palmerston, 12. 11. 1838, Belgrade, p. 321.

26 AS, S/GB, FO 78/339, Saunders to Foreign Office, 8. 9. 1838, Preveza, pp. 62-63; Foreign Office to Hodges, 9. 11. 1838, p. 212-213; Foreign Office to Saunders, 24. 12. 1838, pp. 23-24; 78/365, Hodges to Foreign Office, 15. 2. 1839, Belgrade, p. 44 and Vasojević to Hodges, 1/13. 2. 1839, Baljevac.

27 AS, S/GB, FO, 78/365, Hodges to Foreign Office, 15. 2. 1839, Belgrade, p. 44 and Vasojević to Hodges, 1/13. 2. 1839, Baljevac; Vasojević to Hodges, ? 6. 1839, Mokra Gora, pp. 212-215; MUD-P, 1839, F 2 R 2; ASANU, Ispisi (Excerpts), I/III, kutija (box) 12, № 35/40.

28 Istorijски Arhiv Beograda (Historical Archives of Belgrade) (IAB), Uprava grada Beograda (Belgrade City Direction) (UGB), 1841, F 5 R 785.

had secret connections with Montenegrin metropolitan Njegoš, that he and his mountain tribes and the leader of Serbian and Bulgarian people made an alliance in order to free themselves from Turkish rule and “renew” an independent state, so now they asked for support from friendly powers, i.e. France, for their enterprise. He specially emphasized his connections with Orthodox clergy in Turkey. Slavonic and Albanian people (tribes he mentioned were comprised of Serbs and Albanians) empowered him to represent them in those matters (Stojančević 1972, 156–160, Guberinić 1997, 66–73).<sup>29</sup> Probably with the help of Ami Boué, in March of 1841 Vasojević published an article in the magazine of French Geographic Society, naming this region Holmia. Important is that in the article he used the term “Old Serbia” (Guberinić 1997, 74).

According to Guberinić, Nikola Vasojević was actively engaged in organization of an uprising against Turkish rule. For that reason in 1838 he visited the tribe Vasojević three times; in the spring of 1839 on his way to Preveza, he visited monastery Dečane and church Gračanica in Kosovo, where he made arrangements with monks and priests, and at the end of 1839, before the journey to London, he visited again Gračanica and negotiated with unnamed Albanian leaders (Guberinić 1997, 32, 39, 47, 52, 64). Confirmation of these statements we could not find in other sources, so we accept them reservedly.<sup>30</sup> Still, the fact that monk Dimitrije Arsenjević from Gorioč used in 1840 a yet unknown term *Old Serbia*, opens a promising possibility he heard and accepted it from Vasojević, and that again indicates Vasojević might really discuss certain matters with monks in Metohija and/or Kosovo.

In Paris Vasojević met the leader of Polish emigration, count Adam Czartoryski. He convinced him to help in forming the state of Holmia that would become a base for future operations directed towards liberation of Poland from Russia. Vasojević asked Czartoryski to provide support of the French government, money, Polish officers and weapons. Czartoryski accepted that secret plan. In May 1841, followed by several Polish agents, Vasojević started a journey via Italy towards

29 ASANU, Narratives, I/III, box 12, № 35/40, 35/42, 35/44.

30 Guberinić cited this according to an unpublished manuscript on Nikola Vasojević from 1977, whose author was Miloljub Spasojević, late director of Historical Archives of Kraljevo. Spasojević's writing was based on stories told by doctor Stevan Vasojević, great-grandson of Nikola Vasojević (Guberinić, 128). We have tried in 2015 to get in touch with Čedomir Spasojević, son of Miloljub Spasojević and an education inspector in Kraljevo, in order to examine his father's manuscript if still in existence, but to no avail.



Shkodër and Vasojevići. He was agitated and in a hurry. In a letter sent on May 15 to one of the Polish agents, he explained the reason: his scribe started the revolution in “Old Serbia” too early, doubting Vasojević would return. Vasojević was angry the rebellion started too early, but sent a message he would try to come to their aid (Cetnarowicz 1993, 68). The revolution Vasojević mentions was the Niš Rebellion, the one that started earlier than planned. This Vasojević’s message, put together with his memoranda on Serbian-Bulgarian-Albanian alliance could make solid indication he really was directly involved in uprising preparations in 1838 and 1839, and later indirectly, via some representative. In the meantime, the union between Czartoryski and Vasojević was discovered through an indiscretion and their plan failed. From Italy, via Corfu and Durrës (Drač), Vasojević arrived to Shkodër on August 26 and remained there until September 21, 1841. From there he went to Vasojevići. In October he was staying in Dečani where, according to Guberinić, he was making deals with certain Albanian leaders on the uprising. Allegedly, somebody revealed the plan to the Turks; by the end of 1841 Vasojević was arrested and taken to prison in Shkodër. Some other prominent leaders of Vasojević tribe were imprisoned at the same time. Nikola Vasojević was afterwards sent to prison in Constantinople. He managed to escape in 1842 and return to Vasojevići, where he remained until his death in 1844. He was killed during a trip to Montenegro and historians have different opinions on who the assassin was, but they are of no consequence for this paper (Durković–Jakšić 1957, 39–58; Guberinić 1997, 80–174, Cetnarowicz 1993, 60–72).

As a proof that conspiracy for uprising existed in much wider area than the sancak of Niš, apart from the mentioned report of Mustafa Sabri Pasha, the reports of French consul representative in Belgrade, Alfred Marey, from April 12 to April 29, 1841 were used in literature (Vučković 1957, 25–26; Stojančević 1971, 161–163; Дамянов, 27–29; Цветкова 1968, 272–278). The authors did not connect them to Nikola Vasojević. We consider that outside of context of his activities, they cannot be properly understood.<sup>31</sup>

Before analysis of Marey’s reports, following things must be emphasized: 1) Marey knew Serbian language; 2) he knew the difference between titles “knez” and “knjaz”; 3) whenever using these titles, he wrote them in Serbian, without

<sup>31</sup> In further exposition were used original reports, not literature, ASANU, Narratives, I/IV, № 36/53, Marey à Guizot, № 12, 12. 4. 1841, Belgrade; I/VI, № 38/2, Marey à Guizot, № 15, 29. 4. 1841.

translating them into French (“knez” and “kniaz”); 4) The title of the ruler of Serbia, Mihailo Obrenović, he was writing exclusively translated in French (“Prince”) or was replacing it with acronym S. A. (Son Altess). In a report of April 12, 1841 Marey wrote he was visited altogether four times, last time on April 9, by a person whose identity he knew but considered needless to reveal at the time, so he put just title “kniaz”. That mysterious “knjaz” was intelligent and could speak Russian, what was very unusual and stunned Marey. They were talking in Serbian. “Knjaz” told him the following. In several days, a revolution will start simultaneously in Bosnia, Herzegovina, a part of Bulgaria along Timok river, in Niš surroundings and in Western Albania (Arnautluk).<sup>32</sup> In each town and in many villages most prominent people were already chosen as uprising leaders (note that baron Lieven possessed literally same information). As a rebellion center was chosen Leskovac. Rebels had at their disposal 60,000 rifles and had a supreme leader, a man of great courage and intelligence, whose name he did not reveal. Montenegrin metropolitan was familiar with preparations, he promised he will tolerate them and actively support the uprising in case of danger. North Albanian tribe Mirdita also promised to support the uprising. An eight member delegation, with two members from each province, visited Serbia and in Kragujevac presented complaints on position of Christians separately to prince Mihailo and baron Lieven. Three members of the delegation, two described as “knez” and one priest, proceeded to Constantinople to submit complaints there. “Knjaz” was a member of that delegation of eight. He himself later talked once more with prince Mihailo in the presence of Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Đorđe Protić. The ruler told him he will “turn a blind eye” to uprising preparations and hinted he could also take part in that project. The rebels asked for French help, specifically: 50,000 ducats, six engineers, ten artillery men and twenty Polish officers. “Knjaz” asked Marey on several occasions to support opening of French consulate in Novi Pazar, and he complied, citing that several years back there was established British consul “Knjaz Vasojević” (“le Kniaz Vaçoévitch”); and added that he later lived in Serbia and a year ago went to England and Paris. Mysterious “knjaz” came to Marey sometimes alone, sometimes

<sup>32</sup> Region around Novi Pazar and Sjenica belonged to Bosnia, nearby area around Pljevlja, Prijepolje and Nova Varoš, those across Serbian outpost Vasilina Česma, to Herzegovina. Term *Arnautluk* encompasses the region of Priština, Peć, Prizren and Đakovica, Bulgarian regions along Timok and around Niš correspond to Vidin and Niš sancaks.

with a “Bulgarian” priest. In those talks, Marey in no way encouraged the uprising, just promised he will exactly relay information to his superiors.

On April 29 Marey reported the following. In the evening of April 27 he was again visited by “knjaz”. This time he revealed his name: the man was called Vaso Kepa (“Vaço Kepa”) and just came back discontented from the “Bosnian” border. Uprising in “Bulgaria”, i.e. the Niš Rebellion, in his words, started six to eight weeks earlier than planned, due to fear of revenge and reprisals. This time he said that the rebellion had to start in Novi Pazar, the moment certain “Montenegrin boss” gave a sign. Further he said that “twelve apostles” roamed Turkish provinces for eighteen months and recruited people for the uprising (note that Mustafa Sabri Pasha received similar information). Vaso Kepa is one of those twelve. Afterwards Marey, amidst Kepa’s narrative, inserted his sentence saying that there was in Paris at the moment certain knjaz Vasojević, who was in London before that. Marey did not know where he obtained the money for the journey, but he supposed he got it from Jevrem Obrenović or somebody else. In Paris he was trying to get attention for the dreary position of Slavs in Turkey. After that digression, Marey returned to Kepa’s narrative. He said that everything was ready, they had dynamic hands and “one” intelligent head, so they were lacking only money. To Marey’s question what was the goal of the uprising, Kepa answered it was an independent state. At the end, Kepa asked Marey to issue him a French passport, to replace the Montenegrin traveling document he possessed. He intended to go to Kladovo, and from there by boat to Constantinople. Marey did not fulfil his wish, suspecting Kepa was a Russian agent. In the reports of the French Consulate in Belgrade this person was never mentioned again.

Narrative of Vaso Kepa is pretty much compliant with formerly presented data on uprising preparations (territory included, delegation of eight members, reception with Lieven, twelve “apostles”, the premature start of the uprising). The only prominent discrepancy is the issue of finances: rebels from the sancak of Niš had at disposal a large sum of money, while Kepa complained they had no money at all. The reason for the discrepancy so far remains inexplicable. Kepa’s narrative is also consistent with activities of Nikola Vasojević (request for French support, sending of Polish officers, Serbian–Albanian–Bulgarian alliance, aspirations for forming an independent state, opening of consulate in Novi Pazar). Moreover, the fact that Marey in both reports quite prominently entered data on Nikola

Vasojević indicates he implicitly wanted to suggest that Vasojević is that “supreme boss” of the uprising.

Key question, anyway, is who was Vaso Kepa? He was a Serb, knjaz and spoke Russian. Since it is certain he was not Nikola Vasojević, then Vaso Kepa should have been his eldest son Altoman or his stepson Nikola Ivanović Vasojević. We consider name Vaso Kepa is actually a pseudonym with the meaning “small Vaso”, i.e. Vasojević. One letter from 1839 Altoman signed as “knjaz” (Guberinić 1997, 163). Still, he was born in 1818 (Guberinić 1997, 174), therefore should have been rather young and he resided in Belgrade, while Vaso Kepa, as one of “twelve apostles” roamed Turkish provinces for a year and a half and had Montenegrin travel documents. Nikola Ivanović Vasojević secretly left Belgrade in May 1840, when his mother approached police looking for him. In his own words, he went to Shkodër where he resided all the time before the return to Serbia, working for a salt merchant, certain Arso Milenković. He entered Serbia on October 30, 1841, not at border crossing, near border post Vrška Čuka. That border post was in the east part of the country, and could be reached from Turkey from Vidin, not from Shkodër. From there he went to Čačak region, Studenica district, to the outpost Raška. Through that outpost one can go from Serbia to Vasojevići, where at the time knez Nikola Vasojević was. There he was found and arrested as the culprit of former illegal crossing near Vrška Čuka. He was arrested by the Commissioner of Studenica district, Lazar Tošić, who knew him from the times when he stayed with the family in Baljevac. Nikola presented himself as a Russian subject, but the Russian consul in Belgrade refused to acknowledge him as a such, for he had no Russian passport. After three months spent in jail, he was released. That is all we know about him.<sup>33</sup> His staying in Shkodër is indicative on its own, having in mind plans of prince Nikola Vasojević. Nikola Ivanović Vasojević could easily go from Shkodër to Montenegro and get travel document from Njegoš, the one he used to come to Serbia. Vaso Kepa said from Belgrade he intended to go to Kladovo, and further to Constantinople. From Constantinople he could return by boat, disembark at Vidin and cross to Serbia near Vrška Čuka. One of principal conspirators personally spoke to French ambassador in Constantinople and informed him that uprising should also encompass “Albania” (Романски 1912, 90). With all that pre-

<sup>33</sup> AS, MID-V, 1841, F 4 R 1, Ministry of Interior to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, s№ 1737, 15/27. 11. 1841; MUD-S, 1841, DP, № 1659; IAB, UGB, 1841, F 5 R 785.

sented, it looks most probable Vaso Kepa was Nikola Ivanović Vasojević, stepson of prince Nikola Vasojević.

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Presented facts lead to following conclusions. Preparations for the uprising of 1840–1841 encompassed, besides the sancak of Niš, certainly region around Novi Pazar and Sjenica, most probably Kosovo and Metohija, and maybe surroundings of Skopje. The uprising started prematurely, because Ottoman authorities were informed about preparations. That is the reason it remained limited only to the sancak of Niš. Neither any of the big powers, nor Principality of Serbia did officially support the uprising. Baron Lieven and princess Ljubica did encourage conspiracy leaders to start the fight. Questions of the role of prince Miloš and that of financing the uprising remain open. The goal of the rebels was to liberate from Turkish rule and adjoin Serbia. It is assumed prince Nikola Vasojević was involved in the organization of the uprising and solid arguments support that assumption, but there is still no indisputable proof for final confirmation. Historical significance of this unsuccessful conspiracy lies in the fact it was the widest organized Serbian rebel movement between the First Serbian Uprising and the Great Eastern Crisis. The biggest question that remains open concerning this uprising is if it was somehow connected to similar Christian movements that erupted in Crete, Samos and Thessaly, with insurrections in Melnik and Serres, or these events represented same, but isolated, symptoms of general conditions in the Ottoman Empire.

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### ***Rezime:***

#### ***Propala zavera: organizacija i priprema srpskog ustanka protiv turske vlasti u periodu 1840–1841.***

Tokom 1840. i 1841. godine, pripreman je ustanak Srba protiv turske vlasti na području Niša, Leskovca, Pirota, Prokuplja, Novog Pazara, Sjenice, Kosova, verovatno Metohije i moguće Skoplja. Uzrok je ležao u žalosnom položaju hrišćana i izostanku neposrednog ispunjenja obećanja datih hatišerifom iz Gilane 1839. godine. Cilj ustanka bio bi prisajedinjenje navedenih oblasti Srbiji. Kneževina Srbija se prema pripremama ustanka držala zvanično neutralno, ali je neformalno tolerisala organizovanje ustaničke zavere. Postoje indicije, ali ne i čvrsti dokazi, da je u zaveru bio umešan bivši vladar Srbije, knez Miloš Obre-

nović. Podizanje ustanka ohrabрили su ruski diplomata baron Liven, nasuprot instrukcijama koje je imao od ruskog ministra spoljnih poslova Neselrodea, i majka kneza Mihaila, kneginja Ljubica. Pitanje finansiranja ustanka ostaje nerešeno. Mustafa Sabri-paša, turski upravnik Niša, doznao je od nepoznatog špijuna sve o pripremi pobune. Zbog straha od odmazde, ustanak je u Niškom sandžaku izbio prevremeno i Turci su ga sa lakoćom i uz veliku okrutnost ugušili. Izostanak pomoći iz Srbije, poraz ustanika i svirepi obračun sa hrišćanima u Niškom sandžaku uticali su da ustanak ne izbije u drugim oblastima. Knez Nikola Vasojević najverovatnije je učestvovao u pripremi i organizaciji ustanka, neposredno do 1840. godine i posredno, 1840–1841, preko svog pastorka Nikole Ivanovića Vasojevića. Za sada je nemoguće utvrditi da li je organizacija ustanka Srba 1840–1841. bila povezana sa ustancima koji su 1841. godine izbili na Kritu, Samosu i u Tesaliji, sa pokušajima pokreta u Makedoniji, oko Sereza i Melnika.

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*Ključne reči:* pobuna u Nišu, 1841, Nikola Vasojević, ustanak, knez Mihailo

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