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Shifting State Loyalty: The Case of an Officer Şerefeddin or Milan Milovanović*

The paper, drawing primarily on archival material located in Austria, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey, examines the lifeworld of an Ottoman officer, Şerefeddin, who in the midst of the Balkan Wars (1912/13), after accepting Christianity, voluntarily joined the army of the Kingdom of Serbia. By relying on the theoretical concept of loyalty, the essay claims that loyalty towards state is not given and fixed, but rather is subject to change. It indicates in particular that Şerefeddin's decision to join the enemy army is context-driven and thus should be imbedded in the momentary setting. It pursues to show how a person amid war is nevertheless able successfully to adjust to a new emerging context. This case should not be co understood as a typical biography, but rather as an episodic one because similar cases are noticeable in different settings worldwide as well.

Key words: Montenegro, Ottoman Empire, Serbia, Şerefeddin/Milan, the military, officers, loyalty

Мењање државне лојалности: Студија о официру Шерефедину, односно о Милану Милановићу

Овај чланак, чија анализа се заснива првенствено на архивској грађи која се налази у Аустрији, Црној Гори, Србији и Турској, прати животни свет османлијског официра Шерефедина који је током Балканских ратова (1912/13) приступио добровољно војсци Краљевине Србије након што је прихватио хришћанство. Ослањајући се теоријски на концепт лојалности, чланак тврди да лојалност према држави није дата и фиксирана, већ да је подложна променама. Конкретно указује да је одлука Шерефедина да се придружи до тада непријатељској војсци зависила од контекста и стога треба да буде разматрана у датом тренутку када је донета. Настоји показати како се особа током рата успешно може прилагодити новој ситуацији. Овај случај не представља типичну биографију, већ се треба прихватити као епизода због тога што су слични случајеви евиденти и у различитим контекстима широм света.

Кључне речи: Црна Гора, Османлијско царство, Србија, Шерефедин/Милан, официри, војска, лојалност

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Introduction

“[On the Serbian-Bosnian border] there was also Lieutenant Milovan Milovanović. He was a real Turk from Anatolia, who was captured in 1912 as an active Ottoman officer. He was enchanted by the cultural and chivalrous attitude of Serb authorities towards imprisoned Ottoman officers. They lived in hotels in Valjevo, receiving a salary according to their ranks, and had a free movement [permission] through the town. He converted himself [to Christianity] and became Milovan Milovanović. [He] learned the Serbian language, married a Serb woman from Pljevlja and joined voluntarily the Serb army. He got a company. He showed himself on all occasions as a good and courageous officer. He liked to sing during fight, “Shot *Švabo*¹, but not in the head!”, and as if his wish were fulfilled; in one battle, he was wounded in both legs” (Šikoparija 2016, 237-238).

Relying on the personal military file of 1922, Milan Ahmeda Milovanović was wounded in three places during the military campaign in Bosnia amid World War I (October 1914). At the time, he was a commander in charge of one company within the Fourth Regiment of the Serbian army. In the same year, he got even a silver medal for bravery. However, this was not the only honor that Milan obtained during his career as a Serbian officer. Not only did he gain the commemorative medal for the Serbian-Ottoman War (1912/13), but also for the Serbian-Bulgarian War (1913), what indicates that Milan, in fact, participated in every single war that Serbia waged between 1912 and 1918.² Taking a step back from the detail that Milan had apparently a successful career in the Serbian military, a question arises: who is actually Milan Ahmeda Milovanović? Why would an Ottoman officer change his loyalty and decide to join the enemy? What are the motives that led to this adjustment? Why would he convert his faith?

The cited paragraph indicates that Milan was supposedly delighted by the manner of the authorities while being a prisoner of war (POW), what might be true. Yet this does not sufficiently explain why he would switch his allegiance. This information should nevertheless be included in the narrative given in this paper but, in the following pages, it will be contended that his decision has to be embedded in a broader picture and crucial events of 1912 which amended his life for good. By mentioning similar examples, the paper further illustrates that his lifeworld is not exceptional. Comparable cases are traceable in different settings worldwide as well. This example is not to be comprehended, though, as a conventional biography, but rather as an episodic one. By revolving around this case and by centering an analysis on this individual, the purpose is to question and thus undermine the rigid boundaries between state and society in order to unfold the possibility of a much

¹ A pejorative term used to label the imagined German from the Habsburg Monarchy.

² Vojni arhiv/Belgrade (= VA/Belgrade), Dosije personalnih podataka (= DPP), Kutija (= K) 1115/699, Milovanović Ahmeda Milan.

more nuanced and complicated historical narrative (see Fortna 2016, 10, 20). Therefore, emphasis on the person allows a sight into the persons' experiences, ambitions and tactics (Philliou 2011, 22, 25). Still, before beginning with the narrative, in an attempt to better conceptualize Milan's determination to throw in his lot with the Serbian army, theoretical-methodological approach has to be addressed.

Theoretical-Methodological Approach

The focus here is mainly on loyalty towards state or state loyalty which is subject to change and redefining in the moment of state dissolution. Still, owing to personal reasons or lack of public order and security, a person during war might start questioning loyalty given to the previous state. Accordingly, (s)he seeks to establish a new space of security in which the former lifeworld is to be preserved and hopefully unchanged. In the face of danger and uncertainty, an effort is made with the goal of adjusting to new political and economic circumstances. Therefore, as Martin Schulze Wessel aptly labels, the erosion of the old rule is not only to be measured by lost battles, but also by the decline of loyalty of the controlled population (Wessel 2004, 11). Changing loyalty, in fact, becomes one of the most applied tactics to survive the war and endure uncertainty generated by the war itself. As certain scholars have already suggested, whereas the multilayered loyalty relations were always existing in daily life during times of peace, this could greatly alter in times of accelerating violence inasmuch as in the wake of 'narrowed' down loyalties, people, being coerced by the belligerent parties, are prone to side "with this or that faction" (Grandits, Clay & Pichler 2011, 6).

Since the emerging occupation initializes pressure for taking action, members of the occupied societies are in their forms of behavior often directly or indirectly "occupier-driven." In such a context, "normality assumptions" become dubious, behavioral expectations and routines uncertain, and reliability corrodes, while feelings of vulnerability, in turn, spread. Hence, occupied societies turn out to be those whose regulations are massively threatened and defenseless, and are in this manner severely under stress. To what degree their strategies, decisions and deeds, based on ideal "normality assumptions", prove to be valid for occupation societies has to be exemplified (cf. Tönsmeier 2015). This implies that individuals should not be viewed simply as cat's-pawns in a larger power struggle or as passive victims of impersonal historical forces, but also as social actors who in certain cases know how to negotiate with new established authorities (cf. Browning 2014). This "from bottom-up" approach is to be separated between "bottom" and "top" as social categories and "bottom up" as an upward direction of political activity (Anastasopoulos 2012, 7).

Nevertheless, why should a scholar deal with the concept of loyalty? Jana Osterkamp and Martin Schulze Wessel outline four categories by means of which loyalty is ensured from the danger of becoming lost in a fog of conceptual vagueness: duration, mutuality, sequentially, and communication (Osterkamp & Wessel 2017, 3). When one juxtaposes loyalty with such terms as fidelity, trust or solidarity, it displays a number of overlaps and dissimilarities. Fidelity designates mainly a

personal bond but lacks the investigative multi-layeredness. In contrast, the term loyalty can suggest pluralization of the social bonds. Still, the main difference between the two concerns the emotional intensity and sphere of actions: contrary to private dimension of fidelity, loyalty is limited to relationships between individuals and institutions, and interactions between persons as an outcome of communitarization processes (Wessel 2004, 3). Whereas trust deals with the emotional disposition in a mutual relationship, solidarity refers to a willingness to support one another. However, the historical analysis of trust rarely involved the examination of actual behavior, while solidarity primarily stands for the horizontal dimension of adherence (Osterkamp & Wessel 2016, 59-60). Even though loyalty is branded as a relationship between state and its subjects/citizens, it would be misleading to think that these two poles act from the same equal position. Actually, state institutions are the ones who draw rules of the mutual interaction, meaning already at the outset, a person on the ground is at a disadvantage vis-à-vis a new state.

Hannes Grandits highlights in his work that depending on the communal context, one is able to speak about strong kin-based, patronage, class and/or confessional/national loyalties that, in a way, function as “social bridges” which sidestep a communal separation and polarity (Grandits 2014, 11-24). Accordingly, it is possible to summarize that there is horizontal (between different denominational or social group-formations) and vertical loyalties (between a monarch/state apparatus and the people). One of the most important benefits of working with loyalty is its ability to bring together under the same caption the very different levels of social relationship that exist within one political order. It seems more persuasive to analyze loyalty both in its vertical and horizontal dimensions in combinations with its mutual conditionalities, what fidelity, trust or solidarity cannot provide (Osterkamp & Wessel 2017, 5). However, due to the lack of space, this paper will be concentrating only on the vertical one. In so doing, the paper does not seek to sketch a hierarchy of loyalties, ranking religion, class, gender, against or above nation (Zahra 2010, 11-12).

In spite of not having ego-documents, loyalty can more or less be restored, since it is mirrored in sources and apparently, means more for governing political and military elites than for an individual.³ As Osterkamp und Wessel aptly summarize, religious or political authorities may demand loyalty in order to establish a level of uniformity and to replace a plurality of loyalties with the single one. This especially emerges in the times of social and political crises during which the performance of expectations and acknowledgements of allegiance are demanded (Osterkamp & Wessel 2017, 7). That is why Ulf Brunnbauer claims that for the nation-states, there should be no context-sensitive allegiances insofar as they have to be unmistakable, thereby providing a firm foundation, on top of which the ruling elites tend to construct their political projects (Brunnbauer 2002, 18). By stressing a monopolization of all personal loyalties, they allude that citizens/subjects are in a way

³ The term refers here to letters, autobiographical writings, diaries, commentaries, memoirs or diaries. On the letter (see van der Wal & Rutten 2013; von Greyerz 2010; Mortimer 2002).

expected to suffer during war, showing that they are loyal to the national and/or religious causes.

This ‘unusual’ behavior of switching loyalties is to be distinguished, however, from the notion “changing identities” used by Gábor Demeter and Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics. A person threatened and intimidated by comitadjis, that is; members of various armed groupings that further this or that national cause, declares in late Ottoman Macedonia a loyalty to this or that party in order to stay alive (Demeter & Csaplár-Degovics 2014, 21-22). Changing allegiance does not mean changing identities, though. Judkin Browning, analyzing the concept of shifting loyalties in North Carolina during the American Civil War (1861-1865), persuasively contends that an individual could have multiple loyalties with fluctuating degrees of attachment to each, depending on his/her circumstances and agendas. Being often driven by practicalities, Southerners’ allegiance to the Union represented only a rejection of the Confederate state; however, they at the same time adhered to a sense of Southern nationalism or values (Browning 2014, 4, 64). Hence, identity does not signify a relationship between various actors that one is possible to follow by using the concept of loyalty.

Loyalty, by contrast, has the advantage to be limited to the analysis of specific interactions. It is not only interested in long-terms effective imprints, but also offers the possibilities of analyzing actors’ action. Stronger than identity and identification, it makes possible for the observer to change a perspective: if identity first concentrates on an individual or a specific community, by applying the category of loyalty, one can focus on the perspective of their counterpart, not only on the dispositions and interests of the other individuals’ actions, but also on the perspective of institutions (Osterkamp & Wessel 2016, 560). In a word, one can track it easily. Emphasis on questions of the national and ethnical identities led to the neglect of other forms of collective interactions and to a takeover of the ethicizing discourse of nationalist actors who see social connections exclusively and only in ethnic terms. National and ethnic identities by no means constitute the totality of collective distinctiveness (Brunnbauer 2002, 13-14). As Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper have aptly claimed, moving beyond this language unfolds possibilities for specifying other kinds of connectedness and other phrases of identification, since social analysis needs relatively precise analytical categories (Brubaker & Cooper 2000, 2, 32).

In the present paper, a person changes adherence calculatingly and not by coercion. This understanding is more related to Isa Blumi’s view who has exemplified that locals in late Ottoman Yemen, whose occupation depended on safeguarding the safe route of their commerce in and out of the area, were faithful to a person who had control over the region (Blumi 2004, 103-117). Once the sway of this individual was disputed either from a state or from other residents, the locals, fearing that this would peril their interests and their incomes, switch their adherence because customs, social allegiances, religious associations, and legal traditions are fluid (Blumi 2004, 103-117). Reflecting back again the American Civil War, in the tense atmosphere of change, Southerners sought to create circumstances that would give them the best means to support themselves and their families (Browning 2014,

5). The curiosity to explore these performances, in fact, is not actually something new. These new interests and discoveries coincide with a fashionable current in modern historiography: studying marginal groups and ‘irregular’ behaviors, once condemned to contempt or oblivion (Kołodziejczyk 2006, 79).

Drawing on the concept of national indifference elaborated at length by Tara Zahra, the goal is to move beyond imagined communities but simultaneously to keep in mind the nation-state and its impact on modern history. In addition, religious indifference should not be disregarded either (Zahra 2010, 97, 119). This does not mean inevitably that this paper is on the same page with “soft and weak understandings of identity” criticized by Brubaker and Cooper, but rather, that the examined persons, getting educated at modern state-sponsored institutions, are quite able to recognize the situation in which the authorities’ “identitarian language” is to be deployed (Brubaker & Cooper 2000, 11-12). They are skilled enough to comprehend how “the identity discourse” runs in order to endure the transition or to profit from the emerging setting. This does not imply that they are opportunists, but rather these individuals seek to accommodate themselves in a turbulent context simply because there is no other alternative.

By focusing on loyalty towards state, Milan’s actions are interpreted mainly through the lens of states’ sources that are kept nowadays in Austria, Montenegro, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. These are written in the languages that were the official ones in these polities and their armies at the outset of the 20th century (e.g. Ottoman Turkish in the Ottoman Empire or German in the Habsburg military), whereby all translations given in the text are made by the author himself. In this type of sources, the persons’ performance can be tracked. This means that albeit loyalty in this case represents a relationship between state and its citizens/subjects, the most plausible explanation would be drawn relying on their courses of action. The aim is neither to defend them nor to indict them, but simply to understand their world. Certainly, by applying this approach, it should be underlined that this fact creates an imbalance of which a modern historian has to be mindful in order to avoid an uncritical adoption of the state agents’ narration and interpretation of the facts (Anastasopoulos 2012, 5). However, in other persons’ ego-documents, conduct of Şerefeddin, for example, could be caught. That is why memoirs, hearings, travel logs and newspaper articles had been addressed while writing this paper. This is crucial because the goal is to dodge the shortcoming of one unified narrative with the purpose of gaining multiplicity of voices and hence, multiplicity of narratives. These are then compared to one other so as to extract narratives that are contradictory or supplement each other.

Şerefeddin or Milan Milovanović

Milan Milovanović was born in the Ottoman capital under the name Şerefeddin in 1886, as a son of Ahmed Husni, an Ottoman general and a former marshal of the palace. After completing his education at a primary and junior high school, being only 13-year-old, Şerefeddin entered the Ottoman military education-

al system (1899). In Istanbul, he went through a training at the Junior Officers School, the Military Academy and the Gendarmerie course. At the outset of 1912, Şerefeddin became second lieutenant (*mülazım*) and then, was temporarily deployed prior to the First Balkan War to the 60th Regular Regiment whose headquarters were located in Pljevlja, then, the administrative center of a sanjak.⁴ In the first month of the conflict, after partaking in fight against the Montenegrin army, Şerefeddin opted to stay in the town, thereby not taking refuge with the rest of his unit in Habsburg Bosnia.⁵ He was present in Pljevlja as both the Serbian and Montenegrin armies set foot in the town on October 28, 1912. Very soon, Şerefeddin gave his word to a Serbian unit that he will not fight against Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece.⁶ Although the cited paragraph above stated that he spent some time in Valjevo as an Ottoman POW, this was actually not a case because, according to another account, Şerefeddin took shelter in the home of his Slavic-speaking Orthodox Christian fiancée and her mother. The latter actually notified the Montenegrin command in January 1913 about his situation, claiming that he wishes to become an Orthodox Christian in order to marry his wife-to-be, what was immediately granted (Knežević 1971, 35).

As early as from March 1913, available sources no longer refer to him as Şerefeddin, but rather Milovan Milovanović (sic!). That he converted to Christianity among the Montenegrins, fittingly illustrates a 1913-dated report, in which the Montenegrin commander confirms this.⁷ In contrast, a Belgrade-based Ottoman ambassador's deputy was updated one year later that Şerefeddin threw in his lot with the Serbian army and converted to Christianity "during the Serbian occupation of Pljevlja."⁸ Seemingly, Şerefeddin was fine with his new role because at the end of the six-page long report about the fight around Pljevlja at the outset of the

⁴ VA/Belgrade, DPP, K-1115/699, Milovanović Ahmeda Milan and Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (= BOA/Istanbul), Hariciye Nezâreti Siyasî Kısım (= HR.SYS), 2084/7, leff 7, 9.07.1914, Chargé d'affaires of the Ottoman Embassy in Belgrade to the Grand Vizier and Minister of Foreign Affairs Said Halim Pasha. (...) altmışıncı alayda müstahdem olmayıp altmışıncı alayda hizmeti sebak etdiği.

⁵ VA/Belgrade, DPP, K-1115/699, Milovanović Ahmeda Milan and BOA/Istanbul, HR.SYS, 2084/7, leff 16, 22.08.1914, Said Halim Pasha to the Minister of War Enver Pasha. Yeni Pazar sancağının işgali esnasında alayı Avusturya toprağına iltica etdiği halde kendüsü Plevliye'de kalmış olduğu.

⁶ VA/Belgrade, Popisnik (= P) 2, Kutija (= K) 101, Fascikla (= F) 1, 4/1, Operacijski dnevnik/protokol Javorske brigade od br. 1 do 752, red. br. 359, (= ODPJBr) od ove komande, 22.10.1912: Саслушала турског п[од]поручника Шерефедуна. Прилог: часна реч истога да се неће борити против Србије, Црне Горе, Бугарске и Грчке.

⁷ Državni arhiv Crne Gore/Cetinje (= DACG/Cetinje), Ministarstvo vojno (= MV), Kabinet Ministra vojnog (= KMV) 1913/F8, br. reg. 6252, 23.05.1913, Pljevlja, Commander Periša Tomanović to Prime Minister and Ministry of War Janko Vukotić. (...) који се код нас покристио и име добио Милован Миловановић.

⁸ BOA/Istanbul, HR.SYS, 2084/3, leff 2, 6.05.1914, Istanbul, Said Halim Pasha to the Chargé d'affaires of the Ottoman Embassy Hrand Noradunkian. (...) altmışıncı alayın ikinci taburunun birinci bölüğü mülazım-ı sanisi iken Taşlıca'nın Sırbılar tarafından hîn-i işgalinde Sırb ordusuna dehaletle tanassur ederek.

1912/13 war, which he personally recorded in the Ottoman language at the order of the Montenegrin commander and which is to be found nowadays in Cetinje, he wrote down his name and the date in the Cyrillic script *Ottoman lieutenant a new Serb Milan Milovanović, March 13th, [1]913*.⁹ After converting to Christianity, Milan did not join right away the Montenegrin, but rather the Serbian army. The same Montenegrin commander wrote somehow in an angry tone that the local Serbian authorities approached and accompanied Milan to Belgrade without his awareness in mid-1913, granting him the rank of lieutenant.¹⁰ As his personal military file indicates, soon afterwards Milan got for the first time an assignment in the Serbian military, being assigned to lead a gendarmery company in Pljevlja, what he did until the town was handed over to Montenegro (May 1913 – January 1914).¹¹

As one could assume, it represents quite a challenge to clarify why exactly Şerefeddin decided to convert to Christianity and joined the Serbian army. As already stressed, his enthusiasm for the Serbian authorities cannot be accepted as only possible description to understand why someone would change his allegiance. For example, captured Ottoman Captain Bahri of Selanik, who spent eight and an half months in Serbia's eastern town Pirot as a POW, praises and speaks highly of the Serbian army and its attitude towards the Ottoman officers in his memoirs too. However, the captain neither converted himself to Christianity, nor joined the enemy armed forces (Yüzbaşı 2012). Şerefeddin's action to shift allegiance can be regarded as a tactic of an individual who wants to find a fitting spot in a new context. This is essential in the moments when one state is disappearing, another one is emerging and when a person needs to adjust to new altering conditions. Amid this transition phase as well as during war conflicts a possibility to act is shrinking and options to maneuver narrows down (Grandits, Clayer & Pichler 2011, 6, 12).

Changing religion therefore should be interpreted as a tool to set up a new space of security and to downplay any possible suspicion that might arise. Claude-Alexandre, comte de Bonneval, for example, who is later known in the Ottoman Empire as Humbaracı Ahmed Pasha, after being relieved of duty for military insubordination both from the French and Habsburg militaries in the first half of 18th century, decided to change religion because abandoning Christianity for Islam gave him the right to seek protection from the Sublime Porte. In danger of being either poisoned to death or sent back to Vienna, it seemed that “turning Turk” was the best option inasmuch as his conversion to Islam mattered more for political than religious reasons. Practicing Islam was a display of loyalty to the Ottoman dynasty, and no one did examine the depth of another person's religious conviction (Landweber 2016, 13-15, 20).

⁹ Arhivsko-bibliotečko odjeljenje Narodnog muzeja Crne Gore (= ABO-NMCG/Cetinje), Nikola I, F66/1913, br. 18, 15.03.1913, Turski poručnik novi Srbin Milan Milovanović, Taşlica 60. Alayı Nizamiye ve Redif Kıtaaatı, p. 6.

¹⁰ DACG/Cetinje, MV, KMV, 1913/F8, br. reg. 6252, 23.05.1913, Pljevlja, Commander Periša Tomanović to Prime Minister and Ministry of War Janko Vukotić. (...) Доцније су га србијанске власти обратиле и спровеле у Београд без мога знања, произвели га у чин поручника.

¹¹ VA/Belgrade, DPP, K-1115/699, Milovanović Ahmeda Milan.

Others would simply utter that they are Muslims with the purpose of improving their momentary position. Take Kosta Đorđević, an former Ottoman soldier and after 1912 a Serbian private born in Ottoman Skopje. Having been captured and sent to Habsburg POW camps amid World War I, he ended up repairing roads and railways around Banja Luka. As an Ottoman-Habsburg commission re-enlisted Slavic and Albanian-speaking Muslims hailed originally from the former Ottoman Balkan territories, Kosta said that he is Turk who knows to read and write well. He was subsequently sent with others to Istanbul, where he spent six months at the school for non-commissioned officers, becoming thereby an Ottoman sergeant. However, after being deployed on the Mesopotamian front, he used the opportunity to surrender himself to British forces with his whole platoon under his command. Then, he again joined the Serbian army on the Macedonian front.¹² Thus, it seems that all these persons, including Şerefeddin, fall under the category of religious indifference. Based on the above-quoted paragraph, a conclusion could be drawn that by shedding blood for Serbia and, for instance, chanting songs about the *Swabs* (that is, *Švabe*), Milan's peers supportively considered his loyalty. Certainly, mastering the language just made horizontal loyalty between him and other Serbian officers even stronger.

Dissolution of the Ottoman state in the Balkans meant that not only former Ottoman civilian administrators have to think on how they shall sustain themselves and their families, but the same applies for Ottoman officers as well. While illustrating an acute situation in the Sjenica region at the outset of 1913, a commanding officer informed the Serbian Supreme Command that "there are a large number of Ottoman officers and functionaries who are [residing here in Sjenica] with their families in the biggest poverty without having any more resources for livelihood. I was forwarding them to the municipalities but there was no help either".¹³ Albeit a monthly assistance was granted to the families of the captured Ottoman officers and bureaucrats, as the Serbian Ministry of War had ordered, the commanding officer assured the latter that there are not such families and hence, no one is entitled to it.¹⁴ Moreover, none of the available sources tell anything at all about a possible organized propaganda campaign that the Serbian military authorities might have applied in their POWs camps with the purpose of gaining hearts and minds of the captured Ottoman officers and soldiers, as the British did during the Great War among the Arab-speaking Ottoman officers, for example (Uyar 2013, 526-544).

Being an Ottoman officer who stayed behind meant that Şerefeddin faced difficulties to sponsor his life, especially because he emphasized in mid-1914 that he did not receive any salary for the last three months of 1912 and that the Ottoman

¹² VA/Belgrade, P3, K178, F3, 3/1, *Podaci o prilikama u Srbiji okupiranoj od Bugara 1916-1918. godine*, OBr. 19434, 18.10.1917.

¹³ VA/Belgrade, P2, K18, F1, 22/2, 07.01.1913, Sjenica, Lietenant colonel Anđelković to the Supreme Command.

¹⁴ VA/Belgrade, P2, K18, F1, 22/12, 24.04.1913, Sjenica, Lietenant colonel Anđelković to the Supreme Command.

State, therefore, owed him money.¹⁵ This does not come as surprise, though, because the same problem soon beset the families of the captured Ottoman officers who dwelled in Nova Varoš.¹⁶ In the case of Şerefeddin, the Ottoman institutions demanded that having received more money than planned, he is actually the one who should pay off the debt of 1016 piasters.¹⁷ The situation in which he found himself at the end of 1912 and beginning of 1913 might have triggered him to wonder about his future steps. Does anything exist that connects him to the Ottoman state? Mesut Uyar convincingly argues that the high level of integration, *esprit de corps*, and institutional loyalty were one of the reasons why the majority of the Arabic-speaking Ottoman officers from the east provinces decided to stay in the military until the very end of WWI. Still, following the retreat of the Ottoman army from these provinces in late 1918, the majority of the officers solicited for an approval to leave in order to return to their hometowns (Uyar 2013, 542-543).

Obviously, Şerefeddin's professional socialization in the Ottoman army was not fully effective, even though he concluded the military schools in his birthplace. Probably, Şerefeddin did not have the family back in Istanbul who would keep him attached to the Ottoman Empire after state loyalty evaporated. All things considered, some of the reasons why then 26-year-old Şerefeddin resolved to throw in his lot with the enemy could be, besides witnessing of the quick end of the Ottoman rule in the Pljevlja region, the careful behavior of the new authorities and hard economic situation at the beginning of 1913. Here, one should not overlook his parole that he will not fight against the allied Balkan forces, an opportunity to continue his career in the new army and psychological moment that might have engulfed him at the time. It is known that the latter forced another Ottoman lieutenant Mahmud Kran, also deployed in Pljevlja, to surrender to the approaching Montenegrin troops at the beginning of the 1912/13 war because he believed that the Ottoman Empire has failed in the Balkans and lost the war, having been attacked from multiple sides (Knežević 1971, 23-24). It is equally possible that Şerefeddin simply needed a job in the wake of the state dissolution. The Serbian army offered him rank and related to that, salary and a military life that he could pursue in a new context.

This phenomena of Ottoman officers switching loyalty in the wake of a state collapse was not exclusively taking place in Pljevlja, as already stated. One detects a similar if not the same thing happening worldwide: in Montenegro, upon being occupied by Habsburg troops in early 1916, in the Middle East as it was clear that

¹⁵ BOA/Istanbul, HR.SYS, 2084/7, leff 16, 22.08.1914, Istanbul, Said Halim Pasha to the Minister of War Enver Pasha. (...) ve kendü alayının ne birinci ve ne de ikinci taburundan hiçbir akçe ahz etmediğinden başka 1912 senesi son üç ayları maaşını bile almadığını söylemiş olduğu işar kılındığı.

¹⁶ VA/Belgrade, P2, K101, F1, 31/1, br. 34, 10.01.1913, Nova Varoš, Local Command to the Command of Javor Brigade.

¹⁷ BOA/Istanbul, HR.SYS, 2084/3, leff 3, 22.08.1914, Istanbul, Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of War. Şerefeddin Efendinin taburundan istihkakından fazla mehuzu olan 368 ve mensub olduğu alayın birinci taburundan 650 guruş ki cem'an 1016 guruş zimmet meblağsının.

after 1918 Ottoman provinces would become a part of the French and British colonial rule, or on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean during the American Civil War. Not to mention the same process in the context of the Habsburg Monarchy at the end of 1918. It gives the impression that economic and physical settings play a significant role in reconsidering where someone's allegiance lies. To begin with, the Habsburg occupying authorities in Montenegro highlighted in early 1916 in a weekly report as follows:

"The officers in many cases begin to take off their uniform. Some have asked for an acceptance in Austrian [military] service. There is also a great diversity of political views among them. There are in a difficult position. The received salary is almost worthless, since it exists merely in paper, but the officer is not supposed to have a job, so he understandably sees his future gray and drab, if we remain masters of the country."¹⁸

Laila Parsons illustrates in her study on Fawzi al-Qawuqji, one of the leading military figures of the Arab anti-colonial movement, that he wanted to continue his career as a soldier in late 1918 as the Ottoman state was vanishing. He faced two choices: like other officers from the Ottoman east provinces, Qawuqji could try his luck in Anatolia with the rest of the Ottoman army or could stay close to his family and friends, joining the emerging Arab military. At the time, the ex-Ottoman officers viewed the latter as the best option for them. However, after the French occupation of Syria, Fawzi al-Qawuqji, like others, joined the new French-run army, the Syrian Legion. Alike in the case of Şerefeddin, Laila Parsons finds it difficult to reveal why Qawuqji became a member of the French Syrian Legion given the fact he was fighting against it just a few months before. She argues that Qawuqji looked for a job in the wake of the closure of the Arab army. The Syrian Legion put forward a rank, paycheck and military calling. In addition, the fact that he got married in 1918 made this proposal difficult to turn down (Parsons 2017, 53-55; Provence 2017).

In North Carolina during the American Civil War, local poor Southerners took advantage of the Union's invitation and recognized the many practical advantages of joining its army. Material benefits for the locals as well as their families drew them to enroll. While being in the military, they could provide food, clothing, shelter, and protection to their families. Being paid in Union currency, whose inflation rate was much lower than that of Confederate scrip, represented the very attractive economic opportunity to potential enlists (Browning 2014, 73-74). While this was granted, vertical loyalty between the institution and the able-bodied was rein-

¹⁸ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv/Vienna (= ÖStA/HHStA/Vienna), Politisches Archiv (= PA) I 998, Liasse Krieg 49e, Montenegro, K. Nr. 266, 17.03.1916, Cetinje, MGG/M to the Armeeoberkommando (= AOK), pp. 8: Die Offiziere beginnen vielfach die Uniform abzulegen. Einige baten um Übernahme in österreichische Dienste. Auch unter ihnen ist eine große Verschiedenheit der politischen Meinungen bemerkbar. Sie befinden sich in einer schwierigen Lage. Das bezogene Gehalt ist fast wertlos, da es nur in Papiergeld besteht, für eine Arbeit ist aber der Offizier nicht zu haben und so sieht er begreiflicherweise seine Zukunft grau in grau, wenn wir Herren des Landes bleiben [underlined in original].

forced. Contrary, this not being ensured, led to shaking someone's loyalty vis-à-vis the state. Hence, it does not amaze that the Southerners in certain regiments were almost in a state of mutiny due to the non-reception of their pay (Browning 2014, 42).

Nevertheless, is it possible to exemplify how a person deploys rhetoric of the authorities and in which situation? In Milan's case, this is unfeasible since sources are lacking. However, another example from Mitrovica (alb. Mitrovicë) may provide an answer. Albanian-speaking Bajazit Boljetina (alb. Boletini) after finishing the Military Academy in Vienna (1918) was accepted in early 1919 as a cavalry lieutenant in the newly established army of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.¹⁹ He made the written oath of allegiance in September 1921 and stayed in the military until 1932.²⁰ In fact, Bajazit was one of the almost 8300 active and reserve former Habsburg officers who continued their professional life in the new state (Čapo 2009, 19).²¹ Being proficient to speak Albanian, Serbian, Turkish and German, Bajazit participated even in a undercover assignment in post-1913 Albania together with Puniša Račić, a former Ottoman-time-comitadji, an envoy of the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs and later on, a MP of one of the most dominant political parties in the Kingdom, People's Radical Party.²² Moreover, Bajazit had reopened his family quarry company together with Račić, which had a status of a privileged industry (Hadri & Avramovski 1979, 98, 124).²³ On the way to Albania in 1921, he stopped several days in Mitrovica where Bajazit burned down several wood cabins above the village of Boljetin where his family house was located and which were used by the local Albanian bands.²⁴ One year later, after finding it out that his brother Mujo was imprisoned, Bajazit wrote to the Ministry of the Interior as follows:

“I, as a Serb and as a son of the great patriot and a Serb, deceased Isa Boljetinac, regret that in these parts [in the Mitrovica area] we have such our authorities, who work according to their whim and spite, and not at all for the good of our fatherland.”²⁵

One would argue that there is nothing astonishing in quoting a patriotic narrative of a military officer because this kind of vocabulary is after all expected from the army personnel. Yet, several things have to be clarified here: firstly, per-

¹⁹ *Službeni vojni list*, god. 38, 12.03.1919, br. 6, 101.

²⁰ VA/Belgrade, DPP, K-53/2036, Boljetinac Isa Bajazit.

²¹ More on the Habsburg officers in the post-WWI Yugoslav context (see Bjelajac 1988; Bjelajac 1999; Deák 1990).

²² VA/Belgrade, DPP, K-53/2036, Boljetinac Isa Bajazit and Arhiv Jugoslavije/Belgrade (= AJ/Belgrade), 14-181-670-45, Statement by Bajazit Ise Boljetinca made on August 11, 1922 in the Ministry of the Interior.

²³ See the company advertising, for instance, in *Težak: Ilustrovani list srpskog poljoprivrednog društva*, god. LV, br. 10, 15.05.1928, 334.

²⁴ AJ/Belgrade, 14-181-670-45, Statement by Bajazit Ise Boljetinca made on August 11, 1922 in the Ministry of the Interior.

²⁵ Ibid.

sonal pronouns, adjectives, nouns, and names that was deployed, such as *we, I as a Serb, the great patriot, our fatherland*. Since his brother was detained, it sounds like Bajazit, by stressing his national identity and employing the patriotic discourse, tries to legitimize his position in order to protect his brother's rights. By addressing to the authorities, he seeks the protection of the state. Secondly, context is here of tremendous importance because not considering it, the argument stays fragmentary. In the statement, he accuses a local civilian official for this behavior who apparently pursues a personal vendetta against Bajazit by throwing his brother in jail.²⁶ While using such rhetoric he tends to make his appeal look more convincing. Finally, a deceased and mentioned person in the hearing should be addressed as well. His father, Isa Boljetinac, was not, in fact, a "great Serb" patriot as Bajazit attempts to portray.

His contemporaries might portray Isa very differently. For example, one traveler from Serbia lays out in his memories (1906) that Isa

"(...) is from the most common Albanian scum. As a mischievous boy, he was taking care of horses during celebration of a monastic patron saint. He has become famous in riots so much that he had to be deported to Istanbul. As a true ruffian, he was usually covered with gifts in Istanbul: the sultan gave him the rank of Major and honored him with order of the Medjidie, as well as with villages and mines. He returns to Mitrovica as the most noble and richest Albanian. Apart of God and the Sultan, he recognizes no power above him. He directly corresponds telegraphically with the sultan" (Jugović 1906, 41).²⁷

Isa Boljetinac even found a place in one biweekly satire and humor newspaper published in Habsburg Novi Sad (1910): "While Isa was hanging Serbs, it was okay. And now he hangs [Ottoman] officers; they know now, what the misery means" (Masque 1910, 184).²⁸ These depictions would (un)consciously discard the fact that Isa, on the other hand, was a guardian of one local Orthodox Christian monastery in lieu of receiving a so-called protection fee (Petrović 1924, 4). It is true, however, that Isa Boljetinac, as one of the most prominent Albanian notables from the Mitrovica region, had connections with the Serbian army prior to the Balkan Wars, and whose family even accepted a financial aid of the new authorities after the area was occupied (Miladinović 2016, 140 and Hadri & Avramovski 1979, 96). Yet he is more recalled as an Albanian national figure, as a person who participated in the Albanian Declaration of Independence, and as a person, whose legacy

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ In original: „Од најобичније је багре арнаутске, као деран придржавао коње о манастирским славама. Прочуо се у нередима, истакао да су га морали протерати у сургун у Цариград. Као правог зулумћара у Стамболу су га као што је то ред обасули поклоницама: Султан му је даровао чин мајорски и орден меџидије, поклонио му села и руднике. Он се враћа у Митровицу као највиђенији и најбогатији Арнаутин. Сем Бога и Цара он не признаје никакву власти. Он директно с царем на телеграфу кореспондира.“

²⁸ In original: „Док је Иса, Србе веш’о / Било је у реду / А сад веша официре / Сад познаше – беџу“.

and political struggle is lionized nowadays both in Kosovo and Albania.³⁰ Albeit it cannot be specified what the authorities' reaction was, still this example is telling because it shows that Bajazit was capable to deploy the rhetoric and the discourse used by the governing elites as a tool with the purpose of achieving the aim. In this case, it was acquittal of the brother from jail, which at the end was done.

Coming back again to Milan Milovanović's lifeworld, another motive should be added when asking about possible reasons why he shifted his loyalty; this is a marriage with a daughter of the medical officer and major Milan Labud Stojković, who in fact hailed from Pljevlja and whose wife informed the Montenegrin commander about Šerefeddin.³¹ Could it be that Milan Stojković had approached Šerefeddin as the local Montenegrin Commander claims in his report? Could it be that Šerefeddin had decided to convert to Christianity because he fell in love with the daughter of the Serbian officer? These questions will unfortunately stay unanswered because sources are lacking. What can be contended, though, is that Milan through this marriage established and straightened his loyalty to Serbia and to its army. This sounds most tenable because it would be hard to clarify the following detail: after being wounded by bands in the area around Prizren in November 1915, Milan Milovanović fell captive and taken to Bulgaria as a POW. For almost three years in captivity, Milan stayed faithful to Serbia as a POW in Bulgaria.³² In this regard, his story overlaps to a certain degree with that of Šefhet Halilović, a Turkish-speaking Ottoman soldier from Kumanovo, who also gradually learned Serbian and after 1914 fought voluntarily in the Serbian army. After falling in love with a girl from Belgrade and having been forced to pay his debts in Belgrade, where Serbian medical staff healed his wounds earned amid the Balkan Wars, Šefhet joined the military without being forced to do so, thereby identifying himself with and dying for the new imagined community (Radojević 1931, 508–513).

Slavic and Albanian-speaking POWs of Muslim and Catholic creed, who were mobilized by the Serbian military in late 1914, were given a choice in 1916 between remaining in POW camps or (re)entering into the Ottoman, Bulgaria and Habsburg militaries; an opportunity that a certain number of them used actually.³³ Thus, if there was something that could motivate Milan to go back to his hometown, he undoubtedly could have done that several times between 1916 and 1917. However, at that moment, he was no longer an Ottoman officer or a Muslim; Milan was a husband of the woman from Pljevlja, a son-in-law of an officer who also was fighting against the Central Powers, an Orthodox Christian, and a captured Serbian officer. In late 1918, Milan was assigned as one of the Commanders within

³⁰ *Fjalor Enciklopedik Shqitar*, s.v. Isa Boletini (1964–1916), 276–277.

³¹ VA/Belgrade, DPP, K-1115/699, Milovanović Ahmeda Milan.

³² Ibid.

³³ See, for instance, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Kriegsarchiv/Vienna (= ÖStA/KA/Vienna), AOK Op. Abt. B-Gruppe, 510/1916, Nr. 30964, Nr. 14.394, Teschen, 21.09.1916, Proxy of the Ministerium des Äußern (= MdÄ) to the AOK and ÖStA/KA/Vienna, AOK Op. Abt. B-Gruppe, 510/1916, Nr. 31.470, 02.10.1916, AOK to the Proxy of the MdÄ and Kriegsministerium (= KM).

the 24th Infantry Regiment, where he was promoted to the rank of First-Class Captain (December 1920). Two years afterwards, he was stationed in Niš within the 16th Infantry Regiment “Tsar Nikola”, meaning that Milan continued successfully his military career also in the Army of the Kingdom of SHS.³⁴

It would give the wrong impression to think that Milan’s ‘nonstandard’ act was an isolated case in the Serbian army and believe that he was the only junior Ottoman soldier of rank who shifted his adherence by joining the enemy. Military reserve officer Hakki Effendi is another example too. An Ottoman Chargé d’affaires from Belgrade informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1914 that an embassy official conducted a detailed investigation on the topic and found out that beyond doubt Hakki Effendi entered into the Serbian military with a rank of second lieutenant. Actually, the embassy official saw him personally in Belgrade.³⁵ Subsequently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified the Hüdavendigâr Vilayet in Anatolia about the matter where Hakki Efendi apparently was coming from and whose father, Hacı Hüseyin Ağazâde, was already at rest.³⁶ Unfortunately, owing the lack of sources, the fate of Hakki Efendi after throwing in his lot with the Serbian army stays unknown. It is imperative, however, to point out that existing sources suggest only that Hakki Effendi did not convert himself to Christianity, which means that Şerefeddin’s decision was personally motivated.

Moving to the last point, aside from elaborating the cases of religious indifference, it seems that shifting of state loyalty could be also welcomed by a new occupying state due to practical reasons. Reflecting back to the Montenegrin context during the 1912/13 War, the Cetinje-based Habsburg military attaché stated that conditions of the Montenegrin army were in no other field of war provision as badly hampered as those of the medical service.³⁷ It comes as no wonder the acceptance of Ottoman army medical doctors into army, who after being captured in Peć (alb. Pejë), continued their call in the enemy medical service.³⁸ The military attaché asserts that among 80 employed doctors, five were the Ottoman ones and they were

³⁴ VA/Belgrade, DPP, K-1115/699, Milovanović Ahmeda Milan.

³⁵ BOA/Istanbul, HR.SYS, 2084/6, leff 4, 02.07.1914, Chargé d’affaires in Belgrade to the Grand Vizier and Minister of Foreign Affairs Said Halim Pasha. In original: Sefâret-i Saniyye Kançerlarlığından istifsâr keyfiyet edilmekle kançerlarının muhârebe-i zaile esnasında memuren Belgrad Almanya Sefareti nezdinde bulunmuş olduğundan mûmâ-ileyh Hakkı Efendi’yi şahsen tanıdığı gibi Sırb ordusuna mülazım-ı sanilikle dahil olduğunu da muhakkak bildiğini ve hatta birkaç gün mükaddem mûmâ-ileyhi Belgrad’da bizzat görmüş olduğunu ifade edildiği mâruzdur.

³⁶ BOA/Istanbul, HR.SYS, 2084/6, leff 3, 14.07.1914, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Hüdavendigâr Vilayet.

³⁷ ÖStA/KA/Vienna, AhOB GSt Militärattachés Cetinje 60 G-Akten Geheime Berichte, Eindrücke und Erfahrungen auf dem montenegrinisch-türkischen Kriegsschauplatze 1912/13 vom k.u.k. Militärattaché in Cetinje, Hauptmann des Generalstabskorps Gustav Hubka, p. 35.

³⁸ Biblioteka Istorijskog instituta Univerziteta Crne Gore (= BIIUCG/Podgorica), F85/Istočni odred crnogorske vojske (1912), 18.10.1912, Peć, Commander of the Detachment J. Vukotić to Brigadier Voivode L. Vojvodić.

all POWs.³⁹ One of them was actually Ali Riza, who at first was employed in Peć as a local doctor (as early as in late 1912); he was given a regular income, just as other Montenegrin state doctors had.⁴⁰ By receiving a recommendation letter of local authorities, meaning that no one had suspicions where his allegiance lies, he applied for and very shortly obtained a Montenegrin citizenship in later 1913.⁴¹ After being hired in the Berane Regional Administration in January 1914, former Ottoman army doctor Ali Riza, without changing his religion, but still he had to make an oath of allegiance, though, got a state position in Montenegro with regular monthly salary.⁴² In other instances, by contrast, state authorities could negatively estimate this action. A Habsburg officer in occupied Montenegro, for example, uttered in late 1916 that in the last four years some Albanian-speaking soldiers – at that moment the Habsburg ones – made already five different oaths.⁴³

Concluding Remarks

All these cases show that shifting state loyalty among persons of the military background was not an uncommon as one would imagine; it is distinguishable in different settings too. Albeit one might argue that only a handful of officers and soldiers amid or after conflicts in the Balkans or elsewhere did change sides, presenting these examples is nevertheless important because they show the complexity of daily life. Loyalties did not revolve exclusively around national or religious affiliations, but one has to pay heed to others too, not forgetting to contextualize the situation in which a shift of allegiance took place. Seemingly, in the case of Şerefeddin/Milan myriad motives (e.g. love, momentary war setting, economic situation) pushed him to shift his loyalty, meaning that it was not simply a matter of which way the political and military winds were blowing. If the latter was the case, then he would most certainly switch sides again after the dissolution of the Serbian rule in late 1915. This paper tried to give voices to these actors, thus preventing their stories to fall into oblivion. Certainly, at this point, it is hard to tell to what extent Şerefeddin/Milan was in a minority, because more studies focusing on the post-Ottoman Balkans are needed in order to demonstrate how the former rank and file accommodated in the new setting after 1913.

³⁹ ÖStA/KA/Vienna, AhOB GSt Militärattachés Cetinje 60 G-Akten Geheime Berichte, Eindrücke und Erfahrungen auf dem montenegrinisch-türkischen Kriegsschauplatze 1912/13 vom k.u.k. Militärattaché in Cetinje, Hauptmann des Generalstabskorps Gustav Hubka, p. 35.

⁴⁰ DACG/Cetinje, MV, KMV, 1913/F9, br. reg. 3001, 11.05.1913, Cetinje, Minister of War to the Minister of the Interior.

⁴¹ DACG/Cetinje, Ministarstvo unutrašnjih djela (= MUD), Upravno odjeljenje (= UO), 1914/F142, br. 302/2, 10.12.1913, Cetinje, Ministerial Council to Minister of the Interior.

⁴² DACG/Cetinje, MUD, UO, 1914/F142, br. 302/6, 14.01.1914, Cetinje, Ministry of the Interior to the Berane Regional Administration.

⁴³ ÖStA/KA/Vienna, AOK Op. Abt. B-Gruppe, 510/1916, Nr. 34433, Präz. Nr. 6874, 15.11.1916, Cetinje, Chief of the General Staff to the MGG/M, p. 4.

In addition, the paper exemplified that in certain situations, persons would even use knowingly religion or the narrative of the ruling elites as a tool to survive in a new context. By keeping an eye on the lifeworld of Şerefeddin/Milan and showing the story of other individuals the goal was to demonstrate what overlapping or differentiating points between them were. Not forgetting that while giving enough space just as to state authorities, as to the individuals, the attempt was made to see what the driving motives were for switching state loyalty, how, and exactly under which conditions these persons were employing the state rhetoric, and finally, how the new occupying authorities reacted to the latter. An aspect that encompasses all these cases is changing state adherence. In spite of having a wish to dive deeper in the lifeworld of the given persons, the story of these rank and file is nonetheless even more intriguing and fascinating insofar as it illustrates how a person successfully adapts to new circumstances amid periods of war and insecurity.

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