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**DAVID URQUHART  
THE FIRST BRITISH DIPLOMAT  
IN SERBIA**

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<b>FOREWORD.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PERSONALITY .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>IN THE EAST.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>IN GREAT BRITAIN .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>THE SERBIAN REVOLUTION .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>MEETINGS WITH PRINCE MILOS .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>A CHANGE OF DYNASTY.....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>OLD AGE .....</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BOOK</b>	
<b>BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH OF MR. URQUHART.....</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>ON THE TERM URQUHARTITE .....</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>URQUHART`S FOREIGN AFFAIRES COMITIES</b>	
<b>AND THE GREAT EASTERN CRISES IN 1876.....</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>LITERATURE.....</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>PUBLISHED WORKS OF DAVID URQUHART .....</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>INDEX OF GEOGRAFICAL PLACES .....</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>INDEX OF AUTHORITIES.....</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>187</b>



## FOREWORD

This book is an updated and translated edition of a book called *David Urquhart's Understanding of International Position of Serbia*. It was first published in Serbian as revised masters theses defended in November 2007 at the Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade University.

Since the theme of the book deals with beginnings of the foreign policy in Serbia and the relations between the Serbian Principality and Great Britain, I decided, after advising with my mentor Professor Radoš Ljušić and my reviewers and dear colleges Suzana Rajić and Dr Radomir J. Popović, to have the book translated. With the help of my other college Assistant Professor Miloš Ković I came in contact with Dr Miloš Damjanović, expert translator on Balkan matters. The book was professionally translated to English. I have also to thank my college Danko Leovac for technical support.

It took me a while to finish the work on the book since I was also working on my PhD theses at the same time. After I got my PhD degree, I had more time to finish the English version of the book about Urquhart. The scientific apparatus was also translated, supplemented and revised and the book was complemented with additional historical documents. The index of names and the index geographical places were translated to English and adjusted to a different language. Even though I did not do the translation by myself, all the extra work took a lot of time.

At the end I accepted the suggestion of my college and PhD mentor Professor Suzana Rajić to write also a foreword. This is why I decided to explain how this book came to be published.

It is not necessary to write about David Urquhart himself since the book deals with his activities in the Balkans, the Ottoman Empire and Great Britain. Nevertheless, it is necessary to stress out that he was the first British professional diplomat to visit newly founded Serbian Principality and Prince Milosh Obrenovic in the 19th century. That was the reason why I decided to change the title of the book.

Hopefully this book will contribute to better understanding of the relations between Serbia and Great Britain and explain the beginning of their diplomatic, economic and social association. This is the subject that is the main goal of my interest and research. After the book about Urquhart I continued my research and my PhD theses was about Philip Hristic the first Serbian envoy in Great Britain.

Some future book might analyze the development of diplomatic relations between Serbia and Great Britain, based on the personalities of the diplomats who visited or were appointed in Great Britain and Serbia and their personal influences on two countries policies.

In Belgrade, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2013



## INTRODUCTION

In Serbian or British historiography there have, until now, been no serious study dedicated to David Urquhart (1805-1877). Based on what we know of him, it can safely be said that he was a particularly interesting individual, meriting greater attention. Of particular significance was his understanding of the position, standing and foreign policy of Serbia in the Ottoman Empire during the 1830s and 1840s.

One of the challenges in writing this book has been that a great deal is already written in Serbian historiography about David Urquhart. However, no comprehensive account of his political and diplomatic activities in Europe and the East has been produced, and instead historians have merely highlighted his importance in the development of the Serbian national program. In order to provide a more complete account of his activities and interests, this book seeks to avoid any repetition or duplication, hence many facts are presented in a different light than has been the case until now, or, rather, they have been supplemented with the portrayals of Urquhart in Britain, his activities in the East, as well as his views regarding the international position of the Principality of Serbia. The main aim of this work has indeed been to provide a more holistic picture of the activities and interests, as well as personality and role, of David Urquhart in the diplomatic and political life of Britain, Serbia, and the East in general. Many of the details of his private and public life are not widely known, which makes it possible to examine and understand Urquhart's views and opinions from that angle as well.

Although David Urquhart was one of the more important figures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nobody has attempted to produce a comprehensive biography of his life. Gertrude Robinson wrote in the introduction to her book on Urquhart, published in London in 1920 with the support of the Urquhart family, that it was merely intended to prepare the way for a more detailed account of Urquhart's life and that only an able historian could embark on such a task.<sup>1</sup> In her unpublished doctoral dissertation, defended in 1964, Margaret H. Jenks, also paid little attention to Urquhart's biography. Even from the title of her work - *The Activities and Influences of David Urquhart 1833-1856, with Special Reference to the Affaires of the Near East* (unpublished doctoral thesis) – it is clear that it only deals with a particular aspect of Urquhart's life.

Urquhart's written legacy can be found at Balliol College in Oxford. His son, Francis Fortescue Urquhart, bequeathed the manuscripts, correspondence and published works of his father to Balliol's library. In addition, he also bequeathed the Urquhart's mountain family home in St. Jarvis in Savoy, on the slopes of Mont Blanc (*The Chalet des Anglais*) to the students of Balliol College for their use.

Today, opinions on Urquhart differ. Gertrude Robinson accords him the respect due in her book *David Urquhart, Some Chapters in the Life of a Victorian Knight Errant of Justice and*

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<sup>1</sup> G. Robinson, *David Urquhart, Some Chapters in the Life of a Victorian Knight Errant of Justice and Liberty*, New York 1970, p. 90.

*Liberty*, written around 1920. She attempts to justify and explain his eccentricity, although she does not do so fully. In any case, she considers him to be a great man. The book does not follow Urquhart's life chronologically; rather, it presents his activities and actions. The influence of the Catholic Church, whose member she was, is clearly visible. In his book, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, 1830-1841: Britain in the Liberal Movement and the Eastern Question*, Sir Charles Webster completely disregards and belittles Urquhart's diplomatic activities during the period. Margaret H. Jenks has described Urquhart's career far better, yet under the influence of Webster she only saw his failures. Nevertheless, she stressed the importance of his knowledge of the East. She did not accord much importance to other aspects of Urquhart's life, and failed to note the extent of Urquhart's influence over British public opinion.

Historians who study the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century constantly stress that Urquhart has been forgotten, yet they nevertheless refer to his name in relation to the most varied of events. British historian A. J. P. Taylor has referred to David Urquhart as the most bizarre dissident of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Taylor, Urquhart was not a radical when he entered into politics – he simply developed an image of how Britain should pursue its foreign policy and was very surprised when his imagined approach to foreign policy was only embraced by the radicals. Urquhart was a man with two obsessions, the first personified by Palmerston, the other which was directed against Russia. Urquhart was of the view that diplomacy as a whole was immoral and that this immorality could be seen in official diplomatic reports.<sup>2</sup>

Writing on the development of Russophobia in Great Britain, the historian of the Balkans Leften Stavros Stavrianos observes that David Urquhart was an unusual Scot, an able, energetic and fairly unbalanced mystic, who under different circumstances could have been the messiah of a religious renaissance movement.<sup>3</sup>

For her part, writing on the politicisation of travel reports from the Balkans, in her book *Imagining the Balkans*, Maria Todorova makes reference to Urquhart. She labels him a Turkophile and an obsessive Russophobe who in his reports from the Balkans sought to surpass and twist around the official positions of British diplomacy. It appeared almost as if Urquhart considered himself personally responsible, in place of the great powers, for the ruin of the Ottoman Empire, and was hence attempting to redeem himself by passionately advocating the interests of the Ottoman Empire against Russia.<sup>4</sup> The well-known British historian of the Balkans, Stevan K. Pavlowitch, mentions Urquhart, seeing him as an eccentric megalomaniac, yet acknowledging that he enjoyed unquestionable influence over Ponsonby, the British ambassador in Constantinople, as well as Lord Palmerston.

Although Serbian historiography is familiar with David Urquhart, his personality has received little attention. One of those familiar with David Urquhart in Serbia, Milorad Ekmecic,

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<sup>2</sup> A. J. P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers*, London 1956, pp. 42–45.

<sup>3</sup> L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, New York 2000, pp. 308–309.

<sup>4</sup> M. Тодорова, *Имагинарни Балкан*, Београд 1999, pp. 169–170.



has given us a brief description of Urquhart's diplomatic career<sup>5</sup> including his activities related to Serbia, yet without analysing his character. The historian Rados Ljusic also only engages purely with Urquhart's role and influence in Serbia.

The views and ideas of David Urquhart often reappear in the contemporary world. His name most often emerges in connection to his cooperation with Karl Marx, as well as in relation to the construction and use of Turkish baths in England.

One of the problems which surfaced during the writing of this book is related to the peculiarity of the available materials. Most of the materials left behind by David Urquhart have already been published. Consequently, a detailed analysis of Urquhart's diplomatic, political and travel writings has already been carried out. Urquhart was a very successful publicist and in his bibliography over 150 titles can be found. Most of the works are of a general multi-disciplinary nature, with both historical, political and diplomatic characteristics, making it hard to categorize them within a single one of these categories.

Broadly speaking, this book is divided into two thematic segments and is made up of eight chapters of unequal scope. One part focuses on the activities of David Urquhart in the East and in Great Britain. While in the East, he was acting as an official diplomatic representative and secretary of the British Embassy in Constantinople, and this period of his life represents both the beginning and the end of Urquhart's diplomatic career. In the chapter titled *In Great Britain* his political activities in Britain are discussed, in particular relating to his publishing career, his work in Parliament during his time as a member of Parliament's lower chamber, the House of Commons, and the foundation of his own Foreign Affairs Committee, whose activities were in fact directed against official British foreign policy. The second thematic part is an analysis of Urquhart's views on the Eastern Question and the position of Serbia in Europe's foreign policy battles, as well as his understanding of British foreign policy in the East.

The opening chapter – *Personality* – and closing chapter – *Old Age* – contain various details relating to Urquhart's private life. In the latter, it is argued that Urquhart's old age and illness had a particular influence on his actions and views.

The chapter titled *Portfolio* can be considered separately, as it is primarily concerned with the content and themes of his magazines.

This book has primarily been written on the basis of materials contained in foreign archives and libraries, which represented an additional problem for the researcher. The research was mainly undertaken in Great Britain, at The National Archives in London and the private collection of David Urquhart which is located in Balliol College in Oxford. Aside from the reports of British diplomats, which can be found in the collections of the Foreign Office, one of the other primary sources used, as already noted, are Urquhart's published works. A large

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<sup>5</sup> М. Екмечић, *Стварање Југославије I*, Београд 1989, pp. 473–474.

proportion of these sources are texts published in magazines whose editor was David Urquhart – *Portfolio*, *The Free Press* and *Diplomatic Review*, as well as other magazines. Urquhart was also the main financier of the mentioned magazines, which represented, above all else, an arm of the his own ‘Foreign Affairs Committees’, groups which were established across Great Britain and whose formation Urquhart initiated in an attempt to influence the official foreign policy of Great Britain. The magazines can be found in the London University Library and the British Library, both in London.

The collections of the Archive of Serbia were also of great significance for the researching of this book: МИД, Кнежева Канцеларија (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office of Prince of Serbia) as well as FO, S/GB – and the microfilm collections from the Foreign Office, particularly the reports of Consul Fonblanque. For the period of the rule of the Defenders of Constitution was necessary to consult the Papers of Dragoslav Stranjakovic collection in the Archive of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

This book could not have been written without the published works of David Urquhart himself: *A Fragment of the History of Serbia*; *The Affairs of Serbia*; *Recent events in the East being letters, articles, Esseys etc. The Kaizer and the Czar*; *Evacuation of the Principalities*; *Turkey and it's Recourses*; *Spirit of the East*; *England, France, Russia and Turkey*; *Progress of Russia in the West, North and South*; *Mystery of the Danube – Showing how through Secret Diplomacy, that river has been closed, exploration from Turkey arrested and the reopening of Istmus of Suez prevented.*

Many published materials and collections were also relied upon: Чедомил Мијатовић, (*Кнез Милош и пуковник Хоџес, Грађа за историју прве владавине кнеза Милоша*), Chedomilj Mijatovic, *Prince Mislosh and Colonel Hodges, Material for the History of the first rule of Prince Milosh (Србија у години 1834, Писма Боа-ле-Конта де Рињи Министру иностраних дела у Паризу о тадашњем стању у Србији)*, *Serbia in 1834, the Letters of Bole le Count de Rini to Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris about the state of Serbia* edited by Stojan Novakovic, (*Преписка Илије Гарашићина 1839–1849*), *Correspondence of Ilija Garasanin* edited by Grgur Jaksic, memoirs and travel writings (Бартоломео Куниберт) by Bartolomeo Cunibert, *Serbian Uprising and the First Rule of Prince Milosh 1804 - 1850* (*Српски устанак и прва владавина Милоша Обреновића 1804–1850*), (Ендрю Арчибалд Пејтон, *Србија. Боравак у Београду 1843–1844*) Andrew Archibald Paton, *Servia or a Residence in Belgrade in 1843 – 1844*, published in 1845 and of course that unforgettable work of early historiography, (Леополд Ранке, *Српска Револуција*) Leopold Ranke, *Serbian Revolution* and (Нил Попов, *Србија и Русија*) Nill Popov, *Serbia and Russia*.

With the great assistance of Polish professor Antoni Cetnarowicz, the author was able to consult excerpts from the printed correspondence of David Urquhart and Adam Czaroryski, as well as the correspondence of count Vladislav Zamojsky and count Adam Czartoryski, which