THE REVOLT OF THE SERBS AGAINST THE TURKS

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(1804–1813)

Translations from the Serbian National Ballads of the Period, with an Introduction,

by

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To

MY WIFE

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1 With Serbian text on opposite page.

Note on Pronunciation

Serbian and Turkish words and names (with the exception of a few like "pasha" which have a recognized English spelling) appear in the translations in their Croat or Latin-alphabet form. In this orthography

c = *ts* in "cats". *č* = *ch* in "church".
ć = sound between *ch* in "church" and *t* in "tune".
dj = sound between *j* in "jug" and *d* in "dew".
dž = *j* in "jug". *j* = *y* in "yes".
lj = *lli* in "million". *nj* = *ni* in "minion".
r between consonants = *ur* in "burn" pronounced with rolled *r* in the Scottish way.
š = *sh* in "shin". *ž* = *s* in "pleasure" (French *j*).

The other consonants are pronounced approximately as in English, except that *r* is rolled and *g* always hard as in "get".

The stressed syllable has been indicated by an acute accent on the vowel, except in words of two syllables, in which the stress is invariably on the first. The pronunciation of the vowels (among which should be included *r* between consonants) varies according to length and intonation (rising or falling), but for practical purposes it may be taken that *a* is pronounced as in English "far", *e* as in "bed", *i* as in "give", *o* as in "for", *u* as in "push".

Then the Serbs sat down to rest in comfort;
On their steeds the saddle-girths they slackened,
Let them wander o'er the plain in hobbles,
And the heroes pulled out other garments,
Took their waist-bands off, put on fresh footwear;
Who was sleepy, laid him down to slumber,
Who was not, would like to dance a little,
Called for bagpipes, called for Turkish fiddles...
Others of them sought the maple gusle
Some old song to sing, or else to listen
To the doings of their famous forebears.

'The Battle of Banja.'

Introduction

Of the many absorbing objects for study which the Balkan Peninsula, with its wealth of ancient monuments of architecture and speech, curious folk-lore, strange landscapes, picturesque customs and costumes, has to offer the investigator equipped with an eye and an ear to take in and understand, one of the most interesting consists in the folk-poems which mirror the life and history of the Serbo-Croat people.[1] These poems (or songs, for the word *pesma* embraces both), epic and lyric, unquestionably form a most noteworthy contribution to the unwritten literature of mankind. But just as the Yugoslav part of the Peninsula, from the Adriatic coast and the classical beauty of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) to the hills of Serbia and the poplar-shaded villages of the Shumadian peasantry, still lies largely outside the beaten track of visitors from Western Europe, so too these remarkable productions of a strange and peculiar genius for song are too little known save to the people who have inherited them from their forefathers, and a narrow circle of foreign specialists.[2] This is a natural result of the small extent to which the Serbo-Croat language is known outside the country in which it is spoken, and, failing a

1 The word "Serbian" is used in this book because the poems under consideration in it deal with the history of the Serbian branch of the Serbo-Croats. What is said of the Serbian applies equally to the Croat poems, except that the epic songs naturally have in some instances a rather different historical subject-matter. There are Serbian epic songs dealing with Croat heroes and vice versa.

2 The indispensable book on the subject in English is 'Yugoslav Popular Ballads' by Dragutin Subotić (Cambridge University Press, 1932).

more extensive study of that interesting tongue, is a thing that can only be remedied (and that imperfectly) by translations.

Those translations which have already appeared in English and other Western European languages (concerning which full details are to be found in Dr Subotić's book) are of a somewhat fragmentary nature, being chiefly confined to certain portions of the epic poems, while the wonderful lyrics are for the most part untouched. It is the aim of this book to make available to the English-reading public a part of the epics which has till now found no English translator, namely, the poems dealing with the revolt of the Serbs under Kara-George against the Turks;[1] and it is perhaps not unfitting that it should appear at a moment when the Yugoslavs are groaning under the heel of an even more deadly foe.

Throughout all the course of Serbian history the outstanding events have been recorded in song, and chanted to the contemporary and following generations to the mournful notes of the *gusle* or one-stringed fiddle. These records are by no means always historically accurate, and contain a large admixture of supernatural and mythological elements such as are always to be found in folk-epics. But they do give a fascinating picture of the history of the Serbs from the twelfth century onwards, and would be of interest even if they lacked the lyric beauty which abounds in them and forms their chief claim to attention and study.

The later poems were moulded on, adapted and imitated from, the earlier epics, whence it is inevitable that they should lose something of their original freshness and charm, and tend to become stereotyped. But they also

1 These translations have all appeared, in whole or in part, in the 'Slavonic Review', and are reproduced by kind permission of the editors.

underwent new influences, that of the written literature, for instance, which introduced fresh elements tending to compensate for these defects. It is hoped that the present book will show that the epics of a hundred years ago at least had retained much of the charm of the older poems and contain much beauty of their own such as render them well worth studying.

The Serbian epic is usually divided into nine cycles.[1] First comes the cycle dealing with the period preceding the Battle of Kosovo (1389), with the Nemanjići and Mrnjavčevići: Stevan Nemanja, his son St Sava, King Dušan, Vukašin Mrnjavčević, etc. Then follows the cycle describing the fateful battle and the break-up of the Serbian Empire. The third cycle sings the deeds of the greatest hero of the Yugoslav epic, Kraljević Marko (Prince Mark), who is known not only to the Serbs and Croats but to the Slovenes, Bulgars, Albanians and Turks as well. The fourth cycle deals with the Brankovići and Jakšići, the last upholders of any measure of Serbian independence till the final break-down towards the end of the fifteenth century. Then comes the cycle dealing with the haiduks or Serbian Robin-Hoods, who "took to the mountains, attacked, plundered, and killed the Turks, and by their heroic deeds revenged the Serbian people for the Turkish tyranny and kept alive the national spirit and the hope of better days to come" (V. M. Jovanović). The sixth cycle, with which the present book is concerned, has as its subject the Serbian struggle for independence at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There are also cycles dealing with Montenegrin, Bosnian and Dalmatian themes, and the modern cycle, covering the events of the last hundred years. The best of the cycles are undoubtedly those which have the

1 Pavle Popović, 'Pregled Srpske Književnosti'.

Battle of Kosovo and the doings of Kraljević Marko[1] as their subject, but all of them, with perhaps the exception of the modern cycle, in which the process of stereotypization and the mechanical adaptation of older poems tend to become excessive, have a charm which, while it strikes on first acquaintance, grows as that acquaintance is widened and deepened.

The translations in this book are all made from poems in the "Freeing of Serbia" cycle, save for two from the "Haiduk" cycle (late compositions, in which literary influences are particularly marked) which serve as an introduction to the period and give a picture of the heroic side of Serbian life immediately before the Revolt.

The value as historical documents of the ballads of the Liberation, which were largely composed, or at any rate "codified", by the blind *guslar* Filip Višnjić, is attested by the fact that the German historian Leopold von Ranke included them in the material on which he based his classical 'Serbische Revolution' (1829).

After their defeat at the Battle of Kosovo and the gradual break-up of the old Serbian Empire which ensued in the course of the following century, the Serbs who clung to the Christian religion passed centuries of virtual serfdom as the "rayah" of their Turkish conquerors. Many of the leading Serbs of Bosnia adopted Islam, and so escaped extermination; in Serbia itself, which under the Turks came to be known as the pashalik of Belgrade, conversions to the new faith were rarer. The everyday life of these centuries of suppression does not, as is only natural, find much expression in the epic poems of the period, which deal with the only

1 See D. H. Low, 'The Ballads of Marko Kraljević' (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1922).

side of Serbian life which at that time offered any scope for heroism, namely, the exploits of the haiduks. It was as a haiduk, waging the guerrilla warfare for which he is still famous, that the Serbian schooled himself in the art of war and prepared for the decisive struggle with the Turk. The sixteenth century was the Golden Age of the haiduks and the poems that sing their deeds, but several of these poems deal with the period immediately before the Revolt, and are interesting, apart from other things, in that they introduce characters who later won fame as leaders of the Revolt; Kara-George was himself a haiduk before he took to pig-dealing.

In the eighteenth century the tide of Turkish penetration into Europe turned; Hungary was lost to them, and part of Serbia and Bosnia came for a time under the sway of the Habsburgs. Service in the Austrian armies provided the Serbians with another school of arms, as is indicated in the lines:

> Till I from this world move Knez[1] Aleksa
> From the beauteous village Brankovina,
> And kill Jakov, brother to Aleksa—
> When the Sultan and the Emperor quarrelled
> They were colonels in the Emperor's service,
> Caps of gold upon their heads they sported,
> And they plundered many a Turkish village,
> Burned them down, enslaved the Turkish dwellers....
>
> 'The Beginning of the Revolt against the Dahijas.'

Soon, however, the Turks recovered Serbia once more, were driven out again, and admitted afresh by the Treaty of

1 This word later came to mean "Prince", but at this time it was used for certain outstanding Serbs who under Turkish rule enjoyed a measure of authority, each in his own district or *knežina*, gathered the taxes, and acted as intermediaries between the Turkish rulers and the Serbian people.

Sistova (1791), which re-established peace between Austria and Turkey.[1] According to this treaty the janissaries, bodies of soldiers largely recruited from the subject peoples of the Empire, who amid the decay of Ottoman power had become largely independent, were to be expelled from the pashalik of Belgrade, in which they had worked much evil; but after a time their resistance, and that of certain other influential circles, forced the Sultan (Selim III) to allow them to return. That the janissaries were able to impose their will on a Sultan who in fact desired their abolition and the institution of a regular army is a measure of the independence achieved by their leaders, as by many of the pashas during that era of internal disorder.

But before this happened the pashalik had been administered for a time in the spirit of the Treaty of Sistova, the Serbs enjoying a degree of freedom that they had not experienced for centuries. Beshir, at that time pasha of Belgrade, had ensured a considerable measure of local autonomy; each *nahija* or division of the pashalik had its *oborknez* (from German *Ober-* and Serbian *knez*, for which see footnote on p. xv), who as official representative of the Christian population was responsible for the administration of justice; the Imperial tribute was collected entirely by Serbian authorities, thus avoiding at any rate foreign "squeeze"; and this tribute together with the dues to the *spahijas* or large landowners constituted the only financial burden which the Christians had to bear by virtue of their subjection to the Ottoman power.

Now, after this brief glimpse of better things, the janissaries were back in the pashalik. In 1801 they indicated the attitude *they* considered should be adopted towards the Serbs by assassinating Beshir's successor, Mustapha Pasha,

1 On all this cf. 'History of Serbia', by H. V. Temperley (London, 1919).

whose benevolent attitude to the Christian population had earned him the title of *Majka Srbije* (Serbia's Mother),[1] and the country was thenceforth ruled by them and their leaders the so-called *dahijas*:

> Aganlija and Kučuk-Alija,
> And the brothers, the two sons of Foča,
> Memed-aga and Mus-aga with him,
> And the grand dahija Mula Jusuf,
> Derviš-aga, steward of the fortress,
> Old man Foča of a hundred summers....
>
> 'The Beginning of the Revolt against the Dahijas.'

Their tyranny caused the Serbs to send a petition to the Sultan, who, having as much to fear as they from the unbridled sway of the dahijas, intimated that the Serbs would be encouraged to overthrow them. Learning of this, the dahijas at the beginning of 1804 set about exterminating all the Serbs from whom they had most to fear:

> We will slaughter all the Serbian knezes,
> All the kmets[2] who are a danger to us,
> All the village priests, those Serbian teachers...,

and this was the immediate occasion for the Revolt. Among the many Serbian leaders who perished in this massacre was the Birčanin Ilija who plays such a distinguished rôle in the second ballad in this book. The Serbs replied by leading their women and children away to safe retreats in the mountains, murdering their *subashas*, the village overseers instituted by the dahijas, and attacking the Turkish forces.

1 Now that the rôle of the Turks in the Balkans has been so fundamentally transformed, it is perhaps worth while pointing out that the Serbs were always ready to recognize their opponents' good points. There are several instances of this in the present ballads; e.g. the attitude, described in the ballad, of the "old man Foča" mentioned in the quotation on this page.

2 Headmen of villages.

All this is described or hinted at in 'The Beginning of the Revolt against the Dahijas' and other poems. (A more fanciful account from Montenegro describes how Kara-George raised the banner of revolt when a Turkish chieftain carried off the Serbian's sister on her wedding-day.) Kara-George (George Petrović, nicknamed *kara* or "black" from his dark complexion and violent nature), former haiduk and prosperous pig-dealer, whose trade relations with "the German land" are often referred to in the poems, and who had managed to elude the sinister attentions of the dahijas, was chosen as leader at a meeting of the chief men of the Šumadija, in Northern Serbia, held between 14 and 21 February 1804 at the village of Orašac.

The Serbs, who were at first fighting technically on the Sultan's behalf against the rebellious dahijas, and who were not without the help and encouragement of certain Turkish official and other quarters, e.g. the spahijas, entered on what was in view of their small numbers an amazing series of military successes. In quick succession they captured Požarevac, some 50 miles east of Belgrade, and Šabac, about the same distance to the west, on the River Sava, and invested Smederevo (Semendria, about 30 miles east of Belgrade on the Danube, near the confluence of that river with the Morava flowing from the south-east) and Belgrade itself, into which the dahijas had retired. After these notable successes the Sultan, fearing lest the Serbian movement might get out of hand, sent Beshir, the former pasha of Belgrade and now vizier of Bosnia, officially to assist the Serbs against the recalcitrant dahijas, but in reality to hold them in check. Faced by this combination of Serbian force and Imperial authority, Gušanac-Ali, commander of the fortress of Belgrade, admitted Beshir Pasha into the city in July 1804. The dahijas had previously fled down the

Danube to an island near Tekija known as Ada Kale. Beshir instructed the local commander to hand them over to the Serbs, who were satisfied with their heads, which they took back to Belgrade on 25 July.

Now that the power of the dahijas had to this extent been smashed, Beshir desired the Serbian forces to disperse, but this they were unwilling to do without guarantees, particularly as important towns like Užice, 80 miles south-west of Belgrade, were still in the hands of the janissaries. Realizing the course events were likely to take, the Sultan now instructed the authorities in the adjacent pashaliks to suppress the Serbian movement. For their part the Serbs determined to seek foreign help, and in September 1804 sent a deputation to St Petersburg, which returned with money and the promise of diplomatic support.

In April 1805 the Serbs put forward their proposals for peace, on the following lines: the semi-independent pasha of Belgrade to be replaced by a direct representative of the Sultan; the former pashalik to be governed by an elected Serbian Grand Knez; the amount of the tribute to be fixed, and collected and despatched to the Imperial treasury by the Grand Knez; Serbia to enjoy complete local autonomy under Turkish suzerainty.

Selim's answer to these eminently reasonable proposals took concrete shape when in the summer of this year Hafiz, the pasha of Niš, gathered an army to crush the infidel Serbs and their impious demands. At the Battle of Ivankovac (6–7 August) this force was defeated by the Serbs, Hafiz himself dying of wounds; after which the Serbs captured Smederevo, Paraćin, some 60 miles south-east of Belgrade, and Aleksinac, 30 miles further south, well on the way to the important Turkish centre of Niš on the Morava, and other towns.

After these Turkish setbacks the task of repressing the Serbs, clearly no easy one, was entrusted to Beshir Pasha, who had returned to Bosnia in October of the previous year, and Ibrahim, pasha of Rumelia. In the spring of 1806 the Bosnian army under Beshir struck across the River Drina, which, flowing northwards into the Sava, forms the natural boundary between Serbia and Bosnia. Part of this army was destroyed by Stojan Čupić at the battle of the Salaš in March 1806; the rest was defeated by Kara-George near Valjevo. Thereupon the Turkish commander known to the Serbs as Kulin-kapetan crossed the Drina with 30,000 men and reached Šabac. Kara-George entrenched himself outside the city

On the plain of Mišar, far-extending,

and in a battle fought on 1 August the Turks were smashed, Kulin-kapetan and other Turkish leaders losing their lives.

Attacking from the south, an army of 40,000 under Ibrahim Pasha recaptured Aleksinac, but was halted in its advance northwards by the entrenched position of Deligrad overlooking the Morava some 10 miles to the north-west. Here for six weeks the Serbs under Petar Dobrnjac, referred to in the poems as Petar from Dobrinja, heroically resisted the Turkish onslaughts, till Kara-George, fresh from his victory over the Bosnians, arrived under Deligrad, when Ibrahim Pasha withdrew to Niš. In the words of the ballad (rendered somewhat euphemistically on p. 103 of this book),

Kad idjahu niz Moravu Turci,
Sve skakahu Turci, ka' jeleni;
A kad li se natrag povrnuše,
Otidoše Turci, ka' . . . !

'The Battle of Deligrad', last four lines.

Apart from the fact that the Serbian Revolt was now in itself assuming alarming proportions, the Turkish authorities had additional reason for wishing to dispose of it in that Napoleon was anxious for Turkey to attack Russia. In these circumstances they now declared their readiness to accept the Serbian proposals as listed above.

Gušanac-Ali, however, was not of like mind; so on 30 November 1806 the Serbs attacked and captured the town of Belgrade, the Turks retiring into the fortress situated so picturesquely on the hill overlooking the confluence of the Sava and Danube. To cut off supplies from Zemun (Semlin) on the opposite, Austrian, bank of the Danube, Kara-George occupied the small flat island in mid-stream, and on 27 December Gušanac-Ali surrendered. A month later, on 27 January 1807, the Turks also surrendered Šabac. The Serbs now held all the former pashalik with the exception of the town of Užice.

Hostilities between Russia and Turkey commenced in December 1806. Russia occupied Roumania, at that time the Turkish provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia, and in June 1807 a Russian division crossed the Danube. In the following month the Serbs gained Užice.

The Treaty of Tilsit, signed on 7 July, restored peace between Russia and Turkey, and from then till the spring of 1809 the Serbs also rested from battle. This was a period of greater chaos than usual in the Ottoman Empire, Selim III being deposed and succeeded after a stormy interval by Mahmud II. The Serbs took advantage of this breathing-space to set about the task of organizing liberated Serbia as an independent state.

The epics naturally deal more with the heroic side of the Revolt, with battle and bloodshed; the organization of the new state, the beginnings of education, even the feuds

between the Serbian leaders that to a certain extent contributed to the ultimate failure of the Revolt, are but lightly touched on if at all.

In the spring of 1809 Russia declared war on Turkey, and at the same time the Serbs once more took up arms. Now their attacks were directed outwards, at territories inhabited by Serbs lying outside the boundaries of the former pashalik. One Serb army crossed the Drina into Bosnia, another marched south-west to join up with the Serbs of Montenegro and cut the connexions of Bosnia with Constantinople, a third struck southwards at Niš, and a fourth descended the Danube to join hands with the Russians. The Serbs advanced successfully through Bosnia, rousing the inhabitants to arms, while Kara-George moved across the Javor range towards the River Lim, and defeated the Pasha of Peć in a violent battle at Suvodol, thus making connexion with Montenegro.

During the course of the southern campaign, which was at first less successful, the entrenched position on the Čegar height under the command of the voivode Stevan Sindjelić was the scene of a celebrated episode. Sindjelić and his 3000 men were attacked by a great force of Turks, and, owing as it appears to a lamentable lack of understanding between the Serbian leaders, failed to receive the help so desperately needed. As the defensive ditches filled up with the bodies of the slain, the Turks were able to cross them and close in on the defenders. Perceiving that the position was hopeless, Sindjelić set fire to the gunpowder in the entrenchment and blew himself, the Serbs and the Turks sky-high (19 May 1809).

The remaining Serbs withdrew towards the entrenchment at Deligrad, harassed by the pursuing Turks. From the heads of the Serb warriors killed in these encounters

the Turks raised the so-called Ćele-kula (Skull Tower) at Niš.

Deligrad under Petar Dobrnjac was besieged and on 3 August captured by the Turks, who then seized all the right or eastern bank of the Morava. Thereupon they crossed the river and headed for Kragujevac and Belgrade. These columns were, however, defeated at Lipar and Crni Vrh (16 August), and thrown back over the Morava.

At about the same time the Bosnian Turks crossed the Drina into Serbia and besieged in Loznica the voivode Ante Bogićević, referred to, in the words of Ali Pasha as given in the ballad 'The Battle of Loznica', as follows:

> "And that whoreson Bogićević-Ante,
> Who has ravished all fair Jadar from me,
> Underneath his outstretched wing protects it—
> Him will I impale with awful torture!"
> (These words uttered pasha Ali-pasha;
> Thus he spoke; no prayer to God he uttered.)

Pride as usual went before a fall. This is how the same ballad sums up the results of the ensuing Battle of Loznica:

> Few were they that crossed the Drina water,
> Many they who in the Drina perished;
> For the Drina takes no count of heroes,
> She devours them, all unnamed, uncounted.
> God in Heaven and the Holy Virgin!
> Since the town of Loznica was building,
> Never have the Serbs won greater booty
> Than that time they smashed the Turkish army,
> From the Turks won loot beyond all counting!

War continued in the following year in alliance with the Russians. The Serbs captured Kladovo on the Danube near the Iron Gates, Brza Palanka further down the river, and

Négotin, just before the present Bulgarian frontier, and some 20 miles north-west of the then important Turkish fortress of Vidin on the Danube, frequently referred to in the ballads. In June 1810 Kara-George defeated the Turks at Soko Banja and threw them back across the southern frontier.

Once again the Turks moved on Serbia from Niš and from Bosnia. At Varvarinsko Polje on 6 September the Serbs and Russians defeated Hurshid, pasha of Niš. Kara-George crossed the Drina once more, and this time the Bosnian Turks offered peace. It was then agreed that the Drina should form the frontier.

Thus after some initial ill-success the Serbs had returned to and surpassed the frontiers of 1807 (i.e. those bounding the former pashalik, including the town of Užice captured in July of that year). They had now taken Krajina, Ključ and Crna Reka from the pasha of Vidin, Banja and Aleksinac from the pasha of Niš, Paraćin and Kruševac from the pasha of Leskovac, from the pasha of Novi Pazar the region round the monastery of Studenica, and from the pasha of Zvornik Jadar and Raćevina on the right bank of the Drina.

In May 1812, under the menace of Napoleon's invasion, the Russians signed the Peace of Bucarest with Turkey. By it Turkey recovered Wallachia and Moldavia, and the Serbs were thus separated from Russia. Article VIII of this treaty stipulated that the Sultan should pardon the Serbs for having risen against him and promise them immunity from retribution for what had occurred; that the Serbs should govern themselves; that they should pay an agreed tribute, collected by them; and that they should destroy all new fortifications, and hand the old ones over to the Turks.

The Serbs were not unnaturally dissatisfied with the part of the treaty permitting the Turks to return to Serbia and

take possession of the fortresses. As, however, no promise of support could be obtained from the Russians, Kara-George sent envoys to Hurshid Pasha in Niš, on 12 August 1812, to discuss the implementing of the treaty. The envoys were amiably received, but the discussions, intentionally protracted by the Turks, were fruitless, and for a good reason. The fact was that the new Sultan, regardless of any treaties, was resolved to humiliate the Serbs who had in recent years so often humiliated the might of the Ottoman Empire; and as soon as the Russian armies had evacuated Wallachia and Moldavia and were fully occupied with their struggle against Napoleon, Hurshid Pasha informed the envoys that the Sultan intended the Serb people to return to the position in which they had been before 1804! In other words, they were to become once again the "helpless rayah", to hand over their fortresses, destroy their entrenchments, surrender their cannon and arms, and in addition pay ten years' arrears of tribute.

And to leave no doubt as to his intentions, the Sultan ordered his armies to invade Serbia by the usual routes: up the Danube from Vidin, over the Drina from Bosnia, and down the Morava from Niš.

In this desperate emergency, with no hope of Russian help, Kara-George for the last time called the Serbs to arms. His proclamation, which was read out in the churches, runs in part as follows:

> The landowners, janissaries and other Turks expelled from Serbia have now risen to subdue the Serbs and put to the sword every male over seven years of age, enslave the women, and turn the children into Turks. Yet who are they that we should fear them? Are they not the same Turks the Serbs so often defeated in the early days, when they had naught but their bare hands to fight with? And now we have some 150

cannon, 7 fortresses of stone, and 40 entrenched positions, from which the Turks have so often been thrown back. Why, we might hold out for ten years, without help from any quarter! But doubt not that help will come, ere six months are out, from Serbia's allies. May God inspire courage in the hearts of the sons of Serbia in their fight for themselves, their children and the Orthodox faith!

The following dispositions were made for the defence of the country: facing Vidin stood Haiduk Veljko with 7000 men, and facing Niš Mladen Milanović with 18,000; Knez Sima Marković guarded the Drina with 16,000 men, while under Kara-George were three to four thousand soldiers to act as a reserve.

In July 1813 a force twice as large as Veljko's struck from Vidin. Veljko was killed, and the Turks occupied Negotin and all that part of the country. At the same time Hurshid Pasha moved north from Niš with 100,000 men against Milanović's 18,000, besieged and by-passed the Deligrad entrenchment, and marched down the Morava, reaching the Danube by the beginning of September. The Bosnian Turks occupied Loznica and advanced to Ravanj, where the Serbs were entrenched under the priest Matej Nenadović, Stojan Čupić, and the Miloš Obrenović who was to lead the second Revolt. After a battle lasting seventeen days the Serbs were forced to retire to Šabac. Here they were visited by Kara-George, who then returned to Belgrade.

There, in an atmosphere of confusion, apprehension and divided counsel, Kara-George learnt that Hurshid Pasha had crossed the Morava and was marching on Belgrade. On 21 September 1813 he crossed the river to Zemun with the Russian representative and a number of Serbian leaders. The last poem in this book consists of Kara-George's 'Farewell to Serbia'.

The Turks entered an undefended Belgrade. When news of this reached the army at Šabac it dispersed, as did the other Serbian forces save those at the Deligrad entrenchment. After the rest of Serbia had been subdued these brave men for a while continued the struggle in a way recalling the heroism of the last isolated defenders of the Maginot Line, then broke through the Turkish lines and scattered; Stanoje Glavaš and his band of warriors continued to wage guerrilla warfare in the mountains between Niš and Novi Pazar for two months before surrendering to the Turks.

Two years later Miloš Obrenović, who had remained behind in Serbia, once more roused the Serbs to revolt; but his methods were on the whole more diplomatic than heroic, and he was content to consolidate his successes with a small measure of independence. This action, though it constituted a decisive step towards the final liberation of the Serbs from Turkish rule, was by its nature little productive of epic poems; nor does any ballad which has yet been collected sing the return of Kara-George to Serbia in 1817, his assassination at the behest of Miloš, and the sending of his head in pickle to the Sultan.

The poems translated in the present book are not the only ones having as their theme the Revolt against the Turks, but are a selection from the best epics of the period.

The lyrical and epic beauties of these poems must in the main be left to speak for themselves as far as their foreign guise permits; nevertheless some remarks on the outstanding characteristics of the epics, based mainly on the "Freeing of Serbia" cycle, will not perhaps be out of place.

These poems are invariably composed in lines of ten syllables, or *deseterci* (from *deset*, "ten"). When they are sung, or rather chanted, to the notes of the *gusle*, the rhythm

is easily recognizable as a regular succession of trochaic feet, five to a line, with a caesura[1] after the second foot, i.e.

– ∪ – ∪ || – ∪ – ∪ – ∪ .

This rhythm does not, however, necessarily take into account the natural stress of the Serbian words as they are normally pronounced, in which respect the verse-scheme bears a certain resemblance to Greek and Latin prosody. Thus, for instance, the line

To govori, a s dušom se bori
(This she utters, with her soul she struggles),

which when chanted would be accented as follows:

Tōgŏ vōrĭ || āsdŭ šōmsĕ bōrĭ,

when recited or quoted would be read

Tō gōvŏrĭ, ă s dūšŏm sĕ bōrĭ.

It is true that many lines retain their trochaic nature even when they are read aloud; for instance,

Sábljom s'jéče, a mrkóvom gázi,
Drúgom rúkom buzdovánom túče...
(Smites with sabre, tramples with his war-horse,
With his left hand wields his mighty cudgel...);

but as many, if not more, do not. The result, when the poems are read aloud, is an irregularity by no means displeasing to the ear, and which, in fact, has the effect of avoiding the monotony which might arise from a succession of regular trochaic lines.

Rhyme and assonance between lines, though occasionally to be found, are generally speaking rare. Slightly more common is internal rhyme, between the last word before the caesura and the last word in the line, e.g.

1 For the frequent omission of the caesura in the present English translations see later.

Zemlji *pade*, pušci oganj *dade*
(To the ground he fell, and fired his musket),
On je *paša*, a ja sam *subaša*
(He is pasha, I am but subasha);

as these rhymes are of necessity feminine, they are often difficult to imitate in English.

Repetition, of phrases, lines, and entire sections, is very common, as in all folk-epics. This feature is found in all primitive literary productions, and will be familiar to English readers from the fairy-stories of their childhood. Among the poems in the present volume 'The Battle of Deligrad' contains the most striking examples of repetition.

Another characteristic of all folk-epics, from Homer onwards, is the use of constant epithets, i.e. the regular and often stereotyped use of the same adjective with certain nouns. Common Serbian examples are: "*svijetlo* oružje" (shining weapons), "*sinje* more" (blue sea), "*bijelo* lice" (white face), "*bijeli* grad" (white-walled city), "*vjeran* sluga" (faithful servant), "*vjerna* ljuba" (faithful spouse), "*ludo* dijete" (helpless child); sometimes the epithets are used incongruously, as when, in describing an "Ethiopian", reference is made to his "*white* face".

Among the figures of speech which are characteristic of the epic poems one of the most striking is a peculiar form of antithesis employed as follows: first a statement is made or a rhetorical question posed, then it is denied or contradicted, and finally the true version of the facts is given. For instance:

Loud a grey-blue cuckoo-bird lamented
On the hillock over Bijeljina;
'Twas no grey-blue cuckoo that lamented,
But the mother of Orugdžijć Meho...

'Miloš Stoićević and Meho Orugdžijć.'

or

Does it thunder, is the earth a-tremble?
Is it Krnjo[1] and Zelenko[1] roaring
Up in Zvornik, in the white-walled fortress,
That their thunder far and near re-echoes?
None of these things makes the mighty tumult:
Two strong armies are engaged in battle.

'The Battle of Kukutnica.'

Besides this we find metaphors and similes, many of them very striking, especially when used in composition. For instance, all the figures of speech in the following extract are Serbian commonplaces, yet it will hardly be denied that their cumulative effect is extremely poetical. (Metaphors have been changed into similes in the translation in order to avoid the introduction of words not found in the original):

Fine of waist is she, and tall of figure,
And her hair is like a wreath of silk-threads;
Her two eyes are like two precious jewels
And like leeches from the sea her eyebrows;
In her cheek a crimson rose is blooming
And her teeth two strings of pearls resemble,
And her mouth a little box of sugar;
When she speaks, 'tis like a pigeon cooing,
Like the sound of sprinkled pearls her laughter,
And her walk is like a peahen's gliding...

'Sava from Posavlje and Ali-beg.'

Another common feature is the interjection, especially at the beginning of descriptions of battles, etc., of a line of religious character, e.g.

God in Heaven and the Holy Virgin!

1 Names of cannon.