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**MEASURES AGAINST THE PLAGUE AND OTHER
CONTAGIOUS DISEASES IN SERBIA IN THE FIRST HALF OF
THE 19th CENTURY**

The paper provides an introduction covering the absence of measures against the plague and other contagious diseases in the Ottoman Empire, the measures practiced in the Austrian Empire, the terminology used for measures against the spreading of the disease in the Serbian language, etc. This is followed by a section that covers the plague during the First Serbian Uprising and the remembrance of its disastrous consequences. The central part of the paper focuses on the measures against cholera and the plague taken by the Principality of Serbia, starting the 1830s. Regulations modeled after the Austrian counterparts passed in 1839 and 1841, establishing a cordon sanitaire toward the Ottoman Empire.

Key words: *Principality of Serbia. – Plague. – Cordon sanitaire. – Ottoman Empire. – Austrian regulations.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the 18th century the Austrian Empire set up a cordon sanitaire on its border with the Ottoman Empire in order to protect itself from contagious diseases, primarily the plague.¹ No traveler from the Ottoman Empire could cross into the Austrian Empire without being detained in the cordon sanitaire or at a quarantine station (*kontumac*). A person would spend a certain number of days (42 during an infection outbreak, otherwise 21 days) and only then, if not infected, would they be permitted to enter the territory of the Austrian Empire.

There were no regulations or measures against contagious diseases in the Ottoman Empire up until the early 1830s, when the first quarantine station was established, in Constantinople.

The portion of the Serb people who lived under Venetian and Habsburg rule applied the measures for containing the spread of contagious diseases that were prescribed by these authorities. The terms used in the Serbian language also express this duality – Romance and Germanic. They came from Latin by way of German. The word *quarantine* found its way into the Serbian language from the German word *Karantin*, which comes from the Italian word *quaranta*, meaning forty. Forty days was length of the protective measure of isolation and confinement of persons, animals and goods from regions affected by a contagious disease, who were either infected, or who could transmit the disease. The word *kontumac* came from the German word *Kontumaz*, which is derived from the Latin word *contumax*, meaning stubborn, disobedient (Klajn, Šipka 2006, 583, 653).

2. THE PLAGUE DURING THE FIRST SERBIAN UPRISING

During the First Serbian Uprising (1804–1813) decrees were passed for fighting contagious diseases. This is apparent from decrees passed by Grand Vožd Karađorđe Petrović in 1812 and 1813, banning contacts with Ottoman subjects because of the plague in the Ottoman Empire. Thus, Archpriest Mateja Nenadović and his uncle Jefrem Nenanović who “held the border with the Turks” were ordered “to close the border with Turkey and not to allow any meetings because the great plague disease has appeared in Turkey”. In

¹ Regarding other contagious diseases, this paper will only focus on cholera due to limited space available. On smallpox see Kršljanin 2021, on typhus see Čukić 2011.

addition, there are also Karađorđe's decrees issued to Aleksa Dukić, who had been posted in Paraćin, "for our people not to voluntarily speak with and not to mingle [...] with Turkish merchants" (Stojanović 1848, Nos. 979–980, 67–68; Katić 1965, 138).²

At the beginning of 1814, "to make things worse, the plague spread all across Serbia and Belgrade, where 3–4 people per day died from the disease" (Ivić 1917, 78–79, n. 16).

This great plague spread throughout the European part of the Ottoman Empire, especially from 1814 to 1816, reaching Šumadija, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. Its dire consequences are preserved in historical monuments, and it was long remembered by the population.

In Karadžić (1818) the plague is described by stating "Serbs say that the plague is as lively as a woman (this is especially evidenced by those who contracted it). Many claim to have seen it walking veiled with a white scarf; some say that they carried her, that is, that she finds a man in a field or encounters a man on a road (even comes to one's house), and then says to him: I am the plague, come on, carry me there (wherever she wants to go). He puts her on his back, gladly (because then she will do no harm to him and his household) and carries her without any difficulty (because she is not heavy in the least) wherever she tells him to go. The plagues have their own land across the sea (where only they live), so God sends them over here (when people do evil and sin much) and tells them how many people to kill; but many succumbed to dogs [...] When the plague is killing, they do not often call her the plague but rather *ćuma* (in an attempt to appease it); nor can they leave dirty dishes at night, because she comes to the house at night to see whether the dishes have been washed, and then poisons and scratches all the spoons and dishes (sometimes the plague also takes people's bacon from the attic). – To collect like the plague collects children. – To linger like the plague in Sarajevo. – The plague has killed in the past, but never has it struck in the ass" (Karadžić 1818, 348–349).

The plague is a contagious disease that was also called *buba*, *ćuma*, or *morija*.³ The word *ćuma* comes from the Turkish *çuma*, from the Greek *κύμα*, meaning plague (Klajn, Šipka 2006, 1457).⁴

² All translations in this paper are by the author.

³ There was also the forms *kuža* and *kužica*. "In the Balkans it is replaced with Gr.-Lat. κύμα>ćuma" (Skok 1973, 223).

⁴ For *ćuma* see Skok (1971, 341).

3. CHOLERA AND THE PLAGUE IN 1836 AND 1837

Care for the public health and the prevention of the plague and other contagious diseases was prescribed by Article 131 of the 1835 Constitution, which stipulated the right of municipalities to request that the Government (*Praviteljstvo*) build hospitals and quarantines stations at the state's expense (Mitrović 2004, 20, 59).

3.1. Cholera

A cholera outbreak occurred in 1836 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The disease also spread to the western regions of the Principality of Serbia, primarily in Podrinje region. In fighting against this horrendous contagious disease, people resorted to superstitious practices. Records show that twins were sought out to make a furrow around the village using twin oxen, which this disease allegedly could not cross. Frontiersmen (*Krajišnici*) who lived in abandoned Turkish houses feared that the curse of “sitting in Turkish houses” had caught up with them. There was mass exodus from populated areas to the hills, to secluded and “clean” places. If tradition is to be believed, Prince Miloš shared the prejudices of his subjects. In order to protect himself, his family and his retinue, he allegedly ordered for nine old women, completely naked, to secretly spin wool and weave a shirt in one night, through which he then passed, followed by his family, his retinue, and his armed escort (Đorđević 1922, 228–229).

In addition to and despite prejudices, the Serbian public authorities seriously came to grips with cholera. Serbian authorities had learned from the 1831 cholera epidemic that the disease is rarely spread from one person to another and that quarantine measures yielded no results.⁵ For this reason, the fight against cholera mainly focused on suppressing panic,

⁵ In a letter to Police Minister Cvetko Rajović, dated 10 August 1831, Prince Miloš Obrenović tells him that, since “quarantines have been established in Zemun and in Hungary, because cholera is not transmitted by touch and person-to-person contact, but by air”, he should act, as best he can, with the goods and traders coming from there (State Archives of Serbia (SAS), Prince's Chancery (PC), V, 103b).

In a letter to Minister Rajović (which is undated but undoubtedly is from this period), Prince Miloš approved “of them giving up on the quarantine, because cholera is transmitted by air and humidity” and ordered that custodians should no longer announce the deceased by ringing bells, for there to be no funeral ceremonies but rather a single priest performing a burial service, to prevent the further spreading of cholera (SAS, PC V, 104b).

preventing people from fleeing their homes and populated areas, finding a cure, and seeking professional medical assistance. It is probably difficult for the contemporary reader to even imagine such scarce conditions, lack of medication and doctors.

A cure for cholera was sought everywhere. Even Prince Miloš set out in search of it. He sent back to the Government the "Rule on how to protect oneself from cholera" because "it does not correspond with our people's views", and sent a strong medicine against cholera that "had cured so many people."⁶ Captain Miloš Bogičević had mentioned a certain Predić who treated persons with cholera "with some medicaments."⁷ In August 1836 the Government issued the Podrinje-Sava Command instructions for treating cholera.⁸ Pavle Jovičić, a medical doctor and surgeon, wrote a manuscript entitled *Kolera, azijatičeska, kako se od nje lečiti i čuvati treba* (Cholera, Asian, how it should be treated and how to protect oneself from it) and forwarded it to Prince Miloš on 17 September 1836.⁹

The first news on the spread of cholera arrived in early July 1836. Pavle Jovanović, the head of the Posavina County, notified the Prince's Office on July 8 about the people who had died of cholera.¹⁰ On July 12, Miloš Bogičević reported that a woman had died of cholera in Loznica, and that several frontiersmen had fallen sick.¹¹ These were frontiersmen who had come from Bosnia and settled in the Podrinje region. As quite a few of them had cholera, it was suspected that they had brought it with them.¹²

On July 26 Dr. Maksim Nikolić informed Prince Miloš about the spread of cholera in the village of Ražanj and the surrounding area. Dr. Nikolić sent a skilled man to the village where the disease had appeared to treat the infected people in a way that he did, as a doctor.¹³

⁶ Document dated 27 July 1836 (SAS, PC XVIII, 90).

⁷ Document dated 13 July 1836 (SAS, PC XXXVII, 1428).

⁸ SAS, PC XXXVII, 1451

⁹ SAS, PC XVIII, 15.

¹⁰ SAS, PC IV, 876.

¹¹ SAS, PC XXXVII, 1426.

¹² See the Administrative Council (*Upraviteljni sovjet*) document, dated 8 August 1836, on dissolving the Committee for the distribution of land in the Podrinje region to frontiersmen, following its submission of a report on the number of frontiersmen wishing to return to Bosnia (SAS, PC XXXVII, 850). See the letter of the Prince's Committee from Lešnica, dated 13 August 1836, addressed to military commander Laza Teodorović in which it is recommended that a doctor be dispatched, because cholera was spreading among the frontiersmen (SAS, PC XXXVII, 1468).

¹³ SAS, PC XVIII, 79.

The Prince's Office documents from 1833 reveal that Dr. Maksim Nikolić had received a scholarship from Prince Miloš, to study medicine in Pest. He had encountered financial difficulties due the costs of treatment for his leg. With Prince Miloš's financial support he completed his studies and was to move to Serbia in December 1833.¹⁴

On 28 and 30 July 1836, Dr. Maksim Nikolić informed Prince Miloš about the condition of people sick with cholera, and on 31 July 1836 he said that there were four newly infected persons. Of the total of 95 people suffering from cholera, 21 died, ten were on the road to recovery, and 64 had been cured. He had noticed that the disease relapsed easily.¹⁵

The ban on spreading "terrifying news" about the cholera outbreak in the Čačak region speaks to the nature and the speed at which the news on the cholera spread.¹⁶ The Podrinje–Sava military command informed Prince Miloš on 29 July 1836 that cholera had appeared in Loznica and Lešnica and that the schools have been closed. On August 1 the same command notified Prince Miloš that cholera was spreading in towns, that many people were dying, especially the frontiersmen, and that guards had been posted.¹⁷

On 7 August 1836 Valjevo district physician Grigorije Ribakov notified Prince Miloš of the spread of cholera in the town of Valjevo and the surrounding area. He informed him that the population was not abiding by his circular letter or the medical advice, that they were buying medicaments in shops whose owners were making good money off of them.¹⁸ The

¹⁴ See Aleksa Simić's letters to Prince Miloš, dated 29 July 1833, and Maksim Nikolić's letters to Prince Miloš, dated 30 August and 6 December 1833 (SAS, PC XVIII, 226–228).

¹⁵ SAS, PC XVIII, 80–82.

¹⁶ The Čačak Justice Authority (*Ispravničenstvo*) wrote to Jovan Obrenović on 27 July 1836 (SAS, PC XIV, 1223). The letter from Arsenije Andrejević, Commander of the Central Military Command, to Prince Miloš, dated 29 July 1836 testifies to the misinformation, as well as the authorities' attempt to present the situation as normal and regular. The letter reads that he had received a report from Jovan Obrenović stating that he had returned to Čačak from his trip, having heard that the residents of Čačak had fled in fear of cholera. However, this is by no means true. Only five people had died in his absence, while things calmed down with his return and the cholera was practically forgotten (SAS, PC XV, 1817).

¹⁷ SAS, PC XXXVII, 1450, 1452.

¹⁸ SAS, PC XVIII, 113. Two days earlier, the same doctor, Ribakov, wrote to Commander Laza Teodorović that he needs to tour all the villages in the Valjevo county and to explain to the people how to protect themselves from cholera (SAS, PC XXXVII, 1458).

Administrative Council (*Upraviteljni sovjet*) recommended that the population refrain from fleeing into the woods but to instead use medication against cholera.¹⁹

Reports from early August, i.e., dated 6, 10 (three reports) and 11 August 1836, from Loznica, Lešnica and Radalj state that “cholera is stopping“, “cholera is disappearing“.²⁰ However, in late August, cases of cholera appeared in Šabac and Kragujevac. According to a report dated August 17, three people had abruptly died of cholera, while a report from 18 August 1836 said that cholera was beginning to spread.²¹ Reports from Kragujevac, dated 17 and 31 August and 1 September 1836, speak of the appearance of cholera, deaths and the spreading of the disease. A report from Kragujevac, dated 9 September 1836, reads that there were no more cases of cholera infection.²²

There are three more reports from October 1836. On October 2 the commander of the Central Military Command, Arsenije Andrejević, informed Prince Miloš, among other things, that two women and one girl had died of cholera.²³ On 4 October 1836, Boško Tadić, Captain of Azbukovica, notified Commander Laza Teodorović that there were several people suffering from cholera in the village of Čitluk, in the Rađevina region, and that several people had died from it.²⁴ Finally, on 18 October 1836, Commander Andrejević informed Prince Miloš that three people had died in the same house within 48 hours in the Belica county, in the village of Glavinci, and that 24 people had died of cholera in the Resava county, in the village of Bigrenica.²⁵

From that point on, documents, at least the ones preserved in the Prince’s Chancery, are silent on cholera. Apparently, with the onset of winter this terrible infectious disease disappeared.

However, new trouble was already knocking on the door. Reports of the appearance of the plague in the Ottoman Empire started arriving already in the spring of 1836. That year, the plague reached Constantinople, from Egypt, and began to spread throughout the European part of the Ottoman Empire, in the direction of the southern borders of the Principality of Serbia.

¹⁹ SAS, PC XXXVII, 850.

²⁰ SAS, PC XXXVII, 1459, 1461, 1464, 1466–1467.

²¹ SAS, PC XXXVII, 1470–1471.

²² SAS, PC XV, 1843, 1851–1852, 1857.

²³ SAS, PC XV, 1877.

²⁴ SAS, PC XXXVII, 1505.

²⁵ SAS, PC XV, 1883.

Unlike in the case of cholera, the fight against the plague involved strict measures of quarantine and isolation, in order to prevent the plague from making its way into the country, and to isolate the infected from the others to prevent contagion.

3.2. The Quarantine Station in Aleksinac

On 9 August 1836 Prince Miloš received news from the vizier that the plague was ravaging Rumelia, i.e., the European part of the Empire, and that a quarantine station should be set up.²⁶ From that day on, all possible measures were vigorously undertaken to prevent the introduction of the plague into Serbia, primarily the construction of quarantine stations.

A decision was taken on 21 August 1836 to establish quarantine stations²⁷ at all major border crossings and, at the same time, to set up a cordon sanitaire at the border. Quarantine stations were set up in Aleksinac, at the mouth of the Drina River, in Mokra Gora, Bregovo, and meetings were held in Vrška Čuka and Pazarski Drum. It was decided to immediately start construction of quarantine stations, for which 10,000 market groschen was allocated (Mihajlović 1937, 40).

The most important quarantine station was in Aleksinac, on the main Constantinople road, which ran from the city of Constantinople via Niš to Belgrade and was a lifeline of traffic and trade. The construction began immediately, while Prince Miloš appointed Avram Petronijević, one of the most respectable Council members, as the supervisor of these works and sanitary commissioner for all quarantine stations, which only goes to show how much importance he attached to the job.

On 20 August 1836, Jovan Veljković, the administrator (*ispravnik*) of the *Ispravničestvo*²⁸ of Aleksinac conveyed to Prince Miloš Obrenović in Kragujevac that works on the reconstruction of an old quarantine station were under way as well as preparations for the construction of a new quarantine station in Aleksinac.²⁹ The testimony of Stefan “Stevča” Mihailović, who was appointed chief customs officer (*đumurdžija*) in

²⁶ SAS, PC VI, 746

²⁷ On quarantine stations at the time see Petković (2008, 33–36) and Milovanović (2011, 193–198).

²⁸ *Ispravničestvo* was the term at the time for the administrative unit at the level of the *nahiya*, i.e., district).

²⁹ SAS, PC I, 100.

Aleksinac on 31 March 1834, shows that a quarantine station was yet to be built in Aleksinac (Mihailović 1928, 84–85, 110). It seems that there had not been an old quarantine station, prior to March 1834. Supporting the claim that there had been no quarantine station in Aleksinac beforehand, is the fact that this quarantine station was only twice mentioned in the documents belonging to the Prince's Office. The first time on 20 October 1834, when the newly-appointed director of the Aleksinac customs authority (*đumruk*) Emanuil Solar wrote to Prince Miloš Obrenović proposing the establishing of an office "for the erecting of a quarantine station in Aleksinac".³⁰ The second mention was a letter from Stefan Stojanović, the Danube–Timok military commander, to Prince Miloš, dated 18 June 1836, informing him that he had moved Captain Toma Katić, who was unable to find accommodations, into four rooms at the Aleksinac quarantine station.³¹

The quarantine station staff consisted of director Nikola Ćefala (Kefala), Dr. Rebrić, an overseer (*osmotritelj*), a clerk (*pisar*), a storehouse keeper (*ambardžija/magaziner*), customs officers (*latovi*) and guards (*gvardijani*). Director Kefala was of Greek origin.

Director Ćefala wrote to Prince Miloš on 21 August 1836 telling him that workers started building huts for incomers but that they were short of lime, and that they have dug a well. Prince Miloš replied to him on 23 August 1836, saying he had received his letter and instructed him in the future to address the Council³² for all the quarantine station's needs. Prince Miloš also directed the Administrator of Aleksinac, Jovan Veljković, to the Council regarding the construction of quarantine station in Aleksinac.³³ Veljković informed Prince Miloš on August 24 about the progress of the construction of a new quarantine station.³⁴

The quarantine station in Aleksinac began operation on 1 September 1836.

On 25 September 1836 Avram Petronijević informed Prince Miloš that, on his orders, he would immediately leave for Aleksinac to arrange matters regarding the quarantine station, and that the plague kept spreading in Rumelia. Four days later Prince Miloš issued him orders under which all traders coming into Serbia were to be held in quarantine, along with their merchandise, for a period of three days. In order to avoid postal service

³⁰ SAS, PC I, 21.

³¹ SAS, PC I, 84.

³² SAS, PC I, 101.

³³ SAS, PC I, 102.

³⁴ SAS, PC I, 103.

stoppages, postmen (*tatarī*) were to be held only overnight, during which time letters were to be disinfected without being opened or pierced.³⁵ On October 10 Prince Miloš ordered his advisor, Petronijević, to deploy bureaucrats to the Aleksinac quarantine station, and said that he would include several of his soldiers as a guard.³⁶

The quarantine station director was in direct communication with the pasha of Niš and the Austrian consul, regarding the mail, primarily that from Constantinople.³⁷

Prince Miloš was in continuous communication with Colonel Stefan Stojanović, commander of the Danube–Timok District (at the time the Principality of Serbia was divided into five military districts), with director Ćefalo, and with advisor Petronijević, the sanitary commissioner for all quarantine stations. He ordered that guards be deployed to the border, to prevent the plague from coming in, that crossing the border should be allowed only at the quarantine points, and that the orderly performance of duties by the quarantine station staff be overseen.³⁸ On 20 November 1836, Prince Miloš ordered advisor Avram Petronijević to settle the matter of posting stations (*menzulans*) with the pasha of Niš, as well as the matter of the land owned by the Turks and Serbs in the border area, to let no one through without quarantine, with no exceptions, and to ensure that the plague is not brought into the country.³⁹

On 21 November 1836, Petronijević and Stojanović informed Prince Miloš that they had studied the matter of the Aleksinac quarantine station and decided that the quarantine station parlatory (*parlatorija*) in Aleksinac be shut down, and that one be set up on Mt. Gramada to which they reassigned the mountain camp (*katun*) customs officer. They proposed closing the Bregovo quarantine station and the prompt construction of a house for the disinfected, on the Danube. They also kindly asked that bureaucrats be appointed to the Bregovo and Radujevac quarantine stations.

There were also the appendices:

1. Plan of the duties of bureaucrats and attendants at the Aleksinac quarantine station and at the Supovac and Mt. Gramada parlatories.

³⁵ SAS, PC I, 109–110.

³⁶ SAS, PC I, 114.

³⁷ SAS, PC I, 117–118.

³⁸ These are two documents, one of 13 November and the other of 19 November 1836 (SAS, PC I, 122, 123; PC XXXVII–1545).

³⁹ SAS, PC I, 124.

2. The duties of customs officers at border meeting points.
3. List of Aleksinac quarantine station bureaucrats and attendants.
4. List of Bregovo quarantine station bureaucrats and attendants.

In his letter dated 28 November 1836, Prince Miloš approved their proposals regarding the duties of quarantine station bureaucrats and attendants at meeting points, and ordered that the Bregovo quarantine station commence operation. He appointed Council members Stojan Jovanović and Jeremija Zdravković as bureaucrats in Bregovo and Vrška Čuka, letting them choose the other staff members.⁴⁰ It is apparent that the instructions for the admission and further processing of persons who were either quarantined or suspected of having the plague was very similar to the Sanitary-Police Decree for Quarantines and Border Meeting Points, dated 19 June 1841. The reason for this should be sought in the fact that the Austrian Sanitary Norm of 1770 served as a model for both documents, which will be discussed in the following section.

From the exchange of letters between Prince Miloš and Colonel Stojanović, the Danube–Timok commander, the following is learned: that the Prince repeatedly issued strict orders for the border with the Ottoman Empire to be well guarded so as to keep the plague out of Serbia; that on the border toward the Niš nahiyah guard Marko Đorđević injured a villager from the Niš nahiyah because he had crossed the border. Prince Miloš approved of the guard's actions and rewarded him with a ducat. He ordered that information on this incident be shared with all the chiefs, to set an example to shoot at anything and anyone trying to cross the border where it is not allowed.⁴¹

On November 24 advisor Petronjević informed Prince Miloš that he had agreed with the pasha of Niš to immediately erect a pen (*košara*) on the mountain hut side so a posting station could be built in spring, on the very border and to announce to the people who own land on the Turkish or Serbian side, that they should sell it, in order to prevent the illegal and unwanted crossing of the border. Two days later, on 26 November 1836, Petronjević reported that the plague had appeared in the town of Dupnica (present-day Bulgaria), Vranje and in surrounding villages, in two villages

⁴⁰ SAS, PC I, 126 (1–10, 11–12).

⁴¹ These are three documents: two dated 23 November and one dated 28 November 1836 (SAS, PC I, 129–130 (1–2, 3)).

around Pirot and one around Leskovac – all in the Ottoman Empire. He ordered the authorities in Aleksinac and Kruševac to stop issuing passports for Niš.⁴²

Prince Miloš ordered Petronijević to extend the quarantine to five days and five nights because the plague was getting closer to Serbia's borders, to increase the number of staff in the quarantine station in Aleksinac, to negotiate correction of the border toward Pirot with the local agent (*ajan*), even if he is to receive something in return, so as to prevent uncontrolled crossing of the border. Prince Miloš repeatedly warned and threatened to apply stringent measures and use all available means to ensure that the plague was not brought into the country. Prince Miloš also informed him that waggoners (*kiridžije*) from the Ottoman Empire would be sent back from Aleksinac, and that goods and people would be taken over in Serbia by local waggoners with horses and oxen.⁴³

Meanwhile, Čefala, the director of the quarantine station in Aleksinac, complained to Prince Miloš about the severe actions and harsh orders issued by sanitary commissioner Petronijević and Colonel Stojanović at the Aleksinac quarantine station because, in his opinion, there was no need for such rigidity, and it had a negative effect on trade and traffic.⁴⁴

Letters and other mail had to be disinfected both on the inside and on the outside, in the presence of the recipient. Avram Petronijević complained to Prince Miloš that a certain Anastas Guta repeatedly failed to send someone to fetch his mail from Thessaloniki, so the mail was disinfected only on the outside because it could not be opened without his witness.⁴⁵

Advisor Petronijević wrote two letters to Prince Miloš on 2 December 1836, informing him that starting on December 3 Serbian waggoners⁴⁶ would be transporting goods by carts from the quarantine station in Aleksinac to Belgrade, and that, due to the increased volume, assistance from Belgrade would be necessary; that the pasha of Sofia had closed the road from Turkey to Sofia because of the plague outbreak between Constantinople to Philippopolis (present-day Plovdiv); that he had set up a parlatory in Supovac near Kruševac; that the posting station on the mountain hut side is

⁴² SAS, PC I, 131, 133.

⁴³ Documents dated 28 November 1836 (SAS, PC I, 134, 136).

⁴⁴ Document dated 26 November 1836 (SAS, PC I, 135).

⁴⁵ Document dated 1 December 1836 (SAS, PC I, 137).

⁴⁶ *Kiridžija* is a person who transported other people's goods, any kind of load in general, usually in his own cart (Klajn, Šipka 2006, 611).

almost finished. He confirmed receiving orders on extending quarantine to seven days and explained ways in which this can be carried out, in light of the lack of space in the quarantine station.⁴⁷

The director of the quarantine station in Aleksinac, Nikola Ćefala, submitted his resignation to Prince Miloš on 4 December 1836 because he was unable to carry out the orders issued by Avram Petronijević and Stefan Stojanović.⁴⁸ Three days later Prince Miloš accepted his resignation. He ordered Petronijević to hand all books and money over to Rista Romi, and a day later he informed Romi that he had been appointed director of the quarantine station in Aleksinac. He sent Herrmann Meinert, a medical doctor, to replace Rebrić as the quarantine station doctor.⁴⁹

On 10 December 1836 Prince Miloš ordered Rista Romi, the director of the quarantine station in Aleksinac, to extend the quarantine period to 10 days and explained to him how to organize this in the relatively limited space. He further ordered him to strictly abide by the given instructions and to do everything in agreement with Pavle Stefanović, who was to organize the quarantine according to the Austrian model.⁵⁰

In addition to the usual reports on the situation in the quarantine station, takeover of duties, dismissals and appointment of new quarantine station bureaucrats,⁵¹ also important was the organizing of the waggoner service from Aleksinac to Belgrade, so Rumelian traders could leave their goods at the quarantine station in Aleksinac.⁵²

Quarantine station director Romi informed Prince Miloš on 17 December 1836 that he was strictly following the 10-day quarantine rule and the quarantine instructions given to him by the Prince, as well as that Dr. Meinert had arrived at the quarantine to assume his duties.⁵³ On 23 December 1836, director Romi notified Prince Miloš that the plague had reappeared in Thessaloniki, and that it was still present in Philippopolis and Dubnica.⁵⁴ In his letter of 4 April 1837, Romi reported to Prince Miloš that there was plague in Pirot, Skopje, Dubnica, and Thessaloniki, and that it had

⁴⁷ SAS, PC I, 138, 140.

⁴⁸ SAS, PC I, 141.

⁴⁹ SAS, PC I, 143, 145–146.

⁵⁰ SAS, PC I, 148.

⁵¹ SAS, PC I, 149–150.

⁵² SAS, PC I, 151.

⁵³ SAS, PC I, 152–153.

⁵⁴ SAS, PC I, 157.

also appeared in Kumanovo; that 600 people and 1,600 loads of goods had passed through the quarantine in February, with another 800 people and 2,200 loads of goods in March.⁵⁵

On 30 April 1837 Prince Miloš dismissed Rista Romi and appointed Stojan Veljković to the post of director of the quarantine station in Aleksinac. On May 4 he ordered Veljković to release English diplomat David Urquhart from quarantine after five days, but to do so in such a way that others did not notice.⁵⁶

On 24 May 1837 Prince Miloš ordered advisor Petronijević to tighten the quarantine measures and extend the quarantine period to 15 days, because of the plague outbreak in Rumelia.⁵⁷

3.3. The Plague in 1837

The first mention of the plague in the Prince's Office materials was on 1 March 1836: Prince Miloš Obrenović informed Osman Pasha that the plague had appeared in the immediate vicinity of the border. It was for this reason that he gave orders to the border authorities to strictly adhere to the instructions issued by the sanitary authorities. It was vital to undertake these measures, reads the letter, out of caution and in the interest of public health.⁵⁸ On 9 August 1836 Toma Vučić-Perišić informed Prince Miloš that the vizier had heard that the plague had appeared in Rumelia, which is why a quarantine station should be set up, as previously mentioned.⁵⁹ In his letter dated 3 October 1836, Hüseyin Pasha of Vidin informed Prince Miloš that he had ordered that a quarantine station be established for ships coming from areas affected by the plague. He asked for his understanding, because Serbian ships would also be quarantined.⁶⁰ Letters from November 1836 speak of the appearance of the plague in Dupnica, which was near the southern border of the Principality of Serbia.⁶¹

⁵⁵ SAS, PC I, 183.

⁵⁶ SAS, PC I, 189, 192.

⁵⁷ SAS, PC I, 206 (3–4).

⁵⁸ SAS, PC XXX, 1402.

⁵⁹ SAS, PC VI, 746.

⁶⁰ SAS, PC XXX, 1235.

⁶¹ SAS, PC V, 131, VI, 807.

The news that Austria had prohibited traders from crossing into Serbia to buy cattle, because the plague had appeared in Vidin, Leskovac, and Vranje, reached Prince Miloš on 13 January 1837.⁶² The Austrian authorities issued the same ban again in March, this time because of the outbreak of the plague in Bosnia.⁶³

On 6 February 1837 *Novine Serbske* reported that “the cordon is strong, as strong as it can be, to the measure of the impending disease in Serbia, which is immanent, so strict that Serbian guards are shooting at people, and at cattle coming to the Serbian border, and there are cases of several heads of cattle being killed and people wounded.”

Prince Miloš sent numerous letters to the Morava-Podrinje military commander, the Užice region administration, to the head of the Rujan district (*srez*) and to the director of the quarantine station in Mokra Gora, in other words to all chiefs in the areas bordering Bosnia. He asked them to obtain precise information on whether there really was an outbreak of the plague in Bosnia, and to carefully guard the border so the disease would not spread to Serbia. The reports do not contain any confirmation of the plague occurring in Bosnia. A report dated 1 July 1837 speaks of the presence of the plague in Kumanovo, in the Skadar region. On 28 July 1837, Prince Miloš ordered the head of the Rujan district to erect a strong fence along the border and to have guards patrolling it, because “the plague is in Arnautluk”.⁶⁴

Prince Miloš’s correspondence on the issue of the plague with Ottoman pashas in the region shows that some of them were distrustful. This was partly rooted in the fact that the Ottoman Empire neither knew of nor took any measures against the spread of infectious diseases. In part it also had to do with them believing that the whole issue was part of a conspiracy by the Serbs, who want to attack them. All this took place after the hatt-i humayuns of 1830 and 1833, whose provisions stipulated that the Ottoman population was to move out within a period of one or five years, and they believed it to be a way of pressuring them to depart as soon as possible. These fears are particularly noticeable in Prince Miloš’s correspondence with the Yusuf Pasha of Belgrade, between May and June 1837.⁶⁵

⁶² SAS, PC, KK XXI, 1851.

⁶³ SAS, PC XXXVII, 1636.

⁶⁴ Letters dated 18 and March, 1, 5 and 15 April, 1 May, and 1 and 28 July 1837 (SAS, PC XXXII, 549–550, 553–556, 558, 561, 576, 584).

⁶⁵ SAS, PC XXXVII, 1498, 1481–1483, 1427.

At the end of July 1837 *Novine Serbske* reported that “the health situation across Rumelia is very sad and pitiful. The plague has spread everywhere and it is ferocious.” It further said that the health situation in Serbia was positive and that the plague had not entered the country. The official newspaper credited Prince Miloš for this, somewhat flatteringly. Quarantines stations and cordons sanitaire were praised, as were the measure to double and triple the cordon sanitaire on the border with Rumelia. Unfortunately, things changed soon after that.

A key event for the plague entering Serbia happened at the quarantine station in Aleksinac. In July 1837, 53 Ottoman Nizam-ı Cedid soldiers were admitted into the quarantine station. While in quarantine, two of the soldiers died. Despite warnings, Dr. Majnert, who was inexperienced, failed to establish that the plague was the cause of death and he allowed the other soldiers to continue their journey to Belgrade. The Ottoman soldiers travelled on, only one died on the journey and was buried between the towns of Ćuprija and Jagodina. The others arrived in Belgrade in good health, however, judging by everything that was later established, they brought the plague to Ražanj and Jagodina.⁶⁶ In both places where the soldiers stayed overnight all those who happened to be staying at the same inns died soon after.

An Aromanian cattle trader from Bitola, who was quarantined together with the soldiers in Aleksinac, was released from quarantine as healthy by the inexperienced Dr. Meinert. The trader then went to the Valjevo district on business. He spent some time in the village of Brežđe in the Kolubara area. There he fell ill with the plague and died soon after, having infected the local population. A woman from the village of Osečenica, who happened to attend his funeral in Brežđe, brought the plague back to her village (Vujić 1967, 83–169).⁶⁷

The initial spreading of the plague in Jagodina in mid-August 1837 and all the horrors were described by Stefan “Stevča” Mihailović in his memoirs. The general commotion and the anger of the residents of Jagodina was brought about by the evacuation of the families of advisor Avram Petronijević and Great Sardar Mileta Radojković from the town, after which it was completely

⁶⁶ See Prince Miloš’s correspondence of 16, 17 and 18 August 1837 on his findings that the plague had entered Serbia with the Ottoman Nizam-ı Cedid soldiers (SAS, PC I, 291, PC VI, 987, PC XIX, 537, PC XXVI, 875).

⁶⁷ See the local authorities’ letters, dated 15 and 22 August 1837, to Prince Miloš, regarding the breakout of the plague in these two villages (SAS, PC XXXVII, 1726, PC XXVI, 210).

sequestered when guards encircled it. Everyone “was alarmed and they all scattered, ran off to vineyards, corn fields, gardens, meadows.” They shouted: “Are they alone to stay alive and we are to die?” (Mihailović 1928, 106).

The main actors in this drama surrounding the outbreak of the plague in Jagodina were Prince Miloš, Avram Petronijević, Stefan “Stevča” Mihailović, and Mileta Radojković (albeit he only at the beginning) – the most eminent people in the Principality of Serbia at the time. Avram Petronijević, one of the most prominent members of the Council, went from being Prince Miloš’s supporter to being his bitter opponent. Following the expulsion of Prince Miloš in June 1839, and of his son Mihailo in the fall of 1842, Avram Petronijević, together with Toma Vučić Perišić, was practically the ruler of Serbia until his death in 1852. Stevča Mihailović had an incredible career, the pinnacle of which was his appointment to the position of regent. This happened at the famous Saint Andrew’s Day Assembly when Aleksandar Karađorđević was ousted and Miloš Obrenović was reinstated to the throne. In December 1858 and January 1859 Stevan Mihailović was regent until Miloš arrived in Serbia from his spahi’s estate in Wallachia. Mileta Radojković was the highest military official – the Great Sardar (there was a total of five great serdar commands). On 22 March 1834 he was appointed Great Sardar of the Rasina area, which, at the time, was comprised of the Kruševac, Jagodina, Paraćin and Resava districts. He gained fame and eternal remembrance by starting the rebellion against Prince Miloš in January 1835, which led to the adoption of the so-called Sretenje Constitution (Candlemas Constitution). Every time the Sretenje Constitution is mentioned, Mileta’s Rebellion and its leader, Mileta Radojković, are mentioned as well.

This is where their paths crossed and Miloš did what should not be done. He ordered that only of the families of people important to him be the evacuated from Jagodina.⁶⁸ He put the lives of some before the lives of others, and in plain sight. This angered the people of Jagodina and they attacked the guards. With the help of ten friends, a man named Đoko, a straw mat maker from Jagodina, dispersed the guards on the Jagodina road. Commander Andrejević ordered that he be caught and chained and, if this failed – that he be killed. And so he was killed. Prince Miloš approved this and issued a proclamation stating that anyone attacking guards would be fired upon and, if they were not hit, they would be executed when caught.⁶⁹ The threat of death calmed the situation.

⁶⁸ See the correspondence between Prince Miloš and Avram Petronijević, dated 18 and 22 August 1837 (SAS, PC XXXI, 967, 970).

⁶⁹ SAS, PC XII, 872, 873; Mihailović (1928, 106–107).

Since the plague was getting close to the borders of the Principality of Serbia (Prince Miloš did not know at the time that it had already entered Serbia with the Nizam-i Cedid soldiers), on 15 August 1837, in an effort to prevent the plague from spreading to the country, he asked the Austrian imperial and royal authorities for a capable civil servant. At the Prince's request, the Austrian authorities sent Dr. Nagy, the doctor from the quarantine station in Zemun. He was tasked with inspecting the quarantine stations and cordons.⁷⁰ On 29 August 1837 Prince Miloš appointed his advisor Avram Petronijević and Dr. Nagy as sanitary commissioners. Their assignment was to prevent the spread of the plague and everyone was carry out their orders.⁷¹ From that time until the beginning of November, an energetic and serious battle was fought against the plague, using all available means and strictly adhering to all measures adopted by the Serbian authorities, headed by Prince Miloš.

Just how strict the implementation of measures was is evident from the fact that İbrahim Sarim Pasha, who was traveling to attend the coronation of Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom of Great Britain as the sultan's envoy in 1837, was ordered to quarantine. In spite of the envoy's strong protest, he and his entourage were detained at the Aleksinac quarantine station. Prince Miloš issued orders for İbrahim Sarim Pasha's quarantine time to be reduced to 21 days because he had stated that he had not stopped in villages or towns and that he slept in "his tent in a field". The prince also ordered that "all comforts be prepared in the quarantine" for the sultan's envoy.⁷² The epilogue of this episode was that the detained envoy succeeded in attending Queen Victoria's coronation after all.

On 8 November 1837 Dr. Nagy submitted a report on the plague epidemic for the period from July 25 to November 8 in for the towns of Ražanj, Paraćin and Jagodina and in the villages of Radoševac, Čičevac, Varoš and Pardik. Nagy reported that the first five places infected with the plague "are now completely free of it and open". There were still a few people quarantined in the villages of Varoš and Pardok, but these villages were to be liberated and opened in about ten days. The figures from Dr. Nagy's report are presented in Table 1.

⁷⁰ SAS, PC XXV, 270.

⁷¹ SAS, PC XXXI, 985.

⁷² Prince Miloš's letter to the Aleksinac quarantine station dated 6 September 1837 (SAS, PC I, 312).

Table 1.
Plague cases and deaths according to location.

Place	Population	Cases	Deaths	Recoveries
Ražanj	434	86	68	18
Paraćin	3402	48	35	13
Jagodina	5220	46	36	10
Radoševac	102	26	22	4
Ćičevac	1068	3	3	0
Varoš	231	31	25	6
Pardik	30	3	3	0
TOTAL:	8,567	243	192	51

Source: *Српске новине*. 13 November 1837.

On the basis of a report from December 1837, the consequences of the plague in Brežđe and Osečnica are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Plague cases and deaths in Brežđe and Osečnica.

Place	Population	Cases	Deaths	Recoveries
Brežđe	270	29	28	1
Osečnica	365	11	10	1
TOTAL:	635	40	38	2

Source: Vujić (1967, 145–148).

Great human casualties, suffering, personal and family dramas, fear and despair – in short, the people who lived through the 1837 plague in Serbia had a awful experience. Probably the only positive thing was that a lesson could be learnt: the fight against the plague and other contagious diseases had to be organized systemically. This meant prescribing and organizing institutions, procedures and measures while, at the same time, providing material resources and people capable of performing the tasks. The help

and experience of the quarantine in Zemun⁷³ and its staff, and Dr. Nagy's personal contribution proved valuable in the enactment of regulations and the organization of the quarantine stations in the Principality of Serbia.

The reemergence of the plague on Serbia's southern borders in the fall of 1838 accelerated this process.⁷⁴

4. REGULATIONS PASSED IN 1839, 1841 AND SUBSEQUENTLY

The Border Meeting Points Act (*Ustrojenje pograničnih sastanaka*) was passed on 31 October 1839. It had 84 articles divided into seven chapters. Article 1 prescribes that “[a] border meeting point is a place on the border, designated for the people of both neighboring foreign countries to meet, speak, trade between themselves, but only under strict supervision, so those from this side would not mix with those from the other side and bring the contagious disease into the country.” The border meeting points could be separate or combined with quarantine stations. The place where people came to meet was called *parlatorija* (parlatory). This and many other terms related to this institution, as well as the institution itself, were adopted from the Austrian legislation (discussed below). The organizing and structure of the parlatory is described in detail: the area where the locals entered was to be separated by strong partitions from the area entered by outsiders, an official was to be present, items were to be checked. Listed in the second chapter are the duties of the meetings place attendants, supervisors, customs officers, such as the organization, administration and supervision of border meeting points, in general twice a week, the submission of briefings, quarterly reports and accounts, dealing with persons who mixed without permission, the quarantining procedure, handling fugitives and cordon violators, handover of items, and closing meeting points.

⁷³ The Zemun quarantine was set up in 1730 and all passengers coming “from Turkey” or going there had to spend a certain period in quarantine, depending on the epidemiological situation. The Zemun quarantine station was abolished in 1872.

⁷⁴ The governor of Niš, Mehmed Pasha, informed Prince Miloš on 15 September 1838 that the plague had appeared in the vicinity of Niš. He advised him to, in the light of this fact, increase the number of quarantine staff (SAS, PC XXX, 1586). Documents dated 26 September, 4 October and 15 November 1838 also speak of the appearance of the plague in the south, in the Niš and Pirot nahiyahs (SAS, PC XIV, 2649, 2671, 2681).

Listed in the third chapter are “non-contaminable belongings and goods“, i.e., goods that “do not retain the infectious disease“, such as beverages, mineral acids, vinegar, oil, fruit cooked in sugar and honey, shellfish and fish, dried meat, fresh and dried fruits, cereals and legumes, green vegetables, fresh and dried leaves, grass and flowers, trees, spices, ores, salts, minerals, melted ore, timber and wood.

Chapter four prescribes cleaning methods: water, fumigation and pouring through a funnel or turning soil with a shovel. Chapter five lays down the procedure with items and goods that cannot be infected. Chapter six prescribes what items are cleaned by washing, and the seventh the items cleansed by fumigation.⁷⁵

In line with the above, decrees on opening border meeting points were passed. In order to establish trade relations between Serbia and Novi Pazar, a decree on opening a meeting point at the Raška border post was passed on 10 July 1839, even before the issuance of the act. Under the decree of 1 April 1840, a meeting point for relations with “the residents of border areas or remote Turkish areas“ was opened in Supovac, in the Kruševac district.⁷⁶

On 19 June 1841 the legislators, Prince Mihailo and the Council passed the Sanitary–Police Decree on Quarantine Stations and Border Meeting Points.⁷⁷ The first part, Articles 1–10, is dedicated to quarantine stations. Article 1 stipulated that “the quarantine station or *kontumac* serves for the people coming from countries to which our homeland is closed off by a cordon guard due to the plague or *čuma*, to be held there, with their belongings that they usually wear or lie on, and undergoing a mandatory health check“. Goods were to be cleansed in the quarantine station, as well as animals, primarily domestic ones. The quarantine station was to be located in a healthy place and close to water. The quarantine stations was to consist of two spaces: the unexposed, unmixed or clean space, housing the offices and residence for quarantine administrative staff and buildings for effects and equipment. and the exposed, mixed or unclean space that had buildings for quarantined persons, their belongings, goods and livestock. These two spaces were to be separated by a strong fence. They each were to have a solid gate and a very hard door. Different parts of these two spaces were defined in detail.

⁷⁵ *Сборникъ закона и уредба, и уредбени указа, изданы у Княжеству Србскомъ, одъ времена обнародованогъ Устава земаљскогъ (13. Фебр. 1839 до Апр. мес. 1840)*, I, Belgrade 1840, 163–176.

⁷⁶ *Сборникъ закона и уредба, и уредбени указа, изданы у Княжеству Србскомъ*, I, 233, 250.

⁷⁷ *Сборникъ закона и уредба и уредбени указа издани у Књажеству Србији (Од Априла 1840. до конца Декемвра 1844. године)*, II, Belgrade 1845, 51–114.

The exposed space was to have two courtyards. One courtyard was to include a) a room for visiting, b) a parlatory or a building for meetings and talks between locals and foreigners, who were to be separated by a partition so they could not mix, c) a small room for cleansing letters by fumigation, and d) a residence for one quarantine attendant. Huts for quarantined persons were to be in the other courtyard. Each hut had to be well fenced, and there was to be one quarantined person per hut. In addition to this, there were also other facilities such as a storehouse, a room for hospitalization, etc.

Quarantine staff included a director, a doctor, an overseer, a clerk, a storehouse keeper, customs officers, and guards. The Decree laid out their duties in detail. The direct administration of the entire quarantine was in the hands of the director, who had to be “a fair, sensible, zealous and reasonable man”. He was ordered to “refrain from any trade and speculation” as well as to strive “that the other quarantine station staff also refrain from trade and speculation”. The doctor was second in charge in the quarantine station and was tasked with maintaining and examining people’s health. The overseer was the third in rank at the quarantine station, and it was his duty to methodically enter into the records the quarantined persons and their belongings, following their medical examination, to oversee that persons and belonging are orderly, etc. The clerk, as the name suggests, performed the duties of a clerk. The storehouse keeper took care of things related to the storehouse. Customs officers were especially tasked with preventing the mixing of people in the quarantine, and with inspecting items and goods in the quarantine. The guards were the youngest of the quarantine attendants and the most exposed, because they had to take every single belonging that entered the quarantine station into their hands and to put it away. This is why it was necessary for them to be very strong and healthy.

The first part of the Sanitary–Police Decree was modeled after the Police Decree in the event of plague for imperial and royal Austrian lands (*Pest-Polizei-Ordnung für die k.k. öesterreichischen Staaten*) of 30 June 1837. Article 1 of the Serbian Decree was modelled after Article 39, and Article 2 after Articles 40, 41, 42, 43 and 44 of the Austrian Decree. Articles 3 and 4, governing the issue of the quarantine director, are an abbreviated version of the translation of Article 47 of the Austrian Decree. There was one modification: Article 47 of the Austrian Decree stipulates that the director must always be a medical doctor (“*stets Medicinae Doctor sein*”), while Article 3 of the Serbian Decree reads “he must also have knowledge of medical science” (“*nužđno mu je i znanje lekarstvene nauke*”). Article 5 of the Serbian Decree was created by translating and shortening Article 48 of the Austrian Decree, and the same parallel exists between Article 6 and

Article 50, Article 7 and Article 52, Article 9 and Article 54, and Article 10 and Article 55.⁷⁸ As opposed to the Austrian Decree, the Serbian ordinance did not envisage a quarantine station chaplain (*Geistlicher*) or an interpreter.

The second part, Articles 11–42, is dedicated to the quarantine procedure for people. It is prescribed that individuals who come from abroad must undergo a quarantine interview. They were asked their name, vocation, where they are coming from, whether they had heard about any illnesses or diseases on their journey, whether they were carrying any belongings, merchandise, letters, whether any of their friends, fellow-passengers were sick or had died on the journey. In the event that it was reliably established that a contagious disease was in question, the quarantine official would report this to higher authorities, the person's passport would be confiscated and information on their admission into quarantine would be entered in the protocol. If the person's replies indicated that there was nothing dangerous and suspicious about them, then they would not be placed in quarantine and they were free to go on their way once their belongings had been listed and cleansed.

Persons who wished to enter the Principality of Serbia at suspicious or dangerous times were treated somewhat differently. Suspicious times were the times when there were reports of an outbreak of the plague or some other infectious disease in a remote location in the European part of the Ottoman Empire. However, dangerous times were those when the plague or some other infectious disease appeared in the vicinity of Serbia's border. During suspicious and dangerous times the border was to be strictly guarded so no one could cross it. The group of people going into quarantine was to be escorted by a sufficient number of border guards, who were forbidden from mingling with the people being escorted, in order to prevent contagion.

Foreigners who came just for a meeting or to arrange business with locals were taken to the parlatory, in the area for foreigners, and locals in a separate area, without the possibility of the two groups mixing. A quarantine officer would act as a middleman, without contact with the foreigners. If signs of the plague were visible on the foreigners, they would not be allowed inside the quarantine station and would be sent back to where they came from, with their possessions and goods. If the foreigners happened to object to this, they were to be pushed back and removed by force of arms.

⁷⁸ *Politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für sämtliche Provinzen des österreichischen Kaiserstaates, mit Ausnahme von Ungarn und Siebenbürgen*, Fünf und Sechzigster Band, Wien 1839, 243, 244–248, 252–257, 257–259, 261, 262, 263–264, 264–267; *Сборник закона и уредба и уредбени указа*, II, 51–52, 53–57, 57–58, 59, 59–60, 61–62, 62–64.

Those who were questioned and were not allowed to leave were subject to examination (*vizitiranje*). The doctor examined their naked body in the examination room. He did so from a distance, behind a barrier so as not to come into contact with them, but in a way that enabled him to establish with certainty whether they had the plague. If during the course of examination, it was determined that there were signs of a contagious disease, that person would be sent back to where he had come from, with utmost precaution, together with their belongings, goods and the travelers with whom they came. If the doctor established that there were no signs of the plague, the person would be quarantined. A quarantine official would take down their personal information, information on their belongings and goods, letters would be unsealed and fumigated, and money would be washed using vinegar. Following examination, the person would be taken to a hut, making sure that they did not interact with others. In suspicious times this person would be quarantined for 10 days, in dangerous times for 20 days, as stipulated in Article 23 of the Decree. This Article further reads that, if experience showed that the Decree on Measures Against Infectious Diseases, which was passed by the Ottoman Empire only in 1840, yielded results, and that the health situation in the European part of the Ottoman Empire was generally better, then the Principality of Serbia would reduce this former period from 10 to seven days.

One or more quarantined persons were accommodated in a hut. It was the duty of a hut-attendant (*služitelj-kolibaš*) to tend to them. They were not allowed to interact with people from other huts or from the outside. A inscribed on the hut was its number, the date of the beginning of the quarantine, the name of the person and the date of their release.

Once a quarantined person was accommodated in the hut, the hut-attendant was to see to it that that person and their belongings are cleansed according to the rules, which were very detailed. The hut-attendant provided the quarantined person with food and drinks, and the quarantine station director and doctor saw to it that the food and drinks were of adequate quality and quantity and that they came at a reasonable price.

The quarantined persons were to be checked on at least twice a day to see how they were and what they were doing. Every morning the doctor would determine the health of the quarantined persons and order the huts to be fumigated.

If a person fell ill with a disease other than the plague, they would stay in their hut. If a person was taken ill with the plague, they would be placed in a special hut and their quarantine period and that of their roommates would be extended.

If a quarantined person caught the plague, they were to be quarantined alone in a hut. Persons who had contracted the plague were treated by the quarantine station doctor according to the rules of the medical profession and the doctor's experience. At the end of the year the doctor submitted to the director a report on the patients with the plague and with other diseases, and the director forwarded this report to the relevant higher authorities.

Convalescents "or those who had recovered from the plague" were to undergo a new quarantine period of no less than 20 days.

If a person who had the plague happened to die, that person's body would be buried with special care. Using pincers or gaffs, four guards would place the body in a coffin that was placed "on a cart built for plague corpses". This is also how the body was removed from the coffin and, together with the ashes of incinerated clothes, placed in a grave six feet deep and covered with earth. "This entire procedure, during which one must be careful not to make any mix-ups, should be carried out with the greatest care for the corpse and with all decency."

According to sanitary rules, a body that had no signs of the plague was buried 48 hours from the time of death. Exceptionally, this deadline could be shorter if the body that had started to decay. Quarantine station staff looked after the belongings of the deceased and handed them over to the relevant higher authority for the initiation of the inheritance procedure.

After the expiry of the quarantine period – 10 or 20 days, depending on the degree of danger at a given time – the quarantined person was released after a check-up by the doctor and the doctor's opinion that there were no signs of contagious disease. The released person was issued a sanitary document containing information regarding them and their possessions. The quarantine station director would inspect the hut in which the released person was accommodated, and in the event that any damage was done, collect and to see to it that the damage was repaired. The director was also required to ensure that none of the quarantine station staff received any gifts or bribes, either in money or in valuables.

A quarantined person could ask to be released from quarantine even before the expiry of the deadline, but he could only return to where he had come from.

Locals who wanted to cross the border just for a meeting were required to go to the quarantine station where their passport would be signed and a sanitary escort assigned. The sanitary escort would see to it that they did not interact with other people. If they did, they would be quarantined upon their return.

These provisions of the Serbian decree were modelled after the provision of the *Pest-Polizei-Ordnung für die k.k. österreichischen Staaten* of 1837, largely by simple translation. Article 11 of the Serbian decree was a translation and abbreviation of Article 58, Article 12 the translation and abbreviation of Article 59, Article 13 of Article 18, Article 14 of Article 60, Articles 15 and 16 of Article 61, Articles 17 and 18 of Article 62, Article 19 of Article 63, Article 20 of Article 64, Articles 21 and 22 of Article 65, Article 23 of Article 66, Articles 24 and 25 of Article 67, Article 28 of Article 68, Article 26 of Article 69, paragraph 1, Article 29 of Article 70, Articles 30–34 of Article 70, Articles 35–39 of Article 72, Article 40 of Article 73, Article 41 of Article 74, and Article 42 of the Serbian Decree was a translated and abbreviated version of Article 75 of the Austrian Decree.⁷⁹

Described in the third part is the “quarantine procedure for goods“. Items and merchandise were not subject to quarantine procedures when brought into the country from European Turkey “in healthy and harmless times“. Still, belongings and goods coming from Asia and Africa were to be “be quarantine-cleansed always, even in the healthiest of times“. However, letters, unclean clothes, old and shabby gowns (clothing items) always underwent quarantine cleansing.

In suspicious and dangerous times “close supervision and care“ was to be carried out to ensure that the belonging and goods brought into the quarantine station were not mixed with other items, and to make sure that nothing is brought in fraudulently by ignoring the prescribed procedure. The process of cleansing and storing items in storehouse for a certain period of time was described in detail: when things were done, who did them and how, the necessary measures of control and supervision, etc. Anyone allowing goods and items to enter the country “before a quarantine cleansing is completed and before the expiration of the prescribed period“ would be committing the gravest violation of the quarantine Decree and would deserve the harshest punishment.

Under the provisions of this Decree, regarding the contracting and spreading of the plague, belonging and goods were classified as very suspicious, suspicious, and not suspicious.

⁷⁹ *Politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für sämtliche Provinzen des österreichischen Kaiserstaates*, Fünf und Sechzigster Band, 269–270, 270–271, 218–219, 271–272, 272–273, 273–275, 275–277, 277, 277–278, 278–279, 279–281, 283–285, 285–290, 291–294, 294–295, 295–296, 297; *Сборник закона и уредба и уредбени указа*, II, 61–65, 65, 65–66, 66–67, 67–68, 68, 69, 69–70, 70, 70–71, 73–74, 71–72, 74–285, 75–78, 78–80, 80–81, 81, 82.

Very suspicious (“*odveć podozriteljne*“) were the items that people use to cover and wipe themselves, items they had on them or with them, those that were in the rooms and buildings they lived in. Therefore, these were items that were most often and most likely “watered with the contagious poison“ and which could spread it to other people. Listed in this category were items made of leather, wool, hair, cotton, silk, cloth for the head, neck, chest, legs, arms. They also included: towels, scarves, sheets, shaving items, jewelry, tobacco and money pouches, pipes, wrist watches, rifles, swords, knives, umbrellas, furniture covers, cushions, rugs, kilims, household items, maps, books, utensils, writing implements, especially items used when caring for sick people, etc.

Suspicious (“*podozriteljne*“) were the belongings and goods that are kept outside rooms and houses, either out in the open or in sheds, cellars, barns, i.e., in places that are separate and which a person with the plague could not easily and often come into contact with. However, during production, stacking, transportation and other activities, these belongings and goods could come into contact with “the plague poison“ and so become a means of transmitting the disease. These included numerous natural raw products or artisanal and industrial products, which are only listed by class: made of wood, bone and in general solid animal parts and handicrafts made from them, earthenware, food utensils made of glass, stone, metal, jewelry and haberdashery, unprocessed flax, tow and oakum and items made from them, greige cotton and wool and products made from them, silk goods and items, poultry and domestic animals – live or parts of their bodies (feathers, skin), glovemaking and furrier handicrafts, lard, suet and cheese, all kinds of paper, crates and other containers for goods.

Not suspicious (“*nepodozriteljne*“) were items that were not directly touched but rather procured, processed and produced by means of machines or tools, items that were directly touched but then left to dry in the air and, finally, items that experience had shown could not transmit the plague. These included: all liquids, cooked fruits, fruit preserves, jam, sea and freshwater dried and salted fish, salt-cured dried meat, dry and fresh fruits, food in stew and grain form, flour, greens and leaf vegetables, green and dry grass, leaves and flowers, trees, bark and roots for medicaments and dyeing, dyes, spices, precious stones, salt, earth and mining products, timber and firewood.

Goods and items could best and most reliably be cleansed by washing, fumigating, heating, wiping, airing and by a combination of these methods.

Goods and items that were not suspicious could be brought into the country without being quarantined even in dangerous and suspicious times while abiding by certain procedures that eliminated the possibility of plague

transmission. So, for example, fruits and greens were washed in water and, once drained, they would be put into clean containers. Lumber and firewood could be brought into the country only after having been aired for 48 hours.

Article 62 prescribes how suspicious items and goods could be brought into the country once they are cleansed. Article 63 defined which items were to be cleansed by fumigation in an enclosed space designated for this purpose (letters, banknotes, promissory notes, securities, and other papers). Article 64 also describes the procedure of handling letters sent from “Turkey” to the Prince, the Council, or to ministries. Article 66 explains how to cleanse items and goods that could not be cleansed by airing. It also defined which items and goods were to be aired 7 days, 10 days and which needed to be aired for 20 days. Article 67 stipulates that clothes, shirts and bedding belonging to the people who had fallen ill with the plague or died from it must not be brought into the quarantine station but rather should be sent back.

Provisions of the third part of the Serbian Decree, Articles 43–68, were modeled after Articles 76–94 of the *Pest-Polizei-Ordnung für die k.k. österreichischen Staaten* from 1837, mostly by translating the provisions. The complete correlation of the articles of the two documents is presented in Table 3.

Part four is titled ‘The Meeting Point’. The meeting point is a designated location on the border where people from neighboring countries can meet and speak, mostly for the purpose of trade, under strict sanitary rules so as to prevent the plague from entering the Principality of Serbia.

There were three types of meeting points: main meeting points (which was independent), quarantine meeting points (connected to a quarantine station), and branch meeting points (dependent on a quarantine station). The primary place for meetings was the parlatory, which was usually roofed and had two strong, physically separated chambers and a space between them. Foreigners entered the far chamber, while locals entered the compartment on the near side. Sanitary attendants were located in the middle. Every meeting point was attended by the head supervisor (*starešina nadziratelj*) and two attendants or customs officers, with very precisely defined responsibilities. Meetings were usually held twice a week, publicly announced in advance, and attended by those “from this and that side” for the purpose of trade, work and discussion. It was also prescribed how which goods were to enter the country.

Table 3.
Correlation of the between articles of the Sanitary–Police Decree for Quarantine Stations and Border Meeting Points of the Principality of Serbia.

<i>Pest-Polizei-Ordnung für die k.k. österreichischen Staaten</i> of 1837		Sanitary–Police Decree for Quarantine Stations and Border Meeting Points of the Principality of Serbia of 19 June 1841
Article 76	=	Articles 43 and 44
Article 77	=	Articles 45–49
Article 78	=	Articles 50–53
Article 80	=	Article 55
Article 81	=	Article 56
Article 82	=	Article 57
Article 83	=	Article 58
Article 84	=	Article 59
Article 85	=	Article 60
Article 86	=	Article 61
Article 87	=	Article 62
Article 88	=	Article 63
Article 89	=	Article 64
Article 90	=	Article 65
Article 91	=	Article 66
Article 93	=	Article 67
Article 94	=	Article 68

Source: *Politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für sämtliche Provinzen des österreichischen Kaiserstaates*, Fünf und Sechzigster Band, 297–340; *Сборник закона и уредба и уредбени указа*, II, 82–107.

Provisions of the fourth part of the Serbian Decree, Articles 69–76, were modelled after Articles 96–100 of the *Pest-Polizei-Ordnung für die k.k. österreichischen Staaten* from 1837.⁸⁰

The appendix contains an extensive 12-point “Description of the Plague”. Point 1 prescribed the following: “The plague or *čuma* can be recognized by its communicable or contagious nature; its sudden and short course that is accompanied by various and grave difficulties; a great many deaths among those who fall ill to it, and by particular signs on the patient’s body.” It stresses the gravity of the disease and the fact that those who have contracted the plague “usually die more than they recover, and usually on the second, third or fourth day of illness”. As described by the legislator, those who have contracted the plague first get “chills or as if cold wind has caught up with them, or as if cold water is being poured on them, and often such that their bones penetrate to their brain, and they cannot calm the strong shivers until, completely exhausted, they let go of their soul”. Further listed, *exempli causa*, are other signs of the plague: headache, unconsciousness, heavy “and dizzy head, like after many drinks”, “a swollen and changed, pale, yellowish or dark red face”, blurry, stiff and bloodshot eyes, dry mouth, heavy tongue, pounding heart, heavy breathing, swollen stomach, heaviness in the stomach, nausea and severe vomiting, limp limbs, despondency and despair... It is said that patients often experienced improvement, which was then followed by bleeding from the nose, mouth and rectum, and then death. Point 6 described in detail the types of pain caused by the plague and the patients’ reactions. Points 7–13 describe in great detail and professionally all the manifestations of the plague on the patient’s body: swelling, suppuration, boils, the way that they heal when people are stronger and how they result in a total collapse of those who have no chance of survival. The impression is that this was written so that as many people as possible could recognize the plague. Finally, point 14 describes what the bodies of those who died from the plague, i.e. “plague corpses”, look like: the areas around their mouth, nose, ears and under their nails are blackened, “their faces are changed, ugly, as if they are defiant or menacing, usually black and blue in color”, as if they were “suffocated or struck by lightning”, with subsided swellings. The description of the plague, in Articles 1–14, was modeled on the description of the plague in German, in Articles 2–17 of the *Pest-Polizei-Ordnung für die k.k. österreichischen Staaten* of 1837.⁸¹

⁸⁰ *Politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für sämtliche Provinzen des österreichischen Kaiserstaates*, Fünf und Sechzigster Band, 341–347; *Сборник закона и уредба и уредбени указа*, II, 107–114.

⁸¹ *Politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für sämtliche Provinzen des österreichischen Kaiserstaates*, Fünf und Sechzigster Band, 398–409; *Сборник закона и уредба и уредбени указа*, II, 115–120.

The large number of provisions and prohibitions testify to the fact that the observance of quarantine measures and of the complex cordon sanitaire system was faced with many examples of disobedience and violations of these provisions. In order to successfully prevent the spread of contagious diseases, stringency in implementing the measures was key. In order for these measures to be implemented, strict criminal liability of those who violated the measures was necessary, whether it be those who entered the country illegally, or those who violated their obligation to guard the cordon (border). This was prescribed by the Rules for Guards at the Border Cordon, passed on 21 July 1841. Article 2 stipulates that cordon guards stand at the border line “by which a necessary blockade is drawn between our fatherland and all the neighboring countries from which the plague menace and other similar as well as different evils threaten.” For the cordon guards on the border line there were border posts and watchtowers, which were in a clearing and, if possible, on higher ground. If someone wanted to cross the cordon line and enter the country by force, after being warned by the guard, the guards were required to kill them. Anyone who entered the country in “plague” times, secretly or by force, would be court-martialed, sentenced and executed. Guards were authorized to kill on the spot, using rifles, all those who secretly or forcefully wanted to enter the country and refused to obey their orders. A dog or a cat spotted at the border was also to be killed by rifle fire. In times of the plague even domestic animals that happened to be at the border without a shepherd and could not be driven back to where they had come from – were to be killed.

Article 19 stipulated as follows: “On the cordon line it was by no means permissible for people from this and that side to meet, arrange things and amuse themselves.” The guards were prohibited from crossing over “to the other side” in suspicious times and, if they violated the cordon, they would be dismissed from service and sentenced to flogging or prison. If a guard violated the cordon in the dangerous time of the plague, that guard would be court-martialed and sentenced to death. Guards who, because of a bribe or friendship, allowed someone to cross the cordon and enter the country would be punished more severely “than if they had personally violated the cordon; in the times of the plague they will certainly lose their life over this”⁸².

The provisions of the Rules for Guards at the Border Cordon were an extract from Articles 18 to 38 (*Zweiter Abschnitt. Absperrung der Gränze gegen das von der Pestergriffene oder Pestverdächtige Land*) of the *Pest-Polizei-*

⁸² *Сборник закона и уредба и уредбени указа, II, 121–132.*

Ordnung für die k.k. öesterreichischen Staaten from 1837.⁸³ Provisions of the *Pest-Polizei-Ordnung* were largely taken from the Austrian *Kontumaz Patent* of 25 August 1766, which prescribed criminal responsibility related to the implementation of epidemic protection measures at quarantine stations and punishments for those who violated these measures.⁸⁴ Testifying to the importance of the *Kontumaz Patent* is the fact that the Vienna court had it printed in all vernaculars of the Habsburg Monarchy. The General Sanitary Normative (*Das Generalsanitätsnormativum*)⁸⁵ of 2 January 1770 went a step further with the provision that, “for the sake of better understanding”, this criminal law was to be read in the vernacular during each guard change at the cordon. Punishments were made more lenient in 1771 by a provision stipulating that the death penalty was prescribed only at times when a contagious disease was in the vicinity and when the maximum number of quarantine days was prescribed; in all other situation more lenient punishments were passed down.⁸⁶

The Serbian authorities regulated the complex system by means of regulations issued in 1839 and 1841, just as the Austrian Empire did, starting 1770, with the General Sanitary Normative. A cordon sanitaire was established toward the Ottoman Empire, which, following the Austrian model, included three elements. The first element was the cordon guard at the border, which primarily relied on the military. The second element was collecting of information on the health situation in the Ottoman Empire, i.e., intelligence information from all available sources and structures. Finally, the most important cordon sanitaire element were the quarantine stations. The main activity of the quarantine stations was, as defined in the *Pest-Polizei-Ordnung* of 1837 based on decades of accumulated experience, the acceptance and accommodation of persons and goods from the Ottoman Empire, the examination and control of travelers’ health, and the disinfection of travelers, their belongings and goods.

Following the regulations from 1839 and 1841, the Serbian legislator also passed subsequent regulations. A decree was passed on 16 March 1842, under which only the prince could shorten the quarantine period prescribed

⁸³ *Politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für sämtliche Provinzen des österreichischen Kaiserstaates*, Fünf und Sechzigster Band, 218–243.

⁸⁴ *Sammlung aller k. k. Verordnungen und Gesetze vom Jahre 1740. bis 1780, in einer chronologischen Ordnung*, Sechster Band, Wien 1786, 113–121.

⁸⁵ See *Sammlung aller k. k. Verordnungen und Gesetze vom Jahre 1740. bis 1780*, VI, 3–112.

⁸⁶ *Sammlung aller k. k. Verordnungen und Gesetze vom Jahre 1740. bis 1780*, VI, 332–333.

in Article 23 of the Sanitary–Police Decree for “important persons from Turkish regions“, while taking into account the health situation of the region they were coming from.⁸⁷ The Rules for Guards at the Border Cordon of 21 July 1841 were supplemented on 11 October 1843 with the guards’ obligation to personally carry reports and official letters from one border post to another, in an orderly fashion and without delay.⁸⁸ A quarantine tariff was established under the Act of 21 October 1843. Listed first were the items that were not considered suspicious and which could not transmit the plague. The second category were suspicious items or items that could transmit the plague. The Act also prescribed a tax for cleansing these items.⁸⁹

At the request of the residents from the Zaglav and Svrlijig counties and merchants from “the Filib region“, on 7 July 1846 Prince Aleksandar Karađorđević issued a Decree on the opening of a semi-quarantine station at Pandiralo, “at which crossing will be allowed only at peaceful and healthy times, while in the event that any danger should arise on either of the two sides, it is to be abolished immediately“. The same decree was issued for the opening of a semi-quarantine station at Jabuka, near Loznica, “where it will be possible to cross from the Turkish side to Serbia during peaceful and healthy times“.⁹⁰

5. EPILOGUE

An article on measures for preventing the spread of infectious diseases in the first half of the 19th century in Serbia should end with the Decree on the Reorganization of Quarantine Stations and Meeting Points (*Uredba o preustrojstvu karantina i sastanaka*) of 16 May 1861. The Decree starts with the statement that there is no danger of infectious diseases, except for rinderpest in Wallachia and Bulgaria, which is why some changes needed to be made to the sanitary-police and financial regulations. Article 1 authorized the Ministry of Internal Affairs to suspend and reinstate these regulations, as required. Taxes for cleansing and assessing persons and goods would be charged only if relevant sanitary regulations are in effect. Deposits on goods and wages for attendants would be paid continuously. The procedure

⁸⁷ *Сборник закона и уредба и уредбени указа*, II, 164.

⁸⁸ *Сборник закона и уредба и уредбени указа*, II, 257–258.

⁸⁹ *Сборник закона и уредба и уредбени указа*, II, 277–286.

⁹⁰ *Сборник закона и уредба и уредбени указа издани у Књажеству Србском од 1 јануара 1845 до конца декембра 1846 (с прибавленијем неки старији)*, III, Belgrade 1847, 120–121.

for cordon offenders and fugitives was prescribed. For the entry of people, goods and livestock into the country along the Sava and Danube rivers, from Rača to Radujevac, the following ferries were designated: Rača, Mitrovica, Šabac, Zabrežje, Belgrade, Grocka, Smederevo, Dubravica, Ram, Gradište, Milanovac, Ada Kaleh, Tekija, Kladovo, Kusjak, and Radujevac. Assigned to each of them were one attendant-infantry customs officer private, and, at Radujevac, also a cavalry customs officer and guard.

In order to maintain the sanitary measures “at our border toward Turkey“, quarantine stations were set up in Aleksinac, Radujevac, Rača, Mokra Gora, Raška, and a semi-quarantine station at Pandiralo. The staff comprised a director, an overseer or apprentice, one or two customs officers and several guards at each of these places.⁹¹

6. CONCLUSION

In the first half of the 19th century, medical science had not yet discovered that the cause of the plague was in the human body. Without knowledge of the cause, it was impossible to find a treatment and the plague was incurable. In the absence of a treatment, the approach to fighting the plague was to isolate infected people, their houses and settlements, by cleansing and burning infected items and buildings. Quarantine stations played a special role. Modeled after the Austrian cordon sanitaire, the Serbian authorities set up one toward the Ottoman Empire and instated measures against the plague and other infectious diseases: isolation of infected persons and everyone who had come or could have come into contact with them, as well as preventive detention of persons and goods at border crossings. Despite all their shortcomings and resistance, these measures achieved their purpose – the spread of epidemics, especially that of the plague, was prevented and the number of casualties was reduced.

⁹¹ *Сборник закона и уредба и уредбени указа издани у Княжеству Србији (Од почетка до конца 1861. године)*, XIV, Belgrade 1862, 88–91.

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