

Summary

The Rebellion of Toplica in Kuršumljia – Authentic Testimonies about the Crimes Committed by the Occupier

The rebellion of Toplica in Kuršumljia and its surroundings broke out at the end of February in 1917 and lasted to the middle of March of the same year. It was one of the bloodiest epic poems of the First Serbian Rebellion and the only revolt behind the front backgrounds, with the exception of Irski rebellion which lasted for just one day.

When the Bulgarians formed the accessory “gendarmerie” comprised of the Albanian mercenaries situated in Kuršumljia, the tormented people fled into the surrounding woods where they formed strong companies of the armed peasants. On the February 24th, Rade Vlahović, naming himself “the leader of the people of Kuršumljia”, started the uprising with those already formed companies. The uprising actually started when one of the Bulgarian reinforced patrols, in the night of the 25th and 26th February, started robbing the houses in the village of Mačkovac, in the vicinity of Kuršumljia. The armed peasants attacked them and expelled them towards Kuršumljia, and the same did the peasants from all the surrounding villages all the way to Kuršumljia.

The news about the beginning of this uprising reached Kosta Pećanac and Kosta Vojinović, who at that time were moving from Obilić to Kuršumljia. Kosta Vojinović rushed towards Kuršumljia where heavy battles were going on. He liquidated the resistance of the Šiptars and Bulgarians, and organized the authorities in Kuršumljia. Kosta Pećanac, at the request of Kosta Vojinović, helped the uprising in the way that he crushed one of the Bulgarian companies in the village of Pločnik and expelled them towards Prokuplje.

As we find out from the testimonies of the rebels, memories of the youth and the children of those times, as well as from the stories of the descendants about their ancestors, the Serbian people in this region did not manage to retain the power in their hands for long, because they did not have enough weapons and ammunition. In the middle of March, i.e. the 16th of March, Bulgaria and Austria crushed the rebellion, entered Kuršumljia and started their unseen crimes, murders, hangings, rapes and burning down the whole villages. They did not choose the victims, their victims were all people regardless their sex or age, and it was all going on far away from the international public. Furthermore, even the Serbian historiography has dealt very little with the Rebellion of Toplica.