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YUGOSLAV UNITY AND THE DISSOLUTION OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

1 Introduction

At the dawn of the 20th century the Southern Slav peoples lived divided into two independent small states, Serbia and Montenegro, and several provinces under the auspices of two empires, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. Besides sharing the same language, overwhelming differences prevailed among them in regard to social structure, confessional identity, cultural and historic experience.

The Serbian statehood disappeared along with the Serbian nobility at the beginning of the Ottoman era, and with the gradual liberation of the Balkan nations in the 19th century its new statehood was constituted on ethnic nationalism and the French vision of centralized state-building. By the end of the Balkan Wars, Serbia had emerged as a regional power in the Balkan Peninsula, while its citizens possessed a strong national and confessional identity ingrained by centuries of struggles for independence.

In contrast to the Serbian experience, Croatian statehood had been preserved within the Habsburg Empire, and its features morphed into the Dualist period in the form of a limited Croatian self-government. In effect, this became the symbolic guardian of a fragile Croatian identity in the Danubian Monarchy dominated by German-Austrians and Hungarians. Facing the political and ethnic realities of 19th century Croatia-Slavonia, the Croatian intellectual elite conceived a Yugoslav idea as a form of civic nationalism to eliminate the conflicting national claims of the various Southern Slav groups (who each coveted territories characterized by an ethnic mosaic of Slav and other peoples)

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in order to foster political cooperation among the Slav groups within the Habsburg Empire, based on national equality.

Yugoslavism, the idea of Southern Slav solidarity, developed in the 19th century around the belief that the various branches of Southern Slav „tribes“ were kin peoples who ought to have united in a common state;¹ nonetheless, in essence, it mostly functioned „as a mobilizing force in the process of constituting the Croatian nation.”² Undoubtedly, the Yugoslav idea was a product of civic or political nationalism which defined the shared political values and visions as the criteria of nationhood and national belonging, rather than cultural or religious uniformity.³ Regions inhabited by the Yugoslavs were politically fragmented lands and featured a remarkably complex ethno-religious and linguistic mosaic. Therefore, the intermixture of the population made it impossible to draw national borders without triggering hostilities among the nationalities. For that matter, the civic idea of political union seemed to be the best solution for the problem created by the competing national aspirations of each of the Southern Slav groups.⁴

The Yugoslav idea transformed a problem into its own solution by requiring the sacrifice of the various national programmes (Pan-Croat/Greater Croatia and Pan-Serb/ Greater Serbia) for the common cause of unification.⁵ Yugoslavism was an artificial national identity promoting primarily the sameness of Serbs and Croats to prevent the dominance of one nation over the other. At the same time Yugoslavism

¹ Seton-Watson, Hugh and Christopher: *The Making of New Europe. R. W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary*. London: Methuen, 1981, 58.

² Gross, Mirjana: Social Structure and National Movements among the Yugoslav Peoples on the Eve of the First World War. In: *Slavic Review. American Quarterly of Soviet and East European Studies* 36(4), 642.

³ Miller, Nicholas John: *Between Nation and State: Serbian Politics in Croatia before the First World War*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997, 31.

⁴ Jelavich, Charles: *South Slav Nationalism. Textbooks and Yugoslav Union before 1914*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990, 3; Rusinow, Dennison. The Yugoslav Idea before Yugoslavia. In: Djokić, Dejan (ed.): *Yugoslavism. Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918-1992*. London: Hurst, 2003, 12; Pavlowitch, Kosta Stevan. *Yugoslavia*. London: Ernest Benn, 1971, 62.

⁵ Rusinow 2003, *op. cit.*, 12-13.

meant the realization of Croatian and Serbian national endeavours, as all lands inhabited by both Croats and Serbs would be incorporated under the sceptre of a unified Yugoslav state. Furthermore, the idea did not specify which branch of the Southern Slavs would be entitled to unify the whole „Yugoslav nation.” By the outbreak of The Great War Yugoslavism remained a partially formed civic national idea. While it laid the foundation for a temporary political cooperation between the Serbs and Croats, its conceptual fuzziness enabled diverging interpretations on the constitutional and political outlook of a common state.

The third and ultimate wave of Yugoslavism emerged in *fin-de-siècle* Dalmatia. Reviving the civic notion of Yugoslav nationhood,⁶ the Croatian middle class replaced the traditionally loyalist pro-Habsburg stance (Austro-Slavism) with a temporary pro-Hungarian attitude (Hungaro-Slavism) in Croatian national politics. Their new political movement known as the *novi kurs* (new direction), saw an opportunity in the political and economic disputes between the Austrian and Hungarian elite to expand the rights of Croatia, and to bring Dalmatia under Hungarian, and thus under Croatian, administration in lieu of Austrian rule. Not only did the rise and success of the Hungarian opposition parties restructure the Hungarian political scene between 1903 and 1905, but it threatened the constitutional foundations of the Austro–Hungarian Compromise. Adjusting to the political realities in Hungary, the *novi kurs* movement successfully mobilized most of the burgeoning Croatian and Serbian entrepreneur and professional classes dissatisfied with the Croato-Hungarian *Nagodba* (Compromise) of 1868, and formed the so-called Croat-Serb Coalition. Being promised the renegotiation of the *Nagodba*, this new alliance firmly stood by the Independence Party’s coalition throughout the Hungarian constitutional crisis (1905–1906). Their political activism and electoral successes not only marked the rebirth of the Yugoslav idea but elevated the Southern Slavs question to become the most significant issue in

⁶ Zlatar, Zdenko. The Yugoslav Idea and the First Common State of the South Slavs. In: *Nationalities Papers* 25(2), 389.

the Habsburg Empire. As a result, the various national movements of the Habsburg Yugoslavs became a visible threat to the integrity of the Empire.⁷

2 The Evolution of the Southern Slav Question in the Habsburg Empire

To understand the evolution of the Yugoslav question within the Habsburg Empire the inter-Yugoslav relations have to be examined in light of Hungary's Croatian policy. The Austro-Hungarian Compromise had a considerable impact on the constitutional relations between Croatia and Hungary as well, upsetting the centuries-old constitutional equality in favour of the latter.⁸ Under the new dualist structure Hungary was reunited both with Transylvania and Croatia, and the Austrians let the Hungarian Cabinet deal with the Southern Slavs. As a result, the Habsburg dynasty allowed the Hungarians to enact a separate Compromise with the Croats (the *Nagodba* of 1868). In practice, the Austro-Hungarian Compromise meant Croatia was in a constitutionally subordinated position inside the Kingdom of Hungary. The traditional administrator of Croatia (the Ban) was nominated by, and responsible to, the Hungarian Cabinet, and the Croatian Diet (the Sabor) exercised limited domestic power and self-governing rights pertaining to the affairs of the interior, judiciary and administration. Despite these rights, the crown province was effectively subdued to Hungary in both economic and political terms.⁹

⁷ Okey, Robin: *The Neue Preie Presse and the South Slavs of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1867-1914*. In: *The Slavonic and East European Review* 85(1), 83.

⁸ Tihany, Leslie C.: *The Austro-Hungarian Compromise, 1867-1918: A Half Century of Diagnosis*. In: *Central European History* 2(2), 114-115.

⁹ Katus László: *Horvátok*. In: Ács Zoltán (ed.): *Együtt élő népek a Kárpát-medencében*. Budapest: Auktor, 1994, 173; Katus László: *Sokszólamú történelem: válogatott tanulmányok és cikkek*. Nagy Mariann et al (eds.). Pécs: PTE BTK Történelem Tanszékcsoport, 2008, 9; Péter László: *The Army Question in Hungarian Politics, 1867-1918*. In: *Central Europe* 4(2), 83; Okey 2007, *op. cit.*, 83-84, 94; Pavlowitch 1971, *op. cit.*, 43.

2.1 Divide and Rule: The Khuen-Héderváry Regime in Croatia–Slavonia

Ever since the appointment of Károly Khuen-Héderváry in 1883, the Bans of Croatia¹⁰ governed according to the wishes and interests of the Hungarian Cabinet. The governing Liberal Party in Budapest expected Khuen-Héderváry to solidify Croatia's position in the dualist constitutional design. Eventually, Héderváry established a solid power base and was unchallenged for two decades, firstly by applying a *divide and rule* policy to aggravate Croat-Serb antagonism in Croatia; and secondly, by seizing control of the Croatian National Party, the largest party in the crown province, and transforming it into an ardent and pure *Magyaron*¹¹ political stable. According to the Nagodba of 1868 the Sabor delegated forty Croatian representatives to the Hungarian Parliament, whose mandates lasted until the conclusion of the following Croatian elections. Although in theory the representatives' task would have been to represent Croatian interests in Budapest, the National Party consisting mostly of the Croatian aristocracy conformed to the wishes of the Ban and Budapest. Their obedient and adaptive nature is exemplified by the fact that prior to 1905 their delegates had risen to speak in the Hungarian Parliament only seventeen times, and despite their rights they had expressed their views in Hungarian and not in Croatian. Their spectacular failure to represent Croatian national interests to the slightest degree was criticized even by the Hungarian opposition.¹²

¹⁰ The official name of the state used in Hungarian documents was „the Kingdom of Dalmatia–Croatia–Slavonia” (Dalmát–Horvát–Szlavón Királyság), but the „Croatia–Slavonia” (Horvát–Szlavónország) form was utilized likewise. In this study, the kingdom would be referred to as either Croatia or Croatia–Slavonia.

¹¹ Denomination of politically Pro-Hungarian individuals among Southern Slavs.

¹² Cieger András: Horvát képviselők a magyar országgyűlésben (1868–1918). In: Fodor Pál et al. (eds.): *A horvát-magyar együttélés fordulópontjai*. Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, 2015, 426–428, 435; Okey 2007, 89; Sokcsevits Dénes: A fiumei rezolúció és az 1905 és 1907 közötti horvát-magyar közeledés előkészítése a horvát sajtóban. In: *Századok* 139(3), 751.

As for other measures utilised by Héderváry to control Croatia, he pursued an openly pro-Serbian policy which conformed to the Dual Monarchy's temporary patronising policy towards Serbia. The exceptionally amicable relationship between Austria-Hungary and the Obrenović ruling dynasty of the small Balkan state had lasted until 1903, and this alone had fostered loyalty towards the Habsburg Crown among the Serbs of Croatia and Hungary.¹³ However, the Ban replaced his with a pro-Hungarian policy in Croatia by winning over the Croatian Serbs with offices and symbolic acts, such as recognising Serbian as an official language in 1887 along with the Cyrillic alphabet. Being disproportionately overrepresented in the administration, Croatian Serbs came to exercise an overwhelming influence on the political and administrative life of Croatia during the Khuen-Héderváry era.¹⁴ The electoral law introduced by Héderváry in 1887 had remained for a long time the cornerstone and the safeguard of the constitutional-political arrangement between Croatia and Hungary. The new wealth-based suffrage increased the tax threshold for the right to vote, but automatically granted voting rights to citizens employed in the Croatian administration. This meant that by 1910 the percentage of overall voters in Croatia-Slavonia shrunk to a narrow 2%, while a vast number of Croatian Serbs received the vote within this limited franchise. As a consequence, the overrepresentation of Serbs in the administration and in the Sabor ingrained hostility between Serbs and Croats for decades, as the animosity towards the Héderváry regime was redirected towards the Croatian Serbs.¹⁵

Besides the economic and political advantages, the cooperation of Croatian Serbs with the Héderváry regime was further motivated by their angst of Croatian nationalism. In 1881, the Croatian Military Frontier had been abolished and its territory had been returned to the civil administration. Despite fulfilling a long-standing demand of the

¹³ Goldstein, Ivo: *Croatia: A History*. Trans. Nikolina Jovanović. Montreal: McGill-Queen's U P, 1999, 96.

¹⁴ Miller 1997, *op. cit.*, 36–37; Pavlowitch 1971, *op. cit.*, 75.

¹⁵ Goldstein 1999, *op. cit.*, 96; Miller 1997, *op. cit.*, 52–54; Pavlowitch 1971, *op. cit.*, 75; Sokcevitš 2005, *op. cit.*, 758.

Croatian political elite, the reincorporation of Military Croatia into Civil Croatia significantly changed the ethnic outlook of the crown province. As in Military Croatia, the Serbs constituted half of the population and the administrative unification meant that a considerable number of Orthodox Serbs came under the rule of Zagreb: indeed, based on the census of 1910 a quarter of Croatia-Slavonia was inhabited by Serbs.¹⁶ The new ethnic and political realities promoted the formation of the Party of Right which remained the most significant Croatian opposition party until the dawn of the 20th century. Led by Ante Starčević, the party exploited the Croatian pride vested in history and demanded the constitutional and administrative separation of Croatia from Hungary based on the historic rights of Croatian medieval statehood. Furthermore, Starčević propagated the concept of a „Croatian political nation” which misused the civic notion of nationhood to meet the ends of ethnic nationalism.

The concept of „one political nation” resembled its contemporary Hungarian counterpart and regarded all citizens Croats in the national sense, irrespective of their ethnic, cultural, and confessional backgrounds. This approach served as an argument on which the equal national status of Croatian Serbs could have been rejected, rendering any reconciliation or political cooperation between Croats and Serbs impossible. In essence, Starčević argued that regardless of spoken dialects or confessional affiliations all Southern Slavs in the Habsburg Yugoslav regions of Croatia-Slavonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Dalmatia had been Croats. Those „Croats” who did not realize that, namely the Serbs, could be „re-Croatised.” By Starčević’s logic, the existence of the Serbian nation in Croatia was denied, perceiving the Serbs as being merely „Orthodox Croats.” With its nationalist ideas, anti-Habsburg, and anti-Hungarian attitude the Party of Right isolated itself within the Habsburg Empire, while its rhetoric nurtured displeasure and fear among the Croatian Serbs, and fostered the latter’s

¹⁶ Goldstein 1999, *op. cit.*, 93, 96; Miller 1997, *op. cit.*, 16–18.

willingness to serve Hungarian interests in exchange for protection and granted livelihood.¹⁷

Undoubtedly, the Héderváry system created a political standstill in Croatia which could not have been altered by the Croatian opposition's perseverance with the „neither Vienna nor Budapest” approach. After the death of Starčević in 1896, the Party of Right split into two successor parties, while the public mood felt that it had been high time for the revision of Croatian national goals and strategies. As a consequence, a number of new parties emerged in the political scene around the turn of the 20th century. The majority of their young leaders represented a new political generation who were educated either in the most acknowledged universities of the Empire or conducted their studies abroad.¹⁸ Their activities expanded also into the field of culture, education, and journalism, and starting with 1895 their dissatisfaction was oftentimes voiced through street demonstrations. Most of these new political formations took an Austro-Slav stance and wished to revisit the national strategy along pro-Habsburg lines. Consequently, their political programmes envisioned either the overall federalisation of the Habsburg Empire into ethnic subunits or the introduction of Trialism as a means to secure wide-ranging autonomy for Croatia as the third federal unit besides Hungary and Austria.¹⁹ Furthermore, ever since the Nagodba had been implemented the broadening of Croatian political and economic autonomy and the unification of Croatian lands

¹⁷ Miller 1997 *op. cit.*, 42; Pavlowitch 1971 *op. cit.*, 74.

¹⁸ Around 1890's, the Southern Slavs were attracted by the Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague. Many future Yugoslav intellectual and political leaders conducted their studies there, and were inspired by the Young Bohemia movement. Notably, Professor Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the Professor of Philosophy, had a substantial influence on them by drawing their attention to the significance of resources as a key to socio-economic affluence. Additionally, the professor had a considerable role in educating his Croatian students and acquaintances on the threat of German economic expansionism, concluding that, in essence, the Southern Slavs had more reasons to fear German aspirations than Italian or Hungarian endeavours (Suppan, Arnold: Masaryk and the Trials for High Treason against South Slavs in 1909. In: Stanley B. Winters (ed.): *T. G. Masaryk, 1850–1937*, vol 1. London: MacMillan, n/a, 211–213).

¹⁹ Goldstein 1999 *op. cit.*, 96–100; Pavlowitch 1971 *op. cit.*, 46–47, 87; Sokcsevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 751.

(notably, the reincorporation of Dalmatia) had been among the goals of all Croatian opposition parties. Albeit that the political transformation of Croatia into a civic state and the industrialisation benefited the crown province, the constitutional-political arrangements between Croatia and Hungary had been a source of perpetual discontent. In effect, the theme of renegotiating the Nagodba was considered a commonplace in Croatian political life.²⁰

Based on the census of 1910, 6.8 million Southern Slavs inhabited Austria–Hungary (13.2% of the population) living in several crown provinces with diverging constitutional legitimacies and political rights. Besides Croatia-Slavonia and Fiume (Rijeka) under the Hungarian Kingdom, Croats lived in the Austrian Adriatic coastline provinces of Istria and Dalmatia, and also inhabited the Southwest regions of Bosnia–Herzegovina. Above the administrative, cultural, historical and religious divergence of these Habsburg Yugoslav lands they displayed regional differences in economic development as well. The economic growth and industrialization of Yugoslav territories were protracted by the policies of Vienna and Budapest, as they were all forced to compete in the market under unequal terms, while financial resources were redistributed to meet the interests of the Austrian-German, Hungarian, and Italian landowning and entrepreneur classes. As a consequence, the burgeoning and broadening of the Yugoslav middle classes were moderate and their local economies achieved average or substandard growth.²¹

Among the Yugoslav crown provinces, the capitalist environment within the dualist arrangement mostly benefited the Slovenian

²⁰ Matković, Stjepan: A horvát politika evolúciója az első világháború előestéjén. In: Fodor Pál et. al. (ed.): *A horvát–Magyar együttélés fordulópontjai*. Budapest: MTA BTK TTI, Horvát Történettudományi Intézet, 2015, 36.

²¹ Calder, Kenneth J.: *Britain and the Origins of the New Europe, 1914–1918*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1976, 5–6; Katus 2008, *op. cit.*, 9, 11, 13–14, 65. The neglect and the secondary position of Yugoslav provinces was apparent in case of Dalmatia and Bosnia–Hercegovina, where investment in the finance and transportation infrastructure considerably lagged behind the average. Unsurprisingly, these two territories were among the most backward provinces of the Empire (Katus 2008, *op. cit.*, 13–14, 65).

territories and the Istrian coastline, although the Serbian and Croatian merchant layer managed to grab a significant share in the grains and flour export of Bácska and Bánát. As a result, the Croatian and Serbian middle classes experienced notable growth towards the end of the 19th century. Eventually, the Croatian National Bank and the Serbian Bank were founded in Zagreb, and these could then provide the local entrepreneurs with sufficient credit to either modernize their agricultural production or to invest in industry. Despite all these achievements, and due to the constitutional-political framework, the middle class could not escape their disadvantaged position within the Habsburg market. Fostered by the common economic interests soon the idea of Serbian-Croatian political cooperation was conceived and gradually gained ground in the burgeoning Croatian and Serbian classes towards the turn of the 19th century. With both being exposed to Austrian and Hungarian competition, the modification of the *Nagodba* arrangement became the key for their long-term economic survival. Consequently, by broadening the rights of Croatia-Slavonia, they hoped that Zagreb would gain a share in the redistribution of economic resources, and could pursue a protectionist policy in the Croatian market.²²

2.2. Hungaro-Slavism and the Advent of the Resolution Policy

In lieu of Croatia the first joint political action was initiated in Dalmatia at the dawn of the 20th century by an initially Hungaro-Slav and Serbophile movement called the *novi kurs* (new political direction). The founders of the movement all came from the Dalmatian Party of Right, who abandoned the party's traditionally anti-Serbian and anti-Hungarian standing. Facing the economic, political, and ethnic realities they reintroduced the Yugoslav idea into political thinking as an instrument to accomplish the long-standing Croatian national

²² Katus 2008 *op. cit.*, 11-12, 42, 65-66.

goals.²³ Eventually, the *novi kurs* was successful in mobilizing both the Croatian and Serbian entrepreneur classes in most of the Yugoslav Habsburg territories, forming the Croat-Serb Coalition, and turning Croatian public opinion temporarily pro-Hungarian.²⁴

The major role in the political genesis of *novi kurs* can be accredited to Frano Supilo, a Dalmatian Croat journalist who moved to Fiume to become the Editor of the *Riječki Novi List* (Fiume New Paper) at the turn of the 20th century. With his optimistic approach and energetic youth spirit, in due time he became a popular and respected figure of Croatian political life. Discovering Hungarian opponents of the Compromise during his first visit to Budapest in 1901, Supilo conceived that a future electoral victory of the Hungarian opposition could be the key to the renegotiation of the Nagodba. Besides regularly reviewing the pivotal questions of Hungarian-Croatian relations in the 19th century, he waited for the right opportunity to influence and reshape the Croatian public opinion to take a pro-Hungarian turn.²⁵

Eventually, the year 1903 brought those significant changes in the domestic and international political scenes which allowed Supilo to pursue his vision. The despised Khuen-Héderváry was appointed Prime Minister of Hungary in 1903 and, accordingly, resigned from the Croatian banishment. In the same year Benjámín von Kállay, the Habsburg joint Finance Minister, an expert on Yugoslav matters and the chief architect of Habsburg Bosnia, passed away. Tension between the ruling Liberal Party and its opposition intensified in Budapest. And the ascension of the pro-Russian Karađorđević dynasty to the Serbian throne resulted in the Danubian Monarchy losing its subservient ally. From 1903 onward, the *Novi List* under Supilo employed correspondents in Vienna, Budapest, and Zagreb, and intentionally devoted more space to giving up-to-date reports on the political developments and crucial

²³ Ganza-Aras, Tereza: *Politika „Novog kursa” dalmatinskih pravaša oko Supila i Trumbića*. Split: Matica Hrvatska, 1992, 66–67.

²⁴ Miller 1997 *op. cit.*, 75.

²⁵ Ganza-Aras 1992, *op. cit.*, 279; Petrinović, Ivo: *Politička misao Frana Supila*. Split: Književni Krug, 1988, 50, 62–64; Sokcsevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 752–753, 757.

affairs of the Dual Monarchy.²⁶ Besides the Dalmatian journalist, the above developments mobilized other members of the young Dalmatian intelligentsia, such as the lawyers Ante Trumbić and Josip Smodlaka, who all decided to join Supilo's pro-Hungarian endeavours. Eventually, the Dalmatian initiation of *novi kurs* transgressed the frontiers of the province and found its way to the Croatian and Serbian middle classes in Croatia-Slavonia.²⁷

To convey the idea of Croatian-Hungarian cooperation the *novi kurs* utilized the anti-German sentiments of the Dalmatian intelligentsia. The source of antipathy against Austria and Austrian-Germans originated in the backwardness of the Dalmatian coastal regions, whose peripheral position had been exclusively blamed on Vienna.²⁸ In regard to Hungary, the opposition Independence Party and its electoral allies²⁹ (commonly referred to collectively as "the Coalition") were perceived to be future partners in the renegotiation of the *Nagodba*. A new settlement with the Hungarians assumed a sub-dualist solution, consequently leaving the dualist arrangement intact, but awarding the crown province with financial independence and an extended self-government. Overall, the *novi kurs* was aware that a new sub-dualist settlement not only required a regime change in Hungary, but

²⁶ Sokcsevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 753; Tanner, Marcus: *Croatia. A Nation Forged in War*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, 111.

²⁷ Ganza-Aras 1992, *op. cit.*, 286; Sokcsevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 752-753.

²⁸ Tanner 1997, *op. cit.*, 110. Owing to the Austrian policy, the tiny minority of Dalmatian Italians – making up only 2-4% of the population in the crown province – could culturally and politically dominate the Dalmatian Yugoslav majority. In many cases, the Dalmatian town counsels were operated by Italians (Okey 2007, *op. cit.*, 85).

²⁹ At the beginning of the 20th century, the Hungarian opposition's growing demand for the revision and the „improvement” of the Compromise – calling for economic separation, electoral and army reforms – clashed with the persistent determination of the Liberal Party's establishment figures to uphold and protect the dualist system. By 1905, the Independence Party, the dissidents of the Liberal Party and other opposition parties formed an electoral coalition to challenge the rule of the Liberal Party and the dualist structure. This grand alliance, commonly referred to as the Coalition, came to being with the political collaboration of radical nationalists, moderate conservatives, and political opportunists (Péter, László: *The Army Question in Hungarian Politics, 1867-1918*. In: *Central Europe* 4(2), 83-84; Stone, Norman: *Constitutional Crises in Hungary, 1903-1906*. In: *The Slavonic and East European Review* 45(104), 165-166, 178).

also demanded the extension of Hungary's rights within the Dualist structure. In reality, their solution was conceived as a long-term plan, while the short-term necessities required a strong coalition in Croatia and Dalmatia to be forged to back the constitutional struggles of the Coalition in Budapest.³⁰

The grounds for seeking political allies among the Habsburg Yugoslavs was taunted by fact or fictitious fear of German economic expansion and Germanisation, which the *novi kurs* viewed as the ultimate threats for the small nations of Eastern Europe. With a fine situational awareness in regard to the political mood in Hungary and the Croatian lands the *novi kurs* proposed an alliance for Yugoslav peoples to battle German intrusion into the region. Eventually, the movement managed to recruit the Serbian Independent Party as its political partner. The Serbian formation was the party of the Serbian entrepreneur class, non-incriminated and non-involved in dealing with the Héderváry regime. Its leaders were involved in the organisation of everyday cultural and community life, and therefore they could exert significant influence over the Croatian Serbs.³¹

However, in view of the Héderváry era the rapprochement of Serbs and Croats, and the creation of a mutual platform, was presumed to be a difficult task. For that matter, the proponents of the new political course abandoned the concept of the „Croatian political nation,” and in lieu of the Croatian historic state right they propagated a new Croatian statehood based on the civil equality of Southern Slavs.³² In essence, the 19th century Yugoslav idea was revived and adjusted to meet the social-political realities of contemporary Croatian lands. The latest

³⁰ Although the text of the Sub-Compromise described Dalmatia as being the part of the Triune Kingdom of Dalmatia–Croatia–Slavonia, in reality, the crown province remained under Austrian jurisdiction. The *novi kurs* perceived the political alliance with the Hungarians as a key to accomplish the long-lasting national aim of unifying Dalmatia with Croatia–Slavonia (Trumbić, Ante: *n/a*. In: *Narodni List*, 11 March 1905). Goldstein 1999, *op. cit.*, 102; Miller 1997, *op. cit.*, 90; Petrinović 1998, *op. cit.*, 64–65.

³¹ Goldstein 1999, *op. cit.*, 96; Petrinović 1998, *op. cit.*, 61, 64–65; Sokcsevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 753.

³² Krestić, Vasilije D.: *History of the Serbs in Croatia and Slavonia, 1848-1914*. Belgrade: BIGZ, 1997, 16.

form of Yugoslavism championed the idea of *narodno jedinstvo* (national unity) between Serbs and Croats, and pursued an ethnically inclusive national programme³³ with the notion of *dvaimeni narod* (nation with two names) as a form civic nationhood. As summarized by Frano Supilo below, it regarded the Croats and the Serbs as a single nation based on their common language and shared political values:

Serbs and Croats are one people with two names. They may have two names, two religions, two traditions, two cultures [...] they may kill, they may kiss each other, but in spite of that, from the ethnic point of view, Serbs and Croats are the same peoples, because they are the children of the same Slavic race and because they have the same national language.³⁴

In response to the political developments in Hungary a multiparty meeting took place in October 1905 in Fiume with the participation of Dalmatian opposition parties.³⁵ Marking the beginning of the so-called *resolution policy* the Croatian Club was formed with the fusion of the National Party and the Party of Right of Dalmatia. The Club firmly expressed its support for the Coalition in its struggle for Hungarian state autonomy in a statement known as the Fiume (Rijeka) Resolution. In return for their support, the declaration called for the expansion of Croatian state rights in the framework the sub-dualist arrangements, the termination of the so-far oppressive policy of Budapest towards Croatia-Slavonia, the democratisation of the political life and the unification of Croatian lands. Reported by the majority of the Croatian papers the Fiume Resolution was used to attract the attention of the Serbian Independent Party and the Coalition in Budapest. Furthermore,

³³ Lampe, John R.: *Balkans into Southeastern Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 29.

³⁴ Qtd. Trgovčević, Ljubinka: *South Slav Intellectuals and the Creation of Yugoslavia*. In: Djokić, Dejan (ed.): *Yugoslavism. Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918-1992*. London: Hurst, 2003, 224-225.

³⁵ Participating as private individuals, some members of the Zagreb Sabor attended the meeting likewise (Ganza-Aras 1992, *op. cit.*, 319).

it served to prepare the Croatian public for a pro-Hungarian and pro-Serbian shift by disseminating the notion that the Croatian regime could only be defeated provided political changes prevailed in Budapest.³⁶

The proclamation of the resolution policy received an unexpectedly warm welcome on behalf of the Serbian opposition parties in Dalmatia and Croatia, and two weeks later the delegates of the Serbian Independent Party, and the Serbian Radical Party joined the Croatian initiative in Zara. In the spirit of the Yugoslav idea the Croatian and Serbian parties concluded the Zara (Zadar) Resolution, which acknowledged the Serbs as a constituent political nation, and declared their civil equality with the Croats. In exchange, the Serbian delegates aligned with the points of the Fiume Resolution, and officially joined the common front advocating the unification of Dalmatia with Croatia. Undoubtedly, the Zara Resolution signified a new chapter in Serbian and Croatian relations, which soon witnessed the formation of the Croato-Serb Coalition (CSC), a party alliance inspired by the electoral success of the Hungarian opposition parties' coalition strategy. Besides the points of the Fiume and Zara Resolutions the electoral programme of CSC openly included the extension of civic rights. Moreover, it promised the democratisation of the judicial system, a responsible government, electoral reforms, the protection of industrial workers and smallholders, and last, but not least, the renegotiation of the Sub-Compromise with special considerations given to economic and constitutional-political questions.³⁷

The opportunistic approach of endorsing the Coalition in the course of the Hungarian constitutional crisis eventually paid off. Within a short period of time the CSC's support increased so rapidly that the

³⁶ Banac, Ivo: *Croat-Magyar Relations, 1904–1914: A New Jelačić or the “New Course”?* In: *Slovene Studies* 9(1–2), 45; Djokić, Dejan. *Yugoslavism: Histories, Myths, Concepts*. In: Djokić, Dejan (ed.): *Yugoslavism. Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918–1992*. London: Hurst, 2003, 140; Ganza-Aras 1992, *op. cit.*, 319; Sokcsevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 757.

³⁷ Djokić, Dejan: *Nikola Pašić and Ante Trumbić: The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes*. London: Haus, 2010, 34–35; Goldstein 1999, *op. cit.*, 102–103; Haslinger, Peter: *Austria-Hungary*. In Robert Gerwarth et al. (ed.): *Empires at War, 1911–1923*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 2014, 76; Petrinović 1998, *op. cit.*, 76, 87; Sokcsevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 754, 757; Tanner 1997, *op. cit.*, 111.

alliance managed to win first the Dalmatian provincial elections in December 1905, and then the Croatian elections in May 1906. As a result, the CSC emerged as the largest political bloc in the Sabor of both crown provinces, and Frano Supilo³⁸ transformed into a renowned public figure across the Danubian Empire. Dissolving shortly after the elections had commenced, the defeated Croatian National Party suffered the same fate as its Hungarian sister party, the Liberals.³⁹

2.3. *Disillusionment and Absolutism in Croatia-Slavonia*

Adjusting to the secret compromise concluded with King Francis Joseph the Coalition Cabinet in Budapest discontinued challenging the constitutional-political arrangement of the Habsburg Empire. Respectively, their long-advocated national aims – the demand for the Hungarian command of language, the separate and independent Hungarian tariff zone, and a central bank – were abandoned, and from one day to another these plans vanished from their political communication. Due to their political turnabout in Hungary, the tactical alliance with the CSC became a reliability for the Coalition, and soon the persisting great expectations of the Yugoslavs transformed into a source of irritation for Budapest.⁴⁰ The appointment of Sándor Wekerle, a Habsburg loyalist, as Prime Minister of Hungary created a great obstacle in the Croatian-Hungarian reconciliation. By sustaining its pro-Hungarian stance, the CSC avoided political clashes with the Coalition, the bill proposed on railway regulations in May 1907 proved to be an ultimate breaking point. With the nationalist turn in Budapest, the temporary alliance with the Yugoslavs collapsed, and the Croato-

³⁸ Residing in Fiume for many years, Supilo finally applied for a Hungarian citizenship, which he was awarded in the course of only eight days by the Governor of Fiume (Petrinović 1998, *op. cit.*, 81).

³⁹ Djokic 2010, *op. cit.*, 35; Goldstein 1999, *op. cit.*, 102-103; Petrinović 76, *op. cit.*, 87; Soksevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 754; Tanner 1997, *op. cit.*, 111.

⁴⁰ Banac 1987, *op. cit.*, 46.

Serb Coalition was soon declared to be an enemy of the Hungarian state for supporting „Pan-Slav ideas.”⁴¹

In preparation for the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the pacification of Croatia through the re-establishment of a pro-Hungarian and Habsburg loyalist leadership in Zagreb turned into the major agenda for the Coalition Cabinet. The period between 1906 and 1914 saw the repeated dissolution of the Sabor to secure a pro-Hungarian majority; among the five provincial elections, the CSC emerged clearly victorious four times and on one occasion the Frankists triumphed. For this reason, the pro-Hungarian Bans in the late Dualist period utilised both lawful and unconstitutional means to purge Croatia from the proponents of the Yugoslav idea.⁴²

Between 1908 and 1910, the Bans tried to abuse the temporary anti-Serbian sentiments triggered by the annexation crisis to break and dissolve the Croatian-Serbian party alliance. On the orders of Prime Minister Sándor Wekerle and Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal, the joint Foreign Minister, Ban Paul Rauch collected compromising materials against CSC members to mount a mass staged trial.⁴³ Denunciatory articles were published followed by the arrest of fifty-three members of the Serbian Independent Party in 1908, among them priests, entrepreneurs, merchants, intellectuals and farmers. The specific charges were only announced seven months later in March 1909, when the arrested Serbians were charged with high treason⁴⁴ committed in the form of anti-state conspiracy, support of pan-Serb separatist movements, and association with the Belgrade-based, pan-Yugoslav cultural organization, the Slovenski Jug.⁴⁵ Although the treason trial

⁴¹ Banac *ibid.*; Cieger 2015, *op. cit.*, 426–428; Goldstein 1999, *op. cit.*, 103; Petrinović 1998, *op. cit.*, 93, 99–104.

⁴² Cieger 2015, *op. cit.*, 433; Cohen, Lenard J.: *Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics in Transition*. Boulder and Oxford: Westview, 1995, 253; Sokcsevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 760, 765.

⁴³ Cohen 1995, *op. cit.*, 253.

⁴⁴ Requested by his former students in the CSC, Professor Masaryk 1969, addressed the issues of the trial in the Reichsrat, and called for the review of the evidence by a parliamentary committee in vain (Suppan n/a, *op. cit.*, 210, 216–217).

⁴⁵ The Slovenski Jug, established in 1904 in Belgrade, was the only Serbian

had been primarily created to prepare the annexation, and to control the pro-Serbian sentiments, it was not suspended even after the Serbian Kingdom officially acknowledged the annexation of the two provinces. Eventually, the verdict was announced on the first anniversary of the annexation, 5 October 1909, with thirty-two defendants sentenced to imprisonment.⁴⁶ Not only did the masterminds behind the trial fail to break up the Croato-Serb Coalition, but the defence attorney, Hinko Hinković,⁴⁷ an elderly member of the CSC, did an excellent job in making a public joke out of both the evidence and the illiterate anti-Serbian witnesses summoned to court. Overall, the mass trial did not increase anti-Serbian sentiments in Croatia, but conversely brought the two nations closer, as the majority of the Habsburg Yugoslavs perceived the Zagreb high treason trial as a staged trial.⁴⁸ With the trial failing its primary objective, all verdicts were suddenly annulled in 1910 without any clarified reasons,⁴⁹ while Vienna and Budapest – growing even more determined to disrupt the CSC – changed political tactics, and set out to destroy the image of the Yugoslav alliance.

Orchestrated by the Foreign Minister, Aehrenthal, the preparation for another anti-Yugoslav trial had been in motion while the treason trial commenced. Heinrich Friedjung, an internationally acclaimed

organization, which stood by the Yugoslav idea (Zlatar 1997, *op. cit.*, 392).

⁴⁶ Dragnich, Alex N: *Serbia and Yugoslavia*. New York: Columbia U P, 1998, 44–45; Suppan n/a, *op. cit.*, 215, 220.

⁴⁷ Hinko Hinković was a lawyer by profession, and had a Jewish ancestry. For a brief period between 1884 and 1886, he was a member of the Party of Right, but opposed Starčević nationalist tone and withdrew from politics. Later he joined the CSC in Croatia, and became a target of political attacks due to his role in the Zagreb High Treason Trial and jailed in 1911. In 1913, he was chosen as one of the Sabor delegates to the Budapest Parliament. Because of his Serbian relations and acquaintances, he emigrated after the Sarajevo assassination (Janković, Dragoslav: *Srbija i stvaranje Jugoslavije*. In: Acković, Aleksandar (ed.): *Politički život Jugoslavije, 1914–1945*. Belgrade: Radio-Beograd, 1973, 202).

⁴⁸ Goldstein 1999, *op. cit.*, 103–104; Miller 1997, *op. cit.*, 130; Seton-Watson, Robert William: *Absolutism in Croatia*. London: Constable, 1912, 227–228; Tanner 1997, *op. cit.*, 113.

⁴⁹ Cohen 1995, *op. cit.*, 9.

historian, published a series of articles in the *Neue Freie Presse*⁵⁰ during the spring of 1909, making allegations about some unnamed members of CSC accepting bribes and payments from Serbia.⁵¹ His efforts in galvanizing public opinion were joined by Friederich Funder, a Christian-Socialist journalist and the Editor-in-Chief of the *Reichspost*, who published translated documents on payments which supposed to support Friedjung's accusations. Additionally, Funder's article accused Frano Supilo, Svetozar Pribičević, Franko Potočnjak and others by name for accepting financial support from the Slovenski Jug and the Serbian Cabinet on a regular basis. As a result of the denunciatory articles, fifty-two representatives of the Sabor eventually sued both the newspapers and the authors for libel.⁵²

In the course of the infamous Friedjung-*Reichspost* libel trial,⁵³ anti-Yugoslav endeavours suffered an embarrassing defeat in court. Firstly, it was proven that Frano Supilo had been attending lectures in Berlin at the alleged time he had supposed to be in Belgrade attending secret meetings. Secondly, based on expert testimonies, the authenticity of the proof documents was questioned. It was soon uncovered that the cash orders and other payments had been fabricated by a false witness, Milan Vašić,⁵⁴ an employee at the Habsburg Legation in Belgrade. With the wide domestic and international press coverage, the ill-conceived Friedjung-*Reichspost* libel trial tarnished Austrian-Hungarian prestige, and came to be an embarrassing political disaster for the Monarchy. The libel trial also proved to be an unquestionable moral victory for the CSC, leading Aehrenthal and Heir-Apparent Francis Ferdinand to interfere and convince the litigant parties to close the case with an

⁵⁰ The *Neue Freie Presse* was a prestigious paper of the Austrian-German liberal middle-class. Acquired a large circulation, by 1914 had more than 114.000 subscribers (Okey 2007, *op. cit.*, 81).

⁵¹ Suppan n/a, *op. cit.*, 221.

⁵² Miller 1997, *op. cit.*, 125.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 125, 131.

⁵⁴ Vašić was later interrogated in Belgrade in 1910 and received prison sentence (Antić, Čedomir: *Ralph Paget: A Diplomat in Serbia*. Belgrade: SASA, 2006, 48–49).

out-of-court settlement.⁵⁵ Although the inter-Yugoslav party alliance managed to persist until the end of the Great War regardless of the trials orchestrated to destroy it, the unconstitutional and overtly absolutist measures of Budapest made its practical and effective operation impossible.⁵⁶

The enduring political struggles – peaking with the two trials and introduction of absolutism – exhausted Frano Supilo, who decided to withdraw from politics, and left the CSC in 1912. After his departure, Svetozar Pribičević,⁵⁷ the President of the Serbian Independent Party, took over the leadership of the CSC. Despite being a supporter of the Yugoslav idea, Pribičević realized that the civic national programme offered by Yugoslavism could not have protected the Serbian community within the Habsburg Empire.⁵⁸ For that matter, he covertly looked for Belgrade as the future unifier of all Southern Slavs, and maintained a close relationship with the Serbian Premier, Nikola Pašić and his political clique.⁵⁹ Upon the request of Pašić, Pribičević on the one hand had remained the President of CSC and sustained the coalition until the end of the Great War; and on the other hand, made a compromise with Budapest by turning himself into a moderate *Magyaron*. In 1913, his negotiations with István Tisza, the Prime Minister of Hungary, resulted in the restoration of the Croatian Constitution, the end of

⁵⁵ Cohen 1995, *op. cit.*, 253–254; Miller 1997, *op. cit.*, 125, 131–132; Petrinović 1998, *op. cit.*, 120, 124; Seton-Watson 1912, *op. cit.*, 227–228; Steed, Henry Wickham: *The Hapsburg Monarchy*. 4th edition. London: Constable, 1919, 102, 104; Suppan n/a, *op. cit.*, 217, 220–221; Tanner 1997, *op. cit.*, 113.

⁵⁶ Soksevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 765. In 1911, the Hungarian Cabinet suspended the Croatian Constitution, and the crown province was subjected to absolutism marked by the autocratic rule of royal commissariat, the extreme violation of right to free speech and assemble.

⁵⁷ Pribičević became the Minister of Interior and then the Minister of Education in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Suppan n/a, *op. cit.*, 212).

⁵⁸ Cieger 2015, *op. cit.*, 433; Goldstein 1999, *op. cit.*, 105; Miller 1997, *op. cit.*, 167; Soksevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 756–766.

⁵⁹ Svetozar Pribičević had a decisive role in that the Serbian vision of the Yugoslav union was realized after the Great War with the passing of the Vidovdan Constitution in 1921. Although, he did not abandon the coalition, but betrayed its founding principles (Miller 1997, *op. cit.*, 136).

absolutism, and additional concessions obtained by the creation of a separate National Economy Department in Zagreb.

Pribičević's rapprochement with the Hungarian Cabinet was firstly fostered by the fear of Budapest concluding an agreement with the anti-Serb Frankists; secondly, he wished to buy time for Serbia which was both financially and militarily exhausted after the Balkan Wars.⁶⁰ Emerging as a regional power, Serbia faced isolation in the post-Balkan War period, while the international situation in Europe pointed towards a future armed conflict. For these reasons the Serbian Premier did not want to weaken the Hungarian Cabinet by any means, as he hoped Budapest could counter-balance the war-party in the Viennese Court. With his perplexing pro-Hungarian attitude Pribičević fulfilled the wishes of Pašić and persisted in maintaining the coalition of the Croat and Serb parties.⁶¹

In the course of the Balkan Wars, Serbia's unexpected military performance – owned to the modernization financed by French loans – surprised even the Dual Monarchy's leadership. With the conclusion of the wars, Serbia doubled its territory and rose to the number one regional power in the Balkan Peninsula. In the midst of the new Croatian political standstill, these developments considerably enhanced Serbian prestige in the Habsburg Yugoslav world,⁶² and the enlarged Balkan state transformed into a model for the rest of the Southern Slavs. With the Croato-Serb Coalition dominating the Sabor,⁶³ Serbian military victories were celebrated publicly in many cities.⁶⁴ But the public manifestation of joy provoked the authorities to intervene by introducing a state of emergency and suspending the work of local authorities.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Jeszenszky, Géza: Közép-Európa veszte: az I. világháború. In: *Magyar Szemle* 23(9–10), 41; Miller 1997, *op. cit.*, 166–167.

⁶¹ Goldstein 1999, *op. cit.*, 104–105; Krestić 1997, *op. cit.*, 429; Sokcsevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 766.

⁶² Antić 2006, *op. cit.*, 65; Woodhouse, Edward James: *Italy and the Yugoslavs*. Boston: Badger, 1920, 63.

⁶³ Tanner 1997, *op. cit.*, 111.

⁶⁴ Trgovčević 2003, *op. cit.*, 229–230.

⁶⁵ Čirković, Sima M.: *The Serbs*. Trans. Vuk Tošić. Malden: Blackwell, 2004, 246.

After the spectacular failure of the resolution policy, the founders of the *novi kurs* concluded that a sub-dualist or a trialist solution could not have been expected either from Francis Joseph or the Hungarian political elite. The annexation crisis with the anti-Yugoslav trials, and the suspension of the Croatian Constitution, forced them to abandon plans for Croatian self-government within the Habsburg Empire. However, owing to the increasing Serbophile sentiments, unification with Serbia had become more desirable than ever as the Serbian achievements promoted Yugoslav solidarity and hope that the Yugoslav national aspirations could have been accomplished through liberation. As it was unlikely that the Habsburg Yugoslav territories could have seceded from Austria-Hungary on their own, many leading Southern Slav intellectuals – drawing a parallel with the success of Italian unification – recognized Serbia as a possible Piedmont of Southern Slavs.⁶⁶

Nonetheless, the idea of a „Yugoslav Piedmont“ became popular primarily among the founders of the *novi kurs* and the Croatian intelligentsia. In theory the victories of Serbia made Yugoslavism more appealing; yet in practice Croatian society remained divided on the pan-Yugoslav national programme, with the overwhelming majority preferring a trialist solution as the key to Croatian self-government. Irrespective of the this, the idea of a common Yugoslav state established outside the Habsburg Empire with Serbia being the liberator had evolved into the new national programme for the intellectual founders of the *novi kurs*.⁶⁷ Ante Trumbić and Josip Smoljčić both held talks with Bosnian Serb politicians and concluded that, provided a future war between the Serbian Kingdom and the Habsburg Empire broke out, the proponents of the Yugoslav Piedmont idea would emigrate to launch an international campaign abroad for the unification Habsburg Yugoslav territories with Serbia.⁶⁸ Despite the speculative and prospective nature of the plan, the assassination of Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo

⁶⁶ Calder 1976, *op. cit.*, 5–6; Goldstein 1999, *op. cit.*, 103–104; Haslinger 2014, *op. cit.*, 76; Sokcsevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 760; Zlatar 1997, *op. cit.*, 392.

⁶⁷ Cohen 1995, *op. cit.*, 8–9; Goldstein 1999, *op. cit.*, 103–104; Zlatar 1997, *op. cit.*, 392.

⁶⁸ Djokic 2010, *op. cit.*, 35–36; Sokcsevits 2005, *op. cit.*, 766.

proved to be the „sudden and unexpected future event,”⁶⁹ Frano Supilo and the other pro-Yugoslav Croatian intellectuals had waited for. The entirely new international situation which the assassination triggered offered an unexpected opportunity for Yugoslavism.

3 The Southern Slav Question and the Great War

With the outbreak of the Great War, Serbia evolved into the ally of the Entente Powers and the pan-Yugoslav cause soon found such influential, well-informed and devoted allies as Henry Wickham Steed (1871–1956), an English political journalist and the Foreign Editor of the *Times* during the war, and Robert William Seton-Watson (1879–1951), a Scottish historian and journalist, who was among the first Western European intellectuals to write on the Southern Slavs. Their life-long friendship and political alliance dated back to the years spent in Vienna as the correspondents of the *Times* and the *Morning Post*. Disillusioned with the Hungarian political elite and the Habsburg Empire, they would become the inseparable vanguards of the political movement advocating for the general reconstruction of European frontiers during the Great War. Becoming the ardent proponents of Southern Slav unity, Seton-Watson and Steed made the dissolution of Austria–Hungary their self-appointed task,⁷⁰ and introduced the idea of national self-determination as the principle of the peace settlement and an alternative for the preservation of the Habsburg Empire.

The prospect of an independent Croatia realized under the patronage of the Allied Powers triggered the Serbian Cabinet to declare its support for the Yugoslav idea in Serbia’s official war aims. In effect, the majority of the Serbian elite envisioned the extension of Serbian statehood to the future Yugoslav territories, and rejected any solutions which would have renounced the sovereignty of the Serbian

⁶⁹ *Qtd.* Banac 1987, *op. cit.*, 46.

⁷⁰ MacMillan, Margaret: *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to End War*. London: John Murray, 2002, 123; Masaryk, Thomas Garrigue: *The Making of a State*. Trans. Henry Wickham Steed. New York: Howard Fertig, 1969, 125.

Kingdom in any ways. Among them, Premier Nikola Pašić and the members of the governing Radical Party were pan-Serb nationalists who stood for the unification of all lands inhabited by Serbs. In theory, Croats and Slovenes could have joined this enlarged Serbian state but only under agreed terms and Belgrade's leadership. In reality, before the outbreak of the Great War Pašić had not displayed any interest in a wider pan-Yugoslav state. Nonetheless, the political realities of the war forced Serbia to assume the role of Yugoslav Piedmont, and seemingly pursue the liberation of all Habsburg Yugoslav lands.⁷¹

Incorporating the Southern Slav territories of the Habsburg Monarchy, the vision of a Croatian state meant an obvious threat for the pan-Serb endeavours. The concerns of the Serbian Cabinet regarding a possible rival Southern Slav state were not entirely groundless, since the idea had been discussed in French and Italian diplomatic circles in September 1914. Consequently, Pašić had no alternative but to espouse the Yugoslav idea to satisfy the Croats and deter the plan of a separate and sovereign Croatia before it had been officially embraced by the Allied Powers. For this purpose, a group of Serbian scholars were assigned with the task of defining Serbia's war aims and emphasizing that the Habsburg Monarchy could not have retained its Southern Slav possessions, and that these provinces could not have survived, unless associated with Serbia.⁷²

The document known as the Niš Declaration was officially proclaimed by the Serbian Parliament as the country's war aims on 7 December 1914, and it clearly stated that Serbia wanted to liberate and unite all the Yugoslavs into a single state. Issuing a declaration which overtly championed the Yugoslav idea was a means for Pašić to undermine the Habsburg Yugoslavs' loyalty to the Empire, and to assume control over the process of unification by securing exclusive right for Serbia to represent the Southern Slavs. The declaration also

⁷¹ Jelavich 1990, *op. cit.*, 31; MacMillan 2002, *op. cit.*, 122; Pavlowitch 1971, *op. cit.*, 99.

⁷² Banac, Ivo: *The National Question in Yugoslavia*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984, 117.

enabled the Serbian Cabinet to claim as many Habsburg Yugoslav lands as possible primarily to fulfil pan-Serb aspirations.⁷³

With the arrival of Habsburg Yugoslav exiles in Great Britain, the idea of national self-determination along with the notion of a united Yugoslav state paved their ways both to the Foreign Office and public opinion under the assistance and patronage of Henry Wickham Steed and Robert William Seton-Watson. Despite the question of a Yugoslav state being briefly raised in the first years of the Great War, the Entente attitude towards the Great Power status and necessity for the Habsburg Monarchy remained unchanged.⁷⁴ While a few officials in the British and French Foreign Office sympathized with the nationality principle,⁷⁵ official commitment to national self-determination would have considerably limited the possibility of war-time diplomacy⁷⁶ which aimed to defeat German aggression and not to reorganize Central Europe. As a result, the strategic interests and necessities of the war took priority over the case of Yugoslav national unification.

The Yugoslav Committee – a London-based⁷⁷ Southern Slav émigré organization headed by Ante Trumbić as its president – was established by a number of Habsburg Yugoslav expatriates with the assistance of the Serbian Cabinet. The majority of its members were Croats who imagined the future common Yugoslav state would be realised based on „an organic union and equal partnership”⁷⁸ among the Croats, Slovenes

⁷³ Bataković, Dušan T.: Szerbia az első világháborúban. In: Szarka László. (ed.): *Párhuzamos nemzetépítés, konfliktusos együttélés*. Budapest: Országház, 2017, 237; Sotirović, Vladislav B.: The 1917 Corfu Declaration. In: *The South Slavic Journal* 33(1–2), 13; Pavlowitch, Kosta Stevan: The First World War and the Unification of Yugoslavia. In: Djokić, Dejan (ed.): *Yugoslavism. Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918–1992*. London: Hurst, 2003, 27; Lederer, Ivo J.: *Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference: A Study in Frontiersmaking*. New Haven and London: Yale U P, 1963, 4–5; Pavlowitch 1971, *op. cit.*, 99.

⁷⁴ Hay, William Anthony: A Problem Postponed: Britain and the Future of Austria–Hungary, 1914–18. In: *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 13(3), 59.

⁷⁵ Evans, James: *Great Britain and the Creation of Yugoslavia: Negotiating Balkan Nationality and Identity*. London and New York: Tauris, 2008, 161.

⁷⁶ Calder 1976, *op. cit.*, 28–29.

⁷⁷ The political organization was created in Paris, but immediately moved its headquarters to London (Sotirović 2014, *op. cit.*, 12).

⁷⁸ *Southern Slav Programme*. London: Nisbet, 1915, 4.

and Serbs. Under the patronage of Seton-Watson and Steed, the group lobbied for the recognition of its national programme in Great Britain, and tried to guard the ethno-historic rights of the Southern Slavs for the Eastern Adriatic.⁷⁹ The formation and first public appearance of the Yugoslav Committee was connected with the Allied-Italian secret negotiations, when the Yugoslav exiles hastily published a manifesto, the *Southern Slav Programme*, on 12 May 1915 which sought to protect the national interests of Yugoslavs by attempting to influence Allied opinion.⁸⁰ Once it was revealed that the Treaty of London had already been concluded, the Yugoslav Committee was forced to press its claims on the Adriatic by launching a propaganda campaign⁸¹ „for the purpose of imparting information”⁸² on the Yugoslav’s cause. The organization published the *Southern Slav Bulletin*, a serialized pamphlet to educate the public and decision-makers about the Southern Slavs. In essence, it provided thorough political, historical, geographic, economic and ethnographic background on the Southern Slav lands. Each of the six pamphlets published was composed to expand knowledge about a specific theme.

Both the *Southern Slav Programme* and the *Southern Slav Bulletin* aimed to convince officials of the Entente Powers that: the Yugoslav Committee had a legitimate right to represent and speak on behalf of the Habsburg Yugoslavs; the Yugoslav idea had been the prevailing national idea of the Southern Slavs; and, only a unified and ethnically compact Yugoslav state – and not an enlarged Serbia and Italy – could be an effective barrier to German expansion.

In reality, with the outbreak of the Great War three options emerged for the Croats and Slovenes regarding their future: autonomy within the Habsburg Monarchy; formation of independent states; or unification with Serbia.⁸³ All three options had their proponents among

⁷⁹ Sotirović 2014, *op. cit.*, 12.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 11.

⁸¹ Lederer 1963, *op. cit.*, 12-13.

⁸² *Southern Slav Bulletin*. London: Nisbet, 1915, 1.

⁸³ Trgovčević 2003, *op. cit.*, 231.

the Habsburg Yugoslav political and intellectual circles. Emperor Charles's accession to the throne in late 1916 provided an opportunity for the Habsburg Yugoslavs to renew their request for an autonomous Yugoslav federal unit.⁸⁴ Corresponding with the words and whispers in the Empire that the new Emperor intended to proclaim the trialist rearrangement of the Habsburg Empire upon his coronation, the Yugoslav Club – a newly established club party consisting of the Southern Slav representatives of Austrian Yugoslav territories – appealed to the sovereign in a manifesto known as the May Declaration, which called for the „unification of all the lands in the Monarchy inhabited by the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs”.⁸⁵ In practice the May Declaration – issued for the reopening of the Vienna Reichstag on 30 May 1917 – propagated Trialism based on the Croat state right, the nationality principle⁸⁶ and national equality, the latter guaranteeing recognition of Serbs as a separate constituent nation in Croatia-Slavonia.⁸⁷ At this stage of the Great War the radical visions of the Yugoslav expatriates and their patrons in Entente countries – entailing the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire, and the Yugoslav unification with then non-existing free Serbia – were not echoed among their Habsburg Yugoslav kinsmen⁸⁸ who still wished to preserve the Habsburg Empire in 1917.

With the outcome of the war hanging in the air, the Yugoslav deputies in the Vienna Reichsrat and the Zagreb Sabor played a two-sided game by letting their loyalty be bargained. To maximize the possible political gains and to put pressure on the Habsburgs, they maintained contacts with the Yugoslav Committee, while they were also eager to profess their loyalty to Charles, the new Emperor-King, with the hope that the sovereign would proclaim a trialist rearrangement. For this reason, on

⁸⁴ Pavlowitch 2003, *op. cit.*, 32.

⁸⁵ „[...] ujedinjenje svih zemalja u monarhiji, u kojima žive Slovenci, Hrvati i Srbi [...]” Qtd. Ferdo Šišić (ed.): *Dokumenti o postanku Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, 1914–1918*. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatske, 1920, 94.

⁸⁶ Ćirković 2004, *op. cit.*, 250.

⁸⁷ Banac 1984, *op. cit.*, 125.

⁸⁸ Mason, John W.: *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1867–1918*. London and New York: Longman, 1997, 85.

30 May 1917 thirty-three Yugoslav deputies in the Reichsrat formed the Yugoslav Club under the Slovene leadership of Anton Korošec who read out the May Declaration, a brief but far-reaching manifesto asking Charles for the unification of Habsburg Yugoslav territories in a third sub-state.⁸⁹

Undoubtedly, the declaration movement's agenda clashed with the aims of both the Serbian Cabinet and the Yugoslav Committee, as the document requested a dynastic solution for the Southern Slav question. Moreover, the manifesto did not mention union with Serbia but explicitly stated that the Habsburg Yugoslavs had wished to remain under the aegis of the Habsburg dynasty.⁹⁰ In effect, the May Declaration was a result of a compromise between the Croatian Party of Right and the Yugoslav deputies in the Reichsrat, merging the Croatian aspirations with the civic nationalism of Slovenes and Dalmatian Yugoslavs to claim Trialism jointly on the basis of Croatian historic state right. The positive response to the May Declaration amongst the Habsburg Yugoslav public encouraged the Yugoslav parties – with the exception the Croato-Serbian Coalition⁹¹ – into a loose but broad cooperation,⁹² which would prove significant during the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire in the autumn of 1918.

Realising that it had been essential to work out his disagreements with the Yugoslav Committee, in early May 1917 Pašić invited Ante Trumbić and other members of the organization⁹³ to Corfu – where

⁸⁹ Janković 1973, *op. cit.*, 124; Lederer 1963, *op. cit.*, 25.

⁹⁰ Pavlowitch 1971, *op. cit.*, 99, 106; Pavlowitch, Kosta Stevan: *Serbia: The History Behind the Name*. London: Hurst, 2002, 51; Tanner 1997, *op. cit.*, 117.

⁹¹ Under the leadership of the Serbian Pribičević, the CSC still enjoyed patronage of Hungary as the new *Magyarons*. At the same time, Pribičević did not wish to collide with Pašić, thus the CSC would remain uninvolved in the declaration movement until the collapse of the Monarchy (Mitrović, Andrej: *Serbia's Great War, 1914–1918*. London: Hurst, 2007, 301).

⁹² Mitrović 2007, *op. cit.*, 299–300, 302–303.

⁹³ To neutralize the overrepresented Dalmatian Croats, Pašić requested the Committee's delegation to be composed of a Croatian member from Dalmatia and Croatia-Slavonia, a Slovenian and a Bosnian Serb representative. The delegation which left for Corfu constituted of Ante Trumbić, Hinko Hinković, Bogumil Vošnjak and Dušan Vasiljević, while the Serbian opposition parties were also given the

the Serbian government-in-exile had been operating ever since the occupation of Serbia – with the intention of preparing and propagating a joint political programme for the Western Allied Powers. As the political activity of the Habsburg Yugoslavs had proven that they could speak for themselves, and given the ineffective nature of the Yugoslav Committee, Trumbić was more than ready to accept the invitation as the conference provided an opportunity for the organization to become visible and active again in Southern Slav matters.⁹⁴

Profound disagreements on the internal structure of the future state considerably complicated the negotiations. Nevertheless, following a two-week long discussion the inter-Yugoslav conference eventually released the so-called Corfu Declaration on 20 June 1917. The Declaration answered most of the major questions about unification, and clarified in its preamble that the Serbs and the Habsburg Yugoslavs constituted a single nation which proclaimed its determination to form a common state under the rule of the Karađorđević dynasty, by exercising its right of national self-determination. Besides these two fundamental principles, the document emphasized that Yugoslavia would be realized through the unification of the Habsburg Yugoslav territories with Serbia, and not by their annexation by Serbia.⁹⁵ As the name „Yugoslavia” was regarded a pan-Croat „contrivance” aimed against the Serbian identity and statehood, the Serbian politicians advocated for „the nation with three names” formula,⁹⁶ insisting on using the term „Serb, Croat, and Slovene” in the text as the acceptable alternative. As this terminology included the „Serbian” name, yet indicated that the new state would be different from the mere extension of Serbia,⁹⁷ the wording satisfied both Pašić and Trumbić.

The Corfu Declaration was a compromise made between Pašić and Trumbić under the pressure of many circumstances. It did not

opportunity to represent themselves with a delegate during the conference (Janković 1973, *op. cit.*, 189, 192, 200, 202).

⁹⁴ Evans 2008, *op. cit.*, 279; Lederer 1963, *op. cit.*, 25.

⁹⁵ Janković 1973, *op. cit.*, 196–197, 228; Sotirović 2014, *op. cit.*, 31.

⁹⁶ Mitrović 2007, *op. cit.*, 280; Sotirović 2014, *op. cit.*, 25.

⁹⁷ Zlatar 1997, *op. cit.*, 396.

eliminate the federalist-centralist dispute between the respective parties, but postponed a final decision to the future.⁹⁸ While the Yugoslav exiles treated the Declaration as an official agreement framing the constitutional foundations of the future state, the Serbian Cabinet regarded the document as a mere declaration on Yugoslav solidarity by expressing the principles of cooperation. Subsequently, proclaiming that the Habsburg Yugoslavs would unite with Serbia under the Serbian Crown, the Corfu Declaration was Pašić's answer for the May Declaration and any other concepts which envisioned that the Habsburg Slavs could have remained within the Habsburg Empire. As Pašić had never officially acknowledged the Yugoslav Committee as the representatives of the Habsburg Yugoslavs, or as the equal partner of the Serbian Cabinet, in his reading the Declaration was by no means a legal agreement binding Serbia to share the leadership in the creation of Yugoslavia.⁹⁹

In reality, the Corfu agreement was the only lasting achievement of the Yugoslav Committee, whose members had become more divided on political visions than ever before by 1917 due to the surfacing of regional and ethnic differences.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the Yugoslav Committee could neither attract the Habsburg Yugoslavs nor the Allied governments, and indeed, it had no legal status or mandate to act on behalf of the Yugoslavs of the Dual Monarchy for which the May Declaration had been an apparent proof.¹⁰¹

Overall, Yugoslav unification had remained unattainable even by early 1918, as the official war aims of Great Britain and the United States did not include the elimination of Austria-Hungary.¹⁰² In the

⁹⁸ Janković 1973, *op. cit.*, 256–257; Lederer 1963, *op. cit.*, 25–26.

⁹⁹ Bataković 2017, *op. cit.*, 247–248; Lederer 1963, *op. cit.*, 5; Sotirović 2014, *op. cit.*, 29.

¹⁰⁰ Janković 1973, *op. cit.*, 131. Not only did Dalmatian Croats outnumber others, but, indeed, they proved to be the most active members of the organization. As Valjević, one of the Bosnian Serb members of the Committee complained to Jovanović, the Serbian Minister in London in February 1917: “The Dalmatians have their men in Paris, London, Geneva, and they gradually overtake all initiations” (“*Dalmatinci imaju [...] čovjeka u Parizu, Londonu, Ženevi i da polako preuzmu sve poslove*” qtd. *ibid.*, 131–132).

¹⁰¹ Pavlowitch 1971, *op. cit.*, 99.

¹⁰² Mitrović 2007, *op. cit.*, 279–280.

belief that the aspirations of Habsburg nationalities could have been satisfied within a federalized Habsburg Monarchy,¹⁰³ the dissolution of the Empire had been altogether dismissed. Consequently, the Western Allies proposed to keep the integrity of the Empire almost intact, albeit that in the course of secret peace talks a number of plans were outlined for the conversion of the Danubian Monarchy into a federal state of five units, each being granted the same rights that Austria and Hungary had so far enjoyed. It was believed that such a federalised Empire would follow an anti-German foreign policy and could fulfil its role in the European balance of power. The secret peace talks with the Monarchy revealed the Allies' willingness to accept the Empire as a great power in the post-bellum period, as a counterpoise to German economic and military expansion.¹⁰⁴

Realising that the defeat of Italy would have meant the defeat of Yugoslav aspirations as well,¹⁰⁵ an informal and a preliminary meeting – hosted at Henry Wickham Steed's private house in London – prepared the ground for a joint Italian-Yugoslav agreement subsequently known as the Pact of Rome and concluded at the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities between 8 and 10 April 1918.¹⁰⁶ Although the conference did not possess any official diplomatic status, it managed to bind together the Habsburg nationalities under the patronage of the Italian Cabinet, to realise their liberation through a joint struggle against a common oppressor. A joint resolution was passed emphasising that as the Habsburg Monarchy had transformed into „the instrument of

¹⁰³ Mason 1997, *op. cit.*, 81.

¹⁰⁴ Arday Lajos: *Térkép, csata után*. Budapest: Magvető, 1990, 12, 15; Arday Lajos: Economics Versus Nationality. British Plans for Re-Shaping East-Central Europe in 1917–1919. In: Kapronczay Károly (ed.): *Az Egyesült Királyság és Magyarország*. Budapest: Mundus, 2005, 466; Hanak, Harry: The Government, the Foreign Office and Austria–Hungary, 1914–1918. In *The Slavonic Review* 47(108), 184; Mitrović, Andrej: The Yugoslav Question, the First World War and the Peace Conference, 1914–20. In: Djokić, Dejan (ed.): *Yugoslavism. Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918–1992*. London: Hurst, 2003, 48–49.

¹⁰⁵ Masaryk 1969, *op. cit.*, 227.

¹⁰⁶ Lederer 1963, *op. cit.*, 28–29.

Germanic domination,"¹⁰⁷ the nationalities of the Empire joined forces to achieve full political and economic independence with the creation of their own states.¹⁰⁸

Overall, the declaration marked a resting point in the Italian-Yugoslav hostilities, and it awarded Italy with the moral obligation to patronise the Habsburg nationalities' aspirations. In effect, the conference coincided with the shift in British policy concerning the fate of the Habsburg Empire, and would be instrumental in a five-month long anti-Habsburg propaganda campaign targeting the Habsburg army divisions on the Italian Front.¹⁰⁹ However, as the end of the Great War approached, it would be revealed that Italy was not only against any forms of Yugoslav unification but intended to extend its territorial gains beyond the lines of the Treaty of London.

The last year of the Great War created the conditions which eventually enabled the formation of a united Southern Slav state. Among these conditions the collapse of the Habsburg Empire¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Qtd. Albrecht-Carrié, René: *Italy at the Peace Conference*. New York: Columbia U P, 1938, 347.

¹⁰⁸ Lederer 1963, *op. cit.*, 30; Masaryk 1969, *op. cit.*, 226–227.

¹⁰⁹ Cornwall, Mark: *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary: The Battle of Hearts and Minds*. London: Macmillan, 2000, 178; Seton-Watson, Christopher: *Introduction to R. W. Seton-Watson and His Relations with the Czechs and Slovaks*. vol 1. n/a: Matica Slovenska, 1995, 28; Jeszenszky Géza: A történelmi Magyarország sírásója: H. W. Steed. In: Horváth Jenő et al. (eds.): *Emlékirat és történelem*. Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 2012, 32.

¹¹⁰ By 1918, the failure of Emperor Charles and the Austro-Hungarian political elite to satisfy the aspirations of their nationalities by implementing the necessary political and constitutional reforms, along with the social unrest, economic hardship, strikes, desertions, military mutinies and the radicalization of the national movements led to the organic disintegration and the eventual dissolution of the Danubian Empire without any direct involvement on behalf of the Allied Powers. The sudden collapse of Austria-Hungary stimulated a race among the Southern Slavs, Romania and Italy for the division of the Empire in autumn 1918. As all sides strived to realize their most excessive aspirations, the Paris Peace Conference – to be convened in January 1919 – would attest conflicting territorial claims placed on the lands inhabited by Southern Slavs. (Živojinović, Dragan R.: *America, Italy and the Birth of Yugoslavia, 1917–1919*. New York: Boulder, 1972, 150; Beretzky, Ágnes: British Confederation Plans concerning Central and Eastern Europe, 1939–1945. In: Nagypál Szabolcs - Šajda, Peter (eds.): *A Pentatonic Landscape Central Europe, Ecology, Ecumenism*. Budapest: BGÖI & WSCF-CESR, 2002, 35; Beretzky Ágnes: *Scotus Viator és Macartney Elemér: Magyarország-kép*

and the Allied victory were the most significant components which paved the way for the Act of Union between the Habsburg Yugoslav territories and Serbia. However, Allied recognition for the united Southern Slav state would be further complicated by the establishment of the National Council in Zagreb. The unbridgeable discord between Pašić and Trumbić, and the postponement of Allied acknowledgment, triggered the Habsburg Yugoslavs to act independently of the Serbian Cabinet and Yugoslav Committee.¹¹¹ As a result, the delegates of the Croat, Serb and Slovene parties in the disintegrating Habsburg Empire formed their own joint representative body, the National Council of the Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs in Zagreb. The leaders of the Council – Anton Korošec, Ante Pavelić¹¹² and Svetozar Pribičević – terminated all links with Budapest and Vienna, and declared the independence of the lands inhabited by the Habsburg Yugoslavs on 29 October 1918. Filling the gap of power with this act, the interim State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs was created, and its national government entrusted with the task of orchestrating a union with Montenegro and Serbia.¹¹³

The formation of the National Council in Zagreb had transpired in the midst of armistice negotiations, the terms of which outlined the Allied occupation zones in the Southern territories of the dissolving Habsburg Empire. Accepting the Italian position, the Supreme War Council regarded the lands, over which the National Council had claimed sovereignty, as enemy territories to be occupied by one of the Entente Powers according to their mandates. Thus, the State

változó előjelekkel, 1905–1945. Budapest: Akadémia, 2005, 35; Lederer 1963, *op. cit.*, 71.)

¹¹¹ In effect, this development had been in the making ever since the May Declaration of 1917. In the summer of 1918, a number of anti-Habsburg demonstrations took place, and the Croato-Serbian Coalition's popularity increased steadily under the leadership of Pribičević. With the gradual disintegration of the Empire, the CSC started to propagate openly the idea of a common Yugoslav state which had a favourable reception in Dalmatia and among some of the urban intellectuals of Croatia-Slavonia (Lederer 1963, *op. cit.*, 43–44).

¹¹² Not to be confused with the Croatian Fascist Ustaša leader of the same name.

¹¹³ Becherelli, Alberto: The National Question in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes: The Croatian Case. In: *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 2(3), 266; Šepić, Dragovan: The Question of Yugoslav Union in 1918. In: *Journal of Contemporary History* 3(4), 37; Banac 1984, *op. cit.*, 127–128; Djokić 2010, *op. cit.*, 53.

of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs could not be acknowledged as a belligerent Allied state; instead, Great Britain and France expected a joint Serbian-Habsburg Yugoslav government to be formed. However, contrary to their expectation, 1 December 1918 witnessed the sudden and unexpected proclamation of the Yugoslav union, creating a state which lacked an established legal framework to operate and raising the question of whether an entirely new state had emerged or a political-constitutional extension of Serbia had transpired.¹¹⁴

The imperfect territorial solutions resulted in the creation of a multi-ethnic state with twelve million inhabitants among whom circa 13% did not belong to any Southern Slav ethnicities. No resolution had been passed on the future of Fiume, while 700,000 Southern Slavs remained outside the unified state, stimulating discontent among the Croatian and Slovene citizens that their kinsmen had come under Italian rule. Moreover, the manner and implementation of how Montenegro had been unified with Serbia resembled a „Balkan Anschluss“ or an involuntary surrender of statehood and independence. The annexation of the small Balkan state violated both international law – paradoxically allowing a victorious Allied state to lose its independence – and the will of the Montenegrin people who strived for the unification with the Southern Slav world in a federal state. Not only would Montenegro’s political and ecclesiastical absorption into Serbia upset the balance in the Yugoslav Kingdom in favour of the Serbs, but it would also feed Montenegrin national pride and disillusion in the first common state of the Southern Slavs.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Djokić 2010, *op. cit.*, 62; Mitrović 2007, *op. cit.*, 322; Pavlowitch 1971, *op. cit.*, 52; Šepić 1968, *op. cit.*, 29, 37.

¹¹⁵ Evans 2008, *op. cit.*, 121; Morrison, Kenneth: Nationalism, Identity and Statehood in Post-Yugoslav Montenegro. In: *Slavic Review* 78(2), 43, 46; Pavlović, Srdja: *Balkan Anschluss: The Annexation of Montenegro and the Creation of the Common South Slavic State*. West Lafayette: Purdue U P, 2008, 1, 23–24, 145.

4 Conclusions

With the conclusion of the Treaty of Rapallo (1920), the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes received its final borders. Despite the majority of the Yugoslav claims being fulfilled, the first common state of Southern Slavs was an ambiguous achievement characterized by the uneasy union of peoples who had been divided from each other by state or administrative frontiers for centuries, and hardly had anything in common other than the shared language.¹¹⁶ Besides the questionable manner of the proclamation of Montenegrin unification, the united Southern Slavs was the outcome of the voluntary union of the Yugoslav lands with miscellaneous cultural and political traditions. Combining diverging traditions, faiths and historical experience, Yugoslavia resembled the old multi-ethnic empires of Europe with the possibility of becoming a melting pot or the source of increasing disagreements.¹¹⁷ In the long run it would be revealed that a common language was not sufficient to make Yugoslavia a well-functioning state based on popular democracy.¹¹⁸

Altogether, the question of borders and the multi-ethnic nature of the new state would prove to be a considerable challenge for the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes during the interwar period in terms of foreign policy and security,¹¹⁹ which would undermine the integrity of the Yugoslav state. Although the ideals of Southern Slav unification pursued by the Yugoslav idea and championed by its devout British proponents had been eventually realised at the end of the Great War,¹²⁰ the compromises and the constitutional foundations, which the first state of the Yugoslavs was based on, would set in

¹¹⁶ MacMillan 2002, *op. cit.*, 126, 133.

¹¹⁷ Motta, Giuseppe: The Birth of Yugoslavia: A Vision from Italy, 1918-20. In: Srđan Rudić - Antonello Biagini (eds.): *Serbian-Italian Relations: History and Modern Times*. Požega: The Institute of History Belgrade and Sapienza University of Rome, 2015, 142.

¹¹⁸ MacMillan 2002, *op. cit.*, 133

¹¹⁹ Albrecht-Carrié 1938, *op. cit.*, 308; Lederer 1963, *op. cit.*, 117; Mitrović 2007, *op. cit.*, 325-326.

¹²⁰ Šepić 1968, *op. cit.*, 43.

motion ethnic rivalries transpiring into centrist, federalist and secessionist movements. The domestic and foreign policy issues of interwar Yugoslavia resembled the ambiguities and contradictions of the European peace settlement, which instead of establishing a lasting peace fostered enduring hostilities among the European nations. The experience of the first Southern Slav state, together with the legacy of the Second World War, would survive into the post-Cold War era.

The outbreak and the developments of the Great War eventually created the conditions for Yugoslav unification. Nonetheless, the Croatian proponents of Yugoslavism failed to secure any guarantees to prevent the centuries-old Croatian statehood from submerging and disappearing in the unified Southern Slav Kingdom dominated by the Serbian political elite. Bribing the Yugoslav Muslim, Albanian and Turkish deputies with the prospect of political concessions, Pašić managed to secure a majority in the Constituent Assembly to adopt a highly centralising constitution known as the Vidovdan Constitution on 28 June 1921. As a result, based on the dualist experience of federation, the Croatian leaders would persist in practicing a „cunning of bargaining” in the interwar period, to establish an enlarged and strengthened Croatia to counter-balance Serbian political dominance. However, their political aspirations and exceptionalism, relying on and overemphasising Croatian historic rights, fostered disunity, nationalism and separatism among the rest of the Southern Slavs as well.¹²¹

In effect, the discord and disputes among the Yugoslav factions during the Great War transpired into political clashes in interwar Yugoslavia. This confirmed how difficult it had been to resolve the political disagreements originating from the diverging cultural experiences and centuries-long political divisions of the Yugoslav peoples.¹²² Eventually, the history of Yugoslavia proved to be that of

¹²¹ Morrison 2009, *op. cit.*, 49; Pavlowitch 1971, *op. cit.*, 57-58, 109-110.

¹²² Black, Jeremy: *The Great War and the Making of the Modern World*. New York: Continuum, 2011, 243; Mitrović 2007, *op. cit.*, 322, 326. Overall, the uncertainties of the Yugoslav cause, and the Allies' willingness to preserve the Habsburg Empire and to sacrifice Southern Slav territories contributed to friction and factionalism among the Yugoslavs (Šepić 1968, *op. cit.*, 33).

a long and enduring disintegration of a state whose citizens were forced into a common state twice by overwhelmingly international developments and external circumstances. Rather than solving the Southern Slav Question, the dismemberment of the Habsburg Empire and the peace treaties concluding the First World War multiplied the issues of the Yugoslavs, which had still not been entirely resolved at the dawn of the 21th century.

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