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Searching for a Viable Solution
Yugoslav and Czechoslovak Nation-Building Projects in the 1930s[1]

Abstract: This paper examines the policies used by the Yugoslav central government in the Yugoslav nation-building project of the 1930s and draws comparisons with the similar experience of Czechoslovakia. It explores the centralist approaches of both governments, highlighting the rise of Croat and Slovak nationalism during the decade in question by analysing the internal political dynamics of both countries. These two communities were crucial because, unlike numerous national minorities in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, they were considered part of the 'state-nation.' Their integration was essential for the success of the nation-building projects in both countries. External pressure, especially the rise of Nazi Germany, became a crucial factor in the second half of the 1930s and deeply affected the decision-making process in both Belgrade and Prague.

Keywords: Yugoslavism, Czechoslovakism, interwar Yugoslavia, interwar Czechoslovakia, nation-building, 1930s politics

Introduction

> "Some are saying today: look at the example of Czechoslovakia. It is introducing a federation. Yes, it is, but do ask yourselves: when, how and why? Under whose pressure and under what circumstances? When the Czechoslovak Republic was pursuing a policy of forming alliances against Germany, leaning on Soviet Russia, our sages [...] said: 'Look how smart Czechoslovakia is! And we, and Yugoslavia?' Today, those sages are silent on these issues of foreign policy [...] That is why they invented the Czechoslovak Federation as a respectable model. Every man is the architect of his fortune, and every nation controls its destiny. We wish our Czechoslovak brothers the best from the bottom of our hearts, but all I can say now is this: May God spare my country the fate of Czechoslovakia in foreign and domestic politics."[2]

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[2] Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ) [Archives of Yugoslavia], Milan Stojadinović Papers [collection no. 37], 37-2-9, Stojadinović's election campaign speech at a rally in Belgrade, 9 December 1938.

At the beginning of December, when Stojadinović delivered this speech, Czechoslovakia, a Yugoslav ally, had already become a rump state.[3] This transformation occurred after the Munich Agreement, concluded on 30 September 1938 by Germany, Italy, France and the United Kingdom. Germany annexed the borderlands, the so-called Sudetenland and the country was then renamed "the Second Czechoslovak Republic," with the "Autonomous Land of Slovakia" becoming a part of an asymmetrical federation. In November 1938 by the First Vienna Award Hungary annexed parts of southern Slovakia which additionally weakened the Republic.[4]

This paper will focus on the so-called Croatian and Slovakian Questions in the 1930s, in that order. The Yugoslav-Czechoslovak example highlights the interplay between the already existing nationalist movements (for example, the Serbian and Croatian, the Czech and Slovak) with the new state-sponsored projects to (re-)forge a nation.[5] To understand the apparent failure of the interwar Yugoslav nation-building project, I will analyse its crucial aspects and

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[3] On the closeness of the two countries that stemmed from the experience of the Great War: M. Radojević, "Srpsko-češka saradnja u Prvom svetskom ratu", *Studia Balcanica Bohemo-Slavica* 6 (2006), 280–298. See also Lj. Dimić, "Jugoslovensko-čehoslovačke kulturne veze (1918–1938): proklamovano i stvarno". In *Od Moravy k Moravě: Od Morave do Morave* 3, ed. V. Štepanek, L. Hlatki, V. Koprivica (Brno-Novi Sad: Matice moravská, Matica srpska: 2017), 291–308; D. Tasić, "Friends and Foes. Czechs/Slovaks and Serbia during the First World War", *Historický časopis* 68/5 (2020), 797–814. Of course, it helped that the two countries had no territorial disputes, see J. P. Newman, "Volunteer Veterans and Entangled Cultures of Victory in Interwar Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia", *Journal of Contemporary History* 54/4 (2019), 725. The relations grew cold during the second part of the 1930s, see T. Stojkov, "Čehoslovačko-francuska aktivnost protiv M. Stojadinovića (1936–1938)", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 11/1 (1979), 111–207; L. Deak, "Čehoslovačko-jugoslavenski odnosi 1935–1939", *Zbornik Zavoda za povijesne znanosti Istraživačkog centra Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 10 (1980), 111–207.

[4] V. Bystricky, "Slovakia from the Munich Conference to the Declaration of Independence". In *Slovakia in History*, eds. M. Teich, D. Kovač, R. D. Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 160. J. Osterkamp, *Verfassungsgerichtsbarkeit in der Tschechoslowakei (1920–1939). Verfassungsidee–Demokratieverständnis–Nationalitätenproblem* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2009), 226.

[5] On the importance of the Croatian Question for interwar Yugoslavia, see Lj. Boban, *Maček i politika Hrvatske seljačke stranke, 1928–1941: iz povijesti hrvatskog pitanja*, 2 vols (Zagreb, Rijeka: Liber, Otokar Keršovani, 1974); D. Djokić, *Elusive Compromise: a History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst, 2007); M. Radojević, *Udružena opozicija 1935–1939* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1994). For a description of the Czech-Slovak relations during the 1930s as "he central issue in Czechoslovak politics" see Bystricky, "Slovakia", 159. For a different approach, insisting on the German minority question, see O. Vojtěchovský, B. Mosković, J. Pelikán, "Yugoslavism throughout the twentieth century: developments and tendencies". In *Czechoslovakism*, ed. A. Hudek, M. Kopeček and J. Mervart (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 439. In this paper, I

compare it with Czechoslovakism. While both Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia intended to create a new national identity, their political elites were simultaneously trying to homogenise their respective countries, which included numerous national minorities. This paper will emphasise the importance of intertwining different identities: national, regional, and local, each with its own unique political culture and heritage. It examines the official policy of Yugoslavism in the 1930s and the interaction between the "nationalising state" and different regional interests and identities.[6]

The trials and tribulations of a successor state: post-imperial legacies, new legitimacy and (re-)construction of nations

Contrary to the self-proclaimed nation-state ideologies they insisted on, Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (henceforth Kingdom of SCS, and Yugoslavia after 1929) should primarily be analysed as heterogeneous patchworks of several imperial legacies. Yugoslavia incorporated some former Austrian, Hungarian and Ottoman lands, while Czechoslovakia consisted of five regions with distinct administrative, cultural, and political legacies.[7]

After the First World War ended, both countries faced similar circumstances and enacted similar policies. As members of the victorious alliance, they saw their territorial aspirations mostly fulfilled. They formed the Little Entente with the Kingdom of Romania to prevent the Habsburg restoration or Hungarian revanchism.[8] The challenge of managing diverse post-imperial legacies, which included numerous national minorities, led to rigid centralisation, land

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will focus on the nation-building process, so the Slovak question will take precedence in the analysis.

[6] R. Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed: nationhood and the national question in the New Europe*. (Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 79; O. Zimmer, *Nationalism in Europe, 1890–1940* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 45–46; P. Troch, *Nationalism and Yugoslavia. Education, Yugoslavism and the Balkans before World War II* (London –New York: I. B. Tauris, 2015), 8–11.

[7] A possible approach is that of composite post-imperial states, see O. J. Schmitt, *Der Balkan Im 20 Jahrhundert: Eine Postimperiale Geschichte* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2019). On " …the relationship between the ideal of a nation-state and the reality of its multiethnic structure" see M. Zückert, "National Concepts of Freedom and Government Pacification Policies. The Case of Czechoslovakia in the Transitional Period after 1918", *Contemporary European History* 17/3 (2008), 325; Troch, *Nationalism*, 4–5; M. Filipová, "'Highly Civilized, yet Very Simple': Images of the Czechoslovak State and Nation at Interwar World's Fairs", *Nationalities Papers* 50/1 (2022), 148.

[8] Czechoslovakia was seen as the most reliable of the three, at least by the British Foreign Office and that reputation mostly rested on their trust in Tomáš Masaryk and Edvard Beneš; see D. Bakić, *Britain and Interwar Danubian Europe. Foreign Policy and Security Challenges, 1919–1936* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 72.

reform (which also served as a nation-building measure due to the changing status of former landowner elites), and expanded suffrage.[9] These measures aimed to create more homogeneous states but also changed the power relations from the local level to the top in the new structure.[10]

Beyond ideologies, the Kingdom of SCS and Czechoslovakia emerged out of security and geopolitical needs. The Serbian government saw maximal borders as crucial for the survival of the state, especially amidst Italian claims on the Eastern Adriatic.[11] The birth of Czechoslovakia and its borders were facilitated by the triumvirate of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Edvard Beneš, and Milan Rastislav Štefánik, with diplomatic successes and occasional military offensives, especially concerning the Slovakian-Hungarian border settlement in June 1920.[12] The concept of the Czechoslovak nation proclaimed in the country's Constitution (1921) and the "three-named nation of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes" served as the legitimising principles for the new countries.[13] The censuses

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[9] Universal male suffrage in the case of Yugoslavia, and both female and male in the case of Czechoslovakia. On the Czechoslovak land reform: M. Cornwall, "National reparation? The Czech land reform and the Sudeten Germans 1918–1938", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 75 (1997), 259–280; A. Doležalová, "A stolen revolution. The political economy of the land reform in interwar Czechoslovakia", *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 69/3 (2021), 278–300. For the Yugoslav case, see Z. Janjetović, *Deca careva, pastorčad kraljeva: nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji 1918–1941* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2005).

[10] On the similarities of the state-buildings, K. Boeckh, "Crumbling of Empires and Emerging States: Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia as (Multi)national Countries". In *1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, eds. U. Daniel, P. Gatrell, O. Janz, H. Jones, J. Keene, A. Kramer, and B. Nasson (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014-10-08).

[11] V. G. Pavlović, "Italy and the Creation of Yugoslavia. Delenda Austria". In *Serbia and Italy in the Great War*, ed. V. G. Pavlović (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, 2019), 265; B. Gligorijević, "Jugoslovenstvo izmedju dva rata", *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis* 21 (1986), 72. On the decision of the Serbian government to pursue Yugoslav unification as a war aim see the Niš Declaration of 1914, B. Petranović, M. Zečević, *Jugoslavija 1918–1988. Tematska zbirka dokumenata* (Belgrade: Izdavačka radna organizacija "Rad", 1988), 37.

[12] N. Krajčovičová, "Slovakia in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1938". In *Slovakia in History*, 140–141. On the importance of foreign danger for the founding of both Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of the SCS, see J. Bakić, *Ideologije jugoslovenstva izmedju srpskog i hrvatskog nacionalizma (1918–1941): sociološko-istorijska studija* (Zrenjanin: Gradska narodna biblioteka "Žarko Zrenjanin", 2004), 82.

[13] Czechs and Slovaks were dubbed as two peoples of one nation by President Masaryk, two stocks by Ľudovít Medvecký or two branches by Ivan Dérer, a Slovak politician that was certainly the most "Czechoslovak-minded" politician in the interwar state see A. Maxwell, *Choosing Slovakia: Slavic Hungary, the Czechoslovak Language and Accidental Nationalism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 170. On Dérer see R. Árpáš, M. Havula, "The

conducted in 1921 aimed to portray Czechoslovaks and the "state nation" of the Kingdom of SCS as the dominant ethnic groups and to obscure existing ethnic diversity.[14] Taken together, the Czechoslovaks, the *štátotvorné* nation, came to around 65% of the population, although the Germans outnumbered the Slovaks and were the second largest ethnic group in the country while officially being a minority.[15] In the Kingdom of SCS, after including all of the South Slav communities into the "state nation", this group accounted for over 80% of the population.

The next move on the agenda was language politics. Both countries proclaimed shared languages called "československý" and "srpsko-hrvatsko-slovenački" to underline the homogeneity of the population. The following decades did not bring about the realisation of the proclaimed goals. In Czechoslovakia, Czech, Slovak, and other regional languages were used in practice, so a unified education system was never truly established.[16] Equally, before 1929 in the Kingdom of SCS, the "education system remained fractured along the pre-First World War borders."[17] Besides re-imagining the past to establish continuity of the newly established states throughout the centuries, both countries had to contend with a certain "nation-building paradox." As an unintended

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positions of major Slovak political movements on the concept of Czechoslovakism during the interwar period". In *Czechoslovakism*, 212–213.

[14] This move was meant to counter the fact that both states were "the only two countries in interwar Europe without a dominant ethnic group representing more than half the population." Serbs accounted for around 40% and Czechs around 46% of the population in their respective countries, S. G. Markovich, "Ethnic and National Minorities in Serbia and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia." In *Minorities in the Balkans. State Policy and Inter-Ethnic Relations (1804–2004)*, ed. D. T. Bataković (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2011), 99. For Czechoslovak example, see J. Rychlík, "Czech-Slovak Relations in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1939". In *Czechoslovakia in a Nationalist and Fascist Europe 1918–1948*, eds. M. Cornwall and R. J. W. Evans, (Oxford: British Academy and Oxford University Press, 2007), 14.

[15] E. Bakke, "The Making of Czechoslovakism in the First Czechoslovak Republic." In *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik, 1918–1938 politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten*. Hrsg. von M. Schulze Wessel (München: Oldenbourg, 1998), 23–25. Masaryk dubbed the Germans "immigrants and colonists", see J. Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the two World Wars* (Seattle – London: University of Washington Press, 1992), 80; M. Heimann, *Czechoslovakia. The State that Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 65.

[16] Krajčovičová, "Slovakia", 142; T. Kamusella, *The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe* (Basingstoke and New York: Routledge, 2009), 738–746.

[17] Lj. Dimić, "Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca (mogućnosti i ograničenja)". In *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara* 2, (Zagreb: Zaklada Friedrich Naumann, 2000), 321; P. Troch. "Yugoslavism between the world wars: indecisive nation building", Nationalities Papers 38/2 (2010), 231.

consequence, the Czechoslovak Republic became a "Slovakising" as much as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was a "Croatising" state. Indecisive policy-making plagued by the consequences of the Great Depression offered the possibilities of mass politics that Slovakian and Croatian nationalists had not had in former Austria-Hungary.[18]

The central governments and Croatian and Slovak Questions in the 1930s

The Croatian and Slovak Questions emerged in the early state-building years, strengthened by the global economic crisis and rising foreign pressure. That led to a radicalisation of the political situation in both countries during the 1930s. In the early 1920s, influential political parties resisted the centralist government in both cases. Despite the fluctuations in their decision-making, it was only after the collapse of the Versailles system that the centralists finally acceded to their demands.[19]

Slovakia's political parties were divided into two major groups. On the one hand, the centralists, dominated by the Agrarian Party and its leaders Vavro Šrobár and Milan Hodža, advocated close ties and participation in the central government, supporting the idea of the Czechoslovak nation. On the other hand, the autonomists were mainly represented by the Slovak People's Party (renamed Hlinka's Slovak People's Party in 1925, henceforth HSSP) led by the Catholic priest Andrej Hlinka.[20] Between 1925 and 1938, these two parties managed to claim the majority of votes in Slovakia. Notably, Milan Hodža was the only Slovak to serve as the country's Prime Minister throughout the entire interwar period.[21] This allowed the central government, dominated by the *pětka* (the five dominant Czech parties), to marginalize the autonomist claims from Slovakia

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[18] Maxwell, *Choosing*, 184. For the importance of the 1930–1945 period for the Croatian nation-building, V. Aralica, *Kmet, fiškal, hajduk. Konstrukcija identiteta Hrvata 1935–1945* (Zagreb: Ljevak, 2016). See also Troch, *Nationalism*, 233–234; D. Nádvorníková, "The idea of Czechoslovakism in Czech history textbooks and civic education textbooks published between 1918–1938." In *Czechoslovakism*, 277–278; Rychlík, "Czech-Slovak Relations", 25.

[19] The main reason for the resistance of the Serbian-dominated parties in Yugoslavia to resist federalism was due to doubts about the feasibility of uniting all Serbs into one territorial unit, see B. Gligorijević, "Unutrašnje (administrativne) granice Jugoslavije izmedju dva svetska rata 1918 – 1941", *Istorija 20. veka* 10/1–2 (1992), 28.

[20] The goal of the Slovakian autonomists was self-government based on the Pittsburg Agreement of 31 August 1918. The document signed by the future president Masaryk and several Czech and Slovak emigrants in the USA predicted the recognition of the Slovak nation and language, judiciary and administrative powers with a separate Slovak Diet see Arpáš, Hanula, "The positions", 226; Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 33–34.

[21] Arpáš, Hanula, "The positions", 209.

and instead offer cabinet positions to the pro-centralist Slovak politicians. From 1918 to 1938, an overwhelming 94% of the most influential posts went to the centralists, leaving the autonomists with only two places.[22] The only exception to this divide was a short-lived coalition between the two sides in the Czechoslovak government from 1927 to 1929. In the 1930s, the Agrarian Party gradually accepted the positions of "regionalism" by conceding some "individualities" to Slovakia.[23]

The leading political organisation among the Croats in interwar Yugoslavia, Stjepan Radić's Croatian Republican Peasant Party, refused to acknowledge the new state until 1925.[24] Then, an agreement was reached between the leading Croatian and Serbian politicians: Stjepan Radić and Nikola Pašić, the president of the ruling Serbian-dominated People's Radical Party. Their joint government, which lasted from 1925 to 1927 and in which Radić's party (now renamed Croatian Peasant Party, henceforth CSS) participated, ultimately failed to achieve political stability in the Kingdom. In 1929, King Alexander I Karadjordjević dissolved the Parliament after Radić was fatally shot in the Parliament by a Serbian representative.[25] As a result, the King abolished the Constitution and assumed dictatorial powers. The proclamation of integral Yugoslavism aimed to erase all tribal, regional, religious, and cultural differences, with the country renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.[26] The previously "tripartite" nation of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, enshrined in the Kingdom's old name, was no more. Between 6 January and 3 October 3 1929, the internal organisation of the country changed,

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[22] C. Skalnik Leff, "Inevitability, Probability, Possibility: The Legacies of the Czech-Slovak Relationship, 1918–1989, and the Disintegration of the State". In *Irreconcilable Differences? Explaining Czechoslovakia's Dissolution*, eds. Michael Kraus and Alison Stanger (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 32–34. On the *pětka* system see A. Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 57–59; M. Kopeček, "Czechoslovak interwar democracy and its critical introspections", *Journal of Modern European History* 17/1 (2019), 7–15.

[23] C. Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918–1987* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 54.

[24] M. Biondich, *Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization, 1904–1928* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 201–203.

[25] In this paper I deal with the relations between the central government and the CPP; for an analysis of the extreme right-wing Croatian interwar political organisation, the *ustaša* movement see D. Bakić, "Milan Stojadinović, the Croat Question and the International Position of Yugoslavia, 1935–1939", *Acta Histriae* 26/1 (2018), 209–210, 218.

[26] The term tribal encompassed identities as being more than a region and less than a nation, Troch, *Nationalism*, 10.

leading to the creation of new regional units called *banovina*, and named after geographical toponyms.[27]

Two years later, the Yugoslav sovereign granted his country an "Octroyed Constitution." King Alexander restored limited parliamentary rule, but it applied only to pan-Yugoslav organisations, with the King retaining a dominant position in the governance. Following the elections, the King established a political organisation called the Yugoslav National Party, whose membership included selected deputies. The party's program emphasised that the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were all part of one Yugoslav nation, sharing a common origin, language and historical fate and experience. In the subsequent years, members of the party embarked on a countrywide tour to promote Yugoslavism.[28]

The Croatian political elites, led by the CPP, responded to the Yugoslav arrangement proposed by the King with what became known as the "Zagreb Points" on 7 November 1932. In their response, they accused the authorities of promoting "Serbian hegemony" and criticised centralism and so-called constitutionalism. Instead, they demanded a return to the situation of 1918 and called for the federalisation of the country.[29] This stance was part of the broader process, especially prominent during the period from 1928 to 1939, where the Croatian opposition viewed themselves as members of a minority rather than as part of the state nation. This perception was likened to the situation of the Slovaks.[30]

The Slovak autonomists, led by Andrej Hlinka, also sought to establish a dual federation, and they took a step forward towards this goal by initiating a

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[27] C. A. Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs. Identity in King Aleksandar's Yugoslavia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 77–78; D. Djokić, "(Dis)integrating Yugoslavia: King Alexander and Interwar Yugoslavism", in *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918–1992*, ed. Dejan Djokić (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2003), 148. Only after 1929 did Yugoslavia get new school curricula, accompanied by an increase of the education budgets, but those trends were thwarted by the Great Depression, see Troch, *Nationalism*, 47; Lj. Dimić, *Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1918*, vol. 1 (Beograd: Stubovi kulture, 1996), 108–109.

[28] I. Dobrivojević, *Državna represija u doba kralja Aleksandra 1929–1935* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2006), 133. Although after 1931 Yugoslavism increasingly started to be seen as an evolutionary process, Lj. Dimić, *Kulturna*, 287–288. Integral Yugoslavism, although imposed by the King, also had numerous willing supporters among Serbian and Croatian scientists and intellectuals. see M. Janićijević, *Stvaralačka inteligencija medjuratne Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Institut društvenih nauka, 1984), 127–130.

[29] Lj. Boban, "Geneza, značenje i odjek zagrebačkih punktacija", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 3/1 (1971), 153–209. For the text of the Zagreb Points see Petranović, Zečević, *Jugoslavija*, 335–336. The Zagreb points inspired numerous other political organisations in the country, including the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation and Slovenian People's Party, to devise their own "points", Radojević, *Udružena*, 27–34.

[30] Markovich, "Ethnic", 100.

regional reform, which was approved by the Parliament on 14 July 1927.[31] After the reform, the county system established in 1920 was abolished and replaced by four provinces: Bohemia (Czech Lands), Moravia-Silesia, Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. This reform served a dual purpose: for the first time, Slovakia was recognised as "a single administrative unit" and by combining Silesia with Moravia, the government aimed to "prevent political dominance by the Germans in any of the units".[32] For the HSPP, this law was of particular interest because it aimed to preserve and enhance "Slovak individuality" but Hlinka found the rights granted to the new *Slovenská krajina* to be insufficient and described them as a mere "glint of autonomy."[33] "Do not imagine that this is the autonomy of the Slovak region, do not believe that the Slovak question is hereby solved, do not expect that we will be satisfied with this. As we grow, we will demand more rights, more power to our Slovak *krajina*".[34]

Even though the 1929 elections showed that the majority of the Slovakia's electorate voted for parties with autonomist aspirations in their programs, they were too different to form a united front. Conservative and clerical HSPP did not share a common ground with the Communist Party or the Hungarian Christian Social Party.[35] The Prague government remained unyielding, and the next HSPP request for autonomy came in May 1930 but did not succeed.[36] In response to the social and economic challenges the Czechoslovak government tried to strengthen its centralist powers. This move resulted in the formation of the Autonomist Bloc in 1932, which was dominated by the two Slovak parties, namely the HSPP and the Slovak National Party.[37]

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[31] Bakke, "The Making", 23–24.

[32] E. Bakke, *Doomed to failure? The Czechoslovak nation project and the Slovak autonomist reaction 1918–1938* (Oslo: Department of Political Science, 1998), 454. On the reform, also see Rothschild, *East*, 113–114; Rychlík, "Czech-Slovak Relations", 20.

[33] J. R. Felak, *At the Price of the Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party 1929–1938* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 35.

[34] Quote from the speech of Ferdiš Juriga, Slovak member of Parliament on 27 June 1927, Bakke, *Doomed*, 454.

[35] Felak, *At the Price*, 59–61.

[36] Krajčovičová, "Slovakia", 147. There were two additional requests in 1922 and 1938, Bakke, *Doomed*, 466–473.

[37] Krajčovičová, "Slovakia", 153. The Autonomist Bloc rejected the existence of the Czechoslovak nation, Arpáš, Hanula, "The positions", 222. As Jan Rychlík concludes: "At the end of the twenties it was already obvious that Masaryk's idea of the Czechoslovak nation was dead. From this point of view the most significant event was the congress of the young Slovak generation in Trenčianske Teplice (25–26 June 1932) where the idea itself was condemned by the youth representatives of all releveant political forces in Slovakia", in: Rychlík, "Czech-Slovak Relations", 22.

The reorganisations of both Czechoslovakia (1927) and Yugoslavia (1929) marked a unique approach taken by the two countries. While Yugoslavia's reorganisation was more far-reaching and significant in terms of the depth of the changes, both countries sought to find a new basis for their governance. After years of trying to maintain the system established after 1918, the search for a new solution started. Despite their different contexts, both countries decided to strengthen their central governments. As a result of this policy, the Croat and Slovak opposition reacted by 1932, demanding changes and advocating for federalisation. They eventually went down this path at the end of the 1930s, prompted by a radical shift in the international situation. In Yugoslavia, despite strong opposition from different sides of the ideological spectrum, Alexander I held on to integral Yugoslavism until his assassination in Marseille (1934). Following his death, his underage son, Peter II, inherited the throne, under the guidance of a Regency Council in which the late King's cousin, Prince Paul, had a dominant role.

The implementation of integral Yugoslavism struggled due to economic difficulties, and the entire first decade of the state's existence passed without a designed cultural policy.[38] During the 1930s, integral Yugoslavism transformed and became associated with the monarch's dictatorial powers and the abolition of political parties while the Croatian movement grew more radical, viewing Yugoslavism as a cover for "Serbian hegemony". On the other hand, the intellectual elites of the pre-war Kingdom of Serbia, in their struggle for the restoration of political freedoms, gradually distanced themselves from the Yugoslav idea. Despite this shift, integral Yugoslavism remained popular primarily among Serbian elites in regions such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dalmatia, and Vojvodina. They feared that the country might be divided, and Croatia could secede.[39]

By early 1935, the ruling party was facing strong opposition, and the regime's increasing repression sparked violent responses from opposition parties. As the government became more authoritarian under pressure from various sides, the May 1935 elections turned into terror on both sides. Prince Paul continued the Crown's dominance over the elected government and removed Jevtić from power. Milan Stojadinović, the former Minister of Finance, founded a new political organisation called the Yugoslav Radical Union (YRU). The formation of the YRU marked a shift in the policy of Yugoslavism. It emerged through the fusion of one faction of the Serbian-dominated People's Radical Party (PRP), the Slovene People's Party, and the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation. The latter

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[38] Dimić, *Kulturna*, 167.

[39] Janićijević, *Stvaralačka*, 127–128. It is also important to underline that it is implausible to argue that integral Yugoslavism "came too late" or that it was doomed from the very start because the King's untimely death ended it after just five years, B. Jezernik, *Jugoslavija, zemlja snova* (Belgrade: Istorija XX veka, 2018), 225 – 226.

two parties represented most Slovenes and Bosnian Herzegovinian Muslims, respectively. Despite forming a new organisation, none of these parties lost their local distinctive features, and the YRU was essentially a coalition. The YRU did not seek to dismantle the old parties but aimed to politically isolate the CPP and compel its President, Vladko Maček, to cooperate.[40]

The manifesto of the YRU emphasised the importance of unity within the state and among the people, while also supporting the monarchy and dynasty. However, it also called for "respect for the three names of our people," acknowledging the distinct identities of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes within the Yugoslav nation. With the support of Prince Paul, Stojadinović revisited the concept of the three-named people, hinting at the possibility of self-government to accommodate certain regional traditions.[41] This new concept was referred to as "real Yugoslavism.". In his speech at the first YRU National Convention, Stojadinović expounded on his views on the state's organisation and national policy: "There has been a major misunderstanding in our public life for 18 years. We have always been for the broadest self-government. Others sought autonomy and others still a federation… We believe that the most important content and range of competencies is what is advisable for individual administrative units… We are in favour of respecting the three names of our people: Serb, Croat and Slovene. We are for respect of their equality and their traditions… for leaving certain administrative areas to regulate their needs: administrative, economic, financial, cultural and others… and in a way that this rearrangement would not be at odds with the state, its goals and needs."[42]

Stojadinović's focus on the "content and range" of future self-government is crucial for understanding "real Yugoslavism." This concept was built on a direct agreement between the central government, represented by the Prime Minister with the support of the Prince Regent, and regional political leaders. These regional leaders, who wielded significant influence in their respective areas, would also have considerable sway at the state level. The key principle of "real Yugoslavism" was to maintain the Constitution of 1931 without territorialising any tribal identity, as this could potentially lead to the federalisation of the country. It also meant a more flexible understanding of the "three tribes" idea, contrary to the official public discourse. This flexibility allowed for a more pragmatic approach

[40] T. Stojkov, *Opozicija u vreme šestojanuarske diktature 1929–1935* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1969), 320; T. Stojkov, *Vlada Milana Stojadinovića 1935–1937* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1985), 54–55.

[41] AJ, 37–1–4, Declaration of Stojadinović, Korošec and Spaho.

[42] *Rad prve zemaljske skupštine Jugoslovenske radikalne zajednice, održane 1 i 2 juna 1936. u Beogradu* (Beograd: izdanje Samouprave, 1936), 15.

to managing regional differences and political alliances, which became evident in practice.[43]

These claims were not merely a façade for abandoning integral Yugoslavism; they represented an unofficial form of "home rule" for certain regions of the country. Stojadinović, along with his party's vice presidents, Anton Korošec and Mehmed Spaho, played pivotal roles in establishing this system. Korošec and Spaho were leading politicians among the Slovenes and Bosnian Muslims, respectively. They served as vice presidents of the YRU, ministers in the Yugoslav government, and leaders of their respective regional parties. This approach led to the creation of a power network where central state policies intertwined with regional ones, establishing a local balance of influences. It also connected local actors to the interests of the broader Yugoslav state.[44] Stojadinović and Prince Paul hoped that the CPP could also find this solution acceptable.

Besides this change, Stojadinović also believed that a successful foreign policy was essential for addressing internal issues. He was aware of the increasing influence of Germany and Italy in the region. He anticipated that, after the inevitable annexation of Austria to Germany, Czechoslovakia would be left vulnerable and isolated if Hitler decided to launch an attack.[45] Stojadinović's analysis and approach to foreign policy proved to be correct when Czechoslovakia faced the above-described situation in September 1938. During that time, the country found itself at the mercy of Germany's ambitions. "A successor state that sprang from the peace settlement in Paris, riddled with nationalities conflict and dismembered along ethnic lines through an orchestrated combination of foreign

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[43] The YRU government also exhibited a more liberal approach by not strictly enforcing King Alexander's laws, see B. Simić, *Propaganda Milana Stojadinovića* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2007), 38–39.

[44] For this argument in the region of former Bosnia and Herzegovina, see for example, AJ, 37-48-310, Lukić to Stojadinović, 3 November 1935; AJ, 37-51-315, Kujundžić to Stojadinović, 16 November 1935; AJ, 37-48-310, Lukić to Stojadinović, Korošec, Spaho, 6 October 1936; AJ, 37-48-310, Lukić to Stojadinović, 12 January 1937; AJ, 37-44-295, Spaho to Stojadinović, 26 February 1936; AJ, 37-44-295, Spaho to Stojadinović, late 1937; AJ, 37-44-295, Spaho to Stojadinović, 1 May 1938. For the application in the "Slovenian lands" see AJ, 37-46-299, Korošec to Stojadinović, 6 July 1936; AJ, 37-48-309, Natlačen to Stošović, 20 February 1936; AJ, 37-46-299, Korošec to Stojadinović, 19 February 1937. See detailed analysis in D. Fundić, "'Being capable or incapable of governing a great Yugoslavia': The Serbian Right Wing and the Ideologies of Yugoslavism (1934–1941)". In *The Serbian Right-Wing Parties and Intellectuals in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1934–1941*, ed. D. Bakić (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2022), 295–302.

[45] D. Bakić, "A Makeshift Party: Conservative JRZ under Milan Stojadinović". In *The Serbian Right-Wing Parties*, 49–50.

interference and domestic subversion, was a pattern to which Yugoslavia could fit all too easily."[46]

Despite several meetings and contacts via confidants, both Prime Minister Stojadinović and the Croatian leader Maček remained firmly entrenched in their initial positions. Stojadinović persisted in a "political war of attrition," attempting to wear down the CPP and politically isolate them. On the other hand, Maček adopted a stance of passive resistance, refusing to compromise on his demands.[47] In August 1938, Maček visited Belgrade, where he received an enthusiastic welcome as the leader of the all-Yugoslav democratic opposition. This visit and the support he garnered convinced Prince Paul himself that it was necessary to reaffirm the state policy in the upcoming elections.[48]

The "Czechoslovak foreshadowing" and the Cvetković-Maček Agreement of 1939

The First Czechoslovak Republic initially had relatively stable internal relations compared to the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia. However, the situation began to deteriorate in the 1930s due to external pressures and the growing German influence in Central Europe.[49] In the elections of May 1935, Konrad Heinlein's movement achieved a convincing victory, winning two-thirds of the German vote. With the support of Nazi Germany and its changing foreign policy, the position of the German minority in Czechoslovakia became extremely challenging for the Czechoslovak authorities.

The HSSP refused to cooperate with minority parties that could pose a threat to the Czechoslovak state. The party believed that the idea of a Czechoslovak nation was unacceptable, but it was necessary to safeguard the concept of the Slovak nation as state-forming, especially to assert dominance in Slovakia, primarily against the Hungarian national minority. In the words of the party's executive committee on 17 February 1938, the HSSP "rejects most decidedly the qualification of Slovaks as a national minority of the Republic. We are not a national minority but a state-forming, distinct, Slovak nation!"[50] During the second half of the 1930s, the centralist and autonomist blocs in Czechoslovakia gained equal support, but the autonomist bloc gradually grew in strength as the political climate became more polarised and influenced by external actors.[51]

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[46] D. Bakić, "Milan Stojadinović", 219.

[47] *Ibid.*, 210–212.

[48] Lj. Boban, *Sporazum Cvetković-Maček* (Belgrade: Institut društvenih nauka, 1965), 46.

[49] Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict*, 63.

[50] Felak, *At the Price*, 182–183.

[51] *Ibid.*, 187–188.

In the summer of 1938, Hlinka's party made another attempt to push for autonomy. On 5 June, Hlinka proposed the introduction of the Slovakian Diet, the recognition of the separate Slovak nation and Slovak language as official in the country's administrative and legislative framework. However, Edvard Beneš, President of Czechoslovakia, did not respond to these demands until the Sudeten Crisis on 22 September.[52] Beneš offered several concessions to appease Slovak autonomists. Beneš offered economic subsidies to equalise the development between the Czech Lands and Slovakia, implementation of changes in state administration to include more Slovakian representatives, and granting the Diet some legislative powers.[53] Despite these concessions, Beneš did not agree to the full recognition of a separate Slovak nation. He maintained the stance that Czechoslovakia should remain a unified nation-state, even with provisions for regional autonomy. After his resignation, Beneš likened the situation to having "two revolvers" threatening Czechoslovakia's stability and unity. One revolver was the German minority led by Heinlein, which was pushing for the Sudetenland's annexation to Germany, and the other was the Slovak autonomists.[54]

The day after Beneš resigned and was replaced by Emil Hácha, the leading Slovak parties, except for the Social Democrats and Communists, signed the Žilina Agreement on 6 October 1938, declaring autonomy. Prague accepted, and by the end of November 1938, "The Constitutional Act on the Autonomy of Slovakia" was passed. The state became an "asymmetrical federal state: the Czecho-Slovak Republic."[55] The short-lived Republic, which fell to the German invasion in March 1939, also became increasingly authoritarian.[56] By accepting Slovakia's self-government, the Czechoslovak centralists aimed to create a unified front while it is safe to say that the Slovak autonomists would have had no chance of success without the Munich Agreement.[57]

The events in Czechoslovakia foreshadowed those in Yugoslavia, drawing attention to the Croatian question and sparking comparisons between the internal organisations of the two countries. The collapse of the "centralist constitution" in Czechoslovakia presented an opportunity for the federalisation of the

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[52] After the death of Masaryk, Beneš was the leading politician and, in the summer of 1938, the sole decision maker in the country, I. Lukes, *Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler: The Diplomacy of Edvard Beneš in the 1930s* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[53] On the importance of German pressure on the Beneš's decision-making, see Rychlík, "Czech-Slovak Relations", 22–23; Krajčovičová, "Slovakia", 155–156.

[54] M. Hauner, "'We Must Push Eastwards!' and Dilemmas of President Beneš after Munich", *Journal of Contemporary History* 44/4 (2009), 623.

[55] Bystricky, "Slovakia", 160.

[56] Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 87.

[57] Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict*, 83; Felak, *At the Price*, 208–209.

country. This development served as an encouragement for those in Yugoslavia who sought a similar federal arrangement, particularly the CPP leadership.[58] In the leading Croatian party's paper, a direct comparison was drawn between the situations in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia: "If Belgrade does not approach the solution of the Croatian question based on the demands of the Croatian people and meet them in their entirety and completely, it will satisfy them under the pressure of external events under much more difficult conditions and circumstances."[59]

The showdown between Stojadinović and Maček during the general elections in December 1938 was a critical test for the concept of real Yugoslavism. The government's list emerged victorious in the elections, but the results were not as convincing as Prince Paul would have liked. Stojadinović blamed Interior Minister Anton Korošec for the elections' less successful outcome, accusing him of allowing the opposition to carry out acts of terror against voters in Croatia without sufficient intervention. After the elections, the government was restructured, and Korošec was appointed President of the Senate of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Despite the reshuffling, the dissolution of the YRU was not seen as beneficial to any party involved. It became evident that Prince Paul had abandoned Stojadinović and started negotiations with the CPP through Minister Dragiša Cvetković. The CPP's passive resistance and rejection of offers to join the YRU government undermined Stojadinović's efforts to implement real Yugoslavism successfully.

After Prince Paul removed Stojadinović from power, Dragiša Cvetković, the new Prime Minister, received the "Crown's blessing" to form a new YRU government. It became evident that the primary objective of Cvetković's government was to address and resolve the long-standing Croatian issue. In his parliamentary speech on settling the internal situation on 16 February 1939, the new Prime Minister emphasised: "On that path, one of the main issues is undoubtedly the settlement of relations in the views that have existed for twenty years among our Croat brothers on the basic problems of our state policy… the agreement with the Croats brings a solid basis for a new orientation of our domestic policy".[60]

To properly contextualize the policy of Yugoslavism, it is important to note that the Stojadinović government's backtracking to the pre-1929 situation was the same path that his political opponents had chosen to follow. The united

[58] Boban, *Sporazum*, 40.

[59] *Ibid.*, 41. On the stances of the Serbian-dominated parties in the Yugoslav opposition, see M. M. Baltić, "Jugoslovenska gradjanska opozicija i Minhenski sporazum (1938)", *Srpska akademska misao* 4/1 (2019), 7–18.

[60] *Stenografske beleške Narodne Skupštine Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, I redovni sastanak Narodne skupštine Kraljevine Jugoslavije držan 16.februara 1939. godine u Beogradu, 76.

opposition (Democratic Party, PRP, Alliance of Agrarian Workers) reached an agreement with the Peasant-Democratic Coalition, which included CPP and the Independent Democratic Party (where Serbs from the territory of former Austria-Hungary made up the bulk of the membership) in the village of Farkašić (October 1937). They agreed to push for a new constitution, accepting the system of parliamentary monarchy; however, for the future organisation of the country, they believed, it would be necessary to ensure the restoration of political freedoms and democracy with the consent "of the majority of Serbs, the majority of Croats and the majority of Slovenes".[61] The Czechoslovak example affected them too: "The recent tragic turn in the developed Czechoslovak Republic convincingly showed how costly it is for any country if it constantly postpones the solutions of its fateful questions, which are related to the internal consolidation of the country... Such is the case with the solution of the Croatian question, the final solution of whichhas been constantly postponed for twenty years now …"[62] The agreement of the opposition forces in Yugoslavia, which can be seen as an imagined democratic form of real Yugoslavism, would crumble, along with its more authoritarian variant, with the agreement of August 1939.

The Cvetković-Maček Agreement marked a significant turning point in the political landscape of Yugoslavia. The agreement was reached just a few days before the German attack on Poland in September 1939, highlighting the importance of international relations for Yugoslavia's internal dynamics. In 1939, YRU propaganda spoke of Yugoslavia "finding its way" and of their new president as the creator of the people's agreement.[63] The Agreement was essentially a compromise between the Crown and CPP leadership. The usual assessment of the agreement is that for the Croatian nationalists, the agreement was "too little, too late," while Serbian nationalists condemned it for weakening the state and endangering their nation's rights, especially as Germany's influence in the region grew.[64]

However, it is important to note that the Croatian-Serbian Coalition continued in the newly established Croatian *banovina*, showing some degree of cooperation between the two sides. Also, there was support for concessions to the Croatian side among most Serbian-dominated parties and movements, but

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[61] Radojević, *Udružena*, 176 – 202.

[62] M. Dimitrijević, *Mi i Hrvati. Hrvatsko pitanje (1914–1939). Sporazum sa Hrvatima* (Beograd: Štamparija Privrednik, 1939), 1.

[63] *Svim sreskim organizacijama Jugoslovenske radikalne zajednice* (Belgrade, 1940), 5–7.

[64] M. Biondich, "The crisis of legitimacy and the rise of the radical Right in interwar Yugoslavia (1918–1941)". In *Conservatives and Right Radicals in Interwar Europe*, ed. Marco Bresciani (London–New York: Routledge, 101).

the issue of borders remained a significant concern.[65] One of the leaders of the Serbian Cultural Club, an organisation that started widespread resistance to the agreement dubbed it "Serbian Munich", alluding to the Czechoslovak case.[66] Consequently, the agreement set aside the question of democracy and the CPP entered the YRU government.[67] When the Croatian *banovina* was established, new questions arose, and the most prominent among them were the Serbian one and the issue of the national territories.[68]

The toppling of Stojadinović's government, in a plot organised by his associates with Prince Paul's support, and the subsequent agreement on the formation of the Banovina of Croatia, led to increased authoritarianism in the country's political life, recalling the similar course of events in the Second Czecho-Slovak Republic.[69] The Regent's personal decision created a new administrative division with much wider powers than the *banovinas* introduced in 1929 had had. The problem was, in fact, the agreement's lack of legitimacy. The Serbian political factors, along with those of the Bosnian Muslims and Slovenians, felt sidelined

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[65] Gligorijević "Jugoslovenstvo", 82; Lj. Dimić, "Srpski kulturni klub i preuredjenje države". In *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara*, ed. I. Graovac (Zagreb, Zaklada Friedrich Naumann, 2000), 361; M. Radojević, "Bosna i Hercegovina u raspravama i državnom uredjenju Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1918 – 1941", *Istorija 20. veka* (1994), 7–41. The Serbian elites started to turn away from Yugoslavism only in the late 1930s, which mirrored the Czech example, where there was "little Czech resistance to Czechoslovak identity", Bakke, "The Making", 32–37.

[66] M. Timotijević, *Dragiša Vasić i srpska nacionalna ideja* (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2019).

[67] D. Djokić, "National Mobilization in the 1930s: The emergence of the 'Serb question' in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia". In *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia. Key Issues and Controversies*, eds. D. Djokić, J. Ker-Lindsay (London: Routledge, 2010), 64. Only a year before, the opposition led by Maček had confirmed its position established in 1937, AJ, Political Parties in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia [collection no. 730], 730-1, Saopštenje sa sastanka Bloka narodnog sporazuma, 15 August 1938. For an example of the Serbian-dominated part of the opposition's disappointment in Maček's decision, see *Kako je došlo do sporazuma? Gledište Narodne radikalne stranke na sadašnju politički situaciju u zemlji* (Beograd, 1940), 13.

[68] That was also the plan of the ruling YRU, for the stances of the leaders of their Serbian and Slovenian branches, Dragiša Cvetković and Miha Krek, see AJ, Central Press Bureau of the Ministerial Council Presidency of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia [collection no. 38], 38-336-484, Rezolucija Jugoslovenske radikalne zajednice, Jugosloven, 9 March 1940. Cvetković called for "the end to the organisation and reordering of all the state's parts and of the state union". On the idea to create the Serbian *banovina* under the name of "Serbian Lands", see M. Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma: dnevničke beleške 1939–1941, londonske beleške 1944–1945* (Novi Sad: Prometej, 1998), 77–79.

[69] For the political radicalisation and elements of fascisation in Yugoslavia, see D. Bakić, "Troubles at Home and Abroad: JRZ under Dragiša Cvetković". In *Serbian Right Wing Parties*, 110–117, 123–145.

in the decision-making process.[70] The agreement's implementation was not seen as final, and there were discussions about referendums and possible changes to internal borders. After two decades of attempts to put Yugoslavism into practice, it became clear that it was now merely an idea of citizenship, and the country's political life began to shift towards a multi-national, asymmetrical federation in practice, if not in name.

Concluding remarks

In the first years of its existence, the new Central European state bore the name "Czecho-Slovakia" (28–30 October 1918–29 February 1920). The hyphen was erased by the 1920 Constitution change, indicating the centralist internal structure of Czechoslovakia. Such a solution lasted until October 1938, when the hyphen was reinstated, with autonomous Slovakia, lasting until the fall of the short-lived Second Czecho-Slovak Republic (6 October 1938–19 March 1939).[71] If we apply the Czecho-Slovak model, we can speak about "the comma" phase of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes 1918–1929 and the idea of a tripartite nation, replaced by integral (1929–1935) and real Yugoslavism until 1939, while the period August 1939–March 1941 with autonomous Croatia resembles The Second Czecho-Slovak Republic. As already explained, the nation-building decisions in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia were decreed by central government edicts after 1929, and that is also true for Czechoslovakia.[72]

Additional parallels emerge when comparing Slovak and Croatian political roles in their respective countries. The Slovak autonomist demands for state reform resembled the former organisation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, except in their imagination, the Czechoslovak president replaced the former Habsburg Emperor and King.[73] Another similarity is the virtually non-existent Serbian resistance to Yugoslavism until the later years of the Kingdom. The Slovak opposition to Czechoslovakism, on the other hand, mirrors the Croatian resistance to Yugoslavia.[74] Slovak elites also could have understood Czechoslovakism as a continuation of "Magyarisation", which could have caused a sense of negative continuity. The same goes for the Croats, who saw the transition as

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[70] During 1939 and 1940, the Bosnian Muslim and Slovenian-dominated parts of the YRU demanded autonomy for the *banovinas* of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia respectively, see AJ, Mihailo Konstantinović Papers [collection no. 845], 845–20, Krek to Konstantinović, 11 October 1939; AJ, 38-337-485, Jugoslovenski list, 1 December 1940.

[71] Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, xv, 70, 87.

[72] Nielsen, *Making*, 7.

[73] Maxwell, *Choosing*, 175.

[74] Bakke, "The Making", 32.

going from one hegemony to another.[75] Just like Yugoslavism, it was already obvious by the mid-1930s that Czechoslovakism was failing. One of the reasons it was not abandoned earlier might be the interdependence between the state and national unity. Official Czechoslovakism helped legitimise Czechoslovakia as a nation-state and make it preferable to the old Austrian "prison of nations". Any change could have led to the country's disintegration.[76]

In the 1930s, the governments of both countries, in searching for internal stability, attempted to politically isolate the Slovakian and Croatian autonomists, in Czechoslovakia's case, by forming coalitions exclusively with pro-centralist Slovak organisations and in Yugoslavia, by organising Serbian, Slovenian and Bosnian Muslim factions of the YRU to bring the leading Croatian politicians into the fold. Both attempts ultimately proved unsuccessful. On the other hand, there must have been a certain "vote of confidence" for the two countries. Two decades in the case of the First Czechoslovak Republic and a little longer for the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was a short amount of time for any nation-building process to take hold, especially amidst severe economic problems.[77] Despite all the political crises, dithering, and failed negotiations, interwar Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia did not disintegrate by themselves while searching for viable solutions, but under severe foreign political and diplomatic pressure or in a war against the Axis.

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[75] C. Skalnik Leff, "Czech and Slovak Nationalism in the Twentieth Century". In *Eastern European Nationalism in the 20th Century*, ed. P. F. Sugar (Lanham: American University Press, 1995), 113–129. The comparative analysis also shows that, no matter the democracy level, the successor states were equally "undermined by legacies of the old regime", A. Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires. Central Europe, the Middle East and Russia, 1914–1923* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 203.

[76] Bakke, "The Making", 43.

[77] Bakke, *Doomed*, 529 – 530. On the economic hardships and their effects on Yugoslav nation-building, Dimić, *Kulturna*, 138–166.

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