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D. NIKOLIĆ, Municipium Aelianum • S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, The Romani Language in the Linguistic Landscape of Serbia. A (non)visible Minority Language • K. POPEK, The Question of Christian Slavic Refugees and the Russian Occupation of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia (1877–1879) • M. VOJINOVIĆ, Breaking the Isolation. Kingdom of Serbia and the Adriatic Railroad 1906–1908 • M. VIDENOVIĆ, The Outbreak of the First Balkan War and the Italo-Turkish Peace Negotiations in Lausanne in 1912 • A. NIKOLIĆ, The Promulgation of the 1910 Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina – the Imperial Framework • D. FUNDIĆ, Searching for the Viable Solution. Yugoslav and Czechoslovak Nation-Building Projects during the 1930s • M. LORENCI, Tribes in Arms. Gjon Marka Gjoni and the Irregular and Paramilitary Volunteer Forces of Northern Albania during the Fascist Occupation (1939–1943) • A. STOJANOVIĆ, A Croatian and Catholic State. The Ustasha Regime and Religious Communities in the Independent State of Croatia • A. EDEMSKIY, “The Chivu Stoica Plan” (September 1957). A Step on the Road to the “Open Balkans” • A. BONIFACIO, “Death to the Slavs!” The Italian-Yugoslav Relations on Mutual Minorities and the Impact of the 1961 Trieste Disorders (1954–1964) ❧

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The origin of the Institute goes back to the Institut des Études balkaniques founded in Belgrade in 1934 as one of a kind in the Balkans. The initiative came from King Alexander I Karadjordjević, while the Institute's scholarly profile was created by Ratko Parežanin and Svetozar Spanačević. The Institute published *Revue internationale des Études balkaniques*, which assembled most prominent European experts on the Balkans in various disciplines. Its work was banned by the Nazi occupation authorities in 1941.

The Institute was not re-established until 1969, under its present-day name and under the auspices of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. It assembled a team of scholars to cover the Balkans from prehistory to the modern age and in a range of different fields of study, such as archaeology, ethnography, anthropology, history, culture, art, literature, law. This multidisciplinary approach remains its long-term orientation.

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

CLASSICAL STUDIES

- Dragana Nikolić*, *Municipium Aelianum* 7

LINGUISTICS

- Svetlana Ćirković*, *The Romani Language in the Linguistic Landscape of Serbia. A (non)visible Minority Language* 21

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

- Krzysztof Popek*, *The Question of Christian Slavic Refugees and the Russian Occupation of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia (1877–1879)* 65
- Miloš Vojinović*, *Breaking the Isolation. Kingdom of Serbia and the Adriatic Railroad 1906–1908* 83
- Milan Videnović*, *The Outbreak of the First Balkan War and the Italo-Turkish Peace Negotiations in Lausanne in 1912* 103
- Anja Nikolić*, *The Promulgation of the 1910 Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina – the Imperial Framework* 129
- Dušan Fundić*, *Searching for the Viable Solution. Yugoslav and Czechoslovak Nation-Building Projects during the 1930s* 151
- Markenc Lorenci*, *Tribes in Arms. Gjon Marka Gjoni and the Irregular and Paramilitary Volunteer Forces of Northern Albania during the Fascist Occupation (1939–1943)* 175
- Aleksandar Stojanović*, *A Croatian and Catholic State. The Ustasha Regime and Religious Communities in the Independent State of Croatia* 193
- Andrey Edemskiy*, *“The Chivu Stoica Plan” (September 1957). A Step on the Road to the “Open Balkans”* 223
- Arrigo Bonifacio*, *“Death to the Slavs!” The Italian-Yugoslav Relations on Mutual Minorities and the Impact of the 1961 Trieste Disorders (1954–1964)* 243

REVIEWS

<i>Petar Josipović</i> : Dubravka Preradović, ed., <i>Ermil i Stratonik. Sveti ranohrišćanski mučenici beogradski</i> [Hermilos and Stratonikos. Early christian martyrs of Belgrade]	277
<i>Ognjen Krešić</i> : Roumen Avramov, Aleksandar Fotić, Elias Kolovos, Phokion P. Kotzageorgis, eds., <i>Monastic Economy across Time. Wealth Management, Patterns, and Trends</i>	282
<i>Radmila Pejić</i> : Dušan Spasojević, <i>Ελλάδα. Ο αγώνας για την ανεξαρτησία, η συγκρότηση του κράτους και η παλιγγενεσία του έθνους</i> [Greece. The War of Independence, the Creation of the State and the Rebirth of the Nation]	288
<i>Dušan Fundić</i> : Paschalis M. Kitromilides, ed., <i>The Greek Revolution in the Age of Revolutions (1776–1848). Reappraisals and Comparisons</i>	290
<i>Bogdan Živković</i> : Luciano Monzali, <i>La diplomazia italiana dal Risorgimento alla Prima Repubblica</i>	293
<i>Nemanja Stanimirović</i> : Slobodan Markovich, ed., <i>Cultural Transfer Europe-Serbia: Methodological Issues and Challenges</i>	295
<i>Anđela Redžić</i> : Mirjana Mirić & Svetlana Ćirković, <i>Gurbetski romski u kontaktu: analiza balkanizama i pozajmljenica iz srpskog jezika</i> [Gurbet Romani in Contact: The Analysis of Balkanisms and Serbian Loanwords]	299
List of reviewers for the journal <i>Balcanica LIV</i> (2023).	303
Instructions for authors	304

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Municipium Aelianum**

Abstract: The paper focuses on the Upper Moesian *municipium Aelianum*, whose existence and location have been long debated. Relatively recently, a new epigraphic attestation of the municipium has been discovered and published, which calls for a reconsideration of all existing data and hypotheses about this little-known Roman town, in order to contribute to the study of the urbanisation in the Roman province of Upper Moesia.

Keywords: municipium Aelianum, Upper Moesia, Hadrian, Roman urbanisation.

Introduction

The existence of the Upper Moesian *municipium Aelianum* was, until recently, attested by a single inscription from another provincial town, Ulpiana. The inscription was erected by *P. Licinius P. f. Pap(iria) Aelianus*, a decurion in the councils of three Roman municipia in the province: Ulpiana, Viminacium, and Aelianum, along with his wife *Ulpia Cassia*. Emil Čerškov discovered the monument in Ulpiana in 1956 and provided only a brief note about it in his book *Romans in Kosovo and Metohija* (Rimljani na Kosovu i Metohiji). The text and the drawing of the inscription were later published by Zef Mirdita, though without a photograph. It is a plaque of white marble in the form of *tabula ansata*, measuring 112 x 50 x 9 cm.

Editions: Čerškov 1956, 86, note 101; Mirdita 1978, 161–166; *AE* 1978, 702; *ILJug* 527. M. Gabričević 1984, 77–80.

P. Licinius P. f. Pap(iria) | Aelianus dec(urio) muni|cipior(um) Ulpiani et Aeli Vimina(ci) | et Aeliani et Ulpia Cassia eius |⁵ porticum incendio con|sumptam sua pecunia restit(uerunt).

Martin Gabričević emended the reading of the wife's name in line 4, suggesting *Cassia* instead of *Cassa*, contrary to all other editions. His argument is

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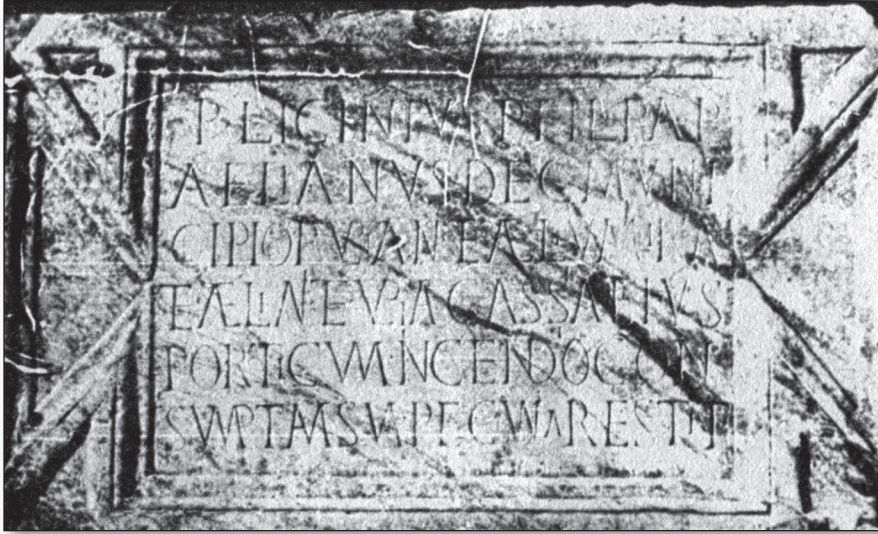


Fig. 1: Inscription from Ulpiana, Photo: M. Gabričević, ZMKM.

based on the presence of a small letter *I* between the upper strokes of *S* and *A*, a common stylistic feature in the inscription where most “*I*” letters are either raised or engraved within other letters. The inscription displays numerous ligatures. Gabričević’s reading is verifiable through the high-quality photograph published in the same volume of *Glasnik Muzeja Kosova i Metohije*. Additionally, a black-and-white photograph of the plaque is available in the Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg (EDH) database under the signature Foo7013. It’s noteworthy that Gabričević’s edition is not documented in the EDH, which instead accepts Mirdita’s reading of *Cassa*. Regarding the mention of the town’s name, Gabričević expresses scepticism. He associates *Aeliani* in line 4 with the decurion’s cognomen, possibly a third person, rejecting the notion that *Aelianum* was the name of the municipium. However, such an interpretation might be less logical. Despite this, there seems to be little doubt that the text refers to three Upper Moesian *municipia*.

In the Danubian provinces, particularly in Upper Moesia, it was not uncommon for individuals to carry out official duties in multiple towns in the province or in the neighbouring provinces. Numerous epigraphic examples bear witness to this practice.¹ For example, *L. Quesidius* (perhaps *Co`esidius* (?)) *C.f. Praesens* held a dignitary position in Drobeta in Dacia and in the Upper Moesian capital, Viminacium. *C. Tit(ius) Antonius Peculiaris* served as a decurion in the

¹ See below.

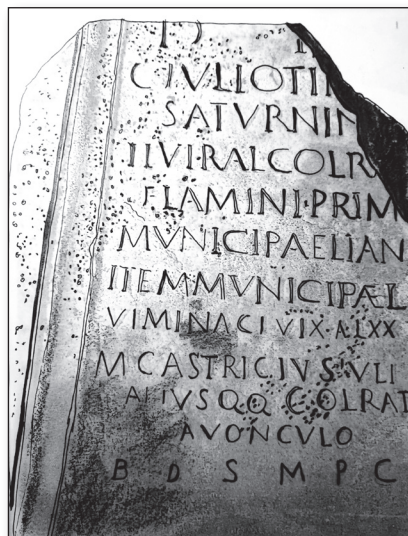


Fig. 2: Inscription from Ratiaria, Drawing after the photography of K. Karadimitrova.

municipium Singidunum and in the colonia Aquincum in Lower Pannonia.² A decurion in the councils of the colony of Scupi and municipium Ulpiana erected a funerary inscription to his son in *municipium D(ardanorum)* (Sočanica), where he might have also held an official duty.³ *Titus Aurelius Atticus* (IMS I 16) held the position of *quinquennalis* in both Singidunum and Sirmium.

New attestation of municipium Aelianum

Another inscription mentioning this *municipium* was discovered in Ratiaria (Arčar) in 2010 and published the same year, though it has not received due attention in the literature. Unfortunately, not unlike the first attestation, the new inscription offers no insights into its location. However, it prompts a series of crucial questions, not only pertaining to the debated location of the town but also the organisational aspects of the imperial cult in the province. This is particularly notable as it mentions the priest, a flamen. On a broader scale, the inscription invites scrutiny of the consolidation of territories, urbanisation, activation of mines, and road construction in Upper Moesia during the reign of Hadrian.

² CIL III 6452. Fishwick 2015, 277–279.

³ Fragmentary inscription from Sočanica (*Municipium Dardanorum*), *ILJug* 1380: ----] | ornatus or|namentis dec(urionalibus) | col(oniae) Fl(auiae) Scupino|rum et mun(icipii) spl(endidissimi) | Ulp(ianorum) filio pii(ssimo) | l(oco) d(ato) d(creto) co(lonorum). The reading *co(lonorum)* is better than *co(loniae)*, see: Dušanić 1971, 249; 1977, 87 note 222.

It is a funerary inscription engraved on a marble stele, 123 x 62 x 12 cm, letter height 7.5–4.5 cm. The monument was discovered in the territory of the colony of Ratiaria. The context of the finding is not specified, as it is possible that the information is not available.

Karadimitrova 2010, 179–189; Tab. 31, 1; AE 2010, 1391.

D(is) M(anibus) | C. Iulio Tib. [f.] | Saturnin[o] | Iiviral(i) col(oniae) Ra[t(iariae)] |⁵ flamini prim[o] | municip(i) Aelian(i) | item municip(i) Ael(i) | Viminaci uixit a(nnis) LXX. | M. Castricius Iuli|ioanus q(uin)q(uennalis) col(oniae) Rat(iariae) | auonculo (!) | b(ene) d(e) s(e) m(erenti) p(onendum) c(urauit).

The deceased *C. Iulius Tib. f. Saturninus* held the position of *Iiviralis* of the colony Ratiaria and served as a *flamen* in two provincial towns: *municipium Aelianum* and *municipium Aelium Viminacium*. The inscription was erected by his nephew, *M. Castricius Iulianus*, who held the role of *quinquennalis* in Ratiaria. The *editio princeps* places its primary emphasis on the interpretation of the term “*flamen primus*,” with limited discussion on other aspects. Taking into account various epigraphic analogies from both the Danubian provinces and other parts of the Empire, it appears probable that the dedicator’s intention was to emphasize that Saturninus was the inaugural individual to undertake this role in a recently established Hadrianic *municipium*.⁴ The commentary to the edition in *L’annee epigraphique* 2010 offers the same interpretation.

A recently published inscription from Durostorum in Lower Moesia also provides a highly informative analogy.⁵ As an analogy, the authors of the article cite two votive inscriptions from Apulum, erected by the first *IIIvir* of the *municipium*: *T. Fl(avius) Italicus primus IIIvir mun(icipii) Aur(elii) Ap(ulensis)*⁶ and *C. Iul(ius) Valentinus primus IIIvir annualis mun(icipii) Sep(timii) Apul(ensis)*,⁷ who was also the patron of the corporation of *fabri*. Also, the already mentioned decurion in the town councils of Drobeta and Viminacium, *L. Quesidius C.f. Praesens*, was also *primus quinquennalis mun(icipii) P. Ael(ii) Dru(betensium)*.⁸

⁴ Karadimitrova does not include any of the examples from the Danubian provinces.

⁵ Donevski & Matei-Popescu 2021, 329.

⁶ IDR III/5, 144: *I(oui) O(ptimo) M(aximo) | T. Fl(avius) Itali|cus pri|mus IIIuir | mun(icipii) Aur(elii) Ap(ulensis) | u(otum) s(oluit) l(ibens) m(erito)*; IDR III/5, 52: *Deanae (!) sacrum | T. Fl(avius) Italicus prim(us) IIIuir | mun(icipii) cum Statilia Lu|cia coniuge et Fl(aui) Sta|tiliano filio ex uoto*

⁷ IDR III/5, 204: *I(oui) O(ptimo) M(aximo) Aetern(o) | C. Iul(ius) Valenti|nus IIIuir pri|mus annualis | mun(icipii) Sep(timii) Apul(ensis) | et patr(onus) coll(egii) fab(rum) | mun(icipii) s(upra) s(cripti) ex uoto | posuit.*

⁸ IMS II 75: *D(is) M(anibus) | L. Quesidio C. | filio Praesenti | dec(urioni) et q(uin)q(uennali) pri|smo mun(icipii) P. Ael(ii) Dru(betensium) | [et] dec(urioni) [mun(icipii)] Vim(inacensium), uixit | an(nis) LXIII L. Quesid(ius) Pr[ae]|sentia(nus) fil. et Luc(i)us*

A *flamen* and *primus quinquennalis* is attested in Sarmizegetusa as well.⁹ Previous examples may be associated with another inscription from Apulum that directly highlights the inscription was erected in 'the first year of the established municipium', *anno primo facti municipi*.¹⁰ Outside the Danubian provinces, there are numerous inscriptions that highlight the novelty of an office.¹¹ For example, the inscription *CIL* II 895 from the African town of Volubilis, which received the status of municipium with Latin rights under Claudius, attests the married couple of the 'first' flamines in the municipium. *M. Valerius Bostaris f. Severus* was a *duumvir* and *flamen primus* at Volubilis, and his wife *Fabia Bira Izeltae f. was flaminica prima*.¹²

Ubication of Aelianum

In a 1958 article, Andras Mócsy included *Municipium* as one of the autonomous Roman towns in Upper Moesia. The toponym is documented in the Roman itineraries as a *mansio* on the road Viminacium-Naissus (*via militaris*).¹³ According to the data from *Tabula Peutingeriana*, *Itinerarium Antonini* and *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, it is the first station south of Viminacium, located at a distance of 18 Roman miles (27 km).¹⁴ The station is identified with the Roman site near the village Kalište at the confluence of the Vitovnica River and the Mlava River, where the remains of a Roman quadrangular fortification were observed and documented as early as 1870 by Felix Kanitz.¹⁵ Kanitz also documented the discovery of numerous bricks with stamps of the *legio VI Claudia*.¹⁶ Nikola Vulić and Anton von Premerstein, who visited the site in August 1900,

Regu|lin(us) IIuir q(uin)q(uennalis) et Au|¹⁰rel(ius) Fir(mus?), q(uin)q(uennalis) mu(nicipii) Ael(ii) Vim(inacensium) | s(cribendum) c(urauerunt) | h(ic) s(itus) e(st).

⁹ *CIL* III 1503: *Q. Ianuario Q(uinti) f. | Collina Rufo | Tauio flamini | q(uin)q(uennali) prim(o) pro Imp(eratore) | ordo col(oniae) Ulp(iae) Trai(anae) | Dacic(ae) Sarmizeg(etusae).*

¹⁰ *CIL* III 7805 C. *Ceruoni[o] | Pap(iria) Sabino q(uin)[q(uennali)] | col(oniae) Dac(icae) dec(urioni) mun[i]cipi(i) Apul(ensis) | patron(o) | [c]ollegi(i) fabr(um) col(oniae) | [et m]unicipi(i) s(upra) s(criptorum) pa[tr]o no causarum | [piis]simo(?) am[ico] | rarissim[o] | Sex. Sentinas Maxi|mus anno primo | [f]acti municipi(i) | posuit || [Ob] cuius | [sta]tuae dedi|[cat]ionem Lu|[ci]a Iulia uxor | [C]eruoni per | omnes balne|[as] populo pu|blice oleum | posuit | l(ocus) d(atus) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum).*

¹¹ Cf. e.g. *CIL* XIII 1048; *CIL* VIII 5368.

¹² *Flamen primus* cf.: *IL Afr* 634; *AE* 1980, 615. Cf. Hemelrijk 2006.

¹³ Petrović 2019 (with bibliography).

¹⁴ *Tab. Peut.* segm. VI: *Municipio. It.Ant.* 134–135.4: *Municipio XXVII; It. Hieros.* 565.1–566.8: *mansio Municipio.*

¹⁵ Kanitz 1892, 60–62; *IMS* II, 56.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

assumed that this might have been the urban centre of Viminacium. Although their theory was later proven incorrect, it nevertheless provides insight into the impressions of these scholars regarding the visible remains and the geo-strategic position of the place.

Before the publication of the inscription from *Ulpiana*, which definitely confirmed the existence of the *municipium* called *Aelianum*, Mócsy correlated the data from the itineraries mentioning the toponym *Municipium*, the archaeological remains at Kalište with the Roman mines *Aeliana Pincensia*, located in the valleys of Pek (*Pincus*) and Mlava, whose name is attested in mining coins.¹⁷ Drawing inspiration from the example of the pair of *metalla Ulpiana* and *municipium Ulpianum*, he postulated that there must have been other pairs as well: *metalla Aeliana Pincensia* and *municipium *Aelianum*, and *metalla Aureliana* and **municipium Aurelianum*. He hypothesised that the *municipium* at Kalište emerged through the urbanisation of the mining district *Aeliana Pincensia*, which extended from the Danube (*Pincum*, V. Gradište) to the Mlava.

Slobodan Dušanić and Miroslava Mirković rejected Mócsy's hypothesis, highlighting that the itineraries mention *Municipium* at Kalište as a *mansio* (a road station), and not as a *civitas*, a town. Dušanić criticised Mócsy's views on the municipalisation of the mines, rejecting his thesis that the *Pincus* mines were administered from Kalište. In Dušanić's opinion, this "would be inexplicably eccentric for a *vicus metalli*", which, according to him, should be sought at *Pincum* (Veliko Gradište), on the Danube bank.¹⁸ M. Mirković, in her 1968 book about the Roman towns on the Danube in Upper Moesia, mentions the locality at Kalište as a site where "contours of the ancient town are still discernible", but there is no further discussion about this region.¹⁹ She included this whole area in the territory of Viminacium, considering the station "*Municipium*" as the first road station on Viminacium's territory, which, according to this author, was very extensive, stretching from this station to the Iron Gates region on the Danube. In the second volume of the corpus of the Upper Moesian inscriptions (*Inscriptions de la Mésie supérieure*), Mirković included the inscriptions discovered at Kalište in the *territorium* of Viminacium (*IMS* II 297–307), rejecting the possibility that this was a different administrative entity. In the introduction to the same volume, M. Mirković references the mention of the *municipium Aelianum* in the inscription from *Ulpiana*, which had recently been published in *ZPE*. However, she approaches this information with great caution, noting that, at that time, a photograph of the inscription was not yet available. She highlighted that even if the inscription attested a town named *Aelianum*, it need not necessarily be iden-

¹⁷ *BMC* III, p. 533 no. 1853 [AD 128–138]. Dušanić 1977, 57.

¹⁸ Dušanić 1977, 77, note 157.

¹⁹ Mirković 1968.

tified as the locality at Kalište. This remains a pertinent observation, especially considering that the new attestation of the municipium did not resolve the question of the town's localisation. Another editor, Martin Gabričević, addressed this issue and rejected the notion of a Roman autonomous town at Kalište because of its close proximity to Viminacium and the small territory it covered. However, this may not be a compelling argument against the existence of a municipium at Kalište, as there is no formal obstacle for two Roman towns to coexist in close vicinity. In the region around Viminacium, there is also another independent town, Margum, which was elevated to the status of municipium in a later period.²⁰ Similar instances exist, for example, with Sirmium and Bassianae in the neighbouring Lower Pannonia, which are also positioned at a comparable distance. Concerning the size of its territory, there are numerous examples of well-explored "small towns", especially in neighbouring Pannonia, which did not extend over a much larger territory than a village and did not have monumental buildings.²¹ A recent study by D. Donev sheds light on the phenomenon of "small towns" in the Danubian provinces.²²

D. Piletić (Piletić 1970), who explored the locality 'Gradište' at Kalište, discovered a Roman castle of quadrangular shape measuring 154 x 56.5 m with square-shaped towers of 5 x 5 m and 120 cm-thick walls, dating back to the first century. The *castellum* was positioned next to the *via militaris*, and its primary role was undoubtedly to protect the road.²³ This location was also crucial for accessing the mining complexes in the Mlava-Pek region from the interior of the province and the southwest. Further archaeological excavations in the Kalište region were carried out in several campaigns during the 1980s.²⁴ The data published in the individual excavation reports, summarised in the 2012 monograph by M. Cunjak, the archaeologist leading the excavations, strongly suggest that this might have been a considerable agglomeration. Regardless of the administrative status that the place might have had in the Roman times, it was a Roman urban settlement that thrived from the middle of the first century until the Migration Period.²⁵ Besides the strong 22-metre-long walls with columns,²⁶ the

²⁰ *IMS II*, 207–211; Mócsy 1974, 196.

²¹ Baret 2020, 111–112.

²² Donev 2020.

²³ For the Roman road see Petrović 2019, 127–157 with bibliography.

²⁴ Cunjak & Pindić 1985; Цуњак 2012.

²⁵ Cf. Diers 2019 (a very instructive study about urban settlements without the formal status of towns, taking Upper Moesian *Timacum Minus* as an example).

²⁶ *IMS II*, 56; Цуњак 2012, 17.

finds include the remains of the water system, *thermae*,²⁷ the remains of buildings and necropolises, the remains of a ceramic workshop, along with portable material. In the vicinity of the Roman castrum, the remnants of a Roman necropolis have been discovered at the locality “Staro groblje” (“Old Cemetery”).²⁸ The excavations revealed a building with a hypocaust precisely dated to the end of the first or the beginning of the second century, thanks to numismatic finds.²⁹ In the environs of Kalište, in the village of Kravlji Do, the remains of a *villa rustica* with a floor mosaic with representations of horses and centaurs were found in 1959.³⁰ As mentioned earlier, several inscribed monuments were unearthed at Kalište. Most of the known inscriptions were published by Nikola Vulić and Anton von Premerstein. These are mostly votive monuments: altars dedicated to *Mars*,³¹ *Silvanus Domesticus*,³² and an altar dedicated to several deities, *Apollo*, *Diana*, *Silvanus*,³³ the reading of which could benefit from revision. Cunjak also mentions a ring with a blue stone with an engraved image of the goddess Diana. A fragment of a Mithraic relief also comes from the locality “Gradište”.³⁴ One of the inscriptions from Kalište is the funerary monument *IMS II 303*, which *M. Ulpus Surio* erected for his mother. Among other noteworthy findings are an alphabetical graffito and a bronze weight (*IMS II 307*).³⁵ The continuity of occupancy from the middle of the first century to the migration period is affirmed by numerous portable finds, especially numismatic material.

The fact that localities concentrated around the confluence of the Vitovnica and the Mlava Rivers underwent serious destruction in the past implies that the remains that were saved, explored and recorded by the archaeologist are only a fragment of what might have existed there in antiquity. The locality sustained significant damage in 1870, during the construction of the railway that passed right next to “Gradac”. Severe damage was also inflicted on the locality in

²⁷ Cunjak (Цуњак 2012) mentions the finding of Traian’s coins in the *thermae*. He distinguishes three building phases: the first in the times of Hadrian, the second at the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, and the last phase in the times of the emperor Constantine.

²⁸ Цуњак 1983, 67; Цуњак & Пиндић 1985, 93–96.

²⁹ It is not clear on what evidence rests the claim in *IMS II*, Introd. 56, note 20 that there is “une rupture entre le début du Ier et la fin du IIIe siècle.”

³⁰ Mirković 1968, 68, Спасић-Ђурић 2015, 34 with the drawing of the mosaic made by M. Pindić (fig. 35); Cunjak 2012, 21 note 17).

³¹ *IMS II 299*.

³² *IMS II 300*.

³³ *IMS II 297*.

³⁴ Tomović 1989–1990, 92, n. 3.

³⁵ Spasić-Ђurić 2002, 142, fig. 121 a; Spasić-Ђurić 2015, 197, n. 126.

1955, during the construction of the road between Požarevac and Peterovac on the Mlava, when it was destroyed as it served as the exploitation site for road-filling works. Cunjak, in his detailed and emotional description of the events, refers to this as an “uncompromising wildfire”.³⁶ This information calls for caution when discussing the character of the settlement based on archaeological remains.

The Emperor Hadrian and the Urbanisation of Upper Moesia

The name of municipium Aelianum indicates that the town was a Hadrianic foundation, given that the toponym is derived from Hadrian's gentile name. This emperor played a significant role in the urbanisation of the Danubian provinces. Numerous towns received the status of municipium during his reign, with especially notable among them being towns on the Danube, such as Carnuntum, Aquincum, Viminacium, Drobeta. To the list of the places whose change of status under Hadrian is directly attested, one could add a number of *municipia* whose Hadrianic date is inferred from different indications, such as the pseudo-tribe *Aelia*, onomastic evidence, epigraphic attestations that offer a *terminus ante quem* or *terminus post quem*.³⁷ Some of these include Salla, Mogetiana,³⁸ municipium Iasorum, Cibalae, Bassianae,³⁹ etc.⁴⁰ A number of municipia in Dalmatia are possibly Hadrianic (*Aquae S., Delminium*).⁴¹ Also, we cannot rule out that they were granted Latin rights, although direct, unambiguous evidence is lacking.⁴² In Upper Moesia, no autonomous Roman towns except for the Roman colony of *Scupi* predate Trajan's reign. A critical urbanising impulse happened under Hadrian. It is epigraphically attested that Hadrian granted the municipal status to Viminacium.⁴³ Another important Roman settlement on the Danube that was also a legionary seat, Singidunum, probably also became a *municipium* at this time. In the Introduction to the first volume of the *Inscriptions de la Mésie supérieure* (“*Singidunum et son territoire*”), Miroslava Mirković assumed this date based on the evidence of the inscription *IMS I 47*. Namely, the *terminus ante quem non* would be Trajan's reign, but she was inclined to think that the mu-

³⁶ Пуњак 2012, 16–19.

³⁷ M. Boatwright (2000, 39–40, note 15) is sceptical about all these cases, although the Hadrianic date is not problematic but just not directly attested.

³⁸ Kovács 2003.

³⁹ Dušanić 1967, 70 note 70; Mócsy 1974, 143.

⁴⁰ Kos and Scherrer 2002.

⁴¹ Grbić 2014, 142–143.

⁴² Boatwright 2000, 38.

⁴³ Cf. *IMS II 48*.

nicipal status was granted under Hadrian, at the same time as Viminacium and other towns on the Danube, which is a very logical and likely assumption. The fact that there is another town in Upper Moesia founded under this emperor is not surprising.

The outset of Hadrian's reign is characterised by events that threatened to overturn the achievements of Trajan's great successes in the Dacian wars and undermine the stability of the entire Danubian region. The coordinated attacks by the Sarmatian Jazyges, residing around the Tisza River to the north of the Iron Gates region, and their kinsmen, the Roxolani, presented a significant danger to the new province of Dacia and the neighbouring Lower Pannonia, Upper and Lower Moesia. Even though these tribes had allied with Rome during the Dacian wars, they rebelled after Trajan's death. The governor C. Iulius Quadratus Bassus was killed in the attacks.⁴⁴ Hadrian's response – to combine Pannonia and Dacia under one command, entrusted to the knight Q. Marcius Turbo – and his personal presence on the Danube early in 118 CE underscored the gravity of the situation.⁴⁵ According to Cassius Dio, Hadrian ordered the removal of the wooden superstructure of Trajan's bridge on the Danube, between Pontes and Drobeta, as he was "afraid that it might also make it easy for the barbarians, once they had overpowered the guard at the bridge, to cross into Moesia" (Cass. Dio LXVIII 13, 6: Ἀδριανὸς δὲ τοῦναντίον φοβηθεὶς μὴ καὶ τοῖς βαρβάροις τοὺς φρουροὺς αὐτῆς βιάζομενοι ράδια διάβασις ἐς τὴν Μυσίαν ἦ, ἀφείλε τὴν ἐπιπολῆς κατασκευὴν. The effective resolution of the conflict was followed by a series of consolidating measures in the Danubian provinces.⁴⁶ The process of urbanisation in this region could be viewed as a part of Hadrian's efforts to consolidate power, contributing to the stability in the provinces on the Danubian *limes* by strengthening the loyalty of the provincials. Several measures could also be attributed to the same goal, such as the reorganisation of the newly founded Dacia, withdrawal from a part of the conquered territories, and delimitation and redefinition of the territories.⁴⁷ Upper Moesian milestones from Hadrian's reign indicate that the emperor spurred road building and repairs in the provinces, particularly in the communications between the mining districts in Dardania and those gravitating towards the Danube, as well as the south, Scupi.⁴⁸ A fragmented inscription from Viminacium (*IMS* II 50) testifies that

⁴⁴ Syme 1971, 164–164; Birley 1997, 84–85

⁴⁵ Hist. Aug. *Had.* 6.6, 6.8; Cass. Dio 69.9.6; Syme 1971, 163; Halfmann 1986, 190; Mócsy 1974, 100.

⁴⁶ Mócsy 1974, 100, 376.

⁴⁷ Nikolić 2022, 94–96.

⁴⁸ *IMS* VI 195 and 199, milestones from Đeneral Janković and Scupi speak of road-building between Scupi and *Ulpiana* under the legate *Coelius Rufus* 120 (cos. suff. 119):

the building of the road that connected the Morava valley and Dardania, which was according to this inscription *compendium*, a shortcut, was completed during Hadrian's reign.⁴⁹

Conclusions

The conclusions can be summarised as follows: the mention of *municipium Aelianum* in two inscriptions unequivocally attests to its existence. The fact that it was named after Hadrian's gentile name indicates the Hadrianic date of its foundation. Both inscriptions mention dignitaries who performed duties in different towns of the province, and both were erected in other towns, providing no evidence about the town's location. The suggestion that *Aelianum* could be identified as the remains of the Roman town located at the site in the village Kalište on the Mlava River mentioned in the Roman itineraries as *Municipium* should not be discarded merely because there is no better idea of where else it could have been located. Its origin may not necessarily be strictly linked to the municipalisation of the mines, as assumed by Mócsy and rejected by Dušanić and other scholars. Nevertheless, the substantial archaeological findings at Kalište (considering that many remains may not have been recovered due to extensive site destruction), the exceptional geo-strategic position of the place, and the suggestive toponym "Municipium" in the itineraries suggest that it might have been an autonomous Roman town, perhaps *Aelianum*.

List of Abbreviations:

- AE — *L'Année épigraphique*, Paris
 ANRW — *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, New York
 CIL — *Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum*, Berlin
 IDR — *Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae*, Bukuresti
 IMS — *Inscriptions de la Mésie supérieure*, Belgrade
 ZPE — *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, Bonn

Imp(eratori) Caesari | divi Traiani Parthici f. | divi Nervae nepoti | Traiano Hadriano | Aug(usto) p(ontifici) m(aximo) trib(unicia) pot(estate) IIII | co(n)s(uli) III L(ucio) Coelio Rufo | leg(ato) Aug(usti) pr(o) pr(aetore) col(onia) Scupin(orum) | m(ilia) p(assuum) VIII.

⁴⁹ IMS II 50: [*Imp(erator) Caes*]ar | *divi Tr[ai]ani Parthici f. di[vi] Nervae*] | [*n]epos Tr[ai]anus Hadrianus Aug(ustus) pont(ifex) max(imus)*] | [*trib(unicia) pot(estate) --- c]o(n)s(ul) III p(ater) [p(atriciae)] | [per --- leg(atum) Aug(usti) pr(o) pr(aetore)? viam] novam qua[e] coe?][*pta a divo patre suo Traia]no compen[dio] | [facto per m(ilia) p(assuum) ---] a Ma[rgo flumine] in Dardania[m] | [direxit? et munivit? ut vehicula?] com- meare | [possint ---] fe[cit.]**

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The Romani Language in the Linguistic Landscape of Serbia A (non)visible Minority Language

Abstract: According to the Serbian Constitution, aligned laws, and international conventions, the Romani language, along with other minority languages in Serbia, is guaranteed minority linguistic rights. However, Romani continues to be stigmatized and marginalized, resulting in its infrequent public usage and a decreasing intergenerational transmission of the language. The objective of this study is to emphasize the significance of Romani in the public sphere of Serbia. By examining the use of this language in public spaces, it is possible to ascertain its status, usage, and simultaneously identify its vitality or vulnerability. Based on a search by domain of the use of the Romani language, the paper comments on the use of the Romani language at the top-down level – the level of usage guaranteed by institutions and public and local policies, the advantages and disadvantages of its use, and the violation of language rights. In addition, the analysis also includes the bottom-up level of the usage of Romani, which is based on field research and the documentation of the use of the written Romani on sacred monuments and tombstones, initiated by individuals and/or locally organised groups, which indicate its symbolic function within the public space.

Key words: linguistic landscape, Romani language, official language use, public space, tombstones, Serbia

1 The linguistic landscape

Although a relatively new (socio)linguistic discipline,¹ the linguistic landscape, understood as the use of different languages on public signs, has

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¹ In one of the first works in the field of the linguistic landscape, published in 1997 by linguists Rodrigue Landry and Richard Y. Bourhis (1997, 25), the definition of linguistic landscape was determined as “The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration”, which is often referred to by researchers in the contemporary studies in this field. A detailed overview of the various thematic, methodological and theoretical approaches to linguistic landscape research is provided in Gorter 2013.

resulted in numerous scientific works where the use of language in the public space is analysed from different perspectives. Such published scientific works examine urban and rural linguistic landscapes and cyberscapes, often incorporating semiotic research as complementary in observing the representation of the language and ethnicity of certain ethnic communities in the public space (Marten, Van Mensel & Gorter 2012). The concept of the linguistic landscape has been used in different ways, most often as descriptions and analyses of the language situation in a given country (Sciriha & Vassallo 2001), or the use of multiple languages within a wider geographical area (Kresling 2003). Understood in this way, the linguistic landscape can be synonymous with concepts such as the “linguistic market, linguistic mosaic, ecology of languages, diversity of languages or the linguistic situation” (Gorter 2006, 1). Today, the linguistic landscape is approached mainly from the perspective of studying multilingualism, where research into the linguistic landscape of minority languages in multilingual environments occupies a special place (Spolsky 2004; Ben-Rafael et al. 2006; Shohamy & Abu Ghazaleh-Mahajneh 2012; Puzey 2012, among others). Studies of the linguistic landscape aim to offer another view of social multilingualism, focusing on language choice, hierarchies in the use of different languages, contact phenomena, and literacy. The linguistic landscape is a multi-layered phenomenon and research in this area includes different perspectives and disciplines, with the most frequently applied being linguistics, sociolinguistics and language policy (Gorter 2013, 191).

The approach to researching the use of languages (one or more) offered by the linguistic landscape is advantageous for several reasons: a) it adopts a comprehensive view of written language in the public space, paying attention to each type of sign; b) research into the linguistic landscape not only take into account signs, but also who initiates, creates, places and reads them; c) the linguistic landscape offers insight into how language is manipulated – consciously or unconsciously – with the aim of confirming or refuting the existence of prestige patterns accorded a certain language as well as hierarchies among languages; d) the linguistic landscape allows for a deeper understanding of demographics and opportunities, as well as language and other policies towards different languages (Marten, Van Mansel & Gorter 2012, 1).

In addition to the aforementioned, the concept of the linguistic landscape in multilingual environments is also included in the list of domains which serve to determine the status of a minority language (Edwards 2010), as well as the important domain of literacy and the role of written tradition in research (Spolsky 2009). Furthermore, efforts to preserve and revitalise minority languages are supported by the state, regional and local administrations, as well as numerous non-governmental organisations. Therefore, the linguistic landscape, understood as written language in the public space, represents the space in which

official regulations and private initiatives can combine or conflict in the use of different languages (Gorter, Aiesaran & Cenoz 2012, 148–149). Studies of the linguistic landscape involving the presence and/or absence of a given language in the public space are significant as they may lead to the identification of systemic patterns which can in turn result in a new understanding of different languages and social phenomena (Shohamy & Abu Ghazaleh-Mahajneh 2012, 89).

One of the first steps in laying the foundation for an analysis of the linguistic landscape is to distinguish between top-down and bottom-up strategies in presenting the elements of the linguistic landscape. Top-down strategies involve the engagement of institutions, which act within local or central policies, while bottom-up strategies include individuals, actors in associations or corporations who have autonomous action within legal frameworks (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006, 10).

Bearing in mind all of the above – the theoretical assumptions, which have remained more or less the same since the genesis of the discipline, with minor fluctuations in methodology, applied to new technological achievements, the linguistic landscape remains a discipline which predominantly deals with urban space, visibility, absence and hierarchy among languages, while research studies on the rural linguistic landscape are less frequently represented (cf. e.g. Davely & Ferguson 2009; Kotze & Du Plessis 2010).

1.1. *Studies of the linguistic landscape in Serbia*

Although research into the linguistic landscape in Serbia started slightly later than the initial research in other parts of the world, which began at the end of the 20th century, Serbia is not lagging behind in this respect. In fact, the rise of such studies in Serbia is almost parallel to that in the rest of the world. In contrast to research into the linguistic landscape of cities - or the urban linguistic landscape, which predominates in international scientific literature, in Serbia the focus of research, with the exception of a few rare cases (e.g. Vuković 2012), has shifted to the rural linguistic landscape and the linguistic landscape of cemeteries, focusing on a specific audience, and making the conscious choice of epitaphs and inscriptions in the rural public space as true representations of ethnicity (Soresku-Marinković 2021, 55).²

The works of linguists in Serbia are dominated by studies of multicultural and multilingual environments, by analyses of inscriptions in the Serbian,

² A series of publications were released at the beginning of the 21st century on the subject of Serbian tombstones in Hungary, in St Andrea specifically, which were firstly documented and published, and subsequently analysed from a linguistic perspective (Vulović, Đinđić & Jovanović 2008; Vulović, Đinđić & Radonjić 2010; Vulović et al. 2009; Vulović et al. 2012).

Hungarian and Croatian languages in the public space of the city of Subotica (Vuković 2012), the Banat-Bulgarian language in the linguistic landscape of the villages where this ethnic community is most represented in Serbia (Sikimić & Nomači 2016), and the Romanian language in the settlements in the Serbian part of Banat (Popović & Janjić 2013; Soresku-Marinković 2021). These studies also examine the relationship and status of different languages in multilingual environments, such as the village of Ečka in Serbian Banat (Sorescu-Marinković & Salamurović 2022), or the villages in eastern Serbia mostly populated by Vlachs, bilingual speakers of the Serbian and Vlach languages (Huțanu & Sorescu-Marinković 2016; Sorescu-Marinković & Huțanu (forthcoming)).

The results of research into the urban linguistic landscape in Serbia indicate the relative status of certain languages in the local socio-linguistic context - official inscriptions reflect the official promotion of trilingualism (Serbian-Hungarian-Croatian) in the city of Subotica, while private inscriptions strive for simpler communication, which in practice means monolingualism³ (Vuković 2012, 175). Researching the linguistic landscape of the multi-ethnic and multilingual village of Ečka in Serbian Banat, authors Annemarie Sorescu Marinović and Aleksandra Salamurović conclude that instead of top-down and bottom-up levels of usage of official languages in this village and strategies for observing the linguistic landscape, greater consideration should be given to the synchronic linguistic landscape (Synchronic LL) and the memorial linguistic landscape (Memorial LL). The former, Synchronic LL, reflects the current language use, language prestige and language policy – the inscriptions of street names, the names of settlements, the current language use, language prestige and language policy are all multilingual – there are multilingual street name inscriptions, inscriptions on road signs and the premises of local institutions and bodies, but also graffiti and obituaries (Sorescu-Marinković & Salamurović 2022, 52, 64–70), while the latter, Memorial LL, represents a sort of chronicle of the multilingualism of past generations, introducing a diachronic perspective, which is reflected in the inscriptions on old houses (mainly family names on old Vojvodina houses), old monuments, as well as epitaphs and other inscriptions on tombstones (idem, 52, 70).

The minority Banat-Bulgarian language in Serbia is recognised as official only in the village of Ivanovo, where the number of Banat Bulgarians makes up 15% of the total population, which is reflected in the existence of official public inscriptions in the Banat-Bulgarian language (in addition to the official languages – majority Serbian and minority Hungarian) on street names, pri-

³ Vuković emphasises that in private inscriptions deviation from monolingualism (in the specific case of the Serbian language) does occur, whereby a minority language is used only in cases where the aim is to win over speakers of that minority language, who are considered potential clients (Vuković 2012, 175).

mary schools, the premises of local municipal offices, etc. (Sikimić & Nomaći 2016, 12–13). Unlike Ivanovo, where the Banat-Bulgarian language is one of the official languages, in the villages of Jaša Tomić, Konak and Skorenovac, which despite being inhabited by Banat Bulgarians, are not registered in sufficient numbers for their language to be recognised as official, the use of the language is reflected only in the domain of private use – on tombstones. The use of the language on tombstones also indicates literacy in the given language, since there is no formal education in the Banat-Bulgarian language, so it is assumed that the speakers of this language, who order the tombstones, only know its oral form (Sikimić & Nomaći 2016, 25–26). The existence of inscriptions in Banat-Bulgarian on tombstones is an example of the prestige of this language (Sikimić & Nomaći 2016, 25). The minority Romanian language in Serbia, more precisely in the Serbian part of Banat, is not only the language of public inscriptions in areas inhabited by the Romanian population, but is also the language used by its speakers for extremely creative purposes, such as for epitaphs on tombstones. Epitaphs represent a valuable source for linguistic research into the relationship between the standard and local varieties of the Romanian language⁴ spoken in Romanian settlements, and the texts of these epitaphs, often in Serbian and Romanian, demonstrate the prestige of the Romanian language since they are more developed and longer in terms of content, and in addition, often include quotations from the literary works of eminent Romanian writers (Soresku-Marinković 2021, 59–62). In Eastern Serbia, which has no tradition or continuity of multilingualism, numerous settlements are inhabited by Vlachs, who are also a national minority in Serbia. According to Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković and Monica Huțanu, since 2005 epitaphs in the Vlach variety have emerged, whose codification and standardisation have seen a rapid development in recent years. Since in Eastern Serbia there are still no official regulations regarding the use of Vlach in the public space, the use of Vlach on memorials, in the form of epitaphs, indicates the symbolic value of this language, used as markers of identity or as support for the legitimisation of minority speech (Sorescu-Marinković & Huțanu 2016, 27; Sorescu-Marinković & Huțanu (forthcoming)).⁵

⁴ Researchers point to the dominance of the local Romanian variety in relation to the standard Romanian language, as well as dialectal features, spelling mistakes, the influence of the Serbian language on the orthography of the local Romanian variety, etc. (Popović & Janjić 2013; Sorescu-Marinković 2021).

⁵ The authors analyse the inscriptions on the tombstones from the perspective of their content – the use of “technical” terms and phrases, such as “Here he lies” or “The memorial has been erected”, which are taken from the Serbian language (Soresku-Marinković & Huțanu 2016, 34), as well as the use of hypocoristics and patronymics in Vlach (Soresku-Marinković & Huțanu 2016, 31). In addition, the authors draw attention to linguistic notes about the Vlach language – especially from the perspective of the high degree of variability of the written language (Soresku-Marinković & Huțanu 2016, 35).

1.2. *The Romani language and linguistic landscape - an under-researched field*

As mentioned in numerous works in the field of linguistic landscape research, in addition to public language policies and the enforcement of various laws regulating language use, the use of minority languages in the public space also reflects the prestige of the languages written in the public space, serving as an emblem of identity and belonging to a certain ethnic community, at the same time identifying systematic patterns which lead to the understanding of different languages as social phenomena (cf. e.g. Cenoz & Gorter 2006; Shohamy & Abu Gharleh-Mahajneh 2012; Sikimić 2016; Huţanu & Soresku-Marinković 2016; Sorescu-Marinković & Huţanu (forthcoming), among others).

The visibility of minority languages in the public space, their status, prestige, role and the like have sparked debate about the use of the Romani language in the public space, since, on the one hand, it is a minority language in numerous European countries, while on the other, it remains an under-researched area in the linguistic landscape. The Romani language is always a marginalised language (Bašić 2018), “it is a language of lower prestige to be found even on tombstones” (Sikimić 2016, 25), and is characterised by linguistic mimicry and one-way bilingualism (Friedman 2001, 148–149; Bašić 2018).⁶ It is precisely because Romani is recognised as a minority language and its use is clearly defined as such both by the laws of the Republic of Serbia and international conventions. The aim of this paper is to examine whether Romani is really visible in the public space of Serbia. In order to achieve this goal, the paper will first discuss Romani itself, its dialects and distribution, as well as domains of use. Given that the emphasis will be placed on the public space of Serbia, following some general remarks about Romani in Serbia demographic data on the Roma population in Serbia and their language rights will be provided, and the practical application of those legal regulations which take into account this minority language in different domains will be discussed. The analysis will be conducted on material documented over the past ten years in field research carried out in different Roma, multi-cultural and multilingual communities in Serbia, with the objective of examining the visibility of Romani and its presence in different domains.

⁶ Although the Serbian language, as well as numerous other languages with which Romani comes into contact, includes loanwords from Romani, they belong to the linguistic repertoire of slang, and this does not mean that borrowings from Romani contain elements of two-way bilingualism (cf. e.g. Uhlik 1954; Matras 1998; 2002; Vučković 2017; 2022; Sonnemann 2021, among others). Furthermore, it is not entirely certain whether part of the slang lexicon, which originates from Romani speakers, is recognised as Romani. The lower prestige of the Romani language is also shown in the lack of interest of non-Roma students in attending Romani language classes as an optional subject at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, which resulted in the closure of the Romani Language Department.

2. *The Romani language*

The Romani language, which belongs to the Indo-European family of languages, or more precisely the Indo-Aryan group, boasts a rich tradition of research spanning diverse domains of its linguistic structure. A large number of fundamental scientific studies on Romani provide insight into the history of this language (e.g. Matras 2002; Beníšek 2020), dialectal diversity and distribution of dialects (e.g. Matras, Bakker & Kyuchukov 1997; Matras 2002; 2005; Elšík & Beníšek 2020),⁷ the grammatical structure of Romani and its dialects (Hancock 1995; Courthiade 1998; Matras 2002; Boretzky 1993; 1994; 2000; 2003; Tenser 2005; Leggio 2011; Mirić 2019; 2021; Elšík 2020; Adamou & Matras 2020, among others), the lexicography of Romani (e.g. Uhlik 1941; 1983; Boretzky & Iglá 1994; Kajtazi 2008; Ćirković & Mirić 2017; Oslon & Kožanov (online))⁸, sociolinguistic issues (Friedman 1995; 1999; Matras 2002; Halwachs 2003; 2011; 2017; Halwachs et al. 2015; among others), various contact phenomena between Romani and other languages (Matras 2007; 2009; Matras & Adamou 2020; Adamou 2016; Adamou & Granqvist 2015; Bodnárova & Wiedner 2020; Friedman 2020; Meyer 2020; Scala 2020; Ćirković & Mirić 2022; Mirić & Ćirković 2022)⁹ and so on. Researchers should not neglect phenomena such as para-Romani varieties (which are the intermediate stage in language replacement), language loss and language shift as a consequence of the interrupted intergenerational transmission, or extinct Romani varieties which have not been described or linguistically investigated.

In the literature relevant to the Romani language, there is still a great deal of speculation about the number of speakers of this language. The frequently cited data on the number of speakers of Romani comes from one source – UNESCO's *Atlas of The World's Languages in Danger* (Moseley 2010, printed version), which specifies approximately 3.5 million Romani speakers in the world. According to the same source, the distribution of the Romani language is limited predominantly to Europe, and to a lesser extent to North and South America

⁷ The study carried out by Elšík and Beníšek in 2020 is of particular importance for the review of the dialects of the Romani language - both in terms of structure and areas of use, which, in addition to citing what has now become classic literature, also incorporates the results of the latest linguistic and dialectological research, including a more detailed classification of Romani dialects and their distribution in the region.

⁸ RomLex, a lexical database of different Romani varieties available online at: <http://romani.uni-graz.at/romlex/whatisromani.xml> (accessed on 12/4/2023) should also be added to the aforementioned classic dictionaries and lexicographic publications.

⁹ Here, only the most recent studies dealing with the aforementioned issues in Romani language research are listed, but it is necessary to note that they provide an exhaustive analysis of the examined phenomena with an overview of previously published relevant literature.

and Australia. It should be borne in mind that although this data is often cited and is the only available information, it should be viewed with caution for several reasons. First of all, this information has remained unchanged since 2009, when the interactive map of the *Atlas* first became available online, and the number of Roma (and probably speakers of other languages and varieties registered in this *Atlas*) has not been updated following numerous population censuses conducted in European countries over the last 20 years. Moreover, demographic factors pertaining to the assessment and projections of the number of members of the Roma ethnic community have not been taken into account either. In addition, it is important to note that one of the important reasons for the insufficiently precise number of Roma is the social status of the members of the Roma community – their political, economic, and cultural marginalisation, as well as their ethnic and linguistic stigmatisation (cf. Filipović, Vučo & Djurić 2010, 261). Majority languages cover public domains of language use, while the use of the Romani language is limited to informal domains (Halwachs 2020, 430).

The number of speakers of a language is one of the crucial factors in determining the endangerment and/or vitality of a language. In linguistics, Romani is often cited as an endangered language, and this information is available in various international databases which document endangered languages around the world – UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* (Moseley 2010), *Ethnologue* (Lewis, Simons & Fennig 2013) and *Endangered Languages Project* (Lee & van Way 2016). The limitations of these databases are numerous – starting from the imprecise demarcation of languages and dialects, through the incorrect location of Romani dialects within a certain territory, to the classification of the threat to the Romani language (cf. Sorescu-Marinković, Mirić & Ćirković 2020). Linguists consider the criteria used to assess Romani in UNESCO's *Atlas* inadequate, as they treat the Romani language as a whole, overlooking its dialectal heterogeneity and the need to assess the endangerment and vitality of individual Romani varieties (Halwachs 2020, 432), believing that the assessment of endangerment must include factors such as the dialectal variation of this language and the different degree of endangerment/vitality at the level of communities and individual speakers (Sorescu-Marinković, Mirić & Ćirković 2020, 96). Halwachs (2020, 432) asserts that only basic definitions of language endangerment allow for an assessment of the threat and/or vitality of Romani in the sense that the language is vital if the community uses it as a primary means of communication in private and daily life.

In addition to an endangered language, Romani is also often referred to as a minority language, and 30 years ago (1993) the Council of Europe declared the Roma to be “the true European minority” (Guy 2003; Filipović, Vučo & Djurić 2010, 261). The status of minority languages is regulated by the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, which guarantees linguistic rights to re-

gional or minority languages within the domains of “education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life, and trans-frontier exchanges”.¹⁰ The *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* was established by the Council of Europe in 1992, and some of its provisions in the domain of recognising the Romani language as a minority language have been implemented by Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. A little earlier, in 1991, in the constitutions of three European countries – Finland, Austria and North Macedonia – Romani was recognised as a minority language according to the recommendations of the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the European Parliament. In addition to the *Charter* and the recommendations of other European institutions, various forms of official government support, without specific legal provisions, have also been implemented by the governments of Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic, Norway and Italy. These mainly refer to the creation of educational materials in Romani, as well as instructions, financing and training for teachers of Romani (Matras 2002, 258–259). However, as Matras points out (2002, 259), many of the mentioned initiatives have failed to function fully and regularly. Today, the Romani language is recognised as a minority language by the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* in Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden and Ukraine.¹¹ The Romani language has been the subject of numerous scientific studies. During the 1990s, Romani language classes were introduced into the curricula of sixteen different universities in Europe and the United States of America, which continue to hold scientific conferences, seminars and workshops dedicated to the Romani language to this day (Matras 2002, 259).

2.2. *The public domains of use of the Romani language*

Bearing in mind the fact that Romani is recognised around the world as both an endangered and minority language, as well as generally stigmatised and marginalised, but that its use is regulated (at least declaratively) by various internationally recognised acts, scientific studies indicate its use in different domains – in education, literature, digital media, social networks, etc.

In terms of the use of Romani in education, linguists highlight the status of Romani as part of the political agenda, underlining the existence of a correla-

¹⁰ The text of the charter is available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/text-of-the-charter> (accessed on 30/5/2023)

¹¹ Mentioned languages are available at the link of the chapter <https://rm.coe.int/november-2022-revised-table-languages-covered-english-/1680a8fef4> (accessed on 29/5/2023).

tion between bottom-up and top-down strategies in the implementation of Romani in official and unofficial educational curricula. Although the introduction of Romani in education depends on the cooperation of non-governmental organisations and a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity on the part of the government sector, as pointed out by Dieter Halwachs (2020, 442–444), joint efforts and compromises can result in the introduction of Romani into the education system, but not necessarily its integration into regular educational curricula. The situation is similar with the presence of Romani in digital media,¹² especially the Internet (Leggio 2020), which is characterised by differences between the use of the language by activists and non-activists. As Leggio notes, activists take institutionalised written practice into account, to the extent possible in terms of non-standardised language. The standardisation of Romani turns out to be an insufficiently important factor in the use of the language. According to Leggio (2020, 531), the virtual world of Roma non-activists represents a wide range of linguistic repertoires reflecting their individual identities. Conversations and dialogue on Facebook groups are characterised by cross-dialect variation and the use of different linguistic features (Granqvist 2021). A similar study focusing on different video clips in Romani on the YouTube platform was carried out by Leggio and Matras (Leggio & Matras 2017) to investigate the linguistic features of the written Romani. The authors found the written Romani in the comments posted on the YouTube platform to be characterised by a high degree of variation in terms of both dialectology and orthography.¹³ As for Romani in the literature, Sofiya Zahova (2020) distinguishes between Romani literature and literature in the Romani language, differentiating between the use of the Romani language as a medium of creative expression and the language into which both literature written by Roma authors and literature translated into the Romani language is translated. The author also points out the challenges of distribution, reception and availability faced by Romani literature (Zahova 2020, 560).

As the aforementioned domains of Romani language usage partially indicate, an important question for the public space, the public and the visibility of Romani in different public domains relates to the standardisation of Romani, which is a frequently asked question in many European countries, even when a language variety has already been established as standard. Although traditional practice tends to establish one variety as the standard, many researchers con-

¹² Daniele Victor Leggio has previously dealt with the use of Romani in the virtual world – mainly on the radio, exploring how this public use reflects on Romani identity (Leggio 2015).

¹³ On orthography as a convention, see more in: Matras 2002, 258–259.

sider a pluricentric approach to the standardisation of the Romani language to be more appropriate (Matras 2005; Halwachs 2020, among others).¹⁴

3. *The Romani language in Serbia*

The Romani language in Serbia is considered an endangered language on the one hand, and a minority language on the other. It is documented as an endangered language by all the relevant databases of endangered languages (*UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, *Ethnologue*, *Endangered Languages Project*), however, as previously discussed (Sorescu-Marinković, Mirić & Ćirković 2020), it is not entirely clear on which data these international bases used by the global academic community are based. On the one hand, when it comes to the Romani language (although similar problems are faced by other languages and varieties found in these databases, here the focus will only be on the Romani language) the number of speakers is not entirely precise, and the sources from which such data is drawn are not provided in the databases either. What attracts even greater attention are the Romani varieties, some of which are certainly not registered in Serbia, and as far as the number of Romani speakers is concerned, these databases do not list the data on which the dialectal diversity of the Romani language in Serbia is based (*idem*, 84). Despite the existence of a number of Roma groups in Serbia who speak different Roma varieties, they mostly belong to two Romani dialect branches – Vlax and Balkan. While it can be assumed that there are certain Roma communities which linguistically belong to other Romani varieties in Serbia, the relevant literature does not include this data.¹⁵ It is worth emphasising that Serbia, which has a large Roma population, has no data on their distribution or the varieties they speak, which could serve as the basis for both linguistic and interdisciplinary research.¹⁶ In Serbia, there is

¹⁴ An extensive list of literature on the standardisation and codification of the Romani language and its history is available at: <https://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/db/bibliography/index.html?cat=22>.

¹⁵ The middle of the 20th century, 1979, saw the publication of the study *Ethnological material on the Roma - Gypsies in Vojvodina* (the research was carried out in the 1960s, while the monograph was published in 1979), prepared by Mirjana Maluckov, who observed the Roma communities in a large number of settlements in Vojvodina, their striking ethnographic characteristics, the work they did, etc. It is important to note that Maluckov also recorded local names – ethnonyms and exonyms - for the investigated Roma communities and groups, but what is missing in this valuable field monograph is linguistic data on these Roma communities. Although such an ethnographic study was not expected to provide such data, to this day it remains (almost) the only study which documents the Roma communities in Vojvodina (Maluckov 1979).

¹⁶ Numerous Romological studies have been carried out on the territory of Serbia from sociological, anthropological, ethnographic, and demographic perspectives. However,

a Roma community in almost every urban and rural settlement (integrated into the majority population or geographically separated), but they are not found on the map, which would be valuable both for further research and the correction of existing databases (cf. Ćirković 2018). What is striking is the number of foreign researchers who remained on the territory of Serbia from the 19th to the end of the 20th century to collect valuable data on this topic (Ćirković 2018, 231–235). However, the drawbacks of such large projects are inevitable, so today the Serbian academic community still faces numerous problems that do not belong to the academic domain at all. The first systematic study of a Roma community in Serbia began in 2016, continued in 2017 and ended in 2018, conducted by researchers from the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.¹⁷ Although the volume of the material, and therefore the corpus, is small, this research resulted in numerous scientific studies which introduced Serbia into the global academic community of Romology (cf. Sikimić 2017; Ćirković & Mirić 2017; Mirić 2019a; 2019b; 2021a; 2021b; Sikimić 2018 (ed.); Ćirković & Mirić 2022; Mirić & Ćirković 2022).

3.1. *Census data on the Roma population in Serbia*

The last census of population, households and dwellings was conducted in 2022, and currently only data on ethnicity and gender are available. According to these data, the number of Roma in Serbia stands at 131,936. Mother tongue data is unavailable, so it is not possible to state how many Roma have declared the Romani language as their mother tongue. According to the 2011 census, 147,604 citizens declared Roma ethnicity, while 100,668 speakers declared Romani as their mother tongue. These numbers are important because the percentage of Roma in relation to the total population of the Republic of Serbia enables the realisation of linguistic and other rights. It is important to note that the census numbers are lower than the estimated number of Roma and speakers of Romani in Serbia, as is the case with other countries in Central and Southern Europe (Surdu 2016, 139–148).¹⁸

these studies are generally not suitable or reliable for linguistic research (for an overview of the research and literature, cf. Ćirković 2018).

¹⁷ The research was carried out within the project “Language and Folklore of the Roma in Knjaževac”, supported by the National Library “Njegoš” from Knjaževac, and financed in 2016 and 2017 by the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia. The research was continued in 2018 within the project “Language, folklore and migrations in the Balkans” of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA.

¹⁸ According to the study “Romska naselja, uslovi života i mogućnosti integracije Roma u Srbiji” (Roma settlements, living conditions and the possibilities of the integration of the Roma in Serbia) (Jakšić & Bašić 2005), the estimated number of Roma is 247,591.

The reasons for the discrepancy between census data and data in the field are numerous – as stigmatised and marginalised Roma have a tendency to conceal their ethnic and linguistic identity. Through self-identification as part of a more prestigious ethnicity (majority or minority), the members of the Roma community avoid such discrimination, stigmatisation and marginalisation. In addition, frequent work and temporary migration to the countries of Western Europe make it difficult to determine the exact number of Roma, given their frequent fluctuation. Furthermore, mixed marriages should be taken into consideration as mixed marriages between members of the Roma and other ethnic communities are common, while strict census questionnaires do not provide for ethnic pluralism. Therefore, descendants from mixed marriages may have problems declaring only one ethnic affiliation. The situation with the “mother tongue” is similar since Romani has always been in contact with other languages in the recent and distant past alike. Therefore, in most cases, the Roma are bilingual or multilingual (Mirić & Ćirković 2022, 19). During early childhood the Roma acquire Romani as the language of their family environment, simultaneously acquiring the Serbian language within the broader social context, thus rendering both languages as their mother tongue (Mirić 2019a). The situation with census data and questionnaires is similar to that of ethnicity – the questionnaires do not allow for the expression of two mother tongues, so during the Census, the members of the Roma community must choose one. In multi-ethnic communities, mixed marriages, and conditions of stigmatisation and discrimination, it is only to be expected that linguistic identity remains concealed, and that during the census, efforts are made to declare the more prestigious majority language as the mother tongue.¹⁹

3.2. *The linguistic rights of the Roma in Serbia*

As already mentioned, the linguistic rights of the Roma, as a minority ethnic group, are recognised by the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, ratified in 2006, but also by the *Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts*, which forms part of the local legislation of the Republic of Serbia. *The Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts* is harmonised with the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia and guarantees the use of minority languages in areas where they constitute a significant part of the population, and state bodies, organisations entrusted with public powers, bodies of autonomous provinces and local self-government units are obliged to conduct proceedings in the mi-

¹⁹ Even in the Census conducted in 2022, the introduction of ethnic and linguistic pluralism was not considered, and imprecise data can be expected when it comes to the number of Roma and Romani as a mother tongue in Serbia.

minority language. In addition, the right to education in the minority language in the state institutions of the autonomous provinces is guaranteed, as well as the right to use their first and last names in their own language, and in areas where there is a significant population, traditional local place names, street names, settlements and topographical signs are also written in their language.²⁰

In addition, the *Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities* stipulates that a local self-government unit is obliged to introduce the language of a national minority into official use if, according to the last population census, at least 15% of the members of that minority live on its territory.²¹ The official use of the language and scripts of the national minority also includes the right of MPs – members of the national minority to address the parliament in their own language if they represent a national minority which makes up at least 2% of the total population. The decision on the introduction of the language of the national minority into official use is made by the local self-government assembly. The same percentage of members of the national minority (2%) is also necessary to exercise the right to address state authorities in their own language and to have the right to receive an answer in that language (Bašić 2018, 16).

Although the laws regulate the rights of national minorities, including the Roma, the standardisation of the language is often mentioned as one of the problems concerning the Romani language in Serbia (but not only in Serbia). In 2013, the National Council of the Romani National Minority adopted a resolution on the standardisation of Romani, however, according to Lukin Saitović (2018, 32–33), the standardisation of Romani in Serbia is a permanent, long-term process, which began during the period of the existence of the former Yugoslavia, resulting in divergent processes of language planning in the states which emerged after the break-up of Yugoslavia.

Since the use of Romani in Serbia is guaranteed by various legal frameworks, the visibility of elements of Romani in the linguistic landscape of Serbia which stem from formal institutions and organisations are considered a top-down level of language use. Further in the text, the application of the right to the visibility of Romani as a minority language will be considered in those domains guaranteed by the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, and the *Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts of the Republic of Serbia*, as well

²⁰ Article 10 of the Constitution, “Official Gazette of RS”, no. 98/2006, according to Bašić 2018, 14.

²¹ Paragraph 2, Article 10 of the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, according to Bašić 2018, 15.

as other relevant laws pertaining to the regulation of the status and rights of national minorities.²²

4. *The top-down level and official use of the Romani language in the public space of Serbia*

4.1. *The use of the Romani language in the domain of law (judicial and administrative authorities)*

According to the population and household Census of the Republic of Serbia from 2011, the number of Roma in the Republic of Serbia is exactly 2.05%.²³ *The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, as well as the *Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts in the Republic of Serbia* guarantee the Roma community the right to speak in their native language in the Parliament, local self-government units, state bodies, organisations entrusted with public powers, the bodies of autonomous provinces and local self-government units. In state bodies where legal proceedings are conducted, such proceedings can be conducted in the Romani language.

In order to uphold this right, the Higher Court in Belgrade employs two court interpreters for Romani.²⁴ An example of the violation of this guaranteed right in practice proved to be decisive in the case of proceedings against a defendant in 2016 in the Supreme Court of Cassation in Belgrade, because the court failed to “inform the defendant, who declared that his mother tongue was Romani, about the right to use his language and nor was the defendant’s statement in this regard recorded”.²⁵

Apart from the aforementioned laws, the *Law on the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia* also enables MPs to speak in their own language at sessions of the National Assembly, as well as to submit written documents in their own language. According to the law and the rules of the National Assembly, the

²² The language rights of the Roma in Serbia have been commented on several times in works by Mirjana Mirić (cf. e.g. Mirić 2019a; 2021a).

²³ On this occasion, the data from the 2011 Census are cited as this Census data was analysed in the aforementioned studies, on the basis of which we can discuss the linguistic rights of the Roma in Serbia. Data from the census conducted in 2022 are available only for nationality and gender, according to which the percentage of Roma in the total population of Serbia is 1.98%.

²⁴ The names of court interpreters for Romani, along with their contact information, are listed on the website of the Higher Court in Belgrade (available at: <https://www.bg.vi.sud.rs/tekst/539/sudski-tumaci-za-romski-jezik.php>, accessed on 30/5/2023)

²⁵ The reasoning of the Supreme Court of Cassation PR 14/2016 is available at: <https://www.vk.sud.rs/sr-lat/kzz-pr-142016> accessed on 20/4/2023.

Secretary General of the National Assembly is obliged to provide simultaneous translation of his presentation, as well as that of any documents submitted (Bašić 2018, 16). Therefore, if there are members of parliament of Roma nationality in the National Assembly, they are able to use their own language. Although the Roma are included in the work of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia as deputies (it is inappropriate to mention their names here), in practice they do not exercise their right to speak in their own language at the sessions of the National Assembly.

4.2. *The use of the Romani language in education*

Today, the Romani language in Serbia is considered standardised (Đurić 2012), which has essentially enabled the introduction of optional classes in Romani in the form of the subject the *Romani language with elements of national culture*, for which purpose Romani language textbooks were created (cf. e.g. Đurić & Koko 2018).

The problem which arises in connection with the realization of this Roma national minority right is the availability and distribution of textbooks. Textbooks are not available in all schools to all teachers, and the teachers of the Romani language create teaching materials and improvised textbooks themselves (Mirić 2019a, 167; Mirić 2021a, 40). Since the *Romani language with elements of national culture* is an optional subject in primary schools in Serbia, and is organised only on the basis of a “sufficient” number of registered students, it is not entirely transparent (the official website of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia does not have such data) in which schools it is possible to attend such optional classes and on what the organisation of classes depends. According to Marija Aleksandrović, the optional subject *Romani language with elements of national culture* is implemented in 68 schools throughout Serbia with 2,467 students from in elementary schools (Aleksandrović 2021, 221). This number of schools and students has fluctuated slightly from 2016 to 2021, the period the author observed (Aleksandrović 2021, 222).”

One of the problems is the insufficient number of qualified teachers for Romani. Although in 2015 the Faculty of Philology of the University of Belgrade established the Department for the Romani Language, which would enable both Roma and non-Roma students to acquire the necessary qualifications to teach Romani in schools (Bašić 2018, 24–25; Aleksandrović 2021, 222), the department was closed because of a lack of interested students (Ćirković 2018, 245). In addition to the Department for the Romani Language at the Faculty of Philology, the “Mihailo Pavlov” College of Vocational Studies for Educators in Vršac (Aleksandrović 2021, 222) also provides training for teaching staff,

but so far no information has been published about their possible employment opportunities.

4.3. *The use of the Romani language in the media and Internet content*

The aforementioned legal acts also serve to regulate the use of the Romani language as the language of the Roma national minority in the field of information. Two public services broadcast programmes in Romani – Radio Television Vojvodina (RTV) and Radio Television Serbia (RTS). On RTV's second channel, news programmes are broadcast daily in the languages of national minorities, including in Romani, while specialist programmes have a special programming scheme.²⁶ RTS, more precisely Radio Belgrade 1, broadcasts the show *Romano Them* every day, with the most important national and international news in Romani and Serbian.²⁷ It is important to note that the RTV website is available in the languages of national minorities, therefore also in Romani, and the programme in Romani,²⁸ *Amen Adjes*, also has an Internet presentation in Romani.²⁹

The strategy for the social inclusion of the Roma community in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022-2030 23/2022-3 envisages “Empowering Roma men and women to access their rights and preserve their identity” (Measure 1.2.) through various measures, including the establishment of cultural institutions, but also the development of informative programmes in Romani in areas inhabited by a significant percentage of members of the Roma national minority.³⁰ The strategy does not include special measures for the printed media, however, the strategy for the improvement of the position of the Roma in the Republic of Serbia from 2009 promoted the publication of print media in Romani.³¹

The competent institutions for implementing these measures are the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue and the National

²⁶ The programming schedule is available at: https://www.rtv.rs/sr_ci/program/drugi-program/satnica (accessed on 21/4/2023).

²⁷ Information about the programme is available at: <https://www.rts.rs/lat/radio/radio-beograd-1/emisija/3556/romano-them.html?s=3556> (accessed on 21/04/2023).

²⁸ The Roma version of the RTV website is available at: <https://www.rtv.rs/rom/> (accessed on 21/4/2023).

²⁹ Available at: <https://media.rtv.rs/rom/amen-adjes/80423> (accessed on 21/4/2023).

³⁰ The text of the strategy is available at: <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2022/23/1> (accessed on 21/4/2023).

³¹ The text of the strategy for improving the position of the Roma in the Republic of Serbia 27/2009-3 is available at: <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2009/27/1/reg> (accessed on 21/4/2023).

Council of the Roma National Minority of the Republic of Serbia. Bearing in mind the aforementioned strategy, as well as the competent institutions for the implementation of that strategy, namely in the field of information and culture, it is important to note that these same institutions fail to implement the legal frameworks prescribed by both the Republic of Serbia and the European Community. For example, the National Council of the Roma National Minority's website offers content and necessary information only in the Serbian language despite Romani being the language of the National Council's website.³² The National Council of the Roma National Minority (as well as other national minority councils) has been assigned numerous responsibilities in the field of the official use of language and writing, one of which is to determine "the traditional names of local self-government units, settlements and other geographical names in the language of the national minority if the language of the national minority is in official use in the area of the local self-government unit or settlement, and the names determined by the national council will then be introduced into official use in addition to the names in the Serbian language" (Bašić 2018, 17). However, it should be noted that the Romani language is not recognised as an official language in any community in Serbia, and therefore, the names of streets and settlements, road signs and the like have not been translated into Romani.

Furthermore, the Government of the Republic of Serbia has 25 ministries, of which only the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure (MCTI) offers content translated into Romani,³³ meaning that with the exception of Romani, Serbian (the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets) and English, no other national minority language is provided. Some ministries translate content into English, but no other ministry, apart from the aforementioned MCTI, has content in any of the national minority languages used in Serbia. What is particularly surprising is the failure of the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, as the umbrella institution for the implementation of the rights of national minorities, to provide content in any of the languages of national minorities, choosing instead to limit the information it provides in the Serbian language only (Cyrillic and Latin alphabet).³⁴ Although the visibility of Romani on the MCTI website is an example of good practice in the implementation of laws and regulations, the criteria for choosing this particular ministry as opposed to any other for the inclusion of Romani in the website's

³² The National Council of the Roma National Minority website is available at: <https://romskinacionalnisavet.org.rs/rom/> with the 'Romani language' option (accessed on 21/4/2023).

³³ The website of the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure in the Romani language is available at: <https://www.mgsi.gov.rs/rom> (accessed on 21/4/2023).

³⁴ The website of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue is available at: <https://www.minljmpdd.gov.rs/> (accessed on 21/4/2023).

visual presentation is not entirely clear. As a national minority, a socially vulnerable, marginalised and stigmatised community, as well as a community often discriminated against, the members of the Roma population would presumably require information in their own language in the presentations of many other ministries, as well as many other relevant institutions.

4.4. *Different types of inscriptions in the Serbian public space*

Inscriptions in the Romani language in the Serbian public space belong to the top-down level of language use because they are part of strategic state or local self-government policies. As previously mentioned, although Romani can be “seen” on the Internet sites of radio and television channels which broadcast programmes in Romani as well as selected Internet presentations, signs in Romani in public spaces are hardly to be seen at all.

This chapter will focus on the inscriptions intended for the Roma population (in Serbian and Romani), documented in the field research carried out by the researchers from the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA.³⁵ Since they represent inscriptions of public importance, initiated by institutions of local self-government, they can be seen as elements of the top-down level of the use of the Romani language.

Part of the photo-documentation analysed here was collected during field research in the city of Knjaževac and the surrounding area. According to the 2011 Census, in the municipality of Knjaževac, 789 residents declared themselves as Roma, while 673 residents stated that their mother tongue was Romani.³⁶ The data from the 2011 Census and the 2022 Census for the municipality of Knjaževac differ to the extent that in the last Census (2022) only 680 residents declared themselves as Roma. While it is not currently possible to discuss the reasons for the dramatic drop in the number of Roma in the municipality of Knjaževac, the reduction in their number may be a consequence of continued stigmatisation, a lower percentage of Roma ethnicity, frequent migration, and the like. In the city of Knjaževac, one part of the Roma community live in a special Roma settlement (Roma mahala), separated from the city centre, while the other part are integrated into the majority Serbian population and reside in the urban area of the city. In the village of Minićevo, which is located near the town of Knjaževac, the Roma population are integrated into the majority population, i.e. they do not inhabit a separate and isolated settlement. The Roma

³⁵ All photographs were archived in the Digital Archive of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA.

³⁶ According to unofficial data, the number of Roma in the territory of the municipality of Knjaževac is approximately 1,500.



Image 1: Inscription in a Roma settlement in Knjaževac

in the municipality of Knjaževac are bilingual so they are equally proficient in Serbian and Romani.

The photographs referred to in this place are documented in the Roma settlement in Knjaževac, where the majority of the city's Roma live. In 2016, on one of the Roma houses, the inscription DEČJI KLUB ROMA (Roma Children's Club) was recorded in the Serbian language and Cyrillic script (Image 1). The same photograph includes another inscription (the photo is not clear enough to see) OD 1.7.2015. POČINJE OBDANIŠTE SA RADOM (The kindergarten starts working from 1.7.2015) in the Serbian language and Latin script.

Based on the content of the inscription, it can be concluded that in 2015 the house was intended to be used as a kindergarten for the Roma children from the settlement, and it can be assumed that the opening of the kindergarten was either a local self-government initiative or part of another local project. Details about the work of the kindergarten are not known (such as the number of children, who initiated the opening of the kindergarten, etc.). All that is known is that in 2016, when the field research was carried out and when the photograph was documented, the kindergarten was no longer working. Considering that the inscription is written in Serbian, using both Cyrillic and Latin scripts, the photograph testifies to the (non)use of the Romani language as well as its definitive invisibility in researched community. The project which was clearly intended for Roma children and the Roma population involving a house in a Roma settle-

Image 2: Inscription
 “Be a foster family”
 (Aven dujto familia)
 in front of the Pančevo Town Hall



ment which had been selected as the location for a kindergarten, as well as the inscriptions themselves, which contain important information intended for the target group, disregard the language of the community for which the entire initiative was intended, thus designating Romani as one of lower prestige. The time span from 2015 to 2016, when the kindergarten was operational, shows a time-limited initiative, which either failed to flourish in the local Roma community or was not supported by further funding.

In Knjaževac and its surroundings, the local library – the National Library “Njegoš” – works actively and intensively to promote Romani, organising workshops for Roma children several times a year, and in several elementary schools in Knjaževac and its surroundings, optional classes are held in the subject *Romani language with elements of national culture* (Mirić 2019a; 2021a).

Six years later, in field research on the visibility of different languages in multilingual border regions, conducted within the *Semiotic Landscapes of Multilingual Border Regions* project,³⁷ only one inscription in Romani was docu-

³⁷ This is a bilateral project carried out by the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA and the “Friedrich Schiller” University Jena, which in the period from 2022 to 2024 is financed by the Ministry of Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

mented in the city of Pančevo, representing a rare example of the use of Romani in the public space and on official signage. Pančevo is a multi-ethnic and multilingual city, where the Serbian, Romanian, Hungarian, Slovak and Macedonian languages are in official use and the signs on public sector buildings are written in the official languages. Although the Roma are the fourth largest national minority according to the census, the Romani language is not in official use. On the inscription cited and analysed here, Romani is used alongside the Serbian, Hungarian, Romanian, Macedonian, Russian and Slovak languages (in the official script of each of the mentioned languages) in a call for citizens to offer foster care, published by the Centre for Social Work (Image 2).

The photograph shows AVEN DUJTO FAMILIA written in Romani, in the Latin script (translation (literal): Be second family). Since there are no inscriptions in other parts of the city – either official or unofficial (or the researchers did not observe any other inscriptions during their research) it can be concluded that the functional message of this particular inscription takes precedence over the official use of language in the public space. In practice, it has been shown that Roma families are often foster families, hence the appearance of Romani on the mentioned inscription.

Both of the mentioned inscriptions have a functional use, with the first inscription (the inscription in the Roma settlement in Knjaževac) being in the Serbian language, while the second (the inscription in Pančevo) is in Romani. The initiators of both inscriptions are local institutions. The inscription in the Roma settlement in Knjaževac was probably initiated by a local non-governmental organisation or one of the institutions within the local self-government, while the second inscription was initiated by the Centre for Social Work and the “Duga” Foster Care Association. Although these institutions can be viewed as official institutions, it seems that the functionality of the content of the inscriptions, and therefore the use or non-use of Romani in the inscriptions, and not its official use, takes priority over the status of Romani itself. In addition, the use of Romani in Pančevo, and the non-use in the Romani settlement in Knjaževac may indicate the practice of multilingualism in the settlements where the inscriptions were located. Knjaževac is a monolingual town, without any official practice of using Romani, while the town of Pančevo is officially multilingual, and the use of Romani, although not in official use, is an indicator of the practice of multilingual inscriptions and writing in different languages. Furthermore, in 2015, when the inscription was placed in the Roma settlement in Knjaževac, there were still no classes in Romani, and the Roma population itself was not aware of the possibility of signs being written in Romani. The question also arises as to whether the Roma community was even involved in the implementation of the project to open a kindergarten in this Roma settlement. Pančevo, on the other hand, belongs to the area (Vojvodina) where education in Romani

exists, and therefore the appearance of Romani on an official inscription should not be considered unusual.

5. *The bottom-up level and use of the Romani language in the linguistic landscape in Serbia – field research*

An examination of various legal frameworks, such as the top-down level of language use, whose goal, but also obligation, are to include the Romani language as a national minority language, and to promote the visibility of Romani and the Romani community in the public space in Serbia, indicates only the partial implementation of relevant laws and the realization of the Roma's linguistic rights. The analysis of the domains of use of Romani provided for in the *Charter on Regional or Minority Languages* and the *Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts* showed that Romani is nominally included in those domains anticipated in both the *Charter* and the *Law*, but that the real situation in Serbia is significantly more complex, and more should be done to insist and work on an even more intense visibility of Romani, especially considering the status of the members of this community in Serbian society. It can be assumed that the greater visibility of the Roma community and their language would promote intercultural, multilingual and multiethnic tolerance, especially when it comes to the Roma.

It is crucial to conduct research on the visibility of Romani in the Serbian public space and its linguistic landscape at the bottom-up level, as the level of language use in the public space based on the initiatives of individuals and informal groups. Bearing in mind the dispersion of the Roma community, as well as the heterogeneity of Romani in terms of the existence of different Roma varieties on the territory of Serbia, such studies require a systematic approach, on the one hand, and human resources, which the scientific community in Serbia does not have access to in sufficient amounts, on the other. In various field studies of Roma communities and the Romani language on the territory of Serbia in the period from 2016 to today, material which only partially shows the visibility of Romani in Serbia has been documented, i.e. although it represents a solid methodological and theoretical basis for further research, it does not prove the visibility of this minority language.

The material was documented in several projects, from 2010 to 2023, involving the researchers from the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, and for the purposes of analysing the visibility of Romani, it will be divided into 1) sacral inscriptions; 2) funerary inscriptions, or inscriptions on tombstones. The photo-documentation method was applied in the collection of this material, and the photographs were archived in the Digital Archive of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA. Inscriptions of both types belong to the bottom-up level of

language use because they were created and are visible thanks to the initiatives of individuals and/or informal Roma groups (societies, associations, etc.). The photo-documented inscriptions in Romani will be accompanied by a discussion of the preliminary results obtained from a pilot sociolinguistic questionnaire in several Romani communities on the territory of Serbia, which was created for the purposes of researching the vulnerability of different languages in Serbia as part of the VLingS project of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA.

5.1. *Inscriptions on sacred monuments*

There are very few differences between Roma traditional culture, especially Orthodox-Christian, and the traditional culture of the majority Serbian population of the same confessional affiliation. Therefore, the traditional holidays, the rituals practiced during the celebration of the traditional holidays and the elements of the rituals are largely the same. However, in some Roma communities, a holiday dedicated to the non-canonised Roma saint (Aunty) Bibija is celebrated. This feast day is celebrated only by Roma of the Orthodox faith, in the area south of the Sava and Danube, and north of Niš. It is important to note that the date of the celebration dedicated to Bibija differs among various Roma communities in the territories where it exists. In some communities, it is linked to Easter, which is why the holiday is a movable feast, or it is linked to a specific date – January 31 (Ćirković 2021).³⁸

Several monuments dedicated to Bibija have been documented in field research to date. The monument in the Belgrade Roma settlement of Orlovsko naselje was documented in 2010 (Image 3), the monument in the vicinity of Knjaževac was documented in 2016 (Image 4) and the monument in Vlaško Polje in 2018 (Image 5). All the monuments were erected on the initiative of the local communities (and possibly individuals) where the monuments are located. This would mean that the inhabitants of the aforementioned settlements created both the monuments and the inscriptions on them themselves.

The iconography on the monuments is completely different. On the monument in the Orlovsko settlement (Image 3) there is a reproduction of the classic icon of Aunty Bibija, which is considered to be the work of P. Daničić (Ćirković 2021, 123), while a reproduction of the icon of Saint Paraskeva of the Balkans is found on the monument in Vlaško Polje (Image 5). Apart from the cross at the top, the monument in the vicinity of Knjaževac (Image 4) has no other iconography, but only an inscription.

³⁸ The settlements mapped according to the date of the celebration of the holiday dedicated to Bibija can be found at: <https://rm.coe.int/factsheets-on-romani-culture-2-5-bibi-and-bibijako-djive-in-serbia/1680aac380> (accessed on 24/4/2023).

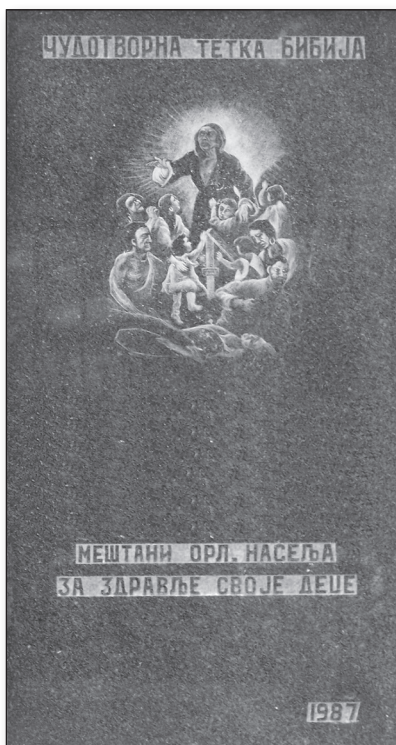


Image 3:
Monument to Aunty Bibija in the Orlovska settlement in Belgrade (top, left)

Image 4:
Monument to Aunty Bibija in Knjaževac (top, right)

Image 5:
Monument to Aunty Bibija in Vlaško Polje (left)

The monument in Orlovsko naselje (Image 3) includes an inscription in the Serbian language, in the Cyrillic script:

Serbian	English
ЧУДОТВОРНА ТЕТКА БИБИЈА.	The miracle worker Aunt Bibija
МЕШТАНИ ОРЛ. НАСЕЉА ЗА ЗДРАВЉЕ СВОЈЕ ДЕЦЕ.	The residents of the Orl. Settlement for the health of their children

Image 3: Transcription of the inscription in Romani translated into English

The monument in Vlaško Polje (Image 5) also contains an inscription in the Romani and Serbian languages (both written in the Latin script) below the reproduced icon of Saint Paraskeva of the Balkans:

Romani	Serbian	English
БАХТАЛИ Е ВИБИ		Happy Bibija
	SREĆNA BIBIЈАКА	

Image 4: Transcription of the inscription in Romani translated into English

Unlike these two monuments, the inscription on the monument in the vicinity of Knjaževac (Image 4) contains the date when the holiday is celebrated (January 31), the year the monument was erected, (2009), and the text:

Romani	English
БАХТАЛО БИБИЈАКО ЂИВЕ	Happy Aunt's day

Image 5: Transcription of the inscription in Romani translated into English

The listed sacred monuments provide valuable documentary evidence of the initiatives of local Roma communities to mark the elements of their identity – the celebration of this Roma feast day is important in those communities where it is celebrated, although not all communities have sacred landmarks in the form of monuments. In addition, the inscriptions also affirm language as a marker of identity. The variations in the Romani language on the inscriptions on these sacred monuments are completely understandable and expected. This can be seen in the script (the standardised Romani script is the Latin alphabet, which also contains graphemes for specific aspirated sounds in the Romani language, e.g. *kh*, *čh*, *čh*, etc., while the inscription on the monument in the vicinity of Knjaževac (Image 4) is in the Cyrillic script), as well as in certain linguistic elements (e.g. on the inscription on the monument in Vlaško Polje (Image 5) *bahtalo* is written instead of *baxtalo* – i.e. instead of the grapheme for the velar fricative *x*, the grapheme of the classic Latin script *h* is used). Fluctuations in the writing of the Romani language are also observed in other domains of the use

of the Romani language, both informal – in conversations on various internet platforms (Leggio & Matras 2017), and official – in classes, for example, but also in texts published in Romani.

What can be said for certain is that regardless of the lack of education in the Romani language and literacy in the mother tongue of the native speakers of Romani, its stigmatisation and lower prestige compared to the official Serbian language, in some Roma communities there is an awareness among the speakers of Romani that it can be written (Images 4 and 5). Despite the rudimentary nature of the text, the inscriptions indicate that there are readers of those inscriptions since they are written in Cyrillic and Latin scripts which do not differ from the scripts in Serbia (both scripts are in official use). Literate readers thus receive and understand the message contained in the text of the inscription.

5.2. *Funerary inscriptions or tombstone inscriptions*

Numerous research studies in Serbia have been dedicated to inscriptions on tombstones to date (see chapter 1.1.). These mainly deal with minority and/or endangered languages, so the importance of such research is great. Roma tombstones are difficult to identify as the names and surnames of the deceased or those who erected the monuments are often identical to Serbian names and surnames. They can therefore only be distinguished according to confessional affiliation as Roma Orthodox Christians have names and surnames typical of Serbian Orthodox Christians, while Roma Muslims most often have Muslim names and surnames. In addition, members of the Roma community are buried in officially established cemeteries, and are not separated within the cemetery area. Field research carried out to date, including the photo-documentation of tombstones, has not yielded materials which would indicate the existence of inscriptions on tombstones in the Romani language. The only exception are the recently documented tombstones at the Zbeg cemetery in the neighbourhood of the Borča settlement on the outskirts of Belgrade, which currently represents the only corpus of inscriptions on tombstones in Romani.³⁹

At the Zbeg cemetery in the Belgrade neighbourhood of Borča, the documented tombstones with inscriptions in Romani belong to Romani Muslims. The names and surnames of the deceased, as well as their relatives who erected

³⁹ This discovery was made by my colleague Snežana Stanković, a postdoctoral student at the “Friedrich Schiller” University Jena (Germany), who during her research observed inscriptions in Romani, documenting a few of them. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my colleague Snežana Stanković, who shared her knowledge and sent several documented photographs of these tombstones with inscriptions in the Romani language, which were accompanied by a systematic photo-documentation of the tombstones at the Zbeg cemetery in Borča.

the monuments, are Muslim. The Muslim monuments in this cemetery are visually noticeable. They are made of white stone and bear symbols of Islam (the crescent moon with a star). The term *nišan* is used for Muslim tombstones, and this term is also used on some of the inscriptions, although the term for 'monument' varies, as the material itself will show. There are no inscriptions in Romani on the monuments of Romani Christians, although it is not possible to identify in any way which Christian monuments are Romani and which are not. The case with the Muslim monuments is similar as only those with an inscription in Romani can be reliably claimed to belong to the Roma. The rest of the Muslim monuments cannot be claimed to be Romani without delving deeper into the demographic and ethnic composition of the inhabitants of the Borča settlement, which will not be included in this study.

The corpus of tombstones with inscriptions in Romani comprises 13 tombstones.⁴⁰ The earliest dated monument with an inscription in Romani bears the year 2007. In addition to inscriptions in Romani, the monuments also include the names and surnames of the deceased (as well as the names of those relatives who share the burial place and the monument), the year of birth and the year of death, and some monuments also bear photographs of the deceased.⁴¹ What can be noted on the largest number of tombstones is Al-Fatiha, the first surah of the Quran.⁴² On all the monuments where it is found in the form of an inscription, it is written in the Latin script, transliterated from the Arabic language.⁴³ From all 13 monuments with inscriptions in Romani, two are written in the Cyrillic (e.g. Image 6), while the rest are in the Latin script (e.g. Image 7). The inscriptions in Romani on the tombstones are mostly "technical" in nature ("Tombstone erected by ...") (Huțanu&Sorescu-Marinković 2016, 34) (Images 6 and 7).

Romani	English
О БАР ВАЗДЕНА	Headstone erected
О ДАД И ДАЈ О ПЕЊА ЕМ О ПРАЛ	Father, mother, sisters and brother

Image 6: Transcription of the inscription in Romani translated into English

⁴⁰ All other monuments, if they have inscriptions, are in Serbian, and one of them has an inscription in the Albanian language.

⁴¹ The canonical and non-canonical elements of tombstones will not be discussed here as that is beyond the topic and scope of this paper.

⁴² Al-Fatiha consists of seven verses, in which a request is made to Allah for guidance and protection from evil.

⁴³ Since the analysis of the Arabic text will not be the subject of the analysis of this paper, the texts of Al-Fatiha, their authentic transliteration and the variability of the orthography will not be discussed further.



Image 6:
Tombstone in the Zbeg Cemetery in Borča

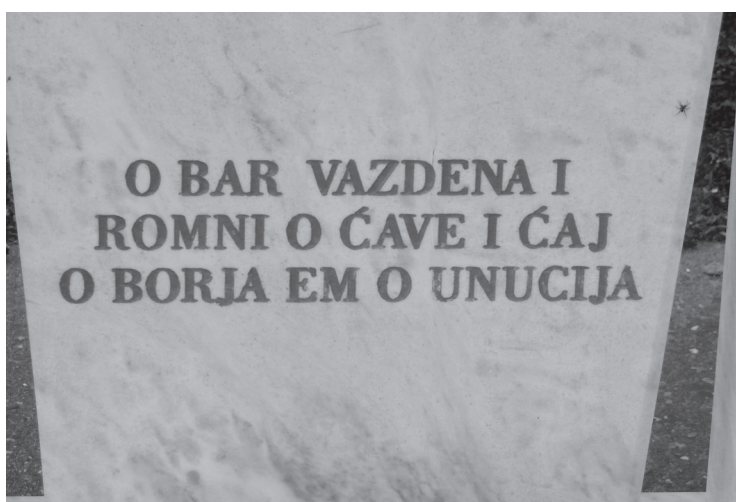


Image 7: Tombstone in the Zbeg Cemetery in Borča

Romani	English
O BAR VAZDENA I	Headstone erected
ROMNI O ĆAVE I ĆAJ	wife, sons and daughter
O BORJA EM O UNUCIJA	daughter-in-law and grandchildren

Image 7: Transcription of the inscription in Romani translated into English

Two inscriptions have a slightly different content, i.e. the inscriptions are not of a “technical” nature (Images 8 and 9).

The inscription in Image 8 contains a formula which expresses the wish for Allah to send the deceased to paradise⁴⁴

Romani	English
ja allah oprostin o grehija sa	[may] Allah forgive all of our sins
e rahmetljenje hem akalje	to the deceased and to these
dujenje hem te rahmeteja	two and that the deceased
chiv ljen ko dzeneti	go to heaven

Image 8: Transcription of the inscription in Romani translated into English

while the inscription in Image 9 contains an emotional statement in both Romani and Serbian:

Romani	Serbian	English
Amari duša		Our soul
Amaro đuli		Our rose
	S ljubavlju najmiliji	With love from your dearest ones

Image 9: Transcription of the inscription in Romani translated into English

On the one hand, the linguistic characteristics of the inscription show that it is an Arli variety of the Romani language,⁴⁵ while on the other hand they demonstrate great variability in the use of terms, orthographic solutions for the sounds of the Romani language, morphological variation and the like. Here, attention will be drawn only to a few linguistic features, while a detailed linguistic analysis of the inscription deserves a separate study.

⁴⁴ The translation of this particular inscription is not literal, but adapted to make the text easier to understand.

⁴⁵ The Muslim Roma, as to be expected, speak the Arli variety of Romani, or another variety belonging to the Balkan branch of Romani dialects.

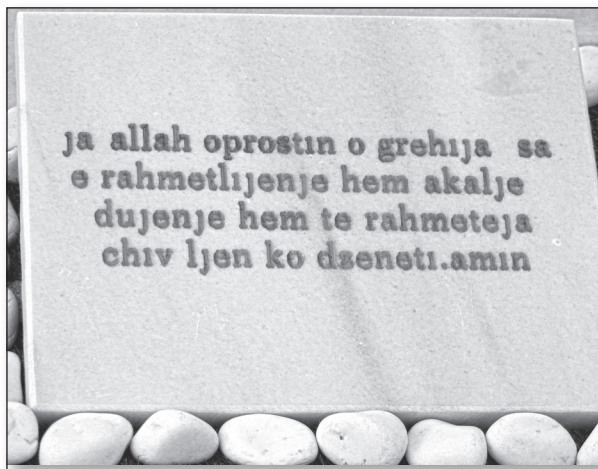


Image 8: Tombstone in the Zbeg Cemetery in Borča



Image 9: Tombstone in the Zbeg Cemetery in Borča

The phonological characteristics of lexemes such as *daj* ‘mother’, *ćaj* ‘daughter’, *penja* ‘sisters’, *hem/em* ‘and’, or the morphological characteristics, e.g. *vazdela* ‘erects’ (present singular), *vazdinje* ‘they erected’ (perfect plural) and others all indicate that the Arli dialect was used on the inscriptions.⁴⁶

The variability is noted in the use of the terms for ‘monument’, where *nišani* ‘tombstone/nišan’, *spomeniko* ‘monument’, and *bar* ‘stone’ are used, as well as in orthographic solutions for Romani sounds: *ćave* and *čave* (from Romani *čhavo* (sg) and *čhave* (pl)) ‘sons’ and *ćaj* (from Romani *čhej/čhaj*) ‘daughter’. The morphological variability is reflected in the borrowed stem of the noun *unuki/unuci/unuc* (from Serbian *unuk* (sg)/*unuci* (pl) ‘grandchild/grandchildren’), while the plural suffix *-ja* retains, e.g. *unukija/unucija/unucja* ‘grandchildren’, *borja/bojra*⁴⁷ ‘daughters-in-law’, as well as in the use of different forms of *vazdel* ‘erect’ – *vzdinđe/vazdinđe* (perfect) ‘they erected’, *vazdela/vazdena* (present) ‘erects.3SG/ erect.3PL’. Such orthographic and morphological variability indicate individual practice in the use of language, as well as individual orthographic interpretation of spoken language.

5.3. *The application of a sociolinguistic questionnaire in researching the use of the Romani language in the linguistic landscape in Serbia*

The use of language in the linguistic landscape, i.e. in the public space, as an important factor in assessing the vitality of a language has not been given adequate attention in studies dealing with this issue. Furthermore, this factor has not been taken into account in the scales used to assess language vitality, and there is no mention of it in the international databases of endangered languages such as UNESCO’s *Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger*, *Ethnologue*, *Endangered Languages Project*. Bearing in mind previous research on the visibility of minority languages in Serbia, such as Banat-Bulgarian, Vlach, Romanian and others (see chapter 1.1.), as well as the importance of language use in the public space for assessing its vitality and status, the sociolinguistic questionnaire created for the purposes of research into the endangerment/vitality of the languages registered as endangered in Serbia⁴⁸ also includes several questions which examine

⁴⁶ The typical form of the conjunction ‘and’ in Romani is *thaj*, while *hem/em* is borrowed from the Turkish language.

⁴⁷ It concerns the metathesis of the final sound if the noun stem *bori* and the plural suffix *-ja*.

⁴⁸ The sociolinguistic questionnaire was developed by researchers engaged in the Vulnerable Languages and Linguistic Varieties in Serbia (VLingS) project, financed by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia within the IDEA program. For more about the project, see: <https://vlings.rs/> (accessed on 4/26/2023). The questionnaire is universal and uniform for all the investigated languages, only its form differs from language to

the knowledge of native speakers regarding the existence of inscriptions, both public and private, in the investigated languages:

- a) Are there any inscriptions in Romani on/in the buildings of state institutions (health centres, municipalities, schools...)? (if the answer is “yes” – where did you see those inscriptions?)
- b) Are there any official inscriptions in Romani on the streets (e.g. street names, settlements)? (if the answer is “yes” – what kind of inscriptions have you seen, where did you see those inscriptions?)
- c) Have you ever seen any inscriptions in Romani (e.g. inscriptions on monuments, graffiti...)? (if the answer is “yes” – what kind of inscriptions have you seen, where did you see them?)
- d) Are there inscriptions on gravestones in Romani?
- e) Are there inscriptions on your family’s tombstones?

Given that this sociolinguistic questionnaire is the first to examine the most diverse domains of the use of endangered languages, it had an initial pilot version, which for the Romani language was tested by Svetlana Ćirković and Mirjana Mirić in the Romani settlements in Knjaževac, Belgrade (the Mali Mokri Lug and Bežanijska kosa settlements), Bavanište (the Kovin municipality) and Zrenjanin.⁴⁹ A total of 62 pilot sociolinguistic questionnaires were completed for Romani, and the answers to the aforementioned questions show, on the one hand, the uniformity of the answers, i.e. that Romani is not in official use, while, on the other, Romani is partially used in the private sphere. Table 1 shows the results of the questionnaire regarding the visibility of Romani in public spaces.

language, whereby the question for the Romani language is formulated as: *Are there any inscriptions on tombstones in Romani?*, while for Banat-Bulgarian it reads: *Are there any inscriptions on tombstones in Paulician?* For more about creating sociolinguistic questionnaires, see: Sokolovska, Sorescu-Marinković & Mirić (in preparation).

⁴⁹ In the second phase, the questionnaire was reworked based on the experiences of the researchers who carried out field research during 2022 in all the ethnolinguistic communities covered by the VLingS project. The revised sociolinguistic questionnaire, version 2.0, will be applied in research in 2023 in the different Romani communities in Serbia.

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Are there inscriptions in Romani on/in the buildings of state institutions (health centres, municipalities, schools...)?	1	55	6
Are there official inscriptions in Romani on the streets (e.g. street names, settlements)?	0	56	6
Have you ever seen any inscriptions in Romani (e.g. inscriptions on monuments, graffiti...)?	12	47	3
Are there inscriptions on tombstones in Romani?	12	42	8
Are there any inscriptions on your family's tombstones?	2	59	1

Table 1: The results of the applied sociolinguistic questionnaire in the domain of the visibility of the Romani language in the public space.

Out of 62 completed questionnaires, in response to question a) *Are there any inscriptions in Romani on/in the buildings of state institutions (health centres, municipalities, schools...)?* - the answer in 55 cases was "no", in 6 cases "I don't know", while only one answer was "yes". To question b) *Are there any official inscriptions in Romani on the streets (e.g. street names, settlements)?* - 56 research participants answered "no", while 6 participants answered "I don't know". The participants' answers to questions c) and d) are rather thought-provoking, and consequently should provide the stimulus for further research. When asked question c) *Have you ever seen any inscriptions in Romani (e.g. inscriptions on monuments, graffiti...)?* - most of the participants, 47 of them in total answered "no", 3 participants answered "I don't know", while 12 answered "yes". The participants who are aware of the existence of inscriptions in Romani mentioned graffiti and swear-words, which they had seen in public places such as on the walls of buildings, and park benches. A number of participants said that they had seen inscriptions on tombstones, which is a very significant discovery. What is important to note is that those research participants who provided answers regarding the existence of inscriptions in Romani on tombstones, mentioned the Bežanija Cemetery in Belgrade as a place where inscriptions in Romani on tombstones can be found. The question regarding the existence of inscriptions in Romani on tombstones (d) produced answers of the following type - 42 participants in the research indicated "no", 8 answered with "I don't know", while 12 participants answered that inscriptions in Romani on tombstones exist. The Bežanija Cemetery in Belgrade was mentioned again as a cemetery where such inscriptions can be found. The

answers to the last question (f) about the existence of inscriptions in Romani on the tombstones belonging to the respondents' families show that as many as 59 participants claim that there are no inscriptions in Romani on the tombstones in their families, with only one participant answering with "I don't know" and two participants with "yes".

Although there are relatively few answers about the presence and use of Romani on tombstones, the prominent and most frequently cited Bežanija Cemetery in Belgrade remains a place for future research. The prevailing response of "no" to the aforementioned questions, including those examining the usage of Romani within official institution and in the public space, indicates that, based on previous research, Romani is not visible within the public sphere of Serbia.

6. *Discussion and concluding remarks*

In this study, the analysis of the use of the Romani language in the public space and the linguistic landscape in Serbia has raised several important questions concerning both the legally regulated use of this language and its private use in the public space in Serbia, on the one hand, and methodological issues, on the other. The Romani language is only partially visible in the public space in Serbia, despite its use and visibility being guaranteed by the constitution, the laws harmonised with it, and international conventions, just like other minority languages. The analysis of the domains of use of Romani in public spaces ostensibly shows the visibility of Romani. In order to investigate the real picture in more detail, it is necessary to include interviews with the enforcers of the right to use Romani in the research, such as court interpreters, members of parliament, and persons engaged in the National Council of the Romani National Minority. This would provide a clearer picture of whether and to what extent members of the Roma community exercise their right to use Romani in court cases and in the National Assembly, as well as in addressing the National Council for the realisation of the right to use Romani on public signs, given that this body has the authority to initiate such action. In addition, the lack of data on the potential organisation of teaching in Romani for the subject *Romani language with elements of national culture* contributes significantly to the inadequate representation of Romani in this domain. Although the conditions for the use of Romani as a minority language within the public domain and in public spaces are prescribed by laws and conventions, it seems that the implementation of the law in Serbia should be more flexible when it comes to Romani. Given that the attitude of the majority of the population towards the Roma and the Romani language remains discriminatory, and that even today Romani does not enjoy a higher status than in the past prior to the introduction of rights regulated by law, those who are responsible for the visibility of Romani should be more motivated to

advocate for a more tolerant attitude in the application of laws and conventions. Although the bottom-up level of language use depends on individuals and organised groups and their initiatives, it seems that the literacy of native language speakers, as well as the awareness of Romani speakers that they can write in their language, could be a significant factor in the use of Romani in the private sphere, serving to make it much more visible than it is today.

Research into the linguistic landscape as a sociolinguistic subdiscipline shows that the use of language in the public space is an important factor which indicates the status of a language, its vitality, and the attitude of speakers towards their own and other languages, and that research into the linguistic landscape is important for the general sociolinguistic picture of a language. The findings of linguistic landscape research may also serve as the basis for further strategies and concrete steps in language planning and the development of language policies.

The Romani language is still marginalised and stigmatised in Serbia, as well as in European countries in general, even though significant progress has been made in the field of human rights and the rights of national minorities. A realistic picture of the number of Roma and speakers of Romani is not attainable from the analysis of census data, since the census questionnaires do not allow for the declaration of linguistic and ethnic pluralism, which in the case of the Roma would be of great benefit bearing in mind the traditional and continuous bilingualism and multilingualism of the speakers of Romani, mixed marriages between Roma and non-Roma and the like. The top-down level of use of Romani in Serbia shows that the rights to use Romani as a minority are fully applied only in the domain of use in the media, while other domains of use of Romani are highly questionable. Public inscriptions in Romani of different types indicate the predominance of the functional principle, whereby the selective use of Romani on public inscriptions targets the Roma as possible beneficiaries of public strategies (e.g. Romani families as foster families), while failing to facilitate their rights or to address the real-life issues they face. This is clearly shown, among other things, in the unclear criteria for choosing which ministry's website will be translated into Romani, while those ministries which are significantly more important for resolving problems in the Roma communities in Serbia, such as the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and others do not offer content in the Romani language.

The use of the Romani language in the private sphere, which belongs to the bottom-up level of language use, indicates the symbolic function of the language, which, among other things, serves to mark identity. This is particularly evident in the use of Romani on sacral monuments and tombstones, which have so far only been discovered by chance during research. The written Romani

language on sacral monuments and tombstones is characterised by a high degree of variability in orthography, morphology and syntax, as well as in the use of punctuation. Bearing in mind the dispersion of the Roma and the lack of competent personnel within the academic community, research into the use of Romani must be consistently promoted, on the one hand, and systematised, on the other. The first step towards systematic research has been taken by including questions about the visibility and use of Romani in the public space in the sociolinguistic questionnaire, which should be conducted in different Romani communities in Serbia. The results of this questionnaire may serve as the starting point for documenting the written Romani language.

Based on everything mentioned in this paper, it may be concluded that the inclusion of field interviews in field research into the visibility of the Romani language in the public space, as well as on sacral monuments and tombstones, is extremely important, since it provides guidelines for further research, particularly considering the dispersion of Roma communities. Therefore, observing the public space in terms of the use of Romani in it is not sufficient in methodological terms. The application of the sociolinguistic questionnaire, which, among other things, examines the existence of public and private inscriptions in the Romani language has proven to be very important as it provides guidelines for further research.

The census data from 2011 and 2022 show a decrease in the number of Roma in Serbia. Taking into account the percentage of the national minority in the total population, this would mean that 1.98% of Roma in Serbia are currently losing their language rights. Although it is unlikely that such a scenario will actually occur, it should certainly be borne in mind that efforts to work on strengthening the ethnic and linguistic identity of this fragile national minority are of the utmost importance.

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The Question of Christian Slavic Refugees and the Russian Occupation of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia (1877–1879)¹

Abstract: The modern Bulgarian state was founded as a result of the Russian intervention on the Balkan Peninsula in 1877–1878. Until June 1879, the tsarist army occupied the newly created state, which was divided into the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia pursuant to the decision of the Congress of Berlin. During this period, the Russians made all the most important decisions in the eastern Balkans, including those concerning migrations. As a result of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, about 100,000 Christian Slavs left their homes fleeing the hostilities. After the cease-fire, at the beginning of 1878, most of the refugees came back home; however, the Christians from Macedonia and Thrace, the lands which remained under the Ottoman Empire's control in accordance with the Treaty of Berlin of July 1878, also started to migrate to Bulgaria. This was a result of unsuccessful uprisings as well as the will to live in a country ruled by the men of the same religion and ethnicity.

Key words: Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, migrations, Russia, Bulgaria, 19th century, Russian occupation of Bulgaria (1877–1879), refugees

Introduction

The modern Bulgarian state was founded as a result of the Russian intervention on the Balkan Peninsula in 1877–1878. The Russians played a crucial role in building the structures of the Principality of Bulgaria (which functioned as a protectorate of the Romanov Empire until 1885) as well as Eastern Rumelia (the autonomous province with the capital in Plovdiv). The tsar's army occupied these two territories until the first half of 1879. During this time, the Russians took the most important decisions and shaped policies of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia regarding the key questions, including

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migrations. As a result of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, about 100,000 Christian Slavs left their homes in the territory of the future Bulgarian state, fleeing from the Ottoman army to take refuge in the areas away from the theatre of war or territories taken over by the tsarist forces. After the cease-fire, at the beginning of 1878, most of these refugees came back home. However, the Christians from Macedonia and Thrace, the lands which remained (or would remain) under the Ottoman Empire's control in accordance with the Treaty of Berlin of July 1878, started to migrate to Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia as well. About 100,000 people, mostly from Turkey-in-Europe, reached the Principality and Eastern Rumelia by the end of 1879.

Some of the analysis are devoted to the emigration from Macedonia (Manastir and Thessaloniki Vilayets with Skopje Sanjak of Kosovo vilayet) and Thrace (Adrianople Vilayet) to Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, and it indirectly addresses the question of self-identity of the most numerous population of these territories. In view of the on-going nation-building processes in the Balkans in the nineteenth century, it is impossible to make an unequivocal answer regarding the nationality of the Slavs living in the Ottoman Empire, especially considering most of them were illiterate rural population. Characterizing this population at the end of the 1870s we can be sure about the language they used (the dialects of the South Slavic languages) as well as the religion (Orthodoxy divided between two sovereigns: the Greek Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarian Exarchate created in 1870) so the terms “Slavs,” “Christians,” or “Christian Slavs” are the most accurate.²

² B. Jezernik, *Dzika Europa. Bałkany w oczach zachodnich podróżników*, tłum. P. Oczko (Kraków: Universitas, 2007), 177–200. See also P. Детрез, *Не търсят гърци, а ромеи да бъдат. Православната културна общност в Османската империя. XV–XIX в.* (София: Кралица Маб, 2015); H. Poulton, *Who Are the Macedonians?* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); P. Kitromilides, *An Orthodox Commonwealth. Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007). There is no doubt that some of the Slavs in Macedonia considered themselves Bulgarians, some Serbs, and some Macedonians, however, the problem is so complex that it would require completely different analyses. There is a very rich historiography on this subject in Macedonian (Manol Pandevski, Ivan Katardžiev, Risto Kirjazovski, Stojan Kiselinovski), Serbian (Jovan Cvijić, Vladimir Stojančević, Kliment Džambazovski, Mihailo Vojvodić, Milorad Ekmečić, Slavenko Terzić, Dušan Bataković, Uroš Šešum), Bulgarian (Hristo Silyanov, Ivan Snegarov, Dino Kiosev, Kosta Tsarnushanov, Tsocho Bilyarski, Stoyan Raychevski, Naum Kaytchev), or Greek (Nikolaos Martis, Michael Sakellariou, Evangelos Kofos, Kariophiles Mitsakis, George B. Zotiades) which represent – to a greater extent in some cases, to a lesser in others – the national perspectives on that matter and identify majority of population of Macedonia and Thrace with a specific national group. I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Historia Macedonii* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 2000), 326–331. See more: V. Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict: Greece, Bulgaria, and the Macedonian Question* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002).

The topic of the Slavic migrations to Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia in 1877–1879 has not been thoroughly analysed in the scholarly literature. There are some valuable comprehensive works (for example, by Goran Todorov or Mariya Manolova) as well as a collection of documents about the Russian occupation, but they do not focus on the problem of migrations.³ The same can be said about the publications about mobility after the “Great Eastern Crisis,” which do not deal strictly with Bulgaria under the Russian occupation.⁴ Specific studies about it were published by Hristo Gandev, who based them on materials from the Historical Archives at the National Library of Ivan Vazov in Plovdiv⁵, as well as works by the Russian historian Marina Mihaylovna Frolova, who focused on the period of the 1877–1878 War using Russian printed materials.⁶ The addition of archival materials from Sofia (Central State Archives, Historical Archive in the National Library of St. Cyril and Methodius), Varna (State Archives), and London (British National Archives) as well as the literature and document collections published more recently could bring us new conclusions about the Russian occupation authorities’ policy towards Slavic migrations, especially taking into account that it was seemingly inconsistent.

³ See Г. Тодоров, *Временното руско управление в България през 1877–1879* (София: Изд-во на Българската комунистическа партия, 1958); М. Манолова, *Нормотворческата дейност на временното руско управление в България (1877–1879)* (София: СИ-ЕЛА, 2003); *Русия и възстановяването на българската държавност (1878–1885 г.)* (София: УИ “Св. Климент Охридски”, 2008).

⁴ See С. Райчевски, *Бежанците от Македония и техните братства в България* (София: Захарий Стоянов, 2016); М. Пандевска, *Присилни миграции во Македонија во годините на Големата источна криза (1875–1881)* (Скопје: Институт за национална историја–Книгоиздателство Мисла, 1993); *Миграционни движения на българите 1878–1941*, т. 1: 1878–1912, съст. Вера Василиева, Венцислав Гигов, Горица Стоянова, Кръстина Георгиева, Катя Недевска, (София: УИ “Св. Климент Охридски”, 1993); *Българските бежанци в Бургас и региона 1878–1945 г.*, съст. Светлозар Елдърров, Милен Николов, Пламена Кирова, Иванка Делева, (Бургас: Фабер, 2018); К. Попек, “The Bulgarian Migrations and the End of Ottoman Rule in Bulgaria (1878–1900)”, *Historijski Zbornik* LXXI(1) (2018), 45–59.

⁵ Х. Гандев, “Преселението на тракийски българи и гърци в България през 1878–1879 г.” *Архив за поселищни проучвания* 1(2) (1933), 3–15.

⁶ М. М. Фролова, “Русское гражданское управление в Болгарии и проблема болгарских беженцев в свете становления болгарской государственности (1877–19.02.1878 гг.)”. In *Славяне и Россия: проблемы государственности на Балканах (конец XVIII–XXI вв.)*, отв. ред. Светлана И. Данченко, (Москва: Институт славяноведения РАН, 2020), 106–150.

The war of 1877–1878

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 led not only to the restoration of the Bulgarian state on the map of the Balkan Peninsula but also to mass migrations. Ones of the most brutal acts of violence against Christians in the Eastern Balkans took place in Dobruja. They were described not only by the Russians and foreign correspondents but also by the local Muslims. In May 1877, there was information about eighteen completely empty villages in the Sanjak of Tulcha, where houses and churches had been burnt down and people were repressed by “hordes of Circassians, Anatolians, Tatars, and Turks.”⁷ In August (July OS) 1877, about 2,000 Christians escaped from Kavarna to Balchik.⁸ The brutal massacres during the war took place in Osman Pazar (today Omurtag) and Eski Dzhumaya (Targovishte) at the beginning of 1878. The Christians from the former town received guarantees from the local Ottoman authorities that they would be under protection no matter the situation. However, during the night of 25 and 26 (13 and 14 Old Style) of January, houses were set on fire, many people died in the flames, and those who tried to escape into the streets were murdered. Those who survived ran away to Eski Dzhumaya, where they also received guarantees that they would be safe. However, the perpetrators from Osman Pazar arrived in the city and, with the support of the local Muslims, attacked the Christian refugees and residents. The British Consul of Shumen received reports about “the streets covered by human bodies; some of them were badly injured, some without heads, some of the bodies were cut into pieces.” Once again, the Christians were forced to escape – about 200 people reached

⁷ “Превод на доклад от Е. Лангле до Л. Ш. Деказ, Тулча 24.05.1877”. In *Извори за историята на Добруджа*, т. 4: 1853–1878 (Чуждестранни документи), ред. Велко Тонев, (София: БАН, 2003), 340–343.

⁸ “Vice-Consul Dalziel to Mr. Layard, Varna 25.07.1877”. In *Ethnic Minorities in the Balkan States 1860–1971*, vol. 1: 1860–1885, ed. Bejtullah Destani, (Cambridge: Cambridge Archive Editions, 2003), 277–281; “Commandor Durmont to Mr. Layard, Varna 25.07.1877”. In *Ethnic Minorities*, vol. 1, 281–282; “Statement made at Baltschik before Commander Drummond and Vice-Consul Dalziel, Varna 25.07.1877”. In *Ethnic Minorities*, vol. 1, 282; “Mr. Layard to Earl of Derby, Therapia 1.08.1877”. In *Ethnic Minorities*, vol. 1, 291–292; *Извори за историята на Добруджа*, т. 4, 334–357; “Показания на българина Илия Н. Танасов за положение в Шумен, Търговище и Разград, Русе 04.1878”. In *След Сан Стефано и Берлин 1878 г. Изследване, документи и материали за освобождението на Североизточна България от османска власт*, съст. Велко Тонев, (София: Анупис, 1999), 90–91; “Sadoullah Bey à Aarifi Pacha, Berlin 27.07.1877, no. 549”. In *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on “the Eastern Question”*, vol. X: *The Balkan Crisis 1875–1878*, part 4: *The Turco-Russian War, May 1877 – January 1878*, eds. Sinan Kunalalp, Gül Tokay, (Istanbul: ISIS Press, 2013), 314; “Aarifi Pacha à Sadoullah Bey, Constantinople 30.07.1877, no. 563”. In *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, vol. X, part 4, 321–322; Ф. Каниц, *Дунавска България и Балканът*, т. III, прев. Петър Горбанов, (София: Бороина, [no date]), 238–239.

Shumen.⁹ The scale of the violence could be illustrated by the fact that before the war there were 1,671 Christians in Eski Dzhumaya and after there were none.¹⁰ In February (January OS) 1878, there was also information about 6,900 Slavic refugees from Silistra and Balchik in villages in the Dobruja region: Kyusendzha (nowadays Kostantsa), Medidiye, Cherna Voda, Harsovo, and Machin.¹¹ Outside of Dobruja, the cities in which Christian inhabitants suffered the most in 1877–1878 were Stara Zagora, Kazanlak, and Karlovo.¹² The war was also a time of repressions against the Christians who were not in the centre of war activities. In Thrace, in the region of Lozengrad (Kırklareli), about 600 houses as well as seventeen churches were burnt down by the soldiers from the defeated Ottoman armies, Circassians, and Muslim refugees (*Muhajirs*).¹³

Most refugees did not escape very far – they hid in the forests, mountains, and camps organized by the Russians, to wait the war out and return home after the situation calmed down. The civilians from the territories where the Ottoman irregular troops and marauders were active were moved with the Russian army and left the villages where there were no garrisons organized.¹⁴ We know reports about people who migrated further away, for instance to Anatolia.¹⁵ This was mostly connected to kidnapping young girls or children, who became slaves or were taken as hostages, as well as cases of servants who migrated with their

⁹ Foreign Office Archives, Public Record Office, London (FO), 913/4/258–261, To Reade, Shumla 30.01.1878.

¹⁰ M. Kiel, “Urban Development in Bulgaria in the Turkish Period: The Place of Turkish Architecture in the Process”. In *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority*, ed. Kemal Karpat, (Istanbul: ISIS Press, 1990), 112.

¹¹ “Превод от Е. Ланге до У. Х. Вадингтон, Тулча 26.01.1878”. In *Извори за историята на Добруджа*, т. 4, 474–476.

¹² Народна Библиотека “Св. Св. Кирил и Методий” – Български исторически архив (НБКМ-БИА), ф. 22 оп. 1 а.е. 806 л. 1–4, Писмо от жителите на Ески Заара до Найдено Геров до левският митрополит Геврасий в Пловдив, Ески Заара 5.08.1876; Народна Библиотека “Иван Вазов” – Български исторически архив (НБИВ-БИА), ф. 19 а.е. 5 passim; *Репортажи за Освободителната война 1877–1878*, съст. Людмила Генова, (София: ОФ, 1978), 138–139.

¹³ С. Райчевски, *Източна Тракия. История, етноси, преселения XV–XX в.*, (София: Отечество, 1994), 154–155.

¹⁴ НБИВ-БИА, ф. 19 а.е. 3 л. 22, Прошение от Слав Танев до Пловдивския градски началник, Пловдив 21.03.1878; *Репортажи за Освободителната война*, 125, 213–214; Some of the authors write about 200,000–400,000 Christian refugees. М.М. Фролова, “Русское гражданское управление”, 122, 128.

¹⁵ Централен държавен архив, София (ЦДА), ф. 321к оп. 1 а.е. 7 л. 97, Препис от прошение на Атанас Ивевич до Представител на окръжен съд в Кюстендил, Кюстендил 31.05.1879.

employers.¹⁶ It is estimated that during the War of 1877–1878, about 100,000 Christians from the future territory of the Bulgarian state were forced to escape and it was one of the Russians' most important tasks to enable them to return.¹⁷ It was not easy because of the devastation of the cities and villages – as a result of bombarding, there were a lot of destroyed buildings in Vidin, Nikopol, Ruse, or Lovech; Stara Zagora was almost completely burnt down, as was the new Bulgarian capital, Sofia, which greatly suffered during the hostilities.¹⁸

While moving south and taking power over eastern Balkans, the Russians started organizing the occupation administration in July 1877. The authorities had a clear position on the matter of Christian refugees – they fully supported the migrants in returning home and helped with food and shelter in the difficult situation. For example, before the key moment of the conflict, the capture of Pleven in November 1877, the Governor of Svishtov, Kiryak Tsankov, organized the return of 400 fugitives to the region of the besieged citadel.¹⁹ The most complicated cases were those of the Christians who had been kidnapped and transported to Anatolia – they wrote petitions to the Russians, asking for help with coming back home.²⁰ The return of the fugitives to their homes lasted

¹⁶ ЦДА, ф. 321к оп. 1 а.е. 9 л. 112, От Министерство на външните дела и изповеданията до Дипломатически агент в Цариград, София 16.05.1880; ЦДА, ф. 321к оп. 1 а.е. 9 л. 113, От Министерство на външните дела и изповеданията до Дипломатически агент в Цариград, София 3.06.1880; ЦДА, ф. 321к оп. 1 а.е. 16 л. 96, Министерство на външните работи и изповеданията до Дипломатически агент в Цариград, София 16.12.1880; ЦДА, ф. 321к оп. 1 а.е. 16 л. 105, Списък на зароблените от башибозуци във войната през 1877/78 български деца из Врачанското окръжие, [12.05.1881]; ЦДА, ф. 321к оп. 1 а.е. 16 л. 113, Министерство на външните работи и изповеданията до Дипломатически агент в Цариград, София 14.05.1881; ЦДА, ф. 321к оп. 1 а.е. 16 л. 114, Свидетелство на Изворска общинско управление, Извор 1.05.1881; ЦДА, ф. 321к оп. 1 а.е. 16 л. 119, Министерство на външните работи и изповеданията до Дипломатически агент в Цариград, София 3.10.1881; ЦДА, ф. 321к оп. 1 а.е. 16 л. 120–121, Дознание, Самоков 19.08.1881.

¹⁷ К. Иречек, *Княжество България. Негова повърхнина, природа, население, духовна култура, управление и новейша история*, ч. I: *Българска държава*, (Пловдив: Хр. Г. Данов, 1899), 160; М. М. Фролова, "Русское гражданское управление", 117.

¹⁸ Ф. Каниц, *Дунавска България и Балканът*, т. I, прев. Михаил Матлиев, (София: Борина, 1995), 70, 81–82, 176–177; *Идет, Дунавска България и Балканът*, т. II, прев. Петър Горбанов, (София: Борина, 1997), 33–34.

¹⁹ НБКМ-БИА, ф. 5 а.е. 20 л. 10–11, Писмо Свищовскиего губернатора Киряку Цанкову, Свищов 3.11.1877; НБКМ-БИА, ф. 5 а.е. 20 л. 14, Списък на имената на фамилиите заселени в плевенски села; НБКМ-БИА, ф. 5 а.е. 20 л. 15, Рапорт Киряка Цанкова Свищовску губернатору, Свищов 11.11.1877.

²⁰ НБИБ-БИА, ф. 19 а.е. 4 л. 75, Прошение от Камина Димитрова до Пловдивския градски полицмайстор, Пловдив 26.04.1878.

long after the cease-fire signed in Adrianople in January 1878 – some of them were still returning in the 1880s.²¹

The Russians offered the refugees help for humanitarian reasons and due to Slavic solidarity but also for political motivations. Their main goal during the war (taking control over the Eastern Balkans) was strongly linked to the ethnic map of that area, and we should not forget that about half of the population inhabiting the Danube and the Adrianople Vilayets were Muslims.²² It was important to the Russians to maintain the Slavic and Orthodox character of these territories so that it would be easier to control them after the war. They also wanted to ensure that the local population would support the future Russian administration.

Russian Occupation Administration in 1878–1879

At the beginning of 1878, the Russians occupied the territories of the Danube and Adrianople Vilayets. In accordance with the Treaty of San Stefano of March (February OS) 1878, these territories were organized into the Principality of Bulgaria, so-called Great Bulgaria, to which most of Macedonia (without Thessaloniki with Chalkidiki) was added, but a significant part of Thrace was separated (among others, Adrianople, which was still controlled by the Russians). The territory of the Principality was reduced, in accordance with the Treaty of Berlin of July 1878, to northern Bulgaria (former Sofia, Vidin, Varna, Tarnovo, and Ruse Sanjaks). In southern Bulgaria (former Plovdiv and Sliven Sanjaks), Eastern Rumelia, an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire, was created. Macedonia and most of Thrace were returned under the sultan's direct control; however, the Adrianople Sanjak would be occupied by the Russians until March 1879.²³ The head of the Russian administration in Bulgaria was Vladimir Alexandrovich Cherkassky and after his death in March (February OS) 1878, this position was held by Prince Alexander Dondukov-Korsakov. After the Congress of Berlin, there were separate commissars for the Principality (Dondukov-Korsakov) and for Eastern Rumelia and the Adrianople Sanjak (Arkady Dmitrievich Stolypin).

²¹ ЦДА, ф. 321к оп. 1 а.е. 29 л. 76, Прошение от жител из Лом до Ломския окръжен управител, Лом 12.05.1882.

²² FO, 881/3574/3, 5, Statistical Information as to the Populations of European Turkey, printed for the use of the Foreign Office, June 1878; М. Тафрова, *Танзиматът, вилаетската реформа и българите. Администрацията на Дунавския вилает (1864–1876)* (София: СИЕЛА, 2010), 84.

²³ *Historia Bułgarii 1870–1915. Materiały źródłowe z komentarzami*, vol. 3: *Polityka wewnętrzna*, eds. Jarosław Rubacha, Andrzej Malinowski, (Warszawa: Neriton, 2009), 35–36.

However, there was no stabilization in the Balkans – some parts of Macedonia became an arena of further fighting. After the Ottomans restored control over the region in accordance with the Treaty of Berlin, there were retaliations against the Slavic population, who became the scapegoat for the empire's failures. Between July and September 1878, there were a lot of reports about repression in Macedonian villages, which made people escape to the territories occupied by the Russians.²⁴ These events as well as the hope linked to a revision of the Treaty of Berlin were the fuel for the anti-Ottoman uprising which started in October. The movement, the so-called Kresna-Razlog Uprising, which concentrated in South-Eastern Macedonia, was pacified by the Ottomans by June (May OS) 1879. Foreign correspondents wrote about the extreme brutality of crimes against Christians – there was information about pogroms, expulsions, torture and kidnapping committed by the Ottoman troops, for example, in such villages as Banya, Chereshnitsa, and Berovo.²⁵ At the end of 1878, according to Russian data, about 30,000 people from Macedonia took refuge on the lands controlled by the tsar's army, most of them (23,000) in the Principality of Bulgaria. Three fourth of them were women and children. They were concentrated near the border, in the Kyustendil and Samokov areas; however, the authorities organized their resettlement to the eastern parts of the country.²⁶

The situation in Thrace was more stable than in Macedonia due to the fact that until March 1879 the region was occupied by the Russians. Despite this, the Christians also emigrated *en masse* from there, knowing that Thrace would be returned under the sultan's administration. The vision of the restoration of the Ottoman rule and the fear of retaliation strongly affected the Christian communities. It is estimated that in that period about 35,000 people emigrated from Eastern Thrace to the north – to the Principality and to Eastern Rumelia.²⁷

²⁴ М. Пандевска, *Присилни миграции*, 51.

²⁵ FO, 78/2838/96–99, Palgrave to Marquis of Salibury, Sofia 25.11.1878; FO, 78/2838/116, Palgrave to Marquis of Salibury, Sophia 28.11.1878; *Британски дипломатически документи по българския национален въпрос*, т. 1: 1878–1893, съст. Весела Трайкова, Александър Гребенаров, Румен Караганев, Румяна Прахова, (София: Македонски научен институт–Институт по история при БАН, 1993), 79, 99–104; М. Пандевска, *Присилни миграции*, 58–65. See more about the Kresna Uprising: Д. Дойнов, *Кресненско-Разложкото въстание 1878–1879* (София: БАН, 1979).

²⁶ FO, 78/2838/158–159, Palgrave to Marquis of Salibury, Sophia 12.12.1878; FO, 78/2838/120–126, Report I on Bulgaro-Macedonian Refugees by Palgrave, Sophia 9.12.1878; Н. Овсяный, *Русское управление в Болгарии в 1877–78–79 гг.: Российский Императорский Комиссар в Болгарии, генерал-адъютант князь А. М. Дондуков-Корсаков*, (Петербург: Воен.-ист. комис. Гл. Штаба, 1906), 108; Г. Дракалиев, “Пристигане и установяване на бежанци от Македония в Бургас 1878–1928 г.”. In *Българските бежанци в Бургас*, 252.

²⁷ Н. Овсяный, *Русское управление в Болгарии в 1877–78–79 гг.: Восточная Румелия и Адрианопольский санджак*, (Петербург: Воен.-ист. комис. Гл. Штаба, 1907), 45–46.

There were statements, formulated among others by the British, that the Russians supported the migrations from Macedonia and Thrace, hoping that the Orthodox Slavic element would be strengthened in the controlled territories.²⁸ In reality, the official Russian position was more complicated. In August 1878, the tsar's representatives in Bulgaria clearly stressed that the Christians' emigration from the territories controlled by the Ottomans was unfavourable to Bulgarian as well as Russian interests and had to be prevented.²⁹ The Russian Imperial Commissar Alexander Dondukov-Korsakov pointed out that the administration did not have the appropriate resources to deal with such a high number of refugees and that the latter could not all settle due to the limited quantity of free land. The problems were also linked to the scale of the conflicts between the Christian refugees and the returning Muslims over the houses and territories abandoned during the war.³⁰ Additionally, the Russian occupation authorities wanted the Slavs to stay in their homes in Thrace and Macedonia, which became the destination for the Muslims from Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and other lands separated from the Ottoman state. This was part of the attempts to rebuild "Great Bulgaria", which would play the role of a Russian satellite in the Balkans. The Russians believed that the frontiers specified in the Treaty of San Stefano could be restored in the nearest future and that it was important to maintain the Slavic and Orthodox character of these territories.³¹ However, among representatives of the Russian occupation authorities, there were also voices that it was necessary to support Christian settlement, especially in Eastern Rumelia. According to them, like during the war, the migration should be an instrument to keep the Orthodox and Slavic character of the lands south of the Balkan mountains as well as to counteract

²⁸ Cf. *Британски дипломатически документи*, т. 1, 40–42, 46–48.

²⁹ "Съобщение от ген.-майор В. Золотарьов до Ал. Липински, Филипопол 27.07.1878". In *Миграционни движения на българите*, т. 1, 21–22.

³⁰ НБИН-БИА, ф. 19 а.е. 6 л. 9, Прошение от 400-те фамилии български от Чоп-къой до Пловдивския губернатор, Пловдив 10.1878; "Предписание от ген. адютант княз Дондуков-Корсаков до П. Алабин, б.м. 21.08.1878", In *Миграционни движения на българите*, т. 1, 23–24; "Молба от българи от с. Чоп къой до губернатора на Пловдив, Пловдив 5.10.1878". In *Миграционни движения на българите*, т. 1, 28–29; See more: K. Popek, "De-Ottomanisation of Land. Muslim Migrations and Ownership in the Bulgarian Countryside after 1878". In *Turkish Yoke or Pax Ottomana. The Reception of Ottoman Heritage in the Balkan History and Culture*, eds. Krzysztof Popek, Monika Skrzyszewska, (Kraków: Nowa Strona, 2019), 85–110.

³¹ The Russian position was supported by the Bulgarian Church authorities, represented by Exarchate Bishop of Adrianople Sinesiy. The Bulgarian hierarchy sent to Thrace special emissaries who tried to convince the local population to stay home. A somewhat surprising fact was that the Ottoman local government also shared the Russian position – the Adrianople Vali Reuf Pasha was afraid of the depopulation of his province.

the alleged Ottoman plan of “de-Bulgarization” of the province and making it an integral part of the empire once again by strengthening the Muslim element. This kind of pro-migration thinking was also not rare in the Principality of Bulgaria, about one third of which was inhabited by non-Christian populations in the first years after its emergence.³² These two contradictory positions affected the political line of the Russian authorities, which was inconsistent in many aspects.

Due to the repressions which affected the Christian Slavs in Macedonia and Thrace, the borders were opened at the turn of 1878 and 1879, and the Russians let the refugees in. The occupation authorities openly claimed that the refugees’ stay in the Principality and Eastern Rumelia could be only temporary and after the situation stabilized in Turkey-in-Europe they would have to go back home.³³ In December 1878, in the Plovdiv and the Sliven Governorates, there were 30,000 Christian refugees, in the Sofia Governorate – 20,000. The Governorates of Tarnovo, Ruse, Vidin, Varna, and Sliven were open to accepting exactly 72,335 people.³⁴ During the winter months, there was a dynamic increase in the number of refugees – in February 1879, there were about 115,000 Christians, mostly from the Ottoman Empire. Exactly 15,833 families were registered in the Principality of Bulgaria and 7,040 in Eastern Rumelia.³⁵

The next migration wave took place after the end of the Russian occupation of Thrace in March 1879, when 20,000 Slavs and Greeks moved with the tsar’s last soldiers to Eastern Rumelia. There was information that in the region of Lozengrad (Kırklareli) about twenty-two of thirty-one Christian villages were abandoned. The people had escaped, fearing retaliation from the Ottomans after the Russians’ departure. Some of them were afraid of collective responsibility, some were guilty of offenses against the local Muslim population,

³² Британски дипломатически документи, т. 1, 40–42, 46–48; Г. Генадиев, *Бежанците във Варненско 1878–1908*, (София: ВМРО, 1998), 21–22; Р. Георгиева, “Бежанският проблем в контекста на демографския профил на Сливен през 1878–1880 г.” In *Българските бежанци в Бургас*, 438; А. М. Мirkova, “Population Politics’ at the End of Empire: Migration and Sovereignty in Ottoman Eastern Rumelia, 1877–1886,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* LV\4 (2013), 962.

³³ НБИВ-БИА, ф. 19 а.е. б л. 19, Санджаковое Казначейство Филиппольскому губернатору, Филипполь 11.10.1878; “Ведомост за броя на бежанците от Адрианопол в Княжество България и Източна Румелия от 28 септември 1878, Адрианопол 11.10.1878.” In *Миграционни движения на българите*, т. 1, 31–32.

³⁴ “Протокол на Съвета на руски комисар в България, [Пловдив] 9.12.1878.” In *Миграционни движения на българите*, т. 1, 44–49.

³⁵ “Из отчет на княз Дондуков-Корсаков до ген. Тотлебен, София 6.02.1879.” In *Миграционни движения на българите*, т. 1, 63.

for example, in Adrianople, the Slavic and Greek poor plundered Muslim properties during the war.³⁶

Facing the mass migrations from Thrace, the Russians decided to close the border shortly after they moved their troops to the north. They officially stated that the situation in the region was stabilized and there was no need to treat the people coming to the Principality and Eastern Rumelia as refugees. The authorities also needed to focus on deployment and on ensuring appropriate conditions for those who were on the controlled territories.³⁷ The borders with Thrace and Macedonia remained closed until the end of the Russian occupation administration of Eastern Rumelia (April 1879) and Bulgaria (June 1879).

The Russians were generally against the settlement of refugees from Thrace and Macedonia – the victims of violence were let in but there was expectation that after the situation in the Ottoman Empire stabilized, they would have to return home. However, it did not mean that Christians from Turkey-in-Europe had not settled in the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia during the Russian occupation. Many did so, which was related to the followed circumstances: (1) they used the chaos of the first months after the war, when it was hard to control the movement of people, and took over abandoned Muslim land and houses; (2) if they had enough money, they could buy property; (3) some of the local governments did not listen to the central occupation authorities and supported the settlement due to the post-war depopulation in some regions (mostly the local authorities in the eastern parts of the Principality). Analyses show that, generally, the refugees gathered in the north were planning to settle and the ones in Eastern Rumelia were just waiting to go home.³⁸ This discrepancy was visible when the Russian occupation ended: the government in Sofia generally continued the migration strategy proposed by the tsar's representatives but a separate policy was pursued by some local governments, which often decided to transfer free land to the incoming population at their own discretion.³⁹

³⁶ “Обръщение на жители от Централните Родопи (Смолянко) до граф Н. П. Игнатиев за присъединяване към България (Ахъ-Челеби, 25.03.1878)”. In *История на българите 1878–1944 в документи*, т. 1: 1878–1912, ч. 1: *Възстановяване и развитие на българската държава*, ред. Величко Георгиев, Стойко Трифонов, (София: Просвета, 1994), 14; *Британски дипломатически документи*, т. 1, 28, 35–38, 120–125.

³⁷ Х. Гандев, “Преселението на тракийски българи”, 8–11.

³⁸ “Писмо от окръжния началник до Градски съвет в Самоков, София 15.05.1879”. In *Миграционни движения на българите*, т. 1, 66–67; С. Райчевски, *Източна Тракия*, 161–163; М. Пандевска, *Присилни миграции*, 80–81.

³⁹ ЦДА, ф. 20к оп. 1 а.е. 178 л. 55–56, Прошение до Постоянна комисия на Източна Румелия, 31.03.1880; ФО, 195/1311 (по pagination), Lascalles to Layard, Sofia 19.04.1880, no. 16; “Писмо от окръжния началник до Градския съвет в Самоков, Са-

The biggest opportunities to settle were on the land of the Turks, Circassians, Tatars, and Pomaks (Slavic-speaking Muslims) who had escaped during the war. Contrary to their political line, the Russians generally accepted the settling of the Christians from Macedonia and Thrace to block the return of the *Muhajirs*.⁴⁰ The Russian Ministry of War's decree concerning the areas of the former Tulcha Sanjak of 21 (9 OS) March 1878 stated that the Muslim refugees could not return to lands where the Christians had settled. There was a direct order that in the case of a conflict between a Muslim and a Christian, the latter should be favored.⁴¹ The lands which were the easiest to get were the Circassian ones – the Circassians, who had settled in the Balkans in the 1860s, were the first to emigrate after the collapse of the Ottoman rule. Their appearance in the Balkans was linked to the previous conflict with the Russians during the conquest of the North Caucasus. During their short stay in the region, they did not adapt well and had difficult relations with the local population, not only the Christians but Muslims as well. Additionally, the Circassians were used by the Ottoman authorities to pacify the local insurrections. The suppression of the uprising of May (April OS) 1876 (the so-called April Uprising), in which the incomers from the Caucasus played a key role, had a particularly bad reputation. That is why the Russian authorities officially forbid the return of all Circassians on 14 (2 OS) August 1878 and their lands were taken by refugees from Macedonia and Thrace at first.⁴² The concentration of the Christian refugees on northern Bulgarian lands (the former Danube Vilayet) was linked to the fact that there had been many Circassians there before the war.⁴³

моков 5.09.1879". In *Миграционни движения на българите*, т. 1, 73; "Доклад от Т. Бурмов до княз Александър Батенберг, София 24.11.1879". In *Миграционни движения на българите*, т. 1, 83–84; "Из протокол на общински съвет на Айтос, Айтос 29.03.1900". In *Миграционни движения на българите*, т. 1, 155–156.

⁴⁰ М.М. Фролова, "Русское гражданское управление", 118–119.

⁴¹ Държавен архив във Варна (ДА-Варна), ф. 717к оп. 1 а.е. 2 л. 2–4, Циркулярно Министерство Военного, 9.03.1878.

⁴² ДА-Варна, ф. 78к оп. 2 а.е. 1 л. 1–6, Журнал императорского Российского Коммисара в България, 2.08.1878; Cf. e.g. ДА-Варна, ф. 681к оп. 1 а.е. 2 л. 2, Прощение от преселенците в черказко село Шеремет до Провадийски окръжен началник, Провадия 7.05.1879; ЦДА, ф. 159к оп. 1 а.е. 107 л. 67, От Ловчански окръжен управител до Министерство на финансите, 10.09.1886; НБИВ-БИА, ф. 20 а.е. 13 л. 45–47, 58–59, Татар-Пазарджикският околийски началник до префекта на Татар-Пазарджикския департамент, Татар-Пазарджик 09.1882.

⁴³ В. Тонев, *Българското Черноморие през Възраждането* (София: АИ Проф. Марин Дринов, 1995), 47; М. Жагодић, "Колонизациони процеси у Европској Турској 60-тих и 70-тих година 19. века и Кнежевина Србија". In *Империји, граници, политики (XIX – началото на XX век)*, съст. Пламен Митов, Ваня Рачева, (София: УИ "Св. Климент

Conclusions

The Russian occupation authorities in Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia pursued a clear policy towards the Christian refugees during the Russo-Turkish War – they created conditions for the people who had emigrated during the hostilities to return home. The goal was to keep the Slavic and Orthodox character of these lands and to gather support of the local population – the Christian element was a guarantee of future control over the Eastern Balkans. The policy after the ceasefire in January 1878 was not so consistent. At first, the Russians assumed that they needed to oppose the migrations of the Slavs from Macedonia and Thrace to the newly created Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. As was the case earlier, they wanted to keep the ethnic and religious character of Turkey-in-Europe, which would be important for the future plan of regaining control over these lands. However, this policy had many exceptions. First of all, the Russians let in the Christian refugees escaping from the repressions in Macedonia and Thrace, especially in the former region, where the pacification of the Kresna-Razlog Uprising was really brutal. They expected that after the stabilization of the situation in the Ottoman Empire, the fugitives would return home and would not settle in the Principality and Eastern Rumelia. Again, there were exceptions, for two reasons. Firstly, this rule was contradictory to the other goal of the migration policy of the Russian occupation administration – blocking the return of Muslims.⁴⁴ Given the fact that about half of the population of the Danube and Adrianople Vilayets (more or less the future Principality and Eastern Rumelia) before the War of 1877–1878 was Muslim, the Russians wanted to change this proportion and the settlement of Christian refugees could become a useful instrument for enacting this scenario. Secondly, the Russians could not control everything, which is why during the chaos during the war and the first months after it, the refugees simply used the situation and took over land without the authorities' permission. The tsarist representatives also could not strictly control all the local governments, which pursued their own policy with regard to this matter.

The inconsistency of the migration policy of the Russian occupation authorities of Bulgaria was a result of the complexity of the question which affected many aspects of public life and caused many challenges. The migrations were not treated as a priority but as one of the many problems linked to the building

Охридски”, 2016), 82–83; Н. Тодоров, *Балканският град XV–XIX век. Социално-икономическо и демографско развитие* (София: Наука и изкуство, 1972), 307.

⁴⁴ See more K. Popek, “To Get Rid of Turks. The South-Slavic States and Muslim Remigration in the Turn of 1870s and 1880s”. In *Crossroads of the Old Continent. Central and Southeastern Europe in the 19th and 20th Century*, eds. Krzysztof Popek, Michał Bałogh, Kamil Szadkowski, Agnieszka Ścibior, (Kraków: Petrus, 2021), 63–85.

of the new state in the Balkans. Facing such a big challenge and dealing with such a mass phenomenon (we should not forget that thousands of people were migrating at that time), it was nearly impossible to formulate simple answers and consistently apply the rules that the occupation administration set out. The Russians had to react to a changing situation.

The Russian occupation authorities played a key role in the creation of many aspects of the modern Bulgarian state: the administration, police, army, judiciary, as well as migration policy. The attitude towards the migrations from Macedonia and Thrace more or less persisted until 1912, when the Ottoman Empire lost control over these territories. As long as the Bulgarian authorities hoped to incorporate Macedonia and Thrace, they cared about the Orthodox and Slavic character of these territories, which meant having the people identified by the authorities in Sofia as Bulgarians stay there. However, this political line was as inconsistent as the Russian one.

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Breaking the Isolation Kingdom of Serbia and the Adriatic Railroad 1906–1908

Abstract: Between 1906 and 1908, the Kingdom of Serbia undertook a comprehensive diplomatic effort aimed at establishing a rail connection between the Danube and the Adriatic Sea. The article first provides a brief overview of the project's rationale. Following that, it delves into the positions of individual countries regarding the proposed initiative, covering those who offered financial and political support, as well as those who actively sought to thwart the project. Ultimately, the article points to a particular Balkan infrastructural predicament. The Adriatic Railroad project, despite obvious economic benefits, had international support above all because it had the potential to influence the balance of power in the region. This potential was, at the same time, the reason why the project had powerful opponents and why it eventually failed.

Keywords: Adriatic Railroad, railroads, infrastructure, Kingdom of Serbia, Great Power Politics.

Introduction

As Jürgen Osterhammel noted, “the nineteenth century became the age of the speed revolution”.¹ Indeed, it is hard to think of any aspect of life that was not affected by the construction of railroads. Movements of people and goods were changed forever. Railroads, as an invention, did not affect only the economy and migrations. It did not take long before it was obvious that the new technology affected the projection of power and military planning.² When great transcontinental railway projects were conceptualized and implemented for the first time, during the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, that time coincided with the emergence of geopolitics as a separate discipline. Nu-

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¹ J. Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 74.

² C. Wolmar, *Engines of War: How Wars Were Won & Lost on the Railways* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010), 13–33; G. Wawro, *The Franco–Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870–1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 47, 48, 84.

merous contemporary analyses pointed to the same region as crucial for global dominance. That region was Southwestern Asia, or as American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan called it for the first time in 1902: The Middle East.³ The Balkans, a region in-between Asia Minor and Central Europe, was not just the location of a couple of last stations before the Orient Express reached Constantinople. It was the region that stood between the Middle East and the rest of Europe.

It was not only this that gave importance to the Balkans. It was a region where different national aspirations and different great power objectives overlapped. In other words, a change in the balance of power in the Balkans could affect a larger balance among the Great Powers. Lastly, the Balkans was an arena of the Russo-Austrian struggle for dominance.⁴ France and Britain were positioning themselves towards local issues in the context of their wider interests in Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. From the 1870s onward, these complex relations additionally intensified with the arrival of the newly unified German Empire and Italy, who also had their visions and interests. Last but not least, the Ottoman Empire struggled to preserve its territories and prestige. All Great Powers were interested in every proposed infrastructure project. France, Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Germany paid attention to every project, proposal, or even discussion about future infrastructural ventures. It was generally understood that both access to and the geographical orientation of a newly constructed railroad could bolster both the political and the economic position in the region and diminish those of opponents. A railroad also opened opportunities for new military plans and faster movements of armies. If we look at Europe as a whole, before 1914, railroads had a crucial place in the war plans of all Great Powers.⁵

Bridging Markets: Serbia's Call for the Adriatic Railroad

When discussing big transcontinental projects, projects whose goal was nothing short of connecting Europe and Asia, it may look strange to focus on the construction plans of the Kingdom of Serbia, a small, undeveloped, landlocked Balkan country, which was chronically deprived both of capital and modern in-

³ R. Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and Wars 1902–1922* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1995), 22.

⁴ For an overview of the Russo-Austrian struggle in the Balkans in the context of rail projects see: H. Jacolin, "Serbia's Access to the Sea 1830–2006". In *Eastern European Railways in Transition: Nineteenth to Twenty-first Centuries*, eds. Henry Jacolin, Ralf Roth, (London: Routledge, 2013), 69–76.

⁵ D. Stevenson, "War by Timetable? The Railway Race Before 1914", *Past & Present* 162 (1999), 163–194.

frastructure. However, this paper aims to show that this case study can indicate all the complexities of trans-regional and trans-continental transport, in its political, economic, and military context. Serbia, previously an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire, became independent in 1878. The newly independent Balkan country had to fulfill several conditions to become internationally accepted as sovereign and independent. One of the conditions that the Great Powers set was that the Serbian government had to promise to build a railroad. Construction of the railroad became a condition *sine qua non* for Serbian independence. Serbia, thus, represents a unique example of a state which did not choose to build a railroad. It was obliged to do so. This was a desire of the Habsburg Empire for which the potential of not having a connection with the Ottoman Empire was not seen as a possibility. In the early 1880s, the first railroads were built in Serbia. Austria-Hungary took on itself the job of connecting Belgrade, the Serbian capital, with the Central European network of railroads. In a symbolic move, which encapsulated its influence in Serbia, the Habsburg Monarchy did not bring the rail to the border between the two countries, on the Sava River. Austrian engineers crossed the river and continued their work up until Belgrade. The Serbian government, with the help of foreign investors, had built railroads from Belgrade towards the border with the Ottoman Empire. One leg of these new railroads ended in Thessaloniki and the other in Constantinople.

Austria-Hungary was determined to have full domination over its new south-eastern neighbor. The Habsburg foreign minister Baron Heinrich Karl von Haymerle insisted that the Habsburg Monarchy had to have guaranteed “most-favored-nation status” in Serbia. In the early 1880s, with several trade treaties, Serbia’s economy became completely attached to Austro-Hungarian industry and trade. Moreover, Serbia agreed to have prior consultations with Vienna before conducting negotiations with any other government.⁶ The negotiating power of the Habsburg diplomats was not based purely on the military power of the Monarchy. It was strengthened by the fact that all existing railroads connecting Serbia with potential markets passed through Austria-Hungary. This gave the Habsburg Empire powerful leverage.

With this in mind, diplomats from Vienna created another medium for pressuring Serbia. Starting from the 1881 trade treaty, the so-called “swine fever clause” allowed Austria-Hungary to close the border for Serbian products by proclaiming that Serbian livestock was infected. Without a doubt, the danger

⁶ J. G. Beaver, *Collision Course: Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, Serbia and the Politics of Preventive War* (Author’s edition, 2009), 67; A. C. Tuncer, *Sovereign Debt and International Financial Control: The Middle East and the Balkans 1870–1914* (London: Palgrave, 2015), 82; I. D. Armour, *Apple of Discord: The “Hungarian Factor” in Austro-Serbian Relations 1867–1881* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2014), 311.

of a disease was tangible. However, from the start, it was clear that this measure could be used as a political weapon. Whenever the Belgrade government was less amiable towards Vienna, news about unhealthy Serbian livestock resurfaced. In the coming years, the government in Vienna threatened, every now and then, that it would forbid Serbian export through its territories, which would, as it was believed, represent a crucial and fatal blow to the Serbian state finances. This situation continued for more than two decades.⁷ Serbia's leading elites were dissatisfied but had few other options.

In the first years of the 20th century, Serbian diplomacy took a bolder stance. In December of 1905, Austro-Hungarian diplomacy discovered that Serbia and neighboring Bulgaria had secretly negotiated a new trade deal. Even a customs union between Serbia and Bulgaria was a possibility at one point. This threatened not only the predominant position of Austrian merchandise in Serbia but also the prestige of the Monarchy in general. The government in Vienna considered that no other country, apart from itself, could have trade privileges of that kind in Serbia.⁸ What was not emphasized enough is the fact that the coming moves of the Habsburg diplomacy were also motivated by a desire to crush any Serbo-Bulgarian rail projects, which were already rumored in diplomatic circles.⁹

In January 1906, Austria-Hungary did something that Hungarian agrarian producers had requested for quite some time. The government in Vienna banned imports from Serbia. Moreover, Serbia could not export to other markets using the Austro-Hungarian rail network. It is important to note that depending on the year, almost 90 percent of Serbian exports had ended up in Austria-Hungary prior to this point.¹⁰ The Habsburg market was crucial for Serbia's economy, not just as a final destination, but also as a depot for trade with other European countries – because the bulk of the exports that did not

⁷ Between 1881 and 1906 the border was closed nine times. *Ibid.*, 295.

⁸ F. R. Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo: The Foreign Policy of Austria-Hungary 1866–1914* (London: Routledge, 1972), 277–279.

⁹ *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* (HHStA), PA XIX Serbien Kopie. Ad 3153/9; *HHStA*, Original. Telegramm № 15 AR, F 37, Serbien 3, K. 62. Both documents are quoted from: *Austro-Ugarska i Srbija 1903–1918, Dokumenti iz bečkih arhiva, IV* (1906), ed. A. Radenić, (Belgrade: Istorijски institut, 1989), Doc. no. 18 & 40. Viennese diplomacy was especially fearful because they suspected that any future rail projects would have the support of Germany, which would set German Balkan policy away from the Habsburg goals: “If the Serbian-Bulgarian railway alliance comes about, then Berlin will be a good deal closer to its goal. Our Monarchy would then be stuck between the German Reichsbahn network and the Serbian-Bulgarian Railway Association” (translated from German). *HHStA*, PA XIX Serbien Kopie. Ad 3153/9.

¹⁰ For the details and nature of Serbian export see: D. Djordjević, *Carinski rat Srbije i Austro-Ugarske 1906–1911* (Belgrade: Istorijски institut, 1962), 1–31.

go to Austria-Hungary went through its territories to other destinations. The Habsburgs wanted to crush the Serbian economy as a punishment for its independent foreign policy, and in the next 5 years, with some interruptions, the borders of Austria-Hungary remained closed for Serbian products. In historiography, this is known as the *Pig War*, *Schweinekrieg*, or *Customs War*.

At the time, Serbia and Switzerland were the only European countries without sea access. For some time, the Serbian Ministry of Infrastructure and Ministry of Foreign Affairs contemplated building a new railroad to connect the Adriatic Sea and the River Danube.¹¹ New railroads seemed a necessary foundation for the future. This new railroad promised diversification of trade and export possibilities. While this project had an extensive history, it remained more of a concept until 1906. The Kingdom of Serbia, isolated from all markets due to the Austro-Hungarian closure of borders, entered a state of alarm during this period.¹² Not only was the Austro-Hungarian border closed, but also the nature of Serbian export requested speed and allowed no delay: Serbia exported pork, beef, and fresh fruit. Despite the attempts to create a food processing industry, not a lot was achieved, and the speed of export remained a top priority.¹³ Trade agents and outposts financed by the Serbian government quickly discovered new potential buyers and markets in Egypt, Malta, Italy, France, and Great Britain.¹⁴

Given that Austria-Hungary forbade voyages upstream on the Danube for ships with Serbian goods, the existing alternative routes were a) the Black Sea, which could be reached by using Bulgarian railroads; b) Thessaloniki, a port city that could be reached by a direct railroad line coming from Belgrade. Exporting goods towards the Black Sea did not turn out to be a viable solution in the long term. Even though it was cheap, it was not fast. After reaching the Black Sea, there was still a long journey ahead to reach the Mediterranean markets. Jams and prunes could survive long journeys, just like wheat and timber, but the main export products, fresh fruit and livestock, could not. Thessaloniki seemed to be a good choice. However, a strong fear existed that the Ottoman government could close access to Thessaloniki for Serbian products.¹⁵ More-

¹¹ D. Djordjević, "Projekat Jadranske železnice u Srbiji (1896–1912)", *Istoriski glasnik* III-IV (1956), 1–33.

¹² The idea originated among Serbian merchants during the late 1890s. *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³ Djordjević, *Carinski rat*, 162, 302–303.

¹⁴ Bridge, *From Sadova*, 279; For a detailed account of establishing these trade agencies and outposts see: Djordjević, *Carinski rat*, 295–303.

¹⁵ In September 1906, a new trade deal between the Ottoman Empire and Serbia was signed. It was seen as favorable for Serbia. However, Serbian diplomats never believed that it could serve as a long-term solution. *Ibid.*, 187–188. These fears were justified in the coming period. In 1909, the Sublime Porte temporarily forbade further Serbian trade from Thessaloniki. See: D. Djordjević, "Austro – srpski sukob oko projekta novopazar-

over, new kinds of problems emerged in the Thessaloniki port. There were no appropriate stables where livestock could be held before transport ships arrived. Furthermore, disputes with merchant shipping companies emerged often. The small amount of goods coming from Serbia was not a good enough incentive for a reliable maritime merchant service.

It became obvious that Serbia desperately needed the new railroad. Between the “outbreak” of the Pig War in January 1906, and the end of 1908, the Serbian government actively worked on the so-called “Adriatic Railroad” to connect the Adriatic Sea and the Danube River. A new foreign loan, which was granted to the Serbian government, was intended partially for the construction of new railroads.¹⁶ The Serbian government hoped to connect one of the northern Albanian ports with Serbia. The railroad was to cross the Danube and connect with Romania and eventually with the Russian Empire.¹⁷ Because this imagined railroad in the Balkan Peninsula was positioned on the line northeast-southwest, unlike other railroads (and railroad projects) that were mainly positioned on the line northwest-southeast, in the contemporary diplomatic documents it was also called the “Transversal railroad”. Its imagined routes started from the Serbian-Romanian border on the Danube and went towards the South, South-West, to “Old Serbia” and Ottoman Macedonia, where it turned to the west, towards the north of Albania. The final goal was to reach one of the Albanian port cities. Because of its geographical position, the coastal town of San Giovanni di Medua (Shëngjin/Sveti Jovan Medovski) was considered the perfect location.

The first talks with the investors about the new potential transversal railroad took place in London in 1906. Contacts were made with James Sivewright, former Railroad Minister of the British Cape Colony. Sivewright started negotiations with the Serbian government. Soon after, with the backing of several British banks, several investors interested in food production, and construction firm Powling and Co, *The Balkan Railways Construction Syndicate* was formed. The plan was to send engineers to chart the terrain, propose the most viable route, and calculate the costs. A syndicate was formed to bring companies inter-

ske železnice”, *Istorijski časopis* VII (1957), 242. For a detailed account of the problems Serbian merchants encountered in Thessaloniki see: *Dokumenti o spoljnoj politici Kraljevine Srbije-Documents sur la politique exterieure do royaume de Serbie 1903–1914* (DSP), (Belgrade: SANU, 2006), Vol. II, No. 3/1, doc. No. 44.

¹⁶ Stevenson, “War by Timetable”, 182; “Extract from Annual Report for Serbia for the Year 1906”. In *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898–1914*, eds. G. P. Gooch, H. Temperley, vol. V, (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1928), 321.

¹⁷ In January 1906, talks about the construction of a bridge that would connect Serbia and Romania were already underway. See: DSP, Vol. II, No. 1/1, doc. No. 58. Negotiations have begun in late 1890s.

ested in mining, the lumber industry, and the food trade, into the project.¹⁸ After some time, it became obvious that the biggest issue was neither the mountainous terrain nor the unfavorable financial conditions set by the newly established Syndicate. The main obstacle was also not the fact that all Albanian harbors were shallow and required at least some deepening. In the Balkans, in the years before the outbreak of the Great War, for this kind of railroad project, a project that included building in the territories of the Ottoman Empire, the prerequisite was not funding or the support of capable engineers. It was a consensus among the Great Powers. The Balkan Railways Construction Syndicate did not have any political backing. Therefore, it could not achieve much.

Divergent Views: Unpacking Responses to Serbia's Adriatic Railway Initiative

The only way to understand the history of plans to build the Adriatic Railroad is to understand it in the context of Great Power rivalries. The period between 1906 and 1908 was marked by growing hostility among European Powers. In 1905, Russia was defeated in a war against Japan, which opened a vacuum of power that several powers attempted to fill. In January 1906, representatives of the Great Powers met at Algeiras for a conference supposed to solve the Morocco Crisis from the previous year. What happened in the following three years was that tensions remained high among the Great Powers. In 1907, the Anglo-Russian Convention was signed. The two great rivals were now acting evermore following each other. Opposing blocs, which would get their final shape in the summer of 1914, were slowly emerging, and these tense relations, which existed on a global scale, were reflected in the Balkans and the proposed Adriatic Railroad. What is important to note is that the plans to build the Adriatic railroad were formulated between two crises. The idea was put forward after the Pig War started when, from a Serbian perspective, the need for new communication corridors became obvious. Everything came to an end during the Bosnian Crisis of 1908–1909, after which the whole region was considered to be completely unstable and thus unsuitable for any kind of expensive construction project.

Even before the attempts with James Sivewright proved futile, the Serbian government launched a different kind of initiative. It seems that this plan was based on suggestions that came from Miroslav Spaljković, Serbian envoy in St. Petersburg. Spaljković was not just an ordinary Serbian diplomat. He was a close friend and confidant of Nikola Pašić, Serbian Prime Minister from April 1906 to July 1908. On May 3rd 1906, Spaljković sent a confidential memo

¹⁸ For negotiation details with British investors and construction companies see: *DSP*, Vol. 2, No. 2/1, doc. No. 1; *DSP*, Vol. 2, No. 2/2, doc. No. 247; *DSP*, Vol. 2, No. 2/2, doc. No. 354; *DSP*, Vol. 2, No. 2/2, doc. No. 357; *DSP*, Vol. 2, No. 2/2, doc. No. 420; *DSP*, Vol. 2, No. 2/2, doc. No. 421; *DSP*, Vol. 2, No. 3/1, doc. No. 26.

to Belgrade. In this lengthy document, he outlined the methods that ought to be used during diplomatic negotiations whose ultimate goal was the construction of the planned Adriatic railroad.¹⁹ His recommendations and conclusions can be summarized in the following way: a) Multinational projects have better chances for success since they would provoke less suspicion and opposition b) Great Britain should be attracted to support the project, but equally important is the support of France and Italy c) growing hostility among powers could prove *beneficial* for Serbia's plans since maintenance of the *status quo* towards the Ottoman Empire would almost certainly mean that there would be no railroads construction in the European parts of the Ottoman Empire.

Spaljković's hopes rested on the growing hostility between Great Britain and Germany, and he presumed that this would be an incentive for British diplomacy to support the Serbian project. He maintained that Serbian interests lay on the same side as the interests of Great Britain, France, Italy, and Russia and that the new railroad would serve as a kind of blockade for the future political and economic penetration of the Central European empires into Asia Minor. Spaljković understood how great infrastructural projects depended on Great Power politics. I will present the interactions of Serbian diplomacy with all parties involved, interactions with their politics and actions, one by one. This seems to be a better way to understand negotiations about the Adriatic Railroad project than simply to follow the chronology of the events, which may lead us to omit existing trends and continuities.

For Serbia, the Adriatic Railroad had a dual character. Firstly, it was an opportunity to make any future customs wars with the Habsburg Monarchy obsolete and to enhance Serbian trade and economy. Secondly, it was about the political influence that came with new railroads. On the one hand, the railroad could have increased Serbia's influence in the Ottoman Macedonia part of the Ottoman Empire, to which all the Balkan states laid claim.²⁰ On the other hand, the connection with Russian railroads was supposed to be a counterbalance to the Habsburg influence. This counterbalance was meant to create maneuvering space so that Serbia could never become totally dependent on one of its powerful neighbors. Enabling trade with both Russia and Austria-Hungary would provide much-needed room for maneuvering in Serbia's foreign policy. With this

¹⁹ For the full text see: *DSP*, Vol. 2, No. 1/2, doc. No. 434; See also: Z. D. Bajin, *Miroslav Spaljković: 1869–1951 – biografija* (PhD manuscript) (Belgrade: University of Belgrade, 2016), 96.

²⁰ This represented continuity with the construction of the first railroads that connected the Kingdom of Serbia and the Ottoman Empire. Since the 1880s and the construction of the first railroad in Macedonia, new railroads in Serbia were understood as an opportunity for further strengthening the national interest in the Ottoman Empire. See: S. Terzić, "Stojan Novaković i Železnička konvencija sa Turskom 1887", *Istorijski časopis XXXIII* (1976), 119.

in mind, Serbian diplomats started a wide diplomatic offensive in Rome, Paris, London, St. Petersburg, and, naturally, in Constantinople. In the Ottoman capital, every move was taken with extreme care, since it was assumed that it would be hard to convince the Sublime Port to allow construction on its own soil.

The Habsburg Empire from the outset was the biggest opponent of the proposed Adriatic Railroad. This is usually understood as one of the measures created to block Russian influence in the Balkans. As Francis Roy Bridge noted, since the Habsburgs lost control over territories in Italy and German lands in the 1850s and 1860s, they were particularly fearful of the possibility that Russian influence in the Balkans:

“Might expose them [Austria-Hungary] yet again to that disastrous combination of irredentist nationalism backed by a first-class power, this time with terminally fatal consequences for the Great Power status of the Monarchy – encircled by Russia, excluded from its colonial markets in the Balkans, and at the mercy of irredentist neighbors.”²¹

However, as will be shown, Serbia had a very hard time getting Russia to support its plans. The general fear of the Russian growing influence pushed Vienna to be assertive even when Russia hoped to keep the *status quo*. Another way to understand the perspective of Viennese diplomacy is to point to the intricate connection between foreign and internal politics of the Habsburg Empire. The Kingdom of Serbia could not be allowed to become politically and economically independent from the Habsburg influence, not just simply because of Serbia itself, a state that could never present any serious threat to the Habsburg Monarchy, but because of the possible rise of the prestige of independent Serbia among numerous Serbs and other South Slavs in Austria-Hungary.²² This is how this railway project, initiated by the Kingdom of Serbia, with its population of fewer than three million citizens, evolved into a significant security concern for Austria-Hungary.

During these three years, between 1906 and 1908, Austria-Hungary pressured the Sublime Porte to not even start negotiating about the railroad. The Habsburg diplomacy sought German support and looked for other ways to foil this project. Firstly, Vienna bribed the local Albanian population in West-

²¹ F. R. Bridge, “The Sanjak of Novibazar Railway project”. In *Railways and International Politics: Paths of Empire 1848–1945*, eds. T. G. Otte, K. Nielson, (London: Routledge, 2006), 68.

²² A. Mitrović, *Prodor na Balkan: Srbija u planovima Austro-Ugarske i Nemačke 1908–1918* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2011), 120–128; This line of reasoning, whose credo was that any kind of independent South Slav polity, despite scarce economic or military potential, was exceptionally dangerous for Austria-Hungary security, had a history in the Habsburg official thinking. See: Bridge, *From Sadowa*, 8–9, 23, 72, 79, 93, 141, 289, and especially 150.

ern Macedonia. The local Albanians were instructed to scare off the engineers who measured the terrain and sketched possible routes.²³ Secondly, Vienna supported other railroad projects, the ones that would diminish the value of the proposed Adriatic railroad. First, the Vienna government supported the Bulgarian wish to connect Kyustendil in Western Bulgaria with Kumanovo in Macedonia.²⁴

Moreover, the foreign minister Aehrenthal renewed an old Austrian project to connect Bosnia and Herzegovina, still formally part of the Ottoman Empire but under Austrian occupation, with Thessaloniki and Athens.²⁵ He declared publicly in the parliament that this route was “the shortest route from Central Europe to Egypt and India”.²⁶ As a shrewd and experienced diplomat, Aehrenthal knew how the other powers would react. Similarly, he was well aware that the Ottoman Sultan would consider all these projects a grave danger to the Ottoman state and that the Sublime Porte would have no choice but to allow no construction at all. Aehrenthal wanted to make an atmosphere where it would be easy for the sultan to reject all projects.

British diplomats believed that Aehrenthal offered one more thing to the Sultan in exchange for not allowing the Adriatic Railroad. For more than a decade, the Great Powers had negotiated reforms in Macedonia, part of the Ottoman Empire, a region marked by unstable security and inhabited by numerous nationalities and ethnic groups. The fear was that a spark from Macedonia could ignite a new Great Eastern Crisis, like the one from the 1870s, which could bring the Great Powers to the brink of a new conflict. Therefore, European diplomats worked hard on the reform project in Macedonia. The greatest problem was the lack of security. As the Ottoman state capacity was in decline, tax collection was not conducted by state officials. Instead, the right to collect tax was sold to local strongmen. Often, tax collection represented an attempt to take as much as possible from the local population and was often accompanied by violence. It was recognized that a security reform could prevent future crises. The core of the plan was to bring non-Muslims into the local police force. This plan had existed since the 1903 Austro-Russian Mürzsteg Agreement, but it was never implemented.²⁷

²³ DSP, Vol. 3, No. 1/1, doc. No. 20; DSP, Vol. 3, No. 1/1, doc. No. 150.

²⁴ DSP, Vol. 2, No. 3/2, doc. No. 556.

²⁵ DSP, Vol. 3, No. 1/1, doc. No. 37.

²⁶ Doc. No. 869I. In *Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871–1914, Band 25/2: Die englisch-russische Entente und der Osten*, (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte).

²⁷ M. Biondich, “The Balkan Wars: the Patterns of Violence in the Balkans Leading up to the First World War”. In *The Routledge History Handbook of Central and Eastern*

British diplomats believed that Austria was deliberately sabotaging the reforms in Macedonia. The Sultan was an opponent of reform projects from the outset. By helping the Sultan, Vienna hoped to get some favors from Ottoman diplomacy. Edward Grey, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, wrote:

“I have said that these developments in Macedonian reform negotiations coinciding with irade by the Sultan in favor of Austrian railway projects make it appear that while we are credited at Constantinople with responsibility for initiating Macedonian Reform proposals, other Powers get concessions from the Sultan by obstructing them. It was impossible to work the Concert on these lines and I regarded the dropping of Judicial Reform proposals under these conditions as a step towards breaking up the concert.”²⁸

Grey was completely right, as documents in Austrian archives show. Solomon Wank was the first historian who pointed to the logic behind the moves taken by the Habsburg diplomacy. Based on diplomatic dispatches of the Habsburg diplomats, he demonstrated that the Habsburg diplomacy traded their obstruction of Macedonian reforms for the Sultan’s approval of their own railroad projects, which were supposed to connect Austria-Hungary with Thessaloniki, though the Sanjak of Novibazar.²⁹ The Serbian project was confronted from the beginning by the suspicious sultan and hostile Austria-Hungary. But the Adriatic railroad project did not die immediately, because other Great Powers were ready to support it. In his memo, Spalajković sensed that the antagonism between the powers could mean that the Serbian project would have support.

Italian diplomats understood well the intensity of the Austro-Serb conflict. The Italian consul in Belgrade wrote in March 1906 to Foreign Minister Guicciardini about something that is often forgotten by contemporary historians. The Italian consul in Belgrade informed his superiors that the Serbo-Bulgarian trade deal, the cause of the entire crisis, was never put to a vote in the Serbian national assembly. However, the Austro-Hungarian border remained closed.³⁰ The issue between Belgrade and Vienna was never simply about the economy. It was about power and prestige. Moreover, Italian diplomats reported the Austro-

Europe in the Twentieth Century, Volume 4: Violence, eds. J. Böhler, W. Borodziej, J. von Puttkamer, (London: Routledge, 2016), 9.

²⁸ *British Documents*, Vol. V, doc. No. 231.

²⁹ S. Wank, “Aehrenthal and the Sanjak of Novibazar Railway Project: A Reappraisal”, *The Slavonic and East European Review* XLII (1964), 353–369, esp. footnote 44.

³⁰ “But what about the famous Serbian-Bulgarian rail convention, the primary cause of the whole affair, someone will ask? And well, this has also been foreseen. The deadline for its approval was the 1st of this month, which passed without it being presented to the Skupchtina. Now we don’t talk about it anymore” (translation from Italian). *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Terza Serie 1896–1907, Vol. IX, No. 603.

Hungarian opposition to Italian rail projects in the eastern Adriatic.³¹ Lastly, the potential for Italian commercial penetration into Albania, Serbia, and even Romania, was evident to the Italian ambassador to Constantinople.³² It is not surprising that Italy supported from the beginning the idea of building a railroad from the Adriatic Sea to the Danube River. Italian diplomats believed this project presented a possible means to block something they feared severely: the complete penetration of Habsburg and German influence in the Balkans.³³ Italy had its ambitions and plans in the region, and competition from the Habsburgs was not desirable. Support for the Serbian project in Italy was manifold. Italian diplomats advised their Serbian counterparts about the best possible course of action.³⁴ This represented valuable input since Italian networks and information gathering surpassed the reach of Serbian diplomacy. Italian investors immediately demonstrated interest in financing the construction.³⁵ Italy did not just support Serbian plans; moreover, Rome became the place where ambassadors of other countries were approached to solicit the support of their respective countries for the Adriatic railroad.³⁶

Italian diplomats helped their Serbian counterparts to better understand the Great Power relations of the time, arguing that fear of the German influence in the Ottoman Empire was the main reason that could make Great Britain to decide to support the railroad. The interest of Italian investors was formalized in Milan, where the financial consortium *Danube–Adriatic* was created. Similarly to Spalajković, the Italians believed that a multinational financial project had better chances than a project that had just one power behind it. Moreover, they advised the Serbian government to act according to this premise. At the same time, the Italians contacted both the Ottoman bank in Constantinople and French investors in France regarding the proposed railroad project.³⁷ A railroad that would end in northern Albania, a region where Italy already tended to project its influence, was completely compatible with Italian foreign policy. The possibility of access to the Balkan hinterland, the lower Danube, and Russian

³¹ *Ibid.*, No. 279n.

³² *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Terza Serie 1896–1907, Vol. X, No. 192

³³ C. J. Lowe & F. Marzari, *Italian Foreign Policy 1870–1940* (London: Routledge, 1975), 104; Lj. Aleksić-Pejković, “Italija i Jadranska železnica”, *Istorijski časopis XXXIV* (1987), 256, 263.

³⁴ *DSP*, Vol. 2, No. 2/2, doc. No. 335.

³⁵ *DSP*, Vol. 2, No. 1/2, doc. No. 626.

³⁶ *DSP*, Vol. 2, No. 3/1, doc. No. 34; *DSP*, Vol. 2, No. 3/1, doc. No. 272; *DSP*, Vol. 3, No. 1/1, doc. No. 265.

³⁷ A. Tamborra, “The Rise of Italian Industry and the Balkans (1900–1914)”, *The Journal of European Economic History* III (1974), 115; Aleksić-Pejković, “Italija i Jadranska”, 264–265.

railways was very tempting for Italian interests. Italian diplomats even contemplated, in the case of the full cooperation between Russia, France, and Italy being established, sending a fleet to Ottoman waters to force the Sultan to allow the construction.³⁸

A comparative reading of Serbian and Italian documents reveals that the Italians did not share their views fully with their Serb interlocutors. Italians did not share fully the strong impression that the chance of success was not high.³⁹ Despite the small chances of success, Italian diplomats still argued for the project.⁴⁰ Unlike Serbia, Italy understood that it could always back away from the project in order to get benefits elsewhere. Moreover, Italian support was limited in two other ways. Firstly, Italian diplomacy was aware that from the financial point of view, they could not act alone. In other words, French financial participation was necessary.⁴¹ Secondly, because of its complex relations with Germany, especially in the aftermath of the Algeciras conference, Italy tended to co-opt France into a leading position of this temporary coalition which stood behind the proposed Adriatic railroad. Italian diplomats stressed that they were not willing to be the first to openly challenge Austro-Hungarian policies in the Balkans.⁴²

Just like Italy, France showed immediate interest in the project of the Serbian government. In this case, we can see the most striking example of the coordination of foreign policy and investment policy. The French government, together with French bankers, representatives of the *Societe Financiere d'Orient*, and the *Ottoman bank*, discussed with Serbian diplomats the potential solutions for the realization of this project.⁴³ Not just in France, but also in Constantinople, Serbian envoys had multiple conversations with French diplomats and bankers, and all of them together tried to figure out who in the Sublime Porte was the most likely to support this project.⁴⁴ It was important that this figure had sufficient influence on the Sultan and Ottoman politics.

French interest in this project had a strong financial aspect, and the French investors were aware that neither Russian nor Italian financial circles

³⁸ DSP, Vol. 3, No. 1/1, doc. No. 265.

³⁹ "Evidently sooner or later the construction of the railway will come about, but Austria will certainly make every effort in Constantinople to prevent it, and, if Germany joins it, which at the present moment seems very probable, the obstacles will be greater than the Serbs have been led to think" (translation from Italian). *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Vol. X, No. 192.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 209.

⁴¹ Aleksić-Pejković, "Italija i Jadranska", 265.

⁴² DSP, Vol. 3, No. 1/1, doc. No. 90.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, doc. No. 156, 190; Djordjević, "Projekt Jadranske", 12.

⁴⁴ DSP, Vol. 3, No. 2/1, doc. No. 324.

had enough money to realize this project on their own. However, the political aspect was equally strong from the French perspective. It seems that French diplomacy did not want Russian prestige to suffer another blow, after the revolution of 1905 and the defeat in the Far East in the war against Japan. The French feared that if that happened, the Russian debt to France and future loans could come into question. Also, France needed a strong Russia to counter Germany. Another reason that stood behind French support was their thinking that if Thessaloniki became a port city dominated by Austria-Hungary, French influence in the Balkans would come into question.⁴⁵ From the beginning of 1908, this project almost became solely a French venture, from the financial point of view. Furthermore, in February 1908, the Serbian government decided to consult with their French counterparts before taking any decision in regard to the railroad project.⁴⁶ Paris was the place where it was decided, after consultations between the Ottoman Bank and Jonction Salonique-Constantinople that Régie générale des chemins de fer would study the possible routes.⁴⁷ Moreover, the final description of the route was created in Paris.⁴⁸

Even though Habsburg diplomacy feared that the Adriatic railroad, if ever completed, would bolster Russian prestige and influence, it was not easy for Serbian diplomats to solicit Russian support. As soon as the project started at the beginning of 1906, the Russian government was informed. However, it was immediately obvious that the Russian side had no intention of supporting the project.⁴⁹ In the following months, Serbian attempts to acquire the support of official St. Petersburg were continuous.⁵⁰ However, the Russian stance was equally persistent. Politically and economically weakened, the Russian Empire did not believe it was the proper time for any kind of diplomatic offensive in the Balkans. Russian foreign minister Izvolski claimed: "Russia must be assured of peace from Kamatchka to Gibraltar for ten years."⁵¹ Izvolski hoped to continue

⁴⁵ Djordjević, "Austro-srpski", 229. For a general overview of French politics towards the Kingdom of Serbia see: V. Pavlović, *De la Serbie vers la Yougoslavie: la France et la naissance de la Yougoslavie 1878-1918* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2015).

⁴⁶ DSP, Vol. 3, No. 1/1, doc. No. 224.

⁴⁷ DSP, Vol. 3, No. 2/1, doc. No. 191. A couple of months before this happened, it was decided that Jonction Salonique-Constantinople, and not the Serbian government, would formally request from the Sublime Porte the permit to construct the railroad. DSP, Vol. 3, No. 1/1, doc. No. 212.

⁴⁸ DSP, Vol. 3, No. 2/1, doc. No. 337.

⁴⁹ DSP, Vol. 2, No. 1/1, doc. No. 124.

⁵⁰ DSP, Vol. 2, No. 3/1, doc. No. 366, 428, 677.

⁵¹ D. M. McDonald, *United Government and Foreign Policy in Russia, 1900–1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 109.

cooperation with Austria-Hungary and therefore knew that Russia could not stand behind the Serbian railroad project.

The first time Serbian diplomacy started to get some positive signs from St. Petersburg was in 1908, only after Austria-Hungary set out on her railroad-building path in the Balkans, which *de facto* meant a violation of the Russo-Austrian Mürzsteg Agreement from 1903.⁵² Even then Russia promised only its support but not initiative.⁵³ Russian diplomats lent their support to the Adriatic railroad in Constantinople only after Italians had already done that before them, and after Russian Foreign Minister Izvolski understood that there was no more *status quo* in the Balkans. It seems that Izvolski's motivation was the following: he hoped that he would attract Italy to the Balkans so that Italy, instead of Russia, could block the Habsburg penetration towards Thessaloniki.⁵⁴ The first proactive Russian moves came only in the days of the Young Turk Revolution when all of the Powers were repositioning themselves to reflect the new political situation.⁵⁵ In the coming months, Serbian diplomats still had the feeling that Russia would gladly ditch the Adriatic railroad project if only Austria-Hungary would abandon her own project of connecting Bosnia and Herzegovina with Thessaloniki.⁵⁶

Unlike Italy or France, Great Britain never actively worked in favor of the new rail projects, not just the Adriatic railroad but also the Austro-Hungarian one. Edward Grey feared German influence in the Ottoman Empire but was reluctant to support the Adriatic Railroad, believing that by doing this, he would push the Ottoman Empire even stronger into Germany's arms.⁵⁷ Only after the Sublime Porte allowed the building of the Austro-Hungarian project, the British ambassador in Constantinople supported the Adriatic railroad.⁵⁸ That happened in the summer of 1908, when the whole project looked more and more unattainable.

⁵² DSP, Vol. 3, No. 1/1, doc. No. 59, 114. See also: V. V. Zaitsev, "The Shaping of Russian Foreign Policy on Turkey and the Balkans 1908-1911", *Oxford Slavonic Papers XXXII* (1999), 53-54; S. Wank, *In the Twilight of Empire: Count Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal 1854-1912: Imperial Habsburg Patriot and Statesman*, vol. I (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2009), 200-201, 347-349.

⁵³ DSP, Vol. 3, No. 1/1, doc. No. 128, 176.

⁵⁴ Aleksić-Pejković, "Italija i Jadranska", 261.

⁵⁵ DSP, Vol. 3, No. 2/1, doc. No. 174.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Doc. No. 425, 456.

⁵⁷ Grey wrote: "We had been approached by the Servians some time ago, and had told them we were favourable to railway projects generally, but could not promise our support to any particular project". *British Documents*, Vol. 5, doc. No. 238.

⁵⁸ DSP, Vol. 3, No. 2/1, doc. No. 351.

In the period between 1906 and 1908, Germany followed a line of reasoning similar to Britain's. It seems that Germany and Great Britain were in mutual equilibrium and were mostly concerned with the possibility that the other would gain predominant influence in the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, they did not want to pressure the Sublime Porte over any issue. German Foreign Minister Heinrich Leonhard von Tschirschky wrote in May of 1907: "We have assured the Austrian minister of our willingness to support his railway project if it could be implemented with the approval of the Sultan. Against his will, we could not proceed in light of our specific interests in Constantinople".⁵⁹

In the following months, the German position indeed changed, but only slightly. Tschirschky's successor as Foreign Minister of the German Empire, Wilhelm Eduard Freiherr von Schoen, wrote a short note to the German ambassador in Constantinople on 31st December 1907: "Carefully support for the Austro-Hungarian approach to the railway issue".⁶⁰

Conclusion

During the whole period covered by this article, the Foreign Ministry of the Kingdom of Serbia collected as much information and instruction as it could get about various schemes and plans made by the Great Powers. The Serbian government, which lacked adequate finances to push for this kind of project on its own, tried to solve the conundrum of getting a concession to build in the Ottoman Empire and acquiring enough investment for the construction. In June 1908, the final details about the new consortium that was supposed to build a new railroad were agreed upon. French bankers invested 45% of the capital, Italian 35%, and the rest was covered by Serbia and Russia, on equal terms. Another company was set up in order to build a harbor in Albania; the Italians came with 55% and the French with 45% of the required capital.

The Young Turk Revolution of July 1908 caught everyone by surprise. Immediately, almost everything was put on hold. All diplomats in Constantinople wanted to wait and see what would come out of the unexpected new political reality. In October 1908, simultaneously, Bulgaria declared independence and Austria-Hungary declared annexation of the Ottoman territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina. An international crisis was on the horizon. Soon, it became clear that under the new circumstances, the Ottoman government was not going to allow any new building projects. The danger of war ended all construction plans.

This case study opens a window of opportunity to access the infrastructural project-making in the Balkans prior to the First World War. The Kingdom

⁵⁹ *Große Politik*, Vol. 22, doc. No. 7373.

⁶⁰ *Große Politik*, Vol. 25/2, doc. No. 8689.

of Serbia, a small, underdeveloped country without sufficient capital, found itself at a turbulent crossroads of Great Power rivalry as soon as it proposed the Adriatic railroad. Between 1906 and 1908, there was no doubt that the construction of the Adriatic Railroad would bring economic benefits. The overarching question that hung over the entire project was: who would benefit the most? This was the primary driver of the opposition to the project. Moreover, support for the railroad was not solely based on economic reasoning. For Serbia and other actors, it served a dual purpose. For Serbia, the railroad would, above all, allow more freedom in foreign policy. For other supporters, the project not only made economic sense but also promised to limit the Habsburg presence in the Balkans.

It's impossible to overlook the fact that, despite variations in support, the project ultimately garnered both endorsement and opposition in a manner strongly reminiscent of the alliance structure that would solidify in 1914 and 1915. Britain was not eager to support the plan, but, as we have seen, its Foreign Office did express dissatisfaction with the Habsburg actions. Furthermore, this case study illustrates that, despite financial constraints and challenging terrain, the insurmountable challenge lay in the political realm. Multinational cooperation was deemed the optimal approach for undertaking transcontinental projects, as it was believed to possess the capacity to address all potential challenges. However, in the end, even this proved unsuccessful. This should be taken into consideration when thinking about the broader history of the Balkan infrastructural underdevelopment. The railroad that had financial backing and a planned route in 1908 was finished only in the 1970s. Equally, it seems that Spalajković was right. The interest of the Great Powers to support an infrastructural project was higher in the times when the *status quo* was challenged. The need to limit the Habsburg penetration into the Balkans was part of the motivation behind support for the Adriatic railroad. In other words, the greatest chance for the Balkan infrastructure was in periods of tense relations between the Great Powers. The ill fate of the Adriatic Railroad points to the Balkan predicament: the railway project became possible due to the conflicting interests between the Powers. It failed because deteriorating relations among them developed into a full-blown crisis.

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The Outbreak of the First Balkan War and the Italo-Turkish Peace Negotiations in Lausanne in 1912¹

Abstract: Analyzing published and unpublished sources, the paper aims to determine to what extent the crisis in the Balkan Peninsula influenced the dynamics and stages of the negotiations in Lausanne between the Italian and Turkish delegations to end the Italo-Turkish War. The analysis spans from mid-July to the signing of the First Treaty of Lausanne (Treaty of Ouchy) and the entry of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece in the war against Turkey on 18 October 1912. Italy tried to end its conflict with Turkey and prevent the Balkan countries in their aspiration to disrupt the *status quo* in the Balkan Peninsula. Italian diplomacy used the friction between the Balkan countries and Turkey to conclude as favorable a treaty as possible, directly pressuring the Turkish delegation at Ouchy and using the great powers' pressure on Turkey. The practical results of signing the Treaty of Lausanne were the establishment of direct Italian rule in Libya and retaining temporary control of the Aegean islands.

Keywords: Italy, Turkey, Austria-Hungary, Balkans, *status quo*, First Balkan War, Italo-Turkish War, 1912, peace, Libya, Lausanne/Ouchy

After the founding of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861 and moving the capital to Rome in 1871, the process of its unification was incomplete. Austria-Hungary still retained the so-called *terre irredente*, Trentino, Trieste, parts of Tyrol, and parts of Dalmatia. Italy's need to complete the unification process by incorporating the Austro-Hungarian territories inhabited by ethnic Italians gave rise to the anti-Austrian irredentist movement. On the other hand, after the unification, Italian diplomacy took on a colonial component, directing its foreign policy to securing colonial possessions to increase Italian prestige and ensure the country's status as a great power. By the second half of the 19th century, few territories remained up for grabs. The geographic position of Tunisia meant that it was vitally important for Italian policy in the Mediterranean. The turn came in 1881 when France took control of Tunisia, irking the Italian general public and political circles. Following the French conquest of Tunisia, Italy

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redirected its colonial aspirations to Libya and the Horn of Africa. Inspired by the French move, the Italian Foreign Minister Pasquale Stanislao Mancini set out to rethink the fundamental premises of the Italian foreign policy, concluding that it could reach its international objectives with the support of Austria-Hungary and Germany.²

Cyrenaica and Tripolitania in the Italian Foreign-Policy Strategy

The new course of Italian foreign policy was formalized with the signing of the Triple Alliance between Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Germany on 20th May 1882.³ Italy's accession to the Triple Alliance distanced the country from France, suppressed the irredentist movement, and redirected its foreign policy to colonial expansionism. When the treaty was renewed on 20th February 1887, Germany pledged to support Italy in case of a war against France for the North African colonies. The promise was specified in the text of the Triple Alliance treaty in 1891, and Article IX promised that Germany would support the Italian violation of the *status quo* in North Africa and the occupation of territories in this region. After its defeat in Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in 1895–1896, Italy recognized the French Protectorate of Tunisia. This improvement in the relations with France in 1896 did not dilute the importance of the Triple Alliance for the Italian colonial policy. In the new treaty on the Triple Alliance signed on 30th June 1902, Austria-Hungary gave *carte blanche* to Italy in Tripolitania.⁴

Beyond the Triple Alliance, Italy sought to secure the support of the other great powers for its influence in Tripoli. When the Triple Alliance was renewed in 1887, Italian diplomacy managed to come to agreements with Britain and Spain. Britain agreed to maintain the *status quo* in the Mediterranean and

² L. Monzali, "The Balkans and The Triple Alliance In The Italian Foreign Policy". In *Italy's Balkan Strategies*, ed. Vojislav G. Pavlović, (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, 2014), 61–64; L. Monzali, et al., *Storia delle relazioni internazionali (1492–1918): Dall'ascesa dell'Europa alla prima guerra mondiale* (Milano: Mondadori Education S.p.A, 2022), 362; Д. Р. Живојиновић, *У потрази за империјом Италија и Балкан почетком XX века*, (In search of an empire, Italy and the Balkans at the beginning of the 20th century) (Београд: Албатрос плус, 2013), 9–10; D. R. Živojinović, *Amerika, Italija i postanak Jugoslavije 1917–1919* (Beograd: Naučna knjiga, 1970), 7–9.

³ The Triple Alliance Treaty was renewed multiple times: in 1887, 1891, 1896, 1902, and, for the final time, on the eve of the First World War in 1912.

⁴ L. Monzali, *The Balkans and The Triple Alliance in the Italian Foreign Policy*, 65–78; L. Monzali, et al., *Storia delle relazioni internazionali (1492–1918)*, 369–375; М. Виденовић, „Избијање Италијанско–турског рата и Србија 1911. године“, („The Outbreak of the Italian-Turkish War and Serbia in 1911“) *Врањски гласник* (2021), 154; А. Mitrović, *Prodor na Balkan i Srbija 1908–1918* (Beograd: Nolit, 1981), 11; D. R. Živojinović, *Amerika, Italija i postanak Jugoslavije 1917–1919*, 8–11.

the Adriatic, Aegean, and Black Seas. London pledged to support Italy in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica in exchange for Italian support in Egypt. Spain promised not to support any moves that could undermine Italian interests in North Africa.⁵ Making use of the Franco-English rivalry in Africa, on 11th March 1902, Rome acquired London's firmer support for taking control of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. In the summer of 1902, Italian diplomacy secured France's consent to take these territories in exchange for recognizing French interests in Morocco. Italy's diplomatic preparations for fulfilling its aspirations in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania were completed by a treaty signed with Russia in Racconigi (1909). The so-called Racconigi Bargain ensured Russian consent for taking Tripoli, and, in return, Italy pledged to support Russian policy in the Turkish Straits.⁶

The Second Moroccan Crisis and the Tripolitanian Question

By 1911, Italy had secured its interests in Libya with both great power blocs. The diplomatic struggle was followed by peaceful expansion, which involved the support of banks, trade exchanges, and investments. At first, the Italians steered clear of matters of Ottoman sovereignty in the provinces. The crisis in the Ottoman Empire had led to the Young Turk Revolution in 1908. The new regime did not look favorably on the expansion of Italian influence in Tripolitania, reasoning that the Italian economic penetration could lay the ground for a political intervention. Fearing the Italian threat, the Young Turk regime tried to make their position as difficult as possible by allowing the economic expansion of other great powers in the provinces. Their reinforcements of the Turkish garrisons in Tripoli and fortification projects solidified the Italian public in its conviction that an intervention was necessary.⁷

⁵ A. Duce, „The War in Libya and Russia“. In *The Libyan War 1911–1912*, eds. Luca Micheletta, Andrea Ungari, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 117; L. Monzali, et al., *Storia delle relazioni internazionali (1492–1918)*, 375.

⁶ F. Caccamo, „Italy, Libya and the Balkan“. In *The Wars before the Great War*, eds. D. Geppert, W. Mulligan, A. Rose, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 21; L. Monzali, *The Balkans and The Triple Alliance in the Italian Foreign Policy*, 76; C. Sforza, *L'Italia dal 1914 al 1944 quale io la vidi* (Roma: Mondadori Roma, 1944), 24; В. Поповић, *Источно питање* (Eastern Question) (Београд: Никола Пашић, 2007), 164–165; М. Виденовић, *Избијање Италијанско–турског рата и Србија 1911. године* (The outbreak of the Italian-Turkish war and Serbia in 1911), 154.

⁷ *Документи о спољној политици Краљевине Србије 1903–1914* (Documents on the foreign policy of the Kingdom of Serbia 1903–1914) (henceforth: ДСПКС), Књ. IV, св. 4/1, (1/14. јула – 30. септембар/13. октобар 1912) прир. Љ. А. Пејковић, К. Џамбазовски, (Београд: САНУ одељење историјских наука, 2009), док. 371; F. Rudi, *Soglie Inquiete, L'Italia e la Serbia all'inizio del novecento (1904–1912)* (Milano: Mimesis edizioni, 2020), 176–189; М. Виденовић, *Избијање Италијанско–турског рата и Србија 1911.*

When the liberal politician Giovanni Giolitti formed a new cabinet in March 1911, foreign affairs were entrusted to Antonino, Marchese di San Giuliano. The economic reform that was to involve placing insurance companies under state control made things more difficult for Giolitti's government. The reform was seen as a blow against industrialists, private property, and capitalist relations. The summer saw an energetic debate in the Parliament about the constant attacks on the government. It was in this internal climate that the Second Moroccan Crisis (Agadir Crisis or Incident) caught Italy when it broke out on 1st July 1911.⁸

In Rome, the Second Moroccan Crisis was seen as a turning point because the resolution of the Moroccan question would have untied France from the promises it had made to Italy in the 1902 agreement. Italian political circles feared that Libya might go down the same path as Tunisia had done in 1881. The Italians could not put all of their trust in Germany – it had become the chief protector of the Ottoman Empire because of the concessions for the construction of the Baghdad railway. On 28th July 1911, San Giuliano sent the King and Giolitti a secret memorandum in which he judged that Italy would have to intervene in Tripolitania in a matter of months.⁹ The campaign in North Africa was to help Giolitti's government consolidate its position in internal politics as its program was encountering sharp criticism. The government hoped that the popularity of the colonial conquest might eliminate the negative impact of the clash about the reform program. Some liberal politicians such as Sidney Sonnino, the leader of the liberal-conservative opposition, offered support to the government, seeing the Libyan campaign as an opportunity to resolve the social question, ensure Italy's prestige, and confirm its status as a great power. Despite internal pressure, Giolitti was aware that a declaration of war should have a good reason or, at least, a convenient trigger. The Italian government's decision to intervene in Libya does not seem to have been driven by internal factors but solely by the international situation.¹⁰

године (The outbreak of the Italian-Turkish war and Serbia in 1911), 154; I. Bonomi, *La politica italiana da Porta Pia a Vittorio Veneto 1870–1918* (Roma: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1946), 300; F. Caccamo, *Italy, Libya and the Balkan*, 24.

⁸ A. A. Mola, *Giolitti, il senso dello stato* (Roma: Rusconi Libri S.p.A., 2019), 388; I. Bonomi, *La politica italiana da Porta Pia a Vittorio Veneto 1870–1918*, 298–299; F. Rudi, *Soglie Inquiete, L'Italia e la Serbia all'inizio del novecento (1904–1912)*, 188–190;

⁹ F. Rudi, *Soglie Inquiete, L'Italia e la Serbia all'inizio del novecento (1904–1912)*, 189–190; A. A. Mola, *Giolitti, il senso dello stato*, 388.

¹⁰ G. A. Haywood, *Failure of a dream, Sidney Sonnino and the rise and fall of the liberal Italy 1847–1922* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki editore, 1999), 379–384; F. Caccamo, *Italy, Libya and the Balkan*, 23–29.

The preoccupation of the great powers with the Second Moroccan Crisis was convenient for Italy, allowing it to present the conquest of Tripolitania as a *fait accompli*. On the other hand, San Giuliano and Giolitti were concerned that the campaign might undermine the prestige of the Ottoman Empire and embolden the Balkan nations. The movements of the Balkan peoples and the crisis of the Ottoman Empire could ultimately lead to an Austro-Hungarian initiative in the Balkans. Such a scenario did not align with the objectives of Italian diplomacy, as it would have prevented its involvement in Balkan matters. Its efforts to prevent a disruption of the *status quo* in the Balkans stemmed from concerns that Austria-Hungary might use Italy's focus on North Africa to gain the upper hand in the Balkans. In August and September 1911, San Giuliano was informed by diplomats that the non-violent expansion had failed and that more drastic measures needed to be taken before the end of the Second Moroccan Crisis. The Italians had expected a swift initiative in Tripoli, believing that a rapid move could prevent turmoil in the Balkans, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and a unilateral offensive of Austria-Hungary in the Balkans. To put it differently, once it acquired control over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, Italian diplomacy could redefine its treaties with Austria-Hungary and Germany and emphasize its irredentist and Balkan interests.¹¹

The Italo-Turkish War of 1911–1912

San Giuliano and Giolitti held their last consultations about the planned intervention in Libya in the first half of September, proceeding to meet with Victor Emmanuel III at Racconigi on 19 September 1911. The signing of the Franco-German preliminary agreement on Morocco on 23 September 1911 and the incoming fall and changing weather conditions, unfavorable for naval missions, hastened the decision of the Italian government. During the night of 26/27 September, San Giuliano sent the Italian representative in Constantinople a tele-

¹¹ *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* (henceforth: DDI, IV, VII–VIII), Serie IV, vol. VII–VIII (Roma: Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 2004), doc. 120, 136–137, Rome, 9. 8. 1911, *San Giuliano to De Martino*; *Ibid.*, doc. 123, 143, Vienna, 12. 8. 1911, *Pansa to San Giuliano*; *Ibid.*, doc. 132, 163–164, Therapia, 21. 8. 1911, *De Martino a San Giuliano*; *Ibid.*, doc. 153, 194–195, Paris, 7. 9. 1911, *Tittoni a San Giuliano*; A. A. Mola, *Giolitti, il senso dello stato*, 388–391; G. A. Haywood, *Failure of a dream, Sidney Sonnino and the rise and fall of the liberal Italy 1847–1922*, 381–383; I. Bonomi, *La politica italiana da Porta Pia a Vittorio Veneto 1870–1918*, 300; F. Rudi, *Soglie Inquiete, L'Italia e la Serbia all'inizio del novecento (1904–1912)*, 188–191; F. Caccamo, *Italy, Libya and the Balkan*, 25–27. Italian diplomats were worried that Austria-Hungary and Germany might use the renewal of the Triple Alliance treaty in 1912 as an opportunity to demand modifying the terms of the agreement in exchange for concessions to Italy in Africa (F. Caccamo, *Italy, Libya and the Balkan*, 26).

gram informing the Sublime Porte that Italy was forced to occupy Tripolitania and Cyrenaica to establish order in the provinces and protect the local Italian citizens. The Ottoman Porte had little choice: it was given 24 hours to respond to the ultimatum and recognize the Italian occupation of the two provinces. The ultimatum to Turkey left a negative impression on the Italian allies in Vienna and Berlin, as the two countries were trying to be on friendly terms with Turkey because of the Austro-Hungarian penetration toward Thessaloniki and Germany's eastward expansion. The Porte rejected the ultimatum, giving Italy the grounds to officially declare war on the Ottoman Empire on 29th September 1911 at 14:30.¹²

Rome was not preparing for a protracted war, initially deploying only naval forces. In the first few days of the conflict, Italian troops took control of all relevant coastal positions in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Giolitti believed that after the conquest of Tripoli, Turkey would accept the *fait accompli* in exchange for monetary compensation. Under the impression that Libya was already lost, the Ottoman government, with the support of Austria-Hungary and Germany, offered to recognize the Italian occupation; in return, the Sultan would retain sovereignty in the provinces. In other words, the Turkish side offered Italian *de facto* control in what *de iure* would remain Turkish territory. With this approach, Turkey wanted to protect the Sultan's prestige and prevent any revolts of the Arab population. The Turkish offer aligned with San Giuliano's view: Italian *de facto* control in a territory officially ruled by the local dynasty or through a model similar to the one implemented in the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878. The Turkish proposal created the preconditions for implementing the Italian concept of a speedy and short intervention.¹³

And yet, Giolitti disagreed with San Giuliano's views, believing that Italian sovereignty needed to be established in Libya. On 13 October, the Italian government announced annexation as its new war aim. Less than a month later, on 5 November 1911, a royal decree declared suzerainty over the *Fourth Shore* (Libya).¹⁴ The motivation for this move lay in the Italian government's flawed

¹² M. Rallo, *Il coinvolgimento dell'Italia nella Prima Guerra Mondiale e la „Vittoria Mutilata“ – La politica estera italiana e lo scenario egeo-balcanico dal Patto di Londra al Patto di Roma (1915–1924)* (Roma: Settimo Sigilo, 2007), 15; I. Bonomi, *La politica italiana da Porta Pia a Vittorio Veneto 1870–1918*, 300–301; F. Rudi, *Soglie Inquiete, L'Italia e la Serbia all'inizio del novecento (1904–1912)*, 189–192; A. A. Mola, *Giolitti, il senso dello stato*, 390; ДСРКК, IV–4/I, doc. 368, 369, 371; F. Caccamo, *Italy, Libya and the Balkan*, 26–29.

¹³ ДСРКК, IV–4/I, doc. 368; G. A. Haywood, *Failure of a dream, Sidney Sonnino and the rise and fall of the liberal Italy 1847–1922*, 384; F. Rudi, *Soglie Inquiete, L'Italia e la Serbia all'inizio del novecento (1904–1912)*, 188; F. Caccamo, *Italy, Libya and the Balkan*, 30.

¹⁴ The decree on Italian suzerainty was formally and legally a proclamation of its sovereignty over Libya and did not mention annexation. Because of this, on 23 February

calculation and excessive self-confidence, as well as in the pressure of political groups in the Parliament, which were demanding the annexation of Libya in the name of protecting national interests. Giolitti was concerned that a partial solution might allow the question of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica to resurface in the future. The change of Italian war aims fundamentally altered the situation and had the opposite effect: the war entered a new phase, and the chances of quickly ending it evaporated. The Ottoman Empire could not accept the Italian annexation of Libya because such a precedent could lead to rebellions in Arab-majority provinces, threatening the very survival of the Empire.¹⁵

As the war dragged on, the local population rebelled in Libya, forcing Italy to deploy 100,000 troops to maintain its control in the coastal strip. In its first stage, the war against Turkey was limited to the territory of Libya because of the interests of other powers. At the beginning of the war, the Italian incursion into the waters near the Albanian coast led to protests from Austrian diplomats, who did not want the Italian actions to cause upheavals in the Balkans. The Russians and the British were against threatening the Turkish Straits, and the French had their special interests in Syria. The Aegean islands were the only maneuvering space the Italian navy had. However, due to protestations of Vienna, an offensive in the Aegean was delayed until the spring of 1912. The aim of the operations in the Aegean was to pressure Turkey into offering peace terms. Should the disruptions in the islands fail, the Italians hoped that the destruction of the Turkish fleet would force Turkey to ask for peace. After the Italian navy shelled the fortifications at the entrance to the Turkish Straits on 18 April, Turkey closed off the strait until 2nd May, when it was opened on Russian insistence. Although the talks in Lausanne had begun on 12th July 1912, in a demonstration of power, the Italian fleet, led by Admiral Enrico Millo, sailed into the strait during the night of 18 July. Although this move failed to achieve significant results, its psychological effect was immense.¹⁶ One of the consequences of this war was the formation of an alliance of Balkan countries. Turkey responded with force to the turmoil in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, leading to a new conflict.¹⁷

1912, the Parliament passed an act on Italian suzerainty over Libya, (A. A. Mola, *Giolitti, il senso dello stato*, 393–394).

¹⁵ A. A. Mola, *Giolitti, il senso dello stato*, 392–393; G. A. Haywood, *Failure of a dream, Sidney Sonnino and the rise and fall of the liberal Italy 1847–1922*, 384–386; F. Caccamo, *Italy, Libya and the Balkan*, 30.

¹⁶ M. Rallo, *Il coinvolgimento dell'Italia nella Prima Guerra Mondiale e la „Vittoria Mutilata“*, 15–16; A. A. Mola, *Giolitti, il senso dello stato*, 396; I. Bonomi, *La politica italiana da Porta Pia a Vittorio Veneto 1870–1918*, 302–305; В. Поповић, *Источно питање* (Eastern Question), 164–165; F. Caccamo, *Italy, Libya and the Balkan*, 33–35.

¹⁷ *Документи о спољној политици Краљевине Србије 1903–1914* (Documents on the foreign policy of the Kingdom of Serbia 1903–1914) (henceforth: ДСПКС), Књ. V, св.

Italy's colonial and Balkan strategy

Italy strove to realize its irredentist and expansionist aspirations in Albania through compensations for supporting the Austro-Hungarian expansion in the Balkans. In that spirit, Mancini's successor, Robilant, was willing to accept Austria-Hungary's penetration to Thessaloniki in exchange for Tripolitania, Tyrol, and demarcating the border on the Isonzo (Soča) River. The Triple Alliance treaty of 1887 defined Italy's Balkan policy in Article I, which in 1891 became Article VII of the renewed Triple Alliance treaty. Italy and Austria-Hungary pledged to coordinate their policies in case of disrupting the *status quo* in the Balkans. The treaty stipulated coordinated action in the event of a temporary or permanent occupation of territory in those areas. With the provision on compensations in case of gaining any advantage in the Balkans, Italy ensured a more or less equal position to that of Austria-Hungary.¹⁸

In the 1890s, the Italians had increased their political presence in the Balkans. The marriage of King Victor Emmanuel III with Princess Elena (Jelena) of Montenegro in October 1896 opened the door to Italian influence in Montenegro. The intensifying internal crisis in the Ottoman Empire made it easier for Italy to implement its cultural and economic expansion in Albania, Epirus, and Macedonia. Its expansion in Albania met with displeasure in Vienna because of concerns that an Italian foothold in Albania might disrupt the equilibrium in the Adriatic Sea in Rome's favor. Therefore, Vienna and Rome reached a verbal agreement on Albania at Monza (1897). The agreement was confirmed by

2, (15/28. јул – 4/17. октобар 1912) прир. М. Војводић, (Београд: САНУ одељење историјских наука, 2014), документ број 175, 178, 193, 200, 208, 209, 210, 218, 220, 236; V. Vigezzi, „L'Italia dopo l'unità: liberalismo e politica estera.“ In *La politica estera italiana 1860–1985*, a cura di Richard J. B. Bosworth e Sergio Romano, (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1991), 284; V. Vidotto, *Atlante del ventesimo secolo: I documenti essenziali 1900–1918* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2011), 164–165; F. Rudi, *Soglie Inquiete, L'Italia e la Serbia all'inizio del novecento (1904–1912)*, 176–180, 206; С. Д. Станојевић, „Утицај Италијанско–турског рата на прилике у Србији, према извештају руског посланика у Београду Н. Г. Хартвига“ („The impact of the Italian-Turkish war on the situation in Serbia, according to the report of the Russian representative in Belgrade, N. G. Hartwig“), *Зборник радова Филозофског факултета* XLIII/2 (2013), 183–193; Д. Ђорђевић, „Италијанско–турски рат 1911–12 године и његов утицај на Балкан“ („The Italo-Turkish War of 1911–12 and its impact on the Balkans“) *Историјски прегле* 4 (1954), 46–54; F. Saccamo, *Italy, the Adriatic, and the Balkans*, 123.

¹⁸ Д. Р. Живојиновић, *У потрази за империјом Италија и Балкан почетком XX века* (In search of empire, Italy and the Balkans at the beginning of the 20th century), 10; L. Monzali, *The Balkans and The Triple Alliance in the Italian Foreign Policy*, 65–68; С. Sforza, *L'Italia dal 1914 al 1944 quale io la vidi*, 24–25. А. Mitrović, *Prodor na Balkan i Srbija 1908–1918*, 12.

letters in 1900 and 1901. The two sides agreed to maintain the *status quo* in Albania. Should it be disrupted, the allies planned to grant Albania autonomy.¹⁹

The principal problem in the Vienna–Rome relations was that Austria-Hungary did not see Italy as an equal partner in the Balkans and refused to make specific agreements with it. The ascent of Victor Emmanuel III to the Italian throne in 1900 steered Italy's policy toward the Balkans. The new king believed that Italy must rival Austria-Hungary and Russia in the Balkans. The Italian initiative to secure the status of a power with vested interests in the Balkans was not welcomed in Vienna. During the talks on renewing the Triple Alliance in 1902, Italian diplomacy wanted to increase its influence in the Balkans and ensure a diplomatic solution to the Italian national question. The Italians wanted to concretize the compensation issue, but Austria-Hungary and Germany disagreed, ultimately thwarting this move. The following year, irredentist developments soured Italy's relations with Austria-Hungary; as a consequence, Italy was not a signatory of the Müritz Agreement, which ensured synchronized actions of Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in matters concerning the Ottoman Empire. The tense relations between Austria and Italy and the Austro-Hungarian pressure on the Balkan states at the beginning of the 20th century opened up space for cooperation between Italy and the Balkan nations. However, from 1910 onward, the Italians saw the rise of the Slavic element in the Adriatic as a threat, which is why they opted to support Albania.²⁰

The disagreements between Austria-Hungary and Italy in the Balkans were a result of their different interpretations of Article VII in the Triple Alliance treaty. In Rome's view, in the event of a disruption of the *status quo* in the Balkans, Italy would be entitled to territorial compensations in Albania and the irredentist territories. Rome aimed to secure a strategically safe border with Austria-Hungary and an equal position in the Adriatic. In its interpretation of Article VII, Vienna argued that Italy would be entitled to compensations only in Albania. When Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, Italy did not receive the expected compensation. In response, the Italians planned

¹⁹ Д. Фундић, *Аустроугарска и настанак Албаније (1896–1914)*, (Austria-Hungary and the Emergence of Albania (1896–1914)) (Београд: Clio, 2021), 73–74; L. Monzali, *Italiani di Dalmazia: Dal Risorgimento alla Grande Guerra* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 2011), 191–193; L. Monzali, *The Balkans and The Triple Alliance in the Italian Foreign Policy*, 71–74; D. R. Živojinović, *Amerika, Italija i postanak Jugoslavije*, 12.

²⁰ L. Monzali, *The Balkans and the Triple Alliance in the Italian Foreign Policy*, 75–79; Д. Ђорђевић, *Националне револуције балканских народа 1804–1914* (National revolutions of the Balkan peoples 1804–1914) (Београд: Службени лист СРЈ, 1995), 97; Д. Фундић, *Аустроугарска и настанак Албаније (1896–1914)*, (Austria-Hungary and the Emergence of Albania (1896–1914)), 74–75; Lj. A. Pejković, „The Serbian Question in Italy's Balkan Policy Until The First World War“. In *Italy's Balkan Strategies*, ed. Vojislav G. Pavlović (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, 2014), 96–100.

to insist on specifying the territorial compensations in the event of disrupting the Balkan *status quo* at the next meeting on renewing the Triple Alliance.²¹

Austria-Hungary as an Obstacle to Italian Plans in the Balkans

After the unification of Germany and the Risorgimento, Austria-Hungary directed its expansion toward the Balkan Peninsula. Once it was allowed at the Congress of Berlin (1878) to occupy the Turkish provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its influence in the small Balkan countries increased. Its interests in the Balkans clashed with the interests of the Balkan nations, Russia, and Italy. The main objective of the Austro-Hungarian policy in the Balkan Peninsula was to get to Thessaloniki. Given that Italy used the provisions of the Triple Alliance treaty as a veto against Austro-Hungarian initiatives in the Balkans, Vienna tried to sidestep the Italians, seeking an agreement with the Russians. Russia and Austria-Hungary reached a verbal agreement in St. Petersburg in 1897, agreeing to jointly control the developments in Turkey. At the beginning of the 20th century, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Italy – each out of their interests – all supported the policy of keeping the *status quo* in the Balkan Peninsula. The national awakening of the Balkan peoples threatened to disrupt the established order in the Balkans. The powers saw reforms as the solution to the problems in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The Ilinden Uprising of 1903 led to the Mürzsteg Reforms, based on Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin (1878).²²

The decisive chapter in Austria-Hungary's foreign policy began in 1906 when Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal became the Foreign Minister. Aehrenthal started to pursue an actively imperialist policy in the Balkans. When, in January 1908, the plan to build a railway via the Sanjak of Novi Pazar to Thessaloniki was announced, the direction of Austro-Hungarian expansion was clearly outlined. The outbreak of the Young Turk Revolution in July 1908 gave the Viennese diplomacy a convenient opportunity to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina in October. After the Annexation Crisis in 1908–1909, Austria-Hungary was left

²¹ F. Rudi, *Soglie Inquiete, L'Italia e la Serbia all'inizio del novecento (1904–1912)*, 120–155; Д. Ђорђевић, *Историја модерне Србије 1800–1918* (History of Modern Serbia 1800–1918) (Београд: Завод за уџбенике, 2017), 353–356; L. A. Pejković, *The Serbian Question in Italy's Balkan Policy Until the First World War*, 97; L. Monzali, *The Balkans and The Triple Alliance in the Italian Foreign Policy*, 63–65.

²² Д. Ђорђевић, *Националне револуције балканских народа* (National revolutions of the Balkan peoples 1804–1914), 97; Д. Фундић, *Аустроугарска и настанак Албаније (1896–1914)* (Austria-Hungary and the Emergence of Albania (1896–1914)), 54–55, 74–75; L. Monzali, *Italiani di Dalmazia*, 191–193; L. Monzali, *The Balkans and The Triple Alliance*, 69–79; А. Митровић, *Prodor na Balkan i Srbija 1908–1918*, 62–63; Владимир Стојанчевић, *Србија 1908–1918* (Serbia 1908–1918) (Београд: Српска књижевна задруга, 1995), 22–23; В. Поповић, *Источно питање* (Eastern Question), 154–155.

outside of the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, continuing its economic penetration into the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire.²³

In February 1910, Austria-Hungary came to an agreement with Russia about their future actions in the Balkans. The agreement stipulated that Russia and Austria-Hungary would maintain the *status quo* in the Balkan Peninsula and support the consolidation of the Ottoman regime, which would pledge to ensure the equality of all of the Empire's nations. The agreement also envisaged joint efforts to consolidate and develop the Balkan countries. Although the two powers did not include Italy in the agreement, maintaining the *status quo* aligned with its interests, giving it a free hand in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.²⁴

Vienna did not look kindly on Italy's declaration of war to Turkey, especially when Italian warships shelled Preveza and San Giovanni di Medua. Aehrenthal protested and, in a threatening tone, demanded leaving the Balkans out of the war operations of the Italian fleet. San Giuliano agreed to this concession and gave guarantees that Italy would not intervene in the European territories of the Ottoman Empire. In the fall of 1911, Aehrenthal spoke out against the Italian offensive in the Aegean, emphasizing that the Aegean Sea was covered by Article VII of the Triple Alliance treaty. However, San Giuliano claimed that the operations in the Aegean would be temporary and aimed at ending the war and pacifying the situation in the Ottoman Empire. He argued that the eastern islands of the Aegean were more part of Asia than Europe and that any offensive of the Italian fleet in this area could hardly have repercussions in the Balkans. Austria-Hungary's protests forced the Italians to move their war operations to the Red Sea at the turn of 1911/1912. After Aehrenthal's death in February 1912 and the appointment of Leopold von Berchtold as his replacement, Austria-Hungary relaxed its position and accepted a temporary occupation of the Aegean islands. The movements of the Balkan peoples had decisively influenced the compromise because a swift end to the Italo-Turkish War suited Austria-Hungary's interest in pacifying the Balkans.²⁵

²³ A. Mitrović, *Prodor na Balkan i Srbija 1908–1918*, 74–75; В. Поповић, *Источно питање*, 159–161; Р. Мантран, *Историја Османског царства* (The History of the Ottoman Empire) (Београд: Clio, 2002), 696–697.

²⁴ F. Rudi, *Soglie Inquiete, L'Italia e la Serbia all'inizio del novecento (1904–1912)*, 177–178.

²⁵ F. Caccamo, *Italy, Libya and the Balkan*, 33–36. I. Bonomi, *La politica italiana da Porta Pia a Vittorio Veneto 1870–1918*, 303–304; F. Rudi, *Soglie Inquiete, L'Italia e la Serbia all'inizio del novecento (1904–1912)*, 198–200.

The Intensification of the Crisis in the Balkans and the Mediation Attempts of the Great Powers

The crisis of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 19th century allowed the economic and political expansion of the great powers. The situation was more complex in the Balkan provinces of the Empire because the nascent Balkan countries also had interests in this region. To maintain the *status quo* in the Balkans, the great powers tried to implement reforms in European Turkey. The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 put an end to those reforms. That same year, the new regime faced the declaration of Bulgaria's independence and the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Besides international problems, the Young Turk regime also had to contend with numerous internal challenges inherited from the previous regime.²⁶

The Albanians were particularly disaffected with Young Turk policies, although they had initially actively participated in the Young Turk movement. The Albanian leaders had supported the movement, hoping it would result in the decentralization of power; however, to make taxation more effective, the new government was instead pursuing centralization. Disagreements with the Young Turk regime led to a string of open revolts that came one after another until the outbreak of the First Balkan War in 1912. The first major Albanian rebellion lasted from 24th March to 24th July 1910. The second uprising of the Albanians started in the spring of 1911 and ended on 18th June 1911 when Sultan Mehmet V personally met with the rebels and offered them pardon. New frictions with the Albanians surfaced during the elections in Turkey in the spring of 1912. The uprising intensified in late May and continued over the summer, leading to the fall of the Turkish government on 22nd June.²⁷

The difficult position of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans coincided with the beginning of the negotiations between Italy and Turkey in Lausanne in July 1912. Viennese diplomacy took the leading role in pacifying the situation in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Berchtold decided to support the Albanians, which was apparent at the Austro-Italian consultations in August. The Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister saw the solution to the Balkan problems in decentralization and granting privileges to the Albanians. However, the Balkan countries were concerned about the Albanian movement, seeing Berchtold's initiative as a threat to their interests. The initiative to implement

²⁶ Д. Фундић, *Аустроугарска и настанак Албаније (1896–1914)*, 56–58, 87–89; В. Поповић, *Источно питање*, 160–161; Р. Мантран, *Историја османског царства*, 696–697; М. Војводић, *Србија и Турска 1878–1914* (Serbia and Turkey 1878–1914) (Београд: Филип Вишњић, 2019), 183–195.

²⁷ F. Rudi, *Soglie Inquiete, L'Italia e la Serbia all'inizio del novecento (1904–1912)*, 188–189; Д. Фундић, *Аустроугарска и настанак Албаније (1896–1914)*, 237–240.

sweeping reforms in the Ottoman Empire proposed on 13th August did little to pacify the Balkans and instead hastened the conflict. The Albanian movement and Berchtold's initiative directly influenced Greece to join the treaty with other Balkan countries. Italian diplomacy approved of Vienna's action because retaining the *status quo* in the Balkans and granting privileges to the Albanians aligned with Rome's interests.²⁸

Besides supporting Berchtold's initiative, Italian diplomats, aligning their policies with other great powers, sought more involvement in preventing complications in the Balkans. As the ongoing war meant that it could not influence the Porte, Italy tried to exert influence on the Balkan countries. On 24th August, the Italian envoy to Cetinje tried – and failed – to convince Nicholas I of Montenegro not to act. The King said that Turkey had deployed additional troops, armed the Muslim population in the borderlands, and started to harass the local Christians.²⁹ On 19th September, De Bosdari, the Italian representative in Sophia, tried to dissuade the Bulgarian Prime Minister Ivan Geshov from entering the war, claiming that the great powers would not support any territorial changes in the Balkans. He pointed out that should they defeat Turkey, the Balkan countries might clash with each other because of disagreements on dividing the liberated territories. Geshov promised that Bulgaria would make no move before the other Balkan countries.³⁰

The Ottoman Empire interpreted Berchtold's initiative and granting privileges to the rebelling Albanians as support for the separatist movement. After the failure of Berchtold's initiative, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador to Rome informed San Giuliano on 22nd September that the Russian government had proposed to Vienna a joint action in Constantinople. The proposed reforms included holding elections in Turkey and guarantees for the lives and property of the population. San Giuliano was skeptical and did not believe that the Porte's intention to implement reforms was genuine. The ambassador em-

²⁸ ДСПКК, V–2, doc. 16, 168, 169, 171, 172, 181, 182, 185, 186, 189, 190, 196, 197, 205, 211, 215, 231, 232, 243, 244, 245; DDI, doc. 984, pp. 1084, Rome, 21. 8. 1912, *Bollati to San Giuliano*; F. Caccamo, *Italy, Libya and the Balkan*, 33; Д. Фундић, *Аустроугарска и настанак Албаније (1896–1914)*, 241–242.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, V–2, doc. 166, 175, 178, 192, 193, 200, 203, 208, 209, 210, 218, 220, 221, 236, 237; Archivio Storico–Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (у даљем тексту: ASDMAE), Serie Politica 1891–1916 (у даљем тексту: SP 1891–1916), b. 199, n. 5411, 29. 8. 1912, *Avarna to San Giuliano*, n. 5436, 30. 8. 1912, *De Bosdari to San Giuliano*, n. 5439, 30. 8. 1912, *Rinella to The Ministry of Foreign Affairs*; DDI, IV, VII–VIII, doc. 986, 1086, Rome, 22. 8. 1912, *San Giuliano to embassies in Berlin, London, Paris, Saint Petersburg and Vienna, and to Legation at Cetinje*; *Ibid.*, doc. 987, 1086, Cetinje, 24. 8. 1912, *Squitti to San Giuliano*.

³⁰ DDI, IV, VII–VIII, doc. 1010, 1120–1122, Sofia, 19. 9. 1912, *De Bosdari to San Giuliano*.

phasized to the Italian Foreign Minister that an exchange of ideas between Italy and Austria-Hungary was crucial for avoiding a war in the Balkan Peninsula.³¹ Berchtold directly connected reaching peace terms between Italy and Turkey with pacifying the Balkans. However, the negotiations stalled, and the Austro-Hungarian chancellor was becoming impatient; on 24 September, he offered to help in the peace talks. Turkey was advised that a peace treaty with Italy would buy it time to implement reforms in the Balkans. The same day, Franz Joseph I declared that his government had taken the initiative for an exchange of views among the powers to ensure peace and the Balkan *status quo*.³²

In late September, the great powers agreed to dissuade the governments in Belgrade and Sofia from mobilizing troops and advise Turkey to keep its regiments away from the borders of the Balkan countries. The declaration of the Balkan countries' mobilization on 2nd October made the great powers' initiative to implement reforms quite difficult. The Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Sazonov suggested that Austria-Hungary and Russia, as the powers with vested interests in the Balkans, implement a joint diplomatic action. The Italians disliked the phrase "powers with vested interests," and the Russian Foreign Minister explained that due to the ongoing Italo-Turkish War, its interests would be represented by its ally, Austria-Hungary. Sazonov's suggestion was for the two powers to agree on an action plan and for Russia and Austria-Hungary to act as the representatives of the two groups of powers.³³

The Italian government accepted that Russia and Austria-Hungary would try to influence the Balkan countries on behalf of Europe and that the great powers would launch a collective diplomatic action in Constantinople.³⁴ The Russian and Austro-Hungarian envoys, in agreement with the other powers, had an audience on 8th October with King Nicholas and the Montenegrin government, informing them that, in the event of a war between the Balkan countries and Turkey, they would not allow a modification of the *status quo*.

³¹ *Ibid.*, IV, VII–VIII, doc. 995, 1097–1099, Rome, 31. 8. 1912, *San Giuliano to ambassadors to the Great Powers*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1013, 1123, Rome, 22. 9. 1912, *San Giuliano to ambassadors to the Great Powers*.

³² DDI, IV, VII–VIII, doc. 1013, 1123, Rome, 22. 9. 1912, *San Giuliano to ambassadors to the Great Powers*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1014, 1124–115, Vienna, 24. 9. 1912, *Avarna to San Giuliano*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1015, 1125–1126, Vienna, 24. 9. 1912, *Avarna to San Giuliano*.

³³ *Ibid.*, doc. 1021, pp. 1132, London, 30. 9. 1912, *Imperiali to San Giuliano*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1018, 1128, Cetinje, 27. 9. 1912, *Squitti to San Giuliano*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1025, 1137–1138, London, 2. 10. 1912, *Imperiali to San Giuliano*;

³⁴ *Ibid.*, doc. 1032, 1144–1145, Rome, 6. 10. 1912, *San Giuliano to ambassadors to the Great Powers*.

The action of Russia and Austria-Hungary failed to produce the desired effect: Montenegro declared war on Turkey on the same day.³⁵

After the Montenegrin declaration of war, the course of action that Austria-Hungary would take in the event of an all-out war in the Balkans became vital for Italy. Berchtold argued that the conflict needed to be localized and the Balkan countries should be made aware that, in the event of a war, there would be no territorial changes in the Balkan Peninsula.³⁶ Della Torretta, the Italian chargé d'affaires in St. Petersburg confirmed there was no threat of intervention from either Russia or Austria-Hungary because both were in favor of keeping the *status quo* in the Balkans.³⁷ That suited the Italians because it removed the possibility for any changes in the Balkans while Italy was still preoccupied with the war in Libya.³⁸

Unlike Montenegro, which had declared war on Turkey, the remaining Balkan countries ignored the Austro-Russian note. They doubted that the Porte would accept reforms and believed the great powers had no mechanisms to force it. In expectation of the response of the Balkan states to the Austro-Russian note, reports surfaced in the European press that Italy was pushing the Balkan countries into war. San Giuliano immediately denied this, highlighting that maintaining the *status quo* in the Balkans was in Italy's interest. Italian diplomats tried to prevent complications in the Balkans by suspending war operations and agreeing peace terms with Turkey. However, the possibility of an Italo-Turkish peace treaty meant that Turkey, having extricated itself from other war efforts, might come down with full force on the Balkan countries. With this looming threat, the reports of an imminent Italo-Turkish treaty hastened the Balkan countries to take action.³⁹

On 13th October at 7 o'clock, the Serbian government submitted its replies to the note to the envoys of Austria-Hungary and Russia, thanking them for the interest of the great powers in the peoples of European Turkey and the

³⁵ *Ibid.*, doc. 1036, 1151, Cetinje, 8. 10. 1912, *Squitti to San Giuliano*.

³⁶ ASDMAE, *Archivio di Gabinetto 1908–1913* (henceforth: ASDMAE, AG 1908–1913), b. 61, n. 162, 6. 10. 1912, *Нобили Сан Ђулијану*; DDI, IV, VII–VIII, doc. 1026, 1138–1139, Vienna, 2. 10. 1912, *Avarna to San Giuliano*.

³⁷ DDI, IV, VII–VIII, doc. 1029, 1141–1142, Saint Petersburg, 4. 10. 1912, *Della Torretta to San Giuliano*.

³⁸ ASDMAE, AG 1908–1913, b. 61, n. 162, 6. октобра 1912, *Nobili to San Giuliano*.

³⁹ Архив Србије, Министарство иностраних дела, Политичко одељење (henceforth: АС, МИД, ПО), 1912, ролна 369, Фасцикла III, досије III, 336; DDI, IV, VII–VIII, doc. 1047, 1159–1160, Rome, 10. 10. 1912, *San Giuliano to ambassadors to the Great Powers, and to legations in Belgrade, Athens, Sofia and Cetinje*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1045, 1158, Athens, 10. 10. 1912, *Carloti to San Giuliano*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1046, 1159, Rome, 10. 10. 1912, *San Giuliano to ambassadors to the Great Powers*.

promised reforms. The reply also stated that more concrete reforms needed to be ensured for the Empire's Christians. For these reasons, it informed the powers that they had directly contacted the Turkish government, emphasizing the principles for implementing reforms and guarantees for their implementation.⁴⁰ As an addendum, the first note submitted to the Russian and Austro-Hungarian envoys contained another note, which was submitted to the Turkish delegate at 4 o'clock. In this note, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece underscored that only radical reforms could improve the fate and position of the Empire's Christians, guaranteeing lasting peace in the Balkans. The Porte was called upon to implement reforms in cooperation with the Balkan countries.⁴¹

In the few days between the signing of the provisional Italo-Turkish treaty on 15th October and the entry of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece into a war against Turkey on 18 October, Italy joined the action of the great powers. Raymond Poincaré, Prime Minister of France, came out with a proposal to prepare for the mediation of the great powers in the Balkans, which also envisaged an international conference to discuss the implementation of reforms in European Turkey. If mediation proved futile, the conference would take the necessary steps to maintain peace and the *status quo* in the Balkan Peninsula.⁴² San Giuliano decided to confer with Vienna and Berlin regarding Poincaré's proposal. This decision might have been motivated by the impending negotiations on renewing the Triple Alliance. His correspondence reveals that he supported Poincaré's mediation idea, which, in his view, had to take place immediately after the first battles because its earlier implementation would inevitably end in failure. Preparations for mediation or a peace-keeping mission were to be launched at once, as the synchronization of all powers regarding its details would take too long. The Italian Foreign Minister saw a conference as the most suitable mechanism for reaching the objective, which, together with the suggestion of maintaining the Balkan *status quo*, allowed him to respond affirmatively to Poincaré's proposal. San Giuliano saw the implementation of reforms to end the war and preserve the *status quo* in the Balkans and peace in Europe as possible only under the control of and with the cooperation of Europe.⁴³

⁴⁰ ΔСПΙΚС, V-2, doc. 645; DDI, IV, VII-VIII, doc. 1063, 1172-1173, Athens, 14. 10. 1912, *Carlotti to San Giuliano*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, V-2, doc. 258, 643, 644, 645; DDI, IV, VII-VIII, doc. 1060, 1070, Belgrade, 13. 10. 1912, *Rinella to San Giuliano*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1063, 1172-1173, Athens, 14. 10. 1912, *Carlotti to San Giuliano*.

⁴² DDI, IV, VII-VIII, doc. 1071, 1182-1183, Rome, 18. 10. 1912, *San Giuliano to ambassadors to the Great Powers*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, doc. 1072, 1183-1184, Rome, 18. 10. 1912, *San Giuliano to Pansa & Avarna*.

Italo-Turkish negotiations in Lausanne

The Ottoman Empire, aware of the negative consequences of the war and fearing complications in the Balkans, began to contemplate making peace with Italy. Carlo Garbasso, First Secretary of the Italian Embassy in Constantinople, and Bernardo Nogara, Director of the Oriental Trading Company, played prominent roles in initiating the peace talks. In June 1912, an Italian mission headed by Giuseppe Volpi was received in Constantinople. Per Giolitti's instructions, Nogara and Volpi probed the Turkish side and had a few informal conversations. This laid the ground for the negotiations that began on 12th July in Lausanne. The Italian delegation included Giuseppe Volpi and two trusted associates of Giolitti's – the MPs Pietro Bertolini and Guido Fusinato. Interestingly, official Italian diplomacy did not directly participate in the talks, although San Giuliano was kept up to speed. The Turkish delegation was first led by Said Halem Paşa, an Arab, and after the fall of Sait Paşa's government and the formation of Ahmet Muhtar Paşa's cabinet, he was replaced by Mehmed Naby Bey, the envoy to Sofia, and Roubeyoglu Fahreddin Bey, the Turkish minister at Cetinje.⁴⁴

The main objective of Turkish diplomacy was to curtail the demands concerning suzerainty over Libya. However, the offensive of the Italian fleet in the Turkish Straits in mid-July and the collapse of the government because of the Albanian uprising had revealed that the Ottoman Empire was weak. In August, Turkish diplomats demanded an end to hostilities as a prerequisite for continuing the negotiations. The chief obstacle during the August talks was still the suzerainty matter. Keeping the Sultan's suzerainty over Cyrenaica and Tripolitania was the primary concern of the Turkish delegation. The reasons for this position had not changed since the beginning of the war: fearing an Arab rebellion, the Turkish diplomats sought to come to peace terms that would be acceptable to the Muslim world.⁴⁵

In the second half of August, Italian diplomacy firmly stated that it would not accept a treaty unless Italy was given full suzerainty over Libya. As a compromise, Turkey was offered a way out of formally recognizing Italian sovereignty over these provinces and the resultant humiliation. San Giuliano was careful not to make it seem to the Turkish delegation that the Italians were in a rush to sign the peace treaty and thus preempt their demands for larger concessions. The truth was that the Italians were indeed in a hurry because an emerging crisis

⁴⁴ G. A. Haywood, *Failure of a dream, Sidney Sonnino and the rise and fall of the liberal Italy 1847–1922*, 386; I. Bonomi, *La politica italiana da Porta Pia a Vittorio Veneto 1870–1918*, 305; ДСИКК, V–2, doc. 5; F. Caccamo, *Italy, Libya and the Balkan*, 37–38

⁴⁵ DDI, IV, VII–VIII, doc. 985, 1085–1086, Rome, 21. 8. 1912, Bollati to San Giuliano; *Ibid.*, doc. 988, 1087–1088, Rome, 24. 8. 1912, *San Giuliano to ambassadors to the Great Powers*.

in the Balkans, while Italy was still at war with Turkey, would have harmed its interests. In late August, because of the intensifying crisis in the Balkans, the other great powers showed more interest in mediating the peace talks between Italy and Turkey. It was more important to Italy to get its position in Libya recognized by the great powers than by Turkey because the Italian intervention in Libya had been based on treaties and agreements with them. Hence, it was proposed to the Turkish delegation that Italian suzerainty over Libya should be recognized only by the great powers.⁴⁶

In August, the great powers energetically worked to facilitate the Italo-Turkish treaty, believing that this development would pacify the Balkans. Poincaré thought that Italy should relax its position on suzerainty, listing the examples of Tunisia and Morocco, where France would have encountered many problems was it not for the Sultan's suzerainty. Poincaré suggested a formula in which the Sultan would name a few officials to be confirmed by Italy. He believed that Turkey would accept such a solution. Germany considered offering to restore Turkey's fleet and admit the country into the Triple Alliance in exchange for a speedy peace agreement with Italy. It would take it upon itself to win over Austria-Hungary. Guglielmo Imperiali, the Italian ambassador to London, in a conversation with Sir Edward Grey, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said that Italy could not back down regarding suzerainty over Libya but was open to discussing all other matters. At this stage, Italy informed the great powers of the terms under which it would be willing to accept a peace treaty with Turkey.⁴⁷

Defining a Common Ground for Agreeing Peace Terms

The resistance of the Turkish delegation on account of the Balkan people's movement waned considerably in early September. Given the danger of an Arab rebellion, the Turkish side came out with new proposals formulated to be acceptable to the Muslim world. The Turkish suggestion was that the Sultan should issue a decree (berat) appointing a plenipotentiary steward of the autonomous province, who would then assume all sovereign rights except suzerainty. After that, the Italians would strip the appointed steward of his powers by a special act. The proposal was not acceptable to the Italian side because it was at odds

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, doc. 985, 1085–1086, Rome, 21. 8. 1912, *Bollati to San Giuliano*; *Ibid.*, doc. 988, 1087–1088, Rome, 24. 8. 1912, *San Giuliano to ambassadors to the Great Powers*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, doc. 990, 1091–1092, Paris, 25. 8. 1912, *Tittoni to San Giuliano*; *Ibid.*, doc. 991, 1092–1093, Constantinople, 26. 8. 1912, *Nogara to Volpi*; *Ibid.*, doc. 993, 1096, London, 28. 8. 1912, *Imperiali to San Giuliano*; the Balkan countries thought that their coordinated action against Turkey would slow down the peace negotiation process with Italy and displease the interested powers (ДСПКС, V–2, doc. 229).

with the decree of November 1911 and the law of 27th February 1912, which had already established Italian suzerainty over Libya. Italy could not take sovereign rights from a third party that had not participated in the conflict. In addition, Turkey would not formally capitulate in Libya, and that would also contradict the law passed in February 1912. The Italian side wanted the appointed steward to be merely a symbol of the connection between Libya and Turkey, with no sovereign rights. The Porte disagreed with this solution because it would have amounted to a violation of the Turkish Constitution.⁴⁸

Aware of the international circumstances plaguing the Ottoman Empire, San Giuliano advised Nogara on 5th September to exert pressure on the Turkish delegation to achieve a more favorable result. Although autonomy did not align with Italy's interests, San Giuliano and Giolitti agreed that a breakdown of the talks should be avoided. Equipped with new instructions, the Italian delegation defined a new basis for negotiations and presented it to their Turkish colleagues on 10 September. This was a compromise solution in which the Sultan would grant the two African provinces the broadest autonomy possible. It included appointing an official to represent Turkish interests under the proviso that he could not hold the title of *Wali*. After the appointment of this official, the Sultan would issue a decree defining the position of the local population. A local religious representative appointed by the caliph and confirmed by the Italian government would represent the Ottoman interests in the province. The draft of the treaty included guarantees and amnesty for the local population of the Aegean islands controlled by Italy. The agreement would comprise a secret provisional agreement and a resultant public document based on it. The public document was to end the hostilities and recall the Turkish troops. The Italian delegation sent these proposals to be approved by the government in Rome, underscoring that even partially rejecting these terms could lead to a complete breakdown of the talks. On the same day, San Giuliano asked Vienna and Berlin to put pressure on Turkey to accept the proposal.⁴⁹

The reports of Italian envoys to Balkan capitals from late November and the mobilization of the Turkish army suggested that it would be advisable to expedite the peace treaty. The Italian government feared that a war in the Balkans could lead to the collapse of the Turkish government and the breakdown of the talks in Lausanne. The beginning of a war in the Balkans before agreeing on peace terms would allow Austria-Hungary and Russia to intervene without

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, doc. 1000, 1106–1107, Constantinopoli, 4. 9. 1912, *Nogara to Volpi*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1001, 1107, Constantinopoli, 5. 9. 1912, *Nogara to Volpi*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, doc. 1001, 1107, Constantinopoli, 5. 9. 1912, *Nogara to Volpi*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1003, 1108, Ouchy, 11. 9. 1912, *Volpi to Nogara*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1004, 1109, Vallombrosa, 11. 9. 1912, *San Giuliano to Pansa&Cerruti*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1006, 1111–1112, Berlin, 13. 9. 1912, *Pansa to San Giuliano*.

Italy's participation. Another threat to Italian interests stemmed from the possibility that the signing of the peace treaty in Lausanne might lead to the fall of the Turkish government, block the implementation of reforms, and encourage the Balkan countries to declare war on Turkey. The decisive change came on 1st October when Turkey announced wholesale mobilization; the Balkan countries responded by announcing their mobilization on 2nd October. For the Italians this was a sign that it was time to make one last push for the peace treaty. In a bid to get the Turkish delegation to back down, the Italians offered their diplomatic support for keeping the *status quo* in the Balkans and four million Turkish lire. Giolitti gave the negotiators until 10 October to sign the preliminary agreement, or else Italy would stop the negotiations, leave Lausanne, and continue war operations. The offer had a set deadline to leave the Turks little maneuvering space. Germany offered to pressure Turkey to accept the Italian demands.⁵⁰

On 6th October, the Italian delegations were secretly instructed to include in the confidential agreement an article in which Italy would promise to extend eternal support to Turkey in resolving the Balkan question and guarantee the *status quo* in the Balkans and the Mediterranean. San Giuliano did not insist on the Mediterranean, and, more importantly, he was willing to avoid mentioning Italian suzerainty over Libya. The annexes of the secret agreement would be added to the official public text of the treaty. The text of the agreement, once it was ratified by the Council of Ministers in Rome, was to be submitted to the Italian delegation on 8 October. Nogara insisted on expediting the process because the dismissal of the Turkish Foreign Minister, whose position was far from secure, could thwart the signing of the treaty.⁵¹

According to the plan of the Italian government, the secret agreement was to be signed on 10th October, with a possible delay until 12th October. Turkey had to accept or reject the Italian demands in the set deadlines. Italy threatened to re-launch naval operations if the agreement was rejected again. The draft of the secret agreement allowed the Sultan to grant Libya the broadest autonomy and appoint his representative. The Italian government would then use a royal decree to declare full suzerainty over Libya. The Sultan would issue another decree ensuring guarantees and amnesty for the inhabitants of the Aegean islands. The public treaty would restore peace and the *status quo ante bellum*. Turkey would be obliged to withdraw its officials from Libya, and Italy

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, doc. 1018, 1128, Cetinje, 27. 9. 1912, *Squitti to San Giuliano*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1023, 1135, Constantinopoli, 1. 10. 1912, *Nogara to Volpi*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1025, pp. 1137–1138, London, 2. 10. 1912, *Imperiali to San Giuliano*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1027, 1139–1140, Constantinopoli, 2. 10. 1912, *Nogara to Volpi*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1028, 1140, Ouchy, 3. 10. 1912, *Volpi to Nogara*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1030, 1143, Constantinopoli, 6. 10. 1912, *Nogara to Volpi*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1025, 1137–1138, London, 2. 10. 1912, *Imperiali to San Giuliano*;

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, doc. 1030, 1143, Constantinopoli, 6. 10. 1912, *Nogara to Volpi*.

would leave the Aegean islands after the evacuation of Turkish officials.⁵² Montenegro's declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire on 8 October was seen as a positive development for Italy because it was believed that it would make the Ottoman government more eager to come to an agreement. Ahmet Tevfik Pasha, the Turkish ambassador in London, told the British diplomat Sir Arthur Nicolson that signing the peace treaty was the priority. The Italians tried to use the situation to make Turkey fully accept their terms.⁵³

The diplomatic circles in Paris were convinced that Bulgaria's entry into war would not allow Italy to come to peace terms with Turkey. This would potentially elicit a response from the Italian nationalists, who would be inclined to see the peace treaty as abandoning the Balkan peoples. Such a course of events would threaten to make the Italian public hostile to the peace treaty.⁵⁴ San Giuliano and Tomaso Tittoni, the Italian ambassador in Paris, judged that the entry of the Balkan countries into war would change Italy's situation and position because its continuation of the war would threaten Turkey's survival. Poincaré communicated this view to the Turkish ambassador in Paris, Mehmed Rifat Pasha, on 9th October and asked him to encourage signing the peace treaty with Italy before the Bulgarian government crossed the border. The Pasha argued that the Turkish government could not sign the peace treaty with Italy because it would seem that this was done out of fear of Bulgaria. According to Rifat Pasha, Turkey would not sign the peace treaty in the event of a war in the Balkans. On 8th October, Turkey's hesitation led Nogara to suggest – in a surge of pessimism and fear that the Turkish cabinet might fall – backing down and accepting the demands of the Turkish delegations.⁵⁵

⁵² *Ibid.*, doc. 1031, 1143–1144, Rome, 6. 10. 1912, *San Giuliano to Pansa&Avarna*; There was no guarantee that Italy would leave the Aegean islands after Turkey fulfilled its part of the bargain. The Italians planned to delay vacating the islands for as long as possible, which was apparent when D'Ameglio, the commander of the occupation army in Rhodes, submitted a report to the Prime Minister suggesting that Italy use the situation to permanently retain control of the Aegean islands. The commander said that this should be done without a formal annexation because it would require a lot of energy and funds and encounter international problems, (DDI, IV, VII–VIII, doc. 1008, 1114–1119, Rodi, 18.9.1912, *D'Ameglio to Giolitti*).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, doc. 1037, 1151–1152, London, 8. 10. 1912, *Imperiali to San Giuliano*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, doc. 1039, 1153, Paris, 9. 10. 1912, *Tittoni to San Giuliano*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, VII–VIII, doc.1040, 1154, Paris, 9. 10. 1912, *Tittoni to San Giuliano*; *Ibid.*, doc.1038, 1152–1153, Constantinopoli, 8. 10. 1912, *Nogara to Volpi*.

The Turkish Delegation Changes its Stance

The mobilization of the Balkan countries and Montenegro's declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire stirred the great powers into action. To pacify the situation, the great powers collectively exerted pressure on Constantinople on 10th October, and the Balkan countries were sent the Austro-Russian note. Amidst these developments, on 11th October, the Ottoman government suddenly withdrew the proposals it had already accepted. Convinced that the Balkan crisis would be resolved with international intervention and reluctant to show weakness, the Turkish delegation proposed a completely different model from the one that had been agreed upon. After he was informed of the shift in the Turkish position, Giolitti started to prepare for sharpening his country's relations with Turkey.⁵⁶

In this new package of demands, the Turkish delegation refused to call the Arabs to peace and issue a statement on Libya's autonomy. The agreement on the Arab population – almost entirely worded by the Turkish delegation – was now challenged by the same delegation. They suggested a public agreement stipulating that the Ottoman Empire would withdraw its troops from Libya, leaving it up to them to decide whether they would obey the orders. San Giuliano rightly concluded that Italy would not receive anything tangible with this move. In return, it would suspend hostilities and, at a critical moment for Turkey, restore freedom at sea, relinquish control of the islands, and pay 50 million Francs as compensation for the Turkish government debt. This stance of the Turkish delegation was the most critical moment in the peace talks in Lausanne. The Italian government was ready to suspend the negotiations and more energetically launch naval and land operations. The outbreak of war in the Balkans would exacerbate Turkey's position because a disruption of the *status quo* would remove limitations on the theater of war. The Italians decided to postpone leaving the negotiations for a few days, hoping that Germany would persuade the Porte to back down.⁵⁷

As a gesture of goodwill, San Giuliano allowed the Italian delegation to extend the deadline for the Turkish side to accept the demands, pushing back the deadline until Tuesday, 15th October, with continuing war operations. If Turkey failed to sign the treaty by 15th October, the negotiations would be suspended.⁵⁸ The Italian Foreign Minister judged that the Turkish government might inter-

⁵⁶ AC, МИД, ПО, 1912, 369, ф. III, д. III, 336; ДСПКК, V-2, doc. 633; DDI, IV, VII-VIII, doc. 1051, 1162-1163, Constantinopoli, 11. 10. 1912, *Nogara to Volpi*.

⁵⁷ DDI, IV, VII-VIII, doc. 1048, 1160-1161, Rome, 11. 10. 1912, *San Giuliano to Pansa*; AC, МИД, ПО, 1912, 369, ф. III, д. III, 336.

⁵⁸ ДСПКК, V-2, doc. 636, 657; DDI, IV, VII-VIII, doc. 1054, 1164-1165, Rome, 12. 10. 1912, *San Giuliano to ambassadors to the Great Powers*.

pret Italy's haste to sign the treaty as an indicator of weakness. The Italians had long not launched any war operations beyond Libya, which could also influence the Turkish decision. When the extended deadline ran out on 12th October, the Italian delegates protested with the Turkish side about modifying the provisions. Following the instructions he was given, on 12th October, Volpi rejected the suggestions of the Turkish delegation and sent an ultimatum demanding a response by 15th October. According to the planned secret agreement, three days after signing the public treaty, a royal decree would follow, establishing Italian suzerainty over Libya. After the royal decree, the great powers would recognize Italian sovereignty. Thus, Italy's *de facto* rule in Libya would be based on a public treaty with the Ottoman Empire, and its *de iure* authority would stem from the royal decree and the great powers' recognition. The Arabs would receive concessions and privileges, and the representative would protect Ottoman interests. The two parties would agree to keep the acts secret, creating an illusion of spontaneity and unilateral action to prevent any internal upheavals. In practice, this meant that the Turkish delegation would secretly accept Italian suzerainty over Libya, making it seem as unilaterally proclaimed by Italy. Offering an increase of the sum to be paid as compensation for the Turkish government debt was the last concession Italy made before signing the treaty.⁵⁹

Signing the Treaty of Lausanne

The ultimatum of the Balkan countries, issued on 13th October, and German pressure led the Turkish delegation to back down and accept the Italian draft of the agreement. The preliminary Italo-Turkish agreement was signed in Lausanne on 15th October at six p.m. On that occasion, the secret annex to the Treaty of Lausanne (Ouchy) was formulated, stipulating that Italy would reestablish peace and friendly relations with Turkey and work to support the territorial *status quo* of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and the Mediterranean. The treaty was signed by Pietro Bertolini, Guido Fusinato, and Giuseppe Volpi on behalf of Italy and by Mehmed Naby Bey and Roumbeyoglou Fahreddin Bey on behalf of Turkey.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, V-2, doc. 636, 653, 657; DDI, IV, VII-VIII, doc. 1054, 1164-1165, Rome, 12. 10. 1912., *San Giuliano to ambassadors to the Great Powers*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1056, 1166-1167, Rome, 12. 10. 1912, *San Giuliano to ambassadors to the Great Powers*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1057, 1168, Ouchy, 12. 10. 1912, *Volpi to Nogara*.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, V-2 doc. 670; DDI, IV, VII-VIII, doc. 1064, 1174, Rome, 15. 10. 1912, *San Giuliano to ambassadors to the Great Powers*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1066, 1175-1177, Ouchy, 15. 10. 1912, *Preliminary peace agreement*; *Ibid.*, doc. 1067, 1178, Lausanne, 15. 10. 1915, *A secret addition to the peace agreement*.

With the Balkan countries' declaration of war on Turkey on 18th October, the *status quo* in the Balkans ended, and, with it, Italy's promise to maintain it as defined in the secret annex of 15th October. On the day they declared war, the Balkan countries submitted identical notes to San Giuliano stating their reasons for declaring war on Turkey and seeking Italy's neutrality. The Italian Foreign Minister restrainedly said that his country, alongside other great powers, would help quickly end the war. The same day, the Italian delegation signed the final version of the peace treaty with Turkey in Lausanne.⁶¹ Having ensured suzerainty over Libya and established control over the Aegean islands, Italy created the conditions that would allow it to make its support to the great powers dependent on new positions in the Balkans and the Mediterranean.⁶²

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⁶¹ The Treaty of Lausanne concluded on 18 October 1912 is alternately called the First Treaty of Lausanne or the Treaty of Ouchy (a suburb of Lausanne) because another treaty, also known as the Treaty of Lausanne, was concluded in the city in 1923.

⁶² F. Caccamo, *Italy, Libya and the Balkan*, 39–40.

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The Promulgation of the 1910 Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina – the Imperial Framework

Abstract: The paper aims to present the promulgation process of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Landesstatut*) in the context of the Austro-Hungarian colonial administration of this territory. The passing of the promised constitution, locally known as *Zemaljski statut*, was an important political issue in the Dual Monarchy and attracted significant attention among contemporaries. The complex internal dynamics of Austria-Hungary and the peculiar legal status of Bosnia and Herzegovina make the process of enacting the supreme legal act of the newly annexed territory an intriguing case study within a colonial regime.

Key words: 1910 Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Austria-Hungary, constitution, annexation

This paper attempts to examine the process of passing the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Landesstatut*) in 1910 in the context of the Austro-Hungarian colonial administration. More than three decades passed from the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the promulgation of the constitution and establishment of a representative assembly (diet). In this period, Vienna and Pest insisted on the successes of their rule in the occupied province while, at the same time, depriving the local population of political life. The passing of the Constitution and the establishment of the Diet marked the beginning of “organized” political life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This paper hopes to show to what extent the center of the Empire continued to control it.

The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina aroused curiosity among contemporaries and was written about from the moment it was passed. Professor Karl Lamp offered an extensive legal analysis, insisting on the precedents set by this document.¹ Lamp was not the only contemporary to provide a review of

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¹ K. Lamp, “Die Rechtsnatur der Verfassung Bosniens und der Herzegowina vom 17. Februar 1910”, *Archiv des öffentlichen Rechts* 27/2 (1911), 288–337; P. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire. A New History* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 380–381, touches on Lamp and his analyses.

the Constitution, with many other jurists of the time offering their opinions.² In historical scholarship, Dževad Juzbašić left the deepest mark in the study of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

To understand the context of the promulgation of the supreme legal act of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is necessary to briefly address the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the period leading up to the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908. On 13th July 1878, at the Congress of Berlin, the Great Powers gave Austria-Hungary the mandate to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina and station its troops at Pljevlje, Priboj, and Prijepolje. The legal underpinnings of the Austro-Hungarian presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina were laid out in two documents: Article XXV of the Treaty of Berlin and the convention signed by the Ottoman Empire and the Dual Monarchy in April 1879. The legal framework did not include a clearly defined and temporally limited presence of the Austro-Hungarian occupation army in what was legally still an Ottoman province. In this, the Dual Monarchy was no different from other imperial powers of the epoch, which also worked in vague frameworks.

The agreement between the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary stipulated that the occupation should be temporary. The convention of April 1879 preserved Ottoman sovereignty over Bosnia and Herzegovina but left the Sultan no powers to participate in its administration.³ No time limit was set for the duration of the occupation. This vagueness, commonly explained by the complex relations within Austria-Hungary,⁴ allowed Vienna to pursue a classic imperial policy. For the following three decades, Bosnia and Herzegovina would be a colony of Austria-Hungary.⁵

² A detailed overview of contemporaneous and historiographic considerations of the promulgation process and its problems can be found in: Dž. Juzbašić, "Aneksija i problemi donošenja Zemaljskog ustava (statuta) za Bosnu i Hercegovinu", *Godišnjak Centra za balkanološka ispitivanja* 38 (2009), 183–184.

³ The text of the convention on Bosnia and Herzegovina (21st April 1879) is available in: *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi 1876–1996*, I, ed. M. Stojković, (Beograd: Službeni list SRJ, 1998), 151–153.

⁴ After 1867, Franz Joseph needed a much broader consensus on matters that concerned the Empire. While he remained the central political figure and symbol of the Empire, the Compromise brought profound changes to the Empire's functioning. Ж. П. Блед, *Франц Јозеф* (Franz Joseph) (Београд: Clio, 1998), 309.

⁵ On the colonial nature of the Austro-Hungarian regime up to 1908, see E. Kolm, *Die Ambitionen Österreich-Ungarns im Zeitalter des Hochimperialismus* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2001), 235–241; A. Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire 1815–1918* (London: Longman, 1989), 243–246; C. Ruthner, "Bosnien-Herzegowina als k. u. k. Kolonie. Eine Einführung". In *Bosnien-Herzegowina und Österreich-Ungarn, 1878–1918. Annäherungen an eine Kolonie*, hrsg. C. Ruthner, T. Scheer, (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2018), 15–45; P. Judson, "L'Autriche-Hongrie était-elle un empi-

Control over the newly annexed province lay in the hands of the Joint Minister of Finance. The governor and undisputed ruler of the Condominium of Bosnia and Herzegovina until 1903 was Benjamin von Kállay. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Provincial Government (Landesregierung/Zemaljska vlada) was formed as the principal executive body of the Condominium and was led by the head of this organ. He answered to the Joint Minister of Finance and the shared government. The provincial ruler was also the commander-in-chief of the military, which essentially meant that they were also accountable to the Ministry of War. Under Kállay, the highest offices in the administration remained beyond the reach of the local population. The failed attempt to introduce the Bosnian nation and the Monarchy's iron grip on local political and cultural life marked Kállay's term in office. His death in 1903 seemingly relaxed the Empire's hold on occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina. Count Stephan Burián von Rajecz became Joint Minister of Finance.

Burián's policy was different from Kállay's. As part of the new policy, devised to establish firmer control through an illusion of loosening, on his first visit to Sarajevo after becoming the Joint Minister of Finance, Burián gave a statement guaranteeing that Bosnia would be directed toward self-government, ultimately leading to the introduction of the parliament or diet as its representative body.⁶ Under Burián, the Serbian Orthodox population, as well as the Muslim and Roman Catholic, received statutes that regulated their ecclesiastical and educational autonomy.

As noted above, these changes were meant to tighten Vienna and Pest's grip on Sarajevo. In this context, Vienna and Pest needed to formalize their presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The crises tearing through the Balkans and the final division of Europe into two blocs indicated that the provisional character of the occupation had to change.⁷ From the fall of 1906, when Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal became the Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary, the Austrian policy in the Balkans became more aggressive. Von Aehrenthal gathered a group

rez", *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 63/3 (2008), 563–596; Т. Краљачић, *Калајев режим у Босни и Херцеговини 1882–1903* (Kállay's regime in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1882–1903) (Београд: Сатена Мунди, 2017); Д. Т. Батаковић, „Босна и Херцеговина у српској историји: од средњег века до уједињења 1918” („Bosnia and Herzegovina in Serbian history: from the Middle Ages to unification in 1918”). In *Напор Босне и Херцеговине за ослобођење и уједињење* (The effort of Bosnia and Herzegovina for liberation and unification) (Београд-Бања Лука: Балканолошки институт САНУ, Народна и универзитетска библиотека Републике Српске, 2017), VII–СХХVII.

⁶ *Сарајевски лист*, 3rd June 1904.

⁷ Н. Капидџић, „Priprema ustavnog perioda u Bosni i Hercegovini (1908–1910)”. In Н. Капидџић, *Bosna i Hercegovina pod austrougarskom upravom* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1968), 45.

of young men who took decision-making positions and gradually led the Dual Monarchy into conflict with its neighbors.

In December 1907, at a joint government session, Aehrenthal brought up the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He believed that the status of Bosnia and Herzegovina had to be resolved before tackling issues such as its constitution or the formation of some sort of representative body. Also, it was vitally important to settle all of these matters at the center of the Empire and not allow any debates in Sarajevo, where some semblance of political life had taken root during Burián's term in office. The formation of a "parliament" could be considered only after the formal annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Historical scholarship has thoroughly analyzed diplomatic plans for the annexation and the discussions between Aehrenthal and Izvolsky, Foreign Minister of the Russian Empire.

The Young Turk Revolution hastened Vienna's process of proclaiming the annexation, and Emperor Franz Joseph signed the annexation documents on 5 October 1908 in Budapest, increasing the city's symbolic importance. Discussions on the method of incorporation and place of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Monarchy were briefly set aside. The topic of Hungary's historical right to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had dominated the debates on its future organization, temporarily subsided.⁸ Reports of the annexation appeared in the press as early as 6 October, which was also when the representatives of European countries in Vienna were informed of the news. A day later, an announcement was read in Sarajevo. The sovereign promised a constitution in the proclamation to the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, the promulgation of the supreme legal act was used to justify the annexation. The wording of the proclamation carried strong colonial overtones, insisting that the citizens were receiving another proof of "faith in their political maturity." Invoking the "olden days" when there were ties between the Hungarian throne and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the emperor laid claim to these territories. He claimed that the "new system will guarantee that culture and prosperity shall find a safe hearth in your homeland."⁹

The diplomatic initiative that accompanied the preparations for the annexation and its recognition went hand in hand with the struggle with the local leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were expected to accept the annexation and ensure the proclamation would encounter no resistance. To secure the population's obedience, Sarajevo was cut off from the rest of Bosnia and Her-

⁸ R. Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 178; From December 1908, Hungarian politicians continued to insist on Hungary's historical right to the newly annexed territories. This topic would dictate the process of passing the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁹ *Сарајевски лист*, 7th October 1908.

zegovina. Telephone and telegram lines were out of service for a week, and, in this situation, it was not difficult for the authorities to prevent any significant resistance to the proclamation of the annexation.

This was an important event in the colonial context of the Dual Monarchy's administration. At first glance, Austria-Hungary changed the status of Bosnia and Herzegovina with its explicit annexation. Nevertheless, the newly annexed province continued to exist in a legal vacuum, the only difference being that from 1908, the Dual Monarchy became the framework for such an existence. No fundamental change that would have made the relationship between the Monarchy and Bosnia and Herzegovina non-colonial ever came. The tense negotiations and concessions of the Austrian and Hungarian sides left Bosnia and Herzegovina in the same status it had had in the previous three decades. Three weeks before the annexation was proclaimed, at a session of the joint government, Joint Minister of Finance Burián said that the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina would not alter its status and that the laws passed in 1879 and 1880 would remain in force. It would be possible to change them only if both governments agreed to do so. Thus, the former Ottoman provinces remained a *corpus separatum* within Austria-Hungary.¹⁰ The annexation of 1908 merely affirmed the status of Austria-Hungary as a traditional imperial power with expansionist ambitions toward neighboring territories.

The diplomatic denouement of the annexation crisis brought Austria-Hungary's focus back to Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the tension-filled months from October 1908 to March 1909, the Serbian People's Organization and the Muslim People's Organization¹¹ tried to put up joint resistance to the proclamation of the annexation. The energetic action of the two largest organizations could change little. It was obvious that the annexation crisis would be resolved outside Bosnia and Herzegovina. The authorities tried to redirect attention to the promised constitution, diverting it from the blatant violation of the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin. The press was inundated with texts on the Bosnian constitution promised in the annexation proclamation.

In December 1908, Burián was tasked with writing a proposal for constitutional reforms to be implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Already at this point, there were demands to take into account the social and religious

¹⁰ H. Kapidžić, „Položaj Bosne i Hercegovine za vrijeme austro-ugarske uprave (državno-pravni odnosi)”, *Prilozi 4* (1968), 70–71.

¹¹ These organizations had emerged from the struggle for ecclesiastical and educational autonomy. They can be considered precursors to political parties, although fully fledged and formalized parties would not emerge until the formation of the Diet of Bosnia. At the time of the annexation, they tried to put up joint resistance. On the other hand, the Catholic population, although divided into two political organizations, welcomed the annexation.

complexities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The voting principle was supposed to be similar to that of Moravia, where the German-speaking population voted separately from Czech-speaking citizens.¹² Given that a linguistic division was not applicable in the newly annexed province, the population was to be divided along religious lines to preserve the social structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was also indicated that local leaders needed to be informed of this document and that it would be advisable to have the supreme legal act formulated by the spring of 1909.¹³

In this atmosphere, the Joint Ministry of Finance began to prepare a constitutional survey in February 1909.¹⁴ The representatives of the Muslim and Serbian People's Organization found themselves in a serious predicament. Agreeing to contribute to the preparations for the promulgation of the constitution meant formally accepting the annexation. Conversely, non-participation and refusal to cooperate would have led to their expulsion from political life. In this way, the Monarchy tried to resolve the matter of the internal recognition of the annexation. Also, during its decades-long administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Monarchy had established a parallel system of loyal politicians willing to cooperate. Given the sensitivity of the political moment, the almost non-existent support for the "loyal" political figures among the general population was of little concern to the Dual Monarchy.

For the two largest parties, the circumstances became even more complex with the refusal of the Provincial Government to promise to involve the representatives of political organizations. In the eyes of Austro-Hungarian representatives on the ground, those political organizations did not have legal recognition and were, as such, ineligible for negotiations. The authorities insisted on involving individuals rather than groups to increase the chances for an agreement. After they failed to make the two largest political groups recognize the annexation, the Austrian authorities resorted to attempts to dilute their significance by insisting that individuals should take the survey.

Despite the insistence of the key representatives of the two organizations, the civilian *adlatus* Baron Isidor Benko submitted a list of the individuals invited to discuss the constitution. The draft of the constitution was jointly formulated by Stephan Burián and the Provincial Government in Sarajevo. Burián was fond of emphasizing that he was the creator of the Bosnian constitution.¹⁵ However, it soon became apparent that the changes introduced by the constitu-

¹² P. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire. A New History*, 379.

¹³ Dž. Juzbašić, „Aneksija i problemi donošenja Zemaljskog ustava (štatuta) za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 193.

¹⁴ H. Kapidžić, „Priprema ustavnog perioda u Bosni i Hercegovini (1908–1910)”, 61.

¹⁵ This is apparent from several letters he sent in 1909. ABIH, ZMF KB 1909 43/1

tion would not be fundamental: the emperor sent a letter to Burián, saying that constitutional rights must correspond to inter-religious relations and the “social structure of the population.”¹⁶ The promise that the constitution would not be octroyed (granted by the sovereign) and result from a dialogue proved false.

The very fact that individuals had been invited, with no talk of elections or any other way of electing representatives, was quite illustrative of the way in which the Dual Monarchy wanted to resolve the constitutional matter in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It should be noted that in February 1909, the struggle against recognizing the annexation was still ongoing. At that moment, neither the Serbian nor the Muslim side had accepted the annexation. The invitation to take part in the survey was extended to 24 persons: eight representatives of the Serbs, ten representatives of the Muslims, five representatives of the Croats, and one representative of the Jewish community. Prominent politicians did not receive invitations or avoided participating in the survey. For instance, no invitation was sent to Gligorije Jeftanović, the most distinguished representative of the Serbian People’s Organization, whereas Alibeg Firdus, the leader of the Muslim People’s Organization, refused to attend.

The surviving reports suggest that the consultations were of modest importance. On the first day, it was already clear that the representatives of the local population had been invited just to hear the text of the constitution. There was no debate on the constitutional solutions.¹⁷ The representatives of the two largest organizations soon left the consultations. After they had left, the Provincial Government continued consultations with individuals close to the Austrian authorities in Sarajevo, such as Esad Kulović and Lazar Dimitrijević. The representatives of the Roman Catholic population also participated in the consultations.

The authorities were reluctant to widen the circle that would discuss the constitution, so the discussions stopped. In his report to the Joint Ministry of Finance, Benko wrote that the Serbo-Muslim opposition was keeping its distance from the constitution survey because of its refusal to recognize the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁸ The provincial government had to find a way to make the Orthodox and Muslim representatives accept the annexation. Diplomatic circumstances exacerbated the situation of the representatives of the Serbs and Muslims. In late February 1909, the Ottoman Empire recognized the annexation. The final agreement between Turkey and the Dual Monarchy

¹⁶ Д. Димовић, Босански сабор. Како је постао, радио и престао (Bosnian Parliament. How it became, worked and stopped), *Правда*, 1st May 1937.

¹⁷ Н. Капидžić, „Припрема уставног периода у Босни и Херцеговини (1908–1910)”, 62.

¹⁸ М. Имамовић, *Правни положај и унутрашњи политички развјатак Босне и Херцеговине* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1976), 198.

stipulated that Austria-Hungary should renounce all pretensions on the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, sign a trade treaty with Turkey, provide guarantees of religious freedom for the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and pay 2.5 million Turkish pounds to reimburse Turkey for its state-owned property in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁹ In March 1909, neighboring Serbia was also forced to recognize the annexation. After the Serbian recognition of the annexation, the representatives²⁰ of Orthodox Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina also recognized this act, thereby breaking the informal alliance between the Serbian and Muslim sides on the annexation issue.

This move allowed the Austro-Hungarian officials to devote themselves to drafting the constitution. As noted above, granting the constitution had been one of the proclaimed reasons for the annexation. In late April, the Joint Minister of Finance and administrator of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Stephan Burián, submitted a draft of the document that was to become the supreme legal act of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the joint ministers and the representatives of the Austrian and Hungarian governments. The document did not encounter harsher criticism and received praise for its conservative overtones, especially regarding protecting the rights of the Muslim population.²¹

After Kállay's regime, the Austrian authorities worked on forming a loyal group of local politicians. All three religions were represented in this pro-regime group. At the same time, the Roman Catholic population collectively showed more readiness to cooperate with the imperial institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In view of the formation of these loyal groups, it is important to mention the role of the colonists whose appeals had served as the impetus for the public debate about the constitution.

Until 1905, the foreign authorities in the occupied Ottoman province actively pursued a policy of settling ethnic Germans in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. From the viewpoint of the Empire's center, colonization was allegedly implemented as a form of support to the local population unused to modern innovations and in need of instruction and education. This climate resulted

¹⁹ Đ. Mikić, „Bosna i Hercegovina između Austro-Ugarske i Turskog carstva u Aneksionoj krizi 1908/1909”. In *Naučni skup posvećen 80. godišnjici aneksije Bosne i Hercegovine*, 206.

²⁰ The Serbian national movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina showed some generational differences during the discussions on recognizing the annexation. The older generation, which had worked on the statute on ecclesiastical and educational autonomy, favored a compromise with the foreign authorities. It was also the segment of the population that recognized the annexation. Around this time, the younger generation of Serbian national representatives started to radicalize.

²¹ Dž. Juzbašić, „Aneksija i problemi donošenja Zemaljskog ustava (štatuta) za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 195.

in a letter from the Austrian colonists, in which they highlighted how much they stood out from their environment and that, because of this, their interests must be protected through the Diet. The letter was written in May 1909 as an initiative to renew the discussions about the constitution after the failed February survey. It claimed that almost thirty thousand colonists lived in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and that their interests must have representation in the future representative body.²² The colonists also highlighted their achievements, insisting that they were doing a better job of working the land and contributing to the state by paying taxes. Finally, they said that the local population was still overwhelmingly illiterate and that only 14% of the local children were enrolled in schools, whereas all of the colonists' children were being schooled. The administrative apparatus would struggle to function without them.²³ It is hard to imagine a document that could more plainly reveal the status and privileges enjoyed by the population resettled in the colony from the Empire's heartlands. Their demands reveal how the document meant to serve as the constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina was written. In the months after February 1909, it was mostly reworked in discussions between Austro-Hungarian officials, with merely sporadic and token involvement of individuals from Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁴

After the colonists' letter, the conversation about Burián's constitution draft continued. At the end of April 1909, the Joint Minister of Finance submitted the draft with the required accompanying legislation.²⁵ The proposal gave rise to some topics that considerably slowed the process of passing the supreme legal act of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The most important factor was certainly the lack of consensus between the Austrian and Hungarian governments.²⁶ During the

²² The figure of thirty thousand colonists in Bosnia and Herzegovina seems unrealistic. For more on their numbers and the process of colonization, see Џ. Јузбашић, „О аустроугарској колонизационој политици у Босни и Херцеговини после анексије” („On the Austro-Hungarian colonization policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the annexation”), *Прилози* 11–12 (1975–1976), 325–331; Т. Краљачић, „Колонизација страних сељака у Босну и Херцеговину за вријеме аустроугарске управе” („Colonization of foreign peasants in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Austro-Hungarian administration”), *Историјски часопис* XXXVI (1989), 112–124.

²³ Н. Каридџић, „Припрема уставног периода у Босни и Херцеговини (1908–1910)”, 69.

²⁴ Ђ. Микић, *Актуелност политике у стогодишњици Босанског сабора 1910–1914* (Current politics in the centenary of the Bosnian Parliament 1910–1914) (Бања Лука: Архив Републике Српске, 2017), 24.

²⁵ АВН, ZMF KB 43/1. The explanations of the proposed laws and regulations are also important for understanding the position of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Burián submitted these clarifications in mid-May 1909.

²⁶ The Austrian and Hungarian sides had been at odds regarding the solution for Bosnia and Herzegovina since December 1907, when the need to transform the provisional administration into a permanent regime began to be openly voiced. Hungary insisted

talks within the joint ministries, a government crisis was ongoing in Hungary, preventing a resolution of the matter. Besides internal strife and the struggle for domination over Bosnia and Herzegovina, the agrarian question emerged as a serious problem. Land ownership and the liberation of peasants were the central issues in the occupied province after the annexation. Even the name of the document was contentious. Although a constitution had been promised in October 1908, the decision-makers preferred not to refer to it as such.

That was the context in which the negotiations about a document that would be granted to Bosnia and Herzegovina began. From the moment of annexation, Hungarian officials insisted on the historical right of the Hungarian state to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Hungarian historians and jurists were called on to prove historical ties between the two territories. If this argumentation had been accepted, it would have led to the Hungarian incorporation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁷ The opposing sides had a dynamic exchange of legal opinions in the Viennese press.²⁸ The promulgation of the legal act that served as the constitution of the newly annexed territory did little to quell the debate. The matter of the occupied province's place in the Dual Monarchy's legal system would remain unresolved as long as this polity existed.

Despite their enormous differences, the Austrian and Hungarian sides held three conferences (28th May, 3rd June, and 4th June 1909) to discuss Burián's draft. These meetings were hosted by the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Joint Foreign Minister Aehrenthal. The meetings praised the constitution's tone but also voiced some objections. Besides the central theme – the place of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Monarchy – the onus was on the suggestion to form the Provincial Council (*Zemaljski savet*). The members of the Diet were to appoint nine members of the Provincial Council from their own ranks. Formed like this, the body would be empowered to ask questions about the state-legal relations that concerned Bosnia and Herzegovina but lay beyond the Diet's purview.²⁹ Essentially, the Provincial Council was to have the right to

on its historical claim to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Shortly after the annexation, the Austrian government was inclined to reach a compromise with the Hungarian side. On the other hand, the Austrian parliament was not in favor of such a solution. For more details, see Dž. Juzbašić, „Austrougarsko zajedničko ministarstvo i upravljanje Bosnom i Hercegovinom nakon aneksije. Državnopravni aspekt.”, *Politika i privreda u Bosni i Hercegovini pod austrougarskom upravom*, ed. Dž. Juzbašić, (Sarajevo: Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine, 2002), 248–250.

²⁷ Dž. Juzbašić, „Aneksija i problemi donošenja Zemaljskog ustava (štatuta) za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 190–192.

²⁸ See: *Neue Freie Presse*, 20th September 1909.

²⁹ Dž. Juzbašić, „Aneksija i problemi donošenja Zemaljskog ustava (štatuta) za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 195.

express views on subjects that did not come under the competences of the Diet. Because of this, the Monarchy's officials thought that a preferable solution would be to appoint "experts" rather than parliamentary representatives to the Council. The differences between Aehrenthal and Burián surfaced. The Joint Minister of Finance thought that this body could serve as an outlet for disaffection, whereas Aehrenthal was against setting such precedents.³⁰ During these consultations, the differences between the Austrian and Hungarian standpoints became apparent. Notably, Aehrenthal was very active in these talks and tried to increase the influence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Meetings at various levels continued over the summer. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted a string of meetings to discuss the name of the document. The term Provincial Statute (*Zemaljski statut*) was suggested.³¹ One of the consulted jurists remarked that a statute is commonly used to regulate organizations and that calling the promised constitution a statute might not go down peacefully.³² In an attempt to find a solution, it was proposed to name the document the *provincial constitution*.³³ The Monarchy was reluctant to use the word "constitution," believing that such a move might have far-reaching consequences for its presence in the Balkans. Also, according to the proposed text, the Provincial Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina was not accountable to the Diet. This erased an important element of constitutionality – the accountability of the government to parliament.³⁴

There were some dissenting views, mostly insisting on the ruler's promise of constitutionality after the annexation. The debates continued throughout the summer, and the matter was not resolved until early September when Stephan Burián, the author of the draft, came up with a solution: in German, the document was called the Provincial Statute for Bosnia and Herzegovina,³⁵ and in official translations into Serbian, the term "statute" would be replaced by "constitution."³⁶ To keep Bosnia and Herzegovina in a symmetric relationship

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 197.

³¹ Landesstatut.

³² Josef Redlich was usually consulted on these matters. His analysis of the constitution is available in *Denkschrift des Reichsrats-und Landtagsabgeordneten Prof. Dr. Josef Redlich zu den Gesetzentwürfen des gemeinsam Ministeriums, betreffend die Verleihung einer Verfassung an Bosnien und die Herzegowina, erstattet Sr. Exzellenz dem Herrn Ministerpräsidenten dr. Richard von Bienert*, HHStA PA XL Interna 247–1 Liasse XIX.

³³ Landesverfassung.

³⁴ Dž. Juzbašić, „Aneksija i problemi donošenja Zemaljskog ustava (štatura) za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 202–203.

³⁵ Landesstatut für Bosnien und die Herzegowina.

³⁶ Dž. Juzbašić, „Aneksija i problemi donošenja Zemaljskog ustava (štatura) za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 203.

with both Austria and Hungary, it was necessary to avoid the word “constitution” in the title so as not to liken Bosnia and Herzegovina to the crown lands. This continued the tradition of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s post-occupation legal vacuum. The annexation did little to change that. The promulgation of the statute in no way altered its relationship to any part of the Monarchy. The legal relations continued to be regulated by the laws of 1880, which had made Bosnia and Herzegovina a *corpus separatum*. It did not become part of Hungary or Austria, and neither was it recognized as an independent state, remaining in the same status it had had since the beginning of the occupation.³⁷

Some progress was made after the summer negotiations, but it was clear that the matter of the Provincial Council was far from settled. That meant it would be impossible to implement Aehrenthal’s plan to have Bosnia and Herzegovina’s constitutional document sanctioned by the fall and allow the Council to convene as soon as possible. Over the summer, another topic had cropped up to deepen the divide between the Austrian and Hungarian sides: the agrarian question and its place in the proposed legislative measures. The agrarian question became crucial for the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the moment it was occupied. The Austrian side insisted that the serfdom issue must have its place in the constitution. The Hungarian side and Burián disagreed, insisting on keeping the provision that required a two-thirds majority for any decision on the agrarian question. Because of the complex electoral law, which will be discussed below, this essentially meant that the interests of large landowners, mostly Muslim, would be protected.³⁸ The clash between the two ministers re-actualized the issue of serf buyouts and how it should be resolved. In September, Burián and Aehrenthal were forced to reach a compromise – the provisions on the agrarian question were left out of the statute’s text, and it was agreed that a law on the voluntary³⁹ serf buyouts formulated by joint ministries would be submitted at the first session of the Council.

Some corrections were also made to the parts of the constitution discussing education, language, and religious equality.⁴⁰ All of these were minor amendments that did not change the meaning of the provisions but had a role

³⁷ T. Kruševac, „Politički okviri bosanskog ustava iz 1910. godine”, *Pregled* 10 (1955), 191.

³⁸ Dž. Juzbašić, „Aneksija i problemi donošenja Zemaljskog ustava (štatuta) za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 203.

³⁹ The issue of voluntary or mandatory serf buyouts was one of the central topics of the Diet sessions. It was resolved by adopting the voluntary principle. Austrian banks mostly gave loans to the Provincial Government, which had been Aehrenthal’s intention in his clash with Burián. Only the Serbian side in the Diet advocated mandatory serf buyouts.

⁴⁰ HHSStA PA XL Interna 247–1 Liasse XIX.

in the internal strife between the two sides. For instance, instead of guaranteeing the distinctiveness and language of the people, the text of the constitution was amended to reflect an Austrian modification – preserving the distinctiveness and language of the people.⁴¹ The judiciary was not separate from the executive, and judges were not independent even though there was some talk of gradual separation.

The provisions for suspending the constitution were more important for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina; according to contemporaries, they were at odds with the essence of constitutionality. In irregular situations, the Provincial Government could suspend parts of the constitution with the sovereign's consent. The text of the constitution did not specify the duration of the supreme act's suspension. It also retained the provision that allowed the sovereign to delay a session of the Diet or dissolve it.⁴² Similar to those were the provisions on the parliamentary privilege of its members, who enjoyed immunity for statements made in the Diet. However, this immunity also stretched beyond the Diet and covered repeating statements previously uttered in the Diet. These decisions met with sharp criticism.⁴³ The provisions on funding troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina also had far-reaching consequences.

It can be noticed that during the process of amending Burián's draft, minor alterations came from the Austrian side. In line with its historical claim to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Hungarian side focused on fundamental changes. The most radical demand was that the legislation within the Diet's competences, once adopted in the Diet of Bosnia and Herzegovina, had to be approved by both governments. Eventually, another compromise solution was found: both governments would have to approve the proposed legislation before bringing it to the Diet. With that move, despite the introduction of a representative body, the Monarchy increased its control.⁴⁴

Given that the proposed constitution merely increased the Monarchy's hold on Bosnia and Herzegovina, an intense debate began about the attitude of the Joint Ministry of Finance toward Bosnia and Herzegovina and other joint ministries of Austria-Hungary. Notably, the most time-consuming part of the constitutional debate concerned the internal clash between the two halves of the Monarchy, including their conflict about formulating the name of the joint body tasked with governing Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Administration of

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Dž. Juzbašić, „Aneksija i problemi donošenja Zemaljskog ustava (štatuta) za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 208–209.

⁴³ HHStA PA XL Interna 247–I Liasse XIX.

⁴⁴ Dž. Juzbašić, „Aneksija i problemi donošenja Zemaljskog ustava (štatuta) za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 211.

Bosnia and Herzegovina Act named the Joint Ministry as the governing organ of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Joint Ministry included three joint ministers. Their agreement, which preceded the 1880 Administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina Act, stipulated that it should be governed by the Joint Minister of Finance. The Austrian side was in favor of retaining the 1880 wording – the governing organ would remain the Joint Ministry.⁴⁵ The Monarchy's senior military circles⁴⁶ staunchly supported eliminating the Joint Ministry of Finance from the governance of Bosnia and Herzegovina and were particularly displeased with Burián's work.

Unsurprisingly, the Hungarian side held the opposite view. The Joint Ministry of Finance exercised its governance of Bosnia and Herzegovina through one of its members. Until that point, the legal practice had been that this member should be the Joint Minister of Finance, and the Hungarian side insisted that the constitution should mention the Joint Minister of Finance.⁴⁷ These quarrels lasted into the fall, threatening to additionally delay the promulgation of the constitution. Aehrenthal's compromise solution put an end to the debate. It was decided to employ the wording "Joint Ministry (i.e., Joint Minister) entrusted with governance."⁴⁸ The same formulation was used to resolve the matter of ratifying the legislation passed in the Diet. The legislation adopted in the representative body was to be approved by the sovereign and the joint minister in charge of governance. This move restored Aehrenthal's importance, essentially allowing him to keep the existing state of affairs. Keeping things as they were, without unnecessary conflicts between the Empire's two halves, had been Aehrenthal's principal idea. The internal clash between the Monarchy's two halves was starting to resemble a colonial conflict. With varying intensity, it had been smoldering from the moment of occupation, with no viable solution in sight, which determined the fate of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1878 to 1918. These debates, which decided which of the Empire's two halves would control the occupied territory and establish domination, make it abundantly clear that Bosnia and Herzegovina was essentially a colony of the Dual Monarchy. Throughout those discussions, the Hungarian side remained steadfast in its insistence on

⁴⁵ Dž. Juzbašić, „Austrougarско zajedničko ministarstvo i upravljanje Bosnom i Hercegovinom nakon aneksije. Državnopravni aspekt.,” 251.

⁴⁶ The solution proposed by the military circles involved concentrating power in the hands of the Governor (*Landeschef*). Although they ultimately failed to bring their intention to fruition in the text of the constitution, Oskar Potiorek's administrative reforms in 1912 abolished the office of the civilian *adlatus*, effectively placing Bosnia and Herzegovina under military dictatorship.

⁴⁷ Dž. Juzbašić, „Austrougarско zajedničko ministarstvo i upravljanje Bosnom i Hercegovinom nakon aneksije. Državnopravni aspekt.,” 255–256.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 257–258.

phrases that did not imply the state-legal position of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That was plainly obvious in the case of the “provincial membership/belonging” of the inhabitants of the occupied territory. Although the Hungarian side insisted on their Hungarian affiliation, due to conflicting views in the Monarchy, they were forced to accept the formulation about their provincial membership. The constitution specified who had this status and how it could be acquired or lost.⁴⁹

By the end of September, the text of the constitution was agreed upon, and the plan was to promulgate it at the anniversary of the annexation. However, the Hungarian side had a few objections to the enactment process. In September 1909, Hungary was experiencing a political crisis. Hungarian officials used this crisis to insist that the emperor promulgate the constitution without the obligatory consent of the two governments. The political crisis in Hungary lasted until January 1910, preventing the approval of the constitutional act. Eventually, Burián had to personally mediate in talks with the new Hungarian government to secure the preconditions for passing the constitution.⁵⁰

Emperor Franz Joseph approved the constitution on 17th February 1910, and the document was promulgated in Sarajevo three days later. The Governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina, General Marijan Varešanin, delivered a speech explaining the changes it had introduced. The constitution/statute was based on the idea of “pyramidal constitutionality.”⁵¹ The decision-makers claimed that pyramidal constitutionality would gradually broaden the initial – mostly minimal – rights of the population. The administrators in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina believed that this was the only solution due to the “cultural backwardness” of the people.⁵² The Vienna-based Joint Ministry of Finance retained its supreme authority. The Constitution granted three new institutions – the Diet, Provincial Council,⁵³ and municipal councils.⁵⁴ In addition, legislation was passed to guarantee elementary civil rights and keep up appearances of parliamentary life.

⁴⁹ Dž. Juzbašić, „Aneksija i problemi donošenja Zemaljskog ustava (štatuta) za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 217.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 219–220.

⁵¹ T. Kruševac, „Politički okviri bosanskog ustava iz 1910. godine”, 190.

⁵² M. Imamović, *Pravni položaj i unutrašnji politički razvitak Bosne i Hercegovine*, 213.

⁵³ The Provincial Council was a body that included nine representatives of the Diet and could present its views on matters of public interest to the Provincial Government. The Provincial Government had to seek its opinion, and this body could not voice its views spontaneously. After the tensions caused by the formation of this body, it was effectively reduced to an advisory role.

⁵⁴ Municipal councils were a form of elected self-government organs. The electoral system was similar to the Diet's.

As we saw, the issue of the Diet's legislative authority was quite contentious. The constitution had left legislative powers firmly in the sovereign's hands. The Diet could take part in drafting some – but not all – laws. It was not allowed to have its say in drafting legislation that concerned the military, fiscal policy, and trade. Its budgetary powers were also limited. The Diet had no restrictions in other matters. As noted above, the Hungarian side had insisted on the provision that both governments had to approve the proposed legislation, limiting the representative body's capacity. All legislation passed in the Diet needed to be confirmed by the Joint Minister of Finance.⁵⁵ The Diet was most influential when it was time to pass the annual budget. Hence, the Joint Ministry of Finance advised the Provincial Government that the budget should include no superfluous details. With this, in its constitutional era, Bosnia and Herzegovina was again pulled back to the times of Kállay, who had been in the habit of submitting generalized and often flawed budgets to be discussed in the Austrian and Hungarian parliaments.⁵⁶ Later on, adoption of the budget proved the only leverage the Diet had at its disposal. Hence, almost all budgets were adopted belatedly because the Diet members kept trying to attach the budget to other major issues, such as language or railways. The Diet was not allowed to decide on military expenditure in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, either for military institutions or troops. The emperor also controlled conscription in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, by extension, determined the recruiting potential of the occupied territory.

The membership of the Diet reflected the national, religious, and social divisions between the voters. This complicated division prevented the formation of broader electoral coalitions potentially hostile to the regime, precluding any inter-religious or inter-ethnic cooperation. Preempting any local joint action was one of the premises of the Austro-Hungarian policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As noted above, during the drafting of the constitution, it was determined that the Diet had to reflect the social structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, parliamentary elections were adapted to the local circumstances, not unlike in Moravia and Bohemia. The Diet was to have 92 members. Of these, 20 had guaranteed seats on account of their offices.⁵⁷ The remaining seats were subject to elections. The population was divided into three curiae, and the members of the Diet were elected from the ranks of their curiae. The first elec-

⁵⁵ M. Imamović, *Pravni položaj i unutrašnji politički razvitak Bosne i Hercegovine*, 213–215.

⁵⁶ Dž. Juzbašić, *Nacionalno-politički odnosi u bosanskohercegovačkom Saboru i jezičko pitanje (1910–1914)*, (Sarajevo: Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine, 1999), 53.

⁵⁷ Seats were assigned to high-ranking church officials, as well as to the President of the Supreme Court, President of the Chamber of Commerce, and the Mayor of Sarajevo.

toral curia included major landowners, clergy, officials, and some well-educated citizens. Rough estimates suggest this curia had slightly below 7,000 voters and elected 18 Diet members. The second curia included the urban population and is believed to have numbered slightly below 48,000 people who voted for 20 Diet members. The third and largest curia, covering the rural population, included 350,000 people and sent 34 representatives to the Diet.⁵⁸ In recognition of the local religious structure, the mandates within the curiae were divided along religious lines. The Orthodox population had eight seats in the first curia and a total of 23 in the other two. The Muslim population had six places in the first and 18 in the other two. The Roman Catholics had four seats in the first curia and 12 in the second and third. Men over 24 years of age had active voting rights if they had lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina for at least one year. Austro-Hungarian nationals who worked in administration, education, and railways could also vote. Women who paid a land tax of more than 140 Kronen also had voting rights in the first curia.

The Dual Monarchy did not hide its intention to preserve the existing situation. The first curia, which had the privilege of electing a significant number of Diet members disproportionate to its electorate, received an internal division into two electoral classes. The first class included those who paid more than 140 Kronen in land tax, including women who met this requirement, bringing their total to 457. Of those 457, 396 were Muslims, 26 were Orthodox, and 11 were Roman Catholics. Other religious groups had 14 representatives in total. This electoral class had six seats out of 18 elected by the first curia, with five out of those six seats guaranteed to the Muslim community.⁵⁹ Of course, this state of affairs preserved the importance of the Muslim landowner elite and confirmed the existence of considerable differences in the approach to the agrarian question within the Monarchy. The architects of the Constitution believed that, besides the unwaveringly loyal Catholic community, the Muslim landowner elite could provide a firm support base to the regime even in the new era. The authorities were convinced they had to safeguard the rights of the group with which they had most closely cooperated.⁶⁰ On the other hand, the division of seats along religious lines in the second curia did not benefit the Muslim population. Vot-

⁵⁸ М. Екмечић, *Стварање Југославије II* (Creation of Yugoslavia II) (Београд: Просвета, 1989), 618.

⁵⁹ Н. Капидџић, „Припрема уставног периода у Босни и Херцеговини (1908–1910)”, 89; The nature of this electoral system becomes obvious once we take into account how many voters decided on how many seats. It produced drastic differences in which the vote of one landowner from the first curia was worth the same as 128 peasant votes in the third curia. Д. Ж. Јузбашић, *Nacionalno-politički odnosi u bosanskohercegovačkom Saboru i jezičko pitanje (1910–1914)*, 41.

⁶⁰ М. Имамовић, *Pravni položaj i unutrašnji politički razvitak Bosne i Hercegovine*, 217.

ers in the second curia mostly lived in cities. The Muslim population was in the majority in most urban settlements; however, although the number of Muslim voters was higher than the Catholics and Orthodox together, the number of seats assigned to their respective groups did not reflect this.⁶¹

The mandate of an elected representative in the Diet lasted five years, and the voters could not repeal their electoral decision and dismiss them. The chairman and vice-chairmen were not elected in the Diet but appointed by the emperor. Representatives of the three religious groups were to take turns serving as the chairman of the Diet. The representative body was to convene once a year in Sarajevo – a decision that moved Bosnia and Herzegovina's political life to this city. The representative assembly was not allowed to communicate with other administrative organs; instead, the Provincial Council was to take on this role. Again, the religious principle dictated its membership, and its president was always the elected chairman of the Diet. The Provincial Council could voice its opinions and views at the request of the Provincial Government.⁶²

As the tense negotiations between Vienna and Pest showed, the Constitution regulated civil rights and provincial membership/belonging. It also contained the usual provisions on freedoms typical of this era. The Provincial Government could also suspend all of these provisions in case of war, unrest, or grand treason. This solution, as we saw, had elicited some dissent.⁶³

In terms of citizenship, the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina also remained in a peculiar position. The Hungarian insistence on not indicating that Bosnia and Herzegovina belonged to either of the two halves was decisive for keeping such formulations. Besides Austrian and Hungarian citizenship, "provincial membership/belonging" was introduced,⁶⁴ which extended to the Austrian and Hungarian citizens working in public service. This solution of the citizenship issue actually highlighted the colonial status of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina had no way of influencing political life and policies in Austria and Hungary. In contrast, the parliaments of the two states directly influenced the life of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its residents.

The Bosnian Constitution, or *štatut* as the local population called it, granted noticeably fewer rights to Bosnia and Herzegovina than similar acts to Moravia and Bohemia. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the provincial administration remained under the control of the Dual Monarchy's authorities. That had

⁶¹ Ђ. Микић, *Актуелност политике у стогодишњици Босанског сабора 1910–1914* (Current politics in the centenary of the Bosnian Parliament 1910–1914), 37.

⁶² М. Imamović, *Pravni položaj i unutrašnji politički razvitak Bosne i Hercegovine*, 218.

⁶³ HHStA PA XL Interna 247–I Liasse XIX.

⁶⁴ *Glasnik zakona i naredaba za Bosnu i Hercegovinu*, Sarajevo 1910, 17–19.

not been the case in other provinces, especially in the Austrian part of the state. They usually had organs accountable to the Austrian government and parallel bodies of provincial autonomy, which were not formed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Another suggestive indicator was the Diet's lack of legislative powers. Vladimir Ćorović, a contemporary of the developments and life in Bosnia and Herzegovina, said that the Constitution was "quite reactionary." Ćorović rightly concluded that the fate of Bosnia and Herzegovina lay in the hands of one general and the joint governments.⁶⁵ The French consul in Bosnia and Herzegovina had a similar impression of the Constitution and its promulgation, arguing in his reports that the Constitution had done little beyond making the situation even more complicated and noting that it seemed likely that conflicts might erupt among the local population, a development that suited the Empire's policy.⁶⁶

The promulgation of the Constitution did not change the position of Bosnia and Herzegovina in relation to the rest of the Monarchy; it remained in a subordinate position to Austria-Hungary. For Aehrenthal and other representatives of the Monarchy, it was merely a territory defined by law.⁶⁷ That did not escape contemporaries. In his detailed analysis of the *Landesstatut*, Karl Lamp compared Bosnia and Herzegovina with Alsace-Lorraine, noting that the promulgation of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina essentially changed nothing because neither Austria nor Hungary had modified their own constitutions to accommodate the annexation of 1908. In his view, the "colonial policy" had led to closer cooperation between the two halves and would doubtlessly result in the centralization of the Empire.⁶⁸

Compared to the previous situation, the "era of constitutionality" was nevertheless a step forward for the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the elections, Bosnian-Herzegovinian politicians used the framework provided by the Diet. Making use of the octroyed imitation of a representative body, they voiced their views and openly protested against the situation in the territory.

⁶⁵ В. Ђоровић, *Односи Србије и Аустро-Угарске у XX веку* (Relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary in the 20th century) (Београд: Библиотека града Београда, 1992), 332.

⁶⁶ М. Ж. Живановић, „Извештаји дипломатских представника Француске у Аустро-Угарској о догађајима у Босни и Херцеговини од завршетка Анексионе кризе (марта 1909) до атентата Богдана Жерајића (јуна 1910)“ („Reports of diplomatic representatives of France in Austria-Hungary on the events in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the end of the Annexation Crisis (March 1909) to the assassination of Bogdan Žerajić (June 1910)“) *Историјски часопис* 18 (1971), 470–471.

⁶⁷ Dž. Juzbašić, „Aneksija i problemi donošenja Zemaljskog ustava (štatuta) za Bosnu i Hercegovinu“, 196.

⁶⁸ K. Lamp, „Die Verfassung von Bosnien und der Herzegowina vom 17. Februar 1910“, *Jahrbuch des öffentlichen Rechts der Gegenwart* 5 (1911), 210–230; P. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 380–381.

Regardless of the possibilities offered by the Diet, we should bear in mind that the process of enacting the constitution and forming the Diet merely underscored Bosnia and Herzegovina's dependence on Austria-Hungary. The end of the absolutist regime, announced with the Constitution and Diet, did not come. Instead, there was a formal reduction in absolutism, which was used as an illustration of the success of the Austrian cultural mission in this region. However, the sovereign had granted the people a constitution drafted in discussions between the same figures that had previously ruled Bosnia and Herzegovina with no restrictions or limitations. As such, it encapsulated the essence of the Austrian administration of this region – formal “progress” with effectively confirming the status quo.

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Searching for a Viable Solution Yugoslav and Czechoslovak Nation-Building Projects in the 1930s¹

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

³ On the closeness of the two countries that stemmed from the experience of the Great War: M. Radojević, “Srpsko-česka 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-Noví Sad: Matica 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. Bystrický, “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 “the central issue in Czechoslovak politics” see Bystrický, “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

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 multi-ethnic 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

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 između 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 između 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 *štatotvorné* 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

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

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. Nádvořníková, “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 između 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,

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

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. Janičijević, *Stvaralačka inteligencija međjuratne Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Institut društvenih nauka, 1984), 127–130.

²⁹ Lj. Boban, “Geneza, značenje i odjek zagrebačkih punktacija”, *Časopis za savremenu 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

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 relevant 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

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

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

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

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 Bystrický, "Slovakia", 160.

⁵⁶ Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 87.

⁵⁷ Skalník 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 građanska 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 which has 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

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, 2011).

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

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 uređenju 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 političku 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: dnevnike 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

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.

⁷⁵ C. Skalník 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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Tribes in Arms Gjon Marka Gjoni and the Irregular and Paramilitary Volunteer Forces of Northern Albania during the Fascist Occupation (1939–1943)

Abstract: This paper analyzes the relationship between Gjon Marka Gjoni, head of the Mirdita tribes in North Albania, and the phenomenon of mobilization and recruitment of many men from the hinterland of North Albania in the irregular and paramilitary forces, i.e., in the voluntary bands and the *Milicia Fasciste Shqiptare* [Albanian Fascist Militia], during the Italian occupation (1939–1943). In addition to his personal role and interpersonal ties, it focuses on the personal motivations of these forces, with an emphasis on both economic ones – wages, benefits, and potential banditry opportunities – and emotional ones, the latter driven by various kinds of fears. Finally, to better understand their local activity and the dynamics that emerged, this paper also addresses the nature and the extent of their violence and the consequent impact on the population.

Keywords: Albania, Second World War, Fascist occupation, Gjon Marka Gjoni, irregular and paramilitary forces, indirect rule

Introduction

With the fascist occupation of Albania, the Italians identified Gjon Marka Gjoni, the leader of the Mirdita tribes in the North, as one of the crucial figures on which to invest. Promoted to the rank of Senator of the Kingdom of Italy, Gjon Marka Gjoni was considered, throughout the period of the fascist occupation (1939–1943) and also later, during the Nazi occupation (1943–1944), one of the strongest leaders of the country due to his ability to mobilize many men in his region and beyond.

His personal involvement and that of his family with the occupying forces led communist historiography to later condemn him as a collaborator and traitor¹ and, in the wake of this, the historian Bernd J. Fischer, in his work *Alba-*

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¹ S. Pollo, *Historia e Shqipërisë 3 (1912–1944)* (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë, Instituti i Historisë, 1984), 482, 604–605.

nia at War 1939–1945,² described him as the most ruthless repressor of the Partisan forces concentrated in the south of Albania, also suggesting his personal responsibility for the punitive operations that led to the burning of numerous villages and the killing of many civilians.³ With regard to the repression of the Partisan forces, which in many cases also affected the civilian population, there was also a tendency to present them as violence executed by northerners against the population of the south, indirectly alluding to the divisions between north and south Albania.

In this paper, I propose to analyze the relationship between Gjon Marka Gjoni and the phenomenon of mobilization and recruitment of many men from the northern hinterland into the irregular and paramilitary forces, that is, in the voluntary bands and the *Milicia Fashiste Shqiptare / Milizia Fascista Albanese*. What was the role of Gjon Marka Gjoni and the other local élites in the mobilization and poor defection of these men? In addition to the attraction and intermediation that the local élites could carry out, what were the personal motivations that led many to enlist and then find themselves carrying out campaigns of repression against the resistance forces in the south of the country? Finally, in the repressions of the resistance forces in which they were deployed, what was the extent and form of their violence, and what impact did they have on the local population?

To answer these questions, we must first try to reconstruct the complex and particular social structure and historical context from which these men came.

Mirdita and the hinterland of the north: between strongmen and tribes

For centuries, during the Ottoman rule the region of Mirdita and the mountainous provinces of the northern hinterland, which constituted the heart of the *gegnia*,⁴ had preserved a kind of autonomy, living isolated and practicing their

² B. J. Fischer, *Albania at War 1939–1945* (London: Hurst & Company, 1999). In this paper, I will use the Albanian translation: B. J. Fischer, *Shqipëria gjatë Luftës, 1939–1945* (Tiranë: Cabej, 2004).

³ It should be noted that, in this statement, Fischer incorrectly refers to Gjon Marka Gjoni as Minister of the Interior of the collaborationist government of Maliq Bushati (February–April 1943); however, the minister was his son Mark Gjonmarkaj, who in his decisions seems to have followed his father's political line. See: B. J. Fischer, *Shqipëria gjatë Luftës, 195–197*.

⁴ The term *Geg / gegni* describes the population of north-central Albania and the region of Kosovo, distinct from *Tosk / toskëri*, the inhabitants of the southern part of the country. They spoke different dialects and had a different social organization and family structure.

own customs.⁵ This isolation had instilled in them a strong sense of belonging to the group and preserved their rigidly patrilineal social structure. Organized into various tribes headed by a *pleqni* (elders) or a single tribal chieftain, as in the case of the region of Mirdita, they had territorial unity and strong social solidarity, particularly in matters of revenge.⁶ Even though, in terms of religious identity, the region of Mirdita had a large Catholic majority, there was nonetheless a strong presence of Muslim tribes, such as those in the region of Luma, which spanned from the northeast of Albania to the southwest of Kosovo region.

Formed by the tribal unification of five Catholic *bajrak* (mobilization zones or subtribes)⁷, the region of Mirdita was led by a *Kapedan* (or *Kapidan*), who was based in Orosh and belonged to the Gjonmarkaj family (or Gjumar-kaj), whose office was hereditary. Impoverished and involved in banditry⁸, this region had always been characterized by marked particularism that manifested itself even within the new Albanian state in the determination to preserve the privileges enjoyed during the Ottoman Empire. If during the first years of the nascent Albanian state, the region of Mirdita, led by its own *Kapedan* Prenk Bib Doda, had enjoyed not only a series of privileges in the field of self-government but also a relevant national political role – during the government of Prince Wilhelm of Wied (March – September 1914) Bib Doda had been minister – following the death of the latter in 1920, the relationships between the region and the central government suffered serious setback. As he died without male heirs, Bib Doda's office was inherited by his cousin and rival Marka Gjoni (1861–1925),⁹ who, however, was not held in high regard in Tirana and soon came into conflict with the central government. Thus, following a direct confrontation with the Minister of the Interior, Mehdi Frashëri, over certain local prerogatives, Marka Gjoni, with the support of Yugoslavia, proceeded to proclaim the Republic of Mirdita in the summer of 1921.¹⁰ Despite Yugoslav support, Marka Gjoni had a limited following among its population, and the central authorities managed

⁵ O. J. Schmitt, *Die Albaner. Eine Geschichte zwischen Orient und Okzident* (München: C. H. Beck Verlag, 2012), chapter 3.

⁶ N. Clayer, *Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar. Lindja e një kombi me shumicë myslimane në Europë* (Tiranë: Botime Përpjekja, 2012), 25–27.

⁷ This union could sometimes comprise up to twelve *bajrak*, involving the seven neighboring *bajraks* in addition to the five of Mirdita. P. Doçi, *Mirdita vatër e qëndresës antiosmane: vështrim etnologjik e historik, 1479–1912* (Tiranë: Mirdita, 1999).

⁸ N. Clayer, *Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar*, 60.

⁹ J. Swire, *Albania: the rise of a kingdom* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1929); T. Zavalani, *Historia e Shqipnis* (Tiranë: Phoenix, 1998).

¹⁰ On the causes that led to the proclamation of the Republic of Mirdita, see: B. Pula, *State, law and revolution: agrarian power and the national state in Albania, 1850–1945*, (PhD dissertation)(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2011), 186–204.

to pacify the rebellion and regain control of the region, leading to the rapid fall of his “Republic”.

Although Marka Gjoni’s attempt was reduced to nothing, from that moment, the central authorities and, in particular, starting from 1928, the Crown, embodied in King Zog, turned to establishing direct government in the northern mountain regions, abandoning the strategy of trying to control these areas through tribal chiefs. Obviously, there were attempts to rebel against this new policy: in 1926, the northern region of Dukagjini rebelled against such centralist policies that aimed to stifle the privileges enjoyed since the times of the Ottoman Empire,¹¹ and the subsequent application by Zog of a government law that established the requisition of weapons aroused much discontent in almost all the population and northern hinterlands.¹²

The failure of the secessionist attempt and the new centralist measures, however, did not reduce the influence of the Gjonmarkaj family in their region. In fact, when Marka Gjoni died in 1925, the hereditary leadership of the area passed to his son Gjon Marka Gjoni (1888–1966), who, despite the heavy shadow of the central authorities, continued consolidating his prestige within his region.¹³ That said, throughout the period of the Zog era, both Gjon Marka Gjoni and the other tribal leaders of the north always remained distrustful towards the new sovereign due to the latter’s attempt to extend his authority at the national level and the will of the former to preserve their privileges and local power.

Fascist occupation: cooptation and rise to central power

With the Italian occupation of Albania in 1939 and the end of the reign of Zog, the fascist authorities moved in two directions: reproduction of its structures in the Albanian space and continuity with the past. Obviously, in the reproduction of its own structures, the reorganization of all Albanian armed forces had to play a central role. Consequently, the Albanian army was incorporated into the Italian, while public security was entrusted to the Carabinieri – which had, in the meantime, absorbed the old Albanian Gendarmerie, the Police Corps, incorporated into the Italian Police Corps and the *Milicia Fashiste Shqiptare / Milizia Fascista Albanese* (MFSH / MFA), established in September 1939.¹⁴

¹¹ R. Morozzo della Rocca, *Nazione e Religione in Albania 1920–1944* (Nardò: Besa, 2001), 102–103.

¹² B. Pula, *State, law, and revolution*, 234.

¹³ It turns out that, in August 1937, Gjon Marka Gjoni was at the head of an assembly that met in Mirdita to discuss a series of customary rules. Hylli i Dritës, vj. XIII korrik–gusht 1937, nr. 7–8, 417–418.

¹⁴ A. Basciani, *L'impero nei Balcani. L'occupazione italiana dell'Albania (1939–1943)* (Roma: Viella, 2022), 61–62; S. Trani, “L'unione fra l'Italia e l'Albania (1939–1943)”

Created according to the fascist model and integrated into the *Milizia volontaria per la sicurezza nazionale* (MVSN) – better known as the “*camicie nere* [Blackshirt Divisions]” – the MFSH was a paramilitary body that had to contribute to the maintenance of internal order and the security of the state. Composed of officers from Italy appointed by the General Command of the MVSN and by Albanian subordinates, recruitment into it was voluntary and open to both Italians residing in Albania and Albanians between 21 and 55 years of age enrolled in their respective fascist parties.¹⁵

However, in order to avoid a social upheaval which could have created a series of problems, the authorities decided to maintain continuity with the past by relying on the local nobility in their efforts to build a fascist regime, especially on the bey landowners of the central-south and the chieftains of mountain tribes of the north. This was a response to the full awareness of the personal prestige enjoyed by the beys in their territories of domination and the strong bond between the peoples of the northern mountains and their local leaders. Implementing a form of occupation, in many respects of the colonial type¹⁶, the Italian authorities heavily invested in offices and subsidies to the Albanian nobility, especially those who had been opponents of King Zog, in order to ensure their loyalty and, indirectly, that of all their retinue. The figures coopted for the new political course of fascist Albania included Gjon Marka Gjoni, who received the highest honor among all the leaders of the north and Catholic Albanian, becoming Senator of the Kingdom of Italy.¹⁷ In addition to this prestigious appointment, which earned him a salary of 4000 lire per month, the *Kapedan* of Mirdita also received a series of extraordinary subsidies¹⁸, leading thus to a substantial improvement of his economic situation.

Clio: Rivista trimestrale di studi storici 30 1 (1994), 164–165; S. Trani, *L'Unione fra l'Albania e l'Italia. Censimento delle fonti (1939–1945) conservate negli archivi pubblici e privati di Roma* (Roma: Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, Direzione generale per gli archivi, 2007), 51–62.

¹⁵ P. Crociani, *Gli albanesi nelle Forze Armate italiane (1939–1943)* (Roma: Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, 2001), 165–175.

¹⁶ A. Basciani, *L'impero nei Balcani*, 84–86; B. Pula, “Becoming Citizens of Empire: Albanian Nationalism and Fascist Empire, 1939–1943”, *Theory and Society* 37 6 (2008), 574–578.

¹⁷ Four Albanian Senators of the Kingdom of Italy were appointed following the fascist occupation: the abovementioned Gjon Marka Gjoni, Mustafa Merlika Kruja, Shefqet Vërlaci and Vangjel Turtulli. P. Milo, *Shqiptarët në luftën e Dytë Botërore I (1939–1943)* (Tiranë: Botime Toena, 2014), 59.

¹⁸ See the list of reserved expenses incurred in the financial year 1939–1940 in Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (henceforth ASDMAE), F. Gabinetto Albania, B. 99.

For the Italians, the appointment of Gjon Marka Gjoni as a Senator, with all the privileges granted to him, had, first of all, to guarantee the stability and loyalty of the population of Mirdita to the regime, and, when the time came, also the mobilization of his men and his mediation, as a powerful and influential man, with the other northern tribes. It is, therefore, not surprising that in the region of Mirdita, during the Italian occupation, there was no consistent military garrison¹⁹, and this was due both to the personal power of the Gjonmarkaj family in maintaining peace in its region and the fact that, from November 1940, an irregular armed unit known as “Albanian Voluntary Bands” or “Albanian Armed Bands” was formed. Created mainly in the northern hinterland around local leaders and influential figures, these formations had the task of ensuring public order and the local defense of their respective regions, with the exception of the areas where the regular armies operated.²⁰ And in fact, one of the first areas where these units were constituted was the region of Mirdita, where, according to documentary sources, under the leadership of Gjon Marka Gjoni, a band was mobilized, the most consistent of all, composed of a thousand armed men.²¹

If initially these irregular bands operated only in their districts, with the emergence of anti-Italian resistance forces, they had to be reorganized and deployed even outside their native territories. This was initially determined by the action of the first anti-fascist bands, which operated in the central part and the north of the country and were formed around three leading figures, Muharrem Bajraktari, Myslim Peza and Abaz Kupa.²² The threat of these first anti-fascist bands led the second collaborationist government, headed by Mustafa

¹⁹ Archivio dell’Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell’Esercito (henceforth AUS-SME), F. N. I–II, B. 969, fasc. Diario Storico, Bimestre: Gennaio–Febbraio 1942, Comando Superiore Forze Armate Albania, Quadro di battaglia, Copia nr. 15.

²⁰ P. Crociani, *Gli albanesi nelle Forze Armate italiane*, 271–272.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 273.

²² Both Muharrem Bajraktari and Myslim Peza were known long-standing opponents of King Zog and, because of this, had spent many years in exile, returning to Albania only after the Italian occupation. The former operated with his men in the area of Luma in the northeast of the country, while the latter worked in the area of Peza, a few kilometers from Tirana, where he came from. Unlike them, Abaz Kupa was a staunch supporter of King Zog and had, with his men, as the commander of the gendarmerie of Durrës, put up the only concrete resistance during the Italian invasion. After a period of exile in Istanbul and Belgrade, in April 1941, he returned to lead an armed band in the area of Kruja in the central part of the country. B. J. Fischer, *Shqipëria gjatë luftës*, 49–50, 157–158; M. Dezhgiu, *Shqipëria nën pushtimin Italian (1939–1943)* (Tiranë: Eneas, 2015), 62, 186–187, R. Shtëpani, *Shtëpanët e Shëngjergjët në rrjedhën e shekujve: origjina e mbienrrit, gjenealogjia ngujimet dhe miqësitet në gjithë Shqipërinë: nga viti 1610 deri 1990* (Tiranë: Globus R, 1999), 175.

Merlika Kruja,²³ to resort again to the mobilization of voluntary bands. Once again, among the influential figures appointed for their organization, there was Gjon Marka Gjoni, placed, in March 1942, in charge of the recruitment of men in Luma and Puka, as well as in Mirdita.²⁴ Once established, these had to be located in the zone of Luma, where M. Bajraktari was operating, and the area of Kruja, where A. Kupa was operating, with the clear aim of preventing and possibly repressing any action carried out by their bands. Although under the responsibility of the personalities who had formed them and under the direct command of their local leaders, these voluntary bands were nevertheless under the high command of the MFSH, not only to allow their coordination but to draw from them, once employed, the most suitable elements to integrate into the MFSH ranks.²⁵

In line with these new directives, the first large-scale operations for the suppression of these anti-fascist bands began after a few weeks. Between 21 and 26 April 1942, a major operation was undertaken by voluntary bands flanked by a battalion of the MFSH in the Luma area to suppress and capture the Bajraktari band. The escape of Bajraktari and the partial failure of this operation led the central authorities to temporarily disband the irregular units and to turn to the reorganization of the MFSH forces for the suppression of the resistance bands.²⁶ In September, another major operation followed; this time, it was carried out by the MFSH formations in the Peza area against the Myslim Peza band and against the base of the PKSh [*Partia Komuniste Shqiptare* – Albanian Communist Party], which also failed in part due to the escape of M. Peza and almost all members of the PKSh.²⁷

The use of the voluntary bands of the north, however, did not end with the Luma operation against the forces of Bajraktari; indeed, during the winter of 1942–1943, these units were reorganized and deployed in the south of the country to suppress the Partisan and nationalist bands. Thus, in addition to the unity of Dibra volunteers deployed to pacify the Partisan and nationalist resistance bands in the Gjorm village in the Vlorë district between the end of

²³ On the figure of Mustafa Merlika Kruja see: E. Papa-Pandelejmoni, "Albania during WWII: Mustafa Merlika Kruja's Fascist Collaboration", *The European Legacy* 19 4 (2014), 433–441.

²⁴ AUSSME, F. N.1–11, B. 969, fasc. Diario Storico, Bimestre: Marzo – Aprile 1942.

²⁵ AUSSME, F. N.1–11, B. 970, fasc. Diario Storico, Bimestre: Novembre – Dicembre 1942.

²⁶ M. Dezhgiu, *Shqipëria nën pushtimin italian*, 137.

²⁷ ASDMAE, F. Gabinetto Albania, B. 196/1, Report (Reserved) of Lieutenant Francesco Jacomoni to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tirana 9 October 1942.

December 1942 and the beginning of January 1943,²⁸ volunteers from Luma led by the Gjonmarkaj family were mobilized in Berat at the same time against the Partisan forces operating in the area of Skrapar.²⁹

In addition to enlisting men from his region and his loyal followers in the voluntary bands, at the same time, Gjon Marka Gjoni began to strengthen his family's position within the state and government structures. Many of his family members were placed in command roles in the forces of the MFSH³⁰ and the reconstituted Gendarmerie in March 1943. His eldest son, Mark Gjonmarkaj, after being appointed Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of the Interior during the Kruja government (December 1941–January 1943), was promoted to Minister of the Interior during the Maliq Bushati presidency (February–April 1943).³¹ In this way, Gjon Marka Gjoni and his family, having embraced the new political course, were fully integrated into the central structures, strengthening their political power at the national level as never before. Thus, if during the interwar period the Gjonmarkajs had been relegated to a marginal role, with the fascist occupation they became one of the main actors on the Albanian political scene.

In fact, in the Bushati Government, which immediately claimed to be ready to firmly face the serious situation resulting from the intensified actions of the Partisan bands,³² Mark Gjonmarkaj, as Minister of the Interior, showed himself as the more determined man in the fight against the Partisan resistance. With the support of his father, Gjonmarkaj was, for the duration of the Bushati government, the chief intermediary between his government and the Italian authorities. While he held the office of Minister and with his approval, the Italian army carried out a series of impressive repression campaigns against the Partisan

²⁸ P. Milo, *Shqiptarët në luftën e Dytë Botërore*, pp. 293 e 302; AUSSME, F. N.1–11, B. 1089, fasc. Diario Storico, Bimestre: Gennaio – Febbraio 1943.

²⁹ Arkivi Qëndror i Shtetit Shqipëtar (henceforth AQSh), F. 165 Milicia Fashiste Shqipëtare, V. 1943, D. 15.

³⁰ The fallen in the MFSH ranks during the Italo-Greek war included the captain and Gjonmarkaj's family member Frok Doda Gjonmarkaj. P. Crociani, *Gli albanesi nelle Forze Armate italiane*, 171–172.

³¹ ACS, M.I, P.S, F. Ispettorato Generale presso la Luogotenenza del Re a Tirana, B. 6, fasc. 30.

³² In introducing the new government to Lieutenant Francesco Jacomoni and the Superior Commander of the Armed Forces of Albania, Lorenzo Dalmazzo, the former Prime Minister Kruja served almost like a guarantor. Another fundamental supporting figure for this government was Senator Gjon Marka Gjoni, who through his son had extended his power over the Interior Ministry. AUSSME, F. N.1–11, B. 1089, fasc. Diario Storico, Bimestre: Gennaio-Febraio 1943; ACS, M.I, P.S, F. Ispettorato Generale presso la Luogotenenza del Re a Tirana, B. 6, fasc. 30, report by the former Permanent Police Councilor Giovanni Travaglio, Tirana 14 February 1943.

bands of the south.³³ As part of these repressive policies against the resistance forces concentrated in the south, Gjonmarkaj also approved a series of harsh and hitherto postponed measures, such as the introduction of curfews in the provinces of Vlorë, Gjirokastër, Berat and Korçë; taking hostage the families of the Partisan fugitives; and executing on the spot anyone who had been found armed and had violated public security.³⁴ However, it should be noted here that if, until that moment, the collaborationist governments had used the voluntary bands of the north to suppress the resistance forces, during the Bushati government, that is, during Gjonmarkaj's term in office, these bands were dissolved and the task of repression was entrusted directly to the Army. The implementation of these measures did not fail to arouse many tensions within the government, leading to its dissolution just over two months after its formation, following the resignation of Prime Minister Bushati, who, in contrast to Gjonmarkaj, frequently complained about not being asked regarding the repressions carried out in the south.³⁵

After the parenthesis of the fascist occupation in September 1943, the Gjonmarkaj family nevertheless continued to maintain a role of primary importance even later, during the Nazi occupation. Especially after the Partisan forces passed through the center of the country in the summer of 1944, they resumed organizing irregular armed units materially supported by the Germans with the clear aim of curbing "the communist advance" in the north.³⁶ However, the gradual retreat of the German forces in November 1944 and the seizure of power by the Partisan forces led many collaborationist and anti-communist figures, including Gjon Marka Gjoni, to flee abroad. The killing in 1946 of his son Mark Gjonmarkaj, at the head of anti-communist resistance units, marked the definitive end of the power of this family in Albania.

³³ AUSSME, F. N. I–II, B. 1196, fasc. Diario Storico, Bimestre: Marzo–Aprile 1943, report of the Superior Command of the Armed Forces Albania, 20 March 1943.

³⁴ Although, for political reasons, no state of war was proclaimed in the southern provinces, a move that would have transferred all powers to military authority, the prerogatives granted to the Armed Forces fully matched such a situation. AUSSME, F. N. I–II, B. 1089, fasc. Diario Storico, Bimestre: Gennaio–Febbraio 1943, Allegato 89, 2 and Allegato 91; AUSSME, F. N. I–II, B. 1196, fasc. Diario Storico, Bimestre: Marzo–Aprile 1943, Promemoria 9 March 1943.

³⁵ B. J. Fischer, *Shqipëria gjatë luftës, 195–197*; ACS, M.I, P.S, F. Ispettorato Generale presso la Luogotenenza del Re a Tirana, B. 5, Report, Tirana 24 April 1943.

³⁶ H. Neuwirth, *Qëndresë dhe bashkëpunim në Shqipëri (1939–1944). Një analizë historike e gjedhes kulturore të mikut dhe armikut* (Tiranë: Instituti i Dialogut & Komunikimit, 2006), 121.

The reasons and motivations for recruitment

After having reconstructed the parable of the power of the Gjonmarkajs and introduced the formation of the MFSH and the voluntary bands, it is necessary to reflect on the motives that led many of the Mirdita men and other northern hinterlands to enlist. If we analyze the purely personal role of the Gjonmarkaj family, it is undeniable that it carried significant weight, considering that mobilization, especially in the north, always took place under the guidance of the local leaders and almost always reflected parental and tribal criteria. It was certainly no coincidence that Gjon Marka Gjoni was appointed Senator and that he was given the task of recruiting men into voluntary bands. The centrality of the parental structure in enlistment came to the fore; in the case of the Gjonmarkajs, it was also apparent in the appointment of some of the family's members to leadership roles both at the MFSH and in the voluntary bands, as mentioned above. However, a distinction must be made here between the voluntary bands and the MFSH, since if the voluntary bands always operated under the direct guidance of their leaders and in many ways emulated the traditional practice of fighting on a clan and tribal basis, the MFSH, even if some commanders came from local élites, tried to overcome this traditional way of waging war in the military vision of northern Albania to build a more institutional structure.

In addition to the attraction that the local élites had, a very important role in the enlistment belonged to material incentives. In fact, if we minutely examine the methods of mobilization of voluntary bands, in addition to the supply of light armament, their members also received a monthly salary, which ranged from 600 Albanian francs (Fr. Alb) for battalion commanders to 400 for company commanders to 300 for platoon leaders and 100 Fr. Alb for private volunteers.³⁷ And again, in line with the direct role played by influential figures, it was up to them to supply their troops with weapons from the Armed Forces and pay them from the government's coffers. So, the person in charge of distributing weapons and paying the volunteers from Mirdita, Luma and Puka was precisely Senator Gjon Marka Gjoni.³⁸

If the conscripts in the voluntary bands received a salary, those enlisted in the MFSH, in addition to personal remuneration, also received a small allowance for their families, depending on the number of members of the household and the days of service of the soldier.³⁹ In this way, for many of the men from Mirdita and the northern hinterland, isolated and poor, enlistment meant a good

³⁷ AUSSME, F. N. I–II, B. 969, fasc. Diario Storico, Bimestre: Marzo–Aprile 1943, Ordinance of the Prime Minister M. Kruja, Tirana March 5, 1942.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ AQSh, F. 337, Nënprefektura e Mirditës, V. 1941, D. 16.

opportunity for employment and additional revenue. Unsurprisingly, in both voluntary bands and the MFSH, most of the recruits were poor villagers.⁴⁰

In addition to wages and subsidies, the real value of which was decreasing during the war due to galloping inflation – suffice it to say that a kilogram of sugar in April 1943 had reached 25 Fr. Alb⁴¹ – for many men in the northern hinterland as well as the recruits in the militia from the south, enlisting in these two armed formations also meant a good opportunity for banditry. As mentioned, banditry had been a very widespread phenomenon in the northern hinterland and, in particular, among the poor population of Mirdita, and during the war, the population frequently complained that plundering, sometimes even trivial, was carried out by the members of the voluntary bands and the MFSH.⁴²

If interpersonal and material factors played an important role, emotional factors should not be neglected – the fear of the communist danger and the potential Yugoslav and Greek threats. Regarding to the communist danger, it was the Albanian Catholic Church that conducted strong anti-communist propaganda, already from the interwar period⁴³ and during the war, among the Catholic population of the north, portraying the Partisans as ruthless criminals⁴⁴ and warning against the prohibition of religion and land property that the communists would certainly impose.⁴⁵

The Yugoslav threat was shrewdly fueled by the collaborationist government forces on account of the presence within the PKSh and the LNÇ [*Lëvizja Nacional Çlirimtare* – National Liberation Movement] of two members of the Yugoslav Communist Party (YCP), Miladin Popović and Dušan Mugoša, and the direct links of the PKSh with the YCP.⁴⁶ To underline the Greek threat, the

⁴⁰ H. Neuwirth, *Qëndresë dhe bashkëpunim*, 20. However, it should be noted that not all recruits of the MFSH were from the northern hinterland, as Neuwirth suggests in his book. Many of them came from the southern regions.

⁴¹ ACS, M.I, P.S, F. Ispettorato Generale presso la Luogotenenza del Re a Tirana, B. 5, fasc. 2, Report on the situation in Albania signed by Kol Mjeda, Tirana 19 April 1943.

⁴² AQSh, F. 165 Milicia Fashiste Shqipëtare, V. 1943, D. 5, Report of the Commanding General of the MFSH, Giuseppe Volante, Tirana January 11, 1943; AQSh, Arkivi i Partisë – Lufta (APL), F. Kujtime, Memories of Zylyftar Veleshnja, 16.

⁴³ R. Halimi, *Il dibattito intellettuale e politico in Albania tra le due guerre mondiali. Mehdi Frashëri tra “i vecchi” e “i giovani”*, (PhD dissertation), (Venice: Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 2013), 182–196.

⁴⁴ Interviews conducted in northern Albania in the period January–March 2017.

⁴⁵ N. Bardhoshi, “Studiuesit e huaj mbi Shqiptarët në Post-Socializem. Bernd Fischer Albania Highland Tribal Society and Family Structure in the Process of Twentieth Century Transformation”, *Kultura Popullore* (2010), 281.

⁴⁶ About the work of the two members of the YCP inside the PKSh and the LNÇ and on the direct links between PKSh and YCP, see: K. Frashëri, *Historia e lëvizjes së majte në Shqipëri dhe e themelimit të PKSH 1878–1941* (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e Shq-

various collaborationist governments claimed that the presence of Greek bands in the territories bordering the southeast was dangerous and that they could invade the Albanian territory.⁴⁷ In fact, although the populations of the north were much more vulnerable to the Slavic danger, they were not indifferent to the potential Greek threat in the south of the country. The fascist authorities themselves, as well as the Nazi authorities who succeeded them, tried to exploit the existing inter-ethnic tensions for their own political interests.⁴⁸

Last but not least, the recruitment of these men was also influenced by the opportunity to be armed. The link between the peoples of the northern mountains and arms possession was very strong, and having arms was seen as synonymous with honor. In fact, being armed gave the possibility of self-defense and defending one's honor in the event of an offense.⁴⁹

Thus, for many of these men, enlisting in voluntary bands and in the MFSH was the best way to reconcile economic income, an opportunity for booty, the possibility of self-defense and strengthening one's sense of honor.

On-the-ground action

Once recruited, what was the scope of the action of these forces? If we analyze the direct actions of both the voluntary bands of the north and the MFSH, it seems that the former, when really willing to intervene, were in their actions more incisive than the militia forces. Although they had had a short training period, just like the militia members, they were more effective. This "efficiency" in their actions can be explained by the fact that the voluntary formations, although under the high command of the MFSH, always operated under their local leaders, which had instilled in them more cohesion than the Albanian troops operating in the MFSH, where the commanders in most cases were Italians. This element may have also led to some episodes of clear refusal to take action in certain contexts and a tendency to act independently. In this regard, Zylyftar Veleshnja, commander of the Partisan band "Riza Cerova" operating in Skrapar (Berat), recalls that in December 1942, the voluntary forces of the north (the voluntary bands of Luma) mobilized in Berat, realized that in the region of Skrapar did not operate Greek bands, as they had been told, but Albanian Partisan

ipërisë, 2006); K. Dervishi, *Lëvizja Komuniste në vitet 1924–1944 dhe formimi i PKSH-së* (Tiranë: Shtëpia botuese 55, 2016).

⁴⁷ AQSh, APL, F. 14, Lista 1, D. 148/2.

⁴⁸ F. A. Zaugg, "From the Milizia Fascista Albanese to SS Division "Skanderberg": between Imposing Fascist ideology and Adapting Local Warfare". In *Fascist Warfare 1922–1945. Aggression, Occupation, Annihilation*, eds. M. Alonso, A. Kramer, J. Rodrigo (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 280.

⁴⁹ B. Pula, *State, law, and revolution*, 233–235.

forces supported by many local peasants, and refused to engage with them and even to hand over weapons and be demobilized.⁵⁰

Even the phenomenon of desertion was much less widespread among the voluntary bands from the north than among the units of the MFSH and all other units of the army where Albanian forces operated. Obviously, in this case, the fact that enlistment was carried out by the local leaders based on parental and tribal criteria and that the troops operated under their direct authority made these units highly cohesive and, consequently, the phenomenon of desertion much more uncommon.

A number of factors influenced desertion among the MFSH members, which progressively increased since the fall of 1942 and lasted until the end of the fascist occupation.⁵¹ It must be immediately specified, however, that even within the MFSH, there were the recruits of the South who deserted more⁵², compared to those coming from the North, so as to induce Mark Gjonmarkaj during his ministry, in February 1943, to decide on the disarmament and dismissal of all Blackshirts from the four southern prefectures.⁵³ The reasons for this phenomenon were determined, first of all, by the concentration of Partisan resistance right from the fall of 1942 in the south, against which both voluntary bands and MFSH forces were deployed. Operating in a foreign territory made the recruits of the north less vulnerable to the action of Partisan bands than the recruits of the south. Not in a few cases, in fact, to curb the action of repression and dissuade the Albanians operating in the MFSH, the Partisan bands resorted to kidnapping adult men from the families of the latter – that is, those residing in the villages of the south – to then forcibly enlist them in their bands.⁵⁴ Even the property of the MFSH members from the south was much more exposed to confiscation by the Partisan forces than that of their northern comrades, which

⁵⁰ AQSh, APL F. Kujtime, Memories of Zylyftar Veleshnja, 17–18.

⁵¹ From 1 October 1942 to 1 March 1943, 237 soldiers deserted, but 344 more deserted in the months of July and August 1943. AUSSME, F. N.1–11, B. 1196, fasc. Diario Storico, Bimestre: Marzo–Aprile 1943; AUSSME, F. N.1–11, B.1313, Notiziario Mensile N. 8, August 1943.

⁵² On the list of men who deserted from MFSH from 1 October 1942 to 31 January 1943, a vast majority was originally from the provinces of the south, see: AQSh, F. 165 Milicia Fashiste Shqipëtare, V. 1943, D. 3.

⁵³ AUSSME, F. N.1–11, B. 1089, fasc. Diario Storico, Bimestre: Gennaio–Febbraio 1943, Allegato n. 89.

⁵⁴ AQSh, F. 165 Milicia Fashiste Shqipëtare, V. 1943, D. 19, Communication (Secret) of G. Volante, 24 January 1943.

were located in areas where Partisan forces were scarce if not, as in Mirdita, non-existent.⁵⁵

Another important element that discouraged the men of the north operating in the south to desert was the simple fact that they were in a foreign territory. This not only strengthened the solidarity between them, but also prevented them from abandoning their units and running away, unlike their comrades-in-arms from the regions of the south, for which defecting in many cases meant reaching their home a few kilometers from where they served.

Finally, if we take into account the scope and nature of the violence of both armed formations, they did not shy away from acts of harsh repression, which often affected the civilian population. In the operations to suppress Mu-harrem Bajraktari's band in April 1942, twelve houses were burned down;⁵⁶ on the other hand, during the operations for the repression of Myslim Peza's band carried out in Peza e Madhe in September of the same year, in addition killing some members of his band and burning many houses, numerous crimes were committed against the peasants with the clear intention of spreading terror and setting a strong example.⁵⁷ No less harsh were the operations conducted with the participation of voluntary formations from Dibra at the end of December 1942 to suppress the resistance bands in the area of Gjorm. The losses suffered by the volunteers of Dibra in this action, amounting to ten dead and nine wounded⁵⁸, led to general frustration, culminating in the killing of the Prefect of Vlorë, Qazim Kaculi, and Mayor Lele Koçi, accused of being in contact with the Partisan forces and thus responsible for the losses suffered.⁵⁹

Impact on the local population: an accentuation of invisible barriers?

The actions of the voluntary bands and the units of the MFSH had a decidedly negative impact on the population of the areas where they were deployed, not

⁵⁵ Starting from September 1943, the LNC, with the approval of the Statute and Regulations of its local councils, officially established the confiscation of assets that belonged to everyone active in the militia. AQSh, APL, F.40, Lista 1, V. 1943, D. 5, Statute and Regulations of the National Liberation Councils, 26.

⁵⁶ M. Dezhgiu, *Shqipëria nën pushtimin Italian*, 137.

⁵⁷ AQSh, APL, F. 14, D. 5, Report of Koço Tashko for the Comintern, October 1942, 9; ASDMAE, F. Gabinetto Albania, B. 1089/1, Report (Reserved) of Jacomoni to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tirana 9 October 1942, 3.

⁵⁸ A relatively high number considering that the Army recorded five dead and the militia only one. AUSSME, F. N.1-11, B. 1089, fasc. Diario Storico, Bimestre: Gennaio – Febbraio 1943, Telegram of the General Spatocco for the Supreme Command, 4 January 1943.

⁵⁹ M. Dezhgiu, *Shqipëria nën pushtimin Italian*, 364.

only because of the violence perpetrated against the civilian population, both in the south and the north, but also, as mentioned, because of widespread theft. These actions appeared even more serious in the popular perception because they were Albanians in the context of occupation and the serious economic situation caused by the war. If the Albanians enlisted in the MFSH wore the black shirt, a more apparent symbol of fascist rule, the position of the members of the voluntary bands was aggravated by the fact that they were irregular troops recruited and paid to carry out certain policing duties and acts of repression. In fact, in many of the documents produced by the members of the resistance, they are labeled as nothing but mercenaries.⁶⁰

Consequently, the transfer of the voluntary bands composed of northerners to the southern territories to carry out acts of repression against the Partisan bands and whoever supported them, in itself, led heightened the tension between the local population and these units: in addition to the phenomena of violence and other episodes of indiscipline, the mere presence of armed men from the north had a negative impact on the local population. This negative perception had roots in the opposition between the north and south that characterized Albania⁶¹ and only increased during the war. It is no coincidence that Zylyftar Veleshnja, in his memoirs, referred to the men of Luma sent to Berat to suppress the Partisan bands of Skrapar by the term *malokët*⁶², a derogatory term used by the inhabitants of the south for the inhabitants of the northern mountains.⁶³ The presence of the volunteer bands of Luma in the city of Berat was the source of a series of debates and tensions both with the local authorities and with the population. So, in December 1942, following strong disagreements between the leaders of the voluntary bands and the Prefect of Berat, the latter banned the movement of volunteers after 17:00.⁶⁴ Towards the end of January 1943, all authorities of the province of Berat thought that the volunteers of Luma had to get away as soon as possible, in the meantime telling all the Luma leaders that they

⁶⁰ The communist historiography also uses the term “mercenaries” for the voluntary bands of the north, see: N. Plasari, Sh. Ballvora, *Histoire de la lutte antifasciste de libération nationale du peuple albanaise (1939–1944)*, Vol. I, (Tirana : Ed. 8 Nëntori, 1976), 305–312.

⁶¹ About the opposition between North and South Albania see: G. De Rapper, « Les Guègues et les Tosques existent-ils? L’opposition Nord/Sud en Albanie et ses interprétations », *Espace populations sociétés* 3 (2004), 625–640.

⁶² AQSh, APL, F. Kujtime, Memories of Zylyftar Veleshnja, 18.

⁶³ On the pejorative meaning of the term *malok*, still used today among the population of the South or originally from the South, see: G. De Rapper, *Les Guègues et Les Tosques*, 631–637.

⁶⁴ AQSh, F. 165 Milicia Fashiste Shqipëtare, V. 1943, D. 19, Promemoria N. 81 (Secret), Tirana 1. 1. 1943.

needed to keep their men under control and supervision to ensure maximum discipline and prevent theft or violations of any kind.⁶⁵ Despite this, in early February, some attacks took place with gunfire and the throwing of bombs by some inhabitants near the camps of the volunteers, leading the latter, on their own initiative, to surround the neighborhood where the riots had occurred and block all access roads to the city, completely preventing movement.⁶⁶

Therefore, everywhere in the southern regions, both the voluntary bands and the forces of the MFSH, which after February 1943 were made up almost entirely of men from the north, aroused a gradual but increasingly marked hostility in the local populations. This hostility was even more pronounced if we consider that, in addition to violence and indiscipline and the fact that these formations were composed of “people of the north”, with the continuation of the war, the Partisan ranks that opposed them increasingly included local recruits, relatives and acquaintances of much of the southern population.

Conclusions

The fascist occupation of Albania and the consequent end of the monarchy of King Zog entailed, in the Italian intention not to upset the existing social order, the co-optation of previously sidelined leaders and the promotion of their local realities neglected by the central government. In many ways, this political choice corresponded to a system of the colonial type of indirect rule, which in Albania during the period of fascist occupation justified the appointment of Gjon Marka Gjoni and his family to the highest government and state offices, as well as the choice to mobilize irregular voluntary bands to maintain public order and suppress any armed rebellions.

In pursuing this policy, the Italians showed that they were well aware of the importance of social networks in Albania, both of the parental and tribal networks of the northern territories and the clientelist ones constituted around the bey in the south-central areas. The constitution of the voluntary bands and the mobilization of many men from the northern hinterland in the MFSH were facilitated by the existence of these social networks and, above all, by the strong bonds that characterized them. In addition, purely personal motivations and, in particular, financial incentives also played a fundamental role in the recruitment of these men, in terms of both remuneration and subsidies and potential pos-

⁶⁵ AQSh, F. 165 Milicia Fashiste Shqipëtare, V. 1943, D. 19, Promemoria N. 101, Tirana January 31, 1943.

⁶⁶ AQSh, F. 165 Milicia Fashiste Shqipëtare, V. 1943, D. 19, Promemoria N. 103, Tirana 3 February 1943.

sibilities for banditry amidst the poverty and lack of prospects that had always characterized the isolated mountain hinterland of the north.

The rise of the Gjonmarkaj family to central power and the mobilization of many men from Mirdita and the northern regions loyal to them in the voluntary bands and the MFSH, in addition to ensuring a series of economic and material advantages, also contributed to their (temporary) integration into the new national reality, namely the fascist one. Having crossed the boundaries of their territories and been integrated into the state structures, despite all the contradictions that emerged on the ground, these men came closer for the first time to central power, which until then had been perceived as alien and in many ways hostile. In this process of national integration, however, their deployment in the territories of the south had an adverse effect: the accentuation of the north-south division and the consequent alienation of much of the southern population from the central collaborationist authorities with their gradual rapprochement to the Partisan resistance.

The end of the fascist occupation and subsequently of the Nazi one with the seizure of power by the Partisan forces led by the Albanian Communist Party heralded the sunset of the power of the Gjonmarkajs and the beginning of a post-war period for the region of Mirdita and almost the entire hinterland of the north, still characterized by repression and political neglect by the central authorities.

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A Croatian and Catholic State The Ustasha Regime and Religious Communities in the Independent State of Croatia**

Abstract: This paper will analyze the status that various religious communities enjoyed in the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska; hereafter NDH), focusing on the legal status and relations, both practical and financial, these communities enjoyed with the Ustasha movement and state authorities. The religious question was a key political problem in the NDH: the treatment of different religious communities serves as a paradigm of the character of the NDH as a state. Numerous studies have been written on the participation of Catholic clergy in the atrocities of the Ustasha movement and the NDH with the earliest being published immediately after the end of the war in 1945. The persecution of the Serbian Orthodox Church has been well documented in a number of important studies. Instead, this article will focus on legal and administrative issues and financial exchange between various religious communities and the NDH authorities as well as the state's program of mass religious conversion since these illustrate the authentic intentions of the Ustasha regime and the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia, as the dominant social and political forces in the state, regarding state religious policy. The article is largely based on primary archival sources drawn from the Croatian and Serbian state archives.

Keywords: Independent State of Croatia (NDH), Roman Catholic church, Greek Catholic church, Serbian Orthodox Church, Croatian Orthodox Church

Introduction

Established as a satellite state in the aftermath of the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia, the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska – NDH) was a condominium state divided between the occupation forces of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany with smaller parts annexed to Hungary. Its territory comprised Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina as well as parts of Srem in Vojvodina, including Zemun, a municipality in Belgrade. When the new state

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was formally established on 10 April 1941, the invading German forces placed it under the rule of the Ustasha movement (Ustaša – Hrvatski revolucionarni pokret), a prewar radical nationalist and fascist political movement and terrorist organization whose leaders had lived mainly in exile in training camps in Italy and Hungary in the 1930s, but which had also created a parallel organization in interwar Croatia and Bosnia too. Added to this, the movement had a network of sympathizers among radical nationalist university students, separatist intellectuals, sections of the Catholic clergy and right-wing workers' syndicates.¹ Ultra-nationalistic, the Ustasha movement and its supreme leader, Ante Pavelić, arguably represented the culmination of Croatian nineteenth and early twentieth century ultra-nationalist ideology, characterized by chauvinism and antisemitism and augmented by aspects of corporativism, and fascist and National Socialist ideas. The Ustasha ideology envisaged a homogenous nation state, politically organized as an authoritarian system (the so-called führerprinzip) which would be exclusively Croatian by national and cultural identity and predominantly Roman Catholic.² Yet, the realization of such an ideological concept was not an easy task given the presence of national and religious minorities which constituted a significant portion of the new state's overall population, the most numerous one being the large Serbian minority which made up approximately one-third of the total population of the state. Given the obstacle the presence of such a sizeable and – from the Ustasha point of view – unassimilable minority presented to the realization of a nationally homogenous state, the Ustasha leadership headed by Pavelić as the supreme chief or Poglavnik decided from the outset – and almost certainly before they came to power – that the only sustainable means of resolving the so-called “Serbian question” and guaranteeing their permanent removal

¹ On the Ustasha regime and the character of the NDH, see F. Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941–1945* (Zagreb: Liber, Školska knjiga, 1977); B. Krizman, *Ante Pavelić i Ustaše*, 3rd edition (Zagreb: Globus, 1986); S. Trifković, *Ustaša: Croatian fascism and European politics, 1929–1945* (Chicago: The Lord Byron Foundation for Balkan Studies, 2011); R. Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation: The Ustasha Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism, 1941–1945* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012); С. Трифковић, *Усташе: балканско срце таме*, 3. издање (The Ustaše: The Balkan Heart of Darkness, 3rd edition) (Београд: Катена Мунди, 2022).

² The history of the NDH is still a contested and controversial topic among historians. This is especially true in respect of the state's concentration camps and the number of victims who perished in them. Nonetheless, the vast majority of authors agree on the totalitarian nature of Pavelić's regime and extreme Croatian nationalism as the NDH's main ideological foundation. See e.g., *The Independent State of Croatia*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet, (London: Routledge, 2007); R. Yeomans, *The Utopia of Terror: Life and Death in Wartime Croatia* (New York: Rochester University Press, 2015); *Pravni poredak Nezavisne Države Hrvatske*, eds. Boris Begović and Zoran S. Mirković (Belgrade: Pravni fakultet, 2018); H. Matković, *Povijest Nezavisne Države Hrvatske*, 3rd edition (Zagreb: Naklada P.I.P., 2022).

was through genocide. In practice, this was to be realized through a combination of isolation from the general Croatian population through ghettoization and in some regions a requirement to wear an identifying armband; ethnic cleansing involving the mass murder of Serbs, primarily in the countryside and the expulsion of large numbers of both rural and urban Serbian citizens to Serbia; mass incarceration in concentration camps; economic destruction through the confiscation of their businesses and properties; and forced assimilation and the eradication of the Serbian identity through a statewide policy of forced religious conversion to Catholicism. This, Ustasha theorists and social planners believed, would transform them into “Croats.”

In the case of other religious and national groups, the Ustasha regime demonstrated a more flexible attitude, sometimes because they were replicating the praxis of National Socialism but also because it corresponded to established nineteenth-century Croatian nationalist ideas about racial belonging.³ Thus, the sizeable Bosnian Muslim population, compactly settled in Bosnian neighboring territories, were considered by Ustasha race theorists to be racially Croats and indeed the racially purest of Croats though of the Islamic faith, largely derived from the ideas and writing of the nineteenth-century father of the Croatian nation, Ante Starčević whom the Ustashes revered as the progenitor of their own ideology. By contrast, although a significant number of Croatian Jews had converted to Catholicism before the establishment of the NDH, the racial laws introduced by the Ustasha movement in the first few months of the new state made it clear that such conversions would not protect them from the draconian racial laws application, which resulted in their increasing exclusion from Croatian society, the confiscation (Aryanization) of their property and exclusion from all economic activity, ghettoization and ultimately deportation either to the state’s concentration camps or the Nazi concentration camps in the East.⁴

Meanwhile, the religious, political, and economic rights of other, less numerous, minority communities in the NDH generally reflected the political and diplomatic relations between the NDH and the “motherland” of the minority or else was an expression of geopolitical concerns. It is no surprise, for example, that the state’s German minority enjoyed extensive autonomy and privileges; likewise, the Russian minority, radically anti-communist and compliant in its stance towards the Ustasha regime, also enjoyed the protection of the state authorities and religious autonomy. The same can also be said for the small Bulgar-

³ N. Bartulin, “The ideology of nation and race: the Croatian Ustasha regime and its policies toward the Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia 1941–1945”, *Croatian Studies Review* 5 (2008), 75–102.

⁴ I. Goldstein and S. Goldstein, *The Holocaust in Croatia* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2016); I. Goldstein, *Holokaust u Zagrebu* (Zagreb: Novi liber, ŽOZ, 2001); M. Švob, *Židovi u ratu i poraću* (Zagreb: CENDO, 2022).

ian and Romanian communities. The Ustasha regime also strongly supported the collaborationist Montenegro National Committee and all “national (i.e., separatist) Montenegrins” could count on favorable treatment in the NDH based on a shared enmity toward the Serbs.

Both Yugoslav socialist historiography and the historiographies of the Yugoslav successor states have produced voluminous works on diverse aspects of the NDH over the past eight decades. Generally, mass killing by Ustasha militias, the concentration camp system, antifascist resistance and socialist revolution have been the dominant topics while far less attention has been paid to relations between the state/regime and various religious communities. During the socialist period, studies within narrowly ideological frameworks were published on the wartime activities of Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac and the relationship between a section of the Catholic clergy and the Ustasha regime and its active participation in war crimes. However, many of them were characterized by an emotional or ideological bias, and often lacking in accuracy and reliability. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, with a few exceptions, Croatian scholars and writers became highly invested in attempts to rehabilitate the wartime legacy of Stepinac and the Catholic Church while Serbian authors focused predominantly on the persecution of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its priests under the Ustasha regime.⁵ Consequently, the most historically sensitive and complex aspects of religion in the NDH, such as the mass religious conversions and the symbiosis of the Ustasha movement and the Catholic Church, were often either relativized and denied, or alternatively sensationalized, thereby preventing any reasonable, empirical scholarly debate.⁶ It is worth noting that both in the so-

⁵ Croatian narratives on Stepinac usually portray him as a martyr, a humble and agile Croatian patriot and an ardent Christian, who was persecuted because he was a true and proud Croat. On the other hand, in Serbian narratives, especially non-academic ones, authors have gone as far as to claim he personally ordered the slaughter and conversions of Serbs, and even witnessed some, which is unsupported by any reliable historical sources. Croatian historians close to the Roman Catholic Church have published numerous studies relativizing the responsibility of Stepinac and the Catholic clergy for collaboration with the Ustasha regime and even portraying them as victims of communism and Serbian postwar hegemony. Cf. V. Nikolić, *Stepinac mu je ime*, I–II, (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1991); J. Krišto, *Katolička crkva u totalitarizmu 1945–1990* (Zagreb: Globus, 1997); J. Božanić, *Blaženi Alojzije Stepinac: baština koja obavezuje* (Zagreb: Krišćanska sadašnjost-Glas Koncila, 2010); M. Akmadža, *Katolička crkva u komunističkoj Hrvatskoj 1945–1980* (Zagreb-Slavonski Brod: Despot Infinitus, 2013); M. Akmadža i S. Josipović Batorac, *Stradanje svećenika Đakovačke i srijemske biskupije 1944–1960* (Slavonski Brod-Đakovo: HIP, Nadbiskupski ordinarijat, 2012).

⁶ Examples of the apologetic stream in Croatian historiography regarding the causes, nature, and scope of the mass religious conversion of Serbs to Catholicism in the NDH can be found in J. Krišto, *Sukob simbola. Politika, vjere i ideologije u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: Globus, 2001); H. Matković, *Povijest Nezavisne Države Hr-*

cialist period and in the early years of the post-Yugoslav successor states, many of the most important and informative historical sources were unavailable to researchers, or access to them was limited. That only increased the currency and visibility of sensationalistic, populist and unscholarly narratives.

Drawing on a wide range of Croatian and Serbian archival sources, some of which were unavailable or unfamiliar to previous generations of scholars, this article seeks to reflect on the arguments of both Serbian and Croatian historiography, analyzing the relationship between the state and its religious communities from a different angle. It reconstructs the legal status, religious conversions, and financing of these communities, complementing and correcting in some cases established historiographical assumptions and narratives on the subject. This article argues that the study of religious conversions provides a crucial prism through which to understand the religious policies of the NDH and the Catholic Church's historical role in it. It shows that both religious conversions and the Catholic Church in wartime Croatia became instruments of a deeply sinister program of national and social engineering.⁷ As Margarita Matijević has noted in her exceptional study of Svetozar Rittig, while the number of religious conversions, on the territory of the four Croatian bishopric dioceses prior to World War One was around five hundred a year, during the campaigns of mass conversion in the NDH, entire Serbian villages converted in a single day; in some areas, dozens of thousands Serbs converted in the space of a few months.⁸ It is therefore hard not to see these conversions as driven, at least in part, by Ustasha terror, with a clear criminal goal to convert the Orthodox Serbs into Catholics, and in so doing transform them into Croats.

vatske, 3rd edition (Zagreb: Naklada P.I.P, 2022). Cf with Filip Škiljan's detailed study on the religious conversions of Serbs on the territory of the diocese of the Archbishop of Zagreb which is the most reliable available work on religious conversions under the Ustasha regime. See Ф. Шкиљан, *Покатоличавање Срба. Прекриштавање на подручју Загребачке надбискупије између 1941. и 1945. године*, књ. 1–3 (Catholicization of Serbs. Rechristening in the area of the Zagreb Archdiocese between 1941 and 1945, vol. 1–3) (Нови Сад: Архив Војводине, Српско народно вијеће, 2022).

⁷ Other authors, strongly relying on primary historical sources, have come to similar conclusions too. Cf. D. Simon, "The Task of the century": Local dimensions of the policy of forced conversions in the Independent State of Croatia (1941–1942)." In *Local dimensions of the Second World War in Southeastern Europe*, eds. X. Bougarel, H. Grandits and M. Vulesica, (London: Routledge, 2019), 50–65.

⁸ M. Matijević, "Između partizana i pristojnosti": Život i doba Svetozara Rittiga (1873–1961) (Zagreb: Plejada, HIP, 2019), 180–181 (here 181). Reflecting on how Croatian bishops perceived the conversions, she writes that "it didn't seem strange to anyone that in areas where, during a thirty years period, not a single conversion took place, or they could be counted on one's fingers, all of a sudden a local priest reported that he was expecting thirty thousand conversions."

At the same time, unpacking the trail of financial transactions and state subsidies and support clearly shows which religious communities enjoyed a privileged status, thereby helping us to identify the political and ideological motivations which drove such state support. The large quantities of money the authorities regularly spent on Catholic priests' salaries, bonuses and various forms of financial aid – for example, the investment of large sums to renovate or rebuild the structures and artefacts of the Catholic Church were almost certainly lavish, disproportionate and economically unjustified in the context of the socially straitened and desperate circumstances in which many of the state's citizens lived. Yet seen from the perspective of the ideological agenda of the Ustasha regime to construct a nationally homogenous society and in the context of the organized destruction of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the mass conversion program, it serves to highlight the central role that religion played in the Ustasha state as an instrument of cultural genocide on the one hand and national homogenisation on the other.

A comparative analysis of the state and religious communities in the NDH

This study of the NDH's religious communities begins with the Roman Catholics as they constituted by far the most influential and largest religious community and established church in the new state. Despite being a universal and non-national religious institution, over the centuries, the Roman Catholic Church had taken an active role in inter-ethnic and international relations in the Balkans, effectively influencing the outlook of the Croatian nation⁹ and Croatia's state-building process.¹⁰ From the early modern period onward, the Roman Catholic Church had openly engaged in proselytism among other religious communities, especially in regard to native Serbian citizens who were adherents of the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church. Although Serbs had settled in the territories of the Habsburg Empire with an already developed national identity and a national Orthodox church of their own, they were treated as an anational mass of schismatics by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and

⁹ I. Guberina, "Katolička formacija Hrvatsva" (Vojni arhiv/VA/, holdings: Nezavisna država Hrvatska /NDH/, box 85, doc. 46/2).

¹⁰ Cf. J. Радонић, *Римска курија и јужнословенске земље од XVI до XIX века* (The Roman Curia and South Slavic lands from the 16th to the 19th century) (Београд: САНУ, 1950); P. M. Грујић, *Политичко-верска активност Ватикана на Балкану кроз векове* (Politico-religious activity of the Vatican in the Balkans throughout the centuries) (Београд: Катена Мунди, 2020); Z. Kudelić, *Marčanska biskupija. Habsburgovci, pravoslavlje i crkvena unija u Hrvatsko-slavonskoj vojnoj krajini (1611–1755)* (Zagreb: HIP, 2007); and D. Vukšić, *Žumberački uskoci. Unijačenje i odnarođivanje* (Zagreb: Srpsko narodno vijeće, 2015).

every possible effort was made either to convert them to Roman Catholics, or compel their religious organizations to recognize Papal supremacy and accept a full communion with the Catholic Church.¹¹ This agenda lasted for a number of centuries since the Catholic clergy enjoyed the full support of and a privileged status in the Habsburg Empire (later Austria-Hungary) and the Venetian Republic. Pressure on Orthodox Serbs became especially intense during Maria Theresia's reign since she harboured the ambition to make the entire empire a religiously monolithic Catholic one. As a result, many Orthodox priests were arrested or expelled from the country; religious schools, Orthodox monasteries and churches were closed; and the religious and national autonomy granted to Serbs by Emperor Leopold I and confirmed by all his previous successors, was canceled.¹²

It was only when the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (from 1929 Yugoslavia) was established that the proselytism of the Catholic Church began to decline since the church was now just one of a number of Christian and non-Christian religious institutions accorded equality and no longer enjoyed a constitutionally privileged status. Such historical circumstances were new for the Catholic Church in the South Slav lands and proved to be unfavorable for its Balkans agenda; hence this church soon became a bitter opponent of the Yugoslav monarchy, advocating for the idea of an independent Croatia and "liberation from the Belgrade regime" among its flock. As prominent Croatian historian Ivo Banac has noted: "During the Royal Dictatorship, when the Croatian Peasant Party was banned, the Catholic church took over Radić's national flag."¹³ Numerous other studies and historical sources likewise suggest that the Catholic Church in Croatia became an important vessel for Croatian national and political activism during the late 1920s and 1930s.¹⁴ At the same time, the Croa-

¹¹ For a Croatian perspective on this historical process, see "Određivanje beriva za Grkokat. biskupskog vikara Dalmatinske Hrvatske", HDA, 218, B1. The famous Serbian writer Simo Matavulj (Šibenik, 1852–Belgrade, 1908) acutely described the pressure placed on Dalmatian Serbs to make religious conversion and accept communion with the Catholic Church in his exceptional essay "Pilipenda."

¹² D. Vukšić, *Žumberački uskoci. Uniženje i odnarođivanje*, 249–253; Д. Кашић, *Омнор марчанској унији* (The resistance to Marcha Union) (Београд: Православље, 1986).

¹³ I. Banac, *Hrvati i crkva. Kratka povijest hrvatskog katoličanstva u modernosti* (Zagreb: Profil, 2013), 61.

¹⁴ The Roman Catholic Church became an increasingly bitter opponent of integral Yugoslav nationalism and Yugoslav social organizations. The Conference of Croatian Bishops condemned the Yugoslav Soko youth organization as an anti-Croat institution and called on parents to prevent their children from joining it. It also protested the celebration of St. Sava's Day in public schools and institutions. At the same time, Catholic laity organizations such as the Catholic Action (Katolička akcija) and the Great Brotherhood and Sisterhood of Crusaders (Veliko bratstvo i sestinstvo Križara) youth

tian Catholic clergy nurtured and increasingly publicly articulated a narrative which depicted the Catholic Church as a victim of mistreatment and repression in Yugoslavia, supposedly threatened by the proselytism of the Serbian Orthodox Church aiming at the denationalization of the Croats. Over the intervening years, this basic discourse was continually replicated and recontextualized, contributing to the ideological preparation of and acceptance among a section of the Croatian population for the propaganda of the Ustasha regime and the implementation of its genocidal anti-Serbian program.¹⁵

In fact, in the years before the creation of the NDH, sections of the Catholic clergy and the Ustasha movement were in close contact.¹⁶ Catholicism, as a fundamental marker of Croatian national identity, was strongly rooted in Ustasha ideology. Therefore, it was not surprising that a significant section of Catholic clergy, especially at the village level, as well as some senior figures, were exultant when NDH was established and rushed to personally congratulate Pavelić and offer their services to the new state and Ustasha movement.¹⁷ Numerous letters sent to Pavelić and the Ministry of Justice and Religion (Ministarstvo pravosuđa i bogoštovlja – MPB) reveal that many monasteries and churches had already been, during the interwar period, used for concealing Ustashas and their illegal propaganda materials and the organization and indoctrination of youth with the Ustasha ideology. As numerous studies have shown, Catholic religious

organization were combining Catholic activism with a radical nationalist and separatist outlook. As such, they were effectively creating parallel social and cultural institutions for the promotion of Croatian ultra-nationalism under the cover of religious education and the promotion of Catholic values. See I. Banac, *ibid.*, 61–85.

¹⁵ V. Novak, *Magnum Crimen. Pola vijeka klerikalizma u Hrvatskoj*, drugo izdanje (Beograd: BIGZ, 1986), 469–1100; В. Ђ. Крестић, *Досије о генези геноцида над Србима у НДХ* (Dossier on the genesis of the genocide against Serbs in the NDH) (Нови Сад: Прометеј, 2009); В. Ђурић Мишина, *Злочин је почео раније. Прилози за историју страдања Срба у бановинама Приморској и Савској 1934–1939. године и Бановини Хрватској 1939–1941. године* (The crime started earlier. Contributions to the history of the suffering of Serbs in the provinces of Primorska and Savska 1934–1939 and Banovina Croatia years 1939–1941) (Београд: В. Ђ. Мишина, 2004).

¹⁶ See, for example, the case of Branko Zupančić, a priest from Bosanska Gradiška. In 1937, he was carrying out research for his dissertation at the Pontifical Croatian College of St. Jerome in Rome when he was arrested at the request of the Yugoslav authorities for transporting letters and messages for the Ustasha movement and Pavelić personally. He was imprisoned in Zagreb but, as documented in a letter recommending him for promotion in July 1941, he was released from prison after an intervention made by Stepinac himself. See HDA, *Ministarstvo pravosuđa i Bogostovlja*, 218. B3/46825–1941.

¹⁷ See, for instance: HDA, 218, B1, doc. 12/5 (Letter to Pavelić, sent by Alojzije Venko, priest in Dubica, 10th May 1941); HDA, 218, B2–19.749–941 (Letter of Croatian Franciscan provincials to Pavelić, 14th June 1941), HDA, 218, B–5, Letter of Božidar Bralo to Pavelić, 15th May 1941.

organizations such as the Crusaders¹⁸ and “Domagoj” were strongly orientated towards the Ustashas and had many Ustasha members and sympathizers. Likewise, a section of the Catholic clergy in Croatia, not only welcomed the establishment of the NDH but supported the Ustasha movement long before April 1941, reflecting the sharing of a common goal: the creation of a Croatian state which would be exclusively one for Croats and Catholics.

It must be stressed that the Catholic Church in Croatia is, and was, in the period between 1941 and 1945 a substantial, dynamic, and heterogeneous institution. As numerous documents testify, some conscientious and ethical Catholic priests as well as devout Catholic citizens protested the persecution of the state’s Serbs, Jews, and Roma by the Ustasha regime, requesting intervention to end the terror. The existence of such letters is attested to in Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac’s diary¹⁹ as well as documents in his State Security file, even if it is also clear that he mostly ignored these appeals.²⁰ At the same time, numerous letters were written to local Ustasha authorities or state dignitaries denouncing Catholic priests who were reluctant to participate in the forced religious conversions and assimilation of the state’s Serbs. In many cases, these priests were accused of working against the Croatian state and national interests,²¹ or of aim-

¹⁸ When Banovina Hrvatska, a Croatian autonomous province within Yugoslavia, was formed in August 1939, the majority of Catholic organizations abandoned the policy of supporting V. Maček and the Croatian Peasant Party. Instead, they advocated radicalization of political actions and played a significant role in attacks on local Serbs and Yugoslav institutions. Reports sent from Banovina to the Belgrade government testify that Crusaders and other similar organizations became even more radical, and that Maček had no control over “clericals,” who were led by Ivo Protulipac, “a notorious Serb-eater” (Arhiv Jugoslavije /AJ/, holdings: Centralni Presbiri (38), 16–56, “Reports from Zagreb, August 1940”).

¹⁹ HDA, holdings: MUP SRH SDS, file: 301681 Stepinac Alojzije, 66.1.2, Dnevnik neovjereni prepis, frame 516 (sent by “a Catholic, Croat and Yugoslav” from Split, 10th June 1941); frame 517 (sent by Josip Ujčić, Belgrade Archbishop, on June 11th 1941); frames 519–520 (sent by an anonymous Catholic on 9 July 1941); frames 521–522 (sent by Ambrozije Benković, 12 July 1941); frames 523–524 (sent by a female Catholic, signed with Z. R., Zagreb, 19 July 1941); and frames 525–526 (sent by fra Dominik Mandić, Rome 19 July 1941). The aforementioned letters contain detailed information regarding the mass killings of Serbs and Jews throughout NDH territory.

²⁰ On 21st July 1941, Stepinac wrote to Pavelić: “I have heard from different sources that the treatment of Serbs and Jews is occasionally inhuman and cruel during deportation to concentration camps and in the camps themselves.” Stepinac mainly protesting about conditions during the transports rather than the transports themselves and he especially pleaded for Jewish “Catholic converts” to be spared from deportation, and if deported, to be separated from other Jews. HDA, 218, B3, Predsjedništvo biskupskih konferencija, Br. 152/BK.

²¹ Such was the case in the denunciation of Adam Žabarović, a priest at the Church of the Holy Cross in Petrovaradin (HDA, 218, BI-Ministarstvo bogostovlja i nastave, za-

ing to nurture “Yugoslav ideology” while others still were implicated in the “Belgrade regime’s” alleged plot against Croats.²² Some of the accused were removed from their positions and forcibly retired and others were relocated to different parts of the state while the fate of other individuals is unclear.²³ Catholic priests who supported and protected the Partisans and communists could expect the worst from the Ustasha, and some were even murdered.²⁴ The actual number of Catholic priests who actively supported resistance in the NDH was quite limited; however, of notable members of the clergy, only the name of Svetozar Rittig, who fled Zagreb and spent some years in Dalmatia prior to joining the Partisans, stands out.

Between 1941 and 1945, however, the vast majority of Catholic clergy in NDH, including the entire hierarchy, collaborated with Ustasha, from the first until the last day of the state’s existence. Archbishop Stepinac immediately recognized the new state and wrote in his diary that 10 April 1941 was a crucial moment in Croatian history.²⁵ Already on 28 April, he officially and publicly called the entire clergy to devote all its efforts to working for the benefit of the NDH. His address was circulated to the clergy and published on the front page of the diocesan Catholic newspaper, *Katolički list*, on 29th April. Moreover, Stepinac acted as an unofficial diplomat of the NDH, heading a mission to the Vatican in June 1941 with the aim of securing official recognition of the state

pisnik 12.445-941). After an investigation was conducted, Žabarović’s superior, Bishop Antun Akšamović, informed the Ministry of Justice and Religion that all accusations against this priest were groundless and that he was a good priest and Croat. See HDA, 218, B4, Biskupski ordinijat Đakovo, br. 1613/941.

²² During the first weeks of the NDH’s existence, Ustasha officials arrested and/or requested removal from their positions of a number of Roman Catholic priests, accusing them of cooperating with the “Belgrade regime” or spreading the Yugoslav national ideology and hero worship of King Aleksandar I. Among better-documented cases is that of Vladimir Krenais, a priest from Županja. See HDA, 218, B1-14/V. In July 1941, the NDH authorities petitioned the Diocesan Chancery for the removal of Mirko Veslaj, a priest in Dubovac, near Karlovac, on the basis that “in his time [he was] a strong supporter of the Croatian-Serbian Coalition and Independent Democratic Party,” someone who “neglected his parish and churches” and was even “baptizing antinational elements.” See HDA, 218, B3, 46821-941.

²³ Stjepan Popović, honorary president of the Diocesan Chancery, administrator of St. Catharine’s Church and nobility convict regens, was retired from all his duties at his own request by Stepinac on 19th May 1941. As a replacement for Popović, Stepinac appointed Matija Markov. See HDA, 218, B1-24/V.

²⁴ Such was the case of Karlo Čulum, a priest in Zavojane village, who was murdered by the Ustasha in May 1943. Supposedly, he was in touch with local Partisans (VA, NDH, box 94, 12/10).

²⁵ HDA, MUP SRH SDS, file: 301681 Stepinac Alojzije, 66.1.2, Dnevnik neovjereni prepis, frame 505.

and gaining moral support from the Holy See.²⁶ For his part, the Archbishop of Sarajevo, Ivan Šarić, a prewar Ustasha supporter, frequently expressed his admiration for the Poglavnik, in public statements and private letters alike, even in a form of poetry. Meanwhile, the Bishop of Srem and Đakovo, Antun Akšamović, collaborated closely with the Ustasha and state authorities in the mass conversions of the state's Serbs to Catholicism and requested, on multiple occasions, permission to expropriate confiscated Serbian property.²⁷ Not a single member of the Croatian Bishop's conference showed any open opposition to Pavelić's regime or publicly criticized its policies.²⁸ On the contrary, they worked hand in hand with the Ustasha authorities in the policy-making process and in the shaping of public morale which ranged from the drafting of decrees against abortion to the NDH's educational policies. Although some of them had doubts regarding the applied methods, all of them were glad to witness thousands of religious conversions to Catholicism.²⁹

²⁶ HDA, MUP SRH SDS, file: 301681 Stepinac Alojzije, 66.1.2, Dnevnik neovjereni prepis, frame 515. Stepinac traveled completely incognito and didn't write much about this special, secret mission, except to state that he was accompanied by Franjo Cvetan, a priest, and that his goal was to "introduce some form of relations between the Holy See and the Independent State of Croatia".

²⁷ On his role in religious conversions and ethnic engineering in Srem and Slavonia, see: J. Horvat i Z. Štambuk, *Dokumenta o protunarodnom radu i zločinima jednog dijela katoličkog klera* (Zagreb, 1946), С. Симић, *Прекрштавање Срба за време Другог светског рата* (Conversion of Serbs during the Second World War) (Титоград: Графички завод Титоград, 1958), В. Ђурић, *Прекрштавање Срба у Независној Држави Хрватској. Прилози за историју верског геноцида* (Conversion of Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia. Contributions to the history of religious genocide) (Београд: Алфа, 1991). Strangely enough, although Akšamović's role in NDH was well-known, he became close with post-war communist authorities and evaded any kind of formal investigation or sanctions. Moreover, he was awarded the Brotherhood and Unity medal (Orden Bratstva i Jedinstva i reda) in May 1959 by Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito, effectively becoming one of the very few people who received high-rank medals from both Pavelić and Broz.

²⁸ One of the main topics of the Bishops' Conference held in October 1941 was the Ustasha atrocities, and they were condemned. Pavelić and Pope Pius XII were informed of the conference's conclusions, but they weren't made public at the time. On the other hand, the Bishops' Conference held in April 1945 had murders of priests by Partisans as the main item on its agenda. On that occasion, condemnations of actions and pleas were publicized. A simple comparison shows that the Bishops' Conference was much braver and more agile when criticizing Yugoslav or communist actions than NDH's.

²⁹ M. Matijević, *ibid*, 177–183. Alojzije Mišić, Bishop of Mostar, was among those who had grown up believing that "there is no salvation outside of Catholic Church." Although he protested against the killings of Serbs, wrote quite direct and provocative letters to Stepinac and Bishops' Conferences warning them about Ustasha atrocities, he still perceived religious conversions in NDH as something positive (I. Banac, *ibid*, 92).

Some Croatian scholars have reasonably pointed to specific statements and documents from, for example, the Croatian bishop conferences as indicating that Stepinac and the senior Church hierarchy protested the mass killings perpetrated by Ustasha militias and the program of mass conversion of the state's Orthodox Serbs to Catholicism. However, documents from the archives of the MPB suggest that the intention to convert hundreds of thousands of Serbs and thereby forcibly assimilate them was a national, nation-engineering project and one in which the Catholic clergy played a central role. Missionary priests and monks sent to the countryside carried out the conversions, in many cases, coordinating their actions with local Ustasha organizations and municipal authorities. The subject of conversions had been discussed at the Bishops' Conferences of 1941 and, in addition, certain instructions on that matter were also provided by the Vatican Congregation for the purposes of religious propaganda and the Holy Congregation for the Eastern Churches.³⁰ The Catholic press in Croatia strongly advocated in favor of the conversions, presenting them as the "return to the faith of fathers and ancestors." Meantime, numerous Catholic priests sent their suggestions on conversion regulations directly to Pavelić and the Ustasha government, usually requesting that even stricter regulations and restrictions should be imposed on members of the affluent Serbian middle-classes such as industrialists, businessmen, local political leaders, Orthodox clergy, the intelligentsia, and wealthy farmers.³¹ Quite often, it seems, the impetus for the mass conversion of particular villages came from local Catholic priests. The same was true in the case of initiatives to either destroy or expropriate certain Orthodox or Old Catholic religious buildings and utilize them for the needs of the Catholic Church.³² Local priests and senior bishops alike, in significant numbers, aspired towards taking over the property of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The process of religious conversion was characterized by a second, even more sinister stage. In many areas of the NDH, Catholic clergy and ecclesial authorities were in the habit of stalling the conversions. Frequently, they expressed doubts about the sincerity of those undergoing the conversion process

³⁰ P. M. Грујић, *Политичко-верска активност Ватикана на Балкану кроз векове* (Politico-religious activity of the Vatican in the Balkans throughout the centuries), 80; B. Ђурић Мишина, *Саслушања српских избеглица. Историјски контекст и анализа саслушања* (Hearings of Serbian refugees. Historical context and analysis of hearings) (Бања Лука–Нови Сад: Архив Републике Српске: Архив Војводине, 2023), 38, 61.

³¹ A letter sent to Pavelić from Catholic priests in Grubišno Polje, Veliki Grđevac and Sremski Karlovci in August 1941 is a perfect example of such an initiative. See HDA, 218, B5, 533–B–1941.

³² For example, a Catholic priest from Petrinja petitioned Pavelić not to demolish the local St. Spyridon's Orthodox Church but to transform it into a Catholic church instead. Mihael Razum to Pavelić, Petrinja, 11 August 1941, HDA, 218, B6.

and would request additional lessons to be given to the candidates for conversion or would else declare themselves unable to perform the mass conversion ceremony. In such cases, desperate Orthodox peasants petitioned Pavelić himself, asking for intervention to accelerate the conversion.³³ Needless to say, ordinary rural Serbs were anxious to convert as local Ustasha officials made it clear to them that this was the only means to avoid deportation to Serbia, repression, or liquidation.

To reinforce and make permanent the effects of conversions, the Church established new parishes and branch parishes (*župe* and *župske ispostave*), for the “converts and colonists.” This development was especially prevalent in the territory under the ecumenical jurisdiction of Akšamović, the bishop of Đakovo and Srem. Such a fundamental change in the organization of Catholic life had to be authorized by the highest ecclesial authority, in most cases by Stepinac himself, who signed the documents establishing new parishes and defining their territorial and religious parameters. Priests serving in new parishes received special supplements and bonuses on top of their salaries, and those that performed the conversions also received financial rewards. Effectively, converted Serbs would become Croats, and their children would also be raised in a Catholic and Croatian spirit.

Some documents suggest that the NDH authorities had the ambition to convert as many as a million Serbs. However, the deterioration in the political situation in the NDH and the course of the war prevented such a scenario. In a letter Stepinac sent to Pope Pius XII in May 1943, he referred to around 244000 converted Serbs. This represents the most accurate figure available and was also the one adopted by the Serbian Orthodox Church. In January 1942, the Office of the Prime Minister of the NDH issued a circular to all local authorities in which they were instructed “to treat all Greek-Easterners who have converted to Roman Catholicism as Croats.” The role the Catholic Church played in the Croatization of the state’s Serbs ultimately extended far beyond religious conversion and grew to encompass a systematic process of re-education and identity shaping through pedagogic, religious and propaganda activities. The initiatives for some of these came from the local Ustasha authorities and at other times from the clergy, though the Catholic Church was often earmarked for an important role in the envisaged plans of the secular authorities in any case. For

³³ Well-documented cases include petitions from peasants in Mali Gradac and Ličko Petrovo Selo who petitioned Pavelić in August and September 1941, respectively, to grant their desire to convert to Catholicism while complaining that despite their wishes and urges, the Catholic clergy had done nothing. In both cases, the Office of the Poglavnik issued an order to the Ministry of Justice and Religion to ensure that no obstacles were placed in the way of conversion and that the ecclesial authorities should accelerate the procedures and convert the petitioners.

example, the local Ustasha camp in Pakrac sent a proposal to various NDH ministries and the State Directorate for Renewal to convert the Serbian Orthodox Church's parochial buildings into a Catholic convent so the nuns could assume teaching in kindergartens and girls' public schools. The author of the proposal claimed that "the sisters of mercy would be the only ones capable of making something [good] out of Serbian, Yugoslav and Croatian-in-name-only children."³⁴

The question of national identity and the role the Catholic clergy was to play in shaping and transforming non-Croatian identities was a matter of great importance to the Ustasha regime. Hence, it was not enough for those who filled all important social, political, financial, and ecclesial positions in the state to be Catholics; they also had to be "good Croats" too: in other words, committed Croatian nationalists. Non-Croatian Catholic priests and nuns in NDH were looked on with suspicion, as is well documented in the case of Slovenian clergy. Already in the summer of 1941, the Poglavnik himself issued an order for all Slovenian nuns and sisters of mercy to be removed from positions of responsibility and effectively replaced by their Croatian subordinates.³⁵ The MPB requested lists of all Slovenian nuns active throughout NDH territory. While presenting their argument as to why some of the Slovenian sisters should remain in their positions, the ecclesial authorities contended variously that they had been "raised as Croats," "have served in Croatia for a long time" and "work with children extraordinary successfully, aligned to the national direction of NDH."³⁶ Soon enough, however, the anti-Slovenian agenda was extended to monasteries and monastic orders. MPB officials explicitly requested Croatian monks to leave their Slovene seniors and establish a provinciality for themselves, stating that "from now on, no Slovene should be head of any monastery nor hold any other influential position."³⁷ By late August 1941, Slovenes were not only to be removed from influential and leading ecclesiastical positions in the NDH, but so

³⁴ HDA, 218, B3-44.538-1941. Later, the same Ustasha camp petitioned the state authorities to give the buildings of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Pakrac to the local Franciscans "because that is in the interest of Pakrac's Croatization." See HDA, 218, B4, Ustaški logor Pakrac, br. 58/41, 12th July 1941.

³⁵ "Sestara Slovenka odstranjenje sa vodećih i odgovornih mjesta," HDA, 218, B4, 169-1941. This order was met by protest from the highest Croatian ecclesial authorities since introducing nationality as an exclusive criterion by the state authorities meant their direct involvement in strictly ecclesial administrative matters. See HDA, 218, B4, Nadiskupski duhovni stol u Zagrebu, br. 9832/41.

³⁶ HDA, 218, B4, Biskupski ordinijat Mostar, br. 887. All the mentioned "praise" referred to Franciscan nuns serving in Herzegovina.

³⁷ "Osamostaljenje franjevačke kapucinske provincije u Hrvatskoj," HDA, 218, B4,

were all non-Croats, as explained in the instructions MPB sent to the Merciful Sisters of the Sacred Cross in Đakovo.³⁸

Finally, mention should be made of something often overlooked in historiography: the financial aspect of the seeming symbiosis between the NDH authorities and the Catholic Church, which greatly benefitted the latter institution. The NDH spent enormous sums of money supporting the building and reconstruction of hundreds of Catholic religious structures. All members of the Catholic and Greek Catholic clergy, from the lowest administrative clerks up to bishops, were eligible for state financial aid, and in practice, very few missed the opportunity. Not infrequently, letters sent to Pavelić or the Ustasha regime requesting financial help or the “correction of injustices perpetrated by the Belgrade regime,” contained intentionally emotional phrases, seeking to convey a deep sense of affection among Catholic clergy, whether active or in retirement, for the Poglavnik and NDH.³⁹ Whenever a Catholic church or monastery had to be repaired or a Catholic social home, seminary or other religious structure constructed or upgraded, local priests or monastic orders reached out to the NDH authorities for assistance.⁴⁰ Stepinac personally and the Bishops’ Conference of Croatia as an institution often petitioned the state authorities with similar requests, achieving, over time, privileged status for the clergy.⁴¹ Apart from providing extensive financing to the Church and clergy on the territory under its administration, the regime allocated significant financial resources for the support of the Croatian Catholic clergy in territories under Italian control, such as in Dalmatia and Istria and the College of St. Jerome in Rome.⁴² Thus, it is likely that the close cooperation between the NDH authorities and the Catholic Church at the institutional and individual level was not simply a matter of ideological alignment or religion but also economics.

Two other religious groups enjoyed the status of recognized and acknowledged communities in the NDH and as such were entitled to state financial and logistic support: the Greek Catholic and the Islamic community.

³⁸ HDA, 218, B6, 950–B–1941.

³⁹ See e.g., Mihovil Kedmenec, retired priest, to Ante Pavelić, Bjelovar, 2 July 1941, HDA, 218, B3; Sarajevo Dominican Sisters of Mercy to Ante Pavelić, 19 July 1941, HDA, 218, B3, 45834–1941; Don Ivo Subašić, priest in Stup to the MPB, 18 July 1941, HDA, 218, B3, 45857–941; priest from Veliko Trojstvo to the MPB, 2 September 1941, HDA, 218, B8, 1397–B–1941.

⁴⁰ The holdings of the MPB in the Croatian State Archives are full of such petitions and requests, numbering in their thousands. See e.g., Guardian and administrator of the diocese in Vukovar to the MPB, 23 August 1941, HDA, 218, B6,

⁴¹ See e.g., HDA, 218, B3, Predsjedništvo biskupskih konferencija, br. 149/BK.

⁴² Dr Krunoslav Draganović to NDH Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 March 1944 (VA, NDH, box 369, 40/2).

The Greek Catholic Church, which was in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church and recognized papal primacy, had deep historical roots in Croatia, stretching back to the seventeenth century.⁴³ In Croatia, its origins were derived from the conversion of Orthodox Serbs who were permitted to continue to follow the Byzantine Rite while adopting some elements of Catholic doctrine (*filioque*) and recognizing papal primacy. Over the course of time, most Greek Catholics in Croatia – Serbs by ethnic origin – became Croatianized. Both the Serbian political leaders in Croatia and Dalmatia and the Serbian Orthodox Church perceived religious unionism and Greek Catholicism as hostile to Serbian national identity and interests. Consequentially, during the interwar period, the Greek Catholic church, although equal to other major religions in Yugoslavia, was neglected and to a certain level repressed by the authorities, who would occasionally take away its property and give it (or in many cases restore it) to the Serbian Orthodox Church. In the NDH, by contrast, the Greek Catholic clergy were, like Roman Catholic clergy, entitled to financial aid, and certain budgetary resources were also allocated for the repair and reconstruction of religious structures belonging to this community.⁴⁴

The Ustasha authorities, at first, took rather a negative attitude towards Greek Catholic proselytism, and members of other religious communities, Serbs primarily, were forbidden conversion to this religion.⁴⁵ Some members of the Catholic clergy shared this prejudice and drafted petitions calling for conversion to Greek Catholicism to be forbidden. Such was the case of a priest in Garešnica who emphasized in his letter to the MPB that “our Croatian people don’t have real trust in Greek Catholics, given that it considers them to be half-Vlachs [a derogatory term for Serbs].” He complained too that the Greek Catholic Church wasn’t “able to transform [Serbs] fast enough, neither religion nor nation-wise, to make them one with us.” On the contrary, the “Greek Catholic ritual would always remind them who they were, even after the current generation of converts dies.”⁴⁶ However, after a mass uprising by Serbs in reaction to their persecution, led by the nascent Partisan movement and Chetniks – the Royalist resistance, paralyzed the NDH, the policy abruptly changed: Serbs and

⁴³ For a detailed insight, see note 10 above.

⁴⁴ Already in 1941, substantial amounts of money were provided for the repair of Greek Catholic churches and parochial homes in Kričke, Baljci and Vrljka. “Molba grkokatoličkog biskupskog vikarijata u Kričkama za novčanu pripomoć za popravku župnih crkava i stanova u Kričkama, Vrljci i Baljkama,” HDA, 218, B6, Later, significant amounts were transferred for the repair of the Cathedral and Bishop’s offices in Križevci. See “Saslušanje dr. Janka Šimraka, biskupa križevačkog, Zapisnik od 22. V 1945,” HDA, MUP SRH SDS, 301385 Šimrak Janko.

⁴⁵ See “NDH – Okružnica,” 30th July 1941, HDA, 218, B3, br. 48468/1941.

⁴⁶ HDA, 218, B3, 45.807–1941.

others were now permitted to convert to Greek Catholicism if a Greek Catholic parish and church existed in the area where the conversion was requested.⁴⁷ From late 1941 onwards, Greek Catholics were even allowed to take over some Orthodox churches and create new parishes.⁴⁸ In fact, German intelligence from early 1942 confirms that Pope Pius XII himself, during a private audience in Rome, authorized Janko Šimrak, a Greek Catholic bishop from Križevci, to convert Orthodox Serbs to Greek-Catholicism.⁴⁹ It is, however, true that local Ustasha commanders and authorities would, occasionally, still seek to make life difficult for both Greek Catholic converts and clergy, as documented in a letter Šimrak sent to Pavelić in October 1942. In some territories, Greek Catholic priests would simply arrive and arbitrarily appropriate the property and church protocols of the Serbian Orthodox Church, conducting mass conversions of local Serbs without any official record.⁵⁰

Comparative analysis suggests that Serbs were indeed more eager to convert to Greek Catholicism than Roman Catholicism when they were allowed to make a free choice. Yet, it should be stressed that the Greek Catholic Church profited from Serbian hardship just as the Roman Catholic Church did and that it supported the regime and closely collaborated in the Croatization of the Orthodox population. Janko Šimrak was a loyal collaborator of the Ustasha regime and a convinced nationalist, anti-communist, and antisemite, as was clear from the content of *Hrvatska straža*, the journal he edited. In addition, Šimrak was decorated with a prestigious medal for state service, while other Greek Catholic priests, such as Aleksandar Vlasov,⁵¹ were liquidated by Partisans for having been active members of the Ustasha movement.

⁴⁷ An intervention by the Diocesan Chancery in July 1941, naming the Greek Catholic Church as the protector of Croatian identity and holy objects, and pleading for less strict restrictions regarding conversions to this denomination, certainly contributed to the change. HDA, 218, B3, Nadbiskupski duhovni stol u Zagrebu, br. 9259/1941.

⁴⁸ New Greek Catholic parishes (*župe*) were created in Bjelovar, Narta, Prgomelj (including Gudovac), Rovišće, Bolč, Veliki Zdenci (Dišnik included) and Veliko Vukovje (Stupovača and Rogož included), and in Hrvatska Kapela. All these parishes were established to accommodate increased numbers of converts and in some cases, former Orthodox churches and Serbian Orthodox Church structures were used. See Šimrak to Pavelić, 14th October 1942, HDA, MUP SRH SDS, 301385 Šimrak Janko.

⁴⁹ HDA, MUP SRH SDS, file: 301385 Šimrak Janko.

⁵⁰ Ф. Шкиљан, *Покатоличавање Срба. Прекрштавање на подручју Загребачке надбискупије између 1941. и 1945. године* (Catholicization of Serbs. Baptism in the area of the Zagreb Archdiocese between 1941 and 1945), I, 85–90. According to Šimrak in his postwar interrogations, the lack of any proper formalities during the conversion of Serbs to Greek Catholicism also provoked strong objections from the head of the MPB's religious office, the Franciscan monk Radoslav Glavaš.

⁵¹ On Vlasov's murder, see: HDA, 218, B54, Zapisnik 9536–B–1942.

Another religious community fully recognized in the NDH was the Islamic community. The Ustasha national ideology perceived the Bosnian Muslims as Islamized Croats, or Croats of the Muslim religion. This is something that had been advocated by Ante Starčević in the second half of the nineteenth century; Ustasha theoreticians simply adapted and racialized his views to the ideological context of National Socialism and the reality of the wartime situation. Hence, Islam in Bosnia was allowed to flourish, and as an act of goodwill and recognition, the Ustasha regime constructed mosques even in towns and cities where Muslims did not constitute a meaningful portion of the overall population. One of the strongest symbolic actions of this kind was the conversion of Meštrović's atelier and museum in central Zagreb into a large mosque, praised by the state and party media as "the most beautiful in Europe."⁵² The Islamic clergy were entitled to state salaries and occasional financial aid, but the existing documents confirm that financial support to the Islamic community was often late or delayed, and that the Reis-ul-Ulema (the most senior Muslim cleric in the state) had to intervene personally on numerous occasions to speed up payouts and to remind the Croatian authorities of their financial obligations.⁵³ While a certain amount of finance was allocated for the construction, repairs and maintenance of Islamic structures, the sums were hardly comparable to the enormous state support the Roman Catholic Church could count on.

Despite the favorable legal status and state subsidies it enjoyed, the Islamic organization in the NDH was faced with certain unusual and unacceptable requests, at least from the Islamic perspective. Ustasha organizations and the Croatian state authorities did not always show sufficient understanding and appreciation for Islamic customs and religious dogma, imposing the replication of certain celebrations established in the Roman Catholic Church. Already in mid-1941, one such awkward situation emerged when it was publicly announced by the state media that all mosques in Sarajevo and elsewhere would be organizing a special prayer commemorating Ante Starčević, Ante Radić and Ante Pavelić's name-day, held on the feast day of St. Anthony of Padua. The Reis-ul-ulema protested, stating that a mosque was no place for a celebration of a Catholic holiday, explaining that even during the Yugoslav era no prayers had been held in mosques for similar festivities and prayers, not even on Vidovdan (St. Vitus Day) "although Serbs had requested that."⁵⁴ He appealed to the authorities to

⁵² VA, NDH, kut. 290, 7–2; M. Jareb, *Mediji i promidžba u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2016), 804–806.

⁵³ HDA, 218, B136, Reis-ul-ulema Spaho to NDH Financial directorate, Sarajevo 20th August 1941; Hakija Hadžić to Fehim Spaho, Sarajevo 2nd August 1941; Spaho to MPB, Sarajevo 31st August 1941; Spaho to MPB, Sarajevo 18th December 1941; Spaho to MPB, Sarajevo 10th January 1942, etc.

⁵⁴ HDA, 218, B1-23/VI.

provide him with a list of NDH state holidays that would require a special event in temples of all religions. This matter resurfaced again later, as it wasn't properly resolved by a legal act.⁵⁵ In fact, it realistically showcased the exclusive, predominantly Catholic mindset of the Ustasha regime and state authorities.

The attitude of the state to religious conversions to Islam underlined the extent to which the NDH was intended to be a Catholic state. Especially in the historical territories of Croatia and Slavonia, local Ustasha authorities called upon a 1906 law forbidding citizens to convert from Christian denominations to non-Christian faiths.⁵⁶ This created immediate practical problems since it meant that permission for religious conversion could not be given even if the reason for such a conversion was marriage. On the other hand, the authorities encouraged Serbs and Jews to convert to Islam in parts of the state where Muslims constituted a majority of the population. At the same time, numerous cases were recorded in which local Muslims prevented members of the Serbian Orthodox religious community from converting to Roman Catholicism through threats. Nonetheless, in the confrontation between Muslim and Catholic proselytism,⁵⁷ Catholicism invariably triumphed.

Some communities in the NDH had to be tolerated for reasons of international relations, even if their existence was hardly pleasing to the Catholic clergy. The German Evangelical Church, a Protestant and Reformist denomination was one such case. This religious community was recognized by the NDH authorities and even received modest and regular state financial support.⁵⁸ During the first few months of the NDH's existence, it seemed that Protestant denominations could, at least, hope for a status similar to the one that the Islamic community enjoyed, but it turned out not to be the case.⁵⁹ The Catholic clergy invested a lot of effort in limiting the influence of the Evangelical Church solely to the German minority. On the other hand, the community enjoyed strong

⁵⁵ Reis-ul-ulema to Velika Župa Vrhbosna, Sarajevo 20 August 1942 (VA, NDH, box 183, 52/5).

⁵⁶ Reis-ul-ulema's representative S. Bašić to Džaferbeg Kulenović, Vice President of the NDH government, Sarajevo 25th August 1943 (VA, NDH, box 87, 2/39).

⁵⁷ Compare: VA, NDH, box 195II, 5/10; VA, NDH, box 153a, 9/10; VA, NDH, box 138, 31/1.

⁵⁸ NDH subsidies for the German Evangelical Church were determined as early as May 1941 by the Ministry of Religion and Education and from that time onwards were paid regularly. The initial amount came to less than 50.000 dinars, which can be considered a very modest financial contribution. "Predmet: Državna pripomoć za Njem. Evang. Crkvu za mjesec lipanj 1941 god.," HDA, 218, B1,

⁵⁹ Optimistically, the German Evangelical Church's bishop in Zagreb petitioned the NDH authorities on 24 July 1941 to institute a special department for Protestants in the MPB and to name a protestant as the department's head. After consideration, the proposal was put on hold until further notice. See HDA, 218, B5, 551-B-1941.

support and the protection of German diplomatic and military circles in the NDH, so most of the disputes this religious community experienced with the authorities and the Catholic clergy were resolved in a favorable manner. In addition, the NDH authorities enjoyed no influence on its internal organization and life. However, proselytism was strictly forbidden and religious conversions to the Church were permitted only among members of the German ethnic community (Volksdeutsche) or individuals who wanted to get married to members of the Evangelical Church. Even the official protest regarding this matter, made by Philip Popp, the supreme Evangelical bishop in NDH, to the highest state authorities was fruitless.⁶⁰

The Russian, Bulgarian and Romanian Orthodox communities were also tolerated.⁶¹ The higher-level state authorities invested a lot of effort in explaining to local and regional Ustasha organizations that all limitations and bans imposed on Orthodox Christians were strictly limited to Serbs. The existing historical records suggest that the relationship between the Russian émigré community and the NDH authorities was generally cordial. Russian priests were allowed to continue their service and, on numerous occasions, Serbian Orthodox Church structures were temporarily handed over to the administration of Russian émigrés.⁶² As early as summer 1941, Russian émigrés requested to take possession of the largest Serbian Orthodox Church building in Zagreb, on Preradović Square.⁶³

Among the communities that did not receive formal recognition and were outlawed by the NDH authorities was the Croatian Old Catholic Popular Church. It had emerged from the ranks of the disaffected lower Catholic clergy who had requested reforms of the Catholic doctrine and specifically did not rec-

⁶⁰ Copy of Popp's letter from 19 November 1941 (Archivio Storico della Segreteria di Stato – Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati, AA.EE.SS., Pio XII, Parte I (1939-1948), Jugoslavia, Pos. 178, ff. 14-15). The letter was written in the form of a protest against religious discrimination, as Popp argued that the Evangelical Church was clearly discriminated against compared to the Roman Catholic and Islamic community.

⁶¹ The NDH authorities also responded affirmatively to individual requests and appeals by Ukrainian Orthodox priests, as attested to by the case of Dimitrije Mrihin. See Mrihin to the MPB, 3rd September 1941, HDA, 218, B9, D.

⁶² Russian priests were allowed to perform funeral rites for Russians, Romanians and Bulgarians of the Orthodox religion, but were strictly forbidden, in September 1941, to do so for Orthodox Serbs. HDA, 218, B9, 2300-B-1941.

⁶³ HDA, 218, B3, 46790-1941. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly supported this initiative, but it was blocked by the Ministry of the Interior, which claimed that "this church will be, as soon as possible, demolished, and all memory of it removed." However, the church remained in place, and after the establishment of the so-called Croatian Orthodox Church, it was given to this new ecclesiastical state organization.

ognize the decisions made at the First Vatican Council.⁶⁴ This community was met with the understanding and support of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Yugoslav authorities, factors which were later used by the Ustasha regime to legitimize their suppression of it. Although many prominent Croats had supported the Church, including Stjepan and Ante Radić, and the Church was a purely Croatian one, the Ustasha perceived it as a foreign body in the Croatian organism.⁶⁵ Hence, this church was prohibited in the NDH. On the Poglavnik's order, relevant ministries and the State Treasury stopped all payments to its clergy.⁶⁶ All its churches were closed, some were converted for the use of the Catholic Church, and more were destroyed; even ones that were spared had to remain locked until the end of the war. The Old Catholic clergy were the target of ferocious state propaganda, as well as physical, legislative, and proselytizing attacks. Representatives of the Croatian Old Catholic Church wrote letters and petitions to Ante Pavelić and relevant governmental bodies asking for protection for church members and themselves from Ustasha threats and attacks, but received no answer or the urgently needed protection.⁶⁷ Religious services were forbidden completely, and within eighteen months of the establishment of the NDH, most Old Catholics had reverted to Roman Catholicism.⁶⁸ Members of the Roman Catholic clergy denounced and intervened with the authorities, demanding that Old Catholic churches be demolished or converted for the use of Roman Catholics and that its priests be arrested or prevented from conducting any religious services. And, indeed, a number of individuals belonging to the Old Catholic clergy were arrested and deported to the Jasenovac-Stara Gradiška concentration camp, where they met their end.⁶⁹ Others were accused of anti-Croatian actions and even of supporting the Partisan movement.

⁶⁴ For a detailed historical overview of the Croatian Old Catholic Church's genesis and development, see M. Miholek, *Hrvatska starokatolička crkva između Zagreba i Beograda* (Zagreb: Durieux, 2022).

⁶⁵ See: Kalogjera's letter to Pavelić from 11th September 1941, with attached press clipping. HDA, 218, B3, 49527/B-41.

⁶⁶ "Obustava beriva svecenstvu Hrvatske Starokatolicke crkve," HDA, 218, B3, 46332

⁶⁷ F. Škiljan, "Starokatolička crkva u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj," *Historijski zbornik* 67/1 (2014), 195–213. See also Josip Ivelić, Old Catholic priest in Šurkovac, to Ante Pavelić, 22nd July 1941, HDA, 218, B5, 568–B-41; HDA, 218, B8, 1636–B-1941.

⁶⁸ Even before an official decision on this matter was made, local Ustasha prevented Old Catholic religious services and physically attacked members of the church. This was the case in Habjanovci, where on 21st May 1941 the priest was prevented from entering the church, and worshippers were beaten by local Ustasha and Catholics. Vinko Pančić, an Ustasha leader and Crusader, threatened Old Catholics that they would have to wear armbands like the Jews. HDA, 218, B1, 9.820–B-1941.

⁶⁹ F. Škiljan, "Starokatolička crkva u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj," 212. However, some Old Catholic clergy had become acquainted with Ustasha concentration camps as early

Smaller religious communities were either restricted and obstructed, or completely forbidden to operate and exist in the NDH. Two well-documented cases were the Nazarenes and Adventists (in former Yugoslavia called the *Subotari*), perceived as religious sects. They were forbidden to conduct religious services and even to have any properties registered in the name of the organizations.⁷⁰ Absurdly, given how small, persecuted and insignificant these communities were, they were accused of proselytizing in Croatian territories. Nonetheless, such accusations were repeatedly filed by local Catholic priests. Another similar case involved the Baptist Church, which was not prohibited from functioning but encountered discrimination, including retroactive cancelation of religious conversions. First, in June 1941, Serbs were banned from converting to Baptism, and local authorities in Modruš and Ogulin were instructed to allow conversions only to the Catholic religion.⁷¹ Just a week later, the MPB wrote to the authorities of the grand governate of Modruš instructing them that all Serbian Orthodox religious conversions to Baptism made prior to 10 April 1941 were to be legally annulled.⁷²

This article ends with an analysis of the two religious communities that suffered the most under the Ustasha regime: the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Jewish community. Given the fact that Jews were treated according to racial laws – not as a religious group but as a race – this paper won't be focusing on them in much detail. Instead, it will showcase the repression of Jews briefly and

as mid-1941. Davorin Ivanović, a priest from Andrijaševci, was reported to be imprisoned in the Koprivnica concentration camp in July 1941. HDA, 218, B3, Kotarska oblast u Vinkovicima, br. 4287–1941.

⁷⁰ A local organization of the Adventist Christians in Banja Luka petitioned the MPB for permission to organize religious services. In their request, they enclosed a decision of the former Yugoslav authorities from 1930 granting the Adventists the right to hold services under certain conditions. However, the local NDH authorities intervened, stating that “the Catholic Church does not want Adventist religious services to be permitted,” effectively influencing the decision of the Ministry to forbid them. See HDA, 218, B5, 428–B–41. In August 1941, both the Ministry of the Interior and the MPB stated that “it is no longer desirable to tolerate this sect.” See HDA, 218, B5, 650–B–1941.

⁷¹ The reason for this reaction was probably the submission of several requests for conversion to Baptism by peasants from Serbian villages in Trojvrh, Janjagora, Kunic and Begovac in the Plaški area. The local Ustasha authorities petitioned the relevant ministries to forbid such conversions, perceiving them as a fraud local Serbs had invented so as to retain their Serbian identity. In the letter, the Baptist Church is referred to as a “sect.” See HDA, 218, B5, 16156–B–1941, prilog 1.

⁷² HDA, 218, B5, 454–B–1941.

direct interested readers toward a number of valuable published works on the Holocaust in Croatia.⁷³

The persecution of Jews in the NDH was motivated by racial and economic concerns and had as its goal the complete destruction of the Jewish population and the Aryanization of Jewish property. The destruction of synagogues throughout NDH territory is well documented, with Zagreb and Osijek as the most paradigmatic cases. Jewish temples were either burned or destroyed brick by brick and the materials sold to private buyers. Initially, conversions from Judaism (“the Israelite religion”) to Catholicism were permitted and even promoted by the Ustasha authorities and, consequently, many Jews converted to save themselves. However, already by the fall of 1941, Jews who had applied for religious conversions were informed that conversion would not affect their status under the state’s racial laws. Unfortunately, religious conversion was not able to save more than a handful of Jews from the awful fate of the Holocaust.

The state’s Serbs, Orthodox Christian by religion, made up around one-third of the total population of the NDH, around 1.9 million citizens out of an overall population of 6.8 million. The Serbian Orthodox Church was the second largest religious organization in the territory of the NDH and was a cornerstone of Serbian national identity. That is the overriding reason it was marked for destruction, as studies by historians such as Dinko Davidov, Jovan Mirković and Veljko Đurić Mišina have described in detail.⁷⁴ The scale of the destruction and the human, material, and cultural losses were enormous. In all, during the existence of the wartime Croatian state, three bishops and over 170 Serbian priests and monks were murdered while hundreds of others were deported to Serbia. In the most notorious cases, clergymen murdered at the hands of Ustasha forces were brutally tortured before being killed and their bodies and faces

⁷³ Besides the literature mentioned in footnote 4, see: O. Kraus, ed., *Antisemitizam, holocaust, antifašizam* (Zagreb: Židovska općina Zagreb, 1996); M. Najman, “Stradanje osiječkih Jevreja”. In *Mi smo preživeli: Jevreji o Holokaustu*, II (Beograd: Jeverski istorijski muzej, 2003) 206–219; Lj. Dobrovšak, “Židovi u Slavoniji”. In *Slavonija – sociodemografski problem/izazovi*, eds. Dragutin Babić, Filip Škiljan, (Zagreb: Institut za migracije i narodnosti, 2014), 71–96; Lj. Dobrovšak, “Židovi u Osijeku”. In *Židovski Osijek*, eds. Ljiljana Dobrovšak et al. (Osijek: Nansen dijalog centar, 2020), 16–27.

⁷⁴ В. Ђ. Ђурић, *Голгота Српске православне цркве 1941–1945* (Golgotha of the Serbian Orthodox Church 1941–1945) (Београд: Алфа, 1997); В. Ђурић Мишина, *Српска православна црква у Независној Држави Хрватској 1941–1945 године* (Serbian Orthodox Church in the Independent State of Croatia 1941–1945) (Ветерник: Дијам-м-прес, 2002); D. Davidov, *Independent State of Croatia: Total genocide, 1941–1945* (Belgrade: Svet knjige, 2015); J. Mirković, *Suffering of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Independent State of Croatia* (Belgrade: Svet knjige, 2016); A. Stojanović, “A Beleaguered Church: The Serbian Orthodox Church in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) 1941–1945”, *Balkanica XLVIII* (2017), 269–287.

afterwards mutilated. Almost 450 religious structures and buildings belonging to the Church were destroyed or heavily damaged and almost the entire property and financial assets of the Church were nationalized. Even the use of the term “Serbian Orthodox” was banned by order of a special decree and replaced with the expression “Greek Easterner” while the Serbian Orthodox Church was effectively outlawed and presented in the media and in state propaganda as well in the statements of Ustasha officials as one of the greatest enemies of the Croatian state and its national interests.⁷⁵

As early as May 1941, Serbs in the NDH, often the target of brutal Ustasha attacks, were being offered the opportunity to convert to Catholicism to save themselves from persecution. Between May and late winter 1941, tens of thousands of ordinary Serbs submitted applications for conversion, with the majority taking place in the fall and winter of 1941. In most regions of the state, the conversion program was complete or else had been abandoned by the end of spring 1942, though in some parts of the state, such as Bjelovar county and Derventa, as well as parts of Srem, mass conversions continued until fall 1942.⁷⁶

Despite its brutality, the repression of the Serbian Orthodox Church and a systematic campaign of anti-Serbian terror did not have the effect the Ustasha regime and the Catholic Church in Croatia were anticipating. On the contrary, the mass atrocities perpetrated by Ustasha militias and police units in the countryside against rural Serbs, as well as the mass deportation program between June and August 1941, fueled a large-scale uprising by desperate Serbs who felt they had nothing more to lose. The conversion program was designed as a solution to the Serbian “problem” which would enable the pacification of the population but ultimately it failed because of the often violent and threatening way it was carried out and because it increasingly became clear to Serbs that converting to Catholicism would not protect them from extermination at the hands of the militias or deportation to the state’s archipelago of concentration camps. As a final, largely futile gesture to calm the uprisings in the countryside which were having a detrimental impact on their ability to govern the state, German diplomats and occupation forces persuaded Pavelić and other members of the Ustasha leadership to establish an autocephalous Orthodox Church in Croatia for the Serbian minority.⁷⁷ Consequently, Pavelić gave a speech in the newly-

⁷⁵ M. Jareb, *ibid.*, 822–828.

⁷⁶ A huge number of individual applications for religious conversion in the Derventa and Bjelovar counties and a number of Srem towns are kept in HDA, 218, boxes B26, B27, B29, B55, B56 and B57.

⁷⁷ A. Стојановић, Р. Ломпар, “Оснивање Хрватске православне цркве у контексту немачке политике и ратних интереса у окупираној Југославији” (The establishment of the Croatian Orthodox Church in the context of German politics and war interests in occupied Yugoslavia), *Српска политичка мисао* 3 (2017), 35–53.

established Croatian State Sabor (the NDH diet) in which he proclaimed that Orthodoxy as such was not a problem, but adding that the Serbian-Orthodox religion could not exist within the Croatian state. A few months later, in April 1942, the state media heralded the founding of a so-called non-canonical Croatian Orthodox Church (*Hrvatska pravoslavna crkva*),⁷⁸ with the assistance of some former Serbs such as Vasilije Šurlan,⁷⁹ a Nazi from Zemun, and Milos Oberknežević, a corrupted ecclesial clerk from Belgrade. This new religious organization enjoyed state support analogous to that of the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic churches. However, from the beginning the new Orthodox Church represented a Potemkin village: most of the clergy was recruited from the Russian emigration although a few former Serbian Orthodox priests joined too. In the meantime, some of the closed Serbian Orthodox churches were reopened and bequeathed to the new church, but very little of the rest of the property of the Serbian Orthodox Church had a similar fate.

In an attempt to strengthen the legitimacy of the new church, the authorities established a journal for the new church, *Glas pravoslavlja* (Voice of the Orthodox), set up a department for the research of Orthodoxy within the Faculty of Religion of the Croatian University in Zagreb, and drafted Serbs into the labor battalions of the Croatian Home Army (Domobrans). The NDH was officially reframed as a state of three religions: Catholicism, Islam and Croatian Orthodoxy, and the senior clergy of the Croatian Orthodox Church now assumed a prominent position in the state's liturgical and secular ceremonies. The

⁷⁸ Compare: В. Ђ. Ђурић, *Усташе и православље. Хрватска православна црква* (Ustasha and Orthodoxy. Croatian Orthodox Church), (Београд: Космос, 1989); Р. Пожар, *Хрватска православна црква у прошлости и будућности*, (Zagreb: Naklada Ravčić, 1996); М. Виталевич Шкароровски, "Создание и деятельность Хорватской Православной Церкви в годы Второй мировой войны", *Вестник церковной истории* 3/7 (2007), 221–262; М. Шовљаков, "Галерија ликова Хрватске православне цркве", ("Gallery of figures of the Croatian Orthodox Church"), *Споменница историјског архива "Срем"* 9 (2010), 66–84; А. Стојановић, Р. Ломпар, "Ангажман Независне Државе Хрватске на међународном признању Хрватске православне цркве 1942–1944" (Engagement of the Independent State of Croatia in the international recognition of the Croatian Orthodox Church 1942–1944), *Токови историје* 2 (2019), 35–58; С. Продић, *Ретрофутуризам Хрватске православне цркве* (Retrofuturism of the Croatian Orthodox Church) (Јагодина: Гамбит, 2020).

⁷⁹ On Šurlan, a truly unique figure in Serbian history: Р. Пилиповић, "Момчило Ђујић и Василије Шурлан – два антипода у свештеничким мантијама" (Момчило Ђујић and Vasilije Šurlan – two antipodes in clerical mantles), *Гласник Удружења архивских радника Републике Српске* 3/3 (2011), 339–356; А. Стојановић, "Писма свештеника Василија Шурлана поглавнику Павелићу 1941. године. Прилог истраживању идеолошке колаборације са усташким режимом НДХ" (Letters of priest Vasilij Šurlan to Chief Pavelić in 1941. Contribution to the research of ideological collaboration with the Ustasha regime of NDH), *Токови историје* 1 (2023), 221–242.

creation of the church had a direct impact on the intensity of religious conversions to Catholicism. Although the church was clearly a state project with the Poglavnik being mentioned during liturgies, it was still reminiscent of the Serbian Orthodox Church to ordinary people, and so the rate of Catholic conversions declined even further and the need for conversion became, to a certain extent, superfluous as far as ordinary Serbs were concerned. Moreover, the NDH authorities invested considerable effort to achieve the recognition of the church in the Orthodox ecumene. However, such endeavors came to naught, and the church failed to receive a single official recognition from canonical Orthodox churches, although some of them did cooperate with the Croatian Orthodox Church. To showcase that the church was supposedly equal in status and rights with the Roman and Greek Catholic churches and Islam, the state even permitted a small number of religious conversions to Orthodoxy, including among Serbs who had in the meantime converted to Catholicism.

Conclusion

The religious question was a central plank of the Croatian national policy during the existence of the NDH. According to Ustasha ideology and, to a lesser extent, the nineteenth-century nationalism of Starčević, whom the Ustasha movement and radical nationalists in Croatia generally viewed as their ideological inspiration, a Croatian state – in this case, the NDH – would inevitably have to be a racially and ethnically pure state, primarily of Croats and Catholics, with Islam theoretically a co-equal religion though one which was to be accorded far less importance and privileges in reality. The concept of a Croatian Catholic state founded on “Catholic” values constituted a national and ideological alignment of the predominantly secular Ustasha movement and the Catholic clergy in Croatia and provided the basis for their symbiotic relationship. As this article has demonstrated, the NDH authorities provided generous and substantial financial and logistic support to the Catholic Church while repressing, discriminating, or openly persecuting most non-Catholic religious communities and their organizations. The Catholic clergy and the Catholic Church in Croatia in return provided moral, cultural, and propaganda support for the regime. Some notable members of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Croatia, such as Archbishop Stepinac and Radoslav Glavaš, were either directly or indirectly involved in the politics of the state, performing special diplomatic missions or employed as high-ranking governmental officials.

Together, the Catholic Church in Croatia and the Ustasha regime organized and carried out mass religious conversions in order to denationalize and Croatize Orthodox Serbs, effectively participating in ethnic engineering and genocide. Together with various state agencies, the Catholic Church and indi-

vidual members of the clergy were either direct participants or, at the least, beneficiaries in the systematic destruction of Serbian and Jewish religious structures and the plunder of properties belonging to these communities.

Although some non-Roman and Greek Catholic religious communities in the NDH were tolerated due to pragmatic political considerations (for example, non-Serbian Orthodox communities) or reasons of national ideology and racial theory (for example, Islam and Bosnian Muslims), the general pattern was one of extreme repression and persecution. Nowhere was this dynamic clearer than in the incremental and systematic terror directed against the Serbian Orthodox Church, but it was also central to state policy towards the Croatian Old Catholic and Baptist religious communities in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Arguably, none of these religious communities ever fully recovered from the war of destruction waged against them by the Ustasha regime from 1941 to 1945. Many of their monasteries, churches and religious structures were razed to the ground and never rebuilt, while thousands of civilians continued to live their lives as reluctant and frightened religious and national converts. Finally, many of the senior prelates most responsible, if only by implication and omission, for the persecutions of non-Catholics – for example, Bishop Antun Akšamović or Bishop Ivan Šarić – escaped justice for their callous and unchristian conduct during the existence of the NDH. This absence of justice only compounded the pain of the victims who struggled to recover both psychologically and spiritually in an atmosphere of impunity in which some of the most culpable individual clerics continued to live, work and, in the case of Akšamović, retain influence and position under the new socialist authorities as if nothing had happened.

While a central aim of this article was to highlight and unpack the brutal and cruel reality of everyday existence for non-Catholics (and, in many cases, non-Croats) in an ideologically nationalist and Catholic state, it would be naïve to think that it could, overnight, change the dominant apologetic narrative in Croatian historiography and public discourse concerning the role of the Catholic Church in the persecution of non-Catholics and non-Croats. Still, it would be encouraging to think that it could at least contribute to a more scholarly, empirical, and, above all, victim-centered debate about the role of religion and especially Catholicism in the NDH in the future.

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"The Chivu Stoica Plan" (September 1957) A Step on the Road to the "Open Balkans"

Abstract: The author unravels the history (from June to September 1957) of the origin, formalization and promotion of the initiative of the Romanian government ("the Chivu Stoica Plan") to organize multilateral cooperation in the Balkan region. An analysis of the course of events is presented as a result of a study of recently declassified documents from Russian archives (RGANI, AVP RF). The consulting of them allowed the author to supplement significantly previous knowledge of the course of events and their various actors, identify in detail the degree of participation of the Soviet Union in them, clarify and expand the agenda of issues discussed during interactions between Bucharest and Moscow, and clarify the dates and planned options for the development of this initiative. This article supplements and corrects pre-existing opinions of world historiography about the allegedly sharply negative attitude of the Kremlin to this proposal of the Romanian leadership, as well as the perception of this initiative by historians as not only aiming to establish multilateral regional cooperation but also as a result of the Soviet bloc's desire to establish a nuclear-free zone in the Balkans already in 1957.

Keywords: Chivu Stoica, Gheorghiu-Dej, Balkan Pact, Soviet-Romanian relations, Balkan regional cooperation, coexistence, Cold War, 20th century, Diplomatic History

Proposals for the establishment of multilateral cooperation of the Balkan countries or the "Chivu Stoica Plan", advanced by the leadership of Romania in September 1957 and the attitude of the Soviet Union towards them, resonated from the very moment they were put forward. H.E. Salisbury reported from Sofia (Bulgaria) in late September 1957 that "Moscow certainly has given the Balkan conference idea its blessing, it is believed here. Moscow has been repeatedly nudging the East European countries to become more active diplomatically and in particular to develop better relations with their neighbors".¹ Subsequently, this assessment persisted, but under the influence of the ensuing various antinuclear initiatives, the attitude towards them was formed through the perception of the idea of cooperation in the Balkans as a measure to turn the region into a zone free of nuclear weapons. In the political studies literature

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¹ *New York Times*, (27. IX, 1957), 3.

of the late 1970s, Romania was considered “the strongest and most persistent advocate of Balkan co-operation – both bilateral and multilateral”. Researchers traced Romania’s national interest back to 1957, when, “as part of Khrushchev’s policy of détente, Premier Chivu Stoica addressed messages (the ‘Stoica Notes’) to all other Balkan states proposing a conference to promote Balkan détente”. At the same time, his ‘plan’ was described as “closely related to Soviet foreign-policy goals of the time – in particular the desire to prevent the installation of nuclear weapons on Greek and Turkish soil”.²

The waves of declassification of archival documents of communist regimes in the Balkans after 1989–1991 had no impact on the interest in this topic. “New histories” of these countries scarcely even mentioned the “Chivu Stoica Plan” of 1957. Historians preferred the brighter topics of later periods³, at best devoting only a few lines to it even in special monographs on regional or European security.⁴ Interest in the topic appeared only after the publication (in 2003) of a memorandum written by experts of the MFA of Romania in early August 1957 to justify the organization of regional cooperation before consultations in Moscow⁵. After this, the attention of historians was drawn to certain aspects of events in the history of the Balkan countries. The narrative of these actions of the Romanian Prime Minister, as not only aimed at regional cooperation but also an expression of the desire to make Balkan a nuclear-free zone, became dominant again. Of the numerous points of the published memorandum (there was nothing about denuclearization there), attention was paid mainly to those confirming the desire of the Soviet bloc to weaken NATO, the unveiling of the “anti-social policy of the Western governments in the public opinion of Greece and Turkey. The mentioning of the idea of regional denuclearization became dominant in the majority of texts.⁶ In the same paradigm, an article by I. Gridan

² F. S. Larrabee, “Balkan Security: Problems and Prospects.” *The Adelphi Papers* 17/135 (1977), 34.

³ D. Deletant, M. Ionescu, *Romania and the Warsaw Pact: 1955-1989*. Cold War International History Project. Working Paper N 43 (Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2004).

⁴ Й. Баев, *Системата за европейска сигурност и Балканите в годината на Студената война* (София: Издателство «Дамян Яков», 2010), 229.

⁵ Memorandum of the Romanian MFA to the Central Committee of the CPSU (not later than 8 August 1957), in: *KPSS i formirovanie sovetskoj politiki na Balkanah v 1950-h – pervoj polovine 1960-h gg. Sbornik dokumentov*, eds. N. G. Tomilina, K. P. Kozhda-georgi-Zimari, N. D. Smirnova, A. A. Yaz’kova i dr. [The CPSU and the formation of the Soviet policy in the Balkans in the 1950s – the first half of the 1960s. Collection of documents] (Saloniki: Paratiritis, 2003), 136–140. This volume was published in Thessaloniki (Greece) by the Institute for Balkan Studies in Greek and Russian.

⁶ E. Chatzēvasileiou, *Greece and the Cold War: Frontline state, 1952-1967* (London: Routledge, 2006), 93–95; L. Kourkouvelas. “Denuclearization on NATO’s Southern

emphasized the relations between Romania and Greece in the shadow of the great powers in connection with the Bucharest initiative. Her research analyzed the goals of the Romanian Greek rapprochement in this period, and its limits and benefits in terms of propaganda. It revealed that, for Bucharest and Moscow, the Stoica Plan led to a peripheral destabilization of the West. As for the Greek side, it allowed a kind of blackmail around the participation in the NATO alliance. At the end, the global logic of the Cold War won over the regional commentary that described Moscow's attitude to this Romanian initiative extremely harshly, pointing out the logic of Balkan cooperation.⁷ However, later on, some researchers continued to ignore "the Chivu Stoica Plan", failing to mention it even in cases where the discussed topic or chronological framework seemed to require it.⁸ Even the seminal work by Serbian historian V. Cvetković sees this Romanian initiative of September 10th 1957, as an insignificant episode.⁹

In Russian historiography, a negative attitude towards the "Chivu Stoica Plan" was rooted in special Soviet expert works of limited distribution. It was formed before 1989, when any foreign policy step of the Ceausescu regime was perceived with suspicion. This attitude spilled over into this commentary on the publication of the Memorandum of the Romanian MFA (August 9th 1957). The authors of this note considered that "the Soviet Union from the very beginning did not support the idea of inter-Balkan cooperation, seeing it as a possibility for creating, beyond its control, a regional bloc with the participation of its allies in the Warsaw Pact and COMECON". According to these influential ex-Soviet (and by the early 2000s, Russian, but no less influential) experts on

Front Allied Reactions to Soviet Proposals, 1957–1963," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14/4 (2012), 202–203; A.S. Gladysheva, "Poziciya Rumynii po nerasprostraneniyu yadernogo oruzhiya (1955–1968)", [Romania's position on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons], *Slavyanovedenie* 5 (2018), 63. This dominant interpretation of Stoica's initiative (1957) as regional denuclearization was challenged only once, by Prof. John O. Iatrides (Southern Connecticut State University) in his review of one of those texts. See: *H-Diplo Article Reviews* (2013. No. 411), 4. Updated, 13 June 2014; <http://h-diplo.org/reviews/PDF/AR411.pdf>

⁷ I. Gridan, "Le plan Stoica et les relations entre la Roumanie et la Grèce au tournant de la guerre froide (1957) [The Stoica Plan and the Relationship between Romania and Greece at a Turning Point in the Cold War (1957)]". *Cahiers Balkaniques* 44 (2016), 1–14.

⁸ A. Florin, "Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Romania's Eastern Neighbourhood", *Eurimedes* 11 (2011), 11–29; I. Gridan, « L'influence du facteur soviétique sur les relations entre la Roumanie et la Syrie (1955–1975) », *Outre-mers* 94/354–355 (2007), 107–132.

⁹ V. Cvetković, *Pogled iza gvozdena zavese. Jugoslovenska politika prema zemljama narodne demokratije u susedstvu 1953–1958*, [A look through the Iron Curtain. Yugoslav policy towards the neighboring countries of people's democracy 1953–1958] (Belgrade: INIS, 2013) 428–429.

the Balkan region, the proposals of Ahivu Stoika of September 10th “were not published in the official Soviet press”.¹⁰

These assessments heavily influenced the views of subsequent Russian texts. A.S. Stykalin also believed that “the Soviet Union did not support the idea of Balkan cooperation in forms that did not involve the active (and guiding) participation of the Soviet side in it)” considering it “a danger of the emergence of a regional bloc out of Soviet control” [...] “capable of strengthening centrifugal tendencies inside the Soviet camp”. The renowned author also considered as “indicative” that the Romanian proposals “found very little echo in the Soviet press”. In his opinion, the reason for the initiative was the “geopolitical vacuum that appeared as a result of the stagnation of the Balkan Pact.” He also paid attention to the position of Romanian leader Gheorghiu Gheorghiu-Dej, who (from the end of 1956), according to Stykalin, “already at that time showed a tendency towards a more independent foreign policy”, trying to create “more purposeful mechanisms to counter Soviet liberal influences generated by the 20th CPSU Congress and Khrushchev’s anti-Stalinist revelations”.¹¹ Several years later, the productive Russian academic scholar A. A. Ulunyan, in his voluminous book *The Balkan Shield of Socialism*, sidelined the “Chivu Stoica plan” of 1957, depicting it by synthesizing the works of Russian and Western historians and agreeing with the majority of previous judgments about the negative assessment of it in Moscow and the minimal interest in it expressed by Balkan Pact member countries, including Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, at the same time, the experienced researcher mentioned the importance of the “Stoica Plan” for “the Romanian leaders for strengthening the position of their state in relations with the Balkan countries”.¹²

The contradictory processes of de-Stalinization that had been unfolding in the Soviet camp since the spring of 1953 (and especially from the summer of 1956) went in parallel with the creation of the Warsaw Pact (May 1955) and questioned the legitimacy of the presence of Soviet troops in the territory of Romania and Hungary. All these events became elements of Moscow’s new foreign policy course after unrests in Poland and Hungary (June – early November

¹⁰ KPSS *i formirovanie sovetской politiki na Balkanah ...* [The CPSU and the formation of Soviet policy in the Balkans...], 140.

¹¹ A. S. Stykalin, “Proekty regional’nogo sotrudnichestva chernomorskih i balkanskikh gosudarstv i poziciya SSSR (1950-e – nachalo 1960-h godov)” [Regional Cooperation Projects of the Black Sea and Balkan States and the Position of the USSR (1950s - early 1960s)], *Studia Balcanica* (2010), 328; 334–335.

¹² A. A. Ulunyan, *Balkanskij «shchit socializma». Oboronnaya politika Albanii, Bolgarii, Rumynii i Yugoslavii (seredina 50-h gg. – 1980 g.)* [Balkan “shield of socialism”. Defense policy of Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia (mid-1950s – 1980)] (Moskva: Russkij fond sodejstviya obrazovaniyu i nauke, 2013), 24.

1956). The Soviet leadership sought to streamline new frames of relations with its post-Stalinist ex-satellite states. Moscow sought ways and methods to transform its relations into partnership, trying to implement principles proclaimed in the Declaration on equal relations between the countries of the Soviet camp of October 30th 1956, after Moscow began to implement them in practice in January 1957. At the same time, forceful methods of organizing confrontation with the West continued to be relevant in the spring of 1957. Moscow reacted positively to Tirana's proposal to strengthen the naval base on the Albanian coast. Having studied this proposal, the Defense Minister of the USSR, G.K. Zhukov, reported to the Soviet leadership the desirability of accepting Tirana's initiative, describing it as "expedient". Nevertheless, in his opinion, it was "desirable" "given the political side of this issue [...] that this base should be Albanian, since the creation of a Soviet naval base on the coast of the PRA [People's Republic of Albania] could provoke a sharp reaction from the Western powers." The Minister "judged it possible to organize the deployment of 4 medium submarines, 4 small anti-submarine ships and auxiliary vessels in the Gulf of Vlora. On April 18, the Kremlin decided to send a group of six Soviet specialists headed by the Deputy Commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Vice Admiral S.K. Chursin, to Albania to exchange views on the creation of a naval base there.¹³ Over the same days, the Soviet leaders, agreeing with the plans of the military leadership of the USSR (after discussions at an earlier meeting with the military delegations of the countries of the Soviet bloc in January 1957) took the decision "to send a group of specialist officers of the Navy to Poland, Romania, Bulgaria to assess the possibility of using the naval bases of these countries "in case of temporary deployment of USSR Navy forces in them, if the situation should require".¹⁴

In mid-June 1957, Moscow received a telegram from the USSR Ambassador to Romania, A.A. Yepishev, who reported that "Comrade Gheorghiu-Gheorghiu-Dej expressed the desire to take some steps to further ease international tension and improve relations between the countries of the socialist camp with Greece and Turkey". Yepishev informed Moscow that "as one of these steps Gheorghiu-Gheorghiu-Dej suggests, it is possible to take the initiative to sign a non-aggression pact between the Balkan countries." The Ambassador also transmitted Dej's view that, if the Soviet leadership should agree to this idea, Bucharest was ready to "send Romanian representatives to Moscow for consultations and development of possible practical measures".¹⁵

¹³ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 205. L. 25–27. Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj arhiv novejshej istorii (hereinafter – RGANI). F. 3. Op. 12. D. 205. L. 25–27. Russian State Archive of Contemporary History.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, L. 37.

¹⁵ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 235. L. 26. Yepishev's message was transmitted in two cipher telegrams Nos. 207–208, which, like most such reports, are still inaccessible to research-

Experts from the Soviet MFA positively assessed Dej's proposal. On June 18th, Foreign Minister Gromyko advised the Soviet leadership to respond affirmatively to Dej's proposal. He believed that "the implementation of such an event by the countries of the socialist camp would help to strengthen their leading role in the struggle for peace and ease tension in the Balkans" and would expose the hostile propaganda of the reactionary circles in Greece and Turkey about a danger to them "from their northern neighbors"; In his opinion, such a step "would intensify the activities of the democratic circles in these countries in their struggle to improve relations with the socialist countries and would also benefit the cause of normalizing relations between Albania and Bulgaria with Greece and Turkey." Gromyko believed that "the event, to a certain extent, will contribute to the undermining of the Baghdad and Balkan pacts and the rapprochement of Yugoslavia with the countries of the socialist camp". Bucharest's initiative was called "appropriate ... considering that Romania has the closest relations with Greece and Turkey, as well as Yugoslavia, and the leading circles of these countries are interested in further improving relations with Romania." According to experts of the Soviet MFA, "the government of Romania could turn to the governments of Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia with a proposal to conclude a non-aggression pact in which the participating countries mutually undertake to refrain from any attack against each other and respect independent rights, sovereignty, territorial integrity and, in the event of disputes and conflicts, the parties will resolve these disputes exclusively by peaceful means in a friendly exchange of views".¹⁶ Gromyko suggested that the top Soviet leadership would decide on a positive answer at their next meeting on June 22nd.¹⁷ However, the political struggle that unfolded in the Soviet leadership in the last weeks of June in the aftermath of the unsuccessful attempt by the majority of the members of the Presidium to remove Khrushchev (supported by the majority of CC CPSU members) from senior government positions did not allow them to give an answer to Gheorghiu-Dej in that period.¹⁸

The instructions to the USSR Ambassador to Romania were adopted only on July 5th in the same version as the Foreign Ministry had proposed on June 18th: "Inform Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej that Moscow is positive about the proposal he made regarding measures to conclude a non-aggression pact be-

ers for academic purposes. Therefore, the exact date of the meeting and the details of its content remain unknown.

¹⁶ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 235. L. 26–27.

¹⁷ A. Sorokin, *Prakticheskij rabotnik Georgij Malenkov*. [Practical Worker Georgij Malenkov] (Moskva: AFK «Sistema» – Politicheskaya enciklopediya, 2021), 649–653.

¹⁸ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 234. L. 5. To discuss the issue, Gromyko, his deputy Semyonov, and Zamchevsky, head of the IV European Department of the USSR Foreign Ministry, were summoned to the meeting.

tween the Balkan countries. It would be expedient for our Romanian friends to take this initiative. Say that, for the purpose of a preliminary discussion of the issue and preparation of possible practical steps, we agree to see Romanian representatives, as suggested by Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej".¹⁹

It took the Romanian side a month to prepare the proposals. During this time, the circumstances for the implementation of the initiative in the Balkans had become much more favorable. On August 1–2, near Bucharest, in the village of Snagov, a summit was held between the delegations of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.²⁰ These talks created the impression that a new fundamental rapprochement between Moscow and Belgrade was beginning, which would inevitably have a positive effect on the situation in the region. To date, researchers are unaware of any evidence that the Soviet delegation during this visit to Romania had consultations on this issue or at least touched upon it in some form during brief meetings with the hosts.

In early August, the Romanians transmitted through diplomatic channels to Moscow two documents containing detailed proposals elaborating on Dej's idea. The first of these was a memorandum substantiating the importance of an attempt to foster cooperation between the Balkan countries. The second was the draft text for the future letter to the Prime Minister of Turkey from the Romanian government. A delegation from the Romanian MFA was about to arrive in Moscow to discuss them.²¹

In this memorandum of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, the authors went much further than the necessity to "conclude a non-aggression pact between the Balkan countries," which Dej had proposed to Yepishev "as one of the steps" in mid-June. The Romanian text outlined a whole package of measures to create multilateral regional cooperation among the Balkan countries. In the introductory part, it was stated that the international environment now allowed the RPR [Romanian People's Republic] to take this initiative. The authors believed that, in order to create strong security guarantees, the Balkan countries should commit to refraining from any act of aggression in their relations, resolv-

¹⁹ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 234. L. 25.

²⁰ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 260. L. 3; 6–8. A. B. Edemskij, "O fiksacii dogovorennostej sovetko-yugoslavskoj vstrechi v Rumynii 1–2 avgusta 1957 g." [On fixing the agreements of the Soviet-Yugoslav meeting in Romania on August 1–2, 1957] *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya v XX veke. Sbornik nauchnyh statej*. Вып. 5. (Kirov, 2016), 228–249; Н. Ж. Петровић, *Војна сарадња Југославије са Совјетским Савезом 1953–1964 године. Погледи из Београда* [Yugoslav Military Cooperation with the Soviet Union 1953–1964. Views from Belgrade] (Београд: Медијационти Одрба, 2016), 99–103. The assumption by I. Gridan that the idea of Balkan cooperation was discussed in Moscow on July 18 by Khrushchev, Zhivkov, Hodza, Kardelj and Ranković (see: I. Gridan, "Le plan Stoica...", 4) still lacks archival findings to support it.

²¹ RGANI... F. 5. Op. 49. D. 19 L. 186.

ing disputed issues through peaceful mediation and arbitration. They also considered the peaceful development of the region as an important contribution to the easing of international tension. The fact that this initiative was put forward not by a great power (USSR – A. E.) but by Romania was considered by the authors to be important for its success, “since in the past, albeit under different conditions”, Romania had developed fruitful relations with the Balkan countries. With a view to the comprehensive development of economic and cultural cooperation, the Romanian government proposed the creation of special bodies that take into account the interests of the Balkan participating countries and submit appropriate recommendations to the governments. The cooperation was supposed to cover all spheres, ranging from transport, energy, and other economic sectors to “the establishment of common scientific and cultural institutions, such as the Institute of Balkan History, the Institute of Balkan Folklore, etc.”

A serious specific measure, the document pointed out, was the proposal to send letters on behalf of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Romanian People’s Republic to prime ministers of other countries in the region, suggesting to convene in Bucharest in November 1957 a conference of the heads of state of all Balkan countries to discuss the proposal of the Romanian government and any other issues related to the cooperation in the Balkans that the participants of the conference may put forward. Its minimum result, according to experts from the Romanian MFA, would be the adoption of a general declaration, like that of the Bandung Conference, concerning peace, security, non-aggression and all-around cooperation between the Balkan countries based on the principles of peaceful coexistence. A second general document could be adopted as a special declaration containing mutual assurances of non-aggression.

Justifying the need for the initiative, experts from the Romanian MFA emphasized the importance of developing economic ties with Greece and Turkey. Bucharest also believed that “the signing of an agreement and the establishment of cooperation between Turkey and Greece and the Balkan socialist countries could influence and, under public pressure, gradually weaken Greece and Turkey’s ties with the North Atlantic Pact” and “put into question the Balkan Pact” as well even if it would “continue to the memorandum hoped, would be “a step towards the abolition of the three-sided Balkan Pact”.

Romanian experts also planned “preliminary consultations on these issues with the Albanian and Bulgarian governments.” Bucharest stressed the particular importance of Yugoslavia’s position, believing that statements of official Belgrade in support of this proposal “would have a positive impact on the position of Greece and Turkey”. The document exuded confidence that Belgrade would be able to attract cooperation because the Yugoslav government “would find it difficult to explain to the Yugoslav people” why the country had joined the Balkan Pact but refused to cooperate with the Balkans as that would contradict

the policy of 'active peaceful coexistence' proclaimed by Belgrade. In this memorandum, the experts espoused a realistic approach, considering the possibility that Turkey and Greece might reject the listed proposals. They believed that the listed measures, if Turkey and Greece did not agree to them, would contribute "to exposing the anti-people policy of their ruling circles".²²

The second document submitted to Moscow, along with the memorandum, was the draft for a letter to the Prime Minister of Turkey. This text consisted of 18 points of different lengths. The content of most of them echoed or was close to the content of the note. Only Paragraph 11 was new. It proposed "to provide for the development of fruitful cooperation [...] in research in the field of peaceful use of nuclear energy".²³ Some of the others recalled the positive experience of the previous successful cooperation between Romania and Turkey. The title of the proposed document showed that, although letters were to be sent to the heads of all governments of the countries in the region, as indicated in the memorandum, Bucharest put a special emphasis on Turkey.²⁴

The content of both documents convincingly indicates that the main idea expressed by Gheorghiu-Gheorghiu-Dej in June (Non-Aggression Pact between the states of the region) was significantly expanded, becoming a proposal "on the organization of collective regional cooperation among the Balkan countries." The initial proposal, a non-aggression pact, was included in a broader cooperation platform.

The positive Soviet assessments of the Romanian proposals were detailed in the materials prepared in the Soviet MFA. In a brief note dated August 12th, Gromyko's deputy V. V. Kuznetsov considered it possible "to agree in principle with the proposals of the Romanian comrades." Kuznetsov thought it important to suggest some adjustments ("During the upcoming conversations, make some comments on the draft letter to the Prime Minister of Turkey"). MFA was to "suggest that the text ought to more clearly express the idea that the Balkan regional cooperation should help reduce tensions in relations between countries and should be an important step towards creating a system of common European security". Kuznetsov considered it necessary for Bucharest to consult not only with Albania and Bulgaria but "with all the members of the Warsaw Pact." The Soviet MFA's experts also judged it "expedient to hold consultations with the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, which should be agreed with the Romanian delegation." The memorandum also discussed consultations with Yugoslavia: "if the Romanian side should raise the question of holding this consultation by the Soviet Union, consent to this". The idea of sending letters to

²² RGANI. F. 5. Op. 49. D. 19. L. 190–191.

²³ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 49. D. 19. L. 198.

²⁴ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 49. D. 19. L. 194.

the Greek and Turkish heads of government was also approved. The timing of their delivery, as well as their date of publication, was to be determined after an exchange of views with other socialist countries. All these suggestions were included in the draft instructions to the Soviet delegation for the meeting with the Romanian side. The draft and accompanying documents were urgently considered and approved by the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU on the day the Romanian delegation, headed by Foreign Minister Maurer, arrived in Moscow. In the adopted decision, the upcoming meetings were described as “an exchange of views with the delegation of the Romanian Foreign Ministry.”²⁵ That day, a document with the full title “Instructions to Soviet representatives in the exchange of views with representatives of Romania”, prepared by the USSR Foreign Ministry, was also adopted. The last point in this text discussed the importance of the agreement with the Romanians that the Soviet side had to “give consent to the Romanian friends to assist in the final preparation of the text of the documents” after they finish consultations with all the countries of the socialist bloc and Yugoslavia.²⁶

The results of the consultations held on June 15–16 are known from the “Record of negotiations between the delegations of the Romanian Foreign Ministry and the USSR Foreign Ministry.”²⁷ A comparison of “Instructions...” and “Records...” demonstrates that, during the consultations, the Romanian side accepted the Soviet recommendations. The parties specified the goals of the initiative: “The proposal of the Romanian government to create a collective regional cooperation of the Balkan countries is a useful initiative in easing international tension and strengthening peace not only in Europe but also in Asia. This measure will help strengthen the socialist camp and serve to undermine the positions of the imperialist powers in the Balkan region.” Sending letters on behalf of the Government of Romania to the heads of state in the region “as a first step, was considered expedient.”²⁸ As for the draft letter to the Prime Minister of Turkey, in early August, it was agreed to use it as “the basis of the letter to the heads of governments of other Balkan countries.” It was also decided “to express in a letter more clearly the idea that Balkan regional cooperation should help reduce tensions in relations between countries and should be an important step towards creating a system of common European security.” It was also considered important in the texts of the letters to governments “to emphasize the idea that

²⁵ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. 141. L. 125–126.

²⁶ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. 141. L. 159.

²⁷ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. 142. L. 16–18. The document was signed by Romanian Deputy head of MFA Lazarescu, and by I.K. Zamchevsky, head of 4th Department of Soviet MFA (responsible for relations with South-East Europe) as a member of the Collegium of the Soviet MFA (*Ibid.*, L.18).

²⁸ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. 142. L. 16.

this cooperation is not a separate action of the Balkan countries and will not impede the development of friendship between these countries and other countries that are part of the regional cooperation of the Balkan countries." The result of the exchange of opinions in Moscow between the two delegations was also "the recognition as expedient" of holding preliminary consultations in the following sequence: first of all, with Albania and Bulgaria, then with Yugoslavia and the countries participating in the Warsaw Pact. The delegations also "agreed that extensive consultations with Albania and Bulgaria as parties to the proposed agreement, and then with Hungary, the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia, would be held by Romania simultaneously. A special approach to Poland was agreed: "It was considered expedient that the Romanian government should do this after negotiations on this issue with the above countries." Joint actions regarding Belgrade were also agreed upon. "In consultation with Yugoslavia, the Romanian side will report that the issue of collective regional cooperation of the Balkan countries was discussed with the Soviet Union and received its full support." Additional consultations (a "corresponding meeting" of representatives of the USSR and Romania) on Yugoslavia were specifically stipulated if "in the course of consultations with Yugoslavia, the Romanian friends need to consult with the government of the USSR." For its part, the USSR took upon itself the task of exchanging "information and consultations with China and other socialist countries of Asia." The attitude towards the Balkan Pact was also specifically stipulated. Both sides confirmed that it was "essentially directed against the socialist countries". It was also described as "expedient", "in the event that its participants, in response to the proposal of the Romanian government, offer the rest of the Balkan countries to join the Balkan Pact", the participants in the Soviet bloc should "without rejecting this proposal, stipulate entry into this Pact with the conditions that this step would aim to eliminate the military side of this Pact and bring it closer to the proposed regional cooperation".²⁹

As can be seen from the signed document, at this stage, the initial Romanian emphasis on the letter to the Turkish Prime Minister was glossed over, and sending letters to both Turkey and Greece was considered an equally important step. During the consultations, an additional decision arose on the information and propaganda support of the Romanian initiative: "It was also recognized as expedient to send an informative letter to the United Nations with a request to forward it to all UN member states" simultaneously with sending letters to the Prime Minister of Greece and Turkey, in the expectation that this "will attract the attention of the general public to the peace initiative of the Romanian government". The last agreed item of the document was the synchronization of the deadlines: "[...] to complete all consultations and preparation of relevant

²⁹ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. L. 17–18.

materials” for their publication before the opening of the 12th session of the UN General Assembly. In addition, it was decided (“deemed appropriate”) to use the press to shape public opinion (the wording in the document is “mobilization of public opinion” – A. E.) in support of this proposal.” The press departments of both foreign ministries were instructed to “develop appropriate plans for this campaign.” In addition, “it was considered desirable, after the completion of preliminary consultations with other socialist countries, for representatives of the Romanian MFA and the Soviet MFA to meet to finalize the text of documents on this issue”.³⁰

The results of consultations in Moscow between the diplomats of the two countries were discussed in Bucharest at a meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Romania on August 19. As soon as Yepishev, the Soviet ambassador to Romania, was informed about the results of this meeting, he reported to Moscow that the Romanian leadership “for tactical reasons, considers as expedient to begin an exchange of views with the Yugoslav leaders at a high level simultaneously with consultations with Albanian and Bulgarian friends”.³¹ Therefore, they were planning to send to Belgrade “after August 23rd a delegation of members of the Politburo headed by comrade Gheorghiu-Dej”. Explaining the position of the Politburo of the Romanian Workers’ Party (henceforth RWP), Yepishev added: “The Romanian friends proceed from the fact that their informal negotiations with Yugoslav representatives at a high level will help clarify Yugoslavia’s attitude towards the Romanian proposal, bypassing the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the FPRY K. Popović as Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej said Romanians do not trust him”.³²

On August 22nd, at a meeting of the Presidium of the CC CPSU, the action plan developed at a joint meeting of the Soviet MFA and the Romanian MFA was approved in the final document after the consultations. In addition, information was sent to the Soviet Ambassador to Beijing to inform the Chinese leadership of the ongoing preparations.³³ Beijing was informed of “the preliminary discussion at the request of Romanian friends” held in Moscow at

³⁰ *Ibid.* L. 18. On August 18, Deputy Gromyko Kuznetsov succinctly and briefly reported to the Soviet leadership on the consultations, drawing attention to the most important agreed points (RGANI, F. 3. Op. 12. D. 257. L. 29–30.)

³¹ RGANI. F.3. Op. 12. L. 25. Op. 14. L. 18.

³² RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 257. L. 34. Bucharest’s interest in Belgrade’s position was not surprising. Even at the very beginning of the development of the “Stoica Plan”, the experts of the Romanian MFA believed that “special attention should be paid to how this issue will be presented to Yugoslavia”. And they considered it necessary “to interest the Yugoslav leaders in accepting the invitation to take part in the conference, because this would affect the position of Greece and possibly of Turkey. See: *KPSS i formirovaniye sovetsskoy politiki na Balkanah*, 139–140.

³³ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. 142. L. 2.

the Foreign Ministry level, and the upcoming consultations "with all countries of the socialist camp", with a subsequent return "to this issue to prepare appropriate proposals, taking into account the opinions of friends." The text of the telegram to the Soviet Ambassador ended with a request to Beijing to report "the opinion of Chinese friends on the essence of the Romanian proposal". A special expression of trust in Beijing (unlike the Polish leadership these months) was the instruction to the Soviet ambassador that, "if the Chinese comrades ask for the text of the messages, you can do so".³⁴ The Romanian visit to Yugoslavia was also discussed. The day before, on August 21st, experts from the USSR Foreign Ministry evaluated the decision of the Romanian leadership: "The arguments of the Romanian comrades about having consultations with Yugoslavia simultaneously with consultations with Albania and Bulgaria are justified". As for the suggestion to send a delegation headed by Gheorghiu-Dej to Belgrade, they thought it appropriate "to express doubts to the Romanian friends about the expediency of Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej's trip" since "the trip of such a representative delegation emphasizes the special interest of Romania in this event and puts Gheorghiu-Dej in the position of a petitioner in front of the Yugoslavs". Soviet experts admitted the possibility of a negative attitude of the Yugoslavs to the Romanian proposal, which "would make it difficult for the Romanian comrades to continue the negotiations". The hope of the Romanians to use a direct top-level meeting between Dej and Josip Broz Tito to "isolate the negative influence of Koča Popović" seemed to the experts as ill-conceived since "there are no sufficient grounds to believe that K. Popović would not be informed about the Romanian proposal". With this in mind, the experts considered it possible "to advise the Romanian friends to hold preliminary consultations with Yugoslavia without the participation of Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej, so that, if necessary, Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej would be able to take some additional steps, taking into account the identified preliminary position of the Yugoslavs".³⁵

The following Soviet officials discussed Yepishev's telegram on Gheorghiu-Dej's idea to go to Belgrade and talk to Tito: Suslov, Brezhnev, Pervukhin and Kuznetsov. It was decided that Yepishev ought to inform the leadership of Romania that Moscow "considers it desirable [...] to exercise caution" and postpone the trip to Belgrade of the Romanian delegation headed by Gheorghiu-Dej". An "incognito" trip to Belgrade for consultations was also described as "inappropriate", since the visit of "such an authoritative delegation ... would be impossible to hide".³⁶

³⁴ RGANI. F. 3, Op. 14, D. 142, L. 19–21.

³⁵ RGANI. F. 3, Op. 14, D. 142, L. 19–21. RGANI. F. 3, Op. 12, D. 257, L. 34–35.

³⁶ RGANI. F. 3, Op. 14, D. 142, L. 2.

To this day, we know only the most general and fragmentary facts about the consultations of the representatives of Romania with their counterparts in the countries of the Soviet bloc and Yugoslavia on August 29th.³⁷ On that day, Belgrade hosted Bodnăraș, a member of the Romanian Politburo, and Foreign Minister Maurer “to discuss final plans for the proposed conference”.³⁸ However, the subsequent developments showed that the consultations were successful.

At the beginning of September, the preparations were proceeding smoothly. On September 5th, during a visit to Moscow by Maurer, the head of the Romanian MFA, the draft of a letter from Chivu Stoica to the Prime Minister of Turkey was finalized. On September 6th, the Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, reporting to the top Soviet leadership on the final consultations with Maurer, wrote that Bucharest intended to send a letter to Ankara and “letters of similar content to the governments of Greece, Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria on September 10–12”. The Soviet minister recalled that “the draft letter submitted by the Romanian comrades was prepared with taking into account the exchange of views with Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia” and the comments made during the Soviet-Romanian consultations in mid-August in Moscow. Gromyko also reported that the Soviet MFA had considered the draft letter brought by Maurer and, together with representatives of the Romanian MFA, agreed on its text.³⁹ The following day, the decision proposed by Gromyko was formalized as a resolution of the top Soviet leadership “On the Letter of the Romanian Government to the Prime Minister of Turkey on the establishment of collective regional cooperation of the Balkan countries.” It was decided to “agree with the prepared text”.⁴⁰

The personal messages Chivu Stoica sent on September 10 to the Balkan heads of state (found in the Archives of Athens and Belgrade)⁴¹ marked the

³⁷ On the meeting with the Albanian side on August 29, 1957, see: A. S. Gladysheva, “Poziciya Rumynii po nerasprostranenyu”, 63.

³⁸ The consultations became public knowledge when they were revealed in the American press just three weeks later. See: H. Salisbury, “Tito-Rumania Tie Close”. *The New York Times*, 27. IX 1957, 3. A day earlier, a short vague note about this visit was included in the daily CIA Briefing Bulletin. See: 5 Yugoslavs favor Rumanian proposal for Balkan states meeting. *Current CIA Intelligence Bulletin* (19th Sept. 1957), 7. There is also a doubtful version of the content of the conversations known in historiography. See: A. S. Stykalin, “Proekty regional'nogo sotrudnichestva”, 327, 335.

³⁹ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 264 L. 105.

⁴⁰ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. 148 L. 5.

⁴¹ E. Chatzēvasileiou, *Greece and the Cold War*, 95; V. Cvetković, *Pogled iza gvozdene zavese*, 428. The basic version of Russian historiography that the initiative was launched with the publication of his Appeal in the Romanian central newspaper *Scienceia* on September 10th (see: KPSS *i formirovanie sovetsoj politiki na Balkanah*, 140) should be considered erroneous.

beginning of the third stage of the Romanian initiative – the stage of implementation. On September 13, Tito replied to Stoica.⁴² After Bucharest received the reply, the initiative became public. On September 17th, the Romanian newspaper *Scinteia* published an Appeal to the Heads of Government of the Balkan countries. It occupied almost the entire front page of the issue. On September 18, the message of Chivu Stoica and J. Broz Tito's reply were published on the front pages in the central Yugoslav newspapers simultaneously with the publication of Tito's reply on the same day in *Scinteia*. The popular Belgrade newspaper *Politika* also published a positive editorial commentary on the same day.⁴³ On September 19th, *Scinteia* once again ran a lengthy commentary on its front page, praising the "Stoica plan" and its enthusiastic reception it in the world.

The Soviet central press, in accordance with the arrangements made at the consultations on August 15–16, began to report in detail on the Stoica Plan from September 18, when an article entitled "For all-round peaceful cooperation between all Balkan countries. Message from Chivu Stoica to the Heads of Government of the Balkan States" was published by *Izvestia* and "Pravda."⁴⁴ On September 19th, the Soviet media published an article titled "Yugoslavia Supports the Romanian proposal". The next day, both *Pravda* and *Izvestia* reported the responses of the heads of government of Bulgaria and Albania.⁴⁵ On September 27th, the central Soviet press reported a positive commentary on the "Chivu Stoica Plan" published a day earlier in the Belgrade-based newspaper *Borba*. A detailed review of the situation with the "Stoica Plan" was made on September 29th in a generalizing Soviet article called "In the interests of peace and security in the Balkans."⁴⁶

From the very beginning, when substantiating the plan for multilateral cooperation, experts from the Romanian MFA considered the possibility that Athens and Ankara might refuse to participate in the general meeting proposed by Bucharest. After the consent of Belgrade, Tirana and Sofia, the development of events went precisely according to this scenario. Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis did so in a mild manner. In his reply to Stoica on September 23rd, he said that trust between the Balkan states had not yet been re-established, high-

⁴² V. Cvetković, *Pogled iza gvozdena zavese*, 429.

⁴³ *Борба* (18. IX 1957), 1; *Политика* (18. IX 1957), 1; 3.

⁴⁴ The Soviet central press published articles entitled "President Tito's response to the message of the Prime Minister of Chivu Stoica". See: *Известия* (19. IX 1957) 4; *Правда* (19. IX 1957), 4. Both articles were marked as news received from Bucharest by TASS on September 17, citing the Romanian news agency as a source.

⁴⁵ The article was titled "Balkan peoples should live in peace and friendship". See: *Правда* (20. IX 1957), 4.

⁴⁶ Besides other things, the text also cited the response of the President of the FPRY Tito, describing it as a positive reaction to the message of Stoica (*Izvestia* 29. IX 1957. P. 3).

lighting the need to discuss existing bilateral problems in relations among the Balkan countries. Already on the same day, the Yugoslav news agency TANJUG reported on the letter, and the following day, the Yugoslav press reported its content. Karamanlis' reply, dated September 23rd, was published (like all previous materials – in a conspicuous place – in the upper right part of the front page) in *Scinteia* on September 26th. Official Ankara did not reply to Bucharest at all. Therefore, this part of the planned Romanian initiatives – the letter to Ankara, so long and carefully prepared already by early August, specifically intended for Turkey, involving, from August 9th, the active participation of Soviet experts – did not succeed.

The available Soviet documents from the Russian archives (despite the still limited access) suggest that, at the end of September, Romanian diplomacy showed no signs of despondency about the position of Greece and Turkey. In late September, a Romanian delegation headed by the Secretary of the Central Committee of the RWP Preotyas paid an unofficial visit to Yugoslavia to discuss with the Yugoslav officials (Deputy Chairman of the SIV Ranković, member of the Yugoslav government M. Todorović and Deputy State Secretary for Foreign Affairs D. Vidić) a number of issues related to Stoica's proposals on Balkan regional cooperation. On September 30th, the Romanian Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Nicolae Guine,⁴⁷ shared his assessments of the current situation with the Soviet envoy in Belgrade Brykin. The Soviet diplomat understood them as the opinion of the Romanian government about the reactions of the Balkan countries to the proposals of the Prime Minister of Romania. Guine said that Bucharest considers positively the reply of the Greek government "as it opens up opportunities for further negotiations with Greece about convening a meeting". Guine also lamented that Bucharest was counting on Ankara's response, which "would not close the door for Turkey's participation in the proposed meeting". In his memorandum on this conversation, Brykin wrote that the Romanians considered it possible "to take measures that would contribute to fostering trust between the socialist countries and Turkey and Greece in order to create the preconditions for holding the conference. Prior to this, it was believed in Bucharest that bilateral negotiations should be held between those Balkan countries that have unresolved bilateral issues, provided that they "be conducted on the initiative of the countries concerned and without any mediation of a third country". At the same time, Bucharest believed that, already at this stage, it would be possible to organize "a number of events with the participation of all Balkan countries", including preparations for the organization of a regional conference of the Balkan countries through UNESCO, the creation of a Balkan

⁴⁷ Nicolae Guine (1911–1999) Romanian Ambassador to Yugoslavia in 1954–59, in 1960–66 – Romanian Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

group within the Inter-Parliamentary Union, etc. Brykin also marked the words of Guine, who said that in Romania, they intended "to renew the activities of the Balkan Institute in Bucharest", which operated there before the Second World War and researched the history and culture of all the Balkan countries with the participation of scholars from these countries. According to Guine, the Yugoslav side shared the views expressed by the Romanians. As a result, the Romania delegation was "satisfied with the negotiations with the Yugoslavs and believed that there [was] complete unity of views between Romania and Yugoslavia and opportunities for further close cooperation on this issue". The Romanian ambassador described Belgrade's position: "From the very beginning, the Yugoslavs reacted very positively to the proposal of the Romanian government. The response of the Yugoslav side to this proposal was as agreed in advance". Guine also mentioned the intention of Bucharest to further consult with Belgrade, as well as with Sofia and Tirana, on all issues related to the implementation of their proposals, which will not only strengthen trust between the two countries", but also "allow maintaining the initiative to convene a meeting of all Balkan countries". The ambassador noted that this was being done "not because Romania claims to be a leader among the Balkan countries", but based on the common interests of the Soviet bloc and the fact that Romania "of all the Balkan countries, has normal relations with all participants in the proposed meeting". Guine also noted that the Romanians had not noticed any Yugoslav "desire to seize the initiative of the Romanian government in this matter and achieve some of their goals". The Soviet diplomat understood that Bucharest believed that Yugoslavia "went into close cooperation with Romania in convening a conference of the Balkan countries, proceeding from its common foreign policy line" and was "not opposed to nullifying the significance of the Balkan Pact, primarily its military aspect, through the cooperation of all Balkan countries". Success in this, according to the Romanians, was possible "only by continuing this tactic and patient, persistent work", as well as building confidence in the Bucharest proposal from Greece and Turkey [while] neutralizing the negative publications of the Bulgarian press regarding Greece". The Soviet diplomat Brykin also took note of his interlocutor's statement that Bucharest "would not like for the proposal of the Romanian government to be discredited by the Western press as being inspired by the Soviet Union and under the pretext that Romania [was] playing the role of a Trojan horse in the cause of separating Greece and Turkey from the capitalist camp."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 49. D. 39. L. 303–307. This conversation is so far the only known document with a positive and optimistic assessment by both official Bucharest and Belgrade of the Chivu Stoica initiative by the end of September 1957. This contradicts the conclusions made in historiography and needs additional research. According to the Serbian researcher V. Cvetković, after Greece's graceful refusal to participate in the

It is known that already by October the “Chivu Stoica Plan” was not only minimized in the further actions of the Soviet bloc countries but simply disappeared from any international agenda without any serious reasons mentioned. The personal priorities of the participants, in one way or another connected with this Romanian initiative, should not be discounted. The Soviet leader Khrushchev and his inner circle, as it is now obvious, were busy for most of October 1957 preparing and implementing a plan to politically discredit and remove the “Marshal of Victory” Zhukov from power in order to strengthen Khrushchev’s personal power and consolidate the dominance of the Soviet Communist party apparatus over other social strata and groups in the Soviet Union. In addition, the appointment of Zamchevsky, the chief coordinator of the Soviet side in interactions with Romanian diplomats concerning the “Stoica plan”, as the Soviet ambassador to Yugoslavia on September 12th temporarily weakened the abilities and bureaucratic interest of the Soviet MFA in interactions with Bucharest on this issue. It should be also stressed that, as a result of Zamchevsky’s Belgrade appointment, even analytical materials on both Romania and Yugoslavia produced by the Soviet MFA at the very beginning of November 1957 contained no mention of either the “Stoica Plan” or any evaluations of activities of both states in the Balkan region.⁴⁹

An analysis of the new documents used in this study allows us to draw a number of conclusions, including that so far, there is no documentary evidence to allow one to reasonably believe that the Romanian initiative of September 10th 1957, was conceived as a response to the growing threat of the deployment of US nuclear weapons in the Balkan region. At the same time, the available archival documents make it possible to judge the initiative of Bucharest as Romanian, which appeared and was formulated without the direct influence of Moscow in its initial stages. It had various aims with an emphasis on the future large-scale interaction of the Balkan countries while taking into account the interests of the Soviet bloc as a whole. At the same time, there are no documentary grounds to assert that from the very beginning Moscow was resolutely against this attempt to organize such regional cooperation. After concretizing the initiative of

events proposed by Romania, Yugoslavia “was no longer in favor of holding some” conference, and its position evolved towards the approach of Greece, although Belgrade “did not declare such a position openly.” According to the researcher, “in Belgrade, where the connection between the Stoica initiative and the Balkan Pact was clearly understood as the ultimate goal to “...decompose the Balkan Pact”. On September 23, D. Vidić spoke about this to the Ambassador of Hungary, L. Cheby. V. Cvetković, *Pogled iza gvozdeno zavese*, 429–430.

⁴⁹ In the foreign policy segments of both memorandums on Romania and Yugoslavia produced by the advisers of the 4th European Department at Soviet MFA A. Golichenko and F. Gryaznov, there was no mention of the “Chivu Stoica Plan”. See: RGANI. F. 5. Op. 49. D. XX. L. 207–219; AVP RF. F. 0144. Op. 42. Pk. 177. D. 27. L. 69–76.

Gheorghiu-Dej in early August in two documents of the Romanian MFA, these proposals, originally intended to supplement Moscow's efforts in international affairs towards diffusing international tensions and resolving the situation in Europe, were adjusted and supplemented in Moscow during constant consultations until the very beginning of September 1957. Moreover, Stoica's appeals to the Balkan governments were covered in detail in the central Soviet and Romanian press after their public promotion on September 17th 1957.

To what extent was the "Stoica Plan" conceived by Gheorghiu-Dej in the frameworks of Soviet-Romanian interactions on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania and his desire to protect his authoritarian regime from the external influence of de-Stalinization from Moscow?⁵⁰ These questions require further research and careful consultation of new materials held mainly in Romanian archives, starting from the moment when Gheorghiu-Dej presented the idea to the Soviet ambassador to Romania in mid-June 1957, during the development of detailed Romanian proposals in July and early August, their discussion with the Soviet side in Moscow mid-August and final approval by the top leaderships of Romania and the Soviet Union. In any case, taking into account the preliminary reservations of Romanian diplomats about the possible negative reactions of Athens and Ankara in early August in the presented documents for further actions, the "Stoica Plan" and the subsequent actions for its implementation could not be considered a complete failure. Further research and careful study of documents is desirable, primarily in the archives of Romania and Balkan and other countries of the Soviet camp with which the Romanian representatives held consultations at the end of August and interacted in the autumn of 1957. Undoubtedly, it is important to include the relevant documents from American and Turkish archives in this research (at least on the same level as it was already done for Greece), bearing in mind the necessity for a more detailed study of the Turkish reaction to Stoica's proposal and the pressure exerted on Ankara by Washington to "neutralize" or even disrupt the implementation of Romanian efforts during September 1957.

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“Death to the Slavs!” The Italian-Yugoslav Relations on Mutual Minorities and the Impact of the 1961 Trieste Riots (1954–1964)

Abstract: After the 1954 Memorandum of Understanding of London, Italy and Yugoslavia settled their border dispute by partitioning what was formerly the Free Territory of Trieste. Furthermore, they also agreed to extend to each other's national minorities living in the two zones of the former Free Territory the protection measures established by the Special Statute, an annex to the Memorandum. Neither of the two countries fully complied with the Special Statute but wanted it to be implemented in the Zone administered by the other side. Italy wanted to negotiate all further implementations and new concessions on the basis of reciprocity, the main rationale for the protection measures stipulated in the Special Statute. In contrast, Yugoslavia wanted Italy to agree to the unilateral implementation of the Special Statute in Trieste and to other concessions. This led to a stalemate in the negotiations and consequently to the poor enforcement of the Special Statute, which caused rising tensions on the local level, even though, in the meantime, the overall diplomatic relations between the two countries continued to improve. Yugoslavia's increasing requests for unilateral implementation of the Special Statute and the Yugoslav-funded Slovene organisations in Italy resulted in a series of major anti-Yugoslav and anti-Slovene demonstrations in Trieste. After these riots and the ensuing debate on the minority issue, the need to rely on reciprocity also became evident to the Yugoslav diplomacy. Yugoslavia, therefore, dropped its old policy and started to improve the treatment of its Italian minority and agreed to negotiate based on the principle of reciprocity. This led to quick benefits for both minorities, and a new path that led Italy and Yugoslavia to sign new agreements on their mutual minorities, going even beyond the Special Statute.

Keywords: Italian-Yugoslav relations, Italian minority in Yugoslavia, Slovene minority in Italy, 1961 Trieste riots, diplomatic history, borderland minorities

“Death to the Slavs!” was one of the slogans shouted by some demonstrators as they attacked the construction site of a building that was to become the main Slovene cultural centre in Trieste. It was 4 February 1961, and this was one of the most serious in a long series of incidents that in February 1961 shook and shocked not only the city of Trieste and its Slovene minority, but also the Italian-Yugoslav relations regarding the issue of their mutual minorities.

In some respects, the 1961 Trieste riots were not news. For over a century, violence of varied intensity had been used as a tool in the national clash between

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Italians and South Slavs (especially Croats and Slovenes) in their large area of cohabitation between the Canale/Kanal Valley, in the present-day Republic of Italy, and the Bay of Kotor/Cattaro, in today's Montenegro.¹ However, what happened in Trieste in February 1961 was the first, unprecedented and, thankfully, last case of nationally motivated violence on such scale after Italy and Yugoslavia settled their main border dispute with the Memorandum of Understanding signed in London on 5 October 1954 (hereinafter MOU).²

Under the MOU, as is known, the Free Territory of Trieste (hereinafter FTT), created by the 1947 Treaty of Peace with Italy, was partitioned and divided between Italy and Yugoslavia.³ The former extended its civil administration to a territory (hereinafter Zone A) roughly corresponding to the former US-British Zone of the FTT (Trieste and five neighbouring municipalities between the Karst plateau and the farther North of Istria). The latter extended its civil administration to a territory (hereinafter Zone B) roughly corresponding to the former Yugoslav Zone of the FTT (an area that included the districts of Koper/Capodistria and Buje/Buie in Northwest Istria).

After the MOU entered into force, the two Zones and their minorities experienced a set of phenomena quite similar to those that occurred in some parts of the Italian-Yugoslav borderland that had previously been assigned to either Italy or Yugoslavia by the 1947 Treaty of Peace, namely the province of Gorizia, which had been left to Italy, and Central Istria, Rijeka/Fiume and the Kvarner/Quarnaro Gulf, which had been handed to Yugoslavia.

As regards Zone B, the substantial integration of this territory into Yugoslavia led the overwhelming majority of the local Italian population to flee the

¹ R. Pupo, *Adriatico amarissimo. Una lunga storia di violenza* (Bari-Rome: Laterza, 2021).

² S. Ranchi, "Calendario delle 'violenze' nazionaliste e neofasciste". In *Nazionalismo e neofascismo nella lotta politica al confine orientale 1945-75*, ed. Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia (Trieste: Editoriale La Libreria, 1977), vol. I; R. Spazzali, *Trieste di fine secolo (1955-2004). Per una storia politica del secondo Novecento* (Trieste: Istituto Regionale per la Cultura Istriano-fumano-dalmata-Italo Svevo, 2006).

³ "Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States and Yugoslavia regarding the Free Territory of Trieste", *The Department of State Bulletin*, vol. XXXI, no. 799, publication 5616, 18 October 1954. For the main contributions on the Trieste issue and its settlement, cf. J.-B. Duroselle, *Le conflit de Trieste, 1943-1954* (Brussels: Editions de l'Institut de sociologie de l'Université libre de Bruxelles, 1966); B. Novak, *Trieste, 1941-1954. The ethnic, political, and ideological struggle* (Chicago-London: Chicago University Press, 1970); D. de Castro, *La questione di Trieste. L'azione politica e diplomatica italiana dal 1943 al 1954*, vols. I-II (Trieste: LINT, 1981); M. de Leonardis, *La "diplomazia atlantica" e la soluzione del problema di Trieste (1952-1954)* (Napoli: ESI, 1992); F. Tenca Montini, *La Jugoslavia e la questione di Trieste, 1945-1954* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2020).

area, as most of the Italians from Central Istria and the Kvarner/Quarnaro Gulf had already done after 1947.⁴ Consequently, within 18 months of the signing of the MOU, the Italian population of Zone B (described as the majority of the population in most local towns and municipalities even in the 1945 Yugoslav census) became a tiny minority of a few thousand residents.⁵

In their public statements, the Yugoslav authorities discouraged the local Italian population from leaving the area; in practice, they implemented policies that were certainly not targeted at deterring Italians from fleeing. For instance, the Italian language disappeared from almost every aspect of public life, including administration, and bilingualism was very quickly dropped (in an area where the use of Croatian and Slovenian as official languages – besides Italian – had been introduced for the very first time in history by the Yugoslav military administration in 1945).⁶ The Yugoslav authorities kept the pre-MOU practices of changing (Slavicising) Italian names and surnames, and forcing the transfer of Italian pupils from Italian-language to Croatian – or Slovenian-language schools.⁷ This caused huge schooling problems for those pupils, since the Italian inhabitants of the area typically spoke neither Croatian nor Slovenian, basically because the local *lingua franca* had traditionally always been Italian.⁸ In

⁴ C. Colummi et al. (eds.), *Storia di un esodo. Istria 1945–1956* (Trieste: Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli-Venezia Giulia, 1980); R. Pupo, *Il lungo esodo. Istria: le persecuzioni, le foibe, l'esilio* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2005).

⁵ A. Argenti Tremul et al., *La comunità nazionale italiana nei censimenti jugoslavi 1945–1991* (Rovinj/Rovigno: Centro di Ricerche Storiche, 2001).

⁶ Accurate records relevant to the Slovene-administered District of Koper/Capodistria are available at Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ), Arhiv Centralnog komiteta Saveza komunista Jugoslavije (507–A-CK-SKJ), Komisija za nacionalne manjine (XVIII), K-6/2, report "Podatki o Italijanski manjšini v Okraju Koper"; Archivio Centro di Ricerche Storiche (ACRS), Unione degli Italiani dell'Istria e di Fiume (UIIF) 1956–1958, box (b.) 1148/74, folder (f.) "Situazione gruppo etnico, CIC, scuole, bilinguismo nel Capodistriano – Materiale Gino Gobbo". Apparently, the Croatian authorities did not draft similar reports for the District of Buje/Buie, where, in any case, the overall situation did not differ significantly from the one in the District of Koper/Capodistria: cf. G. Nemeč, *Nascita di una minoranza. Istria 1947–1965: storia e memoria degli italiani rimasti nell'area istro-quarnerina* (Rovinj/Rovigno: Centro di Ricerche Storiche, 2012); V. D'Alessio, "Politika obrazovanja i nacionalno pitanje u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji: škole s talijanskim nastavnim jezikom u Istri i Rijeci", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* XLIX (2017).

⁷ On the schooling issue also cf. Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale (ASD-MAECI), Consolato Generale d'Italia a Capodistria (CGIC), b. 1, f. 4, tel. no. 4660/660 from Guido Zecchin (Italian Consul-General in Koper/Capodistria) to Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MAE), et al., 9 November 1956.

⁸ A. Borme, "Situazione attuale e prospettive della scuola italiana dell'Istria e di Fiume". In *Nuovi contributi sulla Comunità italiana in Istria e a Fiume (1967–1990)*, eds. A. Borme, E. Giuricin (Trieste-Rovinj/Rovigno: Centro di Ricerche), 94.

any case, to justify these measures, the Yugoslav authorities claimed that the affected individuals allegedly had Slavic roots.⁹ In addition, the local authorities closed some Italian-language schools, typically claiming that the departure of most of the Italian population had rendered them unneeded.¹⁰ Furthermore, the Yugoslav laws prevented the creation of any Italian organisation (apart from those created and controlled by the Party) as well as the free importation and circulation of newspapers, books, and journals from the Republic of Italy. Also, many (of course, state-owned or state-controlled) local firms and public bodies implemented the practice of firing the (Italian) workers who had not mastered Croatian or Slovenian.¹¹

When it comes to Zone A, the return of the Italian administration did not result in a meaningful change in the number of Slovenes residing in the area. Actually, a fair number of local Slovene residents left: apart from an almost negligible minority of a few hundred people – mainly in cahoots with the Yugoslav authorities – that moved to Yugoslavia, the overwhelming majority (thousands of people) opted for countries that were much more attractive than Yugoslavia from the political and economic point of view, such as Australia.¹² However, this Slovene emigration from Zone A was, to a great extent, compensated by the arrival of thousands of Slovenes from Zone B and the Republic of Slovenia, who fled the area – and Tito's Yugoslavia – alongside their Italian fellow citizens.¹³ Therefore, compared to Zone B, Zone A experienced a much smaller shift in the national balance, with the most outstanding cases being the increase of the Italian majority in the city of Trieste, and a decrease of the Slovene majority in the Karst Plateau, especially in the municipality of Duino Aurisina/Devin Nabrežina.¹⁴

In Zone A, the Slovenian-language public school system established by the US-British Allied Military Government was maintained by Italy, as well as all the independent Slovene social, political, economic, and press organisa-

⁹ ACRS, UIIF 1956–1959, b. 4769/85, minutes of the 4 October 1957 meeting of the Union of the Italians of Istria and Rijeka/Fiume (UIIF) secretariat.

¹⁰ Diplomatski arhiv Ministarstva spoljnih poslova (DA-MSP), Politički arhiv (PA), Italija, 1960, b. 51, f. 1, doc. no. 4620, "Zapisnik V. redovnog zasedanja jugoslovensko-italijanskog Mešovitog odbora" (Rome, 26 October–11 November 1959); "Zapisnik sa VI redovnog zasedanja jugoslovensko-italijanskog Mešovitog odbora" (Belgrade, 27 June–9 July 1960): *Službeni list Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije, dodatak Međunarodni ugovori i drugi sporazumi* (hereinafter just "Službeni list"), IX, no. 7, 15 July 1962.

¹¹ ACRS, UIIF 1956–1958, b. 1148/74, f. "Situazione gruppo etnico [...]", cit.

¹² P. Purini, *Metamorfosi etniche. I cambiamenti di popolazione a Trieste, Gorizia, Fiume e in Istria. 1914–1975* (Udine: Kappa Vu, 2010), 301–358.

¹³ C. Colummi, "L'ultimo grande esodo". In *Storia di un esodo*, eds. C. Colummi et al., 495.

¹⁴ Purini, *Metamorfosi etniche*, 312–321.

tions.¹⁵ In this respect, it should be noted that the many pro-Yugoslav (and typically Yugoslav-funded) Slovene organisations in the area further increased their influence with the creation of the Slovenian Cultural and Economic Union (hereinafter SKGZ), launched in the weeks after the signing of the MOU.¹⁶ Indeed, the SKGZ coordinated and oversaw all the (Titoist) pro-Yugoslav Slovene associations in Zone A, and eventually, starting from 1958, also those in the province of Gorizia, where Slovenes had been granted minority rights, and those of the province of Udine, where up to that time no minority status had been granted.¹⁷

As mentioned above, after the MOU entered into force, the treatment of the Italian minority in Zone B did not differ significantly from the previous treatment of the Italian minority in Central Istria and in the Kvarner/Quarnaro Gulf; similarly, the treatment of the Slovene minority in Zone A did not differ significantly from the previous treatment of the Slovene minority in the Province of Gorizia. However, this should not have been the case, since the MOU provided extensive protection measures for the minorities of the former FTT. Annex II of the MOU was indeed a "Special Statute" for the minorities, and according to this document, the Slovene minority in Zone A and the Italian minority in Zone B should have enjoyed a wide range of rights, such as "the right to their own press in their mother tongue" (art. 4-a), the right to have "educational, cultural, social and sports organisations" (art. 4-b), the right to "be free to use their language in their personal and official relations with the administrative and judicial authorities" (art. 5), the right to have bilingual "inscriptions on public institutions and the names of localities and streets" where the members of the

¹⁵ AJ, 507–A-CK-SKJ, XVIII, K 12/33, report "Naša manjina u Italiji", 22 April 1957, annex to the letter from Anton Vratuša to the Commission for International Relations of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and to the Federal Council of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People (SSRN) of Yugoslavia, 23 April 1957.

¹⁶ Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri (PCM), 1955–1958, b. 209, f. 3.2.9-129000, tel. 18/3–2066/55 Gab. from Giovanni Palamara (Government's Commissioner-General to Zone A) to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (PCM), MAE, and Ministry of Interior (MI), 14 March 1955. Cf. also I. Bratina, "La minoranza slovena in Italia: evoluzione storica e problemi attuali". In *Il confine riscoperto. Beni degli esuli, minoranze e cooperazione economica nei rapporti dell'Italia con Slovenia e Croazia*, eds. T. Favaretto & E. Greco (Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali-Angeli, 1997), 130.

¹⁷ P. Stranj, *The Submerged Community. An A to Ž of the Slovenes in Italy* (Trieste: Založništvo tržaškega tiska/Editoriale Stampa Triestina, 1992), 108, 116–119; N. Troha, "Položaj Slovenske narodne skupnosti v Italiji in Italijanske v Sloveniji med letoma 1954 in 1990". In *Na oni strani meje. Slovenska manjšina v Italiji in njen pravni položaj: zgodovinski in pravni pregled 1866–2004*, ed. G. Bajc (Koper/Capodistria: Knjižnica Annales Majora, 2004), 146–147.

minority where “a significant element (at least one quarter) of the population” (art. 5), or the right to see “no change [...] in the boundaries of basic administrative units [...] with a view to prejudicing the ethnic composition of the units concerned” (art. 7).

Special attention was given to the educational field. Indeed, article 4-c granted to minorities “kindergarten, primary, secondary and professional school teaching in the mother tongue [...] in all localities” where minorities lived. This article also forbade closing any of the minority schools operating at the time of the signing of the MOU and stipulated that “the educational programmes of such schools must not be directed at interfering with the national character of the pupils”. Furthermore, article 4-c required that all the teachers of such schools would be “of the same mother tongue as the pupils”, and required Italy and Yugoslavia “to promptly introduce whatever legal prescriptions may be necessary so that the permanent organisation of such schools will be regulated in accordance with” the Special Statute’s provisions, and to “take all reasonable measure to give” the teachers of these schools the opportunity to “qualify” for the “status as regular members of the teaching staff” if they did not already have such a status.

In addition to the Special Statute, whose clear political premise was reciprocity in the treatment of minorities in the two Zones, at the same time of the signing of the MOU, Italy and Yugoslavia agreed other measures in favour of the two minorities through an exchange of letters. Specifically, Italy pledged “to provide a house in Roiano or another suburb to be used as a cultural centre for the Slovene Community of Trieste”, to “also make available funds for the construction and equipment of a new cultural centre on Via Petronio”, and “confirmed that the Narodni Dom at San Giovanni is also available for use as a cultural centre”.¹⁸ In return, Yugoslavia pledged “to give sympathetic consideration to the requests of Italian cultural organizations for additional premises for their cultural activities” in Zone B.¹⁹

The MOU remained in force for over 21 years, but its Special Statute was never fully enforced either by Italy or by Yugoslavia, and the cases of its most blatant violation occurred in the very first years after it entered into force. When it comes to Zone A, the Italian authorities did not facilitate a quick implementation of the clauses of the London agreements concerning bilingualism, the new Slovene cultural centres, and a new law giving Slovenian-language schools a per-

¹⁸ Letter from Manlio Brosio (Italian Ambassador in London) to Vladimir Velebit (Yugoslav Ambassador in London), no. 4162, 5 October 1954: *Međunarodni ugovori Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije* (hereinafter just “*Međunarodni ugovori*”), 1955, no. 2, 12.

¹⁹ Letter from Velebit to Brosio, 5 October 1954: *Međunarodni ugovori*, 1955, no. 2, 12–13.

manent status.²⁰ However, the Italian authorities facilitated the resettlement of many Italians fleeing Zone B in the Karst area between the city of Trieste and the Province of Gorizia.²¹ This policy was not an explicit violation of the Special Statute but, as mentioned before, led to a significant decline in the share of the Slovene population in the Karst plateau. In any case, no Slovene school or organisation was closed or prevented from working, and all Italy's Slovenes (not only those in Zone A, but also those in the provinces of Gorizia and Udine) enjoyed all the political, economic, and association freedoms granted to all Italian citizens, including the freedom to import and read any Yugoslav publication and have almost any sort of political, cultural and even economic relations with Yugoslavia, including having a (Yugoslav-funded) pro-Yugoslav Titoist party, the *Unione Socialista Indipendente/Neodvisna socialistična zveza* [Independent Socialist Union] (USI/NSZ).²²

In Zone B, the situation of the Italian minority was not any easier, and not only because most of the Italians had left the area and were replaced by the Yugoslav authorities with civilians from all over the country whom the regime had encouraged to move to Istria²³. As briefly mentioned above, bilingualism was quickly dropped, with no actual implementation in the fields where it had officially been retained²⁴. An interesting and meaningful case is that of the judiciary, where the use of Italian was formally allowed but effectively dropped. Just to point out one example, in the district of Buje/Buie, where the overwhelming majority of the Italian population who had stayed in Zone B resided, between the signing of the MOU and 1959, only one court procedure had been translated into Italian.²⁵ As mentioned before, the Yugoslav authorities continued to

²⁰ AJ, 507-A-CK-SKJ, XVIII, K 12/33, d. 576/4, *cit.*; AJ, *Socijalistički savez radnog naroda Jugoslavije* (142II-SSRNJ), b. I-471, f. 6, report "Neki elementi položaja Slovenačke etničke grupe u Italiji u 1961. Godini" of the Commission for National Minorities of the Central Committee of the SSRN of Slovenia, February 1962.

²¹ S. Volk, *Ezulski skrbniki. Vloga in pomen begunskih organizacij ter urejanje vprašanja istrskih beguncev v Italiji v luči begunskega časopisja 1945–1963* (Koper/Capodistria: Zgodovinsko društvo za južno Primorsko-Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Republike Slovenije Koper, 1999).

²² For a brief overview of the role played by the USI/NSZ in the Yugoslav foreign policy towards the Slovene minority in Italy cf. F. Tenca Montini & S. Mišič, "Comunisti di un altro tipo: le simpatie filo-jugoslave in Italia (1948–1962)", *Acta Histriae*, XXV/3 (2017), 806–808.

²³ A. Kalc, "The Other Side of the 'Istrian Exodus': Immigration and Social Restoration in Slovenian Coastal Towns in the 1950's", *Dve domovi/Two Homelands* 49 (2019).

²⁴ AJ, 507-A-CK-SKJ, XVIII, K-6/2, report "Podatki o Italijanski manjšini v Okraju Koper", *cit.*; ACRS, UIIF 1956–1958, b. 1148/74, f. "Situazione gruppo etnico [...]", *cit.*

²⁵ DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 51, f. 7, doc. no. 435253, letter no. 6/1-1960 from Milan Kreč (Croatian State Secretariat for Judicial Administration) to the Croatian Executive

force Italian pupils to attend Croatian- or Slovenian-language schools instead of Italian-language ones, while many of the latter were closed, and none of them had a full native Italian-speaking and/or qualified teaching staff (and some schools had none). The educational programmes in Italian-language schools clearly interfered with the national character of the pupils since they systematically portrayed Italy and Italians in a negative light.²⁶ The Yugoslav authorities did not allow any cultural organisation of the Republic of Italy to operate in Zone B,²⁷ and the only “Italian” organisations allowed in the area – those created and controlled by the Yugoslav Party – quickly decreased their activities (mainly the organisation of Croatian and Slovenian language courses), and were sometimes even deprived of their premises.²⁸ In addition, the boundaries of Zone B’s administrative divisions (districts and municipalities) were partially re-drafted, sometimes anticipating the 1955 Yugoslav federal law that started a polity reform²⁹. While re-drafting these polities Yugoslav authorities sometimes merged territories of Zone B with those annexed to Yugoslavia under the 1947 Treaty of Peace. Typically, this caused a further significant decline of the Italian population share, the most outstanding case being that of the municipality of Koper/Capodistria, whose share of Italian population halved overnight.³⁰

The first shift in the treatment of the minorities came in 1956, and the reason for this was that the Special Statute’s Article 8 provided for the creation of a special “Mixed Yugoslav-Italian Committee” (hereinafter “Mixed Committee”) “established for the purpose of assistance and consultation concerning problems relating to the protection” of the two minorities. The Mixed Committee’s Regulations were agreed upon by the negotiators of the two countries in February 1955, and the Yugoslav government ratified them already in June of that year.³¹ However, the Italian government did not approve these Regulations

Council, 13 February 1960.

²⁶ C. Schiffrer, “Le scuole per le minoranze. I libri di testo per gli studenti italiani in Istria”: *Trieste*, V, no. 25, May-June 1958.

²⁷ Archivio di Stato di Trieste (ASTS), Commissariato Generale del Governo (CGG), Gabinetto (Gab.) 1951–1956, b. 6, f. 4/10 “Lega Nazionale”, confidential report no. 18/3/585/54 Gab. from Palamara to PCM and Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MAE), 1 December 1956.

²⁸ ACRS, UIIF 1956–1959, b. 1174/73, minutes of the 10 April 1956 meeting of the UIIF secretariat.

²⁹ “Come la Jugoslavia viola il Memorandum”: *Difesa Adriatica*, VIII, no. 46, 18 December 1954.

³⁰ “Gli effetti del Memorandum d’Intesa [...] Mutamenti all’assetto amministrativo”: *Difesa Adriatica*, IX, no. 26, 2–9 July 1955.

³¹ “Pravilnik jugoslovensko-italijanskog Mešovitog odbora” (Rome, 16 February 1965): *Međunardoni ugovori*, 1956, no. 39.

until November 1956.³² This soon became a matter of great concern to the Yugoslav authorities, who by October 1955 started to fear that the total disappearance of Zone B's Italian population (at the time not an unlikely outcome given the number of relocation from the area) could cause Italy to lose any interest in the functioning of the Mixed Committee and the enforcement of the Special Statute.³³ This would have been a serious defeat for Yugoslav diplomacy, given that the Special Statute not only granted Zone A's Slovenes a wide range of rights, but also gave the Yugoslav government a *droit de regard* on Trieste and its Zone, a right that Belgrade aimed to extend to the provinces of Gorizia and Udine. As a result, the Yugoslav authorities – especially those from Slovenia, the Yugoslav republic that, for self-evident reasons, was the most interested in keeping a sizeable Slovene minority in Italy – started to see the retention of an Italian minority in Zone B as an essential tool to pursue their own interests.

The minority issue quickly arose, drawing the attention of some of the top-ranking Yugoslav officials, such as the former Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Edvard Kardelj, one of Tito's closest collaborators and right-hand men. In February 1956 – when some 90% of the local Italian population had already fled Zone B – Kardelj agreed with some Yugoslav diplomats (all of whom were Slovene, just like him) that Zone B's local authorities had not always properly managed the issue of the Italian minority, and stated that, given the tiny number of the Italians who had stayed in the area, there was no reason for not implementing a "broad" ("širok") policy towards the Italian minority in Yugoslavia.³⁴ From that moment on, both the state and party authorities gradually started to endorse better treatment of the Italian minority.³⁵ Therefore, for the very first time from the Second World War, the latter started to experience – especially in the Slovenian-administered district of Koper/Capodistria – some slight improvements in its treatment, with the gradual restoration of bilingualism on

³² DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1956, b. 39, f. 34, doc. no. 421673, note of Berislav Žulj (Counsellor of the Yugoslav Embassy to Italy) on the 7 November 1956 meeting with Gianluigi Milesi Ferretti (Head of the MAE's MOU Office).

³³ S. Mišić, "The normalisation of political relations between Yugoslavia and Italy". In *Serbian-Italian relations: History and Modern Times*, eds. S. Rudić et al. (Belgrade: Istorijski institut Beograd-Sapienza Università di Roma-Centro di ricerca CEMAS, 2015), 268.

³⁴ AJ, Kabinet predsednika Republike (837-KPR), Dokumentacija o međudržavnim odnosima (I-5-b), b. 44-4, note of Anton Vratuša (Edvard Kardelj's Chief of Staff) on the 2 February 1956 meeting of Edvard Kardelj with Jože Brilej (Deputy Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) and Darko Černež (Yugoslav Ambassador to Italy).

³⁵ ACRS, UIIF 1956–1959, b. 1074/73, minutes of the 8 May 1956 meeting of the UIIF secretariat; ACRS, Archivio Giusto Massarotto, b. 33/96, minutes of the 28 September 1956 meeting of the UIIF secretariat; ACRS, UIIF 1956–1959, b. 1148/74, minutes of the 22 January 1957 meeting of the UIIF secretariat.

street signs and an easing of the policy of forcing Italian pupils with alleged Slavic ancestry to attend Croatian- or Slovenian-language schools.³⁶

These improvements, the first since 1956, were far from the full application of the Special Statute. However, not every failure to comply with Annex II to the MOU was due to a lack of political will. Indeed, sometimes Yugoslavia, as well as Italy, simply did not have the means to enforce the Special Statute by using ordinary instruments. One of the most interesting cases was that of the teaching staff at minority schools who, according to the Special Statute, had to be appropriately qualified and native speakers of the pupils' mother tongue. Neither Italy nor Yugoslavia, both of which required their teachers to hold their citizenship, had enough such teachers among their own citizens. Italy solved this issue by derogating from its public service laws and hiring Slovene native speakers holding Yugoslav citizenship.³⁷ Yugoslavia, on the other hand, simply appointed Croatian or Slovenian native speakers as teachers in Italian-language schools.³⁸ Therefore, these teachers were not of the same mother tongue of the pupils and, in some cases, the classes in Italian-language schools had to be taught in Croatian or Slovenian.³⁹ This was a clear case of non-compliance with the Special Statute and the reciprocity rationale, a grave and unilateral violation that Italy could not quietly tolerate.

For this reason, the Italian diplomacy's very first move at the opening session of the Mixed Committee was to offer Yugoslavia qualified Italian native-speaker teachers (holding Italian citizenship) to be appointed to Zone B's Italian-language schools, a measure that would have allowed Yugoslavia to comply with its obligations in this field, like Italy was doing.⁴⁰ This proposal was quickly rejected by the Yugoslav diplomacy. Anyway, the latter understood it was in a tight spot in the educational field, and the delegates at the 2nd session of the Mixed Committee responded by submitting to Italy two packages of

³⁶ E. Giuricin & L. Giuricin, *La comunità nazionale italiana. Storia e Istituzioni degli Italiani dell'Istria, Fiume e Dalmazia (1944–2006)*, vol. I (Rovinj/Rovigno: Centro di Ricerche Storiche, 2008), 206–213.

³⁷ AJ, 507–A-CK-SKJ, XVIII, b. 12/37, report no. 417902 of Berislav Žulj (head of the Yugoslav delegation to the Mixed Committee) on the 3rd session of the Mixed Committee, 12 August 1958; DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 51, f. 1, doc. no. 4620.

³⁸ AJ, 507–A-CK-SKJ, XVIII, b. 12/35, "Zapisnik II Redovnog zasjedanja Jugoslovensko-italijanskog Mešovitog odbora" (Belgrade, 6–16 November 1957).

³⁹ Report of Mitja Vošnjak (head of the Yugoslav delegation to the Mixed Committee and Yugoslav Consul-General in Trieste) on the work of the Yugoslav delegation at the 1st session of the Mixed Committee (Rome, 21–23 May 1957), whose translation into Italian was published in S. Sau, *La comunità sacrificata. Il Comitato Misto Italo-Jugoslavo 1955–1973* (Izola/Isola: Il Mandracchio, 2015), 22–25.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

agreements dealing with this subject⁴¹. With the first package, Yugoslavia proposed to start a teacher exchange programme aimed at allowing to be deleted minority school teachers to study and train in their kin-state, agree on mutual recognition of diplomas for those teachers, and finally to launch an exchange of publications.⁴² With the second package, Yugoslavia proposed the creation of updating seminars for the teachers of Zone B's Italian-language schools jointly organised by Yugoslav and Italian diplomatic and educational authorities (later known as "Koper/Capodistria Seminars"), and the opening of a new Italian-language school in Savudrija/Salvore.⁴³ These measures were to be reciprocated by Italy with a new law on its Slovenian-language schools guaranteeing that no check of the mother language of the pupils' families would be performed as a precondition for enrolment. Furthermore, Yugoslavia proposed that the set of rights granted by the MOU to the mutual minorities in the two Zones of the FTT – and therefore the jurisdiction of the Mixed Committee – would be extended to all areas inhabited by the two minorities.⁴⁴

Although formally rooted in some form of reciprocity, these Yugoslav proposals were essentially to be deleted an attempt at obtaining unilateral concessions from Italy. First of all, when they proposed the extension of the Special Statute to all the areas where the mutual minorities lived, the Yugoslav authorities had in mind the Slovenes of Zone A and those in the provinces of Gorizia and Udine, but did not accept the existence of any Italian minority in Dalmatia and in most of the Municipalities of the Kvarner/Quarnaro Gulf and Istria, where the Italian minority was officially recognised only in a dozen of municipalities, half of which were in Zone B.⁴⁵ This alone might explain Italy's reluctance to accept the Yugoslav proposal to extend the geographical coverage of the Special Statute, without even mentioning that, unsurprisingly, Rome had no intention of allowing Belgrade to extend its *droit de regard* on Zone A to other Italian territories.

⁴¹ Report of Črtomir Kolenc (member of the Yugoslav delegation to the Mixed Committee) for the Executive Council of the Republic of Slovenia on the Mixed Committee, 15 November 1975, whose translation into Italian was published in *Ibid.*, 282–287.

⁴² Secret letter (no. 1) from Vošnjak to Cesare Pasquinelli (head of the Italian delegation to the Mixed Committee), 16 November 1957, whose translation into Italian was published in *Ibid.*, 36–37.

⁴³ Secret letter (no. 2) from Vošnjak to Pasquinelli, 16 November 1957, whose translation into Italian was published in *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁴ Report of Vošnjak on the work of the Yugoslav delegation at the 1st session of the Mixed Committee.

⁴⁵ L. Monzali, *Gli italiani di Dalmazia e le relazioni italo-jugoslave nel Novecento* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2015).

With respect to the first package of agreements, it should be noted that teacher training in Yugoslavia included political indoctrination whereas in Italy it did not. Furthermore, a significant number of Zone A's Slovene-language school teachers held Yugoslav diplomas while Yugoslav authorities already recognised the qualifications of the few teachers of Zone B's Italian-language schools who held Italian diplomas. In addition to that, while Yugoslav publications already circulated freely in Zone A, any Italian publication had to undergo Yugoslav censorship before entering Zone B. Therefore, if this first package of agreements had been approved, Yugoslavia would have had an opportunity to further expand its political and ideological influence on the Slovene minority in Italy, but Italy would have received no substantial compensation in return.

As for the second package of agreements, the issue was slightly more complicated because, in this case, the Yugoslav proposal relied on a bargain of concessions rather than on some form of reciprocity. However, Yugoslavia was essentially trying to obtain some unilateral concessions from Italy once again. The updating seminars had been conceived by Yugoslav diplomacy as a sop for Italy aimed at mitigating its own blatant and unilateral violation of the Special Statute concerning the mother language of the teachers of Zone B's Italian-language schools, a violation that this measure would not have ended in any case.⁴⁶ As for the new law on Slovenian-language schools in Italy, Yugoslavia was asking for the Slovene minority in Italy to be given what it was denying to its own Italian minority. First, like Italy, Yugoslavia had not yet passed any specific legislation on Italian-language schools. Furthermore, when it comes to the request of free enrolment in the Slovenian-language schools in Italy, it has to be recalled that in Zone B – as well as in the rest of Istria and in Rijeka/Fiume – Italian-language schools were reserved for the children of the local Italian minority, and the decision on who was or was not a member of this group was only up to the Yugoslav authorities. By contrast, up to that time in Zone A and in the province of Gorizia, enrolment in Slovene-language schools had been kept open, and some restrictions had been placed only on the children of families who had self-identified as Italian native speakers in order to flee the areas under Yugoslav rule by opting for Italian citizenship, but after they re-settled in the province of Gorizia or in Zone A, had asked for the benefits granted to the Slovene minority and wanted to enrol their children in the local Slovenian-language schools.

Ultimately, Italy and Yugoslavia had two dramatically different approaches to the minority issue: the former aimed at launching new measures to implement substantial reciprocity in the treatment of the two minorities; the latter essentially wanted to obtain new unilateral concessions from the other party. Unsurprisingly, this resulted in a stalemate in the negotiations. This stalemate lasted

⁴⁶ Report of Kolenc on the Mixed Committee, 15 November 1975, 283.

for years, and consequently, by 1960, none of the main violations of the Special Statute recorded in 1956 had been rectified either in Zone A or in Zone B.⁴⁷

Little had changed concerning the minority issue. However, the same could not be said of the overall relations between the two neighbouring states. Indeed, after the MOU, Italy and Yugoslavia began a process of normalisation of their relations that had already started to pay off, especially in the field of economics.⁴⁸ This new momentum also led to the first political rapprochement, enabling the November 1959 visit to Yugoslavia of the Italian Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Alberto Folchi, the first Italian high-ranking official to visit Tito's country.⁴⁹

Folchi's visit was to be returned in December 1960 by the Yugoslav Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Konstantin "Koča" Popović.⁵⁰ Diplomats of both countries considered this visit an opportunity to re-launch Italian-Yugoslav relations and try to solve some of their ongoing bilateral issues.⁵¹ However, the Italians and Yugoslavs had very different perspectives and approaches. In fact, certain distinctive features of the diplomacies of the two countries that have been noted in historical scholarship on Italian-Yugoslav relations in later periods could already be seen at this time.⁵² Specifically, Italy wanted to begin with solving minor issues, gradually paving the way for major issues at a later stage.⁵³ Conversely, Yugoslavia wanted to find a quick solution for all the unresolved bilateral issues at once.⁵⁴

Yugoslavia would not change its attitude even though the Italians repeatedly made it clear at various levels that the solutions sought by Belgrade were

⁴⁷ "Zapisnik sa VI redovnog zasjedanja jugoslovensko-italijanskog Mešovitog odbora".

⁴⁸ Mišić, "The normalisation".

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Cf. also "I colloqui di Folchi nella capitale jugoslava": *Relazioni Internazionali*, XIII, no. 47, 21 November 1959.

⁵⁰ "La visita di Popovic a Roma": *Relazioni Internazionali*, XXIV, no. 50, 10 December 1960.

⁵¹ DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 46, f. 29, doc. no. 42187, note of Mihajlo Javorski (Yugoslav Ambassador to Italy) on the 15 January 1960 meeting with Remigio Grillo (MAE).

⁵² Cf. M. Bucarelli, *La "questione jugoslava" nella politica estera dell'Italia repubblicana (1945–1999)* (Rome: Aracne, 2008); M. Bucarelli et al. (eds.), *Italy and Tito's Yugoslavia in the Age of International Détente* (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2016); S. Mišić, *Pomirenje na Jadranu. Jugoslavija i Italija na putu ka Osimskim sporazumima iz 1975.* (Belgrade: Univerzitet u Beogradu-Fakultet političkih nauka, 2018).

⁵³ DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 47, f. 2, doc. no. 46854, note of Javorski on the 2 March 1960 meeting with Umberto Grazzi (MAE Secretary-General).

⁵⁴ DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 46, f. 29, doc. no. 45842, note on the 23 February 1960 meeting between Mihajlo Majer (Counsellor Yugoslav Embassy in Italy) and Carlo Marchiori (Deputy Director-General MAE Political Office).

unacceptable and, therefore, unfeasible and unrealistic. For instance, during the 5th session of the Mixed Committee, Italy made it clear that it was ready to make some concessions to its Slovene minority, but only if they were reciprocated not just formally but above all substantially, since up to that time, Yugoslavia's failure to respect the already existing rights of the Italian minority made most of the many formal protections useless.⁵⁵ Extensive negotiations ensued, but it yielded no results because of the different stance of the two delegations.⁵⁶

Another interesting example is the drafting of a cultural agreement signed in Rome during Popović's visit. This agreement was proposed by Italy, whose aim was to improve its relations with Belgrade by meeting "the keen desire repeatedly expressed by the Yugoslav side" of increasing cultural exchanges, especially in the scientific-technical field.⁵⁷ During the negotiations Yugoslavia tried to obtain something that Italy had already refused to concede many times, the mutual recognition of educational qualifications.⁵⁸ However, the Yugoslav approach to the minority issue proved once again to be futile and, despite the persistent efforts of the Yugoslav negotiators, Rome refused to meet Belgrade's requests on this field.⁵⁹

Despite the standstill on the minority issue, the overall Italian-Yugoslav relations were experiencing a period of strong improvement.⁶⁰ The economic relations between the two countries were constantly intensifying and, in the months before Popović's visit to Italy, a series of episodes paved a new political path in the relations between Rome and Belgrade. From the political point of view, the most striking case was certainly a series of events tied to the 15th General Assembly of the United Nations, which took place in the autumn of 1960 in New York. Indeed, during the Assembly, which saw the Italian-Austrian dispute on South Tyrol as the first issue on the agenda,⁶¹ Yugoslavia finally took a stance

⁵⁵ DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 51, f. 1, doc. no. 4620.

⁵⁶ "Zapisnik VII rednovnog zasedanja jugoslovensko-italijanskog Mešovitog Odbora" (Rome, 20 February-10 March 1961): *Službeni list*, year X, no. 2, Belgrade, 15 July 1962.

⁵⁷ ACS, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Direzione Generale Relazioni Culturali, b. 319, f. "Accordi culturali Jugoslavia", urgent confidential tel. no. 31/07791/c from MAE to PCM et al., 29 September 1959.

⁵⁸ DA-MSP, PA, 1960, b. 46, f. 23, d. 412571, minutes of Majer on the 12 April 1960 meeting with the staff of the Yugoslav Embassy in Rome, no. 53/60.

⁵⁹ DA-MSP, PA, 1960, b. 49, f. 5, doc. no. 427345, note of Žulj on the 17 November 1960 meeting with Silvio Falchi (Counsellor Italian Embassy to Yugoslavia).

⁶⁰ Mišić, *Pomirenje na Jadranu*, 18-21.

⁶¹ For an overview of the Austrian-Italian dispute on South Tyrol and its discussion at the 15th UN General Assembly, cf. M. Toscano, *Storia diplomatica della questione dell'Alto Adige* (Bari: Laterza, 1967), 473-540.

appraised as positive and satisfactory by Italy.⁶² In addition, besides the works of the Assembly, while in New York, the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs Antonio Segni held several meetings with Yugoslav representatives, including President Josip Broz "Tito" and Secretary Popović.⁶³ Further signs of improvement in the Italian-Yugoslav relations were the fact that Tito had reached New York after transiting in Zone A and in the Republic of Italy *proper*, and that, after the end of the UN Assembly, the Yugoslav President made his return trip to Europe on the Italian liner "Leonardo da Vinci".⁶⁴

1960 was also a turning point in the attitude of the Italian majority of Trieste towards the Slovene minority. Indeed, that year, the pro-government magazine *Trieste* dedicated several reports to the Slovene minority in Italy, triggering an intense debate among intellectuals and politicians on the need for a fair coexistence and collaboration among Italians and Slovenes, paving the way to a deeper *détente* among the two national communities.⁶⁵ However, despite having made the Italian majority of Trieste more open towards the Slovene minority, this debate ultimately did little to help Yugoslav diplomacy on the minority issue. Indeed, the increased knowledge of the reality of the Slovene minority in Italy, with its dozens of free independent associations, companies, newspapers, parties, and cultural institutions, many of which kept close ties with Yugoslavia, heightened the awareness of the Italian public of the enormous unfavourable imbalance in the treatment of the Slovene minority in Italy and that of the Italian minority in Yugoslavia.⁶⁶

⁶² DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 46, f. 7, doc. no. 428219, tel. 570 from Javorski to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (DSIP), 26 October 1960. Cf. also S. Mišič, "Yugoslavia and the South Tyrolean Question from the End of World War II until the Late 1950s". In *The Alps-Adriatic Region 1945–1955. International and Transnational Perspectives on a Conflicted European Region*, eds. W. Mueller et al. (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2018) 197–198.

⁶³ "Gli incontri di Segni a New York ed a Washington": *Relazioni Internazionali*, XXIV, no. 43, 22 October 1960.

⁶⁴ "Tito je včeraj potoval skozi Trst": *Primorski dnevnik*, XVI, no. 220 (4683), 14 September 1960; "Tito putuje v New York": *Ibid*; G. Cesare, "Il ponte di Londra": *Trieste*, VIII, no. 41, January-February 1961.

⁶⁵ G. Botteri, "Catalogo-Dizionario degli sloveni nella Regione": *Trieste*, VII, no. 38, July-August 1960; G. Botteri "La minoranza slovena: un dibattito aperto": *Trieste*, VII, no. 39, September-October 1960; A. Rebula, "L'intellettuale sloveno": *Trieste*, VII, no. 40, November-December 1960; G. Botteri, "Inchiesta sul problema degli sloveni in Carinzia": *Trieste*, VIII, no. 4, January-February 1961; "Battute di dialogo fra italiani e sloveni": *Ibid*; Cesare, "Il ponte di Londra"; "Il dialogo ponte' fra italiani e sloveni": *Trieste*, VIII, no. 42, March-April 1961.

⁶⁶ P. A., "Hanno tutte le libertà i poveri 'oppressi' sloveni": *Difesa Adriatica*, XIV, no. 39, 23–29 October 1960.

During the following months, these imbalances were additionally emphasised by the debate on the treatment of the Slovene minority in Italy, which focused, among other things, on the law on Slovenian-language schools in Italy. Indeed, the Italian government had issued a draft on this matter that was vehemently criticised by the organisations of the Slovene minority, some Italian left-wing parties, and Yugoslav diplomacy, because it provided that Slovenian-language schools in Italy were to be reserved for the Italian citizens belonging to the Slovene minority.⁶⁷ Once again, the issue was reciprocity, since the rationale of the Italian draft did not differ from the one applied in Istria and in Rijeka/Fiume, where the Italian-language schools were reserved for the Yugoslav citizens that the Yugoslav authorities decided could be considered members of the Italian minority.

The growing awareness of the deep imbalances between the treatment of the Italian minority in Yugoslavia and the Slovene minority in Italy, coupled with the constant Yugoslav demands for unilateral concessions, led significant sections of the Italian population of Trieste and Gorizia to increase their unabated hostility towards Yugoslavia. For these reasons, the Italian officers stationed in the Italian-Yugoslav borderland area – such as the Government's Commissioner-General to Zone A Giovanni Palamara and the Italian Consul-General in Koper/Capodistria Guido Zecchin – repeatedly warned both Yugoslav officers and their own government that all concessions to the Slovene minority in Italy needed to be implemented gradually and reciprocated by similar concessions to the Italian minority in Yugoslavia.⁶⁸ The development of the local situation soon proved that the stance of the Italian officers stationed in the borderland was not unfounded.

In the weeks before Popović's visit to Italy, scheduled between 1 and 4 December 1960, just as bilateral intergovernmental relations improved, the atmosphere in the borderland area became increasingly tense. On 22 September, Segni told the Yugoslav Ambassador to Italy, Mihajlo Javorski, that the Italian government was going to hand over two new Slovene cultural centres to a SKGZ organisation, as requested by Yugoslavia.⁶⁹ The following day, Palamara rejected

⁶⁷ A. Jager, "Slovensko šolstvo v Italiji". In *Slovenci v Italiji po drugi svetovni vojni*, eds. J. Jeri et al. (Ljubljana-Koper/Capodistria-Trieste: Cankarjeva založba-ČZP Primorski tisk-Založništvo tržaškega tiska, 1975), 220–223.

⁶⁸ DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 46, f. 8, doc. no. 428455, telegram no. 91 from Aleksandar Oluić (Deputy Consul Yugoslav Consulate General in Trieste) to DSIP, 26 October 1960, on the meeting with Palamara; DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 46, f. 29, doc. no. 429569, note on the meeting between Oluić and Zecchin, annexed to letter no. 163/60 from Žiga Vodušek (Yugoslav Consul-General in Trieste) to DSIP, 5 November 1960.

⁶⁹ DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 46, f. 2, doc. no. 424965, tel. no. 489 from Javorski to DSIP, 22 September 1960.

a request filed by the Italian Communist Party (PCI) to hold a bilingual Italian-Slovenian political meeting in the main square of Trieste⁷⁰ – Piazza Unità d'Italia – claiming that the square was seen as a symbol of the city's Italianity by the majority of the population and such a meeting was a mere provocation that might lead to unrest.⁷¹ A day later, the Italian Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Carlo Russo stated that Italy was satisfied by Yugoslavia's attitude towards the South Tyrol issue at the 15th UN Assembly.⁷² On 6 November, the Municipality Council of Doberdò del Lago/Doberdob – a Slovene-majority town in the province of Gorizia – passed a resolution that provided the implementation of bilingualism in the municipality and, in response, the prefect of Gorizia, Giacinto Nitri, annulled the resolution, claiming that municipalities did not have the jurisdiction to pass acts on bilingualism.⁷³

In short, in the weeks running up to Popović's visit to Italy, bilingualism had become the main demand of the Slovene minority, backed by the Yugoslav diplomacy, the USI/NSZ, and the still anti-Yugoslav PCI.⁷⁴ In this context, this campaign focused on bilingualism in the judicial system, where Italy had not yet implemented regulations to allow the use of Slovenian for judicial proceedings in Zone A and, therefore, plainly violated article 5 of the Special Statute.⁷⁵ This claim had become a major political issue since the Court of Trieste had rejected a request to use the Slovenian language in court proceedings filed by Stanislav Renko, the Chief Editor of the Trieste-based, Slovenian-language Titoist newspaper *Primorski Dnevnik*, which had been sued by Josip Agneletto, the liberal-democrat leader of the Slovene Democratic Union (SDZ), the main anti-Communist organisation of the Slovene minority in Italy.⁷⁶

The local-level situation probably explains why Popović stressed the issue of bilingualism in Italian tribunals during his visit to Italy.⁷⁷ However, the Yu-

⁷⁰ "Tretja prepoved": *Primorski dnevnik*, XVI, no. 255 (4718), 25 October 1960.

⁷¹ DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 46, f. 8, doc. no. 428455.

⁷² DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 46, f. 7, doc. no. 428219.

⁷³ "Goriški prefekt krši ustavo in zakon o j. v.": *Primorski dnevnik*, XVI, no. 289 (4752), 3 December 1961.

⁷⁴ DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 46, f. 8, doc. no. 436133, tel. no. 34 from Vodusek to DSIP.

⁷⁵ Cf. "Samo za Slovencev veljata fašistična paragrafa 137 in 122": *Primorski dnevnik*, XVI, no. 278 (4741), 20 November 1960.

⁷⁶ ACS, Ministero dell'Interno (MI), Gab. 1961–1963, b. 190, f. "15058/f. 1 - Rapporti politici culturali economici con la Jugoslavia, affari vari anno 1961" (hereinafter "15058/f. 1"), Palamara to MGG Gab, MAE DGAP, tel. 6/10/23023/60, 24 November 1960, and annexes.

⁷⁷ AJ, 142II–SSRNJ, b. I-471, letter from Pero Žarković (DSIP) to Rade Aleksić (secretary of the Commission for minority issues of the Central Committee of the SSRN

goslav Secretary did not manage to obtain any unilateral concessions from Italy, whose top-ranking officers simply confirmed that their government was willing to comply with its own obligations arising from the MOU.⁷⁸

Just after the end of Popović's visit, the debate on bilingualism in Zone A intensified. On 5 November, the Provincial Council of Trieste rejected PCI's proposal aimed at translating into Slovenian all internal proceedings of the body.⁷⁹ The following day, the Rome-based, pro-PCI newspaper *Paese Sera* published a secret cable from Palamara to the Italian government.⁸⁰ In his dispatch, sent on 11 November 1960, the Commissioner-General expressed his hope that the cultural convention that was going to be signed with Yugoslavia during Popović's visit would not include a mutual agreement for educational qualifications, as this would lead the students of the Slovene minority to complete their university studies in Ljubljana, where they would be indoctrinated into Yugoslav communism and Slovene nationalism. In addition, the day after the publication of Palamara's cable, the court of Trieste rejected another request to use the Slovenian language in court proceedings filed by Renko. This decision was immediately mediated by the Slovenian-language press, which emphasised that, this time, the editor of the *Primorski dnevnik* had been sued by the main Neo-Fascist leader of Trieste, the Italian Social Movement (MSI) Deputy Riccardo Geffer Wondrich.⁸¹

The increasingly heated debate was soon exacerbated by an intervention of a member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Gorazd Kušej, who published an article condemning Palamara's letter in the Ljubljana-based magazine *Naši razgledi*.⁸² Kušej avoided mentioning the political-ideological aspects of Palamara's cable and highlighted only the aspects linked with nationality, describing the document as evidence of its author's engagement in a policy of "ethnic-cultural genocide" of the Slovene minority in Italy. After five days, Kušej's article was republished by the *Primorski dnevnik*, which launched

of Yugoslavia), 29 January 1961; DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1961, b. 47, f. 23, doc. no. 49982, report of Žulj on the course and outcome of the 7th session of the Mixed Committee (Rome, 20 February-10 March 1961), 18 March 1961. A translation into Italian of the latter document was published in Sau, *La comunità sacrificata*, 87-94.

⁷⁸ "La visita di Popovic a Roma", cit.

⁷⁹ "Za demokristjane velja v pokrajinskem svetu načelo: 'Qui si parla soltanto italiano!': *Primorski dnevnik*, XVI, no. 291 (4754), 6 December 1960.

⁸⁰ "Il prefetto di Trieste contrario all'accordo culturale con la Jugoslavia": *Paese Sera*, XII, no. 291, 5 December 1960.

⁸¹ "Ponovna kršitev čl. 5 posebnega statuta in potrditev ustavnosti fašističnega paragrafa": *Primorski dnevnik*, XVI, no. 293 (4756), 8 December 1961.

⁸² G. Kušej, "Etnično-kulturni genocid": *Naši razgledi*, IX, no. 24, 24 December 1960.

an intense campaign against Palamara and the Italian government.⁸³ The harsh debate continued in the following weeks, and this led many leaders of the Italian majority of Trieste to write to the main Italian government and party leaders and warn them that excessive unilateral concessions to the Slovene minority would have a serious impact on the local Italian public opinion.⁸⁴ In this context, on 20 January 1961, the Provincial Council rejected another PCI proposal to have some internal proceedings of the body translated into Slovenian.⁸⁵ Over the following days, the news that Segni had confirmed the government's readiness to gradually improve compliance with the MOU spread in Trieste. The Trieste Bar Order reacted to the news by passing a motion rejecting the introduction of bilingualism in the judicial sector, complaining that the Slovene minority in Trieste enjoyed "the widest civil and democratic freedoms, while the Italians who remained in the Venetian cities of Istria [did] not enjoy them at all".⁸⁶

Suddenly, a new factor external to the Italian-Yugoslav borderland affected the already tense local atmosphere. On 27 January, the day after the Trieste Bar Order's motion, Segni and his Austrian counterpart, Bruno Kreisky, met in Milan to try to resolve the dispute on South Tyrol bilaterally.⁸⁷ The summit failed within hours, and already on 28 January, the Austrian delegation left for Vienna. That very evening, the German South Tyrolean irredentists bombed a power plant, an attack that caused a wave of demonstrations throughout Italy, many of which escalated into incidents.⁸⁸

At first, the situation in Trieste was calm, and the issues of South Tyrol and bilingualism in Zone A remained separated. However, all of a sudden, a connection emerged between these two thorny issues for the Italian public opinion. The latter must have already been shaken by the publication of the correspondence between some Triestine deputies and government ministers, where the cabinet members wrote that they thought that – albeit with the necessary caution and gradually – the MOU had to be fully implemented in Zone

⁸³ *Id.*, "Etnično-kulturni genocid": *Primorski dnevnik*, XVI, no. 309 (4772), 29 December 1960.

⁸⁴ "Graduale ma scontata l'applicazione del bilinguismo": *Il Piccolo*, LXXX, no. 4420 n.s., 1 February 1961.

⁸⁵ "Liberale odv. Jona: Tu se govori in se bo govorilo samo italijansko!": *Primorski dnevnik*, XVII, no. 18 (4792), 21 January 1961.

⁸⁶ "L'Ordine degli Avvocati respinge il bilinguismo": *Il Piccolo*, LXXX, no. 4417 (n.s.), 27 January 1961.

⁸⁷ G. B., "Le conversazioni per l'Alto Adige": *Relazioni Internazionali*, XXV, no. 5, 4 February 1961.

⁸⁸ R. Steininger, *Südtirol zwischen Diplomatie und Terror 1947–1969*, vol. II, 1960–1962 (Bolzano/Bozen: Athesia, 1999), 321–323.

A.⁸⁹ This sensitive correspondence was published on 1 February in the morning edition of the main Italian-language newspaper of Trieste, the pro-government right-wing *Il Piccolo*. However, that very day, *Il Piccolo* published in its evening edition (*Piccolo Sera*) another sensitive document, the translation of the first part of an open letter published the day before by the *Primorski dnevnik*.⁹⁰ This open letter did not just complain about the alleged Italian policy of genocide against the Slovene minority as usual: indeed, its author, “J. Z.,” went further, sympathising with the German South Tyrol minority for its recent attitude towards Italy (implicitly alluding to the 28 January bombing attack), and stating that it was a means of self-defence.⁹¹ These already shocking sentences, which *Piccolo Sera* deemed ultimate evidence of the unsuitability of any further concessions to the Slovene minority, which was reportedly now making terrorist threats, were by coincidence published in the very same issue of the newspaper where the Italian majority of Trieste was informed of a new bombing attack carried out by the German irredentists in South Tyrol.⁹²

Expectedly, the *Primorski dnevnik*'s open letter and the connection it established between the South Tyrol issue and the treatment of the Slovene minority in Zone A triggered an immediate and harsh reaction in Trieste. The following day, during demonstrations against terrorism in South Tyrol, many protesters used the slogans “No to bilingualism” and “Slavs out”.⁹³

The leaders of the local Italian far-right parties and Italian organisations who had fled Istria, the Kvarner/Quarnaro Gulf, and Dalmatia (commonly called the “exiles”) quickly understood the mood of the protesters and its huge political potential, so they immediately called for the following day a new protest against both terrorism in South Tyrol and bilingualism in Zone A.⁹⁴ However, many of the approximately 4,000 young protesters did not protest only against terrorism in South Tyrol and bilingualism in Zone A. Indeed, they also made

⁸⁹ “Graduale ma scontata l'applicazione del bilinguismo”, cit.

⁹⁰ “L'Italia accusata di genocidio dagli oltranzisti sloveni”: *Piccolo Sera. Le ultime notizie*, XLI (n.s.), no. 3456, 1 February 1960.

⁹¹ J. Z., “Palamarovo rodmoro pismo še vedno ni bilo preklicano”, part I: *Primorski dnevnik*, XVII, no. 4800, Trieste, 31 January 1961.

⁹² “Nuovo attentato a Bolzano”: *Piccolo Sera. Le ultime notizie*, XLI (n.s.), no. 3456, 1 February 1960.

⁹³ S. Ranchi, “Calendario delle ‘violenze’ nazionaliste e neofasciste”. In *Nazionalismo e neofascismo nella lotta politica al confine orientale 1945–75*, ed. Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Trieste: Editoriale La Libreria, 1977), vol. I, 485–488.

⁹⁴ “Si predispose un argine da opporre al bilinguismo”: *Il Piccolo*, LXXX, no. 4422 (n.s.), Trieste, 3 February 1961; “Ofenziva šovinizma”: *Primorski dnevnik*, XVII, no. 29 (4803), 3 February 1961.

the case for Italy's formal sovereignty on Zone B, denounced the failure to apply reciprocity in the treatment of the FTT minorities and raised the flag of Istria on a flagpole at Piazza Unità d'Italia.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the protesters wrote the slogan "Bilingualism is treason" on the statue of Domenico Rossetti, a 19th-century Triestine intellectual seen as an icon of the city's Italianity. Then they marched in front of the Slovene Credit Institute's premises in Via Fabio Filzi. The Slovene banking institution – which had no counterpart for the Italian minority in Yugoslavia – was protected by the police, who arrested the only protester that managed to get into the building. However, the fact that the overall situation was becoming more and more tense could not be concealed.

The first Yugoslav reaction ensued: the Yugoslav Consul-General in Trieste, Žiga Vodusek, asked to meet Palamara.⁹⁶ The latter eventually presented to his government the first report on the events, where he warned once again that the debate on bilingualism was a very sensitive issue in Zone A, where the majority of the population had strong anti-Yugoslav feelings because of the 1945 killings and deportations perpetrated by the Yugoslav troops after the end of the war⁹⁷ and the presence of some 50,000 exiles.⁹⁸

On the following day, an editorial on the issues of terrorism in South Tyrol and bilingualism in Zone A was published in the new issue of *Vita Nuova*, the anti-Communist and anti-Yugoslav weekly magazine of the Catholic diocese of Trieste.⁹⁹ After praising the (Catholic) Slovene minority of Trieste for having played a significant role in the reconciliation between Zone A's national communities, this editorial spoke out against the introduction of bilingualism in Trieste, stating that its implementation would only be a victory for those who wanted to fuel national hatred between Italians and Slovenes and backed the use of terrorist means. To support this premise, *Vita Nuova* published a translation of some parts of the second half of the open letter signed by "J. Z." – or "Z. J." – which had been, in the meantime, published in the *Primorski dnevnik's* edition of 1 February, where the author not only stated that the settlement of Istrian exiles in Zone A was a crime and the Italian government the only culprit but

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*; "Esposte in sede governativa le preoccupazioni per il bilinguismo": *Il Piccolo*, LXXX, no. 4423 (n.s.), 4 February 1961; "Pripravljaja se stopnjevanje šovinistične ofenzive": *Primorski dnevnik*, XVII, no. 30 (4804), 4 February 1961.

⁹⁶ DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1961, b. 47, f. 1, doc. no. 43500, tel. no. 12 from Vodusek to DSIP, 3 February 1961, 19:00.

⁹⁷ Cf. G. Valdevit (ed.), *Foibe, il peso del passato. Venezia Giulia 1943–1945* (Venice: Marsilio-Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia, 1997).

⁹⁸ ACS, MI, Gab. 1961–1963, b. 190, f. 15058/f. 1, registered express mail no. 6/10-107/61 Gab. from Palamara to PCM, MI, and MAE, 3 February 1961.

⁹⁹ "Altoatesini del Carso": *Vita Nuova*, no. 2082, 4 February 1961.

additionally intimated that the Slovene minority would imitate the Germans of South Tyrol and resort to terrorist means.¹⁰⁰ From the Italian point of view, these sentences were shocking, because the *Primorski dnevnik's* open letter did not mention the reason that had led so many Italians to flee Istria and, above all, because Z. J., as claimed in *Vita Nuova*, was very likely Zorko Jelinčič, one of the main leaders of the pro-Yugoslav irredentist terrorist organisation TIGR at the time of the Fascist regime, a man originally from Bovec (in the then and current Republic of Slovenia) who, after the Second World War, had left the former Italian territories that had been handed over to Yugoslavia and moved to Trieste, where he worked for pro-Yugoslav (Yugoslav-funded) organisations.¹⁰¹

It was a point of no return. That day, as anticipated, some demonstrators attacked the construction site of the Slovene cultural centre that had to be handed over to the SKGZ, shouting slogans against bilingualism, Tito, and “the Slavs”.¹⁰² The construction site was promptly secured by the police, which led to the first violent street clashes recorded in Trieste since November 1953.¹⁰³

The shift from verbal to physical violence was not the only turning point of 4 February. In fact, as Palamara pointed out, that day, the protesters overlooked the South Tyrol issue and focused only on the issue of bilingualism.¹⁰⁴ In addition, the events of Trieste became a blatant diplomatic case. In Rome, Javorski complained to the Italian government and asked to be received by Segni and Prime Minister Fanfani.¹⁰⁵ In Trieste, Palamara received Vodušek, who complained about the slogans against Tito and the risk that members of the Slovene

¹⁰⁰ Z. J./J. Z., “Palamarovo rodmorno pismo”, part II: *Primorski dnevnik*, XVII, no. 4801, 1 February 1961.

¹⁰¹ Z. Jelinčič, *Pod svinčenim nebom: spomini tigrovskega voditelja* (Trieste-Gorizia: ZTT/EST–Sklad Dorčeta Sardoča, 2017). The name TIGR was the acronym of “Trst, Istra, Gorica, Rijeka/Reka” [“Trieste, Istria, Gorizia, Rijeka/Fiume”], the territorial target of the irredentist organisation. For an overview of the TIGR cf. A. Gabrič (ed.), *TIGR v zgodovini in zgodovinopisju* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2017).

¹⁰² ACS, MI, Gab. 1961–1963, b. 190, f. 15058/f. 1, confidential tel. no. 2655, Palamara to PCM and MI, 4 February 1961, 20:35; “Feriti e contusi negli scontri degli studenti con la Polizia”: *Piccolo Sera*, XLI (n.s.), no. 3459, 4 February 1961; “Fašistična pobalinska drhal napadla Kulturni dom ob vpitju rasističnega gesla «Fora i ščavi!»”: *Primorski dnevnik*, XVII, no. 31 (4805), 5 February 1961.

¹⁰³ For a brief overview of the 1953 Trieste riots (when violent clashes broke out between the Allied Military Government police and pro-Italian demonstrators) cf. Pupo, *Adriatico amarissimo*, 236–242.

¹⁰⁴ ACS, MI, Gab. 1961–1963, b. 190, f. 15058/f. 1, confidential tel. no. 2655, cit.

¹⁰⁵ DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1961, b. 47, f. 1, doc. no. 43709, tel. no. 50 from Javorski to DSIP, 4 February 1961, 13:00.

minority might be hurt or their property damaged by the street protesters.¹⁰⁶ At the meeting, Palamara underlined that the police had already protected the Slovene bank and the construction site of the cultural centre and explained that, from his point of view, the protests were proof that the Triestine context did not yet allow for an immediate and full implementation of the MOU, which required graduality and public consensus.

The events of the following days seemed to prove once again Palamara right. On 5 February, *Il Piccolo* ran a strongly worded editorial signed by its editor-in-chief, eloquently titled "No to bilingualism"¹⁰⁷. The article was basically addressed to Segni, who was warned that the Triestines had accepted a tax surcharge to help Sardinia (Segni's constituency) without batting an eye but could not accept bilingualism in their own city. In the afternoon, around 1,500 mostly Istrian exile students gathered in Piazza Unità d'Italia, where they displayed signs with the names of Istrian towns and raised on the square's flagpoles the flags of Italy and the emblems of Istria, Rijeka/Fiume, and Dalmatia.¹⁰⁸

The following day, another student demonstration took place in Trieste. A small group of teenagers, far from the mass of demonstrators, managed to run into Via San Francesco, break the window of the local Slovenian library, and get away from the police.¹⁰⁹ In the meanwhile, the latter had managed to prevent the mass of demonstrators from heading to the library, which led to new violent clashes. Unable to continue in the direction of Via di San Francesco, the demonstrators then headed to the Slovenian-language high school in Via Lazzaretto Vecchio, but were once again stopped by the police. At this point, given that repeated police interventions were preventing the demonstrators from approaching any symbolic building of the Slovene minority, the protesters changed their objective and headed directly towards the Palace of the Government in Piazza Unità d'Italia, the seat of Palamara, who had been vehemently criticised by the protesters for his harsh repression of the demonstrations.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ ACS, MI, Gab. 1961–1963, b. 190, f. 15058/f. 1, tel. no. 2685 from Palamara to PCM, MI, and MAE, 5 February 1961, 01:00; DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1961, doc. no. 43621, tel. 15 from Vodušek to DSIP, 5 February 1961, 07:00.

¹⁰⁷ C. Alessi, "No al bilinguismo": *Il Piccolo*, LXXX, no. 4424 (n.s.), 5 February 1961.

¹⁰⁸ "Anche di domenica": *Piccolo Sera*, XLI (n.s.), no. 3460, 6 February 1961.

¹⁰⁹ "Napad na slovensko knjigarno in poskus napada na drž, slovensko višjo gimnazijo": *Primorski dnevnik*, XVII, no. 32 (4806), 7 February 1961; "Un'altra giornata di manifestazioni contro la minaccia del bilinguismo": *Piccolo Sera*, XLI (n.s.), no. 3460 - edizione delle sedici, 6 February 1961.

¹¹⁰ ACS, MI, Gab. 1961–1963, b. 190, f. 15058/f. 1, tel. no. 2782 from Palamara to PCM, MI, and MAE, 6 February 1961, 16:30; DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1961, doc. no. 43686, tel. no. 18 from Oluić to DSIP, 6 February 1961, 18:40.

The severity of the situation led Palamara to leave Trieste for Rome to confer with Fanfani and Segni.¹¹¹ Meanwhile, the situation in Zone A continued to escalate. During the night of 6/7 February, a well-known Slovene pro-Yugoslav activist (caught red-handed by the police) wrote on several buildings symbolically tied to the Italian majority slogans like “Memorandum” or “Here we are Slovenes”.¹¹² Later in the afternoon, the same activist accompanied to the police station three Slovene schoolgirls, who reported having been harassed by some Italian peers who had warned them to stop talking in Slovenian.¹¹³ In addition, the PCI was organising some rallies to condemn the anti-Slovene demonstrations, while right-wing parties were planning further protests.¹¹⁴ The situation was escalating beyond all limits, which led the Italian cabinet to discuss the issue on 8 February, and the same day, Palamara banned all protests in Trieste for 30 days.¹¹⁵ This helped to calm things down, even though some further incidents were recorded in the following days: on 9 February, the police stopped 600 anti-Yugoslav protesters who were trying to march towards Piazza Unità d’Italia¹¹⁶; during the night of 10/11 February, anti-Italian activists removed some monolingual (Italian) street signs and wrote Zone A slogans, such as “Here we are Slovenes” or “Death to Italy”.¹¹⁷

In the meantime, the events in Trieste continued to be the central issue in the diplomatic relations between Italy and Yugoslavia. Since 6 February, Italian diplomacy made it repeatedly clear that, after the Trieste demonstrations, any further implementation of the MOU in Zone A not only required more

¹¹¹“Palamara riferirà a Roma sulla vibrata protesta di Trieste”: *Il Piccolo*, LXXX, no. 4425 (n.s.), 7 February 1961;

¹¹²ACS, MI, Gab. 1961–1963, b. 190, f. 15058/f. 1, letter no. 6/10-123/61 from Palamara to PCM, MI, and MAE, 8 February 1961.

¹¹³ACS, MI, Gab. 1961–1963, b. 190, f. 15058/f. 1, confidential letter no. 6/10-128/61 Gab. from Palamara to PCM, MI, and MAE, 16 February 1961; “Posledice hujskanja”: *Primorski dnevnik*, XVII, no. 33 (4807), 8 February 1961.

¹¹⁴ASTS, CGG, Gab. 1961–1963, b. 188, f. 13/20 “Divieto [...]”, confidential letter no. 02311/UP from Armando Pace (Trieste Police Commissioner) to the Government’s Commissioner-General office, 7 February 1961.

¹¹⁵“Sono proibite per un mese le pubbliche manifestazioni”: *Piccolo Sera*, XLI (n.s.), no. 3462, 8 February 1961.

¹¹⁶“Una dimostrazione malgrado il divieto”: *Piccolo Sera*, XLI (n.s.), 3463, 9 February 1961

¹¹⁷ACS, MI, Gab. 1961–1963, b. 190, f. 15058/f. 1, letter no. 6/10-143/61 Gab. from Palamara to PCM, MI, and MAE, 13 February 1961; ASTS, CGG, Gab. 1961–1963, f. 13/4 “(Basovizza) Furto e danneggiamento Tabelle segnalazione stradale”, confidential letter no. 13/4-2278/61 Gab. from Palamara to PCM, MI, and MAE, 18 March 1961; “Gli scopi del bilinguismo spiegati dagli attivisti sloveni”: *Difesa Adriatica*, XV, no. 5, 25 February-8 March 1961.

time and graduality but also needed to be acceptable to the Italian population of Trieste.¹¹⁸

At first, Yugoslavia did not change policy, as attested by the Yugoslav note of protest presented to the Italian government on 7 February: in this document, Belgrade asked Rome to put an end to all anti-Slovene protests, outlaw all Italian anti-Yugoslav organisations, and fully implement the MOU in Zone A unilaterally.¹¹⁹ However, the Yugoslav objective of obtaining unilateral concessions for the Slovene minority in Italy without any compensation for the Italian minority in Yugoslavia was becoming more and more unrealistic with each passing day.

During February, the majority of the Italian public opinion (both in Zone A and in the Republic of Italy *proper*) condemned the anti-Slovene deviations of the Trieste demonstrations, but strongly rejected any concessions to the Slovene minority in Italy without adequate compensation for the Italian minority in Yugoslavia.¹²⁰ In addition, the need to comply with the rationale of reciprocity was once again highlighted by the Italian diplomacy. On 24 February, the Italian government replied to the Yugoslav note of 7 February.¹²¹ In its note, the Italian government stated that it was not going to violate the freedoms granted by the Italian constitution by outlawing protests and organisations with anti-Yugoslav sentiments as requested by the Yugoslav government. Moreover, the Italian government declared it was ready to gradually implement all the protection measures granted to the Slovene minority by the Italian constitution and the MOU as long as the Italian minority in Zone B was given the same treatment and living conditions as those enjoyed by the Slovene minority in Zone A.

The need to rely on reciprocity could not be clearer, but nonetheless it was once again reaffirmed by the Italian diplomacy at the 7th session of the

¹¹⁸ DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1961, b. 47, f. 1, doc. no. 43790, tel. no. 52 from Javorski to DSIP on the 6 February meeting with Grazzi, 7 February 1961, 07:00; DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1961, b. 47, f. 2, doc. no. 44333, note of Majer on the 6 February 1961 meeting with Marchiori; *Ibid.*, doc. no. 45006, note II-69/61 of Đorđe Popović (Secretary Yugoslav Embassy to Italy) on the activity of the Yugoslav Embassy with respect to the Trieste events, 13 February 1961.

¹¹⁹ ACS, MI, Gab. 1961–1963, b. 190, f. 15058/f. 1, tel. 335 from Alberto Berio (Italian Ambassador to Yugoslavia) to Segni and annexed Yugoslav note, 7 February 1961; DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1961, b. 47, f. 1, doc. no. 43811, note of Brilej on the 7 February 1961 meeting with Berio.

¹²⁰ "La protesta istriana": *Piccolo Sera*, XLI (n.s.), no. 3462, 8 February 1961; "Le proteste contro il bilinguismo": *Vita Nuova*, no. 2083, 11 February 1961; "Applicare il Memorandum nella sua interezza": *Vita Nuova*, no. 2084, 18 February 1961.

¹²¹ ACS, MI, Gab. 1961–1963, b. 190, f. 15058/f. 1, confidential tel. no. 12/362 from MAE to PCM, 3 March 1961, and annexes (including 24 February 1961 note from the Italian Embassy in Belgrade to DSIP); DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1961, b. 47, f. 3, doc. no. 46387, note of Brilej on the 23 [sic!] February 1961 meeting with Berio.

Mixed Committee, held in Rome from 20 February to 10 March 1961. Indeed, as the Head of the Yugoslav delegation, Berislav Žulj, commented, during this session, the Italian delegation criticised the treatment of the Italian minority in Yugoslavia more harshly than ever.¹²² In fact, the Italian delegation protested very strongly against the Slavicisation of family names, the lack of Italian native-speaker teachers in Zone B's Italian-language schools, and textbook content offensive to Italy and Italians. In addition to these old complaints, for the very first time at a session of the Mixed Committee, the Italian delegation protested against the Zone B polity reform, too.

In the meantime, the course of events in Zone A and in the Republic of Italy once again demonstrated that no concession to the Slovene minority in Italy could be sought without compensation for the Italian minority in Yugoslavia. Indeed, the Italian public opinion firmly rejected any unilateral concessions to the Slovene minority, as it was made evident by the fact that, after the ban of all protests in Trieste, the right-wing anti-Yugoslav rallies continued in other cities, such as Venice.¹²³ Furthermore, except for the USI/NDZ and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), all Italian parties, press, and intellectuals who favoured new concessions towards the Slovene minority now considered reciprocity an essential prerequisite.¹²⁴

The Yugoslav policy aimed at obtaining unilateral concessions for the Slovene minority had, therefore, utterly failed, as did the vigorous propaganda and actions carried out by the pro-Yugoslav (Titoist) organisations in Italy, which achieved little beyond stirring up the Italian far-right. First, the writings published in the *Primorski dnevnik* had basically given the Italian far-right organisations a reason for calling the February protests. In addition, on 24 February, an unexploded bomb was found outside of the *Primorski dnevnik* headquarters, an event that could not but be interpreted as a neo-Fascist retaliation against Jelinčič and the pro-Yugoslav Slovenes open to terrorist means¹²⁵. Indeed, this attack plainly emulated the notorious TIGR attack of 10 February 1930, when Jelinčič's old organisation planted a bomb outside of the headquarters of the

¹²² DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1961, b. 47, f. 23, doc. no. 49982, cit.

¹²³ ACS, MI, Gab. 1961–1963, b. 190, f. 15058/f. 1, confidential tel. no. 12/3458 from MAE to PCM and MI, 18 March 1961.

¹²⁴ "Il punto sul bilinguismo": *Il Piccolo*, LXXX, no. 4441 (n.s.), 25 February 1961; "Le ruote quadre della reciprocità": *Vita Nuova*, no. 2085, 25 February 1961; "KPI, cona B in Palamara": *Primorski dnevnik*, XVII, no. 51 (4825), 1 March 1961; "Sì al Memorandum ma anche in Zona B": *Il Piccolo*, Trieste, 1 March 1961; U. D'Andrea, "Eroismo della frontiera": *Il Tempo*, XVIII, no. 64, Rome, 5 March 1961. Cf. DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1960, b. 47, f. 4, doc. no. 436453, report "Iredentizm".

¹²⁵ "Neesplodirana bomba na dvorišču uredništva Primorskega dnevnika": *Primorski dnevnik*, XVII, no. 48 (4822), Trieste, 25 February 1961.

Fascist newspaper *Il Popolo di Trieste*, killing one person, maiming one, and wounding three.¹²⁶ The outcome of Jelinčič's praise of terrorist means used by the Germans of South Tyrol had not been positive for the Slovene minority and the pro-Yugoslav and anti-Italian signs written during the nights of 6 and 10 February did not bring better results. Indeed, this example was followed by the neo-Fascist Italians who, during the night of 7/8 March snuck into a Slovene-language school of Trieste and wrote words such as "Italy", "Istria", and "Duce".¹²⁷

To sum up, the policy followed by Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav-controlled Slovene organisations in Italy merely solidified Italy's resolve to adhere to the reciprocity principle and strengthened the Italian anti-Yugoslav and anti-Slovene far-right movements, failing in its purpose of securing unilateral concessions for the Slovene minority in Italy. Finally, this fact was lucidly understood by the Yugoslav diplomacy, whose main target of obtaining new concessions for the Slovene minority in Italy had proved futile. The Yugoslav Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, therefore, changed its strategy and developed a brand-new policy on the minority issue.

The new Yugoslav policy was officially announced to the main Yugoslav stakeholders through the Secretariat for Foreign Affairs' report on the 7th session of the Mixed Committee.¹²⁸ This document, signed by Žulj on 18 March 1961, started from a reconstruction of the Trieste events, remarking that their outcome had been the strengthening of the anti-Yugoslav right wing in Italy and the impossibility for the Italian government to make new concessions to its Slovene minority. The report later analysed both the official works and the corridor talks of the 7th session of the Mixed Committee, noting that the Italian diplomacy had criticised the treatment of the Italian minority in Yugoslavia more scathingly than ever, but it had nevertheless declared itself ready to make new concessions to the Slovene minority provided that they were reciprocated by new concessions to the Italian minority. The document, therefore, concluded that the Trieste events had made the minority issue one of the most important and sensitive bilateral problems. Up to that time, these events had not affected significantly other aspects of Italian-Yugoslav relations, with the exception of minor matters, such as the delay of Segni's visit to Yugoslavia initially scheduled for April. However, the report warned that, under these new circumstances, similar cases had become a true possibility and could have a substantial negative

¹²⁶M. Pahor, "Nastanek in razvoj ilegalne tajne organizacije Borba (1927–1930)". In *TIGR v zgodovini in zgodovinospisju*, ed. A. Gabrič (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2017), 57–58.

¹²⁷"Fašistična gesla na stopnišču slovenske šole pri Sv. Jakobu": *Primorski dnevnik*, XVII, no. 58 (4832), 9 March 1961.

¹²⁸DA-MSP, PA, Italija, 1961, b. 47, f. 23, doc. no. 49982, cit.

impact on the relations with Rome. All this, wrote Žulj, had made it necessary to take a wide range of new measures.

With regard to its Italian minority, Yugoslavia had to stop blatantly breaching the MOU and the Yugoslav laws and constitutions. Some of the main tasks indicated by the document were: remove the sentences offensive to Italy and Italians from textbooks; adopt new laws on Italian-language schools in the Republics of Croatia and Slovenia; ensure that all teachers in Italian-language schools are Italian native speakers; implement bilingualism where provided by the Special Statute; make sure that the treatment of the Italian minority might not be highly controversial. In addition, the Secretariat for Foreign Affairs advocated the restoration of Zone B's pre-MOU polities, since the Yugoslav polity reform, in breach of the Special Statute, had elicited vehement protests from Italy, and if the latter implemented similar reforms in Zone A, it would have easily made the Slovenes a tiny minority in every new polity.

The Slovene minority in Italy was also the subject of a wide range of measures provided by the Secretariat for Foreign Affairs. Interestingly enough, for a self-proclaimed socialist country, Yugoslavia's new policy was mainly aimed at promoting, where possible, overcoming party differences among the Slovenes of Italy, who were supposed to have taken a concerted and stronger action to uphold their rights. This policy had already been launched in February during the Trieste demonstrations¹²⁹ and paved the way for cooperation between the pro-Yugoslav Slovenes linked to the SKGZ and the USI/NSZ, a political minority within the Slovene national minority, and the majority of Italy's Slovenes, whose political orientation was mainly in favour of the still anti-Yugoslav PCI and the conservatives linked to the SDZ. Furthermore, according to the report signed by Žulj, the *Primorski dnevnik* had to stop publishing excessively harsh (anti-Italian) content, since those writings were portrayed as having no use but giving the Italians new justifications to overstate their case.

In a nutshell, Yugoslavia opted to drop its old policy on the minority issue, comply with the MOU, and start a new phase in its relations with Italy concerning their mutual minorities. The final target of this new policy was quite clear: accept negotiations with Italy on the basis of reciprocity to finally secure some long-sought new concessions for the Slovene minority in Italy.

This new policy was implemented very quickly. Within weeks from the issuing of the Secretariat for Foreign Affairs report, the Yugoslav authorities started to give out new instructions aimed at improving the situation of the Italian minority in many fields.¹³⁰ The new Yugoslav attitude unlocked the

¹²⁹ ACS, MI, Gab. 1961–1963, b. 190, f. 15058/f. 1, letter no. 6/10-123/61, cit.

¹³⁰ ACRS, UIIF 1960–1962, b. 1106/73, minutes of the 29 May 1961 meeting of the UIIF secretariat, published in A. Radossi, "Evoluzione interna e rapporti internazionali

negotiations on the minority issue, leading to a rapid series of achievements for the benefit of both minorities. On 26 June, Italy and Yugoslavia signed the regulations of the Koper/Capodistria seminars.¹³¹ A few weeks later, on 19 July, the Italian parliament approved a new law on Slovenian-language schools.¹³² Meanwhile, from 28 June to 1 July, Segni visited Yugoslavia, the first Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Italy to do so.¹³³ In December, the Mixed Committee confirmed the launch of the Koper/Capodistria seminars, whose first edition was eventually held from 31 January to 10 February 1962.¹³⁴ In 1962, for the very first time, the Italian diplomatic authorities were allowed to maintain direct contact with the Italian minority in Istria and Rijeka/Fiume,¹³⁵ and the USI/NSZ was dissolved and basically merged into the pro-government PSI.¹³⁶ Between November and December of that year, at the 9th session of the Mixed Committee, Yugoslavia proposed a wide set of reciprocity-based cultural exchange programs between the two minorities and their kin-states.¹³⁷ This proposal became the basis of a new negotiation process, which was approved at the following 10th session of the Mixed Committee in December 1963, after the delegations of both countries had provided evidence that their countries were trying to comply with the MOU.¹³⁸ For the very first time since 1954, the two

della Jugoslavia dal 1955 al 1965": *Quaderni*, vol. XIV, 2002, 110–112.

¹³¹ "Protokol o sastanku jugoslavenskih i italijanskih eksperata za organizaciju seminara iz italijanske kulture na području pod jugoslovenskom upravom" (Ljubljana, 26 June 1961): *Službeni list*, X, no. 9, Belgrade, 29 September 1962.

¹³² Law 19 July 1961, no. 1012, "Disciplina delle istituzioni scolastiche nella provincia di Gorizia e nel Territorio di Trieste": *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana, Serie Generale*, CII, no. 252, 9 October 1961.

¹³³ "La visita di Segni a Belgrado": *Relazioni Internazionali*, XXV, no. 27, 8 July 1961.

¹³⁴ "Zapisnik sa VIII redovnog redovnog zasedanja jugoslovensko-italijanskog Mešovitog odbora" (Belgrade, 4–16 December 1961): *Službeni list*, X, no. 9, Belgrade, 29 September 1962; L. Macchi, "Cronaca del Seminario di lingua e cultura italiana dal 1962 al 2016, in *Il seminario di lingua e cultura italiana. Genesi, sviluppo, cronaca e testimonianze (1962–2016)*, eds. C. Battelli et al. (Koper/Capodistria: Centro Italiano di Promozione, Cultura, Formazione e Sviluppo "Carlo Combi", 2018), 95–99.

¹³⁵ ASD-MAECI, CGIC, b. 2, f. 10, tel. 84/2/1019 from Zecchin to MAE et al., 18 May 1962.

¹³⁶ ASTS, CGG, Gabinetto Affari Riservati 1955–1970, b. 8, f. 4/2 "Situazione finanziaria del gruppo titoista operante a Trieste e Gorizia", confidential tel. no. 1367/62 Ris. from Libero Mazza (Government's Commissioner-General to Zone A) to PCM, MI, and MAE, 22 May 1962.

¹³⁷ "Zapisnik IX redovnog zasedanja jugoslovensko-italijanskog Mešovitog odbora" (Rome, 20 November–4 December 1961): *Službeni list*, XII, no. 3, 25 March 1964.

¹³⁸ ACS, Archivio Aldo Moro, b. 66, f. 174, s. 1, confidential report of Manlio Castronovo (head Italian delegation to the Mixed Committee) on the X session of the Mixed

governments began to consider going beyond the MOU: from the point of view of the two minorities, this was a milestone, even though officially the new agreement was to cover only the two zones of the former FTT.

From the following February, Italy and Yugoslavia negotiated the details of the new agreement on mutual minorities, which was eventually signed on 21 July 1964.¹³⁹ After this document, the two minorities were given significant new concessions, such as further protection measures and funding, better schooling and, above all, the opportunity to openly forge new relations with their kin-states. This was a great achievement indeed, which had become possible only after the 1961 Trieste events led Yugoslavia to abandon its unrealistic policy aimed at obtaining unilateral concessions from Italy. A decade after the signing of the MOU, the Italian-Yugoslav relations concerning the mutual minorities finally shifted from confrontation to collaboration for the benefit of the two countries and their borderland and its population.

Committe, 23 December 1963; ACS, AAM, b. 66, f. 174, s. 2, "Verbale della X sessione del Comitato Misto" (12–18 December 1963), annexed to tel. 12/16/C from MAE to PCM et al., 4 January 1964.

¹³⁹Report on the meetings of the Mixed Committee's experts (Trieste-Koper/Capodistria, 26 February–21 July 1964), whose translation into Italian was published in Sau, *La comunità sacrificata*, 132–135.

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REVIEWS

DUBRAVKA PRERADOVIĆ, ED., *ERMIL I STRATONIK. SVETI RANOHRISČANSKI MUČENICI BEOGRADSKI* [HERMYLOS AND STRATONIKOS. EARLY CHRISTIAN MARTYRS OF BELGRADE]. BELGRADE: INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES SASA, 2022, 216 P.

Reviewed by Petar Josipović*

Under the auspices of the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, a study on the cult of the holy martyrs of Belgrade Hermylos and Stratonikos was published last year. It is a collaborative work of a group of authors, experts from different backgrounds, whose research efforts on the cult of the late antique martyrs from Singidunum were guided by the diligence of the editor, Dubravka Preradović, a research associate at the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Apart from the reviewer's preface and the editor's introductory remarks, the book is divided into three thematic sections. The first deals with history and archaeology, the second with the cult and iconography of the saints Hermylos and Stratonikos, while the third is devoted to hagiography and the liturgical celebration of their cult. These sections are divided into six separate studies whose topics are intended to provide readers, even

those whose interests lie outside this field of study, with an understanding of the complex processes that accompanied the beginning, development and spread of a Christian cult from late antiquity to modern times. Before providing a more detailed overview of the structure of this book, we believe it useful to briefly inform readers about the basic details of the subject.

Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos suffered for Christ in the Roman city of Singidunum in the early fourth century, probably in 315. According to their hagiographies, they were tortured by order of Emperor Licinius and executed by drowning in the Danube. Hermylos was a deacon, while Stratonikos was a Roman soldier, his jailer and a friend who willingly shared the crown of martyrdom with him. Since hagiography

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is a literary-historical genre primarily aimed at portraying individuals with the characteristics of ideal and recognizable Christian saints rather than providing concrete historical details about their lives, such accounts provide little reliable information. One notable exception is the precise information that the bodies of Hermylos and Stratonikos were found eighteen miles downstream from the site of their execution at Singidunum. Pious Christians kept their relics near the site where they were found, and their cult grew and thrived there until the relics were taken to Constantinople due to the Hunnic invasions in the mid-fifth century. The joint cult of the two saints enjoyed extraordinary popularity in the Byzantine capital, as evidenced by the unusual fact that their feast was celebrated twice a year, on January 13 and June 1, a practice reserved for especially highly venerated saints. As for the presence of the relics of the two Belgrade martyrs in the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, there is a single mention of it in the travelogue of the Russian pilgrim Dobrynya, later Archbishop of Novgorod, who visited Constantinople around the year 1200. Since the Crusaders devastated the Byzantine capital in 1204, it is believed that the relics of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos are irretrievably lost. However, their cult has survived. The veneration of the two early Christian martyrs from Belgrade spread along with the copying and translation of many Constantinopolitan liturgical and other texts, as well as the adoption and adaptation of the iconographic programme of churches in new locations. As a result, the veneration of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos is documented in medieval Russia and the Balkan Peninsula, especially in medieval Serbia, where its popularity is particularly well attested. Although the memory of the two martyrs began to fade, especially after the fall of the Serbian state in the fifteenth century, traces of their cult remained present in the following centuries. The veneration of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos was

revived with particular intensity at the beginning of this century, when the Serbian Orthodox Church, in view of their historical importance, revived their cult under quite different circumstances, dedicating to them, for example, one of the chapels in the Church of Saint Sava in Belgrade.

Taking all this into account – on the one hand, the diversity of regions where the cult of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos was celebrated and, on the other hand, the chronological framework that spans more than seventeen centuries – it is more than clear that the editor and authors of this publication were faced with an exceptionally challenging research task. The decision to trace the history of the cult of these two early Christian martyrs from Belgrade in its entire geographical and chronological framework presented the authors of this book with numerous methodological and heuristic challenges, which to a certain extent influenced the organization of the material presented to the readers. In what follows, we shall attempt to briefly outline the structure of the book by first considering the goals and contributions of each chapter.

In her introductory remarks, Dubravka Preradović, the editor of the book, briefly but thoroughly outlines the history of previous research on the cult of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos, and presents its findings as the basis for the new monographic study. Drawing on contributions from experts in various fields, she confidently formulates a body of knowledge of indisputable scholarly value, while at the same time pointing to the contentious issues that marred the efforts of previous researchers, thus laying the groundwork for her own reflections. In this way, the structure of this publication has been indirectly formulated in six complementary studies.

In the role of an introductory text whose primary aim is to situate the martyrdom of Hermylos and Stratonikos in precise geographical and temporal coordinates, Olga Špehar's contribution focuses

on the Christianization of late antique Singidunum. She traces the urban development of Singidunum from its foundation to the first half of the seventh century. The author examines in detail the emergence and growth of an urban centre on the Danubian frontier and traces various processes that shaped its social and religious identity in a period of frequent political discontinuities and ecclesiastical schisms. The martyrdom of Hermylus and Stratonikos is placed in the context of the persecution of Christians, which was particularly harsh during the reigns of the emperors Diocletian, Galerius, and Licinius. Primarily through a comparative analysis, the author looks at the suffering of the Belgrade deacon and his jailer as part of a broader phenomenon, including the very similar executions of Saints Montanus and Maxima, who were also drowned in the Danube to prevent their relics from inspiring a new Christian cult. In this context, the author attempts to re-evaluate the known facts about a late antique burial site in Brestovik, downstream from Belgrade, which earlier researchers believed might correspond to the place where the cult of Saints Hermylus and Stratonikos had originally been founded and celebrated. The translation of their relics and the relocation of their developed cult to the Byzantine capital were prompted by the political and social crisis caused by the ravaging of the central Balkans by the Huns in 441 AD, which also led to Roman Singidunum gradually losing its urban character. Olga Špehar traces the process of decline of the urban core at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers until the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610–641), when Singidunum most likely ceased to exist.

The second chapter of this book, devoted to the cult and iconography of Saints Hermylus and Stratonikos, is written entirely by the editor, Dubravka Preradović. In her first contribution, she deals with the presence and dynamics of the cult of Saints Hermylus and Stratonikos in

Constantinople. Following the origins of the cult of the two Belgrade martyrs, she seeks to establish their identity in terms of liturgical celebration and to distinguish them from the saints with the same names recorded in the oldest martyrologies. Having established that these were saints commemorated in Constantinopolitan churches on January 13 and June 1, Dubravka Preradović analyses their hagiographies, which survive in various versions and copies, the most important of which is the pre-Metaphrastian version, apparently written in the sixth century. As for the presence of their relics in Constantinople, however, the sources are not quite clear. Since the only solid information about the remains of Saints Hermylus and Stratonikos comes from the aforementioned Anthony of Novgorod, the author has been able to draw conclusions about their physical presence in Constantinople using comparative analysis: examples of other Balkan saints and the translations of their relics prompted by imminent danger in late antiquity. Given that their cult was developing in Singidunum during the century following their martyrdom, as evidenced by the existence of the pre-Metaphrastian hagiography, Dubravka Preradović rightly concludes that their cult came to the Byzantine capital along with their relics. Information about the dynamics of their liturgical veneration in Constantinople can be found in the *Typikon* of the Great Church and the *Synaxarion* of Constantinople, liturgical compositions preserved in numerous copies. The *Typikon* of the Great Church mentions three churches where their synaxes were held – in January and June in the church of St. Michael the Archangel in Oxeia, and in June in the churches in Phirmoupolis and Spoudaioi. With special attention and erudition, the author also analyses poetic compositions, including the eleventh-century verse-calendar of Christopher of Mytilene and the subtle poems of Theodore Prodromos a century later, which depict the martyrdom of Saints Hermylus and Stratonikos with a lyrical

tone. Finally, Dubravka Preradović also examines the dynamics of the celebrations in honour of Saints Hermyllos and Stratonikos in the monasteries of the capital, which took place a day before those in the churches (January 12), since their commemoration coincided with the afterfeast of Epiphany in the calendar. Concluding her comprehensive contribution, the author carefully points out that the cult of the early Christian martyrs of Belgrade, although honoured in Constantinople with two annual commemorations in three churches, could not flourish outside the Byzantine capital, which means that their liturgical celebration in other parts of the Christian world was limited to commemorations in January and rare representations in art.

The third study in this publication deals with the representations of Saints Hermyllos and Stratonikos in the medieval art of the Eastern Christian world. Dubravka Preradović first focuses on their depictions in Byzantine liturgical manuscripts, among which the Menologion of Basil II (976–1025) stands out for its exceptional craftsmanship. In this manuscript the two Belgrade martyrs are shown drowning in a river, which is a direct visual reflection of the hagiographic text. Although the scene of their martyrdom is most commonly depicted in surviving sources, in some illustrated manuscripts they are shown as martyrs clad in tunics and cloaks with a *tablion*, and Hermyllos is depicted in one manuscript wearing a deacon's robe. However, their depictions in Byzantine manuscripts are by no means exhaustive when of their portrayal in medieval art. The author analyses with special attention several preserved calendar icons from the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, in which, among others, the early Christian martyrs from Belgrade are appropriately depicted. In the monumental medieval painting of the Eastern Christian world, Saints Hermyllos and Stratonikos have been present since the middle of the eleventh century, when they were portrayed

in St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv. With the exception of Studenica whose fresco decoration, completed in 1208/9, contains a portrait of St. Hermyllos – nothing precise can be said about the representation of St. Stratonikos – the author emphasizes that they were not portrayed in other churches in medieval Serbia until the fourteenth century. Only then did their portraits appear in Staro Nagoričino, Gračanica, Peć and Dečani as part of the Calendar, although in some cases nothing more can be said about them than that they existed, since they were damaged beyond recognition in later centuries. Taking into account the fact that both saints were also painted in the Lazarević family foundations, Ravanica and Manasija, Dubravka Preradović rightly points out that almost all of their representations that date back to the fourteenth century belong to Serbian art, mentioning only the notable exception of those from the church of St. Nicholas in Platsa in the Peloponnese. Finally, the author also focuses on the shaping and standardization of their iconographic types in post-Byzantine painting, a process that is clearly not yet complete, as contemporary examples from Serbia show.

Taking into account all that has been mentioned, it is quite clear that Dubravka Preradović's two studies, which form the basis of this publication, offer the most comprehensive overview to date of the development, spread, and dynamics of the cult of Saints Hermyllos and Stratonikos in the Eastern Christian world. This is a significant achievement in systematizing existing knowledge and a remarkable advance in bringing new insights. The following three contributions, dealing with the hagiography and liturgical celebration of the feast of the Holy Martyrs of Belgrade in Constantinople, form a coherent thematic unit and support the findings presented in the previous studies in this book.

In the study devoted to the extant texts of the *passio* of Saints Hermyllos and Stratonikos, Darko Todorović first defines the

stylistic and typological features of this genre and describes its emergence, its literary-historical significance, and Metaphrastes' efforts to stylize hagiography in the Byzantine empire. In the case of the early Christian martyrs of Belgrade, which is an exceptional rarity in Byzantine hagiographical literature, a pre-Metaphrastian hagiography has survived whose content and structure have not been affected by abridgements and adaptations to the needs of *synaxarion vitae*, thus preserving its original narrative core. Moreover, Darko Todorović's translation of the *passio* of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos into modern Serbian offers contemporary readers a nuanced experience of late antique martyrdom on a linguistic level, enabling them to bridge the centuries separating us from this phenomenon.

Lazar Ljubić, the author of the text devoted to the memory of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos in medieval Constantinople, faced the challenging task of reconstructing the dynamics of the cult of the Belgrade martyrs within the annual liturgical cycle on the basis of the preserved Constantinopolitan *typika*, both from churches and from monasteries. Through a careful analysis of a considerable number of available manuscripts of the *Typikon* of the Great Church, the author has been able to establish that the commemoration of Hermylos and Stratonikos took place on January 13 and June 1 in three churches of the capital. His contribution to the subject also consists in the fact that he has been able to partially reconstruct how their cult was celebrated in Constantinople, based on the preserved troparion dedicated to the Belgrade martyrs and a note from the same codex, which indicates similarities with the order of service of Saints Sergius and Bacchus. Lazar Ljubić's research also focuses on the study of monastic *typika*, especially the *Typikon* of Alexios Stoudites, named after the author who was the abbot of the Studion Monastery, and the Evergetis *Typikon* from the late eleventh century, in which a practice different

from that in the churches of the capital was noted. Due to a calendar overlap with the afterfeast of Epiphany, the commemoration of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos took place on January 12, along with the commemoration of the Holy Martyr Tatiana of Rome. On the basis of the relatively few surviving sources, the author manages to reconstruct the dynamics of the liturgical celebration of the early Christian martyrs of Belgrade in the Byzantine capital and shed light on yet another aspect of their cult.

The last text in this book, authored by Miloš Jovanović, is focused on the prologue *vitae* of Hermylos and Stratonikos in the Serbian manuscript tradition. By analysing twenty-two Serbian manuscripts, he identifies two different redactions of the hagiography, one in prose and the other in verse. Both prologue *vitae* come from the literary milieu of Constantinople and have an unusual form compared to the rest of the Serbian manuscript tradition. The author notes that the oldest copies of the Serbian version were written in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, while the Bulgarian redaction appeared about half a century later. Having identified the redactions of the prologue *vita* of Saint Hermylos and Stratonikos, Miloš Jovanović presents critical editions of these texts in an appendix and lists the surviving manuscripts in order to provide future researchers with a concrete basis for further study.

All the texts in this volume, which complement one another, are divided into three thematic sections that systematize and expand the existing knowledge about the cult of Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos in the Eastern Christian world, as well as about the general development and spread of early Christian martyr cults in the central Balkans. It is worth noting that this is the first scholarly publication devoted exclusively to the cult of these two Christian martyrs, which makes it an important contribution to future research on related historiographical and hagiological topics. The book is

characterized by a high level of expertise, reflected both in the methodology employed and in the extensive list of sources and literature used. It is enhanced by the rich design with fifty-two carefully selected high-quality illustrations. In the light of all this, it can be confidently said that the monograph on

Saints Hermylos and Stratonikos deserves a prominent place in the libraries both of experts in the history of the cult of Christian saints and of interested readers, who now have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with a truly fascinating and relevant subject in an accessible and comprehensive manner.

ROUMEN AVRAMOV, ALEKSANDAR FOTIĆ,

ELIAS KOLOVOS & PHOKION P. KOTZAGEORGIS, EDs., *MONASTIC ECONOMY ACROSS TIME. WEALTH MANAGEMENT, PATTERNS, AND TRENDS*. SOFIA: CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDY, 2021, 316 P.

*Reviewed by Ognjen Krešić**

Studies of the monastic economy established themselves as an integral aspect of economic history, especially of the medieval and modern periods. Furthermore, this area attracted the attention of many specialists in the field of Ottoman studies, owing both to the specificities of the functioning of Orthodox Christian monasteries in the Ottoman political and social framework and to the richness of their archives. It is not surprising therefore that three of the four editors of the volume *Monastic Economy Across Time. Wealth Management, Patterns, and Trends* are experts in the field of Ottoman studies: Aleksandar Fotić, Elias Kolovos and Phokion P. Kotzageorgis.¹ The fourth editor, Roumen Avramov, is an economist who organized the *Research Network Dedicated to the History of the Monastic Economy* at the

Centre for Advanced Study in Sofia. The present volume is a result of several consecutive workshops held as part of that project.

This edited volume deals with the questions that span the period from the fourteenth century to contemporary times. In the context of Roman Catholic monasticism, monasteries had to adapt to several challenges in that period, from the reformist movement to secularization. Medieval Christian Orthodox monasteries in the Balkans found themselves in a different political, cultural, and economic system after the establishment of Ottoman rule over the region. Unlike their western counterparts, from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, they functioned in a state whose ruling elite did not share their religion. The studies presented in this volume thus cover several centuries and a vast territory, but they revolve around a group of fundamental issues clearly set by the editors. The first is the question of rationality as an aspect of monastic economy management. Further, the question of relations between states and monasteries is scrutinized. Connected with it is the issue of the participation of monks in economic networks, and local and regional markets, as well as their agency in economic endeavours. Lastly, the authors

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tried to analyse and describe various modes of management of monastic property and intrinsic and extrinsic trends that shaped them.

The volume is organized into five sections, each containing both perspectives – the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox. The first section, “Wealth Management: Real Estate”, encompasses studies dealing with the ways in which monasteries acquired landed property and how they managed it. Dimitrios Kalpakis’ paper “Beyond the Borders: The Vital Space of Byzantine Athos: A Geographical Overview of the Athonite Estates up to the Ottoman Conquest” (pp. 27–42) gives a general overview of several fundamental problems concerning monastic property. The author enumerates different types of monastic estates, ranging from smaller plots of land, orchards, olive groves and vineyards to whole villages. Donated by Byzantine emperors, and later by Serbian and Wallachian rulers or other notables, at first they were in the vicinity of Mount Athos. Later on they could be found in areas far away from the monastic community: in the central Balkans and north of the Danube. Tentative statistical research shows that larger estates were more numerous than smaller ones, and the author has been able to ascertain that some of them contributed to a monastery’s economy mostly as a source of money through taxes, while smaller ones provided foodstuffs and other material.

The economic role of monastic estates is further analysed by Styliani N. Lepida in the chapter on “Transactional Activity of Kykkos Monastery (Cyprus) in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: Real Estate Contracts” (pp. 43–54). The author confirms that land remained the main focus of the monastery’s economic activity in the period under study. In the decades following the establishment of Ottoman rule, the monks and their coreligionists strived to recover the properties confiscated by the state on the pretext that they were not held in compliance with the sharia law, but in the

seventeenth century they could start enlarging their estates. Monks purchased and sold property, defended their rights in court against the encroachment of local officials, and received donations from the faithful.

Preston Perluss’s “Urban Catholic Monasteries and Urban Growth in Eighteenth-Century European Cities” (pp. 55–79) treats an important question of the role of Catholic monasticism in the development of the urban economy. The focus is predominantly on early modern Paris, where different types of monastic communities came into possession of urban real estate that was rented out. Monasteries preferred properties that guaranteed long-term yields that could be used as continual sources of revenue. The results obtained in researching Parisian monasteries are compared with the situation in Lyon and Bordeaux. It is shown that urban monasteries had a prominent role in the real estate market in the period under study, and that rentals were significant sources of their income.

The second section, “Flow of Funds and Governance”, consists of four chapters treating financial management of the landed property of several Orthodox monasteries. In the chapter “How to Run a Big Monastic *Çiftlik*: The Case of Hilandar’s *Bulgar Metochion* in Karviya (Kalamaria), Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries” (pp. 83–97), Aleksandar Fotić explains what the term *çiftlik* denotes in the context of the monastic economy. The complex history of the largest of Hilandar’s estates is presented in detail by analysing Ottoman documents produced from the second half of the sixteenth century until the eighteenth century. It clearly shows that studying the management of monastic lands can provide useful information about multiple issues: the legal framework of land ownership, and the relations between monks and the Ottoman central bureaucracy and local *masters of the land*; the ways in which land could be acquired and cultivated and the types of products; and everyday problems of land cultivation and the

ties between monks and local non-Muslim and Muslim population necessitated by them.

Athonite monasteries are also the focus of the next chapter, "Crisis and Survival of the Athonite Monasteries during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. Preliminary Findings and Thoughts" (pp. 98–111), by Phokion P. Kotzageorgis. The main question posed by the author is whether there is a contradiction between two trends attested in Athonite sources. On the one hand, it has been generally accepted in historiography that the period from the last decades of the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century was a time of great financial problems for the monastic community of Mount Athos and that its monasteries had to seek help of their coreligionists to repay debts. On the other hand, there is ample evidence that most of the Athonite monasteries kept on acquiring new landed property throughout the same period. Using a sample of 443 cases, the author analyses the different modes of acquisition of property and the circumstances that caused its loss. It is shown that Athonite monks undertook complex financial practices to manage their estates: at the same time, they could borrow money to buy new property and mortgage their estates to their creditors. Furthermore, it is important to stress that the indebtedness of a monastery did not mean that its monks were personally indebted; some of them succeeded in acquiring personal wealth and helped their brotherhoods to overcome financial plight.

Gheorge Lazăr is the author of the next chapter in this section, "Between Piety and Economics: Nucet Monastery (Wallachia) and its Register of Revenue and Expenses (1731–1739)" (pp. 112–129). The source used for his research is of special interest as it is a manuscript that contains financial information about 60 monasteries in the Principality of Wallachia during the 1730s. The author points out that Nucet monastery's main source of revenue was the trade in alcoholic beverages, especially wine. Further

income came from the trade in cattle and in animal products. Additional revenues were generated from leasing out land, the commercialization of agricultural produce, and through princely awards of tax collection rights. Apart from the various sources of revenue, the ledger book provides researchers with information about the monastery's expenses: dues, taxes and gifts for the ruler, wages for workers, the costs of maintenance of buildings. Careful analysis of this type of sources can provide insight into the development of the monetary economy in the eighteenth century and monasteries' role in it.

The last chapter in this section, written by Konstantinos Giakoumis, is titled "Monastic Financial Management in the Provinces of the Patriarchate of Constantinople (1867–1873): The Case of the Metropolis of Drynopolis and Gjirokastra" (pp. 130–152). The author chose three monasteries as case studies, one with sound finances, one facing economic challenges and one in a dire financial situation. The register of monastic assets with annual balance sheets in the territory of the Metropolitanate of Drynopolis and Gjirokastra is used as the main source. It is shown that the strict control of the central ecclesiastical authority over the economic activities of its monastic dependencies was not enough to provide sound financial management, and that an important prerequisite for that was the existence of a capable local manager (usually a monastery's abbot). The monasteries provided support to the locals that needed it, and at the same time applied some rational economic decisions (like short-cycle investments, and the allocation, reallocation and auditing of services and duties), thus managing to keep a balance between their principal religious function and diverse economic activities.

In the volume's third section, "Dealing with Finance", several examples of banking activities of monasteries are presented. Lidia Cotovanu's chapter "Orthodox Monasteries as Banks: A Comparison with Catholic Mounts of Piety" (pp. 155–180) takes a

comparative perspective on the under-researched issue of the banking role of Eastern Orthodox monasteries. It is stressed that this aspect of church institutions has a long tradition dating back to the first centuries of Christianity and that it attained new qualities in the fifteenth century when the Franciscans introduced *mounts of piety* as a kind of public banks that offered low interest-rate loans in an urban context. On the other hand, Orthodox monasteries functioned as banks in a predominantly agrarian context. The author also treats an important question of dependencies of Greek monasteries in the Danubian Principalities, and their role in the local economy, emphasizing the importance of the rise of new monastic patrons among the wealthy merchants who introduced new economic practices through their contacts with Italian banks.

The next chapter, Andreas Bouroutis' "Assets, Interest and National Preferences: The Athonite Monasteries and the Greek Banks in the Early Twentieth Century" (pp. 181–196), shows that in the modern period, as in the previous centuries, the Athonite monks possessed economic skills and managed monastic assets successfully. Preference for the National Bank of Greece expressed by monasteries attests to the fact that issues of national identity played a role in financial dealings. Sources confirm that the monasteries used banks to make deposits, to invest, and to make minor transactions, but they did not borrow money. The author also presents intricate ways in which banks developed relations with the Athonite community, culminating in the opening of the first branch office of a bank on the peninsula itself.

The chapter that deals with the similar period but in the Catholic context is Brian Heffernan's "Nuns' Funds: The 1874 and 1925 Accounts of the Carmel of 's-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands" (pp. 197–214). The author chose to focus on the financial basis of the convent of Discalced Carmelite nuns in the city of 's-Hertogenbosch by

analysing two years: 1874 – an early phase of the convent's existence, and 1925 – the time of its greatest financial prosperity. Strict rules of confinement of nuns necessitated that this type of convents rely predominantly on donations and on investment of capital. In the early years of the convent's existence, the income was coming mostly from donations and dowries brought by sisters, and the network of benefactors was crucial for its survival. As the annual account from 1925 testifies, the nuns succeeded in amassing important financial resources by investing in bonds. The research shows continued financial support of the faithful to contemplative life in convents – a practice that was not governed by economic rationality but was based upon personal, political and cultural reasons.

The fourth section, "Vis-à-Vis the Secular Power", brings together four chapters that problematize the question of influence of the state structures on monastic life and economy. In the chapter "Monasteries, Economy, and Politics in the Orthodox World from Medieval to Modern Times" (pp. 217–228), Elias Kolovos provides important insights into the development of Orthodox Christian monasteries' economic undertakings in the Balkans in order to explain their uninterrupted continuity from the medieval period until today. The author mainly uses the examples of Athonite monasteries, and shows that investment in land was one of the pillars of that continuity, as the enlargement of landholdings was the central aspect of the monastic economy. Another of the factors that guaranteed the survival and development of monasteries was their proactive relations with political powers, ambiguous as they were in the centuries of Ottoman rule. Lastly, monks' relations with their coreligionists and establishment of wide networks of donors were of crucial importance for the maintaining of sound finances. Those relations had to adapt to changes brought about by different political and cultural trends, from the

advent of the ideas of the Enlightenment to the establishment of modern national states and integration into the capitalist economic system that ensued.

A broad perspective on Catholic convents and their relations with their patrons is taken by Antoine Rouillet in the chapter titled "The Economics of Patronage in Western Catholic Nunneries (Sixteenth–Eighteenth Century)" (pp. 229–243). The author uses urban nunneries in Spain, France and Mexico as examples for his research, because the lack of vast landed properties compelled them to rely heavily on patronage, especially in the first few years of their existence. It must be stressed that mendicant convents were based upon the ideas of poverty and, thus, although finances were given due care, it would have contradicted their fundamentals to strive for economic self-sufficiency. Patrons often exerted influence on the recruitment of new nuns, and female members of aristocratic families, who brought rich dowries upon becoming nuns, were often chosen to lead convents. Thus, the convents and their patrons were engaged in constant negotiation over the influence on financial and internal organization.

Michalis N. Michael returns our attention again to the religious situation in Cyprus in the chapter "The Church of Cyprus and the Transition from Ottoman Rule to British Modernity: Church Property in its Political Context" (pp. 244–260). It is shown that the imposition of British rule had a deep impact on the position of church prelates in Cypriot society. Previously, under Ottoman rule, being incorporated into the administrative system and successfully increasing the financial stability of church institutions, they exerted great social and economic influence. For example, the previously mentioned Kykkos monastery was one of the richest Orthodox monasteries in general. After 1878, however, British colonial rule curtailed the influence of the Church in favour of lay persons, and the Archbishop of Cyprus and other prelates

engaged in the struggle to keep their privileges and to impede reforms of ecclesiastical taxes and estates. In the next decades, religious issues were combined with national ones as the leaders of the Church of Cyprus strived to regain their political influence and base it upon new foundations.

A different case of adaption to the new political system after the withdrawal of the Ottoman administration is analysed in the chapter "The Monastic Economy of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church between the Two World Wars" (pp. 261–277) by Daniela Kalkandjieva. As a result of reforms and the establishment of autonomous church organization, the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church became the highest religious authority in the newly-formed Bulgarian Principality. It exercised control over the economy of monasteries under its jurisdiction. The author points out, however, that there were tensions between the Church and the state administration, as the latter sought to impose control over the former's economic activities. The continuous war effort from 1912 to 1918 put pressure on the Church to increase revenues from monastic holdings. Moreover, confronted with the nationalization of a great part of monastic lands after the First World War, the church hierarchy undertook the modernization of the monastic economy and hired experts to analyse the financial situation of monasteries and to propose ways of its improvement. The negotiations with the state were continued and the Holy Synod had to struggle to retain control over the budgets of monasteries. Attention is paid to the differences between economically stronger male monasteries and more numerous female ones.

The last section of the volume, "Contemporary Monasticism", contains two chapters that problematize the position of monasteries in modern-day societies and their adaption to contemporary economic trends. The first one, "Female Orthodox Monasticism, Ecology, and Productivist Capitalism: The Cases of the Monasteries of Ormylia

(Greece) and Solan (France), Late Twentieth–Early Twenty-First Century” (pp. 281–296), is written by Isabelle Depret. Her exploration of the economic practices of the two female Orthodox monasteries is based upon documents and fieldwork. A comparison of these two convents is especially interesting as they are situated in countries with different political and religious traditions but, at the same time, they share an important connection since both are dependencies of the Athonite monastery Simonopetra. The author presents similarities and differences in the monastic economy between the two houses, explaining the ways in which they participated in market activities, and drawing attention to ecological issues.

Similar problems are treated in a more general way, and in the context of Catholic monasticism, in the chapter “Does Monastic Economy Still Matter? The Economy of Catholic Monasteries and the Expectations of Society” (pp. 297–310) written by Isabelle Jonveaux. Inspired by the question as to how the diminishing number of monks in contemporary Europe is correlated with the merits of the monastic economy, the author undertook field research in various monastic communities in several European countries. The modalities of monastic economic activities are presented and analysed, as well as their importance for the perpetuation and development of ties between monks and broader society. It is stressed that there is not one uniform response to economic challenges, and that there are considerable differences between monasteries in different countries. Even so, economic activities are recognized as one of the main factors in the adaptability of monastic life and a guarantor of its continuation.

This edited volume successfully shows not only that the monastic economy mattered in the past and, in a way, still matters in contemporary societies, but also that research into it can contribute to better understand numerous issues that go beyond the subject of monasticism itself.

Monasteries were prominent institutions in both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christian societies, and their roles were varied. The authors display a multifaceted approach to the questions of the monastic economy and different chapters present the current situation in the field and the results of new research, at the same time opening novel research paths. Even though most of the chapters only deal with one of the two monastic traditions – Eastern or Western – the reader can derive new ideas about the possibilities for and merits of a comparative approach to the study of the monastic economy. Thus, the volume can be of interest to all those wishing to further their knowledge about the history of monasticism in general, as well as about the economic and cultural history of different European societies from the early modern period until today.

DUŠAN SPASOJEVIĆ, ΕΛΛΑΔΑ. Ο ΑΓΩΝΑΣ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΑΝΕΞΑΡΤΗΣΙΑ, Η ΣΥΓΚΡΟΤΗΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΚΡΑΤΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ Η ΠΑΛΙΓΓΕΝΕΣΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΕΘΝΟΥΣ
 [GREECE. THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, THE CREATION OF THE STATE AND THE REBIRTH OF THE NATION]. ATHENS: KASTANIOTIS, 2023, 456 P.

Reviewed by Radmila Pejić*

Dušan Spasojević, the Serbian Ambassador to the Hellenic Republic since 2016, is the author of this monograph, which has already been published in Serbian (Čigoja Press, the Institute for the Recent History of Serbia, the Institute for European Studies, Šaper Foundation). This tome has garnered widespread attention in Serbia resulting in publication of its second revised edition. To the Serbian public Spasojević's book authoritatively reveals the country and the nation they hold close to their hearts but until now have known little of their history. Proof of this is the modest number of titles in the Serbian historiography dealing with Serbian-Greek or Yugoslav-Greek relations.¹ We

also need to stress the importance of the proceedings related to this topic.² Except for the translation of Richard Clogg's book (*A Concise History of Greece*, Belgrade, 2000) nothing has been published on the history of modern Greece in Serbia. The void has now been filled by Dušan Spasojević's book. From it, the Serbian speaking public has now learned more about the Greek path to independence and how comparable it is to the Serbian experience. From comparing the flows of battle to describing personalities, the author brings us closer to the whole process of building the modern Greek nation, as well as teaching us about what constitutes the modern Greek identity. Through these vivid images we see the Greek's dual identity, both Ancient and Byzantine, their relationship with their language, and the establishment of what their nation means to them today. Spasojević splendidly depicts characters who shaped Greek politics of the time through their public and political actions and distinctively portrays strong

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¹ S. Terzić, *Srbija i Grčka (1856–1903), Borba za Balkan* [Serbia and Greece (1856–1903) Struggle for the Balkans, Belgrade 1992]; M. Milošević, *Srbija i Grčka 1914–1918. Iz istorije diplomatskih odnosa* [Serbia and Greece [1914–1918, (Zaječar, 1997)]; M. Ristović, *Dug povratak kući. Deca izbeglice iz Grčke u Jugoslaviji 1948–1960* [A Long Journey Home: Greek Refugee Children in Yugoslavia: 1948–1960], (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2000) and Greek (Το πείραμα Μπούλκας “Η ελληνική δημοκρατία” στη Γιουγκοσλαβία 1945–1949, 1η έκδ. – (Θεσσαλονίκη: Κυριακίδη Αφοί, 2006); M. Ristović, *Na pragu Hladnog rata. Jugoslavija i građanski rat u Grčkoj (1945–1980)*, (Belgrade, 2016). [On the Brink of the Cold War. Yugoslavia and the Civil War in Greece (1945–1949)]; A. Pećinar, *Српско-грчки дипломатски и савезнички односи (1912–1918)*, [Diplomatic and allied relations between the Serbs and Greeks], (Belgrade, 2016).

² Between 1974 and 1991, a series of scholarly conferences (organised by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA) and the Institute for Balkan Studies (IMXA) in Thessaloniki) were largely devoted to political, cultural and particularly literary relations between the two nations during the period of Ottoman domination (mainly between the eighteenth and early twentieth century). Also see very valuable: Paschalis M. Kitromilides, Sophia Matthaïou, eds., *The Salonica Theatre of Operations and the Outcome of the Great War* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2005) and *Greek-Serbian Relations in the Age of Nation* (Athens, 2016).

personalities that come with tumultuous times like these.

It is not easy to write a history book for wide readership especially for an author coming from another country. To do so well takes real skill. Covering recent centuries of Greek history requires courage too, as many in the Balkans have strong opinions about what and how it should be written about. However, what above all else makes Dušan Spasojević's absorbing and voluminous account of the Greek Revolution stand out, is exactly what Professors Spyridon Sfetas and Milan Ristović have pointed out in their Prologue to the Serbian edition – that it is a well written book in which both the expert reader-historian and anyone else interested in the history of Greece will find clear and trustworthy guidelines for navigating this essential period of its recent history. For its carefully selected contributions and rich scientific apparatus, Ristović and Sfetas also find it a good starting point for an advanced comprehension of Modern Greek history and an important part of the common Balkan and European history.

It was therefore no surprise that "Kastaniotis", one of the oldest and most respected Athenian publishing houses, decided to translate and publish Spasojević's book this autumn. The wholehearted welcome it received in Greece, by both the general public and in historical circles, strongly reaffirms that *Greece. The War of Independence, the Creation of the State and the Rebirth of the Nation* is judiciously thought-out, well-researched and commendably up-to-date. This assessment has been confirmed by one of the Greek historians, Professor Emeritus Thanos Veremis. In his review of Spasojević's monograph, Veremis notes several up to now unknown details about Greek-Serbian connections and overall Balkan aspects and influences on developments during the War of Independence. Appraising Spasojević's book, Veremis particularly emphasises its value to the Greek readership by drawing attention to thus far

unexplored links between Karageorge and Filiki Heteria, close interactions of the father of the Greek national history Konstantinos Papanigopoulos with the 19th century Serbian intellectual elite, extraordinarily well-documented reference to the lately neglected role of the great Russian poet Pushkin in the Greek Revolution, as well as the new information that book provides about Egyptian occupation of Peloponnese.

According to Professor Iakovos D. Michailides, Professor of Modern and Contemporary History and the Head of the School of History and Archeology at the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, who authored the Prologue for the Greek edition, Spasojević masterfully presents to the Greek readership a set of interrelated historical fault lines concerning the nature of Greek identity, the role of the state and the nation's place in the modern world. These deep-rooted aspects of the collective identity of modern Greeks as identified by Spasojević – Orthodox Christianity, synthesis of Antique and Byzantine heritage and the Greek language – have by no means gone away. According to the author, in some form or other, they still generate the views of today's Greeks, form and shape their perceptions of themselves and the outside world. After praising the knowledge, sharpness of mind, aesthetics and sensibility of the writer, Michailides goes on to include Spasojević among the ranks of the great modern Hellenophiles like Mark Mazower, Roderick Beaton and David Brewer. As his final point, Mihailides concludes that *Greece. The War of Independence, the Creation of the State and the Rebirth of the Nation* deserves to be the standard general history of modern Greece in both the Serbian and Greek language for years to come.

What the Greek speaking audience will find particularly stimulating is Spasojević's remarkable attraction to Crete. Here, the island is portrayed through the centuries under Venice, but also in the dark ocean of Turkish tyranny, where you can see how the

then existence of Turko-Cretans and Crypto-Christians reflects on today's lifestyle of the islanders.

In conclusion, Spasojević has produced the monograph with a wealth of information, carefully balanced interpretations and an excellent grounding in the wider Balkan and European context of the Greek War of Independence. It will serve as a point of departure for all researchers of Balkan history

in this period. The book is relevant for both audiences: for the Serbian public it fills a huge void of knowledge about their much-loved neighbours, while the Greek public gets a distinct roadmap through critical points in their own history. Such practice should spread to other Balkan historiographies, so that nations of this region can learn more about each other in a valid way.

PASCHALIS M. KITROMILIDES, ED., *THE GREEK REVOLUTION IN THE AGE OF REVOLUTIONS (1776–1848). REAPPRAISALS AND COMPARISONS.*
LONDON AND NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 2022, 284 P.

*Reviewed by Dušan Fundić**

The edited volume stemmed out of the presentations at the eponymous conference held in 2021 with the intention of contextualizing the Greek Revolution (1821–1829) within the framework of international relations, related revolutions and their legacies, the spread of the ideas of the Enlightenment, nationalism and liberalism, but also in the framework of Ottoman and Balkan history as well as the transnational Philhellenic movement. The collection, edited by Paschalis M. Kitromilides, is divided into six parts comprising 18 texts, produced by 21 researchers.¹ The book also contains an

editor's introduction with an accompanying index.

The volume's central claim is that the importance of the Greek Revolution as an event lies in its renewal and maintenance of the revolutionary idea in "Metternich's Europe" after the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte and the defeat of the French Revolution (1815). The Greek Revolution paved the way for new movements that would reach their peak in 1848. This claim is clearly argued throughout the volume and represents a valuable contribution to understanding new revolutionary frameworks. Simultaneously, it is an encouraging example of an active exploration of other events and processes often considered to be on the 'margins' of European history, such as the Balkan Peninsula, and providing them with a necessary reevaluation.

Kitromilides, in his introduction titled "The Greek World in the Age of Revolution"

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¹ Paschalis M. Kitromilides is Professor Emeritus at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and a member of the Greece's national academy, the Academy of Athens. He is the author of several books, including: *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy* (Variorum, 1994); *An Orthodox Commonwealth. Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe* (Variorum Collected Studies Series, Ashgate, 2007);

Eleftherios Venizelos. The Trials of Statesmanship (Edinburgh University Press, 2006); *Enlightenment and Revolution. The Making of Modern Greece* (Harvard University Press, 2013).

refers to Iosipos Moisiodax, an eighteenth-century Greek thinker, who wrote of “Greek diasporas” in order to describe communities across the eastern Mediterranean, within the Ottoman Empire, across southeastern Europe to the Romanian principalities on the Danube, countries of the Habsburg Monarchy and Greek colonies such as Venice, Trieste or the Black Sea coastal cities. All of the mentioned Orthodox-Christian communities constituted the ‘Greek world’ in the age of revolutions discussed by Kitromilides. He paints a complex picture of this world, filled with new ideas of the radical Enlightenment of Rhigas Velestinlis and Adamantios Korais, who also proposed the transfer of the American model of the “first new nation” to the Greek community. The Enlightenment and the Revolution gave new meanings to the world of *klephts* and *hajduks*, shaping their social rebellion and oral poetry. Kitromilides thus reiterates the volume’s central intention of placing the Greek Revolution in the general framework of global revolutionary movements, international relations, the transnational framework of Panhellenism, but also regional events and processes.

The book consists of six parts: “Resonances of the Age of Revolution” (I and II), “Reverberations of Revolution in Eastern and Southern Europe”, “Revolutionary Waves in the Greek World” (I and II) and “Aspirations of Freedom in the Greek World”.

The first two parts of the book are appropriately titled “Resonances of the Age of Revolution” I and II, in which the Greek revolution is placed, firstly, in the global and transnational framework of the Age of Revolutions, liberal ideas and the legacy of the Congress of Vienna, and secondly, in the context of Southern Europe. Annie Jourdan highlights the peculiarities of revolutionary waves and points out the existence of different models: English, American, French and Spanish, which all learned from the mistakes of their predecessors. Similarly,

the Greek Act of Independence, although original, exhibited many similarities with the American Declaration (1776) as well as with the French and Spanish models. An important claim was underlined by David Bell in his text on the Greek Revolution, which, when viewed from a long historical perspective, certainly had the most pronounced international framework. That was most apparent in the internationalisation of the revolution through the Philhellenic movement, where individuals and groups in various countries supported Greece’s independence. Additionally, the great powers of Britain, France, and Russia were directly involved in the conflict in 1826.

In addition to Anna Karakatsouli’s text on transnationalism and cosmopolitanism in the 1820s, Greece is also studied in relation to the *trienio liberal* revolutions of Spain, Portugal and Italy (1820–1823) as part of the liberal international, in the contribution of John Davis. These two chapters effectively place the Greek Revolution in a long historical perspective, connecting it with the liberal emancipation of Latin America, as explored in the text authored by José María Portillo Valdés, rounding off the picture with a new interpretation of the politics of Austria and its chancellor Klemens von Metternich penned by Miroslav Šedivý. The text “Greece and 1848: Direct responses and underlying connectivities” by Christopher Clark and Christos Aliprantis complements the typical approach of studying the relations between Central Europe and Greece in the age of revolutions, focusing on the Greek War of Independence and the Philhellenic movement, in which most of the volunteers arrived from German countries. Clark and Aliprantis therefore highlight the influence of the later European revolutions of 1830 and 1848 as a form of reverse influence on previous decades. Additionally, the plans of German and Italian nationalists inspired the Hellenic Kingdom to seek the realisation of its imagined national unification, with the necessary comparisons and imitations

extending beyond those mentioned. The authors of this important section therefore highlight different administrative practices and the “technocratic turn in governance” as a new feature of post-revolutionary Europe after 1848.

The echoes of the Greek revolution are explored in the collection ranging from Russia to Sicily, with a very important study by H. Şükrü İlicak on the last decade of Ottoman rule, which points to the important process of “de-ayanization” that led to the disappearance of local or regional intermediaries in power, such as the famous Ali Paşa of Tepelena. What followed was the re-establishment of Ottoman imperial power, potentially prompting a revolt as a response from the Greek population. An additional consequence of the loss of the Greek lands was the increased readiness of the Ottoman state to implement administrative and social reforms in the second half of the 19th century.

In addition to the chapter in which the Greek revolution is compared with the Serbian and Romanian ones (text by Harald Heppner), often neglected topics such as economic issues, as well as issues of public security, the creation of the police apparatus, and the organization of the fleet, are also explored as part of the nation-building process. Heppner points out three important similarities between the three revolutions: the geographical limitation in relation to the countries that Serbs, Greeks and Romanians actually inhabited, the neglected economic component in research, and the lack of experience in organising and managing the state, which directed them to foreign aid and limited future freedoms in the new states. The interesting contribution by Mario Efthymiou compares internal conflicts during the Serbian and Greek revolutions. Efthymiou points out that while the legacy of the Greek Revolution was the conflict and civil war between the inhabitants of the Peloponnese and the rest of Greece, in the

Serbian case, the legacy of the revolutionary period became the dynastic rivalry between the Obrenović and Karađorđević families that would mark the Serbian 19th century. The last section in the book, “Aspirations of Freedom in the Greek World,” presents contributions on the constitutions of the Greek Revolution with their differences and various influences, as well as research on the political discourse on modernity.

The volume *The Greek Revolution in the Age of Revolutions (1776–1848). Reappraisals and Comparisons* is an important scholarly contribution to the research of one of the revolutions that marked the “long 19th century” in the Balkans, but also a methodologically sound example that outlines how similar events could be approached. It equally stands as an outstanding addition not only to the study of Greek history (in its regional and global frameworks) but also to the studies of revolutions in general.

LUCIANO MONZALI, *LA DIPLOMAZIA ITALIANA DAL RISORGIMENTO ALLA PRIMA REPUBBLICA*. MILAN: MONDADORI, 2023, 455 P.

Reviewed by Bogdan Živković*

Luciano Monzali, professor of the history of international relations at the University of Bari, recently published a study on the history of Italian diplomacy. As Professor Monzali is one of the leading scholars in this field, the book is the culmination of his previous research and publications. This volume is not merely a collection of his previous articles, re-edited for this occasion. It, in fact, offers an interesting methodological approach to narrating the history of Italian diplomacy. Namely, it contains two different sections. The first one (three out of the initial four chapters) consists of shorter essays about the history of Italian diplomacy. The second section consists of five biographies of illustrious Italian diplomats.

As for the three essays, in the first one (pp. 11–36) Monzali goes back to pre-unification times. This chapter depicts the foreign policy principles and diplomatic culture of the Savoyard state. All the other chapters in this book resonate with this initial essay, demonstrating that Savoyard principles, primarily the rationality of their foreign policy, left a lasting imprint on Italian diplomacy. Continuities, discontinuities and evolution of traditional values are recurring topics of this monograph.

Chapters two and four are also essays on the history of Italian diplomacy. The second chapter (pp. 37–78) is devoted to the period from the Italian unification to the Second World War, and the fourth one (pp. 167–182) focuses on the renaissance of Italian diplomacy after 1943. These two essays revolve around the diplomatic tradition of liberal Italy. Although Monzali criticizes that tradition for being provincial and Eurocentric, his outlook is mostly positive. He writes about the success of liberal diplomacy prior to the March on Rome and how the liberal diplomatic tradition

managed to persist and evolve during the fascist era, preserving the Savoyard legacy of rationality in foreign policy. Most importantly, Monzali underlines how that liberal diplomatic tradition was crucial in 1943. In a dramatic time for the country, it was diplomacy that managed to revive the Italian state. With their rational focus on national interest, diplomats led Italy to a stronger alliance with the US and Western Europe, reinventing the Italian position in the new international order. Thus, they led to benefits and progress for the country whose future had not seemed so bright in 1943.

The essays described above contextualize the five case studies, i.e., the five biographies of illustrious Italian diplomats that are at the centre of this volume. Chapter three (pp. 79–166) is a biography of Raffaele Guariglia; chapter five (pp. 183–252) depicts the life of Pietro Quaroni; chapter six (pp. 253–312) focuses on Roberto Ducci; chapter seven (pp. 313–424) analyses the career of Roberto Gaja; and, finally, chapter eight (pp. 425–440) is a shorter biography of Luigi Vittorio Ferraris.

Continuities and evolution are the thread connecting all the above mentioned diplomats. For Monzali, Guariglia is an example of how the structures and traditions of pre-fascist diplomacy survived the Mussolini era – how they adapted to fascism, modified themselves and finally resurfaced with the demise of *il Duce*. On the other hand, Raffaele Guariglia influenced the new generation of diplomats, such as Roberto Ducci and Roberto Gaja. He passed his

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realism on to the new generation, but also the notion that a diplomat has to be an intellectual and have a broader cultural and political perspective.

Guariglia's portrait is followed by Pietro Quaroni's. Quaroni is also depicted as an incarnation of the best qualities of pre-fascist Italian diplomacy. Mainly, its harsh realism and sincerity in communication with the power centres in Rome. Besides preserving these principles, Quaroni was also a man of the new era. His long stay in Afghanistan helped him to overcome the traditional flaws of Italian diplomacy – provincialism and Eurocentrism.

Two of Quaroni's pupils, two main figures of Italian diplomacy in the period from 1965 to 1975, two Roberto's – Ducci and Gaja, are depicted in the following chapters. Ducci and Gaja's portraits are the central part of this book. Both started their diplomatic careers in the fascist era but were dominantly influenced by the principles of pre-fascist diplomacy, both were intellectuals, both were dedicated to analysing the impact of atomic weapons on international relations, both saw the pinnacle of their careers during the *centro-sinistra* era in Italian politics, both were anti-communists, and both were staunch supporters of the Western alliance. The list of their similarities can be expanded, but Monzali also depicts their differences. For instance, how Gaja was more focused on the alliance with Washington, and Ducci on the collaboration with other Western European countries.¹ But

what Monzali emphasizes is how these two prominent figures incarnated the long-lasting legacies and traditions of Italian diplomacy. They followed those traditions when leading the *Farnesina*, and transmitted their values to the next generations of diplomats.

The book ends with the portrait of Luigi Vittorio Ferraris, an example of a diplomat who was inspired by Gaja and Ducci and preserved the traditional values of Italian diplomacy. In Monzali's portrait we can see that Ferraris was someone who strongly believed that a diplomat should take an active part in the political, cultural and social life of his country, and not be afraid to voice his opinion. In this traditional concept, a diplomat is obliged to counsel his government on international affairs and to have a vision of his country's international role.

Two methodological features make this volume particularly successful. First, as the author underlines, publications on the history of diplomacy focused not on foreign policy but on the diplomatic institutions themselves are much needed in Italian historiography. In this regard, Monzali's study is a competent reconstruction and analysis of that history – how it is rooted in the Savoyard states, and how its traditions persisted and evolved. Second, this book is a *tour de force* of Monzali's characteristic focus on individuals and their agency. In the five biographies, by telling the stories of five diplomats, Monzali manages to depict and analyse the history of Italian diplomacy. Thus, with this book Monzali successfully demonstrates that the Italian diplomatic tradition was crucial in shaping national history, and how individuals and their efforts were paramount in that endeavour.

¹ Another difference that is important in the Serbian context is their outlook on the relations with Yugoslavia. Both were experts on this issue. Ducci even served as ambassador to Belgrade from 1964 to 1967. Also, both advocated a resolution to the bilateral territorial dispute. However, Gaja was persistent in his view that it was not in Italy's interest to hurry to arrive at one. He believed that Rome should request more territorial gains. On the other hand, Ducci was content with ratifying the de

facto state of the border. Hence, he advocated a swift solution to the dispute.

SLOBODAN G. MARKOVICH, ED., *CULTURAL TRANSFER EUROPE-SERBIA: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES*. BELGRADE: FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCES – DOSIJE STUDIO, 2023, 262 P.

Reviewed by Nemanja Stanimirović*

The metaphor of Serbia being at the crossroads between the West and the East (whether with capital letters or not), containing grains from both worlds with the consequential argument of the uniqueness of Serbian culture, has long been worn out, yet the voices stressing the perennial and vernacular character of the Serbian national identity remain equally strong. Resolving at least an aspect of this paradox requires observing the extent of interwovenness between the European and Serbian past whilst also imagining their overlapping future. How much were the two spheres truly interlinked and mutually dependent, and furthermore – how does one come about objectively measuring that?

These and many other questions were targeted by a recent volume *Cultural Transfer Europe-Serbia: Methodological Issues and Challenges*, edited by Slobodan G. Markovich and published jointly by Belgrade's Faculty of Political Sciences and Dosije studio. The book is a by-product of the *Cultural Transfer Europe – Serbia from the 19th till the 21st century (CTES)* project, starting in 2022 and being funded by The Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia. The stated goal of the project, namely to “contribute to the understanding of how cultural transfer Europe-Serbia shaped modern Serbia”, is quite ambitious for a single volume, and thus [so far] two other publications have come out of the same project – *A Reformer of Mankind. Dimitrije Mitrinovic between Cultural Utopianism and Social Activism* and *Културни трансфер Европа-Србија у XIX веку* (*Cultural Transfer Europe-Serbia in the 19th Century*). The volume in review here complements the other two by providing a methodological framework indispensable

for arriving at the above-mentioned ‘understanding’ and linking all of the project’s contributions more tightly to the international literature.

Despite the book consisting of 11 chronologically ordered chapters and a foreword, divided into five different parts, I believe that the truer image of this volume’s structure would be separating it into two somewhat coherent wholes. The first one provides us with the necessary methodological tools to deal with cultural transfers, itself an interdisciplinary topic. Here, the reader can get familiar with basic concepts, key academic disputes in the field, as well as with the limitations and further considerations when researching cultural transfers in the Serbian context. The second [larger] part consists of attempts at applying the said methodology and analysing concrete examples of cultural transfers, most often between Serbia and Western Europe, but also more broadly than that.

The first chapter, following the foreword by the editor, is by one of the great names of the cultural transfer research field – Wolfgang Schmale. In his contribution, Schmale gives us a brief narration of the field’s evolution and, more importantly, provides us with definitions both of what is it that is being transferred and how, as well as what is the main motivation behind the entire cultural transfer research. Namely, Schmale firstly reiterates his earlier distinction between *Struktureme* and *Cultureme* as cultural units – either having a mere

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“identitary-potentiality” (the former) or “identitary-essence” (the latter) – which are being transferred, whilst highlighting that they are being transferred through translations, mediations, dissemination, reception, appropriation, transformation, unconscious adoption, contagion... Most importantly, Schmale stresses that the focus on the transformation of those cultural units to new contexts through transfers highlights the ‘mixture’ character (or *metisage*, to use Michel Espagne’s term) of each national culture. In other words, for Schmale, cultural transfer research is about showing that concepts such as nation and race are not perennial but social imaginaries. Thus, Schmale indirectly sets out criteria for his fellow co-authors in the volume – has their piece contributed to the deconstruction of the concept of a nation as a homogenous, clearly bounded unit?

The fourth chapter in the book, authored by Marina Simić, greatly supplements Schmale’s remarks. Namely, in demonstrating how contemporary anthropological approaches to the topic of cultural transfer still bear some legacy of the diffusionist arguments, Simić underlines the importance of concepts of *translation* and *context*. The interplay of the two highlights the varying meanings that any single cultural unit can hold depending on the circumstances and the environment, that is, that every cultural transfer is followed by a “transformation and re-interpretation” (p. 98) of the transferred cultural artifact. This allows Simić to conclude with the introduction of an *alternative modernities* perspective, which in turn strengthens the argument that no national context exists in a vacuum, isolated from other cultures.

Gordana Đerić’s chapter, one of those closer to the volume’s end, which discusses the methodological aspect of the intended future research, similarly stresses the importance of the translation activity (understood in its more narrow, literal sense) as a signifier of the level of overlap between two

cultures. Thus, with the later aim of attaining a better apprehension of perception of Europe in Serbia by offering an overview of the European literature translated into Serbian between 2000 and 2020, Đerić argues that what is ‘lost in translation’ was caused by the differences in assigned meaning within two cultures.

Finally, concluding what I consider to be the first part of the volume is Slobodan G. Markovich’s chapter on the limitations in researching the cultural transfers in 19th century Serbia, with a practical application of that research by identifying key social groups which acted as agents of Europeanisation in the same period. Namely, the first part of the chapter demonstrates the challenge of analysing the level of modernisation of a society which is predominantly rural and illiterate whilst the majority of the sources originate either from the urban middle-class minority or from ethnographers, like Vuk Karadžić, who have been living away from the Serbian countryside and have inevitably been influenced by the Romantic *Zeitgeist*, or are alternatively produced by the equally biased Western travelogues. Nevertheless, Markovich manages to identify the main actors of the European cultural transfers in Serbia, distinguishing the epochs of the Habsburg Serbs, who mostly moved southwards to aid with the bureaucratic work instrumental for the modernisation of the nascent Serbian state, from the age of the ‘Parisians’, or more broadly the ‘planned elite’ – the Serbian students sent abroad to study, who upon returning got into key political positions and instrumentally directed the development of Serbian society. Along with the people from Western and Central Europe who moved to Serbia and whose population ratio continuously increased over the 19th century, Markovich identifies these three groups as the main carriers of European values into the Serbian culture, and thus as relevant research subjects for exploring the topic of cultural transfers between the two entities.

This allows us to gradually move towards the second part of the book, discussing more concrete examples of cultural transfers. Dragana Grbić's chapter successfully sets the tone with an engaging discussion of both material and immaterial cultural transfers between Serbia and other parts of Europe in the 18th century. In an interesting demonstration of a two-way transfer, she is observing how the different customs, clothing and traditions that the Serbs brought with them to Southern Hungary altered their new environment, but also how the transferred relics changed the landscape more literally – with the example of New Ravanica monastery being paradigmatic. Grbić's contribution to the volume is likewise contained in the analysis of the exchange that the Serbs had with the East – namely Russia, a newly accepted member of the European culture. Finally, Grbić's account is completed by analysis of the translatory work carried out by Zaharije Orfelin, and how his awareness of the (i)literacy and habitats of Serbs, in influencing his translation, is indicative of the differences between the Serbian and European society at the time.

Nemanja Radulović's chapter on Vuk Karadžić's personal networks represents one of the strongest moments in the entire volume, and to an extent provides it with a more balanced account overall by offering a powerful argument of the reciprocal influence that the Serbian culture had on more global developments. Namely, Radulović goes beyond the focus on the texts, that is on the literature history, to note the influence of Serbian folk poetry, and includes Karadžić's personal correspondence as well as several contemporaries' diaries, in order to demonstrate that there was a much longer list of admirers and in general people influenced by new insights stemming from the research of Serbian folk poetry. In the letters and other testimonies, one can observe that there were non-textual appreciations of Karadžić's innovations and that the

development of folklore studies was given a huge impetus by Karadžić's work. In short, besides massively expanding the linguistic context of the time, that is stretching the borders of what concepts were available to certain individuals, Radulović convincingly demonstrates that the spread of the influence made by people like J. G. Herder and Jacob Grimm is not entirely comprehensible without a focus on private networks of people like Vuk Karadžić.

The only chapter dealing with the 20th century is that of Ivana Pantelić. She gave a brief and yet quite fact-loaded overview of the changes in the Yugoslav culture following the Tito-Stalin split and the renewed Western orientation in the cultural sphere. By observing the numerous *Struktureme* that were transferred from the West, Pantelić notes the "hybrid" nature of the Yugoslav model within the education system, the rising consumptionist culture, theatre, music and film, as well as fashion. What is, however, unfortunately omitted from this contribution is the reciprocal effect that the Yugoslav culture had elsewhere, which is only mentioned in passing in regard to the Yugoslav jazz bands travelling to the Soviet Union. It feels as a somewhat missed opportunity since the post-war Yugoslavia had a relatively greater influence on the West than the political entities which preceded or succeeded it.

Orel Beilinson's analysis of the arbitrariness of the concept of adolescence when transferred into Southeastern Europe, as well as Nikolina Nedeljkov's considerations of the grassroots-based pluralistic discourse allowing for an intermixing of cultures as a counterforce to both nationalism and oppressive globalism, whilst both truly interesting and insightful, offer relatively minor novelties for the overall volume's topic. Similarly, Goran Kaulzarić's innovative locating of the neoliberalists' compatibility with Eastern spirituality and religions at their crossroads with the classical liberals, although having wider implications for the

intellectual history, remains far-fetched for the issue of the concrete cultural transfers between Europe and Serbia. Finally, a short interview with Vesna Goldsworthy, one of the opening accounts of the volume, in addition to being a really invigorating read, sends an important reminder to fellow academics – that, despite the important work that the research of cultural transfers carries out, its exploration does not necessarily get rid of many prejudices, but perhaps merely “pushes them underground” (p. 38).

Goldsworthy’s struggle against prejudices of the Balkans being a place of savages goes hand in hand with the more recent historiographical turn towards the global and transnational perspective which aims to counter the orientalist accounts which represent certain parts of the world as passive recipients of the content arriving from the ‘more developed’ countries. In that regard, this volume brought in some new arguments of two-way exchange processes, however, I believe it is safe to say that it also could have done somewhat more. It is possible that the cause for this lies in the relatively low share of pages dedicated to the twentieth century, and especially the post-war Yugoslav state, the rare period when the Serbian political framework, disproportionately to its size, influenced much greater events. Likewise, the overt focus on the cultural exchange *between* the states, whilst presuming that any national context (with all of its entailed interpretations) remains unaltered over time, equally radiates an image of an almost frozen Serbian state entity. In reality, the global hierarchy, and Serbia’s position within it has oscillated significantly since the 1800s, in turn permanently changing any meaning that would be attributed to cultural units continuously adopted from Europe or elsewhere.

That being said, any book should be judged by what it sets out as its goal, and this one undoubtedly was quite successful in that regard. None of the chapters in the book bring in some ground-breaking

archival discoveries – nor do they intend to – but are instead deeply focused on developing a method and guidelines useful for further research of the topic of cultural transfers between Serbia and Europe. Thus, this is a very concise study, based on well-defined concepts, equally very well-written and easy to read with numerous pictures helping a reader conjure up an image of another time(s). Furthermore, the volume fits quite neatly with the recent and laudable historiographical trends putting forward global, transnational or comparative perspectives, untangling themselves from national contexts. Most of all, the volume represents a truly rare case of the conference contributions so consciously and efficiently directed to jointly pull in support of the overarching argument. In sum, the book presents a convincing case that the Serbian national culture neither ever existed nor developed on its own, clearly demarcated from “foreign” influences, but was instead constantly rearticulated with its neighbours, most often with Europe. As such the book should be recommended not just to early-stage social scientists dealing with this region or older fellow academics relatively unfamiliar with Serbian history, but also to anyone brave enough to contemplate the hardships of deciphering the past and the future of cultural transfers between two or more regions.

MIRJANA MIRIĆ & SVETLANA ČIRKOVIĆ, *GURBETSKI ROMSKI U KONTAKTU: ANALIZA BALKANIZAMA I POZAJMLJENICA IZ SRPSKOG JEZIKA* [GURBET ROMANI IN CONTACT: THE ANALYSIS OF BALKANISMS AND SERBIAN LOANWORDS]. BELGRADE: INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES SASA, 2022, 229 P.

*Reviewed by Anđela Redžić**

As it may be seen from the very precise and informative title, the authors focus on the linguistic phenomena occurring in Gurbet Romani as spoken by both adults and children in Knjaževac, a city in eastern Serbia, and in the adjacent village of Miničevo. The monograph is written in the Serbian language, enabling the scholarly community to acquire valuable insights into the understudied Romani language in Serbia. Furthermore, it provides the Roma community in Serbia with a sense of linguistic acknowledgment, given that it approaches Romani on a par with any other language. The purpose of this review is to present and recommend the book for further reading and research by offering a comprehensive overview of its content and technical aspects.

The monograph is divided into five chapters. "Introduction" and "Linguistic Material" are followed by two extensive chapters that delve into the topics outlined in the title "Balkanisms in the Knjaževac Gurbet Romani" and "Serbian Loanwords in the Knjaževac Gurbet Romani". The last chapter, "Concluding Remarks", is followed by a comprehensive summary in English, and an extensive list of literature. The monograph also offers an index of concepts, enhancing its accessibility and facilitating targeted search. Mirić and Čirković make use of tables and charts to ensure a comprehensive presentation of research findings, enabling the reader better to understand and visualize the data.

The introductory part of the monograph provides an overview of the Romani language, its various dialects, and the sociolinguistics surrounding it. Romani is "primarily a spoken language, usually used

within familial settings, among members of the speaker community, and without a unified standard" (p. 11). As a language lacking a specific homeland, it is particularly valuable as a subject of study from a sociolinguistic perspective, the perspective of minority languages, as well as typological and contactological studies, given that its speakers are invariably in contact with other, typically majority languages, and usually are bilingual or multilingual from early childhood. The authors briefly but meticulously deal with assessments of the Romani language vulnerability and the existing problems in that assessment: the language-nation relationship, the number of speakers, and the Romani language use in Serbia itself, specifically in Knjaževac and its environs. Previous research¹ has demonstrated that the Romani language "is passed on to younger generations of speakers, and in addition, the preservation of the language is stimulated by teaching the Romani language in primary schools, language workshops [...], and by publishing activity" (p. 19). By the end of the introductory chapter, readers' attention may be drawn to a noteworthy theoretical examination of the distinction between code-switching and borrowing,

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¹ M. Mirić, "Tendencies in expressing verbal aspect in Gurbet Romani: pilot experimental study with elementary-school children". In *Studies in language and mind* 3, eds. Sabina Halupka-Rešetar & Silvia Matrinez-Ferreiro, (Novi Sad: Faculty of Philosophy, 2019), 47–92.

two phenomena with a mostly unclear border in linguistics and of great importance for Romani language research. In the second chapter, Mirić and Ćirković delineate the methodology of collecting and transcribing the material of the Knjaževac Gurbet Romani, as well as used examples, along with which they also explain abbreviations used in glossing. The analysis of Balkanisms and loanwords is conducted on a sample of about 16,000 words, supplemented by additional examples drawn from the already published texts.² Metadata about the research participants is presented in two tables, one concerning adults, the other children. These tables contain information regarding the place and date of recording, word count, as well as the age and gender of the interlocutors, whose personal names have been withheld to protect their anonymity. The entire material is archived in the Digital Archive of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, and the authors point out that it is accessible to researchers upon request. Access to the data necessitates adherence to a protocol governing its use.

The third chapter presents a study of morphosyntactic Balkanisms, drawing upon Victor A. Friedman's exhaustive list of Balkanisms in Romani.³ The authors commence this chapter by introducing the concept of the Balkan Sprachbund and situating the Romani language within it. Due to the marginalization of Romani, two-way bi- and multilingualism, which are considered the fundamental drivers of Balkanization processes and the integration and survival of Balkanisms, did not occur. The introduc-

tory part of this chapter – together with an introduction to each Balkanism under study – merits reading, reference to relevant literature, and further research for those predominantly interested in Balkan studies. In the chapter's conclusion, Mirić and Ćirković place Knjaževac Gurbet Romani within the languages/dialects of the Balkan Sprachbund according to features: the definite article, preservation of the vocative case, analytical declension, replacement of the infinitive with finite complementation, the use of the universal complementizer *kaj*, and the analytical future with the future particle *ka* (e.g., pp. 127–128). The authors further analyse and provide examples of prominent Balkanisms which are less developed in Romani than in other Balkan languages/dialects. Those are: accusative doubling, object reduplication and analytical constructions with prepositions. Given the particular interest of the author of this review in the use of cases, the text that follows will place greater emphasis on this aspect. The occurrence of accusative doubling is close to object reduplication (p. 65), and both are related to the general case use and syncretism between case forms. The nominal inflection in Romani displays the highest resistance to Balkanization processes. In this regard, it is essential to note that the Romani language case system is distinct compared to other Balkan languages/dialects, primarily in terms of the number of case endings, of which there are eight: nominative, genitive, dative, ablative, accusative, vocative, instrumental, and locative cases (for greater clarity, the cases and case relationships within nouns and pronouns in Knjaževac Romani are listed in Tables 4, 5, and 6). Moreover, case endings are appended after an agglutinative suffix, referred to as a second-layer marker in Romani linguistics (p. 66). Animate nouns express a direct object with the aforementioned agglutinative suffix, while inanimate nouns use the nominative in this function. The authors employ the term *nominative* in this as well as in other functions

² Б. СИКИМИЋ, ed., *Језик и традиција књажевачких Рома* (Knjaževac: Народна библиотека "Његош", 2018).

³ V. A. Friedman, "Romani in the Balkan Linguistic League". In *Valkanike Glossologia: Sykronia kai Diakronia / Balkanlinguistik: Synchronie und Diachronie*, eds. Christos Tzitzilis & Charalambos Symeonidis, (Thessaloniki: University of Thessaloniki, 2000), 95–105.

where the case that could be characterized as a *general case* is encountered, guided by the morphological principles that underlie implicit grammatical rules in the Romani language. As this type of syncretism is also present in Serbian and other Balkan languages (it is also the most prevalent type of syncretism in all languages,⁴ the above data highlight the special importance of the Romani nominal system for examining the dissemination of Balkan-type analyticism in the synthetic case system. Concerning analytical case constructions, it is particularly noteworthy that in the investigated Romani variety, they are expressed through a combination of prepositions and nominatives (and this can also be the case with animate nouns) (see example 36b, p. 89). The results of the analysis show that the inflectional form of the locative has been lost, while the genitive and ablative are confirmed by a smaller number of examples. Additionally, the instrumental is also replaced by analytical constructions, although its synthetic forms are still frequent. The remaining cases in the synthetic form exhibit considerable stability. Mirić and Ćirković conclude the chapter by suggesting that they see further research in the semantic analysis of case use, and we can hope that we shall soon have the opportunity to read about it.

In the fourth chapter, Serbian loanwords are analysed, quantitatively and qualitatively. The authors address the complex issue of determining the origin of loanwords in the Romani language, specifically whether they were borrowed directly from Serbian or indirectly, through Serbian mediation, from another language. The solution they come up with includes both words from the Serbian language and those that entered Romani through it, primarily English loanwords, while words for which the

origin cannot be precisely determined, that is, those that also exist in other Balkan languages/dialects (such as *coffee*), are excluded from the analysis. This analysis is also conducted based on speech corpora derived from both elder and child speakers, enabling a diachronic perspective, which is a novelty in Romani studies on loanwords. This approach proves to be of considerable value for the study of Romani, a language that lacks substantial older materials for comparative purposes. When analysing the two corpora, Mirić and Ćirković observe no substantial generational differences as regards the presence and borrowing frequency of Serbian loanwords: "The established similarities indicate that both generations of speakers are characterized by the same type of bilingualism and language mixing" (p. 157).

The results of the quantitative analysis show that approximately 30% of the word tokens in the sample are borrowed from Serbian. When considering word classes, Serbian loanwords account for more than 50% of the overall corpus. These results are effectively visualized through eight charts, depicting various aspects of the quantitative analysis. The first four charts display the percentage of occurrence of all Romani words and Serbian loanwords, as well as the percentage of lemmas originating from both Roma and Serbian sources. The other charts show the percentage of lemmas of Romani and Serbian origin across different word classes, along with the frequency of use of Romani words and Serbian loanwords within these word classes. The results provide a hierarchy of borrowing according to their frequency in the corpus: "pragmatic particles, conjunctions > nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, indefinite pronouns > prepositions, grammatical particles, complementizers, numerals > demonstrative, personal, possessive, interrogative and reflexive pronouns, definite article" (p. 158). The most conservative are the definite article and various types of pronouns (see above), where 100% of the lemmas within the given word

⁴ M. Baerman, D. Brown & G. Corbett, *The Syntax-Morphology Interface: A Study of Syncretism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

class are of Romani origin. Numbers and quantifiers, interrogative pronouns as well as original Romani prepositions exhibit notable resistance to borrowing. Conversely, the influence of Serbian loanwords is the greatest in the group of conjunctions and pragmatic particles.

The qualitative analysis focuses on the morphological adaptation of inflected word classes in the context of Serbian loanwords. The Serbian loanwords remain in the same word class but integrate into Romani grammatical patterns. Nouns are frequently borrowed: masculine nouns may acquire the suffix *-o* in the nominative case, while feminine nouns retain the original form from the Serbian language. Irrespective of gender, all loaned nouns are accompanied by the definite article. Adjectives are also frequently borrowed and, regardless of the gender of the noun they agree with, they receive the suffix *-o*. Verbs in the Romani language represent another word class with complex morphosyntactic properties, which may pose challenges to those learning the language. In this regard, the basic information and literature cited by Mirić and Ćirković are highly valuable. "Romani verbs consist of a root to which suffixes are added that mark different categories, such as valence, perfectiveness [...] and markers that signal whether the verb is borrowed" (p. 177). In Knjaževac Gurbet Romani the verbs borrowed from Serbian receive the component *-i-* or *-o-* in the present tense, while in the past tense markers *-sard-* (for transitive) and *-salj-* (for reflexive/reciprocal verbs) are employed. Notably, the marker *-sard-* occurs often with intransitive verbs in Knjaževac Gurbet Romani. As one of the factors influencing this phenomenon, the authors refer to agency, considering that even with intransitive verbs, an agent or initiator is present in the context (p. 182). Moreover, Knjaževac Gurbet Romani has borrowed the particle *bi* from the Serbian language for the construction of the conditional, *nek(a)* for the imperative, and consistently uses the modal verb

mora in the 3rd person singular. Adverbs are another word class for which earlier authors emphasized the origin of contact languages, and the structure of Knjaževac Gurbet Romani confirms this. Pertaining to the analysed loanwords, it is particularly noteworthy that each chapter addressing a specific word class provides basic information, and reviews prior research on the subject.⁵

The fifth and final chapter summarizes the results of the two main chapters and offers concluding remarks. The authors, Mirjana Mirić and Svetlana Ćirković, modestly acknowledge potential limitations of their methodology and analysis, and propose guidelines for future research. Overall, the monograph contributes considerably to understanding the Romani language in Serbia, the phenomenon of Balkanisms and loanwords, as well as the contact of the Romani language with Serbian. The relevance of this monograph goes beyond the realm of Romani studies, being of interest to scholars engaged in the fields of Balkan linguistics as well as to those concerned with the Serbian language and its dialects.

⁵ Cf. E. Adamou & K. Granqvist, "Univenly mixed Romani languages", *International Journal of Bilingualism* 19/5 (2015), 187–227; E. Adamou & Y. Matras, "Romani Syntactic Typology". In *The Palgrave Handbook of Romani Language and Linguistics*, eds. Yaron Matras & Anton Tenser, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 49–81.

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