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## THE YUGOSLAV IDEA AND THE UNIFICATION OF 1918

*Abstract:* The article treats the problem of different understandings of integral Yugoslavism by various political groups and representatives of national elites which have joined into Yugoslavia in December of 1918. The author made an attempt to specify possible causes of subsequent Yugoslav national misunderstandings which ended in bloodshed and catastrophe of 1941.

The idea of a Southern Slavic unification dates back to the early 19th century. However, its meaning changed throughout the previous century to denote various notions, blurring the perception as a clear concept of a unified state.

The Yugoslav concept was widespread particularly among Southern Slavs in the Habsburg Monarchy. The trialistic solution of the state organization within an aged empire implied the creation of a Yugoslav unit within Austria. Free-thinking intellectuals from Croatia were especially zealous about the idea. The Illyrian movement, launched in the mid-19th century, was gradually transformed into a movement for the attainment of this political objective.

At the time when national movements were rising throughout Europe, Croats attempted to tread that path. Numerically, politically and economically weak, they were unable to achieve the national ideal of a sovereign state. Instead, they sought a milder variation. On the one hand, they became reconciled with the status of an autonomous unit, accepting the Danube Monarchy as an actual political framework. On the other, they strengthened their national position, linking it with other Southern Slavs and Slavic peoples in the Empire. Certain champions of reform in Austria favored such a settlement. It provided a good way to preserve the Habsburg empire as an integral multi-national state.

The Serbs from Austria had a somewhat different aim. Along with the rise of the state of Serbia in the previous century, Serbs from Austria looked more often toward national unification with Serbia, putting the idea of a Serbian state at the top of their nationalist aspirations. Hindered in their primary goal, Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina made agreements with other Southern Slavs within the Empire in quest of a secondary road for national organization. The Serbo-Croat Coalition arose from these incentives in 1905.<sup>1</sup>

Then Serbia, as an autonomous state factor, persistently set the liberation and unification of all Serbs at the top of her national aspirations. Even when plans for a Balkan, and subsequently, Yugoslav community emerged on the political scene, they were viewed only as a far-reaching possibility. For Serbia, Yugoslav unification could be attained only as an extension of the Serbian national idea, not as a substitute for it.

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Yugoslav unification was first established as the primary and highest ideal of Serbian state politics in 1914. Commencement of a world war and the bloody fighting waged by the Serbian army in the late summer and fall of the same year drastically changed the views of the Serbian government.

A manifesto to the Serbian people, issued by Regent Alexander on July 29th, 1914, contained an indication of the new policy, mentioning the evil-doings of the Austrian authorities against Serbs, and Croats as well.

The Regent was more explicit in a proclamation from Kragujevac several days later:

"...the howls of our brothers that have reached us from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Banat, Bačka, from Croatia, Slavonia, Srem and from our seaside, the jagged Dalmatia..."<sup>2</sup>

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1 Prvislav Grisogono wrote about this in 1938: "There was neither in the program, nor in the intentions of the organization (Serbo-Croatian Coalition, author's remark) the liberation and unification of all Yugoslavs around Belgrade." *Ujedinjena Jugoslavija*. Ljubljana 1938, 56. And again: "The Battle of Kumanovo is in that sense a real date as it definitively settled the differences over whom and around what centrum would unification and liberation be carried out to the advantage of the Karadjordjević dynasty in Belgrade," Grisogono, 59.

2 Grisogono, 71.

At roughly the same time, Pašić himself came out for the boundaries of the new state somewhere along the line "Klagenfurt-Marburg-Szeged".<sup>3</sup>

In late August 1914, the government of the Kingdom of Serbia formed a committee from its best scholars commissioning it to make out a program for Yugoslav unification. The committee included Ljuba Jovanović, Aleksandar Belić, Jovan Cvijić, Nikola Stojanović, Slobodan Jovanović and some other eminent professors. After a few days, on September 4, a ministerial council set out the basic course of the program: 1) a strong centralized state necessary to preserve peace in the Balkans and Europe in the future; 2) the state should constitute Serbia with Bosnia-Herzegovina, Vojvodina, Dalmatia, Croatia, Istria and Slovenia; 3) the state would preserve the balance on the Adriatic and Mediterranean; 4) Bulgaria may join the state on a federal or similar basis.<sup>4</sup>

Instructions given by Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić on the same day were quite specific:

"...the ultimate concessions beyond which Serbia must not and cannot go are lands east of the Bregalnica to the confluence of the Lakovica River, from there southward by the watershed between the eastern side of the Vardar River and waters flowing into the Strumica to the Serbo-Bulgarian border on Mount Belasica - and this on the condition that the Tripartite Agreement wins and that Serbia gains all Serbo-Croatian lands in Austria-Hungary."<sup>5</sup>

Once again, Pašić addressed the allied forces on November 5 in a bid to explain Serbia's war objectives:

"Serbia is struggling not only for herself, but for the other Balkan nations as well... Serbia is fighting for the independence of all Balkan nations."<sup>6</sup>

The Yugoslav unification program was finally framed in a Serbian government Declaration in Niš, in early December, 1914. Among other things, the proclamation read:

"Convinced in the confidence of the National Assembly as long as it puts its forces to serve the great cause of the Serbian state and the

3 M. Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije 1914. godine*, Belgrade 1973, 84.

4 Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi*, 87. Ljubinka Trgovčević, *Srpski naučnici i jugoslovensko ujedinjenje*, Belgrade 1988, 30-32.

5 Diplomatski arhiv SFRJ, political department, "Pašić to Spalajković", highly classified No. 4600 folder XXII, code number 80.

6 Dragoslav Janković, *Niška deklaracija*, *Istorija XX veka*, X, 1969, 25-26.

Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian tribes... the royal government maintains as its chief duty in these crucial moments to secure a happy end to this huge struggle which, since it has been launched, has become a struggle for liberation and unification of all our unliberated brothers - Serbs, Croats and Slovenes."<sup>7</sup>

There is no question, Serbia's official policy changed. Instead of seeking Serbian national unification, it set out the creation of a common state of Southern Slavs as a primary aspiration.

The question, however, is - what made Serbia take that step. It appears at first glance that the Niš Declaration extinguished the Serbian national program.<sup>8</sup> Why?

In 1914, the Kingdom of Serbia was in a very unfavorable position, in a state of war against the great and strong Dual Monarchy. The Yugoslav idea was meant to serve as an internal weapon to debilitate Austria-Hungary and blunt her military power.<sup>9</sup> In the first year of the war, 20-25% were Serbs and over 50% were Croats on the Austrian side.<sup>10</sup> The program of Southern Slavic unification might have helped internationalize the Serbian question in the national sense and state-wise, especially before the western allies. The creation of a big state in the Balkans would provide a balance on the Peninsula. It would prevent Italy's penetration toward the eastern coast of the Adriatic and curb her influence in the eastern Mediterranean. Finally, Austria-Hungary would be distanced from the Balkans, delivering thus a serious blow to her survival as a mid-European state.

Therefore, the Niš Declaration, the commencing document of Southern Slavic unification, was much more the result of concrete political and military circumstances surrounding Serbia than an expression of centuries-long aspirations of Southern Slavs to a single state.

7 Crisogono, 63.

8 There are other opinions. Ante Smith Pavelić maintained that the Declaration of Niš in fact advocated the idea of Serbian unification under the veil of the unification of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. He also believed that this program meant the inclusion of Croats and Slovenes into a Greater Serbia should circumstances permit after the war. According to this author, Pašić feared mostly a decision by the allies supporting the creation of an independent Croatia that would encompass all or most of the Habsburg Southern Slavic territories. See: Ante Smith Pavelić, *Dr. Ante Trumbić: problemi hrvatsko-srpskih odnosa*, Munich 1959, 34-35.

9 *Istorija srpskog naroda* VI-2, 68-70.

10 Dragoslav Janković, *O uticaju prvog svetskog rata na rešavanje jugoslovenskog pitanja*, in *Stvaranje jugoslovenske države 1918. godine*, Belgrade 1989, 145. Milorad Ekmečić, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije 1790-1918*, Belgrade 1989, 696.

Within a complex international situation, confronted with a formidable enemy, Serbia sought deliverance, and a way out. All efforts launched by the Serbian government were aimed toward that objective. The Yugoslav idea was accepted out of need, not conviction. Few notable scholars and intellectuals developed the concept of Southern Slav unity, with common national and state interests, and believed in it sincerely. Politics is a practical activity and deals with momentary or short-term solutions. It was thus with the Declaration of December 7, 1914. Clothed in fine garments of Serb, Croatian and Slovenian national unity, it was motivated by the actual needs of Serbia, threatened by the horrors of war.

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There was much talk, there is still today, of plans for the creation of a large Serbian state at the end of World War I. Its champions usually maintain that Serbia had a free choice between the expansion of Serbia through unliberated regions and Southern Slavic unity. Following from this is that the Serbian government and Regent Alexander chose freely a single state of Southern Slavs. Frequently mentioned are offers from the allies during the war suggesting the forming of a Greater Serbia in the Balkans.

This complex question calls for a more detailed examination from the angle of foreign policy conducted by the powers of the Entente.

Great Britain in particular was opposed to the creation of a big Slavic state in the Balkans. In 1878, Lord Salisbury stressed that the unification of Serbia and Montenegro would lead to a Slavic confederation and ultimately to a big Slavic state stretching from Pirot to the Adriatic.<sup>11</sup> That is why the Niš Declaration was received with reservations in London.<sup>12</sup> In late December, 1914, Britain first proposed territorial concessions to Serbia. Serbia was to obtain Bosnia-Herzegovina, access to the sea and part of Albania on the condition of ceding a large part of Macedonia to Bulgaria.<sup>13</sup> Similar plans were proposed again in the Foreign Office in the first half of 1915.

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11 Public Record Office (Arhiv Srbije), "Salisbury to Cross", Berlin, 19.06.1878, FO 78, vol 2899.

12 See: Dragoljub R. Živojinović, *Velika Srbija ili Jugoslavija? Velika Britanija i jugoslovensko ujedinjenje 1914-1918*, Arhiv za istoriju zdravstvene kulture Srbije, 18, 1989, 95.

13 Živojinović, 98-99.

The concessions were conditioned by Britain's policy toward Italy and her territorial ambitions in the Adriatic and Dalmatia.

In August that same year, the British foreign secretary proposed that the following regions be given to Serbia in the event of allied victory: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slavonia, Srem, Bačka, Adriatic coast up to 10 km south of Cavtat, the islands Veliki and Mali Žirone, Buje, Šolta, Brač, Jakljan and the Pelješac peninsula. The plan envisaged the settling of the question of Banat through a peace accord unless Romania joined the Entente. The demand that Serbia cede to Buglaria part of Macedonia was repeated on the basis of item two of a 1912 secret agreement which prevented a common border between Serbia and Greece.<sup>14</sup>

In April, 1915, Italy joined the allies, demanding and winning specific territorial concessions for its participation in the war operations.<sup>15</sup> The London accord, a secret agreement between England, France, Russia and Italy, was signed on April 26, 1915.<sup>16</sup> Italy actually declared war on Austria on May 23, 1915. Before engaging in war against Germany, Italy waited for fifteen months, until August, 1916. Even Croatian historians admit that the London accord so intimidated Croatian politicians for leaving to the Italians hundreds of thousands of Croats and Slovenes, that they approached the Serbian government for chiefly this reason. It became clear that Croatian and Slovene unification depended on Serbia's success.<sup>17</sup>

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14 Public Record Office, "Grey to Buchanon", 10.08.1915, FO 371, vol 2265. The demand of the Entente was sent to Serbia first on August 30, 1914, and again in notes dating from May 25, 1915 and August 3 the same year. See: *Istorija srpskog naroda* VI-2, 45-84

15 Italy was promised territories Italia Irredenta (Trentino, southern Tirol, Istria, Gorica, Trieste, a large part of the Dalmatian coast from Lisarnica and Trbanj to the headland of Planka with Zadar except the island of Brač, the Kvarner islands), part of Albania around Valona, sovereignty on the Dodekanese islands, the Turkish province of Adolia in Asia Minor, colonial expansion in Africa and a share in the reparations. See: A.J.P.Taylor, *The First World War*, Penguin Books, 1963, 89-90. Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of Balkan National States 1804-1920*, Washington University Press, 1977, 288.

16 The real conditions of the London agreement were disclosed by the Bolsheviks in 1918 after the Soviet revolution when they refused to accept the obligations undertaken by imperial Russia. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson opposed this accord mostly because of its open violation of national principle. That is why the United States refused to accept the provisions of this pact as binding. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, both Great Britain and France turned against Italy. See: A.J.P.Taylor, 91.

17 Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, Cornell University Press, 1984, 119.

Regardless of whether the Serbian government chose to create a Greater Serbia or strove toward Yugoslav unification,<sup>18</sup> Italy's demands were contrary to Serbia's national interest. Italy's breakthrough to the Adriatic coast posed a grave threat and unsurmountable obstacle to the war aims of the Kingdom of Serbia.

In 1916, Britain maintained that Serbia should be allowed to expand in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slavonia, but always on the condition of ceding Macedonia to Bulgaria.<sup>19</sup> A cabinet reshuffle in Great Britain, when David Lloyd George became prime minister, brought only a minimal alteration in Britain's policy in view of the Serbian question. The first memorandum, issued after the new cabinet was set up, proposed the idea of separate peace with Austria-Hungary. At the same time, the Yugoslav kingdom was conceived as a federal unit in a re-arranged Habsburg Monarchy. Bosnia-Herzegovina was ceded to Serbia and the latter was allowed to unify with Montenegro.<sup>20</sup>

At the close of 1917, Britain's policy regarding Serbia and the federal arrangement of the Habsburg Monarchy acquired a more definite outline. There were two different concepts of settling the Balkan problem. Some politicians proposed that Serbia become part of the Danube monarchy. Others adhered to the plans of 1915 and 1916.<sup>21</sup> During negotiations for a separate peace with Austria-Hungary between English General Smuts and Mansdorf, Great Britain reiterated that it did not want the break-up of the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, in the summer of 1918, the British government declared itself in favor of Yugoslav unification within a single and independent state.<sup>23</sup>

Adhering to its old course in preserving balance in the Balkans, Britain was far from enthusiastic over the creation of a Greater Serbia. Such a state would disturb the overall balance of forces in southeastern Europe. Thus Britain was obstinately insistent that both empires,

18 Croatian historians agree that for Serbia, the unification of the Southern Slavs was in fact equal to Serbian unification. See: Ante Smith Pavelic, 34-35.

19 See: K. J. Calder, *Britain and the Origins of the New Europe 1914-1918*, Cambridge 1976, 93-97. V. H. Rothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914-1918*, Oxford 1971, 51-53.

20 Public Record Office, "The Drummond Memorandum", February 12, 1917, FO 800, vol 20. Cited in: Živojinović, 107-108.

21 Library of the House of Lords, David Lloyd George Papers, 1/45/9/10, The General Smuts Memorandum, March 14, 1918. See: Živojinović, 108.

22 Dragoslav Janković and Mirko Mirković, *Državnopravna istorija Jugoslavije*, Belgrade 1989, 349.

23 Živojinović, 105.

Habsburg and Ottoman, must survive the war whatever the cost. In that view, nothing had changed in Britain's policy since the early 19th century. The belated acceptance of the Yugoslav idea only appears to be a renunciation of this political course. In fact, Britain realized that a future unified Yugoslavia would be a smaller Austria-Hungary - a multinational state with similar internal problems as were troubling the Habsburg Monarchy. If it was no longer possible to preserve Austria-Hungary, then it was necessary to create a state similar to it. That was Yugoslavia. Large enough to maintain stability in the Balkans, but too weak inside to develop into a regional force. The principle that applied to Vienna was passed over to Belgrade.<sup>24</sup>

Offers by Great Britain for the creation of a Greater Serbia were mentioned only while the war was in duration, until its final outcome became definite. The role of the Serbian army in crushing the resistance of the central forces was the chief reason why Britain had made the offers, to convince the Serbs in their good intentions. But even then, any thought of Serbian expansion westward and northward meant giving up territories in the south. Thus British plans for a Greater Serbia looked more like moving Serbia north-westward than truly unifying all Serbian lands.

It was naive to expect that the big powers, particularly Great Britain, would wholeheartedly stand on the Serbian side and allow Serbian national unification. The end of the war brought noticeable changes in boundaries, but the balance of forces and world policy in regard to the Serbian question did not alter. Quite the contrary.

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The decisive step in the creation of the single state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was made in the summer of 1917 in Corfu. The Corfu conference, comprising on one side members of the Yugoslav Committee and on the other the Serbian royal government, issued a

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24 "From the side of the Yugoslav committee it has already been set out that the committee represents eight million, and the Serbian government only four million. We in Belgrade are gaining the impression that certain Croatian circles have a plan to separate Serbia and Montenegro from the rest of our regions, and instead of a simple state wherein they fear lest Serbs should be the only spokesmen, they create a purely Austrian combination. Without any originality, too, merely copying the relationship between Austria and Hungary." Arhiv Jugoslavije, "Ninčić to Pribičević" on November 28, 1918, folder XII, doc. 1. See: Ekmečić, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije*, 811-812.



declaration on the future arrangement of the state. The accord is often assumed to be the basis of Yugoslav unification, although its character is still debatable. From the standpoint of law and politics.

The conference was held from June 15 to July 20, 1917. After a lengthy and trying discussion, an act was framed, defining the bases for future unification. Its premise was the national unity of Southern Slavs, underlining the right to national self-determination. Naturally, the Croats were interested the most in the latter principle. The agreement envisaged that the state be named the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, led by the royal family Karadjordjević. The future community was to be a constitutional, parliamentary and democratic monarchy. Suffrage was universal and civil and political freedom guaranteed. It was agreed finally that a freely elected Constituent Assembly would frame decision on the constitutional arrangement and that the constitution would be adopted by a "numerically qualified majority".<sup>25</sup>

The Corfu Declaration indeed became the foundation of Yugoslav unification. The basic principles set out in Corfu were included in the 1921 Constitution of St. Vitus' Day. Yet, however paradoxical this may sound, the motives of both sides were temporary, and different at the core. Each side saw in the accord its own needs and advantages at that particular time.

Pašić persistently avoided a written accord with the Yugoslav Committee as long as imperial Russia existed. Only Russia was disposed to see an Orthodox Serbia in the Balkans rather than a mixed Catholic and Orthodox community. After the fall of the Russian empire in February, 1917, Pašić signed the declaration, mostly to show his western allies that the survival of Austria-Hungary was impossible. But Pašić himself did not want to go beyond the declaration. His conviction was firm in annexing regions in Austria-Hungary to the Kingdom of Serbia. It was a matter of new tactics in regard to altered international circumstances.<sup>26</sup> Besides this, he was pressured by the opposition of independents who pushed for integral Yugoslavism. Teamed with the Yugoslav Committee, they could jeopardize the superiority of the radicals at the head of Serbia. The radical majority in the Serbian parliament was stronger by only a few seats. Pašić feared the

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25 Ferdo Šišić. *Dokumenti o postanku Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1914-1919*. Zagreb 1920. 97

26 Slobodan Jovanović. *Iz istorije i književnosti* I, Belgrade 1991. 175.

Serbian opposition and the Southern Slavs from Austria-Hungary might reach agreement without the radicals, even turn against them. So he agreed to the declaration.

The Serbian government rejected a proposal by the Yugoslav Committee to hold a national congress, comprising Serbian National Assembly deputies, members of the Yugoslav and Montenegrin committees for national unification, representatives of the Serbian army and other Southern Slavic organizations, chaired by Regent Aleksandar.<sup>27</sup> Pašić was on no condition prepared to recognize the Yugoslav Committee, not even if the Committee undertook the obligation to pursue the politics of the Serbian government.<sup>28</sup> This clearly shows that Pašić considered the Corfu Declaration for the future. At that time, all authority had to remain in the competence of the Serbian government.

On the occasion of the founding of the Yugoslav Committee in 1915, its chairman, Dr. Ante Trumbić, defined the general course of politics in the future:

"Our organization has to work in accord with Serbia, of course, but not in her name and only privately without any external labels. Subsequently, when events take place and the liquidation of Austria-Hungary matures, our organization will be formally set up as a committee of Southern Slavic lands subject to Austria-Hungary and as such would stand before the European public with the task of working on liberating all our lands as a whole, regardless of the destiny of Serbia and Montenegro."<sup>29</sup>

Croats, on the other hand, believed that given the overall circumstances, their interest lay in coming closer to Serbia. They, too, sought a way to raise their question before the world. To them, the Corfu Declaration was one of a number of possible ways to carry out their intention. Only two weeks before the Corfu Conference opened, on May 30, the Yugoslav Club in the Viennese parliament adopted another declaration, the so-called "May Declaration" which said:

"On the basis of national principles and Croatian state law, they demand the unification of all lands in the monarchy inhabited by Slovenes, Croats and Serbs into a single autonomous state body, free from

27 See: Nikola Stojanović, *Pred stvaranjem Jugoslavije*, "Nova Evropa", January 1927.

28 Slobodan Jovanović, *Pašić i Jugoslovenski odbor*, in *Iz istorije i književnosti* 1, Belgrade 1991, 198-202

29 Ante Smith Pavelić, 35.

alien rule and based on democracy, under the scepter of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty."<sup>30</sup>

A meeting of Croatian politicians held in Zagreb in August 1917 accepted the Corfu Declaration, though with reservations, but clearly set out the need to preserve Croatian statehood in the new state.<sup>31</sup>

Thus the Corfu Declaration appeared to be a firm basis for Yugoslav unification and proof of agreement on the arrangement of the single state community. However, all the different interests and perceptions of unification remained beneath the formal agreement.

The path toward Yugoslav unification appeared more like a series of compromises between Serbian and Croatian nationalisms than the creation of a common national ideology. The true nature of the Serbo-Croat relations was best revealed at the Geneva Conference held in early November, 1918. Now when western allies had fully accepted the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy, the political representatives of the Kingdom of Serbia (Nikola Pašić), members of the Yugoslav Committee (Dr. Ante Trumbić) and the National Council (Dr. Anton Korošec) met again.<sup>32</sup>

In those international circumstances, England and France favored a Yugoslav state to an expanded Serbia and a fortified Italy with a dominant position on the Adriatic Sea, therefore in the Mediterranean.<sup>33</sup>

Of all the accords leading to the fraternization of the Southern Slavs, the Geneva Declaration triggered most of the protests and caused much hesitation. Although generalized in character, the document established two basic principles. The principle of the national unity of Yugoslavs, that is, their willingness to join the state community, and the factual existence of three Southern Slavic states (Serbia, Montenegro and the State of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes). The Geneva Declaration confirmed the Corfu accord whereby the final state arrangement was to be settled in a Constituent Assembly. What made the accord disputable is an interim solution until the Assembly was con-

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30 Šišić, 94.

31 Ferdo Čulinović, *Jugoslavija između dva rata 1*, Zagreb 1961, 42-45.

32 The Serbian parliamentary delegation comprised Vojislav Marinković, Milorad Drašković and Marko Rifković. On behalf of the Yugoslav committee taking part in the conference were Dr. Gustav Gregorin, Dušan Vasiljević, Dr. Nikola Stojanović and Jovan Banjamin. The National Council from Zagreb was represented by Dr. Delko Čingrija and dr Gregor Žerjav, Čulinović, 80.

33 Čulinović, 79.

vened. During that period, the declaration envisaged the existence of two states (Serbia and the State of SCS) which voluntarily join the community as equal members. Montenegro was left to decide herself on joining the new state. The Geneva Declaration concluded that the Serbian government and National Council "were conducting their affairs each in their own internal and territorial fields of activity in a regular manner".<sup>34</sup> An interim government of twelve members was to deal only with questions of general interest: foreign affairs, army, navy and setting up a Constituent Assembly. Each of the parties gained the right to each appoint six representatives to a joint ministry. For the beginning, six ministers, three from each side, were appointed. The Serbian ministers took oath to the Serbian King, and the others to the National Council in Zagreb.

The Geneva document established a dualistic solution to the Southern Slavic unification and indirectly prognosticated a federal arrangement of the future state. A decree whereby the interim government was obliged to act "in connection with the national governments" of the member states, introduced an element of confederalism in the mutual relations of the two equal state subjects.<sup>35</sup>

The spirit of the Geneva Declaration was doubtless taken from the Austro-Hungarian deal of 1867. Under the influence of Croatian demands, but also integral Yugoslavism at all costs of the Serbian opposition,<sup>36</sup> Pašić was forced to yield and sign the Geneva accord. France played a special role in this among the international factors.<sup>37</sup>

Very indisposed to what had been agreed to at the Geneva Lake, Regent Alexander and members of the Serbian ministerial council rejected the Geneva deal. The prime minister's envoy, Stojan Protić, was irreconcilable in this point:

34 Slobodan Jovanović, *Političke i pravne rasprave* 2, Belgrade 1932, 295.

35 Čulinović, 80-83.

36 In a telegram sent from Paris to Salonika on October 19, 1918, Pašić complained to the Regent and Stojan Protić that the Serbian opposition was assisting the Yugoslav Committee in its struggle against the Serbian government. Svetozar Pribičević, *Diktatura kralja Aleksandra*, Belgrade 1952, 38-39.

37 In early November, 1918, French President Raymond Poincaré called Serbian envoy in Paris Milenko Vesnić and advised him to reach accord with the Yugoslav representatives from Austria-Hungary as early as possible, warning of Italy's major action to neutralize the Yugoslav thesis on unification. Explaining his signature, Pašić on November 10 sent a telegram to the Regent and Stojan Protić reaffirming the efforts of the French President for an accord as soon as possible. See: Pribičević, 41-42.

"Yugoslav politicians have been liberated thanks to the Serbs and allies, yet spiritually they are still in bondage. They are in Austria-Hungary's ideology."<sup>38</sup>

And again:

"The intention of Yugoslav politicians is to separate Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Srem, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Lika, Bačka, Banat and Baranja from Serbia, and put up a front against Serbia."<sup>39</sup>

Protić immediately sent a message to Pašić from Corfu, announcing the resignation of the entire cabinet and proposing that the prime minister tender his resignation as well:

"What these gentlemen underscore and desire now is unheard of, a government which has never existed anywhere, it is an expression of distrust to you personally and against Serbia... I believe it is entirely inappropriate that the ministers take oaths to anyone but our own King who is our common ruler... please accept our resignations... we believe you yourself no longer have a place in such a government..."<sup>40</sup>

On the occasion of the Geneva Convention, Protić sent a message to the deputies of the National Council, Korošec and Čingrija, via a telegram sent to Serbia's envoy in London, Jovan Jovanović. The message, dated November 25, 1918, read as follows:

"Our brothers must decide, amongst themselves, whether or not they accept sincerely, explicitly and purely, national and state unity in the form of a modern, constitutional, parliamentary and democratic monarchy with the Karadjordjević dynasty at its head, on the basis of the Corfu Declaration. A Constituent Assembly in which Serbia would take part cannot settle this question, because we do not permit any discussion on two matters - the monarchy and the Karadjordjević dynasty. We grant our brothers outside Serbia full freedom to decide upon this themselves.

If they accept this, there will be state and national unity and all will be well; if they refuse, and relinquish the Corfu Declaration, it will be a loss we shall deeply regret, but then each shall go his own way: Serbs with the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes with the Croats and Slovenes."<sup>41</sup>

38 Andrej Mitrović, *Srbija u prvom svetskom ratu*, Belgrade 1984, 559.

39 Arhiv Jugoslavije, "Stojan Protić to the military envoy in London", November 12, 1918, folder VI, doc. 1.

40 Pribičević, 42.

41 Stojan Protić, *Ženevski sporazum i njegovi odjeci*, "Radikal", No. 341, January 6, 1923.

Protić reviewed this problem several times. In late 1921, he reiterated the same standpoint:

"If we should agree on such a healthy and broad enough basis... then all is well for all our people, for all three scions of our nation.

If this should prove impossible, contrary to our sincere wishes, then the road is open for us to amputate, however painful that may be, though inevitable, and grant each side full liberty."<sup>42</sup>

He did not alter his standpoint a year later:

"Either we shall come to terms honestly, or part as friends, because that is better than confronting each other like two soldiers with stuck guns."<sup>43</sup>

On November 18, Nikola Pašić set up a new ministry, but it became clear that the Geneva Declaration would remain a dead letter. The Serbian government in Corfu refused to accept the Geneva accord, as did the National Council in Zagreb. Svetozar Pribičević was particularly opposed to the accord. Unification appeared to take a completely different course. What was important, however, was that the Geneva meeting revealed more clearly than any other the true aims and intentions of both sides. The desire for a common state was only formally unanimous. Everything else differed so much that conflicts and misunderstandings had to break out.

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Immediately following the act on unification, even before, in the attempts to win accord from the different participants in the creation of Yugoslavia, essential questions were not purely ideological. Even though they appeared to be at first glance.

The new state, with no past common to its unified nations, imposed the solving of national problems first. All negotiations on the unification, from the Corfu Declaration, through the Geneva Conference to the final unification and character of the future constitution, focused on the arrangement of the state from the national standpoint. That course was pursued in the common state.

The base of all confrontations and contrary viewpoints was essentially national. That means that pressing for certain political solutions (freedom of choice, constitutionality, parliamentarism, democratic

42 Stojan Protić, *Radikalni kongres*, "Radikal", No. 54, December 16, 1921.

43 "Radikal", No. 296, October 11, 1922.

freedoms etc.) always concealed efforts to secure a more favorable position for one of the nations composing Yugoslavia. Not one point of view was essentially ideological, founded on political conviction. Many perceived Yugoslavia as an involuntary product, whose sole task was to ensure an unhindered national constitution.<sup>44</sup> The idea of a common state was of secondary importance.

Non-Serbian political parties adjusted easily to the newly created political circumstances. For two essential reasons.

First, in the case of the Croats and Slovenes, the representatives of these nations were united and organized. The Croatian Republican Peasant Party (subsequently The Croatian Peasant Party) was by far the largest and most influential organized group in Croatia.<sup>45,46</sup> Other Croatian parties (Croatian Labor Party, Croatian Community and Croatian Party of Law) were numerically inferior and less influential.<sup>47</sup> They all acted as a national bloc in issues of national significance. The Slovenian Human Party was the most important political factor among the Slovenians.<sup>48</sup>

Second, their experiences in the Habsburg Monarchy were quite close to their activities within the newly created Yugoslav state.<sup>49</sup> Croatian and Slovenian parties were wont to support not political principles and ideological convictions, but press for a more prominent place for their representatives in Hungarian or Austrian state bodies. Their activities boiled down to struggling for autonomy within Austria-Hungary. They persisted with this policy in Yugoslavia. The new multi-national state replaced the old one. This carried them to the idea

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44 Vladimir Ćorović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, Belgrade 1989, 590.

45 At the 1923 elections, the Croatian Peasant Party won 473,733 votes and 70 seats in parliament. See: Jovan Marjanović, *Političke stranke Kraljevine SHS (1919-1929)*, in *Iz istorije Jugoslavije*, Belgrade 1958, 212.

46 "The Croatian Peasant Party is today what Starčević's party was yesterday, and that is the first and chief representative of the Croatian people." Stjepan Radić, *Politički spisi*, Zagreb 1971, 339.

47 Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1978*, Belgrade 1981, 48.

48 The Slovenian Human Party accounted for 60% of the Slovenian electorate. Other votes were dissipated on minor political groups. See: Banac, 342.

49 For all Southern Slavs from the former Austria-Hungary the principle of universal suffrage was quite new. A high electoral census was maintained in Austria-Hungary till the very end. Only 208,411 citizens had the right to vote in Croatia and Slavonija at the last pre-war elections held on December 16, 1913. The turnout was a little over half the electorate - 111,055; 97,406 abstained. Grisogono, 97. Bogdan Krizman, *Hrvatski sabor i ujedinjenje 1918. godine*, in *Stvaranje jugoslovenske države 1918. godine*, Belgrade 1989, 51.

of federalism, and separatism, for the most persistent.<sup>50</sup> Svetozar Pribičević himself was aware of this trait in Southern Slavs from Austria-Hungary, when he spoke up in the Constituent Assembly:

"Gentlemen, when we discuss matters and affairs of state, a certain spirit emerges that is not noticeable on this side, here in Serbia, which has had state independence for a hundred years. It emerges among us who are from the other regions, a spirit of negation, discontent, destruction... We lived, gentlemen, in an alien state we did not consider our own: everything we had to give to that state, we gave as a 'must'. Everything that state took from the people, the people believed would turn against them; the people hated the state in which they lived and saw everything that came from that state as directed against them. Thus a spirit of negation against the state became rooted in the people: it must be driven out..."<sup>51</sup>

The fact that all non-Serbian parties contained a national label in their names is conducive to this conclusion.

Parties that represented minor national groups held a similar stand in politics (Yugoslav Muslim Organization, Montenegrin Federalist Party etc.)

Immediately after the unification, the parties that rallied the Serbs mostly split into two large groups: radicals and democrats.<sup>52</sup> The National Radical Party was a political organization with the oldest tradition and political heritage in Serbia. Led by politicians such as Nikola Pašić, Stojan Protić and Milenko Vesnić, it maintained its high position on the political scale.<sup>53</sup>

The Democratic Party, founded in early 1919, comprised independents, progressives, liberals, part of the Croato-Serbian Coalition and several pre-war men of politics. Immediately it became one of the most influential and largest parties in the Kingdom.<sup>54</sup>

At the elections for the Constituent Assembly on November 28, 1920, these two parties won an overwhelming victory, taking most of

50 Corović, 589.

51 *Stenografske beleške Ustavotvorne skupštine Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, book 1, minutes from the session dated May 12, 1921, Belgrade 1921, 9.

52 Several minor parties also sought followers among the Serbian electorate (Republican Party, Agricultural Party, Social-Democratic Party, etc).

53 See: Branislav Gligorijević, *Sukobi u vodjstvu radikalne stranke 1920-1928*, Belgrade 1972.

54 See: Branislav Gligorijević, *Demokratska stranka i politički odnosi u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, Belgrade 1970..



the seats in parliament. The Democrats won 319,448 votes, securing 92 seats, and the Radicals 91 seats with 284,575 votes.<sup>55</sup>

The next parliamentary elections were held on March 18, 1923. The strength of the National Radical Party increased to 108 seats with 562,213 votes, and the Democrats were boiled down to nearly a half, winning only 51 seats with 400,342 votes.<sup>56</sup>

The two parties differed in both parts of their programs, more in regard to their views on national issues than questions pertaining to political ideology. Even short-term coalitions which they made on several occasions were an expression of momentary interest, never the result of true political proximity.

Throughout their history, the Radicals' chief political principle was a democratic state organization. The idea of parliamentary rule, based on a system of divided authority, universal suffrage and local self-administration were the basis of the Radicals' political program, dating back to 1881. The Radicals always called for limited authority to the Crown and the protection of all democratic freedoms. They adhered to these principles in the early days of the Yugoslav state.

However, the basic problem of the unified state was not the question of democratic parliamentarism. The main problem was opposing views on the place and role of individual territorial and national units within the common state. In reality, the question was reduced to variations of state arrangement starting from a single state, through various forms of decentralization to the idea of federal organization and concealed separatism.

It is quite clear that the party was rather disoriented in the new political circumstances. It lost its chief stronghold in political ideology and involuntarily become engaged in a struggle it was neither suited nor ready for. Thus different views on the problem of state organization emerged in the party from the very beginning.<sup>57</sup> Regardless of these contradictions, which shattered the party's unity and weakened its force and influence, the political background was always the same. The different streams among the Radicals all wanted the national question settled as soon as possible so that the new state community could deal with the regular political situation. The party's program from 1920 bespeaks of this expressively:

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55 Petranović, 48.

56 Jovan Marjanović, *Političke stranke Kraljevine SHS (1919-1929)*, 212.

57 See: Branislav Gligorjević, *Sukobi u vodjstvu radikalne stranke*, 29

"We consider a single state the one with a single parliament, to which the state government is responsible and which, together with the King, has undivided sovereign legislative authority in the whole country. The party considers another characteristic of a single state the principle of self-government infused through the entire state and social machine [...], with the same principle of self-government relevant to a large region, that is, the region should be large enough for the principle to become prominent without questioning the uniformity of the state with its largeness and competence."<sup>58</sup>

The concept of the priority of democratic freedoms above all other political principles was developed by Stojan Protić:

"If our Vojvodinians or Bosnians, or native Serbians, or Montenegrins or Croats, are yet unable to bear the amount of freedom that Serbia has, which Serbia has a right to lay claim to, after half a century of political and parliamentary life, then let them enjoy the amount that suits them, or which the specific circumstances dictate, for the time being."<sup>59</sup>

The Radicals did not develop as a party of the national bloc. The role was imposed on them. It is no wonder they were disoriented.

On the other hand, the party was the bearer of national construction. Both in Serbia and Yugoslavia. However, different political circumstances made it much less successful in Yugoslavia than it had been in Serbia. The unified state demanded an alliance of national parties, not an ideological bloc. The Radicals were able to lead the latter. But, unfortunately, they had neither the experience nor understanding for the former. The party was and remained a Serbian party which needed national unity in order to operate with success. As the national is always more powerful than the ideal. Probably because it is based on the biased and emotional.

All efforts of individual Radical leaders to find a suitable national solution in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes ended in defeat. The party lost some of its best men in discords and differences over the national question. All suffered from the loss. Yugoslavia and the Radicals.

The other large party in the new state, with its base in Belgrade, was the Democratic Party. Its position and activities on the new political stage differed somewhat from those of the Radicals.

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58 *Zaključci i rezolucija radikalnih zemaljskih konferencija u 1920. i 1921*, Belgrade 1923, 3-4.

59 Stojan Protić, *Oko ustava*, Belgrade 1921, 65.

Since the beginning of organization, the Democrats acted as a completely monolithic group. It was quite evident that there were two streams within the party. One, comprising leaders from Serbia, mostly from the former Autonomous Radical Party, and the other, which rallied former members of the Croato-Serbian Coalition, Serbs from Austria-Hungary. At the head of the former group stood, unofficially, Milorad Drašković, and the latter was led by Svetozar Pribičević.<sup>60</sup>

The essential point in the position of the Democrats<sup>61</sup> in regard to the national question, that is, political ideology, is that the two groups differed mostly on this point. The political experience of the followers of Svetozar Pribičević resembled those of the non-Serbian political parties. They, too, struggled for a more prominent place and role in the Habsburg Monarchy. Questions pertaining to a democratic system were to them incomparably minor in importance. They conveyed this mentality into Yugoslavia.

The idea of a single and centralized state is rooted in the perceptions of these politicians, just as the idea of a federation arose from Croatian political parties. Both viewed the problem from the same angle. But the points of view were different.

As time went on, it became increasingly clear that Serbian political parties had accepted the new rules of national policy. Pressured partly by circumstances, partly under the influence of Serbian politicians from Croatia. Questions on the political organization of the unified state gradually lost significance before surges of ardent national desires. Instead of becoming a democratic community where every individual would be free to express his own political convictions, Yugoslavia turned into a battleground of conflicting national interests.

Conclusions that may be drawn from a deliberation on this course are both complex and far-reaching. There is no point here in searching for them. Perhaps one might stop to think about a basic question.

Is it possible at all to reconcile different national interests and principles of real democracy?

Or does one necessarily exclude the other?

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60 Ćorović, 591.

61 For more particulars on the Democratic Party see: Branislav Gligorijević, *Demokratska stranka...*

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International circumstances altered drastically since the beginning of 1918. The United States became involved in the war as an "associate force" on the side of the Entente in April the previous year. The time for the final outcome was approaching.

U.S. President Woodrow Wilson published in January 1918 a manifest of the U.S. war aims set out in the celebrated "Fourteen Points". The program served subsequently as a basis for the peace conference in Paris (January 18, 1919 - January 20, 1920). Concisely, the Fourteen Points outlined the following: 1. Canceling all secret diplomatic contracts; 2. Free sail in all seas; 3. Removing economic obstacles as much as possible; 4. Arms reduction; 5. Unbiased arrangement of colonial demands; 6. Liberation of Russian territory; 7. Restoration of Belgium; 8. Liberation of France and return of Alsace-Lorraine; 9. Retailoring Italian borders along clearly recognizable national lines; 10. Autonomous development of the peoples of Austria-Hungary; 11. Liberation of the territories of Romania, Serbia and Montenegro with access to the sea for Serbia; 12. Self-government to the peoples in the Ottoman Empire and free passage through the Dardanelles; 13. Creation of independent Poland with free and safe access to the sea; 14. Organizing a world community of nations with the aim of guaranteeing the independence of all states.

Honoring Wilson's program, the Paris Peace Conference refused to recognize any secret agreement contracted during the war. This was binding, before any other accords, to the London 1915 pact, although Italy was obstinate on its provisions being applied.

The Fourteen Points set out above all the principles of national self-determination. Although there is no direct reference to the application of the principle, the entire context points to the underlying meaning of the document. National self-determination can in other words be defined as a national state. The Paris Conference endeavored to apply this principle consistently, but, as always, certain interests of the victorious powers overwhelmed the aspiration toward the universal principle.

For the Serbian cause, it was of the utmost importance that neither the manifest, nor the war program of Great Britain, also dating from the early 1918,<sup>62</sup> mentioned the disintegration of Austria-Hun-

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<sup>62</sup> The program of Britain's war aims was set out by Prime Minister David Lloyd George in a speech to the trade unions, on January 5, 1918. On this occasion, the

gary. Both programs envisaged a survival of the Habsburg Monarchy in a federal rearrangement. The U.S. administration on June 26, 1918, undertook as its objective to break up the artificial Austrian empire.<sup>63</sup>

Serbia was faced with two dangers: the preservation of the Habsburg Monarchy and Italy's entrance into the Balkans. As the result of victory in World War I, Serbia expected the fulfillment of two chief goals: the disintegration of Austria-Hungary whereby the liberation and annexation of the Austrian Serbs would be accomplished, and subsequently the Croats and Slovenes, and secondly, winning access to the Adriatic. Insisting on Yugoslav unification as the most important mission of Serbian policy was to neutralize both these dangers and provide the most appropriate way to achieve both goals.

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Two years after the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the Constituent Assembly convened on December 12, 1920, worked more than six months, closing finally on June 28, 1921, with the adoption of the constitution.<sup>64</sup>

The question of the character of the common state was a stumbling block ever since the unification. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the contrasting views on the state. Only thus can the true nature of the first Yugoslav constitution be perceived, but also the nature of Yugoslav misunderstanding.

The question of national and state rights of the individual peoples that joined the new state community was the crux of the problem. Two aspirations, Serbian and Croatian, are quite clear. Both departed from their individual historical and national interests and owing to those differences collided immediately. The third perception was essentially the one generally called integral Yugoslavism.

The source and content of these views demand separate and thorough analysis.

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English government stressed the intention to preserve the Habsburg Monarchy and offered guarantees for autonomous positions for Southern Slavs. Like Wilson's plan, which was revealed only three days later, Britain also urged the restoration of the Kingdom of Serbia and Montenegro. See: Janković and Mirković, 350.

63 Ekmečić, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije*, 773-774.

64 The Constitution of St. Vitus' Day was passed with a simple majority of 223 votes; 35 votes were opposed, and 161 deputies left the Constituent Assembly earlier.

The Croatian viewpoint was based not on political and lawful reality, but in terms of public law as passed on from the Habsburg Monarchy. The disappearance of Austria-Hungary restored state legal personality to Croatia. The minutes of a Croatian assembly held on October 29, 1918, clearly point to this course of reflection: 1. All state relations cease between the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia on one side and the Kingdom of Hungary and the Austrian Empire on the other; 2. Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia with Rijeka are proclaimed an independent state, thus according to the modern principle of nationality, and on the basis of the national unity of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, join the single national sovereign state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs; 3. The universal national constituent assembly of all the unified Slovenes, Croats and Serbs will decide in a previously established qualified majority which fully protects against any majorization in the form of rule, as well as the internal state organization of our state, founded on the full equality of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs; 4. The Croatian Assembly recognizes supreme authority to the National Council in the state of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs.<sup>65</sup>

So, during the unification, there was not only the sovereign Kingdom of Serbia, but an independent Croatian state as well. These two equal factors conducted negotiations and arranged the terms for unification. This particularly refers to the adoption of the constitutional act. So the Southern Slavic community, according to the Croatian principle, was the result of a deal between two independent states as representatives of two free nations. Resemblance with the Austro-Hungarian model is more than obvious.<sup>66</sup>

A speech by Mate Drinković, a Croatian Community (National Club) deputy in the Constituent Assembly, may serve as a good example. Referring to the minutes of the Croatian assembly of October 29, 1918, and to instructions by the National Council to the delegation for negotiations on unification, he said the following:

"Since this assembly refuses to pay heed, even deliberately wants to destroy the foundations which this state is built on, and to impose

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65 Slobodan Jovanović, *Političke i pravne rasprave* 2, 292-293.

66 It is interesting to note that Svetozar Pribičević favored this viewpoint. He maintained that Croatia had indisputably confirmed its statehood with the Croato-Hungarian accord of 1868. He drew the conclusion whereby the act of unification was a two-sided accord. This notable representative of Serbs across the border proceeded to establish that the success of the new state rested on the need to enable the Croats full development of Croatian individuality. Pribičević, 7, 53-56.

upon the country a constitution through numerical majorization regardless of the position of the representatives of the Croatian people, the National Club feels compelled to retract, as it explicitly does retract, the legitimacy of this assembly and its right to enact a constitution valid for Croatia and the Croatian people until agreement is reached that eliminates the majorization of Croatians."<sup>67</sup>

The Serbian standpoint stressed the fact whereby only Serbia had unquestionable international recognition and an internal constitutional arrangement. Serbia, a sovereign state, emerged from the war as a victorious power. This brought on the conclusion that the Austro-Hungarian Yugoslavs were annexed to Serbia, which passed on to the new state community its external subjectivity, its own Dynasty and Crown, as well as its entire internal order. The convening of the Constituent Assembly was to be a natural continuation of the internal construction of a state on the foundations of the previous Serbian state system. Internal legal discontinuity was received only conditionally. As a concession and expression of good will.

Refusal by the big powers to a requisition of the National Council that it be recognized as the government of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs went in favor of this conception. The requisition was sent on November 3, 1918, to the governments of France, Great Britain, the United States and Italy.<sup>68</sup> Five days later, on November 8, only the Serbian government was willing to recognize the National Council as a legitimate representative of the Austro-Hungarian Yugoslavs. This was regarded as a gesture of generosity toward a side whose status was at least disputable.

The international legal continuity between the Kingdom of Serbia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was convincingly confirmed in a Contract on the Protection of Minorities, dated September 10, 1919. Item 12 of the Contract reads:

"Until the conclusion of new contracts and conventions, the State of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes will be bound by any contract, convention or agreement wherein Serbia was on one side and any of the major allied or associated powers on the other as contractual parties, as of August 1, 1914 or thereafter, as well as all obligations undertaken by

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67 *Stenografske beleške Ustavotvorne skupštine*, 15

68 See: Pavle D. Ostović, *The Truth About Yugoslavia*, New York 1962, 92. Čulinović, 93.

Serbia toward the allied or associated major powers before or after that date."<sup>69</sup>

For Serbia, the question of state continuity was virtually superfluous. Serbia was prepared to bestow on her newly liberated brothers all her national and state achievements and triumphs. Thus it was only natural that Yugoslavia be an extension of Serbian statehood.

The concept of integral Yugoslavism was particularly widespread among the Serbian and Croatian intelligentsia but was slow to diffuse among the masses of one or the other nation. This conviction is based on an unhistorical assumption: Serbs, Croats and Slovenes are one nation that was divided by big powers owing to numerous plights throughout history and deprived of its national state. Differences in religion, customs and political development emerged as a consequence of this forced separation. Therefore the Yugoslavs became divided into tribes, not nations, and so the differences among them are merely tribal, not national. Unification came as the realization of an ancient and natural desire for the Southern Slavs to live together in a single state. The product that was created is a new state with a new constitutional arrangement. This view was founded on the assumption of a "triple-named nation" and a single language, "Serbo-Croato-Slovenian". The champion of this view, the Democratic Party, rallied most of the adherents of this idea, but was unsuccessful in turning it to a general national ideology.<sup>70</sup>

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Thus three different perceptions of the character of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes met on the political scene. Beneath formal differences three national ideas were buried. Two of them old and historical - the Serbian and Croatian, and the third one new - the Yugoslav.<sup>71</sup>

69 "Službene novine Kraljevine SHS", year II, 1920, No. 133.

70 See: Slobodan Jovanović, *Političke i pravne rasprave* 2, 301-324. Slobodan Jovanović, *Jugoslovenska misao u prošlosti i budućnosti*, Belgrade 1939.

71 This was felt only partially by Ivo Banac, though even he failed to draw out conclusions to the end. Encumbered by the mission to justify the Croatian side, he succumbed to national temptations and lost the chief trait of a historian. His remark that the "Yugoslav question was an expression of opposed national ideologies that developed in each of their national and religious communities" was finely put but he did not venture into any deeper analysis. His judgement on the Constitution of St. Vitus' Day is vague as well. In one place, he writes of the "final triumph of the Serbian national ideology", but on the following pages says



The Serbian and Croatian were true national ideologies wherefrom the first developed on the basis of building a national state and the other in a struggle for autonomy from central rule. The Serbian represented itself as traditionally nationally constructive, the Croatian as federalist, verging on separatist. The Serbs protected what they had accomplished theretofore without being overeager to merge completely. Croats demanded the status of a federal unit they were never able to achieve in the Habsburg Monarchy and thus make the first step toward their own statehood.

The Yugoslav idea was supra-national rather than national. It presupposed the obliteration of national traits and historical heritage that the Serbs and Croats had achieved, building upon them their own ideologies. The Yugoslavs, aware of the insufficient strength of their own convictions, insisted on a unitary state organization as the most suitable means to consolidate the Yugoslav ideology.

The idea of integral Yugoslavism triumphed eventually. The constitution of St. Vitus' Day consistently established the organization based on the assumption of a single nation, single language and single state.<sup>72</sup> For the sake of truth, the Yugoslav concept was closer to the Serbian standpoint than the Croatian one. It guaranteed a central state, even if it did renounce its solely Serbian character. The Serbian idea developed more into a state, and less a national idea. At the cost of the national, the Serbs accepted Yugoslavism.

The Constitution of St. Vitus' Day however, was contrary to the Croatian perception of a nation and state. It denied the Croats in every way the historical right to autonomy, let alone a federation. Abreast with this, universal suffrage denied the Croats in Austria-Hungary, gave wing to the Croatian national movement. The constitution was

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the constitution "posed a compromise between the ideologies of Yugoslav unitarism and Serbian nationalism". Banac, surely the most knowledgeable of Croatian historians of the younger generation, seems vague about the notions - nation and state, Serbian and Croatian national ideas and integral Yugoslavism. See: Banac, 403-407.

72 It should be noted here that the dilemma on the character of the Yugoslav nation still remains. Addressing the National Assembly on January 22, 1922, Svetozar Pribičević said: "Are we one nation, or are we not. If we are not, let us say so openly. If we have a peculiar Serbian national individuality, separate Croatian national individuality, if we have a separate Slovenian national individuality, let us speak out openly: 'We are not of the same nation' and let us seek a *modus vivendi*. Either we are one nation, but then we can not negotiate as one nation with another nation." *Stenografske beleške Narodne skupštine Kraljevine SHS*, 1921/22, book I, 193

adopted in agreement between the representatives of Serbianism and Yugoslavism, although its provisions reflected the standpoint of the latter conception.

Then the Serbian concepts of nation and state became muddled. Supra-national Yugoslavism was to come instead of national Serbism. Matters were clearing up for the Croats. But, for the Serbs, they became more entangled. With the creation of Yugoslavia, Croatian nationalism was enlivened as never before. Serbian nationalism found itself in obliterated space, untangled between national integration and state grounds. Unification brought Croats closer to their ultimate aim - the forming of a national state. It distanced the Serbs from an already achieved aim.

The seeds of subsequent delusions and stumbling gaits were planted in the act of December 1, 1918.

## ЈУГОСЛОВЕНСКА ИДЕЈА И УЈЕДИЊЕЊЕ 1918. ГОДИНЕ Резиме

Тежиште рада стављено је на настанак југословенске државе током Првог светског рата и на њено политичко (уставно) конституисање две године доцније.

Супртина је у тврдњи да се у југословенској држави супротстављају три различита схватања, тј. три националне идеје које су биле извор свих размимоплажења између Срба и Хрвата као два најмногорајуднија народа у Југославији.

Рад се заснива на тези о фундаменталној сукобљености српске идеје југословенској, што аутор изводи из теоријске анализе битних својстава националних држава у односу на вишенационалне.