

FINIR LA GRANDE GUERRE DANS LES BALKANS 1918–1923

SOUS LA DIRECTION DE
VOJISLAV G. PAVLOVIĆ



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Ljubodrag Dimić, Membre de l'Académie serbe des sciences et des arts
Professeur *Milan Ristović*, Faculté de philosophie, Belgrade
Professeur *Slobodan Marković*, Faculté des sciences politiques, Belgrade

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Dragan Bakić

*Institute for Balkan Studies
Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts
Belgrade*

TRANSITION FROM AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
TO YUGOSLAVIA
THE SERBIAN ARMY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
IN LATE 1918

Abstract: This paper details the entry of the Serbian army into Bosnia and Herzegovina in the concluding stage of the Great War, after the breakthrough of the Salonica (Macedonian) front. It examines the interaction of the Serbian army with the newly established authorities in the province, in Sarajevo and on the local level, in the vacuum brought about by the collapse of the Habsburg regime, and the order and peace keeping to which the presence of Serbian soldiers was crucial. On the basis of military records, the paper challenges the conventional wisdom about the creation of Yugoslavia by shedding additional light on the attitude of the three Bosnian-Herzegovinian religious and ethnic communities towards the Yugoslav unification realised in Belgrade on 1 December 1918.

Key words: Great War, Serbian Army, Bosnia and Herzegovina, National Council, Yugoslavia

After the breakthrough of the Salonica (Macedonian) Front in September 1918, Austro-Hungary was approaching its military downfall. Due to the rapid and overwhelming victories of the Entente Powers and especially the Serbian army, the Serbian territory was liberated by 1 November and, when the Serbian troops reached the Drina, Sava, and Danube rivers, it became clear that the offensive would soon

continue toward the territory of the shaken Monarchy. The Habsburg Empire did not have to contend only with unfavorable outcomes of military operations; internal discontent was also rapidly approaching boiling point. In the South Slavic territories of the Dual Monarchy, where the idea of the unification of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (SCS) into a single sovereign state was increasingly taking root, especially from the beginning of the last wartime year, political parties and factions that championed the Yugoslav platform began to emerge. That tendency was clearly expressed in the formation of the National Council of SCS in Zagreb, finally established on 5–19 October 1918 as the representative body of the South Slavic population and included delegates of almost all political groups.¹ Ten days later, when the Croatian parliament (*Sabor*) severed constitutional and legal ties with Austria-Hungary, and the State of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was declared, the National Council became the supreme executive organ of the self-proclaimed state.

Its task was extremely challenging: to provide food for the general population, especially in passive areas; to ensure peace and public order, threatened by gangs mostly comprised of army deserters (known as the green cadres), POW returnees, and even locals; and prevent the spread of Bolshevism. The representatives of the newly established regime in Zagreb put this succinctly when they explained to the Serbian officers that in “Austria-Hungary, anarchy had replaced the monarchy.”² Another exacerbating factor was that the Zagreb-based National Council could not effectively control any territory beyond Croatia and Slavonia. In reality, a “movement of councils,” on the pattern of Central European

¹ Bogdan Krizman, „Osnivanje ‘Narodnog vijeća Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba u Zagrebu’ 1918”, *Historijski zbornik*, VII (1954), 23–32 and „Početak rada ‘Narodnog vijeća SHS’ u Zagrebu 1918 godine”, *Istoriski pregled*, I/1954, br. 2, 39–47; Zlatko Matijević, „Narodno vijeće Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba: osnutak, djelovanje i nestanak (1918/1919)”, *Fontes*, 14/1 (2008), 35–66.

² *Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1914–1918 g. i događaji po izvršenom ujedinjenju do demobilizacije 1920 god* [henceforth VRS], knjiga 31 (Beograd: Štamparska radionica Ministarstva vojske i mornarice, 1939), available at: <https://velikirat.nb.rs/items/show/1252>, Drinska divizija Kdtu I Armije, 6. novembar 1918, u 18 časova, o.br. 13707, p. 60. On the general situation, see Bogumil Hrabak, *Dezerterstvo, zeleni kadar i prevratna anarhija u jugoslovenskim zemljama 1914–1918* (Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet, Institut za istoriju, 1990).

lands, emerged,³ and new councils kept sprouting both through the local population's spontaneous initiatives and on the orders of the national councils that were taking control of the historical provinces inhabited by the Habsburg Yugoslavs. To safeguard its territories from neighboring countries, especially the imperialist aspirations of Italy, and to maintain peace and order, armed forces would be needed. The National Council's Department of National Defense took control of all military forces of the State of SCS, which began to be referred to as the "National Army of SCS." However, all attempts of the Zagreb regime to establish more organized armed forces ultimately failed because the demoralized soldiers, having just returned from the frontlines, hurried home and refused to heed calls for mobilization in the name of the State of SCS.⁴ Finally, the primary political task was to achieve unification with Serbia and Montenegro into a single state, but the Zagreb politicians were divided in their opinions about the optimal way of achieving unification.

Multiple papers published while the Yugoslav state still existed discuss those problems, above all, the relationship between the National Council of SCS and Serbia during the formation of that country.⁵ Unfortunately, the recent past has failed to bring new, more diverse and exhaustive knowledge about this topic because it has tended to be seen from the different historiographic viewpoints of the successor countries. Conflicting views of the dissolution of the country are reflected in the divergent views of its historical expediency and, consequently, the way in which it was created. In short, the conflicting interpretations can be reduced to the dilemma of whether the founding of a common Yugoslav state represented the liberation of the Slovenes, Croats, and Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslims

³ Milorad Ekmečić, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije 1790–1918*, 2 knj. (Beograd: Prosveta, 1989), II, 803. The best general account of the dissolution of Austria-Hungary and the creation of Yugoslavia is provided in Bogdan Krizman, *Raspad Austro-Ugarske i stvaranje jugoslavenske države* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1977).

⁴ Mile Bjelajac, „Stvaranje vojske Narodnog vijeća Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba”, u: *Srbija 1918. godine i stvaranje jugoslovenske države* (Beograd, 1989), 365–378; Vlado Strugar, „Vojska, zaštitnica otadžbine, pod vrhovnom komandom Aleksandra Karađorđevića” u: Vlado Strugar, *Vladar Kraljevstva Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca: studija i građa* (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 2010), 481–499.

⁵ Dragovan Šepić, *Italija, saveznici i jugoslavensko pitanje 1914–1918* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1970); Đorđe Stanković, *Nikola Pašić i jugoslovensko pitanje*, 2 knj. (Beograd: BIGZ); Ekmečić, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije*.

(present-day Bosniaks) from the alien domination of Austria-Hungary and voluntary unification with the Kingdom of Serbia or brute occupation and annexation of non-Serbian areas.⁶ This paper hopes to contribute to our knowledge about the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (SCS/Yugoslavia) by focusing on the interaction between the advancing Serbian army and the newly formed government bodies in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H), which, due to its central geographic position and ethnic and religious diversity, had particular importance in the creation of the Yugoslav state. Supplementing the impetus given by high politics, i.e., Serbia's military and political interventions, with information about the "grassroots" reactions of the population and the activities of the newly established central government in Sarajevo and local national councils throughout B&H, as actors in the developments that influenced the behavior and actions of the Serbian army, this approach should yield a more comprehensive and realistic picture of the creation of the new state.

To fully comprehend those events, it is important to understand the shift that took place in B&H due to the collapse of Austria-Hungary before the Serbian forces set foot on the territory of the province. From the outset, the pro-Yugoslav political factions in B&H, initially only Serbian and Croatian, were represented in the Zagreb National Council with 18 designated delegates and had six places in the smaller Central Council.⁷ The Muslims did not initially have representatives in the supreme governing body of the new revolutionary government – a logical consequence of the distrust caused by the behavior of their political leaders, who had advocated reframing B&H as an autonomous province of Austria-Hungary, preferably as an independent unit or, alternatively, a part of Hungary or a special-status unit within Croatia.⁸

⁶ Mile Bjelajac, „1918. Oslobođenje ili okupacija nesrpskih krajeva?“, u: *Prvi svetski rat i Balkan 90 godina kasnije* (Beograd: Institut za strategijska istraživanja i Odeljenje za vojnu istoriju, 2011), 199–223.

⁷ Bogdan Krizman, „Zapisnici Središnjeg odbora 'Narodnog vijeća Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba' u Zagrebu“, *Starine*, knj. 48 (1958), 336–337.

⁸ Nusret Šehić, „Narodno vijeće SHS za Bosnu i Hercegovinu i njegova djelatnost nakon sloma Austro-Ugarske“, *Prilozi*, 19 (1982), 164–166. Husnija Kamberović, *Mehmed Spaho (1883–1939): politička biografija* (Sarajevo: Vijeće Kongresa bošnjačkih intelektualaca, 2009), 20–22 rightly corrects the claims of earlier historiography that Mehmed Spaho accepted Yugoslavism as early as 1917 or early 1918, arguing that his

Only some of their younger leaders (most notably, Mehmed Spaho and Halidbeg Hrasnica) publically and fully endorsed the political program of national unification of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Consequently, two representatives (Mehmed Spaho and Hamid Svrzo) were subsequently co-opted into the Plenum and Central Council of National Council. Their number was starkly disproportionate to the Muslim share in the population of B&H.⁹ However, a more important event for the situation in B&H was the formation of new government bodies in Sarajevo, who were in charge of the entire province. The surviving documents do not allow a full reconstruction of the course of events, but it is evident that the Main Committee of the National Council of B&H became operational no later than 24 October and that at its suggestion the Presidency of the Central Council of the Zagreb National Council appointed the first government of B&H, headed by Atanasije Šola, who had just returned from the Travnik prison.¹⁰ The members of that cabinet were, in fact, delegates from the ranks of the Main Committee of the National Council of B&H.¹¹ The organization of the new government reached down to the local level because the Main Committee decided on 28 October to establish county, district and village committees of the National Council.¹²

It is important to note that Šola did not take over the cabinet without the Zagreb National Council approving his appointment,

acceptance of that concept did not become evident until September 1918 (after the visit of Count Tisza to Sarajevo).

⁹ Atif Purivatra, *Jugoslavenska muslimanska organizacija u političkom životu Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, 2 izd. (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1977), 22–23.

¹⁰ Dragoslav Janković, Bogdan Krizman, *Građa o stvaranju jugoslovenske države (1.I-20.XII 1918)*, 2 knj. (Beograd: Institut društvenih nauka, 1964), II, 383–385; *Narodno vijeće SHS za Bosnu i Hercegovinu. Narodna vlada i Glavni odbor Narodnog vijeća SHS za Bosnu i Hercegovinu. Inventari i građa* (Sarajevo: Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 2008), 35. Bogdan Krizman, „Bosna i Hercegovina i jugoslovensko pitanje u 1918. godini”, *Prilozi*, 4 (1968), 113 cites 20 October as the date when the Main Committee of NC was formed.

¹¹ *Građa o stvaranju jugoslovenske države*, II, 358; Hamdija Kapidžić, „Rad Narodnog vijeća SHS Bosne i Hercegovine u novembru i decembru 1918.”, *Glasnik Arhiva i Društva arhivista Bosne i Hercegovine*, god. III, knj. III (1963), 149.

¹² Šehić, „Narodno vijeće SHS za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 166–168; Draga Mastilović, *Hercegovina u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca (1918–1929)* (Beograd: Filip Višnjić, 2009), 52.

which in itself suggested the recognition of the latter body's authority. However, the Sarajevo government gradually began to act of its own accord, sometimes even in defiance of the intentions of the Zagreb-based supreme executive body. Rather suggestively, the question of the relationship between the central and provincial governments was discussed in relation to the method of appointing not only the Sarajevo cabinet but also the National Council in Ljubljana. Starting from the position that "every part of our state of SCS must unconditionally obey the central government," it was decided that the provincial government should "include representatives of all parties that have joined forces in the National Council," and that those cabinets needed to submit proposals for their membership, which the "presidency would then decide on."¹³ The Zagreb National Council envisaged a centralized system of government for the entire Yugoslav-inhabited territory, reflecting its view that all those people belonged to the same, three-named nation in the process of forming a separate polity through its separation from Austria-Hungary, but in opposition to the independent view of some political factions about integral unification with Serbia and Montenegro. Indeed, on 3 November, National Council acknowledged and sanctioned the formation of "autonomous governments in Slovenia and Bosnia,"¹⁴ although its relationship with them remained contentious, which was also the case with the provincial government of Dalmatia, a province with a Croat majority. The relationship of the provincial governments with the central one in Zagreb was discussed again on 14 November due to a note sent by the National Council of Dalmatia. Individual opinions have not been recorded, but it is suggestive that the discussion led to the conclusion that the presidency of the National Council had to communicate with the Serbian government as soon as possible in order to form a joint government for the entire Yugoslav state – a body whose competences would include railways, armed forces, finance, and foreign affairs. In addition, National Council also considered the problematic relations between the local national councils (*narodna vijeća* at local level) and provincial authorities: the former were denied executive powers to prevent "a conflict with the autonomous regions," and therefore it was

¹³ Krizman, „Zapisnici Središnjeg odbora”, 353.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 355.

concluded that they should be disbanded after urgent municipal and city elections.¹⁵ All of that suggested that the ambitions of NC to establish regular governance operations, with itself at the center of administrative apparatus, clashed with the reality of the extraordinary situation and the general confusion that came with the collapse of the old regime and the uncertainty of not knowing what the new state and social order would look like.

A bloodless revolution took place in B&H, like in other South Slavic lands. Aware of the general situation and his position, the provincial governor of B&H, General Stjepan Sarkotić, a steadfast opponent of the Yugoslav unification who had previously advocated the creation of Great Croatia in a trialist or sub-dualist framework of the Dual Monarchy, transferred his powers to the National Council of B&H on 1 November.¹⁶ That same day, the Main Committee of the National Council in Sarajevo issued a declaration glorifying the momentous “creation of a big, strong, and independent Yugoslavia from the Vardar to the Soča Rivers” and calling on the citizens to behave in a disciplined and orderly fashion: “Protect everyone’s assets and property, protect the personal freedom and safety of every fellow citizen.”¹⁷ The responsibility for maintaining order in the country and tackling its numerous problems now fell on the Main Committee of National Council for B&H and the National Government, whose

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 363.

¹⁶ Milan Jojkić, *U susret srpskoj vojsci u Sarajevu 1918. Doživljaji od tri dana* (Beograd: Antikvarna kolekcija, knjiga 2, 2018, reprint izdanja Sarajevo: I. Gj. Gjurgjevića, 1918); Krizman, „Bosna i Hercegovina i jugoslovensko pitanje u 1918. godini”, 116–122. For more details on the Austro-Hungarian wartime policy towards B&H, especially the views and suggestions of General Sarkotić, see: Hamdija Kapidžić, „Austrougarska politika u Bosni i Hercegovini i jugoslovensko pitanje za vrijeme Prvog svjetskog rata” u: Hamdija Kapidžić, *Bosna i Hercegovina pod austrougarskom upravom* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1968), 198–261; Milorad Ekmečić, „General Sarkotić i planovi spasa Monarhije 1918”, u: Midhat Begić, ur., *Zbornik radova posvećenih uspomeni Salke Nazečića* (Sarajevo: Foliozovski fakultet, Svjetlost, 1972).

¹⁷ Ferdo Šišić, ur., *Dokumenti o postanku Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1920), 218–219; *Građa o stvaranju jugoslovenske države*, II, 456–457; Sonja Dujmović, „Bosna i Hercegovina i 1918. godina”, u: Radovan Cukić, Veselinka Kastratović Ristić i Marija Vasiljević, ur., *Dan vredan veka 1–XII-1918* (Beograd: Muzej Jugoslavije, 2018), 70.

members had been recruited from its ranks and hence included members of various political groups (the place reserved for the Social Democratic Party remained vacant). The National Government took office on 3 November.¹⁸ The new authorities had no choice but to rely on the existing bureaucratic apparatus, and the local national councils being established throughout the province were instructed to work in cooperation with the regular government bodies without interfering with their competences, although that would prove difficult to implement in practice. Another problem was keeping public order because the police and gendarmerie, which the population despised and saw as the wardens of the old regime and which had no authority left, essentially stopped functioning. All attempts to rebuild gendarmerie foundered on a low turnout for recruitment.¹⁹ Hence, the Sarajevo National Council called on the local authorities to, in agreement with the committees of the National Council, form the National Guard, whose commanders would be superior to the gendarmerie and police constabularies, but this solution, too, proved ineffective because untrustworthy and suspicious members of the Guard often resorted to troublemaking and violent behavior instead of keeping order and disarming the retreating Habsburg army.²⁰

¹⁸ The members of Prime Minister Šola's cabinet were Jozo Sunarić (internal affairs), Vaso Ristić (finance), Danilo Dimović (justice), Mehmed Spaho (trade, mail, and telegram), Vjekoslav Jelavić (agriculture and mining), Savo Jelić (public works and railways), Uroš Krulj (healthcare), Tugomir Alaupović (education and religion), Šćepan Grđić (food and livelihood), Stevo Žakula (national defense); no one was appointed the minister of social welfare, the office reserved for the Social Democrats. Six of the cabinet members were Serbs, four were Croats, and one was a Muslim. The most exhaustive overview of the new government bodies is given in Kasim Išović, „Struktura i funkcionisanje organa državne uprave u Bosni i Hercegovini u vremenu od 1918. do 1924. godine”, *Glasnik Arhiva i Društva arhivskih radnika Bosne i Hercegovine*, god. II, knj. II (1962), 13–69.

¹⁹ Šehić, „Narodno vijeće SHS za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 173–174.

²⁰ Hamdija Kapidžić, „Pokušaj ujedinjenja Bosne i Hercegovine sa Srbijom u novembru 1918. godine”, u: Kapidžić, *Bosna i Hercegovina pod austrougarskom upravom*, 266–269; Šehić, „Narodno vijeće SHS za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 172–173; Enes Omerović, „Elementi represije u radu Narodnog vijeća Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba za Bosnu i Hercegovinu i Narodne vlade za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, *Historijska traganja*, 3 (2009), 188–190.

In addition to the difficulties faced by all other South Slavic lands, B&H was struggling with two other problems specific to this province. The collapse of the old regime had led to an agrarian revolution in rural areas, where the serf-peasants rose against the landowner beys and aghas (regardless of its colonialist narrative about having a civilizing mission in B&H, the Austro-Hungarian regime had preserved the Ottoman feudal system), plundering and burning down their estates, even attacking and killing them in some places. As Muslims made up over 90 percent of landowners and Christians, mostly Orthodox, the overwhelming majority of dependent serfs, the social revolt was largely identified with religious antagonism.²¹ A major contributing factor was the bitter resentment of the Serbian people due to the terror it had suffered from the Sarajevo assassination in 1914 to the end of the war, including numerous atrocities committed over Serbian civilians by the *Schutzkorps*, an auxiliary militia made up of Muslim (and some Catholic) riffraff whom the Habsburg authorities had provided with arms.²² In addition, since the summer of 1917, eastern Bosnia and southeastern Herzegovina had suffered devastating raids by the *comites* of Montenegro, for whom this kind of banditry was a traditional way of securing additional income for their impoverished highlander families. Like in the case of the agrarian unrest in B&H, religious differences once again came to the fore because the Montenegrin looters tended to attack Muslim villages, or “Turks,” as they saw them, but they were not averse to raiding Orthodox Serbian villages as well in search of cattle or any kind of movable property.²³

Unable to handle all those difficulties, acutely aware of their potential to evolve into total anarchy, and lacking adequate force, the Sarajevo government was forced to seek outside help. As the government was formed on the premise of Yugoslav unification with the kingdoms

²¹ Milan Gaković, „Agrarni nemiri u Bosni i Hercegovini poslije Prvog svjetskog rata”, *Glasnik Arhiva i Društva arhivskih radnika Bosne i Hercegovine*, god. VI, knj. VI (1966), 171–179.

²² Vladimir Ćorović, *Crna knjiga: patnje Srba Bosne i Hercegovine za vreme Svetskog rata 1914–1918* (Beograd, Sarajevo: I. Đ. Đurđević, 1920); Pero Slijepčević, „Bosna i Hercegovina u Svetskom ratu”, u: Pero Slijepčević i saradnici, ur., *Napor Bosne i Hercegovine za ujedinjenje i oslobođenje* (Banja Luka, Beograd, 2017 – reprint izdanja Sarajevo, 1929), 219–277.

²³ Hrabak, *Dezerterstvo, zeleni kadar i prevratna anarhija*, 157–167.

of Serbia and Montenegro, the advancing Serbian army was expected to provide effective aid. The decision about this was made at the session of the Main Committee of National Council on 3 November, and three delegates (Milan Jojkić, Hamid Svrzo, and Vjekoslav Jelavić) were tasked with opening “negotiations with the commander of the Entente troops about the role of Allied battalions in B&H for order and peacekeeping purposes.”²⁴ Notably, the decision mentioned Entente troops rather than the Serbian army, although the intention to establish contacts with the units of the Serbian Second Army, by that time already in the territory of B&H, was clear enough. This formulation seems to have been chosen to avoid the apprehension of actors who had reservations about unification with Serbia and Montenegro. Although not explicitly stated, this was certainly a reference to some Croat political factions sympathetic to the ideology and policy of Josip Frank in Croatia and Slavonia, who were, before and after the war, gathered around Josip Stadler, Archbishop of Vrhbosna.²⁵ In any case, the three delegates of the Sarajevo National Council immediately set out for Višegrad to deliver an official invitation to the Serbian troops to head to Sarajevo with permits issued by the Austro-Hungarian military command, with the consent of General Sarkotić.

The Entrance of the Serbian Army in Bosnia and Herzegovina

After the Serbian army reached the Drina river, the subsequent operations partly depended on the situation on the ground in B&H, of which there were quite vague, and even false, notions. According to news from neutral Switzerland, a Yugoslav army was established in Zagreb; “the Kingdom of Great Serbia was proclaimed” in Sarajevo; sailors in Pula declared that the local navy was Yugoslav, and the fleet in the Bay of Kotor was believed to have done the same. There were even rumors

²⁴ Kapidžić, „Rad Narodnog vijeća SHS Bosne i Hercegovine”, 151; *Grada o stvaranju jugoslovenske države*, II, 471–473.

²⁵ Zoran Grijak, *Politička djelatnost vrhbosanskog nadbiskupa Josipa Stadlera* (Zagreb, Sarajevo: Hrvatski institut za povijest, Vrhbosanska nadbiskupija Sarajevo, 2001); Zlatko Matijević, „Državno-pravni položaj Bosne i Hercegovine u političkim koncepcijama dr. Ive Pilara (1917.-1918.)”, *Prilozi*, 31 (2002), 137–154.

that the Yugoslav troops, which had obviously rebelled, cut off the retreat route of the Austrian army as it was withdrawing from the Piave river. Based on this combination of true, exaggerated, and downright fictitious reports, the French general Franchet d'Espèrey, commander of the Allied troops on the Macedonian Front, intended to invite the commander of the purported "Yugo-Slavic army" to establish contacts with the commander of Serbia's First Army, Petar Bojović, as the commander of the Allied troops in Belgrade, to come to an agreement about working together. "He instructed me to get in touch with you [and said] that we needed to establish contacts as soon as possible with the national movement in Bosnia and north of the Sava and Danube and to prepare for and explore the possibility of establishing contacts with the Commanders of the Yugo-Slavic troops by air, telegraph, and any other available means," reported the Serbian liaison officer, cavalry Major Mirko Marinković.²⁶ Having received Marinković's report, the Serbian Supreme Command ordered Bojović and Stepa Stepanović, the commander-in-chief of the Second Army, to find out what the situation was on the other side of the border through the patrols that had crossed over earlier and to get in contact with the above mentioned Yugoslav "organs." The commander of the newly formed Adriatic troops was also instructed to find out about the situation in Kotor and capture it.²⁷ It was unclear what kind of resistance could be expected from the shaken Austro-Hungarian army or what the intentions of the government in Vienna were regarding resistance in the future. As the Supreme Command informed Prince Regent Alexander,

²⁶ VA, popisnik 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kutija 25, fascikla 1, dokument 2, list 6, Depeša Šefa sekcije za vezu pri štabu komande savezničkih vojsaka majora Marinkovića, 20. oktobar 1918, u 21 čas [The dates in military documents are given according to the Julian calendar, which was officially in use until mid-1919, unless the original states differently; in the main text, the dates follow the Gregorian calendar]; Bogdan Krizman, „Srpska vrhovna komanda u danima raspada Austro-Ugarske 1918”, *Historijski zbornik*, XIV (1961), 177. For the most exhaustive overview of the endgame operations of the Serbian army in the context of the Yugoslav unification, see Chapter 10 in Petar Opačić, *Srbija, Solunski front i ujedinjenje 1918*, 2. dopunjeno izdanje (Novi Sad: Prometej, 2018).

²⁷ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 6, Depeša Vrhovne Komande komandantima Prve i Druge Armije i Jadranskih trupa, OBR.31.667, 21. oktobar 1918; see also: pop. 4, kut. 53, fasc. 27, dok. 12/64, Vojvoda Mišić Komandantu II Armije, 21. oktobar 1918, O.Br.31667.

again based on some reports from Switzerland, it seemed that “Austria was determined to evacuate Montenegro, and it seemed probable that it would also do so with a part of Bosnia and Herzegovina.”²⁸ In any case, the Supreme Command’s order to Bojović and Stepanović was to, after the troops reached the Danube, Sava, and Drina – the borders separating the Kingdom of Serbia from Austria-Hungary, “allow our army to truly rest after the superhuman exertions it has been through.”²⁹

On 3 November, the advance guard of the Timok Division took Vardište and Dobrun on the Bosnian side of the border, and the beleaguered enemy troops retreated toward Višegrad.³⁰ This clash – a minor skirmish, in fact – was the only armed conflict that the Serbian army fought in the territory of B&H. In late afternoon of the same day, the Austro-Hungarian troops informed that they wanted a cessation of hostilities. The commander of the Timok Cavalry Division reported that an emissary of the Austrian army, a lieutenant of the 18th Brigade of the 45th Landwehr Infantry Division, had visited him with a sergeant and brought a document written by the commander of his brigade (18th Schützen of the 45th Division), Colonel Hasslehner, to the Serbian commander in Vardište, containing the official announcement that a truce was in place, that the Austrian troops had received orders to retreat to the left bank of the Drina, and that consequently he hoped that the Serbian side would cease hostilities. The scout platoon in Dobrinja was met by the mayor and municipal administrator of Višegrad, who asked the Serbian army not to attack and spare the city because the Austrians had no intention of putting up resistance.³¹ As the Supreme

²⁸ *Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1914–1918 g. i događaji po izvršenom ujedinjenju do demobilizacije 1920 god.* [hereafter VRS], knjiga 30 (Beograd: Štamparska radionica Ministarstva vojske i mornarice, 1937), available at: <https://velikirat.nb.rs/items/show/1251>, 29. oktobar, o.br. 31495, str. 577.

²⁹ VRS, knj. 30, 31. oktobar, u 18.20 časova, o.br. 31592, str. 632; Krizman, „Srpska vrhovna komanda”, 175.

³⁰ VRS, knj. 31, 3. novembar, o.br. 22460, str. 4; VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 11, Vrhovna komanda ministru vojnom, majoru Marinkoviću, komandantu II armije, 21. oktobar 1918, OBR.31.695, Stanje 21 oktobra; isto, list 14, depeša od komande II armije, 21. oktobar 1918, OBR.22460.

³¹ VRS, knj. 31, 3. novembar, o.br. 31694, str. 3; knj. 31, 3. novembar, 18:20 časova, o.br. 1195, str. 16; VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande,

Command informed Major Marinković, around noon on 4 November, the emissaries of Višegrad were given the same truce conditions that had been delivered to those of the Hungarian government at the same time. The delegates of the 45th Austrian division returned on the following day around midday and stated that they accepted all terms, but since the division had dispersed by then, the Supreme Command believed that their “response was to be disregarded.”³²

Given that this Austrian division had dispersed, the Timok Cavalry Division entered Višegrad, and one battalion and two mountain guns made their way to the city from Mokra Gora.³³ On the night of 4 November, Lieutenant Colonel Petar Kosić, the staff commander of the Timok Division, telephoned from Višegrad the news from Sarajevo (there was a telephone line between the two cities) about the formation of the national government, its demand – repeated several times – that at least one battalion of the Serbian army should head for Sarajevo, and the arrival of three delegates (Jojkić, Svrza, and Jelavić), who were also asking for troops.³⁴ Finally, Lieutenant Colonel Kosić asked for an urgent order to dispatch the requested troops to Sarajevo. Having heard the news, Field Marshal Stepanović ordered his division commanders: “Due to the proclamation of the unification of Bosnia with Serbia and Yugoslavia in Sarajevo, the need might arise for the troops of this army to move into Bosnia, toward Sarajevo. Therefore, please urgently take the necessary steps to get your divisions [Šumadija and Timok] ready to move if such an order is issued.”³⁵ He also instructed them to secure Višegrad, which would become the base for the troops arriving from western Serbia and to send the detachment led by Colonel Milan Nedić from Užice to

kut. 25, fasc. I, dok. 2, list 11, Vrhovna komanda Šefu sekcije za vezu pri štabu komande savezničkih vojsaka majoru Marinkoviću, 31. oktobar 1918, OBR. 31.694.

³² VRS, knj. 31, 5. novembar, o.br. 31744, str. 33–34. The descriptions of the talks about the implementation of the truce between Lieutenant Hasslehner and the Serbian Lieutenant Colonel Živan Ranković, commander of 14th Infantry Regiment of the Timok Division, is available in Jojkić, *U susret srpskoj vojsci u Sarajevu 1918*, 30–32.

³³ VRS, knj. 31, 5. novembar, str. 45–46.

³⁴ VRS, knj. 31, 4. novembar, str. 30.

³⁵ VA, pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 6, dok. 3/20, Vojvoda Stepanović Komandantima Šumadijske i Timočke divizije, 23. oktobar 1918, u 1:30 časova, Čačak, O.Br.22494.

the city.³⁶ Eventually, the Višegrad detachment was formed to “ensure order and secure state-owned and private property.” Its commander was Lieutenant Colonel Avram Berah, who was instructed to urgently send one company to Rogatica to serve as its garrison and maintain order in agreement with the local authorities.³⁷ Lieutenant Colonel Avram Berah was also told to reduce or disband, in line with the circumstances and possibilities, the garrisons in Sjenica, Prijepolje and Pljevlje in Serbia, which were part of his detachment, to free up as many troops as possible for Bosnia, and to collect the weapons the enemy had thrown away and store them somewhere safe.³⁸

Having received enough information about the situation in B&H, the Supreme Command authorized Stepanović to immediately send to Sarajevo some of his cavalry units and one or two infantry battalions with one mountain gun. “These troops will maintain order in Sarajevo and support the work of the National Council on the unification with Serbia,” read the instructions of Field Marshal Živojin Mišić, Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command.³⁹ Demarcating the area that the Serbian troops were to capture (including the whole of Srem, Slavonia, Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia), the Supreme Command was also taking into account the need to maintain peace and order in the captured territories: “The Army commanders will send some troops, the cavalry, some battalions with a mountain gun or two. Sometimes it is enough to send a company to a given place, just so that our army makes

³⁶ VA, pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 14, dok. 17/69, Vojvoda Stepanović Komandantu Timočke divizije, 23. oktobar 1918, u 1 čas, O.Br.22493.

³⁷ VA, pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 6, dok. 3/23, list 2–4, Vojvoda Stepanović Komandantu Timočke divizije, 23. oktobar 1918, br. 22501; pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 6, dok. 3/26, Vojvoda Stepanović Komandantima Timočke i Šumadijske divizije i Novopazarskog odreda, 24. oktobar 1918, Čaačak, O.Br.22568; VRS, knj. 31, 6. novembar, u 10 časova, o.br. 22568, str. 63–64.

³⁸ VA, pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 6, dok. 3/30, Vojvoda Stepanović Komandantu Timočke divizije, 26. oktobar 1918, O.Br. 22600; VRS, knj. 31, 8. novembar, u 16.25 časova, o.br. 22600, str. 95.

³⁹ VA, pop. 4, kut. 70, fasc. 11, dok. 34/1, Vojvoda Mišić Komandantu II Armije, 23. oktobar 1918, predato u Nišu u 2 časa, O.Br.31726; pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 147, fasc. 7, dok. 9/51, Vojvoda Mišić Komandantu II Armije, 23. oktobar 1918, 0.30 čas; VRS, knj. 31, 4. novembar, o.br. 31726, str. 18.

an appearance. Organize local authorities comprised of locals everywhere right away and use the confiscated weapons to arm our people; conversely, disarm any ill-disposed locals.”⁴⁰ It also stated that the demarcation line between the occupation zones of the First and Second Army should run along the rivers Krivaja-Bosna-Sava and further upstream. The commander of the Second Army was instructed to contact the Adriatic troops via Herzegovina and do everything in his power to capture the sea ports. The last order was of utmost importance to allow a sea route for delivering supplies to the troops and the civilian population; on the other hand, it would prevent any occupation attempts of the Italian army and navy should Rome try to achieve its annexationist ambitions.

On 5 November, the commander of the Second Army, Field Marshal Stepanović, arrived in Vardište and met with the members of the National Council, who had a written authorization for their mission and again requested the deployment of Serbian troops to Sarajevo to “establish order in the city and secure state-owned and private property.” They confirmed that the Austrian forces were in disarray and certainly not battle-ready, but that they nonetheless represented a threat to public safety. The enemy units previously stationed in Višegrad had retreated toward Rogatica with a small supply of weapons for personal protection. To meet their requests, Stepanović formed the Sarajevo Detachment (made up of the 14th Regiment minus one battalion, one mountain gun, and the cavalry squadron of the Timok Division) led by the General Staff Colonel Milan Nedić, the commander of the 1st Infantry Brigade of the Timok Division, who was to travel by rail to Sarajevo on the following day. Granting the request of the National Council to provide a competent General Staff officer to organize their militia, an ongoing project that had been started with little success, the general temporarily assigned Lieutenant Colonel Kosić, the staff commander of the Timok Division, to the Sarajevo detachment. Also, the command of the Second Army was contacted by the county prefect of Rogatica, who asked for additional troops to put an end to the pillaging of the scattered enemy

⁴⁰ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. I, dok. 2, list 27, Vrhovna komanda komandantu I i II armije, 23. oktobar 1918, OBR.31.749; pop. 4, kut. 65, fasc. 13, dok. 19/9, Vojvoda Mišić Komandantu II Armije, Niš, 23. oktobar 1918, O.Br.31149; VRS, knj. 31, 5. novembar, u 19 časova, o.br. 31749, str. 32.

troops (they were raiding warehouses, and there was concern that they might move on to private property), so Stepanović asked the Supreme Command to allow him to send the army to Rogatica and other towns that might request assistance.⁴¹ Thus, already in this earliest phase of the Serbian army's entry into B&H, the pattern that would be replicated in the advance of the Second Army emerged. Following the rough guidelines of the Supreme Command, which envisaged capturing this entire territory, these units were often deployed in response to the constant and persistent pleas and demands of the newly formed revolutionary organs of government, the national councils, to whom only Serbian troops could lend firm support and authority for maintaining public security.

For the National Council in Sarajevo, the crucial problem was maintaining public order in the province in the vacuum created by the retreat and disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian troops, threatening to evolve into anarchy. This was clearly reflected in the pleas that the representatives from Sarajevo communicated at their meeting with Stepanović: "1. To have the Austrian troops withdraw from the Montenegrin border from Foča to Kotor through Italy rather than Bosnia and Herzegovina; 2. Not to deploy *comites* detachments in Bosnia and Herzegovina; 3) To provide financial assistance to the National Council for the wages of railroad and administrative workers if the funds that the Council has at its disposal prove insufficient or if the people refuse to accept the Austrian currency that the Council has at its disposal."⁴² During the meeting, General Stepanović gave the National Council delegates a copy of the orders he had previously given to Colonel Nedić, the commander of the Sarajevo detachment, to let them know what they

⁴¹ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, Depeša komandanta II armije, 23. oktobar 1918, OBR.23.502; pop. 4, kut. 59, fasc. 7, dok. 3/117, Vojvoda Stepanović Vrhovnoj Komandi, 23. oktobar 1918, OBR.22502; pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 6, dok. 3/22, Vojvoda Stepanović Komandantu Timočke divizije, Vardište, 23. oktobar 1918, O.Br.22500; pop. 4, kut. 70, fasc. 11, dok. 54/2, pukovnik Milovanović Komandantu Timočke divizije, 23. oktobar 1918, Vardište, O.Br.22500; VRS, knj. 31, 5. novembar, u 21 čas, o.br. 22502, str. 35.

⁴² VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 67, Depeša iz Užica od komande II armije, 24. oktobar 1918, OBR.22503; pop. 4, kut. 59, fasc. 7, dok. 3/118, Načelnik Štaba pukovnik Milovanović [za Vojvodu Stepanovića] Vrhovnoj Komandi, 24. oktobar 1918, OBR.22503; VRS, knj. 30, 6. novembar, u 14.10 časova, o.br. 22503, str. 53–54.

could ask of him. He noted that they were unsettled by the instruction to help the National Council regarding unification with Serbia “because they feared that their opponents could construe it as a sign of an invasion. I calmed them down by explaining that the instruction should be taken to mean that we would help the National Council when it asks us to, against those who might try to hamper its work on the unification.”⁴³ Three days later, the National Government for B&H submitted to the Serbian commander in Sarajevo a document in which it explained in more detail its demands and views about the most necessary measures that the Serbian army should take to ensure public security and railway, telegraphic and telephone communication.⁴⁴

Immediately after the first units of the Sarajevo detachment reached the city, a report arrived describing that along the way “at every station and upon arrival at the Sarajevo railway station, the commander of the regiment and all other men in the 1st echelon were greeted... with utmost enthusiasm by all social classes from the city of Sarajevo and its area. In the addresses delivered at the railway station and in front of the National Government building to welcome our army, the president and members of the National Government and National Council emphasized our heroic and superhuman effort which has been glorified by this magnificent success. They highlighted that all of them and the entire population of Bosnia and Herzegovina were very happy that they had lived to see the creation of the Great Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.”⁴⁵ Reflecting the Supreme Command’s guidelines about the need to reach the Adriatic Sea, Colonel Nedić was ordered to urgently send one battalion with a mountain gun from Sarajevo to Trebinje, Dubrovnik, and other towns, and preferably a company to Mostar, too. He had to “a) try to enhance, as quickly and as much as possible, the transport potential of the railway line Dobrunj-Sarajevo, and then further to the sea; b) to find the most suitable way to seek and get in contact with the Adriatic troops of Colonel Milutinović... c) to report

⁴³ VA, pop. 4, kut. 59, fasc. 7, dok. 3/119, pukovnik Milovanović Vrhovnoj Komandi, 24. oktobar 1918, OBr.22504; *Građa o stvaranju jugoslovenske države*, II, 495–496.

⁴⁴ VA, pop. 4, kut. 57, fasc. 4, dok. 1/2015, Pukovnik Dokić Komandantu II Armije, 27. oktobar 1918, OBr. 13399; VRS, knj. 31, 9. novembar, o.br. 6742, str. 110–111.

⁴⁵ VRS, knj. 31, 6. novembar, str. 65.

how many and whose troops are in the Bay of Kotor.”⁴⁶ Indeed, the 3rd Battalion of the 14th Infantry Regiment arrived in Trebinje, and one company of the same battalion made its way to Dubrovnik. According to the reports, the Serbian troops were greeted in these cities, as well as in Mostar, “with utmost enthusiasm by the locals, with the loudest ovations and cries: ‘Long live King Petar, Long live the supreme commander Heir Presumptive Aleksandar, Long live the brave and invincible Serbian army.’”⁴⁷ A few days later, Colonel Nedić ordered the 2nd battalion of the 13th Infantry Regiment, with its staff, 1st and 2nd company, and a machine gun squad, to take the railway via Metković for Split, the most important sea port in the Adriatic still beyond the reach of the Italians.⁴⁸

In the meantime, the troops of the Drina Division of the First Army were taking control of northern Bosnia. They crossed the Drina River shortly after Stepanović’s troops crossed the border. One patrol of the squadron of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment entered Bijeljina on 6 November. In a letter to the commander of that regiment, the president of the National Council of the Bijeljina county informed him that the people had taken control in their own hands.⁴⁹ On the following day, the Bijeljina National Council requested to be “sent at least one infantry company for maintaining order so as to prevent pillaging by the Austro-Hungarian soldiers still in the area.”⁵⁰ The commander of the 3rd squadron of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment reported that Dr. Perić and Judge Petar Varadin, members of the National Council of Bijeljina, had returned with a patrol to Loznica and that their town was “decorated with Serbian flags, and walls covered in posters with the slogan ‘Long live the emperor [*sic*] of Great Serbia Petar I.’”⁵¹ At the same time, mounted patrols set

⁴⁶ VRS, knj. 3 I, Kdt II Armije kdtu Timočke divizije, 11. novembar, u 10.20 časova, o.br. 22662, str. 148–149.

⁴⁷ VRS, knj. 3 I, 14. novembar, str. 187.

⁴⁸ VRS, knj. 3 I, 18. novembar, str. 228.

⁴⁹ VRS, knj. 3 I, Izveštaj upućen kdtu I Armije, 6. novembar, u 2 I čas, o.br. 13709, str. 62.

⁵⁰ VRS, knj. 3 I, izveštaj komandira 3. eskadrona 2. konjičkog puka, kapetana Jovana Krstića, 7. novembar, o.br. 105, str. 78.

⁵¹ VRS, knj. 3 I, izveštaj kdtu Jadarskog odreda Drinske divizije, 9. novembar, u 7.30 časova, o.br. 8019, str. 108.

out for Srebrenica, Zvornik, Rača, and Janjina.⁵² The commander of the scouting squadron from Loznica reported at 11.25 that “from Tuzla came engineer Djordje Radja and Ilija Purić from Zvornik with the invitation for our units to head to their towns. In Tuzla, this is needed to protect the local coal mine, salt factory, and soda factory and to prevent the spread of Bolshevism, especially because there are many foreigners among the workers, including some with defeatist views.”⁵³ After the vanguard of the Serbian army established contacts with the local population and familiarized itself with the situation on the ground, the left column of the Drina division was ordered to cross the Drina near Ada Kurjačica and Zvornik; the bulk of these troops were instructed to follow the direction Bijeljina-Brčko and the smaller remaining part the line Tuzla-Doboj-Bosanski Brod. The bulk was later supposed to head to Djakovo, i.e., to cross from Bosnia into Slavonia.⁵⁴ The Serbian army marched into Brčko at 4 P. M. and was given a ceremonious reception by the locals. Buildings were covered in posters reading: “Long live Great Serbia, long live Emperor [*sic*] Petar I, long live the Serbian Army.” One company, armed with a machine gun and a mountain gun, was to remain stationed in Tuzla, and the president of the National Council was informed of that decision.⁵⁵

As noted above, eastern Herzegovina was in a particularly difficult situation due to the raids of the Montenegrin *comites*, who were part of a centuries-long tradition in which stealing moveable property, primarily livestock, represented an economic activity of sorts. The same method of

⁵² VRS, knj. 31, 7. novembar, str. 77. The Adriatic Detachment reported that the patrol of the 3rd Squadron of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment had crossed the river with three *comites* and a few locals from Loznica and continued to Janja, adding that the enemy soldiers were throwing down weapons and surrendering to the National Council or going home; a second patrol crossed the river near Ljubovija and headed to Srebrenica with some locals and soldiers of the National Council; one officer patrol crossed the river Drina near Zvornik (VRS, knj. 31, 7. novembar, str. 79).

⁵³ VRS, knj. 31, kdt Drinske divizije kdtu I Armije, 7. novembar, u 22.20 časova, o.br. 13744, str. 78.

⁵⁴ VRS, knj. 31, 10. novembar, 12 časova, o.br. 13766, str. 125–129.

⁵⁵ VRS, knj. 31, 13. novembar, str. 168. The distribution log of the First Army for 4 November 1918 shows that the 1st Infantry Regiment was deployed in northern Bosnia, Tuzla, Brčko, and Novi Grad (VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 317).

securing livelihood had previously been used in the Montenegrin territory. According to the president of the Pljevlja municipality and a few other locals who had sought assistance from the Serbian army “with tears in their eyes,” the situation was dire indeed. “There are no authorities and no order, anarchy at its worst, Montenegrins, *comites* and raiders, have robbed the Muslim population to the bone, and now they’ve begun indiscriminately pillaging all Montenegrins. Due to the threat, all women and children have fled into the woods.”⁵⁶ Since this pattern of behavior had spread to the vulnerable territory of Herzegovina, the apprehension that the delegates of the Sarajevo National Council showed in their conversation with General Stepanović regarding the actions of the *comites* marauders is very understandable. On 11 November, one battalion of the Višegrad detachment was deployed in the border area between Montenegro and Bosnia “because of the Montenegrin raiders threatening to pillage some towns and at the request of the Bosnian Council.”⁵⁷ This problem, which we will revisit later, would prove difficult to solve not just for the powerless Sarajevo government but also for the scarce Serbian troops, which had enough trouble with maintaining public security even in much calmer areas, a task that distracted them from their main duty of demarcating the territory claimed by the emerging state of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Public security in Herzegovina did not substantially improve until 1921 – almost three years after the founding of the new state and after the execution of a few well-known rogue leaders.⁵⁸

In spite of all operational challenges, the Supreme Command was particularly mindful of the political side of the occupation that the Serbian army was implementing. Aware of the significance that the relationship between the troops and the local population could have for the establishment of the Yugoslav state, the division commanders

⁵⁶ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, Izveštaj komandanta II armije, 23. oktobar 1918, OBR.22598, forwarding the report of the commander of the Novi Pazar detachment from the previous day; pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 15, dok. 28/16, pukovnik M. Ž. Milovanović [za komandanta] Vrhovnoj Komandi, 23. oktobar 1918, O.Br.22498.

⁵⁷ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 188, Depeša od komande Druge Armije, 29. oktobar 1918, OBR.22.659.

⁵⁸ Mastilović, *Hercegovina u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, 244.

were sternly instructed to “warn all troops, especially all officers, to be very careful in their behavior in those Serbian areas and generally avoid all kinds of political conversations because that could, at least in the early stages, have very undesirable effects. In general, you should have in mind that these troops were sent to introduce order and prevent anarchy, so the conduct and all activities of those units must reflect orderliness and discipline.”⁵⁹ Lower-ranking commands and smaller units mostly did their best to behave in line with this order. This was often rather difficult due to the antagonism that had surfaced over the wartime years. A Serbian officer left a testimony about the mood of the Serbian people during his unit’s march from Srebrenica to Han Pijesak: “In the towns through which we passed, the locals came to see the commander of our [2nd] battalion [of the 14th Infantry Regiment of the Timok Division, Lieutenant Colonel Dimitrije Mitrović], as the senior officer in our detachment and gave him information about the atrocities committed against the Serbs during the war. They even brought lists of the perpetrators, who are now posing as Serbian best friends. In those cases, our commander would summon all officers in the battalion and, in their presence, replied to those people that the army was instructed by the Supreme Command not to get involved in those kinds of things.”⁶⁰ “Those kinds of things” were left to be resolved by the regular civilian courts after the post-war situation stabilized.

Functioning of the authorities, political situation, order and peace keeping

The commander of 14th Infantry Regiment of the Timok Division, Lieutenant Colonel Živan Ranković, who had arrived with the first echelon of the Sarajevo detachment and established contact with the

⁵⁹ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 197–198, Depeša od komande Prve Armije, 26. oktobar 1918, OBR.19.216 i list 228, Vrhovna Komanda Komandantu I i II Armije, depeša iz Beograda, 2. novembar 1918, OBR.32096; VRS, knj. 31, 8. novembar, o.br. 19216, str. 90–91; VRS, knj. 31, 15. novembar, o.br. 32096, str. 188; VA, pop. 4, kut. 65, fasc. 13, dok. 19/25, Vojvoda Mišić Komandantu II Armije, 2. novembar 1918, O.Br.32096.

⁶⁰ Tadija Pejović, *Moje uspomene i doživljaji 1892–1919*. (Beograd: izdanje piščevo, 1978), 103.

Sarajevo National Council, reported that this body had asked to be given the needed number of ships to transport the Austro-Hungarian army from the Bay of Kotor to Rijeka. Like the new provincial government of Dalmatia, it had also asked for those ships not to be Italian and not to allow Italian troops to enter Dalmatia. It was believed that enough food for approximately 150,000 people needed to be brought on ships to ensure a normal supply. “The situation in Sarajevo is completely peaceful. I have put to use and assigned to the needed tasks the parts of my regiments that have already made their way here, in consultation with the National Council. The National Council wants as many Serbian troops as possible to be sent to Bosnia and Herzegovina without delay. It wants to see the commander of the 2nd Army, Field Marshal Stepanović, in Sarajevo as soon as possible,” Ranković added.⁶¹ Stepanović replied that he had forwarded their request about the ships and Italian troops in Dalmatia to the Supreme Command and that the deployment of Serbian troops depended on securing enough supplies for them, asking where and for how many troops food had been ensured so that he could order a move in line with the available supplies. He highlighted the need for some troops to head to the nearest port to secure the maritime supply chain.⁶² The Field Marshal also ordered the units of the Timok Division to be marshaled in Sarajevo, from where they would be deployed as necessary. “The division command will be initially moved to Višegrad, and when a larger number of combat units reach Sarajevo, the division staff will be transferred to Sarajevo. Until the division commander moves to Sarajevo, all troops arriving to Sarajevo will be under the command of the commander of the Sarajevo detachment.”⁶³

That order made Colonel Nedić the most important figure of the Serbian army in the territory of B&H, second only to Stepanović,

⁶¹ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 163, Depeša Vrhovne komande šefu sekcije za vezu pri štabu komande savezničkih vojsaka majoru Marikoviću, 27. oktobar 1918, OBR.31.960; pop. 4, kut. 57, fasc. 4, dok. 1/201, [komandant Timočke divizije] Đura Dokić Komandantu II Armije, 26. oktobar 1918, Užice, O.Br. 13380; VRS, knj. 31, 8. novembar, str. 96.

⁶² VA, pop. 4, kut. 59, fasc. 7, dok. 3/131, Komandant II Armije Komandantu Timočke divizije, 25. oktobar 1918, OBR.22618.

⁶³ VA, pop. 4, kut. 65, fasc. 13, dok. 19/20, Štab Druge Armije, 31. oktobar 1918, O.Br.22708; VRS, knj. 31, str. 169.

because the nature of his task meant that he carried out orders not only throughout B&H but also in Dalmatia. He certainly needed to have a considerable level of political tactfulness given his regular communication with the members of the Sarajevo National Government, although the documents more hint at than clearly show that. One of Colonel Nedić's reports aptly encapsulates the challenges he faced:

Because I have a small number of trains at my disposal and because some trains can only admit weaker segments (around two companies), the transport of the troops to Sarajevo is going slowly. The railway line Višegrad-Sarajevo is not guarded by the army, and hence an incident or a malfunction might happen along that route because the scattered Austrian troops are refusing to travel by road and constantly asking to be transported by rail, threatening to do that by force. This also applies to securing the telephone-telegraph line from Višegrad to Sarajevo via Rogatica and Semić, which has been out of order since yesterday. I have learned there is some state-owned materiel in Rogatica and its area, Ustiprača, and the vicinity of Višegrad, and that is not secured either. The local authorities lack sufficient and dependable manpower to maintain order and guard the state-owned and private property from the troops of the disbanded units and the locals. To organize rail and telephone-postal traffic, I intend to send Lieutenant Colonel Kosić to Sarajevo on one of the first trains to organize the traffic in agreement with the government. To secure the traffic, railway, and telephone-telegraph line, as well as some centers in the area of Višegrad and Rogatica, more troops need to be sent: for the railway line Višegrad-Sarajevo, around three companies; for telephone-telegraph line Višegrad-Sarajevo, a cavalry squadron. One battalion is needed for Rogatica and its area; for Ustiprača, one company (of the Rogatica battalion); for Višegrad, its area, and for securing traffic routes, two battalions. All of these units should be united under the command of a senior officer and food provided for them.⁶⁴

An even more complex task was gauging political moods and cooperating with the local authorities, while also keeping an eye on the attempts of Zagreb to put the Sarajevo government under the control of the self-proclaimed State of SCS. Nedić's assessment was that "a large part of the people wanted to unite with Serbia under the Karadjordjević dynasty. Zagreb carries out a propaganda campaign for the formation of a South-Slavic republic without Serbia and Montenegro. Hence, cries of 'Long live the republic!' are occasionally heard in Sarajevo." He recounted that, two days earlier, the Yugoslav government from Zagreb had sent Field

⁶⁴ VRS, knj. 31, Izveštaj kda Sarajevskog odreda, 7. novembar, o.br. 6733, str. 81–82.

Marshal Bekić with two generals, and a number of general-staff and other officers of the Yugoslav army. “I immediately requested an explanation from the [Sarajevo] National Government and asked for these gentlemen to be removed from the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina because the National Government has entrusted maintaining order and introducing lawfulness in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Serbian army. Today, these officers have been thanked for their service and will be recalled to Zagreb. Our troops need to take control of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Dalmatia, too, as soon as possible. They ask for our army on all sides.”⁶⁵ These constant demands for troops came both from the local authorities in the interior and from the Sarajevo government, which guaranteed that it would supply food for the soldiers in the appropriate towns and was inviting Stepanović to come to Sarajevo with his staff. Replying to the demands of the Sarajevo National Council, Stepanović tried to meet

⁶⁵ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 191, Depeša od komande Druge Armije, 29. oktobar 1918, OBR.26.077; VRS, knj. 31, kdt Druge Armije Vrhovnoj Komandi, 11. novembar, u 23.30 časova, o.br. 25077, str. 133–134; VA, pop. 4, kut. 57, fasc. 5, dok. 2/3, Pukovnik Dokić Komandantu II Armije, 29. oktobar 1918, O.Br.13431. In a telephone conversation with Mate Drinković, commissioner for national defense of the National Council in Zagreb, who insisted on the mission of the officers he had sent, Nedić warned him that if Austrian officers, “now the so-called Yugoslav ones,” turn up again they would not live to return from Sarajevo. See General Svetomir Sveta Đukić, *Memoari*, 2 knj. (Beograd: Medija centar Odbrana, 2014–2015), II, 317–318. Another hindrance for Colonel Nedić was the former captain of the Austrian General Staff, Djebić Marušić, a Croat now serving as the head of the staff with the commissioner for national defense Žakula, “appointed by the National Government in Zagreb and ill-disposed toward the new situation and disrupting our work. The National Government in Sarajevo wants to remove him from Sarajevo in an appropriate way, without angering the Government in Zagreb. Therefore I ask to send him to the staff of the Serbian Supreme Command to work as an officer who is very familiar with the circumstances in the army of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” (VA, pop. 4, kut. 53, fasc. 2, dok. 3/41, Vojvoda Stepanović Vrhovnoj Komandi, 13. novembar 1918, O.Br.22983) On the disagreement between Drinković and the government for B&H regarding the military-territorial organization of the province, see: Kapidžić, “Rad Narodnog vijeća SHS Bosne i Hercegovine”, 187–188; Kapidžić, “Pokušaj ujedinjenja Bosne i Hercegovine sa Srbijom”, 270–272. The minutes from the 10 November session of the National Government about this matter are published in: *Narodno vijeće SHS za Bosnu i Hercegovinu*, 119–120.

them insofar as he had adequate manpower to do so.⁶⁶ In that chaotic situation, providing food for the population also had a political dimension. Forwarding the request of the National Government for B&H that the Serbian government procure from the Allies specific amounts of food to the ports in Split and Metković to prevent “horrible hunger,” Colonel Nedić said: “The government of Bosnia and Herzegovina asks our official circles to make it known that the food was sent by Serbia because of the agitation among the people. The food should be delivered one month from today at the latest.”⁶⁷ General Stepanović ordered Nedić, through the commander of the Timok Division, Colonel Đura Dokić, to inform the Sarajevo government that he had “taken the necessary steps as per its request.”⁶⁸ At the request of the Sarajevo government, the Supreme Command asked the command of the Allied troops in Thessaloniki not to transport Austro-Hungarian prisoners from Kotor by land through B&H so as not to put an additional strain on the already overstretched railways, to remove the need to feed the prisoners, and prevent any wrongdoings and raids they might attempt.⁶⁹ The next report Nedić sent about the general situation in B&H was rather favorable:

The political action is not strong in general in any direction. Croatian and social-democratic elements are a little more visible in their calls for a

⁶⁶ VA, pop. 4, kut. 57, fasc. 5, dok. 2/3, Štab Druge Armije Komandantu Timočke divizije, 29. oktobar 1918, O.Br.22670.

⁶⁷ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 205, Vrhovna Komanda Glavnom intendantu Vrhovne Komande, 31. oktobar 1918, OBR.32.033, brings the text of the letter of the Second Army command; pop. 4, kut. 57, fasc. 5, dok. 2/8, Pukovnik Dokić Komandantu II Armije, 30. oktobar 1918, O.Br.13450. The document has been published without the two quoted sentences in: VRS, knj. 31, str. 157.

⁶⁸ VA, pop. 4, kut. 57, fasc. 5, dok. 2/8, Komandant II Armije pukovniku Dokiću, 30. oktobar 1918.

⁶⁹ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 223–224, Depeša iz Čačka od komande Druge Armije, 1. novembar 1918, OBR.22712 and Vrhovna Komanda [iz Beograda] majoru Marinkoviću, 2. novembar 1918, OBR.32082; VRS, knj. 31, izveštaj kda Sarajevskog odreda, 13. novembar, u 17.50 časova, o.br. 6759, str. 170; 14. novembar, u 9.15 časova, o.br. 22712, str. 174–174; VA, pop. 4, kut. 57, fasc. 5, dok. 2/27, Pukovnik Dokić Komandantu II Armije, bez datuma, O.Br.13496; VRS, knj. 31, izveštaj kda Sarajevskog odreda, 14. novembar, u 23.50 časova, o.br. 6785, str. 187.

republic. Order in general is satisfactory. The population in the border area toward Montenegro is a bit unsettled by the emergence of *comites* bands and bandits coming from Montenegro and Sanjak, especially in the area of Kalinovik and Gacko. There are occasional robberies by the locals along the railway line, especially in the centers where state-owned supplies are kept. At the points where segments of our troops are deployed, raids and unrests die down with the appearance of the troops. The Dalmatians keep repeating their demands for our army to be sent in, especially to Spljet [Split], Knin, Cavtat, and Slano. It would suffice to send 1 battalion to these towns. Railway, telegraph, and telephone service is uninterrupted and satisfactory, with the exception of occasional difficulties. The diet of our troops is very good. Order and discipline are satisfactory. We have still not established contacts with the troops of Colonel Milutinović, although it was sought in the towns along the border frontline with which we have telegraph and telephone links from here.⁷⁰

On 7 November, the Serbian Supreme Command authorized the former defense minister, General Božidar Terzić, to get involved in “the regulation of all military and other issues in the territory of Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia, in agreement with the National Council in Sarajevo and other organs of government in those provinces.”⁷¹ Essentially, General Terzić was asked to ensure harmony between the authorities, primarily the National Council for B&H, and the Serbian military, i.e., the Second Army, which was deployed in those areas. To ensure the success of Terzić’s mission, Field Marshal Stepanović was ordered to assist him by providing the personnel for his staff and aid him in any way he might need to complete his “delicate task.”⁷² Stepanović

⁷⁰ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 231–232, Depeša od komande Druge Armije iz Čačka, 1. novembar 1918, OBR.22732; pop. 4, kut. 57, fasc. 5, dok. 2/24, Pukovnik Dokić Komandantu II Armije, 1. novembar 1918, O.Br.13483. Interestingly, a few weeks later, it was found that the telegraph and telephone lines were being purposely cut off, so Field Marshal Stepanović ordered these acts to be prohibited and made punishable by martial law – by the death penalty. (VA, pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 7, dok. 3/68, Vojvoda Stepanović Komandantu Timočke divizije, 27. decembar 1918, O.Br.23886) He also asked for the cooperation of the Sarajevo government to hand the transgressors over to the military authorities.

⁷¹ The text of the authorization is given in full in: VRS, knj. 31, 7. novembar, o.br. 31915, str. 84–85; Krizman, „Srpska Vrhovna komanda”, 191.

⁷² VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 119, Vrhovna komanda Komandantu II armije, 28. oktobar 1918, OBR.31.915.

wanted to know if, in light of General Terzić's departure for Sarajevo, he needed to go to the city with his staff or if he should stay in Čačak, the town that had become the distributing center of his army. The Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command, Field Marshal Mišić, instructed him to go to Sarajevo.⁷³ After General Terzić explained the contents of his authorization to the new authorities in Sarajevo, the Main Committee of the National Council of B&H and the government recruited from its ranks held a joint session on 18 November and made conclusions on all points. Although they accepted all points of Terzić's instructions, it is characteristic that the reply contained some caveats in an effort to be considerate to the Central Committee of the National Council in Zagreb. For instance, regarding the territorial military organization of the provinces, it was mentioned that the Bosnian-Herzegovinian "delegates would, one of these days, report the issue at the session of the central committee in Zagreb, and it will settle the issue in agreement with them and the delegates from Dalmatia, i.e., the Provincial Government in Split." As for the formation of a people's army in the former Habsburg provinces – a project of great importance in view of the territorial aspirations of Italy and the proportionate scarcity and exhaustion of the Serbian troops, they emphasized strengthening the gendarmerie as the primary concern, while the "final decision on the organization of the People's Army is deferred to the Central Committee of the National Council in Zagreb." Regarding the organization of a navy in the Dalmatian coastlands, the view was that "the consent of the Provincial Government for Dalmatia ... was needed."⁷⁴ Finally, Terzić was told that, as per his wishes, the local authorities were informed of his mission and that the commissioner of defense Žakula was authorized to assist him and act as an intermediary between him and the National Government for B&H in all military matters. Terzić acquainted his superiors with the report of the Sarajevo government submitted in response to the "authorization, which was accepted in full" – the general was obviously not particularly

⁷³ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 147, fasc. 7, dok. 9/57, Vojvoda Stepanović Vrhovnoj Komandi, 1. novembar 1918, br. 22718; pop. 4, kut. 70, fasc. 11, dok. 54/5, Vojvoda Mišić Vojvodi Stepanoviću, 2. novembar 1918, eksped. u 22 časa, OBr.32086; VRS, knj. 31, 15. novembar, o.br. 32086, str. 188.

⁷⁴ VA, pop. 4, kut. 70, fasc. 11, dok. 54/13, Vlada Narodnog Veća S.H.S. u Bosni i Hercegovini generalu Terziću, 8/24. novembar 1918, Br. 13812/prez.

sensitive to the nuances in the reply he received or simply did not deem them important.⁷⁵

The first longer report of General Terzić indicated that he had not received any political guidelines for his activity, which would prove a serious handicap in his discussions with prominent citizens of Sarajevo:

Having come into contact with notable political figures in Sarajevo, I also met the editors of Serbian newspapers in Sarajevo, and they asked what direction their papers should take regarding the situation in these areas. I replied that it is a matter for the governments, from which they should seek guidelines, and that I, as a soldier, neither have permission nor want to get involved in politics because I came here on a special and strictly military mission to establish order in the military domain and in agreement with the national governments in those provinces; but I advise that it is in our general interest that they write on the basis of the Corfu Declaration [signed in July 1917 by the representatives of the Serbian government and the Yugoslav Committee comprising emigrants from Austria-Hungary; it listed the basic principles that the future Yugoslav state would rest on], in a mollifying yet convincing tone so as not to irritate the political parties that have yet to definitively declare their support for the Corfu pact. I have also told this to the President of the National Government, Mr. Šola, who agrees with my view. To avoid any awkward situations in the future, I ask the Supreme Command for its opinion and the instructions of the Serbian Government until it appoints its delegate – an appointment badly needed because I am often asked even by some members of the National Government for reports about the political situation, our relations with our allies, but I am unable to answer those questions because I am neither familiar [with those topics] nor authorized to do so.⁷⁶

In response to Terzić's demand, on 20 November, the Supreme Command sent him precise political instructions. It emphasized that it was in the interest of Serbia for B&H to declare its intention to unite

⁷⁵ VA, pop. 4, kut. 24, fasc. 1, dok. 2/1, list 590, 10. novembar 1918, Operativni Delovodni Protokol II Armije. On 28 November, Žakula invited Bosnians and Herzegovinians to sign up for volunteer service in the Serbian army through the local committees of the national councils (Milošević, „Slom austrougarske uprave i formiranje narodnih vlasti”, 189, fusnota 51).

⁷⁶ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 281, Depeša br. 4 generala Terzića iz Sarajeva, 5. novembar 1918, OBR.32.250. For the writings in the press see: Božica Mladenović, „Štampa Bosne i Hercegovine o dočeku srpske vojske novembra 1918”, u: *Srbija 1918. i stvaranje jugoslovenske države* (Beograd: Istorijski institut, 1988), 382.

with Serbia in the same way that Dalmatia had already done and that it would be best if the initiative came from the “Bosnian government” in a public manifesto. “In this regard, you should work with the necessary tactfulness and discretion. Try to discuss this matter only with Šola with some tactfulness and let him be the initiator of all this. We need this unification to happen as soon as possible, so your action with utmost discretion is necessary only with Šola until the government’s representative, soon to be appointed, arrives.”⁷⁷ After these consultations, Terzić sent a new report in which he, judging by the arguments presented therein, forwarded Šola’s views about the matters they had discussed:

1/ Regarding the wishes of the Supreme Command that the Bosnian Government declares unification with Serbia, the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina suggests that the Government needs to be very tactful and cautious and avoid rushing this, especially out of consideration for the Croats, who are also present in the national government in Sarajevo. We will work directly to make the matter come to fruition; the majority of Croats are in favor of the unification. The first step has already been made by entrusting the management of all supply warehouses and equipment to the Serbian army. We could also achieve this right now by force, but with fear of complications. The Muslims are for us and recognize the Karadjordjević dynasty, and they have declared that they will be loyal citizens. 2/ Due to the unresolved agrarian question, the Heir Presumptive needs to issue a suitable statement to give hope to the Muslims that the matter will be resolved through legal channels and their interests protected and that they will not be financially at a loss, which they fear because there are agitations that their property will be taken away and distributed to the peasantry. 3/ The Bosnian Government said that it has followed the instructions of the Serbian Government so far and that it will continue to do so; if a change in the direction of policy is wanted, they should be given the appropriate instructions. 4/ The Serbian army in those provinces should be reinforced to ensure the safety of property and personal security, especially that of the Muslims, who are afraid of retribution. They only respect the Serbian army and Serbian authorities and have faith in them. 5/ The Bosnian Government believe that it can easily settle matters with the Montenegrins. That is not a matter of concern for them although the agents of [the deposed Montenegrin] King Nikola have spared no expense for agitation. 6/ The influence of Zagreb is strongly felt; they are being sent people, former

⁷⁷ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 281, Vrhovna Komanda generalu Terziću, 7. novembar 1918, OBR.32.250.

Austrian officers, to organize the army and military affairs in the country. They keep rejecting them. 7/ The Government asks to be informed if the Corfu Declaration remains in force in full or if it has been modified and in what way.⁷⁸

The Supreme Command, as well as the Serbian government, accepted Terzić's reasons about the inopportunity of pressurizing the Sarajevo government to declare itself in favor of unification with Serbia. General Petar Pešić, assistant to the chief of staff, wrote a brief note on the received document: "Communicated at the conference. Do nothing else regarding this point."⁷⁹ Anyway, Terzić's mission proved short because, already on 22 November, the Supreme Command appointed him commander of the Vardar Division in the south of Serbia and told him to assume his new post immediately.⁸⁰ Field Marshal Stepanović was informed of Terzić's departure and that the latter's powers would pass on to him to "perform that duty in addition to [his] regular ones."⁸¹

Since Stepanović did not want to personally perform that duty, he founded a separate Department for Organization as part of the Second Army staff. For the head of this department, he appointed Colonel Nedić, who had already worked as an intermediary between the Sarajevo National Council and the Serbian military command to the satisfaction of both sides and thus seemed the most suitable person for this kind of task (Colonel Dokić was told to find a temporary replacement for the post of the commander of the 1st Infantry Brigade of the Timok Division). To the department he assigned Lieutenant Colonel Kosić, who had been Nedić's chief of staff in the Sarajevo detachment, and the cavalry Major Petar Nedeljković, who served in the Second Army staff. "The remaining personnel will be made available to the head of the department by the commander of the Timok Division, and he can also take some staff from the Commissioner of National Defense of the National Government in

⁷⁸ Krizman, „Srpska Vrhovna komanda”, 209; *Grada o stvaranju jugoslovenske države*, II, 664–665.

⁷⁹ Krizman, „Srpska Vrhovna komanda”, 210; *Grada o stvaranju jugoslovenske države*, II, 664–665.

⁸⁰ VA, pop. 4, kut. 25, Delovodni protokol Odeljenja za organizaciju štaba II armije, naredba Vrhovne Komande bez broja, 9. novembar 1918, list 5.

⁸¹ VA, pop. 4, kut. 70, fasc. 11, dok. 54/9, Vojvoda Mišić Komandantu Druge Armije, 8. novembar 1918, u 17:20 časova, Pov.Ađ.Br.148376.

Sarajevo. The internal organization of the department, given the nature of its tasks, will be made by its chief. The department will keep its own logs and records, and the archives of the Extraordinary Representative of the Supreme Command with the National Government in Sarajevo should be moved to the department. In the spirit of the department's task, the chief will communicate directly with the National Government in Sarajevo and Splug [Split] and report everything to me," ordered Stepanović and declared that the department would start working on 12 November, of which he also informed the Sarajevo government.⁸² The importance of the role of the Department for Organization was also reflected in Stepanović's additional order that it would bear "the mark 'Dj' because it represented the *djeneralštab* [general staff] for territorial matters."⁸³ Given this reorganization in the Second Army staff and the fact that the staff of the Timok Division arrived in Sarajevo on 27 November, Stepanović also dissolved the Sarajevo detachment two days later and put all of its constituent units under Colonel Dokić's command.⁸⁴

The main problem with peace keeping and public security was directly tied to the establishment of new "national" authorities and the degree of power they enjoyed. In view of the latter, the situation was complicated due to the overlapping competences assumed by the newly formed local authorities, the central Bosnian-Herzegovinian government in Sarajevo, the Zagreb-based National Council and, although they generally tried to avoid getting involved, the Serbian military authorities. The situation was especially chaotic in Bosanska Krajina. While the Zagreb National Council initially established control in Banja Luka, Bosanski Novi and Prijedor and the towns were kept peaceful, in

⁸² VA, pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 6, dok. 3/48, list 2–3, Naredba O.Br.22.902. Komandanta Druge Armije za 10. novembar 1918. god; also see, pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 6, dok. 3/48, list 1, Vojvoda Stepanović Narodnoj Vladi za Bosnu i Hercegovinu (prosleđeno Zemaljskoj Vladi za Dalmaciju), 12. novembar 1918, O.Br.22902. The National Government for B&H "was thankful for receiving" this notice (pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 15, dok. 33/2, Narodna Vlada Vojvodi Stepanoviću, Sarajevo, 30/17. novembar 1918, br. 14027).

⁸³ VA, pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 6, dok. 3/56, Naredba O.Br.23133 Komandanta II. Armije za 17. novembar 1918. god.

⁸⁴ VA, pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 6, dok. 3/54, Vojvoda Stepanović Komandantima Timočke divizije i Sarajevskog odreda, 14. novembar 1918, O.Br.23021; VRS, knj. 31, 28. novembar, u 13 časova, o.br. 23021, str. 312.

Bosanska Dubica and Bosanska Gradiška the local administrative organs did not want to be subordinated to the National Council in Zagreb, and it seemed that they would have to be forced into submission.⁸⁵ A lot depended on the current circumstances and the appropriate decisions of individuals. For instance, the parish priest Nikola Kostić, who headed the National Council of Banja Luka, asked military support from the Zagreb National Council when he learned that some 1000 retreating Austro-Hungarian soldiers were coming to his town from Prijedor.⁸⁶ However, the local national councils in Bosanska Krajina, above all in Banja Luka, were autonomous in their actions not only from the Zagreb National Council but also from the provincial authorities in Sarajevo which were their direct superiors.

The only effective force that could be counted upon to ensure peace and order was the Serbian army, so its assistance was sought from all quarters. According to a report of the Serbian military delegate in Zagreb, Lieutenant Colonel Dušan Simović, “the delegates from Bosanska Krajina are asking that our troops head to Banja Luka, Prijedor, Bosanska Gradiška, and Bosanski Novi as soon as possible to ensure order – especially to Prijedor, a railway intersection and rich mine. Near Bosanska Gradiška and Prnjavor, there are corn and potato fields that could be destroyed unless safeguarded. Finally, they ask for some troops to be sent to Perković to secure communication with Croatia. Forwarding this, I ask for this demand to be met and troops sent to the said places if possible and deemed important enough.”⁸⁷ For his part, the commander of the Sarajevo detachment, Colonel Nedić, also advised sending troops to the northwestern part of Bosnia, which was “inadequately occupied or not at all,” because that area had “a large number of former Austro-Hungarian soldiers from the so-called Green Cadres and because the political tendencies of the population of that region were diverse, [and hence,] troops needed to be stationed in the most important towns,

⁸⁵ Bogumil Hrabak, *Dezerterstvo, zeleni kadar i prevratna anarhija*, 278–279.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁸⁷ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 2, list 260–261, Vrhovna Komanda Komandantu Druge Armije, 5. novembar 1918, OBR.32183; pop. 4, kut. 65, fasc. 13, dok. 19/35, General Pešić Komandantu II Armije, 6. novembar 1918, OBR.31283. The sentence mentioning Croatia is missing from the document published in: VRS, knj. 31, 18. novembar, o.br. 32183, str. 215.

such as: Prijedor, Krupa, Bihać, Bosanska Gradiška, Bosanski Petrovac, Glamoč, Ključ, and Knin /in Dalmatia/. Two infantry battalions would be needed for this. Also, the Dubrovnik-Sarajevo railway line needs to be secured, and one battalion would be needed for that. I ask the Commander to please designate three more infantry battalions to be stationed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”⁸⁸ Nedić’s suggestions were usually accepted because he had already been authorized by Stepanović to, reflecting the tempo of the arrival of the Timok Division units in Sarajevo, send garrisons to the appropriate places, in agreement with the National Council and to immediately report any change in the distribution of the troops.⁸⁹ In the towns of Bosanska Krajina where, at the request of local national councils, the detachments of the national army arrived on the orders of Zagreb (Bihać, Bosanska Dubica, Kostajnica, and Bosanska Gradiška), before the arrival of the Serbian Second Army, the intention was to unite the commands by placing all available forces under Field Marshal Stepanović.⁹⁰

As noted above, the experiences with national guards were largely very bad. The county committee of the National Council in Tuzla complained that the guard members were “disrupting order and peace with their violent behavior and arrest of the gendarme of finances and certain individuals either out of ignorance or personal vendetta. The National Government is requested to please take urgent steps with the Supreme Serbian Command to deploy sufficiently strong detachments to those places to establish order, reorganize the gendarmerie according to local needs, and disarm the guard or bring it under their command or else there will be a response from the embittered social classes and anarchy.”⁹¹

⁸⁸ VA, pop. 4, kut. 70, fasc. 11, dok. 54/12, pukovnik Nedić Komandantu II Armije, 9. novembar 1918, O.Br.6865 (the addendum contains the distribution of the Sarajevo detachment).

⁸⁹ VA, pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 6, dok. 3/42, Vojvoda Stepanović Komandantu Timočke divizije, 1. novembar 1918, O.Br.22741.

⁹⁰ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 26, fasc. 1, dok. 1, list 210, Depeša od šefa vojne misije u Zagrebu, 3. januar 1919, br. 489.

⁹¹ VA, pop. 4, kut. 70, fasc. 11, dok. 54/18, telegram br. 606 od 15. novembra [?] 1918. On the conduct of the national guards in Tuzla, see Adnan Jahić, “Kako je Tuzla dočekala stvaranje Kraljevstva Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca”, *Historijska misao*, 2 (2016), 108–113.

In light of these circumstances, the arrival of the Serbian army to Tuzla brought “unquestionable relief” to the members of the local county committee of the National Council.⁹² Srebrenica also reported that the guard was terrorizing the local clerks.⁹³ Reports of the wrongdoings committed by the members of the National Guard also arrived from Derventa and Dubica, accompanied by invitations to the Serbian army to come and establish peace and order.⁹⁴ It should be noted, however, that there were cases where the guard conscientiously performed its duties: in Kupres, there was an armed conflict between the local guard and some raiders, with fatalities, and order was eventually restored by a company of Serbian soldiers on route to Livno; ten of those soldiers were left behind to maintain peace in the town.⁹⁵ But in view of the described experiences, the demands of the National Government in Sarajevo for the county authorities to, in cooperation with the committees of the National Council, disarm the people and the soldiers coming back from the front, while also safeguarding the confiscated weapons⁹⁶ and doing their main duty of protecting the citizens’ personal safety and state-owned and private property, were clearly unrealistic.

By far the most critical security situation was in the eastern part of B&H. Due to the reports of Montenegrin raids in the Prijepolje county and in Goražde, Colonel Dokić suggested that the battalion of the Šumadija Division within the Višegrad detachment be deployed in Sanjak and eastern Bosnia – in Goražde, Čajniče, and Rogatica. The suggestion was accepted for the most part.⁹⁷ At the request of the Sarajevo government, the commander of the Sarajevo detachment asked to station a garrison in Trebinje, where a large supply of military materiel was kept, because the town was “surrounded by Montenegrin *comites*

⁹² Jahić, „Kako je Tuzla dočekala stvaranje Kraljevstva Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca”, 108.

⁹³ VA, pop. 4, kut. 25, Delovodni protokol Odeljenja za Organizaciju štaba II armije, Poverenik za Narodnu Odbranu, 21. novembar, br. 461, list 8.

⁹⁴ Milošević, „Slom austrougarske uprave i formiranje narodnih vlasti”, 188–189.

⁹⁵ VRS, knj. 31., Izveštaj kda 13. pešadiskog puka, 1. decembar, o.br. 5438, str. 338.

⁹⁶ Jahić, „Kako je Tuzla dočekala stvaranje Kraljevstva Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca”, 110.

⁹⁷ VA, pop. 4, kut. 57, fasc. 4, dok. 1/208, Pukovnik Dokić Komandantu II Armije, 28. oktobar 1918, OBr.13406; Štab Druge Armije Komandantu Timočke divizije, 28. oktobar 1918, O.Br.22642.

bands,” and the command of the Second Army granted the request.⁹⁸ Perhaps the best testimony to the audacity of the plundering hoards was left by the commander of the 14th Regiment of the Šumadija Division Stanković: “Last night, around 150 armed Montenegrins came to Bileća and delivered a letter to the town commander in which they demand the release from prison of six soldiers of the national guard, who were arrested on the grounds of insubordination, and the confiscation of weapons from the Muslims given to them by the National Council. Unless this is done, they are threatening to attack and raid Bileća, and there will be casualties. Please urgently reinforce the Bileća garrison with the troops from Dubrovnik because the French troops are also there and plead with the commander of the Adriatic army to prevent the Montenegrins from plundering.” The commander of the Timok Division ordered Colonel Stanković to send temporary reinforcements to the city with the needed troops from Trebinje and to “act as energetically as possible to preserve order and authority in Bileća.”⁹⁹ Stanković soon reported that the raiders had attacked the barracks in Bileća and that the attack had been repelled, six attackers captured and one wounded, while the rest had taken flight.¹⁰⁰ It is difficult to imagine the full extent of the raids that beset Herzegovina, but the report from Mostar to the effect “that the Montenegrin raiders came to the counties of Trebinje, Bileća, Gacko, Nevesinje, Ljubinje, and plundered all Muslim villages” seems indicative.¹⁰¹ Unfortunately, all countermeasures had little to no effect. In view of the difficult security situation, the Sarajevo National Government ordered a court martial to be founded in the most vulnerable counties, and on 12 November, the court martial was extended to the entire territory of Herzegovina. But not a single sentence was passed until the end of the year.¹⁰² The utter inefficacy of the judiciary undoubtedly reflected

⁹⁸ VA, pop. 4, kut. 57, fasc. 5, dok. 2/1, Pukovnik Dokić Komandantu II Armije, 29. oktobar 1918, O.Br.13429.

⁹⁹ VA, pop. 4, kut. 57, fasc. 6, dok. 2/84, Pukovnik Stanković Komandantu II Armije, 25. novembar 1918, O.Br.13773.

¹⁰⁰ VA, pop. 4, kut. 57, fasc. 6, dok. 2/85, Pukovnik Stanković Komandantu II Armije, 25. novembar 1918, O.Br.13786; VRS, knj. 31, 8. decembar, str. 381.

¹⁰¹ VA, pop. 4, kut. 25, Delovodni protokol Odeljenja za organizaciju štaba II armije, Poverenik za Narodnu Odbranu, 4. januar 1919, br.2249, list 102.

¹⁰² Mastilović, *Hercegovina u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, 213.

the chaotic situation in the interregnum between the fall of the Austro-Hungarian administration and the establishment of the new regime. There were indications that the raids from Montenegro were, at least to some extent, politically motivated. According to the county prefects from Herzegovina – perhaps exaggerating to exonerate themselves from any blame – some Montenegrin marauders were agitating in favor of their deposed king, Nikola Petrović, and intentionally creating unrest and anarchy to foster discontent among the population and turn them against the new situation.¹⁰³

The difficulties that the Serbian Army had in taking control of the territory were reflected in the demands of Field Marshal Stepanović. He asked for “a loan for confidential purposes,” two additional battalions of the Šumadija Division “to be stationed in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia, for maintaining order and guarding equipment and materiel warehouses given to him by the National Government in Sarajevo to use and protect”; he also asked for a sufficient number of officers for various posts in different towns, for resolving the matter of accepting Serb, Croat and Slovene officers into the Serbian army in line with the suggestion he had submitted to the Supreme Command; and for the settlement of the question of allowing volunteers to join the Serbian army to reinforce its effective strength because his troops were falling ill; he asked the Supreme Command to outline a military-territorial distribution plan and send him instructions for the military organization of the country and the formation of the army; he also suggested that the financially ruined Čabrinović family (due to the role of its members in the Sarajevo assassination of 1914) be given financial aid.¹⁰⁴ The troubles of the commander of the Second Army become much clearer when we take into account that the troops of the Timok Division that had occupied the bulk of B&H amounted in early December to just 5,121 soldiers in Sarajevo and 6,732 elsewhere.¹⁰⁵ Atanasije Šola was shocked to learn that the Supreme Command was intending to concentrate in Sinj and Mostar

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 218–219.

¹⁰⁴ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 25, fasc. 1, dok. 4, list 24, Operativno Odeljenje štaba Vrhovne Komande zastupniku ministra inostranih dela gospodinu ministru finansija, 18. novembar 1918, OBR.32703.

¹⁰⁵ VA, pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 7, dok. 3/60, list 5, Naređenje Vojvode Stepanovića, 25. novembar 1918, O.Br.23282.

five battalions to be deployed against an Italian onslaught in Dalmatia. "If this order of the Supreme Command is executed, the bulk of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina will remain without stationed troops. Due to the disorderly situation in the country, the return of soldiers from Russian imprisonment and the spread of Bolshevism through them, the constant marauder incursions from Montenegro and the robberies committed by the locals, it is necessary to keep all stationed troops where they are and send new troops from elsewhere in these special circumstances. I ask you to urgently intercede with the Minister of Defense and the Supreme Command and get this order about the sending of these troops to Dalmatia and Mostar rescinded," Šola pleaded and managed to get his request granted.¹⁰⁶

A particularly sensitive problem was the cooperation between the national councils as the representative bodies of the new regime and the Serbian army. The commissioner for defense of the National Government for B&H asked Field Marshal Stepanović to get his local commanders to help the civilian authorities in the task of disarming the local population, which the latter accepted and issued the appropriate orders to the commander of the Timok Division.¹⁰⁷ Regarding collecting weapons from the population and some parts of the National Guard, Field Marshal Stepanović also mentioned the report that "some commanders ... in Bosnia, Herzegovina, Dalmatia, and Novopazarski Sanjak do not limit themselves to doing the roles assigned to them and instead violate their orders by interfering in internal matters, going as far as to join in the debates about some political questions." To put a stop to this practice, he sternly warned his commanders "to restrict themselves to doing the task assigned to them: keeping peace and order, ensuring personal safety, and safeguarding state-owned and private property. Anyone who after this order chooses to disregard the role assigned to him will taste the full severity of legal accountability."¹⁰⁸ But despite the best efforts of the Serbian troops to help, the National Government in B&H could not

¹⁰⁶ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 147, fasc. 10, dok. 10/75, [ministar unutrašnjih dela] Svetozar Pribičević ministru vojnom, 21. decembar 1918; dok. 10/80, Vrhovna Komanda Komandantu II Armije, 28. decembar 1918, O.Br. 34291.

¹⁰⁷ VRS, knj. 31, 26. decembar, đbr. 437, str. 481.

¹⁰⁸ VRS, knj. 31, Naredba kdta II Armije, 12. decembar, đbr. 97, str. 406.

fully complete the disarmament of the population. Emphasizing that he has no “other measures to take to implement this except if I were fully authorized to use all repressive measures, without resorting to firearms, and if the Supreme Command deems it necessary for me to complete the disarmament, then I ask to be given this authorization and for all organs of administrative and civilian governance to be placed under my command because otherwise the endeavor will be compromised, just as it has been so far. If this is not wanted, then I request that an appropriate order be issued to the local government, and I will keep assisting them as I have done so far.”¹⁰⁹ The Supreme Command did not want to additionally burden the overstretched troops and replied to continue with the disarmament like before.¹¹⁰ Although the tendency of the Serbian military command was not to let the army interfere in the work of the civilian authorities, in practice that distance often proved difficult to maintain. On the one hand, there was the pressure of the Sarajevo government for the Serbian army to perform the duties that would, in normal circumstances, be the job of the police, such as securing commercial railway traffic. To lend as much support as it could to Sarajevo, which also had political importance, the Serbian government did its best to meet all of its demands. Hence the minister of defense allowed the army to help with peace and order keeping “when necessary” and in the specific cases mentioned by Atanasije Šola in his letter of 16 December.¹¹¹ On the other hand, there was a natural resistance of the Supreme Command toward the tendency to draw the army into the civilian affairs, especially at a time when it could barely meet the enormous military demands it was facing. To prevent or at least minimize this, Field Marshal Mišić decreed that “the investigation and confiscation of stolen and plundered private property, according to the reports and complaints of the owners, belongs to the purview of the civilian and not military authorities. Any investigations

¹⁰⁹ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 26, fasc. 1, dok. 1, list 246–247, Depeša od komande Druge Armije, 6. januar 1919, OBR. 24046.

¹¹⁰ VA, pop. 3, Operacijski dnevnik Operativnog odeljenja Vrhovne komande, kut. 26, fasc. 1, dok. 1, list 247, Vrhovna Komanda Komandantu II Armije, 9. januar 1919, OBR. 34723.

¹¹¹ VA, pop. 4, kut. 53, fasc. 27, dok. 12/110, list 2, Komanda II Armije Atanasiji Šoli, 14. decembar 1918, O.Br.23639. The letter has not survived.

of that kind are to be immediately aborted; if the owners keep asking for the mediation of the military authorities in these matters, instruct them to address their complaints to the relevant civilian authorities.”¹¹² Field Marshal Stepanović insisted that his troops had been doing that all along.

The proclamation of Yugoslavia: choosing between Serbian and Yugoslav unification

In late November, a political crisis of sorts broke out, which mostly undermined the position of the National Government for B&H. As is well known, the Zagreb National Council, above all its members who advocated the political ideas of the Party of Rights, had reservations about an unconditional unification with Serbia, preferring an arrangement in which not only Croatia but the entire South Slavic space of the former Habsburg Monarchy would remain a separate territorial-political unit within the emerging Yugoslav state. Although the objective circumstances were not in their favor, the National Council was not in a rush to complete the unification process, but the pressure for its urgent proclamation came from Dalmatia, the most vulnerable to an onslaught of the incoming Italian occupation army and navy. Naturally, stalling and waiting also made the Serbian people on the other side of the Danube, Sava and Drina anxious: having eagerly welcomed the Serbian army, they believed that the establishment of civilian rule by the Serbian government in Belgrade was a done deal. Ultimately, the masses of Serbs outside of Serbia saw the imminent unification as a Serbian unification, while the Yugoslav unification was of secondary importance for them, if it aroused any real interest at all. The most convincing testimony of this sentiment among the Serbs of northern Dalmatia was left by the commander of the 13th Infantry Regiment of the Timok Division, Lieutenant Colonel Miloje Jelisijević, reporting about their passage through Knin and Drniš: “I noticed myself, and many people told me, that they had no liking for Yugoslavia at all and that they only knew Serbia and the Serbian king (in the thunderous ovations and boundless enthusiasm, not a single person mentioned Yugoslavia), while the cries ‘Long live King Petar, long live the

¹¹² VA, pop. 4, kut. 65, fasc. 16, dok. 20/116, list 2, pukovnik Jovanović Komandantu II Armije, 14. januar 1918, Pov.Br.10367.

heir presumptive, long live Great Serbia' could be heard every minute."¹¹³ As time went on and the unification failed to materialise, reactions began to surface. "When during those days, whispering began about some negotiations about the organization of our new state, Banja Luka quickly and covertly organized the entire Bosanska Krajina and most of Bosnia so that Bosnia and Herzegovina be annexed to the Kingdom of Serbia without any caveats. And that took place on 27 November that same year."¹¹⁴ Indeed, what followed was a wave of proclamations about the unification of B&H with Serbia under the scepter of King Petar I issued by local national councils in larger and smaller settlements, highlighting the unanimous mood of the people, regardless of their religious affiliation. Banja Luka and Bosanska Krajina were at the forefront with their majority Serbian population, whose determination to implement the unification directly with Serbia, without any mediation of Zagreb, erased even the authority of the Bosnian government in Sarajevo. "As of today, we are subject only to His Majesty King Petar and the Serbian royal government in Belgrade," read one typical proclamation of the national council of Bihać. "Provincial governments can only act on behalf of His Majesty King Petar and on behalf of the Serbian royal government should it confer those powers on them."¹¹⁵ It is important to note that the wave of proclamations was by no means limited to the Christian Orthodox Serbs. In Ljubuški, which had 92.70% Catholics, 6.77% Muslims and only 0.43% Orthodox believers, the county committee of the National Council, whose members reflected this religious structure,

¹¹³ VA, pop. 4, kut. 67, fasc. 4, dok. 53/2, ppukovnik Miloje Jelisić Komandantu Timočke divizije, 28. novembar 1918, Spljet, Pov.O.Br.5487; VRS, knj. 31, Kdt II Armije Vrh. Komandi, 19. decembar, u 3.20 časova, o.br. 23528, str. 442. The quote from VRS, which was not accurately copied from the original document, thereby slightly changing its meaning but not the general sense, is given in: Milan Gulić, "Stupanje srpske vojske na područje Dalmacije 1918. godine", u: Aleksandar Rastović i Miljan Milkić, ur., *Kraj Velikog rata – put ka Novoj Evropi* (Beograd: Istorijski institut i Institut za strategijska istraživanja, 2020), 53.

¹¹⁴ Vaso Glušac, "Banja Luka", *Glasnik Jugoslovenskog profesorskog društva*, knj. XIV, sv. 10–12 (juni-avgust 1934), 891; see also Đorđe Mikić, *Banja Luka na Krajini hvala* (Banja Luka: Opština Banja Luka, Institut za istoriju, 1995), 423–424.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in: Borivoje Milošević, "Nacionalni pokreti i političke prilike u Banjoj Luci i okolini u vrijeme stvaranja jugoslovenske države", *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju*, 96 (2017), 82–83.

also proclaimed direct unification with Serbia.¹¹⁶ In Livno, a town with a majority Croatian population, the local national council spoke of the liberation of “our people of all three faiths” and declared “at a solemn session, unification with the Kingdom of Serbia and Montenegro into one state under the scepter of His Majesty King Petar I.”¹¹⁷ As we have seen, the same happened in Bihać, where the proclamation of 27 November about the unification of “our fatherland with the Kingdom of Serbia” was signed by many Muslims and Catholics.¹¹⁸ This clearly shows that the uncertainty and insecurity that had resulted from the fall of the Austro-Hungarian regime motivated the non-Serbian population to embrace the solution that seemed as the only feasible one in the new situation. There is no doubt that the disciplined and honorable conduct of the Serbian army – the only actor capable of reintroducing peace and order – left a favorable impression on the non-Serbian population, creating the necessary conditions for a relatively peaceful transition into the new state. But the attitude towards the initiative from Bosanska Krajina depended on the political conjunction in a given milieu. For instance, the county committee of the National Council in Tuzla chose to ignore the call from Banja Luka to proclaim unification with Serbia.¹¹⁹ On the whole, the “grassroots” unification movement had intense momentum, as evidenced by the fact that as many as 42 out of 54 counties in B&H issued a proclamation about their unconditional and immediate unification with Serbia.¹²⁰

Historians have associated this wave of proclamations with the influence of the Serbian government and Supreme Command through the mission of Milan Pećanac, the inspector of religious affairs in the Ministry of Education.¹²¹ As we have seen, the arrival of a delegate of the Serbian government was announced already in the instructions given to

¹¹⁶ Mastilović, *Hercegovina u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, 53–54; Draga Mastilović, *Između srpstva i jugoslovenstva: srpska elita iz Bosne i Hercegovine i stvaranje Jugoslavije* (Beograd: Filip Višnjić), 296.

¹¹⁷ VA, pop. 4, kut. 67, fasc. 1, dok. 6/1, 18. novembar / 1. decembar 1918.

¹¹⁸ VA, pop. 4, kut. 67, fasc. 4, dok. 47/1, 15/28. novembar 1918.

¹¹⁹ Jahić, „Kako je Tuzla dočekala stvaranje Kraljevstva Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca”, 138.

¹²⁰ Mikić, *Banja Luka na Krajini hvala*, 423–424.

¹²¹ Kapidžić, „Pokušaj ujedinjenja Bosne i Hercegovine sa Srbijom”, 275–276; Šehić, „Narodno vijeće SHS za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 185–186.

General Terzić to encourage the unification of B&H with Serbia through Šola. When Pećanac was chosen for the role, due to, among other things, his personal connections with Bosanska Krajina, he was told to “see and consider the circumstances on the ground, revive his friendships, and see people.”¹²² Stojan Protić, minister of finance, informed the prime minister, Nikola Pašić, then in Paris that Pećanac would be given instructions in Corfu and asked for his approval and suggestions. The government’s delegate then spent some time in Dalmatia and Zagreb, no doubt talking with many people, and on 20 November submitted a report that described the mood in Dalmatia, B&H, and Croatia as being in favor of their unification with Serbia. He believed that as many Serbian troops as possible needed to be sent to the new areas and that unification could be realized through the decisions of “the relevant factors – the Councils or, possibly, the local diets.” The aim was to eliminate the views manifested at the Geneva Conference of 6–9 November 1918 among the representatives of the Serbian government, opposition, National Council in Zagreb, and the Yugoslav Committee, advocating the creation of a confederative, dualist Yugoslav state. That would prevent the creation of a state “modeled after and associated with the Austro-Hungarian lands autonomies and a new state would be built according to the Corfu Pact and perhaps even better ... than some of its architects believed and certainly better and differently than if the spirit permeating the statement about the course of the last negotiations and conclusions in Geneva were to prevail.”¹²³ However, all this testifies only to the informative nature of Pećanac’s mission; there are no indications that he was instructed to work – like General Terzić before, although his mission had been cancelled – or that he indeed worked on convincing the local national councils in B&H to issue proclamations about their direct unification with Serbia. In addition, in the quoted report to the government, Pećanac said that he would not head to Banja Luka on the following day as he had previously announced. Thus, the delegate of the Serbian government had abandoned his plans to travel to Banja Luka shortly before the agitation in the city and the entire Bosanska Krajina for unification with Serbia intensified. His mission came to an end when he was told via the Supreme Command to “immediately come back to

¹²² *Građa o stvaranju jugoslovenske države*, II, 496.

¹²³ *Građa o stvaranju jugoslovenske države*, II, 621–622; Kapidžić, „Pokušaj ujedinjenja Bosne i Hercegovine sa Srbijom”, 275–276.

Belgrade and call on Minister Protić,” but we do not know when exactly he was recalled.¹²⁴ All of the above suggests that Pećanac’s mission has been given too much importance in historiography. The mood on the ground, especially in Bosanska Krajina, was such that the Serbian government and the Supreme Command had no need to encourage the local bodies of the new authorities to declare themselves in favor of something that had been their greatest wish – unification with Serbia. As it turned out, the opposite happened: the government and the military command tried to calm the enthusiasm of national councils throughout B&H and maintain the authority of the Sarajevo-based National Government to allow the unification to go through in the Yugoslav spirit and in cooperation with Zagreb.

Telegrams with proclamations, accompanied by greetings and praises for the Serbian army, arrived at the address of the Second Army command from all quarters, and Field Marshal Stepanović thanked everyone and conveyed their contents to the Sarajevo government and the Supreme Command. After the Main Committee of the National Council in Sarajevo received the telegram from Banja Luka about the local national council’s proclamation of unification with Serbia and the statement of the Banja Luka county that it chooses to be subordinated only to the royal government in Belgrade or the authorities it appoints, with the proclamation of the unification in Bihać and the news that Tuzla and Mostar (towns with a majority Muslim and Catholic majority, respectively) intended to do the same, Atanasije Šola, through Field Marshal Stepanović, sent a letter to Svetozar Pribičević, vice-president of the Central Committee of the National Council of SCS, who was in Belgrade at the time. He asked the Central Committee of the National Council to reach an agreement with the Serbian government and “come to a principled conclusion about this matter, immediately inform the National Government for B&H of it, and give the necessary instructions as to how to proceed.” He also asked for the matter of jurisdiction to be resolved. “The matter is very urgent, there is fear of anarchy, therefore reply by telegram immediately.”¹²⁵ The Sarajevo government was obviously

¹²⁴ VA, pop. 4, kut. 24, fasc. 1, dok. 3/1, list 74, Operativni Delovodni Protokol II Armije, nema datuma, O.Br.34402.

¹²⁵ VA, pop. 4, kut. 68, fasc. 6, dok. 30/2, Atanasije Šola Svetozaru Pribičeviću, attached to Šola Vojvodi Stepanoviću, 15/28. novembar 1918, broj 13937/Prez.; Kapidžić,

between a rock and a hard place – between the strong “grassroots” mood to put a stop to the political maneuvers and the intolerable uncertainty by unifying with Serbia and its own wish to avoid seeming as if it were acting against the Zagreb National Council and undermining its authority. This reticence on the part of Šola and his associates had also been noticeable earlier, when General Terzić had proposed that the National Government declare itself in favor of unification with Serbia. On that occasion, it had cited the difficulties that the conduct of the Croats could create and asked the Serbian government for clear instructions. Now, Šola and other Serbian representatives again did not want to assume responsibility for a public and unequivocal declaration of intent regarding the demands on the ground. More recently, it has been suggested that the Serbian politicians who were dominant in the Sarajevo National Council and had been gathered around the *Narod* journal before the war, favored working in agreement with Zagreb, unlike the supporters of the late tribune Petar Kočić from Bosanska Krajina, who were excluded from the decision-making process, and that this was an important factor that led to the indecision of Šola and like-minded people between Belgrade or Zagreb.¹²⁶ This would suggest that the Serbian representatives in Sarajevo did not adequately represent the will of the Serbian people in late 1918.

The same hesitancy, and even reluctance, to pursue Serbian rather than Yugoslav unification characterized the activity of Vladimir Ćorović, later a renowned historian, who in those decisive moments served as the commissioner of the National Government for B&H co-opted into the presidency of the National Council of SCS in Zagreb and the direct link between the two governments.¹²⁷ Admittedly, Ćorović informed the National Council in Zagreb that the Sarajevo government was fully on board with the suggestion of the Dalmatian government for unconditional and immediate unification with Serbia.¹²⁸ But this support had been given for a suggestion of Croatian politicians who formed the

„Pokušaj ujedinjenja Bosne i Hercegovine sa Srbijom”, 279–280; *Grada o stvaranju jugoslovenske države*, II, 662–663.

¹²⁶ Mastilović, *Između srpstva i jugoslovenstva*, 297–301.

¹²⁷ Kapidžić, „Rad Narodnog vijeća SHS Bosne i Hercegovine”, 213.

¹²⁸ Krizman, „Zapisnici Središnjeg odbora”, 366.

government of a province where the majority population was Croatian, so any reproaches or accusations of “separatism” from the Central Committee of the National Council as the central government body of the entire State of SCS were out of the question. However, once the Bosnian-Herzegovinian counties began en masse to declare themselves in favor of unification with Serbia, Ćorović resolutely resisted these actions, no doubt influenced by his political milieu. “The statements of some Bosnian counties about joining Serbia are inappropriate although perhaps understandable,” he told the National Government for B&H. “In the interest of the general national cause, we should, however, try not to get ourselves accused of separatism and harmonize everything with the work of the Central Committee of the National Council of SCS, which is developing completely in the spirit of unity and the royalist principle.” Ćorović also warned that the population of Lika – residents of Croatia rather than B&H – intended to follow the example of the mentioned Bosnian counties, above all the nearby town of Bihać, and that they had “instructed them not to do so.”¹²⁹

The proclamation of the creation of the Yugoslav state, officially named the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, on 1 December in Belgrade, in the presence of Prince Regent Aleksandar and a delegation of the National Council in Zagreb, put a stop to all dilemmas about what kind of state would be formed. The State of SCS was fused into a joint country with the Kingdom of Serbia, which definitely erased any possibility of a Serbian rather than a Yugoslav unification. The decision was made by the political and military leadership of Serbia. Hence, the indecisiveness and dithering of the Serbian politicians in the National Government for B&H was not of crucial importance for the outcome of the unification. The Serbian government was the actor that, aware of all the facts and circumstances in both Sarajevo and Zagreb, decided to leave and abort the already begun process of Serbian unification – it should be borne in mind that the provincial Dalmatian government was also willing to declare unification with Serbia amid the reservations of the politicians in the central National Council of SCS – and proceed with the creation of the Yugoslav state as soon as Zagreb showed clear willingness to do so. However, the wave of proclamations from the counties of B&H continued

¹²⁹ Mastilović, *Između srpstva i jugoslovenstva*, 301, 342.

even after the proclamation of 1 December, undermining the authority of the provincial government in Sarajevo and putting the Serbian government in an awkward position. “From Bihać, Kostajnica, Konjic, Srebrenica, Ključ, Tešanj, Beljina, Banja Luka, etc., we have received telegrams declaring unification with Serbia,” Field Marshal Stepanović was briefed by Stojan Protić, minister of finance, acting as the deputy of prime minister Pašić, who was in France. “Please let everyone know, to avoid any confusion, that the governance should stay in the hands of the National Government in Sarajevo until new orders [are given].”¹³⁰

As, according to the act of 1 December, national representative bodies, including the Sarajevo government, were to continue to rule in the country, Šola asked Stepanović:

Do you agree to give us the necessary assistance in the given circumstances to maintain the authority of the National Government where it proves necessary? We ask you to please come to an agreement with the Serbian Supreme Command in Belgrade, the Royal Government, and let us know as soon as possible. The reason for this request is mostly the disorderly situation in Banja Luka and some other towns. We have learned from reports that our orders are not being implemented there and that no one is heeding the instructions of the National Government; what is more, according to reports, things are happening there that are against the law and that we, as the National Government, can neither sanction nor take responsibility for. To put a stop to this, it is very necessary for you to provide assistance from the Serbian army so that we can peacefully, if at all possible, put in order the unruly and chaotic situation over there. If needed, violence would be used but, of course, only as a last resort after exhausting all gentler means. To support our demand, we add that we are in possession of an encrypted letter of the royal Serbian government, which you sent us with your act of 19.XI. (2.XII.) of this year [with Protić's above mentioned dispatch].¹³¹

Having received Šola's telegram, the command of the Second Army asked “permission from the Supreme Command and the Government to provide military assistance to peacefully resolve the unruly situation in B. Luka and its area, with the use of force if necessary, after all other means

¹³⁰ VA, pop. 4, kut. 65, fasc. 14, dok. 19/76, Đeneral Pešić Komandantu II Armije za Narodnu Vladu u Sarajevu, 19. novembar 1918.; VRS, knj. 31, Kdt II Armije Kdtu Timočke divizije, 4. decembar, o.br. 23158, str. 358–359; *Građa o stvaranju jugoslovenske države*, II, 683.

¹³¹ VA, pop. 4, kut. 66, fasc. 15, dok. 33/4, Atanasije Šola Vojvodi Stepanoviću, 3/16. decembar 1918, br. 14.233/Prez.

are exhausted.”¹³² Field Marshal Stepanović seems to have received such an order, judging by his reply to Šola that they could “count on the assistance of the army when necessary.”¹³³ Regardless, the Serbian troops seem to have avoided confrontations with the local population because there is no record that they ever resorted to violence or even a demonstration of force to support the Sarajevo government in its conflict with the authorities in Banja Luka and Bosanska Krajina. Instead, Field Marshal Stepanović tried to placate those who, like *singelos* Gavriilo Vukojević, the abbot of the Ozren Monastery, and other prominent citizens of Bosansko Petrovo Selo, continued to ask, even eight days after the 1 December decree, for unification with Serbia and subordination only to “King Petar and his lawful heirs for whom we have suffered earlier and never more than in this war.” The Field Marshal’s response with which he tried to mollify the conflicting tendencies was highly characteristic: “While I thank everyone for welcoming the army, I ask you to please continue your loyal service to the National Government for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which would be the greatest pleasure to HM King Petar I.”¹³⁴

The Sarajevo government discussed the situation in Banja Luka and proposed severe measures against the leaders of the town’s national council and the county chief, but none of these suggestions were accepted so as not to additionally inflame the mood.¹³⁵ The only implemented measure was the penalty served by the police to four Serbs in Sarajevo because their aspirations for unification with Serbia were seen as disruptive to public order.¹³⁶ As the Yugoslav unification in Belgrade had become a *fait accompli* and news of it spread throughout the province, proclamations on the ground began to assume a different, politically correct tone. An indicative example is that of the county committee of the National Council in Mostar, whose intention to proclaim direct unification with Serbia had, until recently, been a cause of concern for the National Government for B&H: on 4 December,

¹³² VA, pop. 4, kut. 24, fasc. 1, dok. 3/1, list 10, Operativni Delovodni Protokol II Armije, bez datuma, br. 14233.

¹³³ Šehić, „Narodno vijeće SHS za Bosnu i Hercegovinu”, 184.

¹³⁴ VA, pop. 4, kut. 67, fasc. 1, dok. 14/1, 26. novembar 1918.

¹³⁵ Kapidžić, „Rad Narodnog vijeća SHS Bosne i Hercegovine”, 287–297; Milošević, „Prilike u Banjoj Luci i okolini u vrijeme stvaranja jugoslovenske države”, 83–84.

¹³⁶ Mikić, *Banja Luka na Krajini hvala*, 424.

this body, “on behalf of the entire same-blooded people regardless of religious differences, with enthusiasm and utmost joy” welcomed the “unification of Serbia and Montenegro with the lands of the independent state of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs into the joint kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes under the scepter of the illustrious Karadjordjević dynasty.”¹³⁷ Similar messages emphasizing the Yugoslav character of the unification between the State of SCS and Serbia also came from Teslić, a waqf county, and Glamoč.¹³⁸

Considering the “grassroots” response, i.e., the attitude of the population of B&H to the process and eventual declaration of the unification, we can accept the view of a well-known Serbian historian that the Yugoslav state was created with the consent of the (large) majority of the South Slavic population of the disintegrated Habsburg Monarchy.¹³⁹ However, this assessment was given based on a binary distinction of the citizens’ stances – either in favor of or against the unification, without a consideration of what that unification represented for specific ethnic and religious communities and what their prevalent feeling about that act was. This consideration seems equally important for the Serbian and the non-Serbian population, although historiography has tended to dogmatically posit that the overwhelming majority of Serbs were for Yugoslavia. It was not until very recently that scholars began to notice that the “question of what the Serbian population would have chosen in the dilemma between ‘Great Serbia’ and Yugoslavia” was rarely asked, although this was primarily a reference to the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Serbia.¹⁴⁰ But for the Serbs in B&H, this dilemma was not merely academic: as we have seen, in late November 1918, it was a very real choice between directly joining Serbia or participating in the creation of a “compound state” modeled after the defeated Austria-Hungary, in which they would end up in a territorial-political entity controlled by Zagreb. Faced with this quandary, the response of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Serbs from below was almost unanimous, but they had little influence on the ensuing

¹³⁷ VA, pop. 4, kut. 67, fasc. I, dok. 8/I, 4. decembar 1918 – po novom.

¹³⁸ VA, pop. 4, kut. 70, fasc. II, dok. 58/I; dok. 60/I, 5. decembar po novom; kut. 67, fasc. I, dok. 9/I, 4. decembar 1918 – po novom; dok. 10/I, 5. decembar 1918 – po novom.


¹³⁹ Ekmečić, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije*, II, 829–832.

¹⁴⁰ Mira Radojević, *Srpski narod i jugoslovenska kraljevina 1918–1941* (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 2019), I tom, 236.

events. Of course, they accepted the Yugoslav unification because, for them, like all Serbs beyond the borders of Serbia, it meant they would fall under the jurisdiction of the Serbian king and government. As for the Muslim population, it was not until late October and early November that their leaders accepted the unification program – partly out of conviction, but mostly out of political opportunism in an effort to put a stop to the intolerable uncertainty, especially because they feared retributions from the Serbian army, which had been an enemy force until shortly before that.¹⁴¹ Finally, the disappearance of the Habsburg Monarchy left no alternative solutions to the Muslims. The Croats were divided: some supported their representatives in the Sarajevo National Council while others, those aligned with the views of the Party of Rights, accepted the unification simply out of necessity.¹⁴² The spectrum of political moods among the masses in B&H was much more complex than the statement that the majority unquestionably accepted the Yugoslav unification of 1 December in Belgrade would suggest.

¹⁴¹ Jahić, „Kako je Tuzla dočekala stvaranje Kraljevstva Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca”, 103–105; Adnan Jahić, *Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini za vrijeme monarhističke Jugoslavije* (Zagreb: Bošnjačka nacionalna zajednica i Islamska zajednica u Hrvatskoj, 2010), 73–76; Husnija Kamberović, „Projugoslavenska struja među muslimanskim političarima 1918. godine”, *Historijska traganja*, 3 (2009), 91–105.

¹⁴² When the leadership of the Party of Rights for B&H sent a letter to the Central Committee of the National Council of SCS in Zagreb asking to join this body, the Main Committee of the National Council in Sarajevo replied that their statement did not reveal whether they fully accepted the program of the Yugoslav unification. (Jahić, „Kako je Tuzla dočekala stvaranje Kraljevstva Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca”, 104, f. 13) The same request from the headquarters of the Party of Rights in Zagreb was rejected even more resolutely. (*Narodno vijeće Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba u Zagrebu 1918–1919.: izabrani dokumenti*, priredili Marina Štambuk-Škalić i Zlatko Matijević (Zagreb: Hrvatski državni arhiv, 2008), 109–113)



La Grande guerre était la dernière d'une série de guerres, mais sa fin ne signifiait pas le retour de la paix. La guerre s'est théoriquement terminée en 1918, mais les hostilités ont continué à éclater sporadiquement au cours des cinq années suivantes. Rien que dans les Balkans, les Yougoslaves s'opposent aux Autrichiens pour la Carinthie et aux Italiens pour Fiume ; les Roumains occupent la Bessarabie et repoussent les Russes et les Ukrainiens ; les Grecs et les Turcs se livrent une guerre totale en Asie mineure pendant trois ans. Finalement, les combats cessèrent et des traités de paix furent négociés.

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