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Language as a political issue: The case of language of command in the Austro-Hungarian army

The paper shows the political crisis of dualism in a multinational Austro-Hungary that was initiated by the political opposition of the Magyar magnates in the Hungarian Parliament. It was initiated by the large land owners-magnates with the claim to introduce the Magyar language as the language of command within the Hungarian army. The claim implicated the split of the united army and dispute of the joint chief commander, the Emperor Francis Joseph. The issue of the Magyar language was, for this reason, primarily a political question that subsequently meant the further weakening of political ties with the western half of the Monarchy until the complete separation of Hungary. The Emperor opposed this, announcing a new electoral law that would put an end to the dominance of the Magyar minority over the non-Magyar majority in Hungary. He was supported by the Liberal party headed by István Tisza, who was correct in his assessment that dualism primarily protected the Magyar interests in Hungary. The fear of the new electoral law sobered the Magyar nationalists and they gave upon the idea of revising the Austrian-Hungarian *Ausgleich*. The Emperor subsequently gave up the implementation of the law on the general right to vote in Hungary, led by direct political interests, despite the fact that a law like this, under favorable political circumstances which unfortunately were not present, could have become the future foundation – and not the eventual destruction – of the protection of the Monarchy.



Key words: Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich*; Emperor Francis Joseph; István Tisza; Austro-Hungarian army; language of command in Austro-Hungarian army; electoral law in Hungary.

1. Introduction

The division of the Austrian Empire to the Austrian and Hungarian parts occurred in 1867 by the so-called *Ausgleich*, or rather, alignment. The dualism was, first of all, an “agreement” between Emperor Francis Joseph I and the Magyars. The Magyars agreed that the military¹ and foreign affairs would come under the competence of the common greater state, and the Emperor would resign control of Hungary’s interior matters to the Magyars. The Magyars also agreed that Hungary had to be in the customs union with other parts of the Empire and the union would be renewed every ten years. In this way, three organizational forms were made: the permanent common Monarchy (that presented itself as a strong Habsburg power to the foreigners), the temporary Austro-Hungarian economic union, and two separate states, Austria and Hungary. The Dual Monarchy had a common ruler, a Minister of Foreign Affairs, and a Minister of War. There was no common government or common Prime Minister. The Dual Monarchy, however, had its constitutional term in the form of Austrian and Hungarian delegations of sixty members each that had separate sessions.² The

¹ The *Ausgleich* hold over the undivided joint army. Hungary agreed to it only at the cost of founding its own Home Guard which led Austria to do the same. The three military organizations with separate Ministries – one for the joint army and two for Home Guards – depended upon three Parliaments: the Austrian, the Hungarian and the joint, which reflected negatively upon the development of the military forces of the Monarchy. According to the 1869 Law, the military forces were divided to the Imperial and Regal armies and the Navy. The joint army with German as the language of command was subordinate to the Ministry of War in peace time; the Regal-Hungarian Home Guard with Magyar as the language of command and the Regal-Croatian Home Guard with Croatian as the language of command were both subordinate to the Hungarian Ministry of Defense; the Imperial-Regal Home Guard in countries represented in the Imperial Council with German as the language of command was subordinate to the Austrian Ministry of Defense. More on this: *Vojna Enciklopedija* (1970: 333–337).

² The Upper House in Hungary voted for twenty members by direct vote, and one of them had to be a Croat. The Lower House voted forty members by the direct vote, too, four of them were voted for by the Croatian members of the House. In Austria, twenty members of the delegation voted directly for the members of the Upper House, and forty voted in the Lower House through elective collegiums of different provinces—in accordance with the size of the



Hungarian delegation represented the integral state of Hungary with a symbolic acknowledgment of Croatia, and the Austrian delegation was the latest version of the Parliament of classes, the dreamland of the conservatives.³ The Hungary part, although it comprised only two-fifths of the population, paid only one-third of taxes to the Monarchy, while it had the equal status in bringing decisions. (Taylor 1990: 166-168) The operation of the delegations' only role was to debate, which was to the Emperor's liking because he maintained the final say. Economic issues were not left to the Emperor to decide. Such issues were decided about by the direct negotiations of both Parliaments. The biggest economic problem centered on deciding the "quote," i.e. the participation in common expenses and the customs policies connected with it. In the beginning, Hungary participated with a quote of only 30%, which was later raised to 34.4%. This was regulated by the customs policies that increasingly preferred Hungarian interests. The Austrian part of the Monarchy was developing into an industrial region that depended on inexpensive food from Hungary, which protected it by high customs taxes. This was the reason why each ten-year economic agreement between Austria and Hungary provoked a difficult political crisis that questioned the very foundations of the common state.

The new Hungary was formed as a unitary state, regardless of the majority non-Magyar population that expected the interior autonomy within the frame of dualism (Galántai 1967: 146). The dualism, however, envisaged only the balance between the two strongest nations which, without an overall solution to the national issue, could not be a solid foundation upon which the future of the Dual Monarchy could be built. (Galántai 1967: 148) Only Croatia made the *Agreement* in 1868 which, as opposed to Austrian-Hungarian *Ausgleich*, was not an alliance of two equal partners but quite the contrary, because Croatia was in a submissive position in all important issues.⁴ Although the Emperor managed to crush the Magyar rebellion with the help of the Croatian army headed by Josip

province (from twenty delegates for Czech to one delegate for Tyrol, i.e. Voralberg) (Taylor 1990: 167)

³ The Austrian Germans and the Magyar Hungarians had a different notion of their position in "their" respective parts of the Monarchy, as well as the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich*. For Germans, the *Ausgleich* was a necessity, but also no reason to challenge it. The majority did not feel members of the unified Habsburg Empire and the guarantors of its safety. The Magyars, however, identified themselves exclusively with the Hungarian-Magyar state and they felt the two terms as a whole. The *Ausgleich* was, for all classes of the Magyar population, more or less a necessity. They, however, were politically focused upon the Hungarian Kingdom, and not the Habsburg Empire. (Kann 1962: 153)

⁴ About Croato-Hungarian Agreement 1868 see Ratner (1949).



Jelačić in 1848, he was forced to leave to the Magyars the exclusive rights to steer relationships with Croatia after he had suffered defeat in the war with Prussia in 1866. The hope was that the agreement with the Magyars would preserve the unity of the Monarchy. This was why the Croatian “autonomy” provided only for autonomous decision making in the fields of education and language. The Croatian Governor was appointed by the Emperor, but upon the suggestion of the Hungarian Prime Minister and a handful of Croatian members of Parliament (40) in the Hungarian Parliament, could at any time be outvoted (Kann 1964: 131).

At the beginning of 20th century, Hungary had a population of 20 million with less than ten million Magyars. The majority of the population was made up of Slovaks, Romanians, Serbs, Croats, Germans, and Bulgarians. In the Austrian part of the Empire, the situation was similar. Out of a population of 28 million, Germans made up only ten million. The rest of the population consisted of all nationalities of Central Europe: Poles, Rusyns, Rumanians, Czechs, Slovenes, Italians, Croats, and Serbs. Although Slavic nations prevailed in the mosaic, they did not show solidarity.⁵

The Dual Monarchy was begun as a compound of two constitutional states, one of which was based on German and the other upon the Magyar hegemony. Behind the constitutional curtain, however, there was the Habsburg Monarchy—the Empire whose ruler gave up a part of his prerogatives in internal affairs, but numerous unsolved problems enabled him an endless area for manouvering and protecting the supreme authority.⁶

⁵ There were about two million Slovaks in the Hungarian part at the northern border; three million Romanians in Transylvania; around one million Serbs in Timisoara Banat and the Danube valley; more than two million Croats in Croatia and Slavonia. Transylvanian Germans (Saxon) and Bulgarians were relatively few. In the Austrian part of Galicia lived a little bit less than five million Poles and three million Rusyns. There were around six and a half million Czechs; there were more than one million Slovenes in Styria, Carinthia, Crain and Istria; south Tyrol and Istria was home to around 700,000 Italians; more than 700,000 Croats and Serbs lived in Istria and the Adriatic coast. More in Renouvin (2008: 75–79) and Kardum (2009: 21–23).

⁶ More on creation of dualism in Austro-Hungary 1866–67 see Taylor (1990: 161–173).



2. Dualist Hungary

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were simultaneous political crises in both Austria and Hungary provoked by civil nationalism. The crisis in Austria was a result of the industrial development; in Hungary it was the result of the deterioration of agriculture.

The capitulation of Emperor Francis Joseph I to Hungary in 1867, i.e. his acceptance of the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich*, had a paradoxical effect upon Hungary: the Magyar gentry achieved political success at the moment of its economic collapse. The process began in 1848 with the abolishment of statute labor, and reached its peak with the purchasing of inexpensive American grain. Their land was taken over by large landowners (magnates) who did not have problems with the abolishment of statute labor because they could withstand the global competitions due to their capitalistic approach to agrarian production. In the period from 1867 until the end of the century, more than 100,000 independent landowners disappeared and more than one-third of Hungary came under the direction of the magnates, with one-fifth of ownership in the hands of only three hundred families (Taylor 1990: 229).

The gentry without land were saved from complete disappearance by the new character of the Hungarian state that required a large administration. In 1867, Hungary was organized after the Austrian model as a huge bureaucratic organization with state railways, a state post office, and state health and education systems. The landless gentry found employment in the state administration and was existentially identified with centralized Hungary. At the beginning of 20th century, the bureaucratic apparatus employed around 250,000 Magyar gentry. They had only basic administrative experience in their counties but were qualified for the positions by the very fact that they were the Magyars. Faced with the competition of other nationalities, they feared implementing the 1868 Law on Nationalities. On the contrary, to safeguard their privileged position, knowledge of the Magyar language was required from all inhabitants in Hungary. In this way, they managed to disable the political affirmation of other nationalities, evict their few representatives from the Parliament, condemn their organizations, and completely monopolize state administration positions and free professions. 95% of state employees, 92% of county employees, 89% of physicians, and 90% of judges were Magyars at the beginning of 20th century.⁷

⁷ The Croatian Parliament was also helpless. The railway company, controlled from Budapest, introduced the Magyar officials all around Croatia. They also served as a mean of further



The Magyar nationalism was not exclusive. Aware of their minority, the Magyars successfully attracted to their side the few intellectuals of other Hungarian nationalities. They were most successful with Germans, who gained a dominant position in industry and trade, and with Jews, who were the major defenders of the “assimilation” (Taylor 1990: 231-232).

The ardent nationalism of the Magyar gentry was not only the means of protecting the monopoly on the administrative positions, but also its new and decisive weapon in an endless fight with the magnates. As opposed to the gentry, who had always had a tensions relationship with the dynasty, the magnates—cosmopolite courtiers with large real property—tried to negotiate with the Habsburgs. This became an obvious pattern beginning in 1848. The gentry took the side of Lajos Kossuth, while the magnates turned their back on him. After 1867, the situation reversed and the magnates became independent large agrarian capitalists and the gentry did not only pine in their counties, but entered the state offices upon which it depended. Due to this change of circumstances, the gentry needed stronger relationships with the Habsburgs to protect the power of the Hungarian state and their own existence. This was why they were willing to pay their freedom by respecting the prerogatives of the Crown in matters of military and foreign affairs. (Taylor 1990: 237) The symbol of the change and the true creator of the new Hungary was Koloman Tisza, who became the Hungarian Prime Minister in 1875. For the next twenty-five years, during which his party ruled, he was an obedient servant of Francis Joseph.

Tisza and his followers could not have managed to survive only by protecting their interests because Kossuth’s ideas deeply permeated the national feeling of the Magyar that was bitterly tested on the troubled experience in the period 1849-1867. The constant pursuit of nationalities was necessary to Tisza and his followers as evidence that they were good Magyars, despite their loyalty to the Emperor. The voters in central Hungary, with its majority of the Magyar population, persistently followed Kossuth’s ideas. To prevent this, Tisza resorted to a special “election geometry”—the creation of, on one hand, large electoral counties with 10,000 of Magyar voters and, on the other hand, small electoral units of as few as 250 voters in areas dominantly populated by national minorities. Since only few knew the Magyar language in those areas, the decision depended upon

weakening of Croatia by Hungarian preventing of railroad connection of Zagreb and Vienna, thus forcing Croatian railways to an unnatural connection to Budapest. (Taylor 1990: 230–231).



only a few Magyar officials. Owing to these “pocket counties,” the Hungarian monopoly was successfully kept over the non-Magyar populations.

The “brilliant” system upset the magnates’ plans because they had believed that dualism was going to guarantee them high positions which were accompanied by honors and privileges. Their position, however, was taken over by the hardworking and less demanding gentry that ruled the magnates out of power with the help of the Emperor. The magnates were cosmopolitan by upbringing and were looked upon as traitors of Hungarian independence. Now they were devoid of their traditional influence on the court and were left only to focus on policies of patriotism in the field of foreign affairs, i.e. the fight against the dynasty. This was the only field in which Tisza could not compete with them, the same as they could not overplay him in the policies of magyarization that he conducted in such an unrelenting way.

Tisza and the gentry became defenders of dualism, while the representatives of the magnates, headed by Gulag Andrassy (the Constitutional Party), Albert Apponyi (the National Party) and the count Aladar Zichy (the Catholic Peoples Party) (Trumbić 1936: 62) stood for “personal union,” and demanded that Hungary had its own army that would indirectly imply that they could steer their own foreign policy (although Lajos Kossuth had long ago given up the program and backed the Danube Confederation without the Habsburgs) (Taylor 1990: 240). There was no idea of the complete separation from Austria and the Habsburgs because it was obvious that the fight for independence would also incite democratic elements of the non-Magyar peoples for their autonomy or self-government. They simply wanted to obtain new privileges in military and diplomatic affairs. (Jászi 1964: 358)

The real reason for the strong patriotism of the magnates was the fear from possible consequences of the crisis that got hold of the agrarian and reached its peak by the end of 19th century. Faced with the farmers’ rebellion and endangered by the alliance of farming hands, the magnates channeled the revolt against this class towards the court. They claimed that the main cause of all problems in Hungary was German language as a language of command in the Austrian-Hungarian army. At that time, such a policy was possible because the direct danger of the exterior enemy was removed by signing the agreement between Austria-Hungary and Russia in 1897, the enemy that both Germans and Magyars feared. As soon as there was no Russian threat from the east, the magnates could direct their patriotism against the dynasty (Jászi 1964: 359).



3. Monarchy in crisis

The crisis began in the Austrian part of the Dual Monarchy because the ruling Germans could not accept the decree that named Czech and German the languages of “internal offices” which meant they had lost their monopoly on official positions throughout Czech region. The Austrian Germans could not preserve Austria as a German national state and, at the same time they did not want it to transform into the supranational entity. The crisis in Austria opened door to the crisis in the whole Empire.⁸ After the fall of the Prime Minister of the Austrian government, the count Kazimir Badeni in November 1897, the constitutional authority in Austria collapsed which freed the Magyar magnates of any fear that the unified Austria would mobilize against them. At the same time, the Imperial Council transgressed and the new customs agreement could not be voted out. This meant that the old agreement would be in force until 1903. This was a pretext for new formal concessions to Hungary. Due to the chaos that prevailed in Austria at the time, it seemed that the elderly Emperor could not oppose attacks on dualism; a hard campaign against the unitary army was soon initiated.

The Emperor knew that the Monarchy was necessary for “ruling peoples” if they wanted to maintain their hegemony and upper-class ways and that he could make them compliant by withholding support. It was the threat that he retorted to only in the utmost necessity (Jászi 1964: 360).

After the death of Lajos Kossuth in 1894 and ceremonial return of his body to Budapest, his son Ferenz Kossuth became the leader of the Independent Party and the agitation against dualism took on dramatic, almost revolutionary proportions. After more pronounced and open claims for the total independence of Hungary, and because the revolutionaries claimed that Hungary had the right to annul the *Ausgleich* from 1867 at all times, the Emperor Francis Joseph had to abandon his reconciling policies. In the beginning, the Emperor resisted the division of power, but when a form of government was found that seemed to him acceptable and that promised eventual success, he stood for the *Ausgleich* firmly

⁸ These two privileged nations did not realize that the third crisis germinated in the spirits of a few Croatian intellectuals as a result of the Habsburg’s betrayal of Croatia and the Magyar oppression of Croatia. In ten years, the Southern Slavic issue will overshadow both constitutional confusion in Austria and ferment in Hungary. In twenty years, the Habsburg dynasty, the hegemony of Germans and the Greater Hungary will crush down the challenges of the Yugoslavism issue. (Taylor 1990: 241)



and unyieldingly. He considered any aberration from the agreement both treason and a crime (Wandruszka and Urbanitsch 1975: 61).

The Dual Monarchy faced its most serious crisis since 1848. The Emperor was much more affected by the Hungarian crisis than the one in Austria because it endangered the foundations of Austro-Hungarian survival (Tschuppik 1928: 247). The attack upon the unitary army was also an attack upon the Emperor as the commanding leader of the army; after all, military issues were of the utmost importance for both the Emperor and the heir to the throne, Francis Ferdinand. (Stöller 1942: 4) The army was a symbol of the Emperor and King's military power. Such a high opinion for the army had its roots in the Emperor's youth, when the Monarchy was saved in 1848, thanks in large part to the army. Next to it, the later alliance with Germany was founded on the fact that Germany had the most powerful army in Europe at the time. Francis Joseph himself dreamed about the role of a successful military strategist, but he had to accept the fact that the dream would never be fulfilled. Despite that, he believed that the unity and homogeneity of the Austro-Hungarian army should not be endangered at any cost and that the language of command had to be a single one, i.e. German. Such an unbending view by the Emperor was supported by the fact that he was raised as a soldier and he was comfortable only in performing his military duties. Until his death he personally signed all military decrees, regardless of whether they concerned simply the cut and the color of the uniforms (Wandruszka and Urbanitsch 1975: 62).

The Austro-Hungarian army had a special problem in communication due to its multinational composition. Although the language of command was German, soldiers who were not of German origin did not speak German. The problem was solved by publishing military handbooks in Czech, Croatian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak and Magyar languages and was aimed at officers to enable them to communicate with their subordinates.⁹ The Emperor himself could fluently speak the languages of his Monarchy and was aware that the national question was the most difficult internal political question of the Dual Monarchy. Although he never gave preference to Germans—quite the contrary, he always took care that servants in the government¹⁰ were represented by as many other Austro-Hungarian nationalities as possible—the Emperor saw “his” nations only as

⁹ Seidels *Militär-Sprachbücher* (1902).

¹⁰ The members of the Austrian government were mainly the members of the top state bureaucracy while the leading politicians belonged to the court or regional nobility. As a rule, they were the people whom the Emperor trusted most. (Kann 1962: 158).



the populations of different regions, and not as different nationalities (Wandruszka and Urbanitsch 1975: 64).

The sore spot of the Austro-Hungarian army was a thumping defeat in the war with Prussia in 1866 at Königgratz. The defeat resulted in a handful of major internal political consequences due to the future agreement with the Magyars. In wartime circumstances, Austria highly appreciated not only Hungarian loyalty, but also its active support against the exterior enemy. The loyalty of the upper-class was unquestionable and provided a satisfactory agreement with the government in Vienna; however, the lower-classes did not share the same sentiment. They were only expected and asked to give war sacrifices and could not expect any direct benefits. There was even some fear that they might use the arms not against Prussia but for completely different purposes. This was why the authorities in Vienna were willing to make agreements with the Magyars because if the war with Prussia lasted longer, Magyar radicalism could only become stronger. The Magyar ruling authorities used the war with Prussia to reorganize the Monarchy on the principle of duality, but only to the extent of not endangering the total strength of the Monarchy in order to safeguard their interests and privileges that they won. *Ausgleich* had a primary role to ensure the Magyars in Hungary the support against aspirations of other nationalities to get rid of the Magyar hegemony. The same policies were used by Austrian Germans in their part of the Monarchy (Galántai 1967: 148-152). The Habsburg Monarchy was saved in the war with Prussia only due to Bismarck's wisdom and moderateness, and not due to their own power. Austro-Hungary indeed stayed outside the great German Reich, but it had the status of the inferior ally by the end of its existence because it had, for good reason, the support of the Magyars.

4. The language of command in the Hungarian army

The dramatic events of 1903 led Emperor Francis Joseph to take energetic moves. The problem lied in the fact that the number of draftees in the Austro-Hungarian army was diminishing over the previous few years. Due to the political circumstances in the Monarchy, no War Minister had the courage to suggest the enlargement of draftee quotes in either the Austrian or Hungarian Parliaments, although the military command had problems reinforcing old and new military formations for years. The existing quotes did not follow the population rise and the government asked in the new defense bill to raise the quote for 23,000 draftees per year. The Austrian part of the Monarchy, including Czech,



adopted the Emperor's requirement, but the Independent Party in Hungary believed that it was the right moment to ask for the introduction of the Magyar language as a language of command in Hungarian units.¹¹ The question of language in this case was in no way a cultural or linguistic problem. The Magyar language not only was not subordinate to German, but had a superior status relative to other peoples' languages in Hungary due to the policies of magyarization in Hungary. The language question, in this case, was exclusively a political question, with the aim to loosen the last bond with the common state and provide, in the long run, the independence of Hungary ruled by the Magyars. The Emperor could not accept the claim, but there was also another factor¹² that would make Kossuthists' claim hard to implement. Hungarian corps had 17 Croatian regiments and Croats would take up arms at the first command in the Magyar language (Tschuppik 1928: 468). Despite all of this, Kossuth's party organized a strong obstruction in the Hungarian Parliament which led to the Emperor's energetic defense of the army as a common institution that could not be questioned.

After the fall of the liberal government in Hungary, the Emperor appointed Earl Khuen-Hedervary the new Prime Minister. Khuen-Hedervary had the image of a "strong politician" because he, as a Croatian Governor, managed to control the growing Croatian opposition by using political corruption, force, and the granting of privileges to Serbs. The Emperor hoped Khuen-Hedervary could control Kossuth's party, too (Redlich 1929: 402). Khuen-Hedervary, however, was not as successful in this task. The obstruction not only continued but ended in the streets with a contagious effect on other parts of the Monarchy. Rebellions took over in Prague, Innsbruck, and even Vienna. Khuen-Hedervary backed off and advised the Emperor to call off the bill on recruitment. The Emperor obliged but with an aching heart. This put the Austrian Prime Minister Ernest von Koerber into a difficult position and he had to resign because he stood for the idea that the bill was necessary and that it could not be rejected. Khuen also did

¹¹ "They endorsed such demands of the Opposition as the compulsory transfer of Hungarian officers to Hungarian regiments and the weeding out of Austrians from Hungarian units; the easing of the German language requirement for Hungarian officer candidates; the training of Hungarian cadets exclusively in Hungarian military schools; the recognition of Hungarian as an official military language; and the use of the Hungarian flag and insignia in Hungarian units." See Deák (1992: 69).

¹² There were not enough Hungarian officers to command all the units originating from Hungary. The non-Magyar career officers who happened to be Hungarian citizens were for the largest part Germans, and most of them had no desire to transfer to a Hungarian unit, nor did most of the Magyar officers. See Deák (1992: 69).



not last long and the Emperor appointed István Tisza (the son of Koloman Tisza) as the new Hungarian Prime Minister. Although the Emperor called off the recruitment bill, he sent a message to his army from Chlopy in Galicia, where he attended military maneuvers in which he explicitly confirmed his determination that the army must stay integral and that he would never give up his rights of a chief commander. “My army should know that I shall never give up my duties and my rights that are bestowed to me as a supreme commander. My army must stay unitary and common as it is now, powerful to defend the Austro-Hungarian monarchy from enemies wherever they might come from...” (Bibl 1937: 429) The Emperor’s message met major approval in Austria (with the exception of the radical Czech element); however, in Hungary it provoked a storm of bitterness among the Magyar intelligentsia.¹³ A newspaper campaign was brought to a fever pitch. This is why Tisza’s Liberal Party, in fear of further radicalization of Kossuthists, made a compromise regarding the military program in favor of the Hungarian army. This was accepted and only slightly revised by the Emperor. He was 73 (in 1903) and signs of old age began to hinder him from performing his duties for the first time.

Tisza managed to persuade the Magyar opposition for the compromised bill, which ended in a short-lasting truce in March 1904. As early as the next year, the Independent Party continued to obstruct parliamentary proceedings, which led to the cessation of work of the Parliament and, eventually, the dissolution of the Parliament. Tisza was undoubtedly a Magyar patriot who wanted to acquire the biggest concessions for the Magyars from the Emperor; but he nevertheless did not want to jeopardize the dualistic structure that meant not only a privileged position in Hungary but also guaranteed a major influence over the general policies of the Monarchy.¹⁴ The Emperor had a special appreciation for Tisza although he did not agree with him at all times. He, however, had always consulted him and rarely, if ever, disregarded Tisza’s advice.

¹³ The Emperor stated in his Army order also that: “My entire armed forces... are imbued with that spirit of unity and harmony which respects every national characteristic and is able to solve all antagonisms so to utilize the individual qualities of each ethnic group for the benefit of all.” The term “ethnic group” was translated into Hungarian as “tribal group”, which was for the Hungarians an unforgivable insult because they were not treated as a sovereign nation in equal partnership with Austria. See Deák (1992: 69).

¹⁴ Tisza’s policy was seen in Austria as manifestation of Magyar chauvinism, and in Hungary as an abject surrender to Austrian policy. Cf. Deák (1992: 70)



Tisza decided to end the political agony in a radical manner. He proposed honest elections without political corruption that was customary in Hungary. The move was a risky one, but in January 1905, the only free and fair elections were held. Tisza's Liberal Party was defeated utterly and a new government was formed by a coalition of parties that opposed dualism, led by the Kossuth's Independent Party. The political scene was again dangerously radicalized because the new parliamentary majority asked for the Magyar language to be the language of command in the Hungarian army. It was an unambiguous claim for separation of the Hungarian army from the common Austro-Hungarian army (Kann 1962: 136). Since more than half of the Hungarian army consisted of Slovak, Rumanian, Croat, and German military formations, the claim manifested the will of the Magyars that the Hungarian army should become yet another means for the magyarization in non-Magyar parts of Hungary.

The Emperor had to face the thirty-six year long indifference for the position of the non-Magyar majority in Hungary that was left completely to magyarization because he was aware that the Magyar approval of *Ausgleich* was conditioned (although it was not directly stated) by their unlimited rule in Hungary.¹⁵ Now the long-term protection of Magyar hegemony came due in the form of opposition to the Emperor's condition to the *Ausgleich*, i.e. that the army stayed unitary and exclusively under his command (Redlich 1929: 404). Embittered by the position of the Magyar nobility, Francis Joseph decided for a decisive move for which he had the support not only of the officers' choir, but his generals as well. He broke the constitutional practice and appointed General Geza Fejervary, a man loyal to the Emperor, as the new Hungarian Prime Minister. Despite the fact that Fejervary enjoyed popularity among the Magyars, his negotiations with the representatives of the winning coalition did not yield success because they did not want to abandon their condition to overtake the duty only if Hungary got its own army.

¹⁵ "Once the Dual monarchy was set up, signifying Hungary's total victory over the centralizing Germans in Vienna, the Magyars did everything in their power to strengthen the rule of German liberals over the other half of the Empire... They did this because they believed, correctly, that any concessions made by Vienna to the subject-nations in her half of the monarchy might produce demands for similar concessions from their own subjects." Crankshaw (1972: 211).



The Emperor showed his hesitance very clearly when he invited the representatives of the winning coalition¹⁶ into the audience to read them in conspicuously brief manner the conditions they had to accept if they wanted to form the new government. However, this gesture did not influence the policies of the coalition. They refused the negotiations with the common Minister of Foreign Affairs because he was not a Magyar. The negotiations with the Emperor's authorized representative, Count Cziraki did not yield any positive result. This was why the Emperor authorized General Fejervary to form a non-parliamentary government in which the Minister of the Interior became Joseph Kristoffy, a man almost entirely anonymous to Hungarians. Despite the fact that Kristoffy was a Magyar, he supported the introduction of a general right to vote in Hungary and won over General Fejervary to accept this idea. The general right to vote would annul the Magyar hegemony over the majority of non-Magyar peoples in Hungary. This was why the Magyar politicians started a vehement campaign against it, claiming that it allegedly breached the Constitution and policies of the new government. Few, however, expected that simultaneously with the convening of the Parliament on February 19, 1906, the appointment of the Honvéd¹⁷ General Alexander Nyria would be made as a new King's commissariat for the Hungarian Kingdom. As soon as the President of the Parliament ended the parliamentary session, Honvéd colonel Fabricius, accompanied by his troops and the police, entered the building of the Parliament and read the decree to absolve it.¹⁸ Many expected that the Emperor's move would result in the resistance of the Magyar population, as Magyar nationalists announced, but this did not happen. The Magyars did not want to resort to arms to defend the privileged classes

¹⁶ They were: the Counts Gula Andrassy, Albert Apponyi, and Aladar Zichy, the Barons Desiderius Bánffy and Ferenc Kossuth.

¹⁷ The Hungarian homeguard units.

¹⁸ Both in Austro-Hungary as a unit and in its parts, Austria and Hungary, the Parliament was not legally or politically the supreme authority that the executive branch depended upon. The Crown governed the legislative part in cooperation with the Parliaments of Austria and Hungary. The governments had to have the trust of the Crown and they governed primarily in the interest of the Crown. The governments had to render accounts to the Parliaments only in cases of illegal operation of the members of Parliaments, but they did not depend upon the support of the parliamentary majority vote. The parliamentary support was always welcome, but if it did not occur, they could govern by the Emperor's decree. In the Austrian part of the Monarchy, such a practice became a rule due to the constant parliamentary obstruction. In Hungary, the limitation of the electoral law enabled the safe Magyar parliamentary majority and the parliamentary crisis was much less likely. When this happened in 1905, however, the Emperor did not hesitate to dissolve the Parliament and appoint a technical government that did not have the support of the parliamentary majority (Kann 1964: 158).



in the incomplete Hungarian Parliament. It seemed as if the road to the peaceful restructuring of national and social structure of feudal Hungary had been set. This, however, proved to be just an illusion (Kann 1964: 136).

As early as July, Kristoffy made public the bill on the general and direct right to vote for parliamentary elections in Hungary. The announcement brought the winning coalition to reason. They abandoned completely their claims for the introduction of the Magyar language as the language of command in the Hungarian army. They were aware that otherwise they would not get the Emperor's approval to take power. They signed an agreement with Fejervary that also featured their promise that they would conduct electoral reforms when they take power. The promise, however, was all they managed. The new government, headed by Alexander Wekerle, did not attempt to introduce the promised electoral reforms in the next three years, and the Emperor did not insist upon it. The new electoral law had the purpose of breaking down Magyar nationalists. When the goal was achieved, the electoral reform and the revision of the *Ausgleich* were abandoned. Both parties had good reasons for abandoning it.

The Hungarian ruling circles, regardless of whether they belonged to Tisza's liberals or Ferenc Kossuth's independents, gladly abandoned any variant of revision of the *Ausgleich*, fearing the possibility of a social overhaul and national reforms that would endanger their dominant position in Hungary. It is obvious that the insecure position of the Crown in Hungary was founded exclusively upon the joint interests of noblemen, magnates, upper merchant and industrial classes in both parts of the Monarchy. The introduction of the general right to vote in Hungary could radically change the situation because prevalence would go to common farmers and workers of non-Magyar origin. Their support would exclusively depend upon overall change of policies towards the national question and far-reaching changes in social and agrarian policies. These would hardly be accepted by the ruling trade circles, as was seen in the crisis that shook the Austrian part of the Monarchy when the general right to vote was introduced in 1906/07.¹⁹ The development would not stop there. Slavic peoples would domi-

¹⁹ While the unrelenting Magyarization went on in Hungary, there was no Germanization in the Austrian part of the Monarchy, anymore. The political crisis in Hungary caused by the general right to vote incited some intellectuals in Austria to support the implementation of the general right to vote at least in the western part of the Monarchy in order to solve the national issue for the future of the country. The Austrian Parliament voted out the motion which caused a huge shock and surprise with noblemen and officials on high positions. The Emperor, however, decisively supported such a move of the Austrian government, unlike a similar case in Hungary. The *Ausgleich* did not put him under any obligation to restrain in any



nate in the Hungarian part of the Monarchy and they would ask for the union with their kins in the Austrian parts of the Monarchy. The Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich* would have had to be radically revised and enable that the Habsburg Monarchy be transformed into a federal state founded on ethnic criteria. In such a scenario, the Crown would have to build its power on the support of the lower classes, farmers, and workers of all nationalities and relinquish the support of the nobility, industrialists, and centralized public servants, all of whom had helped the Crown rule over the previous decades. Such a radical restructuring of power could not and should not be introduced, not only because Europe was already overshadowed by the future war conflict, but also because it was evident that numerous Austro-Hungarian nations wished to fulfill their national aspirations outside the borders of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. This was why the Emperor abandoned the implementation of the general right to vote in Hungary, i.e. he was led by direct political interests, despite the fact that a law like this one would have become, under the favorable political circumstances which sadly were not present, the future foundation, not for the destruction, but for the protection of the Monarchy (Kann 1964: 137–138).

5. Croatia

The crisis of dualism and the resistance of the Magyar opposition to the central authorities had an impact upon the political circumstances in Croatia. A hope for the possible union of Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia and Istria appeared, followed by the occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina that would together form one state with Croatian national characteristics. The state would, in agreement with other countries and peoples of the Monarchy, set common affairs. With this in view, the Rijeka and Zadar Resolutions were signed in 1905 by all Croatian parties, both from Hungarian and Austrian parts of the Monarchy. They were joined by Serbian parties and the representatives of Italians. The Serbian parties conditioned the union from Dalmatia to Croatia and Slavonia by the compulsory acknowledgment of equal status of Serbians and Croats by the Croats. Everyone agreed that each nation had the right to freely and independently decide about its fate and that was why they supported the Magyar fight for the state's independence, hoping that the already existing rights and freedoms would benefit the

matters of interior political problems in Austria as it was the case in Hungary and he used the opportunity to start necessary reforms, hoping that the example of Austria will be followed by Hungary, too. (Redlich 1929: 410)



Croatian nation, primarily with the union of Croatia and Slavonia with Dalmatia (Kardum 1993: 140). The Croatians were, primarily due to their liberalism, an easy victim to the Magyar “sweet talk”. Among them, the Magyar gentry sold its myth about a liberal Hungary to all of Europe, cheating on the fact that they were more experienced negotiators than the Croatians. The champions of the Magyar coalition claimed they were fighting for the national independence against the Habsburg dynasty and promised that the victory of Hungary would bring freedom to Southern Slavs as well. The Croatian liberals²⁰ had at the time a firm conviction that independence could only be achieved by having harmonic relations with Hungary, rather than fighting it (Taylor 1990: 258).²¹

This was a shudder to the Austrian policy of dualism and the Emperor himself, who refused both the idea of the Magyar language as a language of command in the Hungarian military and Dalmatia as a part of the Hungarian part of Croatia. The making of the Croatian-Serbian coalition at the end of 1905 and the parliamentary overthrow of the unpopular Magyar regime in Croatia, showed both Austria and Hungary that it was an extremely dangerous political group that threatened even the stable ways of operation of the Dual Monarchy.²²

As for the Yugoslav idea, it did not have any major importance among South Slavic nations and was used only as a topic of discussion among the intellectual elite. Despite this, the Yugoslav idea panicked both the Austrian court and the Magyars. The Croatian-Serbian coalition considerably helped the reconciliation of the Emperor and the magnates (Taylor 1990: 259).

The Independent party tried to challenge the supreme command of the Emperor over the army once more in 1912 by starting new obstructions in the Parliament. This time, however, Tisza, then the President of the Hungarian Parliament, managed to promote legal provisions for the benefit of the mutual military

²⁰ Ante Trumbić—the future president of the “Yugoslav Committee” during the War—talked about the need for understanding among all peoples in the south of the monarchy, especially the Croats, Serbs and Italians of the seaboard. He expressed his hope that also the Hungarians, who were fighting for their own independence, would refuse to be still tools in foreign hands, and that they would enable the South Slavs to make an agreement with them on the new basis of “mutual fight for emancipation.” Krizman (not dated: 25).

²¹ The promises to the Croatian-Serbian coalition were wasted. Ferenc Kossuth replied to the Rijeka suggestion for the cooperation in 1905: “We have been waiting for you with hope and love” to introduce a decree as a Habsburg Minister in 1907 that the Magyar language was the only official language at the Croatian railways, too (Taylor 1990: 260).

²² Cf. Kardum (1993: 141); Lovrenčić (1972).



and introduce a new way of parliamentary operation, thus ending a long-term obstruction. Tisza was the actual regent of Hungary from that time until 1917, when the new Emperor Carl thanked him for his services as the Prime Minister of the Hungarian government (Redlich 1929: 407). Although Tisza managed to solve the crisis with the Austrian court and break his political opponents, he did not manage to solve the issue of nationalities in Hungary in a decisive moment, which would prove to be fatal for the existence of the Dual Monarchy.

6. Conclusion

The political crises that occurred in Austria and Hungary at the beginning of 20th century were primarily caused by civil nationalism—in Austria, a result of industrial development, and in Hungary, a result of the decay of agriculture. The crisis in Hungary was incited when the Magyar landowners—magnates—requested that the Magyar language become the language of command in Hungarian units within the Austro-Hungarian army. The question of language in this case was in no way a cultural or linguistic problem. The Magyar language was not only subordinate to German, but had a superior status relative to other peoples' languages in Hungary due to the policies of Magyarization in Hungary. The language question, in this case, was exclusively a political question, with the aim to enable the Magyars to make the Hungarian army another powerful means of Magyarization in non-Magyar parts of Hungary. It was the fear that non-Magyar peoples of Hungary would see their chance for national affirmation within or outside the existing borders during the Magyar fight for Hungarian independence. This prevented the Magyar nationalists from claims for complete separation from the Austrian part of the Monarchy.

The attack upon the unitary army was also an attack upon the Emperor Francis Joseph I as the commanding leader of the army; after all, military issues were of the utmost importance for both the Emperor and the heir to the throne, Francis Ferdinand. The Emperor knew that the Monarchy was necessary for “ruling peoples” if they wanted to maintain their hegemony and upper-class ways and that he could make them compliant by withholding support. The Emperor opposed the enthusiastic fervor of the Magyar nationalist magnates by the announcement of the new electoral law that would annul the Magyar hegemony over non-Magyar peoples in Hungary. He found his ally in the Liberal party headed by István Tisza. Tisza was undoubtedly a Magyar patriot who wanted to acquire the biggest concessions for Hungarians from the Emperor; but he never-



theless did not want to jeopardize the dualistic structure that meant not only a privileged position in Hungary but also guaranteed a major influence over the general policies of the Monarchy.

The announcement of the new electoral law was just a means of breaking down the Magyar nationalists. When the goal was achieved, both the electoral reform and the revision of the *Ausgleich* were abandoned. Both parties had good reason to do so. The unsafe position of the Crown in Hungary was primarily based upon the common interests of the nobility, the magnates, business and industrial upper classes in both parts of the Monarchy. This was why the introduction of the general right to vote would radically change the political situation because the majority vote would primarily be in the hands of petty farmers and workers of non-Magyar origin. Such a radical restructuring of power could not be carried out not only because the dark shadow of the future war was hanging over Europe, but also because it was obvious that many of the Austro-Hungarian nationalities hoped for the fulfillment of their national aspirations outside of the borders of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. This was why the Emperor abandoned the implementation of the general right to vote in Hungary, i.e. he was led by direct political interests, despite the fact that a law like this one would have become, under the favorable political circumstances which sadly were not present, the future foundation, not for the destruction, but for the protection of the Monarchy.

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**JEZIK KAO POLITIČKO PITANJE:
SLUČAJ ZAPOVJEDNOG JEZIKA U AUSTROUGARSKOJ VOJSCI**

Rasprava prikazuje političku krizu dualizma u višenacionalnoj Austro-Ugraskoj izazvanu jačanjem političke opozicije mađarskih magnata u Ugarskom parlamentu. Potakli su je krupni veleposjednici-magnati sa zahtjevom da se u ugarsku vojsku uvede mađarski kao zapovjedni jezik. Taj zahtjev je implicirao razdvajanje zajedničke vojske i osporavanje zajedničkog vrhovnog zapovjednika cara Franje Josipa. Pitanje mađarskog jezika je zbog toga bilo prvenstveno političko pitanje, koje je u krajnjoj konsekvenci značilo daljnje slabljenje veza sa zapadnom polovicom monarhije do potpunog ugarskog otcjepljenja, ali i mogućnost daljnje mađarizacije ostalih nacionalnosti. Car se tome suprotstavio najavom novog izbornog zakona kojim bi mađarska manjina izgubila pravlast nad nemađarskom većinom u Ugarskoj. Podršku je dobio od liberalne stranke na čelu s Istvánom Tiszom koji je dobro procjenio da dualizam prvenstveno štiti mađarske interese u Ugarskoj. Strah od novog izbornog zakona otrijeznio je i mađarske nacionaliste pa su odustali od revizije austrougarske *Nagodbe*, a Car je nakon toga odustao i od provedbe zakona o općem pravu glasa u Ugarskoj, vođen neposrednim političkim interesima iako bi upravo takav zakon pod određenim povoljnim političkim okolnostima, kojih na žalost nije bilo, mogao u perspektivi postati temelj, ne za rušenje, već za očuvanje Austro-Ugarske.

Ključne riječi: Austrougarska nagodba; car Franjo Josip; Istvan Tisza; austrougarska vojska; zapovjedni jezik u austrougarskoj vojsci; izborni zakon u Ugarskoj.