

NATIONAL MINORITIES IN YUGOSLAVIA 1918-1941

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The aim of this article is the analysis of national minorities in the first Yugoslav state, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Focusing on its multicultural structure and shaping its political, social and religious diversity, the author takes into account the problems of various minority groups in Yugoslavia and the failure of its global minority politics as well.

Key words: Kingdom of Yugoslavia, national minorities, minority politics, political organization, education

The first common state of Southern Slavs was founded in 1918 at the end of WWI. Although it purported to be a national state on the Western European model, it was in fact as multi-national as the defunct empires it has replaced.¹ Among the patchwork of nationalities making up its population, were numerous national minorities most of whom were non-Slavs. They made up some 12 % of the total population, but not all of them were officially recognized as national minorities and the existence of some of them was denied altogether.²

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¹ The state was founded under the name the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and was renamed Yugoslavia only in 1929. However, for convenience, we'll call it simply Yugoslavia throughout this paper.

² The existence of Aromunians in Macedonia and Romanians in Eastern Serbia were acknowledged but they were not legally recognized as national minorities. (Cf. Nikola Trifon, *Cincari. Narod koji nestaje* (Belgrade, 2010), pp. 358-359; Tihomir Đorđević, *The Truth Concerning the Rumanes in Serbia* (Paris, 1919); Military Archive (henceforth:VA), pop. 17, k. 69, f. 4, d. 6.) The existence of Bulgarians in Eastern Serbia was admitted sub rosa, but publicly denied. (Archives of Yugoslavia (henceforth: AJ) F. 398, f. 1; Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (henceforth: PA AA), Abt. IIb, Nationalitätenfrage, Fremdvölker, Politik 6 Jugoslawien, Bd. 4; Association Yougoslave pour la Société des Nations. La Serbie de Sud depuis 1918 (Belgrade, 1926);

Even those who were recognized enjoyed different position in various parts of the country. This had to do with historical reasons to be discussed presently.

The origin of parts of the minority population was a moot point in some cases. This held true particularly for Albanians who claimed they were descendants of the ancient Illyrians, being thus the original population of Kosovo³ and Western Macedonia. According to the Serbian version, which seems better grounded in historical records, they came in larger numbers only since late 17th century, ousting gradually the local Serbs.⁴ Similarly, Romanians claimed they were descendants of the Romanized Dacians and thus the original inhabitants of the Banat.⁵ Here also historical records, at least for the Western part of the

Association Yougoslave pour la Société des Nations, Bulgares et Yougoslaves. Language-Religion-Traditions-Aspect Politique-Etat actuel-Conclusion (Belgrade, 1928); Leopold Lenard, "Narodne manjine u SHS", in: *Jubilarni zbornik Života i rada SHS 1918-1928* (Belgrade, 1928), p. 733; Živko Avramovski, *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji. Godišnji izveštaji britanskog poslanstva u Beogradu 1921-1938, I (1921-1931)* (Zagreb, Belgrade, 1986), pp. 147, 161.) Slavs of Macedonia, Montenegrins and Bosnian Muslims, most of whom had no clear national consciousness anyway, were also denied ethnic recognition and were considered part of the majority population (Vladan Jovanović, *Vardarska banovina 1929-1941* (Belgrade, 2011), pp. 47-59; Ivo Banac, *Nacionalno pitanje u Jugoslaviji. Porijeklo, povijest, politika* (Zagreb, 1988), pp. 299-307, 336-351; Srećko M. Džaja, *Die politische Realität des Jugoslawismus (1918-1991). Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung Bosnien-Herzegovinas* (Munich, 2002), pp. 174-184, 235).

³ For practical reasons we shall adopt here the practice of English-speakers and call the Southern Serbian province simply Kosovo, but understanding under that term its whole territory including the Metohija.

⁴ This was a centuries long process in which violence, all sorts of pressure and assimilation (by conversion to Islam, adopting of Albanian dress and language etc.) played the part. (*Kosovo i Metohija u srpskoj istoriji* (Belgrade, 1989), pp. 133-193; Dušan T. Bataković, *Kosovo. La spirale de la haine* (Lausanne, 1993), pp. 23-24; Đoko Slijepčević, *Srpsko-arbanaški odnosi kroz vekove sa posebnim osvrtom na novije vreme* (Himelstir, 1983, 2nd ed.), pp. 99-126; Atanasije Urošević, "Ethnic Processes in Kosovo During the Turkish Rule," in: *Kosovo. Past and Present* (Belgrade, 1989), pp. 41-47; Dimitrije Bogdanović, *Knjiga o Kosovu* (Belgrade 1985), pp. 85-125.)

⁵ G[eorge] Bratianu, *An Enigma and a Miracle of History. The Romanian People* (Bucarest, 1996) (1st ed. 1937); N[icolae] Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains et de la romanité orientale, I. Les ancêtres avant les Roumains* (Bucarest, 1937), pp. 14-16; Idem, *Istorija Rumuna i njihove civilizacije*, (Belgrade, s.a.), pp. 46-47). This theory is hotly disputed by Hungarian and some other scholars who claim Romanians came only in 14th century from Valachia in the wake of their flocks, inhabiting gradually Transylvania and the Banat. (Paul Hunfalvy, *Ethnographie von Ungarn* (Budapest, 1877), pp. 334-350; Ludwig von Thallóczy, "Die Theorie der wlachischen oder rumänischen Frage," in *Illyrisch-albanische Forschungen, I*, ed. Ludwig von Thallóczy (Munich, Leipzig, 1916), p. 39; Ladislaus Makkai, ed., *Geschichte der Rumänen*, (Budapest, 1942), pp. 5-45; Bela Köpeczi (ed.), *Kurze Geschichte Siebenbürgens*, (Budapest, 1990), pp. 57-113, 181-185; Gottfried Schramm, "Die Katastrophe des 6. bis 8. Jahrhunderts und die Entstehung des rumänischen Volkes, *Südosteuropa Jahrbuch*, 17 (1983): 93). For a summary of the two centuries long debate cf. Dietmar Müller, "Neue Fragestellungen – alte Antworten", *Zeitschrift für siebenbürgische Landeskunde*, XXIV (2001), no.1; Georges Castellán, *A History of the Romanians* (New York, 1989), pp. 18-22).

Banat, seem to speak against the Romanian version.⁶ Whereas the perception of Albanians as violent late-comers deeply affected the way Yugoslav authorities handled them during the inter-war period, thanks to less violent previous history, cultural affinity, smaller number and, last but not least, friendly relations between Yugoslavia and Romania, Romanians in the Banat never stood in such bad odor.⁷

Other ethnic groups who could claim an early date of settlement were Germans in Slovenia⁸ and Hungarians in the Vojvodina⁹ – although most of the latter left the territory of the province during Ottoman invasion, only to return later on from 18th century onwards. Turks settled down in Macedonia and Kosovo during the Ottoman rule, but many left already before the foundation of Yugoslavia. Members of other ethnic groups (Germans, Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Ruthenians, Czechs) also settled down in the Vojvodina during 18th and 19th centuries in the course of the planned colonization aimed at strengthening the economy, increasing the number of working hands, tax payers and soldiers.¹⁰ The privileges these colonists had been granted (particu-

⁶ Borislav Jankulov, *Pregled kolonizacije Vojvodine u XVIII i XIX veku* (Novi Sad, 1961), p. 52; Radivoj Simonović, *Etnografski pregled Vojvodine* (Novi Sad, [1924]), p. 22; Dušan Popović, *Srbi u Banatu od kraja XVIII veka. Istorija naselja i stanovništva* (Belgrade, 1955), p. 16; Mirjana Maluckova, *Narodna nošnja Rumuna u jugoslovenskom Banatu* (Novi Sad, 1973), p. 13; Gligor Popi, *Rumuni u jugoslovenskom Banatu između dva rata (1918-1941)* (Novi Sad, 1976), p. 4.

⁷ On predominantly friendly relations between Yugoslavia and Romania between the two world wars cf. Gligor Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918-1941* (Novi Sad, 1984); Milan Vanku, *Mala Antanta 1920-1938* (Titovo Užice, 1969). However, the allied relations didn't exclude occasional outbursts of irredentist sentiments on part of more radical Romanian nationalists throughout the interwar period. (Cf. Dragoljub Petrović, "Pregled rumunskih revandikacionih težnji na teritoriju severoistočne Srbije do Drugog svetskog rata", *Braničevo*, XIV (1968), no. 2-3; Andrea Schmidt-Rösler, *Rumänien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Grenzziehung in der Dobrukscha und im Banat und die Folgeprobleme* (Frankfurt, Berlin, New York, Paris, Wien, [1994]), pp. 467-470.

⁸ Hugo Grothe, *Deutsche Sprachinsel Gottschee in Slowenien. Ein Beitrag zur Deutschtumskunde des europäischen Südostens* (Münster in Westfalen, 1931), pp. 18. ff; Herbert Otterstädt, *Gottschee. Verlorene Heimat deutscher Waldbauer* (Freilassing, [1962]), pp. 6-8; Ivan Simonič, "Zgodovina kočevskega ozemlja," in *Kočevski zbornik. Razprave o Kočevski in njenih ljudjih* (Ljubljana, 1939), pp. 51-58; *500 leta mesta Kočevja* (Kočevje, 1971), pp. 8-10; Karl Schemitsch, *Das war Gottschee* (Landskron, Kitchener, [1977]), p. 18; *Handwörterbuch des Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtums* (henceforth: HWBGAD), III, (Breslau, 1938), p. 322; Doris Kraft, *Das untersteierische Drauland. Deutsches Grenzland zwischen Unterdrauburg und Marburg*, (Munich, 1935), p. 127; Balduin Saria, "Die mittelalterliche deutsche Besiedlung in Krain," in *Gedenkschrift für Harold Steinacker (1875-1965)* (Munich, 1966), pp. 85-94; Bogo Grafenauer, "Ptuj v Srednjem veku," *Zgodovinski časopis*, XXIV (1970), no. 3-4; Janez Cvirn, *Trdnjavski trikotnik. Politična orijentacija Nemcev na Spodnjem Štajerskem (1861-1914)* (Maribor, 1997), pp. 10-11.

⁹ The term the Vojvodina will also be used for convenience's sake to designate parts of the historical South Hungary which fell to Yugoslavia after WWI.

¹⁰ Among many surveys cf. Dušan J. Popović, *Srbi u Vojvodini. Od Karlovačkog mira 1699 do Temišvarskog sabora 1790*, vol. 2, (2nd ed.) (Novi Sad, 1990), pp. 23-54; Oskar Feldtänzer, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte, Bd. I. Das Jahrhundert der Ansiedlung (1686-1805)* (Munich, 2006);

larly Germans) and their economic prowess which helped them gradually gain ground at the expense of the indigenous Slavic population would leave bad blood and would subsequently influence the treatment of national minorities in the inter-war Yugoslavia.

After the unoccupied land had been exhausted in the Vojvodina, the immigration wave slopped over into Slavonia, mostly in the second half of 19th century.¹¹ Finally, the last bunch of settlers came to Bosnia after the Habsburg occupation in 1878. It was mostly Poles, Germans and Ruthenians who founded few dozens of poor villages.¹²

The official numbers of minority inhabitants were disputed as is often the case. However, private conscriptions some minorities have undertaken seem to show that the official figures were more or less accurate. Thus the census of 1921 showed 505,790 Germans, 467,658 Hungarians, 439,657 Albanians, 231,068 Romanians,¹³ 150,322 Turks, 115,535 Czechs and Slovaks (lumped together as

Jankulov, o.c.; Konrad Schünemann, *Österreichs Bevölkerungspolitik unter Maria Theresia*, I (Berlin, 1935); Erik Roth, "Die planmäßig angelegte Siedlung im Deutsch-Banater Militärbezirk," in *Gedenkschrift für Harold Steinacker (1875-1965)* (Munich, 1966), pp. 133 ff; Sonja Jordan, *Die Kaiserliche Wirtschaftspolitik im Banat im 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1967); Márta Fata, "Einwanderung und Ansiedlung der Deutschen (1686-1790)," in *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas. Land an der Donau*, ed. Günter Schödl (Berlin, 1995), pp. 91-196.

¹¹ Vladimir Geiger, *Nijemci u Đakovu i Đakovštini* (Zagreb, 2001), pp. 3-17; Vlatka Dugački, "Češka i slovačka manjina u međuratnoj Jugoslaviji (1918.-1941.)," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Zagreb, 2011), pp. 24-31, 39-45; Carl Bethke, *Deutsche und ungarische Minderheiten in Kroatien und der Vojvodina 1918-1941. Identitätsentwürfe und ethnopolitische Mobilisierung* (Wiesbaden, 2009), pp. 76-88; Georg Wild, "Deutsche Siedlungen in Syrmien, Slawonien und Bosnien," *Südostdeutsches Archiv*, XIV (1971); Valentin Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien Slawonien und Kroatien bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Donauschwaben* (Stuttgart, 1972), pp. 17-19; E. Meynen, ed., *Das Deutschtum in Slawonien Syrmien. Landes- und Volkskunde* (Leipzig, 1942); Vidosava Nikolić, "Prilog proučavanju kolonizacije stanovništva Češke i Moravske na području Varaždinskog generalata i Slavonije 1824-1830. godine," *Zbornik Matice srpske za društvene nauke*, 46 (1967); Slavko Gavrilović, "Naseljavanje Slovaka u sremska sela Sot i Bingulu godine 1835," *Godišnjak Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu*, 6 (1961); Idem, "Rusini u Šidu od 1803. do 1848. Prilog istoriji nacionalnih manjina u Vojvodini," *Godišnjak Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu*, I (1956); Zdravka Zlodi, "Rusini/Ukrajinci u Hrvatskoj. Etape naseljavanja i problem imena," *Scrinia slavonica*, 5 (2005): 408-431.

¹² Tomislav Kraljačić, "Kolonizacija stranih seljaka u Bosnu i Hercegovinu za vrijeme austrougarske uprave," *Istorijski časopis*, vol. XXXVI (1989); Ferdo Hauptmann, "Regulisanje zemljišnog posjeda u Bosni i Hercegovini i počeci naseljavanja stranih seljaka u doba austrougarske vladavine," *Godišnjak Društva istoričara BiH*, XVI (1965); Hans Maier, *Die deutschen Siedlungen in Bosnien* (Stuttgart, 1924); Artur Burda, "Poljski naseljenici u Bosni," *Zbornik krajiških muzeja*, III (1969); Adnan Busuladžić, "Pojava grkokatoličkog stanovništva u Bosni i Hercegovini (od 1878. do najnovijeg doba)," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, XXXV (2003), no. 1; Vaso Strehaljuk, "Ukrajinci u Bosni," *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine* (Novi Sad, 1978); Dušan Drljača, *Kolonizacija i život Poljaka u jugoslovenskim zemljama. Od kraja XIX do polovine XX veka* (Belgrade, 1985), pp. 8-43.

¹³ All Romanians and Aromuns were counted together, but only the Romanians in the Banat were recognized as national minority.

was customary in those days), 25,615 Ruthenians etc.¹⁴ Ten years later, Albanians became the largest minority with 508,259 inhabitants. Germans were second-largest with 499,969, Hungarians came out third with 468,185. Czechs and Slovaks were now counted separately: there were 52,909 Czechs and 76,411 Slovaks. Furthermore, there were 132,924 Turks, 130,255 Romanians, 27,681 Ruthenians, etc.¹⁵ Due to incomplete data, it isn't possible to say how much emigration influenced the changed number of respective nationalities,¹⁶ but one should keep in mind that the first census was taken at the time the emigration triggered off by the outcome of WWI was still in progress. Apart from political reasons relevant above all for Hungarian and German officials and professionals in the first years after WWI,¹⁷ the reasons of emigration were primarily economic (in the case of Germans and Hungarians) or religious and national (in the case of Turks and Albanians). Large part of the migrations during the inter-war period was only the continuation of the processes that had started already in the late 19th century. This concerned Muslim population which was retreating before the advancing Christian states between 1878 and 1913 and the movable population of Austria-Hungary desirous of better living, among whom Germans and Hungarians were traditionally overrepresented.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Statistički pregled Kraljevine Jugoslavije [1921] po banovinama* (Belgrade, 1930), p. 5.

¹⁵ Publikationsstelle Wien, ed., *Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession, nach den unveröffentlichten Angaben der Zählung von 1931* (Wien, 1943).

¹⁶ Particularly hotly disputed was the number of Albanians who emigrated, mostly to Turkey, since the pressure on them to emigrate was the strongest. (Mile Bjelajac, "Die Volksgruppe der Albaner. Migrationen in der Kosovo Region 1918-1950," in *Zwangsmigrationen im mittleren und östlichen Europa. Völkerrecht, Konzeptionen, Praxis (1938-1950)*, ed. Ralph Melville, Jiří Pešek, Claus Scharf (Mainz, 2007), pp. 331-345; Vladan Jovanović, *Jugoslovenska država i Južna Srbija 1918-1929* (Belgrade, 2002), p. 205; Idem, *Vardarska banovina*, pp. 106-117; Janjetović, pp. 69-72; Aleksandar R. Miletić, *Journey under Surveillance. The Overseas Emigration Policy of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in Global Context, 1918-1928* (Belgrade, 2009), pp. 119-121).

¹⁷ Enikő Sajt, *Hungarians in the Vojvodina 1918/1947* (Boulder, Col., 2003), p. 20; Šandor Mesaroš, *Položaj Mađara u Vojvodini 1918-1929* (Novi Sad, 1981), pp. 88, 93-94; Vuk Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1918-1933* (Belgrade, 1971), p. 274; Istvan A. Mocsy, "Partition of Hungary and the Origins of the Refugee Problem," in *Trianon and East Central Europe. Antecedents and Repercussions*, ed. Béla K. Király, Lásylo Veszprémy (New York, 1995), p. 242.

¹⁸ Radoslav Đ. Pavlović, "Seobe Srba i Arbanasa u ratovima 1876, 1877, 1878. godine", *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SAN*, book IV-VI (1955-1957); Bogdanović, pp. 136-141; Ejup Mušović, "Crnogorski muhadžiri i njihova kretanja", *Istorijski zapisi*, XXXIX (1986), no. 1-2: 139-148; Safet Bandžović, "Tokovi iseljavanja muslimana iz Bosne i Sandžaka u Tursku", *NovopazarSKI zbornik*, 17 (1993): 137-139; Miloš Jagodić, "The Emigration of Muslims from the New Serbian Regions 1877/1878", *Balkanologie*, II (1998), no. 2; Laszlo Katusz, "Die Magyaren" in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918. III. Die Völker des Reiches*, ed. Adam Wandruszka, Peter Urbanitsch (Wien, 1980), p. 429; Zoltan Đere, "Iseljavanje iz Torontalske, Bačko-Bodroške i Sremske županije u periodu od 1900. do 1910. godine", *Istraživanja*, 13 (1990): 166; Lazar Rakić, "Iseljavanje iz Vojvodine krajem XIX i početkom XX veka", *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju*, 23 (1981): 153; Jan Sirácky, "On the Problem of Lowland Slovak Emigration in the Late Nineteenth and Twen-

The ways in which members of these peoples accepted the Yugoslav state were different and they depended on their numbers, dispersal, historical background, differences in topography and mentality. Turks, if they didn't chose to emigrate, acquiesced in their new role of a minority and even started collaborating with Serbian authorities right after the First Balkan War.¹⁹ The Albanians, on the other hand, offered armed resistance after the break down of the Ottoman rule, as well as after WWI. Their resistance lasted until mid-1920s, when the safe haven of the insurgents was effectively stamped out after the change of the regime in Albania.²⁰ Not very numerous Germans in Slovenia also toyed with putting up resistance for a short while, but were very soon thwarted by military preponderance of the Serbian Army and the majority Slovenian population.²¹ The Vojvodina was occupied peacefully by Serbian troops after the Belgrade armistice on November 13, 1918. National councils, other than Serbian ones, were dissolved and the non-Slavic population disarmed. However, Hungarians and Hungarian-friendly Germans continued to offer passive resistance for the next few years.²² Minority population in Slavonia and Bosnia was just a drop in the South-Slavic ocean which couldn't even think of independent political action.²³

tieth Centuries", in *Overseas Migrations from East-Central Europe 1880-1940*, ed. Julianna Puskás (Budapest, 1990), p. 210; Miletić, pp. 109-121.

¹⁹ Bogumil Hrabak, *Džemijet: organizacija muslimana Makedonije, Kosova, Metohije i Sandžaka 1919-1928* (Belgrade, 2003), p. 85.

²⁰ Ljubodrag Dimić, Đorđe Borozan, "Političke i bezbednosne prilike na Kosovu i Metohiji u prvoj polovini 1920. godine", *Istorija 20. veka*, (1999), no. 1-2; Živko Avramovski, "Jugoslovensko-albanski odnosi 1918-1939", *Ideje*, (1987), no. 5-6: 72-73; Ljubodrag Dimić, Đorđe Borozan, ed., *Jugoslovenska država i Albanci*, I, (Belgrade, 1998); *Ibid.*, II, (Belgrade, 1999); "Reokupacija oblasti srpske i crnogorske države s arbanaškom većinom stanovništva u jesen 1918. godine i držanje Arbanasa prema uspostavljenoj vlasti", *Gjurmine albanologjike*, (1969), no. 1; Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo. A Short History* (London, 1998), pp. 273-279.

²¹ Grothe, p. 180; HWBGAD, III, p. 76; Dušan Biber, "Kočevski Nemci med obema vojnama, *Zgodovinski časopis*, XVII (1963): 27; Janko Orožen, *Zgodovina Celja in okolice* (Celje, 1971), II, p. 314; Lojze Penič, "Konec avstrijske oblasti v Mariboru 1918-1919, *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje*, L (1979), no. 1-2; Lojze Ude, *Boj za severno mejo 1918-1919* (Maribor, 1977); Anton Vončina, "Maribor v letih 1918-1919, *Kronika*, IV (1956), no. 2.

²² Bethke, pp. 135-144; Dim[itrije] Kirilović, "Novi Sad u danima oslobođenja", *Glasnik istorijskog društva u Novom Sadu*, book VI, vol. 3 (1933); Petar Pekić, *Povijest oslobođenja Vojvodine* (Subotica, 1939); *Spomenica oslobođenja Vojvodine 1918*, (Novi Sad, 1929); Mesaroš, pp. 37-70; Sajti, pp. 10-12; Ljubomirka Krkljuš, "Pitanje organizacije vlasti u Vojvodini 1918-1919", in *Srbija na kraju Prvog svetskog rata* (Beograd, 1990); Арпад Лебл, "Народни совети во некои градови на Банат (ноември 1918 година), *Гласник на Институтот за национална историја*, 3 (1968); Toma Milenković, "Banatska republika i mađarski komesarijat u Banatu (31. oktobar 1918-20. februar 1919), *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju*, 32 (1985).

²³ Josip Horvat, *Politička povijest Hrvatske*, II, (2nd ed.) (Zagreb, 1989), pp. 85-98; Fritz Hoffmann, Josef Zorn, eds., *Franz-Josefsfeld – Schönborn. Geschichte einer deutschen Gemeinde in Bosnien* (Freilassing, 1963), p. 57.

Yugoslav leaders were far from delighted to have such a large number of ethnically alien minorities in their new state, particularly since the relations with most of them (except for Czechs and Slovaks)²⁴ had been rather bad than good throughout the history and because these minorities inhabited mostly sensitive border regions to which the neighboring countries cherished aspirations throughout the interwar period.²⁵ The fact that minority population made up actually the majority in areas such as the Vojvodina and Kosovo, made the situation even worse. Furthermore, part of the minorities had economic (and sometimes cultural) supremacy over the local South-Slav population making in that way the situation of the local “majority population” and its state precarious.²⁶ Throughout the inter-war period the minorities in these parts were seen as a destabilizing factor and a potential danger.

For that reason the new powers-to-be wanted to keep the national minorities down and, if possible, to encourage them to resettle in their mother countries. Partial curb on such ambitions was put by the Convention on Protection of Minorities which was forced upon Yugoslavia at the Paris peace conference. It was reluctantly signed by Yugoslav representatives after protracted opposition on December 5, 1919, and it would be applied equally reluctantly throughout the inter-war period. It granted basic nationality rights to minorities – in accordance with the then international standards. Actually, the chief aim was preservation of the stability of host-countries rather than preservation of minorities as such. For that reason, it was disliked by the states which had to apply it²⁷ and criticized by minority experts. Otherwise Yugoslav governments

²⁴ Cf. Dugački, o.c. Even the relations with Slavic, but mostly Greek-Catholic Ruthenians were strained. (Slavko Gavrilović, “Prilog istoriji Rusina u Bačkoj sredinom XVIII veka”, *Zbornik Matice srpske za društvene nauke*, 48 (1967), p. 113; Idem, *Rusini u Bačkoj i Sremu od sredine XVIII do sredine XIX veka*, in: *Iz istorije Rusina do 1941. godine*, (Novi Sad, 1977), pp. 39-43; Sima Tomović, *Šid. Monografija* (Šid, 1973), p. 36; Vladimir Biljnja, *Rusini u Vojvodini. Prilog proučavanju istorije Rusina u Vojvodini (1918-1941)*, (Novi Sad, 1987), p. 26.)

²⁵ Jovanović, *Jugoslovenska država*, pp. 147-163; Avramovski, *Jugoslovensko-albanski odnosi*; Vinaver, o.c.; Idem, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1933-1941* (Belgrade, 1976); Đorđe Borozan, *Velika Albanija. Porijeklo – ideje-prakasa*, (Belgrade, 1995); Anikó Kovács-Bertrand, *Der ungarische Revisionismus nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Der publizistische Kampf gegen den Friedensvertrag von Trianon (1919-1931)* (Munich, 1997); Gyula Juhász, *Hungarian Foreign Policy 1919-1945* (Budapest, 1979); G. Bajdaroff, *La Question macédonienne dans le passé et le présent* (Sofia, 1926); George P. Genoff, “The Minority Question and Revision of Treaties”, in *Bulgaria and the Balkan Problem* (Sofia, 1934); Petrović, “Pregled rumunskih revandikacionih težnji...; Schmidt-Rösler, pp. 467-470.)

²⁶ This was made manifest in a number of ways ranging from the feeling of unease, over economic dependency to outright panic in moments of foreign political crisis.

²⁷ The fact that old established Western powers (including the defeated Germany) were not obliged to sign such a convention jarred the new or enlarged smaller states of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe the more. (Zoran Janjetović, “Pitanje zaštite nacionalnih manjina u Kraljevini SHS na konferenciji mira u Parizu 1919-1920”, *Istorija 20. veka*, XVIII (2003), no. 2; Andrej Mitrović, *Jugoslavija na konferenciji mira u Parizu 1919-1920* (Beograd, 1968), pp. 200-206; Ivo

refused to commit themselves except for a few exceptional cases when minority rights were anchored in bilateral treaties with other countries.²⁸ On the whole, legal acts regulating the situation of minorities were in most cases government ordinances and not laws - except for a few concerning minority religious communities.

Having belonged mostly to privileged nationalities until 1913/1918 (Hungarians, Germans, Albanians, Turks), national minorities often (but by no means always) enjoyed better living standards and greater economic power than Southern Slavs. Thus the Germans in Slovenia dominated the industry, commerce and partly liberal professions;²⁹ most of the landowners in the Vojvodina were Hungarian, German or Jewish, although there were large numbers of landless German, and particularly Hungarian peasants;³⁰ in that region members of minorities also controlled larger part of industry and certain crafts.³¹ In the Southern

J. Lederer, *Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference. A Study in Frontiermaking* (New Haven, London, 1963), pp. 225-226, 239-249, 254-257; Bogdan Krizman, Bogumil Hrabak, ed., *Zapisnici sa sednica delegacije Kraljevine SHS na mirovnoj konferenciji u Parizu 1919-1920* (Belgrade, 1960), pp. 141, 143-144, 164, 168, 170, 176-195; Ilija Pržić, *Zaštita manjina* (Belgrade, 1933), p. 111-118; László Rehak, *Manjine u Jugoslaviji. Pravno politička studija* (Ph.D. dissertation, Novi Sad, Beograd, 1965), pp. 163-175; David Sherman Spector, *Romania at the Paris Peace Conference. A Study of the Diplomacy of Ioan I.C. Bratianu* (Iași 1995) (2nd ed.) p. 269.

²⁸ This concerned above all the tiny Italian minority in Dalmatia whose rights were regulated by several bilateral agreements in 1923-1925. It was the fruit of Yugoslavia's policy of appeasing the big and dangerous neighbor. Another case in point was the convention about minority primary schools in the Banat signed, also grudgingly, with Romania in 1933. (Pržić, pp. 143-149; Rehak, pp. 182-196, 204; Pierre Jaquin, *La question des minorités entre l'Italie et la Yougoslavie* (Paris, 1929), pp. 49-52; Popi, *Rumuni...*, p. 102; Idem, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi...*, p. 98; Branislav Gligorijević, "Jugoslovensko-rumunska konvencija o uređenju manjinskih škola Rumuna u Banatu 1933. godine, *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju*, 7 (1973): 86-88; *Die jugoslawisch-rumänische Schulkonvention: eine vorbildliche Regelung*, *Nation und Staat*, VII, 10/11, 1933, pp. 657-658.)

²⁹ Dušan Biber, "Socijalna struktura nemačke nacionalne manjine u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji, *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis*, (1978), no. 1-4: 405-406; Bruno Hartman, "„Südmarkini“ knjižnici v Mariboru, *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje*, LIV (1983), no. 1-2: 235; Tone Zorn, "Dva poročila iz leta 1929 o nemški manjšini v Sloveniji", *Kronika*, XXIV (1976), no. 2: 91; Ervin Kržičnik, *Gospodarski razvoj Maribora. Gradivo k zgodovini industrijalizacije mesta Maribora* (Maribor, 1956), pp. 15-30, 35-41; Stefan Karner, *Die deutschsprachige Volksgruppe in Slowenien. Aspekte ihrer Entwicklung 1939-1997* (Klagenfurt, Ljubljana, Wien, 1998), pp. 47-52, 58-60.

³⁰ Laslo Kevago, "Statistička ispitivanja društveno-ekonomskog položaja južnih Slovena u Ugarskoj početkom XX veka", *Zbornik Matice srpske za društvene nauke*, 54 (1969), p. 53; Nikola Gačeša, "Posedovni odnosi u Vojvodini pred Prvi svetski rat", in *Radovi iz agrarne istorije i demografije* (Novi Sad, 1995), pp. 44-45; Idem, "The Germans in the Agrarian Reform and Land Ownership Patterns in the Vojvodina Province During the Period from 1919 to 1941", in *The Third Reich and Yugoslavia 1933-1945* (Belgrade, 1977), p. 85; Slavko Šećerov, *Socijalno agrarni odnosi u Bačkoj pred izvođenje agrarne reforme* (Belgrade, 1929), pp. 119, 125.

³¹ Gordana Krivokapić-Jović, *Oklop bez viteza. O socijalnim osnovama i organizacionoj strukturi Narodne radikalne stranke u Kraljevini SHS (1918-1929)* (Belgrade, 2002), pp. 312-314; Todor Avramović, *Privreda Vojvodine od 1918. do 1929/30. godine s obzirom na stanje pre Prvog svet-*

part of the country, large landowners were almost exclusively Albanians and Turks – although there were also many poor Albanian peasants too.³² The authorities strove to weaken this dominant position of minority upper classes through measures such as nationalization of banks or agrarian reform, but they failed to win over the minority poor by giving over part of the appropriated wealth to them.³³ Colonization of Slavic patriots and WWI volunteers in the Vojvodina, Slavonia, Macedonia and Kosovo was clearly aimed against minorities, since in most cases they were excluded from the land distribution.³⁴ The goal was to strengthen the Slavic element both numerically and economically at the expense of unreliable minorities but only a limited success was achieved.³⁵

Yugoslavia, being on paper a democratic state, couldn't withhold political rights from its minority citizens. However, the government tried to restrict it in northern parts until the possibility to opt for Austria or Hungary stipulated by the Minority Convention, expired in 1921. Thus the first to make use of civic liberties were Albanians and Turks who set up the Cemiyet, the party of Southern Muslims which at first had primarily interests of Muslim landlords at heart. It secured indemnification for confiscated land for them on the occasion of the passing of the first Yugoslav constitution in June 1921. Later on, it enlarged its base and became increasingly Albanian-tinged. When it grew too strong and when the regime didn't need it any more, it was effectively busted by 1924.³⁶

skog rata (Novi Sad, 1965), p. 255; Dobrivoj Nikolić, *Srbi u Banatu u prošlosti i sadašnjosti* (Novi Sad, 1941), p. 150; Daka Popović, *Banat, Bačka i Baranja. Savremeni nacionalni, politički i društveni profil* (Novi Sad, 1935), p. 13; Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije, I. Kraljevina Jugoslavija 1918-1941* (Beograd, [1989]), p. 58; HWBGAD, I, (Breslau, 1933), p. 282; Biljnja, p. 35.

³² Vladan Jovanović, "Turci u Južnoj Srbiji 1918-1929", *Srpska slobodarska misao*, III (2001), no. 10: 135; Ali Hadri, "Okupacioni sistem na Kosovu i Metohiji 1941-1944", *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis*, 2 (1965): 57-58; Hajredin Hoxha, "Proces nacionalne afirmacije albanske narodnosti u Jugoslaviji (Izabrana poglavlja)", *Časopis za kritiko znanosti*, IX (1982), no. 51-52: 285.

³³ Nikola Gaćeša, Radovi...; Idem, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Bačkoj 1918-1941* (Novi Sad, 1968); Idem, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Banatu 1919-1941* (Novi Sad, 1972); Idem, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Sremu 1919-1941* (Novi Sad, 1975); Zdenka Šimončić-Bobetko, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Hrvatskoj 1918-1941* (Zagreb, 1997); Milovan Obradović, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija na Kosovu* (Priština, 1981); Boris Kršev, *Bankarstvo u Dunavskoj banovini* (Novi Sad, 1998); Mesaroš, Mađari, p. 313; Branko Bešlin, *Nacionalizacija banaka sa isključivo stranim kapitalom u Vojvodini posle Prvog svetskog rata* (Mscr.); Josip Vrbošić, "Kategorije i brojčano stanje kolonista u Slavoniji i Baranji između dva svjetska rata", *Društvena istraživanja*, VI (1997), no. 2-3; Snježana Ružić, "Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Slavoniji, Srijemu i Baranji 1918-1929 – odnos lokalnog stanovništva i naesljenih dobrovoljaca", *Scrinia slavonica*, I (2001). (Some Croatian authors interpret the agrarian reform and colonization as aimed against the Croats).

³⁴ Even the otherwise preferred Slovaks and Czechs didn't get their rightful share of the land subject to the agrarian reform. (Nikola Gaćeša, "Vojvođanski Slovaci u agrarnoj reformi posle Prvog svetskog rata", in *Radovi...*)

³⁵ Janjetović, o.c., pp. 330-345.

³⁶ Bogumil Hrabak, *Džemijet: organizacija muslimana Makedonije, Kosova, Metohije i Sandžaka 1919-1928* (Belgrade, 2003); Krivokapić-Jović., pp. 164-165.

In the Northern parts, it was the Slovaks who set up a party of their own which had to suffer a long chain of disappointments due to unfulfilled promises by the governing Serbian parties.³⁷ By 1922 Germans, Hungarians and Romanians also founded their parties.³⁸ The only one which could claim comparative success was the German one which strove to stick with the governing parties in order to secure benefits for the German minority. Depending on the parliamentary constellation, it scored some minor successes. Because the majority parties never thought about really sharing power with the German Party, and due to the fact that large part of Germans voted for South-Slav parties: Radical, Democratic or Croatian Peasants' Parties its influence wasn't commensurate with the number of German voters.³⁹ As for the two other minority parties, they were riddled with dissent and under government pressure as irredentist.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the Romanian Party could count only on small number of voters, whereas the Hungarian one never managed to find the common cause with Hungarian masses. After political parties were abolished in 1929, only few minority representatives played a token role in political life.⁴¹ They could voice their grievances but the strength and influence of their respective mother-countries carried far more weight than they themselves.⁴²

³⁷ Dugački, pp. 216-281; Branislav Gligorijević, "Politička istupanja i organizacija Slovaka i Čeha u Kraljevini SHS", *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju*, 24 (1981).

³⁸ PA AA, Abt. IIB, Nationalitätenfrage, Fremdvölker in Jugoslawien, Politik 6, Jugoslawien, Bd. 2; AJ, 14, box 104, document no. 401; Oskar Plautz, *Das Werden der deutschen Volksgemeinschaft in Südslawien* (Novi Sad, 1940), pp. 47-48; Mathias Annabring, *Volksgeschichte der Donauschwaben in Jugoslawien* (Stuttgart, 1955), p. 31; Hans Rasimus, *Als Fremde im Vaterland. Der Schwäbisch-deutsche Kulturbund und die ehemalige deutsche Volksgruppe in Jugoslawien im Spiegel der Presse* ([Munich, 1989]), pp. 206-254; Sajti, pp. 32-47; Mesaroš, pp. 154-156; Popi, *Rumuni...*, pp. 54-55; Idem, "Formiranje, razvoj i delovanje Rumunske stranke (1923-1929)", *Istraživanja*, 3 (1974).

³⁹ PA AA, Abt. IIB, Nationalitätenfrage, Fremdvölker in Jugoslawien, Politik 6, Jugoslawien, Bd. 2; Ibid., Bd. 3; Plautz, pp. 35-36, 53-55, 58, 64-65, 77; Annabring, pp. 32-38, 41; Branislav Gligorijević, *Parlament...*, pp. 140, 158, 217-218, 294. According to Johann Wüsch, only a third of German voters actually voted for the German Party. (Johann Wüsch, *Beitrag zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Jugoslawien für den Zeitraum von 1933 bis 1944* (Kehl a. Rh., 1966), p. 53). The same was true of other minorities. (Krivokapić-Jović, p. 173; Hrabak, *Džemijet...*, p. 10; Sajti, p. 50; Hadri, p. 67.)

⁴⁰ AJ, 14, 109/413; 124/444; 118/430; 148/514; 105/404; 98/385; 69, 8/18; Aleksandar Kasaš, *Mađari u Vojvodini 1941-1946* (Novi Sad, 1996), pp. 14-15; Sajti, pp. 34-38. In cases of some members of minority parties the suspicion was completely justified. (Cf. Mesaroš, p. 252; Popi, *Rumuni...*, p. 73.)

⁴¹ PA AA, Abt. IIB, Nationalitätenfrage, Fremdvölker in Jugoslawien, Politik 6, Jugoslawien, Bd. 5; VI A Bd. 18, 640/39; Janjetović, pp. 196-210; Šandor Mesaroš, *Mađari u Vojvodini 1929-1941* (Novi Sad, 1989), pp. 79-80, 83, 115-116, 121, 124, 132-135, 147-148, 158, 172-173; Sajti, pp. 94-97, 101; Annabring, p. 63; Dušan Biber, *Nacizem in Nemci v Jugoslaviji 1933-1941* (Ljubljana, 1966), pp. 188-193.

⁴² This held true particularly for German and Hungarian minorities. (Cf. Sajti, pp. 103-108, 121; Mesaroš, *Mađari*, pp. 193, 199-205, 211, 223-226.)

The field in which minority rights were guaranteed to a limited extent was education. Yugoslavia was obliged to set up minority primary schools (with just four grades) in minority languages. Oversized German (in Slovenia) and Hungarian (in the Vojvodina and Slavonia) education system was rapidly dismantled and minority classes set up at majority schools. The school system was brought completely under state control. The government wanted to raise minority children, as well as all citizens, in the spirit of loyalty. Teachers and schoolbooks were lacking and enrolment was restricted whenever a legal possibility presented itself. Albanian and Turkish-language schools were abolished altogether,⁴³ as were all private schools. The number of secondary schools was very limited and few of them existed above all for Germans, Hungarians, Czechs and Slovaks. The success of this heavy-handed school system was rather limited: some members of minorities learned the official language well, but that didn't make them better Yugoslav patriots.⁴⁴

Other avenues minorities could use to build up their separate national existence were various associations and press. Both were almost exclusively developed in the North. Tribal Albanian pre-literate society felt almost no need for either press or for civic associations. The level of culture was much too low to demand that way of organization. Turks sank into general apathy which often ended in emigration to Turkey and their undefined cultural and political clubs from the late Ottoman times, weren't renewed.⁴⁵

It was in the North, in the former Habsburg territories with their higher cultural and living standard and long tradition of associations that all sorts of organizations thrived. Many of them originated in the decades before WWI, and

⁴³ They were not numerous anyway, particularly the Albanian ones. Aromunian schools suffered the same fate, even though Yugoslavia was on good terms with their protector, Romania. (Ljubodrag Dimić, *Prosvetna politika Kraljevine Jugoslavije, III. Politika i stvaralaštvo* (Belgrade, 1997), p. 193; Max Demeter Peyfuss, *Die aromunische Frage von den Ursprüngen bis zum Frieden von Bukarest (1913) und die Haltung Österreich-Ungarns* (Wien, Köln, Graz, 1974), p. 121; Katrin Boeckh, *Von den Balkankriegen zum Ersten Weltkrieg. Kleinstaatenpolitik und ethnische Selbstbestimmung auf dem Balkan* (Munich, 1996), p. 355).

⁴⁴ PA AA, Unterrichts- und Erziehungs- und Politik 17, Jugoslawien, Bd. 1; Ervin Dolenc, *Kulturni boj. Slovenska kulturna politika v Kraljevini SHS* ([Ljubljana, 1996]), pp. 30-33; Muhamet Pirraku, "Kulturno-prosvetni pokret Albanaca u Jugoslaviji (191-1941)", *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis* 1-4 (1978); HWBGAD, III, p. 76; Kraft, p. 134; Biljana Šimunović-Bešlin, *Prosvetna politika u Dunavskoj banovini (1929-1941)* (Novi Sad, 2007), pp. 187-211, 272-284, 297-303; Dimić, pp. 11, 59-66, 77-78, 110, 122-135, 138, 154; Ibid., I, pp. 76, 86, 88, 120; Jovanović, "Turci..."; pp. 143-144; Sajti, pp. 146-152; Josef Volkmar Senz, *Das Schulwesen der Donauschwaben in Jugoslawien* (Munich, 1969); Popi, *Rumuni...*, p. 49; Mesaroš, Položaj, p. 167, 179-189, 193-195, 202-205, 151; Idem, Mađari, pp. 50, 136, 147, 379; Andrej Vovko, "Nemško manjšinsko šolstvo v obdobju stare Jugoslavije", *Zgodovinski časopis*, XL (1986), no. 3; Janjetović, *Deca careva...*, pp. 231-263; Branislav Gligorijević, "O nastavi na jezicima narodnosti u Vojvodini 1919-1929", *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju*, 5 (1972); Biljnja, pp. 52-54; Lenard, *Narodne manjine*, p. 731-733; Dugački, pp. 310-317.

⁴⁵ To be sure, there were few – but really very few – exceptions. (Pirraku, pp. 359, 369; Mustafa Memić, *Velika medresa i njeni učenici u revolucionarnom pokretu* (Skopje, 1984), pp. 68-69.

some even in 18th century.⁴⁶ They comprised general cultural associations, choirs, drama clubs, reading rooms, libraries, humanitarian societies etc. According to the official Yugoslav data, there were some 700 various minority associations in Yugoslavia in the late 1920s: 415 German, 195 Hungarian, 48 Romanian etc.⁴⁷ The level of their activity varied depending on local conditions.

Basically all minorities strove to set up their national cultural organizations which would be blanket organizations for all kinds of cultural and social activities on local and national levels. Czechs and Slovaks, enjoying the government benevolence were relatively successful.⁴⁸ Romanians wanted much, but due to lack of leaders and resources, as well as, due to disunity, ultimately achieved little: after unsuccessful attempts at founding a blanket organization in 1923 and 1936, their cultural life remained fragmented.⁴⁹ Ruthenians organized their association Prosvita in 1919, and another one, leftist in nature, in 1930, which started competing for Ruthenians' hearts and minds with Prosvita without notable success.⁵⁰ Hungarians had a number of cultural and other associations which, due to government pressure and emigration of many opinion leaders, had difficulties weathering the first years after WWI. Their activities were consolidated later on, but were never unmolested and the authorities kept a watchful eye to prevent their unification into a large blanket association. This was permitted only in 1941, few months before Yugoslavia was plunged into WWII. Their standing wish for a professional theater was granted only in 1940 and then not in the Vojvodina but in Belgrade!⁵¹

The unification of forces was achieved by Germans in 1920 when Kulturbund was founded in Novi Sad to serve as a clearing house of all cultural, economic and social activities of the German minorities. Later on its economic branches became independent, and some additional ones were founded, whereas the Kulturbund remained the major minority cultural organization.⁵²

⁴⁶ The [German] Philharmonic Association in Ljubljana was founded as far back as 1702! (Adolf Lenz, *Die deutsche Minderheit in Slowenien* (Graz, 1923), p. 65).

⁴⁷ AJ, 38, 93/225.

⁴⁸ Dugački, pp. 184-193, 201-203, 317-327; Rudolf Bednárík, *Slováci v Južoslávii. Materiály k ich hmotnej a duchovnej kultúre* (Bratislava, 1966), pp. 57-58; Josip Hanzl, Josip Matušek, Adolf Orct, *Borbeni put prve čehoslovačke brigade „Jan Žižka z Trcnova“* (Darugar, 1968), pp. 36-38.

⁴⁹ Popi, *Rumuni*, pp. 127-141, 136-141.

⁵⁰ Biljnja, pp. 23, 45-59; Nikola Gačeša, "Rusini između dva svetska rata" in *Radovi...*, pp. 349-351; Vlado Kostelnik, "Klasno i nacionalno u emancipaciji jugoslavenskih Rusina-Ukrajincina" in *Klasno i nacionalno u suvrremenom socijalizmu, II* (Zagreb, 1970), p. 574; L. Lenard, "Slovenske narodne manjine u Jugoslaviji", *Narodna odbrana*, December 29, 1929, no. 52, p. 855.

⁵¹ AJ, 38, 93/225; 93/225; 63, 47/145; F. 398, f. 1; 305, 8/18; 66 (pov.), 71/184; Zbirka A. Cincar-Markovića, f. II; Dimić, *Kulturna politika*, III, p. 80, 86; Mesaroš, Položaj, pp. 224-234; Idem, Mađari, pp. 53-55, 148-149, 158, 180, 219, 380; Sajti, p. 119-120.

⁵² Despite that, it would comprise less than 10% of the *Volksdeutsche* until late 1930s. (Anthony Komjathy, Rebecca Stockwell, *German Minorities and the Third Reich. Ethnic Germans of East Central Europe Between the Wars* (New York, London, 1980), p. 130).

Its work was also not free of government pressure and molestation – depending on political situation and interests of the ruling parties, relations with Germany, as well as on the part of the country where its branches were active.⁵³ Just like the German Party it strove to achieve a complete cultural autonomy of the *Volksdeutsche*.⁵⁴ Between 1933 and 1938/39 it experienced the struggle between the old leaders and the young Nazis comparable to similar struggles in other European countries with German minorities. Eventually the Nazis came to the top with the direct aid of the Third Reich. Henceforth the Kulturbund would increasingly become the vehicle for spreading Nazi propaganda and *Gleichschaltung* of the *Volksdeutsche*. It would unite bulk of Yugoslavia's Germans and cover all fields of their activities – becoming the willing tool of the Reich's foreign policy.⁵⁵ In any case, the Kulturbund remained the model other minorities wished to emulate.

Just like associations, minority press was developed mostly in Northern parts. The Cemiyet had its short-lived newspaper which was banned for political reasons in 1924 as part of the government offensive against the party, and several other Turkish-language newspapers which were of even shorter duration.⁵⁶ On the other hand, minority press, particularly Hungarian and German, had strong tradition and a number of various publications. These two national minorities had several influential dailies, read not only by members of these two minorities, but also by the educated South-Slavs. Some of them, particularly Hungarian ones, received financial support from the mother-countries of their respective minorities.⁵⁷ To be sure, all this press had to write within the limits set by the official censorship – which held true for all publications. In other words, not all minority problems could be discussed freely in the press. This, however, was partly rectified by import of newspapers and journals from Germany, Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, although some of the papers published there were banned in Yugoslavia because of their “unfriendly writing”.

⁵³ It was abolished in 1924 and 1929. (Annabring, p. 41; Plautz, p. 35; Biber, Nacizem, p. 34; Rasimus, pp. 429-431; Josip Mirnić, *Nemci u Bačkoj u Drugom svetskom ratu* (Novi Sad, 1974), p. 30).

⁵⁴ Bethke, pp. 272-286; Plautz, p. 26, 34; Senz, pp. 51-52, Biber, Nacizem, pp. 32-34; Annabring, p. 40, 53; Rasimus, p. 16-199, 445-47; Mirnić, pp. 25-36.

⁵⁵ Biber, Nacizem, pp. 167-211; Rasimus, pp. 489-509; Mirnić, pp. 36-75; Annabring, pp. 65-69; Wüsch, pp. 148-153.

⁵⁶ Hrabak, *Džemijet*, pp. 8, 82, 234, 238; Jovanović, *Jugoslovenska država*, p. 345; Ismail Eren, “Turska štampa u Jugoslaviji (1866-1966)”, *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju XIV-XV* (1964-1965): 375-380.

⁵⁷ Branko Bešlin, *Vesnik oluje. Nemačka štampa u Vojvodini (1933-1941)* (Novi Sad, Sremski Karlovci, [2001]); Tanja Žigon, *Nemško časopisje na Slovenskem* (Ljubljana, 2001); Smilja Amon, “Nemško časopisje na Slovenskem”, *Teorija in praksa XXV* (1987), no. 9-10; Mesaroš, Položaj, pp. 157, 160, 220-222, 243; Idem, Mađari, pp. 57, 367-378; Sajti, pp. 41, 155-157; Dugački, pp. 50-70; Janjetović, *Deca...*, 268-287; Popi, *Rumuni...*, pp. 70-71, 146; László Rehák, “Štampa u Vojvodini” in *Vojvodina 1944-1954* (Novi Sad, 1954), pp. 355-356.

One might conclude that the situation of various national minorities wasn't the same in various parts of the country. Indeed, the same national minority could receive different treatment in various parts. Thus the pressure on Germans was the strongest in Slovenia, weaker in Slavonia, whereas in the Vojvodina it was the mildest thanks to the policy of weaning them from Hungarians. At the same time, some minorities hadn't the same position in various spheres of life: Albanians and Turks were politically more influential than their economic strength would warrant; Germans in Slovenia had economic influence far beyond their political one; in the Vojvodina they had some political influence and economic power, but in Bosnia they were absolute underdogs. Hungarian leaders were influential enough to file lawsuits before the League of Nations, but many ordinary Hungarians lived in complete poverty. Thanks to accords with Italy the tiny Italian minority in Dalmatia enjoyed benefits other minorities could only dream of etc. Some, like Czechs, and especially Slovaks, were upgraded within the new state, whereas others were deprived of the privileged position they had enjoyed prior to the Balkan wars and WWI. Historically created social, political, religious and other differences within each national minority, foreign policy considerations and many other factors should also be kept in mind.

On the whole, the situation of national minorities was tolerable, although far from good. At the same time, it was on the then European average, sometimes even surpassing in quality the situation of national minorities in many other countries.⁵⁸ However, it was not good enough to win the loyalty of members of the minorities, which would have tragic consequences in WWII. Bad historical experience, real or imagined strength of certain minorities, nationalism and the threat some of the neighboring countries represented for Yugoslavia's integrity, prevented the minority policy from being more generous and maybe from winning hearts and minds of members of minorities for the young state. Thus, the Yugoslav minority policy must be, in the last resort, declared a failure: it didn't achieve its main objective of making loyal citizens out of members of national minorities and of securing the possession of territories they inhabited.

⁵⁸ This was particularly true if one takes into consideration the situation of Slovenes in Austria, Macedonians in Greece or Serbs in Albania. A contemporary overview of the situation of national minorities in the early 1930s see in: Ewald Ammende, ed., *Die Nationalitäten in den Staaten Europas. Sammlung von Lageberichten* (Wien, Leipzig, 1931).

Nationale Minderheiten in Jugoslawien 1918-1941

Zusammenfassung

Nationale Minderheiten bildeten etwa 12% der Gesamtbevölkerung des Königreiches der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen/Jugoslawiens und das Verhältnis der Behörden ihnen gegenüber war nicht gleich im ganzen Staate. Der Druck auf Deutsche war am stärksten in Slowenien, etwas schwächer in Slawonien und am schwächsten in Vojvodina und zielte darauf, sie von der ungarischen Minderheit zu trennen. Die nationalen Minderheiten genossen auch nicht die gleiche Lage im gesellschaftlichen Leben des Königreiches. Albaner und Türken hatten größeren politischen Einfluss, als dass es ihnen ihre wirtschaftliche Macht ermöglichen würde. Auf der anderen Seite verfügten die Deutschen in Slowenien über starken wirtschaftlichen Einfluss, jedoch nicht über politische Macht, während sie in Vojvodina politische und wirtschaftliche Macht innehatten. Die Führer der Ungaren waren wiederum politisch so einflussreich, dass sie beispielsweise sogar eine Klage bei der Liga der Nationen erheben könnten, während viele ihrer Volksgenossen in bitterer Armut lebten. Dank der mit Italien getroffenen Abkommen genoss die an Zahl kleine italienische Gemeinschaft in Dalmatien solche Begünstigungen, von denen andere Minderheiten nur träumen konnten. Andere Minderheiten - wie Tschechen und Slowaken - waren in den neuen Staat eingewebt und gewisse Minderheiten genossen privilegierte Lage auf Grund des Erbes der Balkankriege und des Ersten Weltkrieges. Im Ganzen genommen war die Lage der nationalen Minderheiten in Jugoslawien nur erträglich. Deswegen kann man die jugoslawische Politik den nationalen Minderheiten gegenüber als unerfolgreich bezeichnen, denn sie erfüllte ihr Ziel nicht: die Angehörigen der nationalen Minderheiten zu loyalen Staatsbürgern zu machen und auf diese Weise den Besitz der von ihnen besiedelten Territorien zu sichern.