

IDENTIFIABILITY IN WARFARE: CROATIAN SOLDIERS' MULTINATIONAL AMBIANCE OF SERVICE (1914-1918)

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The importance of collective emotions in warfare is enormous. In conflicts individual emotions are often submitted by the collective ones. Soldiers are often bounded by emotions. The tie between nation (Homeland) and individuals is crucial to that process. What makes the bond tight is nationalism. Nationalism within a multiethnic state is especially complexed and it can lead to one's disunification. This article argues the interconnections between individual and collective emotions within different political environments. The case study to this analysis is on Croatian soldiers during World War One (WWI), than a part of the multiethnic Austria-Hungarian Army. What makes the case more complex is the presence of various stresses in order to shift the Croatian soldiers' concept of Homeland: Austria-Hungarian, Yugoslavian/Serbian, and Croatian. I suggest that the majority of Croatian soldiers, bounded by the sense of 'duty and honor', stayed loyal to Austria-Hungary, or at least, were not the pivots of the army's disintegration. The question of their perception of Homeland is therefore important for understanding the influence of emotions on political relations.

Key words: World War One, Croatian soldiers, collective emotions

Introduction

Preceding WWI national integrations of the Slavic people in Austria-Hungary were already finished (at least on the key elements of building modern nations) forthcoming their vibrant activities during the war.¹ Being aware of

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¹ By 1918 Croatian people had built a modern nation by constituting all of the particularity elements needed for the creation of the nation – state (Petar Korunić, *Rasprava o izgradnji moderne hrvatske nacije: Nacija i nacionalni identiteti* (Slavonski Brod, 2006), p. 260).

that, the Austro-Hungarian High Command (AOK) looked upon the Slavic soldiers as the weakest link of the Army. However, no matter how highly manifested national movements were, the Austro-Hungarian Army lived to its last days. Nonetheless, it was Croatian General Svetozar Boroević who fought the Monarchy's last battles on the Isonzo front.²

The stigma on Slavic troops continued in the histories of WWI, especially those more dated (mostly of interwar era of 'official' histories engagement), where Slavs were highlighted as those to blame for the final defeat.³ Slavic unwillingness to fight, desertion and treachery were seen as the reasons for the defeat.⁴ The Czechs were especially seen as torchbearer. After 1918, the successor states of South-Slavic entities of once Austria-Hungary empowered the 'Prison of People' mantra regarding the fallen Black-Yellow Empire. By such mantra, a veil overlaid most of the Austro-Hungarian war history. During the first Yugoslavia (Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia, 1918-1941) there were present only the works carrying the sententious Yugoslav message - stories of the Volunteer units or the Yugoslav Comitee experience.⁵ Whatsoever, the interest in Yugoslav volunteers, rebels counter to

² During WWI Svetozar Boroević (1856-1920) led the 3rd Austro-Hungarian army in the Eastern front (Russian front). During 1915 he was commanding the 5th Army on the Southeastern front (Italian front). During the last two years of WWI he commanded the group of Armies (including 1st and 2nd Army) and became famous because of his strategic planning and holding up the Isonzo front. He remained faithful to the King all to the end of Austria-Hungary. After the war, due to his reputation and rank, he became *persona non grata* in the new Kingdom of SHS. However, he also lost his right to an Austrian pension due to applying for a citizenship of the Kingdom of SHS. Without solving those problems he died homeless and in poverty on May 23, 1920 in Klagenfurt, Austria.

³ This viewpoint was presented in *Österreich-Ungarns Letzter Krieg, 1914-1918*, vol. I-VII (Vienna, 1930-1938) which were made under the supervision and direction of Austrian War Archives director Edmund Glaise-Horstenau. The Austrian *ÖULK* editors clearly saw the Slavs divided - as the South (Croats, Slovenes and, conveniently the Slovaks of higher loyalty to the Crown) and North Slavs, i.e. the Czechs, seen closely to "renegades" (*ÖULK*, vol. IV, p. 138). Slavs and the Romanians were shown in the lens of separtist nationalities whose "subversive activities were soon initiated" after the break out of the war (*ÖULK*, vol. II, p. 4). The mood of the 'Slavic and Latin' soldiers was influenced both by the Monarchy's interior (with Czechs as the nucleus) and abroad movements (*ÖULK*, vol. II, p. 27). However, neither were the Magyars put in different light as presenting them as those who forced the Crown "to make further concessions to Magyar's national aspirations" (*ÖULK*, vol. I, p. 40). Slavic incidents of unloyalism were seen in carrying "banners and ribbons in the pan-Slavic colors (red, white, blue)" which were also used on enemy insignia (*ÖULK*, vol. II, p. 27). When speaking of spreading the feelings of "apathy and indifference" Slavic troops again were "the worst affected" (*ÖULK*, vol. II, pp. 134-135).

⁴ As an example of this viewpoint see: Geoffrey Wawro, "Morale in the Austro-Hungarian Army: the Evidence of Habsburg Army Campaign reports and Allied Intelligence Officers", in: Hugh Cecil, Peter H. Liddle, eds. *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), pp. 399-412. Survey of the works on the understandig of the influences of WWI see: Samuel Williamson Jr., Ernest R. May, "An Identity of Opinion: Historians and July 1914", *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 79 (2007): 335-387.

⁵ Filip Hameršak, *Tamna strana Marsa. Hrvatska autobiografija i Prvi svjetski rat*, (Zagreb, 2013), p. 179.

Austria-Hungary, and the Yugoslav bellwethers continued likewise during the second Yugoslavia (1945-1990), but due to the State polity, it was then introduced in the scope of communism.⁶ Considering both Yugoslavias, most of the attention was given to the 'Piemont' role of Serbia.⁷ Eventually, a gap in historiography increased. Just in the recent Croatian historiography (1990-) has that gap declined while analyses of Austro-Hungary's end (including the warfare experience) in different lens are rapidly multiplying.⁸

Thus, it seems that the comparative survey of Slavic soldiers' identity during WWI is what can additionally help latest scholarly discourse. The interconnection between pugnacity and collective emotions could be regarded stimulative to even more extensive analysis of Slavic soldiers in WWI.⁹ Here, the Croatian component of the Austro-Hungarian Army will be analyzed. Three major issues would be considered: mobilization, front behavior and their deflection of the Army.

The complexity of the Austro-Hungarian Army was deep-rooted in its multinational structure. There existed three types of units, joined imperial and royal common army (KuK) which was paid for by the central state government, and two divided frontline forces, one for the Austrian crown lands (Landwehr, KK) which included Dalmatian troops, and one for the Hungarian kingdom (Honvéd, KU).¹⁰ A year after the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise, within the Hungarian part of the Monarchy there was another one signed, that between Croatian and Hungarian governments. By that agreement, and considering military affairs, Croatia gained greater autonomy within the Croatian

⁶ F. Hameršak, *Tamna strana Marsa*: pp. 183-185.

⁷ Alan Sked, "Austria-Hungary and the First World War", *Histoire@politique: Politique, culture, société*, n° 22, janvier-avril 2014, e-edition (www.histoire-politique.fr); F. Hameršak, *Tamna strana Marsa*, p. 183.; Mark Cornwall, "The Great War and the Yugoslav Grassroots: Popular mobilization in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1914-18", in: Dejan Djokić and James Ker-Lindsay, eds., *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia. Key issues and Controversies* (Abingdon – New York, 2011): 27-45, 27.

⁸ An especially extensive work on Croatian WWI point of view in the scope of the autobiographies including comprehensive analysis on the WWI bibliography (both Croatian and international) see: F. Hameršak, *Tamna strana Marsa*.

⁹ Pioneer historiographical work on WWI soldiers' and motivation, founded on Erik Erikson's ego development theory, conducted at the early 1980s' by Eric J. Leed see in his book *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge, 1981). As regarding Austro-Hungarian Army bad war morale in the lens of objective reasons of military defeat (especially after defeat on the river Piave) and lack of food "regardless of nationality" see: Mark Cornwall, "Morale and patriotism in the Austro-Hungarian Army, 1914-1918", in: John Horne, ed., *State, society and mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 173-191, 187).

¹⁰ Croatian lands were not in the same administrative systems. Officially, there was the Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia but existed in two parts of the Monarchy. The Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia was incorporated into the Hungarian part of the Monarchy, and the Kingdom of Dalmatia in the Austrian part of the Empire.

troops (Domobranstvo) (which were still part of the Hungarian army organization) by introducing Croatian language and insignias. Considering the loyalty, those elements showed as the crucial ones in long terms. Respectively, there existed three commanding languages: German, Hungarian and Croatian, as well as seven languages used in particular regiments depending on the ethnic structure of their recruits. The transnational cohesion within the army stayed almost untouched, but only before the outbreak of WWI. However, it proved that giving the opportunity to express one's national elements, even in a wide supranational sense, was a cohesive item after all. *Indivisible and Inseparable*, backed by a number of draconian measures, seemed to be deep-rooted.

Just few years before WWI Croatian political reality was quite different then advocated within the army. It interfered with the national feeling but far from advocating independence of Croatia.¹¹ At the time the Croat-Serb coalition, supportive of the Yugoslav idea, was in power in Zagreb. Its empowerment was followed by tightening the relations with the Kingdom of Serbia, but solely, and exclusively on an unofficial level. Some initial signs of this trend can be traced during the Balkan Wars (1912-1914) when some of the Austro-Hungarian Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were joining the fights on behalf of the Kingdom of Serbia. There was also a strong academic, mostly student exchange taking place between Belgrade and Zagreb. In the eve of WWI a parliament representative, member of the Croatian Party of Right, Dragutin Hrvoj vividly described that surreal present sense of brotherhood. On July 8, 1914 he said in the Croatian *Sabor*: "In our era our intelligentsia is gripped by some Serbo-mania which was caused in particular by the success of the Balkan allies in the last Balkan War. (...) Our intelligentsia, if you consider our press and our literature in the last five or six years (...) if you consider all that you see that everything has like gone crazy, mad about anything that is Serbian".¹²

Those ideas also affected some of the intelligentsia during WWI when a certain sense of Serbophilia could have been traced among the units. However, although it existed, it was not in majority, because of both the lack of co-supporters and the high presence of repressive, draconian, measures against those who openly advocated it. Yet, the Monarchy was mashed by the national questions, of which the Czech and the Croatian ones had not been solved. However, as the war was coming to its end, the Monarchy became aware of the national trigger which had yet to be solved. The final solution by allowing the

¹¹ Croatian independence was a political goal of only one parliamentary group in the Sabor of Croatia and Slavonia, the Party of Right. However, the party considered Croatian independence as a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, only.

¹² Dragoslav Janković, *Srbija i jugoslovensko pitanje 1914-1915* (Belgrade, 1973), pp. 363-364. From the beginning of the war military censorship was introduced. The control over the newspapers was under the command of the War Department for newspapers (Kriegs-Uberwachungsamt). *Ibid*, p. 368.

confederate polity of the Monarchy was tried out by Karl I but far too late, in the very last of its days.¹³

“But when Evil threatens the home, ‘In fight!’”¹⁴

Only a day after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, the warlike atmosphere in the Croatian lands boiled. Newspapers were calling out and people were reacting by protesting against Serbia and the Serbs. Anti-Serbian violent protests occurred in Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although it is yet to be answered how widely they were dispersed, it is evident that riots included reactions of many, producing a welcome introduction to the forthcoming mobilization. Creating an Evile empire out of Serbia was the key of amassing the recruits and it was done successfully. “Hatred of the Serbs as provokers of the war” was immense, making one of the recruits say when referring to the Serbs: “I’m not gonna to slaughter them, I’m gonna eat them”¹⁵

However, the majority of Orthodox population stayed loyal to the authorities, even in the territory of the former Military border.¹⁶ Most of the Serbs from Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia maintained their loyalty to the Austro-Hungarian colors. An episode which happened in the Serbian front during 1914 is an excellent example of this. It occurred when one of the Serbian officers called the Austro-Hungarian soldiers rather to surrender than be killed in vain. Surprisingly, the answer out of the Austro-Hungarian trenches was that they were the Serbs and would never give up!¹⁷ It was Military border experience from XVI to the last quarter of XIX century that gave Croatia-Slavonia a unique position within the Monarchy. The territory of once called “biggest army camp in Europe” laid over the southern parts of Croatia-Slavonia and had a simple purpose - to defend the Hapsburg Empire from the Ottoman invasions. The basic obligations of patriarchal families (mostly Orthodox) were to be prepared for any warlike situation.¹⁸ It existed until 1881, but what seems

¹³ King and Emperor Karl I on October 16, 1918 declared a manifesto by which he advocated tripartite reconstruction of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The National Council of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes refused it.

¹⁴ The fragment of the Austro-Hungarian anthem verse (translation out of the Croatian text).

¹⁵ “Zagreb u ratno doba”, *Ilustrovani list*, 8 August 1914.

¹⁶ Željko Karaula, “Sarajevski atentat – rekacije Hrvata i Srba u Kraljevini Hrvatskoj, Slavoniji i Dalmaciji”, *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* 43 (2011): 25-292, 268. Damir Agičić, “Civil Croatia on the Eve of the First World War. The Echo of the Assassination and Ultimatum”, *Povijesni prilozi*, 14 (1995): 301-317.

¹⁷ Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita*, vol. 2 (Rijeka, 1981), pp. 246-247.

¹⁸ On this territory one had to serve in the regular frontline forces for ten years and in Honvéd for two years. Unlike the civilian part of the Monarchy the recruits here were obligated to stay

to have remained unchanged almost forty years later, was the loyal mentality to Vienna. The importance of this was visible soon after the outbreak of the war, when Croatian General Svetozar Borojević was given more attention. Due to his doubtless loyalty and strategic genius, this Military border born officer, later became one of the closest Emperor and King Karl's generals.

Almost a month after the Sarajevo assassination, on July 25, the Austro-Hungarian mobilization began. And it passed in a rather excellent atmosphere. There was no organized or massive opposition to the mobilization, so the authorities believed that the mobilization was the first Austro-Hungarian war victory.¹⁹ Enthusiasm, patriotism and heroism were the summer feelings in 1914. When looking upon the recruits the press highlighted how "the sense of military duty" is what can be read from their faces.²⁰ It is interesting how tightly the food and mobilization process were interconnected. Evidently, the newspaper reporters were shaping the atmosphere in the sense of making war efforts desirable and masculine: "Among population there are rumors how good the soldiers' food is" – newspapers were describing – "See how greasy their soup is and what big piece of meat they have got".²¹ Journalists were reporting repeatedly how civilians were amazed by the quantity and the quality of the food so much so that they believed it was worth going to the war just to have proper meals, if nothing. This propagandist manner of writing further continued in reports of the wounded soldiers returnees by describing them as being more in desire for cigarettes and drinks than for proper meals.²²

On the very first day of mobilization, the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs publicly announced a circular letter to the Monarchy's diplomatic representatives where the supposed war plan of the Kingdom of Serbia was revealed. The propagandist impact on the Austro-Hungarian South Slavs seemed to be a goal of this revealing document. In fact, the revealed document was a programmatic brochure of the Serbian society National Defense written in 1911. The point of the named program was to liberate "7 million of 'our' imprisoned people".²³ Austro-Hungarian propaganda published it especially in Croatian newspapers which were then shockingly reporting: "(...) Oh, where

within their military administered territory even during peacetime. (Milan Pojić, "Ustroj austrougarske vojske na ozemlju Hrvatske 1868.-1918.", *Arhivski vjesnik* 43 (2000): 147-161, 151).

¹⁹ B. Hrabak, *Dezerterstvo*, p. 35. I. Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (New York, Oxford, 1992), p. 190.

²⁰ "Zagreb u ratno doba", *Ilustrovani list*, 8 August 1914.

²¹ "Zagreb u ratno doba", *Ilustrovani list*, 8 August 1914.

²² "Prvi ranjenici u Zagrebu", *Ilustrovani list*, 22 August 1914.

²³ There are some differences between the original text published in Serbian, and the German one translated in 1914. In the German translation stands that „Serbia is a small part (in original "as small free part") of 3 million people who are giving hope and support to 7 million Serbian (in original "ours") imprisoned people! (D. Janković, *Srbija i jugoslovensko pitanje 1914-1915.*, p. 370).

are those seven million Serbs, where did they count them? – Yeah, that's us, Croats and Slovenes. We are that lower, renegade layer of the Serbian people that needs to be awakened, enlightened, liberated (...). Never have the Croats abandoned the throne and the country, nor they will now".²⁴ Like every other public print media in the Empire the Croatian editors were also publishing texts which ultimately had to contribute to the victory (entirely according to the omni present motto *Viribus Unitis*). This meant that newspapers sought to keep the Croatian national awareness on the highest level.²⁵

During the first wave of the mobilization men from the most developed parts of the Monarchy were mostly excluded. In the case of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia this meant mainly the cities. On the other hand, that meant that peasants and farmers were represented by majority in the war units. For instance, by the time the first mobilization process ended, Dalmatia stayed almost without any men.²⁶ Some statistic data can help in getting to know those people better. Primary information of their world is revealed by their literacy skills. Outside urban communities those were poor, while carrying most of the war load on their shoulders. Dalmatia had around 72% illiteracy share, and Croatia and Slavonia was facing around 54 %.²⁷ Undoubtedly, differences in war perception were enormous between educated and common people. In 1910 Zagreb had 11.27 % men and 17.65 % women who could not read nor write, but district Brinje in Lika-Krbava County had 69.35 % men and 88.75 % women who were illiterate.²⁸ However, soldiers of Lika-Krbava County were traditionally considered as the ultimate fighters. One 1915 war postal card showing the Croatian soldiers of 42nd "Devil's" Division vividly depicts this stereotype. While the 25th Zagreb Company was represented by a soldier with neatly groomed mustache, the 26th Karlovac Company (of the Lika-Krbava County) was represented by a hairy, bearded soldier biting on his knife.

²⁴ "(...) Ma kamo ti sedam milijuna Srba, gdje su ih nabrojali? – Da, to smo mi Hrvati i Slovenci, mi smo niži, odrođeni sloj srpskoga naroda, koji treba osvijestiti, prosvijetliti, osloboditi (...). Nikad još Hrvati nijesu iznevjerili prijesto i državu, neće ni sada (...)." (D. Janković, *Srbija i jugoslovensko pitanje*, p. 371).

²⁵ The monarchical war propaganda was glorifying victories of the Croatian soldiers in the war against Serbia. The Serbian papers were on the other hand writing that Croatian (Slavic) regiments were sent to the Serbian front only to make sure that every connection between Austro-Hungarian Slavs and Serbs would be destroyed. Pero Blašković mentioned that the Serbs in Austro-Hungarian Bosnia-Herzegovinian troops could choose to which battlefield they would be appointed. According to him only 18 out of 1,000 in his regiment choose not to go on Serbia. (Pero Blašković, *Sa Bošnjacima u Svjetskom ratu* (Belgrade, 1939), p. 81). Josip Horvat claimed much higher percentage, 20 % of the unwilling Serbs.

²⁶ B. Hrabak, *Dezerterstvo*, p. 39.

²⁷ Rolf Wörsdörfer, *Kriesenherd Adria 1915-1955: Konstruktion und Artikulation des Nationalen im italienisch-jugoslawischen Grenzraum* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2004), p. 57

²⁸ *Statistički godišnjak Kraljevina Hrvatske i Slavonije 1906.-1910.*, vol. II (Zagreb, 1917), pp. 40-41.

Commonly, the mobilized men went to the front followed by organized ceremonies and speeches of the politicians or the state officials. Three things were commonly introduced in those: duty to the Emperor and King, religion, and patriotism to the Croatian Homeland. In reality it seems that the identifiability of Croatian soldier in its whole complexity was also shaped in the same manner. Although individually shaped the majority of Croatian WWI autobiographies kept the leitmotif of duty and honor.²⁹

During the war Austria-Hungary called around 7 million men to arms. Around half a million Croats were among them. About 190,000 of them never made returned home.³⁰ Just in the last days of July 1914 the Monarchy called around 3,350,000 people to arms. However, only half of them were capable of serving on the first frontlines.³¹ The national structure of the Army corresponded to the ethnic structure of the Monarchy. It consisted of 25.2 % of Austrians and Germans, 23.1 % of Magyars, 12.9 % of Czechs and Moravians, 9 % of Croats and Serbs, 7.9 % of Poles, 7.6 % of Ruthenians and Ukrainians, 7 % of Romanians, 3.6 % of Slovaks, 2.4 % of Slovenians, and 1.3 % of Italians.³² The joined army units were nationally mixed the most. Predominantly single-nation units were more possible in the Honvéd, and mostly in the Gendarmerie. Most of the Croatian units were in the 42nd Honvéd division and 36th KuK infantry division.

After the first defeats in the summer of 1914 AOK started to look upon Slavic and Romans nations suspectively. Eventually, they started mixing their multinational units (once again with the Czechs as the most problematic).³³ That process formally continued until the early spring of 1915 when unit number was increased to 148.³⁴ However, the AOK feared another problem might arise, endangering the cohesion of the "politically reliable units".³⁵ Regarding Croats it seems that the mixing of the units with the non-Slavic nations did not taking part. Already after experiencing first defeats and loses in Serbia, the unit force power was undermined especially among the reserve troops that had yet to be mobilized. Even in the time of censorship it was registered

²⁹ F. Hameršak identified a number of individual motivations: for the Monarchy (because of the inner duty, because of the forced duty, or in cause of honor), for Croatia in the Monarchy, for Yugoslavia or Great Serbia, for the closest family, or simply for its' own sake), F. Hameršak, *Tamna strana Marsa*, 266-427, 452-455.

³⁰ Dinko Čutura, Lovro Galić, "Veliki rat: pregled ratnih operacija", *Hrvatska revija* IV (2004), no. 3: 56.

³¹ D. Čutura, L. Galić, "Veliki rat: pregled ratnih operacija": 15.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³³ That was the information given to the Serbian authorities by the Austro-Hungarian POW's. (B. Hrabak, *Dezerterstvo*, p. 22.)

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³⁵ *ÖULK*, vol. IV, p. 141.

that “new recruits are behaving like they are going to be taken momentarily in front of the enemy guns, or will take part in conquering the world the next day”.³⁶

Percentage of Croats and Serbs within the two major Croatian units in the Austro-Hungarian Army during the First World War.

Division	Regiment	Place	Percentage of Croats and Serbs within the regiment	
			1914	1918
42	25	Zagreb	100	98
	26	Karlovac	100	98
	27	Sisak	80	95
	28	Osijek	80	92
36	16	Bjelovar	90	86
	53	Zagreb	95	95
	78	Osijek	80	90
	116		80	80

(Bogumil Hrabak, *Dezerterstvo*, pp. 19-25)

“Quietly, life to our king, gladly every of us will give”³⁷

If we look at the share soldiers who died during WWI among the whole population of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, a brighter picture of ‘fighting spirit’ for the Monarchy can be seen. In the first twenty months of the war the soldiers from the Austrian Alps, Czech Moravia (German ethnic territories) and Pannonia lowlands suffered the biggest losses. In Austria the death toll was 45 per one thousand of inhabitants, in Moravia 44 per one thousand, and 20 per one thousand among Croats and Slovenes, although they were considered as good fighters for the Monarchy.³⁸ The AOK did consider Croats and Slovenes as the nations with greater faith and due to that they were sent to more dangerous fronts.³⁹ Recent Croatian historiography introduced the number of Croatian casualties at 34 per one thousand inhabitants.⁴⁰ If we look at the territory which later became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and

³⁶ “Oni, koji odlaze i oni, koji dolaze”, Ilustrovani list, 22 August 1914.

³⁷ A verse of the official Anthem of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (translation of the Croatian text).

³⁸ *ÖULK*, vol I, pp. 44-45.

³⁹ István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, p. 192

⁴⁰ D. Čutura, L. Galić, “Veliki rat: pregled ratnih operacija”: 54-55.

Slovenes, the greatest casualties were domestic on the territory of Bačka (44.1 per one thousand), followed by Slovenian Styria (32.5 per one thousand), the territory of Lika (31.7 per one thousand) and Dalmatian hinterlands (24 per one thousand).⁴¹

During WWI Croatian troops fought on three major battlefields: Serbian, Eastern (Galicia) and South Western (Italian). Until the end of 1914 the Austro-Hungarian army undertook an offensive operation against Serbia which ended in a failure. That first clash of its soldiers cost the Monarchy 30,000 dead and around 170,000 wounded men. Serbia lost around 22,000 had 91,000 wounded and had around 19,000 men imprisoned.⁴² The failure in 1914 and considerable losses in Serbia were the results of the lack of coordination and planning and not the absence of courage and dedication. The sallies in Serbia were described by a witness as almost insane acts of "drunken people running like headless chickens".⁴³ Almost a year after this failed military action the war luck changed and Belgrade was occupied by the Austro-Hungarian forces causing celebrations especially in Zagreb.⁴⁴ Already by the end of 1914 it was evident that the huge Austrian bureaucratic apparatus had a lot of coordination problems, especially the logistic and commanding ones. How complicated the situation in the first battle rows was can be seen in the fact that in 1915 the compulsory age for serving military duty was expanded to all men from 18 to 50, unlike 19 to 45 until then. The scale of moral and discipline within the units closely corresponded to the quantity of army supplies. It could be said that the revolt of the soldiers coincided with the lack of food and equipment.

In 1916 the majority of Croatians were in the troops on the Eastern front, in Galicia. In the meantime they were redistributed so after 1916 they were mostly concentrated in the 42nd Division under the command of Vice-Marshal Luka Šnjarić, while Teodor Bekić commanded the 83rd Brigade.⁴⁵ At that time Croatians did make a contribution in one regiment as a part of 36th Division of the German South Army. They came to the Eastern front (Galicia) in the beginning of 1915, although there were some Croatian forces in 1914 within the

⁴¹ B. Hrabak, *Dezerterstvo*, p., 34.

⁴² D. Čutura, L. Galić, "Veliki rat: pregled ratnih operacija": 16. These numbers are quite close to the information delivered in the Croatian papers *Obzor* in 1915 that the Austro-Hungarian infantry is was made up of 9 % of Croats and Serbs, and the whole Army of about 7 % of them. (B. Hrabak, *Dezerterstvo*, p. 19).

⁴³ F. Hameršak, *Tamna strana Marsa*, p. 443.

⁴⁴ German – Austro-Hungarian offensive on Serbia began on October 6. Belgrade was conquered two days after. Until the beginning of December the Austro-Hungarian troops entered Montenegro. Sallonica front was created on 9 December, 1915.

⁴⁵ At the moment, the 42nd Division was composed of 72nd and 83rd Brigade. All units from Croatia and Slavonia (25th Zagreb, 26th Karlovac, 27th Sisak, 28th Osijek) were a part of 42nd Division. 72nd Brigade was composed of of the following regiments: the 16th Bjelovar, the 53rd Zagreb including its three battalion (the 4th battalion was in the Italian front).

VII Corps, like 96th Regiment of Karlovac and 70th Regiment of Srijem. At that time general Svetozar Borojević lead the 3rd Army fronted towards the Russian forces. Most of the Croatian troops came to the Eastern Front as a part of the Zagreb XIII Corps in the beginning of 1915. There, Russian forces had taken initiative until the Easter of 1915. After that the Austro-Hungarian German forces undertook a successful offensive which led to preventing the possibility of Russians penetrating into Hungary. Relief of the Russian advancement enabled the transfer of Croatian troops to the South-Western, Italian Front.⁴⁶

Discipline within the Croatian troops especially increased after Italy entered the war in the end of May 1915, following the signing of the secret London Agreement and passing the significant parts of Croatian territories to Italy. The cases of deserting from the army units were also present outside the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.⁴⁷ The London Agreement was used as an additional reason to increase combat preparedness of Croatian troops. Yet, after 1917, situation in the Italian front became slightly different when desertion of the troops, including Croatian, started. In the end around 30,000 soldiers and 200 officers fled to the Italians.⁴⁸ That was due to new developments of the global diplomacy in which Austria-Hungary firstly signed a peace treaty with Russia in Brest-Litovsk and later started unsuccessful secret talks with the Entente powers. In the end the German-Austrian power block was not broken but the Austria-Hungary even surrendered its commanding power to Germany. That caused demoralization among soldiers, especially in the Isonzo front. Croatian Colonel Stanko Turudija explained this situation to Ivan Meštrović, a member of the Yugoslav Committee: “We were fighting like lions with the conviction that we were fighting for our land and people, (...), and I would rather commit suicide than surrender to the Italians. Then, as rumors started that the Emperor tried to make a treaty with the Entente, they sent us the Germans and, when we saw the Prussian helmets, we thought: There is no more Monarchy, Wilhelm commands now. From that time on I wished to surrender but did not succeed, for, whenever I tried to surrender, the Italians surrendered to us.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ At this battlefield the Croatian troops kept the best with high morale and dedication. The propositions of the London Agreement were openly presented to them to increase their fighting spirit. So the Croatian troops in the Southeastern (Italian) front had the highest feeling of defending their homeland, Croatia.

⁴⁷ Desertions and mutinies were present in Entente armies just as in the Central Powers' ones. Leonard V. Smith argues that mutinies have to be scoped only as political, while soldiers-officers continuing process of the redefinition of the authority. Although the state of poor conditions as terrifying trench warfare is a trigger to the revolt, what is crucial to the process was actually the state polity, i.e. regime that shaped the 'citizen-soldier' while peacetime (Leonard V. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War* (Princeton, 1994, 2014)).

⁴⁸ George Grlica, “Odessa in 1917 from a Croatian perspective”, *Journal of Croatian Studies* XXXVIII (1997): 3-114, 48.

⁴⁹ Ivan Meštrović, *Uspomene na političke ljude i događaje* (Buenos Aires, 1961), p. 110.

Beside infantry troops in the Italian front, cracks were shown in the Navy, too. The Navy wasn't exculpated from the demonstrative atmosphere which appeared sometime in 1917. That atmosphere can also be traced after the beginning of the chronic lack of food and money and the Austro-Hungarian-Entente secret mission failure. There were sporadic and individual cases of desertion and protest like escape attempts made by the artillery ships from Pula and Šibenik in 1917. However, the biggest outbreak of the protest happened in Boka Kotorska when crew of two ships took over the command and started their demonstration against the war and for better conditions in the army. Their aim was not against the Monarchy although the conclusions that their protest was a proto communist revolution were common later in historiography.⁵⁰

The avoidance of mobilization began immediately and continually lasted throughout the wartime. Other forms of desertion and avoidance of military obligations had appeared already in 1915 when the soldiers started coming home to collect crops and cultivate their lands. Desertion by that time was still individual, and did not become such a problem in terms of quantity. Of course, army authorities did expect such moves of the recruits who were sharply warned before leave.⁵¹ For example, during the first two weeks of 1917, 64 soldiers left their units. Of that number 28 defected to the opponent's side. It is interesting to see the national structure of the deserted soldiers. There were 29 Romanians, 16 Ukrainians, 11 Magyars, 10 Italians, 9 Serbs, 8 Poles, 3 Czechs and two of Slovaks and Croats.⁵² Data on deserted soldiers is still various. According to some there were 218,032 army deserters during 1916 in the Hungarian part of the Monarchy.⁵³ According to other data there were 39,000 deserters on the same territory during 1916, and by the end of the war around 150,000 of them.⁵⁴

To prevent the cases of defecting, military authorities used gendarmerie and Military police to accompany the trains transporting the troops. It was common not to give the troops their weapons or ammunition until they would leave the „boundaries of their language“.⁵⁵ It is evident that the number of desertions was increasing as the war was coming to its end. During 1917 the number of caught army runaways in Croatia-Slavonia was around 20,000.⁵⁶ During the first three months of 1918 the number of caught runaways in the

⁵⁰ See more: Bogdan Krizman, *Pobuna mornara 1918*, (Zagreb, 1963).

⁵¹ The soldiers were politically checked before their release to leave. (*B. Hrabak, Dezerterstvo*, p. 82).

⁵² None of the Croats were from the Croatia - Slavonia, one was from Hungary and the other one from Istria (*Ibid.*, 91).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

Hungarian part of the Monarchy was 44,611.⁵⁷ The commander of the XIII Corps in Zagreb General von Schenk was informed that the number of soldiers who were fleeing the troops under his responsibility was around 10 % of the units.⁵⁸ Another commander, General Slavko Sarkotić believed that the Green Cadre (corps of military deserters) around Zagreb, Osijek and Vinkovci were very unstable groups of 10 to 15 people who were surviving by robbery.⁵⁹ It was common to see the Green Cadre so often that the government of Croatia-Slavonia declared that every man aged between 18 and 50 is obliged to have a written excuse in the case of being absent from the troops.⁶⁰

While Croatian civilian and military authorities shared an opinion that the reason for desertion of soldiers was mainly due of poor economic conditions, the Austrian and Hungarian authorities thought differently. For them, the reason for the increasing number of desertions from the army was in the national context. There was an opinion that the Yugoslavian and Czech national movements worked together and they were to blame for the decline in the discipline within the units. Hungarian government advocated the introduction of harsh repressive measures against Croatia-Slavonia.⁶¹

From the beginning of spring until September of 1918 the headcount of the Green Cadre was constantly and rapidly increasing, so that the central Monarchy authorities took radical moves to suppress them. Since they did not believe that the Croatian government and police forces could resolve that problem, the Hungarian government imposed the assistant troops of Hungarian Honvéd, which had to catch the runaways. By that time Croatia-Slavonia was considered the largest territory of the Green Cadre whose number the AOK estimated at around 100,000 persons. However, the Headquarter of the XIII Corps in Zagreb had only 9,854 deserters in their records.⁶² Today it's considered that the number of the Green Cadre in Croatia and Slavonia was not higher than 50,000 people.⁶³

The situation in Dalmatia was completely different from Croatia-Slavonia. There the Green Cadre did not appear even by the middle of 1918. Certainly the main reasons were the lack of proper food and hostile landscape in the sense of not providing proper hiding places, especially on the islands.⁶⁴ However, the army deserters were present there, but they were not, not even slightly, organized. Like Dalmatia, Istria also suffered from terrifying conditions of famine

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁶¹ Bernard Stulli, "Prilozi građi o ustanku u Boki Kotorskoj", *Arhivski vjesnik* I (1951): 238.

⁶² B. Hrabak, *Dezerterstvo*, p. 122.

⁶³ D. Čutura, I. Lovrić, "Veliki rat: pregled ratnih operacija": 58.

⁶⁴ B. Hrabak, *Dezerterstvo*, p. 133.

and general poverty. There were simply no conditions for fleeing and longer hiding.⁶⁵ Political conditions in Dalmatia were quite different from those in Croatia-Slavonia. There, Yugoslav idea was much more present. In the beginning of the war the Austro-Hungarian authorities arrested a number of people for whom they thought would be counter-productive during the oncoming war. An existing pro Yugoslavian and pro Serbian atmosphere there was tried to be suppressed by arrests and internment. In such an atmosphere, Frano Supilo and Ante Trumbić went to emigration where they later founded the Yugoslav Committee. Just after the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, 33 people were arrested in Split and 14 in its surroundings, in the city of Šibenik 28 and 25 in the cities of Knin and Sinj.⁶⁶ In the Serbian war propaganda those measures were just the signs that in Dalmatia, which the Government of Nikola Pašić saw as a “pure, the purest Serbian province”, an uprising broke out.⁶⁷

To think that the desertion from the army was just a result of national movements does not correspond to the facts. Although there were some signs of the national feeling related desertions already in the beginning of the war, they were sporadic and individual. Desertions became common only after the war lasted for a while and it became obvious that it would continue. They appeared when food or equipment started to lack, after exhausting horrors of wartime.⁶⁸

“I declare that I voluntarily enter the Serbian Volunteer Unit” or The Forced Volunteers⁶⁹

During WWI around 2.77 million Austro-Hungarian soldiers were taken as POWs. That was about one third of all mobilized men, or about 11 % of all Austria-Hungary male population.⁷⁰ Most of them were captured in the Eastern, Russian front.⁷¹ Because of the extremely high percentage of the POWs

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁶⁶ D. Janković, *Srbija i jugoslovensko pitanje*, p. 400.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 401.

⁶⁸ B. Hrabak, *Dezerterstvo*, p. 177.

⁶⁹ Part of the written oath which was signed by the Austro-Hungarian soldiers who were entering the Odessa Division. (Franko Potočnjak, *Iz emigracije IV: U Rusiji* (Zagreb, 1926), p. 118).

⁷⁰ Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern front* (New York, 2002), p. 31.

⁷¹ Around 360,000 soldiers were captured on the South Western front. It is significant that the German forces, which on the eastern front had roughly equal forces to the Austro-Hungarian ones, had around 167,000 of arrested, which was much fewer than on the Austro-Hungarian side. According to that data, the Austro-Hungarian Supreme Command (e. g. Field Marshal Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf) believed that certain nationalities within the Austro-Hungarian army (mostly Czechs, Serbs, Italians and Ukrainians) showed extremely high and unacceptable

in the Russian front, AOK introduced a variety of drastic measures against desertions or avoidance of military service and duty, such as death penalties without prior trials.⁷² During the first actions on the Serbian battlefields there were around 70,000 captured Austro-Hungarian soldiers, of whom about 20,000 were Croats, Slovenes and Serbs. From those ranks Serbian government sought to attract as many volunteers within its army. While among those volunteers there were some Croats who supported Yugoslav idea, there was a sharp difference between the Croats loyal to that idea (known as the "Aces") and those loyal to Emperor Franz Joseph. However, data on the results of the Serbian government's achievement show that by the end of 1914 only 500 captured soldiers entered the Serbian Army, or about 2.5% of the captives, mostly Serbs and much fewer of the Croats and Slovenes.⁷³ Although the AOK was aware of the minority of those defectors, what worried them was its impact in the sense of "serious consequences for the spirit of the troops."⁷⁴

Although there were a number of educated individuals who had worked for the benefit of the Yugoslav idea in their past most of the soldiers in captivity were peasants, illiterate people. Few of those intellectuals soon started to write in Serbian newspapers struggling to explain the Yugoslav idea and the links between the southern Slavs. In addition, in the spring of 1915 a group of Austro-Hungarian Croats, Serbs and Slovenes established a sort of a Yugoslav Committee branch in Niš, Serbia.⁷⁵ In contrast to the above mentioned propagandist texts published in the Serbian newspapers, their personal thoughts - written down in private, much more intimate correspondences - provide a different aspect of the Yugoslav idea in Serbia. In a letter dated on March 7, 1915 sent to Ante Trumbić, president of the Yugoslav Committee, one of the captured Austro-Hungarian officers, Giuni Silvio, described the problems of the Croatian POWs. Based on his personal feelings and understanding of a Serbian point of view of the South Slavic union issue he wrote to Ante Trumbić that the Yugoslav idea was not so dominant among the Yugoslav nations as much as it should have been. According to him that idea had not been realized because the process in Serbia went exactly in the opposite direction from the possible unification. According to him that process in Serbia was heading only to the direction of Serbian nationalism.⁷⁶ He wrote: "Many, many people in Serbia understand that question [of the Yugoslav union] in a way as if it is

level of disloyalty to the state. (*Ibid.*, pp. 31, 32.). On the other hand there was extremely high percentage of runaways in the Russian troops.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁷³ B. Hrabak, "Austrougarski zarobljenici u Srbiji 1914-1915. i prilikom povlačenja kroz Albaniju", *Zbornik HIS 2* (1964): 107-204, 138-139.

⁷⁴ *ÖULK*, vol. IV, p. 142.

⁷⁵ D. Janković, *Srbija i jugoslovensko pitanje 1914-1915.*, p. 343.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

only Serbia that is invited to represent Yugo-Slavism and take all the Yugoslav nations under her wing by creating a big and strong Serbia in which every Yugoslav nation would be dived, little by little, into Serbs. Among almost all, including the former Yugoslav-orientated Serbs, the idea that the Serbs could turn into a new kind of nation (e.g., Yugoslavs), those more reasonable think that it is better to give the Croats a (...) territory, so to be completely free, but others say, as the Croats and Serbs are one nation, the Croats in the Serbian state, under the Serbian freedom and as Serbian citizens, eventually will find everything they want.”⁷⁷

According to some authors the most active national movement within the Austro-Hungarian soldiers was among members of the Serbian (later renamed in Yugoslavian) Volunteer Division in Odessa, Ukraine. In Yugoslavian historiography after World War II the Serbian Volunteer Division was often presented as a pure result of the Serbian, Croatian and Slovene struggle for the creation of Yugoslavia. Their role was also often described as a beginning of some kind of communist revolution with elements of brotherhood, equality and feeling of freedom. However, things were not so clear and the reasons for entering into the Division were different for every man, whether prosaic or those not so much.⁷⁸ Majority of the Croats and Slovenes in the Division were there mostly as “forced volunteers”.⁷⁹ As for the national structure of the unit 90 % of men were the Serbs. In the beginning of the Division's creation, in early 1915, the soldiers were entering that unit mostly because of the plain reason of helping Serbia.⁸⁰ The name of the Division was first the Serbian Volunteer Division, and it was later renamed to Yugoslav Volunteer Division. Immediately after its constitution the Division had to exclusively follow Serbian Army rules. What's more, members of the Division were taking an oath to the Serbian king. Such a Serbization of the unit led to many problems among non-Serbian nations. Firstly, Croats refused to fight under the Serbian flag and for the Serbian state interests. That led to the differentiation of two groups within the unit where one advocated Serbian state interests, and another group saw the

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 341-342.

⁷⁸ During captivity a Croatian soldier named Pero allegedly evolved to an supporter of an “Great Yugoslavia” only because the possibility of meeting town women, as being close to the Serbian Command. (F. Hameršak, *Tamna strana Marsa*, p. 302, according to Mile Budak, *Pripovijetke: Ratno roblje* (Zagreb, 1995), pp. 112, 114, 117, 119).

⁷⁹ Of the first 500 captured officers who were brought to Odessa 20 percent did not want to enter the volunteer unit, while 20% waited for the statements of the Yugoslav Committee in London. Division Commander in Odessa, Serbian Colonel Stevan Hadžić, in accordance with the instructions of his government on the island of Corfu, implemented and supported not Yugoslav but Great Serbian politics in the unit. (B. Hrabak, “Konceptije federativne i konfederativne Jugoslavije među Jugoslovenima u Rusiji (od aprila 1916. do aprila 1918. godine)”, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 21 (1989), No. 1-3: 1-28, 2-4).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*: 2. The author claims that volunteers fought for the creation of a united state of Serbs, Croats only after the defeat of Serbia in 1915.

reasons for their fight simply in desire of liberating their homeland a possibility to create some kind of a Yugoslavian state.⁸¹

From the beginning the Serbization of the unit in Odessa involved violence against all who did not want to accept it as their own identity, i.e. the non-Serbian nations. A number of Croatian soldiers who came back from the captivity testified about the harsh and hostile environment in Odessa. There they were experiencing violent inclusions in the volunteer units and intrusion of the Serbian name and identity.⁸² Such cases were registered by Đuro Radaković in his diary: "(...) January 20, [1915] (...) During the night fought Serbs and Hungarians. There were several wounded. (...) Day 23.I. (...) Just around noon when was the time for the mass Serbs beat one Hungarian corporal so much that he had to be carried into the barrack. They smashed his head. (...) Day January 24th (...) Serbs submitted their volunteer obligations (...) Day February 26th. In the morning, at 8 a.m. fifty two Serbs left the camp. No one knew where to. When one Russian officer came to inspect them they welcomed him with loud "Long live". One volunteer (a Serb) made a speech, he pointed that no matter whether Serbia fell but still the winner of the war would be Russia, which will establish Serbia once again. (...) March 5th, From 11 a.m. till 12 we Croats met the Serbs in the yard. One Russian captain came to our group asking who wanted to fight in the war against Bulgarians and Austria who are Slavic enemies. All Serbs, except two of them volunteered, but when he spoke to us we unanimously refused to wage the war. Captain didn't go to the rest of the Croatian groups. Serbs shouted Down with the Austria, Long live Russia, Long live the Slavs. (...) March 9, we still weren't all awake when the group of Serbs surrounded our barrack, each had a bludgeon in his hand guarding us from running away. In groups we went to the toilet followed by the Serbian patrol. (...) March 10, Guards are around every barrack where there are Croats. Russian officers agreed and in the morning thrust out the Serbs, to what they disgusted and said that will go to the Captain. (...) Two Czech civilians (possibly Austrian officers) came to the camp yesterday, had a speech urging the gathered to register for the volunteer units which will go into fight for Slavic people and against Austria and Bulgaria. To Serbs they said that it will be good and nice (harašo, Russ. Good), and to Croats and Hungarians to be huj (Russ. bad word). March 30, In front of the 7th Croatian barrack set the guard compound out of Serbian POWs who armed themselves with bludgeons like robbers. One Croat they beat with them."⁸³

One of the hardest violent outbreaks of the Serbian officers and soldiers towards the Croatian ones happened on October 23, 1916 when thirteen Croats

⁸¹ Ibid.: 3.

⁸² Đuro Dumbović said that in Odessa one Serbian officer received them as prisoners and immediately started forcing them to express themselves as Serbs. After Croatian POWs refused they were heavily beaten. (I. Perić, *Hrvatski državni sabor*, vol. II., p. 406).

⁸³ "Ratni dnevnik Đure Radakovića", *Hrvatska revija* IV (2004), no. 3: 67.

were executed, and eighteen wounded. The news about mistreatment of Croats in Odessa was publicly revealed in Croatia only on 6 June, 1918 when two eminent members of the Party of Right Aleksandar Horvat and Vladimir Prebeg wrote an article about the mistreatment of the Croatian soldiers in the party newspapers *Hrvatska*. A month later, members of the same party submitted an interpellation in the *Sabor* about harsh Serbian treatment of the Croatian and Slovenian POW's in Odessa.⁸⁴ For example Ivan Jambrek of Radoboj told Aleksandar Horvat that he was, like many others, pressured to identify himself as a Serb. After he declared that he just could not be anything else but a Croat he was sentenced to 25 strokes with a cane. Andrija Varga of Zlatar, Antun Hleb and Franjo Drvar told Horvat that they were driven to a village near Odessa and locked up in a narrow cellar, about hundred of them in a place where normally only 20 people could fit. There they were poured with boiling water. A few of them were rescued by some Russian (Ukrainian) women. Vladko Nežić of Jaska told that he was jailed just because he said that he spoke Croatian. He was freed by one Russian soldier. A priest from Istria testified the stories of the returning soldiers to his parish. Father Hlača said: "To recognize oneself as Croatian amongst the Serbian officers and soldiers and at the same time take an oath of allegiance to the Serbian King and State, would mean to be condemned to the most terrible tortures."⁸⁵

Although the members of Party of Right thought that such news would cause an uprising of public opinion which could lead to the disintegration of the Croatian-Serbian coalition, none of that happened.⁸⁶ The interpellation argument revealed that the Serbian (later Yugoslavian) Volunteer Corps had a predominant Serbian element. Although, on the basis of the testimonies of the prisoners who went back home, it showed that the Serbians were forcing the Croats and Slovenes to accept the Serbian identity in the Corps through tortures, beatings, even killings.⁸⁷

The Yugoslav Committee needed to prove to the Allies that South Slavs of Austria-Hungary have good will and desire to liberate themselves and unite. That's why on January 24, 1915 the Committee made a decision to organize one volunteer unit which could prove all the above mentioned.⁸⁸ The unit was

⁸⁴ At that time Aleksandar Horvat was president of the Party of Right. Unlike other parties, the Party of Right was the only one to advocate solving Croatian autonomy within Austria-Hungary. (Stjepan Matković, "Ratni zločini nad Hrvatima u Odesi 1916.", *Politički zatvorenik* (2003), no. 140: 34).

⁸⁵ G. Grlica, "Odessa in 1917 (...)": 59.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*: 51.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*: 106-107.

⁸⁸ Although the Yugoslav Committee expected that just from the USA there could be around thirty thousand volunteers, during WWI only ten thousands of them were drafted. (Ivan Čizmić, "Dobrovoljački pokret jugoslavenskih legija u SAD u Prvom svjetskom ratu", *Historijski zbornik XXIII-XXIV* (1970-1971): 21-43, 25).

named the Adriatic Legion and should have gathered volunteers from northern America. However, almost momentarily the Yugoslav Committee and the Serbian Government disagreed. While the Committee strived to save the unity of the Adriatic Legion and incorporate it within the Serbian army as a whole, the Serbian Government refused that and was trying to include volunteers individually in different Serbian units.⁸⁹ From the beginning mostly Serbs entered the Legion while Croats and Slovenes did it in a much lesser amount. Ante Trumbich explained that the Serbs were more enthusiastic about helping Serbia, while it was hard to reassure Croats and Slovenes that that wasn't the fight just for the Serbian cause.⁹⁰

“I swear by Almighty God that I shall faithfully serve the Government of the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs” or The Shifting

While in the beginning of WWI one out of four soldiers (referred to the Slavs exclusively) was considered potentially anti-monarchical and disloyal, at the very end of the war the AOK saw hardly any soldiers as pro Austro-Hungarian.⁹¹ Austria-Hungary formally ended its life on November 3, 1918 when its representatives signed truce and capitulation to Entente powers. After the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy and before the creation of the new Southslavic kingdom there was a state. It lasted for just a month and it was named the State of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (SHS). At its session on 29 October 1918 the Croatian *Sabor* decided to cease all state-legal ties of Croatian lands with Austria and Hungary and proclaim Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia and Rijeka an independent state which, together with other South Slavic lands formerly in Austria-Hungary, formed the joint State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (the State of SHS). At the head of the state was the Presidency of the National Council situated in Zagreb, while the state was divided into four provinces with separate governments (in Zagreb, Ljubljana, Sarajevo and Split). The president of the National Council was a Slovene Anton Korošec and vice-presidents were a Croat Ante Pavelić and a Serb from Croatia Svetozar Pribičević. The State of SHS was seen as a temporary form until the final unification with the Kingdom of Serbia.⁹²

⁸⁹ The Serbian government was not in favor of creating a separate volunteer unit because of the following reasons: 1. Italian pretensions for the east Adriatic coast, 2. the existence of such a unit could bring into question the unique role of Serbia as a sole element of the unification of South Slavs, 3. at the time the Serbian army had no significant defeats and it did not need to fill its units. (Ivan Hrstić, “Položaj dobrovoljaca iz iseljništva u srbijanskoj vojsci prema dokumentima iz ostavštine dr. Ante Trumbića (1914.-1918.)”, *Društvena istraživanja* 21 (2012), no. 1: 239-258, 241.

⁹⁰ I. Čizmić, “Dobrovoljački pokret jugoslavenskih legija u SAD u Prvom svjetskom ratu”: 35.

⁹¹ ÖULK, vol. I, p. 44.

⁹² The first attempt towards uniting these two states took place at the conference in Geneva (6-9 November 1918). Then Anton Korošec (president of the National Council of the State of SHS), Ante Trumbić (president of the Yugoslav Committee) and Nikola Pašić (president of the govern-

The end of WWI was passing in a quite unstable environment where groups of ex Austro-Hungarian soldiers were wondering around the country the Green Cadre were looting, and people were taking political power. In such an environment, another solution was coming to the fore: to invite Serbian troops on the territory of the State of SHS, which was anyhow already considered as an area claimed by the Serbs. However, the soldiers remaining from Croatian troops of the broken Austro-Hungarian Army, now part of the Peoples' Army of the State of SHS successfully went on the last mission.⁹³ For the sake of the new state, under Croatian flag, with collective emotions of liberating the Homeland, Croatian units attacked, until few days ago, comrade Hungarian troops. Under the leadership of Colonel Slavko Kvaternik they liberated Međimurje in December 1918. In the days that followed former Austro-Hungarian and the State of SHS' soldiers were scrutinized by the Kingdom of SHS to determine whether they were suited to serve the new state. Many were not. The majority of them were considered "separatists" in the light of the event taking place on December 5, 1918 when some of the units (25th and 53rd Regiments located in Zagreb) gathered on Ban Jelačić Square calling for the Croatian Republic. Forces loyal to the National Council including some Serbian troops ended the protests and "no less than eighteen people perished".⁹⁴

ment of the Kingdom of Serbia) signed the Geneva Declaration which guaranteed the equality of all nations in the future Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Considering such an agreement unfavorable, Nikola Pašić withdrew his signature from the Declaration and negotiations about a joint state were transferred into the state to the National Council in Zagreb which was in fact led by Svetozar Pribičević, and the government of the Kingdom of Serbia in Belgrade. Meanwhile, in accordance with the Treaty of London of 1915, the Italian army began to carry out the occupation of Croatian parts of Dalmatia, while the Serbian army entered the territory of the SHS under the pretence of defense against the former Austro-Hungarian army. Some provincial governments (Sarajevo, Split, Novi Sad) threatened direct unification with the Kingdom of Serbia. In such an atmosphere on 23 November 1918 the National Council started a two-day discussion about the unification with Serbia resulting in a decision to send a delegation to Belgrade with the Instructions ("Naputak") regarding the future joint state. Stjepan Radić was the only one opposing such a decision, warning the attendees of the meeting not to rush into implementing the unification with the words: "Do not rush forward as geese in a fog!". On 1 December 1918 the delegation of the National Council (28 members) was received by Aleksandar Karađorđević, Prince-Regent of Serbia who on the same day proclaimed the unification of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs with the Kingdom of Serbia into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. This 1 December Act on unification was a unilateral document proclaimed by the Prince-Regent Aleksandar Karađorđević and not a legal document of the representatives of the two states being unified.

⁹³ Authorities of National Council could have from 15 to 25 thousands soldiers under its control (Mile Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918-1921*, (Belgrade, 1988), p. 29, 56. Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1978* (Belgrade, 1980), p. 36). As they were unable to return to their homeland territory under Italian occupation, Dalmatian troops were gathered in Zagreb, namely: 22nd, 23rd, 37th and 122nd infantry regiments. (Tomislav Aralica, Višeslav Aralica, *Hrvatski ratnici kroz stoljeća 2. Razdoblje Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca/ Jugoslavije 1918-1941* (Zagreb, 2006), p. 14).

⁹⁴ Mislav Gabelica, "Žrtve sukoba na Jelačićevom trgu 5. prosinca 1918.," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 37 (2005), no. 2: 467-477, 467, 477.

Only shortly before the declaration of the State SHS, the National Council had approached the negotiations with two, at that moment highest Austro-Hungarian officers in Croatia, General Mihovil Mihaljević and Vice Marshal Luka Šnjarić.⁹⁵ They submitted a report to Emperor and King Karl I who gave them freedom of action after what they approached the army of the new state. However, the majority of the highest ranking ex Austro-Hungarian officers were not trusted in the national sense. Many were fired and retired, soon. General A. Lipošćak, at the time a military governor of Poland and the last of the high ex Austro-Hungarian officers of Croatian origin, experienced no difference. Although he welcomed the creation of the State SHS (which he referred to as “Great Yugoslavia”) expressing his obedience and submission, like other high officers he was not accepted by the political elite. Political reality was differently guided, in accordance with Serbian government. In the night prior the National Council key meeting on unifying with the Kingdom of Serbia, it seems that Anton Lipošćak was excellently, as an example figure. To intimidate those “doubtful” of the unification with the Kingdom of Serbia and the Kingdom of Montenegro, he was arrested and accused of planning the coup d'etat.⁹⁶ Political context of the arresting and the produced “Lipošćak affair” mirrors in the fact that trial to the group arrested, actually, never had held. After the NV finally decided to suggest the unification with Serbia and Montenegro, trialling of those ex Austria-Hungarian officers had no purpose.⁹⁷

Declaring their identifiability with the new state in the case of the highest former Austro-Hungarian officers worth nothing. Anton Lipošćak was eventually interned, Luka Šnjarić was retired on the first day of 1919, Mihovil Mihaljević was resolved only seven days after the founding of the State of SHS. Their destinies are most vividly represented in the person of Svetozar Borojević, once Croatian highest ranking officer in the Austrian-Hungarian Army. Almost a year after disappearance of Austria-Hungary, on November 2, 1919, in one hotel room near Klagenfurt he wrote his friend and fellow soldier colonel Slavko Kvaternik in Zagreb, then serving in the Army of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS): “Dear Slavko! (...) my wife and I, because of seizure of our private property under the command of Kranj National Council in October 1918, suffered damage of 120,000 kronor and by so came to a difficult financial situation. This distress increases the interdiction of my return to Croatia, and for the second year now we do not know where to settle, so we are forced to live expensively in modest hotels and under the impact of the German press, which denounce me as the South Slav. We no longer get food stamps from Klagenfurt and are directed to Krumpendorf, where we get the coupons, but we cannot use them. (...) They accuse me of being

⁹⁵ B. Krizman, *Hrvatska u Prvom svjetskom ratu*, p. 299.

⁹⁶ Tomislav Zorko, “Afera Lipošćak”, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 35 (2003), no. 3: 887-902, 887.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*: 898.

an opponent of the new state, which I am not. I do not want anything more, except for peace.”⁹⁸ Six months after writing those words, the favorite general of Emperor and King Karl I, once famous “Lion of Isonzo” filled with misery died in exile.

Unlike him, his fellow soldier colonel Slavko Kvaternik shared different destiny among two thousand five hundred other former Austro-Hungarian officers, mostly the youngest, who were accepted in the Army of the newly proclaimed Kingdom of SHS. However, they were not trusted by their commanding Serbian officers. For the rest of their carriers, no matter how short or long, they were mostly considered just as defeated enemies, the “Austrians.”⁹⁹ A long way and a whole terrifying war took those soldiers from serving the Black Yellow Monarchy to taking an oath to the Serbian King Karađorđević. The fostering of the new supranational soldiers in a new multinational state had begun.

Conclusion

Four years meant life to those who lived through the horrifying Great War. Croatian soldiers were not an exception. Global changes arising from WWI influenced them additionally. In a short period of time, from June 1914 to December of 1918, they witnessed the fall of an empire and a creation of a new Southslavic kingdom. In the meantime their collective emotions pertaining to the concept of Homeland had to be challenged by various stresses: Austro-Hungarian, Yugoslavian/Serbian, and Croatian. Those stresses were different while in army camps, in trenches or in the captivity.

Due to the AOK view upon the Slavic troops as the weakest link of the Austro-Hungarian Army, harsh draconian measures were introduced against those with any disintegration tryouts. Yugoslavism was considered the idea that endangered the unity of the army. A certain sense of Yugoslavism could have been traced among the units. However, although it existed, it was not in majority, because of both the lack of co-supporters and the high presence of repressive measures against those who openly advocated it. Promoting the Yugoslavism in the Serbian/Yugoslav Volunteer Division in Odessa especially highlighted the Croatian soldiers collective emotions. When threatened, their Croatian identity transcended the most. Based on the testimonies of the prisoners who returned home from Odessa, it is showed that the Serbians were

⁹⁸ Milan Pojić, Danijela Marjanić, “Pisma vojskovođe Svetozara Borojevića 1912.-1920.,” in: Marino Manin, ed., *Feldmaršal Svetozar Borojević od Bojne (1856.-1920.): bornik radova* (Zagreb, 2011), pp. 125-146, 141.

⁹⁹ Expressing their Croatian origin put them in the light of the separatists to the new state, while their “mentality of the medieval mercenaries” that was mostly highlighted by their Serbian fellows (M. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS 1918-1921*, p. 51).

forcing the Croats and Slovenes to accept the Serbian identity in the Corps through tortures, beatings, and even killings.

Avoidance of mobilization began immediately and continually lasted throughout the wartime. Other forms of desertion and avoidance of military obligations had appeared already in 1915 when soldiers started coming home to collect crops and cultivate their lands. Desertion by that time was still individual, and did not become such a problem in terms of quantity. To think that the desertion from the army was just a result of national movements does not correspond to the facts. Although there were some signs of the national feeling related desertions already in the beginning of the war, they were sporadic and individual. Desertions became common only after the war lasted for a while and it became obvious that it would continue. They appeared when food or equipment started to lack, after exhausting horrors of wartime.

Three things were imposed on the Croatian soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army during the war: duty to the Emperor and King, religion, and Croatian patriotism. The identifiability of Croatian soldiers in its whole complexity was shaped in the same manner. Eventually, it seems that majority of Croatian soldiers, bounded by the sense of 'duty and honor', stayed loyal to Austria-Hungary, or at least, were not the pivots of the army's disintegration. Moreover, for the majority of Croatian soldiers perceiving Croatia as Homeland is what stayed unchanged in spite of various multinational ambiance of their service.

Identifizierung unter den Waffen: multinationale Atmosphäre im Dienste kroatischer Soldaten (1914-1918)

Zusammenfassung

Kollektive Emotionen sind in der Kriegszeit außerordentlich wichtig. Während der Konflikte werden die Gefühle des Einzelnen häufig den kollektiven Emotionen unterstellt. Als Folge davon, Soldaten werden mit der Idee, einem höheren Ziel zu dienen, verbunden. Die Verbindung des Heimatlandes und des Einzelnen spielt in diesem Prozess eine Schlüsselrolle. Was diese Verbindung noch stärker macht, ist Nationalismus. Nationalismus ist im Rahmen eines Vielvölkerstaates besonders komplex und kann sogar zu seinem Zerfall führen. In diesem Beitrag wird der Schwerpunkt auf die Zwischenbeziehungen zwischen persönlichen und kollektiven Emotionen innerhalb einer multiethnischen Armee gelegt. Als Beispiel werden kroatische Soldaten genommen, die in der österreichisch-ungarischen Armee während des Ersten Weltkrieges dienten. Auf ihre Auffassung des Heimatlandes wurde von österreichisch-ungarischer, jugoslawisch/serbischer und kroatischer Seite Druck ausgeübt, was ihre Lage noch komplexer machte. Ihre Auffassung der Heimat ist deswegen auch für das Verstehen des Einflusses von Emotionen auf politische Verhältnisse wichtig.

Schlagwörter: Erster Weltkrieg, kroatische Soldaten, kollektive Emotionen