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The Implications of the “New Course” Strategy

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Summary

This article examines the political framework of “*novi kurs*” (“New Course”) from the beginning of the 20th century, its strategic aims and its function within the battle of different visions of a South Slavic state. The evidence shows that the new political direction contributed to the improvement of conflicting relations between Croats and Serbs, but, at the same time, it had a negative impact on the Croatian-Slovenian alliance along the Adriatic coast. In the context of the latter relation, the author analyses the reactions of Slovenians from Trieste and Primorska region who were supposed to be the collaterals due to what seemed to be an agreement between Serbs and Croats. However, although the “New Course” may be seen as long expected consensus between Croats and Serbs, a thorough analysis undermines that thesis. This became evident with the formation of two political factions within the Croatian-Serbian Coalition in which different views on the fundamental geopolitical parameters of the South Slavic state were developed.

Keywords: “New Course”, Adriatic Issue, Dalmatia, Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia, National Question

Introduction

The beginning of the 20th century was marked by extremely dynamic relations in the triangle of Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs, which was manifested through the discussion on the future of a South Slavic political formation. The latter was a kind of common platform used by political groups to present their ideas and therefore to improve their position in the triangle relations. Each side tried to incorporate its own national goals into the idea of a South Slavic state. These goals were often mutually exclusive, which seems to be one of the main sources of the instability for both Yugoslav states formed after the two world wars (Ivašković, 2019). According to Ivo Banac (1988: 149), the reason for this was the fact that partial national ideologies

among South Slavs had been already formed well before the idea of Yugoslavism started to take place in the political reality. In line with that the idea of a common state of South Slavs was based more on the belief in political benefits for all the included nations than on the thesis of their cultural homogeneity, which was sincerely cherished only among minor political groups. The diversity of ambitions, which were supposed to be satisfied within the South Slavic state, resulted with the whole spectrum of state visions, which differentiated regarding the size, the location of the political-administrative centre, the internal state division, and, of course, regarding the position of the future state within the international community.

The ambition of this article is to analyse one part of the South Slavic state visions' spectrum and to illustrate how this phenomenon was influenced by the movement of "New Course", what the main goals and strategies of Croats and Serbs within that political course were, and the reactions of Slovenians directly affected by the new geopolitical plan.

The Context of South Slavic Alternatives' Production

The beginning of the new century and the disproportion between the economic and political (military) power raised the question and consequentially uncertainty regarding the future and territorial scope of European empires. This implicated many opportunities and at the same time great dangers for smaller nations that were an integral part of these states. This also implied the question of the South Slavs' political fate, and raised the issue of defining territorial scope of their potential political formation. Economic trends affected a relatively fast growing population and the fragmentation of arable land. From the beginning of the 19th century, the population density in the South Slavic areas grew from about 20 to more than 60 inhabitants per square kilometre at the beginning of the 20th century (Lampe, 2000: 73-74).¹ Beside an emigration process, the increase of population resulted with the migration to suburban and urban centres, which led to changes in the economic and educational structure of the population. In Slovenia and Croatia, a large part of the bourgeois still had German (Austrian) or Hungarian origins, but its political domination

¹ Serbia had the highest growth rate in late 19th century, where 1.3 million inhabitants in 1870 increased to 2.91 million in 1910. Croatia-Slavonia also had remarkable growth (from 1.84 million in 1870 to 2.73 in 1910), while the demographic increase was slightly smaller in Dalmatia (from 0.46 to 0.63 million). Interestingly, Slovenian areas recorded a decline in population (from 1.13 to 1.06 million), which was mainly consequence of the emigration from the parts where the soil and the existing density did not allow further growth. The absolute fastest growth was recorded by Montenegro, where population rose from only 67.5 thousand to 238 thousand inhabitants. However, that meant the Montenegrin areas still had less than 25 inhabitants per square kilometre.

was endangered by the growth of the Slavic urban population and its consequential involvement in political life. In this context, the South Slavic question became an important issue within the Habsburg Monarchy, where numerous versions of a Yugoslav concept were emerging not only among Slovenians, Croats and Serbs, but among Austrian and Hungarian political elites as well.

The majority of ideas which opposed the concept of South Slavs within the Habsburg state were generated in Serbia. Indeed, after the rise of Karadžević, irrespective to the cultural and territorial scope of South Slavic ideas, anti-Germanism was one of the basic paradigms emphasised in all Serbian variations of the Yugoslav state concept. The latter clearly reflected the fundamental geopolitical function of the process of South Slavic unification as had been perceived among Serbian politicians. From this perspective, the Habsburg rulers embodied a German threat to the very existence of the Serbian state. Therefore, for Karadžević any kind of Serbian integration into the central European federation under the leadership of the Habsburg dynasty was unacceptable due to the whole spectrum of cultural and political factors. Indeed, that would imply a loss (at least partial) of Serbian statehood, sovereign rights, which from Belgrade's point of view implied a reduction of Serbian political rights on the level from the era of Ottoman rule. This would also imply connecting the Serbian population to the catholic majority within Habsburg Monarchy, and would make the territory of Serbia some kind of periphery or even worse; a potential space for Vienna's or Budapest's trading maneuvers in the Balkans. Excluding every possibility of joining the rest of the South Slavs within the Austro-Hungarian Empire implied significantly reduced maneuvering space for building Yugoslav concepts in Serbia and at the same time clearly defined its basic framework. However, regardless of the main political goals, the manifestation of the Serbian Yugoslav idea depended on Serbia's international situation. During the periods of a strong Serbian international position the Great-Serbian character of Yugoslavia was emphasised, while in the moments of Serbia's weakness the Pan-Slavic rhetoric and the equality of all South Slavs was used (Ivašković, 2012). Following the ambition of incorporating Serbs from Croatia-Slavonia, Dalmatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Kingdom of Serbia, its political agenda included an attempt to create a broad political coalition on Austro-Hungarian soil that would be reluctant to be ruled by Viennese authorities. In this context, all leverages, including the engagement of the Hungarian anti-Habsburg political forces, were used. As the Serbian writer Stanoje Stanojević acknowledged in his texts: "At that time, the work of Serbian youth and the struggle of the Serbian people in Austria began for their political rights and freedoms: the Serbs in Hungary and in the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia in alliance with the Hungarians and the Croats began their fight against Vienna" (Pilar, 1990: 350).

From the Serbian point of view, the crucial task was to gain the support of at least one part of the catholic South Slavs within Habsburg Monarchy, which was imposed by the fact of otherwise huge disparities between the Serbian and Croatian “Yugoslav” concepts. Thus, it is not a surprise that Croats gained more attention in the Serbian media at the beginning of the 20th century. Of course, only those who were criticising the traditional Croatian attitude towards the South Slavic issue and its resolution within the Habsburg state got the opportunity for publishing. Fran Potočnjak, for example, rejected Strossmayer’s idea of Yugoslavism and criticised its Habsburg and catholic political framework (Bakić, 2004: 155-157). However, that group had only marginal influence within the Austro-Hungarian political sphere. Generally speaking, there were no strong anti-German movements among South Slavs in the Habsburg Monarchy like in Serbia. Moreover, a large part of the Croatian and Slovenian political elite cherished the belief that their areas belong to the Central-European framework within the Habsburg Monarchy. The national catholic political parties of Slovenians and Croats were especially striving to preserve the Habsburg framework as a shield from other great powers, and at the same time to reform the Monarchy in order to increase the degree of Slovenian and Croatian political emancipation. While this tendency among Croats was articulated in the political goal of reviving the Croatian historical kingdom and integrating the territories that the latter included, Slovenians sought to consolidate power at the lower level in the areas with the dominant Slovenian majority. In addition to this, the Slovenian catholic nationalists were, in the absence of Slovenian statehood institutions, characterised by the reliance on natural law or on attaching Slovenians to the Croatian historical statehood concept. This implicated Zagreb as the centre in the Austro-Slavic or catholic South Slavic concepts, which represented a continuity of the Croat-centric South Slavic visions from the 19th century, whether they were inclined to Strossmayer’s or to Starčević’s idea. The Slovenian catholic parties therefore accepted Croatia as the centre of the South Slavs for additional reasons. Firstly, the Slovenian conservatives were in ideological harmony with the Croatian catholic parties (Rahten, 2005), and secondly, Croatia-Slavonia was the largest South Slavic unit within the Habsburg Monarchy (according to some estimates it accounted for 55.77% of Croats out of their total number in Austria-Hungary) (Lovrenčić, 1972: 22). Finally, the fact was that only the Croatian statehood arguments were recognized by Austro-Hungarian authorities.

Beside the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian national ambitions, other interest groups were also considering the idea of creating a South Slavic state within the frame of their geopolitical vision. From the perspective of the Habsburg authorities, the unresolved South Slavic issue was a factor of destabilisation for the Empire. The Croatian dissatisfaction with their separation among the Austrian and Hungarian

parts was something that should have been resolved as soon as possible, otherwise Croatia could become the centre of anti-Habsburg movement within Austria-Hungary, which was already the case among Serbs both inside and outside of the dual Monarchy. The method of making decisions on key administrative and territorial reforms that would satisfy the Habsburg South Slavs and distance them from Serbia was extremely difficult due to the need of the Hungarian consensus. Therefore, the political strategy of the Habsburg authorities consisted of giving some concessions to the Slovenes and Croats, while the main foreign policy aim was to undermine the conditions for creating a state that would be a strong centrifugal factor for the Habsburg South Slavs (Pleterski, 1975: 52). This strategy included preventing the integration of Montenegro and Serbia, and their annexation of the lands from the dying Ottoman state. However, at that time, Austria-Hungary found itself surrounded by countries which were much more in a competitive than collaborative relationship with the Habsburg Monarchy. Irrespective of the general perception of the natural ally, Germany represented a latent danger due to its promotion of German nationalism and the tendency to unite all Germans into one state (Rahten, 2001: 8-9). Similarly, Italy, which was a formal Austro-Hungarian ally after 1882, also actively promoted the irredentist tendencies among the Austro-Hungarian Italians (*ibid.*: 9). At the same time, the Habsburg political elite could not ignore the Russian danger, which was, despite its defeat in the war with Japan, far greater than the danger of the Turkish Empire, which was more concerned with its own survival. The Balkan area therefore represented a great opportunity and a danger at the same time for the Habsburg Monarchy, due to the uncertainty of who and in what way would capture the territory of the Ottoman Empire.

The international state of affairs affected the internal situation of the Habsburg Monarchy. Any attempt to resolve the South Slavic issue was blocked due to the lack of inner Austria-Hungary consensus. The first "anti-Austrian" vote was, of course, represented by the Hungarian political elites, which tried to maintain the dual system from 1867 at any cost. The latter enabled Hungary to control the vast territory and the position of the only relevant counterpart to Vienna for all key decisions at the state level. The second voice against the South Slavs' political emancipation was represented by German national groups which were opposed to everything that smelled of incorporating South Slav territories into a third entity within the Monarchy. The Carinthian Germans were describing that as a "struggle till death" for all the lands south of the Drava River (Rahten, 2005: 196-198). The dominance of the national component over other ideological dimensions was also confirmed by the German catholic-socialists who adhered to the national demands of other German political parties (Ivašković, 2012). An additional blow for the Slovenian and Croatian unit was the absence of Czech support. In the potential South Slavic unit within

the Habsburg Monarchy, the Czech politicians perceived the threat of remaining the only Slavs in the Austrian part of the Monarchy, which would undermine their efforts for their own territorial-administrative emancipation. This situation greatly reduced the possibilities for a successful implementation of any strategy that would result with an internal reorganisation into a triune Monarchy.

It seems that the South Slavic issue was of great importance for too many political groups. At the same time, that issue was not only beyond South Slavic political actors, but it also raised interests among politicians outside of the Monarchy. The conflicting objectives, accompanied by a high level of interests, prevented the consensus among the critical majority in terms of the concrete territorial delimitation of the third unit. These circumstances created a climate, which on one hand fostered the emergence of new political orientations, while encouraging the existing ones to search for different methods for the realisation of their political goals. In this context, the political movement “New Course” was born. It was fostered by primarily Croatian politicians, who seemed to be tired of more than three decades of waiting for the reform of the dual system, and decided to go along the new revolutionary political path. This movement gave up attaining the support of the ruling Austrian political groups, and sought alternatives in the creation of wider opposition strategic partnerships. For the “New Course” members, it was crucial to gain support from neighbouring countries, especially from Serbia and Italy, while in the wider political scene the movement tried to get the support from France, Russia, Bulgaria, and even the US (Ivašković, 2017: 99).

The Search for an Agreement with Italians

The “New Course” movement had the centre in Rijeka and Dalmatia and spread relatively quickly along the Adriatic coast. The Croatian, Italian, and Slovenian national elements accompanied by Austrian government interventions formed quadrilateral relations in the Northern Adriatic. However, although not strongly present in Kvarner, Istria, and Trieste, Serbs from the Dalmatian hinterland had an indirectly significant impact on political events in that area. By the beginning of the 20th century, Croats and Slovenians were jointly defending their own interests against the forces of Italian irredentism. In such a mutual relationship, the Slovenians from the Primorska region defended the Croatian primacy in Zadar and Rijeka, while the Croatian newspapers supported establishing Slovenian institutions in Trieste (Pahor, 2004). The year 1903 marked a sudden turn in these relations, since some of the Croatian journals started an intensive campaign for the Croatian-Italian national agreement. That was a thoughtfully developed new strategy, which was indicated by the fact that the new ideas were simultaneously fostered in all spheres of political life. Ante Tresić-Pavičić (1867–1949) took over the key role in the sphere of

diplomacy, while Frano Supilo (1870–1917) took the initiative to spread the idea in public life. In the summer of 1903, the latter began intensively publishing articles that favoured the Italians who were until then very unpopular in Croatian journals (Pleterski, 1975: 55). In the same year, the journals, which promoted the South Slavic-Italian alliance on the new foundations, also experienced expansion in Trieste, where besides the existing “Slovanska misel” (Slavic Thought) and “Trijalizam” (Trialism) Tresić-Pavičić began to publish “Jadran” (Adriatic). Indicatively these Croatian journals increasingly started to use Italian language in their articles. At the same time, similar processes took place in Dalmatia, where Ante Trumbić (1864–1938) took the leading role in the Croatian-Italian alliance. Trumbić promoted the thesis about marginal disputes between the Italians and Croats, which could not represent a serious threat for the agreement that would wipe out even the slightest trace of national-political antagonism between those two nations. Interestingly, almost at the same time the switch in Croatian-Italian relations reflected on Trumbić’s exposure of Pan-Germanism as a factor that jeopardised the vital interests of both Croats and Italians (*ibid.*: 57).

A completely different atmosphere was in Primorska and Istria where scepticism prevailed regarding the making of any kind of arrangements with the Italians about the delimitation line between them on one side and Slovenians and Istrian Croats on the other. This particular attempt of solving the South Slavic issue within the Habsburg Monarchy was therefore no different from the previous plans. The national relations in the Primorska region, in Trieste, and in Istria were tense, which could have been noticed in the writings of the “Edinost” (Unity), the Slovenian liberal journal from Trieste, and its Italian counterpart “L’Istria” (Ivašković, 2019). Already at the end of 1903, the latter proclaimed that Istria would be definitely Italian, while the Slavic population was supposed *nolens volens* to be loyal and to recognise the Italian character of the peninsula (“Edinost”, 26 November 1903). On the other hand, “Edinost” strongly protested this solution and insisted on the integration of Istria, Trieste and the whole of Primorska region in the framework of the South Slavic unit within the Habsburg Monarchy (“Edinost”, 21 November 1903). It seemed that there was practically no manoeuvring space for an agreement between the two sides, the Slovenians and Italians from Trieste, Primorska, and Istria. The Italian side continually tried to transfer this process of solving the national issue to higher and wider level, and therefore sought a negotiator who would have the legitimacy of negotiating over the entire area of the Adriatic Sea and its coastal resorts. Thus, from the Italian point of view, it was far more expedient to choose Croatian interlocutors considering the fact that at the given moment the word from Belgrade had not yet had the legitimacy of representing Habsburg South Slavs. It seemed that with Croatian acceptance of this role Slovenians from Trieste, Primor-

ska, and Istria were left on their own overnight. However, it also seemed that this was not an arrangement only between Italians and Dalmatian Croats, but it also had at least silent support from the dominant Slovenian political force gathered within the Slovenian People's Party (Slovenska ljudska stranka – SLS). The latter was led by Ivan Šušteršič (1863–1925), who, at the beginning of the 20th century, was the most influential Slovenian politician, and decided himself that the negotiations with the Italian side on behalf of the Slavic Union (the strongest mainly Slovenian and Croatian parliamentary group in Vienna) should be left to the Istrian Croat Vjekoslav Spinčić (1848–1933). This indirectly showed that the priority for Slavic Union was to preserve the largest share of Istria, while Trieste and Primorska were set aside. In line with this thesis, there was also an agreement on joint efforts between Italian and Slovenian conservatives for the establishment of an Italian Law faculty in Trieste and its Slovenian version in Ljubljana. On the other hand, Slovenians and Croats from Trieste gained the right to use their languages in the German Gymnasium. Of course, “Edinost” was strongly disappointed with such arrangements, while Croats from Dalmatia were supporting their acceptance (Pleterski, 1975: 61-62). The manifestations of Slovenian disappointment were not limited only to liberal and social democratic journals. On March 27, 1904, for example, members of “Edinost” accompanied by Social Democrats and the Croatian representatives from Istria protested against the “suicide of the Trieste Slovenes” (“Edinost”, 28 March 1904).

Although Slovenian discontent was remarkable, it seems that in the first phase the creators of “New Course” did not care much about it. Due to the German and Italian interests, they considered Slovenian ambitions in Trieste geopolitically unrealistic (Ivašković, 2013). Therefore, every criticism of the new policy came under the fierce condemnation, while supporters of the new political movement tried to prove that critics were playing according to Austrian notes. The same argument was used against those Croats who opposed the “New Course”. Those critiques, which could not be attributed to Vienna's policy, were on the other hand simply ignored. “New Course” leaders did not consider the domestic opposition as the real threat, and it seems that the greater problem for them was the divisions on the Italian side. An example of this was the deal reached by Ante Tresić-Pavičić and Riccioto Garibaldi (1847–1924), which was later strongly rejected by the Italian official representatives from Trieste (Pleterski, 1975: 64).

Croatian supporters of the arrangement with Italians, however, did not have illusions regarding interests of the other party of the agreement. Regardless of individual political affiliation, everyone on the Italian side saw this as the possibility of a political-geographical demarcation on the Adriatic coast, hoping that the shift in Croatian strategy and consequentially the positioning of the South Slavic centre to the east would diminish the importance of Trieste, the Primorska region, and Istrian

peninsula for the key decision makers on the South Slavic side. For Croats within "New Course", this was probably an additional stimulative factor for the acceleration of the negotiations. Indeed, the debate about the status of Bosnia and Herzegovina was already rising on the political horizon. From this aspect, it was necessary to do everything in order to finally revitalise the concept of Croatian statehood. Therefore, the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia-Dalmatia could represent a strong centripetal force that would attract the incorporation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and thus the realisation of the Croatian state idea. The same strategy was later used by Minister Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal (1854–1912) within the trialist idea (Wank, 1963). With this in mind, Ante Tresić-Pavičić offered to Italians Croatian support for their ambitions in Albania, while at the same time hoping for Italian help in preserving a strong Bulgarian state, which would neutralize Serbia's pressures on Bosnia and Herzegovina (Ivašković, 2017: 104). The Croatian rush affected their willingness to negotiate and to gradually increase the piece of the territory offered to the Italians. At first, the Croatian side was prepared to accept the demarcation line promoted by Milan Marjanović (1879–1955) who took the national principle as a criterion of territorial delineation; Trieste and the western part of the Istrian peninsula would become Italian, while the rest should belong to the Croatian-Slovenian majority (Pleterski, 1975: 65). Both sides should also guarantee some kind of minority rights for Italians who would stay on South Slavic territory and vice versa. Supilo also bowed to this idea, although he soon realised that Italian appetites were much bigger. Slovenians and Croats in Istria, Trieste, and Primorska region remained reluctant to this solution. They considered there was no actual readiness for minority rights protection and that any kind of agreement, which would leave them on the Italian side, was actually their conviction to forced assimilation.

Partnership with Serbs and Hungarians

Due to the large Serb population in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the Syrmia region of the Croatia-Slavonia unit, and in the Dalmatian hinterland, resolving issues between Croats and Serbs was of strategic importance for the "New Course" on its way of achieving internal South Slav unity. The precondition for this was the creation of a strong Croatian coalition on January 29, 1903, when the "Obzor" and "Hrvatska domovina"² factions joined with Advanced youth and Croatian workers' community into the Croatian Party of Rights (Hrvatska stranka prava – HSP) (Lovrenčić, 1972: 153). The formation of the Croatian Block continued in April 1905, when the parliamentary groups of the Croatian National Party (Hrvatska narodna stranka – HNS) and the HSP joined into the new club named Croatian

² "Obzor" and "Hrvatska domovina" were two (political) journals published in Zagreb.

Party (Hrvatska stranka – HS). The key points of the agreement clearly indicated the HS's fundamental goals. The first point declared: "The Croatian Party resolutely demands the merger of the Kingdom of Dalmatia and the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia on the basis of national and state law, and considers the unification as a major step of the supreme national ambition to connect all the territories that are inhabited by Croats into one independent state body" (Pilar, 1990: 344). The next point of agreement emphasised the demand for Croatian language to have all rights in public life and educational system in Dalmatia. It also declared that the HS will strive for the connection of Dalmatian ports with the natural hinterland in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the definition of Croatian territorial and cultural goals, the third point defined the Croatian relationship with Serbs, namely "that the Croatian and Serbian people represent unified nation in blood and language, and that they are inextricably attached to the territory, so the Croatian Party will strive for the elimination and suppression of conflicts between them" (Bakić, 2004: 152-153). The document was obviously a mixture of liberal and conservative elements. However, the main strategic aim of the new party was to integrate Croatian territories on the basis of Croatian statehood right, which should give Croatia a better starting point for political, economic, and cultural life within the Habsburg Monarchy. This without doubt was a Croat-centric concept, which pragmatically tried to obtain the support of Serbian population within Austro-Hungary.

A liberal-conservative program with a Croatian base was of course criticised by some Serbian politicians. The document was labelled as a nationalistic Croatian program, which divided South Slavs and jeopardised their common future. Serbian diplomat Jovan Jovanović Pižon (1869–1939) thus wrote: "This program and the acts of Dalmatian Croats cannot be rejoiced by Serbs. Its first paragraph, besides all ambiguities, can be considered as purely nationalistic Croatian program, which is narrow, without sight, and thus without future. At home Hungarians, in the Balkans Germans, and Croats speak about their unification. ... Instead of the broad program for all South Slavs, the old purely Croatian program. Instead of Strossmayer, Antun Starčević. Instead of Yugoslavia, the Great Croatia" (*ibid.*: 154). The plan for the integration of the Habsburg Serbs into the Yugoslav concept within the Habsburg Monarchy, which declaratively offered Serbs equality, but whose main goal was to obtain them for the Croatian political program, quickly diverted most of the Serbian politicians within and outside of Austria-Hungary. Therefore, it was necessary to think about points in which agreement could be reached with certain concessions. This issue divided Croatian political parties. On one side, the Croatian opposition led by Josip Frank (1844–1911) perceived the Serbian population in Croatian areas as a Belgrade's Trojan horse with a function of preventing the revival of Croatian statehood (Ivašković, 2017: 104). Other parties saw the Serbian population in the

Habsburg Monarchy as the leverage with which internal unity could be achieved, and through which obtaining Belgrade's support for Croatian political demands would be easier.

Unlike Serbian political circles, the "New Course" succeeded in gaining support among Croats from Banovina in its beginnings, especially among youth movements from the 1890s, which had a diversified activity in towns within the Croatia-Slavonia unit (Lovrenčić, 1972: 39-89). In fact, the only loud opponent of "New Course" was the Pure Party of Rights (Čista stranka prava – ČSP) of Josip Frank, which remained isolated on the Croatian political scene with the absence of the capacity for making any kind of coalitions. The weakness of the ČSP was evident at the end of August 1905 in Dubrovnik when Frank's resolution, according to which Croatia would demand detaching from Hungary, was rejected (Pilar, 1990: 343-345). This marked the beginning of forming the opposing resolution. On 3 October 1905, all Croatian parties (with the exception of the ČSP) met in Rijeka and after two days of consultations adopted a document which clearly outlined all the elements of the "New Course"'s political goals. A long introduction defined Hungary as a natural Croatian partner and concluded that neither the Croatian nation nor its political representatives will have any intention of acting against Hungarian interests. Similarly, as in relation with Italians, the resolution promoted the thesis that the movement for a greater degree of Croatian independence would not in any way contradict the Hungarians' national ambitions: "Croatian representatives consider as their duty to fight alongside the Hungarian people for the fulfilment of all state rights and freedoms, in the belief that these rights and freedoms will benefit the Croatian and Hungarian people; and this will make the basis of a lasting agreement between the two nations" (*ibid.*: 345).

The central part of the resolution declared the unification of Croatia and Slavonia with Dalmatia as the fundamental political goal. Indicatively, the word used for this act was not "merger", but the "reincorporation" of Dalmatia into the triune kingdom: "The achievement of this purpose, intended for mutual benefit, is conditioned first by the reincorporation of Dalmatia to the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia to which it already belongs virtually and legally" (*ibid.*). The choice of word confirmed that this plan did not demand the creation of a new entity, but rather the separation of Dalmatia from Austria and its reintegration to the Croatian kingdom. Thus, although Austria was not mentioned directly in the document, the act itself had an extremely anti-Austrian note. In fact, it promoted the thesis that Austria was the biggest obstacle in the way of the "full autonomy" of Hungary and Croatia as well (*ibid.*).

From today's point of view, it is slightly easier to evaluate the motives for such a political strategy. Although the choice of a strategic partner, which throughout

the history certainly represented a greater danger for the existence of Croatian political subjectivity, may seem as unreasonable, the ambition of finding a new path, which was caused by frustration due to Austrian inactivity in solving the Croatian and South Slavic issue, is understandable. The second important factor was the fact that the Croatian geopolitical core was part of the Hungarian part of the Monarchy, which enabled flourishing of anti-Austrian alternatives. That was one of the main reasons why for example the Czechs could not afford similar strategies, and were throughout the whole 19th and the beginning of the 20th century much more careful in relation to Vienna. An additional cause for a new strategic orientation lies in the context of resolving Croatian-Serbian political issues. As Croatian members of the new political movement were trying to build a bridge for cooperation with Serbian political parties, they had to reduce the gap between two different South Slavic ideologies, and the easiest way for the Croatian side was to adopt anti-Germanism, which was one of the fundamentals of Serbian Yugoslavism. Of course, this anti-Austrian position was welcomed by Kossuth's nationalistic Hungarian party, who understood the Rijeka resolution as an act that would take Dalmatia out of Austria and incorporate it into the territory of the St. Stefan's crown: "We welcome our brothers Croats and Dalmatians, and we remind them that we have shared with them all the rights that we have so far achieved. Austria made us angry and the Almighty himself will help us to bring back Dalmatia through Croatia to the crown of St. Stefan. We are expecting you with love and with a lot of hope" (*ibid.*: 347-348). Thus, according to the initial plan, the Croatian parties of "New Course" should have acquired two new allies and only one new opponent.

The Issue of Slovenians from Primorska Region and Trieste

"New Course" strategy did not affect only the Austrian political elite negatively, it put the Slovenians from Primorska region and Trieste in a very unfavourable position as well. They were not invited to Rijeka, which undermined the idea of South Slavic reciprocity and indicated an unwillingness to solve the issue of Slovenians in the Adriatic. On one side, the strongest conservative Slovenian political group, SLS, could not participate in the anti-Habsburg coalition, as that would be in diametrical opposition to its political program and also to the political agenda of their political partners from Croatia. On the other hand, the Slovenian Liberals in the People's Progressive Party (Narodno napredna stranka – NNS) could not participate in the "New Course" due to plans which included leaving to the Italians parts of the territory which was according to Slovenian Liberals considered Slovenian. Therefore, Slovenian criticism for the Rijeka resolution came from both Slovenian political poles. The conservative journal "Slovenec" argued: "From a Slovenian standpoint no Slovenian politician can defend the resolutions because it separates us from the Croats

and its implementation would implicate our national death. The irony was that they adopted such a resolution in Rijeka, the city for which the Croats should fight until the last man standing! We will not allow divisions between the South Slavs in our empire in any way, and we hope that the majority of Croats will search for a different future than those gentlemen in Rijeka did" ("Slovenec", 10 October 1905).

The resolution was also criticised by "Naš list", a weekly journal of former NNS members, which labelled the document as an act that negated the solidarity efforts of all South Slavs for their political independence (Pleterski, 1975: 71-72). Leaving a huge part of Slovenians outside of South Slavic political context and leaning on Italy and Hungary was severely condemned. The editorial board of the journal wrote that the reintegration of Dalmatia to the Croatian unit and indirectly to the Hungarian part of the Monarchy would greatly strengthen the eastern half of the Empire, but this would mean the loss of Slovenian territories for good (*ibid.*: 72). Such Slovenian isolation would just mean waiting for one of two great neighbours to finish up conquering the rest of Slovenian territory. This could ultimately jeopardise not only South Slavic reciprocity, but also the idea of the Empire's federalisation in general (*ibid.*).

The decision to omit the Slovenian representatives from the process of formalising the "New Course"'s political efforts was not instant. Already several years before the Rijeka resolution Ante Tresić-Pavičić had realised that there was nothing to offer to the Slovenians, especially to the Trieste Slovenians, that would satisfy at least the minimum of their national aspirations. At the annual assembly of "Edinost" in 1905, for example, he faced complaints from both the Slovenians and the Istrian Croats, that the negotiations with the Italians were too fast and that the opposite side did not offer anything. Tresić-Pavičić did not have any kind of comment, but repeated the thesis how the Italians do not pose a greater danger than the Germans: "In this fight for South Slavic unity and for the formation of a strong chain that would prevent the Germans from penetrating the Balkans and the Adriatic, we need connections with Romans, especially with the Italians" ("Slovenski narod", 16 January 1919). However, this was not the only opinion within the "New Course" movement. In the year 1905, quite a few different views existed on the Adriatic issue, especially regarding the Trieste problem and the solution of the Slovenian status in this area. The Dalmatian politician Josip Smodlaka (1869–1956) tried to pursue a different political strategy with innovative proposals, which should attract Slovenians on the side of "New Course". Slovenian criticism and Smodlaka's personal acquaintances with Slovenian colleagues from Trieste enabled him to realise the exceptional importance of Trieste for all three sides (Slovenians, Italians, and Germans). Therefore, at the gathering of the Slovenian national-radical youth in the beginning of September 1905, Smodlaka presented the plan of a Slovenian

Trieste that would be positioned beside the existing Italian city (Pleterski, 1975: 73-74). Regardless of the fact that it was not entirely clear from his speech whether he proposed the division of the city or he used the model of Gorizia case (where a new Slovenian town was built near Italian Gorizia after World War II), the idea was innovative and certainly ensured the existence of Slovenians in Trieste and their contact with the Adriatic Sea. This was a pragmatic attempt to solve the Italian-South Slavic issue, which took into account the Slovenian arguments as well. Slovenian politician Henrik Tuma (1858–1935) influenced Smodlaka who supported Tuma's contribution in the journal "Sloboda" (Freedom) from Split, where he explained the geopolitical, especially economic, importance of Trieste from the South Slavic aspect, and the importance of the city for the Slovenian nation in the South Slavic context (*ibid.*: 80-83). Unfortunately, Smodlaka's proposal of demarcation has never experienced the second stage of development, in which he might explain how he imagined the idea of two Triestes. We can only assume that this would imply some kind of discontinuity of the Italian territory, since the Italians were certainly not willing to give up Western Istria.

The reason for the failure of alternative proposals such as Smodlaka's was the fact that the majority of other resolution supporters were on much more rigid standpoints, especially already mentioned Tresić-Pavičić, who was showing much more sentiment for the Italian side. In the Dalmatian assembly he openly supported the idea of Italian University in Trieste, which was, of course, condemned by the Slovenians, who criticized Dalmatian inconsistency, since the Croats tried to prevent the establishment of an Italian elementary school in Split ("Edinost", 23 November 1905). Due to that Tresić-Pavičić was criticised even by the conservative journal "Slovenec": "Confused Yugoslav politics of Tresić-Pavičić has bloomed its most lush flower these days. Mr Tresić-Pavičić has been negotiating for days (...) in order to establish an alliance between Romans and Slavs, of course, harming the Monarchy" ("Slovenec", 16 March 1906).

United Slovenian rejection made it impossible for the new Croatian-Serbian Coalition (Hrvatsko-srpska koalicija – HSK), which fostered the "New Course" policy, to present the criticism of the "New Course" merely as a reflection of the Austrian element among one part of the Slovenian (and Croatian) political elite. The editorial board of "Edinost" firmly defended the position that liberal Slovenians are not "in love" with the Austrian system, the Austrian government, or the Austrian bureaucracy, and that the Austrian citizenship of Slovenians is only a fact which no one had asked their opinion for. However, the Italian handling with the Slavs discourages the desire of the Slovenians from Primorska to replace their citizenship with the Italian ("Edinost", 20 January 1906). That fact brought even Tresić-Pavičić to the standpoint that Slovenians should get their access to the Adriatic Sea. He still

insisted that this could not by any means be through Trieste, but on one occasion he asserted "if the Italians would not be willing to give Slovenians access to the sea, we, the Croats, will do it" (Pleterski, 1975: 84). Whether this was only a diplomatic approach with the aim of reducing Slovenian dissatisfaction or if it was also based in the real plans of "New Course" is difficult to assess, since there is no other evidence that would confirm the intention to realise Tresić-Pavičić's claim. Thus, this was just another unsuccessful attempt to obtain Slovenian support for the "New Course" movement (Gross, 1960: 112-118).

Dalmatia as the Centre and Aim of the Croatian-Serbian Coalition

From the geopolitical aspect, Dalmatia was positioned as the meeting point of the new South Slavic strategy pillars. Although the followers of the new policy advocated a partnership with the Italians and Hungarians against Austria, the paradox was that it was the Austrian government which enabled development of such political alternatives. The political system in Dalmatia was significantly softer than the one in the Hungarian part of the Monarchy including Croatia-Slavonia (Lovrenčić, 1972: 102-104). Even in comparison with the Istrians, the Dalmatian Croats were in a much better position. This was due to a small proportion of the Italian population, whose political representatives could not occupy all crucial political positions without major constitutional violations. Possible insistence on this would be too risky for the authorities, since the dissatisfaction of the Dalmatian population could quickly spread to the still unstable area of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, the state authorities also had to count on the connections of the Dalmatian Serbs with Montenegro, which represented an additional element of risk. The Vienna policy was consequently more liberal and permissive to the rule of the moderate People's Party (Narodna stranka), which enabled a much broader spectrum of Croatian cultural and political activity. Accordingly, the movement for the reintegration of Dalmatia to Croatia-Slavonia enjoyed widespread support among the Dalmatian people, while Hungarian nationalists were publicly expressing their support to the efforts of abolishing the artificial division of Croats. This is also evident from the Slovenian journals' reports: "The conference in Rijeka and its conclusions in Dalmatia do not have any public opponents among the Croats ... Even among the people exists a thought that Austria means nothing but taxes and gendarmes. ... The Hungarian coalition knows this, and that is now why its journals write in favour of Dalmatian Croats. ... Kossuth's journal 'Budapest' says that the Coalition will ensure Dalmatia and Croatia become united, and that Dalmatians will finally be free" ("Slovenec", 12 October 1905).

From the Serbian point of view the significant orthodox population in certain parts of the Dalmatian hinterland, as well as in eastern Herzegovina and Montene-

gro, played an important role in the process of Belgrade's attraction to the "New Course" strategy. The fundamental Serbian goal was the definition of their national rights, which was done with the Zadar resolution on 17 October 1905. The latter was added as a kind of amendment to the Resolution from Rijeka, after which 26 Serbian representatives from Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia gave their support to the decisions from Rijeka (Pilar, 1990: 345-346). The Croatian request for the reincorporation of Dalmatia to Croatia-Slavonia was conditioned by the recognition of equal rights for Dalmatian Serbs to express their will regarding the "reincorporation" as the constitutional element: "As for the request of the Croatian brothers for the reincorporation of Dalmatia to Croatia and Slavonia, which is also guaranteed by a positive law, the Serbian parties are ready to invest their strength to meet this demand, if (...) the Croatian side acknowledges the equal rights to Serbs as Croats have" (*ibid.*: 346). This was therefore a demand for the political emancipation of Serbs in Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia, which was at the same time a demand for a unique veto right that implied the inability of Croatian decision-making without the consent of the Serbian representatives.

Following two separate resolutions, the final joint Croatian-Serbian act was adopted on 14 November 1905 in Zadar again, where representatives of the Croatian Party (Hrvatska stranka) and the Serbian People's Party (Srpska narodna stranka) met. Croatian politician Pero Čingrija (1837–1921) read out the conclusions in the Dalmatian assembly: "The clubs of the Croatian party and the Serbian People's Party persist in principle that Croats and Serbs are one nation, that both are equal ... For that reason Croats and Serbs in Dalmatia will work side by side as equal brothers in all national-political matters; they will especially try to work together in order to achieve the reincorporation of Dalmatia to Croatia and Slavonia as soon as possible, as this is the main condition for ensuring their better future. ... We also demand that for the people's language in the government areas and all offices is used the name Croatian or Serbian language; that Dalmatian schools give to the Serbian name a place of honour and that the school books take into account both the Serbian and Croatian history, that the children learn Latin and Cyrillic alphabet, so they can read and write in both" (*ibid.*: 346-347). It seems that the final resolution had some ambiguous points. Croats and Serbs were defined in joint statement as the same nation, while at the same time the equality of Croats and Serbs was claimed. The latter in fact meant that there were two subjects with the same rights. In this respect, the Croatian-Serbian consensus apparently was not reached. Therefore, both sides' proposals were included in the final resolution even though they were in opposition to one another.

The cultural achievements of Serbs from Croatia and Dalmatia were by no means the only successes of Serbian politics at the time; even more important was

the fact that, in return for Serbian support for the reintegration of Dalmatia to Croatia-Slavonia, some Croats resigned from the idea of Croatian Bosnia and Herzegovina. The latter was initially unofficial, but gradually some eminent Croatian "New Course" representatives disclosed in their public speeches that Bosnia and Herzegovina belongs to the Serbian field of interest. An example of that was the speech of Frano Supilo in the Croatian Parliament on 25 February 1907:

The entire policy of both states (Austro-Hungary and Germany) has been directed to the removal of all obstacles that are on their way to the great "Drang"... If we acknowledge that our task is to be a Balkan guardian rather than the bridge over which the enemy will cross, then we also know that we can count on our Serbian brothers... Recognising the Serbs we have again got their support for the reincorporation of Dalmatia... But we do not know what is happening with Bosnia and Herzegovina. These countries are still Turkish provinces, regardless of the fact that some are trying to disguise that reality. In addition, although Bosnia and Herzegovina are Turkish provinces under the sovereignty of the Sultan, they were handed over to Austro-Hungarians, but only for a limited period of time, until the conditions in those two regions improve. However, Austro-Hungary does nothing to improve their situation, exactly the opposite; it is hurting them, and wants to create a favourable terrain for the battle against the East. And if we were lucky and Bosnia and Herzegovina stepped out of the Monarchy, it is quite natural that any true and honest Croat would prefer to give Bosnia and Herzegovina to Serbs rather than to foreigners (*ibid.*: 351).

The explicit characterisation of Austrians and Germans as enemies became a constant in the political discourse of the "New Course", but in Supilo's speech Croatia was for the first time in its history explicitly classified as the defender of the East in the context of antagonistic East-West relations.

Conceptual Differences

The resolutions from Zadar and Rijeka faced a lot of criticism, but the voices against those acts remained unarticulated and did not have a political body that could come up with a realistic program against the new policy. On the contrary, the advocates of the otherwise different South Slavic visions found a common framework within which it seemed that both, Serbs and Croats, could achieve their primary political goals. The HSK joined the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP), the Croatian Progressive Party (Hrvatska napredna stranka – HNS), the Serbian National Independent Party (Srpska narodna samostalna stranka – SNSS), the Serbian National Radical Party (Srpska narodna radikalna stranka – SNRS) and the Social Democratic Party of Croatia (Socijalno-demokratska stranka Hrvatske – SDSH) into this common political formation (Ivašković, 2017: 114). Although this political group had an enor-

amous impact in the Croatian political arena in the coming years, within the Coalition itself there were significant divisions. That was a consequence of important discrepancies regarding the South Slavic concepts, which were evident already in the process of adopting Zadar's resolution. In the initial period, the policy of the Coalition did not aim at creating a South Slavic state outside the dual Monarchy. The "New Course" was primarily an attempt of Croatian parties to attract Serbian parties from Croatia for the Croatian goal of South Slavic unification within the Monarchy, which would imply a Croatian majority in the consequential South Slavic unit. On the other side, Serbian parties in Croatia sought a way of political survival when international circumstances were not in their favour. In this context, it was important to participate with the ruling authorities and to marginalise anti-Serbian movements within Croatia, while waiting for the international position of Serbia to improve. In these relations the conflict of Croat-centrism against Serbian expansionism still existed, but was at certain moments hidden by common tactical goals in the context of otherwise different strategies. Therefore, we can agree with the thesis that within Croatian-Serbian relations there was a competition, whose conditions were determined by wider international political circumstances that forced South Slavic political groups to adapt their ideas to macro-geopolitical conditions (Ivašković, 2013). When one side was in a better position, it tried to impose its own strategic goals on the partner within the Coalition. Thus, we have to be careful with strong conclusions when analysing the circumstances of both adopted resolutions and the characteristic features of South Slavic concepts among Croatian and Serbian political parties in the beginning of the 20th century. The claim that the South Slavic state was the Coalition's cohesive factor could only be accepted conditionally, since the visions of that state differed extremely.

In line with some previous claims (Lovrenčić, 1972: 15) we can agree that the wider context of German and Austro-Hungarian penetration into the Balkans and the Middle East, and the unstable internal situation in the Habsburg Monarchy were the driving force of the "New Course". Those circumstances brought closer two South Slavic visions, but regardless of this we cannot talk about the fusion of two state conceptions into a single one. For this reason, it would be incorrect to define the HSK's policy as a common "Yugoslavian" policy. The Coalition was a conglomerate of different parties, which had in one moment a common political goal, which was not yet sufficient to talk about the unification of South Slavic policies. Nevertheless, the crystallisation of relations within the particular political group brings us to the conclusion that the Croatian part of the "New Course" seemed to have made a bigger step towards the Serbian concept than vice versa. An indication which supports this thesis was the partnership of HSK with the Independent Radical Party (Samostalna radikalna stranka – SRS) from Serbia, which announced a turning

point among one section of Croatian politicians towards finding a solution in a wider South Slavic context (outside of the Habsburg Monarchy). This caused a lot of difficulties for the Croatian part of HSK. In the first place, the Austrian political leadership was opposed to the "New Course", but the idea of a South Slavic state outside the Monarchy did not please Budapest either. In such a narrow manoeuvring space the Serbs and the Italians practically became the only Croatian allies. On the other hand, Belgrade seemed to gain more benefits, since the Croatian areas were of key importance in terms of achieving the fundamental Serbian geopolitical goal. The incitement of the anti-Habsburg mood in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina allowed for Serbian calculations that these areas could represent a kind of a restrictive zone to Austrian ambitions in the Balkans.

Conclusions

There are two key conclusions which arise from this study. Firstly, the policy of the "New Course" was born as a result of dissatisfaction among one group of Croatian politicians due to the inactivity of the Habsburg authorities in resolving the South Slavic, more precisely Croatian, issue in the context of Austria-Hungary's reform. The alternative political strategy included a radical turn in the context of Croatian-Austrian-Hungarian relations and in the triangle of relations between Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs. The primary political goal of the "New Course" was the reintegration of Dalmatia in the Croatian-Slavonia unit within the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Monarchy. In return for obtaining Italian consent for the new plan, this group of Croatian politicians offered support to the Italian ambitions regarding the demarcation line in Istria and in the Primorska region, which caused many Slovenian protests.

Secondly, the "New Course" might at first be seen as a long expected consensus between Croats and Serbs, but the analysis in this article undermines that thesis. The fact that Croats and Serbs had not reached a consensus regarding the ultimate political goal became evident with the formation of two political factions within the HSK that formed different views on the fundamental geopolitical parameters of the desired South Slavic state. While the Croatian part primarily sought to integrate Dalmatia into the Croatian kingdom with the centre in Zagreb, the Serbian parties understood the latter only as the short-term collateral cost; while in the long run they saw the HSK as an institute that would bring the Habsburg South Slavs to the bosom of Serbia. Inner incompatibility and strong opponents to the new strategy, above all Austrian politicians, were the reasons which undermined the realisation of the "New Course"'s aims. However, this period was a turning point in the Croatian political sphere, and HSK became the strongest anti-Austrian political movement on the Croatian soil.

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