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PREPARATIONS OF BANAL CROATIA FOR ITALY'S ENTRY INTO THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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Based on sources from the archives, newspapers of the time and published literature, the author in the article presents and analyses the activities of the authorities of Banal Croatia, as part of Austria-Hungary, related to the expected entry of Italy into World War I. In addition to Italian propaganda, espionage and irredentist activities, smuggling of confidential messages of anti-state content was noticed, as well as the use of fake passports. The authorities monitored the anti-Habsburg activities of South Slavic political emigration, and church representatives during their stay in Italy. After the outbreak of the war, Italian citizens were interned, and some of the refugees from the border war zone settled in Banal Croatia.

Keywords: Banal Croatia; World War I; Italy; espionage; propaganda; irredenta; refugees

Introduction

At the outset of World War, I, Italy—although formally allied with Austria-Hungary and Germany through the Triple Alliance—chose to remain neutral. However, it immediately began negotiating with both the Entente and the Central Powers, seeking the more favorable offer in exchange for its potential entry into the war.

Austria-Hungary, aware that Italy was engaging in anti-Austrian activities that extended beyond politics, began preparing for the possibility of Italy joining the conflict as an enemy. These preparations also impacted Banal Croatia. Most

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of the measures taken were implemented by civilian and military authorities tasked with identifying threats to national security, though they were only partially reported in the media.

These actions allow us to observe how the authorities of Austria-Hungary — and specifically Banal Croatia — anticipated the unfolding of events. Ultimately, Italy found the Entente's offer more advantageous, signed the Treaty of London with Great Britain, France, and Russia on April 26, 1915, and declared war on Austria-Hungary on May 23, 1915.¹

Military preparations for defence are not considered here because they were not within the jurisdiction of the Croatian authorities. Before the Centenario, Croatian historiography did not show much interest in researching the activities of state security system and its operations during the First World war. Although works dedicated to some phenomena exists, especially rich in the field of downfall of Austria-Hungarian Monarchy or Yugoslav Committee but their focus has been on Entente efforts, building the national unity of South Slavs and fighting against the Treaty of London, but they are not focused on the national security. A few papers address the political situation in the country or police oppressions on the begging of the Great War. Marko Vukičević's work "Aspects of Personal Freedom During the First World War in Zagreb" and Hrvoj Čapo's "Gradivo požeškog arhiva o špijunima u Prvome svjetskom ratu" both of which discuss aspects of state security but are primarily focused on local history. A broader perspective is provided by Miroslav Kota with his work "Preustroj sigurnosnoga sustava banske Hrvatske 1915. godine". But so far there has been no paper which examined the activities considering possible Italy's approach to war, or Austro-Hungarian (Croatian) countermeasures. Some of these events were noticed by press of that time and we present them here. For archive sources we can highlight the Croatian State Archives, Record Group 79, Serial OUVZ – SDDS, which contains rich documentation about state security.

By the time Italy entered the war, Exceptional measures² had already been in effect in Banal Croatia. These were enacted by Ban Ivan Skerlec on July 27,

¹ About Italy's entry into the war see: Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Prvi svjetski rat i kraj Habsburške monarhije, 1914-1918*, (Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 2019). His work contains rich bibliography in this issue.

² State of emergency. On exceptional measures see more: Arnold Suppan, *Oblikovanje nacije u građanskoj Hrvatskoj, 1835-1918*, (Zagreb : Naprijed, 1999), 322-340, Joseph Redlich: *Österreichische Regierung und Verwaltung im Weltkrieg*, (Vienna - New Haven : Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky A.G./Yale University Press, 1925), Velimir Ivančević, *Institucije upravnog prava*, (Zagreb : Pravni fakultet, 1983), Hrvoje Čapo, "Gradivo požeškog arhiva o špijunima u Prvome svjetskom ratu," *Scrinia Slavonica*, no. 6 (2006), 267-289. Here we must note that exceptional measures were applied in some form by all then warring parties, author's note.

1914³, in anticipation of the outbreak of World War I. The measures granted executive authorities broad powers without requiring parliamentary approval. Military courts were introduced for certain civilian offenses, censorship was imposed on correspondence and the press, and the right to public assembly was suspended.⁴

Within this restrictive environment, the Austro-Hungarian security services — of which Croatia formed an integral part — began closely monitoring potential security threats to national security originating from Italy, which was increasingly seen as an unreliable ally.

Activities of Security Services Regarding Suspicious Foreigners

On October 5, 1914, the Military Command in Zagreb reported to the Central Counterintelligence Service⁵ (Središnja defenzivno doglasna služba) which was under cover incorporated in the Land Government of Banal Croatia, on October 5, 1914, that four influential freemasons⁶ intend to enter the Monarchy from Italy, with the goal of spreading irredentist propaganda. Their intended destinations were Trieste and Dalmatia, where they planned to coordinate with local sympathizers and determine the timing and methods for launching an uprising.⁷ There was concern that they might provoke Slavs into initiating conflicts with Italians in those areas. Irredentist demonstrations in Italy were expected, designed to pressure the Italian government into joining the Entente.

³ *Narodne novine*, no. 177, July 27 1914.

⁴ About social and political situation in Zagreb after the Exceptional Measures see: Marko Vukičević, "Aspects of Personal Freedom During the First World War in Zagreb," *Review of Croatian History* 10, no. 1 (2014): 97-112.

⁵ The Central Counterintelligence Service was incorporated in government of Banal Croatia first hidden in the Department of Interior, Police Section and after reform in the Section IV b, which was in charge for border patrol. It had main offices in Zagreb and Osijek, within the police commissions, and in Sušak, Mitrovica and Zemun as part of the border patrol units. For more details on the establishment and work of the CCIS see: Miroslav Kota, "Preustroj sigurnosnoga sustava banske Hrvatske 1915. Godine," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 51, no.2 (2019), 535-564.

⁶ In Austro-Hungary, freemasons as an association were banned, author's note.

⁷ On Italian irredentism see in more detail: Angelo Vivante, *Jadranski irredentizam* (Zagreb: Dom i svijet, 2002), (translation of Italian original: *Irredentismo adriatico – contributo alla discussione sui rapporti austro-italiani*, (Firenze: Libreria della Voce, 1912), Silvio Delich, *L'irredentismo italiano in Dalmazia: secondo i documenti segreti della polizia austriaca*, (Roma: Vita italiana, 1925). In Eng. for "irredentists" is also present term "unredeemed", author's note.

Žiga Maravić,⁸ head of the CCIS, instructed all government commissioners and regional CCIS offices in Banal Croatia to monitor the situation closely and take appropriate countermeasures should these individuals enter the territory.⁹

The Evidenzbureau¹⁰ (hereinafter: EB), the empire's central military intelligence agency, who coordinated all military intelligence with civil counter-intelligence services, had previously raised suspicions about Italy's intentions — particularly in light of Italy's construction of militarily strategic railways in South Tyrol. In 1914, the EB reported a confidential remark made by General Luigi Cadorna¹¹ Italy's new Chief of the General Staff, who stated: "We need a war to recover the nation. This war can only be fought against Austria-Hungary."

Based on its intelligence, the EB concluded that Italy would be militarily prepared to attack Austria-Hungary by late February or March 1915, once its expeditionary forces had returned from Africa.¹² By the end of April 1915, the EB became aware of the secret London Conference, even though Italian diplomats and the press publicly denied its existence. From May 4 onward, the agency was inundated with reports of Italian troop movements along the border. When Italy formally withdrew from the Triple Alliance on May 5, a

⁸ Žiga Maravić, a high official of the Land Government of Banal Croatia (1859-1917), participated in 1914 as a representative of Ban Ivan Skerlec in the Conference of establishment of the CCIS in the joint Ministry of War in Vienna. In June 1914, he became the director of the Police Section of the Department of Internal Affairs of the Land Government and the head of the Central Office of said service in Zagreb.

⁹ Croatia (HR) – Croatian State Archives, Zagreb (HDA) – Record Group 79 – Unutarnji odjel Zemaljske vlade (UOZV), Središnja defenzivno doglasna služba (SDDS), Box 5689, File 548/14.

¹⁰ The *Evidenzbureau* was an organizational unit of the General Staff that managed the military intelligence service, headquartered in the building of the joint Ministry of War in Vienna. From 1914, the EB was also the coordinator of the civilian central offices of the Counter-intelligence Service. During World War 1, the head of the EB was Colonel Oskar Hranilović von Czvetassin, until 1917, and from 1917 until the end of the war Colonel Maximilian Ronge. About EB see: Albert Pethö, *Agenten für den Doppeladler: Österreich-Ungarns Geheimer Dienst im Weltkrieg*, (Graz: Leopold Stocker Verlag, 1998), Max Ronge, *Kriegs- und Industrie Spionage* (Zürich-Leipzig-Wien: Amalthea Verlag, 1930), Verena Moritz, Hannes Leidinger, Gerhard Jagschitz, *Im Zentrum der Macht*, (Salzburg-Wien: Residenz Verlag, 2007).

¹¹ Luigi Cadorna, Italian general (1850 – 1928), in 1914 became chief of the General Staff and remained in that position until 1917 and the military defeat at Kobarid (Italian: Caporetto) when he was dismissed.

¹² In 1912, Italy waged war with the Ottoman Empire and occupied part of present-day Libya, conflicts with the local population continued for longer, author's note.

declaration of war was considered imminent. As a result, all intelligence indicating Italian espionage was subject to intense scrutiny.¹³

On January 12, 1915, the Land Government for Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: BH) alerted the Central Counterintelligence Service (CCIS) about the politically suspicious activities of Menotti Specchi, an Italian citizen working as a freight forwarder at the Ivanišević sawmill in Konjic. Specchi came under suspicion following the publication of an anti-Austrian article, described as “filled with hatred and tendentiousness,” in the *Giornale d'Italia*, a Roman newspaper closely aligned with Prime Minister Antonio Salandra¹⁴ and Foreign Minister Sidney Sonnino,¹⁵ The article, dated October 14, 1914, cited the director of the Konjic wood industry as a source of its information. Specchi returned to Konjic on December 15, 1914, where he was promptly arrested and imprisoned by the military authorities. From an intelligence standpoint, there was strong suspicion that the article — through its distorted and hostile portrayal of events — was intended to sway public opinion against the Austro-Hungarian military. On December 20, 1914, Specchi was expelled from BH, but he continued to travel throughout the Monarchy as a wood trader, and the CCIS kept him under surveillance as a politically or espionage-suspected individual.

Regarding suspicious Italian activities, the Zagreb Police Commission learned about the employment of numerous Italians at the Gomirje sawmill,

¹³ RONGE, *Kriegs*, 73-79, 146 and 159. The measures implemented by the state in Dalmatia because of the war, regardless of the Italian irredenta, have already been covered in historiography, for more detail see: Filip Škiljan, *Prvi svjetski rat u Dalmaciji (1914-1918)*, (Split – Dubrovnik: Vijeće Srpske nacionalne manjine Splitsko-dalmatinske županije i Dubrovačko-neretvanske županije, 2014), Stanko Piplović, “Dalmacija u nastupu Prvog svjetskog rata,” *Kulturna baština* 42-43, (2016/17): 77-110, Ante Bralić, “Beginning of the First World War in Dalmatia”, *Review of Croatian History* 10, no. 1 (2014): 47-75, Joško Zaninović, *Šibenik u Prvom svjetskom ratu*, (Šibenik : Državni arhiv, 2018), Stjepan Matković and Edi Miloš, “Između čekića i nakovnja: Hrvati u 1915” in: *Historiae patriaeque cultor*, Festschrift in honour of Mate Artuković, ed. by Suzana Leček, 351-370, (Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest, Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Baranje i Srijema, 2019).

¹⁴ Antonio Salandra, Italian lawyer and politician (1853-1931), full professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Rome from 1902. As a political conservative he was a parliamentary representative in 12 terms (1886-1924), member of various ministries with breaks from 1891 to 1915, and prime minister in 1914-1916. After initial neutrality, he introduced Italy to World War I on the side of the Entente upon the conclusion of the Treaty of London in 1915.

¹⁵ Sidney Sonino, Italian nobleman and politician (1847-1922), in 1914, he became minister of foreign affairs in the Government of Salandra and arranged for Italy's entry into World War I on the side of the Entente. Until the end of the war, he remained minister of foreign affairs. After the fall of the government of Vittorio Orlando in 1919, he retired from active political life, disappointed that Italy had failed to get the city of Rijeka at the Versailles peace talks.

which also stored industrial explosives, as well as about the management's business connections to Italy.¹⁶ On July 22, 1915, the Government Commissioner Vinko Zmajić¹⁷ in Ogulin informed the CCIS that a few years before the war, the Italian company *Societa Anonima – industria Boschi* from Milan had purchased the Cetin forest near Gomirje, built a sawmill next to the Gomirje train station, and started a charcoal business. One of the sawmill's directors, Pellegrini, had once admitted to being an active Italian artillery officer and was involved in photographing the surrounding area. Although the company had made little profit over the past two years, employee salaries had been paid regularly. Due to suspicions that weapons were being concealed at the sawmill, a raid was conducted, resulting in the discovery of some weapons and ammunition.¹⁸

Monitoring of Intelligence Activities of Foreign Diplomats

Tensions with Italy had already been apparent earlier in 1915. In January, a noticeable exodus of Italian citizens from Zagreb began. On January 22, 1915, the Military Command notified the CCIS and inquired about these individuals and whether they were military conscripts. The targeted return of conscripts could have indicated Italy's preparation for war. Maravić asked the Zagreb Police Commission for more information.¹⁹ On February 8, 1915, they really concluded that "many Italian subjects have left Zagreb lately and gone in an unknown direction". A list of 158 Italian nationals was attached—19 had definitively returned to Italy, 47 had departed to unknown locations, while the rest were still in Zagreb or en route to Austria or Germany. On April 21, 1915, the BPU in Sušak informed the CCIS that, according to a confidential source, the Italian Consulate in Rijeka had received secret instructions from the Italian ambassador in Vienna. These orders advised the consulate not to publicly call for Italian citizens to leave Rijeka and nearby areas but to discreetly encourage them to return to Italy as soon as possible. Many had already done so. That same day, the U.S. Consulate in Rijeka received a telegram from the Italian steamship company in Genoa, announcing the cancellation of all routes from Rijeka to America until further notice due to *vis*

¹⁶ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5694, File 943/15.

¹⁷ Vinko Zmajić (1870-1920), baron, lawyer, clerk at various places in the District of Sušak, from 1913 to 1918 Grand Perfect of Modruš-Rijeka County, during the war appointed and entrusted as a government commissioner for the same area due to the implementation of exceptional measures.

¹⁸ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5694, File 1369/15 (inserted in 943/15), Doc. No 462.

¹⁹ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5691, File 96/15, Doc. No 117.

maior, without additional explanation. Maravić reported this growing threat to VHK in Budapest.²⁰ Meanwhile, the Zagreb Military Command relayed a telegram to the CCIS from Sarajevo dated May 14, 1915. It revealed that, unlike his counterpart in Rijeka, the Italian consul in Sarajevo had officially instructed Italian nationals in Bosnia and Herzegovina to return home “given the critical situation.” Authorities also investigated whether similar instructions were issued by the Italian Consulate in Zagreb. On May 25, 1915, the Zagreb Police Commission confirmed that Italian Vice-Consul Amadeo Carnelutti had indeed, during the spring, urged Italian nationals in Banal Croatia to return to Italy — especially to fulfill military obligations — although not everyone complied.²¹

On March 20, 1915, the Zagreb Military Command informed the CCIS of a possible Italian intelligence post in Rijeka. Žiga Maravić relayed this information to the Central Counterintelligence Office in Budapest (VHK),²² requesting confirmation and inquiring whether they could obtain a copy of the “New Italy” map²³ reportedly in circulation in Rijeka. However, on May 19, 1915, the Hungarian Ministry of Internal Affairs responded that it could not confirm the existence of an intelligence post.

Despite this, it was noted that many Italians had already left Rijeka for Italy prior to the outbreak of war, fearing internment.²⁴ Contradicting the Hungarian ministry’s assessment, the Croatian Border Police Unit²⁵ (BPU) in Sušak informed Maravić on April 10, 1915, that the Italian consuls — Lucchi in Rijeka and Lebrecht in Trieste — were actively engaged in intelligence work. These consuls had been summoned to Rome for consultations and had reported back to their government on public sentiment in the Monarchy and the state of its military forces.

On April 3, 1915, the BPU Sušak clarified its position, explaining that while there was no dedicated intelligence office in Rijeka, the Italian consulate there effectively fulfilled that role. It was “informed of everything in detail” and conducted intelligence operations with support from both Italian citizens

²⁰ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5693, File 693/15, Doc. No 108, compare to Ronge, *Kriegs*, 152.

²¹ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5693, File 829/15, Doc. No 725.

²² From Hungarian: *Védelmi Hírszerzőközpont*, author’s note.

²³ That map included Austrian-Hungarian territories – most of Tyrol, Slovenian Gorica, Gradiška, Istra, Rijeka and Croatian Littoral up to 3 km southeast from Novi Vinodolski, author’s note.

²⁴ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5692, File 442/15.

²⁵ Border Police Unit in Banal Croatia acted as state police (gendarmérie), author’s note.

residing in Rijeka and the broader local Italian community,²⁶ with whom it maintained regular contact. The consulate reported to Rome either directly or through intermediaries on key issues such as the availability of food supplies in the Monarchy, public morale, and the condition of the Austro-Hungarian military — both at the front and on the home front Italian social circles in Rijeka actively supported these efforts, particularly from the summer of 1914 onward, when a geographical map titled “New Italy” — depicting Italy's desired future borders — began to circulate. The BPU Sušak eventually succeeded in acquiring a copy of this map from abroad.²⁷

It is worth noting that several South Slavic politicians escaped from the Monarchy via Rijeka using original Italian travel documents — complete with their photographs but bearing false names — issued by the Italian consulate. Historian Milada Paulová documented one such case:

(Milan) Marjanović²⁸ managed to get a passport from Bončuga, a merchant from Rijeka and a friend of Katalinić-Jeretov²⁹ who had purchased it for himself in Rijeka. The swift Italians, seeking to aid their irredentists in crossing the border, dealt in large quantities of passports brought from Italy without photos or signatures. These were then filled out, and the Italian consul would verify them so that the bearer could travel as an Italian. On April 19, 1915, Marjanović crossed the border under the alias Nicolò Bassi.³⁰

On March 29, 1915, the Military Command in Zagreb alerted the CCIS to information from Austria's military attaché in Rome, Captain August Mietzlo, regarding Italian spies who transmitted confidential messages in micro-print beneath postage stamps.³¹ One such case involved letters sent to high school students in Sušak. Although the letters' content appeared innocuous, the Censorship Commission in Rijeka discovered subversive promotional messages hidden in fine print on the envelope flaps and seal.³²

²⁶ According to the last Austro-Hungarian census of 1910, Rijeka had 34,194 inhabitants, of which 46,94% were Italians, with their number determined not by ethnicity nor by their mother tongue but by language they marked as the language they used, “Guida di Fiume, Il risultato del censimento della popolazione di Fiuma,” *La bilancia*, November 17, 1910. About use of language with political aims see: Vivante, *Jadranski irredentizam*.

²⁷ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5692, File 524/15 (inserted in 442/15), Doc. No 106.

²⁸ Milan Marjanović (1879-1955), Croatian writer, publicist, journalist and politician.

²⁹ Rikard Katalinić Jeretov (1969-1954), poet and prose writer.

³⁰ Milada Paulová, *Jugoslavenski odbor* (Zagreb: Prosvjetna nakladna zadruga, 1925), 65.

³¹ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5693, File 486/15, Doc. No 442.

³² About censorship see: Ivan Bulić, “Vojna cenzura u Hrvatskoj za vrijeme Prvog svjetskog rata,” in Željko Holjevac, ed., *1918. u hrvatskoj povijesti* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2012), 323-352.

Following an investigation, the Military Command in Zagreb confirmed on May 21, 1915, that the sender of the letters — acting on behalf of the Adriatic Legion — was Antonio Lekčević, a former substitute teacher at the Sušak gymnasium. The letters included a copy of the *Manifesto to the Polish Nation* issued by Grand Duke Nicholas Romanov. Lekčević later died in Niš.³³

Monitoring of the Enemy Propaganda

Before the outbreak of war with Italy, a matter arose involving oranges wrapped in paper featuring an image of the Italian king and the Russian emperor shaking hands. Such items were even sold in barracks in Zagreb. On March 6, 1915, the Zagreb Police Commission informed the CCIS that the oranges had been sourced from Ivan Feuer, a fruit merchant. Feuer had ordered them from Pietro Cirina, who imported them from Catania, Italy. Consequently, strict inspections of all shipments of southern fruit were ordered at Zagreb's South Station to prevent incidents.³⁴ It was also noted that Pietro Cirina sold his southern fruit shop in March 1915 and relocated from Zagreb to Italy. In addition to the previously documented incidents involving products packaged with enemy propaganda, the Military Command Zagreb reported on January 7, 1915, that wholesalers of southern fruit in Czechia had discreetly distributed an uncontrolled foreign press. Southern fruit had been appearing wrapped in newspaper pages, and entire newspapers were also being placed inside boxes of fruit. These newspapers were French or English and had entered the Monarchy through Italy, which was still neutral at the time, via Italian fruit wholesalers. On January 11, 1915, Maravić forwarded this information to all main offices.³⁵

Monitoring of the Foreign Espionage

On March 19, 1915, the Zagreb Police Commission reported to the CCIS regarding potential British espionage activities organized through Italy. A confidential informant revealed that Đuro Ladiš, a construction entrepreneur from Bjelovar, had been approached by an unidentified naval sailor from Monfalcone (Tržić) to deliver important documents to the British attaché in Venice. Acting on this tip, authorities conducted surveillance, and carried out

³³ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5694, File 963/15, Doc. No 718.

³⁴ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5692, File 351/15, Doc. No 127.

³⁵ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5691, File 35/15, Doc. No 35.

a personal search of Ladiš and his hotel room at the Kaiser von Österreich hotel in Zagreb. During the search, two letters addressed to the British attachés in Venice and Rome were discovered, along with eight pages of detailed technical descriptions of a new Marconi radio receiver, including a deciphered dispatch and a cipher key. The letters were authored by Štefan Emil Kozina, an Austro-Hungarian naval radio-telegraphist. Kozina had proposed to the British military authorities the introduction of the Marconi radio receiver, which he had technically modified into a cryptographic device (a telecryptor), and he also provided them with the cipher key. In his letter, Kozina offered his services, claiming he could modify 60 such radios within three weeks. Ladiš, accompanied by his friend Đuro Pintarić, traveled to Monfalcone under the pretense of collecting wine from Kozina. Upon meeting, Kozina confessed he did not have any wine but instead had built a new radio device based on Marconi's design, which he wished to offer to the Royal Navy along with the cipher key. He instructed them to personally deliver the letters to Venice or Rome.

Following these revelations, Ladiš, Pintarić, and Kozina were arrested. A search of Ladiš's home in Bjelovar uncovered correspondence deemed significant for judicial proceedings against him and Pintarić. Maravić ordered that the detainees be handed over to the competent military court for further legal action.³⁶ Even the *Hrvatski pokret* newspaper reported that Ladiš and several associates had been arrested in Bjelovar on suspicion of espionage in favor of Italy.³⁷ On August 10, 1915, the Homeguard Divisional Court in Zagreb informed the CCIS that proceedings against Ladiš and his comrades had been suspended, and they were released as no criminal offense was established. Meanwhile, the Admiralty Court in Pula continued the case against Kozina³⁸ The court did not view Ladiš and his associates' failure to report Kozina's anti-state activities as criminal. This measured approach by a military court in wartime Austria-Hungary challenges the stereotype of a purely police state; while repressive, the regime did not become totalitarian.³⁹

³⁶ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5692, File 465/15, Doc. No 178.

³⁷ "Nova špijunska afera," *Hrvatski pokret*, June 17, 1915.

³⁸ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5692, File 1595/15 (inserted in 465/15), Doc. No 110. This somewhat surprising decision of the military court could be explained, and with the existence of solid material evidence, only with the fact that the commitment of the act of Ladiš and the comrades remained an attempt, while the proceedings against Kozina continued because he had indeed handed over a letter to other people offering his services to an enemy country.

³⁹ Compare with: Vukičević, "Aspects of Personal Freedom," 103.

Monitoring of Intelligence Activities of Domestic Politicians and Yugoslav Committee

During Italy's period of neutrality, emigrant politicians took advantage of the situation to secretly meet with political figures from their homeland on Italian soil or in the closest neighborhood of it. Croatian politician, journalist, and parliament member Ivan Peršić stated that he learned from Dr. Ante Pavelić (dentist) that at the beginning of 1915, Pavelić met secretly with emigrant politicians from the Yugoslav Committee⁴⁰ in Trieste — meetings that went unnoticed by authorities.⁴¹ At the war's outset in 1914, only a few anti-state Yugoslav politicians were abroad, mostly by chance — on holiday, seeking medical treatment, or attending exhibitions. Among future *Committee* members abroad were politicians Dr. Ante Trumbić, Dr. Hinko Hinković, and sculptor Ivan Meštrović. Frano Supilo was en route to Italy, joined by other political emigrants, mostly Dalmatians. Initially unaware of each other, they gradually began to congregate, first in Venice, then in Rome.

Italian agents in the press and European capitals worked constantly to portray the Entente and Serbia as suspecting the *Committee* of colluding with Austria and Great Croatia, aiming to neutralize the *Committee's* efforts which contradicted Italian ambitions.⁴² Due to growing Italian public hostility toward the *Committee's* activities, and with war expected, the *Committee's* work in Italy became impossible. Additionally, since Italian authorities viewed its members with suspicion as Austrian citizens on the brink of war, the *Committee* members left Rome and convened in Paris on April 30, 1915.⁴³

Not only in Europe but in America also, according to the *Committee's* claims "Austrian agents mislead people by saying that the members of the

⁴⁰ About the Yugoslav Committee (hereinafter: Committee) see more: Paulová, *Jugoslavenski odbor*, Bogdan Krizman, "Povjerljive veze između Jugoslavenskog odbora i domaćih političara za I. svjetskog rata," *Historijski zbornik* 15, (1962): 217-229.

⁴¹ Stjepan Matković, ed., *Ivan Peršić, Kroničarski spisi*. ed. Stjepan Matković, (Zagreb: Državni arhiv, 2002), 189-190. About Ivan Peršić, Dr. Ante Pavelić (dentist) and Dragutin Hrvoj see in more detail: Stjepan Matković, *Izabrani portreti pravaša* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2011).

⁴² An example of Italian scheming is an interview of an Italian journalist Civinini with the Serbian Minister Pašić, published in *Corriere della Sera*, Milan, from August 23, 1915. Sforza confirms the existing of insinuations against Trumbić and states that these attacks even came from the Catholic Action (Action Franciese) in France by Jacques Benvil, but also from the Montenegrin King Nicholas I who was scared of southern Slavs uniting because of his future position, as well as the position of Montenegro. See: Carlo Sforza, *Fifty Years of War and Diplomacy in the Balkans: Pashich and the Union of the Yougoslavs*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940) (the edition also exists on Serbian: *Nikola Pašić i ujedinjenje Jugoslovena* (Belgrade: Delta Design, 1990, reprint), 150-151 (Serbian edition).

⁴³ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5724, File 3521/17, folio 34.

Committee act in favor of Great Serbia and treason. This was further complicated by the Entente's willingness to cede South Slavic regions to Italy, for which the Committee was held responsible, leading to serious consequences. The Vienna Ministry of the Interior concluded that the departure of prominent South Slavic political emigrants from Italy signaled a rupture in the Committee's ties with official Italy, due to their claims on Adriatic territories. On May 19, 1915, the Serbian Consul in Geneva arranged for southern Slavic representatives to visit the editorial board of the *Journal de Genève*,⁴⁴ illustrating Serbia's supportive stance toward the Committee's work. The Austrian Ministry viewed this as building a stronghold for potential future conflict over overlapping Serbian and Italian interests in the Adriatic. Though the Committee opposed Italy, Austro-Hungarian authorities considered its continued advocacy for unification with the Kingdom of Serbia as treason, as it threatened the Monarchy's territorial integrity by promoting South Slavic secession under Serbian leadership.⁴⁵

Following developments linked to Italy, the CCIS maintained a dossier on Frano Supilo. According to a report by Maravić on February 25, 1915, based on Croatian BPU Sušak's information,⁴⁶ Supilo left Rijeka for Venice at the end of July 1914.⁴⁷ There, he met with Dr. Ante Trumbić and Dr. Aloysius (Vjekoslav) Bakotić,⁴⁸ later staying in Rome, Milan, and London. On March 26, 1915, the Vienna Police Directorate learned that Supilo was traveling exten-

⁴⁴ Representatives of the southern Slavs (Trumbić, Meštrović, Supilo and Potočnjak) appeared, under the leadership of the Serbian consul and expressed their great concern over the concessions given by the three allies to Italy regarding the east coast of the Adriatic, without asking the southern Slavs anything. They intended to go further to London and Paris and from there defend specific South Slavic interests against Italian aspirations, HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5702, without the file number, Doc. No 13.678.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Sušak is a part of Rijeka today, but at that time it was not. The city of Rijeka, although it was to be part of Banal Croatia, was under the direct control of the Hungarian government in Budapest, and the east of Rijeka was the settlement of Sušak, which was separated from the city only by the riverbed of the river Rječina. Sušak was administered by Banal Croatia. The question of unification of Rijeka with Croatia was part of Southslavic question of Austro-Hungary Monarchy 1868-1918, author's note.

⁴⁷ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5691, File 287/15 (inserted in 193/15), Doc. No 1211.

⁴⁸ It is more likely that it is about Dr. Lujo Bakotić (1867-1941), a lawyer from Šibenik, was involved in politics and since 1908 was an MP in the Dalmatian Parliament, one of the ideologues of the Serbian Party in Dalmatia. As a legal advisor, he was hired by the Kingdom of Serbia to negotiate the conclusion of a concordat with the Holy See in 1913-14; at the beginning of World War I, he entered the Serbian civil service, first as a censor in Niš, and then as secretary of the Serbian Embassy in Paris and Rome. See in more detail: Dr. Vjekoslav Wagner, "Povijest katoličke crkve u Srbiji u 19. vijeku (od 1800. do konkordata 1914. godine)," *Bogoslovska smotra* 22, no. 2 (1934): 124-140.

sively across Europe, advocating for an Italian-Slavic alliance and Great Serbia. The Military Command in Zagreb reported to the CCIS on April 1, 1915, that Supilo had promoted the Adriatic issue in a “Serbo-Croatian sense”⁴⁹ in Niš. BPU Sušak confirmed, on April 3, 1915, that Supilo’s activities were partly corroborated by Italian newspaper articles and that a confidential source placed him in Petrograd. There, he reportedly proposed Croatian independence to the Russian government, suggesting that the Croatian King should be the brother-in-law of English King George V⁵⁰. In Rijeka, a letter sent by Frano Supilo from Athens to Dr. Gjuro Catti⁵¹ was also intercepted. He asked the doctor to visit his mother and deliver her a message.⁵² On 31 May, 1915, the State Attorney’s High Office informed the CCIS of changing the jurisdiction of Supilo’s matter and the transfer of investigative files for high treason from Banski stol, court in Zagreb to the Tribunal in Rijeka.⁵³

In the Zagreb area, intercepted correspondence led the Zagreb Police Commission to discover on August 21, 1915, that the author was Ernesto Scottoni – Vran, who was interned and temporarily housed at Zagreb’s Sisters of Mercy Hospital. The letter was addressed to Rosa Braum, who lived with her brother Franjo Braum,⁵⁴ an accounting consultant for the Land Government. Scottoni – Vran corresponded with an Italian socialist and was interned on suspicion of Italian espionage. Authorities found it suspicious that he was in contact with the sister of a politically unreliable individual, Braum, who was closely connected to politicians from the Croatian-Serbian Coalition (CSC), the majority party in Ban Škerlec’s government — namely Dr. Živko Bertić, a lawyer, and Većeslav Wilder, a journalist and member of both the Croatian Parliament and the joint Croatian-Hungarian Parliament. These individuals had previously been suspected of possible involvement in pre-war assassina-

⁴⁹ Yugoslav nationalism, author’s note.

⁵⁰ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5691, File 507/15 (inserted in 193/15). Here in question was Adolphus or Alexander of Teck, whose father Prince Francis (Franz) von Teck was born in Osijek, Croatia, 1837, author’s note.

⁵¹ Dr. Đuro Catti (1849-1923), Croatian physician, after completing his studies in Vienna, distinguished himself as a laryngologist and, refusing the position of the head of the laryngology clinic in Innsbruck, returned to Rijeka in 1879 where he worked as an internist at the city hospital. Inventor of the instrument for removing adenoid vegetation from the throat, Croatian patriot in unfavorable conditions of the Rijeka Hungarian administration and Italian propaganda.

⁵² HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5691, File 995/15 (inserted in 193/15), Doc. No 2777.

⁵³ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5691, File 995/15 (inserted in 193/15).

⁵⁴ Franjo Braum (1872-1935), Croatian financial expert, senior government official, union official. He criticized the implementation of the Croatian-Hungarian settlement from a financial point of view. Due to disagreements with the government, he repeatedly lost the civil service. A person of trust of the National Council in 1918.

tions, especially the one carried out by Jukić.⁵⁵ Jukić himself was associated with Serbian and Yugoslav nationalism, as well as Italian anarchists.⁵⁶ The Police Commission noted: "One might conclude that Braum is a mediator between Serbian and Italian political extremists." Maravić ordered strict surveillance of Scottoni – Vran.⁵⁷

Monitoring of Intelligence Activities of Senior Clergy

The Roman Catholic Church was a pillar of the Monarchy, making a warning from Austrian Minister of the Interior Konrad Hohenlohe somewhat surprising. In a letter to Croatian Ban Skerlecz dated November 11, 1915, Hohenlohe warned of possible subversive actions by Roman Catholic clergy in Croatia, especially among circles close to Bishop Mahnić of Krk.⁵⁸ While CCIS investigations in Banal Croatia yielded no concrete evidence, a group of Croatian and Slovenian priests, along with laity and politicians, had earlier drafted the Rijeka Memorandum.⁵⁹ This document, which addressed the status and future of Croats and Slovenes and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, was delivered to Pope Benedict XV during a late March or early April 1915 audience in Rome by Josip (Jozo) Milošević, Provincial of the Franciscan Conventuals of Cres⁶⁰ and Bernard Škrivanić, Guardian of the Capuchin Monastery in Rijeka—both closely connected to Bishop Mahnić.

⁵⁵ Luka Jukić (1887-1929) attempted an unsuccessful assassination on the government commissioner for Banal Croatia Slavko Cuvaj in 1912, in doing so, he killed two people. A Yugoslav nationalist, member of the progressive youth, one of the champions of the student demonstrations in Sarajevo in 1912.

⁵⁶ Italian anarchists at the time worried the European police. Their victims were, for example, the French president Carnot in 1894, the president of the Spanish government Cánovas in 1897, Austrian Empress Elizabeth in 1898 and King Umberto I of Italy in 1900, author's note.

⁵⁷ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5695, File 1693/15 (inserted in 1616/15), Doc. No 751.

⁵⁸ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5697, File 2824/15, Doc. No 20207. Also "Mahnić".

⁵⁹ Text was published, see: "Riječka spomenica. Hrvatski prijevod," translated from Latin by Jadranka Neralić, *Pilar – časopis za društvene i humanističke studije* 7-8, no. 1 – 2 (2019), 233-244, Tomislav Mrkonjić, "Hrvatski katolički pokret i Riječka spomenica iz travnja 1915. (Latinski koncept)" in: *Hrvatski katolički pokret*, Miscellany of works from the International Scientific Conference held in Zagreb and Krk from March 29 to 31, 2001, ed. Zlatko Matijević, (Zagreb : Kršćanska sadašnjost, 2002), 444-456.

⁶⁰ It is about today's Franciscan Province of St. Jerome in Dalmatia and Istria based in Zadar, author's note.

The text of the Rijeka Memorandum from the Catholic Seniorate was adopted in the spring of 1915 at a meeting⁶¹ in Ljubljana with the Archbishop Antun Bonaventura Jeglič. The Memorandum proposed that, in case of victory, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy should be reformed so that all Croatian lands would be unified under the Austrian part, joined with Slovenian territories for defense against Germanization. Alternatively, if the Monarchy lost the war, an independent Croatian Kingdom should be established, including Slovenes. Both proposals sought papal support. However, according to Dr. Fran Binički's recollections, Milošević also suggested that Croats could seek agreement with powers outside the Monarchy. Aware of the Entente's negotiations with Italy, the Pope cautioned Croatian priests that Russia, despite being a powerful Slavic nation, had betrayed the Croats in the Adriatic Question, warning against aligning with the Serbian East. After the audience, the Franciscans secretly met with Trumbić in Rome, warning him of these concerns without disclosing their source. Trumbić, trusting Russian ambassador Anatolij Nikolajevich Krupensky, dismissed their warnings.⁶²

In early April 1915, Milošević and Škrivanić met with Russian journalist Svatkovski (Swiatkovski)⁶³ in Rome, who informed Krupensky about the content of the meeting. That conversation really contained twisted thoughts and endeavors such as the claim that "the Slavic sentiments of Catholic spiritual fathers are so strong that they go completely towards the recognition of the Orthodox dynasty."⁶⁴ The Austrian secret services likely learned about these events — possibly through Rudolf Gerlach,⁶⁵ — but references to Banal Croa-

⁶¹ The following were involved in the drafting of the Memorandum: bishop Anton Mahnić, Fran Binički, Josip Milošević, Frane Bulić, Matko Laginja, Milan Pavelić, Božo Dulibić (Dalmatian member of parliament, hereinafter: MP), Petar Rogulja, and Slovenians Janez Krek as well as Anton Korošec. And at the meeting in Ljubljana, where the text was adopted, the Serb Đuro Vukotić, a Dalmatian MP from the ranks of the Serbian People's Party, also participated.

⁶² Jure Krišto, *Prešućena povijest. Katolička crkva u hrvatskoj politici 1850-1918*, (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 1994), 335-338, compare to: Zlatko Matijević, "Tajna diplomatska aktivnost o. Joze Miloševića," in the miscellany *Posljednjih sto godina (1907-2007)*, ed. Ljudevit Maračić, Vol 2, (Zagreb: Hrvatska provincija sv. Jeronima franjevac konventualaca – Veritas, 2009), 363-379.

⁶³ Vsevolod P. Swiatkowski, died in 1920 in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. For Swiatkowski (who still appears in the Slovenian and Croatian versions as Svatkovski, and in Czech Svatkovský), a journalist of the Russian news agency in Switzerland, Slovenian historian Repe states that he was an agent of the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs (Božo Repe, "Les Slovènes et la Première guerre mondiale," *Les cahiers Irice* 13, no. 1 (2015) : 145-154.

⁶⁴ Paulová, *Jugoslavenski odbor*, 106-107.

⁶⁵ Rudolf Gerlach (1886-1946), a German priest, served the Prussian army as a one-year volunteer after graduating from high school, travelling through Mexico in 1907 and decided to receive Catholicism and become a priest, study philosophy and theology in Freiburg, then graduated from the papal diplomatic academy, admitted to service in the Vatican Curia in

tia were limited to stopping the publication of a newspaper linked to Mahnić (*Riječke novine*), which was then relaunched in Zagreb under a new name (*Novine*), showing some flirtation with Yugoslav nationalism. Additionally, Dr Fran Barac,⁶⁶ a priest of the Zagreb Archdiocese, secretly met Committee members in Switzerland. By September 1915, he reported a growing pro-Yugoslav network within Banal Croatia's clergy attempting to influence Archbishop Bauer via his former secretary, Svetožar Rittig,⁶⁷ pastor of St. Blaise in Zagreb.⁶⁸ The activities of Rittig and especially Barac remained shrouded in secrecy until the war's end.

The Hostage Question

With the outbreak of war with Italy, the Military Command in Zagreb requested on May 22, 1915, that the CCIS tighten regulations concerning the possession and carrying of firearms in the counties of Zagreb, Modruš-Rije-

1914, at the election of Benedict XV for the Pope becoming his personal secretary – chamberlain (Ital. *Camerario segreto della Sua Santità*, /Eng. *Privy Chamberlain of His Holiness*). He cooperated with the Austrian naval intelligence service. See in more detail: Pethö, *Agenten für den Doppeladler*, 97, 99-100, Hartmut Benz, "Prälat Rudolf von Gerlach. Gewogen – und für zu leicht befunden," *Römische Quartalschrift für Christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 116, no. 3-4 (2021) : 255-279, Hubert Wolf, "Verlegung des Heiligen Stuhls. Ein Kirchenstaat ohne Rom? Matthias Erzberger und die Römische Frage im Ersten Weltkrieg," *Rottenburger Jahrbuch für Kirchengeschichte* 11, (1992), 251-270.

⁶⁶ Dr Fran Barac (1872-1940), priest, politician and professor of the Zagreb Faculty of Theology, 1915/16 rector of Zagreb university. See more: Paulová, *Jugoslavenski odbor*, 351-358, about Barac see: Ivica Zvonar, *Mons. Dr. Fran Barac (1872.-1940.). Život i djelo*, (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 2012), and on Dr Barac's contact with the *Committee* see: Ivica Zvonar, "Prilog za životopis i bibliografiju radova mons. Dr. Frana Barca," *Senjski zbornik* 31, (2004), 83 and compare to: Krizman, "Povjerljive veze između Jugoslavenskog odbora". Politicians in the homeland were interested in information on what actions to implement or not to carry out in order not to harm the policy of the *Committee* which was in political emigration, and they also received them secretly through Barac.

⁶⁷ Svetožar Rittig (1873-1961), priest, historian and politicians. See more: Miroslav Akmaž, "Svetožar Rittig – svećenik ministar u komunističkoj vladi Hrvatske," *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice – Zemaljske Udruge Podunavskih Švaba u Hrvatskoj* 15 / *VDG Jahrbuch* 2008 – *Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft – Landsmannschaft der Donauschwaben in Kroatien* 15, no. 1, (2008), 101-115.

⁶⁸ See more: Krišto, *Prešućena povijest*, 335-338, as well as Matijević, "Tajna diplomatska aktivnost". On the connections of Slovenian and Croatian politicians, especially the rightist's see: Andrej Rahten, "Planinsko hrvatstvo," in miscellany *Pravaštvo u hrvatskome političkom i kulturnom životu u sučelju dvaju stoljeća*, eds: Zdravka Jelaska Marijan and Zlatko Matijević, (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2013), 265-282 and Stjepan Matković, "Ivan Šušteršič i hrvatski političari," *Pilar – časopis za društvene i humanističke studije* 4, No 7 (1) - 8 (2) (2009), 87-101.

ka, and Lika-Krbava. They also called for the issuance of regulations on taking hostages in areas inhabited by predominantly irredentist (Italian) populations, particularly to protect railways, telegraph, and telephone lines.⁶⁹ In response, Maravić referred to the Ban's letter dated September 28, 1914 (No. 6750/Pr), addressed to government commissioners. The directive stated that hostage-taking was not recognized under existing Croatian law and that any such action would fall exclusively under the jurisdiction of the Land Government and its subordinates, with necessary consultations with Hungarian Prime Minister István Tisza. When asked, Tisza strongly opposed the idea of taking hostages. Although he later softened his stance slightly, this was only in terms of practicality—not legality. In a telegram to Skerlec, he stated that hostages could be taken only in areas near active war zones where there was clear hostility toward the Monarchy. The disposition of the local population was to be assessed in consultation with civil authorities, and only politically suspicious or unreliable individuals could be considered for detention. Based on this, Maravić responded to the Military Command and issued instructions to government commissioners, effectively eliminating any possibility of hostage-taking in Banal Croatia.⁷⁰

The Internment of Citizens from Enemy Countries

Although no hostages were taken, the internment of Italian nationals residing in the Monarchy began. For instance, Zagreb police interned 26 individuals. On May 28, 1915, a train carrying hundreds of Italian internees from Rijeka to Budapest was briefly halted for breakfast.⁷¹ In parallel, Italy arrested or interned Austro-Hungarian nationals in Italy on suspicion of espionage, including Catholic priests.⁷² By late June 1915, General Cadorna informed the

⁶⁹ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5693, File 901/15, Doc. No 765.

⁷⁰ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5693, File 901/15.

⁷¹ "Internirani Talijani," *Hrvatski pokret*, May 27th 1915, and "Internirani Talijani," *Hrvatski pokret*, May 29th 1915. Italians who were interned in Zagreb are sent to the Main Central Camp for the Interned and Evacuated Population in Koprivnica, and on the Internments of Italians see: Josip Vretenar, David Orlović, *I gorni a Wagna (1915-1918)*, *Dani u Wagni (1915-1918)*, (Rovinj-Rijeka-Trieste: Centro di ricerche storiche-Unione italiana-Università Popolare, 2016) and Vedran MUIĆ, "Interniranje talijanskih državljana iz Hrvatske i Slavonije 1915. Godine," *Historijski zbornik* 75, no. 2 (2022), 193-214. Compare to Vukičević, "Aspects of Personal Freedom," 102, with the data of 43 interned Italians in the Zagreb (some of them was probably interned by gendarmerie, not the city police).

⁷² "Ratne vijesti," *Hrvatski pokret*, July 15, 1915. Thus was the famous Padua priest Leopold Bogdan Mandić interned, although it was in 1917, after a severe Italian defeat at Kobarid (Ital. Caporetto), as an Austro-Hungarian subject until the end of the war in the south of the

Italian government via telegram that 37 Austrian priests had been detained or interned.⁷³ In Zagreb, the arrival of refugees from Italian border regions was recorded — around 500 individuals from the Croatian Littoral, Rijeka, Istria, and Ljubljana — prompting a public appeal for assistance.⁷⁴ The total number of evacuees was steadily growing, with the press estimating up to 15,000. Refugees also began arriving from Bosnia and Herzegovina due to military operations against Serbia. Referred to as evacuees, refugees, or fugitives, they were housed in inns or private homes.⁷⁵

The Evacuation of People from Possible War Zone

Anticipating Italy's entry into the war, and following the partial evacuation of Pula in 1914, Austro-Hungarian authorities decided to evacuate southern Istria entirely. According to Rudolf Schönfeldt, the government commissioner for Pula, 26,564 people — out of the city's 30,000 inhabitants — were evacuated. An additional 27,000 were relocated from the surrounding area south of the Barbariga–Vodnjan–Valtura line, along with 8,000 more from north of that line. These areas included all of Pula's defensive positions.⁷⁶ The evacuation of Istria was also noticed in Banal Croatia. The Zagreb Military Command inquired with the CCIS about the increasing number of immigrants from Rijeka and Trieste arriving in Zagreb, particularly those speaking Italian.⁷⁷ On June 21, 1915, the Zagreb Police Commission confirmed the military's reports, noting that 758 refugees from the Littoral, Trieste, and the Margraviate of

country, after the Italian authorities offered him citizenship, which he refused, Nikola Stanislav Novak, *Životopis oca Leopolda*, <http://www.leopoldomandic.it/index.php/san-leopoldo/video-2/hrvatski/>.

⁷³ Cosmo Colovito, Filippo Cappelano, *The Secret War on the Italian Front in WWI (1915-1918)*, (Roma: Stato Maggiore della Difesa, 2021), 75.

⁷⁴ "Dolazak stanovnika iz pograničnih krajeva," *Hrvatski pokret*, May 27, 1915.

⁷⁵ "Stranci u Zagrebu," *Hrvatski pokret*, June 16, 1915.

⁷⁶ Davor Mandić, *Istra u vihoru Velikog rata, Sudbina evakuiraca 1914.-1918*, (Pula; Zagreb: Susreti na dragom kamenu – Povijesni i pomorski muzej Istre; Grafički zavod Hrvatske, 2013), 42. On the evacuation of the Italian population, but also the population of the Austrian Littoral and the life in the camp Wagner in general, see also: Vretenar - Orlović, *I gornji a Wagner (1915-1918)*, and on the lives of the inhabitants of Istria during the war: Mihovil Dabo and Milan Radošević, eds., *U sjeni Velikoga rata: odraz ratnih zbivanja na život istarskoga civilnog stanovništva*, a miscellany of works from the International Science Conference held in Pula on 13-15th of October 2016 (Pula : Istarsko povijesno društvo – Povijesni i pomorski muzej Istre, 2019).

⁷⁷ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5694, File 939/15.

Istria had arrived in Zagreb and that many spoke Italian.⁷⁸ However, they were confirmed to be Austro-Hungarian subjects, not Italian nationals.

The Security Measures for Critical Infrastructure, Special Travel Provisions and Preventing of Sabotages and Enemy Communications

On May 22, 1915, anticipating an Italian declaration of war, the Austro-Hungarian General Staff sent a telegram to the CCIS instructing heightened security for military personnel, strategic facilities, barracks, bridges, railways, and water infrastructure to prevent sabotage and espionage.⁷⁹

After hostilities began, special wartime travel regulations were introduced for citizens traveling by train, car, carriage, or on foot between the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia and areas such as Styria, Carniola, Istria, and Rijeka.⁸⁰ Travelers were required to have a passport explicitly marked for travel to the southwestern army zone. Alternatively, railway passes or identification cards could be used. Travel to narrow war zones like Carniola, Istria, and Rijeka also required special passes issued by military authorities, with travelers needing to justify their reasons. For limited cross-border travel within adjacent municipalities, local mayors issued identity certificates.⁸¹

At the end of 1915, the CCIS conducted an investigation into the possibility of pro-Italian populations along the coast communicating with Italy via submarines operating in the Kvarner Bay. These submarines could potentially be used to transmit secret messages, equipment, or personnel for sabotage. While no concrete evidence was found, the danger was real — as confirmed by a later incident. On June 4, 1916, an enemy submarine sank the steamship *Albania* near the island of Pag, inside of Austrian territorial sea waters.⁸²

⁷⁸ About refugees in the area of Zagreb see in more detail: Marko Vukičević, *Zagreb 1914.-1918.: grad i stanovnici u Velikome ratu*, (Zagreb: Despot Ininitus, 2020).

⁷⁹ HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5693, File 870/15.

⁸⁰ Although Rijeka was not an immediate border area towards Italy, it was included in this group due to the importance of its shipyards, as well as the arms factory (torpedoes), to reduce the possibility of suspects entering the city area and thus prevent sabotage or espionage. A good assessment by the authorities of the inclusion of the city in the narrow war zone confirmed the Italian air attack on Rijeka on June 8, 1915. See detailed report: "Bombardovanje Rijeke," *Hrvatski pokret*, June 6, 1915.

⁸¹ "Propisi za putovanje," *Hrvatski pokret*, July 14, 1915.

⁸² HR-HDA-79, UOZV-SDDS, Box 5709, File 2653/16 (inserted in 2547/16), Doc. No 1677.

Conclusion

As Austro-Hungary became increasingly aware of Italy's covert and overt anti-Austrian activities, particularly in the context of the escalating First World War, preparations for Italy's anticipated entry into the conflict were undertaken both at the imperial level and within Banal Croatia. Croatian authorities closely monitored Italian irredentist propaganda, tracking the movements and communications of Italian emissaries, censoring publications containing subversive content, and scrutinizing even seemingly innocuous channels such as fruit packaging for clandestine messaging.

Attention was given to the possibility of unauthorized communication between Austro-Hungarian and Italian territories, with all intelligence related to Italian espionage activities within Banal Croatia, as well as other key regions like Rijeka and Bosnia and Herzegovina, meticulously examined. This vigilance was primarily focused on protecting military assets and vital infrastructure from sabotage and infiltration.

A notable phenomenon during spring 1915 was the sudden and unexplained exodus of numerous Italian subjects residing in Banal Croatia to Italy, which intelligence later confirmed was influenced by discreet consular instructions anticipating the outbreak of hostilities. Additionally, the disruption of maritime communication routes between the Austro-Hungarian Adriatic coast and foreign ports, beginning as early as May 1915 and attributed to *vis maior*, further signaled the deteriorating geopolitical situation.

Espionage efforts came to light in the form of attempted collaboration with British intelligence through the planned sale of a radio-cryptographic device by an Austro-Hungarian naval operator, involving Croatian citizens and routed through Italy. The activities of South Slavic political émigrés, who initially operated from Italy before the country's war entry, were under constant surveillance.

Security reports noted the use of forged passports by some foreigners attempting to infiltrate Austro-Hungary, whereas political émigrés typically traveled on authentic Italian passports under assumed identities. Despite contacts between domestic politicians and émigrés abroad, no incriminating evidence was found prior to Italy's official entry into the war.

Within Banal Croatia, no conclusive proof emerged regarding the involvement of the Catholic clergy in anti-state conspiracies, though Austrian security services detected such tendencies in Italy. Following Italy's declaration of war, Banal Croatia refrained from taking hostages, unlike other Austrian territories, but did intern Italian nationals. Reciprocal internments were also conducted by Italian authorities against Austro-Hungarian subjects.

The war's outbreak precipitated mass evacuations from border regions deemed vulnerable to military operations, leading to the influx of refugees into Banal Croatia. In response to the heightened threat environment, authorities intensified security measures around military installations, tightened control over foreign nationals' movements, and imposed stringent travel regulations into the frontline war zones.

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