

FORMER AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN OFFICERS IN THE ARMY OF THE KINGDOM OF SERBS, CROATS AND SLOVENES/YUGOSLAVIA¹

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Introduction

With the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the formation of new independent states, one of the open issues was the Austro-Hungarian military legacy. Each of the newly formed states was facing the formation of its own army, which often was not possible without acceptance of former Austro-Hungarian officers. Their position was best in Poland, where out of 96 generals of the new army in 1922, 45 were from the former Austro-Hungarian army.² In Austria they also played an important role in the new armies, including the revolutionary troops (Volkwehr). The vast majority of former Austro-Hungarian officers were, however, antirepublican and joined private military troops (Heimwehr) that were fighting against armed members of the Socialist Party (Shutzbund). Later, under the more conservative form of Austrian political and civil society, the army was reorganized on the basis of the Habsburg system (including military insignia).³ Hungary retained the prewar military structure, uniforms, and insignia, while former Austro-Hungarian officers even commanded the Hungarian Red Army in 1919.⁴ The army of newly formed Czechoslovakia was also based on the Austro-Hungarian military model with a majority of officers being former members of the Austro-Hungarian army.⁵ In all of these countries the structure of the former Austro-Hungarian army was more or less retained. However, the opposite was true on the territory of Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes

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¹ The findings presented in the paper have resulted from the scientific project called *The Position and Development of Croatia 1918-1941* supported by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

² István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social And Political History Of The Habsburg Officer Corps 1848-1918* (New York – Oxford, 1992), p. 208.

³ Ibid, p. 211.

⁴ Ibid, p. 206.

(Kingdom of SHS), where the new countries were considered to be expansions of previously existing states. On the territory of Croatia, former Austro-Hungarian officers experienced a different outcome than in Poland, Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Prior to the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, a short-lived State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs that included all South Slavic nations on the territory of the dissolved Monarchy, was established.⁶ While the state existed, it did not manage to organize its own army. There were various reasons for this failure, but they all had a common cause. It was necessary to enable the quick entry of the Serbian army into territory of the State of SHS, since it was seen as a provisional solution until the final unification with Serbia. The military mission of Serbia arrived in Zagreb on 13 November 1918, so the reorganization of the army according to the Serbian model started immediately. The Serbian army considered former Austro-Hungarian lands as conquered territories, which differed from the omnipresent emphasis on the unification.

⁵ At its session on 29 October 1918, the Croatian parliament decided to cease all state-legal ties of Croatian lands with Austria and Hungary and proclaim Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia and Rijeka an independent state which, together with other South Slavic lands formerly in Austria-Hungary, formed the joint State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (the State of SHS). At the head of the state was the Presidency of the National Council situated in Zagreb, while the state was divided into four provinces with separate governments (in Zagreb, Ljubljana, Sarajevo and Split). The president of the National Council was a Slovene, Anton Korošec, and the vice-presidents were a Croat, Ante Pavelić, and a Serb from Croatia, Svetozar Pribičević. The State of SHS was seen as a temporary form until the final unification with the Kingdom of Serbia. The first attempt towards uniting these two states took place at the conference in Geneva (6-9 November 1918). Then Anton Korošec (president of the National Council of the State of SHS), Ante Trumbić (president of the Yugoslav Committee) and Nikola Pašić (president of the government of the Kingdom of Serbia) signed the Geneva Declaration which guaranteed the equality of all nations in the future Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Considering such an agreement unfavourable, Nikola Pašić withdrew his signature from the Declaration and negotiations about a joint state were transferred into the state to the National Council in Zagreb, which was in fact led by Svetozar Pribičević, and the government of the Kingdom of Serbia in Belgrade. Meanwhile, in accordance with the Treaty of London of 1915, the Italian army began to carry out the occupation of Croatian parts of Dalmatia, while the Serbian army entered the territory of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs under the pretence of defence against the former Austro-Hungarian army. Some provincial governments (Sarajevo, Split, Novi Sad) threatened direct unification with the Kingdom of Serbia. In such an atmosphere on 23 November 1918 the National Council started a two-day discussion about the unification with Serbia resulting in a decision to send a delegation to Belgrade with the Instructions ("Naputak") regarding the future joint state. Stjepan Radić was the only one opposing such a decision, warning the attendees of the meeting not to rush into implementing the unification with the words: "Do not rush forward as geese in a fog!". On 1 December 1918 the delegation of the National Council (28 members) was received by Aleksandar Karađorđević, Prince-Regent of Serbia who on the same day proclaimed the unification of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs with the Kingdom of Serbia into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. This 1 December Act on unification was a unilateral document proclaimed by the Prince-Regent Aleksandar Karađorđević and not a legal document of the representatives of the two states being unified.

The admission of Austro-Hungarian officers became inevitable from practical, but also political reasons. Until 1961, Yugoslav historiography did not provide the exact number of accepted officers. The first edition of the Military Encyclopaedia (*Vojna enciklopedija*) stated that the army of the Kingdom of SHS had accepted 3500 former Serbian army officers, 2590 former Austro-Hungarian army officers, 469 Montenegrin officers, 12 Imperial Russian army officers and 3 Albanian (Esadpaša) army officers.⁷ Since then these figures have been used in all studies dealing with the number of accepted former Austro-Hungarian officers. The fate of the former Austro-Hungarian officers in the army of the Kingdom of SHS has been studied by Rudolf Bičanić⁸, Ivo Banac⁹, István Deák¹⁰, R. J. Crampton¹¹, Tomislav Aralica¹², Milan Deroc¹³, and especially Mile Bjelajac.¹⁴ Unlike the number of the accepted former Austro-Hungarian officers to the army of the Kingdom of SHS, which is generally accepted in literature and corresponds to the database created here, there are some differences in the number of their resignations and retirements. The opinions of several authors dealing with this topic differ, thus creating two opposing views. While István Deák, R. J. Crampton and Ivo Banac accept the opinion that Austro-Hungarian officers were not welcome to the new army and were systematically expelled from it¹⁵, Mile Bjelajac expresses the opinion that there was no system or express intention in their discharge and that the army of the Kingdom of SHS, as the state itself, was an army of reconciliation.

The problem with forming a firm view on this issue is the lack of numerical data. The discussions of the fate of former Austro-Hungarian officers will therefore concentrate on a series of examples of the relation towards them within the army or the quality of their education compared to Serbian officers, their unacceptance of the new state or their percentage in the officer corps.

⁶ *Vojna enciklopedija*, vol. 4, "Jugoslavija", (Belgrade, 1961), p. 236.

⁷ Rudolf Bičanić, *Ekonomska podloga hrvatskog pitanja i drugi radovi* (Zagreb, 1997), pp. 120-125.

⁸ Ivo Banac, *Nacionalno pitanje u Jugoslaviji: Porijeklo, povijest, politika* (Zagreb, 1991), pp. 120-123.

⁹ I. Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social And Political History Of The Habsburg Officer Corps 1848-1918*, pp. 205-212.

¹⁰ R. J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth century - and after*, 2nd edition (London - New York, 1997), pp. 130-133.

¹¹ Tomislav Aralica, Višeslav Aralica, *Hrvatski ratnici 2: Razdoblje Kraljevine SHS / Jugoslavije 1918-1941* (Zagreb, 2006), p. 59.

¹² Milan Deroc, "The former Yugoslav army", *East European Quarterly*, XIX (1985), no. 3: 363-374.

¹³ See his books: *Vojska Kraljevine SHS 1918-1921*, (Belgrade, 1988); *Vojska Kraljevine SHS / Jugoslavije 1922-1935* (Belgrade, 1994); *Jugoslavensko iskustvo sa multietničkom armijom 1918-1991* (Belgrade, 1999)

¹⁴ I. Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social And Political History Of The Habsburg Officer Corps 1848-1918*, p. 209.

Croatian archives store a rather small amount of military records from the period between 1918 and 1941. The majority of records are stored in the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb, including official state gazettes from the stated period. The main source of research in this paper was *Službeni vojni list – službeno glasilo Ministarstva vojske i mornarice Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (The official army gazette [OAG] – the official paper of the Ministry of Army and Navy of the Kingdom of SHS). The *Službeni vojni list*, initially the official army paper of the Duchy (later the Kingdom) of Serbia published in Belgrade from January 1881, experienced no modifications of its physical or typological appearance after 1918. Its form, size and mode of expression remained unchanged, thus suggesting that after 1918 the army of the former Kingdom of Serbia was merely expanded with the Serbian army, maintaining its position of priority. In the course of this research all available issues of the OAG between 1919 and 1937 have been studied.¹⁵ All of the officers stated in the army gazette as newly accepted in the corps were entered into a computer database and afterwards monitored personally with reference to the time of their resignations or retirement. Based on the data collected from the Official army gazette, this paper aims to determine the number of former Austro-Hungarian officers who were accepted to the active forces of the army of the Kingdom of SHS¹⁶, as well as the number of men who left this new army, whether through resignation or retirement.

1 The acceptance of officers into the army of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes

The individual cases of accepting former Austro-Hungarian officers into the new army took place as early as 1918 (from November, only to the infantry corps), but public announcements of their enlistment started appearing from late January 1919. Although a certain number of officers had by then already been accepted, an announcement about the acceptance of former Austro-Hungarian officers into the new army was published in the press. Therefore the Zagreb daily *Obzor* on 31 January 1919 published the following text that displays the type of a questionnaire the former Austro-Hungarian officers had to complete to be accepted into the new army. In order for their applications to be considered, they needed to provide the following information:

1. First and last names, place and date of birth
2. Names of father and mother, occupation of father
3. Which public schools they attended and documents proving attendance

¹⁵ Due to their unavailability, the annual issues from the years 1922, 1925, 1927, 1931 and 1933 have not been studied.

¹⁶ See Hrvoje Čapo, "Broj primljenih časnika bivše austrougarske vojske u vojsku Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 40 (2008), no. 3:1087-1103.

4. Date when they enlisted, where they enlisted, which weapons they are qualified to use, and their occupation before enlisting
5. Which military schools were completed, where, when, and documents proving attendance
6. Day, month, and year of receiving each military rank. The ranks should be listed according to the regulations of the former AH or Montenegrin Army
7. In which units they served, where, and in what capacity
8. Did they attend an officer training course, when, for how long, where, and which exams were completed
9. Were they an active or reserve officer
10. Were they ever tried in court or sentenced for any kind of crime
11. Were they married and how many children they had.

All the above is to be verified by documentation or affidavits of two officers, and where not possible, by affidavits of two respectable citizens, and these affidavits are to be confirmed with the local military or political authorities, and in which they will testify and vouch for the accuracy of the answers furnished in the questionnaire by the officer. Officers will submit their applications to their senior officer who will forward them through regular channels to the commanding officers of Savska and Dravska Divisions, and they will further forward the applications to this Command for consideration. Officers who are currently unemployed and wish to join the army of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes can submit their applications directly to the commanding officers of Savska Division in Zagreb and Dravska Division in Ljubljana.”¹⁷

Such questionnaires were filled out only by the members of the former Austro-Hungarian and, to a lesser extent, the Montenegro army. Serbian officers were automatically accepted. The admission of Austro-Hungarian officers caused public disapproval, particularly with the Serbian public. For that reason the Ministry of the Army and Navy reacted by issuing a statement justifying the reason for accepting Austro-Hungarian officers to the public. Hence a Serbian general and future minister of the army and navy (1924-1926) Dušan Trifunović, under the pseudonym Miles, signed a text published in the magazine *Novi život*, in which he tried to justify to the public the reasons for accepting so many former Austro-Hungarian officers into the army of the Kingdom of SHS:

“The circumstances called for quick and energetic action. All of this fell upon the overworked, exhausted, and bloodied Serbian officer corps. The Serbian reserve officer corps, which so brilliantly executed its duties, after the liberation wholeheartedly assisted their fellow active officers; only this help was temporary since the needs in other professions released many of the reserve

¹⁷ “Prijem bivših austro-ugarskih i crnogorskih oficira u vojsku kraljevstva Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca”, *Obzor* (Zagreb), 31 January 1919.

officers from their military service, while the forthcoming demobilization was to take the rest of them. Therefore the military command found itself in a very difficult situation since it lacked a sufficient number of officers for future important tasks. A number of measures were taken immediately in order to obtain as many officers as possible.”

Since the Serbian corps could not provide sufficient officers, according to Trifunović four measures were taken to obtain their adequate number:

1. Opening of military academies.
2. Promotions within the Serbian Army.
3. Increasing the noncommissioned officer cadre.
4. Reactivating the reserve officer system.

However, Trifunović proceeds with an explanation why it was necessary to accept former Austro-Hungarian officers as a last resort: “But all the measures that the Military Command was undertaking could not be of much help immediately. Help is to come, but in the future, while an army has to be formed without delay, it has to exist and perform its highly important duties. Highly experienced, ready officers were needed immediately so that they could be of use at once. The formation of a peacetime army required a much higher number of officers than available in the Serbian Officer Corps.”

Since none of these measures could provide a required number of officers right away, it was necessary to accept the officers from the Austro-Hungarian army who met the following requirements: “All those who had a distinctly hostile attitude towards the unification or were ruthless towards Serbian or Montenegrin people could not join the officer corps of the Kingdom. The applications were screened by many bodies and commissions that paid particular attention to the character and moral traits of officers. All complaints and evidences against the applicants were taken into account and affected the outcome.”¹⁸

It is clear that numerous efforts were made to avoid the recruitment of AH officers, but one of the main reasons why they were accepted was the lack of available personnel in the Serbian Army

1.1 The admission of officers into the active forces of the army of the Kingdom of SHS

In addition to various regulations, orders and provisions, the OAG also recorded the data on the admission, resignations, transfers and retirements of former Austro-Hungarian officers into and from the army of the Kingdom of SHS. According to the OAG from December 1918 to December 1929 the army

¹⁸ “Oficirsko pitanje”, *Novi život* (Belgrade), 4 September 1920, pp. 102-106.

of the Kingdom of SHS accepted 8223 officers (active and reserve) from the former Austro-Hungarian army.

During this period the active officer corps accepted 2330 Austro-Hungarian officers. The majority of them joined the infantry (1037), then the administrative service (430), the quartermaster unit (224), the artillery (431) and the navy (126). According to the OAG the admission of officers took place between December 1918 and December 1929, with the highest number of active officers accepted during 1919, while in other years reserve officers were accepted.

Thus the highest number of officers was accepted during 1919, i.e. in the year when the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had not yet been internationally recognized, when peace negotiations were being conducted and the conditions were still chaotic. If we look at the exact time when new officers joined the army we can notice that over 90% of them did so between March and October 1919.

I. PRIMARY SERVICE BRANCHES

The infantry

The majority of officers joined the infantry. Since the infantry was the largest service branch in the Kingdom of SHS Army, this statistic is not surprising. Although there are no precise figures on the number of officers in each service branch between 1919 and 1921 when the majority of them were accepted, certain indicators of the ratio can be generally determined. In the stated period there were on average 5900 officers in the entire officer corps.¹⁹ British reports also agree on such a number.²⁰ Although we are not familiar with the ratio of officers in each active service branch respectively, we are familiar with the ratio of officers in each service branch who attended the Military Academy from 1919 to 1925.²¹ The projection of this percentage provides us with an approximate ratio of officers in the four primary service branches of the army of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. These calculations revealed that the infantry had the majority of officers, i.e. 61.62%, followed by the artillery with 25.2%, the engineer corps with 7.85%, and the cavalry with 4.46%. Hence almost two thirds of the army belonged to the infantry,

¹⁹ M. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS 1918-1921*, pp. 93, 99.

²⁰ Živko Avramovski, *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji, Godišnji izvještaji Britanskog poslanstva u Beogradu 1921.-1938., vol.1, (1921.-1930.)* (Belgrade: Zagreb, Arhiv Jugoslavije: Globus, 1986), p. 219.

²¹ In the period between 1919-1925 out of 2890 officers who attended the Academy 1721 were from the infantry, 713 from the artillery, 129 from the cavalry and 227 from the engineer corps (M. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS /Jugoslavije 1922-1935.*, p. 55).

which further means that between 1919 and 1921 there were approximately 3537 officers in the infantry, 1455 in the artillery, 463 in the engineer corps and 263 in the cavalry. Knowing these ratios facilitates the conclusions on the number of accepted officers into each service branch respectively. However, the number of accepted officers in the service branches varies significantly. Of all the accepted officers as many as 44.5% joined the infantry, 18.5% the artillery, 5.4% the navy, 6.87% the cavalry and 2.36% the engineer corps. However, the partial consideration of the data would not produce the correct figures on the ratio of accepted officers in the new environment.

The produced data gives a complete picture if incorporated into the projections of the total number of officers in each service branch. Such calculations give an entirely different picture of the number of accepted Austro-Hungarian officers into the army of the Kingdom of SHS. However, these figures should be taken as estimates due to the lack of more precise ones. One can notice that the infantry officers made up 29.32% of the total officer corps, the artillery officers 29.62%, the engineer corps officers 11.88%, and the cavalry officers 60.84%. When we add the number of the navy officers to these figures we can see that they constituted around 58% of the total officer corps in the new army. Despite this being a high percentage it differs from the frequent claims in the published literature that almost all officers of the navy of the Kingdom of SHS were former Austro-Hungarian officers.²² Such a conclusion seems logical since the navy on the eastern Adriatic coast was Austro-Hungarian, but it appears this was not the case. Around 40% of the new navy officer corps were officers who didn't come from the Austro-Hungarian army. The literature states that almost no senior officers were accepted, and almost all of the junior ones were.²³ The analysis of the gathered data supports this. During the period of accepting officers into the infantry most of the accepted officers were lieutenants (i.e. former Austro-Hungarian officer designates) (28%), then captains first class (24.3%) who were former Austro-Hungarian captains with over two years of service. They were followed by the officers at the ranks of officer designates (18%) who were lieutenants in the Austro-Hungarian army, or those from the non-commissioned officer ranks of sergeants or officer aspirants. The fourth group of officers were captains 2nd class, i.e. former Austro-Hungarian captains with less than two years of service at that rank (15%).

Only a few higher-ranked officers were accepted into the new army. Of the total number of accepted officers, 9% were majors, 5% lieutenant colonels and 0.7% colonels.

If we analyse the time of accepting officers to the infantry we can see that the majority of them were accepted from March to June 1919, when 60% of all officers were accepted.

²² M. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS 1918-1921*, p. 79.

²³ *Vojna enciklopedija*, vol. 4, "Jugoslavija", p. 236.

By March 1919 only 16 officers, i.e. 0.016% of their total number, were accepted. The reason for that is that the organization of new army according to the Serbian model had not been completed until the end of March. During that period there was a certain vacuum in the army, following the entry of the Serbian army into Croatian territory. The Serbian army was stationed there and by the time the Austro-Hungarian officers started being accepted, it had gained full control of the territory it considered to be conquered.

After the organization of the new army according to the Serbian model was completed, and the verification of the Austro-Hungarian officers was carried out, their formal acceptance into the army began. During the first few months the majority of officers were accepted, which by the end of 1919 resulted in 84.44% of the total officer corps entering into the new army. This can lead to the conclusion that the acceptance process was carefully planned rather than random and that the military leadership knew exactly who was being accepted.

The cavalry

Estimates suggest the officer corps in the cavalry numbered around 264 officers. Since 160 former Austro-Hungarian officers were accepted into this service branch it means that they made up around 60.84% of the total officer corps in the cavalry.

As in the infantry, the majority of officers were accepted into the cavalry in March and April 1919. During that period around 35% of the total number of officers were accepted into the cavalry. During those two months of 1919, the highest number of officers was accepted into the new army at once. As in the case of infantry, over 80% (84.8%) of officers were accepted during 1919.

The majority of accepted officers were lieutenants, i.e. former Austro-Hungarian first lieutenants (35.63%), and captains 2nd class (19.38%), i.e. former captains with less than two years of service. Then followed officer designates (16.25%) and captains 1st class (13.75%). Around 10% of the newly accepted officers were majors, 2.5% were lieutenant colonels and around 2% colonels.

The artillery

According to the stated estimates, in the period of most intense acceptance of Austro-Hungarian officers there were about 1455 officers in the artillery. Since 431 artillery officers were accepted it means that the percentage of Austro-Hungarian corps in the new army was 29.62%. The acceptance of officers into this service branch started at the same time as into the others, during March 1919. The majority of officers were accepted between March and June 1919, almost 66.7%. By the end of 1919 the majority of the remaining corps was accepted, for a total of 89.93%.

Regarding the structure of the accepted officers the majority of them were officer designates (79%), and followed by lieutenants (12%). Other ranks were in a minority. Only 4% of them were captains 2nd class, 3.7% captains 1st class, and of the senior ranks only majors were accepted (1%).

The engineer corps

The estimates show that there were around 455 officers in the engineer corps, while the total number of accepted officers was 55. Accordingly, the percentage of Austro-Hungarian officers was 7.85%. As in the other service branches, the majority of officers were accepted between March and June 1919, when 58.18% of the total number of artillery officers joined the new army.

The highest number of newly accepted officers were of the rank of lieutenants (25), captains 2nd class (10) and then officer designates (7). There were 5 captains 1st class and 5 majors accepted, 3 lieutenant colonels and an equal number of colonels.

II AUXILIARY SERVICES

The administrative service

As for the structure of other accepted officers, we can notice that the majority of them were accepted into the administrative service. Of the total number of accepted officers as many as 430 (18.42%) joined this branch. An analysis of the time frame when these officers were accepted reveals that there is a difference in the period when the acceptance into the four primary service branches was most intense. Over 80% of officers were accepted to the administrative service between August and December 1919. In this case the majority of officers were also accepted during 1919, but the exact months differ when they entered the new army. While officers were accepted into the primary service branches between March and June, for the administrative service it occurred in the last four months of the year. For example, 57.7% of the officers were accepted during August 1919.

The quartermaster unit

Within this unit the quartermaster officers are highlighted as a separate group since the time when they were accepted doesn't correspond to the time when the other officers entered the new army. The total number of accepted individuals was 220. Their acceptance began one month prior to the others in the administrative service, specifically in July 1919 when the new army accepted 61.8% of the total quartermaster officer corps. In the following four months, that is, by the end of October 1919, as many as 90.9% of the total number of new officers were accepted.

III STAFF BRANCHES

I General staff branch

From the initial organization of the army of the Kingdom of SHS until its demise, the lack of qualified officers, particularly in the general staff branch, posed a major problem. A total of 22 officers were accepted into this branch. However, unlike the auxiliary services, here the officers were accepted at the same time as to the primary service branches. Individually the majority of officers were accepted in March 1919 (16), then in April (2) and May (3). As for the structure of the accepted officers the majority of them were captains 1st class (19) and majors (7). At the rank of lieutenant colonel 3 men were accepted, and 2 at the rank of colonel.

II Military justice branch

A total number of 41 officers were accepted to the military justice branch. As for the structure of ranks, the majority of accepted officers were officer designates (17). They were followed by lieutenants (8) and captains 1st class (8). However, when comparing the time of their acceptance to other branches we can notice a difference. While in other branches officers were mostly accepted in March 1919, here it wasn't the case. Although the acceptance of men to this branch started in March 1919, the majority of them (39.02%) were accepted in August of that year.

The reason for that lies in the specificity of this branch. The beginning of its work was closely connected to court martial trials, the organization of which experienced problems and delays in comparison to the organization of other service branches.

2 The treatment of newly accepted officers

The problematic relationship of Serbian military authorities towards the civilian ones on the territory of Croatia became apparent already during the period of the State of SHS in November 1919. The notion of the superior Serbian army and the defeated and occupied former Austro-Hungarian territories was omnipresent, whether in the Serbian press, the opinion of the Serbian public and politicians and the behaviour of Serbian officers on the territory of Croatia, even the most junior ones. The opinion by which the creation of the Kingdom of SHS did not mean the unification of South Slavic lands, but rather the expansion of Serbia, was particularly pronounced within the army. Austro-Hungarian officers were accepted into the new army because, due to the lack of Serbian corps, there was no other solution. For the first four months of the new state the army of the former Kingdom of Serbia held a privileged role in the

army of the Kingdom of SHS, whereas from the end of March its ranks were joined by former Austro-Hungarian officers. By the prevailing Serbian corps they were still seen as enemy officers, “Huns (*Švabe*),” and defeated Croats, all adversaries of the new state. Such an attitude led to a series of problems that arose from the very beginnings of the new state.

During the brief existence of the State of SHS, the inherited Austro-Hungarian military corps was not sufficient for the formation of the new army. Although it did exist (with regular uniforms and new troops) it bore almost no military strength. Serbian troops that entered the territory of the State of SHS were aware of that and they paid no attention to the presence of that army. The Serbian army considered its supremacy over this territory unquestionable.

Initially, the entry of the Serbian army was tried to be presented not as an occupation, but with time its soldiers saw their role on the territory of the State of SHS exactly as that. In the field, the relationship between former Austro-Hungarian soldiers and the newcomers, mostly Serbian soldiers, was so soured that at the beginning of September the Public Defence Department issued an order requesting a mutual respect of until recently opposing soldiers: “There are more and more cases when junior members of the National Army of SHS do not salute their seniors and they in return do not salute back. Likewise, the members of the brotherly Serbian and French armies do not salute each other. Since a military salute is obligatory, and at the same time it is an affection of mutual respect and love, I hereby determine in agreement with the delegates of the Royal Serbian army that they are to salute each other and all the troops, i.e. members of the great Entente.”²⁴

Soon after they started serving in the new army of the Kingdom of SHS, men started to flee. This turned into such a huge problem (mostly from 1920 to 1927) that the correspondence of the military authorities towards the civilian ones became more frequent each year, and harsher in the sense of an increased struggle against such cases. The military authorities blamed the civilian administration on the territory of Croatia for not doing enough to prevent escapes, and the civilian authorities replied that the core of the problem was in the relationships within the army. Recruits from the territory of Croatia complained about the bad treatment in the army which left them no choice but to flee. For example, the prefect of the Virovitica County in his letter to the Commission for Internal Affairs of the State Administration on the subject of deserters stated three reasons for their escaping from the army: “first, the majority of servicemen had served in the Austro-Hungarian army for two to three years but this service is not recognized now; Secondly, the majority of soldiers from this territory are serving in Serbia and Albania and not on the territory of the competent regimental district command; and finally, those

²⁴ Milan Pojić, ed., *Vjesnik naredaba Odjela za narodnu obranu Vlade Narodnog vijeća Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba 1918 – 1919*. (Zagreb: Hrvatski državni arhiv, 2008), p. 53.

soldiers who serve in Serbia are exposed to various insults by Serbian soldiers, i.e., they are referred to as volunteers Huns and Šokci, their diet is very bad, and they are held overtime in the service...”²⁵

The issues of overtime service in the army and a bad diet were particularly widespread. During the course of the interrogation of two deserters, Jakov Treščec, an accountant, and Josip Forjan, a teacher, on the reasons of their escape, the Royal administrative district in Čazma reached almost identical conclusions. Even though one of them served in Kruševac and the other in Ljubljana they complained about the same problems. At the military drill they were kept for longer than anticipated two months, their accommodation and diet were inhuman. Jakov Treščec described his experience and the reasons that made him flee in the following way: “As instructed by the recruitment commission I, together with all men who were drafted as recruits at the same time as me – was to actively serve for only two months – but after these two months had expired in our troop our commander Colonel Aleksa Stevanović, whom we officially requested for dismissal, did not want to dismiss us but he said that he did not have instructions on how long we were to serve...We were accommodated in a half demolished, poorly maintained barracks with smashed windows and broken doors. The heaters that were inside that barracks were also smashed. Some of them could have been mended and lit, but despite all our requests they wouldn’t do it, replying that the Huns smashed them and that better accommodation and fire could not be provided. We slept on the floor on some (illegible) and half rotten straw which was full of lice. We spent fourteen days in that camp in our civil suits without blankets and uniforms, so the men who were peasants and who usually joined the army half naked were especially harmed; three of them died of cold and I attended their funerals. Only after fourteen days did we get a decent uniform and each fellow was given one old worn out blanket made of nettle that couldn’t keep us warm...In the morning we were given nothing to eat or drink...On any given day, Friday or holiday, lunch was made up of old spoiled white beans which was no more than two spoons per portion...We got the same meal for Christmas...Instead of beans a few times we received fresh cabbage, or rather I should say cabbage leaves that were half rotten and simply cut and boiled as if for pigs, then served to men who couldn’t eat them because those who had tried threw up, which on one occasion happened to me as well...”²⁶ The Royal administrative district further added: “...Apart from that he stated that Serbian non-commissioned officers didn’t sleep in such uncomfortable and cold rooms but they had separate rooms with beds and linen and their rooms were heated. Some NCOs even bullied the soldiers...All that particularly badly affected the men, even

²⁵ Hrvatski državni arhiv (HR-HDA), 1214, Grupa XXVI-Zbirka vojska i oružništvo, 6383/1921, 11 February 1921

²⁶ Ibid.

more so since they knew that here the dislocated troops of our army had good supply and order.”²⁷

Josip Forjan served in Ljubljana in 1919 in the 4th Company of the 2nd Battalion of the 37th Infantry Regiment for five and a half months instead of the required two. Here is what he testified on the conditions: “...men were accommodated in the barracks and slept on the sawdust beds, four of them together on two beds...every day the food was ancient old white beans and for a period of one month rotten cabbage.”²⁸

Besides many similar problems, the occurrence of flogging was particularly difficult (on the territory of Croatia it was banned in 1872). After repeated requests and complaints, the Minister of Army and Navy revoked the order on the flogging of soldiers on 24 July 1919, even though the practice nevertheless continued.

During a debate on the first Law on the organisation of Army and Navy in July 1923, Bedijanić, a parliamentary deputy from the Yugoslav Club, submitted an amendment to the law requesting a ban on flogging. His suggestion was turned down, as reported in the Zagreb daily *Obzor*: “...the suggestion of the national representative Bedijanić (Yugoslav Club) to enter an amendment to the law which would ban punishment by flogging was turned down. Therefore the soldiers will continue to be flogged. The Radicals and the Democrats voted against Bedijanić’s proposal, which in that way meant they openly supported flogging...”²⁹

The flogging of soldiers severely disturbed the Croatian people and civilian authorities who tried to intervene. On one occasion a deputy Ban Milan Rojc shockingly informed the minister of the Army: “unfortunately I had an opportunity to hear a senior officer defending this position [the necessity of flogging, H.Č.] at the conference that I called in order to settle the riots. Through my energetic efforts I succeeded in persuading certain commanders to stop the flogging, but the riots will not cease until flogging is entirely banned...People see flogging as an unlawful method which doesn’t serve as a punishment but a personal vendetta. Therefore a soldier becomes an enemy to the citizens, the opinion is formed that the army is an enemy to the people and accordingly there is an unfriendly mood towards the army. Since the army is one of the representatives of the state authority and power, such a mood diminishes and destroys the sense of commitment and loyalty towards the state as well as the notion of unity. I cannot stress enough how deeply the flogging has disturbed the trust in the new state order and the commitment to this new order both in the cities (Zagreb, Karlovac, Petrinja, Bjelovar etc.) and in the country.”³⁰

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ “Rad vojnog odbora”, *Obzor* (Zagreb), 24 June 1923

³⁰ HR-HDA-1214, Grupa XXVI-Zbirka vojska i oružništvo, 6383/1921, 11 February 1921

All of the above mentioned led to an increase in desertions, which led to further instances of violence. In order to stop desertion the military authorities arrested and imprisoned the deserters' next of kin (father, mother, sister, fiancée, etc.) until they would turn themselves in after succumbing to the pressure. Such behaviour deeply irritated the population on the territory of Croatia. In one case of such a hostage situation, the State Administrative asked for an explanation from the command of the 4th Army district, who initially replied that this was done according to Article 12 of the Law of the organisation of the Army from 1919, but afterwards they admitted that "strictly speaking" there were no "legal grounds".³¹ Even though there were no legal grounds, the military authorities repeatedly took a deserter's next of kin as a hostage thus forcing him to return.

Bad accommodation, poor diet, bad interpersonal relations and the occurrence of violence in the army certainly did not reflect only on the recruits from the territory of Croatia. Former Austro-Hungarian officers must have experienced similar problems. They were more visible on the psychological level since they were never accepted as equal to the officers from the former Serbian army. These claims are supported by the memo of the commander of the Osijek garrison regarding the political and safety conditions in Osijek and Virovitica County, which was delivered to the commander of Savska Division in the beginning of March 1919. It made its way to the Minister of Army and Navy, who forwarded it to the Minister of the Interior, Svetozar Pribičević. The memo reveals the general opinion about the accepted Austro-Hungarian officers to the army of the Kingdom of SHS.

"Besides priests, 'Frankists' can count on a substantial number of Austrian officers who were accepted into the army. Many of them, morally and materially corrupt in their previous service, having a mentality of medieval mercenaries, cannot reconcile with the new situation that doesn't allow them previous abuses..."³²

The idea that Pribičević agrees with this is supported by his note addressed to the Minister of Army and Navy and the commanders of the 1st and 4th Army: "...I find the conditions to be in general truthfully presented."³³ The notion that Austro-Hungarian officers were morally and material corrupt was accepted among the state leadership, so there was no mistake that it was only an opinion of a few individuals. The issue of Austro-Hungarian officers was an item on the agenda at the Assembly prior to passing the first Law on the organisation of Army and Navy on 9 August 1923. The law was debated by a special Committee for the study of Law on Army organisation and at the end of June it held its last session. Then a representative from the Slovene People's Party, Karlo Škulj,

³¹ Ibid.

³² Državni arhiv u Osijeku (HR-DAOS) - 6, Gradsko poglavarstvo Osijeka, 48/1919, 5 March 1919

³³ Ibid.

expressed his disagreement with the new law. In his speech he addressed the unfairness of the law towards the Catholic Church and the officers accepted from the Austro-Hungarian army. The Radical Party deputy Stijepo Kobasica remarked: "...it is a pity they were even accepted"³⁴ The burden of the Austro-Hungarian army followed its former officers in the army of the Kingdom of SHS throughout their careers. These officers were always labelled as former "Austrian" officers. An example of such an attitude is seen in a circular memo of the Royal Ban administration of Savska Banovina in Zagreb addressed to all district inspectors, police administration in Zagreb, district heads and city and border police, regarding the drafting of the Manifesto on poor conditions in the army. The typical attitude was that even after eleven years since joining the army an officer accused of preparing the Manifesto was labelled as a former Austro-Hungarian officer:

"We were informed that a Manifesto is being prepared with an aim to show that there are allegedly unhealthy relationships within our army. Drafting of the manifesto was entrusted to a former Austro-Hungarian infantry colonel Perčević, who was given an order to present the condition as bad as possible. The retirement of some of our generals will be used as evidence."³⁵

A report of the British embassy in Belgrade for the year 1921 also addressed the position of former Austro-Hungarian officers.

"...There was a lot of dissatisfaction among officers of the former Austro-Hungarian army and to lesser extent former Montenegrin army officers. The former complained about not being able to get promoted. This can be attributed to the wish of Serbs to remain in control of the army (which they succeeded by holding all senior chief commanding ranks) and further to the lack of trust in the officers trained by Austrian methods. The Serbian attitude was that the officers of the former Serbian army should have supremacy over the officers who fought against them in the war, even if they did it against their will."³⁶

Accepted Austro-Hungarian officers may not have had all of the negative experiences the as recruits, since many enjoyed the same material benefits as Serbian officers, but they were clearly shown that they were not welcome. This was not determined by official regulations or public presentations but beyond formal surface the attitude towards them was clear. Throughout the existence of the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia, they were labelled as former Austro-Hungarian officers. They were always closely watched, as they were always expected to be plotting against the country. It is certain that not all of the approximately 2500 officers had the same qualities, thought alike or had equal feelings towards the new state. Many of those who didn't agree with the new state didn't even join the new army, some accepted it, some resigned

³⁴ "Parlamenteat", *Obzor* (Zagreb), 14 July 1923

³⁵ HR-HDA-1214, Grupa XXVI-Zbirka vojska i oružništvo, 963/1930, 13 December 1930

³⁶ Ž. Avramovski, *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji, Godišnji izvještaji Britanskog poslanstva u Beogradu 1921.-1938., vol.1 (1921.-1930.)*, pp. 260-261.

after judging that the conditions of life and work here were unbearable or insufficient, while the rest of them were retired.

3 Resignations and retirements

When we speak about the number of their resignations and retirements the data in literature is scarce. There is one piece of information from 1924 and another from the end of 1933. According to the List of active officers from 1924 that year there were still 1979 active former Austro-Hungarian officers serving in the army.³⁷ Based on the assumption that 2590 of them were accepted, it means that during five years of the new state 23.6% of the total number of accepted officers were either retired or they resigned. The second figure that appears in the literature is the assessment of the French army according to which there were around 950 former Austro-Hungarian officers in the corps at the end of 1933.³⁸ This figure would suggest that by the end of 1933 63.3% of former Austro-Hungarian officers were either retired or resigned. This means that the biggest drain of former Austro-Hungarian officers took place in the period between 1924 and end of 1933.

The results acquired by collecting individual data for each known Austro-Hungarian officer do not correspond to this assessment. According to them in the first year of the new army (1919) there were a few departures from the army, only 0.17% resignations among all accepted officers. Considering the fact that at that time the acceptance of officers had just begun (March to June 1919) and that the process was still at the beginning, this result merely confirms that the consolidation of the new army was at its start, its full formation was not defined, and thus the departures of accepted officers could not take place. The true formation was visible from 1920 onwards after more experiences in the new army. This is supported by the numbers of resignations and retirements in 1920. At that moment, 8.41% of the accepted Austro-Hungarian officer resigned, but only 0.19% of them were retired. The discrepancy between resignations and retirements shows that it was caused by some sort of anomaly, unnatural against natural (anticipated) retirement process. The statistical correlation of this data shows that something caused a high number of resignations that year, while the notion that the officers made a significant effort to be accepted greatly underlines this indicator. After a series of verifications, efforts to prove their innocence and a long period of waiting to be finally accepted, it was to be expected they would settle into their new positions. However, after one year of service in the new army something forced them to resign. In the following several years the high trend of leaving the army continued. During 1921, the number of resignations was 4.33%, but the percentage of retirements increased

³⁷ M. Bjelajac, *Jugoslavenstvo iskustvo sa multietničkom armijom 1918-1991*, p. 23.

³⁸ M. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS /Jugoslavije 1922-1935.*, p. 164.

to 8.5% of the total number of accepted officers. That year an additional 12.8% of officers left the army, which amounted to 21.5% of the newly accepted corps only three years following the formation of army. If we analyze the retirements that same year, 83.33% of officers were retired by the decision of the ministry and not at their own request, leading to the conclusion that state decisions already had an impact on departures from the army. According to the statistical assessment for 1922 this trend continued, i.e. there could have been around 2% resignations and 4.5% retirements. During 1923 the number of resignations further decreased to 1.24% while the retirements increased to 9%. The percentage of retirements at personal request even further decreased to only 7%, that is even 93% of retirements were according to the ministry's decision. The analysis of actual data and the assessments for 1922 provide the result that shows that at the time of the consolidation of the new army, until after the new Law on the Army was passed (July 1923), around 50% of former Austro-Hungarian officers had left the army.

Until 1923, 15% of accepted officers resigned in the infantry, the majority of them in 1920 (7.55%) and 1921 (5.64%). In the artillery 18.24% resigned, the majority of them in 1920 (15.89%). In the cavalry as many as 38.75% of the officers left by the end of 1923, the majority of them also in 1920 (31.25%). In the engineer corps, 20% of the officers resigned at that time, 10.91% in 1920 and 9.09% in 1921. The fewest officers left the navy, only 13.74%, and again the majority of them in 1920 (7.94%). The frequency of resignations indicates the treatment of former Austro-Hungarian officers within the various service branches. A high percentage of officers who left the cavalry (40%) supports the claim that something was wrong with the former Austro-Hungarian officers in that service branch. On the contrary, the fact that around 13% of officers left the navy indicates somewhat better relationships in that service branch.

A deeper analysis of this period provides an insight into a distribution of resignations or retirements by months. For 1920 and 1921 we can see that the times of resignations and retirements were not interrelated, i.e., that a lower number of resignations did not cause a higher number of retirements. These two processes were intertwined and based on such data predefined. However, an anomaly can be determined in 1923. Until April of that year the retirement process took a predefined course. During May, June and July there was not a single retirement, but in August the number increased to a high of 63.81%. Such a discrepancy clearly indicates a new outside influence. A possible reason may have been due to the arrival of the new Law on the organisation of Army and Navy. During the course of its drawing up there were special debates about the recognition of the years of service of former Austro-Hungarian officers, i.e. whether the years these officers served in the Austro-Hungarian army should be recognised. Additionally, the issue was raised regarding an increase in officer salaries. The Serbian press announced the retirements in the following manner: "...upon accepting the proposal of the Minister of Army about officer

salaries, there should immediately be a call for the reduction in number of active officers from generals to the most junior ranks. The retirement of all superfluous active officers should be performed. This cost cutting measure in the Ministry of Army should precede the increase in officer salaries.”³⁹

Pending the drafting of a new law which would define the status of the newly accepted officers on one hand, and a decision to reduce the total number of officer corps on the other, resulted in the retirement of 210 officers during 1923. After the new law was passed, 63% of the newly accepted corps were retired.

From 1920 and 1923 we can clearly distinguish between two periods, a period of resignations and a period of retirements. The years of 1920 and 1921 were the time of resignations when around 13% of the newly accepted officers left the army. The period of the highest number of retirements started in 1921, continued in 1922 and ended in 1923. After that the retirement process continued with a more stable rate of departures not higher than 3% per year. The year 1924 began a period in which the percentages of retirements and resignations of the army were not so high. By 1937 the percentage of retired men exceeded 2% per year only twice, while the percentage of resignations remained below 0.5%. Such data reveals that after 1923 there was a natural process of abandoning the army without many external factors.

Based on the collected data, by 1937 330 officers resigned from the army and 691 were retired. In this case the analysis focused on the officers from the ranks of officer designates to generals and a hierarchy of their departures from the army followed the same pattern. Of all the accepted officer designates, 95 resigned and 139 were retired. The difference was in the time when each process took place. Resignations were handed in during the first years of the Kingdom of SHS and the majority of officer designates resigned in 1920 and 1921. In other words, considering their years of service in the new army it was only a year or two from the day of their acceptance. Of the total number of officers accepted at that rank 9.18% resigned during their first year of service, and an additional 3.77% during the second. After these critical years the number of resignations was reduced to the insignificant 0.1% per year. Retirements followed after one year of service in the army. Most retirements occurred with officers who served two to four years in the new army. Of the total number of accepted officer designates, 37.54% left the army whether by resigning or retirement. This piece of information reveals that 62.46% of officers who were accepted at that rank remained in the corps.

There were 621 officers at the rank of lieutenants accepted in the army of the Kingdom of SHS. Of that number, 106 men resigned and almost the same number, 133 were retired by 1937. In this case the resignations were also predominantly handed in during the first and second years of service. In

³⁹ “Oficirske i činovničke plaće”, *Politika* (Belgrade), 13 July 1923

the first year there were 8.53% resignations while after two years of service an additional 3.7% resigned. As in the case of officer designates, in later years of service the percentage of resignations was insignificant, with the exception of nine resignations (1.45%) submitted after four years of service. The retirement of officers at this rank also started in the second and the fourth year of their service. Two years after joining, 5.48% were retired, while after four years the percentage was 6.6%. By 1937, 36.07% officers at that rank left the army, which means that 63.93% remained in the corps.

Former Austro-Hungarian captains were accepted to the army of the Kingdom of SHS at the ranks of captain 2nd class and captain 1st class. There were 306 officers at the rank of captain 2nd class. Of that number, 77 resigned and 69 were retired. As many as 15.03% resigned after the first year of service, and an additional 7.52% after the second. Such a high percentage of resignations at a single rank indicates the existence of an additional factor that caused such a reaction, which can be possibly explained by the dissatisfaction at being accepted initially at the lower rank of captain 2nd class. After the first two years of service, when their reaction resulted in the resignation of 22.55% of captains 2nd class, there followed a period when the number of resignations became insignificant, i.e., in the following fifteen years only 1.3% of resignations were submitted. Like with the previous ranks, the highest number of retirements occurred after two (5.88%) and four (4.58%) years of service. Of all the officers accepted at the rank of captain 2nd class, 46.61% left the army and 53.59% remained in the corps.

In the case of officers at the rank of captain 1st class, there were some variations although the general trends noted above continued. Of the total number of 449 accepted officers, 34 resigned and 189 were retired. Again the highest number of resignations was handed in after the first and second years of service when 6.68% of men left. For the first time there was a discrepancy between resignations and retirements. While 7.31% officers resigned, as many as 41.43% were retired. However, the pace of retirements continued and took place after two and four years of service. Of the total number of accepted captains 1st class, 48.55% left the army and 51.45% remained in the corps.

At senior ranks such a trend continued and intensified. The army accepted 173 majors. Only 15 resigned while 84 were retired. The majority of resignations were submitted after one year of service (5.2%). After two years of service, 2.89% of majors left and subsequently the number of resignations became insignificant. As in the previous cases, the retirements took place after two and four years upon joining the army. In total 48.55% of officers were retired. Adding the percentage of resignation to this number we can see that 42.77% of majors remained in the corps.

Out of 91 accepted lieutenant colonels only three resigned and 47 were retired. After four years of service the greatest number of them were retired, as many as 39.56%. There were 45.05% of them left in the corps. At the rank

of colonel, 25 officers were accepted and by 1937 52% had left active service. None of them resigned, but they were all retired. Most of them were retired after two years of service (32%), leaving 48% of them in the corps.

The army of the Kingdom of SHS accepted three former Austro-Hungarian generals. Rudolf Meister, Ante Plivelić and Milan Uzelac were accepted on the same day, 28 November 1919, and they left almost at the same time. Air force general Milan Uzelac was retired on 19 August 1923, while Ante Plivelić and Rudolf Meister were retired on 2 October of the same year.

The number of retirements based on personal requests was not high, only around 11% of the total number of retirements.

The issue of promotions in the army was particularly present in the existing literature and based on individual examples in order to prove that a certain former Austro-Hungarian officer had a senior rank or held a high commanding position.⁴⁰ During the course of this research, information on the ranks held when both joining and leaving the army (either by resigning or retiring) was available for 312 officers. The years of service in the following examples ranged from 1 to 18. Junior ranks were promoted the most, so that out of the aforementioned number, 9.62% of officer designates reached the rank of captains 2nd class. 16.99% of the lieutenants were promoted to captains 1st class, after which the frequency of promotions dropped. Of the former Austro-Hungarian captains 2nd class, 14.74% were promoted to captains 1st class, while 22.44% of those holding the rank of captain 1st class left the army as majors. Since the number of accepted senior officers was low in the first place, their share in promotions was small and not indicative. Less than 1% of majors and less than 2% of lieutenant colonels reached the rank of colonel.

Conclusion

The turbulent times of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy followed by the creation of the State of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (and later the Kingdom of SHS), as well as the general political mood, were the elements which determined the status and destiny of the former Austro-Hungarian officers. The dissolved Austro-Hungarian army could not be incorporated into new military forces of the State of SHS, which was partly due to the decisions made by the National Council in Zagreb. While the Italian army occupied Dalmatia and the Hungarian army entered into Međimurje, the state army was dissolved and the Serbian army was called into the territory of the State of SHS. Such a decision, made under the influence and will of Svetozar Pribićević, was the beginning of the Serbian solution for South Slavic unification. From the moment the Serbian army entered the Croatian territory included in the State of SHS, problems arose in communication between the Serbian military and

⁴⁰ M. Bjelajac, *Jugoslavensko iskustvo sa multietničkom armijom 1918-1991*, p. 24.

Croatian civil authorities and the local population. Considering this territory conquered and taking advantage of the political will of the prevailing forces in the National Council, the Serbian army disregarded the civilian authorities and the feelings of the people.

However, the Serbian army personnel could not respond to the challenges presented in the newly founded Kingdom of SHS. There were not enough men, so the acceptance of Austro-Hungarian officers became inevitable. A great number of officers were admitted but only with prior verifications. The acceptance of the officer corps into the active forces of the Kingdom of SHS lasted until the end of 1923, keeping in mind that 85 % of the men were accepted in the period from the end of March to October 1919. According to the *Official Army Gazette*, 2335 the Austro-Hungarian officers were accepted to the active forces of the new army in that period. The majority of them were accepted into the infantry (1047), then administrative service (430), the quartermaster unit (224), the artillery (431) and the navy (126). Most of them were accepted to the active forces during 1919, while in other years officers of the reserve army were accepted. The infantry officers made up 29.32% of the total officer corps, the artillery officers 29.62%, the engineer officers 11.87%, the cavalry officers 60.84% and the navy officers 58%.

The treatment of accepted officers in the new army was unfavourable and they were labelled as former Austro-Hungarian officers throughout their career. Due to such a treatment and working conditions, as well as some possible personal reasons, many of them left the army, the majority by the end of 1923.

Based on the analysis of data from the *Official Army Gazette* the following can be concluded:

The acceptance of Austro-Hungarian officers into the army of the Kingdom of SHS was carefully planned.

The acceptance began in the fourth month following the creation of the Kingdom of SHS.

The acceptance of officer corps by large was finished during the same year (March to October 1919) when 85% of the total accepted corps joined the military forces.

The order of acceptance was carefully determined. In the first stage (March to June 1919) the officers from the primary service branches were accepted (the infantry, the artillery, the cavalry, the engineer corps and the general staff). Then followed the second stage of acceptance (August – October – December 1919) when the officers of the following branches joined the army: the administrative service, the quartermaster unit, the medical corps and the military justice service.

The majority of accepted officers were at junior ranks. 54% of them were officer designates and lieutenant and 33.14% were captains 1st and 2nd class.

The accepted officers who held senior ranks were few in number. Of the total number of accepted officers 7.6% were majors, 4% lieutenant colonels and 1% colonels.

The highest number of departures from the army (resignations or retirements) took place between 1920 and the end of 1923. By that time around 50% of the total number of men who left the army had departed.

The period between 1920 and 1923 can be divided into two parts. During 1920 and 1921 was a period with the majority of resignations while from the end of 1921 until 1923 was a period with the majority of retirements.

From 1924 onwards, the number of resignations and retirements dropped dramatically.

By the end of 1937, 330 former Austro-Hungarian officers resigned and 691 were retired, which is 43.8% of the total number of accepted officers.

Die ehemaligen österreichisch-ungarischen Offiziere in der Armee des Königreichs der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen beziehungsweise Jugoslawiens

Zusammenfassung

Das Schicksal der ehemaligen österreichisch-ungarischen Offiziere wurde auch beträchtlich von der turbulenten Periode des Zusammenbruchs der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie, der nachfolgenden Gründung des Staates der Slowenen, Kroaten und Serben und danach der Gründung des Königreiches der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen beeinflusst. Es gelang nicht, die zerfallene österreichisch-ungarische Armee in die neu zu gründende militärische Macht des Staates der Slowenen, Kroaten und Serben einzuschließen und die Entscheidungen des Nationalrates in Zagreb trugen dazu auch nicht bei. Während die italienische Armee Dalmatien und die magyrische Armee Medimurje (Murinsel) okkupierte, wurde die kaiserliche österreichisch-ungarische Armee entlassen und die serbische Armee auf das Gebiet des Staates der Slowenen, Kroaten und Serben berufen. Diese Entscheidung, nach dem

Wunsche von Svetozar Pribićević, bedeutete eigentlich den Anfang der Lösung von Frage der Vereinigung der südslawischen Staaten nach dem Wunsche und im Interesse Serbiens. Vom Zeitpunkt des Eintritts der serbischen Armee auf das Gebiet Kroatiens im Rahmen des Staates der Slowenen, Kroaten und Serben begannen die Probleme in der Kommunikation der serbischen militärischen Macht mit kroatischen Zivilbehörden und mit Bevölkerung. Indem sie dieses Gebiet als das eroberte betrachtete und den im Nationalrat des Staates der Slowenen, Kroaten und Serben ausgedrückten politischen Willen ausnützte, nahm die serbische Armee keine Rücksicht auf die Autorität der Zivilbehörden und Fühlungen der Bevölkerung Kroatiens.

Kader der serbischen Armee konnte aber den Anforderungen des neu gegründeten Königreichs der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen nicht entsprechen. Er war zu gering na Zahl, so dass die Annahme der österreichisch-ungarischen Offiziere unvermeidbar wurde. Viele Offiziere sollten angenommen werden, sie sollten aber zuerst überprüft werden. Die Annahme des Offizierkaders in den Aktivbestand des Heeres des Königreichs der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen dauerte mit verschiedener Intensität bis zum Ende des Jahres 1923. Es ist hervorzuheben, dass etwa 85% des Kaders vom Ende März bis zum Oktober 1919 übernommen wurde. In dieser Periode wurden laut dem offiziellen militärischen Blatt (*Službeni vojni list*) 2335 österreichisch-ungarische Offiziere in den Aktivbestand der neuen Armee angenommen. Die meisten von ihnen wurden in die Infanterie (1047) angenommen, 430 wurden in die Administration, 224 in die Intendantur, 431 in die Artillerie und 126 in die Marine angenommen. Die meisten Offiziere wurden in den Aktivbestand im Jahre 1919 angenommen, während man in anderen Jahren die Offiziere der Reserve annahm. Der Anteil der früheren österreichisch-ungarischen Offiziere betrug in der Infanterie der neuen Armee 29,32 % des Gesamtkaders, in der Artillerie 29,62 %, im Ingenieurkorps 11,87 %, in der Kavallerie 60,84 % und in der Marine 58 %.

Das Verhältnis zu den angenommenen Offizieren war in der neuen Armee unangenehm und die Tatsache, dass sie einst Offiziere der österreichisch-ungarischen Armee gewesen waren, begleitete sie in ihrer ganzen militärischen Laufbahn. Es kam zu Austritten aus der Armee wegen solchen Verhältnisses und Arbeitsbedingungen sowie wegen möglicher subjektiver Gründe. Die meisten von ihnen verließen die Armee bis zum Ende des Jahres 1923.