

CROAT-MAGYAR RELATIONS, 1904-1914: A NEW JELAČIĆ OR THE 'NEW COURSE'?

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If the interests of Croats and Magyars at the beginning of the twentieth century can be characterized as mutually opposed, there had been several major signposts along the way to this state of total alienation. These included the Hungarian language and nationality law (passed by the Pozsony Diet in January 1790), and the Croat-Magyar war (initiated by Ban Josip Jelačić in September 1848), and the *Nagodba* (Agreement) of 1868. The abyss between the two banks of the Drava cannot be appreciated unless it is understood that the whole range of Croat reactions to these painful events had nothing in common with most Magyar views. In the linguistic controversy, though the Croat Magyarophiles undermined the sovereign use of Croatian language in Croatia-Slavonia, not even the most ardent among them contemplated the destruction of Croatian.¹ As for the war of 1848, its glow was diminished only in the course of Bach's absolutism.² And finally, though the Magyarophile Croat minimalists defended the *Nagodba* as a fair expression of Croat statehood, they did not anticipate having to defend the *Nagodba* so soon against the same Magyar politicians who had dictated its terms. The recently published excerpts of Isidor Kršnjavi's diary reveal a delicious irony: after Tisza's resignation in March 1890 Khuen-Héderváry himself had to resist Szilágyi's totally one-sided interpretations of the *Nagodba*. "In Hungary," Kršnjavi wrote, Khuen "was in ill-repute for being a man in the service of the court, for being a second Jelačić."³

For many reasons, Croat-Magyar reconciliation could not be effected within the Dual Monarchy. Some of these reasons were "external": the antiquated and anti-democratic structure of the Monarchy as a whole, the divisive and self-serving activities of two Habsburg factions (Franz Joseph's dualists and Franz Ferdinand's Great Austrians), the interests of neighbors (Germany, Russia, Italy, Serbia, the Ottoman Empire) and expectations of special advantage from any of the same. Other reasons were decidedly "internal"—not the least of which were the differences between Croat and Magyar national ideologies and the particular relationships between, on the one hand, the Magyars and the "nationalities," and on the other, the Croats and the Serbs. But in addition to these two broad and to some extent controversial areas of divisiveness, two specific points of division were at work. One of these was the extent to which the Croat and Magyar intellectual elites had become mutually alien—so much so that, in a complete reversal of traditional patterns, their interaction came to an end almost entirely. The second was the policy of "new course" initiated by Frano Supilo in response to the crisis of dualism, which could only be a tactic for so long as Magyar statesmen supported any variant of dualism. In different ways, these points of conflict made union under the Dual Monarchy impossible.

The acrimonies that the age of nationalism kindled on both sides of the Drava need not dim the unique role that the people "of southern origin" played in Magyar history. That history is inconceivable with János Vitéz (Ivan Vitez of Sredna), Janus Pannonius (Ivan Česmički), Tamás Bakócz (Toma Bakač), Péter Beriszló (Petar Berislavić), István Brodaries (Stjepan Brodarić), György Martinuzzi (Juraj Utišinović), Antal and Faustus Verancsics (Antun and Faust Vrančić), and the two Miklós Zrínyis (Nikola Zrinski of Szigetvár and his great-grandson Nikola Zrinski, the author of the Szigetvár epopee, the first epic poem in Hungarian). The Croat presence in Magyar affairs was immense, especially from

the age of Matthias Corvinus to Zápolyai, and to a lesser extent until the expulsion of the Turks. (Coincidentally, not a few Ottoman officials in the Eyalet of Buda were also "of southern origin.") In fact, had not the Ottoman disaster ruined both nations, Croatia, thanks to its geographical position, could have continued its role of cultural intermediary to Hungary in a manner that prefigured the mediatory place occupied by Poland in relation to Lithuania (1569) or England in relation to Scotland (1603). The special constitutional status of Croatia within Greater Hungary set the Croat noble nation apart from the nobleless "nationalities," and, perhaps more important, the Croat élites, noble and later bourgeois, never felt inferior to their Magyar equivalents, least of all in matters of high culture. The Croat élites, nobility and intellectuals both, regarded the attempts to impose Hungarian as the official language in Croatia, which began in earnest with the Buda Diet of 1790, not simply as illegal but as patently absurd. From the start, the chasm engendered by the Magyar and Croat revivals was widest in the spiritual domain, and in time the two societies did not merely take issue with each other—they no longer conversed.

The last point is crucial. The revivalist generation of Ljudevit Gaj was the last Croat generation to study in Pest (Gaj, Kvaternik, Starčević, Strossmayer), Pozsony, (Vranyczány), or Szombathely (I. Mažuranić). By and large, the major figures of Croatian cultural, academic, and scientific life who were active between 1904 and 1914 did not study in Hungary proper. The significant exceptions were Milan Šufflay, historian (Budapest), Archbishop Ante Bauer of Zagreb, theologian and philosopher (Budapest), and Stjepan Radić, who studied in Budapest briefly after being expelled from the universities of Zagreb and Prague for his political activities. Of the forty-four signatories of the modernist manifesto of 4 November 1904, not one studied north of the Drava. Of the fifteen with doctoral degrees, seven obtained them in Zagreb and six in Vienna.⁴ Miroslav Krleža, alone among the major writers of the youngest generation (his works first started appearing in print in 1914), studied exclusively in Hungary (cadet school, Pécs; Ludoviceum, Budapest) and, unique again, developed a keen understanding of Magyar life, which rings through his sardonic oeuvre.

Among the politicians, acquaintance with Hungary was even rarer. Only a handful of Magyarophiles studied in Budapest (Bans Pejacsevich and Szerlecz, but *not* Tomassich, Czuvaj, or Mihalovich). Most politicians did not even know Hungary. Supilo, who with characteristic thoroughness applied himself to lessons in Hungarian (but not before 1905), was the only Hungarian-speaking Croat deputy to the Budapest Diet of 1906-1907. The attitude of Antun Gustav Matoš, the reigning master of Croat modernism, was fairly typical of how Croat intellectuals viewed Magyar culture. When it was announced in 1904 that a chair of Magyar literature was to be established at Zagreb University, Matoš wrote scornfully: "What is Magyar culture? I have no idea since I am a 'good European,' and one can be a good European without having the slightest notion about Magyar culture. . . We have absolutely no reason to study an Altaic language, which is inferior to ours—the language of *ispáns*, brothels, and knavish conductors." He prayed that a new Jelačić would be raised among the awakened Croat youth.⁵ An imperial general was still very much the symbol of Croat resistance to Magyar supremacy.

Prospects for Croat-Magyar reconciliation within Austria-Hungary became utterly impracticable for yet another reason. The policy of "new course" was initiated by Supilo and his political friends (notably the deputies of the Croat Party in Dalmatia, led by Ante Trumbić) on the premise that the Hungarian coalition ought to be supported in its struggle for the genuine independence of Hungary.⁶ According to Supilo, besides the insistence on the cooperation of Croats and Serbs, the "new course" was also defined by the idea that

the "most dangerous enemy of our people is *Drang nach Osten* and the system that serves it. [The Croats] therefore had to seek an agreement with all those who were imperiled by the same threat."⁷ This conviction fueled the Resolution of Rijeka (October 3, 1905), whereby a representative group of Croat deputies expressed their determination "to fight alongside the Hungarian people for the fulfillment of all state rights and privileges, convinced that these rights and privileges will be of benefit to both the Croat and Hungarian people."⁸ Paradoxically, however, a brief period of partnership with the Magyars ushered in a sequence of moves, especially among the radical youth, toward a total separation of the Croat-led South Slavic lands from Hungary and Austria, the first attempt at Croat revolutionary politics since Kvaternik's tragic uprising of 1871.

The "new course" was recently discussed in Peter F. Sugar's admirable reassessment of the Hungarian constitutional crisis of 1905-1906.⁹ Sugar rightly contends that the side effects of the crisis "are more important than the crisis itself and that the damage they produced was so extensive that it effectively doomed the chances of Austria-Hungary to survive for long in the form in which it had existed since 1867," and he arrives at the sound conclusion that after 1906 the non-Magyars "understood quickly that they had no future in Hungary."¹⁰ But (following Péter Hanák) he assumes that there was a fundamental change in the program of the minority parties (including presumably the Croat parties) during their alliance with the embattled Hungarian Coalition. (The Croats would be counted to cheer every Magyar bout with Vienna, provided it was not directed against them. As Starčević remembered it, "immediately after Solferino almost whole [of Zagreb] started yearning for [its] 'brother Magyars.'"¹¹ And he himself was always much harsher on "faithless Austria.") This assumption ignores the fact that the minorities—or at least not the Croats—did not acknowledge the stability of the dualist system or the strengthening of the Magyar state. The Croats certainly did not drop from their program the demand for "territorial self-government and the transformation of the state into a federation." Concessions of such order would have been tantamount to the acceptance of Unionist (Magyarophile) program.

True, the Resolution of Rijeka expressed the demand for the "reincorporation of Dalmatia with the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia [the queer official name for Croatia-Slavonia]" and on that account elicited an enormous response in Magyar political circles. Supilo was aware that the prospect of gaining Dalmatia "exercised magical power over the imagination of Magyars, who are all *in fondo* some kind of imperialists."¹² But he was quick to point out that, no matter what the Magyars actually thought, the alliance with the Coalition had two alternative advantages for the Croats. As he wrote, in 1911:

"I was led by two inescapable combinations. Either the Magyars will persevere in their anti-dualist policy, or they will not. Should they persevere, let them talk whatever they want about their imperialism, since they will be obliged by force of circumstance to change fundamentally their outlook toward Croatia and Dalmatia. Should they not be willing to persevere, then the whole policy of the Resolution of Rijeka turns into a trick for the national-economic help to Dalmatia and the demolition of Khuenite-Magyarophile system in Croatia, so that the poor creature [Croatia] will have a breathing spell and prop itself up a bit, the better to continue the struggle that awaits it."¹³

Supilo's second "inescapable combination" prevailed and the policy of Rijeka turned into a tactic—a "trick." The Sabor elections of May 1906 were a great victory for the *Hrvatsko-srpska koalicija* [HSK], an alliance of Croat and Serb parties that supported the

"new course." Moreover, for the first time since Mažuranić (1873-1880), Croatia-Slavonia had a "people's government," that is, a cabinet dominated by national parties loyally supported by Ban Pejacsevich. Nevertheless, the Croat gains were accomplished after Vienna compelled the Hungarian Coalition to abandon its anti-dualistic radicalism. Once tamed, the Coalition was brought into the government of Sándor Wekerle, a trusted *homo regius*.

Wekerle's consistent dualist policy spelled the end of Croat-Magyar cooperation. The Hungarian prime minister in fact provoked incidents that were meant to undermine the "new course". The HSK had no choice but to use parliamentary obstruction against the proposed Hungarian railroad ordinance of 1907, which contained the famous "Croat paragraph," designed to make Hungarian the official language on the railroads of Croatia-Slavonia. The Croat delegation withdrew from the Budapest Diet and returned to Zagreb, where it was welcomed by a crowd of 30,000 people. "The celebration included the obligatory singing before the statue of Ban Jelačić."¹⁴ Pejacsevich was obliged to resign, the newly appointed Ban Rákodczáy was thought of as a "Magyar through and through," and the Sabor was postponed and then dissolved.

The Pyrrhic victory of Wekerle over the HSK inaugurated a series of absolutist regimes in Croatia-Slavonia, all of them charge with subverting the HSK. However, the preponderance of pro-dualist sentiment at the political helm in Hungary (Wekerle, Lukács, Khuen-Héderváry, Tisza), especially after the fall of the Coalition from power in 1910, ruled out a revival of an anti-dualistic alliance between the Croats and Magyars. Moreover, the HSK, too, was rapidly changing color under the blows of absolutist regimes in Zagreb. Ban Rauch (1908-1910) battered the HSK in the course of annexation crisis. Afterwards, Tomassich (1909-1910) courted and corrupted it. Czuvaj, who unlike his immediate predecessors was not a direct or indirect exponent of purely Viennese interests, relentlessly persecuted it during the Balkan wars in order to lessen Serbia's influence in Croatia. Szkerlec, then, for the same reasons, turned it into a neo-Magyarophile party with which he shared power. In fact, after Supilo's succession in 1909, anything was possible with the HSK. The party's minimalist leadership, in which the Serb group of Svetozar Pribićević increasingly called all the important shots, utterly discredited the "new course." The HSK was reduced to supporting every glaring violation of the Nagodba, including an attempt at the expropriation of Croatian coastline in 1914.

The policy of Vienna, based on dualism though in fact tending toward Austrian centralism, was the chief beneficiary of this reversal. And since one would not change Austrian policy without the participation of Magyars, many Croats, especially the members of the nationalist youth movement, decided that the Monarchy could not be reformed. They only hoped, in Supilo's words, that the "unanticipated and unforeseen events" would change the situation by easing their way out of Austria-Hungary. Predictably, in the last chapters of his series on "The Politics of Croatia" (1911) Supilo hardly mentioned the Magyars. There was, however, one matter-of-fact sentence: "Just as an anti-dualistic Hungary can be, even against its will, an indirect helper of Croatia, so also a dualistic Hungary is a natural and inevitable adversary of every sign of Croat progress."¹⁵ The modulation of Supilo's axiom is telling. He never expected anything from Vienna. After 1907 he also did not expect anything from Budapest.

Two images express the extremities of emotion that dominated Croat-Magyar relations from 1790 on. One is the bronze equestrian statue of Jelačić that stood on Zagreb's main

square until after the Second World War. The base of the statue bore the cryptic inscription "Ban Jelačić 1848," but everyone knew what it meant, and the Ban's sword pointed north (*spram Magjarom*). When Stjepan Radić visited Zagreb for the first time as a boy, he crossed himself before that statue. "It seemed to me," he wrote much later, "thanks be to him and glory, that I stood before God himself."¹⁶ The other image is the signing of the Resolution of Rijeka, the crowning act of the "new course." The Croat parliamentarians gathered in a communal hall of a city that was separated from the authority of the Croatian Sabor in 1867. Ironically, they met there because the Magyar authorities of Rijeka, which was ruled directly from Budapest, were more liberal and tolerant of political opposition than their counterparts in "autonomous" Croatia-Slavonia. Also ironically, whereas those of them who travelled by steamship from Dalmatia had the destination "Rijeka" stamped on their tickets, their fellow parliamentarians who travelled by train from Zagreb could only go to "Fiume." One can only say that the best thing about twentieth-century Croat-Magyar relations is that they improved dramatically after 1918.

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REFERENCES

1. Most Magyarophiles were in fact regional particularists who opposed Ljudevit Gaj's linguistic reforms in the name of narrow kajkavian "Croatdom."
2. Writing in 1870 against the cult of Jelačić among Strossmayer's adherents, David Starčević, a nephew of Ante Starčević, expressed his feelings about the events of September 1848: "Jelačić, the leader of 'Croat people's army,' [upon crossing the Drava] shamefully discarded the popular flags, which inspired the army with enthusiasm, and substituted Austrian flags. He placed the free and proud Croat army under the command of a foreign superior, an Austrian general [Lamberg], who exposed our blood to the extreme perils." David Starčević, *Svetiteljem Jelačića Bana* (Zagreb, 1870) 2.
3. Izidor Kršnjavi, "Memoari: Likovi i sjene," *Oko* (Zagreb, June 11, 1981) 24.
4. The list of signatories can be found in Jakša Ravlić, "Povijest Matice hrvatske," in Miroslav Brandt, ed., *Matica hrvatska 1842-1962* (Zagreb, 1963) 135-136. At least one of the 44 knew Hungarian. This was Marija Jurić-Zagorka, the author of popular Gothic novels (*Grička vještica* [The Witch of Grič] among others), who also worked as a news correspondent stationed in Budapest.
5. Antun Gustav Matoš, "Magjarska kultura," in *Sabrana djela Antuna Gustava Matoša XV* (Zagreb, 1973) 107-108.
6. On the origins of the "new course" and the texture of Croat politics in 1903-1914 see the following: Rene Lovrenčić, *Geneza politike "novog kursa"* (Zagreb, 1972); Janko Ibler, *Hrvatska politika 1904.-1906.* (Zagreb, 1917); Josip Horvat, *Supilo: Život jednog hrvatskog političara* (Zagreb, 1938); Mirjana Gross, *Vladavina Hrvatsko-srpske koalicije 1906-1907* (Belgrade, 1960); Josip Horvat, *Politička povijest Hrvatske* (Zagreb, 1936) 318-435; Jaroslav Šidak et al., eds., *Povijest hrvatskog naroda g. 1860-1914* (Zagreb, 1968) 209-302.
7. Frano Supilo, *Politika u Hrvatskoj* (2nd ed.; Zagreb, 1953) 132.
8. Cited in Horvat, 132.
9. Peter F. Sugar, "An Underrated Event: The Hungarian Constitutional Crisis of 1905-6," *East European Quarterly* (Boulder), 15.3 (1981) 281-306.
10. Sugar, 281, 303.
11. Ante Starčević, *Misli i pogledi*, ed. Blaž Juranić (Zagreb, 1971) 86.
12. Supilo, 161.
13. Supilo, 163.
14. Gross, 218.
15. Supilo, 304.
16. Stjepan Radić, *Uzničke uspomene*, 3rd ed., (Zagreb, 1971) 227.

POVZETEK**HRVATSKO-MADŽARSKI ODNOSI V LETIH 1904-1914: NOV
JELAČIĆ, ALI 'NOVI KURS'?**

Avtor analizira razloge za popolno odtujenost hrvatske in madžarske politike na predvečer Prve svetovne vojne. Glavna teza razprave je da so se razen znanih objektivnih razlogov odnosi poslabšali do te mere, da so bili skoraj povsem pretrgani vsi stiki med hrvatsko in madžarsko inteligenco. Po ilirski generaciji se Hrvati niso več učili madžarskega jezika ni se niso več šolali na Madžarskem. Še več, kratkotrajna politika "novega kursa" se je lahko obdržala samo v pogojih ostrega madžarskega odpora dualizmu. Avtor meni, da teh pogojev po letu 1907 ni bilo več.