

THE TREATY OF LONDON AND THE CREATION OF YUGOSLAVIA

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e-mail: voja.pavlovic@bi.sanu.ac.rs**ABSTRACT**

The historiography considered the Treaty of London 1915 as the main obstacle for the creation of Yugoslavia, since Italy's territorial claims as expressed in the Treaty were in opposition to the creation of a common state of South Slavs. However, the threat that Italy's territorial aspirations in the Adriatic represented was also an important motive for the creation of the Yugoslav state, because only the united with Serbia the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs from Austria-Hungary could defend themselves, seeing that the Allied governments refused to recognise them as an independent state.

Keywords: Treaty of London, Italy, Serbia, Yugoslavia, Great War

IL PATTO DI LONDRA E LA CREAZIONE DELLA JUGOSLAVIA

SINTESI

La storiografia considerava il Patto di Londra del 1915 come il principale ostacolo alla creazione della Jugoslavia, poiché le rivendicazioni territoriali dell'Italia, come vennero espresse nel Patto, erano in opposizione alla creazione di uno Stato che potesse accomunare gli slavi del Sud. Tuttavia la minaccia delle aspirazioni territoriali dell'Italia nell'Adriatico aveva rappresentato anche un importante motivo per la creazione dello Stato jugoslavo, in quanto solamente uniti con la Serbia gli sloveni, i croati e i serbi dell'Austria-Ungheria avevano potuto difendersi, considerando che i governi Alleati rifiutavano di riconoscerli come uno stato indipendente.

Parole chiave: Patto di Londra, Italia, Serbia, Jugoslavia, Grande guerra

INTRODUCTION

The creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on 1st December 1918, renamed Yugoslavia in 1929, was an event that polarised the opinion of historians and politicians for almost a century. Whether they were in favour or against the creation of the common state of South Slavs, historians and politicians alike, could not overlook the importance of the Treaty of London, signed on 26th April 1915 by Italy and the Allies (United Kingdom, France and Russia), for the creation of the future Yugoslavia. The clauses of the Treaty enumerated the territorial gains Italy claimed in return for its entry in the war alongside the Allies. The city of Trieste, counties of Gorizia and Gradisca, the Istrian peninsula, the Gulf of Quarnero with its islands and the province of Dalmatia up to the Capo Planka with the Dalmatian islands, were the territories Italy was supposed to obtain in the case of Allied victory over the Central Powers.¹ Only few months before, on 7th December 1914, the Serbian government solemnly declared in the National Assembly that its main objective in the war is to liberate and unite all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes still living under foreign rule.² The geographer Jovan Cvijić, employed as an expert by the government of Nikola Pašić, the Prime Minister of Serbia, explained in November 1914 to Auguste Boppe, the French minister in Serbia that in his opinion the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were living in the following regions: Banat, Bačka, Srem, Slavonia, Croatia, Slovenia, Istria, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.³ Thus, the Serbian government made the creation of Yugoslavia its principal objective in the war, while Italy articulated in the clauses of the Treaty of London the last stage of its *Risorgimento*, claiming for itself the biggest part of the Eastern Adriatic coast. The aspirations of the two Allies on the same territory were thus beyond any possible doubt.

The Serbs, Croats and Slovenes that were supposed to be liberated or, for a part of them, annexed to Italy, had also their representatives during the war in the form of the Yugoslav Committee, created on 30th May 1915 as a direct reaction to the Treaty of London.⁴ It was composed of exiled Yugoslav politicians from Austria-Hungary and supported by the Serbian government. While the Yugoslav Committee, as an ad hoc created group of exile politicians, did not receive any mandate by nations it was supposed to represent, i.e. the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, living in the Austria-Hungary, the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, created in Zagreb on 29th October 1918, was considered their legitimate representative.⁵ Both the unofficial and the official body representing the South Slavs living under the rule of Hapsburg had their common idea on the creation of the future Yugoslavia. They agreed that the nations they represented had obtained their

1 The full text of the Treaty in: DDF, 1914–19/1, 725–730, and DDI, 5/II, doc. 470, 369–374.

2 The official journal of Serbia, *Srpske novine*, N. 282, 8 December (25 November) 1914.

3 AMAE, *Guerre, Autriche*, vol. 159, Auguste Boppe to Théophile Delcassé, Niš, 22 November 1914.

4 The books on the history of the Yugoslav Committee were published immediately after the end of the Great War: Paulová, 1925, followed by the testimonies of its members, for instance, Stojanović, 1927. See also: Šepić, 1967.

5 The short history of the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs is explained in: Adler, 1997; Krizman, 1977.

freedom on the day the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Slovenes was created as the representative body of their common state. As an independent state, they considered themselves as an equal partner with Serbia in the case of a possible Yugoslav union, and refused to accept the validity of the Treaty of London, since they aspired to be recognised as an ally, albeit of a later date, of the Allies.

Both the official historiographies of the Royal and the communist Yugoslavia and later, respectively, Serbian, Croat and Slovene historiographies, saw the Treaty of London as the principal obstacle for the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.⁶ However our hypothesis is that the main incentive for the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, was the danger of implementing the territorial clauses of the Treaty of London. The common state, even though its inner structure was not defined, was considered as the best possible defence against the Italian annexation of the Adriatic coast. In order to demonstrate the validity of my hypothesis, I will first present the Italian views on the reorganisation of the Hapsburg territorial heritage then those of the Serbian government, and finally the policy followed by the Yugoslav committee and the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs during the decisive month of November 1918.

ITALIANS VIEWS ON THE REORGANISATION OF THE HAPSBURG TERRITORIAL HERITAGE

As early as September 1914, during the first round of negotiations on the territorial compensation that Italy might obtain for her entry in the war alongside the Allies, Marquis the San Giuliano, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, expressed his firm opposition to the creation of a common state of South Slavs. In his telegram to Marquis Guglielmo Imperiali, the Italian ambassador in London he said:

It is now known to Your Excellency that the fundamental reason why Italy may decide to change the orientation of its entire foreign policy is precisely the danger that Austro-Hungarian policy represents for its vital interests in Adriatic. We could not accept to exchange the nightmare of the Austrian threat for the Slav one, therefore we need guaranties.⁷

Sidney Sonnino, San Giuliano's successor, also considered, in a circular telegram sent to the Italian ambassadors in the Allied capitals in March 1915, that a Yugoslav state on the other side of the Adriatic is absolutely unacceptable:

6 The bibliography on the creation of Yugoslavia is huge. The main books on the subject are: Adler, 1997; Banac, 1984; Bataković, 1994; Ekmečić, 1989; Evans, 2008; Grumel-Jacquignon, 1999; Janković, 1967; Janković, 1973; Kovač, 2001; Krizman, 1977; Krizman, 1989; Lampe, 1996; Le Moal, 2006; Stanković, 1995; Šepić, 1970; Živojinović, 1970.

7 DDI, 5/1, doc. 703, 412, Antonio San Giuliano to Guglielmo Imperiali, Rome, 16 September 1914.

*It would be of no use for us to enter in the war in order to liberate ourselves from the pretentious domination of Austria in the Adriatic, if we were immediately to fall into the same condition of inferiority and of the constant threat from the alliance of young and ambitious Yugoslav states.*⁸

Sonnino strategic conception, as expressed in the Treaty of London, went well beyond the firm opposition to the creation of the Yugoslav state. He considered the Treaty as the foundation on which should be based the Italian domination of the Eastern coast of the Adriatic. Italy's territorial gains, as enumerated in the Treaty, were a part of a project that anticipated either the survival of a territorially diminished and weakened Austria-Hungary or a creation of a number of small states in its the place, which would eventually fall under Italian economic and political domination (Burgwyn, 1991, 244–245). Thus, the creation of a common and therefore large Yugoslav state was in clear opposition with Sonnino's plans who throughout the war advocated the creation of the following states: Albania, Serbia, if needed be even, united with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, independent or as a part of the Hungarian state and Montenegro.⁹ Once the Treaty has been signed by all interested parties, Sonnino considered it to be the best possible guarantee of the Italian state interests, and he never even considered the possibility of discussing its terms again. Therefore, Sonnino refused to discuss all territorial and national issues that were in collision with the terms of the Treaty. He refused even to allow the Serbian government to be informed of the terms of the Treaty. While in the spring and summer of 1915, the Allies were trying to induce the Serbian government to cede Eastern Macedonia to Bulgaria in exchange for the future territorial gains in the Yugoslav provinces of the Double Monarchy, Sonnino refused to permit that Serbia be officially informed that the Treaty of London anticipated that Adriatic coast south of Cap Planka should become part of Serbia after the war. Furthermore, he refused, in August 1915, to associate Italy with the Allied demarche in Belgrade promising a consequent enlargement of Serbia on the expense of Yugoslav provinces of Austria-Hungary and even a possibility of Yugoslav union.¹⁰ He remained firmly in favour of an independent Croatia and even argued that the Allied territorial promises would not succeed in convincing Serbia to cede Eastern Macedonia to Bulgaria.¹¹ The Allied strategy of reconstructing the Balkan alliance of 1912 failed, because neither Serbia nor Bulgaria were disposed to make a territorial compromise. Serbia refused to accept the cession of its territory and the Central Powers promised to Bulgaria not only the Eastern Macedonia, but the whole province alongside Kosovo and Eastern Serbia. Nevertheless, on the occasion Italy's logic was more that of an interested party in the process of the partition of the Balkans than that of a Great Powers intent on recreating of an alliance against the Austria-Hungary.

8 DDI, 5/III, doc. 164, 134, Sidney Sonnino to Guglielmo Imperiali, Tommaso Tittoni and Andrea Carloti, 21 March 1915.

9 DDI, 5/III, doc. 164, 134, Sidney Sonnino to Guglielmo Imperiali, Tommaso Tittoni and Andrea Carloti, 21 March 1915.

10 AMAE, PA-AP, 347 Fontenay, vol. 103, Stephen Pichon to Joseph Fontenay, Paris, 16 April 1915.

11 AMAE, Guerre, Balkans, Serbie, vol. 393, 32, Camille Barrère to Théophile Delcassé, Rome, 3 July 1915.

The defeat and the exile of Serbian government and its army in November 1915, mainly due to the Bulgarian entry in the war alongside the Central Powers, put aside the Yugoslav issue for a long period, thus liberating Sonnino from a possible rival as far as the future of the Yugoslav provinces of Austria-Hungary were concerned. The arrival of the Serbian Army on the Salonica front, from May 1916 onwards, and especially the Corfu Declaration signed by Pašić as the president of the Serbian government and by Ante Trumbić as the president of the Yugoslav Committee on 20th July 1917, put the Yugoslav question once again on the agenda of the Allied governments. The Corfu Declaration established the principle of national unity since Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were explicitly considered as part of the same nation with three names. Both parties stated that their future common state will be called the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, as constitutional, democratic and parliamentary Monarchy with common territory and citizenship.¹² The Corfu Declaration went far beyond the Declaration made by the Serbian government in December 1914, since the bases of the future common state were clearly posed, and even more important, because it was accepted and signed by the exiled Yugoslav politicians from the Austria-Hungary.¹³

Sonnino's reaction to the Corfu Declaration was resolutely negative. He received Pašić in Rome on 10th September 1917 and explained to him that Corfu Declaration is the main obstacle for any possible understanding between Italy and Serbia. In Sonnino's view, Italy would lose all viable reasons to continue the war if it accepted the Corfu Declaration. The Declaration would annul any possibility for Italy to obtain her main territorial objectives in the war. Therefore, for Sonnino, the precondition for any type of agreement between Italy and Serbia should be the latter's acceptance of the Treaty of London, which may, by common consent, undergo some small modifications. The positions of the two statesmen were too far apart. Pašić proposed to find an arrangement between the territorial claims of Italy, as expressed in the Treaty of London, and the creation of the Yugoslav state, while Sonnino did not consider the possibility of renouncing even a portion of the territories that Italy has been promised by the Allies in April 1915. In conclusion, Sonnino firmly stated that any discussion between Italy and Serbia which does not consider the Treaty of London as the starting point is of no use (Sonnino, 1972, 190–193).

However, the Italian defeat at the battle of Caporetto (9th November 1917), the entry of the United States in the war against Austria-Hungary (7th December 1917) and the fourteen points of the President Wilson (8th January 1918) created a hostile environment in the American and allied public opinion for the type of secret diplomacy that led to the conclusion of the Treaty of London. The well-known sympathies of President Wilson for the nationalities living under Hapsburg rule and even for the Yugoslav aspirations were expressed in the 10th of his 14 points: "*The people of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity to autonomous development*" (Wilson, 1918). Already in December 1917, the Italian ambassador in Washington, count Vincenzo Macchi de Cellere, draw the attention

12 The full text of Corfu Declaration in: Šišić, 1920, 96–99.

13 On the Corfu declaration: Janković, 1967.

of Sonnino to the sympathies of Wilson for the Yugoslavs living in Austria-Hungary. He declared himself in favour of an agreement between Serbia and Italy capable to reassure President Wilson about the real objective of the Italian policy in the Adriatic and in the Balkans.¹⁴ The Italian ambassadors in London and in Paris supported the proposition of their colleague from Washington. Therefore, Sonnino proposed to Pašić, in December 1917, a sort of general agreement with Serbia in the following terms:

*The Italian and the Serbian government acknowledge that they have a common interest in establishing their present and future relations on a basis of a confident, cordial, friendly collaboration and cohabitation between two nations [...]. Neither of these two nations motivate their actions by imperialistic concepts. They both recognise the mixt character of the populations living on the Eastern coast of the Adriatic, where are situated territories populated by the Slaves and the Italian centres of high economic and historical importance. The desired agreement between the two states could only be inspired by the conciliatory concepts and by the important necessity of common sacrifices and reciprocal concessions.*¹⁵

Sonnino concluded his telegram to Carlo Sforza, the Italian envoy in Corfu, where the Serbian government was situated at that time, with a remark revealing the real objective of the agreement:

*In the case that this or any other wording of the agreement should be refused by Pašić, his refusal could but speak in our favour in the eyes of the US government.*¹⁶

As far as a working agreement with Serbia is concerned, Sonnino's opinion was that this was impossible, since any concession Italy might make, both the Serbian government and the Yugoslavs would, as a consequence, demand even more.¹⁷ He concluded that any concession made to the Serbian government and the Yugoslavs would be considered by the Allies as if Italy was unilaterally abandoning a part of its territorial claims expressed in the Treaty of London. This was unacceptable for Sonnino, who believed that any territorial concession in the Adriatic must be compensated by a gain elsewhere, to be negotiated with the Allies.¹⁸ Nevertheless, in January 1918 Sonnino continued to insist on the conclusion of a general agreement between Italy and Serbia, with the objective of appeasing the anti-Italian attitude of the American public opinion.¹⁹ However, Pašić refused to be drawn in an agreement of the sort, accepting only to state publicly that a confident

14 DDI, 5/IX, doc. 680, 469–470, Vincenzo Macchi di Cellere to Sidney Sonnino, Washington, 11 December 1917.

15 Sonnino, 1975, doc. 247, 355–356, Sidney Sonnino to Carlo Sforza.

16 Sonnino, 1975, doc. 247, 355–356, Sidney Sonnino to Carlo Sforza.

17 DDI, 5/X, doc. 83, 58–59, Sidney Sonnino to Guglielmo Imperiali and Lelio Bonin Longare, Rome, 14 January 1918.

18 Sonnino, 1975, doc. 263, 387–389, Sidney Sonnino to Carlo Sforza, Rome, 31 January 1918.

19 DDI, 5/X, doc. 156, 115, Sidney Sonnino to Carlo Sforza, Rome, 27 January 1918.

and cordial alliance exists between Serbia and Italy.²⁰ The issue of the relations between Serbia and the Yugoslav Committee on one hand and Italy on the other, was subsequently taken up by the President of the Italian government, Vittorio-Emanuele Orlando.

Orlando came to London in January 1918 in order to discuss the British War Aims as they were expressed by the Prime Minister David Lloyd George in his speech in front of the Trade Unions of 5th January 1918. Lloyd George did not mention any of the Italian territorial claims expressed in the Treaty of London, if not by a rather vague phrase:

On the same grounds, we regard as vital the satisfaction of the legitimate claims of the Italians for union with those of their own race and tongue. (Lloyd George, 1918).

During his stay in London, following the suggestion of Wickham Steed, foreign editor of *The Times* and the staunch supporter of the Yugoslav cause, Orlando met the President of The Yugoslav Committee, Ante Trumbić, on 26th January 1918.²¹ Thus, Orlando opened the way for a series of contacts between representatives of the Italian government and the Yugoslav committee that resulted in the convening of the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in Rome from 8th to 10th April 1918. The Congress, which was supposed to establish the basis for an understanding between Italy and the Yugoslavs ended without a formal agreement. Italy and the Yugoslav Committee had but one common denominator, the fight against Austria-Hungry, while the future of the territorial heritage of the Hapsburg continued to be a source of a violent conflict between them.²²

Sonnino considered the Rome Congress as an exercise in propaganda with no real consequence for the relations with Serbia and the Yugoslav Committee. He maintained his opposition to any kind of recognition of the Yugoslav identity. He refused to allow that the leaflets, meant to be distributed among the Yugoslavs fighting in the ranks of Austro-Hungarian Army on the Italian front, contain the promise of their independence. He explained in April 1918 to the French ambassador in Rome, Camille Barrère: “*I cannot subscribe to a common initiative of the Allied governments that can be qualified as an abandon of principal terms of the Treaty of London of 1915*”.²³ After the threat of a new enemy offensive in spring, that was supposed to exploit further the victory gained at Caporetto, vanished, Orlando also abandoned his policy of negotiations with the Yugoslav Committee and lined up again with Sonnino in their resolute defence of the Treaty of London.

The Allies, and especially the French government considered the Rome Congress as a first step towards a formal recognition of the Yugoslav nations as allies in the fight against the Central Powers. However, the intransigent position of the Italian government and, in the first place, Sonnino, prevented the Allied governments to formally declare their support for the right of the nationalities living under the Hapsburg rule to gain independence. Such a declaration might, as Sonnino was convinced, undermine the importance of

20 DDI, 5/X, doc. 198, 180, Sidney Sforza to Carlo Sonnino, Corfù, 8 February 1918.

21 Albertini, 1968, 875–883, Guglielmo Emanuel to Luigi Albertini, London, 27 January 1918.

22 On the Congress of Rome see: Tosi, 1977.

23 AMAE, Guerre, Autriche, vol. 161, Camille Barrère to Stephen Pichon, Rome, 17 April 1918.

the obligations the Allies have taken when they signed the Treaty of Rome. Therefore, the Supreme War Council of the Allies during its conference at Versailles from 1st to 3rd June 1918, was obliged to take in account the Italian position. The Declaration issued at the end of the conference thus spoke only about the sympathies the Allies had for the Czecho-slovaks and Yugo-slavs and their fight for the liberation and realisation of their national aspirations.²⁴ Finally, the French government has formally recognised the national Council of Czecho-slovaks as the representative body of their nation. Stephan Pichon, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, informed Trumbić on 19th July 1918 that he cannot do the same regarding the Yugoslav Committee, because the Italian government was resolutely against (Krizman, Janković, 1964a, 232–234). Orlando's government gave the impression that it was against any profound modification of the situation in the Balkans. It was the last of the Allied governments that gave its approval to the plans for a major offensive on the Salonica front, the offensive that started on the 15th of September and changed the course of the war in the Balkans (Fassy, 2003, 397).

THE SERBIAN CONCEPT OF THE YUGOSLAV UNION

The offensive was the coronation of the efforts of the Serbian governments during the war, which were all led by Nikola Pašić. From June 1917 onwards, his Cabinet was composed exclusively by the members of his Radical Party and their views on the Yugoslav union were expressed in the Corfu Declaration, which anticipated the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, as constitutional, democratic and parliamentary Monarchy with Petar Karadjordjević as its king. Such a vision of the Yugoslav union guaranteed that the main objectives of Pašić will be achieved. The Kingdom would reunite all Slovenes, Croats and most importantly, Serbs, in the common state, which would be based on the same principles as the Kingdom of Serbia and would have the same monarch. The fact that the Declaration was signed by both, Pašić and Trumbić, was interpreted differently. Pašić considered it as a convenient propaganda move supposed to give additional credibility to the projected union, while Trumbić estimated that the Declaration demonstrated that the two parties were equal partners in the process of uniting the South Slavs. Their differences on their respective roles surfaced gradually during the autumn and winter 1917–1918, a period of difficulties and turbulence for both parties. First, the Bolshevik revolution definitively deprived Serbia of its orthodox Russian ally. Then, the British War Aims as expressed by Lloyd Georges and Wilson's 14 points were assessed by the Yugoslav Committee as a serious setback to the Yugoslav project. The Serbian opposition parties demanded the issue of the future Yugoslav union to be clarified in the National Assembly, which had not been convened since October 1916. The opposition did not succeed in convening the National Assembly in France, since the French government refused to allow it. Thus, they were obliged to accept that the National Assembly will be summoned to Corfu, where on 25th February was held its first reunion under the scrutiny of the government and the Prince Regent, Alexandre Karadjordjević.

24 MA, N 3, Procès-verbal of the Supreme War Council, Versailles, 3 May 1918.

The opposition parties demanded the creation of the coalition government from which Pašić should be excluded. He was considered as utterly incompetent since neither Lloyd George nor President Wilson in their respective declarations, anticipated the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, thus annulling any real possibility for the creation of Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the opposition parties required that the members of the Yugoslav Committee should be included in the new government in order to render its composition more in accordance with its main objective, the creation of Yugoslavia. The opposition parties and the Yugoslav Committee agreed that Pašić led a sort of a personal foreign policy without consulting neither of them. However, the Regent Alexandre refused to part with Pašić, while the Allied governments considered him as a guarantee for a pro-Allied policy of the Serbian government, since that was the case with all the governments he presided from the beginning of the war.

Regent Alexandre gave the mandate to Pašić to create a new government and the reunion of the National Assembly ended in June, even though the opposition parties boycotted the vote of the war credits. The nascent conflict with the Yugoslav Committee acquired international proportions, since the members of the Committee accused Pašić of working only for the union of all Serbs. They even complained to the Allied diplomats that he struck a deal with Sonnino in September 1917 and put aside their territorial demands in the North Adriatic, in order to assure the Serbian access to the sea on the Albanian coast, which was, as we have seen, manifestly untrue.

Gradually, two visions of the Yugoslav union were articulated, first by the Serbian government and then by the Yugoslav Committee. Pašić wanted Serbia to be the Piedmont of Yugoslav union and, as such, to liberate and unite, as was said in the Niš and Corfu Declarations, all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in a new Kingdom whose structure would resemble the one of Serbia. Trumbić and his colleagues from the Yugoslav Committee demanded to be recognized by the Allies as the official representative of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs still living under the rule of the Hapsburg and, as such, pretended to be at least an equal partner of Serbia in the future union. The conflict gained importance during the spring and summer of 1918, because the Allies, after trying for more than a year to conclude a separate peace with the Emperor Charles, decided to support the fight of the nationalities in order to provoke the dissolution of the Double Monarchy. Therefore, the issue of the South Slavs gained considerably importance, but, as we have seen, because of the Italian veto, it was not possible to issue an Allied official declaration promising them the creation of their national state. The ongoing conflict between Serbia and the Yugoslav Committee was another reason that imposed caution on the Allied governments. Lord Robert Cecil, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, resumed the motives for a circumspect approach to the issue of recognition of the Yugoslav Committee. On 9th September 1918, he told the French Ambassador in London, Paul Cambon, that no decision could be taken without the consent of the Italian government, which was not forthcoming. Furthermore, the Yugoslav Committee had no troops, while their Czecho-slovak counterpart did and the Yugoslavs did not have a unanimous support from all interested parties, notably the one from the Serbian government was lacking. Therefore, the issue of the Yugoslav union was still more a question of propaganda for the Allies, since the condi-

tions for its realisation did not exist before the breakthrough on the Salonica front. The Allied offensive started on 15th September and brought about the capitulation of Bulgaria. The irresistible advance of the Allied forces, led by Serbian regiments that were coming home from almost three years in exile, continued until all Serbia, including its capital Belgrade, was liberated on 1st November 1918. Four years after the Serbian government publicly proclaimed its intention to unite all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as its main war objective, the indispensable conditions for the creation of Yugoslavia were finally set.

The victories of the Allied and Serbian Armies on the Salonica front gave additional credibility to the Pašić's concept of the Yugoslav's union. Thus, he immediately solicited the Allied governments asking them to officially declare their support to Serbia as the Piedmont of Yugoslav union. He was received by Pichon and told on 20th of September 1918 that the limits of Allied action, as far as Yugoslav union is concerned, were established by the Italian government, which on 14th September declared that the Yugoslav union is possible if it is not in conflict with the clauses of the Treaty of London.²⁵ The President of the French Republic, Raymond Poincaré, informed Pašić that before any kind of Yugoslav union can be achieved, the opinion of the interested nations must be heard via referendum. The President of the French government, Georges Clemenceau, refused even to discuss the issue of the Yugoslav union, commenting laconically that the union will be done in its good time.²⁶ The unanimous refusal of the French to accept Serbia as the Piedmont of Yugoslavia was reinforced by the reaction of the British government. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Arthur Balfour, informed Pašić that the British government cannot accept Serbia as the Piedmont of Yugoslavia, since there is another project for the Yugoslav union, the one advocated by the Yugoslav Committee (Seton-Watson, Seton-Watson, 1981, 312).

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SLOVENES, CROATS AND SERBS AND THE CREATION OF YUGOSLAVIA

Trumbić's concept of the Yugoslav union was considerably reorganised after the breakthrough of the Allied armies at the Salonica front. He wrote to Pašić in September in order to remind him that the Serbian government and the Yugoslav Committee signed the Corfu Declaration as equal partners. Therefore, the moment has come for the Committee to be recognized as the official representative of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs still living under the Hapsburg rule. Thus, Pašić could not pretend any more to speak in the name of both the Serbs from Serbia, and the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs from Austria-Hungary. Trumbić underlined the fact that Serbia did not sign any formal document giving it the right to liberate or annex territories as was the case with the Treaty of

25 Sonnino, 1975, 483, Sidney Sonnino to Guglielmo Imperiali and Lelio Bonin Longare, Rome, 13 September 1918.

26 AMAE, PA-AP, 347 Fontenay, vol. 103, The notes of the Marquis de Fontenay, French envoy to the Serbian government, from the Nikola Pašić's conversation with Stephen Pichon, Raymond Poincaré and Georges Clemenceau, Paris, 20 and 21 September 1918.

London signed by Italy. Therefore, if Serbia has the intention to act unilaterally without the consent the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes from Austria-Hungary or their legitimate representative, i.e. the Yugoslav Committee, its actions can be considered as imperialistic and annexationist.²⁷ The disagreements between Pašić and Trumbić were confirmed during their encounter in Paris, on 27th September. The main divergence was the status of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes living in Austria-Hungary. Pašić was convinced that if they will be recognized as a nation, this would be the first step towards a triallist reform of the Double Monarchy. Trumbić was adamant, stating that the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had the right to decide about their future and the right to be recognized as an actor in the process of their liberation.²⁸

The divergences between the Serbian government and the Yugoslav Committee were communicated first to the French and then to the British government. Pichon received Trumbić on 29th September and told him that the official recognition of the Yugoslav Committee is still impossible because of the Italian opposition.²⁹ Steed and his colleague, a fervent supporter of the Yugoslav cause, Robert William Seton-Watson, the founder of the journal *The New Europe*, informed the Foreign Office of their views in a memoir with a revealing title *La politique de M. Pašić et la politique yougoslave* even before Trumbić reached London. The memoir retraced the differences between the Serbian governments on one side and the Yugoslav Committee and the Serbian opposition parties on the other, from the signing of the Corfu Declaration onwards.³⁰ When he was received by Balfour, on 9th October 1918, Trumbić went a step further than his friends from *The New Europe*. He declared himself in favour of a Yugoslav federation and stated that Pašić wants to create a Great Serbia. The only possible way to prevent Pašić, according to Trumbić, was to officially recognise the Yugoslav Committee. Balfour had the same advice for Trumbić as he already gave to Pašić, which was to try to reach a mutually convenient agreement (Šepić, 1970, 357–358).

The lack of support for his concept of the Yugoslav union and the increasing differences with Trumbić, obliged Pašić to agree to the Trumbić's interpretation of the text of the Corfu Declaration and accept the Yugoslav Committee as an equal partner. On 12th October 1918, in a note sent to the Allied governments, he asked them to accept the Yugoslav union based on the Corfu Declaration.³¹ After the Central Powers wrote to President Wilson asking for armistice, Trumbić was no longer satisfied with the terms of the Corfu Declaration. He proposed a reunion of all actors of the Yugoslav union: the Serbian government, the Serbian National Assembly, the opposition parties, the Yugoslav Committee and the Montenegrin national Committee, in order to decide on the future actions.³² The objective was to reduce the power of Pašić from the sole representative of

27 Krizman, Janković, 1964a, 311–316, Ante Trumbić to Nikola Pašić, Paris, at the end of Septemebr 1918.

28 Krizman, Janković, 1964a, 320–330, Ante Trumbić's note on the talks with Nikola Pašić, Paris, 27 October 1918.

29 AMAE, Z, Autriche, vol. 51, Stephen Pichon to Camille Barrère, Paris, 30 September 1918,

30 Seton-Watson, 1976, 350–355, Robert W. Seton-Watson to Foreign Office, London, 4 October 1918.

31 Krizman, Janković, 1964a, 357, Note of the Serbian government, 12 October 1918.

32 Krizman, Janković, 1964a, 353–355, Ante Trumbić to Nikola Pašić, London, 11 October 1918.

the Yugoslav union to but one among the representatives, who in majority were hostile to him. The stalemate provoked by the increasing differences between Trumbić and Pašić was broken by the arrival of the new and powerful actor of the future Yugoslav union, the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs.

The Council was created at the begging of October and its political views were articulated in response to Emperor Charles's edict on 16th October 1918, proclaiming the federalisation of the Austrian part of the Double Monarchy. The council announced on 19th October 1918 the union of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs irrespectively of the interior frontiers of Austria-Hungary, thus refusing to accept the Emperors edict. Furthermore, the Council demanded to be represented at the Peace Conference (Krizman, 1977, 59–60). After Austria-Hungary officially demanded armistice on 28th October 1918, on the following day the Council proclaimed independence of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (*Država Slovencev, Hrvatov in Srbov/Država Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba*), with the Council as its representative body and with a Slovene, Anton Korošec, as its president (Krizman, 1977, 81–82). The newly created state sent an official note to the Allied governments on 31st October 1918, informing them of its desire to unite with Serbia and, most importantly, that it did not consider itself in war with the Allies (Šišić, 1920, 216–217). The envoys of the Council immediately took over the control of the dissolving Austro-Hungarian forces in the Yugoslav provinces, such as war ships in the ports of Pula, Šibenik and Kotor.

However, the Allies did not recognise the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, nor did they accept to consider it as an ally. After the Italian victory at the Vittorio Veneto (28th October 1918), the Austro-Hungarian army broke apart along the ethnic lines and the Double Monarchy addressed a formal demand for armistice, the terms of which were decided during the conference of the Supreme War Council held at Versailles from 29th October to 3rd November (Le Moal, 2006, 264–265). Lloyd George proposed that the Allies occupy the territories delimited by the Treaty of London, whereas the Serbian representative, Milenko Vesnić, demanded that all Yugoslav territories be evacuated by Austro-Hungarian army. Lloyd George was ready to honour the informal promises made to Serbia in the summer 1915 and suggested that Serbia's troops should occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina, prompting Vesnić to clarify his position. He declared that his intervention did not concern only Bosnia and Herzegovina but all Yugoslav territories, since the unrest in these provinces can be appeased with the arrival of the allied troops. Furthermore, he pointed out that in the text of the armistice agreement the territories to be occupied were designated as Italian, but were occupied for military purposes only, without any prejudice to the terms of the future peace.³³ The Supreme War Council did not take in account the essentially Yugoslav perspective of Vesnić's remarks and decided to honour the obligations taken in the Treaty of London, thus making it possible for the Italian Army and Navy to realise immediately their main objective in the war. The armistice with Austria-Hungary was signed at Villa Giusti near Padova on 3rd November 1918.

During the discussion on the terms of the armistice with Austria-Hungary, a telegram from Pula arrived, sent by the envoys of the National Council of Slovenes,

33 AMAE, Y, vol. 15, 35, The Procès-verbal of Supreme War Council, Paris, 30–31 October 1918.

Croats and Serbs. They informed the Supreme War Council that they have taken control over the Austro-Hungarian Navy and that they were willing to pass it to the Allies. Lloyd George and Vesnić very ready to consider the proposition coming from Pula, but Clemenceau and Orlando were against, therefore the armistice agreement was put in practice by Italian authorities only.³⁴ In a separate agreement, Clemenceau promised to Orlando that France will not recognize any Yugoslav state prior to the terms of the armistice agreement fully implemented (Poincaré, 1933, 407–408). Clemenceau's promise was of outmost importance, since the only other military force on the frontiers of Austria-Hungary was the Serbian Army, which was still a part of the Allied forces on the Salonica front under the command of the French general Franchet d'Espèrey. Furthermore, the promoters of the Yugoslav union were in Paris, where Trumbić and his colleagues from the Yugoslav Committee were trying to obtain the official recognition for the National Council of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, and the state it represented. Philippe Berthelot, undersecretary at the Quai d'Orsay, following Clemenceau lead, explained to Trumbić on 31st October 1918 that the French government is obliged to respect the obligations undertaken in the Treaty of London. Thus, it cannot accept the presence of the representative of the Yugoslav Committee at the Supreme War Council, nor could it recognize the state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs until the terms of armistice are implemented. However, Berthelot assured Trumbić that the decisions taken at Versailles were only temporary and that the definitive decisions regarding territorial issues will be set only at the Peace Conference. He even advised Trumbić to seek the support of the US government, since it did not sign the Treaty of London.³⁵ Lloyd George and Clemenceau decided, with Berthelot confirming it, that the armistice should be enforced by the Italian Army and Navy as the Allied force present on the Austro-Hungarian front in accordance with the clauses of the Treaty of London. The emerging state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was not recognized and their territories were considered as a part of a defeated enemy state.

Even before the armistice was officially signed, the Italian Army and Navy started to occupy the territories delimited by the Treaty of London. Even though the Italian marine have encountered on the Adriatic islands and in the Adriatic ports the authorities mandated by the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, which have already taken control of the Austro-Hungarian navy, the Italians took over from them and established their rule. On 3rd November, they entered Istria and on the next day took possession of the ports of Zara and Pula. In the following days, they established control of the islands of Quarnaro, while on 6th November took possession of the port of Šibenik. The full extent of the territories promised to Italy in the Treaty of London was occupied on 19th November 1918 (Krizman, 1977, 115–119). Thus, a fortnight after the armistice of Villa Giusti, the Italian authorities replaced those of the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in all the territories that were promised to Italy by the Treaty of London.

34 AMAE, Y, vol. 15, 35, The Procès-verbal of Supreme War Council, Paris, 30–31 October 1918.

35 AMAE, Z, Autriche, vol. 51, Note on the talks between Henri Berthelot and Ante Trumbić, Paris, 31 October 1918

The Allies refused to acknowledge the newly created state but had also not accepted Pašić's concept of Serbia as a Yugoslav Piedmont, nor did they take into account the demands of Trumbić and the Yugoslav Committee. The Allied governments still did not consider the Yugoslav union as a realistic option. First of all, because of the Italian opposition, but also due to the lack of unity between the supposed actors of the Union – Pašić, Trumbić and the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. Lloyd George and Balfour advised all the interested parties through intermediaries, such as Elefthérios Venizélos, the President of the Greek government, and Edvard Beneš, a member of Czecho-Slovak National Council, that their accord is the indispensable precondition for the Yugoslav union to be envisaged. The British statesman suggested that a common War Cabinet, composed of representatives of all interested parties, should be created. Such a Cabinet could represent the future Yugoslav State and the Peace Conference (Janković, 1963, 233–235). The negotiations between Pašić, Trumbić and the Serbian opposition parties started in Paris immediately after the end of the Supreme War Council. Their views on the responsibilities and composition of such a Cabinet differed considerably. Since they could not reach an agreement, they decided to continue their discussion in Geneva in order to permit Anton Korošec, the President of the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, to participate in the discussions.

The whole structure of the Yugoslav project was under discussion during the conference held in Geneva from 6th to 9th November 1918. The participants were obliged to reach an agreement if they wanted to convince the Allies of the feasibility of the Yugoslav union. In other terms, after more than four years of war, the question was not what were the best modalities of the future Yugoslav union, but if there will be a Yugoslav union at all. The respective positions of the participants have also changed. Pašić was not any more the only advocate of the Yugoslav union that had an indisputable mandate, since Korošec was an elected representative of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs from Austria-Hungary. The participants in the discussion were organised in three distinct groups: Pašić representing the Serbian government, the representatives of the Serbian opposition parties and the representatives of the Yugoslav Committee and those of the National Council. Whereas Trumbić and Korošec rapidly reached a common negotiating position, after four years in office Pašić had to face the hostility and frustrations of the Serbian opposition. The issue at hand was the composition and the responsibilities of the common War Cabinet that the British government suggested and the semi-official French newspaper *Le Temps* also advised.³⁶

The formation of a common War Cabinet was agreed by all parties, but the issue was what kind of status it should have and who should it represent. Pašić proposed its creation as an ad hoc body but he did not precise who it would represent, a future common state or separately, Serbia and the state of Slovenes, Croats and Slovenes. Milorad Drašković, a member of the Serbian Independent Radical party, proposed a common government for a common state, thus anticipating immediately its existence. Trumbić and Korošec proposed that the two states, Serbia and the state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, delegate a certain number of ministers in the common War Cabinet that would have a limited

36 *Le Temps*, N. 20938, 3 November 1918, L'écroulement de l'Autriche-Hongrie.

number of prerogatives. The two states would continue to exist with their existing structure, administration and laws, until the Constitutional Assembly could express the will of the interested populations on the form and structure of the common state. The respective proposition reflected three visions of the future union. The ambiguity of the Pašić's concept was due to the fact that the only undisputed legitimacy was that of the Serbian government. Drašković wanted to create immediately a new Yugoslav state. Trumbić and Korošec were decided to establish first and foremost the existence of the state they represented. Korošec came to Geneva with the mandate to demand the official recognition of the state he represented and that was his principal request during the discussions. Thus, Pašić, largely isolated, accepted to recognize the Council and the state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, and to ask the Allied governments to do the same.³⁷ He could not accept Drašković's proposal, since the common War Cabinet could not represent exclusively an inexistent state. Finally, both he and the Serbian opposition, accepted the creation of the common representative body, a sort of common War Cabinet of both Serbia and the state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, that was supposed to conduct the affairs of the common interest, while both states were supposed to preserve their independence in their internal affairs.³⁸ Pašić's concept of the Yugoslav union with Serbia as its Piedmont was thus replaced by a confederal solution that resembled the inner structure of the defunct Double Monarchy. Furthermore, due to the insistence of the Serbian opposition parties and Trumbić, supported by Korošec, who all renounced to participate in the common War Cabinet, Pašić was as well forced to renounce the participation.³⁹

The Geneva Conference brought to surface a series of differences that have been obscured by the common desire to create a Yugoslav state. The issues, such as Monarchy or Republic, where only the Serbian members of the common War Cabinet were supposed to make an oath to the Serbian king, or the issue of primacy between Belgrade and Zagreb, since the territory of Serbia and its population were largely inferior to that of the state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, were now on the table. Only the issue of one or two independent Yugoslav states has been definitely settled, mainly due to the belief that the union, be it confederal, was the best possible defence against Italy. The union with Serbia as a belligerent state and member of the Allied coalition from the begging of the war, accorded the same capacity to the other party in the projected union.⁴⁰

After an initial hesitation, Pašić's colleagues in the Serbian government refused to accept the decisions of the Geneva Conference. They explained their refusal by the fact that the decisions of the Geneva conference did not provide for the position of the Serbian Monarchy in the common state. Moreover, they were unwilling to accept the confederal structure of the common War Cabinet and the future Yugoslavia. They invited Pašić to submit the resignation of his government to the Prince Regent who could turn to the opposition in order to find a government ready to accept the decisions of the Geneva con-

37 Krizman, Janković, 1964b, 513, Nikola Pašić to Allied governments, Paris, 8 November 1918.

38 Krizman, Janković, 1964b, 497–505, The Procès-verbal of the Geneva Conference.

39 Krizman, Janković, 1964b, 497–505, The Procès-verbal of the Geneva Conference.

40 Krizman, Janković, 1964b, 497–505, The Procès-verbal of the Geneva Conference.

ference. They were as well convinced that in the future the negotiations on the Yugoslav union should be conducted directly between the Serbian government and the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs on the ground, i.e. between Belgrade and Zagreb.⁴¹

Pašić informed Trumbić and Korošec on 14th November 1918 that the confederal solution established at the Geneva conference was refused by the Serbian government and advised them that the remaining possibilities were either one Cabinet for the entire future Yugoslavia or a sort of common advisory Committee that should be attached to the Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He informed them as well that his colleagues from the Serbian government were opposed to the common War Cabinet agreed upon in Geneva, since it would not respond to the Serbian Parliament or the Serbian king, nor it would make an oath to the Serbian king.⁴²

Confronted with the refusal of Pašić and his colleagues to accept the outcome of the Geneva conference, Trumbić and Korošec decided to put aside the issue of the Yugoslav union and turned to the French government in order to obtain official recognition of the state they represented, that of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. On 15th November 1918, Berthelot once again, with the same arguments, refused to recognize the nascent state. He informed them that the Supreme Allied Council, on the demand of Italy, decided to postpone the issue of recognition until the armistice was fully implemented.⁴³ Berthelot had manifestly considered the agreement between Clemenceau and Orlando as if it was a formal decision of the Supreme War Council, which was not the case, as we have seen. Nevertheless, both the French diplomacy and Clemenceau himself, considered the agreement he made with Orlando as the essence of the French policy towards the Adriatic and Italy. Clemenceau confirmed the existence of the agreement with Orlando to Bonin Longare, the Italian ambassador in Paris, saying that he was expecting in return a sort of conciliatory attitude of the Italian authorities.⁴⁴ The fact that French diplomacy considered the Clemenceau – Orlando agreement as the core of its policy towards Italy was proved also in the contacts with their British counterparts. The British ambassador in Paris officially proposed to Pichon that the Allies should recognize the Yugoslav common War Cabinet created in Geneva. However, Pichon repeated the same reason for his refusal, i.e. that the Allies have decided to wait until the armistice was fully implemented before considering the issue. Pichon also informed Bonin Longare about the exchange in order to confirm the validity of the Clemenceau – Orlando agreement.⁴⁵ The importance of the same agreement was confirmed personally by Clemenceau to Trumbić and Korošec. He received them in Paris on 18th November and informed them that their state could be officially recognized only after the implementation of the terms of armistice agreement.⁴⁶

41 Krizman, Janković, 1964b, 553–555, Stojan Protić to Nikola Pašić, Corfu, 11 November 1918.

42 Krizman, Janković, 1964b, 574, Nikola Pašić to Stojan Protić, Paris, 14 November 1918.

43 Krizman, Janković, 1964b, 583–586, Ante Trumbić's notes on the discussion with Henri Bethelot, Paris, 15 November 1918.

44 DDI, 6/I, doc. 88, 45, Lelio Bonin Longare to Sindy Sonnino, Paris, 10 november 1918.

45 DDI, 6/I, doc. 136, 71, Lelio Bonin Longare to Sindy Sonnino, Paris, 13 november 1918.

46 Krizman, Janković, 1964b, 601–603, Ante Trumbić's notes on the discussion with Georges Clemenceau, Paris, 18 November 1918.

Clemenceau's agreement with Orlando was the main obstacle for the recognition of the state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs by the Allied governments. However, neither he nor the French diplomacy ever gave any indication on how long it would take to implement the armistice agreement. Berthelot said to Trumbić on 15th November that it would take another 17 days. However, the difficulties that arose in the Adriatic: the issue of the Austro-Hungarian fleet that the Italian Navy tried to keep for itself, the nascent conflicts between Italy and the Yugoslavs at the gates of Ljubljana and in the port of Fiume, since the Italians tried to occupy both, even though they were not included in the Treaty of London, demonstrated that the process of implementing would be long and tedious.

The larger issue, the one of the Yugoslav union was still further away. The French diplomats were of the opinion that the Serbian government and the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs should reach an agreement on the modalities of their union before the issue could be considered by the Allied governments. Berthelot and Clemenceau, when they received Trumbić and Korošec, confirmed that an agreement with the Serbian government is a precondition for discussing the Yugoslav Union.⁴⁷ Thus, they were in fact confirming the position taken by both British and French government before the Geneva conference. Furthermore, Clemenceau was preoccupied also by the possibility of the Anschluss in the case of the complete dissolution of Austria-Hungary. Thus, he discussed with Trumbić and Korošec about the necessity to create a confederation that could replace the defunct Austria-Hungary. When Trumbić asked him how the Yugoslav union could be reconciled with his confederal project, he could not explain, but insisted that the Germans from Austria should be in some way connected with the rest of the obsolete Double-Monarchy, in order not be tempted by an Anschluss.⁴⁸

The decisions of the Supreme War Council to allow the Italian Army and the Navy to occupy the territories designated in the Treaty of London and the agreement between Clemenceau and Orlando prevented both, the recognition of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs and of the common War Cabinet created in Geneva. Allied governments had more important issues on their agenda, such as the obligations taken towards Italy by the Treaty of London, the fate of the Austro-Hungarian fleet, the relations between Italy and France, etc. The impossibility of the promoters of the Yugoslav union to reach an agreement certainly did not give credibility to their project. Nevertheless, it was clear that the interests of Italy, as one of the Great Powers, had absolute priority in view of obligations the Allied governments had taken in the Treaty of London. Since Italy was resolutely opposed to the recognition of the state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs and the creation of Yugoslavia, both were impossible. That was the position taken explicitly by Clemenceau. He demonstrated only a passing interest for the Balkans or for the Yugoslav union. He even ignored the terms of the Treaty of London (Poincaré, 1933, 407–408).

47 Krizman, Janković, 1964b, 601–603, Ante Trumbić's notes on the discussion with Georges Clemenceau, Paris, 18 November 1918; 583–586, Ante Trumbić's notes on the discussion with Henri Bethelot, Paris, 15 November 1918.

48 Krizman, Janković, 1964b, 601–603, Ante Trumbić's notes on the discussion with Georges Clemenceau, Paris, 18 November 1918.

The Yugoslav union or the state of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, for him were an issue of lesser importance compared to the reorganisation of Europe after the war. In the future Europe, without the Romanovs, the Hohenzollern and the Hapsburg, the relations with Italy were of outmost importance. He went out of his way to assure Orlando that he had no intention to act as Italy's rival in the Adriatic. Therefore, Italy was granted the right and time necessary to realise her war objectives, while the Serbs and Yugoslavs were supposed to wait until the Peace Conference could address their demands.

The National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was thus faced with the impossibility to obtain the status of an independent and internationally recognized State. It had no grounds, as officially only a local administration of a defeated country that has signed an armistice agreement, to oppose Italy's advancement in the Adriatic and even beyond, as was the case in Ljubljana and Fiume, since Italy was designated by the Supreme War Council to enforce the terms of the armistice agreement. Moreover, the administration organized by the National Council was incapable of managing the interior affairs in the nascent state. In these conditions, the union with Serbia, which was the final objective since the very beginning of the creation of the National Council, appeared as the only way to have an official representation in the international relations. In this way, the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs would no longer be a local administration of a defeated country, but would become a part of a victorious Allied country. In case of union, the Serbian Army would obtain the necessary legitimacy to take a stand against Italy and to impose order in the nascent country. However, the reaction of the Serbian government to the outcome of the Geneva Conference and the declarations of the local assemblies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Vojvodina, in November 1918, all in favour of the union with Serbia, demonstrated that the National Council was not in the position to impose its concept of the Yugoslav union. The decision to opt for an unconditional union, such as the one from 1st December 1918, that created the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, was in our opinion mainly influenced by the fear that the temporary status of the Italian presence in the Adriatic could be transformed in a permanent one. The only possible way to prevent this was to participate at the Peace Conference, which could be achieved only as a part of the Serbian delegation. However, during the Peace Conference, the delegation from both parts of the new Kingdom had to use all their capacities in order to defend the territorial interests of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, that used to live in Austria-Hungary, since the Allies did not recognize officially the new Kingdom, nor did they recognize its frontiers. The Allies officially recognized the state of South Slavs only in June 1919, when its delegation signed the Peace Treaty with Germany in the name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

LONDONSKI PAKT IN USTANOVITEV JUGOSLAVIJE

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POVZETEK

Londonski pakt je določil teritorialne pridobitve, ki jih je Italija zahtevala za vstop v prvi svetovni vojni na stran zaveznikov. Sodobniki in zgodovinopisje so dogovor, podpisan aprila 1915 v Londonu, ocenjevali kot glavno oviro za nastanek Jugoslavije. Italijanski zunanji minister Sidney Sonnino in njegova vlada sta zavračala vsakaršno pobudo na diplomatskem ali propagandnem področju, ki bi lahko ogrozila uresničitev Pakta. Obveznosti do Italije s strani zaveznikov so tudi onemogočale, da bi lahko sledji priznali rojevanje državnosti Slovencev, Hrvatov in Srbov, ki so živeli v Avstro-Ogrski, ter njihovo združitev s Srbijo. Soočeni s takim zavračanjem zavezniških držav in zaradi potrebe po mednarodnem priznanju, kar bi jim omogočilo diplomatsko obrambo teritorija na Jadranu, so se Slovenci, Hrvati in Srbi iz Avstro-Ogrske odločili za brezpogojno zvezo s Srbijo. Namesto, da bi jih obravnavali kot poražence v okviru Avstro-Ogrske, so tako postali del zmagovite Kraljevine Srbov, Hrvatov in Slovencev in naposled so se njihovi predstavniki lahko udeležili mirovne konference.

Ključne besede: Londonski pakt, Italija, Srbija, Jugoslavija, Velika vojna

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