

## Theories of Central European Integration in Croatian Politics and Culture (1848–1971)

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### ABSTRACT

This chapter presents authors involved in Croatian politics and culture between 1848 and 1971 who advocated for Central European integration. In discussing these figures, we examine Austro-Slavism, Croatian-Hungarian unionism, efforts to create the Danube confederation (1918–1945), and the state of Central Europe during the Cold War before the crucial events of the 1980s. After the revolutionary year of 1848 shook the traditional constitutional ties between Croatia and Hungary, Austro-Slavism appeared and offered an alternative to the old Croatian-Hungarian unionism. Austro-Slavism sought to connect the Croats with other West Slavic and South Slavic peoples on the principles of linguistic and ethnic bonds, attempting to form a new political alliance on a different basis than that with the Hungarians. Different forms of Slavism, including Croatian and Hungarian nationalism, led to conflicts between Croats and Hungarians especially in 1848, but the Croatian-Hungarian settlement of 1868 revived the Croatian-Hungarian union, which had suddenly been broken in 1848. After the breakdown of the Monarchy, Emperor Charles I advocated for the restoration of the Habsburg Monarchy. As he failed to attain the Hungarian throne in 1921, his plans remained unfulfilled. A little later, his successor, the Archduke Otto von Habsburg, revived interest in the Danube confederation as a response to Hitlerism and Stalinism and its expansionism towards Central Europe and attempted to lobby the American and British establishments in favour of a Central European confederalism. These initiatives generated interest in Croatia, which was to be integrated into the project. Among those who paid closest attention to the plans were Catholic and conservative groups in exile because the Danube Confederation was to be formed on the basis of anticommunism and anti-sovietism. Due to the contest between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in 1948, certain circles of Croatian emigration stopped writing about the idea of a Central European Danube confederation and began to place their expectations on the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the creation of an independent Croatian state. However, the Prague Spring of 1968 and next the Croatian Spring in communist Yugoslavia brought back interest in Central European issues among Croatian emigrant circles. Already in the early 1970s, it was speculated that the Eastern Communist bloc would not be able to survive the blows of the Central European nations' national movements. The political right and left in Croatia during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were fiercely divided over Central European integration. While the right advocated for an independent Croatian state, which would have been open to Central European integration, the left wanted to see Croatia as an integral part of the Yugoslav state and the Balkan region. Unfortunately, due to the limited scope of the chapter, several important issues

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could not be discussed, such as the relationship between Croatian President Franjo Tuđman and the Visegrad Group in the 1990s during the time of democratic Croatia.

#### KEYWORDS

Central European Integration, Austro-Slavism, Croatian-Hungarian Unionism, Danube Confederation, Milan Šufflay, J. Josip Strossmayer, Ivo Lendić.

## 1. Vision of Austro-Slavism

One of the distinctive ideas related to Central European integration that strongly characterised Croatian political culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was undoubtedly the project called Austro-Slavism, though it was not an original idea in the wider context of Croatian political life at the time. Still, this conception left a significant impact on the formulation of Croatian policy, especially during the turning point of 1848. The Croatian version of Austro-Slavism was an attempt to distance itself from the old union with Hungary; it is thus no coincidence that precisely with the Croatian political elite's adoption of Austro-Slavism in 1848, Croatian-Hungarian relations reached their lowest point. Thus, the state-legislative alliance between Zagreb and Pest was interrupted for the first time in its long history.

Among the main proponents of German romanticism was Johan G. von Herder (1744–1803), who made a decisive contribution to the emergence of Austro-Slavism in his well-known work *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*. He advocated Slavic genius among Germans and all of Europe of his time, wholly believing in the special historical mission of the Slavic peoples and attempting to persuade his contemporaries that the bright future of European culture would precisely belong to them. An idealised imaginary of the Slavs he designed in the German culture thus created the conditions for the later rise of Slavic or Slavophile ideology, one of the versions of which was Austro-Slavism. Herder's influence on the interpreters of Slavism such as Kollar, Pallacky, and Borovsky is unquestionable, but through them also on the entire Croatian national movement in the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>1</sup>

The Austro-Slavist idea wished to integrate into its own programme the reconciliation of Austrian monarchism with the modern national movements of the Slavic nations. After the emancipation through the cultural regeneration of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Slavic nations were looking for a step further in terms of their further political emancipation by means of Austro-Slavism. This eminently Slavic movement expressed its loyalty to the Habsburg Monarchy, expecting that only by relying on it they could defend themselves against Great German nationalism from the outside and Great Hungarian nationalism from the inside. New ideas inevitably came to life in the Monarchy after the French Revolution, which were calculated to change its political order.

This Slavistic ideology kept pace with other reforms in the Habsburg Empire, such as the political system in the sense of extending political rights to non-nobles,

1 Ivanišin, 1963, p. 211.

economic reforms in the direction of building a capitalist economy, as well as the overall strengthening of the national cultures of the Slavs and other peoples. It was quite clear that the Monarchy needed to be internally reformed in order to stand the test of the new times, primarily the national idea that was dominant in European life of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Austro-Slavism was thus offered as a solution for reforming and modernising an old state on behalf of the interests of the Slavic nations.

Considering the Slavic element had the largest share of the population, the improvement of its political status was an imperative in the age of democracy. It thus wanted to bind the Habsburg dynasty and the Slavic nations by fate so that in the future, this would become a new political formula for the development and maintenance of the vitality of the Monarchy. Austro-Slavism was actually a joint Slavic response committed by the Slavic peoples of the Monarchy, primarily Czechs, Croats, Slovaks, Poles, Slovenes, Ukrainians (Rusyns), and Serbs. On one hand, there was a confrontation to centralise the Monarchy by the German ruling minority gathered around dynasty, and on the other hand, an effort to neutralise Hungarian nationalism in the Kingdom of Hungary. As far as external circumstances, almost all of the preachers of Austro-Slavism agreed that the small Slavic peoples needed the Monarchy in order not to become victims of the expansionism of their far bigger neighbours, the imperialist-ambitious Germans and Russians. This was the *raison de être* of Austro-Slavism according to the interpretations of many Austro-Slavists because the Great-German project in 1848 intended to integrate the whole of the Monarchy with Prussia, whilst Russia, no matter how attractive its Slavic bonds, was not sympathetic due to its anti-liberal despotism.

The epicentre of Austro-Slavism was situated in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Czech lands where a national movement had developed, followed by a prosperous economy and culture. The less-developed Croats thus took this as their political, cultural, and social model. In 1848, the National Party (*narodnjaci*) adopted the idea of Czech Austro-Slavism and used it to articulate its own policy in their relations with Austria and Hungary.<sup>2</sup> The Austro-Slavist concept and Slavic orientation generally speaking was ideally attached to the central party's programme of political, financial, and cultural emancipation from the Kingdom of Hungary. From the Czech perspective, Austro-Slavism was turned against Germanism and German political and cultural hegemony over the Czech historical lands, while for Croats and Slovaks, it was an instrument against growing Hungarian nationalism. In addition, Austro-Slavism was also an expression of a broader phenomenon of Czech and Croatian liberalism in the revolutionary year of 1848, which not only created political changes but also social ones in the Habsburg Monarchy.

These conceptions were accepted by the Croatian national revivalists through mutual cooperation with the leaders of the Czech and Slovak national movement, as they were by Czech historians and writers like František Palacki and Karel

2 Šidak, 1973, pp. 51–52.

Havliček Borovski, and Slovak cultural figures such as linguist Josef Šafarik and writer Jan Kollar. Not surprisingly, Prague and Zagreb were the centres of Austro-Slavist thought, where Czechs and Croats dreamed up the reorganisation of the Monarchy. Such a reorganisation was to suppress the Hungarian factor in the new constellation and so affirm the political power of Slavic nations according to the democratic principle, as their population significantly exceeded that of the Hungarian and Germans in the Empire.

Thus, there was a collision of historical and natural law in the relationship between Hungarian nationalism and (Austro)Slavistic nationalism, considering Hungarian nationalism relied on historical rights contained in the institutions of the Kingdom of Hungary. The appeal of the Austro-Slavists to language and nationality was also not favourably viewed by the historicism and legitimism of the dynasty and the Viennese administrative centre of the Empire. One of the huge obstacles to the possible realisation of the Austro-Slavic vision and the connection of the Slavic peoples into a single political entity was the territorial discontinuity between the West Slavic and South Slavic territories in the Monarchy.

A series of distinguished Croatian politicians and cultural activists around 1848, first and foremost Ljudevit Gaj (1809–1872), Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, Dragojlo Kušlan, Bogoslav Šulek, and even forthcoming leaders like Josip J. Strossmayer and Franjo Rački, stood for the very popular Austro-Slavistic ideas. The great personality of the Croatian forty-eight movement, Ljudevit Gaj, paradoxically brought his Slavic and Austro-Slavistic conceptions from Pest, the cultural centre of the very beginnings of the Slavic romantic movement. He was educated and lived in Pest in the 1820s, and the true Slavic national renaissance took place there during those years.<sup>3</sup> In particular, these ideas were expressed in the journal *Slavenski jug* and at the society *Društvo Slavenska lipa na Slavenskom jugu* in Zagreb in those revolutionary days of the notable 1848, which were edited and organised by Dragojle Kušan.<sup>4</sup> The peak of these trends was the attendance of Croatian politicians at the Slavic Congress in Prague in 1848, at which, according to Šidak, there was an attempt to politically concretise an excessively abstract pan-Slavic idea by way of the Austro-Slavist political programme for the first time.<sup>5</sup>

The external surroundings were no less important for understanding the development of the Austro-Slavist programme. There were the menacing winds from the West and the East – the ever-present Great German and Great Russian expansionism towards the Monarchy and its nations. Unlike the Poles, the Czechs, Slovaks, and Croats had certain Russophile sentiments related to pan-Slavistic ideas, but they still adhered to more realistic political concepts, which is why they are their famous ‘Slavic solidarity’ (*slavenska uzajamnost*) would lean on Austria and the Habsburg dynasty.

3 Šokčević, 2006, p. 63.

4 Markus, 2009, p. 197.

5 Šidak, 1960, p. 217.

The structure of the Russian state with the absolutist rule of the emperor was another reason for the Slavic liberals' caution towards Russia: the Russian brutal suppression of the Polish uprising in 1830 was still fresh in their memories. In the same manner, pleading for pan-Slavism could discredit the Slavic leaders before the authorities of the Monarchy because it might have meant a flirtation with Moscow imperialism, which was always ready to threaten the interests of the Monarchy and its very existence in the case that Slavic nations answered the Russian pan-Slavist call.

Insisting on the federalisation of the Monarchy, the Austro-Slavist movement tried to suppress the long-term centralism and absolutism of the Viennese centre, which did not abate from the end of the eighteenth to the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Federalism of free and equal peoples was the main *credo* of the Austro-Slavist programme. Likewise, it appeared as a movement against the new Hungarian policy to create a modern Hungarian national state from the historical Kingdom of Hungary. An even greater threat came from the German world, where the Great-German idea expressed at the Frankfurt Parliament in 1848 was about to attract the Austrian lands.

Austro-Slavism became the ideology of the Croatian national movement in the revolution of 1848, led by the then-larger current of Croatian politics, the ex-Illyrians, now called the National Party (*narodnjaci*). The National Party was the dominant power in the Croatian Parliament of 1848. At the session on 5 June 1848, Article XI enacted by the same Parliament stated that it supported the creation of a federalised monarchy in accordance with the Austro-Slavist plans.<sup>6</sup> At the June and July sessions of the Parliament, the orders of the 'ban and dictator' Josip Jelačić were adopted to declare the political autonomy and territorial integrity of the Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia, which meant to be separated from Hungary and connected with the Austrian constitutional lands.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, Jelačić's military intervention in Hungary could be considered from the viewpoint of this Austro-Slavistic ideology, and not only as his military loyalty to the ruler. That ideology of the Croatian national movement from 1848 created an atmosphere of staunch anti-Hungarian resentment across Croatian lands, most clearly shown in the military conflict and the collapsing of state-legislative relations with Hungary in 1848. The same ideology offered a proposal for modernising the old monarchy, which still functioned on medieval principles and norms. The emphasis on the linguistic and ethnic criteria in the redefinition of the Habsburg Monarchy ran counter to the historical constitutionalism and legitimism. Thus, Austro-Slavism also had revolutionary intentions in the remaking of the Monarchy.<sup>8</sup>

Dragojlo Kušlan (1817–1867) was one of the main Croatian theorists of Austro-Slavism. He gave a speech at the Slavic Congress in Prague in 1848 in which he stated that federalism should have linguistic-ethnic foundations, with a single

6 Džoić, 1999, p. 415.

7 Markus, 2009, p. 189.

8 Šidak, 1973, p. 72.

parliament for the entire state in charge of the common affairs of the army, foreign trade, and finances. According to Kušlan's ideas, the state would thus convert to a constitutional monarchy and the Croatian Kingdom would enter a close alliance with Vojvodina and the Slovenian lands.<sup>9</sup>

Without a doubt, this slowly eroded the traditional political alliance of Hungarians and Croats built on the historical constitution that had been formed organically over the centuries. The real essence of Austro-Slavism consisted, at least in the Croatian case, as an anti-Hungarian policy which, if not openly at first, later certainly paved the way for the destruction of the old Croatian-Hungarian unionism. Naturally, this provoked upheavals in other parts of the monarchy. Because of this, Vienna was wary of Austro-Slavism, since it set out to thoroughly re-evaluate the traditional structures on which the Monarchy itself rested. Thus, Austro-Slavism appeared as a revolutionary idea in the spirit of a revolutionary time. Once the Viennese reaction defeated the revolution in 1849, it triumphantly proclaimed an utterly centralistic constitution called the March Constitution. However, this would be only a provisory act promulgated by the monarch himself, which paved the way for Neo-Absolutism in the 1850s.

Thus, the strong resistance in Croatia to the national movement and its pan-Slavism, which relied on linguistic and ethnic relations, is understandable. As a final consequence, this could have caused the breaking of relations with Hungary and the formation of a new political entity with the West Slavic or South Slavic peoples of the Monarchy. The promoter of resistance to such a political course was represented by the Croatian-Hungarian Party. It was decisive to defend the old traditional constitutionalism and the historical ties between Croats and Hungarians, which will be discussed in the next subchapter on Croatian-Hungarian unionism.

The March Constitution in 1849 enacted by the very young ruler Franz Joseph I dispelled all possible illusions about the reconciliation of the Austrian idea with the Slavism. This also brought a great political resignation to Croatia, standing on the side of Vienna and the military assistance of Croatian troops against the revolution in Hungary and Austria did not bring any political profit. The Croatian political movement of 1848 experienced great disappointment when realised that Austro-Slavism served only as a means to cement even more the absolutism and Viennese centralism after the downfall of the revolution. It was no different with other Slavic nations, anti-Austrian sentiment began to intensify in the 1850s and 1860s, especially after the settlement of the Emperor with the Hungarians in 1867. Thus, Gaj and Kukuljević, take part and prepare the Slavic pilgrimage to Moscow in 1867, but the two most prominent members of the National party and (South) Slavic orientation, Rački and Strossmayer, yet were not present there it was not opportune for them.<sup>10</sup> On the pilgrimage appeared some remarks that Croatia could be able to count on tsarist Russia after the installation of dualism.

9 Šidak, 1981, p. 220.

10 Prelog, 1931, pp. 280–282.

Alexander Bach's neoabsolutist regime in the 1850s once again put Croatian politics back on the track of restoring relations with the Hungarians, which will get its culmination in the conclusion of the Croatian-Hungarian settlement in 1867. It turned out that the only way to defend Croatian political autonomy lead to an agreement with the Hungarians on the basis of historical law and ancient constitutionalism. Despite of this, the National party in the post-1848 period accepted the Yugoslav/South Slavic ideology as a substitute for the failed hopes of Austro-Slavism, to which Strossmayer and Rački stand out. They had been reviving the National Party and its old programme of 1848. Since 1861 they conducted their strategy on the Austro-Slavistic foundations, declared for the federalisation of the Monarchy and thought of a practical trialism between Austria, Hungary and Croatia.<sup>11</sup>



### ***1.1. Strossmayer and Austro-Slavism***

As a bishop and priest by his own vocation, Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1815–1905)<sup>12</sup> presented a specific criticism of the Great Austrian centralism. Speaking against the centralism of the regime he believed that an overly centralised government with a lot of power and competences did not correspond to the nature of a true Christian state, rather that it was suitable for pagan states and societies. Strossmayer thought that federalism is much closer to the organisation of the state on Christian virtues. This was why Strossmayer also embraced Austro-Slavist idea, his programme was 'Croatian state autonomy

and territorial integrity of Croatian lands within the federalist reorganized Monarchy'. He also inherited the anachronistic idea of Austria as defender of Catholicism from the early modern age when it had been defending Catholic Europe against Protestantism and Turkish invasion. It is not strange that he trusted to the past and future 'divine mission' of the Monarchy.<sup>13</sup>

According to the bishop of Djakovo, the Austrian idea politically protected small Slavic nations from powerful neighbours, but not only that Austria also promoted interests of the Catholic Church in Central and South-eastern Europe, given the special relations between the dynasty and the papacy. For Strossmayer, the religious interests of the Catholic Church and the political demands for the federalisation of the Monarchy was very compatible. The prelate thought that it would

<sup>11</sup> Džoić, 1999, p. 404.

<sup>12</sup> Josip Juraj Strossmayer, Croatian politician, Roman Catholic bishop and benefactor, in: old Croatian book, public domain, source of the picture: [https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josip\\_Juraj\\_Strossmayer#/media/F%C3%A1jl:Josip\\_Juraj\\_Strossmayer2.jpg](https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josip_Juraj_Strossmayer#/media/F%C3%A1jl:Josip_Juraj_Strossmayer2.jpg).

<sup>13</sup> Markus, 2012, pp. 69–72.

be able to realise its own 'divine mission' in future times only if it was capable of reforming by itself and would give up the centralist and absolutist tendencies. Decentralisation and federalisation of the Austrian Empire have no alternative, apart from the fact that centralism is not a reflection of the Christian order, it also carried the hegemony of the Austrian Germans over other nations:

Centralization does not respond to the spirit of justice and the Gospel itself, which commands all people not only in the private life, but even more in the public one: Don't do to others what you don't want to be done to you. Centralization is the predominance and domination of one nationality over another; therefore, it is not freedom, but the real slavery of the underprivileged.<sup>14</sup>

However, all of these incentives around the centralisation of the Monarchy, the transformation of historical Hungary into the Hungarian modern state, and the Austro-Slavist federalisation were comprised of the same modernisation impulses. Regardless of the fact that they were opposed to each other in their goals and interests about how to transform the traditional monarchy into a modern state. The radiations coming from Western Europe imposed transformation of it as an imperative. The only question was whether this transformation would take place in a revolutionary or evolutionary way. The conservatism of the monarchical establishment was aware that the *status quo* was unsustainable, and that changes were inevitable to the organism of the state. They adhered to the guiding thought that any changes would be possible only by respecting the current traditional order. Of course, the fear of breaking out new revolutions also pushed them in the direction of urgent modernisation of the state, unreformed institutions did not offer good base for the times to come.

The failure of the revolution in the Monarchy clearly suggested that an evolutionist path would be followed. Yet neo-absolutism of the 1850s indicated that the modernisation of the Monarchy was necessary, even if it was carried out 'from above', under supervision from the Viennese centre with the help of the Emperor and loyal aristocratic, bureaucratic and military forces. The military defeat in Northern Italy in 1859 and the collapse of state budget forced the Viennese regime to abandon centralist and neo-absolutist policies. The dualistic system established by Vienna and the Hungarians in the Austro-Hungarian settlement in 1867 consolidated the state after another military defeat at war with Prussia in 1866. The Prussian victory shook the Monarchy so much threatening with apparent disintegration. It meant an increased danger for the Croats and Hungarians in case that the Austrian lands would become a part of the great German state that would be created on the ruins of the Monarchy. In such unfavourable circumstances, the Croatian political factors had to accept the settlement with Hungary in 1868.

The construction of the dualism led to the final defeat of Austro-Slavism in the politics of the Monarchy. However, the Croatian elites did not accept easily

14 Lukas, 1926, p. 16.



disappearance of Austro-Slavism. Stjepan Radić was the founder of the Croatian peasant movement that would dominate Croatian political life after the First World War. He studied and lived in Praha where was heavily influenced by Tomaš Masaryk and Czech national movement, regarding that Croats and Czechs had to be firmly connected in the common struggle against the dualistic regime, against Wien and Budapest. Then the revival of Austro-Slavism was something rather natural to further Radić's political formation. At the beginning of the political career in 1905 tried to revive some Austro-Slavistic conceptions in the new epoch. By this treatise he wished to offer a solution to Croatian politicians and the intelligentsia in struggle against the dualistic system.<sup>15</sup>

The reform of dualism and the federalisation of the Monarchy were again imposed as a solution to the Croatian question, which was particularly important to Stjepan Radić due to his special sympathy for the Czech nation, politics, and culture. He pleaded far more for federalisation than for trialism, which was common among Croats at the time. Besides, trialism would offer the creation of a third unit of the Monarchy by gathering South Slavic countries around Croatian state right (*hrvatsko državno pravo*) (Slovenian countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Triune Kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia). His work appeared just after the 1903 crisis of dualism in Hungary, when he felt that he could contribute to the solution of the new political crisis with his schema for a new federalisation.

(Yugo)Slavism arose as a variety of the authentic Austro-Slavist ideology in Croatian politics of post-1848 era. It seems that Austro-Slavism gave a direction that would eventually lead to the disintegration of the Croatian-Hungarian union along with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The creation of the Yugoslav state and the abandonment of the Central European integration of the Croatian nation will last from 1918 to 1990, with a brief interruption during the World War II. Thus, paradoxically from the initial desire to stay in the process of the Central European integration through Austro-Slavism, the Croatian lands finally found themselves in a common framework with the Balkan states of Serbia and Montenegro under the guise of the Yugoslav idea.

## 2. Croatian-Hungarian Unionism

We can also treat Croatian-Hungarian unionism as a form of Central European integration in Croatian political culture that lasted for almost eight centuries in continuity. It tried to redefine itself in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to be able to face the challenges of the modern era. Unlike modernistic Illyrianism and Austro-Slavism which were invented, Croatian-Hungarian unionism had on its side tradition, legality and the experience of the coexistence of two peoples. Having the traits of traditionalism opposed to Illyrianism and various types of Slavism, from Pan-Slavism

15 Matković, 1993, pp. 125–139.

to Austro-Slavism to Yugoslavism, which belonged to the domain of revolutionary theories. Just like the agenda of Croatian liberals, Magyarisation policy of the Hungarian liberals over non-Hungarian communities could be qualified as revolutionary alike. The revolutionary exaggerations of Hungarian and Croatian liberalism badly shook the later relations between Hungarians and Croats.

The threat of Viennese absolutism got closer the Croatian and Hungarian nobility to cooperate even more from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At the time of Illyrianism of 1830s Croats did not seek models for their national movement from the Czechs as much as they did from the Hungarians.<sup>16</sup> Some of the most prominent Croatian politicians of that time such as Ljudevit Gaj, and Ante Starčević and Josip J. Strossmayer were educated in Pest and grew up in the Hungarian world, regardless of the fact that they all expressed anti-Hungarian attitudes lately.<sup>17</sup> The question of the introduction of the Hungarian language into Croatian lands and the abandonment of the neutral Latin language in public life brought the first germs of a conflict that would escalate in the military conflict between Croats and Hungarians in 1848. Croats could not accept the transformation of multinational Hungary into a modern Hungarian national state. In order to protect themselves they sought support among the Slavic world as an objectively weaker side in this national contest. The rupture of the state-legislative relations between the Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia and Hungary reached the lowest point in the historical relations of these two nations so Croatian-Hungarian unionism would also disappear temporarily (1848–1868).

Croatian-Hungarian unionism was not based on language and ethnic element as was the case with Austro-Slavism but on the constitution and historical law. All the drama of the Croatian political scene consisted of disagreements over these two integrations based on different starting points of naturalism and historicism, 'nationality' and 'constitutionality'. Because of this dilemma, Croatian modern politics was in conflict between Slavophiles and Magyarophiles, between linguistic and constitutional-historical approaches regarding the Croatian national question. In the period of Schmerling's centralism in the first half of the 1860s, the National Party split into two currents, when one of its faction prioritised constitutionalism over nationalism and thus switched to the unionist side.<sup>18</sup> The motto of the leader of the National party and Austro-Slavists Ljudevit Gaj was following: '*may God live the constitution of Hungary, the kingdom of Croatia and the Illyrian nation*'. It could sound paradoxical, because no matter how much Gaj and his like-minded people thought about the vague constructions of Illyrianism and pan-Slavism, the real political autonomy of the Three Kingdoms was found in the 'constitution of Hungary' of which they were aware very well.<sup>19</sup>

16 Šokčević, 2006, pp. 60–61.

17 Ibid. p. 50.

18 Šidak, 1972, pp. 91–92.

19 Kolak Bošnjak, 2012, p. 105.

Illyrianism appeared as a cultural, linguistic and literary movement in the Croatian environment from the 1830s, but it also showed political ambitions very soon. This particularly frightened the Croatian Magyarophiles, who thought that Gaj and his associates were working to create a separate 'Illyrian' or South Slavic state which would have been separated from Hungary. Such a state would mean that the Hungarians would be surrounded by the Slavic political entity from all sides. Later, prominent unionist Levin Rauch warns of the revolutionary mark of the Illyrian movement and pan-Slavist connections in Russia and Serbia, which supposedly work in a conspiracy to overthrow the existing order in the Monarchy and Hungary.<sup>20</sup> The main political party that defended the traditional alliance between Croatia and Hungary was the Croatian-Hungarian Party (*Horvatsko-vugerska stranka*) founded in 1841. The members of it dominantly originated from the noble class, although they also had adherents among bourgeois class and peasant nobility (Turopolje municipality).<sup>21</sup>

All of them used privileges of the Croatian-Hungarian constitution, and therefore any speculation with 'new ideas' such as Illyrianism and Slavism was out of the question. Like their Illyrian opponents, they also defended the autonomy of the Croatian Kingdom within Hungary but contrary to them they did not question the Croatian-Hungarian union outside of political system. Admittedly, there was a general consensus of the Magyarophiles and the Slavophiles about the autonomy of the Croatian Kingdom, both saw it as the continuation of the medieval Croatian Kingdom.<sup>22</sup> However, there was a nuance here as well the Illyrians insisted that Hungary and Croatia were to be equal states, while the Magyarophiles were ready to accept the subordinate status of the autonomy of the Croatian Kingdom within Hungary.<sup>23</sup> Despite the fact that Jelačić and the National party were in power, the Magyarophile movement still existed in Croatia in 1848 and 1849, and some of the prominent members, such as Antun Danijel Josipović, Koloman Bedeković, Josip Brigljević, Aurel Kušević, sided with the Hungarian revolution and ended up in Hungarian exile as political refugees.<sup>24</sup>

The Unionist Party in Croatia was established later in 1861 as the successor of this old party. A considerable number of the leading members of the Party were the old ones of the Magyarophile movement such as Levin Rauch, Ljudevit Salopek, Stjepan Pavleković, Aurel Kušević, and others like Mirko Šuhaj, Mirko Bogović, Robert Zlatarović, Ivan Nepomuk II. Erdödy, Josip Žuvić, Julije Janković, Lazar Hellenbach i Jovan Živković.<sup>25</sup> This was created after the restoration of the political life in 1861, it certainly advocated for a close union with Hungary. Their programme and that of the former Croatian-Hungarian party were almost realised in 1868,

20 Ibid. pp. 103–104.

21 Ibid. p. 91.

22 Ibid. pp. 124–125.

23 Ibid. pp. 129–130.

24 Ibid. pp. 74–75.

25 Kolak Bošnjak, 2021, pp. 48, 51, 52.

when the Settlement was arranged between Croatia and Hungary. The unionists played an important role to implement it. Law theorists tried to give answers to the character of the Settlement, so the main consensus was reached that it was a real union with the important exception that there was hegemony of Hungary under Croatia.<sup>26</sup> Oppositional Croatian politics did not reconcile with the dualistic order and the subordination of Croatia but it failed to change neither the settlement nor the dualistic regime more significantly (1868–1918).

### **2.1. Milan Šufflay – The Last Apologist of the Croatian-Hungarian Unionism**

Milan Šufflay (1879–1931)<sup>27</sup> was the last significant messenger of the Magyarophile tradition of Croatian politics. No one before him defended this political tradition with such a sophisticated intellectual level as this distinguished historian and nobleman by origin. Šufflay attempted to find a symbiosis of the Croatian-Hungarian state so that the two would continue to live in a common state even if the Monarchy were to collapse. Šufflay's ideas about the Hungarian-Croatian federation were never realised after



1918, but regardless of that, his role in the formulation of Croatian nationalism of an anti-Yugoslav orientation in the interwar period remains indisputable. Šufflay is along with Ivo Pilar and Ante Starčević left a great spiritual influence on the interwar Croatian intelligentsia, both the older generation that rejected Yugoslav idea and the young generation that had just formed since 1929.

He clashed with the Yugoslav nationalism of the Croatian liberal intelligentsia in the last decade of the Monarchy. The most solid criticism of Yugoslavia in the 1920s in Croatian public life thus came from the Magyarophile political tradition of Milan Šufflay. His nostalgia for the Monarchy and the vanished Croatian-Hungarian union resulted in his negative attitude towards the Yugoslav state. Apart from Ivo Pilar, no one among the Croatian intelligentsia presented such an elaborated critique of Yugoslav ideology as Šufflay. Because of all of that, he experienced political persecution in his academic career before and after 1918. His supervisor, the prominent Croatian historian Tadija Smičiklas, supported the young Šufflay, nevertheless they disagreed about Hungarian-Croatian relations for the sake of the Smičiklas' Yugoslavism.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Džoić, 1998, p. 94.

<sup>27</sup> Milan Šufflay, Croatian historian and politician, public domain, source of the picture: [https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milan\\_%C5%A0ufflay#/media/F%C3%A1jl:Milan\\_%C5%A0ufflay.jpg](https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milan_%C5%A0ufflay#/media/F%C3%A1jl:Milan_%C5%A0ufflay.jpg).

<sup>28</sup> Stevović, 2021, p. 69.

Šufflay successfully obtained a doctoral thesis in historical sciences at the University of Zagreb in 1901, but later continued his studies in Vienna and Budapest. He worked in Budapest some time as an assistant at the National Museum and taught auxiliary historical sciences at the University of Zagreb (1908–1918). To the end of 1918, he was retired by the new authorities which were preparing Croatia to go into a new alliance with Serbia. Labeled by them as an Magyarophile, was forced to be in the opposition of the Yugoslav state, had contacts with the first Croatian political emigration of pro-Habsburg and pro-Hungarian feelings arose after the dissolution of the Monarchy, it was an emigrant circle in Vienna and Budapest consisting of Ivo Frank, Josip Frank and Pavao Rauch.

The Hungarian historian József Bajza belonged to this circle. He was a colleague and friend of Šufflay and one of the foremost experts of Croatian history in Hungary at the time. Inspired by Šufflay, Bajza addressed with the South Slavic, Croatian, and Montenegrin question. Bajza and Šufflay were like-minded historians and public intellectuals: both expressed regret for the collapse of the Croatian-Hungarian union. Critical of his own national policy, Bajza believed that Hungarians supported the push of Croats into Yugoslavia and the alliance with Serbia. On his opinion, Hungary bore a large part of the burden for the collapse of the centuries-old union of the two nations. Like Šufflay, he secretly hoped for a Habsburg restoration, without which the restoration of the Croatian-Hungarian community would hardly be possible. The entry of the Croatian lands into Yugoslavia meant a break not only with the political tradition of the Croatian-Hungarian union, but also a break with the Latin culture and Central European civilisation.<sup>29</sup>

It did not take long time for Šufflay to become a target of the Yugoslav regime. At the end of 1920 he was brought before the court on the charge of working for the 'resurrection of Tomislav's state.'<sup>30</sup> He unsuccessfully tried to revive his professional career in 1926. He lobbied Maček, his classmate and Stjepan Radić the then Minister of Education, but it was unsuccessful never came back as a professor of history at the University of Zagreb. Meanwhile, Budapest University accepted him to be a professor at the Department of Southeastern European History in 1928, however, as a political enemy, the Yugoslav authorities did not allow him to issue a passport to travel to Hungary.<sup>31</sup>

Šufflay used knowledge from history and then very popular geopolitics in order to publicly and politically prove the unsustainability of the Yugoslav state, as well as the Versailles Treaty in Europe. He regarded that laws of geography determined politics like most of his contemporaries, warning the public life that the Versailles Europe and the Versailles Balkans were in opposition to the main geopolitical laws. To Šufflay's viewpoint, Versailles also reshaped Europe without any consideration for its historical and cultural structures.

29 Stevović, 2021, pp. 70–71.

30 Mortigjija, 1944, p. 3.

31 Antoljak, 1995, p. 138.

The Peace of Versailles took almost no account of geopolitical forces. The peacemakers in Paris were driven primarily by revenge and reward. Only then the self-determination of the nations. Thereby whole of the economic units were destroyed, which harmonious functioning was arranged by the crust of the earth over the centuries. Even today, Europe, especially Central Europe, and of course the Balkans is in a chaotic state. It is not only national disputes, ideas-forces of historical nations and their memory that are working to dismantle the Versailles building, but primarily geopolitical forces.<sup>32</sup>

He believed that Croats in Yugoslavia or any other Balkan community would lose the Western orientation that they had developed and preserved during the Croatian-Hungarian union and the Habsburg Monarchy. Only the restoration of the Monarchy and the Croatian-Hungarian Union could bring the Croats back to their lost Western and Central European orientation. Later, Šufflay came closer to the ideology of establishing an independent Croatian state. He saw balkanising effects on the Croatian people due to the rise of Yugoslav nationalism, which conquered the Croatian intelligentsia of his time. He once stated that, *'when those Croatian travelers half-frozen of the Belgrade frost and Russian ice will return one day from their Balkan excursions, they will be warmed themselves by the fire of Western non-Balkan Croatia'*.<sup>33</sup> Šufflay thought that Yugoslav nationalism tried to discredit Croatian autonomy in the Monarchy, claiming that the Croatian-Hungarian settlement and the Monarchy in general was a political evil that needed to be destroyed for the supposedly liberation of the Croatian nation.

In response, Šufflay wrote that the settlement in 1868 recognised the Croats as a 'political people'<sup>34</sup> and as well as a subject of international law, while the Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Dalmatia and Slavonia became the national state of the Croats. However, after finishing the Great War the Croatian question ensued to preoccupy European and world politics, as did the national crisis in Yugoslavia itself:

Until the Great World War, even until the collapse of the Danube Monarchy, the political struggle of the Croatian nation was comparatively very simple. It had the armor of their autonomy. Located in a European state, in a monarchy with great and ancient international authority. Huge international concerns and world problems did not reach him through this triple armor. Within his autonomy, the Croats led an idyllic party struggle. As part of its own autonomy, it waged a struggle with Pest for strengthening of it, by no means a mortal struggle for its survival. Today it is completely different. The Croatian nation stand in battle not only without any armor, but naked. It has no autonomy. It is in the Balkan fog, from which the state system has

32 Šufflay, 2000, p. 172.

33 Mortigjija, 1944, p. 3.

34 Šufflay, 2000, p. 84.

yet to be created. The Balkans have always been a European whirlwind. Today it is stronger than ever. This is where the interests of the European superpowers intersect. We are not only looking here through the eyes of the British, Russian and Italian Argus. The gigantic hand of Great Britain and Russia, then the fingers of Italy, are already directly growing there.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. The Idea of the Danube Confederation

Aspirations towards broader Central European integration did not disappear in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although they were no longer at the centre of the main discussions of Croatian politics. The main debate concerned the creation of an independent Croatian state on the one hand and the maintenance of a common Yugoslav state on the other one. It should be said that many advocates of an independent Croatian state were more or less open to integration with the Central European sphere, which could not be said for the advocates of the Yugoslav state union. Considering the specific geographical position and the Croatian national element in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was not only seen as a Central European state, but its location was understood to be far more complex. Thus, the political analyst and later Croatian emigrant Milivoj Magdić (1900–1948) when defined foreign policy of any independent Croatian state said it had not only a Central European role, but also an Adriatic and a Balkan role.<sup>36</sup>

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century numerous authors, politicians, publicists and writers and cultural workers in the Croatian public wrote positive reviews about the Austrian period. Dissatisfied with the situation in the Yugoslav state, their nostalgia for the previous period came to the fore more and more. This was especially felt when there was a significant decline of Yugoslav ideology in Croatian political and intellectual culture since 1929. The realisation that even the Yugoslav episode did not resolve the Croatian national question among Croatian elites led to the conclusion of how futile it was to abandon the old political framework. Along with the political crisis, there was also an economic crisis that began to be felt even before the World Economic Crisis (1929–1933) due to the disappearance of the large market of the Monarchy. The frustration was further intensified by the fact that they lost the autonomy they had under the Monarchy and that the Croats won it again with a difficult political struggle only in 1939, when the Banovina Hrvatska was formed. In such an atmosphere, ideas about the Danube confederation, the return of Croatia from the Balkans to Central Europe found fertile ground.

This was especially significant for those political currents that accepted the ideas of an independent Croatian state, while Yugoslav groups and the political left continued to hold Croatia in the Balkan region defending the ideas of a common

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 163.

<sup>36</sup> Magdić, 2021, p. 147.

Yugoslav state. It is therefore not surprising that the communist movement in Croatia worked on the re-establishment of Yugoslavia during the World War II. The Left were peculiarly anti-Austrian because it considered the Monarchy to be a pillar of European reaction, so all ideas about the restoration were rejected in advance as conservative and reactionary ones. Such a confederation would also stop the penetration of communism into the European continent, which did not suit the Stalinist and Sovietophile Croatian and Yugoslav communists. As a leading figure of the Marxist intelligentsia in Croatia and Yugoslavia, Miroslav Krleža played a major role in the articulation of the anti-Austrian and anti-Habsburg discourse and everything that came from it. Krleža's opus was impregnated for the most part on the demonisation of the Habsburg Monarchy, which later became an important methodology in Croatian culture and historiography during Tito's Yugoslavia.<sup>37</sup>

As for the Catholic Church in the Croatian lands, it was not united in the Yugoslav orientation of Croatian politics. At the beginning of the creation of Yugoslavia, most parts of the Church supported the creation of a new state, either out of conviction or out of proverbial opportunism. However, as the Church did not have a settled position in the state by a single law because the authorities refused to sign a concordat with the Vatican state in 1937, it increasingly moved in anti-Yugoslav course. Additionally, we should add the cultural war that the Yugoslav regime waged against the Catholic Church since the beginning of the 1920s. Of course, there were never-overcome pro-Habsburg sympathies in the Church, so it is no coincidence that precisely the Catholic groups of the intelligentsia would show the greatest interest to pursue the idea of Danube confederalism during the World War II.

The Archbishop of Sarajevo Josip Stadler (1843–1918) stood out in the defence of the Monarchy at its very end. He opposed the Yugoslav unification with Serbia and Montenegro, demanding the preservation of the Monarchy and respect for the Croatian state law tradition. Stadler realised that the growing Yugoslavism from the First World War as a means of destroying the of the Monarchy and Croatian statehood. Worried about the success of the Yugoslav idea at the expense of the Monarchy for it would seriously threaten the position of the Catholic Church in the southern part of the Monarchy and the Balkans itself. According to Stadler, the Croatian politics had to be conducted on the basis of the state law tradition and to maintain relations with Budapest and Vienna. Giving up the state law tradition and those relations would put the Croatian nation and the Catholic Church in a disastrous position. The pro-Yugoslav movement was extremely harmful to Catholic interests since the Church would not have the same support in the new Yugoslavia as it had in the largest Catholic country in Europe, Stadler inferred. In the state of the South Slavs, the majority of the population would be Orthodox with a significant Muslim minority, as an archbishop in Bosnia and Herzegovina, he was also very afraid of Serbian expansionism if the Monarchy collapsed.<sup>38</sup>

37 Markus, 1994, pp. 81–98.

38 Kljaić, 2017, p. 63.



The idea to create the Danube Confederation was resurrected again during World War II. Regardless of the fact that it was then a marginal combination of world politics, it remains worth analysing, particularly because since the 1980s, the similar Central European idea was resurrected in the time immediately before the fall of real socialism and the Berlin Wall. The Danube Confederation was closely related to the calculations about the restoration of the Habsburg Monarchy, which was very much alive right after the end of the World War I, proclaimed of by the Emperor Charles I. Instead of the old dualism, a confederalist concept of organising the restored Monarchy was offered. His efforts to ascend the Hungarian throne failed in 1921, as well as his dreams of making the Danube confederation. After the diplomatic pressure of the guardians of the Versailles order, he had to go into exile on the island of Madeira, where he died soon.

His idea of the Danube confederation was later propagated by his son, the Archduke Otto Von Habsburg (1912–2011), who wanted to animate American and British politics led by Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill in the World War II.<sup>39</sup> The restoration of the Monarchy was offered by Otto von Habsburg when the new structure of Europe was being prepared during and at the end of the World War II.<sup>40</sup> The Danube confederalism from the Baltic to the Adriatic would include Poland, Hungary, the Czech lands, Slovakia, Croatia, Slovenia and even Bavaria and would be built on anti-communist and anti-Nazi foundations. World War II also showed what atrocities happened across Central Europe which found themselves squeezed between Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union. The proposal to create such a confederation could meet with a good response in those countries. However, the subsequent deep penetration of the Soviets into Central Europe and the Soviet occupation made it impossible to form such a confederation.

#### **4. Vinko Krišković, Ivo Lendić, Bonifacije Perović: The Baltic-Adriatic Vertical as an Anti-Communist Bulwark**

Echoes of the mentioned initiatives were also felt in Croatia of the 1940s among Catholic and conservative circles. Those circles stood silently in opposition to Pavelić's regime in the Independent State of Croatia and were critical of the unquestionable alliance with Hitler's Germany. As they were anti-communist, they could not even join the partisan movement. After all, they were also against the restoration of the Yugoslav state. Knowing very well that Croatia would not be

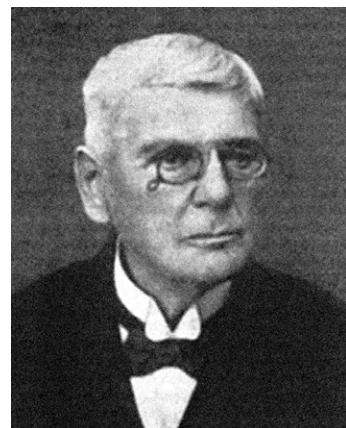
39 The New York Times (1940) Danube Federation Backed by Archduke; Pretender to Austria's Throne Outlines Plan for Unity [Online]. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1940/03/07/archives/danube-federation-backed-by-archduke-pretender-to-austrias-throne.html> (Accessed: 27 June 2023).

40 Radica, 1982, p. 501.

an independent state in post-war Europe, they hoped for this solution of making the Danube confederation, to which Croatia would join as a member. Thus, the programme of the Danube Confederation seemed to be the ideal way out of the situation regarding the threat of Soviet penetration, the installation of Communism and the reconstruction of Yugoslavia. After penetrating of the Soviets into Central Europe and the coming to power of Tito's communists in Croatia and Yugoslavia, they brought the idea of the Danube confederation into political emigration.

From a long distance, they would try to affirm the Danube confederation in the articles and analyses in the post-war years. Writing about it, they hoped that there could be another war between the Western Allies and Soviets. According to such a scenario, the Western Allies would win, push the Soviets out of Europe, and thus create opportunities to create such a confederation, which then would also include the anti-Soviet and anti-communist Croatia. Regarding Croatian political emigration, difficult moments occurred after 1948, when Tito's regime in Yugoslavia had become an ally of the West after Stalin's expulsion of Yugoslav communists from the international communist movement. This event made it clear that Yugoslavian communism would not collapse as they wished, but since then it also had the support of Western politics. That eliminated any possibility that Croatia could find itself in the anti-Soviet Danube confederation. Although it was not real anymore, yet the idea of the Central European orientation of Croatia remained to live in the Croatian emigrant and dissident culture up to the Fall of the Berlin Wall.

Vinko Krišković (1862–1951)<sup>41</sup>, a professor of law at the University of Zagreb, found himself in emigration after 1945. Before the dissolution of the Monarchy, adhered to the trialist conception, whereby all the Croatian lands Dalmatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with Croatia and Slavonia would be gathered in one special unit separated from Austria and Hungary. Later, he oriented himself towards the idea of an independent Croatian state, that was why he supported the Independent State of Croatia in the war. In the post-war times, he wrote his political testament, to which he emphasised that once again it was shown what a political failure was the destruction of the Monarchy for Europe and how Central Europe became a victim of the neighbouring superpowers. He placed the burden of guilt on America for the disappearance of the Monarchy so believed that it owed a moral and political



41 Vinko Krišković, Croatian viceban and politician, unknown photographer, in: hkv.hr, public domain, source of the picture: [https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vinko\\_Kri%C5%A1kovi%C4%87#/media/Datoteka:Vinko\\_Kri%C5%A1kovi%C4%87.jpg](https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vinko_Kri%C5%A1kovi%C4%87#/media/Datoteka:Vinko_Kri%C5%A1kovi%C4%87.jpg).

debt to the nations of Central Europe.<sup>42</sup> For that reason, the Americans was obliged to correct mistakes and to get the Central European nations out of the power of Soviet communism. In the restoration of the Central European confederation, to which Croatia would join Krišković was looking for a way out for Croatian national freedom and a wide bulwark against communism under the auspices of the USA.<sup>43</sup>

Ivo Lendić (1900–1982) was a writer from Croatian Catholic circles who emphasised that the war victors should consider the history and culture of Central and South-eastern Europe when arranging the borders of the new Europe. He objected to British foreign policy regarding the Yugoslav case. It was known to had been built on two different western and eastern cultural traditions and as such was unsustainable. According to Lendić, the reconstruction of Yugoslavia is a pure British interest without considering the historical and cultural context. Just like Krišković, he accused the Americans and British of being responsible for the penetration of the Red Army even into Vienna, the heart of Central Europe. Lendić was familiar with Otto von Habsburg's initiative in America and expected the reaction of the American side.<sup>44</sup>

That was why he pointed out that the Americans could restore the Danube confederation within the borders of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. This gave the last hope that the Croatia could get rid of the alliance with Serbia. Lendić expected a new war between America and the Soviet Union, which would eventually lead to the collapse of Tito's Yugoslavia. In such conditions, Croatia should become an integral part of a wide area '*from Kaunas to Kotor, a kind of restoration of the Danube Monarchy, which would include Hungary, Poland, Croatia, Slovenia, Bavaria and the Catholic circle gathered around Vienna*'. So, the Croatia would return to the framework of Central Europe geopolitically again and not only that but Lendić thought that it was the return to the centuries-old continuity of Croatian geopolitics, and therefore the Yugoslav phase was actually a rupture and discontinuity in relation to that of the authentic geopolitical orientation of Croatia.<sup>45</sup>

Lendić also called for '*centuries-old Catholic solidarity and unity of the Catholic peoples*' cultivated under the Jagelons and the Habsburg especially. The solidarity shown in the fight against the Turks, Mongols and Protestantism would have to be reactivated around a unified anti-communist strategy against the threat of the Soviet Union. He had seen the axis of the confederation around Vienna-Zagreb-Budapest-Warsaw. While accepting the Czech lands to this confederation, he was ready to criticise the Czechs for having forged an anti-Austrian ideology and formed the Little Entente directed against Croatia, Austria, and Hungary.<sup>46</sup>

In this way, Central Europe would become the vanguard of Western Europe's defence from the communist east, as it historically had such a mission for centuries.

42 Krišković, 1955, p. 79.

43 Ibid. pp. 121–122.

44 Lendić, 2001, p. 171.

45 Kljaić, 2017, pp. 81–82.

46 Ibid. pp. 81–82.

The Danube confederation would stop the expansionism of Soviet imperialism, especially ambitious one after the war victory over Germany.

And the opportunities in Croatia are unusually ripe for that solution. Croats now find themselves isolated in the vicious circle of the Yugoslav state concept, which they themselves invented, but which proved to be wrong. In the Yugoslav combination, they are out of their element like fish out of water, like storks from a fable at a banquet in foxes. In the Danube combination, all the vitality of the geopolitical, cultural and economic function of the Croatian soil necessarily comes to the fore, and the Croats become an equal partner of Austria and Hungary. Out of an object they become a subject.<sup>47</sup>

Since there was no war between the Western allies and the Soviet Union, as Tito's Yugoslavia became a Western partner post-1948, all of Lendić's plans for the reorganisation of Central Europe had no chance of being fulfilled.

The outbreak of the Prague Spring and Croatian Spring in the 1960s refocused the interests of Croatian emigrants on the status of Central Europe. They thought that the collapse of the communist bloc could only come from there, as Croatian emigrants with a strong anti-communist orientation so closely followed the events in the region.

The Croatian sociologist Bonifacije Perović (1900–1979) spoke about the failure of Soviet policies in the Eastern bloc, where there was latent resistance to the Soviet occupation and the real-socialist experiment as well. After the Hungarian Revolution and the constant Polish resistance shown on several occasions, and then the Prague and Croatian Spring, Perović spoke about the evident failure of communist policies to cancel the historical memory of Central European nations.

Peoples for whom communism tried to interrupt their historical and cultural heritage, deprive them of their freedom for the sake of a utopian future, and at the same time, failing to achieve a new humane and cultural order and growth, return to their own sources, their past, their national community.<sup>48</sup>

Hungarians, Poles, Czechs and Croats in Yugoslavia were initiated with the request '*to return to their sources and beginnings, to their national culture and history*'. Unlike the Orthodox East under communism, the Central European nations who

belong to the Western cultural circle and therefore with a clearer awareness of their cultural values, there they tried earlier and more strongly to

47 Lendić, 2001, p. 193.

48 Perović, 1971, p. 91.

return to themselves, to freedom and to free themselves from the suffocating cultural anonymity into which they were Communism threw in.<sup>49</sup>

At the beginning of the 1970s, Perović had a deep conviction that the national idea would win in a sharp clash with imperialist and internationalist Soviet communism. The scene of the future fight, as it turned out later, will be Central Europe, as Perović himself correctly predicted. Neo-stalinist Tito's attitude confronted the Croatian Spring in 1971, tens of thousands of people ended up under repression and in jail, but it was for Perović only a Pyrrhic victory for the Yugoslav regime. The same were the Soviet interventions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The ideas of national freedom and human rights are so strongly rooted in the Central European area and in Croatia that no principle of force of Soviet and Yugoslav communism can destroy it, concluded Perović.

## Conclusion

Ideas of Central European integration characterised Croatian political culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In particular, it was relevant in the period when the Croatian lands were part of the Monarchy before 1918. Croatian-Hungarian unionism and their state-law alliance with its great and long tradition was the true expression of Croatian Central European integration throughout almost all Croatian history. Austro-Slavism was supposed to be the Croatian response to Hungarian nationalism and the aspiration to completely subjugate the Croatian position to Hungary in modern times. Since 1850 the Yugoslav idea began to emerge from Austro-Slavism, which would be politically articulated at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It pursued the Croatian lands to leave the Monarchy and Central European integration. Nevertheless, the entry of the Croatian national territories into the Yugoslav states in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, did not stop the discussions on Central European issues in the Croatian politics and culture.

As there was considerable resistance to the Yugoslav state union in Croatia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many members of the Croatian political and intellectual elites dreamt about the return of Croatia to the Central European region. The right-wing, national and conservative political spectrum was in favour of such a direction, while the liberal and left-wing spectrum saw Croatia in Yugoslav and Balkan integration. Thus, in the last century, Croatian politics and culture no less was strongly divided between Central European and Yugoslav or Balkan integration. The idea of the Danube confederation appeared on the margins at the World War II in the Croatian public. Catholic and conservative circles sought the exit from Yugoslavia and the creation of an anti-communist block of states on the Baltic-Adriatic vertical, which would be established against the Soviet Union and international

49 Ibid. p. 266.

communism. When this did not happen, Croatian emigration continued to closely reflect the Central European area, to follow the national movements of Hungarians, Poles, Czechs and Croats. Despite the communist dictatorship, they hinted at imminent changes and the victory of the rich and vital national tradition over the communist utopia. Interestingly, after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and Yugoslavia, democratic Croatia did not join Central European integration in the form of the Visegrad Group, despite the existence of positive historical tradition in the Croatian politics and culture towards this type of integration.

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