

HEEDING A GOOD OR AN EVIL ANGEL: THE MAY DECLARATION OF 1917 AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE MIDDLE-EUROPEAN MONARCHY

Jure KRIŠTO*

Croatian Politics in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy before the War

From the beginning of the twentieth century to the beginning of World War I Croatian political and social life was marked by following characteristics: the end of tenure of Károly Khuen-Hederváry as Ban of Croatia-Slavonia (1903), political dominance of the Croat-Serb Coalition (*Hrvatsko-srpska koalicija* – HSK) (from 1906), the rapture with political and social traditions, pervasiveness with a trend to expand, of Yugoslavist ideology, and the presence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in view of its annexation by the Monarchy (1908) as nemesis of Croatian political life.

After Khuen was nominated the Minister President of Hungary and after he left a long tenure as the Ban of Croatia, a political void was left after him. The party he had used for the implementation of his autocratic policy, People's Party (*Narodna stranka*), also disappeared from the political scene. The Croatian Independent Party (*Hrvatska neovisna stranka*), known also as Strossmayer's Party, dwindled down to a group of soul-mates around the Zagreb daily *Obzor*, and were called *Obzoraši*. On the opposite end of ideological spectrum were Rightists (the Party of [State] Right - *Domovinaši* and the Pure Party of [State] Right – *Frankovci*).¹ Brothers Antun and Stjepan Radić in December 1904 formed the Croatian Popular and Peasant Party (*Hrvatska pučka seljačka stranka*),² but it was more an ideological, almost missionary project

* Jure Krišto, Ph. D., Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb

¹ Mirjana Gross, *Povijest pravaške ideologije* (Zagreb: Institut za hrvatsku povijest, 1973); Stjepan Matković, *Čista stranka prava, 1895.-1903.* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Dom i svijet, 2001).

² Ivan Mužić, *Stjepan Radić u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (Ljubljana, 1987); Josip Horvat, *Politička povijest Hrvatske*, 2 vols., 2nd. ed. (Zagreb, 1990), p. 265.

than a political party, whereby the peasants, the downtrodden people, are to be raised to the status of central political force.

The paucity of political activity was amply replenished with ideological confusion. The newly educated youth returned from European universities, especially Prague, and were ready to knock down "idols" and "authorities" of the "olds" and were in favor of everything *modern* (Croatian Modernism).³ They organized themselves into informal grouping of *Progressive Youth* (*Napredna omladina - Naprednjaci*). They were inimically disposed to *Frankovci* as bastions of traditional politics and traditional Croatian nationalism.⁴

The first political fruition of this ideological burgeoning happened in Dalmatia and it was formulated as a new program of a newly created political party, Croatian Party (*Hrvatska stranka*), in April 1905, called the "new course". The newness consisted of radical turn-around from traditional Croatian political values: instead of Croatian nationalism, readiness to recognize ethnic Serbs as "political people" in Croatia was emphasized. Of course, the turn-around was a reflection of political realism. Faced with Italian pressures and the heightening of Italian irredentism, Croatian politicians in Dalmatia had to look for alliances that would effectively repulse Italian pressures.

On the crest of the "new course" wave on 3 October 1905 the Rijeka Resolution (*Riječka rezolucija*) was signed. Croatian politicians from Dalmatia and banian Croatia, except J. Frank, expressed their readiness for political co-operation and harmony with Croatia's Serbs, and for the support of Hungarian opposition to achieve Hungary's full independence. In return, the signatories of the Resolution expected an equally unhesitant support of Hungarian politicians for unification of all Croat lands.⁵ On 17 October 1905, the Serb representatives from banian Croatia and Dalmatia signed the Zadar Resolution (*Zadarska rezolucija*), approving of the "new course" policy, with an important stipulation that they should be recognized in Croatia as people, and not just a minority group. Croat politicians agreed with that condition.⁶ A year later, the Croat-Serb Coalition (*Hrvatsko-srpska koalicija - HSK*) - the Croatian Party of Rights, the Croatian Progressive Party, the Serb People's Independent Party, the Serb People's Radical Party and, temporarily, the Social Democrat Party - for the first time won the election and thus began a long-lasting tenure.⁷

Politicians who did not share newly installed ideology detected inherent political pitfalls in the "new course" politics. Indeed, mere political rhetoric

³ Milan Marjanović, *Hrvatska Moderna* (Zagreb, 1951); Ante Kadić, "Thomas G. Masaryk and the Croats," *Journal of Croatian Studies*, vol. 28-29, 1987-88, pp. 81-102.

⁴ Ivan Peršić, *Kroničarski spisi*, ed. by Stjepan Matković (Zagreb: Državni arhiv u Zagrebu - Dom i svijet - Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2002), p. 149.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 273-274.

⁶ M. Gross, *Vladavina hrvatsko-srpske koalicije 1906-1907* (Beograd, 1960), passim.

⁷ Josip Horvat, *Politička povijest Hrvatske*, pp. 276-277.

indicated a political course that represented a radical rupture with traditional Croatian politics and rhetoric. In the Coalition's Manifest, there was not a word of the Croatian nation, but only of "our people of Croatian and Serb name". Expectedly, Frank's Pure Party of (State) Right in banian Croatia and Ivo Prodan's Party of (State) Right in Dalmatia did not accept the "new course" policy and did not join the Croat-Serb Coalition. They distrusted Hungarian politicians as much as they detested Serbs' idea of greater Serbia, which they detected in the Yugoslavist ideology and the propaganda about the unity of Croats and Serbs.⁸ Frank thought of Hungarians – supposed partners of the Coalition – as incurable chauvinists and megalomaniacs, and thus inappropriate political partners. He was soon to be justified, when Hungarian government enacted the law on the introduction of the Hungarian language in the rail traffic in Croatia.⁹ Frank believed neither in the ideology of brotherhood with Serbs or in the Slavic mutuality. He even considered those ideas to be nebulous.¹⁰ *Frankovci* manifested their disapproval with such policy by stirring up civil unrest. A number of articles in Frank's *Hrvatsko pravo* under a pseudonym "Argus" accused signatories of the Rijeka Resolution, especially Frano Supilo, to have been hired by Serbian government to propagate Serbian interests.¹¹ Frank believed that a more reliable political partner for Croats is Vienna, and not Pesta. The responsibility of Croatian politics, he believed, was to convince the Crown that failure to satisfy Croatian aspirations might be fatal for the Monarchy. He was also convinced that he can achieve that goal through the General Staff. S. Radić did not join the Coalition either; he stood up against the spirit and the letter of the Rijeka Resolution and the politics arising from it. Neither did the Istrian Croats join the Coalition, because they did not believe that co-operation with the Italians, which the Resolution also called for, would be possible.¹²

Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Test Case

Another important element of the Progressive Youth should be mentioned – their antagonism towards the Catholic clergy and towards the Church. The Church was perceived to be opposed to the idea of "Slavic mutuality" (*slavenska uzajamnost*) and the *Naprednjaci* intended to replace the traditional Catholic Church with "people's church", i.e. the Catholic Church that would be separated from Rome and organized so that it resembles the Serb Orthodox Church. They fiercely criticized the Catholic Church for its conservatism and, as they claimed, strong influence on the social life of Croats, which was supposedly the

⁸ Ivo Perić, *Povijest Hrvata* (Zagreb, 1997), p. 206.

⁹ Tomislav Macan, *Povijest hrvatskoga naroda* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice Hrvatske and Školska knjiga, 1992), p. 381.

¹⁰ Ivan Peršić, *Kroničarski spisi*, pp. 153-154.

¹¹ Josip Horvat, *Politička povijest Hrvatske*, p. 282.

¹² Hrvoje Matković-Drago Trumbetaš, *Mala ilustrirana hrvatska povijest* (Zagreb: Naklada Pavičić, 2001), pp. 230-234.

cause of many Croatia's problems. The Progressive's paper was a vociferous opponent of "clericalism" in Croatian society, which supposedly could be found in culture and politics.¹³ Progressives were, therefore, adamant opponents and critics of Bishop Antun Mahnić's Catholic Movement and its followers.¹⁴

The anti-Catholic disposition of the Progressive Youth stridently came out in connection with political developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As is known, at the Vienna Congress (1878) the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy got the mandate to rule Bosnia and Herzegovina and establish peace there. Soon the region was administered by the combined Ministry of the Finances of the dual Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The occupation also brought about the ecclesiastical reorganization and the assignment of Zagreb professor Josip Stadler (1882-1918) Archbishop of Vrhbosna, based in Sarajevo. For a long time Croatian politicians, especially those that shared Ante Starčević's state rights position, held that Bosnia and Herzegovina was a Croatian land. Archbishop Stadler and majority of Franciscans of the land shared that view and hoped that the expected annexation by the Monarchy would precipitate integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina with banian Croatia. Thus, ideological and political developments in Croatia and Dalmatia and politics of the Croat-Serb Coalition in Croatia militated against their hopes and political goals. The Coalition based its program on the reliance on ethnic Serbs, whereas they had to fight with Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the loyalty of the Muslims and, ultimately, for the decision about the future of that land. The Archbishop and Franciscans knew that the Coalition relinquished the idea that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a Croatian land as a concession to Croatian Serbs.¹⁵

To offset such political developments, the Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina in summer of 1906 founded the religious and cultural organization, Croatian National Community (*Hrvatska narodna zajednica* - HNZ) in Dolac near Travnik. The General Committee members were only laymen: Nikola Mandić, Jozo Sunarić, Stjepan Kukrić, Ivo Pilar and Đuro Džamonja. The political message of the HNZ, contained in its Bylaws, was clear: Bosnia and Herzegovina is a Croat land and its inhabitants naturally tend to unite with the Kingdom of Croatia, its Muslim citizens are "indubitably Croats", who will be "organized apart" due to specific circumstances.¹⁶

¹³ Većeslav Wilder, "O stranačkoj štampi," *Hrvatski Pokret*, 3 (1906), no. 130; "Što je klerikalizam," *Ibid*, no. 119.

¹⁴ Jure Krišto, *Prešućena povijest. Katolička crkva u hrvatskoj politici, 1850-1918* (Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada, 1994), passim.

¹⁵ M. Gross, "Liberalizam i klerikalizam u hrvatskoj povijesti (19. i početak 20. stoljeća)," *Naše teme*, 31 (1987): 6-7, pp. 846-858; For a different viewpoint see: Jure Krišto, *Prešućena povijest; Idem, "Nadbiskup Josip Stadler u svjetlu naprednjačkog tiska (1904.-1918.)," Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 31 (1999): 1, pp. 29-50; Stjepan Matković, *Čista stranka prava*, passim.

¹⁶ M. Gross, "Hrvatska politika u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1878. do 1914.," *Historijski zbornik* 19-20 (1966-1967): 1-4, p. 26; Zoran Grijak, *Politička djelatnost vrhbosanskog nadbiskupa Josipa Stadlera*, (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest-Dom i svijet, 2000), p. 178.

However, the Croat-Serb Coalition began to win followers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, even within the Croatian National Community (I. Pilar, N. Mandić, and Franciscans). At the same time Serbian propaganda intensified after the king Milan Obrenović of Serbia, the holder of the pro-Austrian policy, in June 1903 was murdered. The Karađorđević dynasty immediately adopted the pro-Russian policy. Those developments were matched by antimonarchist activities of the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and an intensified propaganda that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a Serb land and that Muslims are Serbs. At the same time, the Catholic Croats were increasingly presented as reactionary element, Catholic Church, especially Archbishop Stadler, as proselytes eager to convert Muslims to Catholicism. Bosnian Serbs received more than generous help from Croatian Progressives and the Croat-Serb Coalition in spreading such propaganda. In fact, the daily *Pokret*, sponsored by the Progressives, was the fiercest critic of Archbishop Stadler. The standard menu of their critique was that Stadler equated Croathood with Catholicism, which supposedly alienated Croat Catholics in Bosnia and Herzegovina from Muslims and Orthodox Serbs. Moreover, Stadler alone was to blame for his conflict with the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Franciscans.¹⁷

Under such propaganda, Pilar, Mandić, and Franciscans distanced themselves even further from Archbishop Stadler, which inevitably led to the split of the HNZ. In February 1908, Stadler refused to approve the Bylaws.¹⁸ The Archbishop apparently was against the inter-confessional organization, preferring that Muslims and Catholics organize themselves apart and then join their efforts in common political projects. He requested that the Bylaws should reflect that position and, thus, "reserve" the membership for Catholics alone.¹⁹ After the HNZ leadership refused to accommodate the Archbishop,²⁰ in July 1909 he made moves to organize an alternative Croatian organization for Catholics, Croatian Catholic Association (*Hrvatska katolička udruga* – HKU).

In the meantime, on 6 October 1908, the Monarchy annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina and, thus, after three centuries of Ottoman dominance, rejoined it to the western civilization.²¹ Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina generally approved the annexation, hoping that the country would be joined to Croatia.

¹⁷ "Stadler i Jeglič", *Hrvatski pokret* 5 (1908: 238, p. 6. For more details, see: J. Krišto, "Nadbiskup Josip Stadler u svjetlu naprednjačkog tiska".

¹⁸ Luka Djaković, *Političke organizacije bosanskohercegovačkih katolika Hrvata*, sv. 1: Do otvaranja Sabora 1910 (Zagreb, 1985), pp. 271-275.

¹⁹ "Šta hoćemo u H.N.Z?", *Vrhbosna* 23 (1909): 2, p. 31.; L. Djaković, *Političke organizacije*, pp. 271-275, 284-286.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

²¹ Andrew Rossos, *Rusija i Balkan. Međubalkanska rivalstva i ruska vanjska politika 1908-1914*. (Zagreb: Globus, 1922), passim.

However, that approval was not shared by some prominent Croatian politicians in Croatia, members of the Croat-Serb Coalition; Frano Supilo was one of the most vociferous opponents.²²

Croats and the Reformation of the Monarchy - The Debate over the May Declaration

The lack of common political purpose among politicians could not guarantee prosperous future either to Croats in Croatia or in Bosnia and Herzegovina. But the obstinacy of Monarchical political circles to heed basic Croatian wishes was even a greater problem, which frustrated all Croatian political parties, regardless of ideological preferences. Indeed, there was no lack of Croatian politicians in the period leading to World War I who put forward proposals for the reformation of the Monarchy, which would realize the unification of the Croat lands.

One of the proposals came from the Croatian Starčević Party of (State) Right, or *Milinovci*, and the Slovene politicians Rev. Janez Evangelist Krek and Rev. Anton Korošec; it aimed at the reconstruction of the Monarchy so that its Croat and Slovene population would unify on the basis of the Croat state rights, but would remain under the Habsburg dynasty.²³ Before he was assassinated in Sarajevo, they believed that they had the support of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand. The other proposal also came from the rightist tradition of Croatian politics – the Pure Party of (State) Right (*Čista stranka prava – Frankovci*). Their proposal gave priority to the unification of Bosnia and Herzegovina with Croatia-Slavonia, with the unification of Slovenes with Croats second in importance.²⁴

The Croatian political and cultural mainstream, however, was impregnated with ideas of Yugoslavism, nourished by ideology that posited that Croats and Serbs are, like their languages, one and same people, and hoped for creation of a Yugoslav state. By the time of the beginning of World War I, most of the membership of the Catholic movement's organizations felt a deep ideological kinship with the rest of Croatia's intellectual and political elite.²⁵ On the crest of those ideological waves, and not without prodding from the Serbian government, sailed the Croatian self-made representatives of the will of Croatian

²² For further details see: J. Krišto, "Kad pravaši pođu različitim putovima: Frano Supilo i Josip Frank o 'novom kursu'", *Pravaška misao i politika. Zbornik radova*, ed. by Jasna Turkalj, Zlatko Matijević i Stjepan Matković (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2007), pp. 143-165.

²³ *Stenografski zapisnici sabora Kraljevine Hrvatske, Slavonije i Dalmacije (SZSKHSD)*, period 1913-1918, vol. IV, session 159 (March 5, 1917), pp. 850-851; A. Rahten, *Savezništva i diobe. Razvoj slovensko-hrvatskih političkih odnosa u Habsburškoj Monarhiji 1848.-1918.* (Zagreb: Golden marketing–Tehnička knjiga, 2007), pp. 205-212.

²⁴ SZSKHSD, 855.

²⁵ J. Krišto, *Prešućena povijest*, *passim*.

people--Ante Trumbić, Frano Supilo, Ivan Meštrović, and Hinko Hinković. In 1915, they were joined by Serbian and Slovene politicians to found the *Yugoslav Committee* in London.²⁶ The Committee advocated the disintegration of Austro-Hungary and the creation of a new South-Slavic state from its Slavic areas.

In the war (World War I), there was the conflict of interests of the countries of the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy) and Allied powers (Great Britain, France and Russia). As soon as the war broke out, Italy declared its neutrality, and on 26 April 1915, entered into the secret pact with the Allied powers (the Treaty of London) on taking part in the war on their side, as it was promised to get South Tyrol, Gorizia, Gradišće, Trieste, Istria and a larger part of Dalmatia.²⁷ Croats thus fought on three fronts: the Balkan front against Serbia, the East front against Russia, and the Soča front against Italy.

Such was the political and ideological context for the appearance of still another proposal for the reformation of the Monarchy – that of the club of the south Slavic representatives in the Emperor's Council, the Yugoslav Club. On May 30, 1917, the Club issued the Declaration which also was based on Croatian state right; it called for the unification of the lands populated by Croats, Slovenes, and Serbs within the Monarchy in one political body under the house of the Habsburgs.²⁸ The May Declaration was probably an attempt to provide an alternative to the program of the Yugoslav Committee in London. However, its pithy message gave rise to a lively discussion which soon revealed the political and ideological preferences of the opposing groups within Croatian circles.²⁹

The president of Starčević's Party of (State) Right, Ante Pavelić (the elder), praised the Declaration,³⁰ and the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, Stjepan

²⁶ M. Paulova, *Jugoslavenski odbor (Povijest jugoslavenske emigracije za svjetskog rata 1914.-1918.)* (Zagreb, 1925).

²⁷ Ivo Perić, *Povijest Hrvata*, p. 209.

²⁸ Ferdo Šišić, *Dokumenti o postanku Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1914.-1919.* (Zagreb, 1920), p. 95. See also: Dragoslav Janković, *Jugoslovensko pitanje i Krfska deklaracija 1917. god.* (Beograd, 1967), pp.127-128; Zlatko Matijević, *Reakcije frankovačkih pravaša na «Svibanjsku deklaraciju» i njezine promicatelje (1917.-1918.)*, *Prošlost obvezuje : povijesni korijeni Gospićko-senjske biskupije: zbornik biskupa Mile Bogovića*, ed. by Franjo Emanuel Hoško, (Rijeka, 2004), pp. 439-474; A. Rahten, *Savezništva i diob*, pp. 205-212; Dragovan Šepić, *Italija, saveznici i jugoslavensko pitanje 1914-1918* (Zagreb, 1970), pp. 232-233; Momčilo Zečević, *Slovenska ljudska stranka i jugoslovensko ujedinjenje 1917-1921. Od Majske deklaracije do Vidovdansskog ustava* (Beograd, 1973), p. 81.

²⁹ J. Krišto, *Prešućena povijest*, pp. 347-362; Z. Matijević, *Slom politike katoličkog jugoslovenstva. Hrvatska pučka stranka u političkom životu Kraljevine SHS (1919.-1929.)* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Dom i svijet, 1998), pp. 57-69; Idem, *Reakcije frankovačkih pravaša na «Svibanjsku deklaraciju»*, pp. 443-473.

³⁰ F. Šišić, *Dokumenti*, 95.

Radić, lauded it as the very expression of his political program,³¹ whereas the followers of the Pure Party of (State) Right criticized it as a sell-out of the historical Croatian political right.³² Some Frankists accused the leadership of the Slovene People's Party of treason.³³ The Catholic Seniority (the leading body of the Croatian Catholic Movement)³⁴ and the Zagreb Archbishop Antun Bauer expressed support for the Declaration.

A similar polarization occurred among the political parties in Dalmatia. Rev. Ivo Prodan expressed strong support for the Declaration³⁵ while other Catholic priests criticized it as a deviation from the rightist program of 1894.³⁶

Many Catholic priests were involved in the debate caused by the May Declaration, so it is not surprising that the historiography of the former Yugoslavia called the Declaration itself a "clericalist" document, implying that clergy used religion for political purposes. However, the reason for such an opinion does not lie in the fact that many clerics were involved in the debate about the

³¹ Stjepan Radić, "Temelji hrvatske pučke seljačke stranke, jugoslavenske deklaracije i krfskog programa," *Dom*, Zagreb, 12 (1918): 4, p. 2. More in: Branka Boban, "Odnos hrvatske političke elite prema Svibanjskoj deklaraciji," *Dijalog povjesničara – istoričara*, vol. 4 (Zagreb, 2001), pp. 314-318. On Radić's political activities during the WWI see: Bogdan Krizman, "Stjepan Radić i Hrvatska pučka seljačka stranka u prvom svjetskom ratu," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 2 (1970): 2, pp. 99-166.

³² SZSKHSD, period 1913-1918, vol. IV, session 233 (May 15, 1918), p. 722; A. Rahten, *Savezništva i diobe*, p. 215. See also portions of Ivica Frank's speech during the session of August 8, 1917, cited in: B. Krizman, *Hrvatska u Prvom svjetskom ratu. Hrvatsko-srpski politički odnosi* (Zagreb, 1989), p. 137; Z. Matijević, Reakcije frankovačkih pravaša na «Svibanjsku deklaraciju», pp. 448-449.

³³ Milan Kovačević, "Skokovi," *Hrvatska*, 1917, no. 1828, p. 1; Z. Matijević, Reakcije frankovačkih pravaša na «Svibanjsku deklaraciju», p. 448.

³⁴ For differences among the Catholic Seniority see: Z. Matijević, "Politička orijentacija dijela hrvatskih katoličkih seniora u Slavoniji od objavljivanja 'Svibanjske deklaracije' Jugoslavenskog kluba u Beču do osnutka Hrvatske pučke stranke (1917.-1919.)," *Scrinia slavonica*, 1 (2001), pp. 193-216.

³⁵ On the Dalmatian rightist tradition see: Jaroslav Šidak, Mirjana Gross, Igor Karaman i Dragovan Šepić, *Povijest hrvatskog naroda g. 1860-1914*. (Zagreb, 1968), pp. 167-169, 172-176; Mirjana Gross, "Uloga šibenskog pravaštva u dalmatinskoj i općehrvatskoj pravaškoj politici uoči prvog svjetskog rata," *Radovi Instituta za hrvatsku povijest*, 1 (1971), pp. 259-285; Idem, *Povijest pravaške ideologije* (Zagreb, 1973), pp. 287 and passim; Marjan Diklić, "Mihovil Pavlinović i pojava pravaštva u Dalmaciji," *Radovi Zavoda za povijesne znanosti Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti u Zadru*, 37 (1989), pp. 15-43; Idem, "Pojava pravaštva i nastanak Stranke prava u Dalmaciji," *Ibid.*, 32 (1990), pp. 5-107; Idem, "Prva konferencija 'starčevićanaca' u Dalmaciji," *Ibid.*, 34 (1992), pp. 181-195; Idem, "Stranka prava i Hrvatsko političko društvo koncem XIX. i na početku XX. stoljeća," *Ibid.*, 38 (1996), pp. 249-261.

³⁶ See: NEKOLIKO SVEĆENIKA, "Svojevoljni sljepci. Nekoliko rieči povodom deklaracije Jugoslavenskog kluba," *Hrvatska*, 1917, no. 1870, pp. 1-2; no. 1871, pp. 1-2; Z. Matijević, Reakcije frankovačkih pravaša na «Svibanjsku deklaraciju», p. 450. On the rightist program of 1894 see: Stjepan Matković, *Čista stranka prava*, pp. 39-55.

Declaration or that they misused their religion for political purposes. The real reason for such name-calling was the fact that a number of Catholic priests, especially the younger and members of the Croatian Catholic Movement,³⁷ adhered to the ideology of the Pure Party of the (State) Right and thus could not accept any form of Yugoslavism. As an ardent follower of Starčević's ideology, Rev. Stipe Vučetić, considered the May Declaration like the serpent on the tree in Paradise, tempting Croats to choose evil instead of good.³⁸ So even though some clerical circles interpreted the May Declaration in the sense of Yugoslav integration, its acceptance or rejection did not depend on criteria devised by the Church. So it is not surprising that there was a substantial body of Catholic clerics, priests as bishops, who rejected the Declaration because of adherence to the rightist ideology. Obviously, the adherence to the Yugoslavist or rightist ideology was the reason for acceptance or rejection of the Declaration, and the Yugoslav historiography was motivated by still other ideological reasons (communist) when it had labeled it "clericalist".

The Archbishop of Sarajevo is a case in point. He authorized Ivo Pilar and Josip Vancaš to submit to Emperor Karl a memorandum asking that the Croatian Kingdom be unified with Bosnia and Herzegovina and that the new Croatian state become a condominium of Austria and Hungary, headed by a member of the Habsburg dynasty who was to be nominated by the King.³⁹ Stadler's circle made its political position public on November 16, 1917 in a Pronouncement that Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Istria unite in a politically and financially independent state body, permanently associated with the Habsburg Monarchy.⁴⁰

Given Stadler's status in both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as his uneasy relationship to local Franciscans and their circle of politicians, it is not surprising that Stadler's Pronouncement had a divisive effect. Indeed, all those that adhered to the Yugoslav ideology (the Franciscans of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the followers of Mahnić's Catholic movement, including almost all religious orders except the Jesuits; the Zagreb Archbishop A. Bauer; and

³⁷ On the Croatian Catholic Movement, see: ????????

³⁸ S. Vučetić, "Značaj jugoslavenske propagande," *Hrvatska*, 1918, no. 2081, p. 1; Z. Matijević, Reakcije frankovačkih pravaša na «Svibanjsku deklaraciju», p. 471.

³⁹ L. v. Südland (Ivo Pilar), *Die südslawische Frage und der Weltkrieg* (Wien 1918), pp. 751-757; See: Luka Djaković, *Položaj Bosne i Hercegovine u austrougarskim koncepcijama rješenja jugoslavenskog pitanja 1914-1918.* (Tuzla, 1980), p. 156; Hamdija Kapidžić, "Austro-ugarska politika u Bosni i Hercegovini i jugoslovensko pitanje za vrijeme prvog svjetskog rata," *Godišnjak Istorijskog društva Bosne i Hercegovine*, 9 (1957), pp. 26-27; Z. Matijević, Reakcije frankovačkih pravaša na «Svibanjsku deklaraciju», p. 452.

⁴⁰ *Hrvatski dnevnik*, 12 (1917): 263, p. 1. The signers in: "Tko je potpisao izjavu?," *Novine*, 4 (1917): 284, p. 2.; *Bosnische Post*, 20 (November 1917); Z. Matijević, Reakcije frankovačkih pravaša na «Svibanjsku deklaraciju», pp. 454-455; See also: "Na obranu hrvatstva!," *Hrvatski dnevnik*, 12 (1917): 263, p. 1.

I. Prodan's followers in Dalmatia)⁴¹ distanced themselves from Stadler's Pronouncement. Only priests who supported Frank's political party, joined by S. Radić, who normally opposed the Croatian Party of (State) Rights program, approved of Stadler's political course.⁴²

It is not excluded that by the Pronouncement Stadler intended to counteract still another declaration, the *Corfu Declaration*, which members of the emigrant group (Yugoslav Committee) signed on the island of Corfu with the leading Serbian politicians Nikola Pašić on 20 July 1917 and which called for the unification of Croats, Serbs and Slovenes.⁴³ Although the Corfu Declaration was not unanimously welcomed in Croatia, especially by S. Radić, the mainstream of Croatian political and cultural life was inclined to the idea of the unification. That became evident when the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (*Narodno vijeće Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba* – NV SHS) was established on 5-6 October 1918 in Zagreb. The politics of the NV SHS took a definite course after the Croatian-Serbian Coalition entered the Council and gained predominance in it. Slovene Anton Korošec was elected the president, and the vice-presidents were Croat Ante Pavelić, senior, and Croatian Serb Svetozar Pribičević. The National Council did not accept King Karl's manifest on the reorganization of the Monarchy into a federation of independent nations. On the contrary, on 29 October 1918, the Croatian Parliament suspended all connections of the Croatian nation with Hungary and Austria, and transferred its authority to the National Council. The Parliament also declared the new state community – the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs.⁴⁴

Conclusions

Several conclusions seem to be in order.

First, Bosnia and Herzegovina has always been the critical problem of Cro-

⁴¹ See: F. Šišić, *Dokumenti*, p. 105; "Izjava," *Novine*, 4 (1917): 286, p. 1.; Z. Matijević, Reakcije frankovačkih pravaša na «Svibanjsku deklaraciju», p. 457; "Istrani protiv Šadlerove izjave," *Hrvatska riječ* (1917): 351, p. 1; "Izjava nadbiskupa Stadlera," *Hrvatska Kruna* (1917): 88, p. 1; Z. Matijević, Reakcije frankovačkih pravaša na «Svibanjsku deklaraciju», p. 457; J. Krišto, *Prešućena povijest*, p. 355.

⁴² "Izjava povjerenja nadbiskupu dru. Stadleru," *Hrvatska* (1917): 1931, p. 1; Stjepan Markužić, "Na poruku vlč. gg. kolege Jemeršića i Turzana," *Hrvatska* (1918): 1969, p. 1; "Preuzvišenom gospodinu dru. Josipu Stadleru nadbiskupu vrhbosanskom itd. u Sarajevu," *Hrvatska* (1917): 1921, p. 1. The politicians that supported Stadler were: Dr. Aleksandar Horvat, Dr. Ivo Frank, Dr. Vuk pl. Kiš, Josip Milković, Rev. Fran Novak, Rev. Stjepan Pavunić, Rev. dr. Josip Pazman, pop Matija Polić, Dr. Vladimir Prebeg, pop Stipe pl. Vučetić, Ivan Zatluka, Rev. Stjepan Zagarac, Jalžabetić, Vinko Lovreković, and Stjepan Radić, see: Z. Matijević, Reakcije frankovačkih pravaša na "Svibanjsku deklaraciju", pp. 457-458.

⁴³ Tomislav Macan, *Povijest hrvatskoga naroda*, p. 387.

⁴⁴ Šišić et al., *Povijest hrvatskog naroda*, pp. 179-180; Tomislav Macan, *Povijest hrvatskoga naroda*, p. 388. See Z. Matijević's article in this issue of the RCH.

atian politics and the key for resolving the Croatian puzzle. That was the case at the beginning of the 20th century and that is the case today. However, no political problem has caused so much disagreement among Croatian politicians as the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Parties that made up the Croat-Serb Coalition, the leadership of the Croatian Catholic movement, many Catholic bishops, and the Croatian intellectual elite had tended to relinquish the problem of the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina to others – the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Kingdom of Serbia, or some other international actor. The adherence, clerical and secular, to the ideology of the Party of (State) Right, especially its "radical" branch, the Pure Party of Right, had envisaged the unification of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the rest of Croatian lands not only as a solution to the question of the future status of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but to that of Croatia and to the question of the reorganization of the Monarchy as well.

Second, a constant thread has run through Croatian politics and ideological controversy for over a century -- a complaint regarding the influence of clericalism. That usually meant either that a disproportionately large presence of Catholic clergy was actively involved in Croatian culture and politics or that there was a misuse of the (Catholic) faith for political purposes. However, the debate caused by the May Declaration and later by Stadler's Pronouncement demonstrates that the real problem was not whether one was a member of the clergy and, thus, supposedly prone to use religion for political gain, but rather whether one was an adherent of the ideology of Yugoslavism or against it.

Third, the majority of Catholic clergy in Croatia, including the bishops, has adopted the Yugoslavist ideology and the program of those Croatian politicians who worked on the unification of Croatia with the kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro; hence, the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes no issue.

Yugoslavism apparently is the fruit on the Croatian tree that the serpent tempted Croatian politicians to taste.

Dem guten oder dem bösen Engel zuhörend: die Maideklaration aus dem Jahre 1917 und der Zusammenbruch der Mitteleuropäischen Monarchie

Zusammenfassung

Drei Jahre nach dem Kriegsbeginn, am 30. Mai 1917, beschloss der Jugoslawische Klub der Abgeordneten im Wiener Reichsrat die Maideklaration, in der er die Vereinigung aller mit Slowenen, Kroaten und Serben besiedelten Gebiete des Österreich-Ungarns in einen selbständigen Staat forderte, jedoch unter dem Zepter der Habsburger. Diese Forderung basierte auf dem nationalen Prinzip und auf dem kroatischen Staatsrecht.

Die Maideklaration rief Kontroversen unter kroatischen Politikern und politischen Parteien hervor, gleichzeitig aber begann auch die Bewegung zur Annahme des Programms der Deklaration. Die eifrigsten Befürworter waren die Spitzenleute und Mitglieder katholischer Organisationen.

Autor analysiert die politische Situation, die zur Formulierung der Deklaration führte, Kontroversen über die öffentliche Präsentation der Deklaration sowie die von ihr verursachten politischen Folgen. Die Maideklaration bildete wahrscheinlich keinen entscheidenden Faktor im Prozess der Zerstörung der großen Monarchie und in der Bildung des ersten jugoslawischen Staates, trug aber sicherlich dazu im hohen Maße bei.