

Volunteer Veterans and Entangled Cultures of Victory in Interwar Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia

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Abstract

Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were two successor states of the Austro-Hungarian empire at great pains in the interwar period to portray themselves, both domestically and internationally, as ‘victor states’ of the First World War, even though both states inherited societies that were deeply fractured by the experience of war. The symbol of the pro-Entente war volunteer was an important part of both states’ interwar cultures of victory. Such volunteers represented just a fraction of war veterans in both countries, but they were given great prominence in their respective state-forming cultures. This article is a study of the origins and the nature of this important entanglement. It begins by defining the problematic nature of the ‘culture of victory’ in the region, before going on to explore the common origins of the volunteer movements in the wartime pro-Entente émigré groups. It then moves on to a discussion of consequences of the privileging of volunteer veterans in the institutional, political, and commemorative cultures of the two states.

Keywords

culture of victory, Czechoslovakia, First World War, volunteering, Yugoslavia

The leaders of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia went to great lengths in the interwar period to portray their states as victors of the First World War. This was in spite – or perhaps *because of* – the fact that both states inherited societies that were deeply fractured by the experience of war. In this context, the symbol of the pro-Entente war volunteer was an important part of both states’ interwar cultures of victory, for the volunteer was construed in both states as an individual that had elected to fight

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and to sacrifice himself for liberation from imperial rule. Since there had been no Czechoslovak or Yugoslav state armies before 1918, the volunteer divisions of both countries became pre-war surrogates. The volunteer divisions of the Serbian army and the so-called 'Czechoslovak Legionaries', comprising in both cases mainly Habsburg prisoners of war, but also members of the global diaspora, had been an important part of the wartime diplomatic case for recognizing the proposed new states as co-belligerents on the side of the *Entente*. It was a role they continued to take in the interwar period, for in both Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia the volunteer served as a prehistory of patriotism and military service that could anchor postwar national narratives and state-forming efforts, as well as a means of concealing the mixed experiences of the war years with an overarching emblem of war victory. Moreover, this was a culture of victory informed by the common pre-war and wartime histories of the two states.

The privileging of the volunteer as a symbol of state patriotism, both institutionally and at an individual level, pushed other groups into the margins. Laws pertaining to the presence of symbols of 'defeated enemies' in both states could be – and often were – wielded as a means of halting the organizational activities of such groups. In Czechoslovakia, the 'statue wars' fought around monuments to Joseph II provided an example of 'centrifugal' memory cultures and their potential to disrupt the state-forming process.¹ Similar – albeit less violent – conflicts had been waged in Yugoslavia, and here too Austro-Hungarian veteran associations could fall under the same rubric as manifestations of a 'defeated enemy'.² In this sense, then, the culture of victory was not merely a positive articulation of the experience of war and the active role of Czechoslovak and Yugoslav citizens and subjects in its realisation, it was also a matter of suppressing voices and forces that opposed this central narrative in the public sphere.³

To argue, however, that the volunteer movements represented manifestations of a single national group's hegemony in these otherwise supposedly multi-national states is to miss the ambiguity and the paradoxes of the cultures of victory in postwar East-Central Europe. To be sure, as we shall see, overwhelming majorities in both the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav volunteer divisions were respectively Czechs and Serbians, suggesting at first glance that volunteering provides yet further evidence of the conflation between the hegemonic national group and the supposed multinational nature of both countries. But even all told, the Legionaries in Czechoslovakia represented just a small fraction of war veterans

1 N.M. Wingfield *Flag Wars and Stone Saints: How the Bohemian Lands Became Czech* (Cambridge, MA 2007).

2 See J.P. Newman 'Silent Liquidation: Croatian Veterans and the Margins of War Memory in Interwar Yugoslavia', in M. Cornwall and J.P. Newman (eds), *Sacrifice and Rebirth: The Legacy of the Last Habsburg War* (New York, NY and Oxford 2016). And the excellent studies of the Slovene case in interwar Yugoslavia by P. Svoljšak 'The Sacrificed Slovenian Memory of the Great War in Cornwall', Newman, and G.J. Kranjc 'The Neglected War: The Memory of World War I in Slovenia', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 22, 2 (June 2009).

3 A point made by Maria Bucur in her study of Romanian war commemoration. See M. Bucur, *Heroes and Victims: Remembering War in Twentieth-Century Romania* (Bloomington, IN 2009).

in the entire country. The reality was that most Czechoslovaks of all nationalities, including the Czechs themselves, had fought throughout the war in the Austro-Hungarian army. The legionaries were more like a minority whose role in the war granted them access to privileges and prestige in a state that emphasized a supposed culture of victory based on their wartime conduct. This was also the case in Yugoslavia: volunteers themselves represented just a fraction of war veterans, a situation complicated by the presence of a large cohort of non-volunteer veterans of the Serbian army who were an intrinsic part of the Yugoslav culture of victory. Many South Slavs of all nationality had fought on in the Austro-Hungarian army until the end of the war. The volunteer culture of victory excluded marginal state and national groups, to be sure, but it also excluded members of the hegemonic group in both cases (thus Czechs who served in the Austro-Hungarian army, and Serbs/Serbianians who fought in the Austro-Hungarian army, too).

This article is a study of the way in which state-builders manipulated the symbol of the volunteer in both countries, and also a study of the entangled nature of this symbol between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. It begins by defining the problematic nature of the 'culture of victory' in the region (problematic because it concealed the ambivalent nature of the war years) before exploring the common origins of the volunteer movements in the wartime pro-Entente émigré groups. It then moves to a discussion of how volunteer veterans were privileged in the institutional, political, and commemorative cultures of the two states, and the consequences of this.

Perhaps no region in the aftermath of the First World War embodies the paradoxes of the Entente 'culture of victory' as does East-Central Europe. Of the new states in the region, four were deemed members of the victorious Entente: Poland, Romania, and the composite states of Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (renamed as Yugoslavia in 1929, in will be referred to by this title throughout), earning a place at the peace conferences in Paris and – often – considerable territorial expansion. This post-imperial 'shatter-zone' of Russian, German, and – most centrally – Austro-Hungarian empires became after 1918, in the words of first Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, a 'laboratory atop a vast graveyard'⁴ in which unfolded a grand experiment in state-building. Histories of the interwar period have long acknowledged the difficulties faced by peacemakers in midwifing the successor states of 'New Europe' after 1918: grafting the borders of nation-states onto regions mixed and defined by centuries of imperial rule, settler colonialism, and religious proselytizing.⁵ But it was not just that the nation-state as a political model sat uneasily with the ethnic composition of the region: East-Central Europe was divided also by the experience of conflict, its

4 T. Garrigue Masaryk (with K. Čapek), *President Masaryk Tells his Story*, (London 1934), 299.

5 See M. Macmillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York, NY 2003). For the long-term historical arc of imperial evolution and decline, see A. Rieber *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands: From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the End of the First World War* (Cambridge 2014). On the shatterzones and the end of empire, see A. Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia, and the Middle East 1914–1923* (London 2005), and O. Bartov and E.D. Weitz (eds), *Shatterzones of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN 2013).

societies set apart by various and competing military and cultural mobilizations (and thereafter demobilizations), by shifting frontlines, by a protracted ‘Greater War’⁶ that had begun with the first Balkan war of 1912 and extended, largely uninterrupted, through the Polish-Soviet war of 1920–1 and beyond.⁷

The model of the nation-state belied not only the complex ethnic mixing of the populations in question, but also the ambiguous and conflicting legacies of the war years. And if the western allies projected their own state model into the shatter-zone of East-Central Europe, they also brought along their largely statist understanding of victory and defeat. It could feasibly be argued that France or Great Britain experienced victory at a national level (even if within those societies there was profound disagreement about the meaning of that victory).⁸ But it is much less clear that Poland or Romania – whose territories had been divided by the fault-lines of the First World War and its ensuing battles – belonged wholly to either victorious or defeated camps in the interwar period.⁹ The shatter-zone of empire and the overlaying of national borders in the region meant that the societies of the ‘victor states’ in East-Central Europe were divided by competing wartime mobilizations and the legacies of fault-lines between belligerent states.

The newly formed states of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia inherited such an ambiguous legacy from the First World War. Thus, the territories of the new Czechoslovak state had been entirely subsumed within the Austro-Hungarian empire until the end of the war (albeit divided between its Cisleithenian – Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia – and its Transleithenian – Slovakia, Subcarpathian Rus – halves). The diplomatic efforts of anti-Habsburg émigrés such as Masaryk, Edvard Beneš, and Milan Rastislav Štefánik may have persuaded Entente leaders that the Czechs and Slovaks were allies who deserved their own state, but it did not alter the wartime experiences of the people themselves, the majority of whom had been incorporated into the Habsburg war effort, and many of whom had fought not for the Entente but in the imperial army.¹⁰ In the case of Yugoslavia, the unification of the state involved unifying the Serbian and

6 The term is taken from the Oxford University Press series ‘The Greater War’, edited by Robert Gerwarth.

7 There are some excellent regional studies now available on this postwar violence. See, e.g., J. Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe 1918–1921: The Reconstruction of Poland* (Oxford 2018), T. Balkelis, *War, Revolution, and Nation-Making in Lithuania, 1914–1923* (Oxford 2018), M. Jones, *Founding Weimar: Violence and the Revolution of 1918–1919* (Cambridge 2016), and the overarching study by R. Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917–1923* (London 2016).

8 See, e.g., A. Gregory *Armistice Day, 1919–1946: Silence of Memory* (Oxford 1994).

9 See, e.g., J. Eichenberg, *Kämpfen für Frieden und Fürsorge: polnische Veteranen des Ersten Weltkriegs und ihre internationalen Kontakte, 1918–1939* (Munich 2011), I. Marin, ‘World War One and Internal Repression: The Case of Major General Nikolaus Cena’, in *Austrian History Yearbook*, 44 (2013).

10 See Jiří Hutečka’s study of motivation, morale, and masculinity among Czech soldiers in the First World War: J. Hutečka, *Muži proti ohni: Motivace, morálka a mužnost českých vojáků Velké války 1914–1918* (Prague 2016), and for the home-front (in wartime Bohemia), see R. Kučera, *Rationed Life: Science, Everyday Life, and Working Class Politics in the Bohemian Lands, 1914–1918* (London and New York, NY 2016).

Montenegrin kingdoms, which had fought against the Central Powers, with the Habsburg South Slav territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slovenia, territories of the Habsburg empire and part of that state's war effort. Prominent and high-ranking soldiers in the Austro-Hungarian army included Field Marshall Svetozar Borojević, who had fought with distinction on the Italian front General Anton Lipošćak, governor of Habsburg-occupied Poland, and General Stjepan Sarkotić, governor-general of Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹¹ Indeed, many South Slav soldiers had served in the military governorship in Bosnia and Dalmatia and the Habsburg occupation of Serbia, bringing them into direct contact with subjects of the Serbian state.¹²

Despite these ambiguities, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia identified closely with the Entente victory of 1918 and with the territorial status quo after 1918, prizing their ties with the French and the British and their position in the 'New Europe' created by the war victory. This close union was confirmed soon after the end of the war, in the 'Little Entente' (along with Romania), an 'anti-Habsburg' diplomatic alliance initially directed against Hungarian territorial revisionism.¹³ But the ties between these two countries, as we shall see, ran even deeper than this formal political alliance.¹⁴

In the context of these divided legacies of war, the symbol of the pro-Entente war volunteer became crucial for state-builders in both countries. The volunteer divisions of the Serbian army and the so-called 'Czechoslovak Legionaries', comprising in both cases mainly Habsburg prisoners of war,¹⁵ but also members of the global diaspora, were an important part of the wartime diplomatic case for recognising the proposed new states as co-belligerents on the side of the Entente. Both volunteer forces were rooted in the pro-Entente émigré committees that emerged in

11 Borojević, who had been an honorary citizen of Ljubljana, was all but forgotten in postwar Yugoslavia. See E. Bauer, *Der Löwe vom Isonzo. Feldmarschall Svetozar Borojević de Bojna* (Graz 1985).

12 See B. Mladenović, *Grad u austrougarskoj zoni u Srbiji od 1916. do 1918 godine* (Belgrade 2000), and J. Gumz, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914–1918* (Cambridge 2009). In Habsburg Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia, the wartime governor general was Stjepan Sarkotić, a figure notorious in Yugoslavia for his role in the 'Banja Luka Trials' of 1916–17. See N. Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (London 1996), 163.

13 See M. Adám *The Little Entente and Europe: 1920–1929* (Budapest 1993).

14 There is a significant and long-running tradition of studying the common international relations between Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Its history begins soon after the First World War, with the works of Milada Paulová, see especially *Jihoslovanský odboj a česká mafie* (Prague 1928), *Tomáš G. Masaryk a Jihoslovani* (Prague 1930). In the interwar period Czechoslovak and Yugoslav relations were advanced by many the *Czechoslovak-Yugoslav League*, an international association with national and local branches throughout both countries, dedicated to cultivated and celebrating the two states' friendship. On the League, see 'Československo-Jihoslovanská Liga', *Československo-Jihoslovanská Liga* (3 June 1921), and K. Kolářová, *Kapitoly z dějin Československo-jihoslovanské ligy*, unpublished MA dissertation, Masaryk University, Brno (2014). For recent studies of the interwar period, see J. Škerlová *Věrnost za věrnost: Československo-jugoslávské politické vztahy v letech 1929–1934: Prání, rozpor, realita* (Prague 2016), and M. Sovilj, *Československo-jugoslávské vztahy v letech 1939–1941: od zániku Československé republiky do okupace Království Jugoslávie* (Prague 2016). See also J. Gašparović, E. Kubů, Ž. Lazarević, J. Šouša (eds), *Češi a Slovenci v dobi moderne, Slovenci in Čehi v moderní době* (Ljubljana, Prague 2010).

15 See A. Rachamimov *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (Oxford and New York, NY 2002).

Allied capitals after the beginning of the First World War. As Austria-Hungary began to mobilize its population into war against Serbia and its other enemies – small groups of intellectuals took flight from the empire's territory and eventually coalesced in London (although they were active also in other allied capitals), energetically lobbying and propagandizing for a radical solution to Austria-Hungary's nationalities question that envisaged the Slavs outside the borders of the Habsburg state.

The South Slav contingent were represented by the Yugoslav Committee (Jugoslovenski odbor, or JO) and its most important leaders Frano Supilo and Ante Trumbić, both Croats from Dalmatia; the Czechs and Slovaks were represented by Masaryk, Beneš, and Štefánik.¹⁶ While the Czech and Slovak émigrés emerged as the most important political figures in Entente circles (especially after the October revolution in Russia), the Yugoslavs remained largely in the shadow of the Serbian government and – to a lesser extent – the Yugoslav parliamentary club in the Reichsrat.¹⁷ Masaryk, for his part, had closely followed South Slav affairs before the outbreak of the First World War.¹⁸ As an instructor at the Universities in Vienna and Prague, Masaryk's philosophical and sociological ideas, especially those relating to pan-Slavism and the Slavic world, had inspired students from various parts of the (non-German) empire, and he had taken a considerable interest in questions of South Slavic unity.¹⁹ His commitment to this cause was most notably demonstrated by his sensational intervention in the so-called 'Zagreb High Treason Trial' of 1909 and its sequel, the 'Friedjung Trial' of 1910, in which Habsburg prosecutors had used forged documents to 'prove' the existence of an anti-Monarchy conspiracy between Habsburg Serbs sitting in the Croat parliament (the Sabor) and the Serbian state.²⁰ British intellectuals and publicists such as Robert Seton-Watson and Henry Wickham Steed, pre-war critics of Habsburg policies vis-a-vis its Slavic subjects, gave support to the Slavic émigrés. Seton-Watson gathered funds and like-minded supporters for the publication of a journal, *The New Europe* (published from 1916–20), in which contributors promoted

16 On the JO, see C. Robinson 'Yugoslavism in the Early Twentieth Century: The Politics of the Yugoslav Committee' in D. Djokić and J. Ker-Lindsay (eds), *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies* (London and New York, NY 2011), M. Paulová, *Tajná diplomatická hra o Jihoslovany za světové války* (Prague 1923), F. Potočnjak, *Iz emigracije*, vol. 4 (Zagreb 1926). And on the Czech-Slovak exiles see F. Peroutka, *Budování státu: Československá politika v letech popřevratových* (Prague 1933–6, 4 vols.).

17 See I. Banac *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, and Politics* (Ithaca, NY 1988), 118–24; W. Lukan, *Die Habsburgermonarchie und die Slowenen im Ersten Weltkrieg. As dem 'schwarzen Völkerkäfig' in die 'goldene Freiheit'* (Vienna 2017).

18 Masaryk's interests in South Slav affairs, as well as the entangled histories of the two émigré movements, were scrupulously recorded by M. Paulová, see *Jihoslovanský odboj a česká maffie* (Prague 1928), *Tomáš G. Masaryk a Jihoslované* (Prague 1930).

19 His correspondences on South Slav affairs can be read in *Korespondence T.G. Masaryk – Slované. Jižní Slované* (Prague 2015).

20 See M. Cornwall, 'Traitors and the Meaning of Treason in Austria-Hungary's Great War', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 25 (2015).

the notion of a postwar settlement that would see the ‘liberation’ of non-German peoples from the Habsburg empire and the reorganisation of central Europe along the political principle of nationalism.²¹ For the New Europe group, the war needed to end in a *Victoire Intégrale* in which the Entente followed military triumph with a political solution for the future of a transformed Europe.²²

The creation of volunteer divisions of Slav soldiers to fight for the Entente against the Central Powers was pursued with vigour by both Czech-Slovak and South Slav émigrés. Claims of the general anti-Habsburg mood of the populations of their proposed states were less convincing when many tens of thousands of Slavs continued to serve and fight, with considerable loyalty, within the ranks of the Austro-Hungarian army on its various fronts.²³ But military realities made the process of recruitment and organization of such volunteer divisions complicated, as did the uncertain position of the émigrés vis-a-vis the Entente and the restrictions international law imposed upon citizens and subjects fighting against their own state. Masaryk and his allies’ efforts at recruitment and expansion of Czech-Slovak volunteer forces was hampered by the reluctance of the Russian state to allow separate Czech-Slovak volunteer divisions to be recruited and to fight for the Entente,²⁴ and it was not until after the February revolution, in the summer of 1917, that access to Russian POW’s for the purpose of recruitment became possible, and at this point the so-called ‘Czechoslovak Legionary’ movement expanded into a sizable force (60–70,000 men), as well as a focus of Entente propaganda.²⁵ The South Slavs émigrés, for their part, had hoped to form stand-alone Yugoslav volunteer divisions to fight alongside the Entente armies – but Serbian prime minister Nikola Pašić pushed to have any such volunteer force subsumed within the units of the Serbian army, commanded by Serbian officers.²⁶ This, in the event, was the arrangement reached for the ‘First Serbian Volunteer Division’ formed in

21 Thinking along such civilizational lines was a riposte to Friedrich Naumann’s *Mitteleuropa* (published 1915), which foresaw a reorganized central Europe in which ethnic Germans would dominate, politically, economically, and militarily. See Masaryk’s first contribution to *The New Europe*, in 1916, was a series of articles critical of the principle of ‘Pan-Germanism’.

22 ‘La Victoire Intégrale’, *The New Europe*, IV/47.

23 See, e.g., on Czechoslovaks, Hutečka, and É. Boisserie, *Les Tchèques dans la Première Guerre mondiale ‘Nous ne croyons plus aucune promesse’* (Paris 2017) and, on the South Slavs, R.B. Spence ‘Yugoslavs, the Austro-Hungarian Army, and the First World War’, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California Santa Barbara (1981), and F. Hameršak, *Tamna strana Marsa: Hrvatska autobiografija i Prvi Svjetski rat* (Zagreb 2013). For background on South Slavs in the Austro-Hungarian army, see M. Pojić, ‘Ustroj Austrougarske vojske na ozemlju Hrvatske 1868–1914’, *Arhivski vjesnik*, 43 (2001) and R. Stergar, *Slovenci in vojska, 1867–1914: Slovenski odnos do vojskarih vprašanj od uvedbe dualizma do začetka I. svetovne vojne* (Ljubljana 2004).

24 Since initial ‘legionary’ military units were formed by Czechs living in Russia.

25 There is a vast literature on the Czechoslovak Legionaries. See, e.g., K. Pichlík, *Bez Legend. Zahraniční odboj 1914–1918* (Prague 1968), K. Pichlík, B. Klípa, J. Zabloudilová, *Českoslovenští legionáři (1914–1920)* (Prague 1996), and in English, B. Mueggenberg, *The Czecho-Slovak Struggle for Independence 1914–1920* (Jefferson, NC 2014) For Czechs and the First World War more generally, see I. Šedivý, *Češi, české země a velká válka 1914–1918* (Prague 2001).

26 I. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, and Politics* (Ithaca, NY and London 1988), 121–3.

Russia in 1916, and followed about a year later by the 'Second Serbian Volunteer Division', combat forces that held a distinct status within the Serbian army and included at their peak about 40,000 soldiers and officers.²⁷ For both volunteer movements the main (although not the sole) source of recruitment came from the many tens of thousands of Habsburg prisoners of war, mostly, although not entirely, from Russian captivity.

The uneven development of the two volunteer movements at the beginning of the war meant that, even if ultimately the Czechoslovak Legions would eclipse the South Slav divisions in scale and importance, of the Russian-recruited volunteers, it was the Serbian volunteer division that went into battle first. Thus, in its earliest incarnation, the South Slav volunteer movement included a significant number of Czechs and Slovaks (the latter mainly from the Slovak minority of the 'Vojvodina' who would later become subjects of Yugoslavia)²⁸ who fought alongside South Slav volunteers.²⁹ They took part in the Serbian Volunteer Division's initial (and most important) encounter, the 'Battle of Dobruja', September 1916, suffering along with the South Slavs significant casualties.³⁰

There has been less study of the motivation and the morale of these Czechoslovak and South Slav volunteer movements than, for example, the British or the French volunteers of the First World War.³¹ Reasons for volunteering and reasons to remain in the fight have tended to be defined by the numerous memoirs, literary accounts, or celebratory texts produced from the end of the First World War onwards, a legacy protected and promoted by the volunteer veterans themselves, part, in fact, of the postwar 'cultures of victory' of both states.³² In reality, neither of the volunteer movements succeeded in becoming the multi-national force that their

27 On the South Slav volunteer movement, see P. Slijepčević, *Naši dobrovoljaci u svetskom ratu* (Zagreb [s.n.] 1925), 'Naši dobrovoljaci', *Nova Evropa*, 17 (11 June 1925), I. Jovanović, S. Rajković, V. Ribar, *Jugoslavenski dobrovoljački korpus u Rusiji: prilog istoriji dobrovoljačkog pokreta 1914–1918* (Belgrade 1954), N. Pešić, *Udruženje ratnih dobrovoljaca 1912–1918, njihovih potomaka i poštovalaca: nekad i danas* (Belgrade 2005), M. Mičić *Nezapamćena bitka: Srpski dobrovoljaci u Rusiji 1914–1918* (Novo Mileševo 2016).

28 See Banac, *National Question*, 49.

29 Their story is told by J. Čermák, *Věrnost za věrnost: Vzpomínky z účasti Čechů v bojích srbské divise v Dobrudži roku 1916* (Prague 1921), see also VUA, VKPR, karton 37.

30 Jiří Čermák, a veteran of the Serbian division, put the number of Czechoslovaks who fought at between 800–1000. See his *Věrnost za věrnost: Vzpomínky z účasti Čechů v bojích Srbské divise v Dobrudži roku 1916* (Prague 1921). His high public praise for the Czechs in the South Slav volunteer divisions seems to have led to the erroneous idea that their existing a fully-fledged 'Czech Brigade' within their ranks. There did not, see VUA, MNO, Kleg, k.3. After the First World War, Yugoslav volunteers would refer to this battle as a military, historical, and international 'epic'. See *Dobrovoljački glasnik*, 8 (August 1935).

31 See C.G Krüger, Sonja Levsen 'Introduction', in Levsen, Krüger (eds), *War Volunteering in Modern Times: From the French Revolution to the Second World War* (Basingstoke and New York, NY 2011), 3–5. And in the same volume, A. Watson 'Voluntary Enlistment in the Great War: A European Phenomeon?'. An important exception is T. Balkelis 'From Imperial Soldiers to National Guardians: German and Lithuanian Volunteers after the Great War, 1918–1919', in N. Arielli and B. Collins (eds) *Transnational Soldiers: Foreign Military Enlistment in the Modern Era* (Basingstoke 2013).

32 Representative of this trend are (for the Czechoslovak case) A. Zeman (ed), *Cestami odboje* (Prague 1926–9, 5 vols.), and (for the Yugoslav case), D. Hranilović, *Iz zapisačka jugoslavenskog dobrovoljca* (Zagreb 1922).

creators had envisaged. From the beginning and throughout their existence the two Serbian volunteer divisions comprised mainly Serbian soldiers, although Croats and Slovenes were better represented in the hundreds of officer volunteers recruited into the divisions (these were often former students of gymnasias or universities who had been conscripted into the Austro-Hungarian army as reserve officers, but who were otherwise sympathetic to the cause of South Slav unification).³³ The situation was similar in the Czechoslovak Legionary divisions: their ranks overwhelmingly Czech (about 90 per cent), with just a small number of Slovaks, and many fewer Germans, Hungarians, and other nationalities.³⁴ Nevertheless, the presence of fighting divisions composed of Habsburg South Slavs, especially Croats and Slovenes, served to back up demands on contested territories in Dalmatia and the Adriatic littoral (something which, it seems, was of greater importance to the JO than to the Serbian government), and the heavy casualties sustained by the Serbian army made the volunteer divisions a potential source of replenished manpower. Internationally, it was the Czechoslovak volunteer movement that came to represent the anti-Habsburg spirit of the small Slavic nations. Although stalled in the initial stages of the war, its size ultimately surpassed that of the South Slavs.³⁵ The legionaries were eventually hailed in *The New Europe* as 'one of the most remarkable movements of the war',³⁶ a prestige buoyed by their military role in the early phase of the Russian civil war.³⁷

With the collapse of Austria-Hungary at the end of the First World War, the creation of the successor states of the 'New Europe', and the designation and continued identification of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia as victor states, pre-war and wartime evidence of Czecho-Slovak and South Slav co-operation became

33 For numbers, see P. Slijepčević, *Naši dobrovoljaci u svetskoj ratu*, (Zagreb [s.n.] 1925). A report sent to the Yugoslav committee in October 1917 acknowledged that the recruitment of non-Serbs had been a disappointment ('Many of these men [Croats and Slovenes] were not willing to join our corps but they were forced to do so') and that Habsburg spies operating in the prison camps out of which the volunteers were recruited. See Arhiv Jugoslavije, Fond 80 'Jovan Jovanović Pižon', 51/92.

34 K. Pichlík, B. Klípa and J. Zabloudivá, *Českoslovenští legionáři (1914–1920)* (Prague 1996).

35 A significant turning point was the experience of combat against Austro-Hungarian forces in the so-called 'Battle of Zborov' as part of the Kerensky Offensive of 1917, an encounter that would come to occupy a central position in the postwar mythology of the Czechoslovak Legions. In its wake, previous restrictions on recruiting Czech and Slovak volunteers were loosened and the volunteers' numbers grew, shored up by a smaller number of recruits from French and Italian POWs, as well as members of the foreign diaspora. On Zborov, see N.M. Wingfield 'The Battle of Zborov and the Politics of Commemoration in Czechoslovakia', *East European Politics and Societies*, 17, 4 (November 2003).

36 'A New Ally: The Bohemian Army', *The New Europe*, V, 61 (13 December 1917).

37 Masaryk himself understood the diplomatic and propaganda importance of the legionaries. He dedicated his book *The New Europe: The Slav Standpoint* to 'his soldiers', and in it offered them an explanation of the cause for which they were fighting, a cause which had both a national (that is, 'Czechoslovak') and international ('New Europe') aspect. Thus the text was published initially in Czech in 1918 the journal *Československý denník*, but also, in the same year, in French and English editions, underlining the importance of promoting the Czechoslovak struggle to a friendly international audience. Masaryk would continue to articulate the importance of the armed struggle in the wartime state-forming project. See, for example, his speech at a legionary rally in 1921, in which he claimed to have realized from the beginning of the war that Czechs and Slovaks would need to wage this liberation struggle 'with weapons in hand', *Vojenský Ústřední archiv* (hereafter VUA), *Vojenská kancelář presidenta republiky* (Hereafter VKPR), karton 29.

important. State-builders in both countries sought a new historical teleology that would emphasize anti-Habsburg traditions and show how their respective states had arrived at this (final) historical destination with the war victory. These were historical narratives of national liberation that was achieved, ultimately, through war, and it was therefore understandable that the cultures of victory in both countries would emphasize the masculine sacrifice of the front-line soldier.³⁸ Nevertheless, there were other dimensions to these narratives: both states also underlined the oppressive nature of the Austro-Hungarian empire as a 'prison of nations' in which subjects were incarcerated. Thus, parallel narratives of confinement and oppression on the home front also featured in the cultures of victory. In Czechoslovakia, the wartime exile group headed by Masaryk became central to the state-forming culture in a way that the JO never did (a reflection of the more complicated relations between the South Slav exiles and the JO during the war).³⁹ Similarly, the Czechoslovak Legionaries, as we shall see, assumed greater importance in their state than did the South Slav volunteers in theirs; the latter forming just one – albeit important – component of a larger culture of war victory dominated by the Serbian army and its traditions.

The common position of both countries as victorious successor states of the Habsburg empire also led to an emphasis on the pre-war and wartime historical entanglements that had existed between these Slavic peoples. There were no territorial disputes between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (having no common borders), and as both states had the common task of creating a state-forming patriotism out of a multi-national ideology (Czechoslovak, Yugoslav), the ties between them were the closest of all the new successor states of East-Central Europe.⁴⁰

The traditions of wartime volunteering were incorporated into the national cultures and the state-forming principles of both countries. As early as 1921 the Military Chancellery of the President's Office [Vojenská kancelář presidenta republiky] in Czechoslovakia was discussing the relative positions of Yugoslav subjects that had served in the Czechoslovak legions in the First World War and Czechoslovak citizens that had served in the Serbian army. The discussion focused on the one hand on the sizable Slovak minority in Yugoslavia, mainly in Bačka, Banat, and Srem, some of whom were veterans of the Czechoslovak legionaries and whose bureaucratic status as volunteer veterans was unclear. But the discussion also encompassed more generally veterans of both Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia who had served in each other's volunteer divisions during the war.⁴¹ To this end, a delegation of Czechoslovak volunteer veterans of the Serbian army had had an audience with Czechoslovak foreign minister Edvard Beneš at the end of 1921 in

38 A point made by Melissa Bokovoy in the Serbian/Yugoslav case. See M. Bokovoy 'Gendering Grief: Lamenting and Photographing the Dead in Serbia', *Aspasia*, 5 (2011).

39 See F. Peroutka, *Budování státu: Československá politika v letech popřevratových* (Prague 1933–6, 4 vols.).

40 Many of these ties can be traced through the history of the *Czechoslovak-Yugoslav League*.

41 VUA, VKPR, k. 34.

order to explain to him the role of the South Slav volunteer divisions in the First World War.⁴² The legislative status of volunteers in both countries individually was still under review at this stage, but the patriotic values espoused by state-formers suggested that a volunteer veteran would be entitled to certain financial and social benefits by virtue of their wartime service.

At this time, the charge d'affaires for Czechoslovakia in Belgrade was Karel Kadlec, an historian and later professor at Charles University, Prague. Kadlec had already produced a short study entitled *The South Slavs and The Czechoslovak Republic* (1919) in which he underlined the wartime alliance with the South Slavs and its need to continue into the postwar period (as Kadlec put it, 'Just as the Germans and the Magyars are the greatest enemies of our nation and our republic, we look upon the South Slavs as the greatest allies and friends of all the surrounding nations.').⁴³ He called for a reciprocal acknowledgement of the 'volunteer/legionary' status of all sides of this equation, South Slavs who fought in the Czechoslovak legionaries, Czechs and Slovaks who fought in the South Slav volunteer divisions, irrespective of their present-day citizenship.⁴⁴

And indeed, by June 1922, the Office of the Czechoslovak Legions (Kancelář Československý Legií, or Kleg), had decided to acknowledge the 'legionary' status of Czechoslovak citizens who had fought in the Serbian army (most of them in the volunteer divisions), following a visit of The Czechoslovak Legionaries of the Serbian Army, the association formed by Czechoslovak citizens that had fought in the Serbian army in the Balkan wars and/or First World War. The association's delegates explained at length the historical circumstances that had led to a portion of Czechs and Slovaks serving in the volunteer divisions, and also explained that their role in the war was part of the same struggle for national emancipation and state creation as the legionaries themselves.⁴⁵ This was, inter alia, a matter of accessing the social and welfare privileges that were accruing at this time to veterans of the legions,⁴⁶ but it was also an acknowledgement that volunteers had enjoined a common struggle in the war, and that a common cause existed in the present-day. Czechoslovakia was in this respect ahead of Yugoslavia, whose initial legislation pertaining to volunteers did not recognize the status of veterans of foreign but friendly 'armies', and needed to be changed (having in mind the Slovaks of Bačka and the Banat who had served in the war in the Czechoslovak legionaries).⁴⁷ The recognition came at the beginning of 1923, although the Czechoslovak Legionary Association [Československa Obec Legionářská, see below for more information on volunteer veteran associations in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia] was opposed to the idea of foreign nationals being granted legionary

42 VUA, Ministerstvo Národní obrany (MNO), Kancelář Československý Legií (Kleg), box 2.

43 K. Kadlec, *Jihoslované a Československá republika* (Prague 1919), 1.

44 VKPR, k.34.

45 VKPR, k.42.

46 I. Šedivý 'Legionářská republika? K systému legionářského zákonodárství a sociální péče v mezinárodně ČSR', *Historie a vojenství*, 2002/1.

47 MNO Kleg, box 2.

status, on the ground that certain privileges and benefits granted to ex-legionaries should not be extended to non-nationals. In particular, the association's leadership was concerned about the potential employment of foreigners in sensitive positions in the state bureaucracy (a kind of 'affirmative action' policy existed in Czechoslovakia in which legionary veterans were given employment in the state sector).⁴⁸

Such efforts to acknowledge the volunteer sacrifice and to forge a new patriotism based on the culture of victory were manifest also in the national armies of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, which were to perform a multifaceted role in the state-forming project. Certainly, they were intended as effective defence forces in a potentially volatile and contested region. But the armies were also conceived as patriotic 'schools' in which the civic values of the new states could be taught to successive generations of citizens.⁴⁹

Common volunteering traditions were institutionally enshrined with the raising of two new divisions that would honour the wartime record of the Czechoslovak legionaries and the South Slav volunteers. In the city of Benešov, in Bohemia, the 48th infantry division of the Czechoslovak national army was in the early 1920s christened 'Yugoslavia' in honour of the Serbian volunteer divisions and of their connection with the forming of the Czechoslovak state in the war, especially the common fight that Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs had enjoined at Dobruja.⁵⁰ Its soldiers received a visit from Masaryk soon after its formation.⁵¹ And Yugoslavia's military attaché visited the division in 1924, praising the progress made by the new Czechoslovak army and reaffirming the close ties between the two 'fraternal' states and their security interests.⁵² The compliment was returned by the Yugoslavs, whose army had a 'Czechoslovakia' division in Skopje, in 'South Serbia' (today Macedonia), named at the end of 1921 in a ceremony attended by King Aleksandar.⁵³ This division, in fact, had comprised in largest part South Slav volunteers of the First and Second Serbian Divisions from the war, its renaming as 'Czechoslovakia' an acknowledgement of the shared volunteering tradition and of the postwar alliance between these two countries.⁵⁴ In 1929, the Czechoslovak ambassador saw the occasion of awarding the 'White Lion' medal to Yugoslav officer of the division as an opportunity to underline the 'fraternal' relations between the two countries.⁵⁵

48 MNO Kleg, box 2.

49 On the national armies see (for Czechoslovakia) M. Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee und staatlicher Realität. Die tschechoslowakische Armee und ihre Nationalitätenpolitik 1918–1938* (Munich 2006), and (for Yugoslavia) M. Bjelajac, *Vojaska Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata, i Slovenaca 1918–1921* (Belgrade 1988).

50 'Naši v Dobruži', *Československo-Jihoslovanská Liga* (24 October 1921).

51 In 1922, see VUA, VKPR, k. 42, and again in 1930, see k. 104.

52 VKPR, k. 66.

53 'Delegace 21. pěš pluku "Československého Jihoslovanské armády v republice Československé", *Československo-Jihoslovanská Liga* (1 February 1922).

54 I am grateful to Dmitar Tasić for explaining the details of this division to me.

55 Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí, II/I Diplomatický protokol, box 57.

The common history and military ties that had led to this mutual act of naming were enumerated, in 1926, by Jan Syrový, a general in the Czechoslovak army and a former legionary. Syrový argued (ultimately unsuccessfully) against a subsequent division being named 'Romania', the third member of the Little Entente alliance and also an important regional ally of Czechoslovakia. The former legionary did not dispute the importance of Romania and the postwar alliance between these two countries, but argued that the ties between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were even deeper, rooted in the common wartime struggle and perhaps, also, in the fact that the war and its conclusion had created the two multinational states from scratch (whereas Romania, if not 'Greater Romania', had existed before 1918).⁵⁶ For Syrový, and for many veterans like him, the ties that bound Czechoslovakia to Yugoslavia remained the most important.

As in most other European societies in the interwar period, associations of war veterans became an important feature of the postwar political and cultural landscape.⁵⁷ And volunteers were central to the war veterans' movements, both at national level and in relations between the two countries themselves. Although the traditions of volunteering occupied different positions in their respective states and societies, both articulated the same principles of state patriotism and state-forming rooted in the war years and the culture of victory. Both movements understood their common heritage and promoted continuing links in the interwar period.

In Czechoslovakia, ex-legionaries, understandably, were dominant in veteran life. Their associations enjoyed privilege and patronage from the state and were visible and prominent factors in postwar society.⁵⁸ Even so, politically they did not speak with a single voice, and attempts to maintain a unified legionary veteran movement were not successful in the interwar period.⁵⁹ The largest and most important national legionary association, the Czechoslovak Legionary Association (*Československá obec legionářská*), was closely linked to Masaryk, president of the state (until 1935), as well as the Czech National Social Party. This latter was an open political affiliation unusual among war veteran associations in Czechoslovakia (and in Yugoslavia), which tended to avoid party political affiliations.⁶⁰ (and indeed, caused some friction with the inter-Allied veteran association FIDAC, which demanded that its affiliate associations have no domestic party

56 VKPR, k.78.

57 J. Eichenberg, 'Veterans' Associations', in U. Daniel, P. Gatrell, O. Janz, H. Jones et al., (eds), *1914–1918—online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War* (Berlin 2014) [accessed 18 April 2018].

58 See I. Šedivý, 'Zur Loyalität der Legionäre in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik', in M. Schulze Wessel (ed.) *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik, 1918–1939. Politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten* (Munich 2004).

59 K. Kocourek "'In the Spirit of Brotherhood, United We Remain!": Czechoslovak Legionaries and the Militarist State', in M. Cornwall and J.P. Newman (eds), *Sacrifice and Rebirth: The Legacy of the Last Habsburg War* (New York, NY 2016).

60 J. Filip, *Dějiny Československé obce legionářské* (Prague 2014).

political affiliation in their own countries.)⁶¹ Its closest rival, the Independent Union of Czechoslovak Legionaries (Nezávislá jednota československých legionářů or NJČsL), veered closer to the National Democrat Party and the right-wing political parties of the First Republic (although its affiliation to these was less direct).⁶² Beyond the largest national associations, there was a cross-cutting web of smaller groups of legionaries attached to the Czechoslovak fascist and communist parties, of legionaries from the Italian and French fronts, disabled legionaries, and, of course, an association of legionaries who had served in the Serbian army in the First World War: The Czechoslovak Legionaries of the Serbian army (Československý legionáři ze Srbske armáde, formed in Prague in 1920 by Czechoslovak veterans of the Serbian Volunteer Division).⁶³

Yugoslavia did not have the multiplicity of volunteer veteran associations in Yugoslavia as there was in Czechoslovakia. The most important national volunteer association was the Union of Volunteers (Savez Dobrovoljaca),⁶⁴ just one part of a large network of patriotic associations formed by war veterans of the Serbian army, these being by far the dominant voice in veteran affairs in interwar Yugoslavia.⁶⁵ These too broke down along political and ideological lines, and included many small and ephemeral local associations formed from veterans of Serbia and Montenegro's irregular fighters (the 'Chetniks') and associations of disabled veterans.⁶⁶

In both countries the largest part of the veteran community, in so far as it was represented through its active associations, fell within a spectrum loyal to patriotic support for the new states. The political extremes of volunteer and veteran affairs remained marginal. To be sure, the tiny fascist parties of both Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were indeed either formed by ex-volunteers or else contained within their ranks a significant number of ex-volunteers. Thus, the leading Czech fascist of the 1920s was Radola Gajda, a legionary veteran who had in fact served in the Serbian volunteer division in the First World War (and had family connections in

61 Archiv Akademie věd České republiky (hereafter Archiv AV ČR), fond Edvard Beneš, Čs. Legie a Legionáři, k.62.

62 K. Kocourek "'In the Spirit of Brotherhood, United We Remain!'".

63 Masaryk's personal papers included a list of the most important associations (as of March 1931). See Archiv AV ČR, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, R Legionáři— box 432. In the same file there is a letter to Masaryk from volunteer veteran (and future collaborator) Emanuel Moravec, bemoaning the lack of unity in the legionary movement in Czechoslovakia. On the Czechoslovak Legions of the Serbian Army, see 'Volné sdružení čl. legionářů ze srbské armády', *Československa-Jihoslovenská Liga* (3 June 1921).

64 For their history, see N. Pešić, *Udruženje ratnih dobrovoljaca 1912–1918, njihovih potomaka i pošt-ovalaca: nekad i danas* (Belgrade 2005).

65 On Serbian war veterans' associations, see D. Šarenac, *Top Vojnik, i sećanje: Prvi svetski rat i Srbija, 1914–2009* (Belgrade 2014), and J.P. Newman *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War: Veterans and the Limits of State Building, 1903–1945* (Cambridge 2015).

66 See Newman, 53–81. Serbia, in fact, had a 'volunteer' tradition that predated the First World War: the 'Chetnik' guerrillas who had fought the Ottomans in the wars of the nineteenth century and in the Balkan wars of 1912–13, as well as in low intensity skirmishes and raids against the Ottomans and rival national guerrilla groups since the beginning of the twentieth century. These histories would become incorporated into the volunteer tradition and the culture of victory in the interwar period, although they were in reality quite separate from them.

Dalmatia). His small group represented just a splinter of Czechoslovak politics in the 1920s.⁶⁷ The Serbian/Yugoslav fascist party Zbor, formed in 1935 by Dimitrije Ljotić, a veteran of the Serbian army who had served in the two Balkan wars and the First World War, included some volunteers. But Ljotić failed to expand support for his programme beyond just a small coterie of his followers (and indeed, had difficulties maintaining the limited support he held among this group of war veterans).⁶⁸

Otherwise, volunteer patriotism was closely connected to the charismatic heads of state of both countries: Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Yugoslav king (from 1921) Aleksandar Karadjordjević.

Masaryk, as we have seen, was closely connected with the genesis and the development of the Czechoslovak legionary divisions in the First World War. They were, essentially, his political and military project, and they returned his goodwill in the postwar period, saluting the 'Little Father' [Tatíček] of the Czechoslovak nation and frequently printing his public speeches, his writings, and his image, in the pages of their journals and in their publications.⁶⁹ Masaryk would in turn appear at legionary parades and public addresses, and legionaries in uniform were prominent in the public parades and holidays of the First Republic, including, most importantly, the anniversary of the founding of the First Republic (28 October – referred to by the Legionaries as akin to 'Bastille Day'⁷⁰), and of course their own legionary holiday, popularly known as 'Zborov Day' (2 July), which was an official state holiday.⁷¹ This was part of what Andrea Orzoff has identified as the 'Masaryk cult' in the First Republic, a set of symbolic investments in the first Czechoslovak president that made him at least partially resemble the 'little dictators' that emerged in the surrounding states of East-Central Europe in the interwar period, or indeed in the communist regimes of the second-half of the twentieth century.⁷²

King Aleksandar Karadjordjević of Yugoslavia occupied a similar position vis-a-vis veterans and volunteers in his own country. Aleksandar had trained in his youth at the military academy in Russia, and served in the Serbian army in the Balkan wars and in the First World War, an honorific and ceremonial position, to be sure, but one that veterans of the First World War did not quickly forget in the

67 See J. Havránek 'Fascism in Czechoslovakia' in P. Sugar (ed.), *Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918–1945* (Santa Barbara, CA 1971).

68 B. Gligorijević, 'Politički pokreti i grupe s nacionalsocijalističkom ideologijom i njihova fuzija u ljotićevom zboru', in *Istorijski glasnik*, 4 (1965).

69 See, e.g., VKPR k.134, a telegram greeting from the Czechoslovak Association of Legionaries to Masaryk that acknowledged the president's first call to arms against Austria-Hungary, fitting Masaryk into the Czech historical tradition (especially the Hussites) and hailed the international importance of his wartime and postwar roles.

70 *Československý legionář* (12 July 1919). Incidentally, in Yugoslavia, Bastille Day was celebrated as 'France Day', another allusion to the pro-Entente culture in the country.

71 N. Wingfield 'The Battle of Zborov and the Politics of Commemoration in Czechoslovakia', *East European Politics and Societies*, 17, 4 (November 2003).

72 A. Orzoff, 'The Husbandman: Tomáš Masaryk's Leader Cult in Interwar Czechoslovakia', *Austrian History Yearbook*, 39 (2008).

interwar period. Like Masaryk, Aleksandar deployed the culture of victory to reinforce his stature as head of state in the interwar period: appearing at military and festive parades alongside veterans of the First World War, bestowing subventions on to organizations for the purpose of funding their activities, monuments, and so on.⁷³ This close relationship was a function of the Serbian culture of victory, in which all the largest veteran organizations in Yugoslavia, dominated as they were by contingents of war veterans of the Serbian army, acknowledged the authority and the primacy of the king as the great ‘unifier’ of the South Slav peoples. In this respect, volunteers again took their place within a larger culture of victory that encompassed all those that had fought for ‘liberation and unification’ in the wars of 1912–18.⁷⁴ But as Aleksandar assumed his royal dictatorship at the end of the 1920s, a dictatorship that also involved a political, social, and ideological reorganization of the state and its peoples that, it was hoped, would enforce an authentic Yugoslav identity onto the country at large,⁷⁵ so the Union of Volunteers and its leading members became ever more visible symbols of the proposed South Slav unity, a role which they had long desired.⁷⁶ This was manifested in the public pageantry of the dictatorship, in which the Union of Volunteers occupied a central position, and also in the elevation of Lujo Lovrić, a Croat volunteer veteran of the First Serbian Volunteer Division who became president of the Union at the beginning of the dictatorship period, and was something of a mascot for Aleksandar. Lovrić was also well-known in Czechoslovakia, an awardee of the country’s prestigious ‘White Lion’ decoration.⁷⁷

And indeed, these connections operated also at a transnational level: with volunteer veterans of both states paying respect to their counterparts abroad, despite the deep political differences between the two leaders. Thus, the Czechoslovak legionaries acknowledged in Aleksandar a figure of corresponding importance and prestige in the South Slav context. Indeed, the Czechoslovak army marked Aleksandar’s death and funeral with a speech (by legionary general Jan Syrový) that acknowledged the late king not just as a great statesman but also, importantly, as a hero of the war (along with his father Petar). Yugoslavia, Syrový noted, was founded through the strength of the Serbian army, but the Serbian army counted in its ranks not just Serbs, but also other South Slavs, and Czechoslovaks. This was a reference to the Serbian volunteer divisions, drawing out the close wartime and postwar connection between volunteering in both states.⁷⁸

73 These are now stored in ‘King’s Court’ record groups the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, AJ, fond 74.

74 That is, the First World War and the Balkan wars.

75 C. Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar’s Yugoslavia* (Toronto 2014).

76 They had proposed such a role in one of their earliest publications, *Memorandum Saveza dobrovoljaca Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata, i Slovenaca* (Belgrade [s.n.]1923).

77 An honour routinely bestowed on Yugoslav volunteers, including the Slovene Ljudevit Pivko (who also served as president of the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav League in the 1930s). See, e.g. Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí, II/I Diplomatický protokol, box 56.

78 VKPR, k.129.

The differences in temperament of the two leaders and their connections to their respective veteran and volunteer movements were reflected in the political culture of the various war veteran associations and to the political culture of the states more generally. Thus, Masaryk's ideals of democracy and humanism filtered into the public pronouncements of the largest legionary associations during the 1920s and the 1930s, as well as their various publications, journals, pamphlets and so on. In the same way, Aleksandar's impatience with the system of parliamentary democracy in Yugoslavia reflected back at him in the public pronouncements of the various veteran associations throughout the country, including the volunteers. Unlike in Czechoslovakia, the parliamentary system and its political parties were not seen as inseparable to the fabric of the state itself, and therefore essential to the state-forming project. Rather, the many parliamentary crises and problems of the 1920s in Yugoslavia were constantly derided by the volunteers and the other veteran associations, not least because this paralysis was holding up the process of creating legislation that would benefit war veterans themselves (for example disability allowances and pensions). That created a deficit of support for the parliamentary system on the part of a large and prominent interest group that was not only potentially a source of real political and military power, but were also culturally central to the patriotic and state-forming core of the country. Ultimately, it seems, the loyalty of the army and its most prominent officers to Aleksandar were the key factors in the establishment and maintenance of the royal dictatorship, but little protest – and considerable support – emerged from the ranks of the patriotic war veterans, too. An authoritarian shadow was thus cast over Yugoslavia from an early stage in its existence, and it is valid to speak of an illiberal tenor to the culture of victory in Yugoslavia – something which is more usually associated with ‘cultures of defeat’ in interwar Europe.⁷⁹

Did democratic Czechoslovakia differ in this respect? A direct comparison between the political cultures of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in the 1920s shows that the latter state's crises were far more frequent and far more severe than the former, a fact that seems to have been understood by contemporary commentators.⁸⁰ But when political crisis did hit Czechoslovakia, similarly illiberal temptations emerged. Most notable in this respect is the apparent attempt, in 1933, by fascist leader (and former legionary, see above) Radola Gajda to seize power. Whatever the feasibility of this project's success, it was taken seriously by the leaders of the state, not least Masaryk. He and his castle advisors had at that time floated the idea of a temporary ‘democratic dictatorship’ (!) that would see Masaryk assume authoritarian control over the state until the worst of the fascist

79 See W. Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (New York, NY 2013), and R. Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End* (London 2017).

80 ‘Pětiletí království Srbů, Chorvatů, a Slovinců’, *Československo-Jihoslovanská Liga* (15 December 1923).

threat, such as it was, had subsided.⁸¹ Patriotic legionary associations, which constituted the overwhelming majority, as we have seen, would have been central to setting up and securing this improbable political departure, and all available sources show that they were ready and willing participants.⁸² After the coup threat – such as it was – had passed, Masaryk and the castle kept a level of surveillance on far-right groups that flattered their small size.

Perhaps a relevant coda to this discussion is the differing wartime experiences of the two countries. In Yugoslavia, the culture of victory concealed a state of virtual ‘civil war’ between South Slavs, since the experience of Austro-Hungarian invasion, occupation, and rule, had brought South Slavs into direct conflict with one another, a sensitive matter for many Serbs in the interwar period,⁸³ and one that made the legacy of the war years all the more contentious. Czechoslovakia had suffered far less wartime violence, although here too had been hardships and complaints of disloyalty in the war. But both states, it seems, had experienced acute birth pains in the years immediately at war’s end, as military and political leaders of the new orders (usually Czechs and Serbs) attempted to bring order to their lands in the ‘greater war’ years of 1918–23. Territories such as Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Slovakia, and Sub-Carpathian Rus experienced the brunt of this violence, and resistance in these parts demonstrates the fragility of both states cultures of victory.⁸⁴

Interestingly, the parting of political ways between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia at the end of the 1920s, with the latter becoming a royal dictatorship and the former remaining a parliamentary democracy, did not alter the close companionship between them. The central facts of being small ‘victor’ states in the New Europe remained the basis of a common partnership going forwards. Thus, Yugoslav observers in Czechoslovakia explained the dictatorship in Yugoslavia as a result of a local divergence that was suitable for their country, one that would not affect the relationship between these two allies going forwards (it did not), ‘Institutions change, ideals and tasks remain [the same]’, claimed an article in the journal of the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav League.⁸⁵ In the cases of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, then, the differences between an illiberal state and an liberal state

81 A. Orzoff, *The Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914–1948* (Oxford 2011). Interestingly, the Czechoslovak president had also received a full report of Aleksandar’s relationship with Serbian military groups and his handling of the political crisis in Yugoslavia in 1924–5, see VKPR, k.33.

82 A. Orzoff, *The Battle for the Castle*, 99–100.

83 Representative of this trend is V. Čorović, *Crna knjiga patnje Srba Bosne i Hercegovine za vreme svetskog rata: 1914–1918* (Belgrade 2014, originally 1920).

84 See R. Kučera, ‘Exploiting Victory, Sinking into Defeat: Uniformed Violence and the Creation of a New Order in Czechoslovakia and Austria, 1918–1922’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 88, 4 (December 2016), and J.P. Newman, ‘The Origins, Attributes, and Legacies of Paramilitary Violence in the Balkans’, in R. Gerwarth and J. Horne (eds) *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford 2012).

85 ‘Instituce se mění – ideály a úkoly zůstávají’, *Československo-Jihoslovanská Liga*, February 1929. The Yugoslav dictatorship also received at least initial support from France and Great Britain.

and the application of a 'culture of victory' appears to matter less than in other examples cited in this special section.

Finally, this common culture of victory also became part of the terrain through the putting up of war monuments throughout the country that celebrated the war victory, a widespread phenomenon throughout postwar Europe, of course, and one not restricted to the victor states.⁸⁶ In Czechoslovakia, in most cases, war monuments were typically dedicated to the memory of the Legionaries, with very few monuments existing to mark the sacrifice of Austro-Hungarian veterans. The same was true in Yugoslavia, although here, in keeping with the predominant position of Serbia's sacrifice in the postwar state, the vast majority of war monuments, both at national and local levels, were dedicated to Serbian soldiers and their sacrifice.⁸⁷

Monuments in the two countries also reflected the entangled nature of the Yugoslav-Czechoslovak culture of victory. There were, by some estimates, almost 15,000 graves of South Slav soldiers on the territory of Czechoslovakia.⁸⁸ And these were given the honours due to fellow victors of the war. For example, in Olomouc (Moravia) a mausoleum was constructed in the mid-1920s that housed the remains of South Slavs who, so the inscription said, had died fighting for their nation and for South Slav unification.⁸⁹ In reality, the Olomouc mausoleum housed the remains of soldiers who had fought and died for the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. This, tellingly, was not acknowledged in the monument's inscription. While in Yugoslavia, a monument was erected in the Serbian town of Kragujevac to the mainly Slovak soldiers of the 71st Trenčín regiment who had revolted in the final year of the war and who had been court martialled and executed as a result.⁹⁰

The construction of monuments was part of the 'territorialisation' of the culture of victory that took place in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia after 1918, a process that included a programme of land reform that favoured veterans of the First World War. The political and economic considerations that went into these programmes of land reform were complex and very often conflicting. But war veterans were characteristically favoured with tracts of land to reward them for their wartime service. Former volunteers were settled in 'peripheral' territories as a means of 'state-forming', of populating areas where the national element was lacking. In Czechoslovakia, this often meant borderlands in Hungarian or German populated Slovakia or in Sub-Carpathian Rus. Yugoslav volunteer veterans tended to take tracts of land in the formerly Hungarian territories in the north-eastern regions of the South Slav state: Bačka, Baranja, and the Banat – often because volunteer settlers were themselves Serbs who had hailed from these parts before the war.

86 On commemoration in East-Central Europe, see M. Cornwall, J.P. Newman (eds), *Sacrifice and Rebirth: The Legacy of the Last Habsburg War* (New York, NY and London 2018, second edn).

87 The largest volunteer monument resided outside the borders of the South Slav state, at the site of battle in Dobruja (now in Romania).

88 'Hroby jihoslovanských bojovníků v Československé republice', *Československo-Jihoslovanská Liga* (1 October 1922).

89 'Památky padlých bratří', *Československo-Jihoslovanská Liga* (28 June 1926).

90 *Samouprava*, 28 September 1924. This revolt was celebrated at the monument in 1925, see Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí, II/I Diplomatický protokol, box 56.

For many volunteers, this was understood as an extension of their wartime service, thus, the process of settling peripheral territories with loyal and patriotic veterans was a means of essentially securitizing the state and thus securing the culture of victory. Yugoslav veterans, at least, saw this as a phenomenon shared more generally throughout the victor states of New Europe, indicating how the policies of land reform (as they understood it) in Czechoslovakia could be duplicated in Yugoslavia.⁹¹

Faced with the formidable challenges of integrating societies that the war years had divided, state-builders in both Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia emphasized a partially mythologized narrative of war victory, one which, perhaps inevitably, privileged the sacrifice of the soldiers who had fought against Austria-Hungary in the First World War. It was not that this was an invented historical tradition: tens of thousands of citizens in both countries had indeed opted into the pro-Entente legions in the war years. Their common histories as soldiers in the Great War, carried over into the institutional, political, and commemorative cultures of the interwar states, spoke both to the entangled nature of the war years and common, regional identification of the war victory in the region.

These two cultures of victory did not emerge in isolation. They rather evolved out of the common pre-war and wartime struggles of a small group of peoples in both countries, unified by their radical opposition to Austria-Hungary and propelled into the centre of the state-building projects in the respective countries at the end of the First World War. This article has shown how these pre-1918 traditions remained relevant in the interwar period, and how the cultures of victory in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia are best understood at this transnational level. The volunteer was thus an ambiguous factor of cohesion: a minority culture of victory writ large across the entire postwar society. Its central position in the new states demonstrates the paradoxes of the culture of victory in the 'New Europe' of the interwar period.

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91 *Memorandum Saveza dobrovoljaca Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata, i Slovenaca* (Belgrade [s.n.] 1923).

Biographical Note

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