SERBIA IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

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Abstract:
In June 1914, the Austro-Hungarian army held military maneuvers in Bosnia that simulated an attack on Serbia. Austro-Hungarian heir to the throne Franz Ferdinand, together with his wife Sofia, visited Sarajevo on Vidovdan. Members of the secret revolutionary organization Mlada Bosna, which opposed the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, understood this act as a provocation of the Serbs, and guided by that idea, they organized the assassination of the Archduke. The assassination of the Austro-Hungarian heir to the throne was entrusted to Nedeljko Čabrinović, Trifko Grabež and Gavril Princip, who carried it out on Vidovdan, June 28, 1914. After hard battles and victory in 1914, all members of the Central Powers attacked Serbia and retreated to Corfu in Greece. Serbia broke through the Thessaloniki front in 1918 and directly influenced the capitulation of the great powers. The Paris Conference in 1919 was supposed to resolve relations after the war and establish a more lasting peace.
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1. World War I in Serbia

The assassination of Franz Ferdinand was taken as the reason for the outbreak of the First World War. [1] Although the investigation did not prove the involvement of the Serbian Government in the assassination in Sarajevo, Dragutin Dimitrijević Apis, head of the intelligence department of the Main General Staff of the Serbian Army, participated in its preparation. Using his position in the military and leadership in the Black Hand, Apis built a network of confidants. [2] Franz Joseph insisted on a strong reaction towards Serbia, considering that the monarchy was attacked by this act. The war against Serbia was already defined on June 30, 1914. The Prime Minister of Hungary, Istvan Tisa, requested that no action be taken until the investigation has established the involvement

of the Serbian Government in the assassination. Regarding the war, Austria-Hungary consulted with Germany in everything. Berlin believed that there were extremely high chances that the war with Serbia would turn into a world war, while part of the Austro-Hungarian society was under the delusion that the war would be of a local character. The decision to use the assassination to start the war was made at the meetings of the Joint Ministerial Council on July 7, but it was then advocated that Serbia should be reduced, not destroyed. On July 23, MP Baron Vladimir von Giesl delivered an ultimatum to the representative of the Serbian Prime Minister, Lazar Paču, Minister of Finance. The Serbian government was given a deadline of 48 hours to respond to it, with a note that the response could be "accepts conditions" or "does not accept". The ultimatum was worded in such a way that no European government could accept its terms. On July 25, the President of the Serbian Government, Nikola Pašić, submitted the answer to the Austro-Hungarian representative. On the same day, in the evening hours in Vienna, an order was issued on partial mobilization against Serbia and Montenegro, and a month after the assassination in Sarajevo, on July 28, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia in an open telegram. [3]

The alliances and secret agreements between the great powers grew into two opposing military alliances: the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy until the Treaty of London when it sided with the Central Powers, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire) and the Entente (Russia, France and Great Britain). [4] Entering the war, the Serbian state could mobilize between 350,000 and 400,000 soldiers. [5] The army was organized into three armies, the Užice army and the defense troops of the city of Belgrade. The supreme commander was the regent Aleksandar Karađorđević. At the head of the Supreme Command was Duke Radomir Putnik, while his deputy was General Živojin Mišić. The First Army was commanded by General Petar Bojović, the Second Army was commanded by General Stepa Stepanović, the Third Army was commanded by General Pavle Jurišić Šturm, and the Užice Army by General Miloš Božanović. The Austro-Hungarian army designated its Balkan army (Fifth and Sixth Armies) commanded by General Oskar Poćorek for the attack on Serbia. The Serbian Supreme Command expected the main attack from the north, across the Sava and Danube, but it was carried out across the Drina. The operations of the Austro-Hungarian Balkan army with the aim

of crushing the Serbian resistance by conquering Valjevo and Užice began on August 12, 1914. The first blow was accepted by the units of the Third Army. On the night between August 15 and 16 near the village of Tekerish, on Mount Cer, a battle took place that surprised both sides. The next day, on August 16, Serbian units inflicted a decisive defeat on the Austro-Hungarian army. The Battle of Cer ended on August 20 with the defeat of the Fifth Austro-Hungarian Army and its withdrawal to Bosnia.

After the victory at Cer, the Supreme Command launched broad offensive actions towards Austria-Hungary. On September 6, the units of the First Army crossed the Sava and penetrated into Srem, surprising the enemy who managed to destroy one part of the units of the Second Army and capture another. Units The first armies entered Zemun, conquered Nova Pazova and came close to Inđija and Ruma. During September, units of the Second Army withstood the attack of the Fifth Austro-Hungarian Army. During that time, the Sixth Army managed to occupy the area between the Jadra and the Drina. In the following days, heavy battles were fought on Gučevo and Mačkov kamen.

The new Austro-Hungarian offensive began at the end of October, with the attack in Macva. In November the situation was very bad because the Allies did not send help in arms and ammunition. On the night of November 14-15, Serbian units crossed Kolubara and established a new line of defense (Kolubara - Ljig - Maljen - Užice). At the end of November, the Supreme Command entrusted the leadership of the First Army to General Živojin Mišić. The decision to shorten the front line turned out to be extremely important. In this way, he got time for the rest of the soldiers and the consolidation of the units. On December 3, Živojin Mišić ordered the army to launch a counterattack. The decisive battle took place at Suvobor and Kolubara. After the victory in the Battle of Kolubara, the Allies stopped the pressure on Serbia to cede part of its territories to Bulgaria. [6] Most of the murders by the Austro-Hungarian army were committed in Macva, Jadr and Posavina.

At the time of receiving the declaration of war, Serbia had only two formal allies: Montenegro and Greece and "cooperated closely with Russia". [7] Greece would provide assistance only in the event of a Bulgarian attack on Serbia. In addition to the demands of the Allies to cede part of the territories won in the Balkan Wars to Bulgaria, the Allies

also conducted negotiations with Italy and Romania, which were promised territories at the expense of Serbia (the Eastern coast of the Adriatic and the Banat). [8]

At the beginning of September, the position was formulated that "a strong south-western Slavic state should be created from Serbia, which would include all Serbs, all Croats and all Slovenians". The sketch of the new state was drawn up on September 21, and at the end of October a part of the program on the internal organization of the future state was created, which would be a constitutional and centralist monarchy with a joint government and assembly. [9] The turning point was the Niš Declaration. On December 7, the Government of the Kingdom of Serbia made a statement in the People's Representative Office in which, among other things, it is stated that "the only task is to ensure the successful conclusion of this great war which, at the moment it began, became at the same time a struggle for the liberation and unification of all our unliberated brothers Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes." [10]

Serbia entered 1915 devastated and very weak. During 1915, numerous problems arose. Some of them are: huge human losses, shortage of ammunition, epidemic of infectious diseases, ruined economy, increasing indebtedness. Retreating, the Austro-Hungarian soldiers left typhus behind which spread very quickly and mortality was high. The fight against the epidemic was helped by allied countries, but help also came from neutral countries.

Petrograd agreed to negotiations with Italy after the confirmation of the British government that it agrees with the cession of Constantinople and the Straits to Russia, and France joined it. The negotiations between the Entente members and Italy ended with the signing of the secret London Treaty on April 26. Italy was promised South Tyrol, the Julian Territory with Trieste, Gorizia and Postojna, Istria, the Kvarner Islands, northern Dalmatia up to Cape Planka with Zadar and Šibenik, and several Adriatic islands, while in Albania, Wallona and the island of Saseno were to belong to it. The Serbian Government was not officially informed about the start of negotiations or about the conclusion of the contract. [11] The Treaty of London became one of the biggest obstacles in the process of creating the Yugoslav state. The agreement concluded by the Allies with Russia on the issue of Constantinople and the agreement signed with Italy formed the basis on which two military operations were prepared - the attack of the Italian they formed

the basis on which two military operations were prepared - the attack of Italian troops across the Alps on Austria-Hungary and the British-French operation in the Dardanelles. It turned out, however, that none of those offensive actions produced the desired result. [12]

Serbia was still required to hand over part of Macedonia to Bulgaria. On September 1, the Serbian government declared that it was ceding the territories requested by the allies to Bulgaria on the condition that it "attack the Ottoman Empire with all its forces in the shortest possible time and that the allies promise that Croatia and Rijeka will unite with Serbia, that they will be freed from Slovenian lands with the right of self-determination and that Serbia will receive a part of the Banat". [13] The Bulgarian government simultaneously negotiated with the Central Powers, deciding to accept their offer - all of Macedonia and parts of Serbia up to Velika Morava. [14]

Germany joined the Balkan battlefield, whose troops were commanded by German Field Marshal August von Mackensen. On October 14, Bulgaria declared war on Serbia and, as part of military operations towards Skopje, cut the Nis-Thessalonica railway and prevented the withdrawal of the Serbian army towards Greece. The Serbian government was forced to leave Niš and retreat to Raška, where it spent the second half of October and the first half of November 1915. Unable to withstand the attacks of Mackenzie's armies and the Bulgarian army, the Serbian army began its retreat through Montenegro and Albania towards the Adriatic Sea on November 12, and the last units left Serbia on November 28. [15]

Together with the members of the Serbian Government headed by Nikola Pašić, parliamentarians, high government officials, cultural and public workers and a large number of refugees, foreign diplomats also crossed the Albanian mountains. [16]

The allies were asked to deliver food and military equipment to the places where the Serbian army was moving, since it was planned that they would be ready for new battles a month after the crossing of Albania.

A remarkable battle took place near Mojkovac on January 6 and 7, 1916, when the Montenegrin army under the command of serdar Janko Vukotić won a victory that prevented the Austro-Hungarian offensive from the north and east. On January 23, King Nikola II Petrović of Montenegro concluded and signed the capitulation agreement with

Austria-Hungary on January 25. The Serbian army retreated through Albania in three directions. The first was Peć - Andrejevica - Podgorica - Skodar, the second Prizren - Ljum Kula - Spis - Fleti - Puka - Skadar - Lješ, and the third Prizren - Ljum Kula - Piškopeja - Debar - Elbasan. [17] The government reached the Albanian coast on November 30, and the regent Aleksandar Karađorđević a day later, while the Serbian Supreme Command was transferred longer than planned and reached the coast on December 6. The main part of the army and the people arrived in the area between Shkodër and Durres at the beginning of January 1916. The evacuation of the Serbian army from Durres began on January 6. The number of soldiers that had to be evacuated was large and the Albanian ports had a small capacity, the allies demanded that the embarkation be done in Valona. Later, the organization was taken over by the French Navy. Serbian soldiers were transferred to the islands of Corfu and Vido only at the end of the month. The civilians were transferred to Bizerte, a French port in Tunisia. There is still no consensus on the exact number of evacuees.

At the end of the spring of 1916, the Serbian army was transferred to the Thessaloniki front, where it fought with the British and the French. In the autumn of 1916, after fierce fighting, she captured the mountain top of Kajmakčalan, and then Bitola. The front settled down and did not move for the next two years.

In February 1917, an armed uprising broke out against the Bulgarian authorities - the Toplic uprising. The uprising affected the territories of Toplica and Jablanica, southern Pomeranian Voivodeship, the Kopaonica and Kruševac regions, and parts of eastern Serbia. The population fleeing the Bulgarian mobilization took refuge in the forests, where they joined the Chetnik detachments. Kosta Vojinović and Kosta Milovanović from Pećanac were at the head of the uprising. Kuršumlija, Lebane, Prokuplje and Blace were liberated. The uprising was crushed by the end of March 1917. Punitive expeditions killed around 20,000 Serbian civilians.

In mid-September 1918, the Entente forces launched an extensive offensive on the Thessaloniki front. On September 25, Serbian units liberated Skloplje and Štip and crossed the Vardar. This led Bulgaria to capitulate on September 29. The victory over the German units was won on October 12 near Nis. By November 1, the whole of Serbia was liberated, and then the pursuit of the enemy across the Sava, Drina and Danube rivers

continued. On the Salonica front, two volunteer divisions, composed of soldiers from the Austro-Hungarian army that fought on the eastern front, as well as volunteers of Serbian and South Slavic origin who arrived from America, fought as part of the Serbian army.

Austria-Hungary capitulated on November 3, 1918. With the capitulation of Germany on November 11, 1918, the First World War ended. At the peace conference in Versailles, treaties were concluded with the defeated countries, Germany was designated as the main culprit for causing the war, new states were recognized, new borders were drawn and the League of Nations was founded. The First World War brought down four great empires - Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and Turkey. All these states became republics.

There are different data on the total human losses of Serbia in the First World War. Immediately after the war, it was considered that the losses of Serbia amounted to about a 1.370.000 people, and about 370,000 military and other civilian victims. According to the estimate of the SHS delegation at the peace conference in Versailles, Serbia's war damage amounted to 7 to 10 billion gold francs, which was half of its total national assets at the time.

On December 1, 1918, the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the first South Slavic state, was proclaimed.

2. Peace Conference in Paris

At the end of the war, the allied and associated countries were faced with major political, economic and social problems which, above all, demanded the conclusion of peace treaties with the defeated states as quickly as possible and the determination of the borders of the new states that were created by the collapse of the empires. One of the most important tasks was the reconstruction of the economy and the mitigation of the sharp social contradictions that arose as a result of the war, in order to reduce the dissatisfaction of the broad masses of the people and the working classes.

When in the autumn of 1918 it became obvious that the war was coming to an end, the representatives of the Entente and the allied powers met in the Trianon Castle to decide on the new situation. They concluded that decisions on the foundations of international life will remain in the competence of the great powers and that it is necessary

to reconcile the secret treaties concluded during the war and Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points in order to find solutions to current problems. Under the influence of the President of the USA, the Entente powers accepted to take the Fourteen Points and their amendments, which were adopted by the American Congress on July 4, September 27 and October 21, 1918, as the program basis of the Peace Conference. Accepting Wilson's ideas meant agreeing with several basic principles: the principle of public diplomacy, the principle of self-determination, the principle of equality of all peoples, the principle of determining strategic boundaries, the principle of vital economic interest and the principle of historical law.

In addition to the victorious countries, some neutral countries, as well as Russia, could not participate in the conference. The participants were divided into two groups. The larger group consisted of small and medium-sized countries and this group had only limited rights. Their representatives could submit proposals and give notices, participate in plenary sessions and accept decisions. The smaller group consisted of five large countries: USA, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan. All decisions were made by these five states. Representatives of the five powers made up the Supreme Council, the highest body of the conference, in which the heads of delegations and foreign ministers had the status of full members. At the end of March 1919, the presidents formed a narrow body in order to deliberate more secretly. Most of the decisions were in the hands of Georges Clemenceau, David Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson and Vittorio Orlando. The presence of countries from only one camp at the conference did not mean that their interests were aligned. On the contrary, all countries, especially the great powers, came to the conference with separate and conflicting demands. [18]

The official opening of the conference was held in the castle of the French kings in Versailles on January 18, 1919, and was officially opened with a speech by the president of the host country, Raymond Poincaré. About ten days earlier, the delegations of the participating countries started arriving in Paris, and the heads of the delegations of the USA, Great Britain, France and Italy held a preliminary meeting in the building of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs on January 12, 1919, when they agreed on the agenda and the way of working at the conference. [19] The conference sat continuously for a year and consisted of two phases. The first phase was from January 18 to June 28, 1919,

when the peace treaty with Germany was prepared and the League of Nations was founded. The second was from June 28, 1919 to the middle of January 1920, when contracts were prepared with other defeated countries - Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire, and disputes between the victorious and new countries were resolved. The first phase was marked by American and the second by Anglo-French influence in the work of the conference. More than 30 allied and associated countries participated in the conference, but their actual participation in the work of the conference was formal. The major powers refused to discuss the most important issues in plenary sessions. In the first phase of the conference, seven plenary sessions were held. The most important issues were resolved by the great powers, and others were only informed about it. The body of the Council of Ten consisted of the heads of delegations and foreign ministers of the five great powers. The Japanese delegation took part in the discussion only when it came to the Far East. The work of the Council of Ten was ineffective for two reasons. The representatives of the great powers did not want to express their true views in the presence of a large number of people, but did so in the private contacts of the heads of delegations. Another reason was the longer absences of the most prominent personalities. From March 1914, the most important issues were decided by the Council of Four - the Supreme Council, in secret meetings. In addition to the Council, there were also five ministers of foreign affairs who discussed the issues entrusted to them by the heads of delegations. Important bodies that prepared materials and proposed decisions for each problem for the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs were the expert commissions. The most important among them were: the Commission for Territorial Affairs, the Commission for the League of Nations, the Commission for War Responsibility, and the Reparations Commission. [20]

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