2012

Balkan Minds: Transnational Nationalism and the Transformation of South Slavic Immigrant Identity in Chicago, 1890-1941

Dejan Kralj

Loyola University Chicago

Recommended Citation
http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss_1yr/4
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

BALKAN MINDS:
TRANSNATIONAL NATIONALISM & THE TRANSFORMATION
OF SOUTH SLAVIC IMMIGRANT IDENTITY IN CHICAGO, 1890-1941

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HISTORY

BY
DEJAN KRALJ
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
MAY 2012
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is quite a difficult task to thank everyone that has helped me throughout this epic scholarly journey. However, many deserve recognition for the roles they played guiding me through to the end of my graduate career. Foremost in mind, I must thank Lillian Hardison, the heart and soul of the history graduate department at Loyola. Your support and friendship have meant the world to me and countless other graduate students that have made their way through the program. You have made a lasting impression on all of our lives and we are eternally grateful.

I most indebted to Timothy J. Gilfoyle, my dissertation chair and the members of my committee, Harold L. Platt, Susan E. Hirsch, and Edin Hajdarpasić. Your collective wisdom, thorough analyses, and exacting critiques have greatly improved the quality and scope of my work. I am confident that your time and effort will not prove fruitless. More importantly, your friendship and support during the months leading up to my defense have meant more than you can imagine. I thank you all.

In addition, faculty members Lewis Erenberg, William Galush—whose seminar course gave rise to my dissertation topic—Suzanne Kaufman, Michael Khodarovsky, and Anthony Cardoza have all contributed to my growth and development as a scholar. I also must thank Robert O. Bucholz, who has served both directly and indirectly as my teaching mentor throughout my time at Loyola. I am forever in your debt for all of the adroit and judicious wisdom you have freely and tirelessly dispensed throughout the
years. There is no greater example of that which all teaching historians should aspire to. I also owe a special thanks to my friend, confidant, and fellow traveler, John Donoghue, whose arrival at Loyola could not have been more opportune. I look forward to continuing our endless discussions on all things historical and political in the years to come.

I would like to express my gratitude to my fellow graduate students that have inspired, provoked, encouraged, and supported me both in the classroom and during countless pint-filled evenings, waxing philosophic at the back tables of Hamilton’s. I especially want to thank Peter Finocchiaro, Kevin Kaufman, Cord Scott, and Jen Searcy who all sat alongside me during my first three years of coursework. I also want to thank the members of the dissertation writing group—Kevin Kaufman, Elizabeth Hoffman Ransford, Jason Myers, Adam Shrpintzen, Ron Martin, Thomas Greene, Andrew Donnelly, Daniel O’Gorman, Jillana Ordman, and Maria Reynolds—who ultimately motivated me to finally put pen to paper and complete my dissertation. I also wish to thank the History Department and the Graduate School for four years of merit award and teaching assistantship funding, and to the Graduate School and the Arthur J. Schmitt Foundation for honoring me with the Schmitt Dissertation Fellowship during the 2007 and 2008 academic year.

Finally, I want thank all of my family for respecting my decision to take the road less travelled. Especially to my son Zane, who has spent all of his years watching his father work on a “project with no end” and to my wife Elanor, who has supported all my efforts without question. I would have given up a long time ago were it not for your
unfailing love and encouragement. You have all given me the strength to endure one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I am forever grateful.
In loving memory of Branko Šestić
and all who still believe in Yugoslavia…
Exile is the nursery of nationality....
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**  
iii

**PRONUNCIATION GUIDE**  

**INTRODUCTION: SOUTH SLAVIC IMMIGRANTS IN CHICAGO**  
The South Slavs, Immigration, and National Identity  
Chapter Outline and Overview  
1  
12  
23

**CHAPTER ONE: CRUMBLING EMPIRES & ASPIRING NATIONS: THE AWAKENING OF SOUTH SLAVIC NATIONAL IDENTITY, 1804-1882**  
The First and Second Serbian Uprisings, 1804-1817  
Literature, Politics, and the Rise of the Serbian Nation  
Illyrianism and the Emergence of Croatian National Consciousness  
Dueling Nationalisms: Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Illyrians & Jugoslavs  
The Balkan Crisis and Great Power Politics  
Conclusion  
26  
34  
43  
49  
53  
65  
68

**CHAPTER TWO: INDUSTRIAL CITIES & SLAVIC INVASIONS: THE DAWN OF “NEW IMMIGRATION” IN CHICAGO, 1880-1910**  
The Rise of Urban Industrial America  
“New Immigration,” 1880-1924  
South Slav Emigration from Austro-Hungarian Lands  
South Slav Emigration from Ottoman Lands  
Return Migration  
Push-Pull Factors Contributing to South Slavic Immigration  
South Slavic Immigration to Chicago  
Employment & Working Conditions  
Assimilation and Ethnic Maintenance  
Conclusion  
71  
73  
75  
80  
85  
86  
88  
96  
103  
106  
111

**CHAPTER THREE: FRATERNAL SOCIETIES & THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE PRESS: SOUTH SLAVIC NATIONALIST MOBILIZATION & AMERICANIZATION IN CHICAGO, 1880-1930**  
Ethnic Organizations  
Educating the South Slavs  
Athletic Associations  
South Slavic Cultural Organizations  
Junior Affiliates  
The South Slavic Foreign-Language Press  
Conclusion  
114  
118  
130  
135  
138  
147  
148  
158
CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIALISTS, SAINTS & SALOONS: OPPOSITIONAL IDENTITIES, ASSIMILATION, AND ETHNIC MAINTENANCE IN SOUTH SLAVIC CHICAGO, 1900-1930

South Slavic Families: Traditional Life, Homeownership, and the Second Generation 163
South Slavic Saloons 171
South Slavic Churches 179
Working-class Socialists & Anti-Immigrant Nativists 186
Conclusion 196

CHAPTER FIVE: HOMELAND CALLING: TRANSNATIONAL NATIONALIST MOBILIZATION AND CONFLICT IN THE BALKANS, 1908-1918

The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913 213
The First World War, 1914-1918 223
Conclusion: The End of World War I 232

CHAPTER SIX: SOUTH SLAVIC UNITY & DISARRAY: NATIONAL STRUGGLE IN THE FIRST JUGOSLAVIA, 1918-1941

Unity or Disarray 257
The Rise of Croatian Nationalism 263
Jugoslavs in Name Only 269
Jugoslav Day, 1933 271
Death of a King, Birth of a Nation 276
“The Croatsians have Spoken” 279
Conclusion: World War II and the End of Jugoslavia 281

CONCLUSION: THE DEATH OF NATION & REBIRTH OF AN IDEA 283

BIBLIOGRAPHY 302

VITA 321
PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

The language of the former-Yugoslav states of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro once known as Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian is now identified as the individual languages referred to as either Bosnian, Croatian, or Serbian depending on one’s national affiliation. However, the language is commonly referred Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian or BCS. Barring a variety of regional dialectical variations, BCS is a single language written in either Latin or Cyrillic script. The language is determinedly phonetic with each letter representing a singular sound. The stress typically is placed upon the first syllable of each word.

C c  ts as in tsar
Č č  tj as t in future
Ć č  ch as in church
Đ đ  j as in james
J j  y as in yellow
Lj lj  li as in million.
NJ nj  ni as in opinion
Š š  sh as in ship
Ž ž  zh as s in treasure
INTRODUCTION

SOUTH SLAVIC IMMIGRANTS IN CHICAGO

As the end of World War I drew near, centuries of east European nationalistic rivalries and hatreds seemed to dissipate as much of Europe’s old imperial order gave way to the rise of new nations. In 1918, Robert Joseph Kerner, an American authority on Jugoslavia optimistically assessed the nationalism of South Slavs in the Balkans, stating that,

If there are miracles in history, the Jugo-Slav movement is a miracle…. Religious differences, political rivalries, linguistic quibbles and the petty foibles of centuries appeared to be forgotten in the three short years which elapsed from Kumanovo to the destruction of Serbia in 1915. The Great Serbian idea had really perished in 1915 as had the Great Croatian idea in 1878. In their place emerged Jugo-Slavia… Nationalism had proved stronger than opposing religions, more cohesive than political and economic interests… The Jugo-Slav movement had ended in the formation of a nation which is neither a doctrine nor a dream, but reality.¹

For Kerner and other Wilsonian idealists, Jugoslavia represented the culmination of a centuries-long struggle for unification. He believed that South Slavic unity “came first in the imagination and the mind, next in literature and speech, and finally in political action” as the divisions among Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes melted away creating a new national identity: the Jugoslavs.²


² Ibid., 85.
The rapid spread of industrialization in the nineteenth century unleashed an unprecedented wave of migration across Europe and North America. These forces laid the foundation for a period of unparalleled urbanization and a revolution in transportation technologies that allowed untold masses of Europeans to migrate to new lands without restriction. Millions upon millions moved freely throughout their own nations, across continents, and ultimately across the vast Atlantic Ocean to a land simply known as *Amerika.* Among these seemingly endless people were the South Slavs of the Balkan Peninsula—Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes—who were awakened by the forces of the emerging modern world from their centuries-long slumber imposed by imperial suzerainty. The spread of industrialization and capitalism allowed the South Slavs to discover a world beyond the Balkans. More importantly, their experience as émigrés and exiles allowed the South Slavs to discover each other.

By the nineteenth century, the modern Slavic peoples consisted of three distinct populations identified as Eastern, Western, and Southern. The Eastern branch represented the largest of the Slavic populations and comprised of Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. The Western Slavs included the Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, and Sorbs. The Southern Slavs were geographically separated from both the Eastern and Western groups, encompassing the entirety of the

---

3 Lazar Čurić, *Underground in America,* 1907 pamphlet, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

Balkan region shared by the Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Bosnians, Macedonians, and Bulgarians. Although all Slavic groups shared linguistic elements, each respective geographical group adhered to varying dialects of Slavic more similar to their fellow ethnic members.

More specifically, the term “South Slav” referred to all of the various peoples comprising the distinct Southern branch of modern Slavs. In the context of this work, however, the term “Jugoslav” applies to the western branch of South Slavs that became politically unified in the twentieth-century under the name Jugoslavia (Yugoslavia) — Bosnians, Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbians, and Slovenes. Although the Bulgarians were ethnically and linguistically South-Slavic and participated in various unification efforts in the Balkans and in Chicago, their ultimate exclusion and antagonistic relationship with the Serbs during the Second Balkan War justifies their omission.

---

5 “Jug” meaning “south” in most Slavic dialects. The usage of Jugoslav rather than Yugoslav during the period from 1880 to 1941 is in response to this being the dominate spelling and usage both among the various South Slavic and English language sources used throughout this work.

6 Milivoj S. Stanoyevich, "The Ethnography of the Yugo-Slav(s)" Geographical Review, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Feb. 1919), 91. Three primary divisions exist among the Jugoslavs who are divided and identified geographically between Dinaric, Macedonian, and Pannonic regional identities. These regions also represent relative linguistic, dialectic variations and slight cultural variations as well. In the Vuk Karadžić’s epic nationalist tome, “Serbs All and Everywhere, he claimed that “From all this it is apparent that all the South Slavs, except the Bulgarians, can be divided into 3 language groups: first are the Serbs, who say sto or sta (what) (and are thus called Stokavians) and at the end of the past-perfect verb forms say ‘o’ instead of (therefore called Cakavians) and on the end of the past-perfect verb forms say ‘l’ instead of ‘o’, but otherwise do not differ greatly from the Serbs; and the third are the Slovenians, or as we call them, Kranjci, who say kaj instead of sto (Kajkavians), who by language differ more from the Serbs and Croats than do the Serbs and Croats from each other, but they are still closer to them than to any other Slavic people.” See Vuk Karadžić, “Serbs all and Everywhere” 1849. http://www.hic.hr/books/greatserbia/karadzic.htm. (Accessed 13 September 2010). Throughout this work, the terms South Slav(s), Jugo-Slav(s), Jugoslav(s), Yugoslavia, and Yugoslavia are used to identify the western branch of South Slavic peoples that created a political nation known first as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and then simply as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The varied usage of the terms referring to either the people—South Slav, Jugo-Slav, or Yugoslav—or the political nation state—Jugoslaiva or Yugoslavia—reflects the specific usage in the source materials.
The term South Slav is primarily used throughout to reflect the disunity between Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes up until 1918 when their political union led to the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. At this point, the term Jugo-Slav became the most common form both within and without the community. Only in the mid-1920s was it replaced with “Yugoslav” to refer to any and all living within the ultimately renamed Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The terms Yugoslavs and Yugoslavia continued until well after World War II, when it finally gave way to the English spelling of Yugoslavia. Regardless, all referred to the same people and reflect the specific historical events of the time.

Many of these South Slavs unwillingly departed from their homes, "uprooted" by imperial powers embroiled in an endless game of Balkan realpolitik. Others willingly transplanted themselves, their families, and their culture across Europe’s ever-expanding urban landscape and beyond to the industrial cities of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century America. Regardless of their destination, they set out in search of that which eluded them in their homeland. Although the experience was traumatic for some South Slavs whose “old roots were sundered,” it was liberating and enlightening for others.\(^7\) Their experience transformed them as they arrived in America aware of themselves for the first time, and increasingly aware of the commonality they shared with those they left behind. Immigration awakened a national identity that many South Slavs never knew existed and allowed them to collectively fashion a new identity as Yugoslavs.

At the start of the twentieth century, the United States of America was a changed nation as the agrarian yeomen republic yielded to the urban, industrial machine, and now stood at epicenter of extraordinary global change. Simultaneous technological advances combined within increasing economic and political instability to displace traditional structures throughout Europe. As a result, America was inundated with unskilled workers eager to fuel the engines of the new economy. The South Slavs of the Balkans joined countless others from the farthest corners of the European continent during the final years of the nineteenth century and first two decades of the twentieth. Millions of foreign and unfamiliar faces, outlandishly clad, replaced the previous fair-haired and fair-skinned Western Europeans that originally populated the nation. These innumerable diverse peoples of eastern and southern European origin redefined the character of twentieth-century America. Walt Whitman stated that no one needed to be reminded that America is a land of immigrants and “…is not merely a nation, but a teeming nation of nations.”

The vast majority of South Slavic immigrants arrived in the United States between 1890 and 1924. Emigration was a practical response to the profound economic, social and political changes occurring in the Balkans. The experience as émigrés and exiles allowed the South Slavs to discover, develop, and articulate novel modes of individual and collective identity. The experience of life in Chicago allowed Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes to imagine a new Jugoslav identity where none had previously existed. The

---


experience of immigration ultimately defined South Slavic life in Chicago during the early twentieth century, as increased national awareness and the growing support for Jugoslavism—the unification of all South Slavs—profoundly affected events back in the Balkans.

Immigration and exile increased awareness and articulation of national and supranational identity among the South Slavs of Chicago. This process was advanced by modernization and industrialization alongside traditional institutions and structures that were transplanted from the Balkans to America. The shared working-class experience of life in the United States combined with educational efforts within the community and the spread of print media in the form of the South Slavic foreign-language press in Chicago supported the development of both competing nationalisms and the articulation of Jugoslavism. The experience of immigration to the United States ultimately contributed to the development of a pluralistic worldview where South Slavs embraced their newly ascribed hyphenated-American and increasingly working-class identities alongside their newly emerging Croat, Serb, Slovene, and Jugoslav identities.¹⁰


¹⁰ Some scholars maintain that the shared experience of the working class was the most influential factor in the development of immigrant communities in industrial cities, while others argue the traditional affiliations in the forms of family, ethnicity, and religion continued to dominate life in early twentieth century America. For scholarship supporting the primacy of working-class consciousness over traditional ethnonational, ethnorenligious forms of identification see Lizabeth Cohen, Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939 (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1990), James R. Barrett, Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), and Rick Halpern, Down on the Killing Floor: Black and White Workers in Chicago's Packinghouses, 1904-54 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997). Other scholars argue
Nationalism in Europe during the nineteenth century laid the ideological foundations for South Slavic cultural and political institutions transplanted to America. After their arrival, Croat, Serb, and Slovene immigrants adapted these traditional structures to their new environment, which then allowed emergent national identities to take hold throughout the émigré community of Chicago. South Slavic fraternal groups, benevolent associations, and the foreign-language press were modeled after nineteenth-century citaonicas (reading rooms), maticas (literary societies), and literary journals that dominated nationalist discourse throughout the Balkans. Croat, Serb, and Slovene émigrés were not integrated into their respective national identities but rather remained fixed within their own separate local, regional, and religious worlds. The urban, immigrant experience of the predominately rural South Slavs in Chicago contributed to their growing identification, first with their fellow Croat, Serb, and Slovene nations, and then collectively as Jugoslavs, in a similar fashion that gradual urbanization and the spread of print media from urban to rural France transformed peasants into Frenchmen.11

The nationalist awakening of the South Slavs was ultimately achieved through the immigrant experience in Chicago. Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes had limited awareness of themselves let alone one another prior to their collective experience in America. The process of South Slavic unification began with the recognition of common local, regional,
and religious affiliations present in the Balkans existed between Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes within the city. These attachments combined with their shared working-class experience allowed South Slavic cooperation through fraternal and benevolent organizations, churches, families, socialist groups, and the foreign-language press. Modernization, industrialization, and the spread of print media were crucial to the task of national integration, although for the South Slavs the process occurred outside their homeland.\textsuperscript{12} Their experience in America gave rise to a shared working-class identity that was congruent with traditional nationalist identities as well as an emergent Jugoslav identity promoted by certain organizations in Chicago.

The development of working-class consciousness was fundamental to the mobilization of South Slavic national identity. Their experience as laborers and the ongoing struggle between various organizations and institutions within the community spurred increased national awareness. However, working-class consciousness did not replace ethnonational identity but reinforced it and introduced it to those who were unaware of their shared collective identities as Croats, Serbs and Slovenes. Oppositional structures in the form of the traditional families, fraternal groups, benevolent associations, the church, and socialist organizations worked in concert allowing Chicago's South Slavs to embrace Jugoslav national identity. This transformation was abetted by the industrial environment and working-class experience in Chicago, and driven by political events back home that served as a transnational catalyst in the development of South Slavic immigrant identity. The nationalizing programs that began

in the Balkans did not stop in Chicago. Although they employed much of the same tools—literature, intellectual elites, and political organizations—nationalist mobilization within the United States was unique in that it was profoundly influenced by the conditions the encountered in America. For the South Slavs of Chicago, their nationalist awakening was ultimately achieved through the immigrant experience. In the most profound way, exile proved to be the nursery for South Slavic nationalisms.

The South Slav population of Chicago provides a unique opportunity for historical study by not only filling a glaringly obvious gap in the historiographic record concerning immigrant life and community in Chicago, but more importantly by furthering our understanding of how nationalism and transnational concerns affect immigrant identity and community formation. Despite having one of the largest and most enduring South Slavic immigrant populations in the United States, the South Slavs of Chicago have received little serious consideration by scholars. Much of this scholarship is in the form of doctoral dissertations.13 The South Slavs of Chicago offer scholars a variety of answers to traditional questions posited by immigration, social and labor historians since they played a prominent role in the labor movement of the in early twentieth century. The South Slav diaspora also allows for an examination of how transnational political, cultural, social and economic forces work. They were keys to immigrant identity transformation. In terms of studies of nationalism, the South Slavs

13 See Peter Alter, “The Serbian Great Migration: Serbs in the Chicago Region, 1880s to 1930s” (PhD diss., The University of Arizona, 2000); Ljubica Malinajdovska, “The Acculturation of Macedonian Immigrants in the United States” (PhD diss., Kent State University, 2006); Kristen Lucken, “Identity Matters: Bosnian Identity Maintenance in a Post-Migration Setting” (PhD diss., Boston University, 2010), Gregory Brown, “Coping With Long-Distance Nationalism: Inter-Ethnic Conflict in a Diaspora Context” (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2004); Nida Bikmen, “History, Memory, and Identity: Remembering the Homeland in Exile” (PhD diss., City University of New York).
remain an enigma as scholars have correctly argued that they are representative of multiple models of nationalist mobilization theory.\textsuperscript{14}

National identity is closely associated with the ideology of nationalism, a politically oriented-doctrine proclaiming members rights to popular freedom and sovereignty entailing fraternity within a single historic homeland, legal equality among all members, and a singular shared public culture. Some scholars identify a nation as a group of people sharing “assumed blood ties, race, language, region, religion, customs” while others argue a nation can only exist when political institutions and structures are constructed to exert absolute control and sovereignty over a defined territory. Others recognize it simply as a state of mind, a “psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it from all other people…”\textsuperscript{15} In context of the South Slavs, the nation is a form of political identity that overlaps and competes with other forms of collective identity such as religion, ethnicity, class, gender, race, and geographic region. National identity is a paradoxical phenomenon, which often coexists with other forms of collective identity. The dominant model of nationalism that emerged during the nineteenth century declared the existence of a nation when a people shared a common language, history, homeland, and cultural tradition. True nationalists maintained that nations were timeless phenomena that had always existed. Perenialists argued that nations existed in pre-modern political, social and cultural structures, embodying different shapes at different


The first South Slav immigrants arrived in Chicago in the late nineteenth century as nationalism inundated the European continent. As a group, South Slavs were intimately linked to the struggle across the Atlantic. Their active participation in that transnational debate defined their individual and collective identity in Chicago and greatly influenced the outcome of events back home in the Balkans. More importantly, their active manipulation of ethnonational identity during the formation of the first united South Slavic state—the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—ignited a century long struggle that culminated with the violent collapse of Yugoslavia and the death of hundreds of thousands of South Slavs during the 1990s.

Regardless of their reasons, the South Slavs of Chicago were united in the fact that none of them were completely divorced from their homeland or the events that transpired there in their absence. South Slavic immigrant established a pluralistic identity in Chicago that was immigrant and native, Yugoslav and American, and balanced the old and the new, the village and the city, the Balkans and the United States. More importantly, they were capable of changing and adjusting to the multiplicity of their
world and embraced various personas allowing them to occupy the different roles required to survive within the twin realities they both created and contended with. The South Slavs created an identity that shifted seamlessly between ethnic and national, religious and secular, rural and urban, emigrant and native.

Despite the presence of numerous South Slavic groups throughout Chicago during this period, this study focuses primarily on the relationship between the Croatian and Serbian diaspora as they represent the most obvious among the opposing ideas over what it actually meant to be a Jugoslav. Croats were by far the single largest South Slavic group in Chicago and incredibly active in transnational affairs. However, their sheer size was offset by the political dominance of the Serbs within the Balkans and the support of the Great Powers for the Serbian cause. This fact alone ensured that the relationship between the two groups in Chicago remained contentious throughout the interwar period.

The South Slavs, Immigration, and National Identity

Migration, conflict, urbanization, and the continuing importance of communal tradition were essential elements of the shared experience of immigrant life in early twentieth-century America. Immigration to America at times was considered an act of desperation of downtrodden individuals forced into the inhospitable clutches of the great American industrial machine. Others have depicted newcomers as successful players who retained their own cultures and traditions in an unwelcoming and alien environment to create their own successful worlds. Still others have identified these newest Americans as eager entrepreneurs who knowingly moved to America’s ever-expanding cities in hopes of opportunity, advancement, and all of the rewards of capitalism.

Historians no longer see the process simply in terms of the immigrants impact on
American society, but also in the way which the country transformed the immigrant. As the machinery of industry churned, Chicago became America’s second largest city and a national center of commerce intimately shaped by various migrations and distinguished by the vastness of its ethnic diversity.

The historiographic record concerning South Slavic immigration to the United States is limited to a handful of celebratory narratives claiming that “Yugoslavs have shown themselves to be good American citizens” while others explore the fundamental issues of the immigration experience such as push-pull factors, assimilation, ethnic retention, and return migration.17 The most successful of these is Branko Mita Colaković’s *Yugoslav Migrations to America*. In addition to his primarily quantitative approach, the incorporation of oral history gives agency and a voice to the South Slavs émigrés. However, Colaković work focuses on the South Slavic immigration in the broadest sense thus lacking insight into the everyday struggle people encountered in America.18 The work of George Prpić explores transnationalism in greater depth but lacks specificity as he explores Croatian and then Yugoslav immigrants throughout the entire United States from the early late eighteenth century onward. Although his work

---


offers some clarity it is difficult to discern the development of any significant patterns among the South Slavs.\textsuperscript{19}

The South Slav immigrant experience was not unique as their arrival led to the displacement of earlier immigrant groups with whom they competed for resources and occupational opportunity. They shared many common characteristics with other immigrants that arrived in the United States during the early twentieth century. For European immigrants, the processes of migration and adaptation to the host nation were “international in scope” and rooted within the social, economic and political life of the modern world.\textsuperscript{20} As tensions increased with the influx of newcomers, established ethnics attempted to preserve their unity and identity thorough fraternal and benevolent associations, nationalist societies, cultural organizations and most importantly churches and parochial schools.\textsuperscript{21}

Emigration was the end of rural peasant life in Europe and the beginning of life in urban, industrial America for most immigrants. According to Oscar Handlin, the tumultuous crossing served as a filter which measured the adaptability of the various groups that determined who was and was not capable of adjusting traditional culture to the needs and conditions of a hostile and alien experience, leaving the “uprooted” in a


\textsuperscript{21} Louise Carroll Wade, \textit{Chicago’s Pride: The Stockyards, Packingtown, and Environs in the Nineteenth Century} (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), xi-xii, 145
perpetual state of crisis.\textsuperscript{22} This “exile paradigm” reaffirmed the notion of the lack of agency among the uprooted masses victimized by the actions of their respective governments and the deficiency of resources in their native lands. The pull of American commerce was also taken into account as he argued that conditions within the receiving nation ultimately determined the length and intensity of immigration.\textsuperscript{23} Marcus Hansen argued that mid-nineteenth-century patriotic movements were rooted in the transatlantic actions of their émigré populations in America, undermining the field’s adherence to the “exile paradigm.”\textsuperscript{24} Moreover, the South Slavs stood in stark contrast to Kerby Miller’s Northern Irish who viewed themselves as unwilling participants in the process of emigration and forced exile. Although this was true for some South Slavs, the vast majority willingly emigrated from the Balkans in search of better economic opportunities.\textsuperscript{25} Although homesickness and alienation in America was common, Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes turned inward, relying on their own institutions and traditional structures to ease the burden of their exile.\textsuperscript{26}

Chicago was long shaped by mass migrations and the vastness ethnonational diversity that is one of the city’s hallmarks and most identifying features. Historians agree that the various ethnic communities within Chicago’s industrialized labor market not only shared a common experience but also relied on the same mechanisms and

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{22} Handlin, The Uprooted, 30-61.
\item\textsuperscript{23} Marcus L. Hansen, "The History of American Immigration as a Field for Research," The American Historical Review 32, no. 3 (1927), 500 – 501.
\item\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 514 -515.
\item\textsuperscript{25} Kerby A. Miller, Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3-9, 169-280, 556-558.
\item\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 23.
\end{itemize}
strategies to not only survive but to thrive within the city’s foreign environment.

Ethnicity and national identity were central to the American industrial experience during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Immigrants living and working in America’s industrial cities were not victims of an alien and hostile urban culture but rather active participants who adapted and changed traditional culture to accommodate their new environment as well as having adapted and changed their environment to accommodate their traditional lives.

Furthermore, the study of ethnicity and nationality is in large part the study of politically induced cultural change. More precisely, it is the study of the process by which elites and counter-elites within ethnic groups select valued aspects of the group’s culture, attach new meaning to them, and employ them as symbols to mobilize the group, defend certain interests, and compete with other groups.27 Recent scholarship contends little difference exists between nationalism and ethnonationalism. Whereas nation denotes the ethnic identity of a group of people typically characterized by a common language, culture, and ancestry, nationalism connotes the political and ideological confluence of ethnicity and the state, creating an identification with and loyalty to one’s nation, but not necessarily to one’s place.28 The word nation originates with the Latin, natio, and, when first conceived during the middle ages, visibly expressed the idea of “common blood ties.” When the term was introduced into the English language in the late thirteenth century, the primary connotation of a “blood related group” was maintained. The word was revised throughout the years, and by the early seventeenth

27 Paul Brass, Nationalism, 87.

century it was being used to describe the inhabitants of a country regardless of that population’s ethnonational composition. Thus over time the term “nation” served as a substitute for less explicit categories such as the people or the citizenry. This propensity of employing the term improperly led to the misapplication of “nationalism” as a substitute for the “territorial judicial unit,” or the state, and has complicated the relationship of nationalism and ethnicity, with the superficial creation and expression of the nation-state. With the concepts of the nation and state confused, it is unavoidable that nationalism bound personal identification to the state rather than loyalty to the nation.  

The term ethnicity is, if anything, more difficult than nationalism to discern from historical misuse to popular misconception. The word, derived from the Greek ethnikos or ethnos, was defined as a group characterized by common descent. Consistent with this origin and concurrent to its application developed a consensus that an ethnic group denoted a “basic human category, not a subgroup.” But contemporary American sociological theory employs the term ethnic group to refer to a group of people with a “common cultural tradition and a sense of identity, which potentially could exist as subgroup of a larger society.” This application of the construct has been the bane of recent Balkan history as the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia was predicated upon the exclusion and oppression of various ethnic subgroups within their larger homogenous

---


30 Connor, Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding, 100-103.
national structures.\textsuperscript{31} The distinction between nation and ethnicity in the context of the South Slavic peoples of the former Yugoslavia becomes increasingly problematic when taking into account that the Serbo-Croatian word narod delineates not only nationality, but people in an ethno-cultural sense as well.\textsuperscript{32}

More importantly, the conception of ethnic subgroups, as established within the field of ethnic studies, specifically prevented the creation of a unified Yugoslav ethnonational identity. While rejecting the notion that ethnicity refers only to minorities, others defended the incorporation of several forms of identity under this single rubric. Nathan Glazer, Daniel Patrick Moynihan and others maintained that “there is some legitimacy to finding that forms of identification based on social realities as different as religion, language, and national origin all have something in common, such that a new term is coined to refer to all of them—ethnicity. What they have in common is that they have all become effective foci for group mobilization for concrete political ends.”\textsuperscript{33} These fault lines of religious demarcation, exaggerated linguistic variation and competing myths of national origin pulled Croats and Serbs apart by hostile internal and external geopolitical forces. Traditionally and historically, they were incapable of maintaining a

\begin{footnotes}
\item[31] Following the Slovenian and Croatian declarations of independence from the Yugoslav Federation in 1991, the Serbian ethnic minority within the national borders of Croatia used their ethnic subgroup identity and their potential oppression by the Croat ethnic majority as grounds for declaring their own independence from Croatia.

\item[32] Woodward, \textit{Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War}, 30-32. In a thorough analysis of the constitutional framework regarding the right of self-determination in the Second Yugoslavia, 1945-1991, Woodward explains how the Slavic word \textit{Narod} makes no distinction between “people” and “nation.” The various peoples of Yugoslavia had rights as founding nations of the member states of the federation (republics) and as individual members of those nations (ethnic peoples) to express their nationality and culture freely. The primary constitutional problem was the dual concept of a nation as both ethnic peoples and peoples of territories.

\end{footnotes}
distinguishably Yugoslav identity at home and abroad. Few individuals in the entire Balkan Peninsula could honestly claim a racially pure ancestry for themselves. Yet, at many times during the last two centuries, fraudulent racial-ethnic theories dominated the national politics of the Balkan landscape.

Religious identification and ethnic affiliation were intimately linked to the construction of identity within the Balkan milieu. The issue of religion continually surfaced as the artificial construction of “ancient antagonisms” between Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs, which coupled with their excessive reliance upon their mythic past on alleged ancestral soil removed each group further and further from the truth of their shared ethnonational past. The significant role of religious, geographical, and linguistic factors is even more sharply exposed by the fate of the diasporic communities, which often lost their homeland and their autonomy. In many ways, this double loss

---

34 Timothy L. Smith, "Religion and Ethnicity in America," *American Historical Review* 83, no. 5 (1978), 1155-1185. Smith argued that although there was a dialectical relationship between religion and ethnicity, that religion ultimately maintained a superseding authority over the development of ethnic group identity. He also asserted that religious feelings were intimately interconnected with ethnic interests and identities and that although the process of ethnic mobilization began in their homelands that the process of immigration forced the “revitalization of faith and commitment” aiding in the development of ethnonational identity among the migrant communities.


36 H.T. Norris, *Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 6-7, 45; L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961), 9. Norris argued that none of the religious creeds, Bogomil, Catholic and Orthodox, prevalent in the Balkans during the region’s early ethnonational formative period could on their own take up the role of “spiritual and cultural integrator” of Bosnian society. The most radical change in the racial composition of the peninsula occurred during the sixth and seventh centuries with the invasions of Slavic tribes originating in the low-lying areas north of the Carpathians. These newcomers gradually settled down in the central Balkans and developed separate Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian peoples.
conditions their subsequent lot and self-perception as “people-to-be-restored.” This view was prevalent among all groups, but most vociferously articulated among the Croatian diaspora in Chicago as references to the “occupied land” accompanied declarations of linguistic, cultural and religious freedom of expression among the immigrant community.

… the principle of national sovereignty and complete equality encompasses the right of each of Yugoslavia’s nations to protect all the attributes of its national identity and fully develop not only its economy, but also its culture. Among these attributes, the national name of the language spoken by the Croatian nations is of paramount importance, because it is the inalienable right of every people to call its language by its own national name, irrespective of whether, in a philological sense, this language is shared in entirety or through separate variants by another people.

The distinguishing characteristic of the Balkans is that it traditionally was a border area, a transition zone between disparate peoples and religions. This ethnic and religious diversity in the region explains much of the stormy history of the peninsula and sheds light on the difficult task of identifying the development of ethnonational identity.

The Balkan Peninsula is located at the crossroads of three continents exhibiting an incredible amount of accessibility. The Balkans, from the earliest recorded moments in history, was the gateway between the East and the West. The great powers of the world, Rome, Charlemagne, the Ottomans, and the Austro-Hungarians, collided and the faiths of Western Christianity, Eastern Christianity, Judaism and Islam overlapped within this


38 Julian Busic, “Declaracija Hrvatski Pisacni Jezik” Hrvatska Tjednik Danica, 20 October 1978. A similar letter appeared in the Croatian newspaper Novi Svijet (Chicago) 9 August 1930, attacking what the writer determined to be the Yugoslav colony of Chicago’s support of the failing “fascist” regime of King Alexander that since its introduction in 1921 prohibited “social and political” movement of the Croatian peoples.
contested region. Rather than isolating and protecting the region, the Danube River connected the East and West creating a vast conduit where successive invasions of Goths, Huns, Bulgars, and Slavs migrated southward through the centuries.

The topography was another important factor in the region. Deriving its name from the Turkish word for mountains, the expanse of the Balkans is divided by a vast array of mountain ranges flowing in countless directions and overwhelming the region, allowing isolated ethnonational groups to survive independently for long-standing periods. Ultimately, the incursion of external religious, political and cultural influence juxtaposed with the relative geographical isolation of the region worked to create identifiably unique ethno-national groups.  

Ethnicity in the modern sense only became a feature of Balkan society in the course of the nineteenth century, and only became important late in that century when it was pushed by the ambition and irredentism of Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece. Even as ethnic feelings rose, most were directed against the Ottomans, Hapsburgs, or the Hungarians who ran Croatia for the Hapsburgs. Despite the fact that a majority of the people who soon formed the new Yugoslavia had a common first language, a great deal of benevolence, and little or no history of antagonism, the South Slav population began to identify itself with ethno-religious labels. The consequences became apparent at the turn of the century when Serbs and Croats began to identify themselves within the concept of an all-embracing Jugoslav nationalism. Ironically, Jugoslavism appeared as a Croatian

39 Stavrianos, The Balkans since 1453, 1-5, 7-13. Stavrianos argued that “Western Europe is inhabited by largely homogenous national groups where as the Balkans is not. The difference between the east and the west is not in the number of component strains but rather in the particular circumstances which made possible the unification of several strains into a national unit in the one case, and which prevented such unification in another. Thus the unique characteristic of Balkan ethnic evolution is that virtually all the races that have settled there in the past, as distinguished from those that have simply marched through, have been able to preserve their identity to the present.”
program, to counteract both *Magyarization* (Hungarian cultural hegemony) and Greater Serbianism (irredentist nationalism unifying all Serbs regardless of existing borders into a single Serb nation). In fact, the Serbs were among the last ones officially to endorse the Yugoslav idea.\(^{40}\)

South Slavic immigrants in America do not easily fit into a singular theoretical model of nationalist mobilization. In fact, one can argue that nationalism among the South Slavs, at various points and times, embraced multiple elements of primordial, perennial, and modernist theories of nationalist development. For some, nationalism was simply a state of mind that embraced natural and universal socio-cultural elements already present in the Balkans. Croat, Serb, and Slovene nationalists during the nineteenth century maintained that their respective nations had always existed and pointed back to the rich history of their respective medieval kingdoms. They actively employed the language, culture, and symbols of their mythic past to justify nationalist claims. Others maintained that nationalism among the South Slavs was the product of modernity, promoted by social, cultural, and technological forces that did not exist prior to the nineteenth century.\(^{41}\)

\(^{40}\) Vlad Georgescu, “Historical Setting” in Richard F. Nyrop, ed., *Yugoslavia: A Country Study*, Foreign Area Studies (Washington D.C.: United States Government, 1982) Also see Stavrianos, 237. The irony of the Serbs initial reticence towards the Yugoslavism would eventually lead to the collapse of the Second Yugoslavia, 1945-1991, as the Serbs emerged as the dominant political group in the federation and that ultimately Serb nationalist sentiment greatly contributed to the rise of Slovenian and Croatian nationalism that broke the federation asunder. Throughout the history of the Second Yugoslavia, charges of self-interest and dominance would be leveled against the Serbs by the other constituent nations.

Nationalism can be all things to all people. Much like individual or collective identity, nationalism fails to observe a singular form, which is most obvious when evaluating competing visions of Jugoslavism espoused by Croats and Serbs throughout the twentieth century. Although both acknowledged the existence of a uniquely Jugoslav identity, they were unable to agree on what it actually was. For Croats, nationalism represented a pragmatic solution to their desire for independence from Austria-Hungary. For the Serbs, it merely represented the union of all Serbs into a single nation. For the South Slavic peoples of the Balkans, Jugoslav identity was both, real and imagined, part of their mythic past and the future they so desperately desired. It was something to fight and ultimately die for if necessary. In order to achieve their particular goals, each embraced nationalism to support their independent claims. Ultimately, in the context of the South Slavs, nationalism and ethnicity were essentially political in nature, pitting competing Croatian and Serbian nationalisms in a contest to define and control Jugoslav identity in the Balkans and abroad.42

Chapter Outline and Overview

Chapter One, "Crumbling Empires & Aspiring Nations: The Awakening of South Slavic National Identity, 1804-1882" discusses the development of nationalism as a social, cultural, and political movement first among the Serbs within the Ottoman Empire and then the Croats and Slovenes in Austria-Hungary during the nineteenth century. The


chapter highlights the central figures, doctrines, and events that contributed to the formation of Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian nationalism, and the Pan-Slavic ideology of Jugoslavism during the nineteenth century as well as the specific cultural and political institutions that were later adapted to life in Chicago.

Chapter Two, "Industrial Cities & Slavic Invasions: The Dawn of New Immigration in Chicago, 1880-1910" examines the migratory experience of South Slavs coming to America focusing on the specific push-pull factors that led to their migration and their respective patterns of settlement within Chicago. The chapter also illustrates how the South Slavs intertwined various elements of their past with their new industrial environment.

Chapter Three, "Fraternal Societies & the Foreign-Language Press: South Slavic Nationalist Mobilization & Americanization in Chicago, 1880-1930" details the role that Croat, Serb, Slovene, and Jugo-Slav fraternal organizations and benevolent associations played in community formation focusing on how these groups facilitated the successful adaptation to modern American life. In Chapter Four, "Socialists, Saints & Saloons: Oppositional Identities, Assimilation and Ethnic Maintenance in South Slavic Chicago, 1900-1930," emphasizes how working-class organizations, socialist groups, churches, and drinking establishments competed for the loyalty and resources of the South Slavs within the Chicago community, while also aiding the South Slavs to successfully navigate life in America. Chapter Five, "Homeland Calling: Transnational Nationalist Mobilization & Conflict in the Balkans, 1908-1918" deals specifically with South Slav diasporas response to the Balkan Wars and World War I.
The final chapter, Chapter Six, "South Slavic Unity & Disarray: National Struggle in the First Jugoslavia, 1918-1941" outlines the political developments, discourse, and subsequent turmoil in the Kingdom of Jugoslavia during the interwar years. The chapter draws attention to the increasing tensions between Croats and Serbs in Chicago and in the Balkans as the two fought to control the direction of the first South Slavic state, while other South Slavs rallied in support of Jugoslavia and their belief in Jugoslavism.
CHAPTER ONE

CRUMBLING EMPIRES, ASPIRING NATIONS:

THE AWAKENING OF SOUTH SLAVIC NATIONAL IDENTITY, 1800-1882

God in Heaven! The stupendous wonder!
When 'twas time throughout the land of Serbia
That a mighty change should be accomplished
And new ways of ruling be established…
For the blood of innocents had bubbled
From the earth, the time was come for battle,
For the Holy Cross to shed one's life-blood,
Every man should now avenge his forebears.¹

On a bitterly cold morning in the waning days of January of 1804, a heavily armed cavalcade numbering two hundred strong hastily departed the impenetrable stonewalls of Kalemegdan, the infamous fortress within the “White City” of Beograd.²

The men were Janissaries, the Ottoman Sultan’s elite troops culled from conquered Christian populations throughout the Balkans—a centuries-old practice. Despite the traditionally privileged status they enjoyed within the empire, the Janissaries had a historically troublesome relationship with the Sultan. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, their increasing arrogance and insubordination towards their Ottoman ruler was


² The term Belgrade (western pronunciation) or Beograd (Slavic) literally translates to White City, “beo” or “bijelo” meaning white, and “grad” meaning city.
at an all time high.\textsuperscript{3} This tenuous relationship frequently allowed the Janissaries to act on their own accord, much to the dismay and detriment of central authority of the Porte. Their departure from the Ottoman-controlled city of Beograd on that morning originated from their desire to protect their station within the empire as their loyalty to the Sultan was once again called into question.

Sovereignty over the Pašaluk of Beograd recently returned to the Porte following the Ottoman’s victory in the Habsburg instigated Austro-Turkish Wars of the previous decade.\textsuperscript{4} Now that the city of Beograd and the surrounding lands rested firmly in Ottoman hands, Sultan Selim III shifted his attention to the more pressing issue of the Janissary Daхи’s—governors—that now ruled the region.\textsuperscript{5} The fragile relationship between the Sultan and the Janissaries was at an all-time low as the dahi’s increasing power and independence within the Pašaluk threatened the destabilization of the Ottoman central authority.\textsuperscript{6} The Porte’s only option to maintain its precarious authority was to

\textsuperscript{3} William Miller, \textit{The Balkans: Roumania, Bulgaria, Servia, and Montenegro} (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1911), 308-309.

\textsuperscript{4} The Sanjak of Smederevo, with the seat of local government in its nameskae city, was formed in 1459 following the collapse of the Serbian Despotate. By 1521, the Sanjak was conquered by the Turks with the fall of the city of Beograd (Belgrade). Following the Turkish victory, the administrative seat was moved to Beograd and the name shifted to the Pashaluk of Beograd where it remained in Ottoman control until the early decades of the eighteenth century. Austro-Hungarian Empire administered the city and surrounding countryside from 1721 until its return to the Turks in 1791 following their victory in the Austrian initiated conflict. The Austro-Turkish War lasted from 1789-1791.

\textsuperscript{5} Due to the historical tension between the Janissaries and the Porte, they had only been allowed back into the Balkans in 1799 and quickly moved to rest control of the region from the central authority of Istanbul.

\textsuperscript{6} The relationship of the Janissaries and the various Sultans has always been precarious. The Janissaries became the Ottoman’s first standing army in the mid-fourteenth century. By the early sixteenth century they had risen to prominence with Ottoman society and became an integral part of the political system. By 1622, they were considered a serious threat to the Empire and had privileges revoked. Their final revolt came following the Serbian Uprisings of 1804 and 1815. In 1826 the Sultan Mahmud the II provoked the “Auspicious Incident” setting fire to the Janissary barrack, killing over 4000 soldiers. The survivors were either executed or exiled and all their property seized, ending the four-century old military

The steady decline of the Porte’s central authority throughout the Balkans gave rise to excessively independent minded Janissaries during the closing decades of the eighteenth century. In late 1801, the Janissaries executed Hadji Mustafa Paša, the beloved governor of the Pašaluk of Beograd, referred to by the Christian \textit{raya}—peasants—as the “Mother of the Serbs.”\footnote{8}{Miller, \textit{The Balkans}, 309.} The Janissaries quickly positioned themselves to fill the void left by Sultan’s crumbling bureaucracy in Istanbul to regain their previously enjoyed and privileged status within the empire. The leaders of the Janissaries that now governed the Pašaluk of Beograd, the four Dahi’s—Mehmed-Aga Fočić, Kućik-Alija Djevrljić, Mula Jusif, and Aganlia—obliviously ruled the province with impunity despite their professed fealty to the Porte. Guided by the leadership of Fočić, the Janissaries inaugurated a period of unforgettable brutality and oppression during the early years of the nineteenth century. The Dahi colluders assigned their troops the task of quickly consolidating control of the territory, while seeking to enrich themselves at the expense of the local \textit{Raya}—peasantry—under the burden of excessive taxes.\footnote{9}{Glenny, \textit{The Balkans}, 2, and Jelavich, \textit{The Establishment of the Balkan National States}, 28-29.}

On that fateful winter morning, Mehmed-Aga Fočić led the Janissaries that departed Kalemegdan. They turned their backs to the rising sun hanging low on the
eastern sky for the town of Valjevo, some forty miles southwest of Beograd. Traveling through the sparsely populated countryside dominated by the Serbian raya, Fočić and his fervent troops were intent on preventing what in their clouded eyes appeared to be an inevitable uprising against their misguided authority. Despite their indifference towards the local population, Fočić and his coterie became increasingly concerned that the brutality of their regime threatened their rule. The fear of a potentially rebellious Christian peasantry coupled with an angered and vengeful Sultan spurred Fočić and his conspirators to action.

As they travelled along the empty road to Valjevo, the Janissaries were well aware of the increasingly ominous rhetoric emerging from the powerful local Serbian chieftains—Knezevi. In the village of Lubejno Polje, Fočić and his entourage encountered the local Knez, Aleksandar Nenadović, and his companion, Ilija Birčanin, both well-respected leaders among the pašaluk’s Serbian peasant population. Nenadović warmly greeted Fočić, as there was no bad blood between them, and the two continued the rest of the trip together. Without warning, Fočić ordered the arrest of Nenadović and Birčanin. He accused them of fomenting rebellion by smuggling weapons and munitions from the neighboring Serb-dominated lands in Austro-Hungarian controlled province of Vojvodina to the north. Fočić intended the arrests to deter other rebellious Serbs from taking any future actions against him. The dahis identified Nenadović and Baričanin as the head of a conspiratorial snake winding its way throughout the Pašaluk, requiring its immediate extermination before further poisoning the already discredited reputation and rule of the Janissaries.¹⁰

The arrival of the Janissaries and their shackled prisoners drew a large crowd in
the village center. Aware of the potential impact of the political theatre he now directed,
Fočić declared to the eager crowd that he had proof of Nenadović and Birčanin’s betrayal
stating that they had “conspired with the Germans” and “denounced” the Janissaries to
the Sultan.\textsuperscript{11} Fočić cried out that it was a “sin to leave” Alexander’s “head upon his
shoulders” and that it should be removed immediately. Despite the mobs protestations,
Fočić immediately sentenced the two to death by beheading, ordering his troops to “Cut it
off!”\textsuperscript{12} Nenadović and Birčanin’s heads were promptly piked and openly displayed in the
village square while their limp bodies were discarded in the barren fields adjacent the
Kolumbara River near the edge of the village. The brutal events of that day profoundly
affected all of the inhabitants of Valjevo and as well as the Christian and Muslim
population throughout the Pašaluk of Beograd. Fearful of retribution from the Christian
neighbors, the local Muslim population hid behind closed doors. The Serbian men loyal
to Nenadović and Birčanin fled the town for the safety of the surrounding forests and
hills, with weapons in their hands and cries of rebellion on their lips.\textsuperscript{13}

The predations of the Janissaries continued over the next two months as Fočic and
his troops hunted down and executed close to one hundred and fifty prominent Serbs
throughout the region. The Dahis inadvisably clung to the delusion that their continued
brutality and barbarism prevented the insurgence of the Serbian raya. As word of the
Seća Knežova (Slaughter of the Princes) spread throughout the countryside, the

\textsuperscript{11} Glenny, \textit{The Balkans}, 2.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{13} Glenny, \textit{The Balkans}, 1-2, and Jelavich, \textit{The Establishment of the Balkan States}, 28-29.
janissaries slowly realized that they inadvertently created the very incident they so desperately hoped to avoid—open rebellion. The Janissaries miscalculation set in motion an unstoppable sequence of events presaging the eventual departure of the Ottomans from the Balkans and finally offering an answer to the dreaded “Eastern Question” that had plagued the “Great Powers” of Europe for far too long.\(^\text{14}\)

Prior to the nineteenth century, the articulation of South Slavic identity was suppressed through centuries of foreign rule that kept the inhabitants of the Balkans socially and politically isolated.\(^\text{15}\) This limited interaction and association made it difficult to establish a foundation to build any collective “sense of national identity, cultural homogeneity, or political power” among the South Slavs.\(^\text{16}\) The *Prva Sprska Ustanak* (First Serbian Uprising) followed in the wake of the *Seća Knezova* and inaugurated the modern era of South Slavic nationalist awakening throughout the Balkans. Although, the First Serbian Uprising was not initially a nationalist conflict in tenor or tone, it served as the catalyst for the spread of nationalism among the South Slavs throughout the region. The rebel leaders simply sought to end the political, social and economic victimization imposed upon both the Christians and Muslim population by the *Dahis* and the Janissaries by returning to the status quo enjoyed under the authority of

\(^{14}\) See Dennis P. Hupchick, *The Balkans: From Constantinople to Communism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 247-248. The “Eastern Question” centered on the issue of what the Great Powers of Europe should do with the Balkan territories if and when the Ottoman Empire is no longer to maintain their political control in the region. The steady decline of “Europe’s Sick Old Man” was all too well know throughout the European courts as the ruling elite shifted their support from revolutionary movements to the status quo of the *ancien regime* depending on what immediate geopolitical or strategic advantage they could gain.


\(^{16}\) Ibid.
the Porte’s previous governors. Only after news of the Serbian rebels initial military success began to spread beyond the borders of the Pašaluk did the creeping tides of nationalism slowly ebb and flow across the rocky crags of the Balkan Peninsula.

Ultimately, the Seća knezova and the Prva Sprska Ustanak led to the development of multiple strains of nationalist ideology that eventually shaped South Slavic immigrant identity in Chicago during the early twentieth century.

The dawn of the nineteenth century witnessed the materialization of an inchoate South Slavic nationalism expressed first among the Serbs within the Ottoman Empire then spreading to the Habsburg-controlled lands bordering the Pašaluk of Beograd. As nationalist mobilization occurred unevenly, the disparate peoples of the Balkans began to “imagine” a future unlike their present. Only through the confluence of incommensurable local, regional, and continental events did the expression of both antagonistic and analogous sentiments emerge among the South Slavs in the form of Greater Serbianism, Croatian nationalism, and the Pan-Slavic ideology of Jugoslavism. At times, the myriad of proto-nationalist ideals united the disparate South Slavic peoples both at home and abroad. However, they were also quite capable of tearing them asunder. Regardless of character or consequence, the primacy of nationalism was now firmly established and affected South Slavs in the Balkans and their émigré populations abroad.

More importantly, the ascendancy of nationalism defined the mentalité of multiple and heterogeneous South Slavic identities that emerged by the end of the nineteenth-century. Irrespective of existing ideological disparities, the South Slavs all

---

shared the reality of being “oppressed minorities” within larger multicultural empires that to varying degrees repressed either cultural expression or economic and political freedom. Notwithstanding their mutual aspirations for political autonomy or outright independence, the absence of actual political power forced the South Slavs to initially embrace intellectual and cultural concerns. The “awakening” of an elite *intelligentsia* among the minority populations of the multicultural Ottoman and Habsburg empires devoted their efforts to linguistic, cultural, and historical studies allowing nationalism to emerge as a “potent political ideology.”  

18 Embraced by a range of patriotic groups, these scholarly efforts diffused throughout society to the rest of the subject population, ultimately culminating in vast national movement supported, willingly or not, by the majority of the subject population.  

19 The South Slavic peoples of the Balkans experienced incredible change during the nineteenth century as the region convulsed with political, social and cultural unrest resultant from the multifarious and dynamic forces that dominated the region. The convergence of seventeenth-century Enlightenment political thought and German romanticism created the ideal ideological conditions for the development of South Slavic nationalist ideology in the face of continued foreign occupation that treated South Slavs as mere pawns in the European Great Power politics. Thus emergent ideologies and Balkan *realpolitik* awakened nationalist sentiments long dormant among the South Slavs. This convergence allowed for the successful mobilization of South Slav nationalism in the form of both violent uprising and cultural revival. Collectively these events changed

---


19 Ibid.
the nature of political relations throughout the Balkans and brought the South Slavs to the center stage of European politics for the first time in over three hundred years. More importantly, these events set the stage for the rise of the multitudinous South Slavic nations and the collapse of the Balkan *ancien régime* culminating in the two great global conflicts of the twentieth century.

The successive rebellions led by the Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians together with the development of various nationally-orientated literary institutions throughout the Balkans, allowed for the creation of both inclusive and exclusive nationalist ideologies to take hold. Both their successful as well as failed attempts set the foundation for what became a century-long struggle to secure each groups’ articulation of national consciousness at home in the Balkans and abroad among the immigrant diaspora found throughout much of the world and particularly in the newly industrialized cities of America’s industrial Midwest.

**The First and Second Serbian Uprisings, 1804-1817**

The Serbian *Raya* of Pašaluk of Beograd were the first, albeit unintentionally, to stir from their long slumber, wipe the sleep from their tired eyes, and experience the dawn of national awakening. Prior to the 1804 revolt, Serbian “national life” appeared non-existent in spite of the tenacious efforts of the orthodox clergy to keep the memory of the medieval Serbian state alive through traditional folk music and epic poetry.20 However, this quickly changed as the predations of the *dahis* and the Janissaries during the *Seća knezova* signaled the ascendancy of the Serbian people’s first modern “national” leader, Đorde (George) Petrović, and set the stage for a seventy-year “national” struggle

---

for culminating in the establishment of the independent Kingdom of Serbia in 1878. However, national independence was not the aim of the uprising. Acting on behalf of the Sultan and the authority of the Porte, Karadorde and the band of “Serbian dissidents, provincial Muslim landowners (sipahis) and merchants” intended to simply reestablish the political status quo prior to the predations of the Janissaries. Although the rebellion remained strictly a local affair with little impact on the empire it served as the catalyst for nationalist mobilization and integration to dominate South Slavic political discourse throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.21

The enigmatic leader of the Serb rebels, Đorđe Petrović, better known as “Black George” or Karadorde, a reference to either his “dark complexion” or mercurial demeanor, was the son of a prosperous Serbian peasant. Hailing from the heavily forested Šumadia region of southern Serbia, Karadorde participated in a failed uprising against the Ottomans in 1787 and was forced to flee for his life to Austria, where he fought with other South Slavic volunteers on behalf of the Emperor, Joseph I—an experience that greatly benefitted him in his fight against the Janissaries.22 Upon his return to Serbia, the incredibly successful albeit illiterate pig-farmer and occasional brigand, Hajduk, preyed on the Christian and Muslim population alike. During his youth, he served in the Austrian army under Emperor Joseph. During the seća knezova, Karadorde was petitioned by his fellow Serbs to lead their effort due to the quality of his character and his reputation for courage and honesty. At first, he refused, “brothers, I cannot accept, for if I accepted I certainly would do much not to your liking,” he stated.


22 Miller, The Balkans, 309-312.
“If one of you were taken in the smallest treachery, the least faltering, I would punish him in the most fearful manner.”

He insisted, “I am a simple man, if you disobey me, I shall not try to enforce my authority by speeches, I shall kill the disobedient…” a fate rumored to have eventually fallen on his own brother. Despite his protestations and his threats, Karadorđe accepted the leadership of the rebellion as his fellow Serbs named him the “Supreme Commander of Serbia” and granted him the noble title of Vojvoda (duke).

Similar in mind to his fellow insurrectionists, independence was not the immediate concern of Karadorđe. Instead, he focused on the returning to the “relatively enlightened provincial administrative practices” that existed prior to the Janissary coup de tat in 1801.

However, the idea of national independence of the Serbs was not completely absent from rebel minds. Among the most vociferous of these insurrectionists were the orthodox clergy who played an intimate role both as supporters and combatants for the Serb cause. Emulating their heroes that fell at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 and led by men such Jakob Nenadović, Milenko Stojaković, Petrović, Katić, and Luka Lazarević, the Serbian insurrection quickly gained the advantage with their defeat of the Janissaries and turned their attention to the Sultan. They embraced a new cause, as they now desired more than to simply return to the days of old. The participants of the insurrection

---


now focused on the start of a new chapter in the history of Serbia—liberation from foreign occupation.

The attainment of this new goal appeared increasingly plausible with the forward march of Serbian rebel forces. Soon their efforts signaled a turning point in the nascent rebellion at the Battle of Ivankovac. No longer concerned with the terror of the *dahis* or the Janissaries, Karadorđe Petrović and his emboldened Serbian forces turned their efforts into a war of liberation. On August 18, 1805, the Serb rebels faced the Ottoman armies at the village of Ivankovac near the Morava River. Although they were greatly outnumbered, the rebels under the leadership of Milenko Stojaković won they day, forcing the Sultan’s troops to retire from the field of battle. Their newfound confidence served them well as the rebels achieved several consecutive victories in 1806, including battles at Mišar, Deligrad, and Beograd. By year’s end, on December 29, 1806, city of Beograd was liberated from Ottoman rule and Serb ascendency appeared unstoppable.

The triumph of the Serbian military coupled with the start of the Russo-Turkish War in 1806 created a considerable position of strength for the Serbian rebels to negotiate. As the possibility of Serbian autonomy became more tangible, Karadorđe dispatched Petar Ičko, a Serbian and Ottoman diplomat of Bulgarian descent to the Porte to negotiate favorable terms for the Serbian rebels. Despite obtaining reasonable terms and *de facto* autonomy, Karadorđe disavowed the agreement and aligned with the

---

28 W.A. Morison, *The Revolt of the Serbs Against the Turks 1804-1913* (Cambridge University Press, 1942), xix.

Russian Empire in a war against the Ottomans. Karadorde realized that now was the
time to free all Serbs everywhere.\textsuperscript{30}

Karadorde quickly moved to consolidate his political authority and cement the
military gains of his rebel forces. In 1807, Kardorfe and his chief lieutenants formed a
“rudimentary” administrative body in Beograd, the \textit{Skupština}, based on the previously
established council, initially intended as a check on Karadorde’s power. However, by
1808, he proclaimed himself the hereditary leader of the country that in theory ruled
alongside and in cooperation with the representative council.\textsuperscript{31} As news of the success of
the rebellion spread throughout the region, Serbs from all over began to migrate towards
Beograd, which was now not only the epicenter of the insurrection, but the focal point of
a new burgeoning Serbian nationalist movement. Realizing the important role print
media in spreading their ideology, the leaders of the rebellion embraced education as a
fundamental tool of the nation. Alongside the establishment of the \textit{Skupština}, the
representatives introduced a rudimentary educational system intended to lay the
foundation of the Serbian national cause. The primacy of education and print culture
were transplanted abroad to South Slavic immigrants that turned to their institutions of
their past to secure their future in America.\textsuperscript{32}

The year of 1809 arguably marked the height of the First Serbian Insurrection. As
the Serbs continued to consolidate their gains, both politically and militarily, Karađorđe
issued a political document, \textit{Proterašenije that} set the foundation of the modern Serbian

\textsuperscript{30} Meriage, “The First Serbian Uprising,” 427-429, and Seton-Watson, \textit{The Rise of Nationalism in
the Balkans}, 38.

\textsuperscript{31} Jelavich, \textit{The Establishment of the Balkan National States}, 33-34, Miller, \textit{The Balkans}, 316, and

\textsuperscript{32} Seton-Watson, \textit{The Rise of Nationalism in the Balkans}, 38.
nation-state. The *Proglašenije* also set out the central tenets of Serbian irredentism and nationalism that dominated the emerging ideology of “Greater Serbia” for the next two hundred years. The *Proglašenije* called for freedom of religion, rule of law, abolition of taxes to the Porte, and the unity of all Serbs justified by the history of Serbia’s previous independence within the Balkans.

Therefore, dear Serb brothers...now when it's only up to us, take an example from those peoples who foster unity and order, for they have become mighty and prosperous; offer advises to each other, as the priests do, when they teach their flock: teach them the words of Christ, the ones which say: As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. Not so much by words, but by your deeds...by doing so, the end of our quest will bring out the old glory of Serbia to show, that we indeed are: the children of our glorious and brave ancestors.\(^{33}\)

Kardorđe appealed to the Serbian diaspora scattered throughout the Balkans to form a newly independent nation on the ruins of the old Serbian Empire. His call to action quickly found a following among the emerging *intelligentsia* spreading throughout the peninsula. However, Serbia’s newly realized desire for self-rule was quickly dashed against the rocks of European *realpolitik* as Russian support for the Serbian cause stopped with armistice signed with the Ottomans.\(^{34}\) In 1812, Russia withdrew direct support for Serbia due to the rising threat of Napoleon’s ever-expanding French Empire and the likelihood of conflict between the two great powers. Concerned with fighting on two fronts, the Russians signed an armistice with the Ottomans, abandoning the Serbs to their fate. By 1813, internecine conflicts emerged among the various leaders of the

---


rebellen, as a lack of foreign assistance allowed the Porte to launch an all-out assault on Karadorde’s rebel forces and regain the territory previously ceded to the Serbs. By September 21, 1813, the Serb insurrection and all of its national institutions were crushed as the Pašaluk of Beograd returned to Ottoman control once again, and Karadorde and his fellow rebel leaders were forced to flee to the relative security of the Serbian inhabited lands of the Austrian Empire. The harsh reality of European Great Power politics continued to haunt not only the Serbs, but also the other South Slavic populations, that soon clamored for their own rights to self-determination—a trend that continued over the next two centuries.

The resounding defeat of the Serbian rebels forced the hasty departure of Karadorde, who alongside most of the leaders of the uprising fled to Austrian-controlled land. Their absence created a precarious position for those that remained and once again faced Ottoman persecution. However, Karadorde’s self-imposed exile from the Pašaluk of Beograd allowed for the ascendency of Miloš Obrenović—a lesser-known commander—as the Serbs new de facto leader. Despite having fought valiantly against the Ottoman’s throughout the first uprising, Obrenović was charged with the unpleasant task of capitulating to the authority of the Porte following their final route of the Serbs in November of 1813.

Obrenović wisely chose to bide his time on behalf of the Serbian cause, aware that present conditions prohibited any immediate action. On April 3, 1815, the Serbian national council in Takovo chose Obrenović as its leader and once again declared an open

---


revolt against Turkish authority in the Pašaluk of Beograd on April 3, 1815. Eagerly accepting his new authority, he rose to the occasion and uttered, “Here I am, here you are. War to the Turks!” Obrenović immediately set out to achieve that which eluded his predecessor, and unlike Karadorđe, he proved himself not only a capable military strategist but also an astute statesman as well and quite deft at negotiating within the confines of Great Power politics. Support for Obrenović’s leadership was immediately apparent as the Drugi Srpski Ustanak (Second Serbian Uprising) rapidly spread. The Serbian rebels quickly chalked up one victory after another over the Ottomans, forcing them to retreat from the city of Beograd and to the negotiating table. The Serb’s sudden success during the first year of renewed conflict left the Ottoman governor, Marašli Ali Paša, no recourse other than to grant the Serbs of Beograd partial autonomy within the empire. As negotiations continued, the Ottomans finally recognized Serbian de facto independence in 1817, acknowledging the rights of the Serbian Principality. The end of conflict signaled the step forward in the legitimation of Serbian political autonomy as Miloš Obrenović rose in station and was granted the title of Obor-knez, or “senior leader” of the Serbian people within the Pašaluk of Beograd.38

The exiled leadership of Karadorđe, however, felt that their countrymen failed to achieve the ultimate goal—outright independence. On July 24, 1817, Karadorđe and a small group of his most ardent followers secretly entered Serbia in an attempt to mobilize support for a new uprising. Obrenović, whose concern for maintaining his tenuous hold on power was supported by the Ottoman fear of Karadorđe’s growing popularity, quickly


discovered the insurgency and dispatched two of his most loyal agents to find and kill Karadorde. In Radovanjski Lug, an oak forest near Velika Plana in Serbia, Obrenović’s assassins fell upon the unsuspecting Karadorde. They immediately killed and beheaded him. Obrenović delivered the head of his former leader to Maršali Ali Paša, who in turn had the head “stuffed and sent as a gift to the Sultan.”³⁹ The death of Karadorde Petrović was a blessing to the Porte who in return for his loyalty recognized Obrenović’s claim to the Serbian throne, granting him the title of Prince of Serbia.⁴⁰

Following the success of the Drugi Sprpski Ustanak, Serbia emerged as the dominant national voice of the Balkan South Slavs—a truth that was both a blessing and a bane for South Slavic unity within the Balkans. Following the successful military campaign and political negotiations with the Porte, Miloš Obrenović became Prince of Serbia, ruling the nascent kingdom from 1815 to 1839. Despite the ongoing conflict between the Obrenović and Kardorđević families—Serbia’s rival dynasties—Prince Miloš agreed to a peaceful transfer of power between the two. In 1839, then-King Miloš Obrenović willingly abdicated his throne to his rival’s son, Alexander Karadorđević, who ruled from 1842 through 1858. It was during these formative years as the two leaders developed state institutions and a national program that ultimately defined Serbian nationalist aspirations well into the twentieth century.⁴¹ Although the First Serbian Uprising under Karađorđe failed, it set the stage for the rise of Serbian nationalism thereafter. The names of Karadorde and Obrenović became synonymous with Serbian

---


⁴⁰ Lampe, Yugoslavia as History, 50-51.

⁴¹ Charles Jelavich, South Slav Nationalisms: Textbooks and Yugoslav Union before 1914 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), 7.
national identity and were embraced by the Serbian diaspora throughout the United States in the early twentieth century. However, despite the enduring influence of these leaders, the next task of nation building fell to a then-unknown scholar that embraced the prevailing dictums of Romanticism, Herderian nationalism and the Enlightenment to give a voice to the Serbian people.

Literature, Politics, and the Rise of the Serbian Nation

Serbian nationalism received its most enduring gift from the youthful writer, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787-1864), in the years succeeding both Serbian rebellions. Born to a “well-to-do” peasant family in 1787, in the village of Tršić, Serbia, near the Bosnian border, Karadžić emerged as the “father of Serbian literature.”

Karadžić actively fought alongside the rank-and-file of the rebellion before he shifted his energies from liberation to the cultural creation of the Serbian nation. The creation of a standardized grammar for the Serbian language coupled with the publication of folk literature by Karadžić set the foundations for nationalist cultural awakening among the Serbs and their fellow Slavs throughout the Balkans. Ultimately, his efforts created a unified and distinctly Slavic voice to accompany the awakening South Slavic nations.

Prior to the nineteenth century, South Slavic identity resided within the confines of faith and the epic poetry. Both the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Balkan tradition of oral storytelling bridged the historic gap between the mythic past of the medieval Serbian kingdom of Tsar Dušan and the centuries of Ottoman political occupation and

---


cultural diffusion. In 1783, Serbian writer, Dositej Obradović (1742-1811), published his autobiography, Život I priključenija (Life and Adventures). Obradović, the founder of modern Serbian literature, called for the abandonment of the traditional literary use of Old Church Slavonic in favor of a new literature of the spoken language. His work represented the earliest link in the relationship between written language and the establishment of the Serbian nation. However, it is not until the arrival of Karadžić, as the founder of the modern Serb literary language that the development of linguistic national identity became intertwined with the awakening of the Serbian nation. This link was strongly promoted by the South Slavic foreign-language press in Chicago, who embraced literacy as the primary means of unifying the disparate émigré population in the city.

In 1804, at the age of seventeen, Karadžić received permission from his father to attend high school. Karadžić was an incredibly bright young man and exhibited an insatiable intellectual curiosity throughout his life. Despite his natural gifts, he was refused admission into high school for being “too well educated” and forced to pursue his academic endeavors independently abroad. Karadžić travelled to Croatia where he taught himself German and Latin before returning to Beograd at the height of Karadorde’s rebellion. He quickly became a member of the growing intellectual movement within the city.

In 1814, Karadžić published the Mala Prostonarodna Slaveno-Šrpska Pesnarica (Small National Slavic-Serbian Song Book). The text contained over a hundred folk

---


songs and poems that Karadžić learned as a child and committed to memory. That same year he also published a small grammar book for readers to better understand the folk songbook. The next few years marked an incredibly active period in Karadžić’s intellectual life as his combined works single-handedly launched the literary movement that accompanied the Serbian nationalist awakening. In 1815, he published a volume of folk songs and poems based on materials collected from outside sources and the first Serbian dictionary, rječnik, in 1818.46 As his work continued unabated over the next few years, Karadžić quickly drew the ire of the Orthodox Church along with the Austrian authorities concerned that the rise of Serbian linguistic nationalism threatened their respective cultural and political hegemony over the Serbs in the region. The Serbian Orthodox Church felt that the rise of Karadžić and Serbian literary nationalism threatened its centuries-old role as “caretaker” of the nation.47

Unconcerned with the historic ethnogenesis of the Serb nation, Karadžić continued his work and ultimately supplied the rallying cry for the Serb national program that dominated internal and external political events until the end of the twentieth century. In his 1836 article, “Srbi svi i svuda” (Serbs All and Everywhere), Karadžić set the precedent for Serbian irrendentism and the problematic program of creating a “Greater Serbia” uniting Serbs under one nation.

Karadžić adapted German romanticism to placate conflicting ideas concerning national unity. He made a stronger claim regarding the primacy of language as a national


47 Ivo Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 75. Throughout four centuries of Ottoman occupation, the Serbian Orthodox Church actively kept the memory of the medieval Serbian Kingdom alive, serving as the only “institutional instrument of nationalist integration” until the Serbian nationalist awakening in the nineteenth century.
unifier than his intellectual predecessor, Obradović. Karadžić implicitly assumed that all people that spoke the štokavian dialect throughout the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian controlled lands were Serbian, regardless of the specific faith traditions that they followed. Catholicism mattered little to Karadžić. He argued that only Croats spoke čakavian and that only Slovenes spoke kajkavian, while those who spoke štokavian were Serbs despite their opposition or indifference to such identification. Karadžić thus laid the foundation for the development of Serbian irredentism and that idea of a “Greater Serbia” unifying all Catholics, Muslims, and Orthodox Christians into a singular, exclusive Serbian linguistic nation. Whether inadvertent or intentional, Karadžić’s claim of multi-faith linguistic nationalism united various Serb populations while threatening the cultural and political authority of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

South Slav nationalism in the opening decades of the nineteenth century was limited to literary and linguistic “revivalism.” However, following the failed 1804 uprising and the successful efforts of 1815, the spread of nationalism signaled an ideological shift among the South Slavs of the Balkans. No longer confined to the intelligentsia, a variety of nationalist political programs emerged in earnest, propelled by the expansion of vernacular print media throughout Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian controlled Slavic lands. This “journalistic” explosion supported the development of a national identity beyond a limited educated elite to the masses and signaled a shift towards a more nationally politicized agenda among the South Slavs throughout the Balkans. This transformation from a marginal intellectual movement steadily spread to a
growing association of politicians, merchants, craftsmen, and peasants, establishing a broader and more radical popular nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{48}

Karadžić found considerable support among the Serb intelligentsia of the Austrian-controlled Vojvodina region. In 1825, Serbian intellectuals within the city of Novi Sad founded the first Austro-Slav literary academic journal called \textit{Ljetopis} (\textit{Chronicle}) to promote the "cultural-national rebirth" of the Serbian nation.\textsuperscript{49} Their efforts gave Vojvodina the distinction of being the "cradle of Serb nationalism" and created a template for future Austro-Slav and Ottoman-Slav movements. The introduction of the journal also spurred the creation of what historians have identified as the "most significant Serbian national institution" of the nineteenth century. In 1826, Georgije Magarašević (1793-1830), a Serbian professor and writer, and Pavel Josef Šafarik (1795-1861), the famous Slovak intellectual founded the first Serbian literary institution, the \textit{Matica Srpska} (\textit{Queen Bee of Serbs}), in the city of Pest in southern Hungary. The \textit{Matica Srpska} “promoted and supported the national revivals” of all South Slavs and became the first national society around which other national movements mobilized.\textsuperscript{50} They felt that the only means to mobilize a national awakening of the Slavic masses was to "foster national and cultural life, promote all Slavic languages and literature, and to strengthen Slavic mutuality."\textsuperscript{51} Their mission supported the dominant Pan-Slavic tendencies that set the precedent for the proceeding Illyrian and South


\textsuperscript{50} Kimball, 3.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 13.
Slavism that followed later in the century. Regardless of their intentions, the primacy of Serbian nationalism contributed to the belief of Serbian exceptionalism as they became first among the South Slavs to organize nationally and lead their other South Slav brethren by example.

The growing political institutions of the Serbian Principality quickly embraced the cultural nationalism of Karadžić. The relative success of the Second Serbian Uprising led by Miloš Obrenović established the notion among the Serbian intelligentsia of Serbian primacy as the guarantors of freedom for all South Slavic peoples. In 1844, Ilija Garašanin (1812-1874) then serving as Minister of Internal Affairs in King Alexander Karadorđević’s government in Belgrade articulated this increasingly supported notion of Serbian predominance within the Balkans.\textsuperscript{52} That year, Garašanin published the \textit{Načertanije (the outline)} establishing a domestic and foreign policy strategy that was construed by some as a “blueprint” for an “inclusive state of South Slavs or an exclusive Greater Serbia.”\textsuperscript{53}

If Serbia ponders what she is now, the position in which she finds herself and the kind of people that surround her, she is confronted with the undeniable fact that she is small and cannot long remain so. Only through alliance with other surrounding peoples can she solve her future problems. With these factors in mind, a plan may be constructed which does not limit Serbia to her present borders, but endeavors to absorb all the Serbian people around her. If Serbia does not faithfully pursue this policy, and, worse still, rejects it, failing to arrange her problems by a well-ordered plan, she will be buffeted back and forth like a small vessel by the cross

\textsuperscript{52} Banac, \textit{The National Question in Yugoslavia}, 82.

currents of every alien tempest until finally she will be dashed to bits on some unsuspected reef.\textsuperscript{54}

In truth, Garašanin, a career politician and firm believer in Balkan \textit{realpolitik} was more preoccupied with stabilizing Serbia’s precarious political position then the nationalist aspirations of his fellow Serbs and their Austro-Slav brethren. Chief among his concerns was the political and economic stranglehold exercised by Austria upon Serbia. However, Garašanin’s \textit{Nacertanje} provided Serbian nationalists with the rational for Serbian hegemony within the Balkans and practical program Serbian nationalist expansion. The influence of Garašanin remained well into the twentieth century as “Greater Serbianism” ultimately undermined South Slavic unification in the Balkans and abroad.

\textbf{Illyrianism and the Emergence of Croatian National Consciousness}

The rising tide of nationalist sentiment was not limited to the Slavs of the Pašaluk of Beograd. The activities of Karađorđe, Miloš Obrenović, and Vuk Karadžić were well known throughout the region and propeled the nascent ideologies of South Slavic nationalism from its Balkan foothold among the Ottoman Serbs to the Habsburg-controlled lands in the north. Much like their South Slavic contemporaries, the rise of nationalism among the Habsburg Croatians, Slovenes, and Serbs—or Austro-Slavs—emerged in response to the loss of their traditional status within the empire, an issue particular acute among the Croats who felt betrayed as they had historically enjoyed considerable freedoms in terms of nationalist expression. Similar in fashion to their Serbian brethren, the opening decades of the nineteenth century found the Croatian peoples divided between the politically separated regions of Croatia-Slavonia, Dalmatia,

the Illyrian Kingdom, and Bosnia.\footnote{Kimball, “Austro-Slav Revival,” 39.} And just as the Serbs fell victim to the depredations of the Janissaries, the Austro-Slavs, particularly the Croats, found their own position in the empire subsumed by rising tide of nationalism within the empire, particularly among the Hungarian population. Seeking to establish itself as second only to Austria, Hungarian nationalism attempted to minimize Croatian national identity through an increasingly virulent process of Magyarization—Hungarian cultural assimilation. However, this process simply invited a more vociferous opposition from the Austro-Slavs and culminated in the creation of multiple nationalisms that threatened the stability of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.\footnote{Lane, Yugoslavia: When Ideals Collide, 10-13.}

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Habsburg crown’s traditional social and ethnic loyalties excluded the Austro-Slav population of the empire. In addition, Hungarian national identity was promoted to placate growing Hungarian dissatisfaction within the empire. This process of Magyarization coupled within Hungary’s privileged status served to further the cause of South Slavic nationalism, particularly among the Croats. Despite their marginalization, the Austro-Slavs found themselves the temporary beneficiaries of history with the creation of the Province illyriennes carved out of the Dalmatian Coast and in historic Croatian and Slovene lands ceded by the Austrian Empire to Napoleon in 1809, reuniting all Croats into a single political entity.\footnote{Ibid., and Kimball, “The Austro-Slav Revival,” 40.}

The growth of nationalist sentiment among the South Slavs quickly collided with the Austrian crown’s own desire to protect its dominant position within the new
European political reality and once again the South Slavs of the Balkans fell victim to the whims of Great Powers of Europe. As the Provinces Illyriennes returned to Austrian control, the growth of the nascent Illyrian movement was considerably hampered and failed to gain mass support among the Austro-Slav population within the Habsburg empire. Despite this fact, the movement remained viable as Austria maintained the name of the Kingdom of Illyrian for the territory once held by France.\textsuperscript{58}

In the subsequent decades, thoughts of independence remained foremost in the minds of the Austro-Slavs of the empire as nationalist mobilization coalesced in the form of the Ilirski Pokret (Illyrian movement). Illyrianism, the first distillation of Croatian nationalism and the foundation for Jugoslavism—unification of all South Slavs—emerged in earnest in the city of Zagreb, the political, cultural, social and economic hub of Austro-Slav activity. The movement of Illyrianism advocated the unification of all South Slavs within the Austrian Empire, based upon a common language. The Zagreb intelligentsia who attempted to bridge Croatia’s historic past with its stateless presence led this effort. The revival of the term under France’s occupation during the Napoleonic Wars gave rise to the first Pan-Slavic movement among the Balkan Slavs as it served to not only reinforce the historical nature of specifically Croatian national claims but more importantly to ground any future South Slav entity within geographic reality.\textsuperscript{59}

The Illyrian movement advanced under the guidance of the prominent Croatian intellectual, Ljudvet Gaj. Born in the Croatian village of Krapina on August 8, 1809, Gaj began his writing and publishing career in 1826 with the publication of Die Schlösser bei

\footnote{58 Kimball, “The Austro-Slav Revival,” 40.}

\footnote{59 Ibid., 40-42.}
Krapina, followed by “Brief Basics of the Croatian-Slavonic Orthography” in 1830. Gaj quickly emerged as the de facto leader of the Illyrian cause and produced a formal grammar employing the štokavian dialect spoken by Croats and Serbs throughout the empire and in large parts of Bosnia and Serbia. By doing so, Gaj and his compatriots claimed a common language as the foundation of the Illyrian movement, a movement that now potentially appealed to all South Slavs.  

Gaj viewed the primacy of language as the key to South Slavic unification and the most effective means to stop Magaryization within the empire. His efforts established Croatian literature and language as the dominant force within Illyrianism and particularistic nationalism in the region. In 1835, Gaj published the first Croatian language newspaper within the empire, the Ilirske Narodne Novine (Illyrian National News) and its literary companion, the Danica ilirska (Illyrian Morning Star). The Austria tolerated Gaj’s endeavor as an effective counterweight to Russian Pan-Slavism in the Balkans. While appealing to some, Gaj’s efforts alienated others by forsaking the kajkavski and čakavski dialects used in traditional nineteenth-century Croatian literature. This rift became central to the development of particularistic Croat nationalism that openly opposed any form of Jugoslavism.  

Gaj proposed the creation of the Družtvo Prijatelijah Nardonae Izabraženosti Ilirske (Croatian Society of Friends of Illyrian Culture). However, he failed to gain political support as Illyrianism threatened to the hegemony of conservative politicians.

---

60 Kimball, “The Austro-Slav Revival,” 42.


62 Lane, Yugoslavia: When Ideals Collide, 13.
This forced Gaj and other Illyrian activists to establish more modest and informal čitaonicas (reading rooms) that were apolitical and focused exclusively on literature and the development of the Croatian language.\textsuperscript{63} However, in August 1838, the establishment of the Ilirska Čitanoica (Illyrian Reading Room) in Zagreb signaled the arrival of Illyrianism as a source of nationalist mobilization among the political and intellectual elite of Croatia.\textsuperscript{64}

The Ilirska Čitanoica officially opened on November 1, 1838, in the National Building in Zagreb, where it “offered over twenty journals and newspapers” written in different Slavic languages including Serbian, Polish, Czech, and Russian.\textsuperscript{65} The organization shared Gaj’s pro-South Slavic vision clearly stated “Among the books and reviews to be purchased in the first place must be those in the Illyrian language without regard to the alphabet they are printed in—Latin, Cyrillic, or any European one.”\textsuperscript{66}

Although, Gaj's Illyrianism was short lived and peaked between 1832 and 1848, his vision of a broader South Slavic movement ultimately set the stage for each subsequent variant of South Slavism that emerged over the next hundred years.\textsuperscript{67}

Dueling Nationalisms: Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Illyrians & Jugoslavs

Despite the best efforts of Karadžić and Gaj, little became of Serb and Croat brotherhood and unity. Illyrianism failed to take hold among the majority of Serbs

\textsuperscript{63} Aleksander Stipčević, “The Illyrian Reading Rooms in Croatian in the Mid-Nineteenth Century” Libraries’ Culture, Vol. 24, No. 1, Libraries at Times of Cultural Change (Winter, 1989), 69-74

\textsuperscript{64} Kimball, “Austro-Slav Revival,” 40.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{66} Stipčević, “The Illyrian Reading Room,” 71.

\textsuperscript{67} Kimball, “Austro-Slav Revival,” 40.
outside of Austrian lands as they felt that their own efforts proved successful and precluded the need for unifying with the Croats and Slovenes in Habsburg controlled lands. However, the Hungarian Revolution against in Austria in 1848 gave Austro-Slavs the collective will and a common platform to test Illyrianism. The Hungarians drive for independence culminated in violent confrontation that united Croats and Serbs in support of the imperial government under the leadership of Ban Josip Jelačić. As this unintentional collaboration of “Austro-Slavism” gained notoriety and popularity, it fell far short of the Gaj’s expectations. Unlike Gaj’s Illyrianism that envisioned the union of all South Slavs into a single nation, the proponents of Austro-Slavism settled for a more pragmatic approach that simply granted the South Slavs within the empire a greater role within the imperial government. With these hopes in mind, the Croats and Serbs of the empire coordinated their military efforts in hopes of achieving some accommodation by the Habsburg Crown.

In 1848, as nationalist revolutions swept across Europe, the nature of the South Slavism inadvertently altered within the empire. The near collapse of Habsburg rule in the face of Hungarian nationalism prompted Austria co-opting South Slav nationalist aspirations and ideologies to safeguard the Empire from internal collapse. The Austrians staved off the Hungarian revolution and forced their capitulation to the Habsburg crown through the promise of acquiescing to the South Slavs political and cultural demands. However, despite these gains, the Illyrian movement came to an abrupt end as the Austrian Emperor Franz Josip sought to end all nationalist political dissent in the wake of

---


the Revolutions of 1848. As tensions nationalist tensions continued to rise throughout Europe, the Habsburg’s instituted a program of “denationalization” that ironically fueled the development of particularistic nationalisms among the South Slavs of the empire who felt their very identity threatened now more than ever.70

By midcentury, the Serbs remained a deeply divided people within the Balkans, living in four separate geographical and politically independent regions—the Vojvodina region of Austrian Empire, the Ottoman Empire controlled province of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the semi-autonomous Principality of Serbia, and in Montenegro under Bishopric of Peter II Petrović-Njegoš. The fragmented nature of the Serbian population—a fate shared by most of the other South Slavic peoples—prevented Illyrianism or South Slavism from successfully taking root within the Balkans as the various particularistic nationalism and Pan-Slavic movements waxed and waned in popularity among the masses. Most noticeably, the South Slavs witnessed the steady shift towards more homogenous and exclusionary systems of thought among the adherents of Greater Serbianism and Croatianism. The ideology of Serbian primacy as guarantors of South Slav independence first espoused by Garašanin’s načertanje was further elaborated a mere five years later. In 1849, Vuk Karadžić reemerged as the dominant voice of Serbian nationalist ideology with his article, Srbi svi a svuđe “Serbs All and Everywhere.”

It is known for certain that Serbs now live [throughout the Balkans]… there are at least 5 million people who speak the same language, but by religion they can be split into three groups… Only the first 3 million call themselves Serbs, but the rest will not accept the name. Those of the Islam faith think that they are real Turks, and call themselves that, although only one in a hundred can even speak Turkish. All of the wiser

people among the Orthodox and Catholic Serbs recognize they are one people and strive to totally uproot or at least lessen the hatred because of different religions as much as they can. Even so, those of the Catholic faith still have a hard time calling themselves Serbs, but they will adjust to this in their own time, because if they don't want to be Serbs, then they have no national name at all.\textsuperscript{71}

Here Karadžić laid claim to the idea that all speakers of the štovakian dialect, regardless of religion or geography, were Serbians. Once again, the claim of one language, one people gained popularity among the South Slavs. However, unlike previous attempts by various proponents of the Illyrian movement, Karadžić’s linguistic theory negated the existence of divergent South Slav national identities to be subsumed into a “Greater Serbian” identity. Ultimately, Karadžić, willingly or not, created a cultural and linguistic weapon that rationalized Garašanin’s imperialist expansion within the Balkans.\textsuperscript{72}

Despite his sincere desire of politically uniting the South Slavs, Karadžić’s endeavor alarmed the Croatian Austro-Slavs who viewed his efforts attempts of Serbian primacy and hegemony as merely a new form of cultural imperialism on par with the Magaryzation of the Hungarians within the empire. Despite this fact, Karadžić and Gaj continued their undertaking, which was partially realized in 1850 in what became known as the “Vienna Agreement.” Some argue that this coordinated effort by Karadžić and Gaj attempted to create a "uniform language" for all of the South Slavs—particularly the


\textsuperscript{72} Ibid. Quote as appears in source. “From all this it is apparent that all the South Slavs, except the Bulgarians, can be divided into 3 language groups: first are the Serbs, who say što or šta (what) (and are thus called Stokavians) and at the end of the past-perfect verb forms say 'o' instead of 'a'.” The second are the Croats who say ča… “(therefore called Cakavians) and on the end of the past-perfect verb forms say 'l' instead of 'o', but otherwise do not differ greatly from the Serbs; and the third are the Slovenians, or as we call them, Kranjci, who say kaj instead of sto (Kajkavians), who by language differ more from the Serbs and Croats than do the Serbs and Croats from each other, but they are still closer to them than to any other Slavic people.”
Croats, Serbs, Slovenes.\textsuperscript{73} The “Vienna Agreement” proclaimed a unified Serbian and Croatian language utilizing the štoškovian dialect as the foundation of what became known as the Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian language, which recognized the legitimacy and equality of the cyrillic and latin alphabets. In their plea for the unification of all South Slavs, the Illyrians appealed not only to the Pan-Slavist currents with Russia, but more importantly found advocates for their cause in neighboring Serbia—a de facto independent South Slav state surviving on their border. Despite the Illyrian Movement’s ultimate demise, its influence in Balkan South Slavic nationalist mobilization cannot be denied. The simple fact that South Slavism found considerable support among prominent Serbs, most conspicuously among Karadžić, held great sway among the regions intellectual elite. The attempted co-mingling of Serbian and Croatian nationalism in the form of Illyrianism or Jugoslavism laid the foundation for the future South Slav State that emerged in the aftermath of World War I.

In opposition to the waning Illyrianism of the era, particularistic Croatian nationalism emerged under the guidance of Ante Starčević (1823-1896) during the 1850s, in response to Serbian irredentism espoused by Garašanin and Karadžić.\textsuperscript{74} Starčević was born to an Orthodox mother and a Catholic father in the small village of Žitnik in Habsburg-controlled coastal region of Dalmatia, running parallel to the Adriatic Sea. In 1845 after studying and graduating from school in Zagreb, Starčević relocated to the Hungarian city of Pest to attend seminary school. By the start of the “People’s Spring” in 1848, Starčević had completed his studies at the Roman Catholic Seminary and returned

\textsuperscript{73} Kimball, “Austro-Slav Revival,” 40.

\textsuperscript{74} Banac, \textit{The National Question in Yugoslavia}, 85.
to Croatia where he abandoned his priestly pursuits in favor of law. As his legal career floundered, Starčević found himself involved in the emerging Croatian cultural movement. By the late 1850s, he had become a member of Matica Ilirska, the Croatian Cultural Society that played a central role in the Croatian national movement throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{75} In addition to serving as a board member in Matica, Starčević began working for the Croatian Historical Society and served as an editor of the literary magazine, Neven.\textsuperscript{76}

Over time, Starčević became more involved in the Croatian cultural and political movement. By 1861, he was appointed as chief notary in the city of Rijeka in the county of Fiume, in the northwestern corner of Croatia’s coastal region. That same year he was elected to the Croatian Sabor as the representative for Fiume. In parliament, Starčević befriended Eugene Kvaternik (1825-1871), who was elected to parliament the previous year. Together, the two founded the Hrvatska Stranka Prava (Croatian Party of Rights) on June 26, 1861, presenting to the Croatian Parliament their policies that articulated a greater desire for self-rule and autonomy of the Croatian provinces within the Habsburg Empire. Both Starčević and Kvaternik argued that the people of Croatia must negotiate the terms of their relationship with Austria and Hungary. They demanded that the historic lands of the Croatian people be reunited into a single homeland for all the

\textsuperscript{75} Matica ilirska eventually merged with a similar Dalmatian and Croatian cultural group in the twentieth century and was renamed Matica hrvatska or the “Croatian Foundation” which played a crucial role during the 1970s Croatian Spring up through the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991 and Croatia’s ultimate independence.

Croatian people with the “same blood, language, past and future.” In opposition to Karadžić’s “Serbs All and Everywhere,” Starčević and Kvaternik saw Croats all and everywhere, arguing that Serbs within Croatian and the Habsburg lands were Croats, but also that Bosniaks—Bosnians of Muslim faith—were “the best Croats, part of the Croatian people and of the purest Croatian blood.” For his political and literary work, Starčević is commonly referred to as the Otac domivna, “Father of the Nation.”

Although Starčević established the first true national political party for the Croats within the empire, his efforts came to an abrupt end in November 1871, following the failed Croatian Uprising, the Rakovica Revolt, led by his friend and fellow-nationalist, Eugene Kvaternik on November 8, 1871. Even though Starčević did not personally participate in the revolt, the Austro-Hungarian authorities imprisoned him and disbanded the Croatian Party of Rights in retaliation.

The particularistic nationalism and radicalism embraced by Starčević and the Croatian Party of Rights was not the only ideological strain to take hold within Habsburg lands. Following the collapse of the Illyrian Movement, Josip Jura Strossmayer, the Bishop of Đakovo, revisited the idea of South Slavic cultural and political unification.

Born on February 4, 1815, in Osijek, Strossmayer spent most of his childhood in Osijek before attending a Catholic seminary in Đakovo and earning a doctorate in philosophy.

---


80 Tanner, “Illyrianism and the Croatian Quest for Statehood,” 47-62.
from the seminary in Budapest in 1835. He was ordained as a priest in 1838 and received his doctorate in theology in Vienna in 1842.81

Much like his predecessor Ljudvet Gaj, Strossmayer’s education played a crucial role in the development of his own political and national consciousness. By 1860, he emerged as the head of the center-left Hrvatska narodna stranka (Croatian People’s Party) guiding their pro-South Slav agenda until 1873. Strossmayer gave an infamous speech on the floor of the Croatian Sabor (parliament) in 1861 that promoted the unification of all Croatian lands and the establishment of Croatian as the official language within the empire. In addition, Strossmayer promoted Pan-Slavism (the cultural and political association of Slavs) within the confines of the empire’s existing political structures. Despite his open support for the Hasburg Monarchy, Strossmayer strove to safeguard existing rights for the South Slavs.82

Unlike their Croatian and Serbian contemporaries, the Slovene people within the Habsburg Empire experienced no similar watershed moments of national awakening during the first half of the nineteenth century, despite a long tradition of scholarly activity.83 In a sense, they remained relatively isolated from the trials and tribulations of the dominant political turmoil and social unrest that accompanied the various nationalist currents that swept throughout the Balkans during the nineteenth century. Slovenes were relegated to a perfunctory role in the Balkan drama throughout much of the century of

---


82 Tanner, “Illyrianism and the Croatian Quest for Statehood,” 49-52.

83 One of the oldest efforts was the Academia Operosorum (Academy of Learned Works) a small scholarly society formed in the city of Ljubljana during the seventeenth century to promote science and literature. By 1785, the society proved ineffective and its members disbanded.
nationalism. Not until the founding of the *Slovenska Matica* in 1863, did nationalist mobilization emerge as a dominant political and cultural force of unification. The Slovenes lacked any substantial existing national or political institutions to serve as a cultural unifier similar to the Bosnians, Croats or Serbs of the region. Their isolation from other South Slavs coupled with a high degree of *Germanization* they experienced prevented any uniquely Slovenian national identity from taking hold prior to the creation of the *Matica*. However, this belated arrival allowed for the creation of various nationalist institutions that ultimately contributed to their prominent and vocal role among Chicago's South Slavic diaspora during the opening decades of the twentieth century.\(^{84}\)

In 1815, as the Serbs began their second uprising against the Ottomans, the Slovenes stood as the smallest of the Austro-Slavic populations, dispersed throughout the Habsburg empire in Carinthia, Styria, Carniola, Gorizia, Trieste, and Istria. In this sense, they experienced the similar situation as their Croat and Serb counterparts—a people disunited and geographically separated. Despite this fact, Slovenian intellectuals championed the cause of a Slovenian cultural nationalism void of the political antecedents evinced in Croatian and Serbian nationalist ideologies of the era. Much of this effort was undertaken by a group of nationally conscious students attending Karl-Franzens Universität in the city of Graz located in southeast Austria on the Mur River. In 1810, Slovenian students Stanko Vraž and Janez Nepomuk Primić formed the *Societas Slovenica*. Arguably one of the earliest Slovene literary societies created, the *Societas*

---

Slovenica’s was organized to help fellow students foster and develop their understanding of the Slovene language. Following in the footsteps of Vraž and Primić, the subsequent generations of Slovenes attending the university in Graz formed their own particularistic organizations representing the various nationalist strains dominating Slavic discourse. Students supporting the emerging ideology of Illyrianism formed the *Illyrischer Klub* in 1823 while those geared towards Pan-Slavism within the empire formed the *Slavischer Verein* in 1838. During this time, the organizations were deemed harmless to the interests of the crown and Graz began to flourish as the center of Illyrianism, Pan-Slavism and Slovene nationalist thought among the predominately Germanized Slavs within the empire.

Spurred into action by efforts and convictions of the students of Graz, Slovene intellectuals within the city of Ljubljana took note and attempted to reclaim their previous mantel as the center of Slovene intellectual activity. In 1830, a group of writers under the direction of Miha Kastelic (1796-1868) and Matija Cop (1797-1835) published the first Slovene language almanac, the *Krajnska Čbelica* (*Carniolan Bee*). Ljubljana slowly gained ground on Graz as the center of Slovene national and cultural activity. In 1843, Janez Bleiweis (1808-1881) published the Slovene newspaper *Novize* (*News*) with the sole intent to “stimulate national consciousness” within the empire. His efforts bestowed him the distinction as the “father of the Slovene Nation.” Bleiweis argued that the awakening of Slovene nationalism could only be achieved through the dissemination of

---

85 Kimball, “Austro-Slav Revival,” 64.


popular literature due to the predominance of Slovene peasants and "craftsman" in the empire. The educated middle-class that successfully mobilized national forces among the Serbs and Croats was absent among the Slovenes.\(^{88}\)

The shift of Slovene national activity to Ljubljana also signaled an end to the marginalized support of Illyrianism and Austro-Slav pan-Slavism that thrived among the students of Graz. Leaders such as Bleiweis maintained that Slovene national language had attained such a “high artistic level” by this time that any support for Illyrianist tendencies only served to dilute and degrade all that they had achieved.\(^{89}\) As the Revolutions of 1848 threatened to tear down the Habsburg monarchy, the Slovene national causes was subsumed by the Austrian's calculated support of Austro-Slavism as an oppositional wedge to Hungarian nationalist claims. However, the political residue left behind from the “People’s Spring” imbued the Slovenes with growing sense of national pride and a desire to increase efforts to awaken the Slovene nation.\(^{90}\) In July of 1848, they managed to establish their first political news publication, the “semi-weekly” *Slovenija* in Ljubljana, geared towards establishing “unity and equality” and the elevation of Slovenian as their official language. Although this effort ended within two years, its existence coupled with the events of 1848 contributed to renewed call for the "cultural and political" unification of all historic Slovene lands.\(^{91}\)

---


The Slovene national movement flourished during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. By January of 1861, the inaugural *Slovenski čitalnica* (Slovenian reading room) was established in the city of Maribor. Bleiweis quickly followed suit and organized the official *Narodna Čitalnica* (National Reading Room) in Ljubljana, which cemented the city's role as the center of national intellectual, cultural and political activities. *Maticas* spread throughout Slovene occupied lands and continued to foster Slovenian language, literature, and the growth of national consciousness in the absence of any established academies, universities or literary societies. By 1863, the creation of the *Slovenska matica* signaled the high point of the Slovenian national movement. The *matica* emerged at a time of increased national consciousness among the South Slavs and a period of greater political and cultural freedom within the Habsburg Empire. It also represented a period of increased activity of all Austro-Slavic peoples, not simply the Jugoslavs. Despite its late arrival, the *Slovenska matica* endured well into the twentieth century and continued to be the dominant institution within the Slovene national movement as well as a dominant voice in support of Jugoslavism.

Unlike their Croatian counterparts who felt that their national movement suffered a considerable setback in the aftermath of the *Augsliech* of 1867, the Slovenes found themselves in the midst of incredible expression of emergent nationalist awareness. The new constitution that inaugurated the Dual Monarchy granted official albeit tentative approval of Slovenian national efforts witnessing the formal recognition and of the Slovene language throughout the primary school system. An additional constitutional

---


provision on public gatherings allowed the Slovenes to conduct massive outdoor rallies, _tabori_ that served to increase national awareness and urge support for the Slovenian cause. Despite the lack of support for Illyrianism during the nationalist endeavors of the previous generation, the new environment established with the _Ausgleich_ fostered a Pan-Slovenian movement intent on politically uniting all Slovenes within the empire into an “autonomous Slovenian unit.”

**The Balkan Crisis and Great Power Politics**

Throughout the nineteenth century, cultural and political nationalist mobilization gained the greatest ground among the South Slavic populations of Serbia and the Austrian-controlled lands of Croatia, Slavonia, and Vojvodina. However, the experience of their Slavic cousins in Bosnia-Herzegovina proved quite different. Despite the decline of the Ottoman authority throughout the Balkans, the Porte’s administration of Bosnia continued until the final quarter of the nineteenth century. The Sultan’s diminished yet lingering authority contributed to the uneven development of national sentiment in the province. This compromised position allowed external and irredentist national movements from beyond Bosnia’s borders to take hold among the multi-faith Slavs that populated the province. Unlike their neighbors to the east and north, the South Slavs of Bosnia-Herzegovina lacked the prerequisite conditions required for the development of a uniquely identifiable Bosnian national consciousness, despite having endured for centuries as a geographically and politically recognized entity. The Ottoman tradition of politically organizing the empire along religious lines limited the role and power of traditional proto-national affiliations in place of ethno-religious identities. During the

---

centuries of Ottoman rule, Bosnian Christian identity resided culturally within each faiths respective church. The national awakening of the Serbs and Croats earlier in the nineteenth century allowed for the uneven development of national sentiment among the Bosnian Christian population as well as the imposition of national identities from abroad. Ultimately, the increasing strength and popularity of Serb and Croat nationalism supplanted any existing threads of Bosnian collective identity.

Serb and Croat nationalists severed all ties to Bosnia’s "Ottoman past” in an effort to strengthen their own nationalist claims towards Bosnian Christians to justify and support their own internal and external nation building programs. Throughout the Balkans, the various programs of national mobilization each in turn supported the radical ideology of creating homogenous political nations—a nineteenth century precedent that came to dominate twentieth century South Slav discourse. The creation of a unified Bosnian identity in opposition to external Serb and Croat national identities was further undermined by the Ottoman government’s Tanzimat reforms between 1839 and 1876.95

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, repeated claims of Ottoman mistreatment of Christian subjects were leveled by Europe’s Great Powers to justify their own continued involvement in the Balkans. In an attempt to placate the Great Powers of Europe and prevent their further interference in the Ottoman-occupied Balkans, the Porte encouraged and supported the construction of Bosnian orthodox and catholic churches. Their intentions were to illustrate their "fairness and tolerance" towards their Christian subjects to counter Russian and Austrian claims to contrary. However, their efforts had mixed results in that it allowed greater inroads of Serbian and Croatian nationalism from

---

outside the Ottoman controlled lands and contributed to a greater divide within Bosnia as these reforms threatened the traditional status quo of Muslim dominance within Bosnia.\textsuperscript{96} The inability to articulate a multi-faith Bosnian consciousness was further exacerbated during the 1860s and 1870s as increasing Serb nationalism supported the forced displacement of native Muslims and the destruction of Ottoman religious, cultural and political institutions.

In the summer of 1875, a Pan-Slavic revolt exploded among the Christian and Muslim peasant population of Herzegovina in response to repressive taxation by the Porte. Overwhelmed by the burden of Ottoman taxes, the \textit{raya} of Bosnia, immediately followed suit. Within days, an open revolt engulfed the entire province as the Bosnian Slavs presented a unified front against Ottoman misrule regardless of their religious or national affiliations.\textsuperscript{97} The rebellion was eagerly anticipated outside the province as a means for Croat and Serb nationalists to advance their respective agendas from abroad, as each supported the notion that the Bosnian Muslims were simply either Croats or Serbs that had converted to Islam. These external pressures quickly altered the path of what had organically evolved as a Bosnian national revolt. However, Russian and Austrian political interference altered the nationally unified tax revolt against Ottoman authority into an internecine religious conflict. Soon Christian rebels burned hundreds of Muslim villages, forcing Muslim Slavs to retaliate, setting off waves of ethnic cleansing that

\textsuperscript{96} Hajdarpašić, "Out of the Ruins of the Ottoman Empire," 718-722.

\textsuperscript{97} By this time, national identities became intermingled religious identity. Therefore, regardless of geographical location, ones identity became ascribed in accordance with the doctrine that all Orthodox Christians were Serbs and all Catholic Christians were Croats. The situation in Bosnian however proved problematic, as it did not offer a solution for the Muslim population of the province. However, the idea of a unique Bosniac or Bosniak identity irrespective of one's faith did gain some popularity among the Bosnian intellectuals eager to avoid being subsumed into either Serbian or Croatian Nationalist claims.
killed and displaced thousands of Bosnians throughout the province and ending any real opportunity for a unified Bosnian nationalism to emerge in opposition to Croatian and Serbian irredentism.\textsuperscript{98}

The conflict in Bosnia provoked Russian intervention in the province and culminated in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. In exchange for Austrian neutrality, Russia granted possession of Bosnia to the Habsburg Crown.\textsuperscript{99} The war was quickly resolved with Treaty of San Stefano signed on March 3, 1878, that doubled the size of Montenegro while recognizing Serbia \textit{de jure} independence. Discontent with the some of the treaty’s stipulations forced Europe’s new political elite to attend the Congress of Berlin. On July 13, 1878, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire concluded a month-long negotiation aimed at revising San Stefano. The Treaty of Berlin formally recognized the \textit{de facto} independence of the Serbian, Montenegrin, and Romanian principalities. By 1882, Serbia proclaimed itself a sovereign kingdom with the ascension of the first King of Serbia, Milan Obrenović IV. After seventy-eight years of political and cultural struggle, the nationalist dream of an independent Serbian nation was finally realized.\textsuperscript{100}

Conclusion

In the waning decades of the nineteenth century, a new political reality emerged in the historically contested Balkan lands. In spite of Austro-Hungarian opposition, the rise of an independent Serbian kingdom in 1878 signaled the arrival of the first modern

\textsuperscript{98} Richard C. Frucht, \textit{Eastern Europe: An Introduction to the People, Lands, and Culture} (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 640.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{100} Woislav Petrovich, \textit{Serbia: Her People, History and Aspirations} (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1915), 132-141.
South Slav nation and foreshadowed the collapse of the traditional political status quo in the Balkans. After centuries of foreign rule, the South Slavs collectively envisioned a future of their own, answerable only to themselves. For many in the region, the nascent Kingdom of Serbia became a cause célèbre and the inspirational guiding light of South Slavic nationalists throughout the region. Whether desired or not, their ascendency elevated the Serbs to the role of standard-bearer for South Slavic liberation.

By the end of the century, the political situation in the Balkans remained in volatile. Although the “Eastern Question” was partly addressed with the reorganization of the Balkans under the Treaty of Berlin and the international recognition of an independent Serbia, the remaining South Slavs found themselves enduring the similar fate they had encountered almost a century earlier. For the Croats, Slovenes, and Serbs within the Habsburg lands, little had changed accept for the incorporation of Slavic peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Austro-Hungarian Empire. For the Bosnians, fate had simply replaced Ottoman control with Austrian, as their national aspirations, long with their fellow Austro-Slavs remained unfulfilled.

In addition to political uncertainty they now faced, the Kingdom of Serbia and the stateless South Slav nations of the Balkans remained well behind their better off European contemporaries. As the standard of living steadily rose throughout Europe in response to industrialization, the Balkans remained a continental backwater where educational, economic, technological and political development remained severely lacking. The inability of modernization to penetrate the Habsburg and Ottoman controlled lands prevented the improvement of “educational standards, methods of
communication and popular participation in government” evinced among their western neighbors.  

Despite the growing strength of nationalism throughout the region, the lack of these fundamental structures prevented cohesive leadership among the South Slavs, dooming them to endless ethno-national and ethno-religious divisions and traditional loyalties. The failure to establish comprehensive economic, social, educational, and religious freedom, paved the way for a mass exodus of Austro-Slavs to a foreign land that few had only heard whispered throughout their provincial towns and villages. Once word spread about the promise of a new life in “Amerika,” the floodgates of the Balkans opened as the South Slavs headed out to find that which eluded them in their homelands, a nation to call their own.

---

101 Lane, Yugoslavia: When Ideals Collide, 8-9.

102 Ibid.
CHAPTER TWO:

INDUSTRIAL CITIES & SLAVIC INVASIONS:

THE DAWN OF “NEW IMMIGRATION” IN CHICAGO, 1880-1910

I looked upon America with eyes of strong desire, my heart beat with strong hope. Full of hope I approached the gates of America, and full of hope I entered. Your country must be my country, because my blood and my sweat laid the foundation on which it develops.¹

The South Slavs arrived in early twentieth-century America and found themselves in a strange, unfamiliar, and at times, unfriendly land. For many, their initial experience proved overwhelmingly difficult as they awkwardly adjusted to their new urban industrial homes that stood in stark contrast to the traditional life of their rural peasant past.² Many South Slavs vociferously lamented the reprehensible conditions they encountered during their first years living and working in the United States. They felt betrayed by the rose colored descriptions of the “promised land” that supported their initial decision to migrate but now proved completely elusive, if not false. Like other South Slavic émigrés, Lazar Čurić, a Serb from Austria-Hungary left the old country to make his fortune in the “land of opportunity” and the “heaven on earth” that he believed was early twentieth-century industrial America. After arriving in New York City, Čurić made his way to the mining towns of Pennsylvania before finally settling down in Chicago. His dreams of making a


fortune quickly shattered against the harsh reality of life as an industrial-worker in the
United States. Overwhelmed by the horrendous working conditions, where poor air
quality and lack of sufficient light made the back-breaking work even more difficult,
Čurić was even more troubled by alienation and isolation among the linguistically and
cultural diverse fellow workers. The absence of gainfully employed friends and relatives
relegated many South Slavs to destitution as the inability to speak English prevented
them from obtaining regular work. In 1907, Čurić published, Under Ground in America,
painted a bleak picture of the South-Slavic working-class life in the mining towns of
Pennsylvania and steel industries of Chicago. In addition to working in horrible
conditions for little pay, Čurić was forced to cook, clean, and mend his clothes. He
intended his diatribe to serve as a cautionary tale to his brethren back home in the
Balkans who wished to follow his footsteps.³

Lazar Čurić’s experiences were shared by many of his fellow South Slavs
throughout the United States. For them, America proved to be a “cold” and “miserable”
land, void of opportunity and far short of the “heaven on earth” that they believed existed
in the vastness across the Atlantic. Despite his personal experience and a true desire to
help his fellow South Slavs “be wise” in their decision to emigrate, Čurić was unable to
completely discount the myth of America. Although he felt he personally made a
“terrible mistake by not staying in the old country,” he also felt that he could not
completely forsake the America that was such a “rich, beautiful and free country, which

---
³ Lazar Čurić, Underground in America, 1907 pamphlet, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press
Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of
Minnesota.
gives equal rights to the poor and rich, strong and weak.™ In spite of his efforts, the South Slavic invasion of the United States continued at an increasingly rapid pace over the following decades as they were collectively embraced by the all-devouring industrial machine that was early twentieth-century America.

The Rise of Urban Industrial America

Beneath a billowing cloud of acrid smoke, the nineteenth century came to a thunderous close amid the deafening cacophony of industrialization. The United States of America, once predominately rural and agricultural nation, was experiencing an industrial transformation. The nation was at the center of extraordinary global economic and political changes that fundamentally altered the North American and European continents. Technological and mechanical innovations at home coupled within increasing economic and political instability abroad displaced traditional socioeconomic structures as a torrent of unskilled laborers flooded the nation to fuel the engines of the new American economy. Upon the shores of this America—a rapidly changing land—hordes of Slavic peoples from southeastern and central Europe descended during the final years of the nineteenth century and first two decades of the twentieth. Millions of foreign and unfamiliar faces, strangely clad and darker in tone, replaced the fair-haired and fair-skinned Western Europeans that initially populated the nation during the previous two centuries. Exotic in appearance and linguistically unfathomable to their predecessors, the

---

4 Ćurić, Underground in America, 1907, pamphlet.
innumerably diverse Slavs redefined the character of twentieth-century America’s newly emerging industrial metropolises.5

The “Slavic invasion” between 1890 and 1924 forced existing urban institutions and social structures to change throughout the cities that dotted the nation’s Great Lake industrial corridor—Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Chicago.6 Among these new arrivals were the South Slavic peoples of the Balkans, making their first substantial foray across the Atlantic. They arrived in urban, industrial America during a time of profound political and social change back home. This change combined with their experience as émigrés became one of the defining experiences of early twentieth-century South Slavic life. More importantly, their experience as émigrés and exiles allowed for the South Slavs to develop and articulate novel modes of individual and collective identity.

During the era of “new immigration,” the South Slavic immigrants in America discovered themselves and each other in a truly national sense for the first time. Life

5 Geographically, the modern Slavs are comprised of three distinct populations recognized as Eastern, Western, and Southern. The Eastern branch represents the largest of the Slavic populations, consisting of the “Great Russians, inhabiting the central and northern districts of European Russia; the White Russians who occupy…part of the former eastern frontier of Poland; and the Little Russians (otherwise known as Ukrainians or Ruthenians. The Western Slavic groups includes the Poles, the Czechs (or Bohemians) and Moravians, the Slovaks, and two Slavic islands in German territory: the Kashubs on the Baltic coast, and the considerably smaller Sorbs, or Wends, who inhabit Lusatia.” The Southern Slavs are geographically separated from both the Eastern and Western groups, encompassing the entirety of the Balkan region shared by the Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Bosnians, Macedonians, and Bulgarians. The primary concern of this study are the South Slavs that were at various points throughout the twentieth century, members of any of the politically recognized Yugoslav Kingdom or states. See Samuel Hazard Cross, Slavic Civilization through the Ages (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 1-10 and Francis Dvornik, The Slavs in European History and Civilization (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, 1962), 1-3.

6 By 1900, foreign-born peoples and their children made up the vast majority of these Great Lake city’s populations, 85 percent in Chicago alone, and by 1920, the Slavs were the mainstay of the new industrial labor force, were intimately involved in Democratic and socialist politics, and lived throughout the city. See See Frank Julian Warne, The Slav Invasion and the Mine Workers: A Study In Immigration (Philadelphia: J.P. Lipponcott, 1904), John E. Bodnar, The Ethnic Experience in Pennsylvania (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1973) and William John Galush, For More Than Bread: Community and Identity in American Polonia, 1880-1940 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.)
among the working-class laborers of industrial America allowed the South Slavs to create a new world, uniquely their own, combining old world elements of their past with the new reality they encountered to ensure their success and survival in early twentieth-century Chicago.\(^7\) The South Slavs of Chicago were truly “strangers in a strange land,” and willingly and unintentionally contributed to the creation of an emergent collective identity—Jugoslav—that previously did not exist before.\(^8\) Though often neglected, the South Slavs, or Jugoslavs played an influential role in one of the most profound periods of immigration in American history.\(^9\) Their numbers overall were arguably smaller than their contemporaries, but their impact shaped events political events both in the United States and back home throughout the Balkans.\(^10\)

**“New Immigration,” 1880-1924**

Between 1880 and 1924, the world witnessed one of the single largest population shifts in modern history as close to twenty-four million immigrants reached America’s shores alone. Their arrival during the early decades of the twentieth century forever

---


\(^9\) Although the terms “South Slav,” “Jugoslav” and “Yugoslav” are interchangeable, this dissertation will employ the historically accurate and colloquial term of “Jugoslav” or South Slav used during the era.

changed the nation. In addition to the sheer size of incoming migrants, this extraordinary period marked a substantial shift in immigration to the United States. New arrivals were no longer emigrating from traditional regions western and northern Europe as they did during the eighteenth and nineteenth-century. Now they were emerging from the more “exotic” and increasingly unfamiliar lands of southern and Eastern Europe. More importantly, “new immigration” was the product of modernity, marked by a confluence of factors that contributed to the movement of such large numbers of people. In response to urbanization, industrialization, and modernization, Europe’s population increased dramatically during the nineteenth century. These forces combined to upset the precarious balance of southeastern Europe’s predominately rural and agricultural population. The spread of industrialization into these regions dislocated traditional peasant structures forcing large swathes of the rural population into Europe’s expanding urban centers. However, despite rapid urbanization throughout the region, the cities of southeastern Europe, and the Balkans in particular, were ill prepared to accommodate the overwhelming flood of peasants. In response to these limited local and regional limitations, masses of Balkan peasants sought refugee elsewhere in the west where industrialization proved more successful and the need for cheap labor offered opportunities unavailable at home.

11 The period of “new immigration” is identified by a geographic and demographic shift from western and northern Europe towards the southern and eastern Europe. The period also marks an era of “open” immigration policy to the United States following brief periods of limited immigration. Alan M. Kraut, The Huddled Masses: The Immigrant in American Society, 1880-1921 (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, 1982), 3.

12 Between 1843 and 1900, Austria’s urban population tripled in size. Between 1850 and 1900 alone, Vienna’s population grew from 431,000 to approximately 2,000,000. Similar trends can be seen throughout southeastern Europe in the cities where industrialization had made substantial inroads. See Kraut, The Huddled Masses, 30.
Once the decision to leave home was made, the experience of immigration began almost immediately for most South Slavs. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the vast majority of South Slavic émigrés from the Austro-Hungarian controlled Balkan lands first set out for Germany. After purchasing passage in one of the many German port cities, they found themselves winding their way up the Rhine and Elbe rivers towards the North Sea. The final leg of their journey found them setting sail for the shores England to pick up more passengers before heading across the Atlantic to the United States. This pattern of migration continued well into the twentieth century, as approximately two-thirds of all emigrants from Austria-Hungary travelled this path. Not until 1904, did the Dual Monarchy offer direct access via the Adriatic port city of Fiume in an attempt to placate Austrian and Hungarian entrepreneurs who felt excluded from this ever growing and profitable endeavor. The empires actions spurred greater competition among shipping agents and port cities as prices for trans-Atlantic levels fell to under ten dollars per person. This increased competition that set incredibly low prices for the journey coupled with quicker travel times and safer voyages, made the decision of emigrating much easier for those South Slavs that lingered on the fence.\(^{13}\)

For the United States, the era of “new immigration” was merely part of a much larger wave of migration sweeping across the world that accompanied a sea change in technology, transportation, industrialization and urbanization. Although seemingly endless numbers of peoples migrated to the shores of America, the world witnessed even greater shifts in populations nationally and regionally throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. For the most part, these people were spurred by events within their

\(^{13}\) Kraut, *The Huddled Masses*, 45.
homeland that made emigration a viable option. They were also attracted by the rapidly industrializing nations outside of Europe—Canada, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, and the United States—that actively competed for the abundant populations of cheap labor required to keep their emergent industrial societies forward momentum.\textsuperscript{14}

The United States remained by far the most popular destination for the South Slavs due to the “fortuitous combination of economic opportunity, political liberty, and religious tolerance.”\textsuperscript{15} In order to compete, other nations offered subsidized travel from the Balkans and offers of immediate naturalization. The Canadian government went as far as to open offices within the largest industrial cities of the United States, appealing to new arrivals to continue their journey just a bit further to the greener pastures of Canadian industry.\textsuperscript{16} Earlier historical narratives typically depicted the era of “new immigration” as one of victimization, where immigrants were unwillingly “uprooted” from their homes and forced abroad to survive.\textsuperscript{17} However, recent studies moved beyond the oversimplification of victimization and maintained that migration, internally and externally, was a more deliberate process, taking into account a multitude of factors, local as well as international. Immigration abroad was simply one among many options that the South Slavs had available to them.\textsuperscript{18} Although many South Slavic immigrants were

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[15] Ibid.
\item[16] Ibid.
\item[17] Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People (Boston: Little & Brown, 1951.) Handlin’s classic text offered the historically popular yet contemporarily maligned theory of immigrants being “uprooted” from their homes against their will.
\item[18] Ewa Morawska, "For Bread with Butter': Life-Worlds of Peasant-Immigrants from East Central Europe, 1880-1914" Journal of Social History, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Spring 1984), 387.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
in fact uprooted by social, economic, and political events beyond their control, even
greater numbers willingly left their homeland for a multitude of reasons. Some sang the
traditional immigrant song of making their fortune in the land of milk and honey, while
others simply left to join loved ones already abroad. Still others departed to obtain
religious, cultural, and political freedoms they found lacking at home. Regardless of their
reasons or rational, the South Slavs made their way to the burgeoning cities of industrial
America.

The new era of immigration contributed to the rapid rise of industrial America, it also
contributed to the steady economic decline of the South Slav inhabited lands of the
Balkans. The lack of labor elicited internal counter measures within the Austro-
Hungarian Empire. As early as 1887, the Ministry of the Interior instructed Austrian
officials to “oppose foreign efforts to recruit” from within the multi-national empire.
Critics complained that the emigrating Austro-Slavs left with over 3 million Kroner,
deeply affecting the already troubled local economy and leaving many that remained
resentful.\(^{19}\) These concerns continued well into the twentieth century as local
government within the South Slavic lands of Croatia and Slavonia published forms of
propaganda concerning the poor economic conditions encountered by other South Slavs
in the United States. Despite these efforts, South Slavic immigration steadily increased
up through the start of the First World War.\(^{20}\)

Another factor contributing to South Slavic immigration abroad was the concept
of “free movement” within the Austro-Hungarian Empire that traditionally allowed


emigration within the confines of Habsburg lands. Between 1880 and 1890, approximately thirty to thirty-five percent of the entire adult peasant population lived or worked outside of their native villages and local regions throughout the Hungarian-controlled lands of the Dual Monarchy. 21 Traveling throughout the empire, these migrant workers became inadvertent agents of change and modernization as they brought “new trends” back home, which transformed traditional social and cultural structures in native life throughout the region. 22 This transformation became more pronounced by those South Slavs returning home from abroad, especially from the United States, where new ideas concerning economic, political, and religious freedoms threatened the status quo within Austria-Hungary.

**South Slavic Emigration from Austro-Hungarian Lands**

South Slavic immigration to the United States did not begin in earnest until after 1890. The combined effects of economic stagnation, lack of political and social mobility, poor education, and a decline in agricultural production led to the mass exodus of the South Slavs. By 1930, some 325,000 South Slavs called America home and scratched out a meager living in the stockyards, mines, rail yards, and factories of America's growing cities. Chicago, the “city of broad shoulders”, sheltered one of the largest South Slavic populations in the nation, numbering between forty and sixty thousand. Within Chicago’s diverse and ever-expanding neighborhoods, the South Slavs created their own world hidden within the harsh, existing realities of the city. 23

---

21 Morawska, ’’For Bread with Butter’’, 387-390.

22 Ibid., 388.

Prior to the 1890s, South Slavic immigration was merely a trickle consisting of handfuls of Croatian Jesuit missionaries or sailors from the Dalmatian coast of the Illyrian province and from the Slovene lands of Carniola. Thereafter, the majority of South Slavic immigrants in the United States were Croats, Slovenes, and Serbs from the regions under Austro-Hungarian suzerainty. Their ranks consisted primarily of rural peasants that ironically made their way to the emerging urban-industrial centers of America's heartland, primarily in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois. 24 Thousands upon thousands of unskilled, semi-literate peasants toiled in the region's factories, machine shops, and steel mills. Others found work in the coalmines of Pennsylvania, or in the seemingly endless array of construction and railroad related jobs available throughout the region. In Pennsylvania, South Slav immigration peaked in 1908, where Pittsburgh had the largest concentration of Croats in the entire United States. Of 150,000 South Slavs in Pennsylvania, close to 85,000 were Croats. 25

Obtaining accurate demographic information on South Slavic immigration between 1890 and 1921 is problematic. From 1899 until 1919, the United States collected immigration data according to race. Precise numbers regarding South Slavic immigration to the United States are difficult to ascertain as American census figures tended cluster various groups together regionally regardless of national, religious, or ethnic affiliation. 26 Upon their arrival, many South Slavs recorded their nationality as either Austrian or

25 Prpic, South Slavic Immigration in America, 73.
26 Roucek, "The Yugoslav Immigrants in America," 603. Between 1880 and 1890, most South Slavs were identified as either Austrian or Hungarian. Their actual numbers became even more convoluted as Census takers began lumping various groups together.
Hungarian having emigrated from Austrian-Hungarian controlled lands within the Balkans. However, despite these facts, immigration data does allow some understanding as to the actual number of Slavic and South Slavic peoples migrating to the United States from southeastern Europe.

Between 1880 and 1900, approximately 848,845 immigrants arrived in the United States from the various regions within the Balkans under Austro-Hungarian suzerainty. These numbers increased dramatically in the proceeding decades. The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed the largest migration of peoples from the Austro-Hungarian Empire whose numbers totaled just over 2,000,000 immigrants. Between 1910 and 1920, another 1,154,727 immigrants from the Dual Monarchy joined their fellow émigrés in the United States.\(^{27}\) The immigration data collected during this time identified approximately 493,804 Croatians and Slovenians, 170,878 Bulgarians, Serbians and Montenegrins, and 53,142 Dalmatians, Bosnians, and Herzegovinians.\(^ {28}\)

Prior to the twentieth-century, approximately 78,000 South Slavs entered the United States, the majority of which were peasants. This trend continued until 1914 and was most prevalent among the Serb émigrés in which eighty-two percent of their total population was from rural and agricultural regions within the empire.\(^ {29}\) Over the next

\(^{27}\) From N. Carpenter, “Immigrants and Their Children,” *U.S. Bureau of the Census Monograph*, No. 7 (Washington, D.C, 1927), 324-325. Between 1900 and 1910, approximately 34,651 Serbs, Montenegrins, and Bulgarians arrived in addition to the South Slavs of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The following decade, between 1910 and 1920, another 27,180 Serbs, Montenegrins, and Bulgarians made their way to the United States. These numbers represent immigration from the Balkan lands outside of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that were either independent or under Ottoman control at the time.


\(^{29}\) Bodnar, “Immigration and Modernization,” 52.
three decades, this initially modest population of South Slavs was joined by an additional 700,000. The largest of the South Slavic groups to immigrate into the United States were the Croatian who comprised almost fifty-percent of their total numbers. Slovenes, the first to arrive en masse, comprised approximately forty-two percent of the overall population, while the Serbs, the smallest contingent among the South Slavs, represented just slightly less than nine percent of the population. In addition, other smaller regional groups arrived as well but were not accurately represented in the census data.\textsuperscript{30}

The tightening of immigration restrictions in 1924 signaled the official end of the period of "new immigration" and substantially limited the South Slavic population from increasing in size and scope. By the 1930 census, the South Slav population of the United States numbered approximately 700,000. At this time, approximately sixty-four percent of all South Slav immigrants resided in the industrial regions of the American Midwest. They spread out across the Great Lake states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin, establishing substantial communities in the rapidly rising industrial cities of Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Gary, Chicago, and Milwaukee. Although each of these cities contained sizable South Slav colonies, the city of Chicago claimed the single largest population of South Slavic immigrants estimated between 40,000 and 60,000. However, all of these cities quickly emerged as centers of South Slavic religious, working-class, socialist, and transnational political activity. Chicago and Pittsburgh both played major roles in the unification of the various South Slavic immigrant communities in America and contributed to the development of Pan-South

\textsuperscript{30} Carpenter, “Immigrants and Their Children,” 324-325.
Slavic movement (Jugoslavism) that culminated in the creation of the first Yugoslavia in 1918.\textsuperscript{31}

During the height of “new immigration” between 1899 and 1909, approximately seventy-three percent of all immigrants were males. Most of which considered their sojourn to the United States as temporary.\textsuperscript{32} Historically, trans-Atlantic migration was a predominantly male activity, spurred in part by the traditional patriarchal structure of South Slavic societies where the eldest male inherited the family lands. This trend left a considerable portion of working-age males with no means of financial support, which prevented them from settling down and starting a family. By the mid-nineteenth-century internal migration towards more economically developed urban, industrial, or agricultural regions became the norm. With changes in transportation, these same men looked across the Atlantic to the United States for economic opportunities not afforded at home. Once they arrived and after finding some form of steady employment, these men set about the task of saving enough money to send back home for their wives and girlfriends to join them. Even those that arrived in America without any romantic attachments sent money home to “secure picture postcard brides” from their native villages with their immediate family members acting as intermediaries. This was typical of South Slavic immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth century. However, between 1900 and 1924, the

\textsuperscript{31} Roucek, "The Yugoslav Immigrants in America", 603-604

\textsuperscript{32} Powell A. Moore, \textit{The Calumet Region: Indiana’s Last Frontier} (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1959), 356.
trend of male dominated migration slowed considerably as more females and families were able to afford the journey abroad.\textsuperscript{33}

**South Slav Emigration from Ottoman Lands**

Throughout the nineteenth century, changes within Ottoman lands spurred South Slavic immigration to the United States. From the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, the Ottoman economy transitioned from a "primitive" form of capitalism to one comprised “almost entirely on agricultural activities.”\textsuperscript{34} Additionally, during this same period, the Ottoman Empire suffered from the combined effects of near constant "epidemics and wars, economic stagnation, and demographic decay."\textsuperscript{35} The Old Man of Europe was truly ill.

Bosnian Muslim immigration to the United States was limited in part by an increasingly anti-Ottoman, anti-Islamic sentiment among Americans whose Christian sympathies and growing support for national self-determination favored the primarily the Croat, Slovene and Serbs, despite their non-protestant backgrounds. However, small numbers of Muslim Slavs did immigrate to the United States to avoid compulsory military service during an era of incessant warfare. The prolonged social unrest in Bosnia during the 1875 revolts and the subsequent ethno-religious conflict that it devolved into also spurred some Bosnian Muslims to find their way to the city of


\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
Chicago at the start of the twentieth century. For the South Slav Muslims, the primary attraction of the United States was the abundance of economic opportunities presented. Economic and social mobility, more than any other push factor led the way for the Muslim South Slavs. Another pull factor was the effect of returning émigrés that found success in America that came back home to buy land. Their tales of America as a land of plenty appealed to all segments of society as even those of relative means hoped that a brief sojourn to the United States would increase their existing wealth.

The growing success of Muslim colonies contributed as an increasing pull factor especially for those wary of risking a life in an unfamiliar land. For all of the South Slavs, the risk associated with emigration to America lessened with the prospect of joining existing family members or established ex-pat colonies that made their transition easier and dulled the experience to tolerable levels.

Return Migration

United States immigration officials recorded approximately 6,709,357 new arrivals between 1908 and 1914. During this same period, they also recorded 2,063,767 departures among all immigrant groups. Among the South Slavic immigrant population, more than half of all Croatians, Serbs, and Slovenes chose to return home during this time. For many, this decision was simply part of the seasonal pattern of migration for those employed outdoors either in agriculture and the mining industries. Others chose to

---


37 Karpat, "Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914", 179.

38 Ibid., 180.
return home due to the start of an “industrial depression” that led to decreased industrial activity at the start of 1908. Those that worked and lived within the urban environments of Chicago’s steel and meatpacking industries were less likely to travel back home in fear of losing their jobs. Overall, roughly sixty-seven percent of all South Slavs remained in the United States between 1908 and 1916.39

Following the conclusion of World War I, South Slavic immigration to the United States began to decline among the initial group of Austro-Slavs who instead began to head towards South America and Canada. However, the postwar period all saw an increase in South Slavs from the former Kingdom of Serbia and the Montenegro, that were now incorporated into the unified South Slavic Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The postwar period also marked an increase in return immigration from abroad, as many South Slavs viewed the creation of an independent South Slav kingdom optimistically. They felt that their union represented an opportunity for them to find similar economic prosperity to that which they experienced abroad.40 Spurred by unemployment, disenchantment, or a longing for the life they once knew, over one-third of all Croatian immigrants returned home. Having attended some financial freedom, most of these urban industrial workers were intent on returning to their traditional rural and agricultural lives, purchasing additional land in their villages and building new homes for themselves and their immediate families. However, their return was not without problems as they quickly found themselves strangers at home where they tended to dress in western fashions, incorporated their knowledge of English in their daily


40 Roucek, "The Yugoslav Immigrants in America," 610.
conversations and tended to create exclusive circles of friends among other returnees. These Amerikanci were both admired and despised by their countrymen who now carried considerable influence in their homeland.41

Although many South Slavs considered the sojourn to America as a temporary condition seeing themselves as “birds of passage,” the advantages of life in America over returning home to the Balkans where economic, political, and religious conditions remained precarious made the decision of remaining in the United States much easier. For others, the fact that they remained economically destitute after years toiling in United States, despite the promise of plenty espoused in the American dream, similar to the experience Lazar Čurić wrote about in hopes of preventing his countrymen from enduring a similar fate. Ultimately, despite their intentions, the vast majority of South Slavs remained in their new adopted homeland. However, this did not imply that their ties to the old country were any less important. In fact, the reality of possibly never returning made spurred them to take a greater interest in events back home and the condition of the lives of their families that they left behind.42

Push-Pull Factors Contributing to South Slavic Immigration

Extremely diverse conditions and concerns contributed to the Austro-Slavic migration to the United States between 1880 and 1921. In a 1910 article in the Chicago Daily Tribune, writer George A. Dorsey identified poor agricultural conditions, lack of political representation, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, language and educational inequality, and the cost of continually funding Austro-Hungarian war efforts as the primary causes

41 Frances Kraljić, Croatian Migration to and from the United States, 1900-1914 (Palo Alto: Ragusan Press, 1978), 101-103.

of mass migration of Slovene, Croat, and Serb inhabitants of the Carniola region of present-day Slovenia. Many cited the lack of available land, economic opportunity as well as political and religious persecution within the empire as reasons for leaving their homeland. Regardless, each sought something they felt they were denied in their homelands, whether by chance or purpose. For the South Slavs, America offered the opportunity to either find or reinvent themselves.

Despite their preoccupation with political concerns throughout the Dual Monarchy and the Balkan Peninsula, the vast majority of South Slavs émigrés cited poor economic conditions as the primary cause for their migration to the United States. Religion was not a factor until later in the twentieth century as both the Austrian-Hungarians and the Ottomans, despite offering economic incentives to convert, allowed the South Slavs to maintain their choice of religion. Many South Slav immigrants expressed their desire to earn more and obtain decent jobs within the growing industrial sector back home while others complained about increased taxes combined with poor farming conditions and growing debts to justify and explain their decision to leave.

Overall, industrial development throughout the entire Balkan region, lagged behind the rest of Europe by the turn of the century. By 1900, approximately 26.8 percent of the total population in Austria was dependent upon heavy industry for their

---


44 Brank Mita Colaković, Yugoslav Migrations to America, (R&E Research Associates, 1973), 61-62. (Table 4.20/4.21) A survey of 500 South Slavs (Croat, Serb, Slovene) that arrived prior to 1924 indicated that forty-eight percent immigrated due to economic concerns identified as: earn a better living; good jobs/wages; no jobs, poor jobs; poor farming, taxes, debt; too many children in the family; shortage of food; better life in America. Approximately 36 percent immigrated for personal reasons such as: joining father/relatives; joining spouse/fiancé; visiting relatives; travel/adventure/see the U.S. Only 8 percent of respondents identified politically related issues such as freedom, political security, and avoiding military service as reasons justifying their emigration.
livelihoods. In Hungary, the total population dependent on industry was far less, roughly 14.4 percent. More problematic was the fact that the vast majority of industry was concentrated in Bohemia, Austria Proper, and the Hungarian capital of Budapest. The Austro-Hungarian controlled South Slav lands of Croatia, Slavonia, Carniola, Bosnia, and Vojvodina for the most part were completely void of any substantial industry that allowed for the transition of the primarily rural, agricultural populace to transition into urban-industrial lives. However, in spite of better economic opportunities, South Slavs from Vojvodina and Slavonia immigrated to the United States at a substantially higher rate than those living in poorer regions within the empire. They did so regardless of the fact that the farmland in Vojvodina and Slavonia was far superior then elsewhere in the empire and their location within Austria-Hungary and their proximity gave the superior access to Budapest, Vienna, and other Western European markets.45

For the Slovenes, emigration abroad resulted primarily “due to infertility of the soil, poverty, and a lack of transportation facilities.”46 The lack of transportation infrastructure in turn prevented the Slovene and other South Slav farmers throughout Carniola from being able to bring their harvests to market to make a living. Many were all to well aware of how funds for a promised rail line linking rural areas in Carniola to urban markets in Austria and along the Adriatic Coast were used to pay for new munitions and arms for the Austrian and Hungarian armies. The resulting geographic and economic isolation accounted for the astounding fact that almost all males under the age of fifty from Carniola either had migrated to the United States or already had been abroad

45 Colaković, Yugoslav Migrations to America, 30.

and returned.\textsuperscript{47} The Slovenes appeared to suffer most acutely from economic isolation and poor farming conditions in Carniola. However, all three groups, Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes alike, contended with the lack of political representation and educational and linguistic equality. These lingering issues revolved around the internal political struggle between the Habsburg and Hungarian crowns within the Dual Empire dating back into the mid-nineteenth century. Despite various reform efforts, the South Slavs still found themselves victims of forced Magyarization and Germanization as late as 1907 as Austria-Hungary was set to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Ausgleich of 1867 that created the Dual Monarchy.\textsuperscript{48}

The lack of land was further exacerbated by the state-sponsored relocation of German and Magyar colonists into historically Croatian and Serbian territories. Due to internal politics, the Dual Monarchy gave great incentives for Germans and Magyars to colonize various regions, primarily Slavonia and Vojvodina, in contemporary Croatia and Serbia respectively. Between 1840 and 1910, the number of Magyar colonists increased from 5,050 to 105,948 while the number of Germans increased from 13,226 to 126,221, increasing economic competition among the South Slavs for a dwindling amount of resources. This dramatic demographic shift also occurred in Vojvodina, a predominately Serb inhabited region of the empire.\textsuperscript{49} Regardless of their reasons for leaving, their emigration ultimately resulted from internal conditions throughout the Balkans.


\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{49} Colaković, \textit{Yugoslav Migrations to America}, 27.
The internal political struggle between the Austrians and Hungarians spread to other matters of more immediate pragmatic concerns to the South Slavs within the empire. The Dual Monarchy’s internal struggles coupled with the endless external threats from abroad created a hyper-militarized reality that disproportionately affected the South Slavs who bore the brunt of the crown’s military ambitions, both economically and physically. For an empire in constant conflict for most of the past century, the fear of conscription and arbitrary service inspired many South Slavs to set out abroad. Born on April 20, 1877, in the village of Konjsko Brdo in Slovenia, Tomas Rukovina briefly served in Bosnia as a private in the Austro-Hungarian army. There he learned to speak German and grew to greatly admired the Emperor Franz Joseph, speaking of him with the deepest respect. His grandfather, great-grandfather, and other ancestors fought the Ottomans and other invaders to keep their homeland free. Despite this fact, Tomas Rukovina decided to seek a better life in the United States due to the lack of economic opportunity at home and the fear of continued service in the army. He was not alone in this determination as many of his fellow soldiers and friends from back home expressed similar concerns. He embarked on the ship “Kiln” from Bremen, Germany and arrived in Baltimore, Maryland on April 26, 1900.50

Another important factor contributing to the massive exodus of South Slavs was print-media, letters from abroad, and propaganda distributed by various international business interests, greatly assisted in directly and indirectly recruiting émigrés to follow their fellow countrymen abroad. Newspapers printed within the larger cities of Dual

50 The Rukavina Family Papers, Croatian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota. The Zadruga was the traditional social structure of pre-industrial Balkan society representing "a communal-joint family" living with a single home or multiple attached homes under the leadership of the eldest male family member.
Monarchy filtered down to the rural areas where tales of life abroad were read by the few to the many. Quickly the myth of the America spread like wildfire throughout the Balkan Peninsula drawing interest from all segments of society.

Although only a handful of South Slavs made America their home before 1890, these early immigrants paved the way for later émigrés by sending letters and gifts home, and returning to their native land with stories discussing the opportunities available to them in the United States. Initially, the idea of immigrating to the United States enticed only a few South Slavs that had direct contact with friends or relatives abroad. However, the impression of America as a land of opportunity quickly spread throughout the Habsburg lands and became ingrained in peasant folklore as a remedy to all that ailed them. Rumors of South Slavic peasants from Carniola making their way “across the big pond” to the America’s Great Lakes where work was abundant and people were paid well enough to afford “meat and white bread” for every meal with enough left over to send home to their family throughout the year.  

In addition to letters from abroad, South Slavs returning from their sojourns to the United States greatly contributed to the “enlightenment and education” of their families, friends, and neighbors on the benefits of a brief life in America. Many were able to return home with considerable funds saved with which they were then able to either purchase additional land for themselves on which they then built their own homes. More importantly, these returning “birds of passage” brought with them new ideas of freedom.

---

and democracy with which they intentionally or not, contributed to the growing political unrest in their homeland during the turbulent opening decades of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{52}

Emigration was further promoted by a variety of European and American business interests seeking to cash in on this most recent economic opportunity—the migration of millions and millions of people. Among these various interests, the emerging global transportation industry played a significant role in maintaining the popular image of America. Trans-Atlantic ocean lines, steamship owners, and rail operators, both in Europe and America, all competed for their share in the migrant gold rush. Collectively they distributed massive amounts of printed materials throughout European cities attempting to lure migrants from the east and expedite their westward progression. Books, pamphlets, and assorted print materials made their way from European port cities into the interior of southeastern Europe and eventually into the rural hinterlands of the Balkans. These accounts not only promoted the quality and affordability of their services, but also more importantly actively promoted the opportunities that awaited the migrants abroad. In 1891, working on behalf of a British agency, Thomas Cook distributed pamphlets extolling the virtues of life and endless opportunities afforded in the American industrial cities of Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul. Cook also supported efforts by America’s land speculators and rail industries

distributing a pamphlet entitled, “Homesteads for All” that guaranteed easy access to cheap and abundant lands in the American west.\(^5^3\)

Quickly, the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary realized that the issue of migration as well as the potentially negative impact of those returning from abroad demanded a response. “American Fever” swept across the Austro-Hungarian Slav inhabited lands, depopulating “entire regions, first by a few, then hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands.”\(^5^4\) As emigration accelerated local writers critical of their government’s social, economic, and political policies bemoaned the loss stating, “Our strength and youth lie beyond the sea.”\(^5^5\) Millions fled central and southeastern Europe for America in response to Austro-Hungarian government’s failure to address their specific economic, social, and political concerns.\(^5^6\)

The South Slavs of Austria-Hungary hoped against all odds that during their American sojourn conditions would improved for their families, friends, and countrymen that they left behind in the Balkans. Most South Slavs left their homeland with the intention of remaining long enough to save enough money to address the economic difficulties they previously endured back home. Ultimately, the subjectivity of their

\(^5^3\) Kraut, *The Huddled Masses*, 15.

\(^5^4\) Colaković, *Yugoslav Migrations to America*, 38. Despite the obviously profound influence that the first immigrants had by maintaining communication with their families back home, they were not the first to spark the idea of America as a land of opportunity. Croatian and Slovenian Catholic missionaries arrived as early as the late seventeenth century in Spanish controlled North America.

\(^5^5\) Prpić, *South Slavic Immigration in America*, 80.

experience in America and the unrelenting economic and political struggle that continued in southeastern Europe resulted with most never leaving the United States.\textsuperscript{57}

**South Slavic Immigration to Chicago**

In 1890, only three percent of the immigrant population in the United States was from southeastern Europe, approximately 290,000 of 9,200,000 immigrants. However, this rapidly changed as between 1899 and 1923, approximately 1.4 million South Slavs immigrated. The vast majority began their adventure in New York City while substantially smaller numbers arrived via the ports of Galveston or New Orleans. Between 1892 and 1914, the vast majority of southern and eastern Europeans were processed through Ellis Island at a rate of approximately 20,000 immigrants a day.\textsuperscript{58}

The metropolitan area of New York served as the central point of departure for most South Slavs before heading off to seek their fortunes elsewhere. While some found employment within the industrialized cities of the eastern seaboard, most headed to the Midwest, where the preponderance of coal mines, steel mills, and rail construction in allowed for a steady income. Thousands of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs joined the handful of Slavs that had already settled throughout the region. The development of the steel industry in Chicago and the burgeoning industrial corridor extending from the southeast corner of the city along the lakefront into northwest Indiana attracted a significant South Slavic population. In addition, Chicago’s diversified economy allowed it to surpass all others as the city with the single largest South Slavic population in the

\textsuperscript{57} Cizmić, “Yugoslav Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Movement, 1880-1920, 177-179.

early twentieth century, boasting a population numbering between forty and sixty thousand South Slavic inhabitants.\(^{59}\)

Most of the South Slavs were farmers and unskilled workers that found employment in the steel and iron industries, smelting plants, mines, lumberyards, construction sites, railroads, and stockyards, as well as the myriad of subsidiary related employment that sprouted up around each industrial neighborhood. The city’s infamous stockyards and tanneries by far offered the most opportunities for the to gain employment.\(^{60}\) They arrived in Chicago sharing only a common tongue and settled throughout the city in the most marginalized and dilapidated neighborhoods adjacent to the various industries that employed them.\(^{61}\) Most settled alongside fellow South Slavs from the same region or with those that shared the same ethno-religious tradition. In most cases, these traditional local and regional attachments allowed the Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, and other South Slavs of Chicago to create relatively homogenous and unified communities. However, some of these transplanted loyalties simply reproduced the historical divisions and tensions that each contended with back home in the Balkans.

---


\(^{61}\) Despite their common linguistic ties, the Croats, Slovenes, Bosnians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Bulgarians, and Macedonians arrived in early twentieth-century Chicago with little to no shared past. They emigrated from five separate, political unrelated states. As some historians noted “The Yugoslavs have four religions, two alphabets, and four historic divisions which have striven for centuries to promote their individuality as nations.” Maurice R. Davie, "Immigrants from Axis-Conquered Countries" in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 223, Minority Peoples in a Nation at War (Sept. 1942), 114-122, accessed August 25, 2010, http://www.jstore.org/stable/1023794.
The Slovenes from the Carniola region were the first South Slavs to arrive in Chicago. As early as 1873, Slovenian immigrants established colonies of considerable size in Cleveland, Ohio and Joliet, Illinois. With Joliet as their initial base in the state, their numbers steadily grew and spread northeast into Chicago. Although the majority of Slovene immigrants settled in Joliet and in South Chicago, they established sizable colonies in the Pilsen neighborhood along Cermak Road and in Pullman District where they lived alongside other European Slavic groups. Although the first to arrive in the city, the Slovenes comprised the second largest group of South Slavic immigrants having been surpassed by their fellow Austro-Slavs, the Croats.

The Slovenes established a variety of social, cultural, religious, and political institutions to combat the discrimination they encountered from more established immigrant groups. These structures also served to create solidarity among the diaspora by reinforcing traditional ethnic ties. However, unlike the Croats who divided along regional lines, the Slovene community in Chicago split ideologically between those affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church and those aligned to the freethinker and socialist movement. This divide became one of the more significant factors in the

---

62 Maria Prisland, “The Slovenians, Most Recent American Immigrants,” The Wisconsin Magazine of History, Vol. 33, No. 3 (March 1950), 269. Men such as Jovica Gorše and Jovica Stonić arrived in the city of Big Shoulders in 1847 and 1853, respectively. Gorše acquired a considerable fortune as a land speculator in the West Loop neighborhood, while Stonić served in the Civil War, earning the rank of lieutenant. Names have been changed back to their Slavic spelling from John Gorshe and John Stonich as they appear in the source.

63 Ibid., 269.
development of South-Slavism (Jugoslavism) among the Chicago diaspora, supporting the creation of a multinational South Slav state within the Balkans.64

The Roman Catholic faction of the Chicago Slovene population were based out of St. Stephen’s Parish founded in Pilsen in 1898 and St. George’s, founded in 1903, in South Chicago. The Freethinkers operated out of a community center on Lawndale Road, a few blocks from St. Stephen’s Parish and other Catholic organizations affiliated with the church. These two groups passionately fought each other for control of the Slovene diaspora through rival newspapers such as Glas Naroda, Proleterac, and Glasnik as well as sports teams, and cultural groups such as singing societies and dramatic acting troupes. They also sponsored two rival benevolent associations, the Catholic Kranjsko Slovenska Katoliska Jednota and the Freethinker’s Slovenska Narodna Podporna Jednota during the first decade of the twentieth century.65 The conflict between the two groups raged throughout the next twenty years, reaching its highest and most contentious phase during the negotiations concerning the formation of the unified South Slavic state in the aftermath of World War I.

The second group to arrive but by far the most numerous of the South Slavic peoples in Chicago were the Croatians from the Austrian-controlled regions of Banovina, Slavonia, Dalmatia, and Bosnia, first established their colonies throughout the South Loop. Most obtained employment in the city’s stockyards, manufacturing factories, building trades, and rail industries. By the start of the twentieth century, the colony grew

64 M.S. Stanoyevich, Jugoslavs in the United States of America (New York: Jugoslav Section of America's Making, Inc. 1921), 16.

large enough enabling them to split and form several distinct Croatian neighborhoods affiliated with their own Roman Catholic parish. The parishes and their respective colonies organized according to established regional identities from back home that served to divide the Croat diaspora geographically.\textsuperscript{66}

The Croats from the Dalmatian region eventually settled around Armour Square on the Chicago’s near southwest side. By 1912, with a local population numbering near 5,000, they gathered their resources to purchase a church and rectory building near Wentworth Avenue on 15\textsuperscript{th} Street from German Protestants displaced from the neighborhood by the overwhelming numbers of southeastern Europeans that settled the area. On December 5, 1912, under the leadership of Father Leo Medić, the Croatian community of Armour Square consecrated the St. Jerome Croatian Catholic Church—the first in the city.\textsuperscript{67} Another group of Croatians centered around the burgeoning Bohemian neighborhood of Pilsen developed in along similar lines, consecrating the Holy Trinity Croatian Catholic Church near 18\textsuperscript{th} Street and Throop Avenue. The final group of Croat immigrants settled near the Calumet Park neighborhood on Chicago’s far southeast side.

The Croatian immigrants of Chicago also divided themselves geographically along socioeconomic lines. Where the first three Croatian colonies in Armour Square, Pilsen, and Calumet Park neighborhoods consisted primarily of uneducated peasants working as industrial laborers in the city, the more financially successful and educated Croatian


immigrants gravitated towards one another to avoid life in the more run-down working-class areas of the city. These middle-class Croats settled among other better off and more established immigrant groups in the Englewood and Ogden Park neighborhoods on the city’s southwest side. There, near the emerging bustling businesses center on 63rd and Halsted, the Croatian community of Englewood lived distinctly separate lives from their fellow countrymen scattered throughout the rundown working-class neighborhoods of the Chicago.68

The Serbs were the last South Slavic groups to immigrate en masse to the United States. Some Serbs emigrated alongside other South Slavs from various regions of Austro-Hungarian Empire between 1880 and 1890. However, significant numbers of Serb immigrants from historically Serbian lands outside the Dual Monarchy only arrived in the opening decades of the twentieth century.69 Much like their Croatian and Slovenian predecessors, the first wave of Serb immigrants to Chicago consisted of impoverished and uneducated peasants who left their homes in search of better economic opportunities in America. The first Serb immigrants to arrive in the city hailed from the rural regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—Lika, Cordun, Slavonia, Carniola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Vojvodina—where they scratched out a meager existence as subsistence farmers. They settled in small ethnic clusters in the poorest neighborhoods of the city. Their first colony was located on the northern edge of Chicago along Clybourn Street. Another community developed in the heart of the industrial town of South


69 These Serbs arrived from the Kingdoms of Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria, as well as Ottoman controlled regions of Kosova and Sandjak.
Chicago adjacent to the Carnegie Steel Company near Green Bay Avenue. The majority of these Serbs worked in the city’s steel mills and settled near the South Side Calumet region.

Although mostly peasants, the Serbian immigrant population in Chicago also included a significant number of educated professionals from the various urban centers throughout the Balkans. Composed mainly of middle-class professionals, this educated group of Serbs established a colony in Wicker Park where they played fundamental role in the establishment of the Serbian community in Chicago. In 1905, the Wicker Park Serbs founded the Holy Resurrection Serbian Orthodox Church on Schiller Street. The church served as the cultural center from which this educated elite minority attempted to direct the development of the entire Serbian population throughout the city. The church even briefly served as the seat of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North America, making Chicago and its Serb colony one of the more prominent players in Serbian-American affairs during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

However, like their Slovene and Croatian counterparts, the Serbs were not immune to internal divisions transplanted from the old world to the new within their own community. The disparity between the working-class and middle-class Serbs increased tensions and animosity between the two groups. In a similar fashion to political events

---


playing out back in their homeland, the middle-class intelligentsia felt it was their responsibility to unite the all Serbs with in the city and initially they were successful. Holy Resurrection Church and the Wicker Park Serbs maintained their dominance of the Chicago Serb population until the founding of St. Archangel Michael in 1927 by the city’s Southeast Side working-class Serbs. The church quickly became the rallying point for all lower-income Serbs opposed to the heavy-handed management of their Wicker Park counterparts creating a rift within the community that indefinitely remained.\textsuperscript{72}

\textbf{Employment & Working Conditions}

By the start of the twentieth century, the South Slavs and their fellow “new immigrants” became the primary source of labor throughout most of the industrialized America. Their sheer volume allowed them to swell the ranks of the working-class throughout the urban industrial centers of the east coast, Midwest and Great Lakes regions of the nation. The overabundance of a cheap and seemingly sources of labor gave the United States a considerable advantage over its European and competitors.\textsuperscript{73} Approximately forty percent of the entire Yugoslav population in the United States during the early twentieth century was employed in mining and heavy industries despite the predominance of their collective rural agricultural peasant past.\textsuperscript{74} Throughout the various heavy industries dotting the Great Lake region, workers suffered equally in horrible conditions. The South Slavs typically were employed in factories where they


\textsuperscript{73} Kraut, \textit{The Huddled Masses}, 86, 87.

\textsuperscript{74} Roucek, \textit{The Yugoslavs in America}, 605.
toiled for twelve to sixteen hours a day where “unventilated shops, inadequate exhaust systems, and improper safety equipment” were the norm. South Slavs were typically relegated to the lowest paid positions within large industries and small business due to their high levels of illiteracy, their lack of knowledge of English, and their marginal mechanical skills. All of which were the consequence of large numbers of agricultural peasants migrating abroad to fuel the engines of industrialization.

In Chicago, the steel and meat packing industries offered the most opportunities to the new urban workers. The largest percent of South Slavs in the Chicago region found steady employment within the steel industry. Despite steady employment and decent wages, estimated in 1912 as 16.7 cents an hour, the South Slavs experienced extremely demanding working conditions that were both "dangerous and physically exhausting." Mill workers found themselves devoted to twelve-hour days, seven days a week, year round with the additional twenty four hour "swing shift" rotating every two weeks. Some South Slavs found themselves evening working thirty-six hour shifts on priority projects. In addition to the brutal hours, the internal environment of the mills was just as precarious as many South Slavic laborers fell victim to ongoing bouts of tuberculosis and pneumonia. Combined, low wages and poor working conditions contributed to a

75 Kraut, The Huddled Masses, 87.


77 Davie, "Immigrants from Axis-Conquered Countries," 121.

relatively low standard of living. Despite this fact, most South Slavs were unwilling to give up their position within the industry.\textsuperscript{79} Once gainfully employed, the South Slavs tended to hunker down rather than look for more ideal labor. In their minds, the security of a good paying job outweighed the undesirable tasks they were required to perform.\textsuperscript{80}

Despite consistent work, laborers in the steel industry barely made enough money on which to subsist. Improved technologies in the industries led to continually depressed wages. In addition, between 1907 and 1910, accidents in many plants were as high as twenty-five percent resulting in injury or death.\textsuperscript{81} Responding to his father and brother’s deaths in industrial accidents, Gabro Karabin, a second-generation Croat wrote, "We are, in the light of general impression, just another type of laboring foreigner... fit only as industrial fuel."\textsuperscript{82} Such an environment spurred many to write home warning of the dire conditions where many of their fellow Slavs were unable to make a living wage, and that the work was extremely difficult and may not be suited for other member of the family. These conditions contributed to approximately forty-four percent of all southeastern Europeans returning home for every hundred that arrived between 1908 and 1910 of those employed in the steel industry.\textsuperscript{83}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{79} Mohl and Betten, "Ethnic Adjustment in the Industrial City,” 361-376.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Bodnar, “Immigration and Modernization,” 55.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Radnička Straža, February 6, 1908. Vol. 1; No. 4. The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
\item \textsuperscript{82} Gabro Karabin Quoted in Gutman, "Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919", 586.
\item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 554.
\end{itemize}
Adding the high rate of industrial accidents was the discriminatory practices of native foremen and superintendents whose vehement dislike of their “Hunky” and “Slav” laborers placed regularly in harms way. Their overall lack of concern for the safety of the South Slavs alongside the existing and reprehensible working conditions—long hours, poor sanitation, malfunctioning equipment, improper tools, inadequate lighting and ventilation—contributed to the regularity of industrial accidents on a daily basis.  

### Assimilation and Ethnic Maintenance

In the decades preceding World War I, many Americans observed that the South Slavs were slow to integrate into mainstream society in comparison to other immigrants arriving from southeastern Europe. The South Slavs tended to revert to their traditional affiliations of family and church rather than turning outward to new modern society. Despite the impact of modernization, urbanization and industrialization coupled with living in a foreign-land, many South Slavs chose not to assimilate in American culture but rather to maintain most of their traditional structures associated with their lives in the Balkans. Traditional South Slavic culture characterized by extended kinship ties, reciprocity, interdependence, and multigenerational familial relations within the home conflicted with twentieth-century industrial American norms, which stressed


85 Chicago Daily Tribune, May 28, 1912. Quote taken from Dr. David Evans discussing the displacement of German immigrant stock by the Slavs whose inability to adapt American customs created a potential health risk to the entire city.


87 Bodnar, "Immigration and Modernization,” 44-71.
independence, individualism and self-realization. In large part, their retreat into traditional social institutions was a reaction to the extreme isolation and alienation that their migration caused. In addition, local nativist sentiment emerged both within the work place as well as throughout the city, forcing the South Slavs to interact within relatively “narrow circles of acquaintances and countrymen.”

Another factor that contributed to the relatively slow rate of assimilation was that many South Slav immigrants viewed their stay as temporary. The fact that many were intent on returning home, coupled with high levels of illiteracy and the inability of a significant portion of South Slavs to speak English led to extremely low rates of naturalization in comparison to other contemporary immigrant groups. In 1910, approximately thirty percent of all South Slavs became naturalized citizens. By 1921, this number increased to nearly sixty-five percent despite the high rate of return among the South Slavs. For them, they were merely sojourners whose time in America was solely intended to work, save money, and then return home to improve their own position back in their native land. This view of America as a temporary experience allowed the South Slavs to engage in more physically demanding jobs and persevere intolerable working conditions. For them, returning home was foremost in their minds. However,

---


90 Approximately fifteen percent of all South Slavs were illiterate while over ten percent had little to no English-speaking skills. See Davie, "Immigrants from Axis-Conquered Countries," 121.


with time, as conditions both in America and back home in the Balkans changed, many South Slavs were forced to reassess their approach to life in America.

Ethnic maintenance and pre-migratory patterns of behavior among the South Slavs were also positively reinforced by industrial society in the United States. Their lives in working-class environments, albeit in urban areas, mirrored many of the conditions of their previously rural-agricultural lives where the primacy of family, church and communalism played equally important roles. They contend that the realities of early twentieth century urban industrial life "necessitated a conservative, collectivist approach to life" similar to that which they experienced as peasants. Instead, modern industrial life combined with their pre-modern agrarian patterns to create their experience.  

Although traditional values and structures persisted, the South Slavs were influenced and affected by their modern, urban, industrial surroundings. Although males retained their authority in the households, their wives and daughters took on expanded roles and responsibilities both inside and outside the home—a trend unique to their lives in America. Slavs also embraced home-ownership to offset the precarious nature of working-class life in early twentieth century America. The lack of occupational mobility required multiple members of the family to be employed as homeownership gave them some sense of security. This also spurred the wide spread support for fraternal unions evinced among the South Slavs of Chicago. As early as 1910, Croat immigrants founded the First Croatian Building and Loan Association in Chicago to facilitate home ownership.  

---

93 Bodnar, “Immigration and Modernization,” 45.

94 Ibid., 45, 49.
Assimilation and Americanization efforts were most often supported by various South Slavic groups looking to better their own position within both the South Slav community and the larger American community to which they belonged. However, these campaigns were buffeted by the South Slavic colonies throughout the city where ethnic communities were created by choice to ease the pain of adjustment to life in urban, industrial America. Only after a certain period of adjustment, did immigrant offspring move beyond the familiar confines of the ethnic community and engage other immigrants as well as those who already considered themselves American.\footnote{Prisland, \textit{From Slovenia}, 5.}

Family relationships remained prominent among the South Slavic immigrant community in Chicago where patriarchal hierarchies remained constant and children were expected to contribute to the well-being of the family. Some argued that the South Slavs were merely attempting to recreate the \textit{zadruga}, the traditional social structure of pre-industrial Balkan society. The \textit{zadruga}, "a communal joint family" living with a single home or multiple attached homes under the leadership of the eldest male family member continued well into the 1920s throughout the Balkans. Once in America, the South Slavs maintained one of the highest rates of homes containing extended families throughout the industrial towns and cities of the American Midwest. This trend continued in Chicago where extended families would share several rooms or apartments within a single building throughout Chicago's working-class neighborhoods. Over thirty-four percent of Serbian and Croat families lived under such conditions compared to only twenty percent among other groups within the period of new immigration.\footnote{Bodnar, "Immigration and Modernization," 44-71.}
Alongside their obligations to their families, the various ethnic associations and neighborhood organizations also reinforced these conservative working-class values. The emergence of a working-class consciousness was complimentary to their traditional European set of values and aided greatly in the development and identification of emergent national identity. Rather than competing with ethnic identity and the emerging national consciousness among the South Slavs, working-class identity complimented the emergent national identities and actively reinforced them. The South Slavs found common appeal to identifying themselves as working-class and Yugoslav. In fact, working-class and socialist organization quickly emerged as the most vocal supporters of South Slavism at home and abroad. South Slavs were quick to rally around their collective working-class experience void of social and economic mobility in America.97

Among South Slavs, the family was considered a collective endeavor whose success depended on the contributions of all family members, young and old. Reciprocal relations were strongly reinforced as many South Slavs recreated the traditional Zadruga in American urban cities.98 Second generation South Slavs inherited much of their parents’ conservative nature. Although literate to a degree, few viewed education as important to their lives in America as most began their careers as laborers earlier than their contemporaries, typically around the age of fourteen. For them, the ability to obtain a better paying job than their fathers was their ultimate goal. Many saw a position in the steel mills of Chicago—typically one of the highest paying among the cities various industries—as the ideal position. Like their fathers before them, once gainfully employed

97 Bodnar, "Immigration and Modernization," 60.

98 Simić, "Ageing in the United States and Yugoslavia," 53-64.
they were suspect at changing jobs in fear of losing what little economic security they enjoyed.  

Similar to all other immigrant groups, the second generation of South Slavs attempted to distance themselves from their fathers and mothers' traditional concerns. Despite this fact, traditional structures reinforced intergenerational and reciprocal relations throughout the family. Concerns over the loss of culture between second generations South Slavs led to increased efforts by various clubs, societies and organizations to sponsor "lectures on art, literature and history of native countries."  

Conclusion

The South Slavic immigration between 1880 and 1924 resulted from a confluence of factors within their Balkan homeland and abroad. Part of a larger wave of regional, continental, and global migration, most South Slavs willingly departed from their homeland due to economic and political concerns. Upon their arrival in the United States, they confronted new working conditions that came into conflict with traditional social, cultural, and political structures. Growing labor and socialist organizations directly competed with traditional political associations and religious institutions transplanted from Europe into the American colonies.  

---


101 Colaković, Yugoslav Migrations to America, 20-21. Political problems within the Dual monarchy and economic conditions were the primary causes for migration from the Balkans into the United States. Religion was not a factor until later periods, such as the post-World War II era and during the
labor capitalist forces inadvertently strengthened transnational nationalist development as particular South Slavic groups utilized existing socialist-labor models to organize their own diaspora communities and effect change back home.\textsuperscript{102} Despite much of the anti-immigrant sentiment directed against the South Slavs, many of the early immigrant groups such as the Irish and German workers that they displaced as unskilled labor were second or third generation and had obtained enough experience to move up to higher paying and less menial jobs within the various industries.\textsuperscript{103} As the South Slavs came into direct conflict with older, more established immigrant groups entrenched within the cities industrial economy, they turned to various fraternal organizations, benevolent associations, and churches as a means to preserve the precarious position that they achieved in the city and to organize the diaspora to affect change back home.

The South Slavs of Chicago quickly came together in response to their new environment. The experience of living and working in industrial America reinforced their tentative national identities, rallying around a unified working-class consciousness complimentary to the emerging ideology of South Slav unification or Jugoslavism. For many of the South Slavs, life in America allowed for a broader perspective and greater understanding of events back home. Their physical distance allowed them to actively

\textsuperscript{102} Radnička Straža, February 6, 1908, Volume 1, No. 4, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota. The paper called for a meeting to be held on Sunday, February 4, 1908 at 9am to discuss worker’s issues, unemployment, and joining the Socialist Party of Chicago. Organized by the Committee of the Croatian Workingman’s Union for Education and Politics, the meeting was held at the “great hall” in the home of Franjo Mladić at 587 Center Street, advocating that the Croats band together to “finish the fight” started by the Socialist Party of Chicago on behalf of workingmen’s grievances.

\textsuperscript{103} Colaković, Yugoslav Migrations to America, 20-21.
engage in the transnational political debate concerning the future of their homeland in
a meaningful way unavailable to their fellow South Slavs whom remained in the Balkans.
Suddenly, the ideology of Jugoslavism served to unify the working class in America as it
continued to be a rallying cry for the national liberation of the South Slavs still under
Austro-Hungarian control. More importantly, Jugoslavism created the transnational link
[America] was only temporary for us; a place where we would work hard, save our money, and return to Slovenia in a better financial state than when we left. There we could buy a home or a farm and resume a life that was started years before. But that's not the way it happened, because the majority of us stayed in America, bought homes, raised our families here, and before we knew it, we were calling the United States our home and Slovenia the 'old' country.1

The realization that America was now their home painfully resonated among the South Slavic immigrants living throughout the nation during the early twentieth century. This proved particularly true for the masses of working-aged men whose emigration abroad was financially supported by their families with the sole intent to earn enough money to improve the quality of life for their families and then to return home. However, these young Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes understood the shifting nature of life in America. The possibility of returning diminished over time resulting from their own financial limitations as well as the precarious economic and political conditions that remained back home in the Balkans.2 At first, many South Slavs felt helpless confronting


2 Marie Prisland, *From Slovenia--to America, Recollections and Collections* (Chicago: SWUA, 1968), 5; Louis Adamic, *From Many Lands* (New York: Harper, 1940), 57-57; Krinka Vidakovi Petrov,
these conditions and the difficulties surrounding their new lives in industrial Chicago.

Planinsek, like her contemporary émigrés, was amazed at the ability of her fellow
countrymen and women to “suffer the hardships” required surviving in America.
However, most felt that they had no choice, as “[t]here was no future for us back home,
only her in America.” 3  Constrained by the competing demands to earn enough money to
send to their families while in Europe keeping enough to maintain their meager existence,
the South Slavs of Chicago realized that they alone were liable for the quality of their
lives and that that their community held the key to acquiring all that was lacking.
Collectively, they confronted hardships head-on, employing the tools of their recent past
to fashion a new home in America. 4

The absence of family members and friends forced disparate groups of South
Slavs to discover they were not alone. They turned to their fellow countrymen to create a
more familiar environment for themselves. Modeled on the various national and
educational organizations that emerged during the nineteenth century throughout the
Balkans, the South Slavs of Chicago embraced the creation of an incredible variety of
fraternal, benevolent, and working-class organizations throughout the city, predicated on
mutual aid to facilitate their successful adaption to their new home. Central to this effort
was an extensive program of education to mobilize the South Slavs of Chicago.

Following the precedent set by the matica’s and čitonica’s of the various ethno-national

3 Odorizzi, Footsteps Through Time, 33-34.

4 Radnik, Vol. VIII, No. 95, August 8, 1925 in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey
Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
and religious organizations founded throughout the Balkans during the nineteenth century, the South Slavs of Chicago heavily employed the use of newspapers, literature, and educational programs to unite their colonies throughout the city. And much in same way as their predecessors back in the Balkans, these groups—distinguished by opposing national, political, and religious affiliations—competed for the loyalties and support of the Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes, at times uniting the disparate colonies of the city. However, they equally pitted themselves against one another, contributing to a lingering resentment that ultimately kept them divided throughout the interwar period and drove them asunder by the collapse of the Yugoslav Kingdom during the World War II.  

Despite this fact, the South Slavs created a collective albeit plastic identity during the first three decades of the twentieth century that remained contested throughout the twentieth century.

In spite of their differences, the South Slavs of Chicago quickly adhered to the truism of “strength in numbers.” They banded together in a variety of shapes and sizes, organizing both complimentary and confrontational groups throughout the city. Initially most of these groups coalesced along local, regional, religious, or political lines and avoided primarily national or socioeconomic divisions. Regardless of their composition, collectively these groups not only directed the fate of the South Slavic diaspora of Chicago, but also more importantly contributed to the direction of discourse and the flow of events unfolding back in their distant and beloved homeland. At first, the South Slavs

---

5 The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was renamed the Kingdom of Jugoslavia by official decree of King Alexander on January 6, 1929 following a period of intense political turmoil and national mobilization throughout Jugoslavia during the 1920s. At this time, the King suspended parliament, voided the “Vidovdan Constitution” of 1921, outlawed all nationalist parties and redrew the territorial borders of the various states within Jugoslavia.
of Chicago united under the auspices of their mutual working-class status rather than any deeply shared sense of a collective past. Historically, the various Croat, Serb, and Slovene immigrants in the city had very limited contact and interaction that fostered the development of either national or Pan-Slavic identification. Most South Slavs immigrants were unaware of their unique or shared history and culture.\(^6\) The only commonality among them was the experience of their collective dislocation from a predominately rural and peasant laborer past of their homeland into an urban industrial present in a foreign country.

As they made their way through streets and neighborhoods of Chicago, the South Slavs turned towards “improvised rather than inherited” communities in the form of the fraternal societies, benevolent associations, working-class organizations, and socialist groups. These groups were further complimented by a host of subsidiary associations in the form of athletic associations, junior orders, dramatic and singing societies, and various pan-South Slavic social, cultural, and political organizations. Although rooted in the cultural and institutional traditions of the nineteenth-century Balkan nationalists, the organizations created by the South Slavs were a specific response to the new and alienating realities of life in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century industrial Chicago.\(^7\) Through the education of the city’s South Slavic population primarily using print media and political mobilization that these fraternal groups, benevolent associations,

---


socialist groups, and working-class organizations, facilitated the successful adaptation of the immigrant colonies to modern American life. More importantly, these nascent South Slavic organizations succeeded in the ‘new world’ where their ‘old world’ predecessors failed by cultivating a more intense particularistic nationalism among the various Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes, while simultaneously contributing to a greater awareness and appreciation of their collective South Slavic, or rather Jugoslav identity.

**Ethnic Organizations**

> Be not afraid, brother. You will efface the black and doleful memories, which accompanied you from the old country. Do not care what happened abroad. A new many you are now, the Atlantic voyage changed you, from today alone count what you know and what you do.

South Slavic immigrants in Chicago heavily relied on ethnic organizations in the form of fraternal and benevolent associations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. After their arrival in America, increased isolation and alienation magnified by the absence of family or friends, many Croat, Serb, and Slovene immigrants sought refuge within the ranks of the incredible diversity of working-class, national, and religious organizations that proliferated throughout the city. The growing popularity of these groups resulted from their successful substitution of traditional communal structures and organizations built upon collectivism and mutual assistance found in the

---


10 *Jugoslavia*, Vol. XII, No. 9, September 16, 1922, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
rural culture common to South Slavic people of the Balkans. In America, these
groups allowed the South Slavs to adjust to their new lives, fulfilling institutional needs
lacking in the newly established colonies and to create socio-cultural networks and ties
that bound their traditional family lives.\textsuperscript{11}

Prior to their arrival in America, the communal-joint family or \textit{zadruga} was the
primary socio-cultural institution in South Slavic peasant life throughout the eighteenth
and nineteenth centuries. The typical pre-industrial \textit{zadruga} comprised as many as fifty
to seventy individuals from four to six related families that lived together in either a
single home or multiple attached homes. These South Slavic family clans maintained
large holdings of land under the leadership of the eldest male family member.\textsuperscript{12} The
primacy of this patriarchal hierarchy slowly declined over the nineteenth century as
industrialization made its way into the Balkans. Despite this fact, the \textit{zadruga} as an
institution survived well into the twentieth century in truncated forms, both in the
Balkans and throughout the South Slavic colonies of the United States.\textsuperscript{13}

In the absence of traditional social structure, a variety of ethnic organizations
offered the only support to the isolated South Slavic immigrants that arrived alone in the
United States. The extended kinship networks established by fraternal benevolent
associations in Chicago were not merely existing structures simply transplanted from the
old country. In fact, many of the men that formed these initial fraternal and benevolent
societies were from "varying socioeconomic backgrounds" and were unfamiliar with one

\textsuperscript{11} Bodnar, "Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations," 607.

\textsuperscript{12} Branko Mita Colaković, \textit{Yugoslav Migrations to America} (San Francisco: R&E Research

\textsuperscript{13} Joel M. Halpern and David Anderson, "The Zadruga, a Century of Change" \textit{Anthropologica, New
another. However, they quickly realized that they shared something.\textsuperscript{14} Fraternal societies, benevolent associations, and working-class organizations were created to meet the specific needs of the diaspora community as workers struggled with their alienation and marginalized status within American society. However, in addition to the traditional economic and social goals of these organizations—the focus of their traditional homeland precursors—the South Slavic émigré experience created urgency for the preservation of traditional culture and heritage more akin to the nationalist mobilization efforts of Vuk Karadić, Ljudvet Gaj, and Bishop Strossmayer—the founding fathers of the Serbo-Croatian language, linguistic nationalism, and Jugoslavism.\textsuperscript{15}

Over time, South Slav fraternal associations and benevolent groups developed uniquely in response to the working-class immigrant experience in America. Mutual assistance, benevolent societies, and fraternal organizations contributed much more than mere financial assistance to the South Slavs of Chicago. In fact, the economic benefit of many South Slavic fraternal and benevolent organizations was minimal at best as they tended to focus on other non-economic functions such as teaching religion, facilitating Americanization, and increasing awareness of ethnic identity, via English and South Slavic language classes. They also focused heavily on a variety of social and cultural programs that fostered increased national consciousness. Members benefited by obtaining practical advice as members shared their own experience with newcomers “green horns” on how to navigate the murky waters of urban industrial America. Collectively these organizations offered services ranging from insurance, burial service,

\textsuperscript{14} Bodnar, "Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations," 5-14.

\textsuperscript{15} Fraternal and benevolent organizations in the Balkans were typically associated with the urban, industrial workers in primarily Austro-Hungarian urban centers.
educational funds, as well as unemployment, illness, and death benefits. Some organizations even functioned as banks lending members money to buy homes or other necessities to succeed in America. Most importantly, the moral support they offered to their fellow South Slavs who were stricken by loneliness, isolation, and alienation.¹⁶

The earliest South Slavic ethnic organizations date back to 1857 in San Francisco. These groups grew exponentially and spread throughout the United States in response to industrial expansion and increased immigration from southern and eastern Europe. Typical to most immigrant groups of the period, the various ethnic lodges were organized along local, regional, and religious lines espousing a multitude of political loyalties and affiliations. In 1880, a group of Croatians organized the Austrian Benevolent Society later renamed the Croatian Benevolent Society as national tensions within the Habsburg Empire increased. On March 30, 1890, the first Croat language newspaper, Napredak (Progress) was published by Ante Škrivanić under the auspices of the regionally affiliated Slavonian Benevolent Society.

Between the founding of the first South Slavic benevolent society in 1857 and 1930, some 4,500 societies were organized throughout the United States. The most influential of these groups were Zajednica, the Croatian Federal Union of Pittsburgh, Jednota, the Slovene National Benefit Society of Chicago, the Slovene Catholic Society of Joliet, and the Serb National Federation of Pittsburgh. Collectively their ranks boasted over 200,000 national members with collective funds totaling nearly fifteen million dollars.¹⁷ The Croatian League of Illinois had over 153 separate lodges with over 11,000 members.


¹⁷ Roucek, “Yugoslavs in America,” 607.
members while the Slovene National Benefit Society of Chicago alone held a roster
of 35,000 active members by the end of World War I. Although all the rank-and-file
members of these groups were almost entirely working-class industrial laborers, the
leadership of these competing organizations was split among between those supporting
traditional ethnonational and religious affiliations with those advocating a socialist
working-class consciousness. This internal political and social division defined South
Slavic in Chicago throughout the twentieth century.

The Slovenes were first to arrive in substantial numbers in Chicago. As a group,
they quickly embraced the fraternal movement spreading throughout America during the
early decades of the twentieth century. However, they too were divided between those
advocating Slovene national identity through Catholicism and those supporting a
working-class socialist identity. The first fraternal organization established within the
Slovene colonies in the Chicago land area was the religiously affiliated Krajnsko
Slovensko Katolisk Jednota (Carniolian Slovenian Catholic Union) or KSKJ was founded
on April 2, 1894, in Joliet, Illinois. The KSKJ immediately became active among the
working-class Slovene communities of Chicago. Over the next two decades, membership
grew to over 17,000 and collected funds totaling over 600,000 dollars. By 1916, the
KSKJ opened its own print house in Chicago at 1951 West 22nd Street. That same year
it began publication of the largest Slovenian weekly newspaper, the Glasilo KSKJ. The
organization continued to grow throughout the interwar period despite the limited

---

18 M.S. Stanoyevich, “The Jugoslavs” in The Jugoslavs in the United States of America (New
York: Jugoslav Section of America’s Making, 1921), 21.
immigration during this time. By 1942, the Carnolian Slovenian Catholic Union had over 40,000 members and 182 local lodges nationwide.¹⁹

The close ties of the *Krajnsko Slovensko Katolisk Jednota* with the Catholic Church appealed to the Slovene immigrants’ traditional loyalties to family, church, and village. However, the lack of Slovenian speaking clergy coupled with the transition into urban industrial society encouraged many Slovene workers to look elsewhere within the community for support. Concerned with the religious affiliation of the KSKJ, a group of socialist-minded Slovenes established the *Slovenska Narodna Podporna Jednota* (Slovene National Benefit Society) or SNPJ in 1904, whose headquarters were located at 2657 South Lawndale Avenue on the near southwest side of Chicago. The organization gained popularity among the predominately industrial workers of the city. By 1916, the SNPJ had over 18,000 members with John Vogric as president and John Verdebar as secretary with funds estimated at $525,000.²⁰ The SNPJ quickly developed a national reach, extended charters and benefits to lodges throughout the country.²¹

In 1878, the Serbian émigré Ivan Vučetić founded the first Serbian fraternal organization in Chicago named *Obilić*, named after the medieval Serbian warrior, Miloš Obilić. Vučetić was a Serb from the city of Budva in Montenegro and was one of many South Slavs from the Boka Kotorska region along the Adriatic coast. Vučetić and his compatriots created *Obilić* as a cultural and educational club, similar in fashion to the maticas established earlier in the nineteenth century. In 1881, they transformed *Obilić*

---

¹⁹ Eleanor E. Ledbetter, *The Jugoslavs of Cleveland: With a Brief Sketch of their Historical and Political Backgrounds* (Cleveland: Cleveland Americanization Committee, 1918), 17.

²⁰ Ibid.

into a fraternal organization called *Prvo Crnogorsko Dobrotvorno Društvo (First Montenegrin Benevolent Society)* responding to changing conditions among the Serb colony in Chicago. In 1895, the organization once again changed its name to *Srpsko Jedinstvo (Serbian Unity)* to create a broader and more inclusive fraternal organization centered on Serbian national identity rather than a local regional organization dealing specifically with Serbs from the Boka Kotorska region.\(^{22}\) In 1899, the leadership of *Srpsko Jedinstvo* moved to consolidate all Serbian fraternal and benevolent associations in the United States. By 1903, under the leadership of Špiro Srentić and Vasa Dinić, the three largest Serb fraternal organizations in the United States—Serbian Unity in Chicago, *United Serbs* in New York, and Serbian Unity in Butte, Montana—merged and established the Chicago-based organization named the *Prvi Srpski Bratski Dobrotvorni Savez (First Serbian Fraternal Benevolent Federation)* or FSFBF.\(^{23}\) That same year, a rival fraternal organization founded by Serbs from the Krajina region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire established a more exclusive and religiously affiliated fraternal organization called the *Srpski Pravoslavni Savez Srbobran (Serbian Orthodox Society for Serbian Defense)* in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The rivalry between Chicago and Pittsburgh organizations continued throughout the first four decades of the twentieth century.\(^{24}\)

Despite the growing animosity between the two federal entities, South Slavic lodges in the Chicago—regardless of their affiliation—remained focused on improving

\(^{22}\) Memorial Book *Srpsko Jedinstvo* (1936), 14, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

\(^{23}\) Ibid.

the quality of life for their fellow Croat, Serb, and Slovene neighbors. The experience of Jovo Marić proved quite similar to his fellow South Slavs. Born in 1881 in the village of Trebinje, Herzegovina, Marić left his home and arrived in New York City in 1901. Unable to speak English and with "qualifications, experience or support," Marić set out for Chicago. Upon his arrival in the city, Jovo Marić was invited by his friend Ilija Arandelović to assist in the establishment of a new fraternal organization in Chicago. On October 25, 1901, they held a meeting in what they identified as the "Heart of Chicago" at 306 East Randolph Street. Alongside Aćim Lugonja from Herzegovina, Manojlo Jovanović and Milovan Ilić from Serbia, Marić was accepted as the twenty-fifth member of the lodge affiliated with the *Srbobran Federation* located in Pittsburgh. Despite their allegiance to the Pittsburgh federation, they pledged that their fraternity was founded to “aid and unite” all immigrant Serbs in Chicago.25

In 1899, *Balkan*, another prominent Serbian society was formed in the city. Initially it was aligned with the locally based Chicago *First Serbian Fraternal Benevolent Federation* (FSFBF) from its inception until 1905. However, growing dissent among members in response to political events in the Balkans led to the organization breaking away from the FSFBF of Chicago and joining the Pittsburgh-based federation. With over two hundred members, the society adopted a more appropriate name. Under the leadership of Nikola Grahovac, the members agreed to call the group, “King Petar I” to emphasize the support of Serb émigrés from Austria-Hungary living in America for the nascent Serbian Kingdom and the reestablishment of the first Serbian dynastic family, the

---

Karđordevićs. More importantly, the change marked a shift from traditionally religious and culturally affiliations to a more politically oriented identity. The shift from cultural to political identification accelerated as events back in the Balkans beckoned their emigrant sons and daughters.26

Numerous obstacles existed during the founding years of the group as they attempted to unify all of the South Slav fraternal associations in Chicago. In addition to the various national and religious orientations, intergroup rivalries within specific Croat, Serb, and Slovene groups’ fractured relations as loyalties were articulated along regional and local identities. This was especially acute for those within the Austro-Hungarian Empire where South Slavs lived for centuries in different provinces governed by different nationalities within the empire. This localism and regionalism prevented most efforts to create any form of Pan-Slavic, ethnonational, or supranational unity among the Slavs.27

Despite their differences, the Chicago and Pittsburgh societies spurred by transnational political events in Europe still sought any means to overcome their differences and unite all their members. Their collective goal was to become the largest Serb organization within the United States to lead the diaspora socially, culturally and politically. In July of 1904, the Serb Federation in Chicago and Pittsburgh boasted a combined membership of almost 4000 individuals from over eighty separate societies and associations. The Serb Federation of Chicago held its second annual convention and focused on how to overcome their differences with their brothers in Pittsburgh, which were primarily religious. The Pittsburgh federation was intimately linked with the


27 Ibid., 41.
Serbian orthodox church of Pittsburgh while the Serb Federation remained primarily secular to appeal to "Serbs of all faiths" not just orthodox Christians. However, the Serbs of Pittsburgh felt that their identity and religion as Serbs and Pravoslavi were the same. The issue of localism also affected the Church as the head of the Serb Church in Austria-Hungary was independent of the Serbian Patriarchate in Serbia proper.28

By 1905, a newly reinvigorated Obilić organization, unrelated to the founding members of the earlier namesake, emerged as one of the most active groups "propagating culture and education" among its members through a variety of concerts, performances and social dances. Although the societies primary focus was to aid its members "socially, morally and financially," it operated as a traditional benevolent insurance agency but created a unique niche in its focus on cultural programs and national awakening.29 As early as 1909, members of Obilić announced the creation of an annual ball to be held in Colonial Hall located at 1800 Center Avenue to celebrate Serbian and South Slavic culture. On December 28, 1909, the society sponsored the well-known South Slavic "Dramatic Club" to perform the popular play "The Montenegro Dream in America" at Colonial Hall located at 1800 Center Avenue. The play was well received throughout all of the South Slavic colonies of the city.30

Typical of most ethnic societies, Obilić was once again torn asunder by internal divisions. Since its inception until 1921, Obilić was organized under the larger Serb Federation, Sloga, within Chicago. This fate was not unique to the members of Obilić as


internal division ultimately consumed most South Slavic ethnic organizations during this time. Another organization to suffer a similar fate was the Society of St. George that divided over the issue of remaining an independent entity or being subsumed into a larger federation.\textsuperscript{31} These problems were exacerbated in part from the variety of local, regional, and ethnic affiliations present within the groups. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of some fraternal, benevolent association was the presence of other South Slavic national groups within the ranks of particularistic national organizations. Obilić among many other groups boasted the presence of a "large number of Croatian members" that proved that "Serbians and Croats can cooperate if good will and honest work prevail."\textsuperscript{32}

The initial migration of South Slavs consisted primarily of peasants and low-skilled laborers who created the earliest working-class fraternal and benevolent organizations throughout the city. The primary focus of these initial groups was the welfare of South Slavic immigrant workers in Chicago. The fundamental goal of which was to improve the quality of life. This orientation shifted as these earlier arrivals were joined by ever-increasing numbers of middle-class intellectuals and clergymen that assumed positions of leadership within the various organizations. This early cadre of leadership consisted of a variety of saloon owners, restaurateurs, and food wholesalers that supported "career-oriented" fraternalism. They promoted particularistic nationalism to unify their South Slavic neighborhoods in an effort to consolidate their control over all facets of immigrant life within Chicago. Most justified their actions by the fact that the rapidly growing


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
diaspora and its various cultural and ethnic concerns provided an incredible opportunity for South Slavic businessmen to profit. However, the majority of working-class Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes throughout Chicago became increasingly concerned with the success of South Slavic ethnic organizations under middle-class leadership. Over time, conflict between these groups increased as they openly vied for the right to represent the interests of their people both here in America as well as abroad. This rift was further exacerbated as nationalist political parties from the Balkans established branches in America among immigrant colonies that ultimately divided various fraternal and benevolent associations into oppositional "political groups."34

Divorcing life in Chicago from events back home proved difficult. Balkan politics were inextricably intertwined in the fabric South Slavic immigrant life in the city. The peasant drove arriving from Austro-Hungarian controlled lands was joined by a handful of influential political refugees fleeing oppression back home. In 1892, Nikola Polić, a former deputy in the Croatian Sabor (Diet) fled Hungarian political persecution for a safer life in America. That same year he arrived in Chicago and began publishing a vehemently anti-Hungarian political newspaper named Čikago (Chicago). Between 1892 and 1896, Polić’s newspaper emerged as the dominant voice of South Slavic political dissent abroad. Polić’s writings promoted nationalist integration within the American community in an effort to strengthen those very same claims back home. Despite the preponderance of Croatian nationalist and anti-Hungarian political rants and provocations, Polić also used the paper to extol the virtues of America. He encouraged

---


34 Radnik, Vol. VIII No. 95 August 8, 1925, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
his readers to embrace the “American way of life and its ideals” and to “learn English” and become active participants and citizens.\textsuperscript{35} This pluralistic approach to supporting South Slavic particularistic nationalisms abroad while embracing American citizenship spread throughout the ranks of South Slavic intelligentsia in the city. For the South Slavs these competing ideologies were not considered mutually exclusive, but rather complimentary and non-confrontational as they came to realize that one can become a good American as well as an aspiring Croat, Serb, or Slovene nationalist. In an effort to support this pluralistic vision, fraternal groups and the foreign-language press advocated on behalf of education and its relevance to the South Slavs of Chicago. Although their goals were at times at odds with one another, the leaders of these institutions and their numerous constituent entities moved to transform Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes into good Americans, and ultimately aspiring Jugoslavs.

**Educating the South Slavs**

Why do you not learn? Why do you not open your mouth and your eyes? Why do you stay alone, like a stranger along the sea, where anybody knows how to swim except you? Look around. Open your eyes, thousands of opportunities are here, why do you not seize one?\textsuperscript{36}

Despite their predominately rural origins and low literacy rates throughout the Balkans, the South Slavic immigrants to America exhibited relatively high rates of literacy. Within Croatia and Dalmatia territories under Austro-Hungarian control, approximately 50 percent of Croatian men and 38 percent of Croatian women were literate. In Dalmatia, only 30 percent of the population was literate. However,

\textsuperscript{35} Quote appears in Prpić, *The Yugoslav Immigrants in America*, 77-78.

\textsuperscript{36} *Ujednujeno Srbstvo*, Vol. 16, No. 21, October 31, 1922 in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
immigrants arriving in America in 1900 from both regions registered literacy rates at 63 percent. The South Slavic leadership in the city quickly realized the opportunity with that presented to them. Following the example of their predecessors—the Croat, Serb, and Slovene groups that advocated nationalist agitation—the leadership in Chicago focused on the transnational benefits derived from supporting the education of the South Slavic immigrant population abroad. Within the United States, progressivism pursued the education of all young people regardless of origin while back home in the Balkans efforts at educational reform throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Serbia were well underway since the 1880s.37

Fraternal and benevolent associations understood that by educating their members they gained legitimacy both within their ethnic enclaves as well as among Americans. Education paved the way for citizenship and naturalization, which in turn strengthened the role of their respective organizations in the eyes of specific South Slavic immigrant communities and the general American society. Here the idea of American citizenship and nationalist aspirations for the homeland gained the greatest support as both Americanization efforts and particularistic national awareness contributed to the overall support of ethnic organizations for formal education. As many fraternal, benevolent, and working-class organizations emerged as supporters of various nationalistic and pan-Slavic movements, the education of their constituent populations served to strengthen their respective movements support among the masses. The focus on education and literacy remained constant from the days of Vuk Karadzic and Ljudvet Gaj in the early

nineteenth century to the various South Slavic ethnic organizations of Chicago in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{38}

The importance of education pervaded the entirety of the South Slavic community in Chicago. Some immigrants viewed the benefits of literacy and the ability to speak functional English. They were well aware of the hardships associated with life and social mobility in urban industrial America. For them, becoming educated simply ensured that their "investment of time, expense, and emotion" as émigrés was wisely spent as the ability to read and speak English greatly increased their opportunities within Chicago. Organizations throughout the city offered literacy proficiency courses in both English and Serbo-Croatian for the old and young alike. In November 1908, working-class and socialist groups came together and sponsored the creation of the Chicago Workers' Educational and Political Lodge focused on improving adult literacy both in the various South Slavic dialects as well as in English. For them their goal was that their fellow workers “will no longer be blind in spite of their good eyesight.”\textsuperscript{39} For them, educating the proletariat was simply the best way of ensuring the improvement of their condition within industrial America. In 1914, fraternal working-class organizations funded a variety of educational efforts for both working adults as well as for the young, although support for the fund was initially predicated on helping younger Jugoslavs avoid the hardships of life.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{38} Smith, "Immigrant Social Aspirations and American Education, 1880-1930," 525, 537.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Radnička Straža}, Jan. 12, 1909.

\textsuperscript{40} "Jugoslav Student's Fund" \textit{Radnička Obrana}, Vol. 7, No. 46 (October 28, 1914).
The working-class organizations were not the only South Slavic institutions to support such efforts. Prior to the outbreak of World War I, Croatian-born John Jurin arrived in Chicago as a skilled albeit illiterate coppersmith's apprentice. Upon his arrival, he was taken in by a handful of members of the Croatian dramatic club in the city where he was taught to read and write in his native tongue. Then they set themselves to the task of teaching him English as well. Eventually, he served as editor of the Croatian drama clubs self-published papers in the 1930s. Such personal transformation remained central to the mission of most ethnic organizations and institutions created by the South Slavs. Although disrupted by political divisions and dissent at various points in time, the ideology of education, citizenship and nationalist mobilization remained a pillar of South Slavic ethnic organizations in Chicago throughout the twentieth century.

Education was of absolute importance to the South Slavic ethnic institutions and organizations within city throughout the decade. In 1929, the threat of Chicago-wide school closings rallied the South Slavic leadership within the city to action. In June of that year, various publishers and editors of ethnic newspapers and journals gathered at the Hamilton Club to discuss the school closings’ impact on the South Slavic community. John R. Palandech, the Serbian publisher and owner of Palandech Press—the largest in the city—brought together representatives of the Croat, Serb, and Slovene colonies. Collectively, they shared the belief that it was their responsibility to ensure the strength and health of the South Slav community through the continual education of both the young and old members of their colonies. For them, even the education of second generation South Slavs in English was important as they viewed their youth as "the most

---

important branch of social life, the education of the children who represent the future generation.\textsuperscript{42}

His fellow South Slavs shared Palandech’s belief in the importance of the future generation. As fraternal and working-class organizations continued to grow while economic benefits to members remained relatively small, these groups turned their attention to the younger members of their communities. They quickly realized that to ensure the survival of their various organizations, they were required to increase their efforts to promote and protect traditional ethnic culture as much as they were with educating their people to be good citizens. As fraternal groups transitioned into nationally affiliated organizations that became more entrenched in American society, they also took on a greater role, both directly and indirectly, within their respective communities. More surprisingly, their efforts at ethnic preservation and maintenance inadvertently contributed to increased assimilation of South Slavs by incorporating various American activities to appeal to second and third generation South Slavic children. Between 1900 and 1930, ethnic organizations developed a wide variety of sports programs and teams, created numerous singing and dramatic groups, and even opened English speaking chapters to appeal to the younger generations of South Slavs within the city. While doing so, they also affirmed their commitment to preserve their traditional culture of their parents’ homeland.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{42} Vita Nuova (Monthly) June 7, 1929, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

\textsuperscript{43} Bodnar, "Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations," 10-11.
Athletic Associations

Sports, music, choral, and dramatic groups quickly emerged as some of the most popular fraternal supported activities within the city. Soon, tens of thousands of Croat, Serb, and Slovene children and young adults became active members as fraternalism spread beyond the first generation of immigrants to their offspring. The Serbian National Federation (SNF) in Chicago had numerous lodges dedicated to a variety of athletic activities—soccer, baseball, basketball, and gymnastics. Through these activities, many lodge members’ encountered particularistic nationalism for the first time. Many were exposed to the idea of a shared pan-Slavic identity. As the South Slavic community grew, more established colonies turned their attention to the needs of the younger members of their respective communities. The sponsorship variety athletic societies, typically called sokols (falcon) spread throughout the city in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

In 1908, the Chicago Croat colony formed a gymnastic society, Sokol (Falcon) to promote patriotism among the diaspora throughout the United States. These groups rapidly spread throughout the nation and were directly linked to the activities of the gymnastic society movement in Croatia, and effectively created a unified national movement geared towards South Slav unification. The goals of the sokols were to "promote strength in bodies" to combat working in unhealthy conditions and environments. In addition, these associations embraced the cause of American citizenship as they promoted democracy and unity among the various classes to develop a healthy community and to improve their respective members intellect. The sokols

---

44 Prpić The Yugoslavs of America, 92.
offered this through regular physical activities, lectures, courses, meetings, and discussions. They also had a more specific Americanizing affect to develop "strong character, punctuality, patience, seriousness."\textsuperscript{45}

By the second decade of the twentieth century, the sokol movement gained popularity throughout the city, region, and nation’s growing Slavic population. As the movement grew, the idea of pan-Slavism spread alongside it. Chicago’s great diversity of Slavic communities adhered to the trend and embraced the creation of hundreds of ethnic-affiliated sokols throughout the city. On May 5, 1912, the Serbian Sokol sponsored an open-air event in Chicago, showcasing the region’s great depth and variety of sokols. The event was purposefully held on the eve of the Balkan War, as the Serbs did not hide their attempts to foster pan-Slavic and pan-Balkan sentiment to support their efforts against the Ottoman Empire. In attendance was a dizzying array of local and regional Slavic organizations that increasingly embraced the idea of Pan-Slavism. Sokols were not the only societies in attendance. Alongside such groups as the Serbian Sokol from Gary, Coko Sokol Chicago, Bohemian Sokol, Coko Sokol Bohemian Oak Park, Croatian Sokol, and the La Speranta Rumanian Gymnastic Society were more politically-oriented organizations such as Srpsko Jedinstvo, Obilić, Slavia, and the Serbian-American Benevolent Society. Also in attendance were such cultural groups as the Srpsko Jamuraško Društvo (Serbian String Society) Srladya, Srpsko Pjevacko Drushtvo (Serbian

\textsuperscript{45} Dr. Paja Radosavlevich, Soko Sokol, May 1, 1912, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
Many of these groups returned on June 22-23, 1912 as the Chicago Slavic colony held its first Sokol Convention in the United States to celebrate the movement and show their overwhelming support for pan-Slavic unity, both in Chicago and back home in Europe. As the Balkan War continued into the following year, the Slavic colonies throughout the city continued to support the call for support by their Serbian brothers. In February 1913, an “All-Slavs” sokol meeting was held at the Bohemian Hall on 43rd and Winchester by request of the Bohemian Sokol Organization of Chicago. Virtually all South Slav sokols within the city attended the meeting to demonstrate their undying support for Slavic unity.

The sokol movement embraced pluralistic vision of South Slavic and American identity that contributed to the assimilation of Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes into the larger society. By doing so, these organizations fostered a complicated understanding of identity among the Jugoslavs in Chicago. On one hand, they actively promoted an appreciation for their respective Croat, Serb, and Slovene cultural identities, while recognizing the common Jugoslav as well as Slavic culture they shared with each other and the various Polish, Czech, Slovak, and Bulgarian colonies throughout the city. Although the sokols reinforced traditional cultural affiliations, they additionally contributed to the assimilation of South Slavs, and Slavs in general, as they tried to find a place for themselves within the larger context of the American working-class. The South Slavic sokols clearly supported the process of Americanization throughout their colonies.

---

46 Sokol Vol. 2, no 6, (June 1, 1912), in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

47 Ibid.

in Chicago as they viewed sports as a means to achieve recognition and acceptance from the American native population.49

South Slavic Cultural Organizations

While many South Slavs fully supported the citywide efforts of the *sokols* and their Americanizing effects, numerous local leaders lamented the loss of their traditional language and culture. They were alarmed at the high rate of assimilation among the second and third generation of Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes throughout the city. In an effort to reverse this trend, the South Slavs once again turned to the cultural and literary traditions of their recent past with the steadfast belief that only through the lyrics, music, and the written word of their ancestors were capable of remaining true to themselves and their past. Dragutin Popović, a founding member of the Serbian Singing Society Branko Radičević established in 1906 held that, "The life of our people in America is full of trouble. The immigrants' only refuge from grief is his songs, but he cannot be singing all the time."50

During the nineteenth century, supporters of the various national programs turned to their medieval traditions to awaken their brothers and sisters to the cries of their respective nations. Now in Chicago, the South Slavs once again turned to their past to create their own world within the city. The creation of singing societies gave the South Slav immigrant community continuity with their ancestors. For many, traditional music and songs were part of South Slavic culture since time immemorial. "Ever since

---


50 Popovich D. "The Immigrants Troubles" *Scrapbook of D. Popovich*, March 2, 1929, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
migrating down to the Balkan Peninsula, [our] ancestors started their very life with
singing.” 51 Whether in the Balkans or now in Chicago, the South Slavs sang to celebrate
their faith, the passage into life or death, and their national aspirations for their long
dormant nations. Members of the Serbian Singing Society Karadorde (S.S.S Karadorde)
held that “Even during the period of five centuries of life in slavery under the Turkish
yoke, the song never left the lips of those brave Southern Slavs, who, even in moments of
tragedy, found singing their only consolation.” 52 The South Slavs of Chicago organized a
myriad of singing and dancing groups. In addition, S.S.S Karadorde founded numerous	amburitza bands to preserve South Slavic traditions, language, Orthodox liturgy, and
“respect and love for America.” 53

Traditional folk music served a greater role throughout the South Slavic immigrant
community as a means of historical and national education. Typically, these various
societies sang songs celebrating the exploits of ancient Serbian, Croatian and Slovene
warriors fighting for their various kings and queens of old. Played on the traditional
gusla instrument, the South Slavs were collectively brought to tears, lamenting the loss of
their once great kingdoms as they listened to the “sad, heart-rending tales of bravery

51 “Memorial Book Serbian Singing Society, Karageorge," Dec. 9, 1934, in The Chicago Foreign
Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center,
University of Minnesota.

52 Ibid.

53 Quote as appears in Bodnar, "Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations: Their Historical
Development, Character, and Significance," 11. The tamburitza, alongside the gusla (a single stringed
instrument that accompanied the citation of Serbian epic poetry) remained one of the most popular stringed
instruments in the Balkans. The tamburitza consisted of various numbers of strings and is closely related to
the Greek bouzouki.
For those most recent immigrants, these songs made their transition to life in Chicago easier, bringing them together with other members of their respective Croat, Serb, and Slovene communities that until that moment were complete strangers. Typically the members of these various musical and singing societies hailed from lands occupied by the Austro-Hungarian empire and for the Serbs in particular, the songs of past Serbian glory solidified a nascent national pride and aspiration that they were previously unaware of. Their arrival in Chicago and interaction with Serbs from other parts of the Balkans illuminated their shared a national past, present and future.

During the early twentieth century, numerous choirs were organized alongside the various instrumental musical groups throughout Chicago. In 1902, the Croatian community founded one of the city’s first singing societies named Zora (dawn). The members of Zora closely coordinated their efforts with the Federation of Croatian Singing Clubs based in Zagreb, the Croatian capital, which provided logistical and occasionally financial assistance. By 1909, Zora became an official member of the Zagreb federation, which played an instrumental role in establishing Zora as the preeminent Croat singing society in the city, both culturally and politically. Regardless of their origins, most Chicago-based South Slavic choral groups at the time supported their peoples various nationalist agendas.

Zora was no different as it actively pursued the unification of all Croatian singing societies in Chicago. They argued that once they achieved this goal, then it was a short step to do the same throughout the United States. The directors of Zora and their

---

counterparts in Zagreb were all too well aware of the important role that singing societies "play in our Jugoslav life" in the American colonies. In a similar fashion to their Serb and Slovene counterparts in the city, the members of Zora strove for and contributed to the growing awareness of the Croatian national struggle. Even though they focused solely on Croat unity, their efforts established a model and support for Jugoslav national unification. They argued that to “organize in America will help all.”

Another choral group albeit Serbian with similar social and political goals was the Serbian Singing Society Branko Radivčević (SSSBR). The society was formed on November 14, 1906, on the near North Side within Chicago's first Serbian immigrant colony. Unlike their Croatian counterpart Zora that was primarily a secular group supporting nationalist mobilization, the BRSS embraced a Serbian nationalist agenda centered on their Eastern Orthodox faith. Local Serbian Priests Simo Pровидало, Маноилю Јовановић, Георге Милойевић, and Петар Стиячић collectively sponsored the group. Although primarily affiliated with the Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church, Holy Resurrection of Chicago, located at 1905 Fowler Street in the city's Wicker Park neighborhood, the priests and founders of the society soon represented various Serb colonies from throughout the city. The support of the church significantly contributed to the establishment of the SSSBR as one of the most respected Serbian national organizations within the city. Together, the church and the singing society openly supported the Serb national cause as they articulated their primary mission to “promote Serbian songs, produce theatrical acts from Serbian life and do other cultural work among

---

the Serbs here” in Chicago.\textsuperscript{56} By their own admission, the members of the SSSBR “participated in many national and religious movements” sending money and volunteers to fight and support their Serbian countrymen during the Balkan Wars.\textsuperscript{57} These first two singing groups, \textit{Zora} and the SSSBR, mutually grew in popularity via their performances at each other's national halls and at venues belonging to the plethora of other South Slavic organizations throughout Chicago.\textsuperscript{58} Their success spurred the slow but steady growth of other South Slavic singing groups well into the 1930s. In 1915, the Croatian community based in the Lawndale neighborhood of the city founded the Croatian singing club \textit{Mladost} (youth). Although they followed in the traditions of other Croatian local organizations, they strictly employed the model and mission set forth by \textit{Zora}. Like their predecessors, \textit{Mladost} supported Croatian nationalism and the integration of all Croats, regardless of political, regional, or religious differences to unify as one people and in one nation. Ilija Šmicklas, one of their founding members and secretary of the group stated that \textit{Mladost} was “dedicated to the national progress and education of our people. In that

\textsuperscript{56} “Souvenir Book of the Serbian Singing Society Branko Radichevich,” (Memorial Book, 1934), in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid. Another Serbian choir group formed in South Chicago in 1927 under the leadership of Đorđe Lalić. Sloboda was affiliated with the St. Michael's Serbian Orthodox Church on the city's south side. “History of the Serbian Choir, Sloboda Memorial Book, 1934, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{United Serbians} Vol. XXXI, No. 19, October 8, 1936, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
spirit we have a right to the cooperation and support of all Croats and their organizations.  

These singing societies were soon joined by a smaller number of affiliated and independent theatrical and dramatic groups that shared their integrationist goals. They believed that through culture unification of their respective peoples within the city was possible. One of the most prominent of these organizations was the Croatian theatrical association of _Zvijezda_ (Star) that was established in Chicago in 1913. From its inception, the group proclaimed that its creation was predicated on the sole intention to bring together various South Slavs regardless of political affiliations. The directors stated that they were not a “political but theatrical association” with the purpose of presenting native plays in the “Croatian tongue before the Croatian public” of Chicago. Despite their obvious particularistic orientation, the leaders of _Zvijezda_ believed that their appeal was broad enough to include all South Slavic groups in city. For them membership was not limited to any singular political or national party. In their minds, both were irrelevant to their mission.

The trend of culturally supported particularistic nationalist mobilization continued through the interwar years. Supporters advocating Pan-Slavism or “Jugoslavism”—the unification of Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes, eventually supplemented these efforts. In 1918, a group of Croat, Serb, and Slovene women from throughout the city gathered to form the ladies singing club _Jugoslavia_ in honor of the founding of the Kingdom of

---

59 _Hrvatska Zastava_ Vol. XII, No. 291, December 11, 1915, in _The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota_.

60 _Jugoslovenska Zastava_, Vol. XV, No. 281, June 2, 1918.
Serbs, Croats and Slovenes that same year. Although apolitical, the women of this truly unified South Slavic singing group served as an example of Jugoslav idealism. Not only did they perform the traditional songs of Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes alike, they also presented contemporary pieces celebrating the creation of their new nation and the end of their subjugation by foreign empires. The group remained active throughout the interwar period but eventually collapsed in the face of increased nationalist political tensions that emerged in the years prior to World War II.  

Not all South Slavic cultural groups embraced the cause of Jugoslavism. Some chose to simply respond to conditions concerning life in America in an attempt to alleviate the difficulties and pain endured by the Jugoslavs of Chicago. The Croatian singing group Hrvatska was founded on December 1, 1931, “[a]t the beginning of the hardest depression in America” simply because “life had become unbearable for all of us.” The members of Hrvatska lost their jobs one by one and helplessly watches as their life savings were lost as “banks closed their doors.” The group fell under the direction of acclaimed local professor and musician Ivan Horvat. The group dedicated itself to cultural activities and stated, “it will not mix in politics.” Despite its' professed political neutrality, Hrvatska followed in the tradition of other Croatian nationalist groups with the slogan of “With Culture to Liberty. God Grant it.” The group held rehearsals at eight o'clock on the last Friday of each month at the Howell Neighborhood House at

---

61 Novi Svijet, Vol. 6, No. 16 November 15, 1928.
63 Ibid.
64 Danica Hrvatska, No. 62, June 11, 1932.
1831 South Racine Avenue in the Pilsen neighborhood and gave its first concert on Sunday, August 26, 1932.\(^6^{5}\)

The difficulties surrounding life in America was not the only concern for the South Slavic community of Chicago. Since its inception in 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was racked by internal conflict between federalist oriented Croats and Slovenes and the centralist policies of the Serbian monarchy that now held political sway. As this struggle in Europe shifted from rhetorical battles to bloodshed—first on the parliament floor in 1928 and then the streets of Marseille in 1934—the South Slavs of Chicago sought their own resolution to their young country's woes. Not only to show support for their embryonic nation but more importantly to reconcile the relationship between their respective traditional national identities with the newly ascribed Jugoslav identity.

This struggle dominated Jugoslav cultural and political discourse in the Balkans and diaspora throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Despite their efforts, the question remained as to what it truly meant to be a Jugoslav. In response, the various Croat, Serb, and Slovene singing societies of Chicago rallied to support their young and troubled homeland and to confirm legitimacy of their emergent collective identity. Following the assassination of King Alexander of Jugoslavia in Marseille in 1934, the Jugoslavs of Chicago gathered for the first, “All-Slavic Singing Festival” held in the city. The festival intended to showcase the kinship of all Slavic groups represented in the "foreign land" of the United States. Dr. George Kolombatovich, the newly assigned Jugoslav consul in Chicago, reinforced the “necessity of closer cooperation in this country and in our

\(^6^{5}\) Novi Svijet, Vol. IX, No. 23, February 6, 1932, and Danica Hrvatska, No. 62, June 11, 1932.
fatherlands” for all of the Slavic peoples that had gained their independence following World War I. Adhering to the language of the times, he stated, “To the Slavs as the youngest race belongs the future of the world, who after the World War gained their national liberties, are able to succeed in every field of human enterprise if they act united in defense of the their sacred national rights, which had been denied them in various forms and manners through the many past centuries of subjugation by oppressive older nations.”

As the unrest continued back home in Jugoslavia, the South Slav community of Chicago rallied once again in support. On April 18, 1937, leaders of the city's predominant Croat, Serb, and Slovene cultural groups banned together and held a "Jugoslav Song Festival" at the Serbian Church at 1905 West Schiller. Members representing all of the South Slavic peoples from the city and from the hinterland regions attended coming together in one of the largest gatherings in the city. The presence of soloists from the Chicago Civic Opera increased interest and participation in the event far beyond the South Slavic community. The event marked the highpoint of South Slavic cooperation in Chicago during the 1930s. However, the resolve of the entire Jugoslav community in the city and throughout the United States was soon tested at the decades end as political turmoil once again came to the forefront back home in the Balkans.

66 “Memorial Book, First All-Slavic Singing Festival,” 1934, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

Junior Affiliates

Traditionally, South Slavic ethnic organizations were reserved for male membership. However, the growth of the Croat, Serb, and Slovene diaspora throughout Chicago created the need to incorporate women as well as children into their own affiliated orders. The South Slavic community believed that it must continue strengthening the traditional family structure would ensure survival in America. The heart of the South Slavs—the zadruga—could be preserved through the education of the youth. In addition to the various sokols, singing, and dramatic groups, South Slav fraternal associations turned to the creation of “junior orders” to appeal to the youngest members of their communities. Most of these groups followed the example of Srpsko Jedinstvo, which created a “junior order” of boys and girls ranging from age two to twenty-one years old. These groups met monthly and held their meetings in their respective native languages of Croat, Serb, and Slovene. They also gave their members incentive to promote their respective orders as they rewarded the children with a gold pin for recruiting new members.

The role of educating the next generation of South Slavs was of paramount importance. Junior orders held classes every Saturday where children learned to read and write in their mother tongues. These classes focused on “reading, writing and history” as well as learning their specific "national songs, games and Kolos (national dances)."68 They participated in plays and formal readings and recitations of traditional epic poetry with the goal of having a greater understanding and knowledge about their traditional

South Slavic culture. The junior orders were also active in sports playing baseball, basketball and competing in gymnastics. In addition, most of these youth affiliated organizations supported the pluralistic vision of their founding members and parent associations.

The goal of the Junior order... to outnumber the membership of the United Serb Society itself, to work loyally and conscientiously on behalf of the society, to preserve the ideals of their elders, to know the beautiful traditions and history of Jugoslavia, never to forget the mother tongue, to be good orthodox christians, to be loyal sons of Jugoslavia, and finally as young American citizens to respect and love their adopted Country, the United States and its great President, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Once again, the South Slavs easily reconciled these dual loyalties. They embraced both their traditional South Slavic nationalist loyalties in concert with requirements of life in America.

The South Slavic Foreign-Language Press

The impact of the numerous fraternal and cultural organizations that spread across the city was undeniable. However, the success of these variegated groups was unimaginable without the rise of South Slavic ethnic newspapers. The foreign-language press played a pivotal role in the national integration and mobilization of the South Slavic community as “A society without a newspaper is like a body without a head. A newspaper helps a society to expand... It binds the members... into one body.” Alongside fraternal organizations and the church, South Slavic ethnic newspapers offered the strongest means to achieve “natural expression” of nationalist ideals by fostering

---


70 Ibid.

community ties throughout the American South Slavic colonies. In addition, the foreign language press contributed to the community building effort as it preserved ties to traditional culture through language while keeping the South Slavs intimately linked to Balkans by regularly reporting on the political struggles of their homeland. By doing so, the South Slavic foreign language press became indispensable within the Chicago, bridging the gap between the old world and the new.  

The foreign-language press played crucial role in the acculturation of the Chicago South Slavic community as well. By discussing various social and cultural facets concerning life in America alongside the more popular issues of politics, economics and work-class life in the city, the South Slavs were educated on how best to adapt to their new environment. The focus on education of the colony was constant as a variety of South Slavic papers lamented their countrymen’s inability to reconcile the old world with the new. Many considered that the focus on traditional culture coupled with the lack of English-speaking skills prevented their success and hampered the possibility of South Slavic social mobility in America. The editors and publishers of the foreign-language press supported acculturation through education of Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes to be considered less foreign than their fellow immigrants throughout the city. 

The Croat, Serb, and Slovene foreign-language press in Chicago that emerged in the early twentieth century was based on the tradition of literary, linguistic, and political publications that exploded throughout the Balkans amidst the spread of romantic

---


73 *Ujednujeno Srbsko*, Vol. 16, No. 21, October 31, 1922. The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
nationalist ideologies during the nineteenth century. Both symbolic and informational, ethnic newspapers served to unify the various South Slav groups, both as separate nations of Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes, but also as Jugoslavs. The first southern and eastern European foreign-language papers in the United States were founded during the middle of the nineteenth century by immigrants that fled the Revolutions of 1848 that spread throughout European lands. Reasons behind the popular support for the various South Slavic language papers varied considerably. For some, the printing of papers in their native tongue was a political victory and an exercise in free speech as back home under the Austrian-Hungarian regime, many political and culture publications were barred from print. For many immigrants, the foreign-language press was the only means of staying in touch with events back home. More importantly, the South Slavic papers served as the literary front line of a proxy war fought within Chicago for control and leadership of the South Slavic colonies of the city and the right to represent the interests of the diaspora back home in the Balkans.

The breadth and scope of South Slavic press in Chicago during the early twentieth century was impressive to say the least. All sorts of people representing the entire spectrum of social, class, religious, geographical, and political differences among the city’s South Slavs published papers. Some papers were organized by the South Slavic

---


77 *Radnik*, January 24, 1928.
clergy in Chicago as a means of "edification" while others were affiliated with socialist organizations geared towards unifying the South Slav working class in the city. Others were organs of various cultural singing, dramatic societies or even women's groups active in the city. Each organization supported their own newspapers as a means of communicating and rallying their members towards action. “The Serb Union published the *Srbobran (Serb Defender)*, the Croat Union published *Zajendičar (Unity)*, and the Slovene Union, *Prosveta*. Membership grew rapidly up to World War I and then began to decline significantly in the 1920s and 1930s. Some argue that benevolent societies were unable to compete with the emerging labor movement and the development of working class consciousness that aided in assimilating the South Slavs during this time.

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of the foreign-language press was throughout the United States was the short life span that most newspapers experienced. Between 1884 and 1920, approximately 3,444 foreign-language papers came into existence throughout the United States. During the same period, approximately 3,186 of these papers were discontinued. Most scholars identified the years surrounding the First World War as the peak period of foreign-language press activity with some 1350 journals and papers printed in thirty-six languages.

The initial southern and eastern European foreign-language press papers were established during the later half of the nineteenth century by immigrants that fled to the

---


80 Zubrcki, "The Role of the Foreign-Language Press in Migrant Integration," 76.
United States following the Revolutions of 1848.\footnote{Zubrki, "The Role of the Foreign-Language Press in Migrant Integration," 76.} The first South Slavic paper published in the city was Nikola Polić’s political newspaper Čikago (Chicago), which emerged as the dominant voice among the city’s diaspora between 1892 and 1896. Polić, a former deputy in the Croatian Sabor (Diet), fled Hungarian political persecution in 1892 for a safer life in America. That same year he arrived in Chicago and began publishing a vehemently anti-Hungarian Polić’s writings promoted nationalist integration within the American community in an effort to strengthen those very same claims back home. Despite the preponderance of Croatian nationalist anti-Hungarian political rants and provocations, Polić also used the paper to extol the virtues of America. He encouraged his readers to embrace the “American way of life and its ideals” and to “learn English” and become active participants and citizens.\footnote{Quote appears in Prpić, The Yugoslav Immigrants in America, 77-78.}

The next South Slavic paper to emerge was the Hrvatska Zora (Croatian Dawn), which was published the same year as Polić’s groundbreaking newspaper by Janko Kovačević, a Croatian political exile that arrived during the 1880s. Kovačević, a former officer in the Austro-Hungarian army, came to America and enlisted in the last great Sioux War of 1890 before moving to Chicago later that year. Kovačević witnessed first the founding of the burgeoning Croat colonies during the 1890s in Pilsen near 18th Street and Racine, followed by a second group that settled along the Archer Avenue corridor. Kovačević was intimately linked with both as the Hrvatska Zora supported the founding of two separate fraternal organizations in each of the neighborhoods. In 1891, the predominately middle-class South Slavs that settled along Archer Avenue formed the
intellectual organization Strossmayer, while their working-class counterparts formed the lodge, *Crveni Kriz* (*Red Cross*). Over time, as the influx of immigrants of peasant and working-class origins increased, Strossmayer transformed itself from an intellectual society into a benevolent association where it became more active with the concerns of the working-class immigrants that were arriving.\(^8^3\)

Prior to the publication of *Hravatska Zora* and Čikago, the limited number of South Slavs living in the city—primarily in the loop neighborhood—identified themselves as Austrians. This sparse colony of South Slavs opened over a dozen saloons along State, Clark and Wabash Avenue, which were eventually closed as economic hardships forced them out of the area during the Panic of 1893. After closing their doors, most were moved into the existing Croat neighborhoods in Pilsen and Archer were they discovered thriving colonies. Together, these groups laid the foundation for the rapidly growing Croat community as they assisted in the establishment of several organizations, societies, and a Croat “national home” in the city.\(^8^4\) By the early 1900s as both colonies grew, they became increasingly involved in Croatian and Jugoslav national mobilization in Chicago and abroad by expanding on the model established by Polić and Kovačević’s newspapers.

One of the most important South Slavic papers to emerge during this period was *Danica* (*The Morning Star*), which was conceived in Chicago but published in Pittsburgh. *Danica* was the creation of Croatian nationalist Zdravko Muzina, who arrived in Pittsburg from the Chicago in the fall of 1893. While in Chicago, Muzina worked as an

---

\(^8^3\) *Hrvati u Americi*, 1st Volume, 1927, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

\(^8^4\) Ibid.
editor and writer for Nikola Polić’s newspaper, Čikago, establishing a solid reputation as a writer, editor, and supporter of the Croatian cause in America. However, the relationship between the two became increasingly strained over Polić’s editorial policy, which Muzina felt was personally and professionally stifling. Feeling that his opportunities in Chicago were limited by his relationship with Polić, Muzina headed for the city Pittsburgh, whose Croat colony was similar in scope to that of Chicago.85

The paper was funded and published by the Starčević, a local benevolent group named after the popular Croatian nationalist politician, Ante Starčević. The impact of Danica was felt immediately as its presence resonated throughout the Midwest region. As the paper gained in popularity, it served as the catalyst urging and supporting the unification of all Croats within the city and across the nation. In September of 1894, the Danica editors called delegates representing fourteen separate Croatian societies into action. They arrived from across the North America and formed the Croatian Union of the United States. The paper became the official voice of the group, which established its headquarters Allegheny City, Pennsylvania due to its central location between Chicago and New York. The Union quickly grew as lodges spread throughout the industrialized midwestern cities. By the group transformed into the Croatian Fraternal Union (CFU), establishing the foundation of the pluralist vision embraced by future South Slavic ethnic organizations. The CFU promoted its mission via Danica to assist “its sick members, to pay for the burials of its members, and to ‘teach and spread enlightenment and culture…among the Croatian people,’ but also to promote brotherly love and good

citizenship. The lodges were usually named after various saints of the Catholic Church or given patriotic names.\textsuperscript{86}

Nationalist oriented newspapers were the first but not only foreign-language newspapers to influence South Slavic life in Chicago and throughout the Midwest. The publication of \textit{Radnička Straža} in 1907 by the Croatian-Serb Milan Glumac (1884-1914) was a watershed moment for the working-class socialist movement in Chicago. Arguably one of the most influential newspapers within the city was the socialist-oriented \textit{Radnička Straža}, which first appeared on December 25, 1907, to serve the Croatian working-class laborers in Chicago. Although South Slavic socialist organizations began to appear as early as 1903 in Pittsburgh, they failed to gain ground in Chicago until the arrival of Glumac and the \textit{Radnička Straža}.\textsuperscript{87} The paper began through the assistance of the Yugoslav Socialist Club in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, which was “the only socialist club in America at the time.” The JSC of Allegheny contacted the Social Democratic Party of Croatia and Slovenia, appealing for moral, financial and physical assistance in obtaining an editor that could bring the paper to light. The idea for a Croatian socialist paper was hatched during a JSC meeting on October 13, 1907.\textsuperscript{88}

The story of Milan Glumac was typical of many of the first South Slavic newspaper publishers that set up shop in Chicago. Glumac left Croatia at the start of the century to avoid mandatory military service in the Austro-Hungarian army to take up the socialist


cause and liberation of the Croatian people from abroad. The rapid growth of the South Slav diaspora and an open position of editor in Chicago offered Glumac the ideal opportunity to take on the cause of socialist liberation. In addition, Chicago provided the ideal location, situated at the hub of America's emerging industrial nation and the central city between established South Slavic colonies in Milwaukee, Joliet, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh. Shortly after his arrival, Glumac and his fellow members of the Jugoslav Socialist Club felt that Chicago was to become the "heart of Socialism and proletarian revolution in America."

Glumac was also attracted to Chicago because of the presence of socialist comrades from Zagreb that lived and were now active in labor organization within the city. The timing for Chicago's first South Slav socialist newspaper was ideal as 1907 witnessed the start of a devastating industrial depression that left thousands of South Slavs unemployed. The depression spurred the return migration of thousands and thousands of South Slavs back home in an effort to escape the disappointment and hardship of the “promised land, Dollarica” (America). As protests by unemployed workers emerged in response to the depression, the police increased their efforts to stop all activities of “anarchists” and “revolutionaries” intent on shutting down the paper. Despite their efforts, Glumac’s paper continued to print and emerged as the dominant voice of working-class and socialist South Slavs in the city for the next three decades. In February of 1909, the

---


90 Ibid.
Glumac opened the first Croatian owned and operated printing press in the United States funded by working-class South Slavs in Chicago and in Allegheny Pennsylvania.  

Regardless of their particular orientation and affiliations, the South Slavic foreign-language press typically was divided into five separate sections: news in America, international, news from Europe, social cultural life within the diaspora, and editorials. The amount of news covered back home typically varied with the level of nationalist association of each paper. By 1916 in addition to the Radnička Straža, the city’s South Slavs published the Croatian newspapers Jugoslovenska Zastava, Balkanski Sviyet, the Serbian Ujedinjeno Srpsvo, Srpska Zadzbina, Jugoslavia and the Slovenian papers Prosveta, Amerikanski Slovenec, Glas Svobode, Glasilo KSKJ, Proleterac, and Cas. The papers were published by the top South Slavic printing houses in the Pilsen neighborhood and ranged from daily to weekly to monthly publication. In 1921, there were approximately 16 Croatian, 12 Slovene and 8 Serbian papers published nationally, with such names as Jugoslovenski Svijet, Zajednicar, Istina, Narodni List, Jednistro, Jugoslavia, Zanje, Jugoslovenski Glasnik, Hrvatska, and Hrvatski Glasnik, which exhibited the broad swath of particularistic and universal national, political and supranational orientations and appeals.

The rapid growth of the South Slavic foreign-language press came to a grinding halt in response to immigration restriction acts of 1921 and 1924. For many of the South Slavs in the city, events back home seemed far less relevant as the creation of the

---


92 Zubrcki, “The Role of the Foreign-Language Press in Migrant Integration,” 76.

93 Stanoyevich, Jugoslavs in the United States of America, 24.
Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, for the time appeared to fulfill the majority of the Chicago’s Jugoslavs desire for national self-determination. Now, the South Slavic foreign-press turned its attention to the needs of its colonies in an attempt to help their people better adapt to life in Chicago. By focusing on the specific social and cultural facets of life in America and a concern for local political, economic, and work related issues, the foreign-language press increased its role in aiding the assimilation and acculturation of the community. Many newspapers shifted their focus towards education to help their fellow countrymen succeed in America and increase the possibility of social mobility.94

Conclusion

America—my new home—was my real home. My roots were firmly transplanted from the 'old country' to the 'new country'. My heart was now at peace.95

The experience of life in Chicago allowed South Slavic immigrants to embrace both a pluralistic and particular nationalistic view of their world. They applied this understanding mutually to their daily lives in the United States and the political aspirations they held for their homeland in the Balkans. Although obviously divergent, in the minds of the South Slavs, pluralism and particularistic nationalism were completely reconcilable. The Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes that now called Chicago their home accept this because they found themselves with one foot firmly rooted in two separate and unique political realities. Ultimately, this ideological patchwork allowed the Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes of Chicago to embrace a newly emerging Jugoslav political identity

94 Ujednujeno Srbstvo, Vol. 16, No. 21, October 31, 1922, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota

95 Odorizzi, Footsteps Through Time, 30.
without forsaking their independent aspirations for self-determination. For them, these identities were not mutually exclusive but rather complimentary.\textsuperscript{96}

South Slavic fraternal organizations throughout the city, espoused this multi-pluralistic vision via the pages of the foreign-language press and through the endless activities of their various social, cultural, and athletic affiliates. What remained constant was their advocacy of educating the South Slavic community to promote pluralism and nationalism both here in America and back home in the Balkans. Ultimately, the South Slavs resolved the two in that their national aspirations of independence were solely intended for their homeland and any expression of national identity was simply a matter of ethnic pride and tradition. While in America, they were quite content being just another group of the immigrant mass that was early twentieth century America.\textsuperscript{97}

By the 1930s, South Slavic ethnic organizations found themselves in a unique position within the city of Chicago as immigration ground to a halt in response to restrictive legislation and the onset of the economic depression. Regardless of the role they played during the first three decades of the twentieth century, fraternal societies did not emerge as the solely dominant institutions within the South Slavic community in the city. Their primacy diminished by dwindling numbers of incoming South Slavs and the rise of second and third-generation Americanized Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes signaled the decline and disappearance of once prominent fraternal organizations within the city. Despite this fact, some of the larger national organizations continued to be successful and

\textsuperscript{96} “Memorial Book Srpsko Jedinstvo,” 1936 p. 26, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

made significant gains in the decades following World War II as immigration from Jugoslavia altered the make-up of the American South Slavic population by introducing more nationally and religiously oriented individuals into the States. In an effort to remain relevant, many foundering fraternal offered honorary memberships to South Slavs back home as well as more notable Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes both in America and abroad.

Despite the dominant role of fraternal ethnic organizations during the first quarter of the twentieth century, they were not the only institutions that safeguarded the South Slavic community in Chicago. In fact, a significant percentage of the city's South Slavs never joined fraternal or benevolent associations, let alone gave their financial support via membership dues or through purchasing each organization's newspaper. Instead, many turned to their families, their church, their neighbors, and coworkers within their community throughout this period to alleviate the difficulties of urban industrial lives. And despite the opposition that frequently defined their relationship with the city’s various fraternal groups, these more traditional institutions contributed both knowingly and not the establishment of a pluralistic multicultural Jugoslav identity. Although for many South Slavs, the church and the family remained the primary “guardians” of traditional culture that allowed for successful ethnic maintenance, they did in turn contribute to the education and Americanization of the South Slavic community. Perhaps the most important and enduring legacy of fraternal organizations was the fact that

---


99 Memorial Book of the Serbian Society Srpsko Jedinstvo, 1936, p. 12, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
because of their active role in immigrant life during the period of "new immigration" that the South Slavs came to realize that their success and survival in modern industrial America could only be secured through large unified organizations rather than through smaller disparate groups. This was a lesson that many applied in support of Jugoslavia during World War I. However, they soon discovered that those that guided these larger efforts did not necessarily see eye to eye with those that followed.\textsuperscript{100}

South Slavic social and cultural institutions evolved in response to the deprivation and marginalization of Croats, Serbs and Slovenes within Chicago. Each turned to the their respective nineteenth-century Balkan predecessors as a guide to unify the disparate South Slav communities in Chicago. This process of unification first came in the form of nationalist projects to rally the Croat, Serb, and Slovene immigrants around their respective nationalist and collective Jugoslav aspirations. Despite the positive role that various South Slavic institutions played, some felt overwhelmed by competing demands that pulled the South Slavs in too many directions and prevented many from attaining financial stability. “Our people have contributed to causes of all sorts, to the church, to education, benevolent enterprises, until they have nothing left. They have scattered money right and left by handfuls and sackfuls.”\textsuperscript{101}

However, many South Slavs were eager to establish the traditional structures and institutions that made village life back home more tolerable as it was from the villages that the foundations of a variety of cooperative structures existed. These were quickly

\textsuperscript{100} Bodnar, "Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations," 12-13.

\textsuperscript{101} Dusan Popovich, "The Immigrants'Troubles" Scrapbook of D. Popovich, March 2, 1929, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
modified and adapted to their new environment in America. In time, as they became more settled, South Slavs turned to the needs of their local neighborhoods to recreate some semblance of traditional rural communal life. By doing so, they sought to become good American citizens as well as good Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, and even Jugoslavs.

---


104 “Memorial Book Srpsko Jedinstvo, 1936,” 26 in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
CHAPTER FOUR
SOCIALISTS, SAINTS & SALOONS:
OPPOSITIONAL IDENTITIES, ASSIMILATION & ETHNIC MAINTENANCE
IN SOUTH SLAVIC CHICAGO, 1900-1930

The life of our people in America is full of trouble. The immigrants' only refuge from grief is his songs, but he cannot be singing all the time. He has not yet decided what he wants to do, whether to return to the old country or to stay here. If he goes back—not so good. If he stays here—not so good either. Our peoples eyes are always turned in the direction where the old country lies. That country was the immigrants birth-place, and it reared him. No power exists which can make him forget the old country. On the other hand, America, gives him his bread and butter and offers him an opportunity to become independent. So though his feet are on American soil, his heart and soul are still over there.¹

On May 20, 1903, Count Khun Hedervary, the ban (governor) of Croatia, dispatched four Hungarian army regiments to the streets of the Zagreb—the Croatian capital. The troops were sent as a preemptive strike to quell a possible nationalist uprising. The soldiers confronted thousands of Croatian citizens protesting Hungarian occupation while celebrating the anniversary of their fallen nationalist hero, Ban Josip Jelačić.² Decades of Hedervary’s misrule highlighted by burdensome taxation and his incessant campaign of forced magyarization unified calls for nationalist insurrection

¹ D. Popovich, "The Immigrants Troubles" Scrapbook of D. Popovich, March 2, 1929 in the Chicago Foreign-Language Press Survey, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

² Josip Jelačić (1801-1858) was Ban of Croatia from 1848 until his death ten years later. He led Croat troops against the Hungarian rebellion opposing Austrian rule in 1848 in an effort to gain Croatian autonomy and greater rights for Croats within the empire. He advocated and achieved to varying degrees the unification of all Croatian lands, abolition of serfdom, autonomy within the empire, and equality of national rights within the empire.
throughout all Croatian provinces. Hedervary ordered his men “fully equipped” for war, sending artillery units to support their advance.

As crowds gathered in larger and larger numbers, they were met by saber-wielding Hungarian and Croatian police officers. Violence broke out, hundreds were wounded and over 350 arrests were made. In response to the civil disorder, Hedervary imposed martial law throughout the province in the days following the protest and imprisoned thousands deemed as nationalist agitators and threats to Hungarian rule. The revolt quickly spread throughout Croatia from the capital of Zagreb to the Adriatic coast. As news of the events in Zagreb reached the countryside, Croatians peasants throughout the region destroyed existing railways to prevent the incursion of more Hungarian troops. Despite his intentions, Hedervary’s actions fueled Croatian nationalist aspirations empowering a new generation of politically active Croats that embraced an increasingly violent anti-Hungarianism as the city of Zagreb, once again emerged as the center of the Croatian national movement.

The reemergence of Croatian nationalism and desire for an independent Croatian state was not a forgone conclusion. In 1868, relations between the two national groups within the Habsburg Empire stabilized through the Hungarian-Croatian Ausgliech of 1868 that recognized Croatian as the official language among the region’s South Slavic majority. However, political tensions throughout the province steadily increased between the two during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. The ascendency of Hedervary to the governorship signaled the end of Croatian-Hungarian detente as he embarked on a program of magayrization (assimilation) within the province to strengthen the position of Hungary within the empire. In response to his efforts, the list of
grievances among the Croats grew, both home and abroad, as news of Croatia’s plight rapidly spread to throughout the Croatian diaspora communities. Hedervary reimposed Hungarian as the official language and placed the Hungarian coat-of-arms on all civic buildings throughout the province. In addition, he greatly reduced the number of Croatian representatives within the Croatian Diet while revoking the voting rights of approximately 97 percent of the Croatian population. Finally, Hedervary severely limited the functionality of the Croatian national press engaging in a campaign of repression through the imprisonment of Croatian politicians and their supporters.3

However, unlike the Serbian insurrection a century earlier, the Croatian Spring of 1903 garnered support both at home and abroad. On May 25, 1903, four hundred Croatian laborers gathered at the National Hall on Center Avenue and 18th Street in Chicago to protest the imposition of martial law in Croatia by Hedervary. Local labor leaders Juraj Mamek, Ivan Bozić, and Jovica Janković all spoke to protesters that day and declared “There will be no rights for the Slavs in Austria until the hoofs of Cossack horses beat upon the market-Square of Vienna.”4 In the aftermath of the protests, working-class organizations throughout the city unified under the leadership of Dr. Ante Biankini, Pavel Hajdić, and Bozić. Together, these three men drafted a telegram to the National Defense Committee in Zagreb openly supporting their countrymen as they


called on their "brothers to continue the fight for Croatian Rights." They also wrote to the Emperor, Franz Josef, pleading for him to end Hungarian rule in Croatia.  

The events of May 25, 1903, signaled the emergence of nascent South Slavic transnational nationalist movement within Chicago’s immigrant community and contributed to the end of traditional South Slavic life for the Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes in the city. Over the next two decades, disparate programs supported by particularistic South Slavic nationalist groups within Chicago coalesced to support the creation of a unified South Slavic state within the Balkans by 1918. However, these efforts conflicted with traditional South Slavic institutions that were once the mainstay of rural, nineteenth-century life in the Balkans. Suddenly, churches and families found themselves at odds with the emerging working-class and socialist groups and saloon culture that increasingly directed community affairs as all vied for the support and resources of their respective populations.

Traditional particularistic nationalism affiliated with the family and the church slowly gave way to a universalistic supra-nationalism supported by the city’s working-class immigrant experience that increasingly dominated the fraternal groups and benevolent associations with the city. In an effort to transcend traditional local and regional affiliations, socialist groups within the city increasingly turned to the ideology of Jugoslavism to unite South Slavic working-class immigrants within the city. However, their true aspirations were the creation of a global working-class movement that utilized the South Slavs in Chicago and the Balkans as a catalyst for their political agenda.

---

5 “Protest by Croats,” Denni Hlasatel, May 25, 1903.
The events of 1903 created a new sense of solidarity among the South Slavs within Chicago. Various organizations came together to pledge their support to each other and their brethren left behind to struggle in the Balkans. In 1904, the Convention of the National Croatian Society raised over $6,000 to fund anti-Habsburg political parties back home. Despite this initial success, competing interests based upon traditional regional and local loyalties within the society led to its collapse in March 1905. The National Croatian Society splintered into numerous smaller organizations, the most important of which was the Croatian League of Illinois that played an increasingly prominent role among the South Slav diaspora in the decade to come.\(^6\)

The impact of the South Slavic efforts in Chicago did not go unnoticed. Various political organizations within the Balkans recognized the potential of Jugoslavism to break away from the Habsburg Empire. In 1905, a coalition of Serbian and Croatian political parties formed in Dalmatia, promising that the two peoples would “work shoulder to shoulder as blood brothers in national political questions” especially in public school issues. Both declared their aim to be “that the names Croatian and Serbia occupy a position of honor” there, that textbooks would stress the history of both peoples and that all students should learn both Latin and Cyrillic scripts.”\(^7\) This emerging model of Jugoslavism in America and the Balkans closely mirrored the cultural and academic efforts of the South Slavic nationalist awakening during the preceding century. Such cooperation continued throughout the next two decades defining South Slavic life in Chicago. Socialist groups and working-class organizations laid the groundwork for the a


broader, more inclusive Jugoslavism that competed with the traditional nationalist loyalties affiliated with the family, church, and regionally-oriented fraternal and benevolent organizations. Despite this fact, all were instrumental in developing South Slavic national consciousness while also promoting assimilation and pluralism within America, that helped the South Slavs of Chicago adapt to their new surroundings.

At the start of the twentieth century, South Slavic immigrants were relatively slow to integrate into American society, as they tended to revert to the traditional affiliations and attachments of family and church rather American language and culture. In so doing, they remained one of the more highly segregated foreign-born populations throughout the industrial cities of the Chicago, Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh.8

Their relatively small numbers forced most of the South Slavs to cluster in some of the poorest neighborhoods within the city. However, this was ultimately proved advantageous. The establishment of small, relatively homogenous communities, or ethnic enclaves, within Chicago allowed them to develop extended networks that allowed South Slavic owned businesses to cater to South Slavic clientele. This arrangement benefited both those that had already arrived as well as to the most recent immigrants in the city.9 In addition, it laid the foundation for the development of a more inclusive Jugoslav identity founded on shared culture, language, and life in America.

The creation of insulated communities based on paternal, local, and regional affiliations allowed the various South Slavs to develop successfully without having

---


significant social contact outside of the community. Extended kinship networks supported by regionally and nationally affiliated churches and fraternal groups allowed the Croat, Serb, and Slovene immigrants successfully adapt socially and economically to their new American homes. The solidarity that such institutions created among the South Slavs allowed them to create their own “ethnic economy” where South Slavs mobilized their own resources to create their own businesses. These businesses in turn proved opportunity for other businesses to emerge as well as served as potential opportunities for those seeking work. This reinforced the traditional paternalistic structures found in pre-migratory South Slavic culture.10

During the opening decades of the twentieth century, South Slavic families, churches, saloons and working-class organizations found themselves in a rather precarious situation. As these institutions evolved in response to the deprivation and marginalization of Croats, Serbs and Slovenes within Chicago, they each turned to the their respective nineteenth-century antecedents as a guide to unify the disparate South Slavic communities in Chicago. However, these institutions found themselves more often than not, openly competing with one another for the loyalty and resources of their of their communities, that ultimately changed the character of South Slavic immigrant identity.

Prior to their arrival in America, ethnic identification for most South Slavs remained marginal despite the prevalence of nationalist discourse at home. The fact that most South Slav immigrants during the early twentieth century were primarily peasants from the rural agricultural regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire prevented the

development of any acute awareness of ethno-national distinctiveness. Most identified themselves along local, regional, or religious lines. However, upon their arrival, the South Slavs underwent a process of ethno-national awakening that “manifested an intense concern for ethnic communalism.”\textsuperscript{11}

Despite this fact, many South Slavic immigrants worked towards the unification of all South Slavs regardless of their factional affiliations. Many felt that regionally, religiously, and politically organized fraternal organizations arbitrarily divided the community preventing any larger-scale benefit for activities and support of nationalist movements in the homeland. There were on occasion efforts to create multi-national fraternal organizations as well. Among the first was the Los Angeles-based Croatian-Slavonian Benevolent Society, a national organization founded on July 3, 1895, and formed under the auspices of “the propagation of general intelligence, unity, friendship and brotherly love…. And instruction as well as education of the good citizenship.”\textsuperscript{12}

On January 1, 1903, a group of Croats and Slovenes in Calumet, Michigan founded the Slovenska-Hrvatska Zveza u Združenih Državah Ameriskih i Canadi (The Slovenian-Croatian Union of the United States and Canada).\textsuperscript{13}

Efforts for consolidation were furthered by events back home. Following the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908, the South Slavs of Chicago felt the time was right to unify all of the South Slavic peoples within the city under a United Slavic League. On Sunday, February 7, 1909, delegates representing all of the Slavic colonies


\textsuperscript{12} Prpic, \textit{Yugoslav Immigrants in America}, 70.

\textsuperscript{13} Eleanor E. Ledbetter, \textit{The Jugoslavs of Cleveland: With a Brief Sketch of their Historical and Political Backgrounds} (Cleveland: Cleveland Americanization Committee, 1918), 19.
in the city gathered to address the “welfare of our people here and abroad...”\textsuperscript{14} This was the first attempt by the South Slavic community of Chicago to create a truly Jugoslav organization as the annexation crisis of Bosnia and Herzegovina attracted Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs alike. It also appealed to the other South Slavic groups desire for self-rule and independence within the Balkans. Their efforts continued for the most part until the start of the Second Balkan War years when animosities excluded the Bulgarians from continuing their support. At this point within the city, South Slavism became a specific Croat, Serb, and Slovene program and was most successful among the various working-class and socialist organizations that had a history of cooperation.\textsuperscript{15}

**South Slavic Families: Traditional Life, Homeownership, and the Second Generation**

Where we once had a population which could be readily understood and instructed because of rapid assimilation of American customs and speech, now we have a great number of foreign born people who are slow in adapting themselves to the conditions which good civic health demand.\textsuperscript{16}

The South Slavs tended to revert to their traditional affiliations of family and church rather than turning outward to new modern society. Traditional South Slavic culture characterized by extended kinship ties, interdependence, multi-generational familial and reciprocal relations within the home conflicted with twentieth-century industrial American norms, which stressed independence, individualism and self-

\textsuperscript{14} *Balkan*, Vol. II, No. 6, Feb. 9, 1909. The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 28, 1912. Quote taken from Dr. David Evans discussing the displacement of German immigrant stock by the Slavs whose inability to adapt American customs created a potential health risk to the entire city.
realization. In large part, their retreat into traditional social institutions was a reaction to the extreme isolation and alienation that their migration caused. In addition, local nativist sentiment emerged both within the work place as well as throughout the city, forcing the South Slavs to interact within relatively “narrow circles of acquaintances and countrymen.”

Another factor that contributed to the relatively slow rate of assimilation was that many South Slav immigrants viewed their time abroad as temporary. The intent on returning home, coupled with high levels of illiteracy and the inability of a significant portion of South Slavs to speak English led to extremely low rates of naturalization in comparison to other contemporary immigrant groups. In 1910, approximately thirty percent of all South Slavs became naturalized citizens. For them, they were merely sojourners whose time in America was solely intended to work, save money, and then return home to improve their own position back in their native land. This view of America as a temporary experience allowed the South Slavs to engage in more physically demanding jobs and persevere intolerable working conditions. For them, returning home was foremost in their minds. However, with time, as conditions both in America and

---


back home in the Balkans changed, many South Slavs were forced to reassess their approach to life in America.

Ethnic maintenance and pre-migratory patterns of behavior among the South Slavs were also positively reinforced by industrial society in the United States. Their lives in working-class environments, albeit in urban areas, mirrored many of the conditions of their previously rural-agricultural lives where the primacy of family, church and communalism played equally important roles. They contend that the realities of early twentieth-century urban industrial life “necessitated a conservative, collectivist approach to life” similar to that which they experienced as peasants. Instead, modern industrial life combined with their pre-modern agrarian patterns to create their experience.21

Assimilation and Americanization efforts were most often supported by various South Slavic groups looking to better their own position within the South Slav community and the larger American community to which they belonged. These efforts were most frequently witness among the vast array of benevolent societies and fraternal associations throughout the city. However, these efforts were buffeted by the South Slavic colonies throughout the city where ethnic communities were created by choice to ease the pain of adjustment to life in urban, industrial America. Only after a certain period of adjustment do we see an increased desire to set out beyond the familiar confines of the ethnic community and engage other immigrants as well as those who already considered themselves American.22

---

21 Bodnar, “Immigration and Modernization,” 45.

22 Kraut, The Huddled Masses, 111-117.
Family relationships remained prominent among the South Slavic immigrant community in Chicago. Traditional patriarchal hierarchies remained constant and children were expected to contribute to the well being of the family. Some argued that the South Slavs were merely attempting to recreate the zadruga, the traditional social structure of pre-industrial Balkan society. The zadruga, “a communal-joint family” living with a single home or multiple attached homes under the leadership of the eldest male family member continued well into the 1920s throughout the Balkans. Traditional South Slavic family clans maintained large holdings of land, where as many as fifty to seventy individuals from four to six related lived and worked. The limited amount of land led to the disintegration of the zadruga, forcing many younger South Slavs to emigrate to the United States which was financed by a great deal of effort by the entire family.

Although traditional values and structures persisted, the South Slavs were influenced and affected by their modern, urban, industrial surroundings. Males retained their authority in the households, while their wives and daughters took on expanded roles and responsibilities both inside and outside the home—a trend unique to their lives in America. As the presence of women in the South Slavic community increased over time, their role in their family and community increased in importance. Their primary role as homemaker allowed them to become the guardians of traditional culture and one of the more important institutions of ethnic maintenance within the home and within the


24 Branko Mita Colakovic, Yugoslav Migrations to America (San Francisco: R&E Research, 1973), 43.
community. Women prepared traditional cuisine for their families, actively participated in church activities, planned traditional festivals and holidays and interacted most frequently with the South Slavic community within Chicago while also keeping their ties to their homeland via regular letters exchanged with family and friends left behind. South Slavic women held to create a “collective memory” from which their children were able to pick and chose various elements that reinforced traditional and hybrid ethnic identities.25

Even though South Slavic families preferred that their mothers and daughters remain at home, the reality of life in America forced them to make difficult decisions that changed the traditional structure of South Slavic family life. Typically, women and their daughters sought employment outside of the home to alleviate the meager salaries their husbands and sons earned. More often, they did so after the loss of a family member to a job related accidents that were increasingly frequent. Discussing the difficult conditions, Cecilia Sula—a Croatian—stated that after her father was injured at work, her mother was forced to leave the house to find employment and make ends meet. While her father recovered and her mother supported the family, Cecilia and her five siblings subsisted on a diet of coffee and bread, eaten for breakfast and lunch, then supplemented with soup for dinner in their tiny single room tenement apartment.26 Rosie Babeck, a recent arrival from Croatian, found herself homeless after her husband was injured at work and later died at County Hospital. Although his union covered his burial costs, she had no money


for food or to continue paying the eight and a half dollars a month rent on their one room apartment. Her late husband earned twenty-seven cents an hour. Albina Štupien’s husband worked in the slaughterhouse, cleaning hogs earning $15 for a full weeks labor. Despite this fact, their family of six children frequently went without regular food. They lived in a single room where two children were forced to sleep on the floor of the kitchen for lack of space. They had no bed sheets or blankets and covered themselves with their extra clothes at night when they slept. Their diet consisted of kafa i pasul—coffee and bean soup. These conditions spurred many South Slavs to join socialist organizations and labor unions that appeared to be the only means to improve their conditions.27

South Slavs also embraced home-ownership as another method to alleviate the difficulties and uncertainties of working-class life in early twentieth-century America. This concept appealed to many Croat, Serb, and Slovene immigrants as it was rooted in the traditional structure of the zadruga. The lack of occupational mobility required multiple members of the family to be employed as homeownership gave them some sense of security.28 This also spurred the wide spread support for fraternal unions evinced among the South Slavs of Chicago. As early as 1910, Croat immigrants founded the First Croatian Building and Loan Association in Chicago to facilitate home ownership among all of the peoples of the “new immigration” collectively the Slavs became the biggest homeowners. By 1930, fifty-two percent of all South Slavs were homeowners.29


Once in America, the South Slavs maintained one of the highest rates of homes containing extended families throughout the industrial towns and cities of the American Midwest. This trend continued in Chicago where extended families shared several rooms or apartments within a single building throughout the working-class neighborhoods of Pilsen, Archer, West Town, and South Chicago. Over thirty-four percent of Serbian and Croat families lived under such conditions compared to only twenty-percent among other groups within the period of new immigration.

Among South Slavs, the family was considered a collective endeavor whose success depended on the contributions of all family members, young and old. Reciprocal relations were strongly reinforced as many South Slavs recreated the traditional zadruga in American urban cities. Second generation South Slavs inherited much of their parents’ conservative nature. Although literate to a degree, few viewed education as important to their lives in America as most began their careers as laborers earlier than their contemporaries, typically around the age of fourteen. For them, the ability to obtain a better paying job then their fathers was their ultimate goal. Many saw a position in the steel mills of Chicago—typically one of the highest paying among the cities various industries—as the ideal position. Like their fathers before them, once gainfully employed

---


they were suspect at changing jobs in fear of loosing what little economic security
they enjoyed.\textsuperscript{34}

Most noticeably, second generation South Slavs were profoundly influenced by
the hard work ethos espoused by their parents' generation. This influence perpetuated the
working-class status of the South Slavs throughout the period of new immigration. In
general, South Slavs viewed education with contempt as it prohibited their children from
becoming productive members of the family. This point of view was reinforced in much
of the foreign language press stressing “loyalty to home and parish” above education.
The \textit{Amerikansko Slovensko Noviny} (\textit{American Slovene Newspaper}) went so far as to
accuse the public school system for turning Slovene children against there parents
through assimilation and acculturation as immigrant parents became increasingly
concerned with the second generations relative loss of the native tongue.\textsuperscript{35}

Similar to all other immigrant groups, the second generation of South Slavs
attempted to distance themselves from their fathers and mothers traditional concerns.\textsuperscript{36}
Despite this fact, traditional structures reinforced intergenerational and reciprocal
relations throughout the family. Concerns over the loss of culture between second
generations South Slavs led to increased efforts by various clubs, societies and
organizations to sponsor "lectures on art, literature and history of native countries."\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{34} Bodnar, “Immigration and Modernization,” 55-56.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 57-58.
\textsuperscript{36} Roucek, “Jugoslav Immigrants in America,” 608.
\textsuperscript{37} Typical of all Slavic immigrant groups, the South Slavs created a variety of social, cultural,
political, athletic groups, societies and organization promoting traditional South Slavic society. Raymond
A Mohl and Neil Betten, "Ethnic Adjustment in the Industrial City: The International Institute of Gary,
The loss of language was also of great concern, as many second-generation South Slavs did not speak their native language regularly, even inside their home and throughout their extended communities. For them, their mothers and father imbued a sense of tradition reinforced through traditional South Slavic food, church, and social gatherings.38

Concern for second-generation South Slavs shift away from their family and traditional culture increased as more immigrant families became established and made Chicago their home. The feeling that life in America loosened the "spiritual ties" between parents and their children caused alarm to many within the community. For them, the family was central to the health and vitality of the nation, both their adopted home of America, but more importantly their specific South Slav nation. For them a strong united family was central to the "life of the nation, and the nation in turn will be stronger, materially and morally, the more united her members are in behalf of the common cause."39

South Slavic Saloons

Saloons emerged as one of the most important social, cultural, economic and political institutions in late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century South Slavic immigrant life in Chicago. They served as the social center of South Slavic neighborhoods throughout the city where the predominately working-class Croat, Serb, and Slovene laborers sought solace from the alienating and isolating urban landscape.

38 Hladnik, “Slovenian Immigrants' Perceptions of “America,””103.

Ethnic saloons were symbols of the new urban, industrial working-class culture of immigrant America that stood in stark contrast to the traditional Anglo-Saxon, Protestant roots of the nation. Saloons retarded the assimilation of South Slavs into the non-immigrant mass of American culture by reinforcing ethnic and class attachments that kept the South Slavs deeply rooted in their own ethnic communities. For the South Slavs, the saloon replaced the traditional kafić/kafana that was found back home throughout the Balkans that allowed the typically male clientele to relax in the “informal, slow moving social settings” to which they were accustomed back in the Old Country.\textsuperscript{40}

The city’s vast array of ethnic-owned saloons suited the South Slavs quite well considering they had come from a land where “wine, rakija, and slivovica were as important as bread.”\textsuperscript{41} The exclusivity of saloons fostered increased ethnic and national identification among initially disparate and disassociated peoples. Saloons also helped created local neighborhoods identities that initially viewed outsiders, despite their similar backgrounds, with indifference, disdain, and outright suspicion. By reinforcing these identities, saloons in turn created deeply loyal local patronage that guaranteed the short and long-term success of the establishment.\textsuperscript{42}

The first South Slavic saloons in Chicago opened during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. At this time, the small South Slavic population in Chicago

\textsuperscript{40} Jon M. Kingsdale, “The “Poor Man's Club”: Social Functions of the Urban Working-Class Saloon,” \textit{American Quarterly}, Vol. 25, No. 4 (October 1973), 485.

\textsuperscript{41} Anna Zellick, “Fire in the Hole: Slovenians, Croatians & Coal Mining on the Musselshell” \textit{Montana: The Magazine of Western History}, Vol 40, No. 2 (Spring 1990), 24. Rakija (whiskey) is the traditional spirit of the South Slavs made from wide variety of fruit: plums (slivovica), apples, pears, grapes, apricots, quince, and peaches are among the most common.

identified themselves as Austrian nationals and lived throughout the Chicago
downtown neighborhood. Here they had opened over a dozen saloons that along the
streets of State, Clark and Wabash. Unfortunately, their tenure in the area was short-
lived as they were forced out of the area by financial difficulties associated with the Panic
of 1893. At this time, other South Slavic colonies began to develop along the Archer Avenue corridor and near 18th and Central—now Racine Avenue—that absorbed those
fleeing Chicago’s downtown. By the start of the twentieth century, more South Slavic
saloons opened throughout these neighborhoods to cater to the working-class immigrants
arriving in greater and greater numbers.43

Saloons throughout the city were one of the most important social and cultural institutions for the masses of immigrants that frequented them. Most saloons throughout
the South Slavic neighborhoods of Chicago remained ethnically segregated, catering to
their specific South Slavic population within the neighborhood. However, in the more industrialized neighborhoods where a multitude of immigrants came into contact with one another, patrons of saloons were rather heterogeneous and representative of the great diversity of peoples comprising the bulk of ‘new immigration.44

Saloon operators had extremely intimate relations with their cliental developed on
traditional reciprocal relations that created an extended network of personalized
relationships similar to the extended kinship networks of the homeland. South Slavs
came together and pooled resources and finances for mutual assistance and other benefits.

This structure allowed South Slavs to create insulated and self-sufficient communities

43 Hrvati u Americi, 1st Volume, 1927.

independent of the outside world.\textsuperscript{45} For many working-class South Slavs, saloons became a second home, a place for relaxation, socialization and entertainment. However, the saloon also served other important functions and services not available within the community. Patrons were able to receive mail and drop off or pick up packages. They also cashed or deposited their checks, and even borrowed from the owner of the establishment. Saloons also served as the center of local, national, and transnational information. For many South Slavs, saloons gave them respite from the poor living conditions of the industrial ghettos and tenement housing in which they lived. Overcrowding and lack of amenities made the saloon an attractive alternative for most South Slav patrons.\textsuperscript{46}

Throughout the South Slavic colonies of Chicago, saloon and tavern keepers emerged as some of the most successful and prominent members of the community. Typically, saloon and tavern owners were ex-laborers such as Tomas Rukavina, a Croatian immigrant, who worked and saved enough money until they were able to rent an existing space or purchase a building in which to open their own establishment. Saloons and taverns were of central institutions to the life of South Slavs, vying for importance only with the local church. Throughout the South Slavic owned establishments in the city, businessmen, politicians, and neighbors co-mingled, sharing the trials and tribulations of their daily lives. Alongside boarding houses, most saloons—also known as hotels—maintained rooms for rent by local laborers. Here too, South Slavic men found themselves in less-than-ideal conditions, sharing space with limited amenities, 

\textsuperscript{45} Rothbart, “The Ethnic Saloon as a Form of Immigrant Enterprise,” 333-334.

\textsuperscript{46} Kingsdale, “The “Poor Man's Club,”” 476.
although their immediate proximity to an establishment that served alcohol tended to ease their overall discomfort. For those fortunate enough to have made the transition to saloon owner, they now found themselves in a greatly elevated position. Not only was owning a saloon a lucrative business, but the owners attained a position of significant influence within the South Slav community, primarily as a result of their knowledge and command of the English language.47

Even though saloons allowed many South Slavs to move beyond the role of laborer to that of a businessman, their long term prospects and social mobility rarely benefitted. Tomas Rukavina was born on April 20, 1877, in the village of Konjsko Brdo near Lika, Croatia and left his native land due to economic hardship and to escape conscription into the Austro-Hungarian army. After years of working as a migratory laborer throughout Europe, he embarked on the ship “Kiln” in Bremen, Germany and arrived in the United States on April 26, 1900. Rukavina eventually made his way to Chicago where he joined his brother Stjepan and other Croats from Lika. Over the next nine years, Rukavina travelled throughout the Midwest and worked various odd jobs as either dishwasher or laborer in the steel mills and railways. Eventually he worked as a bartender in St. Louis and became a partner in a saloon owned by another Croatian émigré.

In 1909, Rukavina sold his share in the saloon and made his way back to Chicago to be closer to his brother and his friends. In 1910, after working a various Croatian saloons throughout Chicago, Tomas saved enough money to buy his own establishment in South Chicago, on Iron Dale Avenue. The saloon was an immediate success and proved incredibly popular for Croatians in the area. Many new Croat arrivals came for a

47 The Rukavina Family Papers, Croatian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
loan, a handout or a free lunch that was provided for those that were temporarily unemployed.\textsuperscript{48} Most who immigrated from Lika, passed through Chicago or lived in the area for a while came to know Tom Rukovina quite well. He emerged as when of the better-known Croatian immigrants in Chicago and as an example of a successful immigrant in America. He always wore a top hat and spats with his suit, and carried a cane. Despite his initial success, Thomas’ saloon burned to the ground in the fall of 1913. His new wife who was very religious did not like the rowdiness of Chicago during that era and convinced her husband to move and start a new life elsewhere. He and other Croatians heard about work in the mines in the Iron Range Country of Northern Minnesota. Tom and many of the Croatians settled there where great numbers of their descendants still live.\textsuperscript{49}

Another reason regarding the popularity of saloons such as Rukovina’s establishment for South Slavs was the lack of any available recreational and cultural space to them within the city at large. Social workers increasingly brought attention to city officials regarding the need to develop greater social, cultural and recreational space for the increasingly foreign population within the city. Partially to improve the quality of

\textsuperscript{48} The Rukavina Family Papers, Croatian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota. Also see Kingsdale, “The "Poor Man's Club": Social Functions of the Urban Working-Class Saloon”, 477. Free lunch for working-class men became one of the most common features of the saloon during the early twentieth century and helped to establish an incredibly loyal clientele.

\textsuperscript{49} The Rukavina Family Papers, Croatian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
life for the immigrants but more importantly to help draw them out from socially and culturally isolated ethnic neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{50}

However, onset of prohibition meant the loss of one of the single most important institutions within the South Slavic community in Chicago. For them, their neighborhood taverns and saloons were much more then just a place to drink and evolved during the four decades prior to prohibition to serve vital functions within the community. Despite the obvious concerns of drunkenness and sloth associated with excessive drinking, prohibition created a new problem for the South Slavs to contend with. The loss of a historically male environment forced many saloon owners, bartenders and patrons to retreat into “hundreds of thousands of homes [that] have become like the saloons of former days.”\textsuperscript{51} Despite alcohol being abolished, it continued to be used widely throughout the South Slav community. Its most important affect was simply removing a fundamental immigrant institution from the community and depriving women and children what had traditionally been their own space within the community--their homes.\textsuperscript{52}

The loss of the saloon also meant the increased exposure to crime among the South Slavs of Chicago as numerous unemployed members of the community became involved in the illicit trade of alcohol. Perhaps the most disturbing affect on the community was the increase in alcohol related deaths and sickness due to the poor quality

---


\textsuperscript{51} Znaje, March 5, 1921.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
of liquor being passed off as legitimate.\(^53\) The South Slavs also lamented the imbalance among the classes the prohibition helped exacerbate. One writer in *Znaje* stated, “Whoever knows life in rich homes, knows that they drink plenty there. If that is true the prohibition law is hypocrisy and nothing else.”\(^54\)

**South Slavic Churches**

During the early twentieth century, South Slavic churches emerged as the single most important and dominant ethnic institutions in Chicago—a legacy that endures to this day. Churches were intimately involved in the social, cultural, economic, and political development of the earliest Croat, Serb, and Slovene colonies throughout the city. Alongside South Slavic families, the church reinforced traditional conservative and patriarchal culture that intimately linked its members with the homes they left behind in the Balkans. These earliest churches recreated the homeland for the South Slavs as their experience within their respective Catholic and Eastern Orthodox parishes in Chicago was nearly identical to the experience back home as the clergy and its members spoke the same language and addressed the same issues of survival and morality that they contended with in the Balkans. The church allowed South Slavs to embrace the most “natural expression” of their traditional “national societies.”\(^55\) This experience, more than any other, contributed to a growing awareness of the South Slavic particularistic ethnic and national identities articulated through traditional language alongside historical social, cultural, and political symbols that reinforced South Slavic identification with the

---

\(^53\) *Znaje*, January 5, 1920.

\(^54\) Ibid.

Balkans. The church kept the “old world” relevant and bound immigrant life in America to the political struggle back home in the Balkans.

Prior to their arrival in America, ethnic identification for most South Slavs remained marginal despite the prevalence of nationalist discourse and activity that dominated social, cultural, and political life back home throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries. Most South Slavic immigrants during this period were peasants migrating from rural and agricultural regions within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The isolation of these regions prevented the development and expression of South Slavic ethno-national distinctiveness that was more common in urban, industrial centers during the nineteenth century.

Instead, Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes identified themselves along local, regional, and religious affiliations, a common practice throughout the incredibly diverse empire. However, upon their arrival in America, the South Slavs underwent a process of ethno-national awakening and revivalism supported in a large part by their respective churches. This manifested in an intense concern for South Slavic communities, both in American and back home in the Balkans.56 The church played a central role in the South Slavic immigrant life in Chicago and demanded each community’s absolute dedication. For many Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes, the church required a constant financial, physical, and personal devotion to its upkeep. In return, the church rewarded its most supportive patrons with increased status within the community and contributed to the overall

56 United Serbians, March 20, 1934, in the Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
maintenance of the diaspora socially, culturally and spiritually.\footnote{Ewa Morawska, "The Internal Status Hierachy in the East European Immigrant Communities of Johnstown, PA 1890-1930s" \textit{Journal of Social History}, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Autumn 1982), 77.} Churches also provided variety of services and programs aimed to alleviate the burdens of modern, industrial life in Chicago. By doing so, they unintentionally aided in South Slavic adaptation and assimilation to the dominant culture of their new American homes. South Slavic churches thus proved an “effective medium” of both particularistic nationalist development and Americanization.\footnote{Park, \textit{The Immigrant Press and Its Control}, 52.}

Even though they were numerically the smallest of the South Slavic immigrant groups in Chicago, the Serbs were the first to actually build their own church.\footnote{Prior to this time, Croats and Slovenes had both independently and collectively consecrated their own parishes. However, they typically rented space in other existing Catholic churches until they were able to build their own. See Memorial Book of the Croatian Catholic Sacred Heart Church in South Chicago, 1913-1933, in the Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.} Despite their anemic numbers, the Serb population contained an unusually large number of educated individuals. These Serbs hailed from the various cities and urban centers of Austria-Hungary, Bosnia, and the Kingdom of Serbia. Composed mainly of middle-class professionals, they established a significant colony in Wicker Park during the 1890s. By invitation of the Orthodox community of Chicago, Serbian Priest Firmljan Dražić delivered the first Orthodox liturgy in April of 1892 to a mixed Greek, Russian, and Serbian audience in a rented hall on the cities near-north side. The following year, Father Sebastian Dabović arrived in the city and preached to an exclusively Serbian audience in another rented hall on Milwaukee Avenue. During his visit, he founded a church board
with local Serbian businessmen and converted a local residence into a ad hoc
chapel. Dabović continued to visit the city over the next thirteen years promoting the
creation of a Serbian Orthodox Church in the Chicago. His campaign ultimately proved a
success as the Serbian community of Wicker Park consecrated the Holy Resurrection
Serbian Church on July 4, 1905 at a new chapel built on the southeast corner of the park
at 8 Fowler Street.

Holy Resurrection quickly emerged as the cultural epicenter of Serbian life in
Chicago. The same year of its consecration, the voluntary society “Obilić” was formed
and became intimately involved with fundraising efforts for the church and its programs.
On October 14, 1906, members of the church formed the Serbian Singing Society
“Branko Radičević” (SSSBR) alongside the first Serbian tamburitza group, “Srbadija.”
This flurry of activity increased the profile of Holy Resurrection and its leadership,
spurring efforts to control and direct the development of the entire Serbian population
throughout the city. The church even briefly served as the seat of the Serbian Orthodox
Church in North America, making Chicago and its Serb colony one of the more
prominent players in Serbian-American affairs during the first three decades of the
twentieth century.

---

60 Mirjana Pavlović, “The Role of Immigrant Organisations in the Community Life—Serbs in

61 “Chicago Serbs Timeline: First 140 Years 1869-2009: Serbs and Their Life’s in Chicago Land

62 Birgit Bock-Luna, The Past in Exile: Serbian Long-Distance Nationalism and Identity in the
Wake of the Third Balkan War (Berlin: Lit, 2007), 24-28, 51-62. Also see Prpić, South Slavic Immigration
in America, 174-181 and Peter T. Alter, “Serbs” in Encyclopedia of Chicago: Chicago Neighborhoods and
In 1908, Reverend Sava Vojvodić arrived in Chicago as the new parish priest of Holy Resurrection—a position he maintained for the next decade. During his tenure, the cultural activities of the Serbs increased as the church in Wicker Park became the single most important Serbian national institution within the city. That same year, events back home in the Balkans drew the attention of the church and its congregation shifting their focus from local issues and concerns to the political struggle of their people back home. Over the next few years, numerous social and cultural groups emerged in response to these transnational events. The rank-and-file members of the church played a significant role in mobilizing the Serbs of Chicago on behalf of the growing nationalist struggle in the Balkans. One of the most important nationalist groups was the Serbian Benevolent Society of St. George that was founded on February 10, 1910. The Society of St. George was created under the guidance of Father Jovan Vuković, an ardent supporter of the Serbian national cause. Despite its popularity, the society grew slowly as many of its members returned home to fight on behalf of Serbia in the Balkan Wars and then again during World War I. The group also regularly donated funds to the Red Cross to help their fellow Serb countrymen fighting back home.\(^63\)

The Serbian Benevolent Society of St. George became intimately involved with the Holy Resurrection Serbian Church. During its inaugural years, the group raised over $7,700 for the church to purchase a church flag and bell. Some of the funds were also used to complete yet unfinished parts of the building while the members of St. George volunteered as free laborers to do the work themselves. They also extended an additional

---

$1,000 loan to the church and donated money for a future Serbian monastery that was eventually built on land purchased outside the city in Libertyville, Illinois. At this time, the society had approximately 200 members of whom 75 percent were between the ages of 16 and 35. These youngest members of St. George were the most eager to contribute financially and morally to any social, cultural and national enterprises that the church deemed a priority, and were the first to volunteer to return and defend their homes in the Balkans.64

Slovenes were among the first South Slavs to establish a community in Chicago during the 1880s. In the subsequent decade, numerous Croats with whom they shared a common civic identity as citizens of Austria-Hungary and a common religious identity as Roman Catholics joined them. This coupled with ethnic and linguistic similarities allowed the two groups to frequently cooperate to mutually benefit all. As their respective communities grew, their local leaders sought to establish a church for both groups in the city, a task that both groups felt unable to achieve alone due to their relatively small size. In 1902, a Slovene and Croatian church committee was organized by Father John Plevnik, a Slovenian priest, to fund and build a church for the both communities in the area. Their efforts raised enough money to purchase the site on which St. George Catholic Church was eventually built on 95th Street on the city’s far south side. In February of 1903, a new Catholic priest from Pennsylvania arrived to aid in the effort. Father John Kranjec, a Slovene from Pittsburgh, held services for both Slovenes and Croats in the Eagle Hall on Houston Avenue in South Chicago, while

64 Memorial Book of the Serbian Benevolent Society of St. Djurdje, May 10, 1936. The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
working to expand the land purchased the previous year. On June 26, 1903, the mixed congregation broke ground on their new church, laying the first cornerstone after having completed the foundation within a week’s time. Construction of the new church went quickly allowing the Slovene and Croatian southside community to celebrate their first mass on December 6, 1903. The formal dedication of the church was not held until June 19, 1904, to allow workers to complete the interior of the building.65

Over the next decade, the church of St. George prospered as the South Slavic population of South Chicago rapidly grew and their community flourished. However, conflicting concerns and increasing nationalist sentiment eventually forced the two groups apart. As their numbers surpassed their Slovene neighbors, the Croat parishioners of St. George became increasingly frustrated that the Slovene priest that headed the church was not properly catering to their concerns. Primarily they were offended that mass was only delivered in Slovenian and not in Croatian. They also felt that their majority status forced them to shoulder a majority financial burden to keep the church properly funded.66

On August 28, 1912, the leaders of the Croatian parishioners appealed to J.E. Quigley, the Archbishop of Chicago, to have a Croatian priest assigned to the church. Archbishop Quigley agreed to their request, but suggested that they build their own church and by Christmas of that year, he assigned the Reverand Sorio, a Croatian priest, and the Croat's of South Chicago celebrated their first mass together. Under the

---


66 Ibid.
leadership of Reverand Ivan A. Stipanovič, the Croats of South Chicago raised funds to build their own church. Land was purchased at the corner of 96th and Exchange Avenue and construction began immediately. The cornerstone of the church was laid on August 31, 1913 and the construction completed in time for the first service to be held at midnight on Christmas Eve of 1913. By May 17, 1914, the Sacred Heart Church was finally completed as Archbishop Quigley formally dedicated the opening of the new Croatian church.67

The need for additional churches to serve the community became increasingly obvious as the Croatian immigrant colonies of Chicago continued to grow. Prior to 1912, the Croatian colony of Chicago was limited to one other church in the city, the Roman Catholic Church of Assumption located at South Marshfield and West 60th Street. However, the location of both churches and the dualistic character of St. George limited access to the growing Croatian colonies. This was especially true for the large number of Croats hailing from Dalmatia that settled around Armour Square Park near Wentworth and 25th Street. Father George Volič, a pastor from Joliet, addressed the issue regarding the lack of church facilities for South Slavs. Volič delivered a request on behalf of the growing Croat community to Archbishop Quigley to help organize a new parish. He sent Father Leo Medić, a Croatian Franciscan, who arrived in Chicago in May 1912, to organize a new parish for the South Slavs. In the Armour Square neighborhood, close to 300 hundred Croatian families from Croatia proper, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Istria and Bosnia-Herzegovina settled in the area, with a population totally close to 5000. The largest group consisted of some 210 families from the Dalmatian region. Father Medić

67 Memorial Book of the Croatian Catholic Sacred Heart Church in South Chicago, 1913-1933.
held his first services at a neighboring Czech Roman Catholic church, St. Ivan Nepomuk, located at Princeton and 25th Street. Through his leadership, the Croats of Armor Square raised $15,000 dollars with which they purchased a church and rectory building from the displaced German protestant population that had since moved to better neighborhoods in the city.  

Despite their common faith, the Croats of Armor Square did not share a common identity as they remained deeply divided along regional, local, and political lines. These divisions were painfully apparent during the discussions regarding the naming of the church. Father Medić, with support of Archbishop Quigley, supported calling the new congregation the Croatian Roman Catholic Church of St. Jerome. However, this did not appeal to the Catholics from Dalmatia, who represented the majority population in the area. They insisted that they were not Hrvati (Croatians) but Dalmatinci (Dalmatians), adhering to their traditional regional identity rather than what they deemed a non-existent national identity. They demanded that the church name include the word Dalmatian rather than Croatian and openly opposed both Father Medic and the archbishop. Despite their protests, the archbishop insisted that they were all Croatians and that the name of the church would not be changed. The leaders of the Dalmatian sect argued, “if the church is not called Dalmatian, we will not support it.” They quickly began a campaign to oppose the bishop, inciting their members to violence. On December 14, 1912, the evening before the church dedication ceremony, the “Dalmatinci” smashed the windows.

---


69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.
of the rectory. Police were called out in force and arrested the protesters as the Archbishop resolved the conflict by official dedicating the Croatian Roman Catholic Church of St. Jerome the following day.\textsuperscript{71}

Despite frequent internal religious divisions and lingering political animosities, the various religions of the South Slavs did on occasion come together in solidarity. In the years following World War I and the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the various denominations embraced the ideals of Jugoslavism in an effort to support their new nation from abroad. By 1921, thirty-eight Slovenian Catholic churches, twenty-six Croatian Catholic, and twenty-three Serbian Orthodox churches in throughout the United States with over 26 Croatian and Slovenian parochial schools used English as the primary language of instruction.\textsuperscript{72} In December 1923, the Greek Catholic Parish held its annual meeting at the St. Peter and Paul Church Hall on 30\textsuperscript{th} Street and Central Park Avenue to discuss efforts on behalf of Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics and Eastern Orthodox unity despite ongoing political disputes back home. Church officials stated “Our thanks to the brothers of Eastern faith who made a real step ahead in spite of the arguing and conniving back in the old country. A real solidarity of our three branches of the same people, and although we have differences in our religious, the fact that we have the same calendar and the old-Slavic language in the Catholic and in the Eastern Church, will bring us closer to acknowledge and understand Jugoslavia as a

\footnote{\textsuperscript{71} Memorial Book of the 20th Anniversary, 1912-1932 Croatian Catholic Parish of St. Jerome.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{72} M.S. Stanoyevich, \textit{Jugoslavs in the United States of America}, (New York: Jugoslav Section of America's Making, Inc. 1921), 26.}
United Kingdom.” Such efforts at multidenominational unity in America received transnational support from the new South Slavic kingdom as well. Perhaps the most infamous of which was a donation of $100,000 dollars from the Yugoslav government in Beograd for the creation of a monastery in Libertyville, Illinois, the chosen seat for the new Serbian Bishopric in the United States. Such efforts were meant to not only garner support for Jugoslavism and unite South Slavs abroad, but also create a direct link between the new Kingdom and its citizens throughout the diaspora.

Working-Class Socialists & Anti-Immigrant Nativists

The ideology of South Slavic unification was most strongly articulated among the numerous socialist oriented working-class organizations throughout the city. Even though most fraternal benevolent associations were primarily working-class in composition, they tended to divide themselves along regional, religious, and national lines. However, the socialist-oriented working-class fraternals declared, “There is no more east and west, north and south. The workers are not divided by nationality or religion any more. Socialism binds them all; the industrial and agricultural workers, the miner and mariner, men and women. These groups that were the most vocally pro-Jugoslav in nature benefited from the development of socialist and working-class movements in Europe that were transplanted in America alongside the various South Slav immigrants. Socialism and working-class solidarity allowed the various Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes to transcend their traditional divisions and antagonisms in order to support

73 “Greek Catholic Parish Meeting” Hrvatski Glasnik, Vol. XV, No. 50, December 13, 1923.
74 Svijet Vol xxvi, no 9408, May 7, 1923.
75 “To The Workers of America,” Radnička Straža, Vol. V. No. 46, October 31, 1912.
a unified Jugoslav identity that was primarily working-class in orientation. This ideology was exported from the various European socialist and workers' movements to America, spreading among South Slavs and directly challenging the traditional authority of the family and church.

Jugoslav working-class identity was not universally expressed or supported in Chicago. In fact, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most South Slavs opposed any attempts to create a Jugoslav identity centered on socialist working-class principles. This reaction partially resulted from established socioeconomic and religious divisions within the South Slavic community that viewed socialism as a direct threat to control within the city.76 South Slavic working-class solidarity was further retarded through the efforts of existing American working-class organizations that identified South Slavs as a threat to native workers. Labor unions, in particular, were opposed to open immigration as the steady supply of cheap South Slavic labor threatened native-born as well as German, Irish, and Scandinavian immigrants that were traditionally the primary source of labor. In an effort to prevent the South Slavic immigration, labor organizations and working-class groups “drew racial distinctions” between themselves and the South Slavs to draw increasing support for anti-immigration and anti-foreigner sentiment. In addition, the increased mechanization of industrial worker added to interethnic tensions, as skilled workers feared less skilled workers and new machinery were replacing them.77

76 Radnička Straža, Vol. V. No. 46, October 31, 1912.

Initially, socialism was unappealing to many working-class South Slavs due to the lack of familiar patriarchal structures associated with traditional family life—structures reinforced by church and embraced by the South Slavic intellectuals and the middle class within the city. After their arrival, many South Slavs quickly realized that the promise of America came with considerable costs in terms of horrible working and living conditions that were completely alien to them. Many understood that only the strongest and most steadfast among that were willing to pay the price were able to find success in America. However, work was valued above all else in traditional South Slavic culture because it was the central experience of traditional peasant life. “Čovek mora da radi” (man must work) was the common refrain throughout the Balkans and one transplanted to America during the early twentieth century.

As their numbers expanded with increased immigration over the next two decades, more South Slavs were willing to embrace unionization than previous generations of immigrants. Unions served to bridge various ethnic and national divisions among immigrant laborers, while within the South Slavic community it served to reinforce a pan-Slavic, pro-labor identity that appealed to all. The workplace served as one of the greatest advocates of assimilation promoting such values as punctuality, diligences at work and respect for private property.


In attempt to appeal to the growing number of South Slavic workers in the city, socialist and working-class organizations increased their efforts to educate their fellow Slavs on the perils of life in America and the benefit of coming together. Once again, they employed the familiar tool of the foreign-language press to achieve their goals. By the end of the decade, the *Radnička Straža* emerged as the dominant voice of South Slav socialists within the city. The publication first appeared on December 25, 1907, to educate working-class laborers in Chicago under the editorial leadership of Croatian-Serb, Milan Glumac Jurisič. Glumac and the leadership of the Yugoslav Socialist Club (JSC) based in Pennsylvania, viewed Chicago as the ideal location to advance their socialist agenda. Rapid industrialization and the city’s central location combined with the widespread industrial depression throughout the American heartland that year left tens of thousands of immigrants unemployed and eager for a way to improve their marginal status within American society. Glumac’s efforts were further aided by the large population of socialist expatriates in Chicago who fled the Balkans for similar reason. Collectively, they saw an opportunity to unite South Slavs abroad and evince change back home in the Balkans. Glumac and the leaders of the JSC truly believed that Chicago was poised to become the "heart of Socialism and proletarian revolution in America." As protests spread throughout the city, competing labor organizations aided by local authorities attempted to slow Glumac and his compatriots. Despite their efforts, Glumac published the first copy of *Radnička Straža* on December 25, 1907, ushering in an era of cooperation that greatly advanced the not only the


82 Ibid.
advance of socialism among South Slavs within the city, but more importantly introduced Jugoslavism as a viable alternative to particularistic nationalism.  

Over the next three years, South Slavic worker solidarity steadily grew in response to efforts to broaden the appeal of socialism and Jugoslavism to South Slavic immigrants from outside Austria-Hungary. On July 3, 1910, delegates representing South Slavic communities from around the country gathered in Chicago for the “First Jugoslav Socialist Congress in America.” They assembled under the leadership of Milan Glumac alongside key members of the Jugoslav Socialist Club (JSC) Tom Besenić, a Serb from Allegheny, Pennsylvania joined, JSC president, Ivan Masten a Croat, Frank Petrič a Slovene. Twenty-eight delegates representing Slovenes, Serbs, Croatians, and Bulgarians in Chicago attended as the congress began with a speech by Dimitri Ekonomoff titled “The Immigration of Jugoslavs and Their Status in America.” Ekonomoff discussed how economic and political repression in the Balkans were the primary reason behind immigration to the United States and that the South Slavs in Chicago experienced more severe hardships than other immigrants that lived alongside them. In closing Ekonomoff declared that the only recourse to safeguard their fellow Slavs against the predations of American capitalism was to create a Jugoslav Socialist union.  

The socialist movement continued to grow throughout the year as increasing numbers of South Slavs from outside of Habsburg controlled lands made their way to Chicago. In 1900, Serbs were the smallest of the South Slavic groups in the city

---


84 Radnička Straža, July 15, 1910.
numbering less than a thousand and arrived in greater and greater numbers during the first decade of the twentieth century. As their numbers increased, leaders within the Serbian immigrant community began to support a variety of efforts to unite their people.

The Croatian and Slovene leadership in Chicago immediately took notice of the rapid growth of the Serbian community. On December 2, 1910, the call of “Forward Serbian Workers!” echoed throughout the city as various South Slavic socialist groups recognized the importance of including the newer Serbian arrivals among their ranks and supported the establishment of specific socialist and working-class groups and organs that appealed directly to the Serbs. Croats and Slovenes recognized that for Jugoslavism and worker solidarity to truly take hold that the Serbian workers within the city had to establish their own “voice” that allowed them to march under their “own flag.” Croatian groups within the city called out for the Serbs to unite with other South Slavs and join the “fighting circle of American workers” so that they all may enjoy “victory and enlightenment.”85 Slovenes made similar calls for support and unity claiming that it was their duty to help “our comrade Serbians.”86 The Serbs of Chicago quickly responded and by years end announced the arrival of Narodni Glas (The People’s Voice), the first Serbian Socialist Newspaper in the city. The paper followed the footsteps of its Croatian and Slovenian counterparts, the Radnička Straža and Proleterac, as it aimed to “inform Serbian workers about class struggle and Socialism.”87 The arrival of Narodni Glas was held as a victory for all South Slavic workers as it was a paper founded by and written by

85 Proletarec Dec 27, 1910, in the Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota. The paper operated under the auspices of the Serbian Department of the Jugoslav Workingmen’s Educational and Political Federation.

86 Radnička Straža, Jan. 27, 1911, CFLP.

87 Ibid.
directly by the working-class. Upon its release, the editors of *Radnička Straža* and *Proleterac* called on all of their members to support its publication, as it was the “latest pioneer of the Yugoslav Socialist Movement.”

The idea of unifying the South Slavs in Chicago equally garnered support as well as opposition. In December of 1912, the Yugoslav Socialist Federation's Serbian Section suggested the merger of the Croatian *Radnička Straža* with the Serbian *Narodni Glas*, into a single newspaper printed in both Latin and Cyrillic script. This was first proposed by Spasoje Marković, a Serb, who claimed that the “Serbian and the Croatian are one people with two names” whose “language is one language with two alphabets.” He suggested printing the paper under the name *Radnik (The Worker)*, to be printed in both languages. Marković rationalized that the precarious financial situation both papers at the time justified his actions. He argued that by pulling their resources they would appeal to a wider South Slav audience and increase the demand for their paper. More importantly Marković felt that it was show of solidarity among the working-class South Slavs in the city that served as a potent example Jugoslavism throughout the country and back home as well.

Despite such efforts, Croats and Serbs remained equally divided as many felt that the merging of both into a single South Slavic paper signaled the loss of a ethnonational symbol that they had come to depend on and defined their respective communities. The Croats who boasted 600 members with some 1,800 active subscriptions felt that they did

---

88 *Radnička Straža*, Jan. 27, 1911, CFLP.

89 “Do We Want to Go Backward or Forward,” *Radnička Straža*, Vol. VI, No. 1, December 19, 1912.
not need to cater to the smaller Serb cohort of the Jugoslav Socialist Federation with only 150 members and 800 subscribers to the *Narodni Glas*. The Croatian editor Ivan Masten felt that the printing of the paper in both alphabets would not serve to propagate socialism that was their goal.

Not all of the South Slavs in Chicago supported the increased cooperation among the Croatian, Serbian and Slovene socialist groups. Following the *Radnička Straža*’s effort to broaden its appeal to Serbian workers in the city by including articles in Cyrillic, one disgruntled Croat subscriber wrote to the paper that he was quite offended that the “Croatian” paper he subscribed to, the *Radnička Straža* must only be printed in the “mother tongue and not in Serbian.” He continued arguing that he had no desire to read about the Serbians in Chicago, much less read a paper printed in their language—a reference to the suggested use of the Cyrillic alphabet. The editors of the *Radnička Straža* responded arguing that this man's mother tongue and the Serbian language "are one and the same."90 The paper lamented that many workers were prone to becoming “exaggerated Croatians” focusing more on national ties rather than working-class solidarity. For them, the idea of “unity and brotherhood”—a theme that became the foundation of Tito's socialist movement after World War II—became the central unifying tenet of working-class Yugoslavism. They concluded in their support for South Slav working-class unity stating, "In his sincere foolishness this child of a fierce patriotic education speaks with some hatred of Serbians."91

---

90 "A Victim of Mistaken Patriotism," *Radnička Straža*, Nov. 18, 1914. CFPLS

91 Ibid.
The divide between particularistic nationalism—Croatian in this specific case—and Jugoslavism impeded the efforts of uniting the South Slavs in Chicago throughout the next two decades. Regardless of the success or failure of such endeavors, South Slavic collective identity slowly developed and gained increasing support among Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes within the city. In addition to being promoted by socialist and working-class groups, support for Jugoslavism and a collective Jugoslav identity emerged in response to the intensifying anti-immigrant and nativist sentiment the South Slavs encountered throughout urban, industrial America. The steady influx of immigrants into America between 1880 and 1920 increased competition for jobs that in turn increased ethnic conflict between earlier, more established immigrant groups and those arriving during the period of new immigration. The substantial increase in the overall number of foreign-born workers and the ensuing competition within the labor market allowed for the explosive growth of local, regional and national worker organizations.92

Anti-immigrant sentiment reached its peak with the passage of the National Immigration Act of 1924. The law built upon the decades old assumption that southern and eastern European immigrants were of considerable lesser racial quality than earlier immigrant stocks. More importantly, nativists assumed that the various peoples of the Balkans were so completely alien in comparison to other groups that they were unable to successfully assimilate into American society. These ill-conceived assumptions culminated with the designation of the Jugoslavs and all of their Slavic brethren as

racially inferior nations in the national origins quota law that brought the era of “new immigration” to a halt.\textsuperscript{93}

Prior to 1880, the relatively low number of South Slavs immigrating to the United States faced little nativist opposition. However, in light of the growing labor unrest in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the preponderance of these early South Slav émigrés support for radical and socialist labor organizations, the view of the Jugoslavs quickly changed. The growing concern among mainstream Americans with the extremist activities of socialist and radical labor groups placed the South Slavs on the list of undesirable races and nations to be carefully watched and guarded against. Nativists viewed South Slavs as socialist radicals and labor agitators led to increased levels of anti-immigrant sentiment, discrimination, and violence against the Jugoslavs. These actions, however, had the unintended consequence of pushing more and more South Slavs to support various socialist, labor, and working-class organizations to defend their precarious position in industrial America, further exacerbating nativist sentiment.\textsuperscript{94}

Anti-immigrant and nativist consciousness ran high throughout Chicago. In the 1870s, the \textit{Chicago Tribune} labeled striking workers “not reasoning creatures” while the \textit{Chicago Post Mail} described the foreign-born population of the city as “depraved beasts, harpies, decayed physically and spiritually, mentally and morally thievish and

\textsuperscript{93} Roucek, “The Image of the Slav in U.S. History and in Immigration Policy,” 29. The Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act, built upon the Emergency Quota Act of 1921, which limited incoming immigration to approximately to three percent of the total immigrant population based on the 1910 Census. This act limited immigration from southern and eastern Europe while allowing greater numbers of Western Europeans entrance.

The fact that the vast majority of the city’s population was foreign-born was of no concern to the minority of native English-speaking peoples who read these papers. The influx of Slavs drew similar comparisons as Chicago newspapers labeled them as “Scythians, eaters of raw [flesh],” who were “fond of drinking the blood of their enemies.” For many Americans, the image of the Slavic invasion and the eventual collapse of America with which it was associated were very real.

By the 1890s, even unions and business interests alike favored restrictions on immigration from southern and eastern Europe. Although the business community tended to support the view of South Slavic racial inferiority, labor focused on concerns that are more practical as the influx of new immigrants increased competition for work with union members. In addition, the Slavs were used by throughout various industries to help break strikes by hired as “scab” laborers. These attitudes continued throughout the decade, spurred by the ongoing economic depression. However, once the economy began to recover resulting in an increased need for cheap labor, both the industry and labor turned to the South Slavs as a solution to their respective problems.

Nativism among older immigrant groups served to reinforce nationalist development along religious lines within the United States South Slavic colonies. Throughout the Americas, Irish and German parishioners, who identified the South Slavs as racially inferior peoples, met Slovene and Croatia South Slavs with great opposition. They returned the treatment that many of them had experience just a few generations ago.

---


96 Ibid.

before from the dominant Protestant sects in the United States. Despite much of the
nativism directed against the South Slavs, many of those early groups, Irish and German,
that they displaced as unskilled labor were second or third generation with experience to
move up to higher paying and less menial jobs within the steel and iron industries.98

Another factor contributing to the expression of anti-immigrant sentiment,
particularly against the various Slavic populations, was the deterioration of Russo-
American relations during the two decades preceding World War I. The onset of the
Russo-Japanese War in 1904 increased American apprehension over the spread of
Russian absolutism through Czar Alexander’s imperial expansion. As calls for Pan-
Slavism once again became more vocal throughout Europe, Americans truly feared that
the hordes of Slavs invading their shores presented a very real threat to the American way
of life. It was one thing for the Slavs in the form of Russia to contest Anglo-American
supremacy globally. However, the threat to the homeland during through the endless
masses of Slavic immigration proved too much for some.99

Nativist rhetoric and coupled with violent actions contributed to an increased
support for working-class organizations, socialist groups, and unionism among the South
Slavs as these various groups warmly welcomed all of the “new immigrants.” In a
similar fashion as the ethnic neighborhood where families and churches offered sanctuary
from the outside “American” world, socialist groups, working-class organizations, and
unions buffered the South Slavs against extreme nativism and allowed for an easier

98 Prpić, South Slavic Immigration in America, 75, 86.

transition to their new homes. Anti-immigrant rhetoric not only unified the South Slav diaspora but it also spurred them to take political action. Leading up to the November 1912 municipal election, a local democratic candidate employed nativist rhetoric to shore up their base as they lamented that the Croatian working-class were among the “worst kind” of American people. South Slavic socialists used this as a rallying cry to unite their people to action. They implored all eligible Croatian workers to respond to this slight through the ballot box by voting for the socialist candidate so that the “Democratic gentlemen will not joke anymore with the worst kind of Americans.”

Despite continual currents of anti-immigrant sentiment throughout the period of new immigration, extreme nativism emerged in earnest following the war, propelled by growing labor unrest and increased concern throughout the country of Bolshevism in America. The Red Scare increased anti-immigrant sentiment throughout the Chicagoland region as nativists attacks on immigrants increased, calling for an end to foreign-language press and the deportation of “radical” agitators. Steadily discriminatory and exploitative practice emerged throughout the Chicago's dominant industrial sector—meatpacking, rail, and steel.

Initially, the union movement catered to existing nativist inclinations and focused on recruiting the elite skilled laborers among the established Irish and German immigrants within the city. This burdened the masses of unskilled South Slavs and their contemporaries with greater prejudices that limited the “Hunkies” and “Slavs” to the least

---


102 Mohl and Betten, "Ethnic Adjustment in the Industrial City,”367-368.
favorable positions within the various industries in which they were fortunate enough to be employed.\textsuperscript{103} Despite efforts by various groups to retard nativist actions, anti-immigrant sentiment continued throughout the 1920s and 1930s.\textsuperscript{104}

The increased identification of Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes as working-class Jugoslavs had an additional consequence. As they united to oppose nativism and anti-immigrant sentiment, they became increasingly aware of their own racial identity in opposition to growing numbers of African-American workers that were now vying for the same jobs that the Jugoslavs had wrestled away from earlier immigrant groups. As the ranks of Jugoslav socialist organization swelled during the war, their leaders were quick to find fault and take on other aspects of American culture. Jugoslav socialist groups became increasingly concerned with the “Negro Migration,” other working-class organizations, and anti-foreign forces becoming more prevalent in America society throughout the war and during the booming years of the 1920s. The South Slavs felt increasingly threatened by outsiders as the marginal position of working-class Slavs throughout the city was no longer guaranteed.\textsuperscript{105}

Conclusion

The experience of life in America during the early twentieth century transformed South Slavic immigrant identity. Traditional culture embodied in the family and church, directly competed with working-class saloons and socialist organizations that were central to immigrant life in Chicago. While some Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes associated


\textsuperscript{104} ”The Latest in Patriots,” Znanje, April 26, 1920. Croatian CFLP.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
with nascent nationalism espoused by the church and family, others embraced novel forms of supranational and working-class identity that emerged in response to their experience in America and political events back home. Despite this conflict, over the next two decades, the disparate programs advocated by these competing institutions coalesced in support of unified South Slavic State within the Balkans by 1918.

The growing ideology of Jugoslavism appealed to many as it transcended traditional local and regional affiliations and created a common South Slavic working-class identity. This realignment and shift away from local or regional identities towards communal ethnic identities emerged in response to their collective experience and shared struggle within urban industrial settings. No longer did they view themselves as Licani or Dalmatinci, but rather as Croats. Multiple identities, both complementary and oppositional, slowly displaced the traditional South Slavic identities associated with “place of birth, village, or region.”\(^\text{106}\) Another reason for the appeal of socialism was the decline of traditional structures within the family and church that were the foundation of South Slavic rural life. The lack of Croatian, Serbian, and Slovenian speaking priests within in the city during these formative decades allowed various socialist and working-class organizations to take their place.\(^\text{107}\) This process continued as transnational nationalist ideologies continued to grow and spread among the South Slav diaspora in Chicago.

Although socialist groups and working-class organizations laid the groundwork for the creation of a broader, more inclusive Jugoslavism, all South Slavic institutions

\(^{106}\) Bodnar, “Immigration and Modernization,” 51.

contributed to their communities successful adaptation to their new environment. The internal communal conflict and the industrial experience of life in Chicago allowed South Slavic immigrants to accept both pluralistic and nationalistic views of their world. For them, their lives in the United States and the ones they left back home in the Balkans were divergent but reconcilable. As they became increasingly aware of their own particularistic nationalist identities, Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes also supported pluralistic notions alongside the emerging ideology of Jugoslavism because of they found themselves in multicultural, working-class, environment that straddled multiple political worlds.108

Alongside their obligations to their families, these conservative working-class values were also reinforced by the certain ethnic associations and neighborhood organizations. The emergence of a working-class consciousness was complimentary to their traditional European set of values and aided greatly in the development and identification of emergent national identity. Rather than competing with ethnic identity and the emerging national consciousness among the South Slavs, working-class identity complimented the emergent national identities and actively reinforced them.109

The South Slavs found common appeal to identifying themselves as working-class and Jugoslav. In fact, working-class and socialist organization quickly emerged as the most vocal supporters of South Slavism at home and abroad. South Slavs were quick to rally around their collective working-class experience void of social and economic


109 Bodnar, “Immigration and Modernization,” 56. Emergent working-class identity did not completely displace traditional ethno-national identities in the 1920s-1930s. Chicago’s South Slavs working-class identity existed alongside a growing and re-emergent ethno-national identity in response to transnational politic events.
mobility in America. The conflict between national, religious and socialist organizations within Chicago increased during the war spurred on by conflicting notions of the future shape of a South Slavic State. However, following the war, there was a brief moment of respite as all South Slavs rejoiced at the prospect of new and independent future for all Jugoslavs.

---

110 Bodnar, “Immigration and Modernization,” 60.

111 Radnik, Vol. VIII, No. 95, August 8, 1925
CHAPTER FIVE

HOMELAND CALLING:

TRANSNATIONAL NATIONALIST MOBILIZATION & CONFLICT IN THE BALKANS, 1908-1918

A mi ovamo, sa plavog Jadrana
Gdje goli krš cvate, umjesto ruža,
Slavjanstvo hoćemo, sve od Japana
Do pošljednje hridi kod Palagruža,
Hoćemo slogu, snagu i ponos,—
Mi djeca sunca, mora ivjeta,—
I čekamo vjerno—jer doći mora!—
Našega Kralja, našega Petra

And we here, from the blue Adriatic,
Where the bare karst blooms, instead of roses,
We want Slavdom, from the distance of Japan
To our last reef near Palagruža
We want unity, power, and pride—
We the children of the sun, of sea, and of the wind—
And we faithfully await—for He must come!—
Our King, our Petar!¹

On the night of October 22, 1912, a group of “would-be Serbian Soldiers”
stormed the Chicago police station on Des Plaines Street demanding assistance in a
matter of “national importance.” The group of forty-odd men were led by a Serbian
“Amazon Warrior,” the twenty-one year old Critina Savić. Although the group lived in
Indiana Harbor, Indiana, a Chicago construction company that had sent them to work in

¹ Quoted in Ivo Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics (Ithaca &
London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 105-106. Palagruža, a cluster of islands in the Adriatic near the
Italian shore, closer in proximity to Italy than the Dalmatian coast. Their reference implies Yugoslav
irredentist tendencies to incorporate as much land into the new state regardless of location or legitimate
claim.
Merrimac, Wisconsin employed them. For weeks, Ms. Savič, who also lived in Indiana Harbor, wrote the men endlessly urging that they join her to return home and fight against the “Turks.” On October 21, 1912, the entire group left their job site without notice. They arrived at the station house on Des Plaines and demanded police assistance in the collection of their pay. They told the officer in charge that they required the money to fund their return to Europe. The group and their de facto leader Ms. Savič, the only English speaker among them, were concerned that if their cause was not settled quickly, they would miss their opportunity to fight for their motherland, fearing that the Serbs would quickly end the war. When asked by Lt. Michael Gallery, she stated that she was not content with simply being a nurse and aiding the wounded but intended to take up arms alongside her compatriots, and stand side by side with them in the front line.²

The adventure of Ms. Savič and her compatriots was not an isolated event. In fact, South Slavic communities in Chicago and throughout the United States furiously engaged in a variety national mobilization efforts to aid their homeland. A few weeks earlier on October 7, 1912, over three thousand South Slavic and Greek immigrants marched through the streets of Gary, Indiana—an industrial steel town thirty miles southeast of Chicago. They paraded on the eve of the First Balkan War to show their solidarity with their countrymen that now prepared for an epic nationalist struggle back home. The massive throng of Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Bulgarians, and Greeks strutted through the crowded streets of the predominantly immigrant city sporting traditional battle regalia and carrying standards and flags emblazoned with their respective national colors and symbols. The Montenegrins proudly waved a battle flag ² "Serb Amazon on Warpath," *Los Angeles Times* (Chicago Bureau of the Times) October 22, 1912.
sent to them by King Nikola I of Montenegro alongside a personal letter from the king pleading for his fellow countrymen to return immediately and defend their homeland. The Macedonians of Gary received numerous telegrams sent by the Bulgarian government encouraging their immediate return home as well. Governments throughout the Balkans were all too well aware of the important economic and political role that immigrants abroad played in events back home.³

As the parade ended, the leaders of Gary’s South Slavic and Greek communities adjourned to Bizenhoff Hall to coordinate efforts mobilizing troops to return to fight and raising funds for the war. By the end of the meeting over three hundred Montenegrins pledged to return home immediately while close to fifty Serbs sold all their property to fund their own return and purchase supplies for their collective effort. News regarding the events of that day quickly spread throughout the Chicago region, eliciting similar calls throughout the city’s South Slavic community to support the war against the Ottomans. The overwhelming show of solidarity and the mass return home it elicited among the South Slavs deeply troubled Chicago area businessmen who were only concerned about the loss of labor and its impact on the region.⁴ Nevertheless, this moment represented a turning point for Chicago’s South Slavic immigrant community as events back home engulfed their lives here in America.

The decade from 1908 until the end of the First World War witnessed the emergence of a new South Slavic identity. This tumultuous period gave rise to a newly re-imagined collective identity while most Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes were still

³ Daily Tribune, October 7-16, 1912, and Lake County Times, October 6, 1912.
⁴ Ibid.
struggling to come to terms with their transformation from traditional local and regional to national and working-class affiliations. Transnational events unleashed multiple “tides of nationalism” that swept over Chicago and reshaped the South Slav diaspora. In response, certain Croatian, Serbian, and Slovenian individuals and institutions throughout the city engaged in a local struggle over how their new collective identity was to be imagined and what it truly meant to be a Jugoslav. While some embraced the ideology of Jugoslavism, others rejected it outright. For socialist working-class organizations, Jugoslavism was simply another tool uniting all South Slavic workers in opposition to entrepreneurial capitalism. For local clergy and business leaders, it threatened their cultural, political, and economic hegemony within the city. However, some entrepreneurs became ardent supporters of Jugoslavism for a variety of reasons. Most vocally among them were John R. Palandech, a Serbian publisher, and Dr. Ante Biankini, a Croatian physician. Together these men nurtured the idea of Jugoslav unity as the most pragmatic choice to ensure the survival of their respective nations.

John R. Palandech was born Ivan Palandačić on September 23, 1873 in the small village of Luštica, near the town of Herceg Novi on the coast of the Adriatic Sea in Montenegro. In 1887, at the age of fourteen he followed his brothers and other men from his village across the Atlantic, settling in Fresno in 1888. In 1893, he visited the city of Chicago during the Worlds Fair. The experience was so profound that Palandech then decided to return and make Chicago his home. By decades end, the youthful Palandech arrived in Chicago and was quick to emerge as one the most prominent businessmen and leaders within the South Slavic community. On January 22, 1901, he married Catherine

---

Leonard, an American from a relatively prominent local family, with whom he had three children, Paraveska, Veronica, and Catherine. They were married in Louis Sullivan’s Russian Orthodox Holy Trinity Church on North Leavitt Street. Palandech began working as an assistant editor and eventually took over the duties entirely for the Serbian federation Jedinstvo Srpsko’s weekly publication where he edited and financed the paper entirely through his own efforts. In 1907, he launched a new weekly, Balkanski Svijet, which he renamed Jugoslavija in 1914 after the start of the war. This paper more than any other openly advocated the unification of all Serbs as well as all South Slavs together into a single state—a tension the remained unresolved in Palandech throughout his career as publisher and local leader until his death in 1959.6

Ante Biankini was born on August 30, 1860, in the town of Stari Grad on the island of Hvar, southeast of the city of Split in the Adriatic Sea. He was the youngest of four brothers born into one of the islands most prominent families. At a very young age, he was sent abroad to attend grammar and primary school in Italy and then to Vienna where he graduated from the medical school in 1886. Initially he practiced medicine in Vienna before returning home to Stari Grad. In 1893, after a brief courtship, he married Zlata Albrecht, the daughter of a preeminent publisher in Zagreb. In 1898, Biankini and his wife immigrated to Chicago to work for the prominent physician, J.B. Murphy. Biankini worked alongside Murphy at Mercy Hospital from 1898 until 1916. He also

---

6 The John R. Palandech Papers, Serbian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
served as head of surgery at Columbus Hospital and an assistant professor of surgery at Northwestern University from 1900 to 1915.\textsuperscript{7}

In addition to his career in medicine, Biankini was intimately involved with the Croatian transnational politics. In 1902, he assumed the position of editor for one of Chicago’s most popular Croatian newspapers, the weekly \textit{Hrvatska Zastava} (Croatian Flag). The newspaper was closely affiliated with the Croatian League of Illinois, a strong advocate of South Slav unification. Biankini embraced the ideology of Jugoslavism and became an ardent supporter of the South Slavic movement during World War I. In 1915, Biankini was elected the president of the Jugoslav National Committee in the United States and a year later to the presidency of the Jugoslav National Board in Washington. At the same time he served on the board of the Yugoslav Council in London. As the war took its toll financially on local immigrant institutions, Biankini personally funded the publication of the \textit{Hrvatska Zastava} from 1914 until 1916. In 1917, he changed the name of the newspaper to the \textit{Jugoslavenska Zastava} (Yugoslav Flag) and served as its editor until the end of the war in 1918.\textsuperscript{8}

Although the start of the Balkan Wars in October 1912 galvanized South Slavic opinion within the city, it was not the first time that the Slavic diaspora of Chicago came together in response to events back home. The formal annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 by Austria-Hungary triggered what became known as the Bosnian Crisis, pitting the Habsburg Empire against Russia and the Kingdom of Serbia. However, the crisis also


became a rallying cry for other marginalized Slavic groups within Austria-Hungary yearning for their own independence. The crisis offered the South Slavs of Chicago their first real opportunity for cultural and political solidarity within the city. Leaders representing the various immigrant communities felt the time was right to unify all Slavs within the Chicago under the banner of the United Slavic League. On Sunday, February 7, 1909, members from the city’s Bulgarian, Croat, Czech, Russian, Polish, Serb, Slovak and Slovene immigrant communities gathered at the National Hall in Pilsen. Although various Pan-Slavic organizations previously existed, the United Slavic League was the first to openly support national independence for all of the Slavic peoples within the Habsburg and Ottoman empires. Support for the league continued until the start of the Second Balkan War in 1913 as a territorial dispute between Serbia and Bulgaria erupted into open conflict. At this point, Jugoslavism became specifically a Serb, Croat and Slovene program supported primarily by working-class and socialist organizations in the city that had a history and habit of cooperation.9

Calls for South Slavic unity steadily grew in response to deteriorating conditions within Austria-Hungary and the precarious position of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans. For the Austro-Slavs, Hungarian cultural oppression and political persecution increasingly marginalized the South Slavs within the Habsburg Empire leading many Croatian and Slovene leaders to look beyond their borders for a solution. The existence of an independent Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria to their south provided a salient example of what was possible and supported calls for some form of South Slavic union. The fledgling nations of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro engaged the idea of a South

---

Slavic union was a pragmatic solution to safeguard their precarious position in the Balkan Peninsula. Eventually these complimentary strains of the thought merged with a growing call for self-determination throughout the region in response to the decline of imperial control in the region.

The appeal of South Slavic unity increased in Chicago as events back home once again came to a head. In May of 1912, the Hungarian government under the leadership of Khuen Herdervary once again suspended constitutional rights in Croatia and Slavonia in an effort to quell Croatian nationalist activities and reassert Hungary primacy. Croatians throughout Chicago organized protest meetings to give address the continual repression of Croats under Hungarian rule. As their fellow Slavs stood on the verge of war against the Ottomans, the Croatians of the city declared that the "struggle for peoples rights has just begun.” As conflict in the Balkans appeared increasingly inevitable, the Croats of Chicago openly supported the Central Committee of the National Croatian Union and immediately engaged in fundraising efforts for the ensuing national struggle in their Croatian homeland.10

In September 1912, the National Croatian Society gathered over a two-week period for its Eleventh National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri. During this meeting, they officially formed the Croatian National Alliance, an unabashedly radical national political movement that actively supported the South Slavic unification movement in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Its members signed a resolution condemning Habsburg rule, called for the union of all South Slavs within Austro-Hungarian controlled lands, and financial aid for political prisoners being held back in the

empire. This marked a significant rise in anti-Habsburg sentiment among the Austro-Slavic immigrant community in the United States. That year, the Alliance started publication of the Hrvatska Zastava (Croatian Star) as the official voice of the group. The popularity of the Alliance and its anti-imperial nationalist rhetoric immediately took hold among the South Slav diaspora as they quickly organized 110 alliance lodges throughout the United States.11

Despite what appeared to be a more vociferous and unified voice advocating South Slav unification within the Hapsburg controlled lands, the South Slav organizations throughout the United States remained divided regarding the outbreak of violence during the First and Second Balkan Wars. Many South Slavs looked to Serbia as the most obvious guarantor of South Slav independence and a natural counterweight to further German encroachment in the Balkans. Despite the fact that this position granted Serbia considerable support from the Great Powers at the conclusion of World War I, many within the South Slav foreign language press remained uncommitted to the Serbian cause during the First and Second Balkan War.

While a majority supported the efforts of their Slavic brothers and sisters struggle against the Ottomans, openly supporting Serbia, others remained skeptical of Serbia’s true intent. They were concerned how Serbia’s success effected their own national and unification movements. This skepticism appeared most obviously in a handful of Slovene and Croat papers such as Narodni List that criticized the Serbian government on the eve of the Balkan Wars as expansionistic and threatening to the South Slav cause within Austria-Hungary. Narodni List was published by Frank Zotti, a wealthy New

11 George J. Prpič, South Slav Immigration in America (Boston: Twayne Hall, 1978), 92.
York businessmen and president of the National Croatian Society (NCS). However, Zotti’s anti-Serb stance also stemmed from the fact that during the economic depression of 1907, the National Croat Society went bankrupt during his tenure as president. In addition as thousands of NCS members from across the country lost considerable money that they deposited in Zotti’s New York bank—a contemptible event thoroughly covered by the Serbian foreign-language press during the previous decade. Zotti was voted out of the presidency of the NCS in December of 1908, as the organization split into pro-independent and pro-monarchial factions. However, the Narodni List continued as his anti-Serb mouthpiece during the ensuing conflict in the Balkans. The newspaper openly criticized the new leadership of the NCS and vociferously denounced all South Slav diasporic activities deemed anti-Habsburg.\(^\text{12}\)

By November of 1912 as the First Balkan War settled in for a long bitter winter, the threat of a broader conflict loomed on the horizon. The growing power of Serbia and its potentially strengthened position in the region following the war gave Austrian foreign policy makers cause for concern. The non-Slavic paper Allegemeine Zeitung increasingly reported of the raising tensions between Herr von Ugron, the Austro-Hungarian minister to Serbia and his Serbian counterpart in Beograd and beyond. Serbian premier Pasič ordered that the Consulate Prochaska, the Viennese consul in Pristina be surrounded following an incident of Albanians firing upon Serbian troops entering the city from the Viennese consul building in Pristina. Despite demands by Vienna and the threat of the conflict spreading, Pasič held fast arguing that the exigencies of war justified his efforts.

\(^{12}\) Prpič, *South Slav Immigrants in America*, 90-92.
Vienna rumored that it would mobilize troops if no progress was made.\textsuperscript{13} Although war between Austria and Serbia was avoided, these events set the stage for the ensuing conflict that marked the end of imperialism and the unification of the South Slavs in the Balkans.

\textbf{The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913}

The steady retreat of Ottoman authority in the Balkans during the summer of 1912 made open conflict a forgone conclusion. By the fall, war was imminent. On the night of October 8, 1912, thousands of South Slavs were joined by hundreds of Greeks “unable to await the call to war” gathered at an ad hoc recruiting station set up at 748 Blue Island Avenue. Their numbers swelled as they were joined by thousands of South Slavs that had already enlisted to return home and fight in the upcoming war. Even larger crowds gathered to cheer and bid farewell to their heroes returning home to fight the “Turks.” Local leaders working in concert with politicians back home called for unity and support of "blood and nativity." The predominantly Eastern Orthodox men were led in prayer by Father Leo Pegas of Holy Trinity Greek Church who gave the departing troops an American flag to be carried into battle. The men eventually boarded trains at the Polk Street Station bound for ships on the east coast to begin their long trek home in defense of their native lands, while thousands anxiously waited, all too well aware that they may be joining their countrymen very soon.\textsuperscript{14}

The South Slavs and their Greek compatriots did not wait long. On October 18, 1912, King Peter I of Serbia declared that it was the responsibility of their small yet


\textsuperscript{14} “200 Greeks Depart for Balkan War,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, Oct. 9, 1912.
determined nation to wage a “holy war” on the remaining Turkish forces to free all South Slavs and “ensure a better future” for all who “shared joy and sorrow for thirteen centuries now.” The King ordered his army to defend their fellow South Slavs, promising “freedom, brotherhood, and equality” to all who have suffered for far too long. The Balkan Wars had officially begun as South Slavs and Greeks from Chicago and throughout America heard their homeland calling them back to defend their respective nations. However, despite their desire to return, many South Slavs were unable to do so as the onset of war created significant logistical problems that most were unable to overcome. Although many bitterly remained in the United States, they chose to actively participate by any means possible and support the war from abroad. Ironically, their inability to return home combined with the difficulties of living in an urban industrial environment increased their own ethnonational and working-class awareness.

As their Balkan neighbors mobilized for war, members of the Croatian and Slovenian diaspora were uncertain how to engage the opportunity that now presented itself. Although the majority of Croats and Slovenes in America desired independence from or at least autonomy within Austria-Hungary, few were willing to pin their hopes directly to the war. Despite some increased rhetoric supporting their South Slav “brothers” within various elements of the local foreign-language press, few called for direct support of the war—physically or financially—for fear of losing what little status


16 Ibid.

they now retained within the Habsburg Empire. Some were unwilling to remain idle as war raged in the Balkans and felt that independence from Austria-Hungary was only available through violent revolutionary action.

One such man was the Croatian, Stjepan Dojčić, a member of Hrvatski Savez (Croatian Alliance), a nationalist Croatian organization with branches throughout the United States. Dojčić was born in Ludbreg, Croatia, a small city northwest of Zagreb, near the Hungarian border. While in Ludbreg, he finished public school and became a painter's apprentice. He was voracious reader and became an ardent student of history and politics, which contributed to his fervent nationalist supporting Croatian independence. In 1909, limited economic opportunities combined with the deteriorating political conditions in his homeland provided enough cause to justify his emigration. In 1909, he arrived in the United States making his way through Chicago before finally settling down in Kenosha, Wisconsin. During his brief time in Chicago, Dojčić immediately became active in a variety of Croatian nationalist organizations in the city. After his arrival in Kenosha, he joined the local chapter of the Hrvatski Savez and quickly emerged as one of its leaders.18

As the war raged in the Balkans, Dojčić and his fellow Kenoshans refused to remain idle. They openly advocated violent action against Austria and Hungary, particularly in the form of assassination. The members of Hrvatski Savez raised $163 dollars to place an “editorial add” in the Hrvatska Zastava. Dojčić wrote a letter to the “Hrvati u Americi” to come together to free their homeland. He argued that Croatia had once been a free nation and that the thousands upon thousands of Croats and Serbs in the

American colonies should raise their glasses against tyranny, barbarism, and absolutism.\textsuperscript{19}

In the fall of 1912, Dojčić travelled to Croatia to meet with Stjepan Radić, leader of the *Hrvatska pučka seljačka stranka* (Croatian Popular Peasants Party).\textsuperscript{20} Dojčić announced to Radić that he was sent by a group of exiled revolutionaries from the Croatian colony in America to assassinate Baron Ivan von Skerlecz, the Habsburg’s imperial viceroy that governed in Zagreb. Despite Radić’s appeal to suspend what he felt was a foolhardy and dangerous plan—one that jeopardized the Croatian national cause—Dojčić preceded with his plans. On August 18, 1913, Dojčić opened fire on Skerlecz as he departed from Zagreb cathedral after attending a service celebrating the Emperor Franz Joseph’s birthday. Although wounded in his right arm, Skerlecz escaped with his life as Dojčić was arrested and tried in Zagreb on September 24 and 25, 1913. While on the stand, Dojčić brazenly confessed his crime and his intentions of furthering the South Slav cause within the empire. The trial became an international sensation as the American and European press increasingly discussed the implications of South Slavic political activity among its North American colonies. Some South Slavic papers within the United States applauded Dojčić heroic efforts and sublimely advocated the support of any activities that potentially benefitted their cause.\textsuperscript{21}

In response to Ivan Dojčić assassination attempt on Skerlecz and the sensational trial that resulted, Stjepan Radić published and released a “pamphlet” in the United


States, titled *Javna poruka hrvatskoj braći* (Open Message for our Croatian Brothers). Radić sent copies of his pamphlet to thousands of individuals and Slavic organizations throughout the United States, condemning Dojčić’s act as “political insanity.” He appealed to the Croatian diaspora to refrain from political violence despite the fact that many South Slavic newspapers back in the empire and throughout America were now advocating open revolution to remove Habsburg rule from the South Slav lands—a call that echoed Serbian efforts against the Turks during the previous two years.\(^{22}\) Despite his pleas, the Croatian diaspora hailed Dojčić as a national hero. The editors of *Znanje* proclaimed that the “young man was a patriot in the fullest sense of the word. What other dollar patriots were just talking about he was ready to put into action, in the unlucky land of Croatia.”\(^{23}\) Ultimately, Dojčić failed to ignite the revolution he desired as his fellow Croats, both at home and abroad, decided not to join the fray, but to bide their time for another opportunity.

South Slavic immigrants were not the only Americans actively engaging the war from abroad. One American woman found herself intimately linked to the fate of the South Slavs during the Balkan War. Madame Slavko Grouitch (Grujič), the wife of the Serbian charge d'affairs in London arrived in Chicago in mid-December, 1912, to appeal to the large South Slavic community to mobilize their resources and support their Serbian brothers in the war. Prior to her marriage, Madame Slavko Grouitch was Miss Mabel

---

\(^{22}\) Čizmić, "O Atentatu Stjepana Dojčica Na Komesara Ivan Bar. Skerlecza 1913”, 333-344.

Gordon Dunlop of Virginia. She arrived in the city in mid-December pleading her case for her “adopted country” as a guest of Cyrus McCormick taking up residence at his home on 50 East Huron Street. From there, she started a fundraising campaign at the bequest of her husband. She wrote frequent columns in the *Chicago Tribune*, describing the horrible events taking place in the Balkans and the decimation of Serbian forces on the battlefields. Her direct pleas were for support of the Red Cross as she sought aid only on behalf of the wounded and sick soldiers. Ms. Grouitch spoke at a fundraiser that day the National Home at 18th and Center to a capacity crowd of Serbs. She gave a speech titled “my Mission to the United States in the Interest of the Red Cross” where she declared that “every dollar sent from America to the brave people will carry with it the double blessing” of aid and support from abroad, redoubling the belief of the Serbians in their noble cause. She discussed at length the deplorable conditions of wartime life in Belgrad, the capital of Serbia, where thousands of wounded were improperly quartered and treated for lack of resources.

Despite these disadvantages, Serbian troops fought on despite the severe winter and inadequate clothing and munitions that put them at great disadvantage in their fight against the Ottomans. Outside of Beograd, in the cities of Kumanovo, Prelep, Uskub, Pristina, and Monastir, 50,000 Serb troops were under siege during the harsh winter, with little to no food and munitions. She relayed that their conditions were most dire and

---


appealed to local Serbs for help from the “outside” to “enable these poor, honest men” in their most desperate time of need.26

On December 2, 1912, an armistice was signed between the Balkan League—Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, and Serbia—and the Ottoman Empire as war unendingly ravaged the Balkans. Despite their mutual desire for peace, fighting continued throughout the winter and into the early spring of 1913. On April 13, 1913, the final battle of the war concluded with the siege and surrender of the Albanian garrison at Scutari by Montenegrin forces. Despite the cessation of hostilities, an uneasy peace settled across the region. Concerns regarding the distribution of the former Ottoman-controlled lands between the various members of the Balkan League created a new crisis as Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia all made claims on Macedonian territory. Bulgaria made clear its intentions to use force if necessary by relocating its forces to the disputed territories, while Greece and Serbia prepared for conflict, signing a formal military alliance on May 1, 1913, in anticipation of war with Bulgaria. By months end, the First Balkan War officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of London on May 30, 1913. The following day in Thesaloniki, Serbian and Greek officials reaffirmed their commitment to their mutual defense and divided Macedonia among themselves. On June 1, 1913, they signed the Greek-Serbian Alliance and prepared themselves for yet another war in the Balkans.

That same day in Chicago, Ante Biankini, a local Croatian physician and publisher gave a lecture at the Chicago Branch of the Hrvatska Jedinstvo (Croatian Unity), a nationally oriented fraternal organization. The lecture was titled "The Rebirth

and Ideals of a Nation." He spoke of the various Croats living in the city hailing from Croatia proper, Dalmatia, Istria, Bosnian and Hercegovina and how their lack of unity within America and at home prevented them from having any "influence" in the world around them. He discussed how their poor living conditions contributed to the stagnation of their nations ascendency and how this must be overcome for them to improve their lot. *Radnička Straža* lamented the Biankini's ignorance regarding the cause of these conditions, which were capitalism and industrialization.27

On June 25, 1913, newspapers throughout Belgrade ran the headline of “War is Begun” as conflict erupted between Serbian and Bulgarian forces along the Zletovo River. The Second Balkan War began as a conflict pitting Serbs and Montenegrins against their former allies the Bulgarians, who were now joined by Albanian troops as well.28 As the war raged on, the South Slav and Greeks immigrant community of Chicago again rallied to support their countrymen back home. Various business owners turned over their weekend receipts from immigrant owned newsstands, shoe shiners, and theatres to directly aid those involved in the conflict. By weekend, their efforts raised over two thousand dollars for a relief fund.29 Phineas B. Kennedy, a missionary in the region, wrote of the horrible conditions people endured during the most recent round of conflict to the Congregational Board of Missions of the Interior in Chicago. He appealed to all Chicagoans to raise money in aid to all that were suffering. Despite a temporary cease-fire between Serbian and Albanian troops, Kennedy reported the situation

---


28 "New Balkan War; Allies Now Foes" Cable to the *Chicago Tribune*, June 26, 1913.

29 “Sell Papers for Balkan War,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 9, 1913.
worsened as villages were burning throughout the contested lands between the two forces, with people starving. Kennedy argued that those most affected were non-combatants and victims of both forces. He lamented the condition of Serbs that were forced to flee in mass northward towards Serbia and the capital of Beograd. Despite these efforts to drive out the Serbs, some 60,000 Serbs troops pressed forward with cannons and machine guns to take revenge on Albanian forces, where in the Gostiva, Reka, and Kaza districts they burned over 8,000 homes and slaughtered over 11,000 Albanians. Some were burned in their homes while others were “surrounded with fixed bayonets” and slaughtered.\footnote{Help for Albania is Urgent Need, \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, Nov. 2, 1913.}

As the war ended, Serbia emerged the clear victor, doubling its territory and becoming the dominant local power in the Balkans. In spite of its numerous supporters, many observers were concerned with the ascendency of Serbia in the region and the precedent that the conflict set for the future. The Balkan Wars established the practice of ethnic cleansing in the region, where all combatants allowed irregular forces to burn, pillage and slaughter innocent civilians in the wake of troop movements. Such violent expeditions went unchecked by the embattled governments, setting a precedent that haunted the South Slavs for generations to come.\footnote{The Balkan Hell, \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, May 24, 1914.}

The conflict led to the dislocation of millions in the region initiating a period of emigration abroad that went unchecked throughout the rest of the decade. Most importantly, the conflict established ultra-nationalism as the dominant political ideology in the Balkans. Many turned to the idea of the “Serbian Theory” that with time, all the
non-Serbs living in newly Serbian occupied lands will become Serbs within 10 to 15 years. This idea greatly supported the nineteenth-century ideology of Greater Serbia espoused by Ilija Garašanin was now becoming a reality, as the Kingdom of Serbia gained lands with majority Romanian, Macedonian and Albanian populations. Especially in Macedonia, where ardent supporters of Greater Serbia argued that the Macedonians were simply “Bulgarized” but truly Serbian in nature, embracing Serb folk music and folk lore, and celebrating the custom of the slava, family saint day. The notion of a "Greater Serbia" more than any other reality threatened Austria-Hungary due to the large South Slavic population within its own lands and its annexation of Bosnia Herzegovina that maintained a substantial Orthodox population that increasingly identified itself with Serbian national cause.32

The Balkan Wars split the South Slav community of Chicago for most of the decade between nationalists and socialists. The South Slavic socialists lamented the fratricide that destroyed South Slavic unity in Chicago, especially considering the now contentious relationship between Serbs and Bulgarians.33

The First World War, 1914-1918

The impending sense of an unavoidable Pan-European conflict following the First and Second Balkan Wars further contributed to the exodus from southeastern Europe. Between 1913 and 1914, approximately 2,400,000 fled Europe for America in an effort to avoid military hostilities.34 America welcomed approximately 1,218,000 immigrants

---


33 Radnička Straža, July 30, 1913.

34 Kraut, The Huddled Masses, 18.
during the first six months of 1914 alone. Over thirty thousand were South Slav in origin, displaced over the previous two years of war. However, this flood quickly halted on June 28, 1914, as Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb nationalist, shot Archduke Franz Ferdinand igniting the World War I. For many, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the Habsburg throne, in the Bosnia capital of Sarajevo affirmed their decision to leave their homeland for the safety afforded them abroad. However, for others, these events spurred the desire to return home and fight for national independence or Greater Serbia.35

In the days following the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, riots spread throughout Bosnia. In Mostar, the capital of Herzegovina, over two hundred people were killed after fighting broke out between local Serbs and "Mohamedan” Croats. Fires started by Croatian mobs quickly spread throughout the city in an attempt to draw out the Serbs. Eventually Austrian troops helped the mob push back the Serbs to the Serbian quarter of the city.36 Meanwhile, half a world away, over 1,500 Serbs gathered at Best Hall on Clybourn and Southport Street in Chicago pledging their support to Serbia crying "Down with Austria! Long Live Serbia!" The hall echoed with the sound of "foot stomping, fist waving, warlike" Serbs calling upon each other to defend their homeland once again from foreign invaders. Speakers appealed to the predominantly working-class male audience in attendance stating that there was "work to be done" with "bayonet and rifle" instead of the tools they now employed in Chicago. Men within the hall waved hand made flags declaring "To Hell with Austria" as their leaders established committees

35 Kraut, The Huddled Masses, 18.

36 "Riots in Mostar: Two Hundred Die" Chicago Daily Tribune, July 1, 1914.
to aid the upcoming war efforts. Those that attended the meeting immediately
reached into their pockets and donated what money they had for the Red Cross. They
elected local businessman Ačim Lugonja as chairman of the Serbian War Committee
along with Dusan Popović, John Palendeč, John Vususić, Petar Scijacić and Peter
Sekutolović as the hall erupted in cheer.37

Although the death of Ferdinand was celebrated throughout the South Slavic
community as the opening salvo in their final fight for independence, many within the
Chicago colony lamented the use of violence. The socialist newspaper Radnička Straža
acknowledged the oppression of the Habsburg throne against the various Balkan peoples
it ruled. However, they expressed that it was a "pity" that they people of the Austrian-
Hungarian empire were unable to “free themselves in any other way than by the act of an
assassin.” In their minds, the end of oppression could only be brought about by the
“consciousness of people against which any tyranny is impotent.”38

On July 27, 1914, Michael Pupin, the famous Serbian inventor and Columbia
University professor, discussed his homelands possible entry into the war stating
“Americans must never forget that if there is a war it will mean that at last Servia is to be
given the opportunity for which she has been looking for the last 200 years. It will be the
beginning of her great war for independence, and every Serb stands ready to give all—to
fight to the death—to win the political freedom so long denied him.”39 Pupin went on to
state he had received a telegram from a Los Angeles-based Serbian fraternal organization

37 "Chicago Serbs Pledge Loyalty: Lives and Money Offered in Defense of Native Land at War
Rally", "Enlistment is Urged" Chicago Daily Tribune, July 30, 1914.

1, 1914.

committing over one hundred of its members to return to Serbia to fight for the freedom of “all Serbs, everywhere.”\textsuperscript{40} The following day a group of fifteen hundred Serbs paraded through the streets of Gary, Indiana, some thirty miles southeast of Chicago, singing national hymns in support of the war.\textsuperscript{41}

As Europe prepared for war, the South Slavic community in Chicago found itself at an important cross road. The precarious unity that existed within the Croat, Serb, and Slovene communities came apart as traditional working-class solidarity frayed under the weight of patriotic nationalist mobilization. Although most South Slavs supported the self-determination for their respective peoples, South Slavic socialists issued a call to rally against what they viewed as the inevitable slaughter of the poor and working class. On August 9, 1914, the Jugoslav Socialist Branch No. 6 held a meeting at National Hall on 18th Street to discuss their role in mobilizing opposition to the war.\textsuperscript{42} In an article titled “Against Bloody War to Jugoslav Workers in America” called upon all South Slavs in Chicago to oppose enlistment, fundraising, organize and educate opposition, and avoid the temptation of nationalism that seeks to tear apart working-class solidarity.\textsuperscript{43}

As the call to war grew louder throughout the city, the Radnička Straža rang out "Stand Up!  Stand Up!" calling out to its members to not be blindly led into a conflict that ultimately aims to advance the goals of the "Holy Trinity" of "capitalism, church and militarism.” They maintained that capitalism was the foundation of war and conflict, and

\textsuperscript{40} “Says Serbs Hope for War,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, July 27, 1914.

\textsuperscript{41} Powell A. Moore, \textit{The Calumet Region: Indiana’s Last Frontier} (Indiana Historical Bureau, 1959.), 379.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Radnička Straža} Vol. VII No. 36, August 19, 1914

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Radnička Straža}, Vol. VI No. 34, Aug. 5, 1914.
must be destroyed. The war simply represented another battle in the great struggle between labor and capital in America and abroad. They felt that now it was more important then ever for the South Slavs to rally around their cause to stop the spread of war and capitalism around the world. Opposition to the war among socialist working-class emerged almost immediately. On October 23, 1914, the Radnička Straža printed an open call to South Slav workers in Chicago to head to he polls to prevent America from "falling into the same Catastrophe" as Europe did that day. They called for direct protest via the ballot box in an effort to end militarism and capitalistic imperialism.

Throughout America, South Slavic colonies were divided in their opinion according to their own interests. Opposition to the war among socialist the working-class organizations was immediate. On October 23, 1914, the Radnička Straža printed an open call to South Slav workers in Chicago to head to he polls to prevent America from “falling into the same Catastrophe” as Europe did that day. They called for direct protest via the ballot box in an effort to end militarism and capitalistic imperialism. The Narodni List published by Frank Zotti supported the idea of an autonomous Croat and Slovene state within the Habsburg Empire, as espoused on the pages of his daily paper to some twelve thousand subscribers. Austro-Hungarian agents disseminating anti-Serb propaganda throughout the United States aided Zotti’s pro-Habsburg agenda. These agents also actively recruited for the Austrian army and engaged in a campaign of intimidation throughout South Slavic colonies. Families were threatened with “exile or

46 Ibid.
“death” and the confiscation of all property back home, if they failed to comply with the crown’s wishes. In opposition stood the Hrvatski Svijet (Croatian World) published in New York with a ten thousand strong circulation by Slovenian Franc Sakser. Sasker’s paper advocated the creation of a new South Slav state to be built following the defeat and collapse of Austria-Hungary, and the liberation of the South Slavs and other ethnics.

On the 10th and 11th of March, 1915, South Slavic leaders from all over the United States convened at the Hotel LaSalle in Chicago. Their goal was to create an organization that represented the entire North American South Slavic diaspora and to address their collective concerns. They came together under the leadership of the Croatian Reverend Niko Gršković from Cleveland and formed the South Slav National Congress (SSNC). The SSNC elected Gršković as its president and established a political platform calling for the “destruction of Austria-Hungary and the establishment of a South Slav state.”

Over the course of the two/day meeting, the leaders of the SSNC met with representatives of the London-based Jugoslav Committee to support and promote their efforts of creating a "Greater Jugoslavia" among the South Slav diaspora in Chicago and throughout the United States. The Jugoslav Committee, founded by Ante Trumbič, Nikola Stojandinović, and Ivan Meštrović, the famous Croatian sculptor, desired to become the official voice of South Slav exiles throughout the world. Both groups ultimately played crucial roles in negotiating the shape and form of the future Jugoslav

---

47 Eleanor E. Ledbetter, The Jugoslavs of Cleveland: With a Brief Sketch of their Historical and Political Backgrounds (Cleveland: Cleveland Americanization Committee, 1918), 9-10, 25.

48 Prpić, South Slavic Immigration in America, 94.

49 Ledbetter, The Jugoslavs of Cleveland, 9-10, 25.
state during the talks with the Serbian government in exile. Additionally, the Yugoslav Committee in London attained international notoriety due to Meštrović’s participation allowing for substantial funding from the affluent members of North and South America’s diaspora communities. This trend of funding exile political groups created to contest the existing state powers continued among the South Slav diaspora throughout the twentieth century.\(^{50}\)

The London representative Franck Potocnjak detailed the committee's efforts to influence Russian, French, and English diplomacy to support the war and to “unite South Slavs into one state.”\(^{51}\) The congress opened with a prayer by Serbian Reverend Don Niko Grskovič. The members of the congress adopted a resolution that stated that the South Slavs of Austro-Hungary suffered under the rule of two separate governing nations, one German and one Magyar, and that because of this fact it was in the best interest of all South Slavs to form a “union of all Jugoslav provinces of Austria-Hungary and Serbia.”\(^{52}\) The congress went on to acknowledge the existence of three distinctly historical nations of Croatians, Serbs and Slovenes.\(^{53}\)

Although supported by many within the colony, various working-class and socialist organizations questioned the true intentions of the Jugoslav League representatives. They were fearful that the South Slav lands of Austria-Hungary would merely be absorbed into an ever expanding Kingdom of Serbia rather than a federative republic. The nature of a future Jugoslav state was always the central question regarding

\(^{50}\) Ledbetter, *The Jugoslavs of Cleveland*, 9-10, 25.

\(^{51}\) *Radnička Straža*, March 24, 1915, Vol. 7, No. 15

\(^{52}\) Ibid.

\(^{53}\) Ibid.
the benefits of unification. Members that attended the congress retired to the Hotel Victoria following the first day of the congress to discuss various details of that were proposed. Although supportive of Yugoslav unification, some prominent members such as John Palandech, Don Niko Grskovič and Radosavljevič, expressed some concern and reservation towards the Serbian member of the Yugoslav league, Frank Potocnjak. The gathering also agreed to establish a Yugoslav Committee and elected Dr. Ante Biankini as their president. After passing the hat, they raised $1,740 to help fund future activities by the Yugoslav Committee for America.  

The South Slavic community in Chicago immediately embraced the plight of Serbia as the European continent was consumed by war. However, men were not the only members of the Chicago community advocating on behalf of the Serbian cause. In fact, a small yet extremely influential group of local and international women proved fundamental to fundraising and increasing awareness of the ill effects of war on the Serbian people. Having previously appealed to the local South Slavic community on behalf of her husband during the Balkan Wars, Madame Grouitch, now a common name among South Slavs in the city, made her way back to Chicago calling on all South Slavs within the city. As the war rolled into its second year, Madame Grouitch held a fundraising event at the Polish Woman's Alliance Hall on 1315 North Ashland Avenues to benefit the Serbian Red Cross. South Slavs from around the city attended donating clothing and medical supplies while local cultural groups performed the historical play "The Balkan Queen" and songs performed by Olga Miladoinvič's children’s choir.

---


In April of 1915, she returned to Chicago and petitioned the women of the city due to the suffering and precarious nature of average Serbian women and their families struggling to stay alive. She told of how she was naive that invading Austrian armies would not beset the same predations on the Serbs as the Turks during the Balkan wars because of their shared Christian heritage. This was not a war of religion as the previous conflicts, but one of national self-determination on behalf of all Serbs to live peacefully within a single, unified Serbian state. However, she shared stories of how drunken Austrian troops disregarded their christian morality and locked up old men, women and children in buildings before setting them ablaze. She spoke of how Orthodox clergy and schoolteachers were tortured to admit complicity in the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, some being “flayed alive.” Over the next few days, Ms. Grouitch delivered her message throughout Chicago’s immigrant community, speaking at Serbian and Russian churches throughout the city. She was also a guest of local Serbian businessmen that held receptions at Social Turner Hall and the ballroom at the Blackstone Hotel.56

The plight of Serbian women and children was brought to light again when famed suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst held a meeting at the Hotel LaSalle to raise awareness of the struggle of Serbian women and children. Her efforts came in response to published reports from Madame Kristič, the wife of the former Serbian Minister of Rome, spoke of atrocity committed against Serbian women and their daughters at the hands of invading Bulgarian troops during the retreat of the Serbian army. These two women both appealed

for American aid for the women of Serbia to prevent the risk of hunger and death from exposure to the harsh winter.\textsuperscript{57}

As the war raged on, support for the Serbian cause remained strong. Madame Grouitch, a continual supporter returned once again to Chicago to petition for aid. Now her husband, Slavko was serving as the Serbian secretary of war in exile. This time she arrived as a guest of John R. Palendech and his wife, staying at their home at 3215 Flournoy Street, after having escaped from Serbia on foot following the most recent German invasion of Serbian territory. Mrs. Grouitch served as Serbian liason for an Allied Bazaar and fundraiser to be held at the Collesium on January 11 through the 20th. While in the city, she also attended a supper dance at the Hotel La Salle and a midnight dinner sponsored by Gladys Insull, wife of the electricity magnet Samuel Insull.\textsuperscript{58}

Chicago socialists came out in mass for the allied bazaar to aid the war effort. In addition to Gladys Insull, Harriet Pullman, wife of George Pullman, also attended the event to support Chicago workers and troops in their effort. The event drew considerable international support. Madame Sonja Simić, a popular Serbian folk singer and daughter of the former Viennesse ambassador and was closely related to King Peter of Montenegro.\textsuperscript{59}

Despite growing support for the South Slav movement within the United States, the Great Powers inadvertently worked against the movement by alienating a considerable swath of the immigrant community. In an effort to gain Italian support in

\textsuperscript{57}“Mrs. Pankhurst to Speak, Chicago Daily Tribune, March 29, 1916.

\textsuperscript{58}Chicago Daily Tribune, January 6, 1917.

\textsuperscript{59}Chicago Daily Tribune, January 13, 1917.
the war, the Allied Powers concluded a secret Treaty of London in 1915 with the Italians in which they promised considerable territorial concession from Habsburg controlled lands to the Italians in return for their support in the war. These concessions included a considerable portion of Croatian and Slovenian lands that in turn led many Croats and Slovenes to abandon the goal of South Slav unification and remain loyal subjects to the Hapsburg crown. In addition, many Croats and Slovenes within the Balkans and among the global diaspora distrusted the motives the “self-appointed” Yugoslav Committee of London.

The SSNC continued to press for a unified South Slav State, despite the split among the Austro-Slavs into pro-Yugoslav and pro-Habsburg factions that contended with the existence of a pro-Serb contingent as well. At this time, they were unable to reach an absolute consensus as to whether or not a new Yugoslav state would merge with the existing Serbian state or be completely independent and created entirely from the former Austro-Hungarian South Slavic territory. Despite these obstacles, the SSNC opened an office in Washington D.C. to consolidate its efforts and became active participants in future negotiations.

Working-class socialist opposition against Biankini emerged almost immediately after he was elected chair of the Jugoslav Committee during the South Slavic Congress held at the Hotel La Salle. They argued that he did not speak for the majority working-class Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes, but only for the few elite members of the middle and upper class with the city. Biankini’s pledge of assistance and support of all South

---

60 Prpić, *South Slav Immigrants in America*, 94.

61 Ibid.
Slavs in the city on behalf of the American war efforts was deemed absurd and naive to most despite the support of the clergy and other members of the community.\textsuperscript{62}

However, an increasing rift within the South Slav working-class community developed between competing nationalists and Pan-Slavic "ultra-patriotic" Jugoslavs supporting the war, and their socialist pacifist brothers. The socialists identified two main currents within nationalistic patriotism that divided the South Slavs of Chicago. The first consisted of Croats and Serbs supporting the “fantastical” future nation of Jugoslavija that socialists feared was to be ruled by the “Russian Czar, the Serbian government and King Peter.”\textsuperscript{63} The second consisted of Croats and Slovenes that supported the decaying empire and ancien regime of the “old idiot Francis Joseph.”\textsuperscript{64} The socialists concluded that they were not sure which fate was worse.

The editors of the \textit{Radnička Straža} highlighted the hypocrisy of the South Slavs holding a “Friends of Peace” rally in the city during the waning days of August while pro-Jugoslav advocates called for increased support of the war. Specifically, they targeted Dr. Ante Biankinji who emerged alongside John Palandech as the most prominent pro-Jugoslav leaders within the city. They referred to Biankinji as the “Croatian Don Quixote” who has overextended his reach and promised too much to his fellow Croats in the city.\textsuperscript{65} They also accused Biankinji and the council of dividing rather than uniting the South Slavs of Chicago. Although Chicago's South Slav socialists


\textsuperscript{63} "Who are Worse?", \textit{Radnička Straža}, September 1, 1915.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{65} "Who are Worse?", \textit{Radnička Straža}, September 1, 1915.
“condemned German militarism” that led to the war, but they felt that the allies goals went beyond defeating Germany towards promoting Allied imperialistic aims. The socialists also found fault with Biankini’s argument that the conflict was a war between the "German and Slavic races." The South Slav socialists also felt that their brethren back home were paying for the misrule of “King Peter, his ministers, generals, and the rest of the bourgeoisie, pushed Serbia to the edge of ruin.”66 The author concluded stating “I fight for the life and progress, not for the death and ruin of my people.”67

South Slav socialists also opposed the war because they felt it was unjust and that it prevented working-class men from fight against the true evils of society— injustice, exploitation, sickness and crime. They refused to adhere to the refrain that "We fight for country and home. We fight to protect our wives and children" as they argued that it was the financial and business of the ruling classes, that they were really protecting. Moreover, for the working-class South Slavs, their homes and families were now in Chicago. In their minds, war and conflict abroad prevented the advance of working-class movement throughout the world and distracted the South Slavs of the city from fighting their real enemies within Chicago, the middle/class and corporate business elite.68 The socialists opposed most fundraising efforts to send aid abroad on behalf of the South Slavs fighting in the war. For Biankini and Paladech, they argued that it was the patriotic duty of all South Slavs to help however in any way possible.


67 Ibid.

During the initial years of the war, Serbia forces found themselves in a precarious situation fighting Austrian troops along their western border with Bosnia along the Drina River. Battles raged throughout 1914 and in 1915 as the Austrians established a foothold in Serbia proper, while the entrance of Bulgaria as into the war as a Central Power in October 1915 threatened from the east. Austrian and German forces marched across the Sava, Drina and Danube Rivers into Serbia. On Oct 14, Bulgarian forces joined the fray attacking from the Southeast, surrounding the Serbs, who were forced to retreat or risk being surrounded. As the Serbs fled southwest towards Greece, they mounted a last defense fighting in the Battle of Kosovo from November 10 until Dec 4, 1915. The site of Serbian martyrdom proved no benefit as Bulgarian forces overwhelmed the Serbs and retreated into Albania from where they were transported by allied forces to the island of Corfu. The Serbian Army withdrew from Serbia entirely in the face of the overwhelming Austrian and Bulgarian opposition.69

The conflict between Serbs and Austrians eventually spilled onto the streets of Chicago. On a cold November night, during the first week of November 1915, Austrian patron, Mike Elick, a regular at Eli Rakić's Serbian saloon on Chicago's south side at 8928 Strand, excessive celebration provoked a bloody conflict between him and Serbian patron Joe Openis who was hit by a flying beer mug inadvertently launched by Elick, celebrating Austrian victories in Europe. Openis was struck as he entered the bar and immediately drew a blade from his pocket, attacking Elick and wounding him in the stomach and the arm. The confrontation prompted a pitched battle between the twenty Serbian and Austrian customers with half full beer bottle flying through the air, injuring

almost all involved. As the melee drew to a close with no apparent victors, Chicago police arrived on the scene arresting 16 of the men involved while the remaining four were removed to the Bridgewell Hospital.  

The plight of the Serbs during the precarious autumn months of 1915 became the central topic of debate in Chicago. The Serbian Orthodox Church of Holy Resurrection at 1905 Fowler Street organized the Serbian Orphan Relief Society to collect funds to help children who lost their parents during the war. Reverend Sava Vovodič, the pastor of Holy Resurrection was nominated president as the group began a nationwide campaign among Serbs and other South Slavs appealing for help. They set membership at $2 and began immediately receiving cash as well as donations of clothing that was sent to the church on Fowler and shipped abroad through the Red Cross and other international agencies. 

On November 2, 1915, days before the “Great Serbian Retreat,” Balkan World editor, John R. Palandech wrote an editorial for the Chicago Daily Tribune. He responded to a previously published letter from a “Serbian patriot” attacking the man’s support for excessively chauvinistic nationalism that placed the Serbian cause above America. Palandech responded, “No man can be a Serbian patriot who dares not sign his name” and reaffirmed that all Serbs and South Slavs alike were “unhyphenated American citizens.” He maintained that support for the Serbian cause was predicated on “justice

---

70 “Serbs Battle Austrians on South Chicago Front,” Chicago Daily Tribune, Nov. 15, 1915.

71 Chicago Daily Tribune, Nov. 3 1915

and humanity” and the desire to help all men regardless of whether or not they were “Serbian or any other race.”

In an attempt to gain further support for the Serbian cause and show that Serbs shared the same ideals as those that founded America, Palandech spoke to a predominately immigrant crowd at the Masonic temple on November 12, 1915. Palandech claimed once again that he was an American first, despite his Serbian blood and support for the Serbian nationalist cause, and that any undesirable immigrants should not be allowed in America. He argued that only those of “strength of character, mind and body” should be allowed into America and that the nation had no room for “hyphenate Americans.” He declared that “The man who has not the courage to come out and declare to the world that he is an American first, even if against his own flesh and blood, is a moral coward and a traitor to the country of his adoption.” Palandech’s position elicited an immediate negative response from the packed with working-class men, socialists, and a handful of anarchist agitators.

Despite Palandech's vocal promotion of “non-hyphenated American-first” immigrant identity, he was unable to hide his affinity for Serbian nationalistic chauvinism. Although he argued that the plight of the Serbs was a moral issue—a common claim made by other activists—Palandech's words held fast to traditional Serbian nationalists claims. In an editorial to the Chicago Daily Tribune Palandech wrote that peace was unattainable until all land conquered by the Central Powers was returned to Serbia. He made no apologies for Serbian territorial expansion during the Second

---


Balkan War at the expense of other South Slavs. Palandech also supported the common belief that the Serbs were the victims of foreign aggression perpetrated by Austria, Bulgaria and Ottoman Turkey. He concluded only the “Restoration of Serbia and the union of all the Serbian people will make Serbia the dominating factor in the Balkans, and as Serbs have proven themselves the ablest, most consistent, and trustworthy democratic people, they should dominate the Balkans.”

Palandech also lamented the "theft" of Bosnia at the 1878 conference of Berlin that left the Serbian people divided. Palandech rejected any peace the denied freedom for all Serbs and "all the small and oppressed nations and people of the world." Palandech continued to send mixed signals throughout the war, stating that “Serbians in America, many of who have responded nobly to the call of their another country, will give themselves more willingly to fight for America because their duty is two fold. In fighting for America they fight also for their mother country and the freedom and civilization of the whole world.”

As the war began to shift in favor of the allies, and particularly in favor of the Serbian forces that regained a foothold in the Balkans in 1916, opposition to with the South Slavic diaspora increased. On November 29, 1916, approximately 615 delegates came together in Pittsburgh for another Congress speaking on behalf of half a million Slavs that now called America their home. Under the leadership of Rev. Gršković, the South Slavic National Congress approved a motion to recognize the Jugoslav Committee


76 Ibid.

in London as the “sole representative of all South Slavs from Austria-Hungary,” a decision that the Congress later regretted and lamented. Prior to the meeting, a group of Catholic priests from various Croat and Slovene colonies around the nation gathered in Pittsburgh on November 10, 1916. They issued a memorandum titled, “Our Declaration,” supporting and advocating the unification of all Croat and Slovene lands into a free, independent state. On December 6, 1916, the memorandum was printed by the *Narodni List* in New York and disseminated throughout the community.78

In “Our Declaration,” the Croat and Slovene clergy of America affirmed their “national, state, historical and written rights” within the Habsburg Empire. They issued their declaration in opposition to increased international support for a unitary Jugo-Slav state led by the Serbian monarchy. The declaration confirmed the historical relationship between Croats and Slovenes based on their shared faith and their shared cultural and political history within Austria-Hungary, and openly supported the Croatian Party of the Right. The declaration also condemned the Serbian “element” within Habsburg lands as servants of Croatia and Slovenia’s historical enemies, Hungary, Austria, and Italy. The priests also maintained that the Serbian fanaticism espoused in the statement of “Serbians all and everywhere” supported their claims of Serbs as natural enemies of the Croatian nation. Ultimately, their concern was that their distinct national and historical character was at jeopardy as a despite their Slavic brotherhood demanded that each remain “in his own house, in his own land, and within the scope of his own rights.”79

---

78 Prpić, *Yugoslav Immigrants in America*, 95.

The priests also expressed the obvious fear held by many of their countrymen both at home and abroad that the creation of a unitary Yugoslav state under a Serbian monarchy was simply recreating their present reality under the Habsburgs. In their opinion, rule under the Serbian crown did not guarantee Croatian independence, let alone equality within a new Yugoslav state. They openly acknowledged their fear of becoming part of a “Greater Serbia” and lamented the powerlessness and the precarious position of the immigrants they represented. They concluded that despite the outcome of the war, they held firm in their desire for “an Independent Croatian Nation along with all those rights possessed by a sovereign people.”

However, not all Croats and Slovenes shared the sentiment championed in the Catholic clergy’s declaration. In fact, many supported the international position that a unified South Slavic states was the best protection of the South Slavic nations against future Germanic or Ottoman aggression. The South Slavs diaspora held the first ever Jugoslav National Convention in Chicago in March 1915, as the movement for South Slav unity grew and spread across the United States supported such a position. By November 1916, their work culminated in the creation of the Jugoslav National Council and elected local Croatian physician, Dr. Ante Biankini as its president. The council attempted to unify South Slavs within America as while by electing Reverand Niko Grskovic, the Pastor of St. Paul's Croatian church in Cleveland to serve as the council’s acting director. He resigned from the parish to serve as the council and devoted all of his time to the Jugoslav national cause. In response to their efforts, the Habsburg Crown

---

placed a reward for the death of both men. Biankini also served as the treasurer for the Hrvatski Savez (Croatian Alliance) a national Croatian political organization working to support Croat independence from Austria.\textsuperscript{81}

The Jugoslav National Council quickly set about the organization of the South Slav colonies throughout the United States with the primary intent of "removing them from the influence of foreign, especially Austro-German agents.” More importantly, the worked to "prepare a census of all Southern Slavs,” to recruit them on "behalf of the industrial and military preparedness of the United States.” For these they turned to existing sokol's around the country to train “legions of volunteers” for service and active duty in the United States forces. The council also supported the American Red Cross and raised funds to directly assist the “war victims” back home and aid in the “struggle for the liberty of the people.” The Council's final goal was to educate both the South Slav diaspora on the realities of the conflict while also education the American public at large as to the shared values and aspirations that the South Slavs held alongside their fellow American citizens.\textsuperscript{82}

The formal declaration of war by the United States of America against the Austria-Hungary Empire ended South Slavic disunity and opposition to unification with the Serbian monarchial state into a new South Slavic kingdom. Before long, even the most ardent Habsburg loyalists found it impossible to continue supporting their birthplace for the land that they now considered home. By 1917, South Slav resolve throughout America stiffened as the United States inched closer and closer to entering the war.

\textsuperscript{81} Ledbetter, \textit{The Jugoslavs of Cleveland}, 9-10, 25.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
Although Jugoslavism was most popular among Croats, Slovenes, and Serbs originally from Austria-Hungary, the Serbian government soon embraced it and South Slavs outside of Habsburg-controlled lands as the progress of war created new geographical realities once only imagined. The cause for a unified South Slav state gained traction within Serb government, especially with Ljuba Mihajlović, the new Serbian minister in Washington D.C. who actively supported the efforts of both the American and London committees.

On July 20, 1917, Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić met with Ante Trumbić, the leader of the Yugoslav Committee in London that represented Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes living in Austria-Hungary, on the island of Corfu to determine the future of the South Slavs after the war. They signed an agreement, known as the Corfu Declaration, stipulating the territorial and political creation of a unified South Slavic kingdom representing all three nations that was to be organized as a democratic, constitutional and parliamentary monarchy to be ruled by the Serbian Karadžorđević dynasty. Apparently appealing to the prevailing winds of nationalist sentiment, the new state was to be named the awkwardly titled the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The agreement established a unified South Slavic monarchy, encompassing the independent kingdoms of Serbia, Montenegro, and all the South Slav lands under Habsburg control created a unitary state recognizing all three nations as equal with freedom of religion and universal suffrage. Unfortunately, many within the South Slavic National Committee and the diaspora it represented were deeply disappointed with the Corfu Declaration. Croats and Slovenes chaffed at the thought of replacing one monarch with another, especially a

---

Serbian King from albeit an independent nation, but one that they viewed with great suspicion and contempt—contempt of what they identified as an alien, byzantine people that pulled them further away from the Western European nations they so desperately sought to join.

Opposition to the Karadordević monarchy and the Corfu Declaration created a considerable crisis within the American South Slav community. Aware of the future importance the American South Slav diaspora would have in the formation of a new, unified “Jugo-Slav” state, the South Slavic National Committee (SSNC) and the Jugoslav Committee in London devoted themselves to educating the American exile community, alleviating the fears and critics that opposed the union. Reverend Gršković resigned his parish post in Cleveland to work in the Committee’s Washington D.C. office fulltime, while the London Committee enlisted one of its members, Dr. Hinko Hinković, to lead a lecture tour promoting the groups cause and rational for its decision among the South Slavic immigrant communities throughout the United States.84

On August 15, 1917, the Radnička Straža declared, “The Jugoslav people are surely happy! They will not slave for a stranger any more. They will not be obliged to travel over strange lands, but will peacefully and nicely live in their own country, which is united at last.”85 The paper discussed the Corfu Declaration and the dominant role of the Jugoslav Committee of London, a sore point for Chicagoan Ante Biankini, President of the SSNC. The Radnička Straža celebrated the day stating that a "new state was created under the name the Kingdom of Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes" that was to be

84 Prpić, Yugoslavs in America, 95.
85 Radnička Straža, Vol. XX, No. 36 August 15, 1917.
organized as a constitutional democratic and parliamentarian monarchy under the Karadorde dynasty. The Radnička Straža stated that they were “surprised to hear about the creation of the this new state.” The London Committee, led by Mr. Marjanović, who argued that all Yugoslavs should have a “say about the establishment of a new state.” More importantly, the Radnička Straža was more disappointed that the new state was to be organized as a monarchy rather than a “free and democratic state” with a “republican form of government.”

On January 8, 1918, President Wilson delivered his Fourteen Points speech to the United States Congress. Seated within the congressional gallery were Rev. Gršković and other representatives of the South Slavic National Committee. The South Slavs in attendance were dismayed with Wilson’s proposal of autonomy rather than outright independence for the South Slavs within the Austro-Hungarian empire. Soon the Committee and its members realized their weak negotiating position among the Entente powers and turned toward the London Committee’s proposal of unification with Serbia as the best hope of achieving independence from the Habsburg Empire.

Conclusion: The End of the First World War

By the fall of 1918, World War I was concluding. On September 29, 1918, representatives from Bulgaria became the first Central Power to sign an armistice at Saloniki. The Ottomans followed suit the following month on October 30, 1918, a day after Croats, Czechs, and Hungarians declared their independence in their respective capital cities. By November 3, 1918, the Habsburg Empire had collapsed, forcing Austria and Hungary to sign separate agreements ending the war. Finally, on November

86 Radnička Straža, Vol. XX, No. 36 August 15, 1917.
87 Ledbetter, The Jugoslavs of Cleveland, 25.
11, 1918, German capitulation signaled the end of open hostilities and the unofficial end to the Great War. The global conflict that started on the streets of Sarajevo on behalf of South Slavic nationalism was finally over. As the citizens of Europe rejoiced, the South Slavic people of the Balkans and their émigré populations faced the difficult reality of an unimaginable future. Although they welcomed the news, most understood that their struggle for a Jugoslav state in the Balkans had just begun. Most importantly, the Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes now realized that the final battle to be fought for South Slav independence was to be fought between them.

In the years immediately following the war, South Slavs participated in a transnational project to create something that had never before existed—a unified state for all of the South Slavic peoples of the Balkans. Native and exiled Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes took the lead alongside their fellow Bosnian, Montenegrin, Macedonian, and Dalmatian neighbors to lay the foundations for a the first Jugoslav nation. Nationalist mobilization in support and opposition of Jugoslavia reached a fever pitch as competing groups fought determine their own fate prior to the formal conclusion of the war with the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919.88 In Chicago, the Jugoslav cause was led by such men as Ante Biankini and John R. Palandeck who worked tirelessly to give their fellow Chicagoans a voice in the future Jugoslavia. Palandech summed up their shared position in the belief that the “Serbian, Croatian and Slovene people, all of whom are of the same

---

race and nationality, who speak the same language and have the same aspirations and ideals.”

---

89 The John R. Palandech Papers, Serbian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
CHAPTER SIX:
SOUTH SLAVIC UNITY & DISARRAY:
NATIONAL STRUGGLE IN THE FIRST JUGOSLAVIA, 1918-1941

I believe firmly that we, the Slavs—if aided by America in this difficult hour of our transition when we suffer physically and mentally from the ravages of war—will be able to construct quickly a United States of the Balkans... ¹

On December 1, 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was established through the unification of the Kingdom of Serbia and the recently liberated South Slavic lands of the former Habsburg Empire.² The new Jugo-Slav state was recognized as a constitutional monarchy under the Serbian Karađorđević family and committed to direct universal suffrage to elect a constitutional assembly for the new state granting freedom of religion, recognition of Cyrillic and Latin alphabets as equal under the law, and the establishment of local autonomy throughout the new kingdom. However, despite their consensus, representatives within the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes failed to determine a unitary or federal structure for their


² Ivo Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics (Cornell University Press: Ithaca & London, 1984), 214-216. On October 29, 1918, Slovene, Croat, and Serb leaders in Zagreb, Croatia declared the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, and established the National Council (Narodno vijeće) to govern in absence of Austria-Hungary. The council elected Anton Korosec, a Slovene as president, Svetozar Pribićević, a Serb, and Ante Pavelić, a Croat as vice presidents. Their goal was to unite all the lands of the former Habsburg Empire into their state to strengthen their position in negotiations with the Kingdom of Serbia. However, the regions of Vojvodina and Syrmia, pre-empted the effort by uniting with Serbia in November 1918. On December 3, 1918, the National Council formally declared the end of its authority over the former Austro-Hungarian lands as it officially recognized Belgrade as the new seat of government for all South Slavs in the Balkans.
state. More importantly, the issue of the future state borders remained in limbo, as they would not be resolved until peace talks in Paris scheduled for the following year.³

South Slavs across America eagerly awaited the start of negotiations in France. The end of war compelled many Croat, Serb, and Slovene communities to help their countrymen struggling in the aftermath of the conflict. On January 12, 1919, over sixty representatives from Jugo-Slav organizations throughout the United States gathered at the Hotel LaSalle in Chicago. Their goal was to raise fifty million dollars for Jugo-Slavs left starving and homeless throughout the Balkans by the war. The delegates appointed nine members to a committee to lead their efforts organizing South Slavic groups throughout the country collecting clothing, food goods, and money. The attendees named their new organization the Jugo-Slav Relief Committee and pledged to work in concert with the International Red Cross. The committee also enlisted the help of the Serbian ambassador to the United States to file their official charter in New York.⁴ The gathering in Chicago signaled the beginning of a new era for America’s Croat, Serb, and Slovene immigrant community. They carried with them a new name and international support to build their own nation amid the rubble and ash of the Balkans. The Jugo-Slav Relief Committee celebrated this penultimate moment, eager to engage the difficult task ahead.

Although the surrender of German forces in November of 1918 signaled the end of World War I, hostilities between combatants and allies alike failed to subside immediately. The South Slavs attempted to secure all that they had gained during the war and doubled their efforts to determine not only the character of their future state but also

---


⁴ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 13, 1919.
its size and shape. The collapse of Austria-Hungary allowed competing territorial claims on regions containing mixed ethnic populations. This was particularly the case in Istria and northern Dalmatia where significant populations of Italians lived alongside Croats and Slovenes. As members of the Jugo-Slav Committee in London joined representatives from Serbia at the negotiating tables in Europe, the contentious debate of dividing the spoils of war spilled across the pages of Chicago’s newspapers.

On April 23, 1919, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* published editorials supporting competing nationalist claims over the disputed city of Fiume, known as Rijeka in Serbo-Croatian, located on the Adriatic Coast as negotiations in Paris continued. Stephen Malto, a Chicagoan of Italian-American heritage wrote that American citizens of Italian birth and Italian extraction as well as Italians were at a loss to the position of the United States regarding their support for Jugo-Slav annexation of Fiume and the littoral region. He maintained that Italians had no concerns with Jugo-Slavia controlling territory inhabited by Jugo-Slavs. However, he argued that Italy did not sacrifice its soldiers in the war for their own right to govern themselves to be ignored. He expressed the common sentiment held among most Italian-Americans and Italian immigrants throughout the city that they were “ready to fight Jugo-Slavia” to guarantee their right to self-determination.5

In response to the Italian position, John R. Palandech, the well-known Serbian publisher, and ardent nationalist, supported the unification of all Jugo-Slavs and condemned what he deemed as “anti-Jugoslav Italian propaganda” posited by Malto and other Italian representatives in Chicago. He argued that Jugo-Slav unification into a

---

single state was a century old dream and that after having freed themselves from the
“clutches of German oppression” they refused to let any of their future countrymen be
trampled “under the heel of Italy.”\textsuperscript{6} Palandech pointed to the fact that tens of thousands
of Yugoslavs in America joined the “Serbian and army to help accomplish this great
ideal.” Although they had “no desire for a quarrel” with Italy, they demanded justice for
all Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes who sacrificed their lives during the war so that their “kin
may be united and live free.”\textsuperscript{7}

However, not all of the South Slavs in Chicago agreed with Palandech. Many of
the city's leading Croats and Slovenes expressed concerns regarding the proposed nature
of the future Jugo-Slav state. Contrary to Palandech's claims of century's-old shared
desires, cooperation among South Slavs in the Balkans and within the United States prior
to World War I was limited due to traditional antagonisms that kept the South Slavs
divided along competing religious, social, and political affiliations. In truth, upon their
arrival in America in the early twentieth century, Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes had very
little sense of themselves, let alone of each other's shared culture or past. Despite the
wartime consensus, many South Slavs were suspicious of emergent Jugo-Slav identity.
These concerns were primarily political as deep divisions remained between those
supporting unification and centralization under the Serbian monarchy and those in favor
of federalism and Croat and Slovene autonomy within a Jugo-Slav State. The Chicago
community was further divided between secularists and those of faith who were further
divided between Catholic and Orthodox affiliations. The existence of substantial

\textsuperscript{6} Jugo-Slavs vs. Italians,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, April 23, 1919.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
population of free thinkers and atheists added to the disunity while socialist and working-class groups locked horns. Despite their apprehensions and mutual distrust, the South Slavs of Chicago supported the pragmatism of the Great Powers intent on limiting German and Ottoman influence in the Balkans. They gave their blessing to the majority consensus in support of the negotiations in Paris the culminated with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919, five years to the date after the assassination in Sarajevo that started the war.\(^8\)

In December of 1920, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was officially recognized by the Great Powers following final negotiations resolving the territorial dispute between the Italy and the Jugo-Slav state. For many Croats and Slovenes, the central government in Belgrade's surrender of all of Istria alongside the cities of Fiume (Rijeka) and Zara represented the first betrayal of the new state against its minority populations. Many were concerned that they simply traded one oppressive regime for another. It immediately became evident that the vision for South Slavic unification remained divided between the two primary actors in the Jugo-Slav struggle. Serbs on the one hand simply considered their unification with the former Habsburg Slavs as the end of their century-long struggle for national unity that started in 1804 with the first Serbian Uprising against the Ottomans. They had achieved all that they had set out to do by consolidating all Serbs outside of Serbia into a single state. The Croats on the other hand

insisted on maintaining the uniquely autonomous status they had enjoyed during centuries of Hungary and then Austria suzerainty.\footnote{Jelavich, \textit{The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920}, 302-304.}

As the newly minted Jugoslavs of Chicago rejoiced at the creation of their new state, their celebrations were tempered by increasing anti-immigrant sentiment and restrictive immigration policies in the immediate post war period. Following the conclusion of World War I, Yugoslav immigration to the United States declined among the initial group of Austro-Slavs who instead migrated towards South America and Canada. However, the postwar period all saw an increase in South Slavs from the former Kingdom of Serbia and the Montenegro, that were now incorporated into the unified South Slavic Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.\footnote{Joseph S. Roucek, "The Yugoslav Immigrants in America," \textit{The American Journal of Sociology}, Vol. 40, No. 5 (Mar. 1935), 610.} In 1921, there were approximately 635,000 Jugo-Slavs in the United States comprised of approximately 350,000 Croats, 195,000 Slovenes, and 90,000 Serbs. Nearly one-sixth the entire population resided in Illinois.\footnote{M.S. Stanoyevich, \textit{Jugoslavs in the United States of America}, (New York: Jugoslav Section of America's Making, Inc. 1921), 17.}

The postwar period also marked an increase in return immigration as many South Slavs viewed the creation of an independent Jugo-Slav kingdom optimistically. They felt that their union represented an opportunity for them to find similar economic prosperity to that which they experienced abroad.\footnote{Znanje, Vol. IV, No. 38, December 24, 1921. See also Roucek, "The Yugoslav Immigrants in America," 610.} However, they were hampered by the economic limitations that induced them to immigrate in the first place that had grown considerably
in their absence, ultimately preventing their return. In addition, the spread of industrialization in America coupled with Americanization, restrictive immigration law and the questionable conditions back home made staying in the United States an easier and at times effortless choice to make.\textsuperscript{13}

The Quota Act of 1921 drastically reduced South Slavic immigration to the United States as it limited immigration to approximately three percent of the foreign-born population attained on the 1910 census, thus favoring the larger, more established groups from Western Europe that arrived prior to the South Slavs. Anti-immigrant sentiment grew substantially in the years immediately after the war propelled by wartime propaganda and rising labor unrest. Prior to the war, the absence of a collective political will and a lack of support by industry greatly lessened nativist sentiment as the various groups of “new immigrants” were seen as vital components of the American industrial machine. During the interwar period, South Slavic immigration to the United States decreased in size but continued to be influenced by the primary motivating factors of economic opportunity and the desire for political freedom.\textsuperscript{14}

Unity or Disarray

The South Slavic struggle in America mirrored the increasing political disarray back home in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The unification of South Slavs in Chicago proved difficult as proponents of competing nationalist ideologies struggled to define the nature of the new state. The multidimensional conflict pitted supporters of Unitarianism hoping to erase all national differences and create a truly

\textsuperscript{13} Radnik, Vol. VIII, No. 95, August 8, 1925.

singular Yugoslav identity against proponents of Greater Serbiamism that dominated
the central government. These in turn were opposed by Croat and Slovene nationalist
intent on maintaining their traditional and historical autonomy within the new state
structure. However, in the end the Serbian King Alexander Karadžorđević established
Serbian primacy and hegemony within the state with the passing of the Vidovdan (St.
Vitus Day) Constitution enacted on June 15, 1921. The passing of the constitution ended
any hope for national equality within the kingdom, setting the stage for the nations’
inevitable demise.15

As political dissension spread throughout the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and
Slovenes, local tensions within Chicago increased culminating with the murder of local
Croatian nationalist Anton Basetić. On the morning of November 5, 1921, Basetić left
his home at 140 West 31st Street to pick up his mail that he had delivered to an office at
2927 Wentworth Avenue. Upon his arrival, Marie Pullano, a nineteen year-old clerk
working at the office informed him of two suspicious men loitering across the street.
Basetić claimed that there was nothing to fear. The men entered the office and fired six
shots at Basetić, immediately killing him. Basetić’s murder was viewed by the Croat and
Slovene diaspora of Chicago as an attempt to force submission to the will of the dominate
Serbian political machine in the nation opposed to Serb hegemony within the newly
unified Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Basetić was openly anti-Yugoslav
throughout the war and considered the unification of South Slavs into a single state as the
expansion of Greater Serbia and the further subjugation of the Croatian people.

Additionally, the Catholic Basetić had no desire to support a nation ruled by an Eastern

Orthodox King. As the Jugoslav Congress gathered it the Hotel LaSalle on March 10 and 11, 1915, Basetić led 3,000 Croatian émigré protestors to a massive rally on Wentworth Avenue.16

Basetić moved around considerably during his first decade and a half in America. During this time, he found employment with Croatian newspaper, Radnička Obrana (The Workers' Defense) as an editor and manager moving from Salt Lake City to Duluth, Minnesota. In 1916, the publication of the paper stopped and Basetić moved to Chicago where he purchased the Hrvatski Rodoljub (Croatian Patriot) shortly after his arrival. Despite what appeared to be a consensus among most South Slavs during the opening years of the war, a profound rift emerged among the Croatian diaspora of Chicago in regards to the future of their Croatian homelands. The Croatian priest, Ivan Stipanović established the national journal Rodoljub (Patriot) in 1915 in Chicago. Almost immediately, he changed the name to the Hrvatski Katolički Glasnik (Croatian Catholic Messenger), which quickly came to represent the voice of the Croatian Catholic clergy throughout the United States. The paper quickly became associated with other Croat nationalist papers and was published out of 2979 Wentworth Avenue. Basetić was chosen editor due to his work with the Radnička Obrana (Workers Defense), which in response to political pressure in the city changed its name to Narodna Obrana (Peoples Defense). The Croatian community of Chicago considered the murder of Basetić as the work of the Black Hand, the Serbian nationalist organization.17


17 Ibid.
For the next few years, tensions throughout Chicago's South Slavic community increased. On February 11, 1922, the editor of the Croatian paper Znanje received a death threat from two Serbian readers. The readers claimed that the newspaper was excessively critical of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and that it assailed the “Jugoslav state and the Jugoslav people” in an article that appeared in a previous issue. Although the editors did “assail the state,” they refuted attacking the Jugoslav people. The editors felt that the workers who threatened them were victims of misplaced patriotism expressed in the various Serbian nationalist papers in the city that claimed Jugoslavia was the "best, most powerful, and the greatest state in the world."18

Conflict was not limited between Serbs and Croats. In fact, during this time, various South Slavic immigrant communities found themselves at war with one another. On September 30, 1922, Slovenes in Chicago gathered at St. Stephen’s church hall in opposition of the Slovenian socialist paper Prosveta, an organ of the Slovenian Benevolent Union. The members wrote a letter to the Chicago Daily Tribune supporting allegations of the papers anti-American writing to ensure that it did not speak for the majority of Slovenes within the city. They proclaimed their loyalty to America.19

As the political situation in Jugo-Slavia worsened, the South Slavs of Chicago settled in for a prolonged and tenuous peace between themselves as each group contended with their own internal issues. Although tensions between secularists and Catholics within the Slovene community were not new, they had taken on a more virulent

19 Chicago Daily Tribune, October 8, 1922.
tenor as the issue of one's “Americaness” increasingly became called into question.

Following the war, fear of socialism and communism spread throughout the United States bringing with it reinvigorated anti-immigrant nativism that reached its peak with the passage of the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924. The law built upon the decades old assumption that southern and eastern European immigrants were of considerable lesser racial quality than earlier immigrant stocks. More importantly, nativists assumed that the various peoples of the Balkans were so completely alien in comparison to other groups that they were unable to successfully assimilate into American society. These ill-conceived assumptions culminated with the designation of the Jugoslavs and all of their Slavic brethren as racially inferior nations in the national origins quota law that brought the era of immigration from southeastern Europe to a halt.\textsuperscript{20}

Despite growing tensions back in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, many South Slavs in Chicago truly considered themselves as Jugoslavs and continued efforts to unify all of their fellow countrymen living in the city. One such effort was embodied in the long-term desire to build an independently owned hall for the South Slavic community of Chicago. As early as August 12, 1909, the Croatian workers associated with the \textit{Radnička Straža} held a public meeting at the National Hall on 18th and Center Avenue to confer to the all working-class South Slavs the need and benefit of banding together to build a Croatian National Center. They appealed to all Croatian educational and political associations as well as other South Slavic national groups. The

\textsuperscript{20} Joseph S. Roucek, “The Image of the Slav in U.S. History and in Immigration Policy,” \textit{American Journal of Economics and Sociology}, Vol. 28, No. 1 (January 1969), 29. The Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act, built upon the Emergency Quota Act of 1921, which limited incoming immigration to approximately to three percent of the total immigrant population based on the 1910 Census. This act limited immigration from southern and eastern Europe while allowing greater numbers of Western Europeans entrance.
organizers felt it was their “duty to awake” the colony in Chicago and to unite the disparate Croatian groups into a single national structure through the building of a shared South Slavic Hall. On November 23, 1924, the Croatian community of South Chicago held a formal dedication for the opening of their own hall on Commercial Avenue. Despite their preoccupation with political events back home, the Croats of South Chicago made an appeal to all of the cities South Slavs claiming that their hall was open to “all fraternal and cultural groups.” However, this decision was not solely based on their support of South Slavic “brotherhood and unity” but rather the pragmatic issue of the hall being financially beneficial to their organization.

Following their lead, the independent Croatian society Bratstvo (Brotherhood) purchased a building known as the National Hall in October of 1927. Despite renaming it the National Croatian Center, Bratstvo dedicated it to "the use of all Jugoslavs." However, their goal was to “realize the ideal to serve and honor the whole Croatian colony in Chicago.” Despite the confused nationalist tones, the building at 18th Street and South Racine was made available to all South Slavic organizations in Chicago’s near West Side. Within the building Bratstvo erected a stage and had specific areas reserved for various clubs to conduct meetings, have educational and political lectures and be used for personal recreation and family celebrations. The national hall opened its doors on October 23, 1927.

---

22 “Dedication of National Croatian Hall in South Chicago,” Novi Svijet, Nov. 13, 1924.
24 Ibid.
The Rise of Croatian Nationalism

Despite all of their efforts to create community based on a shared Jugo-Slav political identity, the South Slavs in Chicago remained helpless to stop the growing discontent back home in the Balkans. On June 20, 1928, Puniša Račić, a member of the Serbian radical party assassinated the popular Croatian politician Stjepan Radić on the floor the National Assembly in Belgrade. The assassination triggered a wave of discontent throughout the Kingdom and the American South Slav diaspora as most resigned themselves to the fact that Jugo-Slav unity was nothing more than an imaginary ideal to which they were unable and unwilling to aspire. Stjepan Radić was born in in Desno Trebarjevo, Croatia on June 11, 1871 and founded the influential Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka (Croatian Peasant Party or HSS) in 1905. On November 18, 1918, he gave a rousing speech in to the Central Committee of the National Council in Zagreb, denouncing unification with the Kingdom of Serbia. He proclaimed narodno jedinstvo a myth and stated that a shared language alone was unable to bridge the irreconcilable positions of centralism and federalism. Ultimately, Radić's death resulted from his growing influence among Croatian peasantry and his vocal opposition to Serbian hegemony within the new state. His assassination created a permanent rift between Croat, Serb, and Slovene nationalists and supporters of Jugoslavism that ultimately led to the end of the first unified South Slavic state.25

On the evening of July 13, 1928, Croats from throughout Chicago gathered at National Sokol Hall at 1903 South Racine for a mass meeting to protest the assassination of Radić, the “shooting of peasants and workers on the streets of Zagreb,” and the

---

ongoing persecution of Croat “nationals by the unfriendly regime in Yugoslavia.” Speaking to the capacity crowd, Frank Borić stated “Brothers, fellow workers! Your brothers and sisters in the old country are savagely persecuted, the prisons are full of your best representatives, unbearable terror is a daily occurrence, people are suffering acutely, they are starving, while the present regime is preparing open military dictatorship and more misery for the people.”

Borić declared, “You must show with your voice that you are on the people's side in their struggle between life and death. Therefore come to the meeting, learn what is taking place in your own fatherland, raise you voice in protest against unheard of brutality, which is the lot of your brothers in the old country.”

On August 19, 1928, delegates representing every Croatian fraternal, benevolent, and worker-class organization in South Chicago gathered at the Croatian Hall on Commercial Avenue to discuss the assassination of Radić and to celebrate his life and devotion to the Croatian people. That day they decided to directly respond to the political situation back home by forming their own branch of the Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka in Chicago. The increasing nationalist fervor drew support from throughout the regions Croatian communities, bridging traditional religious and class divisions, establishing the Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka of Chicago as a dominant political and cultural force within the city.

On December 20-22, 1928, the Croatian People's Peasant Party of Chicago screened a film of their fallen leader titled, "Stephen Radić in Life and Death" that traced

---

26 Radnik, July 13, 1928
27 Ibid.
28 Hrvatski Glasnik, Vol. XX, No. 33, August 19, 1928.
his most recent political activities and the response to his assassination back home in Jugoslavia. The movie was screened at the Czech-Slovak American Hall at 1438 West 19th Street on December 20-22 and at the Auditorium Hall at 30th and South Wells.\textsuperscript{29}

Over the next few years, the People's Peasant Party of Chicago became increasingly active establishing their headquarters at the Croatian National Sokol Hall at 1903 South Racine in February of 1929.\textsuperscript{30} On March 16, 1930, the Central Committee of the \textit{Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka} in Chicago held an open mass meeting where they unanimously adopted a resolution to be sent to the League of Nations. Their resolution called for the “restitution of an independent Croatian state, within the boundaries of its undisputed national and political territory on the basis of self-determination to safeguard world peace.”\textsuperscript{31} They also demanded the release of Dr. Vlatko Maćek, the Croat leader that was imprisoned in Belgrade and the investigation of police atrocities committed against Croats being held and tortured throughout Jugoslavia. In addition, the party began to raise money under the auspices of the America Croats for Croatian Freedom to support the activities of the Central Executive Committee of the \textit{Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka} in Jugoslavia.\textsuperscript{32}

\textbf{Jugoslavs in Name Only}

While the conflict within the Slovene foreign-language press and the establishment of the \textit{Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka} permanently divided some members of the South Slavic community in Chicago, others continued to support the idealism of their

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Novi Svijet}, Vol. VI, No. 21, December 20, 1928.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Novi Svijet}, Vol. VI, No. 28, February 7, 1929.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Hrvatski Glasnik}, Vol. XXII, No. 13, March 28, 1930.

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Hrvatski Glasnik}, Vol. XXII, No. 22, May 30, 1930.
flawed Jugo-Slav State. A proxy war was fought throughout the South Slavic foreign-language press in Chicago in response to rising tensions in the Jugo-Slav Parliament, initiating a series of relentless attacks on one another. The most obvious divide remained between socialist and working-class papers Radnick and Radnička Straža pitted against their more particularistic nationalist counterparts, Hrvatski List, Danica and Hrvartski Glasnik, which increased attacks on those they deemed socialist agitators.33

Despite these problems, other South Slavs worked in concert to promote bratstvo jedinstvo (brotherhood and unity) within Chicago. On Thursday, August 30, 1928, the National Committee of the Jugoslav Section of the Chicago World Fair invited all Jugoslav organizations within the city to attend a mass meeting in the National Hall at 18th and South Racine. They gathered to discuss the dedication of Croatian sculptor, Ivan Mestrović’s sculptures to be installed at Congress and Michigan Avenue. Franklin Ferguson Monument Fund via the Art Institute of Chicago donated the statues to the city.34 The dedication of the Mestrović’s sculptures represented the penultimate achievement of Chicago's South Slavic community as their disunity at home.

Less than a year after celebrating this momentous occasion, the Jugo-Slavs of Chicago once again fell victim to the political upheaval in their homeland. On January 6, 1929, King Alexander single-handedly brought the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes to end by declaring the royal dictatorship of the new Kingdom of Jugoslavia. The King seized absolute control of the nation and banned all ethnic, religious, and

33 Radnik, January 24, 1928.
34 Novi Svijet, Vol. VI, No. 5, August 30, 1928.
nationally affiliated political parties. He then formally suspended the National Assembly and annulled the Vidovdan Constitution enacted in 1921. Most importantly, the king abolished all previously existing national boundaries dividing the kingdom's six constituent nations—Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia—into nine administrative units or banovinas divided geographically by the nation's major rivers. The King maintained that his actions were justified in response to political paralysis resulting from the increasing virulent ethnonational politics and the need for all South Slavic peoples within the kingdom to identify as Yugoslavs. The establishment of a Yugoslav state by name ironically signaled the death of Jugoslavia as nation where all South Slavic people were truly united. The King’s reorganization of the kingdom into banovinas not only ignored historical precedent, but egregiously gave Serbs numerical superiority in over seventy-percent the new administrative units. Regardless of his intentions, the King’s actions doomed the Yugoslav state to failure and set events in motion leading to his own demise.35

Suddenly, the South Slavs found themselves at another important crossroad as they officially became Yugoslavs by name while their internally beleaguered nation appeared on edge of collapse and their collective community in Chicago increasingly unraveled. Throughout the city, undeterred ideological warriors did everything possible to salvage their imagined identity and less-than-ideal nation. On November 2, 1929, representatives from all over America convened at the Morrison Hotel in Chicago to meet with Dr. George Kolombatović, the recently appointed Yugoslav consul to Chicago. Kolombatović was the first official of the newly minted Kingdom of Jugoslavia to visit

the historically important South Slavic community of Chicago. His arrival coincided with growing tensions within the Jugoslav community and their discontent over King Alexander’s dissolution of parliament, banning of political parties, and reorganization of Jugoslavia earlier that year.  

Efforts to rally Jugoslav Chicagoans continued as supporters of the kingdom remained hopeful that time healed all wounds. On July 3, 1930, a diverse gathering of doctors, engineers, priests, and businessmen were joined by the rank-and-file members of the working-class at the Morrison Hotel in Chicago to confront the historic crisis of national unity besieging the first Jugoslav state. Representing the three largest and most politically active of Yugoslavia’s constituent national groups, this motley diaspora of eternal optimists came together in a show of solidarity and to prove that Jugoslavism remained a viable. They declared that “Our greatest ideal of strong unity among Serbians, Croatians and Slovenes never has been accomplished” and that restoration of national unity depended on the formation of a Jugoslav Club in Chicago.  

The paradox of this moment did not go unnoticed by those gathered in Chicago as their nascent amalgamated supra-nation came to a fatal intersection in its brief and tumultuous history as King Aleksander Karađorđević established the monarchial dictatorship of the Kingdom of Jugoslavia at the start of the previous year. As ethnonational tensions materialized at home and abroad, this first experiment in South-Slavism was quickly dashed against the hills of Balkan real politik before it was fully embraced by all of its supporters.

---

36 Chicago Daily Tribune, November 3, 1929.


ethnonational groups, most of whom remained unknown and unnamed but nevertheless fell underneath the shadow of Jugoslav supranationalism.39

The members of the Jugoslav Club of Chicago who made their way home from the Morrison Hotel that evening were not the only elements of the South Slav diaspora in the city struggling with national identity. However, the Serbian controlled governments intransigence during the postwar decade increasingly alienated their Croatian opposition, fueling rising nationalist and secessionist sentiment, and preventing any true consensus emerging within the city. This ongoing conflict and the political impasse stirred Chicago’s Jugoslavs, but offered limited opportunities for rapprochement. Although tensions failed to subside, a shared Jugoslav identity seemed remained deeply rooted within the community. However, this identity was not articulated in a single, universal form but rather appeared in various guises depending on the character and purpose. Despite the political violence that erupted back in the Yugoslav capital and the suspension of the kingdom’s constitution, many Chicago Jugoslavs rallied around their nascent yet tragically flawed state in an attempt to save something of their imagined community.

The events of the homeland also reinvigorated the socialist and working-class Jugoslavs that felt betrayed by the war, its outcome, and the imposition of Alexander’s dictatorship on their homeland. In response to increased nationalist and fascist mobilization at home in Chicago and back home in Jugoslavia, workers in Chicago declared on April 11, 1931, the creation of the Jugoslav Workers Council of Chicago.

39 The concepts of supranationalism or supranational denote transcending established national or ethnic boundaries or spheres of interest such as "a supranational economy" or "supranational federations" as identified with in the conceptual structure of the European Union. See The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (Springfield: Merriam Webster, 1997), 728.
They elected local leader George Mašlac as president and Ivan Jurinić as secretary. They felt that with nationalist mobilization and fascism on the rise at home and abroad that the workers of Chicago needed to double their efforts. They argued that the “Fascist-Nationalist movement... artificially created” divisions among the Jugoslavs preventing them from uniting in Chicago. They stated, that “we don't hate our birth place but we don't want the agents of the regimes to spread hatred and slavery under the disguise of ‘fatherland' or any other disguise.” The council argued that they supported “democracy through the government of the people, for the rights of man, for the participation in government of workers of all lands.” The council supported the creation of a Balkan federation that included Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Bulgaria as well, harkening back to the Balkan League of 1912. Their call to action came in response to the activities of Jugoslav diplomatic activities within Chicago and throughout the United States that were “spreading propaganda” to induce Jugoslavs in America to return home and fight on behalf of the Karađorđević regime. The council aimed to coordinate the efforts of all working-class Jugoslav “educational, political, and fraternal societies” within the city to prevent the Jugoslav regime from continuing any “action that sows discord among our people here.” They concluded that they supported the true union of all Jugoslavs and stood against anyone that attempted to “disguise” or “spoil our unity.”

Jugoslav Day, 1933

Over the next few years, the Jugoslav Club of Chicago continued to actively support the Karadorđević regime. This was in part due to the absence of any expectable

---


41 Ibid.
alternative to the dictatorship and growing concern over the rise of fascism in Europe.

On November 27, 1932, the Jugoslav Club of Chicago organized a charity ball held at the Hotel LaSalle. The ball featured performances by some of the most respected Croat, Serb, and Slovene musicians and singers throughout Chicago as traditional folk music, dancing, and “colorful” customs were on full display, intended to rally the Jugoslav colony of Chicago. More importantly, the JCC used the event to raise money to be “equally divided between Croatian, Serbian and Slovenian unemployed poor families.”

After 1930, the Jugoslav community became increasingly fragmented. By March 12, 1933, resentment towards the dictatorship of King Alexander spread throughout the Serbian community as well. The monarchy’s efforts to subdue nationalist passions among Bosnians, Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes failed miserably as mass arrests of nationalist party leaders throughout the kingdom led to a vocal protest and the brief unification of Jugoslavs opposed to the King's rule. Unfortunately, the disparate visions of each national group failed to create a unified vision of change for the Jugoslav remaining in the Balkans. This fragmentation was mirrored in Chicago as various South Slavic groups openly supported competing visions for the future of Yugoslavia. Slovene discontent manifested itself with the creation of the Slovenian United Front. On March 19, 1933, Slovenes gathered in Pilsen at the Sokol Hall on South Ashland Avenue. They declared their unity and opposition to the “military Fascist regime of terror in

---


Jugoslavia.” Their ranks quickly swelled as anti-Jugoslav sentiment spread throughout Chicago. The Slovenian United Front Committee elected forty-five delegates from a half-dozen disparate Jugoslav organizations to represent their interests within the city as well as back home.

Jugoslavs throughout the city continued to rally despite the increased activity of anti-Kardorđević groups. The largest show of Jugoslav unity came on July 2, 1933 during the celebration of Jugoslav Day organized by the Yugoslav Committee of Chicago, headed by Serbian publisher John R. Palandech. The festivities started at the foot of Mestrović's statues in Grant Park at 12:30 with a speech delivered by Illinois Attorney General Otto Kerner, Sr. The procession to Soldier Field stretched over half a mile long beyond the stadium and was led by Jugoslav World War I veterans accompanied by three hundred-piece tamburitza orchestra. They were followed by dozens of youth groups, athletic associations, and fraternal benevolent societies representing Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes from across the Midwest, hailing from Detroit, Cleveland, Milwaukee, and St. Louis. Crowds estimated at twenty to fifty-thousand strong arrived to honor their shared Jugoslav heritage and in support of their beleaguered Jugoslav nation.

The continued importance of the Chicago's Jugoslav community and their support for the regime back home became increasingly apparent. On September 11, 1933, Palandech and the Jugoslav Committee welcomed Dr. Leonid Pitamci, the Yugoslav foreign minister to the United States. He arrived in Chicago to address their fundraising

---

44 *Novi Svijet*, Vol, X, No. 12, March 18, 1933.

45 *Daily Calumet*, June 24, 1933.
banquet at the Hamilton Club. The gathering of Jugoslavs, representing all the peoples of the newly renamed Kingdom of Jugoslavia, came together for a concert dance and banquet.46 Later that year, the Jugoslavs of Chicago once again came together, forming the city's first Jugoslav University Club to show their support for their homeland and more importantly to stem the tide of Americanization and the disappearance of traditional South Slavic culture.47

Death of a King, Birth of a Nation

In response to the previous years overwhelming showing during the Jugoslav Day celebrations at Soldier Field, Croatian nationalists organized their own "Croatian Day" in Chicago. On August 24, 1934, 10,000 Croatians gathered from around the Midwest at the East Side Forrest Preserve located at 114th and Avenue D in Chicago's Southside. The day started with a mass was presided over by Reverend Blaž Jerkovič, a local priest and ardent nationalist and was followed by parade through the streets of South Chicago. Croatian tamburitza and choral groups celebrated traditional Croat culture and food while thousands of Croatian youths participated in sporting events held across the grounds. The Reverend Spiro Andrijanič, pastor of the Sacred Heart Church was on hand to supervise the events while local politicians Mayor Edward Joseph Kelly, Congressman P.H. Moynihan, Alderman William A. Rowan and Croatian leaders from throughout the


community spoke at the event.\textsuperscript{48} They event was also intended to build consensus and opposition to the Jugoslav government.

At the annual Croatian Federal Union (CFU) convention on Friday, June 25, 1932, CFU members registered a vote of no confidence for President Anton Gazdić who had received decorations from the King Alexander Karadorđević of Jugoslavia. Pressure from fellow members forced them to return the decorations but the vote went forward and the men were removed from power.\textsuperscript{49} This was followed by a memorandum issued by the Croatian National Council of America on behalf of the All-Croatian Congress, the Catholic Croatian Clergy, and the Croatian Fraternal Union--the largest Croatian Organization in the United States declared that Croatian-Americans and all Croats living outside of Jugoslavia stand united in their demand that Croatia be reestablished as a “completely free, completely sovereign, and completely independent nation.”\textsuperscript{50} The declaration was issued throughout America in hopes of creating a groundswell of support for their demands for independence from Jugoslavia.

The calls for independence were shared by the Croatian diaspora scattered throughout the globe. On October 9, 1934, while on a diplomatic visit to the French city of Marseille, King Alexander of Jugoslavia was assassinated by members of the Croatian fascist, nationalist organization \textit{Ustaša} (insurrectionists). Croatian Ante Pavelić, a prominent lawyer and nationalist politician, formed the \textit{Ustaša organization} in the wake of Stjepan Radič’s death in the 1928. Pavelić was born on July 14, 1889, in the small

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Daily Calumet}, August 19-27, 1934.

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Novi Svijet}, June 25, 1932.

village of Bradina, Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1905, as a high school student, he joined
*Stranka Prava* (Party of Rights), a conservative political party centered on the
ethnonational rights of the Croatian people founded by Ante Starčević and Eugen
Kvatrenik in the 1860s. Pavelić was actively involved with *Stranka Prava* throughout
World War I. As the war ended, he began practicing law in Zagreb and was elected to
office in 1921. Pavelić was a vocal critic of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes
and ardent supporter of Croatian national rights throughout the 1920s. During this time,
he frequently represented Croatian political prisoners and openly advocated Croatian
independence. In 1927, he was elected to parliament where he served for the next two
years, witnessing the death of his friend and fellow Croatian, Stjepan Radić, in the
National Assembly. Following the assassination, Pavelić founded the *Hrvatski domobran*
(Croatian Home Guard), an armed nationalist organization that advocated open revolt
against the Serbian monarchy. He eventually fled the country following King
Alexander's declaration of the royal dictatorship of Yugoslavia on January 6, 1929. While
exiled abroad in Austria and Italy, Pavelić founded the *Ustaša* in 1933 and plotted the
assassination of the Serbian King and the establishment of an Independent State of
Croatia.51

“The Croatians Have Spoken”

The fragmentation of the Yugoslav community of Chicago reached its zenith in
the aftermath of the assassination of King Alexander in 1934. On November 30, 1935,
the National Croatian Congress of Croatian Patriots gathered at the Amalgamated Center

Hercegovina*, 128-132, and Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-
located on 333 South Ashland Avenue in Chicago. The congress was attended by
over five-hundred Croatian delegates from around the world approved the content and
language of a manifesto to be issued to the United Nations demanding Croatian
independence from the Kingdom of Jugoslavia. They stated that President Wilson and
the 1918 Treaty of Versailles granting the explicit “right to determine its own destiny”
and guaranteed Croatian independence.52

The manifesto stated that tensions and resentment within Jugoslavia and abroad
among the diaspora resulted from the “unjust repression” against non-Serbs by the regime
of King Alexander Karadorđević. The manifesto even justified the assassination of the
King in Marseille, France during the previous year in response to this ongoing
mistreatment of the Jugoslav people. Although the Croat delegates did not outright
applaud the assassination, they failed to mention the complicity of three Croat nationals
involved alongside the “king’s slayer, a Macedonian patriot.” Their manifesto even went
as far to request from the French government a fair trial for the three Croatians being
“accused of complicity in the assassination of King Alexander of Jugoslavia.”53 The
congress even justified the assassination in Marseille in October of 1934 as the result of
"resentment created by unjust oppression of Croats." Although they failed to
acknowledge the role of Croatian Fascists in the assassination, they did plead for the
would-be assassins in French custody to be given an impartial trial and be treated fairly.54

52 Nesavisna Hrvatska Drzava, Vol. III, No. 49-50 (December 7, 1935), in the Chicago Foreign-
Language Press Survey, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

53 Ibid.

54 "The Croatians Have Spoken," Nesavisna Hrvatska Drzava (Independent State of Croatia)
December 7, 1935 Vol. III, No. 49-50. Official Organ of the nationalistic organization Defenders of
Croatia.
For many within the Chicago community, the divide was too great to be bridged as Jugoslavs fragmented along religious, political, and ideological lines. However, the working-class cohesiveness remained in spite of the disparate political currents rippling throughout the Croatian diaspora. On July 4, 1937, the Croatian Section of the CPUSA held a conference in Chicago that declared “brotherly” relations among the various Croatian groups within the city had dramatically improved as they were now witnessing the “beginnings of unity in all larger (Croat) communities.” The Jugoslav community continued to fragment as concerns shifted from internal to external threats associate with the rise of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, and their open support of the Croatian Ustaše.

Conclusion: World War II and the Death of Jugoslavia

By the late 1930s, the Jugoslavs of Chicago remained divided, unable to overcome their disparate historical pasts, conflicting national motivations, and irreconcilable political aspirations. Although extreme nationalist sentiment had taken root throughout most Croat, Serb, and Slovene colonies in the city, other Jugoslavs chose to actively support their troubled nation despite its many flaws. On April 18, 1937, Jugoslav representatives from every Balkan nation attended the First Jugoslav Song Festival at the Holy Resurrection Serbian Church located on the Southeast corner of Wicker Park, in Chicago's West Town neighborhood. The festivities featured Croat, Serb, Slovene, and Jugoslav musical and choral groups from throughout the Midwest. The Jugoslav

---

S.M. Loyen, Komunisti i jedinstvo Hrvata u Americi (Chicago: Hrvatska radnička knjižara, 1937), 36.
performers were joined by members of Chicago's Civic Opera making the event a
cultural tour de force in the history of Jugoslavs in the city.\textsuperscript{56}

As whispers of war rippled through the backrooms of Europe, Jugoslav identity
was abruptly abandoned by some and re-imagined by others as the threat of another
European war and Croatian succession failed to dampen their collective and disparate
resolve. On August 18, 1940, thousands of Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes gathered at the
Serbian Holy Archangel Michael Church in South Chicago to attest to the perseverance
of Jugoslav unity and patriotism. They gathered in response to the growing discord
within Jugoslavia and threat of civil war. Many Jugoslavs soon realized that once again,
war was no longer avoidable.\textsuperscript{57} On April 6, 1941, Axis forces invaded Jugoslavia. Less
than two weeks later, the Kingdom of Jugoslavia ceased to exist as the nation was divided
between the conquering German, Italian, Hungarian, and Croatian troops. The death of
Jugoslavia came on April 17, 1941, with the establishment of the Independent State of
Croatia.

By 1942, despite various groups supporting Croatian, Serbian or Slovene
particularistic nationalist policies, the Jugoslavs of Chicago once again became
increasingly united in their support for the allies and the restoration of the Jugoslavia in
any form possible. The Serbian National Defense Council located in South Chicago
allied itself with the Croatian National Alliance and the Slovene National Defense
Council to coordinate fund raising efforts alongside the Jugoslav American Relief

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Yugoslavia}, Vol 31, No. 47, May 1, 1937.

\textsuperscript{57} "Americanism Rally to be Held Tuesday in South Chicago," \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, August 18, 1940.
Association, the Red Cross and the Jugoslav Consul General in Chicago. Once again, the Jugoslavs of Chicago were united as pluralistic experience of living together in America allowed them to overcome their disparate views regarding the political problems experienced during the interwar period. They stood together once again in support of a new Jugoslavia for “[t]hey were united as Americans... to defeat Hitlerism.” Although their mission and principles appeared at odds, the societies truly believed that nationalism and supranationalism were the same. Just as the articulated that one must remain loyal to the fallen King of Yugoslavia as well as to Franklin Delano Roosevelt by being a good American citizen, they saw no distinction between being a good Croat, Serb, or Slovene and a good Yugoslav. For them, these identities were not mutually exclusive but rather complimentary.  

Whether real or imagined, the belief in Jugoslavia as an ideology, an identity, a people, and a nation profoundly impacted the lives of Chicago's Croat, Serb, and Slovene immigrant communities from the waning decades of the nineteenth century through World War II and beyond. However, Jugoslav identity never manifested as a singular, universal idea, embraced by all South Slavs, but rather remained plastic and fluid, adapting and shifting in response to particular historic realities. Since the inception of Jugoslavism in the throws of nationalist revolution, Jugoslav identity continually evolved as various individuals throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century prescribed it as a cure for their particular political ailments. For some, it represented the end of imperial subjugation. For others, it offered the opportunity to unite their people for the

first time in history. Still others maintained that it represented the truest ideal and aspirations of all South Slavic peoples to live freely.

Although the German invasion of 1941 officially brought the brief and troubled history of the Kingdom of Jugoslavia to an end, Jugoslavia as nation died decades earlier with passing of the Vidovan Constitution of 1921 and the imposition of the royal dictatorship in 1929, forever estranging the very people the nation intended to unite. However, the idea of Jugoslavia and Jugoslavism, in all of its supernal forms remained fixed in the imaginations of all who had embraced it. It simply waited for a new generation of South Slavs to reinvent that, which already existed and faithfully believed that “Jugoslavia and its people have a great history and fine traditions, a glorious heritage that any country or people should well be proud to possess.”

---

60 The John R. Palandech Papers, Serbian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
CONCLUSION

THE DEATH OF A NATION

& REBIRTH OF AN IDEA

Jugoslavia and its people have a great history and fine traditions, glorious heritage that any country or people should well be proud to possess.¹

The German invasion of the Kingdom of Jugoslavia on April 6, 1942 signaled the end of the first unified South Slavic state. As the fledgling regime of Alexander Karadordević offered its unconditional surrender, the nation was literally torn apart and divided by the invading Axis armies. Amid the ruins of Jugoslavia emerged the Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (Independent State of Croatia) or NDH—a fascist puppet state of Germany ruled by the Croatian nationalist Ustashi leader, Ante Pavlević.

Although embraced by extreme Croatian nationalists as end of their century long struggle for statehood, many Croats of Chicago held the new state in contempt for its association with Nazi Germany. In fact, the collapse of the first Jugoslavia reinvigorated Jugoslavism within the city, rallying fraternal and benevolent societies, Catholic and Orthodox parishes, and working-class and socialist groups to rally together to restore and re-imagine a new Jugoslavia quite different from the one they briefly knew before.

The dawn of the nineteenth century witnessed the materialization of nationalism, first expressed among the Serbs of the Ottoman Empire prior to gaining a foothold with

¹ The John R. Palandech Papers, Serbian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
the South Slavs of Austria-Hungary. The spread of nationalism occurred unevenly despite the presence of nascent Pan-Slavic sentiments throughout the Balkans. However, the convergence of independent local, regional, and continental events allowed the expression of disparate nationalisms among the regions Croat, Serb, and Slovene populations. On occasion, these various dissimilar proto-national ideologies either united the disparate South Slavic peoples or drove them apart. Regardless, the primacy of nationalism was firmly established by the mid-nineteenth century and guided events for the South Slavs throughout the Balkan Peninsula and beyond to the growing diaspora over the next hundred and fifty years.

Centuries of imperial subjugation under the Habsburg and Ottoman empires kept the South Slavs politically divided and socially isolated, limiting any significant interaction between them. However, South Slav nationalism eventually emerged in the form of both political uprising and cultural revival. Nationalism took root in the region alongside German romanticism and the political philosophies of the Enlightenment. These intellectual strains encountered ideal conditions for the development of nationalism as the South Slavs remained under foreign occupation and increasingly desired political, economic, and cultural independence. The slow progress of industrialization, urbanization, and the establishment of print culture in the Balkans allowed for the incremental development of the “public sphere” where nationalism took hold among the South Slav intelligentsia prior to disseminating to the masses.

The articulation of South Slavic identity was obstructed by centuries of foreign rule that limited interaction among Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes and kept them socially, culturally, and politically divided. The First Serbian Uprising of 1804 inaugurated the
modern era in the Balkans and bridged this impasse as the catalyst for the spread of nationalism throughout the region. The news of Serbian success against the Ottomans ensured the spread of nationalist ideology and insurrection across the Balkan Peninsula.²

The absence of political power directed the South Slavs towards intellectual and cultural institutions to represent their national aspirations. Serb, Croat, and Slovene intellectuals engaged each other irrespective of their minority status and limited access the emerging public sphere in the multicultural Ottoman and Habsburg empires. They devoted their energies to linguistic, cultural, and historical studies to establish nationalism as a viable political alternative.

As their influence diffused throughout society, South Slavic intellectuals garnered the support of increasingly larger segments of the population, moving beyond their urban confines into the rural hinterlands of the Balkans that ultimately gained the support of the majority of the subject population.³ The mutual experience of being oppressed minorities within larger multicultural empires proved fundamental to the development of South Slavs communities in America. Irrespective of existing ideological disparities, Jugoslavism arose amid competing ideologies of Serbian, Croatian, and Slovene nationalism creating a variety of institutional structures adopted by South Slav immigrants to adapt to their new environment.

Though often neglected by historians, the Jugoslavs played an important role in one of the most profound periods of American immigration. Although smaller in size


then many contemporary immigrant groups, the South Slav experience as émigrés and exiles ultimately affected the United States and influenced the outcome of political events in the Balkans. Jugoslav immigration to the United States between 1880 and 1924 was part of a larger pattern of global migration resulting from the rise of industrial capitalism and the convergence of desultory socioeconomic and political factors that swept across Europe during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although some Jugoslavs were "uprooted," most willingly departed as migration represented the only means available for them to respond to economic and political hardship they encountered in the Balkans.

Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes arrived in the United States and confronted new working conditions that questioned remnant social, cultural, and political structures as they became increasingly aware of their own national identities as well as their shared Jugoslav heritage. In addition, their working-class experience forced them to adapt certain elements of their past with the new reality they encountered ensuring their success and survival. By doing so, the South Slavs of Chicago contributed to the creation of an emergent and collective Jugoslav national identity that did not previously exist.

---


5 The Mike Vukasinavich Papers, Slovene American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.


In the opening decades of the twentieth century traditional political and religious affiliations transplanted from Europe to the United States were confronted by the swelling ranks of South Slavic affiliated working-class organizations.\(^8\) The rise of working-class consciousness combined with growing nativist sentiment expressed towards Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes strengthened transnational nationalism in Chicago.\(^9\) As the South Slavs came into direct conflict with older, more established immigrant groups turned to various fraternal organizations, benevolent associations, working-class groups, and churches to preserve the precarious position that they achieved in the city. These institutions were an amalgam of old and new world structures melted together to organize the diaspora and to affect change back in Balkans.\(^10\)

Life in America offered many Jugoslavs a broader perspective and greater understanding of events transpiring back in Europe. Their physical distance allowed their voices to be heard in a meaningful way in the transnational political debate--a luxury unavailable to many that remained in the Balkans. The South Slavs of Chicago united in response to a new environment that reinforced tentative national identities. The spread of working-class consciousness complimented Jugoslavism, which in turn unified the South Slav working-class of Chicago and amplified the call for the national liberation of the

---


\(^9\) *Radnička Straža*, February 6, 1908, Volume 1: No. 4. The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

\(^10\) Colaković, *Yugoslav Migrations to America*, 20-21.
South Slavs in Europe. In the end, the experience of Jugoslav émigrés and exiles increased support for Jugoslavism as it created a transnational bridge between the America and Europe.  

As they made their way through streets of Chicago, the South Slavs embraced the construction of improvised communities in the form of the fraternal societies, benevolent associations, working-class organizations, and socialist groups. These groups were further complimented by a host of subsidiary associations in the form of athletic associations, junior orders, dramatic and singing societies, and various pan-South Slavic social, cultural, and political organizations. Although rooted in literary traditions of the nineteenth-century Balkan national institutions—matica’s and čitona’s—these organizations were a specific response to the novel and alienating realities of life in late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century industrial Chicago. The education of the city’s South Slavs via print media and political mobilization espoused by these institutions facilitated their successful adaptation to modern American life. These earliest organizations succeeded in the ‘new world’ where their ‘old world’ predecessors failed by cultivating a more intense particularistic nationalism, while simultaneously creating a greater awareness and appreciation of their collective Jugoslav identity.


However, the fact that America was now their home was a difficult truth for many South Slavic immigrants living throughout the nation to accept. Particularly among the masses of working-aged men whose emigration was financially supported by their families with the goal to earn enough money to return home and improve the standard of living for the entire family. However, these young émigrés understood the shifting nature of life in America as the possibility of return diminished over time due to their own financial limitations and the precarious conditions that remained in the Balkans. Many South Slavs initially felt helpless confronting these conditions and the difficulties of life in industrial Chicago. Many maintained that their futures were brighter in America and that there was nothing for them to return home to. Constrained by the transnational economic demands, the South Slavs of Chicago realized that they alone held the key to the well-being of their own futures and collectively confronted the hardships they encountered by employing the tools of their past to fashion a new home in America.


17 *Radnik*, Vol. VIII, No. 95, August 8, 1925, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
The absence of family members and friends forced Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes to look beyond traditional kinship and social networks. They turned to their fellow countrymen from the disparate regions of the Balkans to fashion a more familiar environment. The South Slavs of Chicago created an incredible variety of fraternal, benevolent, and working-class organizations throughout the city, predicated on mutual aid to successfully adapt to life in America. These institutions focused on an intensive program nationalist mobilization via newspapers, literature, and educational programs to unite their colonies locally, regionally, and nationally that competed for support and loyalty of the South Slav diaspora. However, opposing affiliations contributed to a lingering resentment kept them relatively divided.

The immigrant experience in Chicago allowed South Slavs to accept both a pluralist and nationalist view of world. By doing so, they successfully adapted to life in the United States and remained loyal to their specific claims for self-determination in the Balkans. In the minds of the South Slavs, pluralism and particularistic nationalism were completely reconcilable. Ultimately, this ideological patchwork allowed a newly emerging Yugoslav political identity to take root without forsaking their independent nationalisms or their newly emerging American identity. For them, these identities were not mutually exclusive but rather complimentary.\(^\text{18}\)

Prior to their arrival in America, South Slavic ethnonational identity remained elusive. Most South Slav immigrants were peasants from the rural areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This prevented the development of any acute awareness of ethno-

\(^{18}\) "Memorial Book Srpsko Jedinstvo," (1936), 26, in The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
national distinctiveness as most identified themselves along local, regional, or religious lines. However, their arrival in American contributed to the national awakening of Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes as they came into greater contact with other members of the South Slav diaspora.\textsuperscript{19}

Initially, South Slavic immigrants relied on traditional attachments affiliated with the family and church rather than turning outward to new modern society. Their small numbers allowed South Slavs to cluster together and develop extended networks that allowed South Slavic owned businesses to cater to a homogeneous clientele. The establishment of small, relatively homogenous communities, or ethnic enclaves, within Chicago proved advantageous as this arrangement benefited both those that had already arrived as well as to the most recent immigrants in the city.\textsuperscript{20} Ultimately, these insulated communities laid the foundation for the development of a more inclusive Jugoslav identity founded on shared culture, language, and life in America.

Insulated communities based on paternal, local, and regional affiliations allowed the South Slavs to successfully adapt to America without significant social contact outside of the community. Extended kinship networks supported by regionally and nationally affiliated churches and fraternal groups allowed the Croat, Serb, and Slovene immigrants socially and economically adjust to their new American homes. South Slavs mobilized their own resources to create an "ethnic economy" that increased solidarity and

\textsuperscript{19} The Zlatko Balokovic Papers, Croatian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

\textsuperscript{20} Majka and Mullan, "Ethnic Communities and Ethnic Organizations Reconsidered," 71–92.
reinforced the traditional pre-migratory structures, while contributing to a greater awareness of their shared Jugoslav identity.\textsuperscript{21}

During the opening decades of the twentieth century, South Slavic families, churches, saloons and working-class organizations found themselves in a rather precarious situation as disparate nationalist programs coalesced in support of a unified South Slavic State. These institutions evolved in response to the deprivation and marginalization of Croats, Serbs and Slovenes within Chicago. However, they found themselves more often than not, openly competing with one another for the loyalty and resources of their communities, that ultimately changed the character of South Slavic immigrant identity. The emergence of a transnational South Slavic nationalist movement within Chicago transformed traditional Croat, Serb, and Slovene immigrant life in the city. Traditional particularistic nationalism affiliated with the family and the church slowly gave way Pan-Slavic Jugoslavism supported by the city’s working-class immigrant experience. Socialist organizations embraced Jugoslavism in an effort to transcend traditional local and regional affiliations and unite the South Slavic working-class within the city.

Conflict in the Balkans gave rise to a newly imagined collective identity that emerged between 1908 and 1918 as Chicago's South Slavic communities mobilized socially, politically, and economically. Transnational events during this decade unleashed multiple nationalisms that reshaped the South Slav diaspora in Chicago. While most Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes struggled with their changing realities, others embraced the emergence of Jugo-Slav identity. In response, Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes engaged

\textsuperscript{21} Majka and Mullan, "Ethnic Communities and Ethnic Organizations Reconsidered,” 71–92
in a local struggle over how their new collective identity was to be imagined and what it truly meant to be a Yugoslav. While some embraced Yugoslavism, others rejected it outright as it threatened the hegemony of traditional institutions and structures within the city. However, some entrepreneurs, most notably, Ante Biankini and John R. Palandech became ardent supporters and nurtured the idea of Yugoslav unity as the most pragmatic choice for the South Slavs in Europe and in Chicago.

The Balkan Wars and World War I galvanized South Slavic opinion as many leaders throughout the South Slavic diaspora felt the time was right to unify all Slavs throughout the nation. On January 20, 1918, South Slavs from across America gathered in the ballroom of the Hotel Astor in New York in support of the unification of South Slavs. The event was supported by the Serbian Defense League of America and was intended to garner national and international support to exert pressure on behalf of the Jugo-Slavs during the upcoming peace negotiations in Paris. The event featured numerous international figures and émigrés voicing their support for the cause of unity. Dr. Hinko Hinković, a Croatian émigré and former member of the Croatian Diet spoke to the throngs stating that the Yugoslavs of Austria-Hungary were “racially” identical to the Serbs and were ardent supporters of unification with Serbia into a Yugoslav state. He argued that they must support the Yugoslav idea in opposition to the growing pan-Germanism and forced magyarization of the Slavs of the empire. Hinković also believed that since the signing of the Corfu Declaration, all Slavs considered the Serbian

---

government in exile as their own, and only the unification of the South Slavs ensured
the possibility of lasting peace throughout the Balkans.²³

The end of World War I signaled the arrival of the Jugoslavs. Despite the obvious
imperfections and the difficulties that their nascent state immediately encountered, the
South Slavs of Chicago enjoyed a momentary unity that many embraced. However, the
South Slav community remained divided over supporting the creation of Jugoslavia
between those in favor of the Karađorđe monarchy versus those in favor of Croat and
Slovene autonomy despite a vocal consensus in the city. In addition, religious tension
lingered alongside growing class divisions the emerged as the Jugo-Slav colonies grew
and became more established in Chicago.²⁴

South Slav cooperation in Chicago and throughout the United States reached its
zenith during World War I as each groups’ independent desires gave way to the
pragmatic realities of the limited opportunities with which they were presented. However,
following the war, the increased acrimony of political discourse in the new Yugoslav
state was reflected among the Chicago colonies as cooperative efforts declined and
vituperative rhetoric became more prevalent among the foreign-language press within the
city. Despite various efforts, South Slavic unity was fractured almost immediately after it
was achieved and little remained left to salvage among the South Slav diaspora as events
back home spiraled out of control.

²³ M. Trivounatz, “For Freedom: A Manifestation of Oppressed Slavic Nationalities of Austria-
Hungary in Honor of the Serbian War Mission to the United States,” (Serbian National Defense League of

²⁴ Joseph S. Roucek, "The Yugoslav Immigrants in America," American Journal of Sociology, 40,
5 (1935), 603.
On December 1, 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was established as a constitutional monarchy under the Serbian Karadžić family. The new state was committed to direct universal suffrage to elect an assembly to draft a constitution granting freedom of religion, recognition of Cyrillic and Latin alphabets as equal under the law, and the establishment of local autonomy. The unification of the Kingdom of Serbia and the recently liberated lands of the former Habsburg Empire created the first Jugo-Slav nation in modern history.25

The end of war compelled many Croat, Serb, and Slovene communities across America to help their countrymen struggling in the aftermath of the conflict. On January 12, 1919, over sixty representatives from Jugo-Slav organizations throughout the United States gathered at the Hotel LaSalle in Chicago. The gathering signaled the beginning of a new era for America’s Jugo-Slav immigrant community as they carried with them a new name and international support to build their own nation amid the rubble and ash of the Balkans.26 However, wartime consensus quickly gave way to suspicion as many of the city's leading Croats and Slovenes expressed concerns regarding the proposed nature of the future Jugo-Slav state regarding the nature of emergent Jugo-Slav identity. These concerns were primarily political as deep divisions remained between those supporting unification and centralization under the Serbian monarchy and those in favor of federalism and Croat and Slovene autonomy within a Jugo-Slav State. Contrary to claims of century's-old desires, cooperation among South Slavs in the Balkans and the United

---


26 *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 13, 1919.
States prior to World War I was limited due to traditional antagonisms that kept the South Slavs divided. Despite their apprehensions and mutual distrust, the South Slavs of Chicago supported the pragmatism of unification and gave their blessing in support of the negotiations in Paris.

The South Slavic struggle in America mirrored the increasing political disarray back home in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Unification proved difficult as competing nationalist ideologies struggled to define the nature of the new state. The multidimensional conflict pitted supporters of unitarianism hoping to erase all national differences and create a truly singular Jugoslav identity against proponents of “Greater Serbianism” that dominated the central government. These in turn were opposed by Croat and Slovene nationalist intent on maintaining their traditional and historical autonomy within the new state structure.

However, in the end the Serbian King Alexander established Serbian primacy and hegemony within the state with the passing of the Vidovdan Constitution enacted on June 15, 1921. The constitution ended any hope for national equality within the kingdom and set the stage for the nation’s inevitable demise two decades later. The invasion of Jugoslavia on April 6, 1942 signaled the death of the first unified South Slavic state. However, the idea of Jugoslavia remained, waiting for the next generation of South Slavs to take up its cause. During its brief existence, Jugoslavia it had “shown the world that you can bring people of the most varying backgrounds and religions together…” and by

---

27 The John R. Palandech Papers, Serbian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
doing so, had profoundly affected the lives of millions of people around the world and among those South Slav immigrants that still call Chicago their home. 28

Brothers and sisters… [t]he once invincible armies of darkness are retreating on all fronts… In the new world to come… the Jugoslavs will heal their wounds, build up there home, and enjoy the blessings of liberty… 29

28 The Zlatko Balakovic Papers, Croatian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

29 The Kristan Etbin Papers, Slovene American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources


Balokovic, Zlatko Papers. Croatian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.


Etbin, Kristan Papers. Slovene American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.


Ledbetter, Eleanor E. *The Jugoslavs of Cleveland: With a Brief Sketch of their Historical and Political Backgrounds*. Cleveland: Cleveland Americanization Committee, 1918.


Memorial Book of the Serbian Benevolent Society of St. Djurdje, 1936. The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

Memorial Book Srpsko Jedinstvo, 1936. The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

Memorial Book of the Croatian Catholic Sacred Heart Church in South Chicago, 1913-1933. The Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.


Palandech, John R. Papers. Serbian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.


Rukavina Family Papers, Croatian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.


Vukasinavich, Mike Papers. Slovene American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.


**Primary Sources: Serials**

*Amerikanski Srbobran*

*Balkan*

*DAILY TRIBUNE*

*Hrvatski Glasnik*

*Hrvatska Tjednik Danica.*

*Hrvati u Americi*

*Lake County Times*

*Los Angeles Times*
Secondary Sources: Articles, Books, Dissertations, Journals


Morison, W.A. The Revolt of the Serbs Against the Turks 1804-1913. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942.


VITA

Dejan Kralj was born in Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina in the former Yugoslavia and raised in Munster, Indiana just outside of Chicago. After graduating from Munster High School, he attended Indiana University Northwest and the University of Illinois at Chicago where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Master of Arts in Anthropology, respectively.

After completing his master studies, Dejan pursued a professional music career with the Milwaukee-based rock group, The Gufs, who signed with Atlantic Records in 1995. Dejan returned to academia entering the doctorate program in history at Loyola University Chicago in the fall of 2002. During his first four years in the program, Dejan was awarded a three-year merit award teaching scholarship and received the Robert W. McCluggage Award in 2004 and 2005. He also was honored with the Arthur J. Schmitt Dissertation Fellowship in 2007. In 2006, Dejan briefly left academia to pursue music once again before returning to Loyola in January of 2009 to begin work on his dissertation and to teach as an adjunct lecturer in the Department of History and the International Studies Program. Dejan successfully defended his dissertation on December 5, 2011.

At present, Dejan is editing his dissertation for publication and pursuing a fulltime tenure-track position in American History. He lives with his wife and son on the Westside of Chicago.