



UDC 32 Miletić S.: [342(439)+323.1(=163.41)
Manuscript received: 13.09.2013.
Accepted for publishing: 05.11.2013.
Review article

Serbian Political Thought
No. 2/2013,
Year V, Vol. 8
pp. 103-117

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Hungarian Constitutional Law and the Serbian Question in the Political Ideology of Svetozar Miletić

Abstract

In the political ideology of Svetozar Miletić and other liberal Serbian political leaders in the Habsburg Monarchy, Hungarian constitutional law represented constitutional and legal framework acceptable inasmuch as the ruling Hungarian state doctrine even partially recognised Serbian privileges, and their democratic and national rights. The initial request to form special territorial autonomy for Serbs within Hungary, which was to have considerable authority over certain aspects of social life, was redefined after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise by requesting administrative integration of Hungarian counties on national basis. Institutionally conducted Magyarisation within Hungary indicated the loss of national identity of all non-Hungarian peoples in Hungary, while the cancellation of Serbian ecclesiastical-educational autonomy meant sanctioning of Serbian privileges.

Keywords: Svetozar Miletić, Austria-Hungary, Hungary, the Annunciation Council, ecclesiastical-educational autonomy, Vojvodina.

Since the end of the 17th century legal and political status of Serbian people within the Habsburg Monarchy was regulated by imperial privileges as well as laws adopted by Hungarian Assembly up to year 1848, after which the Hungarian Parliament. Royal privileges were construed by ecclesiastical and clerical representatives of Austro-Hungarian Serbs as a constitutional and legislative contract, based on which they deduced the right of Serbs to acquire the status of an equal, historical nation in a state where that status had been continuously de-

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nied to them. On the other hand, the privileges were unacceptable for Hungarian nobility, as this act of royal mercy was considered contrary to Hungarian constitutional principle founded on medieval historical law of Hungarian people, according to which there is only one political nation – Hungarian, that is one diplomatic people in the territory of St. Stephen's Hungarian state.

Depending on political circumstances or the need to conform the interests of Hungarian feudal estates and later Hungarian liberal leaders to the dynastic conceptions of the state, Viennese court manipulated Serbian privileges as well as the expectations of Serbs that they will obtain collective and civil rights. The crucial moment in synchronising the Hungarian constitutional law with the requests of Serbs trying to ensure their civil rights in Hungary took place in 1792 when Hungarian Diet in Pozsony adopted Article 27, which guaranteed civil equality to non-Hungarians.

Namely, equality given to Serbs through Article 27 of 1791 and Article 10 of 1792 implied genuine freedom of religious confession to those of Greek, but non-Uniate rite, freedom of endowments, school system, upbringing of youth, and confirmed the existing rights, privileges and concessions that were not in disagreement with the laws of the Kingdom of Hungary. Furthermore, Serbs were guaranteed the right to acquire property and the right to be accepted in civil service. Article 10 also guaranteed Serbian right to elect the metropolitan and bishops as their representatives in the Hungarian Diet. The same article provided the termination of Illyrian court chancery (Forišković 1986: 264). The ruler kept the right to confirm the election of the metropolitan and bishops, to issue permission for the summoning of the Serbian assemblies as well as to appoint commissioners at these assemblies.

However, the full exercise of these rights guaranteed by Hungarian laws was obstructed by the Catholic nobility and Hungarian counties. What seemed to be just a question of formality, such as whether the metropolitan and the bishops were to sit together or separate from the Catholic clergy in the Upper House of the Diet, lessened the effect of the adopted laws. Metropolitan Stratimirović believed that his place should be next to the primas of Hungary, and that Serbian bishops should sit amongst the Catholic, but in front of the Uniate bishops. At the meeting of the Diet in 1792 the palatine did not allocate Serbian bishops among the Catholic clergy, but behind all the other representatives. Because of that Serbian bishops protested pointing in their

appeal that “they will only temporarily be contented with the place allocated to them by the palatine, but they keep the right to request whatever seems they are entitled for later”. The Article 7 of 1792 re-established what Article 16 of the previous year determined, and that is: the Hungarian language ought to become obligatory school subject within Hungarian state borders; the Court Chamber was solely to use Hungarian as the language of communication with Hungarian institutions. All this was requested on the basis of the imperial decree issued on the 22nd June 1792, which allowed Hungarian estates to make decisions like these in the Diet.

From the time when this law was adopted, the political life of Prečani Serbs was characterised by the resistance towards the process of Magyarisation, which primarily consisted of forcing Hungarian language as official in all segments of state life. Burning of public registers kept in Hungarian was preceded by other laws influencing Serbian political elite in the Habsburg Monarchy to determine such a course of national policy according to which the position toward Viennese court was primarily to be established. Additionally, the corpus of social, national and civil requests was to be defined, granting of which, as it seemed, would have created conditions needed for improvement of cultural and educational life, preservation of national identity and acquirement of political equality. Civil equality in the form which was legally sanctioned before the war and the Revolution of 1848, seemed insufficient and unreliable, and therefore in May 1848 at the Serbian national assembly Serbian liberals and Serbian ecclesiastic dignitaries, gathered within the circle around the metropolitan Rajačić, voted to formally acknowledge Hungarian constitutional law, political sovereignty and territorial integrity of Hungary, but they actually proclaimed a distinct political and territorial unit in the territory of Srem, Banat, Baranja and Bačka – Serbian Vojvodina. Jurisdictions and character of this unit show that while it was unacceptable to Hungarian political leaders, for Serbian people it was the finalisation of their historical efforts, and for the 20-year old Miletić and Serbian liberals who saw him as their main leader and ideologist, it was the basis for defining the party’s policy, which tends to adjust Hungarian constitutional law to Serbian national requests, which ultimately formed a policy of rearrangement of the Habsburg Monarchy on the dualistic principle and the formation of a specific Serbian autonomy, which would have the form of a federal unit in accordance with the principle of dual federalism, which seemed quite achievable after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise (Mikavica 2005: 59-67).

The dominant feature of Miletić's political ideology in 1848 was the realisation of Serbian national and collective rights in Hungary, which implied obtaining a distinct territory for Prečani Serbs, who would organise themselves politically and administratively within this territory. Since 1861, and especially since 1868, Miletić's ideology on solving the Serbian national question shifted toward administrative reorganisation of Hungary by means of arondation of Hungarian counties on the basis of acknowledging the national principle. This policy would ultimately lead to the creation of such counties in which non-Hungarian peoples would be able to organise themselves and independently arrange their national, educational, cultural and social life in full. This political concept was not represented as contrary to the Hungarian constitutional law, but quite the opposite (Mikavica 2006).

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In Serbian political circles, already at the time of formal and definite repeal of Vojvodina and afterwards, particular interest was taken in texts in which Hungarians, especially Hungarian Baron of liberal provenance József Eötvös, emphasized that not only the satisfaction of national interests in Hungary was not directly opposite to Hungarian constitutional law, but also the resolving of this issue is a pre-requisite for the national and constitutional survival of the Hungarian people. At the same time, it was neglected that the realization of such justified efforts of the non-Hungarian nations were defined by Eötvös in a wider scope of general constitutional liberties of Hungary². The few elements

2 In the brochure *A nemzetiségi Kérdés*, published in Pest in 1865, József Eötvös positioned himself more precisely towards the feasibility of the idea of meeting the demands of non-Hungarian people in Hungary with a „territorial fragmentation”: „This principle may seem fine and grand, and it may seem that it could be feasible, but it is such that when it would

indicating that the compromise between Miletić's followers and Eötvös's followers was possible could have looked sufficient for the preservation of the achieved level of Serbian-Hungarian political trust. These included Eötvös's estimates that the national question in Switzerland and Belgium had been ideally resolved "through a well-organized municipal system, which should have a wide enough circle to leave room for free development of individual nationalities, tightening the boundaries just as much as the unity of state makes it necessary" (Srbski dnevnik 1860, issue 92). However, Eötvös was not at all ready to advocate for the practical implementation of such an "ideal" system, especially not in the Hungarian Assembly, and this is something he openly said to the Serbian liberals in Pest in 1861 (Srbski dnevnik 1861, issue 56).

Since the issuing of the February Patent, which "significantly modified" the October Diploma, Schmerling's policy was not perceived by Serbian liberals gathered around Svetozar Miletić as sufficiently decisive in meeting the Serbian demands, after the repeal of Vojvodina, while they were trying to present the idea of a Serbian Vojvodina within Hungary as useful and politically practical in the context of Hungarian aspiration to re-establish the constitutional order and establish new constitutional and legal order in Hungary, believing that this idea is feasible, ultimately as the result of the Serbian-Hungarian political compromise (Krestić 1980: 141-142, 145). The compromise implied that the Serbs overcome their "previous antipathies" towards Hungarians and join the "loud protests" against the centralistic policy, heard from the Hungarian Assembly at the time (Mikavica 2011: 116).

It was in the autonomy of Hungarian counties, which would in some elements attain the level of sovereignty of Swiss cantons, as well as in the luscious, affluent life in congregations in town municipalities that the Serbian Liberals saw the last real possibility to achieve an agreement with the Hungarian liberals and guarantee the preservation of Serbian national rights, whilst honouring the integrity and independence of Hungary. At the same time, they expected the Hungarian politicians "abandon the idea of a single, Hungarian political nation in Hungary, i.e. to definitely stop identifying "genetic" nationality of the Hungarians with the so-called constitutional and political nationality of Hungary. Since the Hungarians in Hungary did not make an absolute majority of the population, identifying the citizenship and nationality was consid-

come to life, it could celebrate its victory only on the ruins of the Austrian monarchy" (Србски дневник May 27th, 1865, Issue 42 and May 29th 1865, Issue 43).

ered unacceptable for the Serbs and all other non-Hungarian nations in Hungary. Equality of nations, which was at the time discussed with particular gravity by the leader of the Hungarian liberal nobility, Ferenc Deák, was for them considered to be a possible solution, provided only if it did not involve just civil equality, but for every nation “to govern and rule” its ecclesiastical and educational affairs. “One needn’t be particularly committed to modern constitutional law,” Miletić explained, “in order to know that both kinds of such equality are inherent in one truly constitutional country.”

Furthermore, true equality of nationalities in Hungary, thus Serbs as well, involved, according to Serbian liberals, the right to file court documents in non-Hungarian languages, but also the right for each nationality in Hungary to manifest its national being “as a unique personality” by having a national administration in the province in question (underlined by D. M.), and consequently they found themselves in direct political opposition to the leading representatives of Hungarian state policies. Starting from the fact that the autonomy of the Hungarian counties integrally contained anyway in itself a seed of a national administration for some particular nationalities, they considered it only necessary to integrate some of the counties better, in order to enable some particular nationalities to have majority in the county in question. According to this interpretation by Serbian liberals in Hungary it was necessary first to legally determine which counties in Hungary can be considered purely Hungarian, Serbian, Romanian, Slovak, and which are mixed, paying attention not to use more than three languages in nationally mixed counties. In those counties where the national mix was a serious threat, new county borders were to be made in order to honour the national criterion.

Official language in the newly integrated counties was to be determined based on the nation, i.e. nationality which formed the majority of the county. Each county was to have county councils, which would resemble the existing congregations. Slovaks from all the Slovak counties, and Romanians from all the Romanian ones in Hungary, would enter one great congregation of its own kind, where they would conduct their purely national affairs. Authorities of these councils were to be determined under one law which was to be passed by a common (country) assembly and the exclusion of the legislative activity from the jurisdiction of these councils was understood.

Legislation was to remain unified on the level of whole Hungary, state borders unchanged and the entire “administrative body” was to remain mostly the same. Bearing in mind the large number of nationalities in Hungary and their dispersed settlement, Serbian liberals were ready, as it is evident from their treatises, articles and studies, to relinquish the consistent application of this principle to all nationalities in Hungary and to limit its application to Hungarians, Slovaks, Ruthenians, Romanians and Serbs. Despite the large number of Germans in Hungary, they did not envisage special counties for them precisely because of their dispersion throughout Hungary.³ They mostly kept special rights for Serbs, acquired on the basis of the privileges they had received from Austrian emperors, and they usually thought that these were not in opposition to the principles on which a democratic, constitutional state should rest. Privileges remained for Serbian liberals not *Privilegie juris privati*, but a constitutional and legal contract based on which Serbs represented one “historical-political individuality” within Hungary. In this way, no special rights that would exceed the authorities within the integrated counties were demanded for the Serbs, but rather a greater, historical right of Serbs to this demand was accentuated because precisely thanks to the privileges they “stood at the same time on the basis of the principle of nationality, and on the basis of historical-political individuality.” They did not acknowledge this right of historical-political individuality to other non-Hungarian peoples of Hungary, but they did not doubt that they would also “obtain this basis in time” (*Srbski dnevnik* 1861, issue 27).

By resolving the national question in the suggested manner, Serbian liberals thought it possible to secure a “permanent consolidation of Hungary” and particularly to put paid to the frequent objections of the Hungarian side that the South-Hungarian Serbs were persistently aspiring towards state fragmentation. Serbian South-Hungarian liberals compared the awaited, reorganized Hungarian counties to the existing Swiss cantons, proving that the nationalities in Hungary were stronger in numbers, more compact and less mixed than the nationalities in Switzerland, and that, therefore, land consolidation of the counties, introduction of national administrations and generally thorough implementation of the national principle in Hungary was more feasible than it was presumed.

3 With a certain exception which refers to the Saxons in Transylvania.

Equality of the nationalities in Hungary within the integrated counties was considered insufficient if reduced to the use of the national language of a nationality with majority in the county. The right to independent administration in the integrated counties was considered an issue of utmost importance. In this segment too, Miletić and those like-minded did not digress from the program of national rights, which had been established by the church hierarchy and Serbian representatives at the Timișoara Assembly at the end of the 17th century, and especially since the last church-national assembly at the end of 18th century. This primarily means that the special area for some nations in Hungary involved their right to an independent administration, political, administrative and legal institutions. Though for Serbs and their administration, they suggested and determined the territory of Banat in the end of 18th century, and following the passing of the Octroyed legal act, the October Diploma, the right to the Bacs – Bodrog and Torontal (Banat) County integrated in such a way that the non-Serbian element went to other counties, in order for this one, thusly renewed Vojvodina, to have a predominant Serbian character whilst decidedly and openly not opposing the basic constituents of the ruling Hungarian state doctrine.

However, in such this new Serbian Vojvodina was formed, via arondation of the Hungarian counties, did not significantly influence the position of the Hungarian politicians towards this historical-political legacy. Svetozar Miletić, Mihailo Polit Desančić and all the other like-minded were trying to explain unsuccessfully that Vojvodina would not be “some province Vojvodina”, but just “a large county”, which would have the same legislation and the same representation and mostly the same administration as the entire Kingdom, and that the forming of a Serbian Vojvodina in the scope of one large country would not hinder the integrity of Hungary. For the respectable Hungarian statesman and prominent political leaders, the very mention of the name “Vojvodina” itself meant the breach of the country’s integrity. Discussing the thesis of the Hungarian politician and ideologist Baron Jozsef Eötvös that the non-Hungarian nationalities in Hungary should be treated as legal entities (als juristische Personen), which should be provided with an independent administration in their ecclesiastical and educational affairs, founding of new schools, determining a language of teaching in them and certain financial support by the state, followers of Miletić, and especially Polit Desančić, underlined that such a thing was self-implied in a truly constitutional state and that this could not be considered a sufficient concession on Hungarian part (Mikavica 2007: 55).

Despite the overall disagreement on this matter, in the field of practical political understanding, from 1861 to 1867, Serbian liberals continued to maintain contact with the Hungarian liberals, especially with Eötvös and Ferenc Deák, never being quite sure how honest the latter were in their expressing of the desire to resolve the national issue in Hungary in a satisfactory manner. In particular, none of the Serbian liberals could have known whether Jozsef Eötvös was even ready to adjust his previous theory that a nation was not a language community, but a blend of different races, as this Hungarian politician formulated in the treatise *Influence of the ruling ideas of the 19th Century on the state* (Jozsef Eötvös, *Der Einfluss der herrschenden Ideen des 19. Jahrhunderts auf den Staat*, Wien 1851). It was formed under the influence of the work on the history of civilization by François Guizot. Eötvös developed in this work a thesis that the Hungarian people was created in the process of blending of the superior Hungarian and the inferior Slavic race, which the Christian Church assimilated over several centuries of living together. In some sections, Eötvös wrote about Serbs with open disparaging and presented them as a lower race. Sometime later, Joseph Gobineau and Ante Starčević (Ekmečić 1999: 127, 311) wrote and thought along similar lines, as well. Amongst the representatives of the political idea and advocates of the Hungarian constitutional law from that period, Laszlo Teleki should be highlighted. He wrote to Kossuth from Paris in 1849, saying that Hungarians should reach an agreement with the Serbs, Croats and Romanians.⁴ At the same time, Ferenc Toldy and Aurel Kecskemeti were referred to as the supporters of “mid-way” solutions, though they did not suggest territorial autonomy for non-Hungarians either (Katuš 1987: 107). Since autumn 1849, leaders of the Hungarian emigration were especially under the strong influence of the Polish and Romanian emigrants and Italian politicians. The common denominator of their activities was their work on the creating of a confederation of South-Eastern peoples of Europe. Back in October 1848 in Vidin, at the suggestion of the Polish emigrants Bistranowski and Zamoyski from his entourage, Kossuth drafted a plan of the confederation which was to be joined by Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Poland and the Romanian principalities. Afterwards, he sent his personal emissaries Heningen and Carossini (an Englishman and an Italian) to Belgrade. The following year (1850), Kossuth wrote to Teleki about his

4 He repeated the same in 1850. He intended territorial autonomy with an assembly for the non-Hungarians.

vision of the constitution of the North-Eastern Free Confederate States, where each member of the confederacy would have independent internal politics, and Hungary would be the centre of the confederation without Budapest as the capital of the confederation. During 1849 and 1850 negotiations were developed with the Polish and Romanian emigrants, the plan of Nicolae Bălcescu on the territorial autonomy was pursued,⁵ whilst on the Hungarian side, the most prominent figures of the time, apart from Teleki, were Bertalan Szemere, György Klapka, Gyula Andrásy. Szemere's manuscript (1853-1854) reads similarly as Klapka's (1855) regarding the Alliance between Hungary and Romania and Serbia, Croatia, Dalmatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Klapka signed an agreement of alliance with the Romanian prince Cuza (1859) with the aim of forming a confederation of the Danubian states of Serbia, Hungary and Romania. Kossuth (1862) prepared a similar solution with Pulsky and Canini and this draft was published by the Italian press. The idea of Danubian Confederation was principally accepted by Prince Mihailo Obrenović as well, during the secret negotiations with Kossuth in London. However, missing from these proposals was the handling of the question of Vojvodina, while the Hungarian ruling party and its Frigyes Podmaniczky decisively rejected even the state alliance with Serbia. despite this, Hungarian intermediaries in Belgrade continued the politics of Hungarian emigrants: Janos Ludwig, officers Sandor Gal, György Klapka, István Türr. The awaited joint uprising did not take place. What is important is that all the fractions of the Hungarian emigration (Paris, Italian, American) agreed in the fact that after the achievement of independence, Hungary should enter the confederacy with of the Balkan countries, but opinions differed on what the new state polity of Hungary should be, whilst one part of the Paris-based Hungarian emigration (Teleki, Pulsky, Klapka, Szemere) was most lenient, particularly in their attitude towards allowing national autonomy to the non-Hungarian nations. Kossuth, however, remained adamant, and with him a significant majority in the emigration, which thought that a "more favourable solution was to reach an agreement with Austria and the Habsburgs" (Katuš 1987: 115). Andrásy confirmed this to the Romanians in Paris, Teleki retreated in disappointment in 1851, Klapka continued persuading Kossuth (1861) under the conviction that autonomy of Transylvania should be recognized, and that Vojvo-

5 Bălcescu was also for the Danubian United States, but providing that in that union the territories with Romanian population in Transylvania belonged to the Romanian state.

dina should be given to the Serbs. Kossuth showed readiness for lenience in his first proposal, but in the second case – not in the least. Vojvodina opposed Kossuth's perception of the territorial integrity and political unity of Hungary, as he wrote in *Kütahya* from 1851 Serbs in Hungary were not a political nation which had a historical and state right, according to Kossuth! Croats were thought of differently, which is why Kvaternik (1866) was pleased.⁶ Kossuth's positions were supported in Hungary by many Hungarians from the Virgil Szilágyi, Eden Kalay, Laszlo Böszörményi, Jozsef Madaras, Daniel Iranyi and others. Since the October Diploma, Lajos Mocsáry, Zsigmond Kemény, Moritz Lukacs, Ferenc Deák, Imre Madách, Jókai Mór tried, more than others, to impose constitutional law or to at least make it more approachable to political demands of the non-Hungarian nations. Eötvös and Kemény and Lukacs, as well as Laszlo Salay, all thought like Kossuth that the matter should not be taken further than the municipal and county autonomy for the non-Hungarian nations, civil rights in the system of public administration.

In the manifest of Miletić's party from 1869, a step was made towards a more concrete definition of Serbian collective rights, but this was precisely what manifested the deep political and ideological discrepancy of the two interpretations of the idea of statehood on Hungarian state territory. For the Hungarian side, each political concept which would imply federalization of the country was essentially unacceptable and directly opposite to the Hungarian constitutional law. Already in the first item of the Becskerek Program of Miletić's people's party from 1869, which was based on the proposal of the non-Hungarian political representatives from 1867 and 1868, a demand which referred to the issue of Serbian Vojvodina was made. Serbian representatives, who were supposed to defend the principles of Serbian liberal-democratic nationalism in the Hungarian Assembly, had before them a task to "constantly challenge" the Hungarian government to "either make a proposal based on the conclusion from 1861, or to assemble a new congress, to make and submit a new proposal regarding the mentioned circumstances." In the second part of the programme, this demand was repeated by detailing those state factors from which a positive decision was expected: "To demand from the throne, the government and the assembly to thoroughly discuss the conclusions of the Serbian congress (Annunciation Council – D. M.) from 1861, either through initiative of

6 The only remaining problem was concerned with Međumurje and Rijeka.

the assembly or Serbian representatives.” Key segments of the Hungarian-Serbian negotiations which had been led up to 1867, found their place in the Beckserek Program. The following is also said in it: “...to integrate the collective municipalities as per the nationalities, minding geographic, communicational and administrative considerations...to take nationality into consideration and reorganization of higher court and political authorities...to recognize the equality of various languages at the Assembly as well (Hungarian Assembly – D. M.) and to reorganize the Upper House with reference to having the various nations represented in it... to recognize the limited unification of each nation in Hungary as educational wholes, with the right of autonomy in terms of organization, order and administration along with a right of taxation on this; the latter together with the state authorities...to recognize external mark and significance of each nationality by recognizing the flags and coats of arms of various nations.” Though Serbian Vojvodina was not explicitly highlighted here by name, nor even mentioned as an administrative or federal unit, it is clear from all of the above stated that it was considered and that its resurrection was a matter of persistent striving.

In Hungarian Assembly and outside of it, Miletić and his followers formally supported sustainability of the Hungarian constitutional law, denied any existence of the idea of Serbian Vojvodina within Hungary in front of Hungarian courts, and up to 1876 tended by all available legal, political, parliamentary and publicity means to present publicly their political concepts as democratic, loyal and concordant with the idea of Hungarian state sovereignty. At the May Assembly and afterwards, Miletić's liberals supported the politics of forming of Serbian Vojvodina, which would have numerous and significant jurisdictions in the domain of legislation and its own institutions. On the other hand, at the Annunciation Assembly (1861) a significant, historic outreach was made towards securing the trust of the Hungarian side for the Serbian demands, but without result. At the Annunciation Assembly, Miletić moved away from the opinion of the majority, adjusting his political conception to the position of Hungarian liberals and rejecting the project of relying on the Viennese court, all this with the purpose to procure issuing of the law on nationalities which failed expectations of Serbs on several repeatedly. At the Hungarian Assembly, he defined the demands of the non-Hungarian peoples as part of the proposal which was to be considered by the Hungarian Assembly with the aim of passing

the Law on nationalities. This required demanding a separate political administration and bordered counties based on national criterion. Hungarian parliamentary majority rejected these proposals and issued a series of legal acts founded on the principles of the Hungarian constitutional law and the existence of only one political nation in Hungary (Rokaji, Đere, Pal, Kasaš 2002: 498-499). While the law on Serbian educational-ecclesiastical autonomy partially recognized the justification of Serbian requests referring to their ecclesiastical and educational autonomy, the law on nationalities long-term consolidated the domination and supremacy of Hungarian political nation in Hungary (Đere 1992: 63-77).

At the Serbian church-national assemblies held after 1861, Hungarian constitutional law was in no way openly criticized nor questioned, while in the programmes of Serbian political parties in Austria-Hungary realization of Serbian national and civil rights was solely considered within the existing legislative order, but with frequent remarks to the assembly that the law on nationalities of 1868 was being violated. Institutionally conceptualized assimilation of non-Hungarian peoples compelled Miletić, and especially his followers and the like-minded, to adjust in different ways the governing Hungarian state doctrine to the pragmatic preservation of Serbian national identity and their democratic and civil demands. From 1868 to 1876 Miletić continuously advocated Serbian democratic and national interests in the Hungarian Assembly, but because of the repudiation of political immunity, in the time of the Great Eastern Crisis (the Eastern Question), the entire political activity of Prečani Serbs liberals led by Miletić was put at stake, and by several-year imprisonment Miletić himself was prevented from leading his party (Mikavica 2006: 60).

After Miletić's retreat from political life (1882), one fraction of his followers formed the Serbian People's Party, which favoured notabilities and whose programme presented Hungarian constitutional law as inviolable, while all Serbian requests were reduced to demanding exclusive respect of civil rights and consistent use of the existing laws (Miletić 2002: 879). Miletić's disciple and successor at the head of the newly-formed Liberal Party, Mihailo Polit Desančić, tried to revive the idea on the encirclement, i.e. arondation, of Hungarian counties, which was one of constituent principles of Miletić's political ideology and also the Beckserek programme adopted by Miletić's party. On the other

hand, the leader of Serbian National Radical Party, Jaša Tomić tried by preserving and respecting Hungarian sovereignty in Hungary to gain authority in the domain of Serbian ecclesiastic and school autonomy. In that way Miletić's followers found themselves divided in two fractions, liberal led by Polit and radical led by Jaša Tomić (Mikavica 2011: 247).

Overall, legal and political order in Hungary was especially important to Miletić's followers and Prečani Serbs in the terms of Magyarisation of their spiritual, educational and cultural life. By adopting and implementing the above-mentioned laws, the Hungarian state idea reached its climax, while Serbian national question was reduced to the domain of the basic respect of civil rights. The laws of 1879, 1883, 1900 and 1907 intensified Magyarisation and the supremacy and domination of Hungarian state idea was confirmed. It was only the success of the army of the Kingdom of Serbia in the Balkan Wars, and especially in the First World War, that recreated conditions for the restoration of Serbian sovereignty and preservation of their national identity north of the Sava and the Danube. Political ideology of Svetozar Miletić also had significance on another political level, as it referred to the right to self-determination of people who were at that time under the Turkish rule (Petrović 1968: 197-209). Resolving the Serbian question within the so-called Eastern Question induced the creation of the Balkan confederation fifty years before the end of the Great War and within this project defined by Mihailo Polit Desančić and Svetozar Miletić, Serbs tended to preserve the preconditions for preservation of their national identity as well as the general idea for creation of the Serbian state. The failure of these tendencies was confirmed after the dualistic reorganization of the Habsburg Monarchy, on which nor Miletić nor the representatives of other non-Hungarian nationalities in Hungary could have any influence, especially after the Great Eastern Crisis which ended in the crash of the Serbian national politics and giving of mandate to Austro-Hungary for occupying the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina where the Serbs represented a relative majority of the population.

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