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The Image of Turkey in the Public Discourse of Interwar Yugoslavia During the Reign of King Aleksandar Karađorđević (1921–1934) According to the Newspaper “Politika”

ABSTRACT

Bearing in mind the Ottoman burden in relations between Turkey and other Balkan states, it seems interesting to look at the process of creating the image of Turkey in the public discourse of inter-war Yugoslavia according to the newspaper “Politika,” the largest, and the most popular newspaper in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (since 1929 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). It should be remembered that the modern Serbian state, on the basis of which Yugoslavia was founded, was born in the struggle to shed Turkish yoke. The narrative about dropping this yoke has become one of the cornerstones for building the prestige and the position of the Karađorđević dynasty. On the one hand, the government narrative did not forget about the Ottoman yoke; on the other, there were made attempts to present Kemalist Turkey as a potentially important partner, almost an ally in the Balkans, which parted from the Ottoman heritage.

KEYWORDS

Yugoslavia, Turkey, King Aleksandar Karađorđević, Interwar Period, Turkish-Yugoslavian Relations

Introduction

In the 1920s, there was a very popular statement among Yugoslav political commentators to describe the international situation of their country, that the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was surrounded by the problems (*brige*). The appearance of this catchy term resulted from the fact that this word is also an acronym that we get from the first letters of the names of all neighbours of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes—Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, Greece, Albania, Hungary and Austria.¹ This curiosity and language play turned out to be an excellent diagnosis of the young kingdom's position on the international stage. The uncertainty of the existence in the first months after the end of the Great War and the smaller or larger territorial disputes between Yugoslavia and almost all its neighbours created the leitmotif of the Yugoslavian foreign policy—to watch over the consolidation of the post-Versailles order in Central and Southeastern Europe.² It was intended to achieve this goal in two ways. The first was to resolve the disputable issues with all the neighbours and set up at least correct relations as soon as possible.³ The second was to strengthen the role of Yugoslavia in the region and to make it a leader of this part of Europe.⁴ To achieve the latter, the Kingdom of SCS has taken an active part in two regional alliances: The Little Entente⁵ and the so-called Balkan Entente, known also as the Balkan Pact.⁶ The anti-revisionist policy brought Belgrade closer to Czechoslovakia and Romania, with which it shared common concerns about the revisionist tendencies of Hungary. In addition, Romania and the Kingdom of SCS were even closer to keeping Bulgaria in check. The cooperation of these three countries resulted in the creation of the Little Entente block, which perfectly matched the French assumptions of creating the anti-Bolshevik *cordon sanitaire*.⁷ Possible

¹ D. Djokić, *Nikola Pašić and Ante Trumbić. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes*, London 2010, p. 81.

² A. Mitrović, *Spoljnopolitička doktrina novostvorene jugoslovenske države*, [in:] *Politički život Jugoslavije 1914–1945*, ur. A. Acković, Beograd 1973, p. 317.

³ Б. Димитријевић, С. Сретеновић, *Спољна политика Краљевине СХС/Југославије 1918–1941*, „Историја 20. века” 2008, 2, p. 53.

⁴ *Ibidem*; Б. Глигоријевић, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић*, књ. III, Београд 2010, p. 9.

⁵ About the Little Entente see i.e.: D. Bober, *Rola i miejsce Jugostawii w polityce Malej Ententy (1920–1938)*, Poznań 1981 [unpublished PhD dissertation]; M. Vanku, *Mala Antanta 1920–1938*, Titovo Užice 1969.

⁶ About the so-called Balkan Entente see i.e.: Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska Antanta (1934–1940)*, Beograd 1986.

⁷ Б. Димитријевић, С. Сретеновић, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–54.

cooperation with France was to guarantee the support in the confrontation with Italy, the growing power of which was feared in Belgrade and in Paris.⁸ In the 1920s the fear of the expansionist policy of Italy was one of the few factors that brought Yugoslavia and Turkey together.⁹ Nevertheless, it was the idea of pan-Balkan cooperation in the spirit of the slogan "Balkans for the Balkan peoples," propagated from the beginning of the 1930s, which led to closer political ties with Turkey.¹⁰ This does not mean, of course, that Turkey was ignored by the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs before the 1930s. There is no doubt, however, that it initially played a secondary role. It was no different with the place and significance of the Kingdom of SCS in Turkey's foreign policy. For obvious reasons, until 1923, in the international arena, Turkey focused primarily on the war with Greece and maintaining the direction of reforms begun by Kemal Mustafa Pasha, the future Atatürk ("the Father of Turks"). The situation changed after the Treaty of Lausanne was signed on July 24, 1923 and the Republic of Turkey obtained international legitimacy. After 1923, there can be distinguished two phases in the foreign policy of interwar Turkey. In the first one, in the years 1923–1932, Turkish rulers focused mainly on strengthening the position after the Lausanne Treaty.¹¹ For this reason, in the 1920s, the Balkans, and consequently Yugoslavia, played the peripheral role in the policy of Turkey which focused mainly on the Middle East.¹² The situation changed at the beginning of the 1930s when Turkey began to strengthen its position in the Balkans and became one of the most involved promoters of the idea of Balkan cooperation. It is this Balkan vector that allows to distinguish the second phase of Turkish interwar foreign policy, the phase of increased diplomatic activity in the Balkans in the years 1932–1939.¹³

Taking the above into account and bearing in mind the Ottoman burden in relations between Turkey and other Balkan states, it seems interesting to look at the process of creating the image of Turkey in the public discourse of inter-war Yugoslavia. It should be remembered that the modern Serbian state, on the basis of which Yugoslavia was founded, was born in the struggle to shed Turkish yoke, initiated by the first Serbian uprising in 1804 headed by Đorđe

⁸ A. Mitrović, op. cit., p. 322.

⁹ D. Barlas, A. Vlašić, *The Balkan Entente in Turkish–Yugoslav relations (1934–41): The Yugoslav Perspective*, "Middle Eastern Studies" 2016, Vol. 52, No. 6, p. 1012.

¹⁰ Although it should be noted that both the above-mentioned slogan and the idea of pan-Balkan cooperation are much older, and its roots can be traced back to the 19th century.

¹¹ J. Paszkiewicz, *Uwarunkowania geopolityczne bałkańskiej polityki Turcji w latach 20. i 30. XX wieku*, „Balcanica Posnaniensia. Acta et studia” 2014, t. XXI, p. 187.

¹² Ibidem, p. 188.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 187.

Petrović, known as Karađorđe, and finished with the London Treaty of 1913, which ended the First Balkan War. The narrative about dropping this yoke has become one of the cornerstones for building the prestige and the position of the Karađorđević dynasty. The great victory of Serbian arms over the Turks at the Battle of Kumanovo (October 23–24, 1912) contributed to the creation of the myth strengthening the political position of King Aleksandar Karađorđević, who was commanding in this battle.¹⁴ Therefore, the issue of presenting the image of Turkey in the public discourse of interwar Yugoslavia seems to be all the more interesting. On the one hand, the government narrative did not forget about the Ottoman yoke; on the other, there were made attempts to present Kemalist Turkey as a potentially important partner, almost an ally in the Balkans, which parted from the Ottoman heritage.

Press and the Press System in the Interwar Yugoslavia in the Service of Royal Policy

The most important medium actually allowing to make such acrobatics and create such an image in the mass consciousness of the Yugoslav society was still the press. In the first half of the twentieth century, it was still the most popular and definitely most accessible medium of information, which could significantly affect the public opinion's perception of current political events. The Vidovdan Constitution¹⁵ has left many loopholes allowing for the control and censorship of the press, although the article 13th of this Basic Law guaranteed that the press was free. The same paragraph specifies, however, that it is forbidden to publish and disseminate the newspapers and the articles that would offend the state authorities, members of the royal family, leaders of other states and Skupština—Serbian parliament. It also forbade the titles that would publish content, calling on the citizens to forcefully overthrow and change the constitution or other laws, as well as calls for the violation of public morality.¹⁶ The Law of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on the Protection of Public Security and Order in the State (*Zakon Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca o zaštiti javne bezbednosti i poretka u državi*) published on August

¹⁴ More about the so-called myth of Kumanovo, see: P. Michalak, *Bitwa pod Kumanowem na łamach gazety „Politika” – mit umacniający pozycję polityczną króla Aleksandra Karađorđevića*, „Balkanica Posnaniensia” 2012, t. XIX, pp. 169–179.

¹⁵ The Vidovdan Constitution, was the first constitution of Kingdom of Serbs Croats and Slovenes, which was named after the St. Vitus Day (Serbo-Croat: *Vidovdan*) June 28, 1921, when it was enacted.

¹⁶ *Устав Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца од 28. Јуна, 1921 год.*, Београд 1921, p. 5.

2, 1921, clarified that one of the types of crimes prosecuted under the penal code were, among others, press crimes, understood as writing, publishing, printing and disseminating books, newspapers, posters or announcements which called for overthrowing the elected state authorities, or openly threatened public peace and order.

The press act of August 6, 1925 was also far from liberal.¹⁷ Although it officially maintained the freedom and independence of the press (article 1.) and did not allow the creation of a censoring institution outside the constitutional war and emergency time (article 2.), a few of its provisions affected—if not directly, then indirectly—freedom of speech and media. One of them was article 7., which assumed that before distribution, every freshly printed number should be delivered in five copies to the local representative of the authorities, who sent one copy to the National Library in Belgrade, University Library in Zagreb, National High School Library in Ljubljana, and the public library located in the region where the newspaper was published.¹⁸ Such a warrant made it possible to get acquainted with the newspaper's content by the government representatives even before it was released for sale, which naturally allowed for the public interference in the published content. This type of censorship can be confirmed by numerous reports of local authorities, and police, including complaints, denunciations, and even clippings of articles, or entire numbers of newspapers of various types, both journals and rarely published periodicals, collected in the documents of the State Protection Department (*Odeljenje za Državnu Zaštitu*) in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.¹⁹ The reports informing about the subsequent articles of the press titles that were not favourable to the authorities, suggesting a closer look at them to extend censorship, were not uncommon.²⁰

What is more, article 19. of that Press Law contained a list of offenses, the committing of which made it possible to block any publication. These were the texts: offending the King and the royal family, the parliament, the texts openly calling for the change of the current constitution and the law by force, and those insulting public morality. It was also possible to forbid publishing

¹⁷ „Службене новине Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца” 1925, г. VII, бр. 179 – XXXIX (8 август), pp. 1–10.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

¹⁹ See i.e.: Arhiv Jugoslavije (further AJ), 14 – 25 – 64, 14 – 65 – 204, 14 – 65 – 205, 14 – 65 – 206, 14 – 77 – 275, 14 – 78 – 113, 14 – 78 – 296, 14 – 78 – 297, 14 – 78 – 305, 14 – 78 – 309, 14 – 78 – 311.

²⁰ One of many examples could be a report on the weekly newspaper “Borba” sent on February 2, 1926 to the Headquarters of the Drinska Division in Valjevo, see: AJ, 14 – 78 – 113.

the newspapers accused of spreading hatred against the state and hostility on “tribal” grounds, i.e. national or religious, as well as indirectly calling on citizens for a forceful change in the constitution or state law.²¹ The importance of the press and the awareness of the role it plays in shaping the society could be proven by the fact, that one of the first laws established by King Aleksandar I after the introduction of his dictatorship on January 6, 1929, was related the new press law. Announced on the same day, it was far more restrictive than—already rigorous—the press law from August 6, 1925.²²

As it could be seen, the Yugoslav authorities were very concerned about the possibility of influencing and controlling the media message in the public discourse. An additional instrument, which allowed King Aleksandar I to control the press was the Central Press-Bureau (*Centralni Presbиро – CPB*), established on April 18, 1929. It was one of the first institutions of that kind in Europe.²³ The Chief of the Central Press-Bureau was an official with the rank of the deputy minister, directly reporting to the prime minister.²⁴ The importance of this institution may be proven by the fact, that its first director was Toni Šlegl the former director of the Zagreb daily “Novosti” and a close friend of King Aleksandar I. Unfortunately, he was shot just after taking this office.²⁵ The next Chiefs of CPB were successive: Milan Marjanović, Milan Nikolić, Teofilo Dju- rović, Kosta Luković, Boško Bogdanović, Predrag Milojević, and Milorad Rado- vanović. The length of their term of office was not strictly specified, that is why they were elected and removed from the office according to the vision of the government which currently was in power. The activities of CPB were divided into four sections: the national press, the foreign press, radio, and administra- tion. The employees of these departments prepared daily reports about the articles appearing in both domestic and foreign press.²⁶ Each banovina²⁷ had

²¹ „Службене новине Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца”, г. VII – 1925 (8. Август), бр. 179 – XXXIX, р. 3.

²² I. Dobrivojević, *Državna represija u doba diktature kralja Aleksandra 1929–1935*, Beograd 2006, р. 301.

²³ *Закон о Централном Пресбироу*, АЈ, 38–1–1, р. 1.

²⁴ *Организација штампе и пропаганде у Југославији*, АЈ, 38–1–1, р. 1; B. Simić, *In the Spirit of National Ideology. Organization of State Propaganda in Eastern and Southern Europe in the 1930s, Comparative Perspectives of Poland, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria*, Beograd 2013, р. 61.

²⁵ B. Simić, *In the Spirit of National Ideology...*, op. cit., р. 61.

²⁶ Ibidem, pp. 60–61; Б. Симић, *Агенција „Авала”, „Зборник Матице српске заисторију” 2007*, бр. 75–76, pp. 79–83.

²⁷ Banovina was an administrative unit of the internal division in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia introduced by King Aleksandar in 1929.

its own CPB section, which monitored the activities of the local press.²⁸ All the articles attacking King Aleksandar I, his family and government, or opposing his policy were blocked. Therefore, when defending their own interests, the publishers of most newspapers, including the major ones, such as "Politika," "Vreme," and "Pravda," decided to introduce a certain kind of preventive censorship, resigning in some sense from the position of editors in chief to become the censors from the CPB, but thanks to that fact they avoided possible financial losses, which could have resulted from banning the publication of a single issue or even the whole newspaper.²⁹ Considering all the above mentioned facts and remembering about the 9th paragraph of the press law from 1929, which stated that every publisher was obliged to accept and unconditionally publish each note given him by the authorities in an upcoming issue, the conclusion could be drawn that in the political situation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia almost every article printed in legally publishing press had to be more or less in line with the political vision of government, and thus also the vision of the King Aleksandar I.

Therefore, it is worth examining how the image of Turkey and the evolution in Turkish-Yugoslav relations was presented and commented in Yugoslav interwar press during the reign of King Aleksandar I. The perfect example that fits these assumptions is the daily "Politika," the largest, and the most popular newspaper in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (since 1929 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). This newspaper can be considered as a specific mirror, which reflected the King's political concepts and thus also his policy towards Turkey. The newspaper was founded by Vladislav Ribnikar on January 25, 1904, in Belgrade. It was one of the oldest and most prestigious daily in the Balkans. During the reign of the King Aleksandar I (1921–1934), "Politika" was regarded as the most opinion-forming newspaper in the Kingdom. In the late twenties, it was a title with the largest daily print run of approximately 75,000 copies (the second was "Vreme" with approx. 60,000 copies and the third "Pravda" with approx. 25,000 exemplars). Despite the widely proclaimed political neutrality, "Politika" almost always supported the official political line of the King and the government.³⁰ On the one hand, it was probably determined by the economic pragmatism and the desire to avoid any problems with publishing a single issue.³¹ On the other hand, it seems that the personal connec-

²⁸ Закон о Централном Пресбируу, А], 38–1–1, п. 1–2; В. Simić, *In the Spirit of National Ideology...*, op. cit., p. 64.

²⁹ М. Симић, *Лист „Политика“ и његов утицај на ширење демократских идеја у периоду између два рата*, Београд 1987, pp. 120–123.

³⁰ Ch. A. Nielsen, *One State, One Nation, One King: The Dictatorship of King Aleksandar and his Yugoslav Project 1929–1935*, Columbia University 2002 [unpublished PhD dissertation].

³¹ М. Симић, op. cit., pp. 119–123.

tions of the part of journalists with the royal court also played the role. Milan Gavrilović, considered as the main personage of "Politika" in the period 1924–1930, may be regarded as an example of such a relationship. Gavrilović was a member of the Agrarian Party (*Zemljoradnička Stranka*) and had quite extensive contacts with military elites. What is more, King Aleksandar's Marshal of the Court, general Aleksandar Dimitrijević was his friend from the youth.³² Even Henryk Malmogme, Polish charge d'affaires in Belgrade, spoke about the high probability that "Politika" published the articles inspired by the government circles. He mentioned it in his report from September 18, 1929, dedicated to the military convention of the Little Entente.³³ Even if we assume that "Politika," as the other major Yugoslav newspaper, did everything to keep even just a sham of independence, the result of this struggle was rather poor, which was confirmed by the political opposition, who stated that if someone wants to find out what actually happens in the Kingdom, they should not read "Politika" and "Vreme" but rather German, English and even the Italian press.³⁴ And although the question of objective presentation of the internal situation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in e.g. the Italian press can also be doubtful, the fact of using this fairly drastic comparison may confirm how much native Yugoslav newspapers (even the most prestigious ones) were subordinated to the main political line of the King and the ruling circles. The above mentioned reasons allowed to conclude that such important issues in the Yugoslav foreign policy like relations with Turkey should have found its place on the sheets of the most frequently read newspaper in the country, which would in some way prepare the public opinion for the upcoming changes and justify the royal policy toward the post-ottoman epigone.

Turks Know the Serbs and Value Their Spirit.

The Image of Turkey in Public Discourse of Interwar Yugoslavia During the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations in the 1920s

The joining of Turkey to the First World War on the side of the Central States in 1914 led to the termination of the diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Serbia, which was still strained after the Balkan Wars.³⁵ However, at the begin-

³² Ibidem, p. 120.

³³ AAN, *Poselstwo RP w Belgradzie*, 469, vol. 101, 18.09.1928, p. 89.

³⁴ I. Dobrivojević, *Cenzura u doba šestojanuarskog režima kralja Aleksandra*, „Istorija XX. veka” 2005, 2, p. 54.

³⁵ Д. Тодоровић, *Питање уостављања дипломатских односа између Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца и Републике Турске (1923–1925)*, „Balcanica” 1973, Т. IV, p. 265.

ning of the 1920s, the governments of both countries probed the possibility of starting a peaceful coexistence. The case was complex because of fact that the peace treaty signed in Sèvres on August 10, 1920, was basically a dead letter of law in the face of the overthrowing of the Sultanate and the seizure of power in Turkey by Mustafa Kamal Pasha, who officially broke off the treaty. Due to the fact that until winning the war against Greece in 1922 the Kemalist authorities were generally not recognized by any major country in the world, in the first 5 years after the First World War (1918–1923) Turkey was on the sidelines of the activities of Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The already mentioned international Conference in Lausanne, which began its proceedings on November 20, 1922, turned out to be the breakthrough point in the Yugoslav-Turkish relations. Already four days after its launch, "Politika" has published the interview of the head of the Turkish Foreign Ministry Ismet Pasha with his Yugoslav counterpart Momčilo Ninčić, in which the former categorically denied that Turkey would interfere in the internal situation of the Kingdom of SCS and led propaganda among the Muslim population of the Kingdom.³⁶ It is worth emphasizing that one of the main fears of Yugoslavia in the context of the relations with Turkey, was potential Turkish impact on Turks and Albanians from the so-called Southern Serbia (that's mean Macedonia, Kosovo, and Sanjak of Novi Pazar) who until the First Balkan War of 1912 were living in the Ottoman Empire and whose loyalty towards Yugoslav state were questioned.³⁷ That is why the Yugoslav authorities decided to take action to remove 200,000 Muslims of Southern Serbia from the country.³⁸ Finally, under the Yugoslav-Turkish Convention of July 11, 1938, the government in Ankara undertook to adopt 40,000 Muslim Turkish families from Southern Serbia in the next six years.³⁹ It should be noted, however, that Muslims in interwar Yugoslavia were not a homogeneous organism and while someone could raise some doubts regarding the loyalty of the parts of inhabitants of Southern Serbia, Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina found themselves fairly quickly in the new realities and Yugoslav Muslim Organization⁴⁰

³⁶ „Politika“ 1922, бр. 5240 (24.11), п. 3.

³⁷ V. Jovanović, *Iseljavanje Muslimana iz Vardarske Banovine*, [in:] *Pisati istoriju Jugoslavije: viđenje srpskog faktora*, ur. M. Bjelajac, M. Obradović, V. Jovanović, Beograd 2007, p. 98.

³⁸ V. Jovanović, *In Search of Homeland: Muslim Migration from Yugoslavia to Turkey 1918–1941*, "Токови историје" 2008, 1–2, p. 63.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 64

⁴⁰ More about Yugoslav Muslim Organization see i.e.: A. Purivatra, *Jugoslavenska Muslimanska Organizacija u političkom životu Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, Sarajevo 1977.

(founded in Sarajevo in February 1919) headed by Mehmed Spaho,⁴¹ has become an inseparable part of the Yugoslav political landscape.

Nevertheless “Politika’s” narrative line of that time created the image of Yugoslavia as the leader of the Balkan states’ block in the rivalry with Turkey. An interesting example reflecting the political line of the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs in relation to Turkey and the entire region was the article by journalist Andra Milosavljević on the proceedings at the conference. In the article *Balkan block in Lausanne (Balkanski blok u Lozani)*, published on November 24, 1922,⁴² he presented the speech by Minister Ninčić during a working meeting of the representatives of the Balkan countries organized by the Yugoslav delegation, just before the special commission dealing with the access of Bulgaria to the Aegean Sea started its proceedings.⁴³ The meeting was attended by the representatives of the Balkan states. The Kingdom of SCS was represented by Momčilo Ninčić, Greece by Elefterios Venizelos, Romania by Ion G. Duca, and Bulgaria by Aleksandar Stamboliyski. Andra Milosavljević reported with a fervent triumphalism that under the leadership of the Yugoslav delegation, the Balkan Christian countries took one front against Turkey. During the meeting, Ninčić presented the concept of expanding the neutral zone overseen by the Entente forces in Western Thrace (on the Bulgarian-Turkish border on both sides of the Marica River) by 20–30 km. This solution—according to the head of the Yugoslavian Ministry of Foreign Affairs—had to provide Bulgaria with access to the Aegean Sea.⁴⁴ In this way—said Andra Milosavljević—nine years after the battle over Bregalnica,⁴⁵ the representatives of the Balkan states cooperated on the matters whose effects will affect the future of the entire Balkans. “My country is not directly involved in this dispute—said Ninčić—but this dispute concerns my country because it will affect peace and stabilize the whole region.”⁴⁶ According to Milosavljević, it was possible to get the impression that the Yugoslav minister of foreign affairs spoke not only on behalf of the Kingdom of SCS but the entire region. His speech and argumen-

⁴¹ More about Mehmed Spaho see i.e.: H. Kamberović, *Mehmed Spaho (1883–1939). Politička biografija*, Sarajevo 2009.

⁴² „Политика”, 1922, бр. 5240 (24.11), p. 3.

⁴³ J. Paszkiewicz, *Grecja a bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe na Bałkanach 1923–1936*, Poznań 2012, p. 114.

⁴⁴ “Политика” 1922, бр. 5240 (24.11), p. 3.

⁴⁵ It was one of the main battles of the Second Balkan War, which took place from June 30 to July 9, 1913. Bulgarians on one and the combined Serbian-Montenegrin forces on the other side stood in the battle against each other. Despite similar losses, the strategic victory was for the Serbs and Montenegrins, who forced the Bulgarians to move to the defensive.

⁴⁶ „Политика”, 1922, бр. 5240 (24.11), p. 3.

tation had a huge impact on all, and the whole meeting highlighted the solidarity of all the Balkan states.⁴⁷ However, it should be emphasized that during the entire conference Ninčić was very careful that all postulates of Yugoslavia would be heard (mainly to ensure the repayment of war reparations by Turkey), but in general the attitude of Yugoslav delegation towards Ankara was neither negative nor aggressive. Both the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prime Minister Nikola Pašić, and probably King Aleksandar were keen to prepare the soil for the future Yugoslav-Turkish cooperation.⁴⁸ The first attempts were made at the turn of May and June 1923, when a representative of Turkey Caved Bey came to Belgrade from Bucharest. The Turkish diplomat was supposed to check out the possibilities of establishing diplomatic relations.⁴⁹ Although the official activities of diplomacy of both countries had to wait, through this visit both sides indirectly acknowledged the existence of their own countries in the international arena.⁵⁰ Eventually, the Treaty of Lausanne was approved on July 24, 1923. He revised the Treaty of Sevres and eventually restored Turkey's outposts in the Balkans (Eastern Thrace, Gallipoli) and brought the international legitimacy of the governments of Atatürk and the Republic of Turkey (proclaimed finally on October 29, 1923). During the deliberations, France played a very important role because it wanted to draw Turkey into its Balkan policy.⁵¹

The next two years brought a certain stoppage in the Balkan politics of Turkey, but 1925 saw one of the breakthroughs. In May that year, the first representative of France after the First World War arrived to Turkey. In February 1926 an agreement regarding the Syrian-Turkish border was signed, which improved further relations on the Ankara-Paris line because it should be remembered that Syria was a French protectorate which secured the interests of France in the Middle East.⁵² It also seems that France exerted some pressure on Yugoslavia in order to reach Turkey as soon as possible.⁵³

Despite the Ninčić's declarations on the willingness to reach the agreement with Turkey as soon as possible, the negotiations began to get complicated. The more robust Turkey was no longer willing to make concessions to the

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ Д. Тодоровић, *op. cit.*, pp. 267–268.

⁴⁹ Ž. Аврамовски, *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji. Godišnji izveštaji Britanskog poslanstva u Beogradu 1921–1938*, t. 1, Zagreb 1986, pp. 175–176.

⁵⁰ Д. Тодоровић, *op. cit.*, p., 268.

⁵¹ V. Vinaver *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata (Da li je Jugoslavija bila francuski „satelit“)*, Beograd 1985, p. 55.

⁵² Ibidem, p. 98.

⁵³ Д. Тодоровић, *op. cit.*, p., 284.

Kingdom of SCS, both in terms of accepting Muslim displaced persons from Southern Serbia and to satisfy the Ottoman debt and reparations owed to Serbia after the Balkan Wars. The denser atmosphere can be immediately seen in press publications. It was probably not a coincidence that at this time “Politika” started to publish more articles criticizing and accusing Kemalist Turkey of fuelling the idea of Pan-Islamism among the Muslim inhabitants of Macedonia, which Ankara could use for its own interests.⁵⁴ An example of such anti-Turkish rhetoric was an anonymous article published on July 11, 1925,⁵⁵ entitled: *In Kemal's Turkey (U Kemal'jovog Turskoj)*, with a meaningful subtitle: *Hatred of Turks against Serbian [sic!] brothers in Turkey*. The author of this text described the adventures of an unidentified citizen of Yugoslavia who was to be persecuted by local authorities for no reason from the very beginning of the journey through Turkey. Immediately after his arrival he was arrested for 6 hours and after leaving the prison he was allegedly followed by a local police officer. The visit was only to confirm the very unfavourable attitude of the Turks towards the Yugoslavs, which was also noticed by several other Yugoslavian Muslims who decided to go to Kemalist Turkey.⁵⁶ This country has become—according to the words of that traveller—a nationalist and chauvinist state. It is impossible to clearly determine the reasons for the publication of this text. Perhaps it was aimed at responding to the pressure from the French and emphasizing that the Yugoslav resentment towards the Turks is still alive and the authorities would be very easily able to explain to the nation why the freezing of relations with the Ottoman successors took place. It cannot be ruled out that it was a form of putting pressure on Turkey, because only a month later on August 24, 1925, an official representative of Turkey arrived to Belgrade and submitted credentials. Even before coming to Yugoslavia, the representatives of Ankara assured that there were no formal contraindications to finding an agreement between the two countries and that Turkey would accept the displaced Turkish persons from Yugoslavia, under the condition that they sell their property (land) so that they could have their own capital necessary to settle in Turkey. The government in Ankara wanted to avoid the troubles encountered during the reception of the displaced persons from Greece.⁵⁷

After such declarations, the tone of the Yugoslavian side also began to be more conciliatory, which was also reflected in the press publications. It could be seen i.e. in the article published on August 25, 1925, in “Politika,” entitled

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁵⁵ „Политика”, 1925, бр. 6181 (11.07), п. 5.

⁵⁶ Ibidem.

⁵⁷ Д. Тодоровић, *op. cit.*, п. 284

Turkey's Representative in Belgrade [*Predstavnik Turske u Beogradu*], in which the journalists informed about the arrival of the deputy and summed up the event by stating that the Yugoslav authorities want to sign a peace treaty as soon as possible, once the problems between the two countries can be solved.⁵⁸ However, in this case, no one mentioned the problem of resettlements but rather the reparations from 1913 in the context of the damage done by the Ottoman army in Southern Serbia, which at the time seemed a less controversial problem. Finally, the Yugoslavian-Turkish Treaty of Friendship was signed on October 28, 1925, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was the second Balkan state after Bulgaria (October 18, 1925) with which Kemalist Turkey signed such an agreement.⁵⁹ The treaty was ratified at the end of the year, and the symbol of the tightening of the relations between the Kingdom of SCS and Turkey was the visit of the head of the Turkish diplomacy Tevfik Rüştü Aras in Belgrade on December 24–26, 1925.⁶⁰ Journalists of “Politika” referred to this visit with a perceptible dose of sympathy, which was also visible in the interview with the Turkish Minister. In a conversation published in the issue of December 25, 1925, the journalists cited a statement of a Turkish politician who stressed that: “We [Turkey] are interested in the Balkan matters comprehensively as a whole, but we have no conflicting interests here with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.” In addition, Tevfik Rüştü Aras stressed that Yugoslavia was particularly close to Turkey, because the Turks: “[...] know the Serbs and value their spirit.”⁶¹ The politician also stressed that just like Turkey in the Middle East, the Kingdom of SCS in the Balkans is a power that can protect order and peace and that is why they should cooperate with each other.⁶² It is worth emphasizing that this article is a rare case of a positive message coming from a narrative about the centuries-old relationship between Serbia and the Ottoman Empire. This time, journalists did not emphasize the “Turkish yoke” but quoted Tevfik Rüştü Aras’s statement, which meaning was contained in, among others this experience of the Ottoman administration in the territories of Serbia. Much more often, however, the Ottoman legacy’s image in the articles published in “Politika” had negative connotations.

A great example of this are the articles devoted to the anniversaries of historical events, such as the Balkan Wars, or the already mentioned battle of Kumanovo (October 23–24, 1912), which were the cornerstone of the narrative

⁵⁸ „Politika”, 1925, бр. 6226 (25.08), p. 3.

⁵⁹ J. Paszkiewicz, *Uwarunkowania geopolityczne...*, op. cit., p. 190.

⁶⁰ Ž. Avramovski, *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji...*, T. I, op. cit., p. 293.

⁶¹ „Politika”, 1925, бр. 6348 (25.12), p. 2.

⁶² Ibidem.

uniting the new Yugoslav reality. Obviously, one of the main motives of such a narrative must have been to emphasize the fact of overthrowing the Ottoman captivity, which somehow imposed the narrative about the interwar Turkey. King Aleksandar and his father Peter were presented as the liberators of Serbs and Yugoslavs from the Turkish yoke, and the continuators of the great predecessor, Đorđe Petrović, the leader of the first Serbian uprising, which began the Serbian struggle for liberation from Ottoman Turkey.⁶³ As "Politika" wrote, they cut off the chains of slavery that bound the nation.⁶⁴ In the articles devoted to these events, "Politika" frequently quoted the phrase about the Turkish yoke and displayed the events from Kumanovo as the opening of a new era in Serbian/Yugoslav history.⁶⁵ All this has somehow strengthened the image of Ottoman Turkey as the tormentor. These events were presented in "Politika" from the very beginning of the King's Aleksandar reign.

However, it is worth mentioning that there were some derogations of this rule, i.e. in years 1925, 1929, 1933 and 1934 when "Politika" did not place on its sheets any information about the celebration of the following anniversary of the battle of Kumanovo.⁶⁶ It seems that the lack of articles devoted to these events resulted from both the multitude of important circumstances in the internal policy of the state, which caught the attention of the journalists of the Belgrade journal more than historical memories, as well as from the then relations of the Yugoslavia and Republic of Turkey. In October 1925, both countries signed the said treaty of friendship. In 1929, the authorities focused mainly on strengthening the foundations of the royal dictatorship introduced on January 6. In turn, in early October 1933, King Aleksandar made a private trip to Turkey, where he personally talked with Atatürk about the idea of creating the Balkan Entente. In October 1934 it was only eight months since Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Turkey signed the Balkan Pact. At the beginning of this month, King Aleksandar was assassinated in Marseilles.

As it could be seen in each of the years discussed above, the circumstances in internal politics and in Yugoslav-Turkish relations required a positive message. It seems, therefore, that it was not a coincidence that in those years the editorial office of "Politika" decided to keep silent about the celebrations of the anniversary of the battle of Kumanovo. In this situation, Turkey was seen as a close ally, so it certainly was not a good time to recall the difficult history of mutual relations, and the narrative about the battle of Kumanovo was impossible to separate from this burden.

⁶³ P. Michalak, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

⁶⁴ „Политика” 1927, бр. 7002 (25.10), p. 5.

⁶⁵ „Политика” 1923, бр. 5568 (24.10), pp. 3–4; „Политика” 1932, бр. 8784 (24.10), p. 4.

⁶⁶ P. Michalak, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

Pax Balcanica.**The Image of Turkey in the Public Discourse of Yugoslavia During the Period of Creation the Pan-Balkan Cooperation**

As it was already mentioned, the beginning of the 1930s was a turning point in the activity of Turkish diplomacy in the Balkans, and thus in Turkish-Yugoslav relations. Greater activity of Turkey in this area resulted, among others, from the fact that as a result of the "great crisis" the powers withdrew from more involved activities in this part of Europe, thus creating a space for the action for Turkey.⁶⁷ The beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century favoured tightening the ties in the Balkans. The Balkan states have convinced themselves that the Republic of Turkey has in fact dissociated itself from the heritage of the Ottoman Empire and has no revisionist tendencies. In addition, when the situation inside the country strengthened, it began to be recognized by the other Balkan states as an important player in the region, cooperation with which could bring both political and economic benefits.⁶⁸ The Turkish-Greek agreement of October 30, 1930, was tangible and symbolic evidence of a breakthrough. It showed that if even the recent rivals were able to overcome the controversy in the most complex issues, the cooperation with Turkey was possible for every other Balkan state.⁶⁹ Behind-the-scenes diplomatic activities during the Balkan conferences were also not without significance for warming up the image of Turkey and improving the relations with the Balkan states, including Yugoslavia.⁷⁰ The last factor influencing the enhanced activity of Turkey in the Balkans in the 1930s, which is worth mentioning, was the growing sympathy and respect towards Atatürk. In the interwar Yugoslavia, the keen relations between King Aleksandar and Kemal Pasha favoured the father of the Turks. Its sources should be sought in a similar understanding of interests in the Balkan foreign policy of both countries, in a similar conception for the construction of a centralist state of a homogeneous nation (both Turkish and Yugoslav), but above all in the mutual respect of the rulers for their own military achievements.⁷¹ The respect which King Aleksandar had for Kemal was mentioned by Ivan Meštrović, in his memoirs about a dinner which took place

⁶⁷ D. Barlas, *Turkish Diplomacy in the Balkans and the Mediterranean. Opportunities and Limits for Middle-power Activism in the 1930s*, "Journal of Contemporary History" 2005, Vol. 40 (3), pp. 442–443.

⁶⁸ J. Paszkiewicz, *Uwarunkowania geopolityczne...*, op. cit., p. 190

⁶⁹ Ibidem, p. 191.

⁷⁰ A. Кадијевић, *О архитектури југословенског посланства у Анкари*, „Наслеђе” 2010, vol. XI, p. 57.

⁷¹ Ibidem, p. 58.

in Zagreb on December 18, 1933. During one of the conversations, when someone called Atatürk an interesting man, the King of Yugoslavia said in response that Kemal was more than interesting and that for Turkey he turned out to be as important as Peter the Great was for Russia. King Aleksandar also emphasized that an agreement between him and the President of Turkey was very quickly established. He noted that the ruler of Turkey was a man with broad horizons, which was to be confirmed by showing respect for the historical legacy of Hagia Sophia, including its Christian heritage. At the planned change of the mosque into the Museum, Atatürk announced the scratching of plasters and the unveiling of some frescoes and mosaics. In addition to these, the King of Yugoslavia also underlined the understanding of Mustafa Kemal for the idea of the Balkan Pact and the necessity of attracting Bulgaria to it, in order to prevent the Bulgarians from falling into Mussolini's embrace.⁷² It was not a secret that in the interwar period Italy was constantly striving to take control of Yugoslav Dalmatia. For this reason, one of the issues of Italian foreign policy was the creation of an anti-Yugoslav bloc, which attempted to involve not only revisionist states of the region like Bulgaria, Hungary, or Austria but also Turkey and Greece in a certain period of time.⁷³

The warmer Yugoslav-Turkish relations in the early 1930s did not escape the attention of the Polish representatives in Belgrade. Although they were generally aware of the difficulties in building the consensus between the Balkan states and highlighted the difficulties between individual countries in the relations with Bulgaria or Albania,⁷⁴ the improving relations between Yugoslavia and Turkey were not overlooked. In one of the reports, it was noticed that in the "Balkan Week" organized by Turkey on May 21–26, 1932 in Istanbul, which was devoted to industrial and commercial matters, among the invited representatives of Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and Yugoslavia, only Athens and Belgrade governments sent they envoys. This situation—emphasized in the report—perfectly highlighted the actual state of relations between the Balkan states and indicated which of them were in fact interested in broadly understood issues included under the general name "Union Balkanique."⁷⁵

There is no doubt that 1933 was one of the most important points in Yugoslav-Turkish relations during the interwar period. It was that year in October that the unofficial trip of the Yugoslav royal couple to Istanbul took place

⁷² I. Meštrović, *Uspomene na političke ljude i događaje*, Zagreb 1993, pp. 226–228.

⁷³ See i.e.: J. Paszkiewicz, *Grecja a bezpieczeństwo...*, op. cit., pp. 186–199; idem, *Jugosławia w polityce Włoch w latach 1914–1941*, Poznań 2004, pp. 111–129.

⁷⁴ See i.e.: AAN, *Poselstwo RP w Belgradzie*, 469, vol. 88, 13.10.1930, pp. 1–2.

⁷⁵ AAN, *Poselstwo RP w Belgradzie*, 469, vol. 04.06.1932, pp. 59–61.

(October 4, 1933). During this travel, King Aleksandar was seeking Kemal's support for the creation of the Balkan Pact and the incorporation of Bulgaria into it. According to Branko Lazarević, a representative of Yugoslavia in Turkey, this visit turned out to be the new opening in the relations between the two countries.⁷⁶ What is more, according to general Aleksandar Dimitrijević, it was this visit that improved mutual relations of the leaders of both countries to such an extent that it strengthened cooperation and accelerated efforts to sign the Balkan Pact.⁷⁷ In turn, the result of this new opening was the signing of a non-aggression and friendship pact on November 26, 1933,⁷⁸ during the trip of the head of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Belgrade. That breakthrough found its response among the broad masses of the Yugoslav society, so it could not escape the attention of the media, including "Politika," whose journalists referred to both events.

The famous tour of King Aleksandar, who was one of the main proponents of the creation of the so-called Balkan Entente, in late September and the first days of October 1933, during which he visited all potential signatories of the pact (not only Turkey, but also Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece), met with great interest and was widely and favorably depicted in "Politika."⁷⁹ The issues from October 4, 5, and 6, reported on the course of visit to Turkey. The journalists emphasized the openness, warm and cordial welcome of the King Aleksandar and his wife Queen Maria by the Turkish social and political elite, as well as by Atatürk himself. The titles of the articles commenting on this unofficial trip of the King in the Balkans perfectly reflect the moods that were to be strengthened by the medial discourse. The titles of some articles such as: *The New Era in the Balkans?* [*Nova Evropa na Balkanu?*], or *Pax Balcanica. Balkan Nations for Balkans* [*Pax Balcanica. Balkanski narodi Balkanu*] speak for themselves.⁸⁰ It should be emphasized, however, that this enthusiasm of the Turkish and Yugoslav public opinion was not the invention of propaganda detached from reality. In the reports of the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs, such information can also be found. The diplomats emphasized the epoch-making significance of King Aleksandar's visit to Turkey, during which Turkish society wel-

⁷⁶ Б. Лазаревић, *Дипломатски списи*, Београд 2000, p. 38.

⁷⁷ М. Теодосијевић, *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk u jugoslovenskoj javnosti*, Београд 1998, p. 17.

⁷⁸ Ж. Аврамовски, *Британци о Краљевини Југославији. Годишњи извештаји Британског посланства у Београду 1921–1938*, т. II, Загреб 1986, pp. 159–160.

⁷⁹ „Политика” 1933, бр. 9110 (24.09), p. 2; „Политика” 1933, бр. 9113 (27.09), p. 1; „Политика” 1933, бр. 9115 (29.09), p. 1; „Политика” 1933, бр. 9116 (30.09), p. 1; „Политика” 1933, бр. 9118 (02.10), p. 1; „Политика” 1933, бр. 9119 (03.10), p. 1; „Политика” 1933, бр. 9120 (04.10), p. 1–2; „Политика” 1933, бр. 9121 (05.10), p. 1; „Политика” 1933, бр. 9122 (06.10), p. 1; „Политика” 1933, бр. 9126 (10.10), p. 1.

⁸⁰ „Политика” 1933, бр. 9117 (01.10), p. 3; „Политика” 1933, бр. 9127 (11.10), pp. 1–2.

comed the Yugoslav ruler with optimism. This trip confirmed the rightness of the political direction in which Turkey and Yugoslavia were heading together, led by Atatürk and King Aleksandar.⁸¹

The King's visit to Istanbul was just a prelude to even more important events that took place on November 1933. It was on 26 of that month that Tevfik Rüştü Aras, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, came to Belgrade to meet with Bogoljub Jevtić, the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kingdom of Yugoslavia, a day later and sign a peace and non-aggression pact on behalf of Turkey. The editorial staff of "Politika," of course, did not remain passive about these events. On November 26, it noted the arrival of the Turkish minister, and the day later it published an interview with him, whose main point was to emphasize that the Turkish-Yugoslav pact is transparent and will serve to guarantee peace and harmony not only in the Balkans but also throughout the whole international arena.⁸² However, it seems that the commentary written by Andra Milosavljević, one of Politika's most important commentators on international politics, was much more important. The article entitled *Today's Friendship Pact with Turkey Was Prepared 11 Years Ago* [*Današnji pakt prijateljstva sa Turskom pripremljen je još pre 11 godina*] was published as the main text of the issue on November 27, 1933, so at the time when the treaty was signed. In his text, Milosavljević stated that the pact with Turkey was prepared already 11 years before when after the Greek defeat in Asia Minor, King Aleksandar refused the British government, which attempted to obtain the Kingdom of SCS in order to seize the Black Sea Straits and Istanbul. The ruler of the Kingdom stated that all disputes with Turkey had already been resolved on the battlefield in 1912. According Milosavljević such an answer was the best example of the manifestation of friendly relations with Turkey.⁸³ Bearing in mind the overtones of the articles published even at the time of the peace conference in Lausanne, which, although not anti-Turkish in its meaning, were far from the texts of a somewhat conciliatory nature, it is impossible not to see the inspiration of the Turkish royal government policy.

An apogee of presenting Turkey in a favourable light on the pages of "Politika" and the proof of a significant change in the presentation of this state in the public discourse were articles accompanying the finalization of negotiations and the signing of the Balkan Pact on February 4, 1934. The idea of creat-

⁸¹ *Извештаји Министарства иностраних послова Краљевине Југославије за 1933. Годину. Извори за историју међународних односа 1930–1940*, Т. IV, ур. Нада Петровић и Јелена Ђуришић, Београд 2009, pp. 403–404.

⁸² "Политика" 1933, бр. 9174 (27.11), pp. 1–2.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

ing the so-called Balkan Entente, which was supposed to guarantee the protection of Balkan countries' interests, was at the same time the assumption of the increasingly popular concept of collective security, expressed in the Briand-Kellogg Pact of 1929.⁸⁴ Agreed finally on February 4, 1934, and signed on February 9 of the same year, the Balkan Pact assumed the international cooperation and protection of interests of its signatories: Romania, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey.⁸⁵

The daily reported in details on the course of the last preparatory talks before the signing of the pact, which took place in Belgrade (February 3–4, 1934) and the very ceremony of signing the agreement in Athens (February 9, 1934).⁸⁶ A perfect complement to the narrative of "Politika," which strengthened the message about the significance of the Balkan Pact's significance for the security of the state were two caricatures published at that time in the Belgrade daily.



Image 1: *Балкан и Европа*, „Политика” 1934, бр. 9240 (4.02), р. 2, [online] <http://www.digitalna.nb.rs/wb/NBS/novine/politika/1934/02/04#page/1/mode/1up> [accessed: 30.04.2019].

⁸⁴ M. Dymarski, *Ententa Bałkańska (1934), jako element ładu geopolitycznego w Europie*, [in:] *Studia z nauk społecznych i humanistycznych*, red. M.S. Wolański, W. Baluk, Wrocław 2006, p. 57.

⁸⁵ Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska Antanta...*, op. cit.; Б. Димитријевић, С. Сретеновић, op. cit., pp. 54–55; M. Dymarski, op. cit., pp. 59–60.

⁸⁶ „Политика” 1934, бр. 9239 (03.02), pp. 1–2; „Политика” 1934, бр. 9240 (04.02), р. 1; „Политика” 1934, бр. 9245 (09.02), р. 1.

The first of them, entitled *The Balkans and Europe* [*Balkan i Evropa*], published on February 4, 1934,⁸⁷ presented the conversation of the god of war and the angel of peace, who met at the crossroads, one of which led to Belgrade, the other to Geneva. In the picture, the god of war resting on the road says to the angel: “Hey, you little, you forgot the mask against poisonous gases.” He replied: “I will not need it because I am going to the Balkans, where the air is much purer than in the cultural West.”⁸⁸

The second caricature published on February 9, 1934, that is, on the day of signing the pact,⁸⁹ presents the debate at two different conference tables. At the first one there are fatigued and distressed “European diplomats,” one of whom states: “Gentlemen, we cannot allow for the balkanization of Europe.” At the second table there are happy and smiling “Balkan diplomats” (from the left there are heads of Foreign Ministry of the countries—respectively: Greece—Dimitros Maximos, Romania—Nicolae Titulescu, Turkey—Tevfik Rüştü Aras, and Yugoslavia—Bogoljub Jevtić, and the other two chairs are waiting for the representatives of Bulgaria and Albania), among whom someone could hear the voice: “Gentlemen, we cannot allow for the Europeanisation of the Balkans,” it is difficult to present the main idea of the pact—“Balkans for the Balkan nations”—more accurately. It is also worth noting that this type of representation of the relationship between Yugoslavia and the rest of the Balkan states, including Turkey, was an unquestionable breakthrough.

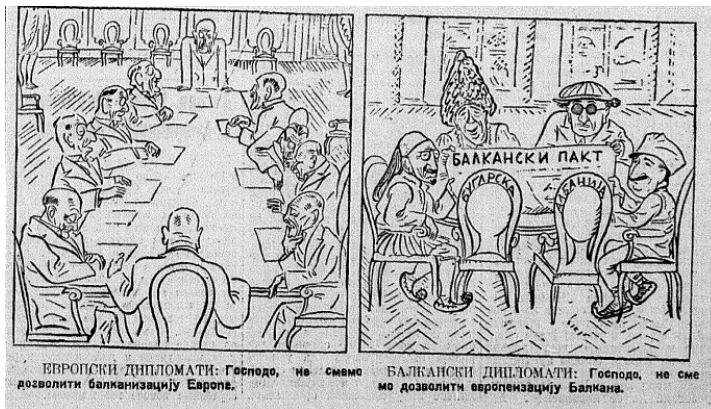


Image 2: „Политика”, 1934, бр. 9245 (09.02), п. 1,
 [online] <http://www.digitalna.nb.rs/wb/NBS/novine/politika/1934/02/09#page/0/mode/1up> [accessed: 30.04.2019].

⁸⁷ „Политика” 1934, бр. 9240 (04.02), п. 2.

⁸⁸ Ibidem.

⁸⁹ „Политика” 1934 г., бр. 9245 (09.02), п. 1.

The greatness of the breakthrough is perfectly demonstrated by the fact that the Balkan Pact, which included the agreement with Turkey—one of the main *spiritus movens* of the whole idea—was presented in the opposition to the relations with the rotten west. It is obvious that the adoption of such a narrative was politically inspired, but there was no doubt that had it not been for systematic work on redefining this narrative about Turkey, such a solution would probably have been impossible.

Conclusion

The First World War, leading to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, ended almost 500 years of Turkish domination in the Balkans. However, it began the process of De-Ottomanisation, which could be observed both in Turkey itself and in the newly created Balkan countries. It should be noted, however, that creating the image of Turkey and Turks in the public discourse of interwar Yugoslavia proceeded in two ways. On the one hand, it operated according to a well-known pattern of De-Ottomanisation quoted, among others by Maria Todorova, according to which the Turks were presented as representatives of a foreign, completely different, barbaric civilization,⁹⁰ and almost all the commemoration of the anniversary of liberation from the Turkish rule (such as the battle of Kumanovo) was presented as dropping the Turkish yoke and the return to Western European civilization. On the other hand, it seems that the state authorities were watching over the way in which public discourse showed relations with Kemalist Turkey and tried not to take the burden of the history of Ottoman rule in the Balkans. It seems that Yugoslav politicians who created the foreign policy of Yugoslavia turned out to be political realists who, in the early 1920s, in the period of the Greek-Turkish war, appreciated the political, social, and economic potential of Turkey. Therefore, in principle, since the first years of the existence of both countries, they were careful that the difficult relations of the past do not close the door to possible agreement and cooperation.

This is perfectly evident in “Politika,” which together with the tightening of the ties between the two countries more and more sparingly emphasized this Ottoman yoke, under which the Yugoslavians had to function for almost half a millennium, more willingly publishing the articles referring to contemporary relations with optimism. The change in the attitude towards Turkey and the Turks in the interwar Yugoslav public discourse is best proven by the articles

⁹⁰ M. Todorova, *The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans*, [in:] *Imperial Legacy—The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, ed. L. C. Brown, New York 1996, p. 71.

published in "Politika" four years after the death of King Aleksandar. In an article published three days after the death of Atatürk on November 13, 1938, entitled *The Historical Figure of Kemal Atatürk [Istorijski lik Kemala Ataturka]*, the author Vasilj Popović wrote straightforwardly that along with the death of Kemal Mustafa, one of the most eminent leaders of the Turkish nation, the Turkish state and one of the greatest politicians of the Middle East went down in history.⁹¹ In turn, on November 17, 1938, in the text *My First Meeting with Kemal Atatürk [Moj prvi susret sa Kemalom Ataturkom]*, the author—colonel Novica B. Rakočević concludes his memories with an eloquent sentence: "Glory to the great and immortal genius of Kemal Atatürk."⁹² It seems that these words are the best proof of to what extent the way of presenting Turkey and the Turks changed in the Yugoslav media during the interwar period, during and after the reign of King Aleksandar. Certainly, it would be impossible to use such words for the leader of the nation of the recent tormentors a decade earlier.

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