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## **“Gentlemen, we do not understand you” An Essay on Imagination in an Epoch of Change**

I would like to reflect on the style of thinking and political imagination of those Central European politicians who, during the First World War, assumed that cooperation with the Central Powers presented the greatest chance for their nations – both political and civilizational. It concerns politicians who were betting on those, which in the end, turned out to be the losers. This overview is about imagination, not about the political option for cooperation with the Central Powers – this already has its own vast literature. Political calculations only interest me insofar as they are rooted in certain beliefs about the world. Therefore, I am not interested in a situation in which someone decided to support the Central Powers for purely tactical reasons; to the extent that such a situation could have even taken place at all, or if there can be a politician who does something exclusively or even predominantly based on such calculations. Perhaps, to some extent, the favoring of the Central Powers adopted by Józef Piłsudski, had such a tactical character (but the stance of many of his colleagues, such as Ignacy Daszyński, does not fit this picture).

One of the most fascinating things in history always seems to be the issue of the interdependence of intellectual and “material” changes (in the broadest sense of the word – those that take place in the material world, not in the mind). People build a picture of the world based on their experiences (again in the broadest sense of the word – including not only practical life experiences, but also reading, reflection, and received tradition, propaganda, the cultures surrounding them, etc.). To use the terminology of one of the most penetrating researchers in this field, Reinhart Koselleck – their horizon of expectations is more or less determined by the field of their experiences. Suddenly, new experiences place before them the need to rebuild their world. We are dealing with two fundamental possibilities here: either the imagination has to adapt to changing circumstances (which does not always work out), or it surpasses them (and sometimes probably just by surpassing them it helps them to materialize).

The main topic of this overview is the first situation, but there will be room for the latter, because it is not always possible to treat both separately.

A historian who tries to study the ways of thinking and feeling about the world in a given era often faces a problem that is similar to one faced by his protagonists. He also builds a certain coherent picture of a bygone era that allows him to put specific phenomena into a general, explanatory, cultural context (social, political, economic, etc.). However, there is a paradox here; the better we understand, or we think we understand, some epoch, the harder it is to understand how it could come to an end. Ultimately, historical understanding is about uncovering meanings, and when we finally think that we have understood a great deal, then we fall into the trap of functionalism – everything seems much more sensible and internally consistent than it actually was. Such a threat is perfectly symmetrical towards its opposite, when the historian succumbs to the illusion of the rational course of history and the temptation of the teleological view. We know that the First World War broke out, and so we treat the politicians who assumed the permanence of the political system from before 1914 as incapable of perceiving the signs of the times; as we know who won this war and how the world changed after it, so we keep our distance in dealing with those who betted on the losing horse. I think that the second threat is much more dangerous for the historian. I prefer the philosophical assumption that in every given historical moment all options are open; that historical development in any given direction, is a matter of a convolution of a huge number of impossible to grasp and accidental factors in totality, rather than of some unequivocal, cause and effect reactions. If we accept such an assumption, then the knowledge about how history unfolded, which for the participants of the events being studied was still an unknown and indeterminate future, is a burden rather than an aid for the historian. It almost subconsciously focuses his attention on searching for an *ex post* genesis of the unfolding of events that actually took place.

So what interests us is the political imagination of the losing side. Imagination operates beyond concepts, instead it creates images in the mind (as the word itself suggests) and supports intuitive recognition, that is (according to the Latin root word *intuitus*), getting to know through direct insight. Conceptually, the formulated texts are only an approximation. A historian who endeavors to research imagination should therefore perform a double operation. First, using the power of his own imagination and intuition, he should try to reconstruct in his own mind the constructs of imagination that laid at the heart of the analyzed text. Then – because a historical article such as this one, is a discursive

work, operating through concepts expressed in words – the historian has to transform the products of his imagination (gained thorough the intuitive insight into the meaning of the studied texts) – into the language of an academic text. If a historian is an outstanding wordsmith (which is not the case of the author of this text, unfortunately), then he can use literary language to influence the reader's imagination, so that the reader can identify with the outlook of the central figures of the text and reconstruct the imagination of the characters in their own minds. In this situation, the stage of translating imagination into a conceptual language is not necessary, because the communication between the author of the text and the reader (and maybe even between the characters of the text and the reader) proceeds intuitively, without the mediation of words. Unfortunately, I lack the talent and psychological insight to use this method.

The above paragraph is not a description of the way this article was written. When writing, I usually do not think about the method, I write instinctively, and only after writing the text (there is no sense hiding from the reader that the above fragment was written when the entire article was almost ready) I start to wonder how I had worked. I have included these reflections in order to warn the reader that we are writing about things that are not obvious, unclear, often internally contradictory and ephemeral. They cannot even be expressed discursively, in full sentences, because in attempting to express them they somehow evaporate. The same words can denote various ideas, and the same ideas can be conceptualized through various words. Between these two spheres, there exists an obvious but difficult to explain interdependence, the nature of which is not quite clear to me.

In any case, the study of imagination, and attempting to reproduce it in a discursive language, always faces the risk that the researcher will try to logically explain and make cohesive what is incoherent, felt and unspoken. However, even with all the risk of mistakes, it is necessary to make an effort, as without taking into account the level of imagination, the discursive level, the image of reality expressed in words, as well as the practical political decisions made on the basis of this image are harder to understand. The situation of a war in which radical changes take place on a daily basis, and imagination often does not keep up with them and tries to contextualize them so that they look familiar, is a particularly rewarding topic for reflection here.

Let us start with a very well-known and important text that symbolically opens the era of the First World War. The imperial "To my peoples!" manifesto

of 28 July 1914, is an oft-quoted document, but I am not aware of any detailed analysis of it. Its stoic roots are visible at first glance. We know that the Renaissance, humanistic ideal of the ruler, which exerted great influence on the Habsburg dynastic ideology, was appealing precisely to these roots. The Emperor assures his peoples: “Ich habe alles geprüft und erwogen” – “I examined everything and considered everything”. This is a particularly interesting phrase. It is easy to notice the paternalistic image of the ruler, who looks after the happiness of his peoples and guards their safety. The Emperor does not enumerate what this “everything” is, but calls upon the confidence of the recipients – assuring that he alone took everything into account, including that which the peoples themselves cannot perceive. However, many more meanings are encoded in this phrase. At the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, a small treatise appeared in German, with the Latin title *Princeps in compendio*. It is one of numerous mirrors for princes (*Fürstenspiegel*, *Speculum principis*) – treatises depicting a model monarch, which were very popular in the Middle Ages and early modern times. In this treatise, we find reflections on war, with particular emphasis on the threats it carries. With war – goes the argument – you have to be careful. It is easy to start, and difficult to finish. It is usually lost, and even victory can lead to later defeat, because it brings huge losses and suffering. In a word, in starting wars, one must be very cautious and the monarch should maturely think through everything before he declares it (“Soll ein Regent alles wohl betrachten und erwegen, ehe einen Krieg anfänget; denn solcher wird leicht angefangen, aber nicht so leicht wieder geendet”).<sup>1</sup> It is easy to recognize the sources of this text – it is a modification and abbreviation (*in compendio*) of the famous work of Erasmus of Rotterdam *Institutio principis christiani*, created in the second decade of the sixteenth century and intended as a textbook for the education of the future Emperor Charles V. The book was written in Latin, and this is the language in which the phrase of Erasmus that interests us appears.<sup>2</sup> Intended for one of the Habsburgs, the book co-created the model of the ideal ruler that functioned in succeeding generations of the dynasty.

<sup>1</sup> *Princeps in Compendio, das ist etliche kurze zusammengefasste Puncte oder Reguln, welche ein Regent bey seiner Regierung zu beobachten nöthig hat, vormahlen in Lateinischer Sprache von einem unbekannnden Autore herausgegeben...*, s. l., 1701, p. 82, “XXI Punct. Vom Kriegs-Wesen” (Google Books; accessed: 21 Nov. 2017).

<sup>2</sup> “Cum numquam oporteat Principem praecipiti esse consilio, tum haud alibi constantior erit aut circumspectior, quam in suscipiendo bello [...]”. Erasmus, *Institutio Principis Christiani*, XI, 1, <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/erasmus/inst.shtml> (accessed: 21 Nov. 2017).

In the search for antecedents, however, we can go back even further. Maria Tanner, in her work, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas*, presented the role of the Trojan myth in the dynastic legend of the Habsburgs; Aeneas, as a mythical progenitor of their royal line, became a personal model for the dynasty's representatives. Pious, uncomplainingly bearing the sufferings sent by the gods; the Virgilian hero approached the early-modern personal model, with his neo-Stoic elements. So, let us take a look into *The Aeneid*. The fundamental characteristic of Aeneas is piety: *Sum pius Aeneas*, those are the first words uttered by him in the poem. The analogy with the Habsburgs is complete: *pietas austriaca* was one of their most important dynastic virtues (and postcards with the praying emperor were distributed during the war). But – let us look further – the stoic Aeneas has one more virtue: he has sensed everything and considered everything.<sup>3</sup> So we reach the source and the circle closes: the last descendant of Aeneas (referring to the title of the aforementioned work of Maria Tanner) at the moment determining the future of the world, calls upon his divine ancestor.

If I have devoted so much time to one text from the eve of the war, it is because such a brief analysis introduces us to what in my opinion is the very core of the world of imagination, which is the subject of this essay. Of course, the emperor did not write his own manifesto personally – but the official who prepared it (a journalist and a clerk in the government's presidium Moritz Bloch)<sup>4</sup> had to know well what books he should have on his desk to capture the style of the Habsburg proclamations. Of course, the vast majority of readers of the manifesto did not catch these allusions (though some, who better remembered their years in the classical gymnasium, probably could). However, the strength of *topoi* is precisely that they live collectively in the minds of many individuals who do not remember their origins and do not comprehend the allusions contained in them – but somehow they understand these *topoi* as familiar, although they cannot say why.

Of course, this begs the question, what was the social power of such an imagined world, whose expression is the imperial manifesto? Who was emotionally

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<sup>3</sup> Virgil's *Aeneid* VI, 105: "Omnia praecepi atque animo mecum ante peregi". I found a reference to this quote in the classic work by E.R. Curtius, *Literatura europejska i łacińskie średniowiecze*, transl. and ed. by A. Borowski, Kraków, 1997, p. 182 (also there is a more accurate characterization of Aeneas).

<sup>4</sup> Basic biographical details: *Handbuch österreichischer Autorinnen und Autoren jüdischer Herkunft: 18. bis 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by S. Blumensberger, M. Doppelhofer, G. Mauthe, vol. 1, München, 2002, p. 135.

moved by such a text? Who was left indifferent by it, and in whom could it cause laughter or irritation? In August 1914, Leon Biliński struck down the plan for another imperial manifesto, specifically addressed to the Poles. The text was accepted by Emperor Franz Josef I, but ultimately was not signed by him due to the opposition of the Prime Minister of Hungary, István Tisza. “Trust the star of my house!” – the emperor addressed the Poles in Biliński’s text. Whom could this have moved? Or maybe the question is wrong? Maybe the purpose of such documents is not to awaken an emotional response, but to send a signal about a position on a given issue? Probably both. Well then, whom did these formulas touch? Probably not those Polish paramilitary volunteers who, on 3 August 1914, on Oleandry Street in Cracow, standing at attention, listened to their commandant, Józef Piłsudski: “Soldiers! You have been met with the immense honor, that you first [...] will cross the border of the Russian partition [...]” The language of dynastic Habsburg patriotism and the language of the insurgent appeal, with the echoes of the January Uprising of 1863 (and even older, Napoleonic undertones) seem to rule each other out. The phrase about the star makes an extremely archaic impression – three hundred years earlier, Emperor Rudolf II could have looked out for the Habsburg star from the castle tower in Prague’s Hradčany, but it probably could not shine for the people of the first decades of the twentieth century.

Or maybe it could? Maybe these different languages did not exclude one another, maybe they functioned in other social situations, and somehow were mutually complementary? Józef Wittlin’s novel, *Salt of the Earth*, which speaks of the first weeks of war, begins with a very expressive, symbolic scene, perhaps a bit kitschy in its overly literal allegory, but aptly capturing in a nutshell – I think – the mental situation of those days. The double-headed eagle disappears from banknotes, from plaques at district buildings, post offices and tobacco shops, from coins in a pocket and from the tickets issued for illegally crossing railway tracks – and out of all of these small eagles forms a giant one; hanging over the heads of people like a monstrous Zeppelin, casting its huge shadow on everyone, blotting out the sun. That’s how it was, exactly like this: a state that went practically unnoticed on a daily basis, and the extent of its repressiveness was in the form of fines for minor offenses, suddenly covered everything up and filled everyone’s lives. It was such a short moment – maybe a week, maybe a month – in which many individuals identified with the state. Konstanty Srokowski, undoubtedly one of the most intelligent Galician publicists, definitely pro-Habsburg in his political attitude, but usually calm and rational, this time wrote extremely emotionally, with a full range of neo-romantic linguistic clichés.

“The great tragedy had to take place yesterday in the soul of the most eminent resident of the imperial villa in Ischl. He, the most powerful defender of peace, who, for the sake of preserving for his peoples the favor of this peace for so many years and among so many unheard of circumstances, resisted the bloody wave with his powerful will, holding it away from the boundaries of his magnificent lands, has now succumbed to the necessity [...], bloody *Ananke*, which turned out to be stronger than [...] his steadfast will to respect and save the blood of his subjects.” The Poles “will go [...] under the banners to faithfully [...] execute this categorical order, that the spirit of Western culture and civilization passed through the lips of the most eminent monarch yesterday.”<sup>5</sup> In the context of earlier reflections on the stoic character of the imperial manifesto, it is worth noting that Srokowski links the imperial decision with Kantian ethics (categorical imperative!), which in many respects are very close to Stoic ethics.

In any case, there is no surprise with Srokowski, if Karl Kraus, himself an eloquent critic of the hypocrisy of Habsburg propaganda, both earlier and later, succumbed (briefly) to the charm of the distinguished formulas of the manifesto.<sup>6</sup> We can also refer to texts from the same period that were not intended for publication. On 2 August 1914, fifty-six-year-old David Angyal, a professor of history at the University of Budapest and a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, wrote a letter to his student and colleague, Gyula Szekfű. He wrote about the flat passions that set history in motion. “Us and the Germans are moved by the question of being or not being, and the French – by blind vanity.” He wrote about England with special bitterness. “As if there was not enough space in the world next to the Germans for the English. But the pride of John Bull... knows no limits. In Serbia, English money is also used to agitate against us.”<sup>7</sup> A few days later, one of the most eminent Czech historians, Jaroslav Goll, wrote to his favorite student, Josef Pekař, in a less emotional way than Angyal, but expressing, albeit without enthusiasm, a similar political position. “My sympathy to the French has decreased over the years, and especially now. Germany is impressive in every

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<sup>5</sup> K. Srokowski, “*Alea jacta*”, *Nowa Reforma*, 29 July 1914, reprint in: id., *Na przełomie*, Kraków, 1916, pp. 9–11.

<sup>6</sup> E. Timms, *Karl Kraus Apocalyptic Satirist. Culture and Catastrophe in Habsburg Vienna*, New Haven and London, 1989, p. 344.

<sup>7</sup> David Angyal to Gyula Szekfű, Budapest, 2 Aug. 1914, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Egyetemi Könyvtár, Kéziratok (hereafter: ELTE KK), ref. no. G 628 (Letters written to Gyula Szekfű – Szekfű Gyulához intézett levelei), Letters of David Angyal (Angyal David Levelei), letter no. 53.

respect... And today (and for a long time) it is the only possible alliance for us (Austria).”<sup>8</sup>

One can imagine that the sense of loyalty towards the state did not have to be in opposition to the feelings that surely dominated in the souls of the soldiers of the First Cadre Company. Whether it really was this way, could – perhaps – be shown by detailed research. This assumption is even more probable because after all, in the pre-war period, manifestations of national patriotism were somehow incorporated into supranational state patriotism. (This was the situation in Cisleithania in any case, while this was not the case with the non-Hungarian nationalities of the Kingdom of Hungary – but this is another story.) However, even if it was so, even if at some point patriotic ideas and ideas of loyalty to the Austrian state could coincide (with many nationalities of the monarchy, not only Poles), then during the war, the situation had to change. Already in September, the same Konstanty Srokowski, after the Austrian defeats in Galicia, wrote much more soberly, urging that in the face of military disasters everyone would fulfill their daily duties, counting on the improvement of the situation. “If I were given the choice to get hit in the head now or in a month, I would choose the second date without hesitation. In a month, a variety of different things could happen. First of all, my foe could be dragged to hell, he could have second thoughts, I can gain strength for necessary defense, etc. The same way of reasoning should be applied to social life in the present situation.”<sup>9</sup> It is difficult to have a greater contrast than between the romantic pathos of Srokowski’s text from 29 July 1914 and the “Švejk-like”, somewhat ideological text of 20 September.

Srokowski, despite his disappointment, remained an active member of the orientation towards Austria, but it is easy to understand that many others doubted in the possibility of an Austro-Polish resolution. The lengthening war, growing exhaustion, as well as social changes, influenced the radicalization of attitudes and politics. This incoherence between the two types of rhetoric, behind which stood different forms of action and different ideas about the world, sometimes revealed themselves very clearly – and it was not a difference of political orientations, but just the difference in the intuitive view of the world. If we find one phrase that reflects the conflict of different ways of

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<sup>8</sup> Jaroslav Goll to Josef Pekař, Brno, 17 Aug. 1914, in: *Listy úcty a přátelství. Vzájemna korespondence Jaroslava Golla a Josefa Pekaře*, ed. by J. Klik, Praha, 1941, p. 590.

<sup>9</sup> K. Srokowski, “O ład w przewrocie”, *Nowa Reforma*, 20 Sept. 1914, reprint in: id., *Na przełomie...*, p. 77.

looking at the world, it is the exclamation of Władysław Leopold Jaworski, one of the leading Polish pro-Habsburg conservative politicians, sometimes quoted in the historiography, after a conversation with Józef Piłsudski and Ignacy Daszyński: “Gentlemen, we do not understand you.”<sup>10</sup>

The wartime diary of Władysław Leopold Jaworski, written by an extremely intelligent man with outstanding analytical skills, devotes much attention to Józef Piłsudski. One can see that Jaworski is fascinated with him, and at the same time that he cannot build such a picture of him, his actions and statements, which he would understand. “I was pondering Piłsudski’s nature. He is a megalomaniac that transmits this disease onto the nation. He is right, except that he acts as if our nation was strong [...]. I do not think I am a *Mikromann*. After all, I see our extreme poverty, above all morally.” The problem apparently would not leave him alone, because the next day he continued: “There is something in Piłsudski, however.” Piłsudski lays down conditions to the Germans:

he is a Pole, as if he were 1) either a Pole in his own strong country, 2) or a Pole capable of seizing his own country. Unfortunately, the situation is different. Does Piłsudski not see this? He does, but instead of reconciling with reality, he protests... He gives the impression of a boy who is beaten and who still stands up to it. This, of course, has its limits. Finally, the boy is thrown out the door... Politics is certainly the art of achieving possible things, the problem lies in how to assess the magnitude and degree of this possibility in every situation. Certainly, you can bluff your opponent, but there are boundaries here too. Well, it seems to me that Piłsudski is only bluffing. His entire POW [Polish Military Organization], all of his oppositionism, now the threat of breaking up the Legions... all bluffs. Where does it flow from? He operates through masses, and this is elusive, it is as if someone wanted to build on a floating, and thus constantly changing wave. This is not a real building, but a fictional one. He himself said something... about the technique of acting among the mass. Here’s how he possessed it: bluffing and opposition.<sup>11</sup>

It is interesting that the German military governor of the Polish territories, General Hans Beseler, judged Piłsudski similarly, as a capable, personally brave, military dilettante and a demagogue who exerts a hypnotic influence on his followers. Stephan Lehnstaedt interprets this statement as an example of a German sense of superiority towards Poles<sup>12</sup> – but it is an almost identical

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<sup>10</sup> W. Suleja, *Orientacja austro-polska w latach I wojny światowej (do aktu 5 listopada 1916 roku)*, Wrocław, 1992, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> W.L. Jaworski, *Diariusz 1914–1918*, ed. by M. Czajka, Warszawa, 1997, pp. 140–141 (entries from 24 and 25 Oct. 1916).

<sup>12</sup> S. Lehnstaedt, *Imperiale Polenpolitik in den Weltkriegen. Eine vergleichende Studie zu den Mittelmächten und zu NS-Deutschland*, Osnabrück, 2017, p. 127.

assessment to that made by Jaworski and also by Srokowski! The division line did not run between nationalities, but between traditional and mass politics.

In searching for manifestations of this conflict of attitudes and types of rhetoric, we can go further. National Democracy was a modern political group in a different sense than that of Piłsudski and his supporters; but in the same way as Piłsudski, it “operated through masses”, which, as we remember, for Jaworski (and another leading conservative, Michał Bobrzyński) was a disaffirmation of political activity. Here, apart from the differences in political techniques, there are two more things: different political orientations and different visions of the state. Both these matters are closely related to each other.

One of the most interesting and at the same time least-understood problems of Polish history of the last decade before the outbreak of the First World War, is the question of increasing pro-Russian sentiments in the Kingdom of Poland. This is probably one of the most important ideological changes to have taken place in Poland since the partitions: the traditional image of Russia as the main enemy of Polish national life (not just Polish independence aspirations, but Polish national life) was generally, from the 1830s, one of the central political ideas in Polish public life. Its demise in a few years is a reversal of alliances – one of these great reversals of alliances that build international history, which can be compared with the Entente Cordiale, ending the centuries-long Anglo-French dispute, or the reversal of alliances during the Seven Years’ War. People and groups, believing that Russia was the greatest threat to Poland, did not disappear, of course, but they had to fight against those who thought the opposite, and during the First World War they constituted, as it seems, a minority. The question of how this reversal of alliances came about, is one of the most important questions for researchers of nineteenth and early-twentieth century Polish history. As far as I know, the historiography basically has one answer, and it was formulated in detail and in depth by Konstanty Srokowski in his book on the Supreme National Committee from 1923 (though he did not invent it)<sup>13</sup>: the revolution of 1905 shook the Polish elites in the Kingdom and convinced them that an alliance with the Tsar was the only guarantor of social stability. If we take the newest books (e.g., Wiktor Marzec’s on the Russian Revolution of 1905), we will meet in principle the same answer, though in other words.

This answer is not entirely convincing: why exactly could fear of revolution not result in an increase in sympathy for Germany as a more stable country

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<sup>13</sup> K. Srokowski, *NKN. Zarys historii Naczelnego Komitetu Narodowego*, Kraków, 1923, p. 2 ff.

than Russia, and therefore more secure in the face of the revolution? However, it is not our goal to solve this problem, but to show that many Poles treated this increase in pro-Russian moods as something incomprehensible, ephemeral, which must end soon. Such an attitude, present even in the most outstanding minds (otherwise differing in their social views, like left democrat-radical Wilhelm Feldman and conservative Michał Bobrzyński) was in a way an admission of helplessness and made it impossible to diagnose the depth of change. Since, as I wrote above, however, Polish historiography has still not successfully explained this change, it is difficult to reproach the contemporaries.

It is fascinating and very interesting to highlight the political choices of Poles during the First World War by comparing the views of Bobrzyński and pro-Russian nationalist Roman Dmowski. The diagnosis of the situation is surprisingly similar for both of them, their conclusions – diametrically opposite. Here is Dmowski:

With a superficial comparison of the policies of two countries, Prussia and Russia, towards Poles, Prussian politics came out better. Although in the Prussian Partition, consistently, with planning, [...] Polishness was destroyed and Germanness inculcated, but it was always done statutorily, with the preservation of formalities: the Polish citizen knew what to expect, what he must subject himself to and what he could resist. While in the Russian partition, the danger to Polishness was much smaller, even the respect given it from the Russians was much greater. But there was administrative arbitrariness, humiliation of human dignity, lack of a sense of law and civilized respect for man. A Pole under Russian rule was constantly bothered, insulted, and always had a reason to be outraged. People who are not used to deeper reflection on political issues usually base their political thinking on personal experiences. There was no small number of these Poles who thought more about wanting Russia to die, rather than for Poland to arise.<sup>14</sup>

One can see a fundamentally different understanding of the state in comparison with Bobrzyński's views, repeatedly expressed by him both in historical works and in statements about political activity (also in his memoirs). Bobrzyński supported "Rechtsstaat" (on whether he was really, especially as the Viceroy of Galicia, such a defender of the rule of law, opinions are divided, but we are writing about attitudes and views, not about political practice). Dmowski, on the other hand, apparently did not regard the rule of law as a central value. The most important thing was, that in Dmowski's eyes, Russia was an ineffective state and that is why in the long run it was less dangerous for Polishness. That is why it was necessary to support repressive and despotic Russia not only against equally repressive but law-abiding Germany, but also against liberal Austria.

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<sup>14</sup> R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, Warszawa, 1925, p. 9.

Meanwhile, for the Cracow historical school, and especially for Bobrzyński, respect for the rule of law is a basic value. The acquisition of this respect in the “school” of the constitutional Austrian state is ultimately the condition on which the future political role of the Poles depends; if Poles learned to live in a law-abiding state, it means that they have rid themselves of the anarchy which led their country to collapse. The dispute with National Democracy was therefore fundamental and reached far deeper than just political orientations.

If we were to look for the closest analogy with the Cracow conservatives, then perhaps the easiest place to find it would be in Romania<sup>15</sup> – a country that ultimately entered the war on the side of the Entente. At first glance it does not seem to be an obvious candidate for such a comparison. Romania was faced with a choice: neutrality or joining the war on one side or the other. This question can be expressed in another way: Bessarabia or Transylvania – which of these provinces is more important for Romanian national life? The political system of Romania was based on two parties governing in turn, conservatives and liberals; in intellectual life, the Agrarian Movement played an increasingly important role, but this concept means something different to the Polish case; it was an intellectual trend, emphasizing the importance of folk culture as the very essence of Romanianness (*Poporanism*). Social Democracy was not politically significant, but it had one theoretician of a European caliber – Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea – about whom more later.

Here, for many reasons, the Romanian conservatives constitute a quite similar counterpart to the conservatives of Cracow. Their undisputed leaders, Titu Maiorescu and Petre Carp, faced westward and were convinced that the countries of Germanic culture provided a credible pattern of Western culture for Romania to follow. They were convinced that the liberals, in their overly hasty and superficial pursuit of Romania’s conformity to the West, satisfied themselves with the copying of institutions, not caring about whether society was ready to accept them – as a result, we obtain forms without content. Only slow, organic occidentalization can prevent this. The German

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<sup>15</sup> On the similarities and differences in the intellectual development of Galicia and the Kingdom of Romania in the run-up to the First World War, writes R. Goleşteanu, *Roads to Europe. Debates on Modernization and Westernization in Romania and Habsburg Galicia 1866–1914*, Warsaw, 2012 (Printed copy of the PhD thesis from the Library of the Institute of History PAS in Warsaw). See also ead., “Naśladownictwo, dostosowanie i synchronizacja z Zachodem: poglądy na strategię rozwoju lokalnego w Rumunii i w Polsce w latach 1870–1940”, in: *Drogi odrębne, drogi wspólne. Problem specyfiki rozwoju historycznego Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w XIX–XX wieku*, ed. by M. Janowski, Warszawa, 2014, pp. 73–72.

cultural orientation of the leaders of the Romanian conservatives was one of the important factors that caused, that in 1914–1916, their support of friendly neutrality towards the Central Powers, or even joining the war against the Entente. Another important factor came into play here. The conservative party had its origins in Moldavia; it originated in the cultural association *Junimea* (“Youth”) founded in the capital of Moldavia, Iași, in 1863. Also in Iași, *Junimea* published its periodical *Convorbiri Literare*, one of the most important cultural publications of Romania. Moldavians felt marginalized in a united Romania, when the fortunes of the capital of Wallachia, Bucharest, as the capital of a unified state, overshadowed the capital of Moldavia. Their resistance to liberal politics (including foreign policy) can thus be understood as a resistance against Bucharest’s domination. Perhaps even more important was the fact that the inhabitants of Moldavia (whose eastern part, Bessarabia, belonged to Russia) more so than the people of Wallachia, felt threatened by the “colossus of the North”.<sup>16</sup>

One of the leading conservative politicians, Petre Carp expressed the strongest concerns about the threat from Russia. We can imagine the dramatic scene during the crown council on 3 August 1914, gathered under the chairmanship of King Charles I in the monarch’s residence in the picturesque Sinaia palace in the Southern Carpathians. Most of the council is for neutrality, Carp in vain demands Romania’s entry into the war on the side of the Central Powers. He speaks of the sinister “colossus of the North”, using the phrase so often used by the anti-Russian Polish press of the Romantic era (which, however, in the second decade of the twentieth century could have sounded somewhat anachronistic).<sup>17</sup> The Liberal government, however, has other plans and maintains neutrality which is favorable to the Entente, so that it can move against the Central Powers at the right moment and join Transylvania to Romania. In December 1915, it seems that the situation is beginning to mature.

On 15–16 December 1915, the Liberal politician Take Ionescu (later minister of foreign affairs and prime minister of Romania) gave a great speech in parliament (really great: the English translation is 112 pages long<sup>18</sup> and, including a nighttime break, it took two days to deliver). It was an emotional

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<sup>16</sup> The importance of Moldavian characteristics for understanding the conservative orientation of the Central Powers is underlined and analyzed by L. Boia, *Die Germanophilen. Die rumänische Elite zu Beginn des ersten Weltkrieges*, Berlin, 2014, pp. 66–67.

<sup>17</sup> C. Gane, *P.P. Carp și locul său in istoria politică a țării*, vol. 2, București, 1936, pp. 511–515.

<sup>18</sup> T. Ionescu, *The Policy of National Instinct*, London, 1916.

appeal to enter the war on the Entente side, liberate Transylvania and break up the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The speaker referred to the historic moment, which the nation was not allowed to waste. National instinct is the ultimate, decisive force in politics; and national instinct now called for a fight to complete the unification of Romanian lands. Support for the Central Powers would in fact be a transition from Turkish to Hungarian vassalage. Carp spoke twice: before Ionescu's speech, on 14 December, and in the discussion after it, four days later on 18 December. In these speeches, he presented arguments very similar to those used by Polish supporters of cooperation with the Central Powers. Austria-Hungary, as the weakest of the great powers, was the least dangerous for Romania; after its fall, small nation-states will not be established in its place, but the zone of Russian influence will expand, and because Serbia is a client of Russia, it would mean Romania's encirclement. Carp outlined the Slavic danger for Europe in words that any conservative or nationalist Hungarian politician could use.<sup>19</sup> Here, it may seem that we encounter a difference in comparison with Polish politicians who, after all, could not condemn Slavdom as a whole. However, they condemned Russian Pan-Slavism in words quite similar to those spoken by Carp. A few months later, on the eve of the war, at the next crown council on 14 August 1916, he uttered harsh words: "it is better that you lose [turning to the Liberals] because your victory would mean ruin for the country."<sup>20</sup> It did not escape observers' attention that he used the form "you" and not "we", as if he considered the war led by the Liberal government as not his own.

Carp's wish came true. The troops of the Central Powers seized Bucharest, and a few months later, after the collapse of the Eastern Front as a result of the Russian Revolution, they occupied the entire territory of the country. Conservative politician Alexandru Marghiloman formed a new government and signed a peace with Austria-Hungary and Germany in May 1918. It seemed that the Romanian conservatives were backing the winning side – until November 1918.

Let us expand our field of view to Hungary. David Angyal, quoted earlier, in some of his subsequent letters continued his reflections on the political situation. "I am not a bloodthirsty person," he wrote, "but if the English ships were sunk, I would feel that *Weltgericht* [Judgement Day] has come to pass."<sup>21</sup> In the spring of 1915, when Italy joined the war on the side of the Entente, he

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<sup>19</sup> C. Gane, op. cit., pp. 525–533.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 539.

<sup>21</sup> Angyal to Szekfű, Budapest, 25 Feb. 1915, ELTE KK, ref. no. G 628, letter no. 73.

commented ironically "*Italia diis sacra*." And dreamed: "If only it were possible to deal Italy a *coup de grâce*..." Then he added: "and Romania too!"<sup>22</sup> – though Romania was then neutral and would remain so for over a year. Finally, in August 1918, he was aware of the peril of the situation: "Only miracles can help. Emperor Wilhelm will be a tragic figure in history", he wrote, and then he predicted: "The years 1918 and 1919 will be the dark years in our history."<sup>23</sup>

These quotes are very interesting. "Weltgericht" (written in German in the Hungarian text) is an obvious reference to the well-known quote by Friedrich Schiller ("Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht"). The defeat of the British fleet would therefore be a "judgement of history" over England. The phrase *Italia diis sacra* (Italy sacred to the gods) from the next letter, is perhaps even more interesting. This is a quote from Pliny's *The Natural History*, which was used as a motto by Jacob Burckhardt for his beautiful book *Der Cicerone*, which – as its subtitle states – is "an introduction to enjoying the works of art of Italy". This book was a kind of bible for all those German burghers and intellectuals who, wanting to be considered cultured people, following Goethe's example, went on an *Italienreise* at least once in their lifetimes. Angyal, like every educated person, had to know Burckhardt's book; there is an obvious irony in the use of this quote at the time just when Italy faced a war with the Central Powers. It was as if one of the fundamental canons of nineteenth-century German culture had collapsed – the conviction of a special German-Italian spiritual kinship. Finally, in the last of the letters quoted earlier, Angyal sees Emperor William II in terms of tragedy, thus elevating the defeat of the Central Powers, which in August 1918 was no longer something impossible for him.

Of course, the sublimation of the events we experience is a form of giving them meaning and we encounter this among people of all political persuasions and nationalities, not only from the supporters of the Central Powers in East-Central Europe. Here, when dealing with personal documents, we can – of course, as one of many possible examples – observe the phenomenon of the internalization of this sublimation, which is apparently not just a propaganda measure but a way of experiencing these events by the individual.

Angyal stayed away from practical politics, while the addressee of these letters, Gyula Szekfű, had certain ambitions at the end of the war, if not in active politics, in any case, its public commenting and interpretation. Szekfű clashed with the nationalist opinion of Hungary in the spring of 1914 as a result of his

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<sup>22</sup> Angyal to Szekfű, Budapest, 11 May 1915, ELTE KK, ref. no. G 628, letter no. 83.

<sup>23</sup> Angyal to Szekfű, Budapest, 18 Aug. 1918, ELTE KK, ref. no. G 628, letter no. 178.

book about the national hero, the prince of Transylvania, Francis II Rákóczi. This book, despite the intents of Szekfű himself, was generally perceived in Hungary as iconoclastic. In his letters to Angyal, there is not so much martial enthusiasm; it is rather a concern for the fate of friends, fellow historians fighting on the front that prevails (I do not know why Szekfű, born in 1884, was not called up). However, one can see in his works the conviction that the central states are the only option for Hungary. Partially for practical reasons: otherwise Hungarians would stand not only against Russia but also against their own national minorities, which numbered around half of the country's population. Above all, however, for civilizational reasons. In this part of Europe, in which Hungary is located, Szekfű describes the prevailing culture as a Christian-Germanic community (which is not identical to Christianity as a whole). Hungary is a part of this community – the main link between Hungary and the West and with civilization. Szekfű, influenced by the theory developed by Friedrich Meinecke and Georg von Below, on the role of the state and the *raison d'état*, saw in Germany's national development a model for Hungary. Just like in the "organic" development of German capitalism, he saw the opposite of the uncontrolled liberalism of the British economy.<sup>24</sup> After the war, in 1920, he wrote in a private letter that "the German nation remains the only hope of European culture".<sup>25</sup>

The aforementioned Jaroslav Goll and Josef Pekař were, during the First World War, the most prominent, professionally active Czech historians; they were also among the most eminent supporters of the pro-Austrian orientation. Goll had already retired from active public life, whereas Pekař repeatedly spoke out – in public and in the circles of Czech politicians – on current issues. His vision of the future of Bohemia within the rebuilt Habsburg monarchy was associated with the necessity of a separate coronation of a king of Bohemia, because the status of the Bohemian Kingdom in the Habsburg countries was, according to him, analogous to that of the Kingdom of Hungary. Recognition by the Habsburgs of the so-called "Bohemian state law" therefore had to be the first condition for a future compromise. The Czech state under the monarchy was to be a Czech national state (not a Czech-German state),<sup>26</sup> but national

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<sup>24</sup> M. Lackó, *Korszellem és tudomány 1910–1945*, Budapest, 1988, pp. 50–53.

<sup>25</sup> Szekfű to Gabor Andor, 7 July 1920, cit. after M. Lackó, op. cit., p. 60. (Szekfű used the word "faj", which means "race", but Szekfű always uses it to denote a community of culture and identity, not a biological community, hence I decided to translate it into the word "nation".)

<sup>26</sup> M. Kučera, *Rakousky občan Josef Pekař (kapitola z kulturně politických dějin)*, Praha, 2005, p. 421 (planned system of the future Czech state under the Habsburg monarchy).

minorities were to be granted wide freedoms. Among the participants in Czech political life, Pekař was always one of the supporters of giving Czech Germans the widest possible language and political rights, provided that they recognized the legality of the Bohemian Kingdom within the bounds of the Habsburg states. Of course, Pekař's situation was different to that of the Hungarians and Romanians discussed above. It was similar to the Polish one in that the proximity of Germany raised problems foreign to those nations living further south and east. Here, it was not so much about the possibility of partaking in German civilizational achievements (although this element was not absent), but about recognizing the positive role of the Habsburg monarchy as protection against German domination. Also, civilizational benefits resulting from the absorption of German achievements should be accomplished through Austrian mediation, which is politically much safer than the direct influence of the German Reich.

This review could be continued, and the lack of the author's erudition is the main limitation here (lack of space being the second). Let us only mention in the margins about a very interesting figure, the Serbian lawyer and politician, Živojin Perić, who wrote very "Montesquieu-esque" analyses in French, in the early twentieth century, of the Serbian political system and was convinced of the necessity of political and cultural alignment of Serbia to Austria-Hungary (in a customs union, and ultimately, maybe even a federation). In 1911, he thought that Serbia's expansion to the south was more favorable to her than to the northwest. He warned that pro-Russian politics could end with disappointment, because Russia could come to the conclusion that the Serbs are an uncertain ally. This may happen because – this wording can be treated as a declaration of Perić's geopolitical vision of the world – the Serbs "are socially and culturally closer to the European or Germanic center than to the Muscovite Empire."<sup>27</sup> Even during the war, he hoped that the Austrian occupation of Serbia may ultimately benefit the country. As Olga Popović-Obradović, a prominent late researcher of the history of Serbia of the nineteenth and twentieth century, writes, Perić was convinced that the main task of Serbia is internal modernization: its manifestations are the rule of law, personal and political freedoms, responsible authority, but not necessarily democracy, which he referred to with reserve.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> J. Péritch, *L'Union douanière entre l'Autriche-Hongrie et la Serbie*, Bucarest, 1911, p. 12 (an offprint from *Le Mouvement Économique*, 13, 1911, no. 74 [1 Jan.]). I thank Professor Dragomir Bondzicow from Belgrade for kindly sending me a copy of this article.

<sup>28</sup> O. Popović-Obradović, *Kakva ili kolika država. Oglеди o političkoj i društvenoj istoriji Srbije XIX–XXI veka*, ed. by L. Perović, Beograd, 2008, p. 301; see also the online version:

Very interesting from the point of view of the theme of our overview, although not involved in active politics in the period of interest to us, was the outstanding Croatian historian Milan Šufflay, who saw the future of Croatia in connection with the Habsburg monarchy. It seems that Vyacheslav Lypynsky (a.k.a. Waclaw Lipiński) on the Ukrainian side would also fit into our review. In his social vision, which goes beyond the problems of political tactics, he regretted the lack of Ukrainian elites: a nation without a noble tradition is like Sancho Panza without Don Quixote – he wrote in a famous essay. He hoped to recreate a group of “farmers” performing functions similar to the West European nobility. It can be argued that the whole project belonged to the intellectual circle of conservative occidentilizing projects, to which a large part of the concepts discussed here belong.

A large part, but not all of them. And this is because the idea of modernity/modernization plays a central role in the imagination of our heroes. Let us only recall Bobrzyński’s conviction about the importance of the German rule of law and Szekfű on the existence of the Christian-German civilization as a “window” to the West. True, from a certain point of view it might seem that the conservatives supported the Central Powers in the hope that they would stop the march of modernity. This is what some historians seem to think: David Hamlin writes about Romanian conservatives as defenders of agrarian interests against liberal supporters of industrialization,<sup>29</sup> and Bohumil Jiroušek presents Jaroslav Goll as a defender of traditional order in society and politics.<sup>30</sup> In theory, such interpretations do not have to be contradictory to what was written above: after all, you can be an Occidentalizer and at the same time a traditionalist. However, not judging whether Jiroušek may not be right in the individual case of Goll, this view cannot be generalized as a characteristics of the whole group of intellectuals supporting the Central Powers – and that for two reasons.

First of all, because the occidentalizer conservatives are not everything; and secondly, because the conservatives themselves are more oriented towards modernization than it might seem at first glance. We can distinguish a large group of leftist or center-left supporters of basing politics on the Central Powers: they are less convinced of this view than the conservatives, but impor-

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<http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/Ogledi12.pdf> (accessed: 12 Nov. 2017). Many thanks to Dr. Maria Falina, who brought the personage of Perić to my attention.

<sup>29</sup> D. Hamlin, *Germany’s Empire in the East. Germans and Romania in an Era of Globalization and Total War*, Cambridge, 2017, pp. 148–150.

<sup>30</sup> B. Jiroušek, *Jaroslav Goll. Role historika v české společnosti*, Praha, 2006, pp. 185–186.

tant because they force us to reject the assumption that there is something inherently conservative in supporting Germany or Austria-Hungary during the First World War. In their thinking, the accents are slightly different: attention is paid to the nationally liberating nature of the war carried out by the Central Powers against Russia. A Polish democratic radical from Galicia, Wilhelm Feldman, in his German-language political writings sought to present Germany and Austria-Hungary as representatives of the principle of freedom of nations. Feudalism, according to him, still exists in international relations in the same way as it once existed in internal relations, and there are oppressed peoples just as there were once oppressed estates. The Great War will free the oppressed peoples just as the French Revolution liberated the oppressed estates: in this perspective, the Habsburg monarchy, which along with Switzerland initiated the principle of equality of nationalities, immediately transforms from an anachronistic creation into an avant-garde of modernity. Feldman referred to Kant *Zum ewigen Frieden* (whose genesis he saw in the partitions of Poland) as a precursor of the idea of freedom of nations, and thus he could present contemporary Germans as executors of the thought of one of the patrons of their national culture – the co-founder of an idealistic philosophy that still dominated in the first decades of the twentieth century in German intellectual life. Feldman, of course, had some problems including the situation of Poles in the Prussian partition in this picture, but he could argue that the Russian and British empires were much worse oppressors and enemies of the freedom of peoples.<sup>31</sup>

The Romanian writer Constantin Stere, a publicist and propagator of folk ideas, an editor of *Viața Românească*, a monthly publication important to Romanian culture, developed an argument very similar to that of Feldman, expanding the topic of aggressive empires: British and Russian. Coming from a boyar family from the then-Russian Bessarabia, in a manner typical for the propaganda of the Central Powers, Stere emphasized the defense of civilization against Russian barbarity; like Feldman, he stressed the freedom of the peoples as one of the wartime goals of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Like Feldman with Prussian Poland, Stere had trouble with the Transylvanian Romanians under Hungarian rule, which had to somehow be incorporated into the whole narrative. He managed to emphasize that one way or another, the situation of Romanians under Russian rule would only change for the worse. Looking

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<sup>31</sup> W. Feldman, *Die Zukunft Polens und der deutsch-polnische Ausgleich*, Berlin, 1915 (Chap. 1: “Der Sinn des Krieges”).

at Germany, he could emphasize with a degree of certainty, that any Polish publicist probably would not have: Germans – it is true – they oppress Poles in Poznań, the French in Alsace and Danes in Schleswig-Holstein. Together, maybe three million people are oppressed. What is the comparison with tens, if not hundreds of millions of oppressed people in the British and Russian empires? If Austria is a patchwork of nations not connected with another binding agent except for the monarch, as presented by Take Ionescu, then how much more does it apply to Russia! It is the presence of Russia on the part of the Entente that annuls all claims of Western states to represent freedom and democracy.

Stere expands his vision of the Central Powers as defenders of the freedom of nations primarily in one direction: Ukraine. For the Polish reader it may be a bit of a surprise (it was for me) that Stere's argument is so similar to the reasoning of Polish supporters of Ukraine's independence as an anti-Russian ally and the country separating our country (Romania or Poland) from Russia. Stere demonstrates some knowledge about the history and culture of Ukraine, arguing in detail, polemicizing with the above-mentioned speech of Take Ionescu, for the recognition of the national, linguistic and cultural separateness of Ukraine and Ukrainians.

At the same time, Stere presents the Central Powers (mainly Germany) as modern, especially underlining the excellence of German social institutions, contrasting them with England and France as far less advanced in this respect. In the context of German social achievements, he mentions the accomplishments of Marx and Engels.<sup>32</sup> After the German victory over Romania, from September 1917, Stere published the newspaper *Lumina* in Bucharest; he wrote in it, among other things, about the benefits for Romania of belonging to the "political and economic union of Central Europe (*Mitteleuropa*), to which all our material and moral interests are tied."<sup>33</sup>

The second Romanian political thinker next to Stere, who strongly cautioned against entering the war on the side of the Entente, was the most outstanding theoretician of Romanian social democracy, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea. Like Stere, he came from the lands of the Russian Empire (unlike Stere, from

<sup>32</sup> C. Stere, "Din carnetul unui solitar, III (Discursul d-lui Take Ionescu)", *Viața Românească*, 10, 1915, nos. 10, 11 and 12 (Oct., Nov., Dec.), pp. 161–211.

<sup>33</sup> Id., "Glasul realității", *Lumina*, 15 Sept. 1917, reprint in: id., *Marele războiu și politica României*, București, 1918, p. 15. I used an online 2009 edition: <https://pl.scribd.com/document/16574388/MARELE-RASBOIU-SI-POLITICA-ROMANIEI#> (accessed: 19 Sept. 2017). On Stere's positions during the war see also: L. Boia, op. cit., pp. 294–298.

a Jewish family, not a noble one), and this was an important factor in his anti-Russian attitude; indeed, all Romanian social democracy was anti-Russian.<sup>34</sup> Gherea was more socially radical than Stere and he combined the “geopolitical” argument with Marxism.

The war – he wrote – is an imperialist war for economic domination, above all between Germany and England; joining in it can only damage small countries (in practice, of course, it is about joining with the Entente side, because, with the exception of Carp, almost no one demanded joining the war on the side of the Central Powers). If they were to fight on the Russian side – he argued, then the Romanian army, perhaps three or four hundred thousand soldiers, would be effectively absorbed by the Russian army.<sup>35</sup>

Of course, this will mean political dependence. Addressing the issue of Transylvania, he emphasized that the nation and the state are not the same, and although the situation of overlap is beneficial, it does not always occur, and in many situations, nations can also develop outside the national state. Transylvania gained a great deal in a peaceful struggle, and in principle the Romanian kingdom, with a “neo-feudal” system in the countryside, does not have much to offer to Romanians living in the Habsburg monarchy.<sup>36</sup> Gherea does not believe that Austria-Hungary could fall apart as a result of the war; it is too needed both for the balance of the whole continent and for the very nations of the monarchy (“with the possible exception of Serbs and Romanians”).<sup>37</sup> If, however, Austria-Hungary fell apart as a result of war, then Transylvania would go to Romania anyway, “regardless of whether it did or did not participate in the fighting” – and even more, a neutral Romania that had not been bled in the battles, would have a better chance of a favorable outcome.<sup>38</sup>

Dobrogeanu-Gherea, a Marxist-reformist (and therefore basically close in his views to the main current of the Polish Socialist Party in Poland), an outstanding theoretician of the phenomenon of economic backwardness and a pioneer of research on dependent capitalism (and thus close to Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska’s interests, of whom below) was reluctant towards liberals, whom he considered an oligarchic clique and the main obstacle to the democratization of the state. Paradoxically, in this dislike of the liberals, he was somewhat closer to the conservatives of the *Junimea* society, which was mentioned earlier.

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<sup>34</sup> L. Boia, op. cit., pp. 311–312.

<sup>35</sup> C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Război sau neutralitate*, București, 1914, pp. 12–13.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 48–54.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 34 and 63 (the same argument repeated twice, using somewhat different words).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

The socio-economic argument, so strong in the quoted Stere speech, is developed in detail in the collective volume, published by the Supreme National Committee, edited by Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska. Daszyńska-Golińska considers the situation of the post-war Polish state, within the framework of the Central European economic union, which is to be built under the aegis of Germany and Austria-Hungary. This union was not supposed to be a common market (it would be opposed by Austria-Hungary, fearing a flood of cheaper industrial goods from Germany), but it was to have uniform customs at the external borders. Daszyńska-Golińska writes about the situation in which difficulties and challenges will arise, but also great opportunities: it will have to be considered how it is possible to belong to a common currency sphere while maintaining the separate nature of one's monetary policy; one will also have to face a situation in which the Polish working class will begin to demand social security on the German model. Given that one of the main advantages of Polish industry is its cheap labor force, Polish industrialists would resist it, while the Germans would support these efforts, considering cheaper Polish goods as unfair competition. However, the momentary difficulty will be rewarded with interest: the Polish working class will become similar to the German one in terms of social awareness and their standard of living within ten years.

In another text in the same volume, Klaudiusz Angerman, an engineer associated with the Polish People's Party, wonders about the direction of development of post-war industry. He also emphasizes that the future economic relationship will not be a customs union; he sees state activity as the main lever of industrial development. He pushes for state monopolies for the extraction of various raw materials needed by industry, while – in total conflict with the classical and neoclassical schools of economic thought – he considers the establishment of a monopoly as the main factor reducing prices for these raw materials. He argues that in free market conditions speculation elevates these prices to an extent that prevents the use of these raw materials.<sup>39</sup>

The Hungarian monthly *Huszadik Század* ("Twentieth Century") was the organ of the so-called radicals. In some respects, roughly speaking, it can be considered the equivalent (maybe a bit more to the left) of Galician democratic circles around Wilhelm Feldman and his monthly *Krytyka* ("Criticism").

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<sup>39</sup> Z. Daszyńska-Golińska, "Środkowoeuropejski związek gospodarczy a Polska", in: *Środkowoeuropejski związek gospodarczy a Polska. Studia*, ed. by Z. Daszyńska-Golińska, Kraków, 1916, pp. 1–33; K. Angerman, "Ukształtowanie się związku gospodarczego państw centralnych po ukończeniu wojny", *ibid.*, pp. 34–49.

It opposed the very conservative liberals ruling Hungary (who in turn were in many ways analogous to the Galician ruling conservatives, the *Stańczycy*); its authors were the intelligentsia close to social democracy, as well as standing between social democracy and liberalism. Here there was less support for the Central Powers than in the publications of the Galician Supreme National Committee. Nevertheless, there were some publications in which one can read arguments similar to those presented by Daszyńska-Golińska. Sociologist Jenő Vámos, a regular contributor to the magazine, wrote about the economic benefits of the customs union with Germany for both Hungarian industry and agriculture.<sup>40</sup> The obstacle for Hungarian economic development is the lack of capital, so the inflow of German capital as part of the economic union to be established will ensure the productivization of those people and raw materials that have remained untapped so far, and, consequently, accelerated economic development. Another writer, Kornél Lukács (I do not know if he is related to Györgyi Lukács), warned against equating the “feudal” state control of the economy of the war years with the future socialist statism,<sup>41</sup> but wrote in a later text with acknowledgement – like Stere and Daszyńska-Golińska – about the position of the working class in Germany.<sup>42</sup> Finally, the most prominent author associated with *Huszadik Század*, the sociologist and publicist Oszkár Jászi, who was already known at the time as the author of a penetrating study on the development processes of nation states and nationality issues. He wrote an article, among other things, on the prospects of democracy after the war. An indispensable supplement to democratic pacifism, he wrote, is democratic imperialism leading to transnational unification.<sup>43</sup> He did not mention any specific countries, but this text can probably be seen as a sign of cautious support for Friedrich Naumann’s *Mitteleuropa*. In other statements, Jászi openly spoke out for the need of a Central European federation after the war. His first statements on this subject date back to the time before the publication of Naumann’s book, so we are dealing with a parallel line of thought, not an influence. It is worth recalling here that Naumann was a liberal, while his

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<sup>40</sup> J. Vámos, “A vámszövetség a fogyasztók szempontjából”, *Huszadik Század*, 1916, no. 2, pp. 105–115. Complete yearbooks of the monthly are available online: [http://mtdaportal.extra.hu/huszadik\\_szazad/hszopen.html](http://mtdaportal.extra.hu/huszadik_szazad/hszopen.html) (accessed: 7 Dec. 2017).

<sup>41</sup> K. Lukács, “Szocialista jogrend-e a háború jogrendje?”, *Huszadik Század*, 1915, no. 6, pp. 366–370.

<sup>42</sup> Id., [book review:] “J. Weltner, *A Német birodalom*, Budapest, 1915”, *Huszadik Század*, 1916, no. 2, pp. 154–155.

<sup>43</sup> O. Jászi, “Imperializmus és pacifizmus”, *Huszadik Század*, 1915, no. 10–11, p. 246 ff.

book, accepting the domination of Germans in the future Central European sphere as obvious, at the same time projected the region as multinational and multilingual, for which it was criticized by extreme German chauvinists. As Péter Hának emphasizes, Jászi hoped, like many intellectuals of the time of war, that wartime suffering must result in some drawing together of nations after the war, a rapprochement that will make future wars impossible. Being an essentially declared Occidentalizer, a sympathizer of England and France, he could not forget the alliance of these states with Russia, the most conservative country in the continent and the Russian threat to Hungary. At the same time, like many liberals, democrats and socialists, he considered international integration – with full respect for national differences – as one of the requirements of modernity and democracy.<sup>44</sup> As a principled critic of official Hungarian intolerance towards national minorities, he always hoped that it would be possible to arrange the coexistence of various ethnic groups within the Kingdom of Hungary's historical boundaries. Therefore, he was not enthusiastic about political boundaries based on ethnographic criteria: Entente victory – he wrote – “would mean total atomization of Central Europe based on the nationality principle, with the emergence of small statehood, remaining, instead of German hegemony, in the sphere of Russian military autocracy. [...] Such a situation would mean the destruction of the historical Hungarian state.”<sup>45</sup>

Finally, let us mention Bohemia, where Bohumir Šmeral, the leader of the Czech Social Democrats, was convinced that staying in the Habsburg monarchy was the best route to industrialization, and thus to the qualitative and quantitative growth of the working class, which in turn would open the way for the future socialist system. Šmeral was one of the leading supporters of the Habsburg monarchy among the Czechs. In 1917, he opposed the creation of separate “buffer states” in its place and criticized the use of the slogan by the Czech national movement of the right of nations to self-determination in a situation when Czech Germans were denied this right.<sup>46</sup> His views were expressed by the resolution of the Czech Social Democracy of December 1913: “From the point of view of the interests of the Czech people and the

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<sup>44</sup> P. Hanák, *Jászi Oszkár dunai patriotizmusa*, Budapest, 1985, pp. 59–64.

<sup>45</sup> O. Jászi, “Középeurópa és Nyugateurópa”, *Világ*, 29 July 1917, cit. after P. Hanák, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>46</sup> J. Chlebowczyk, *Między dyktatem, realiami a prawem do samostanowienia. Prawo do samookreślenia i problem granic we wschodniej Europie Środkowej w pierwszej wojnie światowej oraz po jej zakończeniu*, Warszawa, 1988, pp. 384–385.

proletariat, it is essential to strengthen everything that actually contributes to the maintenance and development of a large economic area organized within the framework of the state organism in the center of Europe, whose historical expression today is Austria-Hungary.”<sup>47</sup>

Let us return to the aforementioned text of Claudius Angerman for a moment, because he excellently represents one of the central features of the way of seeing the world presented here: statism, that is faith in the state as a motor of modernity and warrant of civilization. This “statist” belief unites, in one way or another, Marxist social democrats, more or less leftist liberals and occidentalist conservatives. On the one hand, enlightened, moderate conservatives, saw in the Central Powers the ideal of modernization that they liked: maintaining the social hierarchy. They could not read Ralf Dahrendorf’s book *Society and Democracy in Germany*, but if they read it, they would surely agree with its main argument. Dahrendorf wrote that Wilhelminian Germany modernized the economy, became an industrial state, but retained the premodern hierarchy of social privileges. Dahrendorf sees in this the main weakness of German modernization; the heroes of my sketch would see in it its strength. On the other hand, Social Democrats and leftist Democrats (Feldman, Daszyńska-Golińska, Jászi, Šmeral) also valued the rule of law as a form of guarantee for socially vulnerable groups, with recognition and envy they saw the great development of German social democracy, and in the institutions of the German welfare state, many of them saw the open road for the peaceful construction of socialism. Both democrats and conservatives could read with appreciation Friedrich Naumann’s comparison of London’s ports with the port of Hamburg. Something like the port of London, writes Naumann, does not exist at all, because it consists of various separate private institutions with separate regulations. The Hamburg port, on the other hand, is a perfectly organized, supervised by the authorities, organizational unity. In this difference, according to the author of *Mitteleuropa*, the entire difference between the English and German types of capitalism is contained: the earlier individualistic English capitalism fights with the newer, organized German capitalism, this is the essence of the present war. Who the future belongs to is conveyed clearly from this text.<sup>48</sup> For the left, the above comparison was an example of the superiority of a regulated economy over a free market, for conservatives – an example of the possibility of economic development without anarchy and with the preservation of a traditional state.

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<sup>47</sup> Cit. after P. Hanák, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>48</sup> F. Naumann, *Mitteleuropa*, Berlin, 1916 (1st edn. – 1915), pp. 104–106.

This is how we come to the second reason why it cannot be said that the option for Central Powers was in fact a traditionalist option. Germany (and, to a considerable extent, also Austria-Hungary) created their particular path towards modernization, different than the English and French (and also Russian) roads; this alternative modernization, other than the “classic” liberal modernization, was more regulated, less translatable into political democratization, but providing social protection for groups affected by change. In the early twentieth century, the great historian of political systems, Otto Hintze, wrote an article about the political system of Germany and Austria-Hungary – a constitutional monarchy. A constitutional monarchy is one in which the monarch’s power is limited by the constitution and can only be carried out within its framework, but nevertheless remains real: the monarch’s prerogative still includes important elements of the state system, and above all the government does not have to enjoy the confidence of the parliament, but only of the head of state and is responsible only to them. What is most important – according to Hintze, the constitutional monarchy is not only a stage of development on the way to the classical parliamentary system (which can exist both in the monarchic version in England and in the republican version in France) – a system in which the head of state has a symbolic function and the government depends on a parliamentary vote of confidence. It is not an earlier stage, but a different, parallel development direction, Hintze wrote. It can be assumed that the majority of my heroes thought the same about the German and Austro-Hungarian path of social development. This is not the same modernity as the English or French, that is just at an earlier stage of development: it is an alternative kind of modernity. Regardless of whether we agree with this claim (I personally have no opinion on this matter), it is clear that such reasoning allowed even the most radical advocates of modernity to bind their hopes with the Central Powers. For conservatives, this alternative kind of modernity has one more feature – it allows for the hope that politics will continue to be under the control of reasonable and moderate people (whatever these words might mean).

Having finished this brief review of names and texts, the subject of the imagination of the war period could be continued further – and another phenomenon dealt with – in a way symmetrically opposite to what I wrote above. Until now, we have talked about the imagination that somehow habituates the changes that are taking place, reduces the unknown to the known. But there is a reverse imagination, imagination that in seemingly familiar and ordinary things sees the marks of a different – most often frightening – future. If that first type of imagination “does not catch up to” reality, the second type overtakes

it, leaving it behind. This first type of imagination – as we have seen – appeals to people who are more or less professionally involved in politics, publicists and some scholars – mainly historians. The latter – mainly artists. One can say that on the one hand, visual arts “see” the future, while on the other hand, discursive statements cannot keep up. But it may be an illusion: maybe visual arts do not “see” anything better, just the same aesthetic motifs were later exploited in the aesthetics of totalitarian systems. So an observer looking from today’s perspective has the mistaken impression of aesthetics “foreseeing” the future. The case is open. With this type of imagination, fascinating but requiring a separate study, we will not deal in detail here; I am interested in it as much as it relates to the heroes of my article. This imagination, which can be called “apocalyptic”, serves the purpose of my heroes in a certain way. Its exaggerations and one-sidedness are clearly visible – and therefore, the intellectuals who (in their own mind) see the world soberly and realistically, gain another argument confirm themselves in their views. They position themselves against those whom they consider irresponsible dreamers.

My heroes were usually immune to this apocalyptic kind of imagination. By reading or browsing their texts, and especially by comparing their texts with other texts expressing this apocalyptic imagination, I could not resist one thought: there is no war here! My heroes certainly at least see war invalids, whose presence in the public space of Austro-Hungarian cities was the subject of reflection during the war. In one of his articles, Joseph Roth presented an expressionist description of invalids on the streets.<sup>49</sup> In the correspondence of Szekfű and Angyal, a lot of space is devoted to the fate of friends who are called to the army. One of them, well-known Polonist, Adorján Divéky, writes to Szekfű from the front where the day before, a shell tore off someone’s arm and ripped some NCO to pieces – “this is the world we live in here”.<sup>50</sup> And yet, you cannot see the horrors of war in their reasoning, nor do you feel a sense of danger. I do not know if this observation would be confirmed after a systematic study of First World War political journalism in Austria-Hungary and Germany; however, if we assume that it is at least partially true, then it is worth a moment of reflection. French researchers recently addressed the question, what did the civilians in the rear know about the reality on the front? They argue that

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<sup>49</sup> H.-G. Hufer, “War Neurosis and Viennese Psychiatry in World War One”, in: *Uncovered Fields. Perspectives in First World War Studies*, ed. by J. Macleod, P. Purseigle, Leiden and Boston, 2004, pp. 243–244 (Roth’s citation – p. 247).

<sup>50</sup> Divéky to Szekfű, Feldpostkorrespondenzkarte, s. l., 22 Nov. 1916, ELTE KK, ref. no. G 628, Letters of Adorján Divéky (Divéky Adorján levelei), letter no. 3.

the policies of French and German censorship were fundamentally different: the German (and Central Powers in general) tried to eliminate the subject of death in war from the press and other publications, while the republican French censorship tried to propagate wartime virtues by presenting the deaths of the heroes (of course in a proper propaganda light). Thus, a subject of the Central Powers reading the press, unlike in France, had an “unreal picture of war without the dead”.<sup>51</sup>

This argument, however, does not suffice. Numerous current researchers of emotions, write about the emotional impact of the front on the rear, about tears, nervous breakdowns and about mental diseases – and our heroes live as if in a different world. Perhaps one of the clues to follow would be to look at the form of literary magazines about political thought and analysis that took shape during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There is no room in them for issues related to the body, pain or death. Such things are suitable for the tabloid press, maybe for poetry or a bad novel, but not for a serious discursive text about politics. The adopted form of writing about politics imposes the content. Or maybe one can look even deeper. Jonathan Crary devoted an interesting book to the problem of attention in the culture of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Attention, in his understanding, is not a biological constant, but a historical variable. The modernization of the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries required the development of the skill to shift attention from topic to topic. This in turn provoked intellectuals to pessimistic reflections about the loss of the ability for deep and careful observation (which was supposed to have dominated in the earlier epochs). This easily led to the conclusion that the ability to concentrate is a sign of status, evidence of belonging to the intellectual elite.<sup>52</sup> Does not this apply to our heroes? Like all *Bildungsbürger*, they were obviously convinced of their elitism and their ability to concentrate on the important matters (and this means: on great politics) was for them a sign of their social status.

One can also ask, whether they did not find themselves in a situation in which, more than for other groups, made it difficult for them to see the human scale of the tragedy. They were people who practiced elite politics in big cities, and this also applies to the leftists discussed here: Oszkár Jászi wrote

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<sup>51</sup> J. Beurrier, P. Buton, “L’ombre portée de la représentation de la mort”, in: *Le soldat et la mort dans la Grande Guerre*, ed. by I. Homer, E. Penicaut, Rennes, 2016, pp. 247–260, cit. p. 257.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. J. Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, Cambridge, MA, 1999.

in *Huszarik Század* intended for the intelligentsia, and Wilhelm Feldman in his position of the Supreme National Committee representative in Berlin was addressing people that had an influence on the politics of the German Empire. In *The Last Days of Humanity* by Karl Kraus, one of the main artistic devices consisted of contrasting the apocalyptic world war reality with the traditional language of its description, a language that even unwittingly draws the attention of the speakers towards minor issues, which in the new situation are no longer of great importance. Kraus, as it is known, considered the inadequacy of language to describe reality as one of the main sources of the crisis of his time. At times, it is difficult to resist the thought that Kraus's criticism reaches the protagonists of this sketch. Not in a moral sense – Kraus criticized those who, consciously (or semi-consciously?) used inadequate language to confuse the picture of the situation, which is probably not the case of my heroes. However, this inadequacy of language to the situation must strike the reader, who does not forget during reading, in what socio-political-military context arose those serene, appealing to reason rather than emotion, rationally arguing studies.

One may wonder if one more important issue, apart from the picture of the war, is not missing in the texts of my heroes. Is not it so that both conservatives and leftists have missed an important thing? Namely, that Germany very slowly began to be not so much a solution as part of the problem? The intellectuals seem not to have noticed that the general radicalization of political and social attitudes during the war cannot remain without influence on the institutions of the state in which this radicalization takes place. An additional factor of changes was the strengthening of the state as a result of the introduction of the war economy. For my heroes, meanwhile, Germany is still the guarantor of the rule of law and a mediator in nationality disputes of the future *Mittleuropa*. Researchers, who know the later development of German history, notice that in the First World War, numerous harbingers of change in a totalitarian direction appear. My heroes do not see this.<sup>53</sup> Do they live in a soap bubble, seeing Germany as the ideal of a civilized country, not noticing the forces that will soon overthrow this ideal?

This is a historiosophical question that cannot be answered through a historical study. Knowing the fate of Germany in the quarter century after the First World War, we can easily see in the First World War previews

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<sup>53</sup> Similarly evaluating the attitude of Central European intellectuals towards the idea of *Mittleuropa* and the war aims of Germany is P. Eberhardt, "Geneza niemieckiej koncepcji 'Mittleuropi'", *Przegląd Geograficzny*, 77, 2005, no. 4, pp. 463–483, esp. p. 479.

of the cruelties of the Second – just like in any event, we can easily, *ex post*, identify the signs of any future event, which we know to have happened. *Vaticinium ex eventu* does not require any special predictive ability. In every given historical moment, we find seeds of possible developments in the most numerous, mutually exclusive directions. For example, the impact of wartime events on the socio-economic transformation of the Central Powers could be assessed during the war from various points of view. It could be presumed that wartime statism brought the triumph of socialism and democracy closer, or that such statism, combined with militarization, strengthens traditional elements against modernization and maintains the elements of the social hierarchy and power structure derived from the state system (“feudalism”, as it was often called). This was noticed among others by Konstanty Srokowski, who wrote about the change in Austrian politics caused by the coming to power of the military oligarchy, which removed the Viennese bureaucratic oligarchy, and from another point of view, by the above-mentioned author for *Huszaradik század*, writing about the feudal character of German economic statism. Nowadays, to give one example, such a picture is drawn by the biographer of Emperor Wilhelm II, stressing that the traditional monarchical image of the ruler’s world found a breeding ground in the wartime statism and militarization of the state.<sup>54</sup> For our topic, the work of Maciej Górny is important, as it shows how, with the Central European intellectuals themselves, a group similar to the heroes of my sketch, ideas germinated, and out of which racist ideology began emerging.<sup>55</sup>

All this is true, and the opposing observations of people like Naumann, Daszyńska-Golińska or Jászi are just as true. These people saw in the war events embryos of the democratization of the Central Powers. It is never (or almost never) possible to predict, which direction of historical development is going

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<sup>54</sup> J.C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: Into the Abyss of War and Exile, 1900–1941*, Cambridge, 2014 (4th printing 2015), pp. 1135–1163 (Chap. 43: “The Kaiser’s War Aims”). For Central and Eastern Europe (and especially for the area of German military occupation, the so-called *Ober-Ost*), the image of German politics in the First World War as a peculiar prelude to Nazism is given by V.G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern front. Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I*, Cambridge, 2000. A much more positive picture of the German occupation in the First World War is presented by A. Stempin, *Próba “moralnego podboju” Polski przez Cesarstwo Niemieckie w latach I wojny światowej*, Warszawa, 2013. Similarities and differences are also perceived by Lehnstaedt. He stresses (op. cit., p. 463), that the fundamental difference is the existence of a national-socialist ideology, which was not an “extension” of some ideologies from the First World War, but the result of defeat and events after it.

<sup>55</sup> M. Górny, *Wielka Wojna profesorów. Nauki o człowieku (1912–1923)*, Warszawa, 2014.

to prevail. The fact that events took place in some direction, does not imply that this direction of development was the most probable. The participants of the events had the right to accept one or another expectation in relation to the future unknown to them (*semper dubius eventus belli*, wrote Konstanty Srokowski).<sup>56</sup> The historian (let us remember what was said at the outset) must during his work methodically forget for a while (methodically, because it cannot really be forgotten) about what he knows about later times in order to be able to understand the choices made by his heroes. This assumption does not make impossible pondering on the chances of implementing various unrealized variants of events (it is difficult to resist!). What it excludes is coming to any unambiguous solution in this matter.

One more observation is relevant. If not everyone, then almost all of my heroes were exceptionally intelligent people. Bobrzyński, Jaworski, Srokowski; Daszyńska-Golińska or Feldman, Stere or Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Jaszi or Szekfű, Pekař and Goll, Perić or Lipiński, were a cut above their contemporaries in their breadth of view, depth and originality of thought. One may wonder whether in the Polish, Czech or Romanian political life, among the supporters of the Entente, we would find people of a similar intellectual class (with the possible exception of Dmowski, Masaryk, or Iorga). More clever and tactically better politicians – certainly, but more prominent intellectuals – probably not. And then a reflection comes to mind: isn't it precisely that outstanding intelligence, a feature not necessarily useful for politicians, that led them astray sometimes? The conviction of the necessity of the occidentalization of their countries along with their aversion to revolutionary shocks, guided their thoughts towards Germany. A strong sense of civilizational backwardness also directed them to look with hope along the German path for development. All or most of them were close to German culture (this is clearly seen in the above-quoted Angyal letters). This culture, often idealized, was for them the most obvious archetype of the culture of the European West. It organizes their imagination concerning the whole sphere of social life, and not only their political imagination.

The political imagination of our heroes had a strong centrist element, striving to avoid extremes – they were, to use the formulation of Leszek Kołakowski, “conservative-liberal socialists”, although the proportions of these three components in each individual case were different. Their intelligence meant that they were able to build complex thought systems, confirming them in their convictions and explaining all events in favor of their own worldview – until

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<sup>56</sup> K. Srokowski, *NKN...*, p. 107.

the collapse of empires destroyed their calculations and hopes. They had the feeling that they were seeing deeper and further than most of society; they shared the conviction that they could go beyond the romantic illusions and myths of nationalistically-tuned public opinion, proclaiming the need for politics that were perhaps less thrilling, but in their own conception, realistic and unique, and the only kind that could avoid national failure. Towards the shrill sloganeering of liberal-patriotic public opinion, they were reserved and somewhat contemptuous. All of them would agree with the words of Carp at the crown council of August 1914, that public opinion “does not interest me. It is the duty of the statesman to lead public opinion, and not let it drag him. A clearly seeing statesman must go his own way. Public opinion will be grateful to him in the end.”<sup>57</sup> Most would also applaud the words of Živojin Perić when he called on Serbia to “abandon utopian, Yugoslavian politics, and replace it with real politics, Serbian national politics”<sup>58</sup> – because in almost the same words, they appealed to their own nations. “Serbian national politics”, wrote Perić. My heroes were not internationalists who rejected national values. Patriotism was one of the central elements of their identity, and they painfully felt accusations of being alien or treacherous towards their nation. At the same time, they were convinced that patriotism can take the form of arrangements and compromises with neighboring nations. The national and supranational elements harmonized with each other.

Historians often write that the imagination of Polish conservatives (and implicitly also other heroes of this sketch) did not reach the level of independence, and did not go beyond Poland (or other countries) in relation to Austria. “Politicians of these parties [conservative and democratic] were simply not able to imagine another future” – writes Włodzimierz Suleja.<sup>59</sup> From a certain perspective, this sentence is true and this is the premise at the foundation of this article – its aim was to take a closer look at precisely these limitations of imagination. On the other hand, one can assume that many of my heroes hoped for remaining in one or another form of state union with Austria-Hungary or Germany, seeing it as an option more favorable than full independence – that for a single, small or medium-sized nation in conflict-ridden Europe, might have turned out to be a Trojan Horse. The best example

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<sup>57</sup> C. Gane, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 512. The attitude of the Romanian conservatives to the public and its two most important political myths – the French myth and the Transylvania myth – is very interestingly characterized by L. Boia, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–65.

<sup>58</sup> J. Péritch, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>59</sup> W. Suleja, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

is Perić, with his ideas of the Serbian-Austrian relationship, but basically the same is in fact the thought of Bobrzyński, who from the perspective of post-war times (and therefore not limited by the Austrian or German censorship) could not get over the missed opportunity to create an Austro-Hungarian-Polish triple monarchy.<sup>60</sup> It must be remembered (as already mentioned) that no one predicted the collapse of Russia; the disintegration of the Central Powers and that the creation of nation states in East-Central Europe would throw these countries at the mercy of Russia (see Oszkár Jászi, quoted above). So, in terms of attitudes towards independence, we would have to deal not so much with the limitation of imagination, as with the conscious choice of a certain option.

All these features of thinking and feeling formed a common ground on which moderate conservatives with moderate socialists or liberals could probably come into contact in all of the cases discussed: landowners, bourgeois and Jews. Some years earlier, Michał Bobrzyński, as Viceroy of Galicia, attempted to build a broad coalition of parties to support his pro-Habsburg politics. This included the Cracow Conservatives, liberal democrats, part of the peasant party with tacit support of the Social Democracy and mainstream Ukrainian parties, against the National Democrats and part of the peasant party. One could say that it was the prototype of the uneasy, moderate, conservative-moderate, socialist-moderate, democratic coalition of intellectuals oriented towards the Central Powers during the war.

Once the idea of this sketch was fully crystallized, and the text was written in large part, I came across (in early September 2017) a quote that I did not expect. In the letter of 28 August 1914, which I mentioned, Szekfű writes, among other things about the wartime fate of his closest friend, the literary historian Janos Horvath, who, taken into the army, fights somewhere on the northern slopes of the Carpathians, “where since the time of Louis the Great, a Hungarian army had not yet been.” And immediately after this sentence there is an astonishing statement, completely unexpected in the light of the other parts of this letter: “God grant that it would bring a free Poland with it!”<sup>61</sup> Szekfű never had any closer contact with Poland or deeper interest

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. [M. Bobrzyński], *Wskrzeszenie Państwa Polskiego. Szkic historyczny*, vol. 1: 1914–1918, Kraków, 1920, p. 64. On the other hand, this attitude coexists in Bobrzyński’s text with a repeatedly expressed sense of happiness from regained independence. Showing how these two attitudes coexist and are not contradictory would require a detailed textual analysis.

<sup>61</sup> Gyula Szekfű to David Angyal, Vienna, 28 Aug. 1914, Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtár, Kézirattár, ref. no. Ms 804/295 (in Hungarian: “ahol Nagy Lajos óta sem jart Magyar sereg. Adja Isten, hogy meghozzal a szabad Lengyelországot”).

in its history; an attempt to explain the genesis of this surprising formulation would require a detailed biographical study that we cannot undertake here. However, regardless of any possible conditions, the mere fact of the appearance of a similar statement is important for the subject of this article; it means at least, that a free Poland (whatever that would mean) did not remain beyond the horizon of the author's imagination (probably also of the recipient of the letter). And Szekfű – let us remember – was after all one of the most important intellectuals in favor of the pro-Habsburg and pro-German course of Hungarian politics. So the postulate of a free Poland in his eyes had to be consistent with the orientation towards the Central Powers.

The above conclusion is in harmony with the interesting opinion of Konstanty Srokowski: "In the Viennese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for a long time has existed something like a traditional indication that in the event of a conflict with Russia, the Polish question should be immediately taken up. That is what every minister and every head of section knew. But did he know much more?"<sup>62</sup> If he knew even that much, it would be enough to say that the sphere of the imagination of independence and the imagination of preserving the *status quo* were not completely separate but to some extent (how much?), they overlapped. Free Poland did not have to mean full independence and even a fully independent one could be imagined as embedded in the former political system, with a king and with only slightly diminished Habsburg monarchy as the southern neighbor. In this sense, there was a kind of continuum between the independence trend and the trend of loyalty to the Habsburgs. Włodzimierz Suleja wrote very aptly, about Galician anti-Russian enthusiasm during the formation of Supreme National Committee, in August–September 1914: "It is hardly surprising that those skeptical, rational, realist Galician politicians, who watched the enthusiastic emotions of patriotic crowds with a feeling of helplessness, were, as a matter of fact, deeply proud of this patriotic insurrectionary movement of the [Piłsudski's] Riflemen, however unreasonable this movement may have been in their opinion."<sup>63</sup> I think, however, that this thesis is supplemented by a parallel thesis: at least at the beginning of the war, the independence-minded could also, as a matter of fact, be at the same time loyal to Austria. This in turn leads us to the issue considered at the beginning of this article, about the size range of the distance separating supporters of independence and advocates of conciliation.

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<sup>62</sup> K. Srokowski, *NKN...*, p. 120.

<sup>63</sup> W. Suleja, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

In the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, then situated on the Viennese Ballhausplatz, there was a rumored, very Austrian *bon mot*, that was said to have circulated during the First World War. It was somewhat ironic, a bit resigned, but somehow expressing the central problem of this sketch, that is the inadequacy of old reactions to new, surprising events: “Our need for world history is already covered” – “Unser Bedarf an Weltgeschichte ist bereits gedeckt.”<sup>64</sup> Events up to a certain point were able to be fitted in somehow into the existing world image. But now the flood of widespread, historic changes has broken the existing structures of perception. Unfortunately – even if in the age of which we speak, the demand for world history was completely satisfied – its supply remained at a dangerously high level.

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<sup>64</sup> A phrase from Szekfű's letter to Angyal dated 2 Aug. 1934, cit. after I.Z. Dénes, *A történelmi Magyarország eszménye. Szekfű Gyula a történetiro és ideológus*, Pozsony, 2015, p. 286.