

VIOLENCE OF AUSTRO-HUNGARY OVER SERBS AT THE BEGINNING OF 20th CENTURY

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Summary: At the beginning of 20th century Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's conduct toward the Balkan peoples and their states was a selective one. It was very inappropriate and arrogant towards Serbia, it is possible to claim even that there was a hostile conduct in question. It was only Serbia and Montenegro in the Balkans that posed a direct threat or, in the words of Otto Eduard Leopold von Bismarck in 1879, it was "a stumbling stone on the path of Austria". The Austrian messages to Serbia, that it did not think at all about the division of Turkey, sounded convincing only to naive persons. Austro-Hungary did not want to conduct its Balkanian politics in cooperation with the Serbs, but instead of it, all of its political activities were directed against them. Before that Austro-Hungary had never taken or expressed a very strict and negative attitude toward Serbia. Nobody from Serbia provoked such a hostile attitude. In the first months of the reign of Petar Karadjordjevic, and even in the first years of his reign, he showed a most sincere wish to create as better as possible relations with the neighboring Monarchy, which is confirmed by the reports of an Austro-Hungarian envoy Konstantin Grof cond Dumba in Belgrade himself. The annexion, or only a legal but not factual change of the status of Bosnia and Herzegovina, caused a serious political crisis in Europe. It was done by a one-sided decision of the government in Vienna, with active help of the government in Berlin, and with a reluctant but tacit consent of Russian government which could not be determined and free in its foreign political actions due to the situation in their country following the events in 1905. The annexion crisis went along without a war and political crisis following the assassination in Sarajevo grew into a most destructive war that had been known in the history before that. At that time Russia was considered to be stronger and more capable for an intervention and it was the word not only about legal changes any more in the question, but also about factual changes as well. German-Austrian press actively participated in the creation of the crisis during the latter half of 19th and first half of 20th century, and in particular prior to the annexion crisis and after that prior to the First World War, or before the assassination in Sarajevo. Under the influence of such created the Archbishop of Vienna Rafael Scapinelli sent a letter to Rome on February 15, 1913. In that letter, among other things, there were written the following words: "However, Austria seems to be determined to deal with Serbia in a strict way and there is a general belief that there could emerge a war against that state in the spring." At the same time, with the help of a total anti-Serbian propaganda there was an obvious attempt to demonize the Serbs in the political and all other fields as much as possible. That is why at that time there could not be omitted to announce to Western European public that "they could never forget their heroic songs and that they always dreamt of a great epic empire." That was only a continuation of the previously established attitudes before and after the First World War that the Balkans, and Serbia before all, was an "inextricable tangle of conspiracy, banditry and corruption". And that was not enough, so that at that time the Serbs became "Serbian swines" for many Germans and Austrians or for a professor of the Freiburg University Friedrich Mieneske their "matter" was "a smelly matter". That is why it was said without any hesitation that Belgrade was "a nest of murderers". All that was done for the purpose of abandoning responsibility for

the war in front of the European public and transferring that responsibility to Serbia. At the same time, it was written that “in Serbia the people were bored and lived in expectation of bloodshed and murder.” Even that was not enough so that it was written also that the Serbs as the people “lacked ability and sense for the arts and understanding for social, economic and civilizational demands of modern time.” Germany and Austria intensified the launch of the headlines with the offensive content toward the Serbs, such as, f.e. “the Serbs are, also, the people of law moral values.” Due to all this, or in other words due to such established negative attitudes regarding the Serbs, one postcard in Germany suggested their physical elimination by means of mass hangings. The Germans made efforts not to limit it only to the drawing. (According to a report of Schmidtbonn “among prisoners there were children aged 14, 12 and even 10 years old.” They were found with a gun in their hand, but “these children had no fear at all.” “They are not the prisoners any more... they are wild beasts, caught and untamed.”) Of course, the pages of the German newspapers were full of such derogatory labels. All these headlines were full of hatred toward the Serbs and R. Wendel rightfully said: “Among us the Serbs were slandered more than any other people in Europe.”