

LEERING AT VIENNA
THE SLOVAKS, FRANZ FERDINAND,
AND THE ARCHDUKE'S REFORM PLANS

Although it is relatively uncommon in modern historiography to consider personal sympathies, the case of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand forms a notable exception. Discussions as to whether Franz Ferdinand “hated” or “disliked” the Magyars, or whether he “liked” the Germans or the Czechs, dominated reflections on him by both contemporaries and later historians. The question of his “likes” and “dislikes” becomes more understandable if one considers that his sympathies can not be measured by his political actions for the simple reason that he never went through with these actions. Alexandru Vaida-Voevod's assertion that “He had clear sympathies for the Slovaks, that good peasant people”¹ is certainly informative. It does not, however, offer any clues to practical contacts or specific plans in the political field.

Until now there has been no cohesive study of Franz Ferdinand's contacts with the Slovaks. This can be explained partly by the fact that for his many biographers, his contacts with the Slovaks were seen to be of little relevance. As I will show below, both the contacts themselves and the source materials concerning them are relatively limited. Centring on the politician Milan Hodža, Slovak historiography has not tended to locate his correspondence with Franz Ferdinand in the context of the latter's political views. In her 1983 article, “Milan Hodža and the Politics of Power, 1907-1914”,² the Slovak historian Susan Mikula examines Hodža's plans and motivations, and links these to his ensuing contacts with Franz Ferdinand. Yet she concentrates on their importance for Slovak politics, the article's main subject, and suggests that the contacts were one of several possible political orientations, which gave Hodža and the Slovaks the possibility to exercise some informal political power. In a later contribution, Emilia Hrabovec's approach is still centred on Hodža's perspective on these contacts.³ Both authors are reluctant to explore their possible influence on or repercussions for the Archduke's plans. Given the relative scarcity of unequivocal sources, such a perspective would require more extensive research into

¹ *Franz*, Georg: Alexander Vaida-Voevod und die Reformpläne Erzherzog Franz Ferdinands. In: *Südost-Forschungen* 12 (1953) 278-322, here 184.

² *Mikula*, Susan: Milan Hodža and the Politics of Power, 1907-1914. In: *Kirschbaum*, Stanislav J. (ed.): *Slovak Politics. Essays on Slovak History in Honour of Joseph M. Kirschbaum*. Cleveland 1983, 42-62.

³ *Hrabovec*, Emilia: Milan Hodža und die slowakische “Belvedere-Politik”. In: *Lion*, Michal/*Oravcová*, Marianna (eds.): *Austria slovac. Slovaca austriaca. Dimensionen einer Identität*. Wien 1996, 99-120 (Biblios-Schriften der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek 167).

Franz Ferdinand's political thought, his ideology and his many different plans, as these are the only background against which his contacts with the Slovaks can be interpreted. A study which would explore the connection between Franz Ferdinand's general political ideas and his actual contacts with Slovak political leaders would allow historians to understand more fully the latter's role and potential influence. Based on such research,⁴ the next pages will strive to contribute to further knowledge in this field of history.

The first part of this paper sketches out Franz Ferdinand's general conceptions and ideological background. His view on the Slovak case is then reviewed predominantly in the light of this general outline. In tracing the establishment of contacts between the Belvedere and the Slovaks and describing the nature of these contacts, the larger scope of the heir to the throne's world view will receive particular attention. The Slovaks' basic political wishes and needs, and their possible importance and contribution to Franz Ferdinand's ideas and reform plans, will be analysed within this wider framework. Throughout the paper I will explain how the Slovaks, although a small and neglected people, were able to attract the Archduke's attention and to contribute to his reform plans.

Franz Ferdinand and his Resentment towards the Magyars

Central to Franz Ferdinand's political thinking was his "Herrschnatur" (ruler's nature)⁵. His ultimate goal or God-given duty was the preservation and restoration of Austria's status as a great power, ensured by the monarch's authoritarian or even reactionary rule in a unitary state. Political conservatism, a Catholic upbringing, distrust of democratic novelties such as universal suffrage, and fear of the new political forces – nationalism and social democracy – constituted his political ideology. Of course, like Franz Josef, he had to take the given conditions into account. It is therefore not impossible that he had become a constitutional monarch in a truly liberal regime. Even then, Franz Ferdinand would not have been a benign Emperor and his undemocratic state ideology would have been rejected by most of his future subjects.⁶

Franz Ferdinand considered Magyar adherence to the Dualist state structure the main obstacle to the Habsburg Monarchy's future as a major power. Blocking auto-

⁴ My research was performed in the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (OeStA), Vienna, and the Slovenský národný archív [Slovak National Archive, SNA], Bratislava. I owe many thanks to Dr. Georg Hohenberg for his kind permission to study documents from the Nachlaß Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand (NEFF), and to Catherine Forrest for her outstanding textual corrections. Additional research in the state archives in Prague or Budapest could produce more documentation on this subject.

⁵ *Chlumecký*, Leopold von: *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinands Wirken und Wollen*. Berlin 1929, 240. – *Sosnosky*, Theodor von: *Franz Ferdinand. Der Erzherzog-Thronfolger. Ein Lebensbild*. München, Berlin 1929, 237-238.

⁶ *Franz*, Georg: *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand und die Pläne zur Reform der Habsburger Monarchie*. Brünn, München, Wien 1943, 22-23 (Südosteuropäische Arbeiten 35). – *Kiszling*, Rudolf: *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand von Österreich-Este. Leben, Pläne und Wirken am Schicksalsweg der Donaumonarchie*. Wien, Graz, Köln 1953, 315.

nomy to the Czechs or the Poles, this Magyar intransigence drove the Austrian half of the Empire slowly into a permanent state of crisis. Power in Hungary itself was in the hands of the so-called gentry, the lower nobility with a bourgeois liberal ideology. They considered Hungary a unitary nation state, in which minorities only had a right to exist if they recognised Magyar supremacy and assimilated.⁷ Hungarian eagerness for independence increasingly transformed the Habsburg Empire into an “Empire under notice”.⁸ Franz Ferdinand’s subsequent resentment towards the Magyars can be illustrated with numerous quotations, such as “the Magyar rabble, to which every Hungarian belonged, whether minister, prince, cardinal, bourgeois, or peasant”⁹ or “The Magyars revealed their bad manners a thousand years ago, by coming here from Asia”.¹⁰ For the Archduke, the Magyars were also responsible for all other nationality problems in the Empire, especially the German-Czech issue, where they were seen to serve as an example and a source of inspiration.¹¹ It must be noted that his resentment was primarily directed against the ruling class, and only to a lesser extent against the common Magyars.¹² Franz Ferdinand did not distinguish between the relatively loyal ‘67er’ and the radical ‘48er’ Magyar parties, as both camps sought Hungarian independence by different means. As this paper describes the Archduke’s world view, it will disregard differences in the outlook of both groups. The Archduke’s resentment towards the Magyar ruling class must be considered as a constant in his political thinking.¹³ His frequent political turns from 1905 onwards were nothing more than variations with regard to the means with which he planned to bring an end to Magyar supremacy, and they have caused extensive speculative discussions in historiography regarding his real political programme.¹⁴

⁷ Okey, Robin: *The Habsburg Monarchy c. 1765-1918. From Enlightenment to Eclipse*. Basingstoke 2001, 313-314.

⁸ *Allmayer-Beck*, Johann Christoph: *Ministerpräsident Baron Beck. Ein Staatsmann des alten Österreich*. Wien 1956, 162. – *Franzel*, Emil: *Franz Ferdinand d’Este. Leitbild einer konservativen Revolution*. Wien 1964, 79. – *Popovici*, Aurel C.: *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich. Politische Studien zur Lösung der nationalen Fragen und staatsrechtlichen Krisen in Österreich-Ungarn*. Leipzig 1906, 156.

⁹ *Kiszlíng*: *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 83* (cf. fn. 6). – Letter, Franz Ferdinand to Max Vladimír Beck, 30 July 1904, as quoted in: *Kann*, Robert A.: *Franz Ferdinand der Ungarnfeind?* In: *Idem: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand Studien*. Wien 1976, 100-126, here 114-115 (Veröffentlichungen des Österreichischen Ost- und Südosteuropa-Instituts 10).

¹⁰ SNA, Čsl. légie, kart. 23, inv. č. 16, 2. Obsah rozhovoru s F. F. dňa 14. marca 1913 od 9-9.35 hod [Résumé of a conversation with F. F. on 14 March 1913, 9.00-9.35 h].

¹¹ *Kann*, Robert A.: *Emperor William II and Archduke Francis Ferdinand in their Correspondence*. In: *American Historical Review* 57 (1952) 332-352, here 334. – Letter, Franz Ferdinand to Alois von Aehrenthal, 9 April 1909. In: *Wank*, Solomon (ed.): *Aus dem Nachlaß Aehrenthal. Briefe und Dokumente zur österreichisch-ungarischen Innen- und Außenpolitik 1885-1912*. Vol. 2: 1907-1912. Graz 1994, 665 (Quellen zur Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts 6).

¹² *Chlumecký*: *Erzherzog 208-209* (cf. fn. 5). – *Kann*: *Franz Ferdinand der Ungarnfeind?* (cf. fn. 9). – *Sosnoský*: *Franz Ferdinand* 55, 62-63 (cf. fn. 5).

¹³ *Czernin*, Ottokar: *Im Weltkrieg*. Berlin, Wien 1919, 49. – *Weissensteiner*, Friedrich: *Franz Ferdinand. Der verhinderte Herrscher. Zum 70. Jahrestag von Sarajewo*. Wien 1983, 176-178.

¹⁴ *Chlumecký*: *Erzherzog 173-183, 217-226* (cf. fn. 5). – *Franz*: *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand*

Because of his position as heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand was not yet able to push through the reforms he deemed necessary to ensure the Monarchy's survival. Until his premature death in 1914, he could only prepare steps against the Magyars, supported by his personal military chancellery, ably led by Alexander Brosch von Aarenau. The military chancellery solicited information about all possible military and political questions and gathered an endless stream of suggestions and memoranda for a future political course. The so-called Belvedere Circle must be considered as a kind of think-tank for the discontented, where, unlike in the Emperor's Circle, people without official functions were asked for their opinions. The accession to the throne was its focal point, which was to be prepared carefully. This political workshop did not have any official power and was regularly disappointed by the ruling Emperor's decisions. However, its influence as the future monarch's representative could not be ignored. In the period between 1906 and 1914, the Belvedere Circle's plans were manifold. One can only speculate as to which of these possible policies Franz Ferdinand would have selected after his accession.¹⁵ For this reason, I will focus solely on the Slovaks' role within these changing political plans, which can be retraced in the documents.

For a while, Franz Ferdinand considered a trialist solution.¹⁶ Trialism was essentially nothing more than the restoration of the medieval triune kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia. This unity, which would straddle the Austrian-Hungarian border, could also include the regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and possibly Istria and Krain. Such a kingdom would not only establish a third element in addition to Austria and Hungary; it also promised a solution to the South Slav problem within the Habsburg Empire, instead of outside of it in a Serbian-dominated entity. In a trialist construction, the Catholic "Croats, who were loyal to the Emperor" would be the dominant element.¹⁷ The October 1905 Rijeka Resolution "shook Franz Ferdinand's trust in the Croats' loyalty to the Emperor". This resolution established the Serb-Croat coalition in Croatia, in co-operation with Budapest, and stated that South Slavs and Magyars had to combat Austrian centralism together. This development is generally considered the point at which Franz Ferdinand abandoned the trialist project.¹⁸ If the South Slavs could not be relied on, it would be futile to compli-

66-80, 116-117 (cf. fn. 6). – *Kiszling*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 251-260 (cf. fn. 6). – *Polatschek*, Max: Franz Ferdinand. Europas verlorene Hoffnung. Wien, München 1989, 229-249.

¹⁵ *Kann*, Robert A.: Franz Ferdinand und die Gegenwart. In: *Idem*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand Studien, 15-25, here 16 (cf. fn. 9). – *Sitte*, Martha: Alexander von Brosch, der Flügeladjutant und Vorstand der Militärkanzlei des Thronfolgers Franz Ferdinand. Unpublished typescript. Universität Wien 1961, 119.

¹⁶ *Franz*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 77-80 (cf. fn. 6). – *Höglinger*, Felix: Ministerpräsident Heinrich Graf Clam-Martinic. Graz, Köln 1964, 215. – *Sosnosky*: Franz Ferdinand 75 (cf. fn. 5).

¹⁷ *Chlumecský*: Erzherzog 177-178 (cf. fn. 5). – Letter, Franz Ferdinand to Leopold Berchtold, 1 February 1913, quoted in: *Kann*, Robert A.: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand und Graf Berchtold als Außenminister, 1912-1914. In: *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 22 (1969) 246-278, here 259.

¹⁸ *Hickl*, Elisabeth: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand und die Rumänienpolitik Österreich-Ungarns.

cate the Dualist system by the inclusion of a third element in the Austro-Hungarian constitution.¹⁹ In the following years, Franz Ferdinand effectively continued to use the trialist option as a means of upholding relations with Croat nationalists, but above all as a “very good means of frightening” the Magyar ruling class.²⁰

At the time when the trialist solution became discredited in Franz Ferdinand’s eyes, a new possibility occurred to him.

The Romanian Connection

As the Romanian politician Vaida-Voevod asserted, his contacts with Franz Ferdinand began in 1905 with a deliberate plan to bring the manuscript of Aurel C. Popovici’s book, “Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich”, to the Archduke’s attention. In Vaida-Voevod’s Viennese network, Franz Ferdinand was the only member of the Imperial family who was thought to be receptive to these ideas.²¹ The connection was established through Franz Ferdinand’s confidant Max Vladimir Beck. Beck was quite positive about the Romanians’ political ideas, and arranged the correspondence between Brosch and Vaida-Voevod from April 1906 onwards.²²

Vienna had not been completely ignorant about the nationalities issue in Hungary before that date. After 1867, the nationality question beyond the Leitha had become an internal Hungarian matter. Nobody informed Emperor Franz Josef about the Slovak situation in Hungary, and, as a consequence, he overlooked their fate.²³ The Magyar ruling class was relatively successful in promoting its state ideology, both

Unpublished typescript. Universität Wien 1964, 42. – *Kiszlíng*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 121-122 (cf. fn. 6).

¹⁹ *Csoklich*, Fritz: Das Nationalitätenproblem in Österreich-Ungarn und die Christlichsoziale Partei. Unpublished typescript. Universität Wien 1952, 157-165. – *Hodža*, Milan: Federation in Central Europe. Reflections and Reminiscences. London 1942, 32. – OeStA, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA), NEFF, Karton (K.) 12, fol. 689. Ottokar Czernin, Memorandum, Über die Lösung der ungarischen Frage, 11 May 1911. – OeStA, Kriegsarchiv (KA), Nachlaß Bardolff (NBa), B/207, K. 8a, fol. 11. Carl von Bardolff: Franz Ferdinand und sein Kreis.

²⁰ *Sosnosky*: Franz Ferdinand 86 (cf. fn. 5). – OeStA, KA, Nachlaß Brosch (NBr), B/232:4, fol. 22. Telegram, Franz Ferdinand to Brosch, 10 January 1910. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 11, fol. 374. Letter, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 11 January 1911.

²¹ *Hitchins*, Keith (ed.): The Nationality Problem in Austria-Hungary. The Reports of Alexander Vaida to Archduke Franz Ferdinand’s Chancellery. Leiden 1974, xi (Studien zur Geschichte Osteuropas 18). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 9, fol. 92. Letter, Beck to Franz Ferdinand, 8 April 1906.

²² *Allmayer-Beck*: Ministerpräsident Baron Beck 99 (cf. fn. 8). – *Constantinescu*, Miron: Partisans et adversaires roumains de la „Grossösterreich“ en Transylvanie (1905-1917). In: *Nouvelles études d’histoire* 3 (1965) 345-362, here 346-349. – *Hitchins*: The Nationality Problem in Austria-Hungary. Reports of Alexander Vaida xi-xii (cf. fn. 21). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 9, fol. 73. Letter, Beck to Franz Ferdinand, 19 March 1906.

²³ *Galandauer*, Jan: Belvederská epizoda v životě a paměti Milana Hodži [The Belvedere episode in Milan Hodža’s life and memories]. In: *Pekník*, Miroslav (ed.): Milan Hodža. Štátník a politik [Milan Hodža. Statesman and Politician]. 3., revised edition. Bratislava 2002, 85-94, here 88. – *Kollár*, Karol: Das Wirken von Milan Hodža in Wien. In: *Lion/Oravcová* (eds.): Austria slovac 121-131, here 127 (cf. fn. 3). – *Margutti*, Albert von: Vom alten Kaiser. Leipzig, Wien 1921, 259-268.

abroad and in Austrian political circles. Franz Ferdinand's letters and documents before 1905 mention the national minorities in Hungary only as passive victims of Magyar domination.²⁴ Popovici's book, however, did not restrict its references to the mere presence of different nationalities, but portrayed them as active political players and a potential political factor in Hungary. This vision of a political opposition within Hungary coincided with Franz Ferdinand's first contacts with Vaida-Voevod and his "Romanian National Party", a potential opposition to the Magyars. The heir to the throne must have been pleased with the information that a political opposition to the Magyar gentry already existed in Hungary. At that very moment, Hungary ceased to be a monolithic adversary in his eyes, and became a new political scene, in which he had supporters as well as adversaries.²⁵ The national minorities could be useful informants on the political events in Hungary, and trustworthy allies in the future struggle with the Magyar gentry.²⁶ The book "Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich" stated that the nationalities were large in number and stood firmly behind the Great Austrian programme.²⁷

Popovici's plan combined the vision of a federal state with a strong central power. According to his plan the Habsburg Empire would be divided into national units based on ethnographical borders. Slovakia (Slowakenland) was identified as one of them, and the lands of the Hungarian Crown were to be dismembered. As this was a rather radical solution, which did not consider the historical Crown Lands at all, it seems unlikely that Franz Ferdinand would ever have adopted the plan.²⁸ Given his political ideas, the Archduke probably favoured the passages in which Popovici referred to a centralist constitution, the powers of the Emperor and a centralised legislative and administrative power. A future Emperor who would introduce these reforms would be hailed as the liberator of the oppressed nationalities.²⁹ All this may have inspired Franz Ferdinand in his reform plans. Although his concept of a new Great Austria was more centralist than Popovici's, and in his ideal Empire, all nationalities would be without rights equally, the plan could nevertheless be used as a catchword and a shared basis for cooperation with the nationalities in Hungary.³⁰

Magyar demands in military matters presented a first opportunity for actual political cooperation. Franz Ferdinand considered the introduction of the Magyar language into the Austro-Hungarian common army as a threat to the Empire's unity; the Romanian minority feared that the army would become yet another instrument of magyarisation.³¹ After Vaida-Voevod made a dynastic-minded speech on this army

²⁴ *Chlumecký*: Erzherzog 221-224 (cf. fn. 5). – *Kann*: Franz Ferdinand der Ungarnfeind? 113-119 (cf. fn. 9).

²⁵ *Galandauer*: Belvederská epizoda 88 (cf. fn. 23). – SNA, Čsl. légie, kart. 23, inv. č. 16, 2. Obsah rozhovoru s F. F. (cf. fn. 10).

²⁶ *Franz*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 47 (cf. fn. 6). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 12, fol. 351. Letter, Czernin to Franz Ferdinand, 17 December 1908.

²⁷ *Popovici*: Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich 154-155, 334-335 (cf. fn. 8).

²⁸ *Kiszlíng*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 255 (cf. fn. 6).

²⁹ *Popovici*: Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich 330-332, 427 (cf. fn. 8).

³⁰ *Sosnosky*: Franz Ferdinand 71 (cf. fn. 5).

³¹ *Kiszlíng*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 132 (cf. fn. 6). – OeStA, KA, Militärkanzlei Franz

question in the Hungarian parliament, he was invited for an audience with Franz Ferdinand on the 28th of February 1907.³² Although Brosch's first impressions of the Romanian politician were not particularly favourable,³³ the army question proved to be a suitable basis for further cooperation. Vaida-Voevod became an important informer for the military chancellery and drew the Belvedere's attention to other representatives of the Hungarian nationalities, who he thought should be approached. He obtained audiences not only for his Romanian colleagues, such as Aurel Popovici, but also for the Carpathian German Edmund Steinacker and for the Slovak Milan Hodža.³⁴

The Slovak Contacts: General Outline

In describing the actual contacts between the Slovaks and Franz Ferdinand's circle, our attention must be restricted to Milan Hodža. Kornel Stodola is often mentioned as a member of the Belvedere Circle, but as he never met Franz Ferdinand himself, and as his activities in the Great Austrian group only began after he moved to Vienna in 1913, I will ignore his contribution.³⁵ In 1905, the Slovak National Party began to participate actively in the Budapest parliamentary proceedings. The Slovaks were highly appreciated among the opposition parties,³⁶ but as the connection to the Belvedere Circle was more a personal concern of Hodža, direct contacts between the Belvedere Circle and the Slovak National Party were not established until 1913.

Although Milan Hodža was recommended by Vaida-Voevod as a major Slovak representative, an invitation to present himself at an audience with Franz Ferdinand was not immediately forthcoming. Hodža himself claimed that this delay was due to his democratic ideals concerning universal suffrage. Contacts with the Slovak politician, although advocated by Brosch himself, were supposedly hindered by Franz Ferdinand's aristocratic environment.³⁷ In my opinion, an occasion was required before any contact could occur. The so-called Černová tragedy, in which 15 Slovak

Ferdinand (MKFF), K. 200. Letter, Vaida-Voevod to Brosch, 5 March 1908. – Letter, Franz Ferdinand to Aehrenthal, 9 April 1909. In: *Wank: Aus dem Nachlaß Aehrenthal*, vol. 2, 665 (cf. fn. 11).

³² *Franz: Alexander Vaida-Voevod* 179 (cf. fn. 1). – *Hitchins: The Nationality Problem in Austria-Hungary*. Reports of Alexander Vaida xii (cf. fn. 21).

³³ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 10, fol. 430. Letter, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 29 April 1907.

³⁴ *Franz: Alexander Vaida-Voevod* 179-180 (cf. fn. 1). – *Hitchins: The Nationality Problem in Austria-Hungary*. Reports of Alexander Vaida xii (cf. fn. 21). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 10, fol. 430. Letter, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 29 April 1907.

³⁵ *Franz: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand* 70 (cf. fn. 6). – *Pekník, Miroslav: Milan Hodža a slovenská politika v predvojnových mesiacoch roku 1914 a v prvom období vojny* [Milan Hodža and Slovak Politics in the Pre-War Months of 1914 and during the First Phase of the War]. In: *Idem* (ed.): *Milan Hodža* 131-156, here 146-147 (cf. fn. 23).

³⁶ *Franz: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand* 62 (cf. fn. 6). – *Redlich, Josef: Schicksalsjahre Österreichs 1908-1919*. Vol. 1: 1908-1914. Graz, Köln 1953, 230-231 (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Neuere Geschichte Österreichs 39). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, fol. 498. Letter, József Kristóffy to Franz Ferdinand, 7 May 1907. – OeStA, KA, MKFF, K. 205, 205/42. Memorandum by Szakodczai, undated.

³⁷ *Hodža: Federation in Central Europe* 41-43 (cf. fn. 19).

civilians were killed by Hungarian gendarmes, served as such an occasion.³⁸ The incident on the 27th of October 1907 was connected to the nationalist priest Andrej Hlinka's imprisonment, and caused reverberations in Austrian public opinion and the Austrian parliament. A motion in the Austrian parliament, calling on the Hungarian government to respect the 1868 nationalities law in the interest of the Monarchy as a whole, was dismissed as interference in Hungarian internal affairs.³⁹ In the Hungarian parliament, Hodža made a speech against the officials who were responsible. Within a few days, through the mediation of Vaida-Voevod, Hodža was invited to an audience at the Belvedere.⁴⁰ At the time, this was considered as a small sensation: Hodža, a young, Protestant deputy with democratic ideas on universal suffrage, did not correspond to the image of Franz Ferdinand's usual advisors.⁴¹ The Belvedere, however, needed a Slovak version of the Černová tragedy. Brosch and Franz Ferdinand valued Hodža's account of the shooting highly, as a foil to the Magyar response.⁴² Behind the scenes Franz Ferdinand intervened with the church authorities on behalf of the accused Andrej Hlinka.⁴³

Until the eve of Sarajevo, Hodža was to remain one of the Belvedere's most important informers on political events in Hungary. According to Mikula's and Hrabovec's description of Hodža's motives,⁴⁴ he realised that the Slovaks could not continue their national struggle without outside support. Their common resentment towards the Magyars was sufficient to forge an alliance with the heir to the throne.⁴⁵ When Franz Ferdinand would come to power in the near future, both the Slovaks and Hodža himself would be in a powerful position.⁴⁶ Of course, Hodža realised that the Slovaks were merely an instrument for the Archduke, and that the future Emperor's programme would never fulfil the Slovaks' wishes entirely. However, as almost any political change would be an improvement to the current situation, and

³⁸ *Galandauer*: Belvederská epizoda 89 (cf. fn. 23). – *Kollár*: Das Wirken von Milan Hodža 128 (cf. fn. 23).

³⁹ *Allmayer-Beck*: Ministerpräsident Baron Beck 205 (cf. fn. 8). – *Chlumecký*: Erzherzog 217 (cf. fn. 5). – *Jászi, Oszkár*: The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy. Chicago 1929, 324. – Stenographische Protokolle über die Sitzungen des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Österreichischen Reichsrates. 18 (1907/08), 49. and 50. Sitzung, 16 and 17 December 1907, 3508-3509, 3570-3573.

⁴⁰ *Franz*: Alexander Vaida-Voevod 180 (cf. fn. 1). – Letter, Vaida-Voevod to Brosch, 30 October 1907. In: *Hitchins*: The Nationality Problem in Austria-Hungary. Reports of Alexander Vaida 21 (cf. fn. 21).

⁴¹ *Galandauer*: Belvederská epizoda 89-90 (cf. fn. 23).

⁴² OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 10, fol. 472, 482. Letters, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 5 and 7 November 1911.

⁴³ *Hromják, Luboslav*: L'arciduca ereditario Francesco Ferdinando d'Este e i popoli d'Ungheria con particolare riferimento agli slovacchi dalla prospettiva della Santa Sede [Archduke Franz Ferdinand d'Este and the Nationalities of Hungary with Particular Reference to the Slovaks from the Holy See's Perspective]. In: *Hrabovec, Emilia/Katrebova-Blehova, Beata* (eds.): Slowakei und Österreich im 20. Jahrhundert. Eine Nachbarschaft in historisch-literarischer Perspektive. Wien, Berlin 2008, 57-70, here 64-66 (Europa Orientalis 3).

⁴⁴ *Hrabovec*: Milan Hodža 99-103 (cf. fn. 3). – *Mikula*: Milan Hodža 42-62 (cf. fn. 2).

⁴⁵ *Franz*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 73-74 (cf. fn. 6).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 89.

as his Belvedere orientation would ensure the Slovak factor in that change, this policy was justifiable.⁴⁷

This does not mean that Hodža's political line was in any way generally accepted among Slovak nationalists. The Belvedere orientation began as his own personal project, and it had to be enforced over other possible options, such as co-operation with the Czechs or with Russia. Not without reason, his colleagues and even his close friends doubted its effect.⁴⁸ The Slovak National Party leadership abandoned its opposition only after its audience with Franz Ferdinand on 14 March 1913.⁴⁹

A large part of Hodža's correspondence with the Belvedere Circle consists of information about political circumstances in Hungary and Croatia. He repeatedly accentuated Austria-Hungary's importance for the survival of the Slovak nation.⁵⁰ Slovak nationalism was presented as being truly faithful to the Habsburg cause.⁵¹ Hodža's description of the Slovak people's veneration of the Archduke, according to which he already assumed a saintly status, is partly exaggerated.⁵² Franz Ferdinand had to be convinced of the Slovaks' loyalty to the Habsburgs. On the other hand, Hodža's personal loyalty to and faith in Franz Ferdinand and his plans should not be underestimated. Their relations never became as emotional as the Romanians', with Popovici allegedly surrounding himself with images of Franz Ferdinand and with the Archduke becoming a liberator in the common people's eyes.⁵³ Yet after the Sarajevo events, the Slovak national leadership was certainly severely disoriented and utterly despondent.⁵⁴

The introduction of universal suffrage in Hungary was a recurring theme in Hodža's correspondence with the Archduke's military chancellery. Its practical application in Franz Ferdinand's political programme in Hungary will be discussed below. In his talks with Franz Ferdinand, Hodža had probably never touched on the

⁴⁷ *Hrabovec*: Milan Hodža 99-100 (cf. fn. 3). – *Kováč*, Dušan: Milan Hodža. Od Belvederského kruhu k myšlienkam federácie v 2. svetovej vojne [Milan Hodža. From the Belvedere Circle to the Federation Ideas during the Second World War]. In: *Pekník* (ed.): Milan Hodža 111-116, here 113 (cf. fn. 23). – *Mikula*: Milan Hodža 53, 58-59 (cf. fn. 2). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 117, 117. *Magyarische Politik*, 1914.

⁴⁸ *Dangl*, Vojtech: Postoj Milana Hodžu k niektorým vojenskopolitickým otázkam pred prvou svetovou vojnou [Milan Hodža's Approach to Some Military Political Questions Before the First World War]. In: *Pekník* (ed.): Milan Hodža 117-130, here 127 (cf. fn. 23). – *Mikula*: Milan Hodža 54-55 (cf. fn. 2). – *Pekník*: Milan Hodža a slovenská politika 131-135 (cf. fn. 35).

⁴⁹ *Kollár*: Das Wirken von Milan Hodža 129 (cf. fn. 23). – *Mikula*: Milan Hodža 54 (cf. fn. 2). – *Pekník*: Milan Hodža a slovenská politika 134 (cf. fn. 35).

⁵⁰ SNA, Čsl. légie, kart. 23, inv. č. 16, 4. Obsah rozhovoru s F. F. [Résumé of a conversation with F. F.].

⁵¹ *Hrabovec*: Milan Hodža 104 (cf. fn. 3). – *Kiszling*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 227-228 (cf. fn. 6). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 10, fol. 517. Letter, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 30 November 1907.

⁵² OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, Letters from Milan Hodža 1907-1910 (Hodža), M18. Letter, Hodža to Brosch, 13 May 1909.

⁵³ *Schüssler*, Wilhelm: Ein Hanseat sah das alte Österreich. Erinnerungen. In: *Südost-Forschungen* 14 (1955) 215-222, here 218-219. – OeStA, KA, NBr, N/232:11, fol. 625-626. Letter, Vaida-Voevod to Brosch, 7 July 1914.

⁵⁴ *Kollár*: Das Wirken von Milan Hodža 130 (cf. fn. 23). – *Pekník*: Milan Hodža a slovenská politika 137 (cf. fn. 35).

social theme of land reform. He claims in his memoirs that he did so, unsuccessfully, but this is not confirmed by any letter or other document.⁵⁵ Another difficult issue was the Czech-Slovak connection. Among the Slovaks, co-operation with the Czechs was a favoured political strategy. For the Slovak National Party, it was deemed the most realistic option for the future, and it also loomed large in the background of Hodža's Belvedere orientation.⁵⁶ For him, his current policy was only one of several alternatives. In retrospect, Hodža claims that he always favoured the Czech-Slovak solution, but as Franz Ferdinand was known to dislike the Czechs, this solution would never have been viable.⁵⁷ The Archduke himself was probably all too aware of the Czech-Slovak connection, if only because the Czechs were the most active solicitors for the Slovak cause in the Austrian parliament, and many Slovak politicians were denounced as "Prague pilgrims" by the Magyar press.⁵⁸ But, as it was never brought up by his Slovak informant, it was not an issue for him, and he never mentioned this possibility.⁵⁹

The Slovak Contacts: Themes and Political Projects

Hitherto the issue of universal suffrage had been a means for Emperor Franz Josef to put pressure on the Magyar gentry. After a brief interval in 1905-1906, in which the first legal proposals to this effect were put forward, the Emperor retreated from the full-scale reintroduction of absolutism in Hungary.⁶⁰ He agreed not to introduce universal suffrage, in exchange for concessions from the Magyar nationalists in the army question.⁶¹ Hodža advocated a democratic suffrage reform on principle. For Franz Ferdinand, however, such a reform was only one possible means to break the Magyar ruling class's power and to enhance dynastic power.⁶² Hodža presented his democratic ideals with the Archduke's views in mind and described the Magyar gentry's fear of a fair suffrage reform.⁶³ Magyar politicians eventually agreed on a corrupted suffrage reform, which was adopted by parliament in March 1913. The nationalities' representatives protested vociferously against this reform and tried to prevent its passing through their allies in Vienna, but Franz Ferdinand was unable to

⁵⁵ *Franz*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 67 (cf. fn. 6). – *Hodža*: Federation in Central Europe 49 (cf. fn. 19).

⁵⁶ *Mikula*: Milan Hodža 57-58 (cf. fn. 2).

⁵⁷ *Hodža*: Federation in Central Europe 37 (cf. fn. 19). – *Hrabovec*: Milan Hodža 102-106 (cf. fn. 3).

⁵⁸ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 148. Ungarnfeindliche Hetzen. In: Pester Lloyd, 4 July 1907. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 117, 82. Magyarische Politik.

⁵⁹ OeStA, KA, Nachlaß Bardolff (NBa), K. 8a, fol. 14. *Bardolff*: Franz Ferdinand und sein Kreis.

⁶⁰ *Franz*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 56 (cf. fn. 6). – *Vermes*, Gabor: István Tisza. The Liberal Vision and Conservative Statecraft of a Magyar Nationalist. New York 1985, 115-125 (East European Monographs 184).

⁶¹ *Jászi*: The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy 362 (cf. fn. 39).

⁶² *Ibid.* 123. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, fol. 588. Letter, Kristóffy to Franz Ferdinand, October 1907.

⁶³ *Mikula*: Milan Hodža 49 (cf. fn. 2). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, Hodža, M9. Letter, Hodža to Brosch, 7 March 1908.

exert influence on political decisions.⁶⁴ According to contemporaries, Franz Ferdinand might have abandoned the nationalities and the project of universal suffrage, as soon as he had obtained enough concessions from the Magyars. The Archduke was certainly not democratically-minded and had no reason to advocate universal suffrage on principle. Many letters do indicate the use of universal suffrage as merely a means, rather than a goal.⁶⁵ Faced with this threat, “the Magyars will eat humble pie and will humbly beg for the Crown’s grace”.⁶⁶ Concern for the nationalities’ well-being was even more foreign to his ideology: the minorities were never more than “my Emperor’s ‘Landeskinder’, on an equal footing with the Hungarians”.⁶⁷ However, Franz Ferdinand condemned his uncle’s policy on more than one occasion, and the introduction of universal suffrage was raised in every version of his political programmes.⁶⁸ In any case, it was considered the most effective way to fight Magyar supremacy in Hungary.⁶⁹ Thus he must have been resolved to initiate these reforms, at least nominally.

Vaida-Voevod and his democratic Magyar colleague József Kristóffy involved themselves and the Slovaks in large-scale coalition plans. They believed it was possible to form an anti-coalition, in which democratic parties in Hungary would co-operate with the nationalities under imperial and royal protection. In letters from both politicians, excessively optimistic calculations of such an anti-coalition’s electoral power are frequently repeated.⁷⁰ Hodža was probably too much of a realist to become involved in these visions. As the nationalities could not exercise real power without royal support, in his view it would make more sense for them to await the “Thronwechsel”. Kristóffy did not enjoy any considerable support or popularity in

⁶⁴ OeStA, KA, MKFF, K. 50, Pu/19. Letter, Hodža to Bardolff, 14 October 1912 and letter, Vaida-Voevod to Carl Junker, 24 December 1912. – OeStA, KA, MKFF, K. 200. Der Thronfolger und die Wahlreform. In: *Neue Freie Presse*, 28 December 1912. – Letter, Franz Ferdinand to Leopold Berchtold, 14 January 1914, quoted in: *Kann: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand und Graf Berchtold 273* (cf. fn. 17).

⁶⁵ *Allmayer-Beck*: Ministerpräsident Baron Beck 104 (cf. fn. 8). – *Kann*, Robert A.: Count Ottokar Czernin and Archduke Francis Ferdinand. In: *Journal of Central European Affairs* 16 (1956) 117-145, here 134. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 12, fol. 281-282. Letter, Czernin to Franz Ferdinand, 1 March 1908. Grundgedanken einer Verfassung für die Habsburgische Monarchie. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 13, fol. 260. Letter, Czernin to Franz Ferdinand, 3 February 1911. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 12, fol. 675. *Czernin*, Memorandum: Über die Lösung der ungarischen Frage, 11 May 1911.

⁶⁶ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 11, fol. 385. Letter, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 12 January 1910.

⁶⁷ *Margutti*: Vom alten Kaiser 123-124 (cf. fn. 23). – *Weissensteiner*: Franz Ferdinand 166 (cf. fn. 13). – Letter, Franz Ferdinand to Aehrenthal, 20 July 1909. In: *Wank*: Aus dem Nachlaß Aehrenthal, vol. 2, 697 (cf. fn. 11).

⁶⁸ *Eichhoff*, Johann Andreas Freiherr von: Die geplante Gründung der „Vereinigten Staaten von Großösterreich“. In: *Reichspost*, 28 March 1926, 1-3. – *Sosnosky*: Franz Ferdinand 82-86, 97-101 (cf. fn. 5). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 117, 4. Gleichberechtigung der Völker in Ungarn und in Cisleithanien, 1904.

⁶⁹ OeStA, KA, NBr, B/232:4, fol. 27. Letter, Brosch to Kristóffy, 10 June 1909. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 12, fol. 724. Advice by Brosch, 1911.

⁷⁰ *Franz*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 56 (cf. fn. 6). – *Franzel*: Franz Ferdinand d’Este 84-85 (cf. fn. 8). – *IIickl*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 55 (cf. fn. 18). – OeStA, KA, NBr, B/232:4, fol. 33. Notes of Kristóffy’s lecture, September 1911.

Hungary.⁷¹ Even Vaida-Voevod did not trust Kristóffy's motives,⁷² and the Belvedere Circle generally regarded the prospect of a government led by him as a threat to its negotiations with the Magyar parties.⁷³ Several attempts to include a more influential Magyar party into this anti-coalition were directed and coordinated by the Belvedere Circle, and they demanded Franz Ferdinand's explicit approval.⁷⁴ The nationality parties cooperated with the radical Gyula Justh on the common basis of universal suffrage,⁷⁵ and, upon the Belvedere's advice, they even entered a disastrous electoral agreement with Prime Minister Károly Khuen-Héderváry.⁷⁶

Although the national minorities could not yet claim any political influence in Hungary, their contacts with the heir to the throne at least made them more relevant. The Magyar oligarchy, which was in any case wary of the "Thronwechsel", could not ignore the nationalities any longer.⁷⁷ The minorities' Belvedere policy led to severe conflicts with the Magyar oligarchy. On the one hand, the Magyars tried to scare the nationalities off. After an important speech by Iuliu Maniu on 19 February 1909, this Romanian Member of Parliament was approached by Gyula Andrássy and condemned for his contacts with Vienna. Fruitful negotiations with the nationalities would be possible only after the abandonment of this "leering at Vienna".⁷⁸ This demand for an end to their political contacts and conformity with the Hungarian party system was repeated by István Tisza in 1910.⁷⁹ Prime Minister Khuen-Hé-

⁷¹ Letter, Antal Radó to Aehrenthal, 8 March 1910. In: *Wank*: Aus dem Nachlaß Aehrenthal, vol. 2, 742 (cf. fn. 11).

⁷² *Franz*: Alexander Vaida-Voevod 181 (cf. fn. 1).

⁷³ *Hrabovec*: Milan Hodža 112 (cf. fn. 3). – *Kann*: Franz Ferdinand der Ungarnfeind? 107 (cf. fn. 9). – *Weissensteiner*: Franz Ferdinand 193 (cf. fn. 13). – OeStA, KA, NBr, B/232:4, fol. 22. Telegram, Franz Ferdinand to Brosch, 10 January 1910. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 11, fol. 254 and OeStA, KA, NBr, B/232:2. Telegram, Franz Ferdinand to Brosch, 3 March 1910. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 11, fol. 374. Letter, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 11 January 1911.

⁷⁴ *Constantinescu*: Partisans et adversaires roumains 359 (cf. fn. 22). – *Hitchins*, Keith: The Nationality Problem in Hungary: István Tisza and the Romanian National Party, 1910-1914. In: *Journal of Modern History* 53 (1981) 619-651, here 622-630. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, Hodža, M19, M28. Letters, Hodža to Brosch, 13 June 1909 and 29 April 1910. – OeStA, KA, NBr, B/232:11, fol. 677-678. Letter, János Zichy to Brosch, 15 January 1910. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, fol. 406. Letter, Kristóffy to Franz Ferdinand, 13 July 1909.

⁷⁵ *Franz*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 65 (cf. fn. 6). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, Hodža, M22. Letter, Hodža to Brosch, 3 November 1909. – OeStA, HHStA, NBr, B/232:4, fol. 18. Telegram, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 23 December 1909.

⁷⁶ OeStA, KA, NEFF, K. 15, fol. 513, 522. Letters, Kristóffy to Franz Ferdinand, 30 April and 28 May 1910. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 11, fol. 495, 501. Letters, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 7 and 9 June 1910. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 117, 87-88. Magyarische Politik.

⁷⁷ *Allmayer-Beck*: Ministerpräsident Baron Beck 97 (cf. fn. 8). – *Franz*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 89 (cf. fn. 6). – *Kiszling*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 82, 169 (cf. fn. 6). – *Mikula*: Milan Hodža 48 (cf. fn. 2). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 140. Független Magyarorszá, 25 January 1908. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 18, fol. 400-402. *Vaida-Voevod*: Oesterreich im Jubiläumsjahr, December 1908.

⁷⁸ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 18, fol. 456-461. Report, Vaida-Voevod to Brosch, 19 March 1909. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 115, 2. Memorandum by the Romanian members of the Hungarian parliament, undated.

⁷⁹ *Hitchins*: The Nationality Problem in Hungary. István Tisza 622 (cf. fn. 74). – *Vermes*: István Tisza 139 (cf. fn. 60).

dervály, in his 1910 negotiations for an electoral agreement, tried to bring about an estrangement between the Romanian and the Slovak nationality parties.⁸⁰ In the end, just before World War I, the nationalities' subordination to Magyarisation intensified. The nationalities' parties were "crushed" in the 1910 elections.⁸¹ On the other hand, there were calls for negotiations to reach a compromise on the national question. Prime Minister Sándor Wekerle's overtures in 1907⁸² were a mere prelude to the important Magyar-Romanian talks under István Tisza from 1910 onwards.⁸³ Franz Ferdinand's influence played an important background role in the failure of these talks. While the Magyars tried to reach a compromise and to loosen the nationalities' bond with the heir to the throne, the nationalities stood firm on their essential demands, which would be granted by the new Emperor in due time.⁸⁴ One thing became clear in all these political actions: the heir apparent was able to influence Hungarian politics, but he was not able to direct them. Without royal backing, the supporters of his dynastic policy were rather helpless in the face of Magyar supremacy.

In comparison, Hodža paid much attention to the Hungarian Croats in his communications⁸⁵ and was instrumental in the Belvedere's contacts with Dr. Josip Frank's Rights Party, which opposed the Serb-Croat coalition. He could not reconcile Franz Ferdinand with the Croat case entirely, but he could nevertheless introduce Croat politicians like Stjepan Zagorac and Isidor Kršnjavi to the Archduke.⁸⁶ Somehow, Hodža, and with him the entire Belvedere Circle, totally overlooked the up-and-coming loyal Radić party.⁸⁷ On several occasions, the Belvedere consulted Hodža about Slovak political events when these were mentioned in the Austrian or Hungarian press.⁸⁸ Brosch regularly forwarded Hodža's messages to the heir appa-

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 139-140. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, Hodža, M27. Letter, Hodža to Brosch, 17 February 1910.

⁸¹ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, fol. 524. Letter, Kristóffy to Franz Ferdinand, 7 June 1910. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 136. Ein eingebildeter Sieg. In: Deutsch-ungarischer Volksfreund, 10 June 1910. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, Hodža, M31. Letter, Hodža to Brosch, 17 September 1910.

⁸² OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, Hodža, M2, M3. Letters, Hodža to Brosch, undated [1 December 1907].

⁸³ *Hitchins*: The Nationality Problem in Hungary. István Tisza 619-651 (cf. fn. 74).

⁸⁴ *Constantinescu*: Partisans et adversaires roumains 354-355 (cf. fn. 22). – *Hickl*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 52, 184-189 (cf. fn. 18). – *Mikula*: Milan Hodža 48 (cf. fn. 2). – *Okey*: The Habsburg Monarchy 359 (cf. fn. 7). – *Vermes*: István Tisza 141, 209 (cf. fn. 60). – *Williamson*, Samuel R.: Influence, Power, and the Policy Process: the Case of Franz Ferdinand, 1906-1914. In: *The Historical Journal* 17 (1974) 417-434, here 432.

⁸⁵ *Mikula*: Milan Hodža 47 (cf. fn. 2). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, Hodža, M2, M4, M11, M19. Letters, Hodža to Brosch, undated [12 December 1907, 21 March 1908, 13 June 1909].

⁸⁶ *Chlumecký*: Erzherzog 202 (cf. fn. 5). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, Hodža, M11. Letter, Hodža to Brosch, 21 March 1908.

⁸⁷ At least, during my research in the NEFF I never found one reference to Radić or his party, but in order to be certain on this point, the subject will need more attention and additional research.

⁸⁸ OeStA, KA, MKFF, K. 33, Pb/19. Letter, Brosch to Vaida-Voevod and Hodža, 10 September 1910. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, Hodža, M31. Letter, Hodža to Brosch, 17 September 1910.

rent, usually with a positive comment.⁸⁹ A correspondence from the year 1911 is illustrative of Franz Ferdinand's attitude: the military chancellery was informed about anti-Habsburg propaganda in the Slovak community in the United States initiated by the emigré Slovak, Rovnianek. Franz Ferdinand's indecision is revealed by his initial scribbled comment on Brosch's covering letter: "What can one do? What do you think?" To Brosch's subsequent recommendation to contact Hodža on this matter the Archduke responded with the words "Yes! Fully agree. E. Fr."⁹⁰ In reaction, Hodža claimed that Rovnianek's influence was negligible and that the majority of Slovak Americans were loyal to the Habsburgs.⁹¹ This example shows just how important it was for the Belvedere to have a Slovak informant and how the latter's contributions were valued by Franz Ferdinand himself.

In April 1909, Hodža brought up the following issue for discussion. Andrassy, who as Hungarian interior minister was responsible for the drafting of a corrupted suffrage bill, was to receive an audience with both Emperor Franz Josef and his heir. Franz Ferdinand had refused such a request before, but yielded to pressure from foreign minister Alois von Aehrenthal and others.⁹² Hodža argued that the meeting would lead to doubts and a "desperate panic" among the Archduke's loyal followers in Hungary.⁹³ He warned that it would confirm Andrassy's position of power in Hungary, regardless of the actual content of the conversation.⁹⁴ The Belvedere Circle considered Andrassy and Tisza Hungary's most dangerous politicians.⁹⁵ Hodža suggested that the Magyar coalition leaders were in any case favoured in Vienna. Why could Franz Ferdinand or Aehrenthal not receive loyal Romanian or Slovak representatives in public, just as he received Kossuthists?⁹⁶ Hodža's exposé on this matter was highly valued by the Archduke and his circle, and there was even a proposal to forward it to the Foreign Minister.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Brosch supported the idea of a public audience for the Romanian Maniu, because of its effect on Slovak and Romanian public opinion.⁹⁸ After the Andrassy audience, Franz Ferdinand tried to

⁸⁹ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 10, fol. 703. Letter, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 21 April 1909. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 11, fol. 185. Letter, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 13 October 1911.

⁹⁰ OeStA, KA, MKFF, K. 50, Pu/12. Letter, Imre Vodicska to Brosch, 6 January 1911.

⁹¹ OeStA, KA, MKFF, K. 50, Pu/12. Bericht Hodža's über die Slovaken in Amerika und Mr. Rovnianek's Tätigkeit, February 1911.

⁹² Letters, Franz Ferdinand to Aehrenthal, 8 September 1907 and 9 April 1909. In: *Wank*: Aus dem Nachlaß Aehrenthal, vol. 2, 539, 665 (cf. fn. 11).

⁹³ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, Hodža, M16. Letter, Hodža to Brosch, 8 April 1909.

⁹⁴ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, Hodža, M18. Letter, Hodža to Brosch, 13 May 1909.

⁹⁵ *Kann*: Franz Ferdinand der Ungarnfeind? 113-115 (cf. fn. 9). – *Kiszling*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 108-110, 227-228 (cf. fn. 6). – *Redlich*: Schicksalsjahre Österreichs, vol. 1, 14 (cf. fn. 36). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 10, fol. 695. Letter, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 20 April 1909.

⁹⁶ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 15, Hodža, M16. Letter, Hodža to Brosch, 8 April 1909. – Letter, Vaida-Voevod to Brosch, 8 May 1909. In: *Hitchins*: The Nationality Problem in Austria-Hungary. Reports of Alexander Vaida 76-80 (cf. fn. 21).

⁹⁷ *Hodža*: Federation in Central Europe 48 (cf. fn. 19). – Telegram, Franz Ferdinand to Brosch, 22 April 1909, quoted in: *Chlumecký*: Erzherzog 331 (cf. fn. 5). – OeStA, KA, NBr, B/232:2. Telegram, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 22 April 1909.

⁹⁸ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 10, fol. 668. Letter, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 9 April 1909.

reassure his supporters in Hungary, claiming that the Magyar left the Belvedere “with a face as white as this cuff”.⁹⁹ Vaida-Voevod had the opportunity to present the Romanian view on Hungarian politics to Aehrenthal.¹⁰⁰ However, Vaida-Voevod and Hodža were both unsuccessful in their requests for a public audience with Franz Josef or Franz Ferdinand.¹⁰¹

After the nationality parties’ electoral defeat in 1910, the correspondence wanes. This can be partly explained by the nationalities’ representatives’ assumption that as long as Franz Ferdinand was not yet Emperor, they could not pursue politics in Hungary. Some sources claim that Brosch’s substitution by Carl von Bardolff coincided with the rise of “headlessness” in the Belvedere with regard to Hungarian politics.¹⁰² Two further possible explanations are offered: that Franz Ferdinand, after the completion of his reform programme, could do nothing more than wait for the “Thronwechsel”; or that in 1912 and 1913, he turned his attention increasingly towards foreign policy problems. Of course, due to the connection between Austria-Hungary’s relationship with Romania and the Romanians’ status within Hungary, the latter problem continued to play a role in the military chancellery’s considerations.¹⁰³

A letter by Milan Hodža from Bucharest, dated 31 May 1913, is thus highly interesting. This letter only received Franz Ferdinand’s attention through his military chancellery’s mediation. As Hodža was never a regular informant on Romanian issues, it was all too easy for Bardolff to manipulate his report. Hodža painted the inner Romanian political situation in the blackest colours: “A closer connection to the Monarchy does not have many supporters momentarily”,¹⁰⁴ because of continuing Austro-Hungarian support for Bulgaria. He claimed that the pro-Austrian conservative government was about to fall. In his report to Franz Ferdinand on the 12th of June, Bardolff was somewhat more optimistic. According to him, all Romanians, or at least many influential circles, were waiting for some sign from Franz Ferdinand; a positive deed to readjust Austro-Romanian relations. This could be an audience with a Romanian politician, for example.¹⁰⁵ However, in the end Franz Ferdinand did not agree to this suggestion.¹⁰⁶

Because of the limited availability of sources, it cannot be excluded that this plan was not originally Hodža’s. His letter of the 31st of May is the only one that can still

⁹⁹ *Franz*: Alexander Vaida-Voevod 183 (cf. fn. 1). – *Hodža*: Federation in Central Europe 46 (cf. fn. 19). – *Kiszling*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 109 (cf. fn. 6).

¹⁰⁰ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 10, fol. 692. Letter, Brosch to Franz Ferdinand, 19 April 1909. – Letter, Vaida-Voevod to Brosch, 8 May 1909. In: *Hitchins*: The Nationality Problem in Austria-Hungary. Reports of Alexander Vaida 79 (cf. fn. 21).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 76-80.

¹⁰² *Kiszling*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 166-167 (cf. fn. 6). – *Sosnosky*: Franz Ferdinand 112 (cf. fn. 5). – OeStA, KA, NBr, B/232:11, fol. 624. Letter, Vaida-Voevod to Brosch, 22 December 1913.

¹⁰³ *Hickl*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 105-199 (cf. fn. 18). – *Hitchins*: The Nationality Problem in Hungary. István Tisza 641, 645 (cf. fn. 74).

¹⁰⁴ OeStA, KA, NBa, B/207, K. 3, fol. 85. Letter, Hodža to Bardolff, 31 May 1913.

¹⁰⁵ *Hickl*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 149-150 (cf. fn. 18).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 150.

be found in the archives. Elisabeth Hickl's description is based on Bardolff's report, which cannot now be retraced in the archives, but she did not dispose of Hodža's own letters. It is quite possible that there were more reports or even a personal meeting in Vienna, to which Hodža refers in his letter.¹⁰⁷ Additional information, such as the Slovak's alleged audience with King Carol I of Romania,¹⁰⁸ give grounds for this assumption. Bardolff's report may very well be a genuine reflection of the total body of messages from Romania. However, as the two sources display a complete contradiction when it comes to rating the Romanians' view on the Monarchy, it is likely that Hodža's opinion had been distorted and supplemented by Bardolff's own suggestion. That the Archduke's personal, though merely symbolic action, could have a positive effect on hostile Romanian public opinion, does not sound like the view of the realist, Hodža. In his reports, he never usually combined information with suggestions for actions. This is not the place to discuss Bardolff's motives to hustle Franz Ferdinand into this specific political action. Yet it seems certain that Hodža's report was manipulated to this end.

The Reform Plans and their Slovak Component

In this section, my focus will turn to Franz Ferdinand's plans for the future and the possible impact of his contacts with the Slovaks on them. The Archduke's way of working reflected his "Herrschnatur": he did not commit himself to any programme. His personal opinion remained hidden, causing some newspapers to call him a sphinx.¹⁰⁹ He merely requested new and creative ideas and waited for the moment when he could realise some of them.¹¹⁰ To a certain extent, the documents addressed to Franz Ferdinand must have partly reflected his plans and decisions, and offered indications of his own opinions.¹¹¹ However, caution is called for, as some of the opinions requested may not have coincided with his own at all. One could mention the example of Count Ottokar Czernin, whose memoranda and other proposals to Franz Ferdinand were imbued with ideas of violence and the imposition of autocratic, or rather, caesarian rule on Hungary.¹¹² Czernin's radical tone might have attracted the Archduke in the beginning, but it lost its appeal over the years.¹¹³ Because his closest collaborators Brosch and Bardolff influenced Franz Ferdinand's ideas and controlled his political contacts to such a great extent, their ideas can only be distinguished from the Archduke's with extreme difficulty.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ OeStA, KA, NBA, B/207, K. 3, fol. 86. Letter, Hodža to Bardolff, 31 May 1913.

¹⁰⁸ Hickl: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 181 (cf. fn. 18).

¹⁰⁹ OeStA, KA, MKFF, K. 200. Der König und der Thronfolger. In: Egyetértés, 8 September 1908 and Der Sphinx im Belvedere. In: Független Magyarország, 11 October 1908. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 138. Die Sphinx vom Belvedere. In: Pesti Hírlap, 28 March 1909.

¹¹⁰ Franz: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 76 (cf. fn. 6). – Kiszling: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 249-250 (cf. fn. 6).

¹¹¹ Kann: Count Ottokar Czernin 118 (cf. fn. 65). – Kann: Franz Ferdinand der Ungarnfeind? 104-105 (cf. fn. 9). – Weissensteiner: Franz Ferdinand 189 (cf. fn. 13).

¹¹² Kann: Count Ottokar Czernin 128-136 (cf. fn. 65).

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 142-143.

¹¹⁴ Chlumecský: Erzherzog 358 (cf. fn. 5). – Kann: Franz Ferdinand und die Gegenwart 19 (cf. fn. 15). – Sitte: Alexander von Brosch 34-36 (cf. fn. 15).

Many of his plans were never fully outlined. One of the few fixed documents is the so-called “Programm für den Thronwechsel” (programme for the accession to the throne), composed by Brosch in cooperation with advisors including Czernin, Kristóffy and Professor Heinrich Lammasch. The archive files offer several different versions, but the one dated August 1911 by Brosch is generally considered the final one. As the programme is adequately discussed in the literature on this topic,¹¹⁵ I will confine myself here to a broad outline. It offered a time schedule which stipulated when each political action had to be taken. For instance, all necessary reforms in Hungary had to take place before the new King would be bound by his oath taken during his coronation ceremony. The programme initially adhered to Dualism, and considered the possibility of negotiating necessary reforms with the Magyar ruling class, for example the introduction of universal suffrage. If the Magyars proved unwilling to negotiate a solution, a radical reorganisation was foreseen. In that case, the Emperor would impose his will on Hungary by unconstitutional means, issuing an “Octroy” (royal decree) to introduce universal suffrage, and using the army to keep resistance down. After Brosch’s resignation, Franz Ferdinand requested more radical programmes for a time. That presented by Johann Andreas von Eichhoff is one such programme. It is clear that Eichhoff used his forerunners and borrowed from Brosch’s manifesto, but his interpretation is far more radical. According to this plan, the Habsburg Empire’s complete reorganisation into national units had become the programme’s final goal, rather than one of several proposals. Eichhoff’s equation of Franz Ferdinand’s programme with the Great Austrian ideal is justified for this version.¹¹⁶ When events abroad in 1912 and 1913 brought Austria-Hungary repeatedly to the brink of war, Franz Ferdinand realised that overly ambitious reforms could only endanger the Monarchy’s existence in such an unstable international constellation. Therefore, towards the end of his life he once more returned to Brosch’s plan.¹¹⁷ The Archduke had not completed his accession plans when he was killed in Sarajevo and it is probable that he would not have done so before the “Thronwechsel”.¹¹⁸

The archive documents offer only one direct Slovak contribution to this process: a Promemoria (agenda) composed by Hodža and Maniu, dated 25 December 1911. Maniu and Hodža were not afraid of radical solutions; in fact, they preferred them because of their greater effects. A coup d’état as envisioned in their memorandum “would not only be acclaimed by the non-Magyar peoples, but even by a part of the Magyar masses, which must be led to the right purpose”.¹¹⁹ However, a “Diktat” (decree) should be a last resort when all constitutional means had been exhaust-

¹¹⁵ *Franz*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 82-88, 123-149 (cf. fn. 6). – *Sosnosky*: Franz Ferdinand 78-103 (cf. fn. 5).

¹¹⁶ *Eichhoff*: Die geplante Gründung (cf. fn. 68).

¹¹⁷ *Franz*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 94 (cf. fn. 6). – *Hickl*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 43-44 (cf. fn. 18). – *Kiszlíng*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 257 (cf. fn. 6).

¹¹⁸ *Czernin*: Im Weltkriege 63-66 (cf. fn. 13). – *Franz*: Alexander Vaida-Voevod 187 (cf. fn. 1).

¹¹⁹ OeStA, HHSStA, NEFF, K. 117, 4-5. Gleichberechtigung der Völker. – OeStA, HHSStA, NEFF, K. 114. Promemoria, composed by Milan Hodža and Iuliu Maniu, 25 December 1911, sub III.

ed.¹²⁰ The two politicians expected that elections conducted in a fully democratic way or supervised by the Crown, would result in a parliamentary majority for universal suffrage.¹²¹ In that case, the suffrage reform could be introduced by constitutional means. A newly elected parliament would necessarily promote a dynastic policy, the first measures of which were put forward in the Promemoria. In the new government, the nationality parties were to be represented, preferably with one ministry and the undersecretary of the interior.¹²² Compared to Brosch's programme, Hodža and Maniu envisioned the introduction of universal suffrage as the means by which all the problems faced by Dualism could be solved. For them, universal suffrage was more a necessary condition of the Empire's transformation, than its final result. In a naive way, they considered the introduction of universal suffrage as "the staff, opening up the source from which the trust of the people's soul pours".¹²³

It is almost impossible to determine whether Hodža's and Maniu's memorandum in any way influenced or prepared Brosch's "Programm für den Thronwechsel". With reference to the date, it can even be suggested that if there was any influence, then it was rather in the opposite direction. In any case, Hodža and Maniu were clearly in line with the Belvedere's conceptions. Their Promemoria's content did not, like Czernin's radical alternative, deviate from the main discourse in Franz Ferdinand's military chancellery. The main difference is that the two politicians from Hungary did not favour an unconstitutional "Octroy", like Brosch, but did not rule it out if necessary. When Brosch and Czernin, taking Magyar opposition and the difficulty to have fair elections in Hungary into account, thought the application of an "Octroy" unavoidable,¹²⁴ they were indeed less democratically-minded than the two nationality politicians, but they may well have been more realistic.¹²⁵ One further advantage of such an "Octroy" would be that the actual reform would be the monarch's personal project, a gracious gift to his subjects, and "among Habsburg rulers, he would, with Rudolf of Habsburg and Maria Theresa, deserve a first place in History".¹²⁶ Moreover, unconstitutional action would allow the Emperor to realise his Great Austrian programme, without compromises.

¹²⁰ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 114. Promemoria composed by Hodža and Maniu, 25 December 1911, sub IV.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 114. Promemoria composed by Hodža and Maniu, 25 December 1911, sub V.

¹²³ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 117, 11. Denkschrift über Ungarn, 1908.

¹²⁴ OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 12, fol. 377-378. Allerhöchst anbefohlenen Memorandum über Personenfragen, Letter, Czernin to Franz Ferdinand, February 1909. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 12, fol. 671-673. Czernin: Über die Lösung der ungarischen Frage, 11 May 1911. – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 13, fol. 236-237. Report: Über die ungarische Frage, Letter, Czernin to Franz Ferdinand, 7 August 1911.

¹²⁵ *Kann*: Count Ottokar Czernin 135-136 (cf. fn. 65). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 12, fol. 676. Czernin: Über die Lösung der ungarischen Frage, 11 May 1911.

¹²⁶ *Sosnosky*: Franz Ferdinand 102 (cf. fn. 5). – OeStA, HHStA, NEFF, K. 117, 8. Die Lösung der gegenwärtigen politischen Krise in Ungarn. – Letter, Heinrich Friedjung to Aehrenthal, 10 June 1909. In: *Wank*: Aus dem Nachlaß Aehrenthal, vol. 2, 688 (cf. fn. 11). – OeStA, KA, NBA, K. 8a, fol. 60. Bardolff: Franz Ferdinand und sein Kreis.

Franz Ferdinand's final 1911 programme may not have answered his most radical supporters' expectations. It supported the existing situation and even considered the preservation of Dualism.¹²⁷ "Armed intervention or financial pressure [...] to force the Magyar separatist tendencies to bow beneath the yoke of a centralist regime" was envisaged only as a last resort.¹²⁸ For all scenarios, however, it must be noted that Franz Ferdinand and his staff hoped for support from the Hungarian minorities and, if possible, from parts of the Magyar nation. Although these groups were not really expected to contribute actively, their tacit agreement would at least ensure that the Emperor would not rule against his people and face general resistance. Their anticipated support had been the primary reason for advocating universal suffrage in the first place. It has already been argued that doubts concerning the Croats' loyalty led Franz Ferdinand to drop the project of trialism. This is the ultimate background of Franz Ferdinand's interest in the Romanians and Slovaks, and it explains exclamations like "I must preserve the nationalities, for these are the future's only hope. When they enter the Great-Hungarian camp, everything will be lost."¹²⁹ Hodža's and Maniu's memorandum, and their agreement with the outlines of Franz Ferdinand's programme, was exactly the kind of support the Archduke wished from the nationalities. The mere presence of allies in Hungary, standing behind his future rule and his reform plans, acted as an affirmation of his plans. Where the plans went beyond Habsburg centralism and dealt with potentially dangerous democratic projects such as the introduction of universal suffrage, his trust in the Hungarian nationalities may even have been crucial.

It is difficult to say whether this radical solution would have resulted in the foundation of a multinational federation, or in the replacement of Magyar by Austrian centralism. The goals formulated in the very cautious 1911 programme can probably be considered as a diluted version of his real intentions. Franz Ferdinand remained hesitant: following a zigzag course between political programmes as diverse as 1860-style centralism and Great Austrian federalism, he flinched from making definitive decisions.¹³⁰ It may well be true, as Minister of War Franz von Schönauich remarked, that Franz Ferdinand would have granted more concessions in 24 hours than Emperor Franz Josef had done in 24 years.¹³¹

Conclusions

At this point, a conclusion can be formulated about the Slovaks' importance for Franz Ferdinand's political plans and ideas. What Hodža confessed in a 1933 letter is true: in the political world before 1914, the Slovaks were completely insignifi-

¹²⁷ *Kiszling*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 260 (cf. fn. 6).

¹²⁸ *Kam*: Count Ottokar Czernin 129 (cf. fn. 65).

¹²⁹ Letter, Franz Ferdinand to Brosch, 24 January 1909, quoted in: *Chlumecký*: Erzherzog 323 (cf. fn. 5).

¹³⁰ *Franz*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 77 (cf. fn. 6). – *Kiszling*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 250, 260, 315 (cf. fn. 6). – OeStA, KA, NBa, K. 8a, fol. 52. Bardolff: *Erinnerungen an Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand*, 28 May 1935.

¹³¹ *Kiszling*: Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand 315 (cf. fn. 6).

cant.¹³² The Magyar-Romanian national conflict at least had consequences for Austria-Hungary's foreign relations. The Slovaks, however, never became more than an object of political events. Franz Ferdinand did in fact value Hodža's political ideas and contributions, but the Slovaks were not yet taken seriously as a political force. He did not need the Slovaks and, as a non-democrat, he did not even like their national perspective.¹³³ Yet the fact that the Slovaks were there at all is itself important; as a subjected people they would have welcomed Franz Ferdinand's future reforms. This was the main reason why the Archduke trusted them and accepted Hodža's suggestions. Unlike the Croats, the Slovaks remained loyal to the dynasty and could therefore expect Franz Ferdinand's gratitude. With the project of introducing universal suffrage, his plans contained an element essentially advocated by and beneficial to the Slovaks. Of course, although it is highly questionable that Franz Ferdinand would have fulfilled all the Slovaks' national wishes, he would certainly never have abandoned this loyal people.

¹³² SNA, Čsl. légie, kart. 23, inv. č. 16. Letter, Hodža to Vladimír Makovický, 8 February 1933.

¹³³ *Mikula*: Milan Hodža 48 (cf. fn. 2).