

Benjamin von Kállay's Role in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1882–1903: Habsburg's Policies in an Occupied Territory

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In 1882, an uprising of the population in Herzegovina manifested a powerful protest against the policies of the Austro-Hungarian administration. The uprising spread to Bosnia causing considerable concern throughout the Dual Monarchy. Public opinion expressed apprehension concerning the failure of the occupation in spite of large expenditures for the military intervention. A number of members of the Parliament voiced their opposition to any further intervention and suppression of the uprising. Some members of the ruling party feared that such an attitude would eventually result in the abandonment of both provinces. Although the uprising was eventually subdued, the situation in the provinces was not peaceful and orderly. A stream of refugees from Herzegovina, both Muslim and Orthodox, fled to the neighboring lands.

Benjamin von Kállay was called once again to serve the Austro-Hungarian government. On 5 June 1882, Kállay was nominated to the position of the Joint Minister of Finance in charge of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Kállay had previously served the Habsburg Monarchy with distinction as a consul, with the additional title and responsibilities of a diplomatic agent, during his tenure (1868–1875) at the court of Prince Mihailo Obrenović in Belgrade.¹

Kállay was charged to restore peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina and reestablish the authority of the Monarchy. Moreover, Kállay was expected to procure plans for a long lasting rule of the Austro-Hungarian government, leading to the gradual incorporation of Bosnia-Herzegovina into the Dual Monarchy.²

As the highest officer in charge of the occupied provinces, Kállay represented, most of all, the interests of the Dual Monarchy. Yet as an astute histo-

¹ Ludwig von Thallóczy, "Einleitung, Lebensbild und Persönlichkeit Benjamin von Kállays," in Benjamin von Kállay, *Geschichte des Serbischen Aufstandes 1807–1810* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1910), ix. Kállay served as consul and diplomatic agent in Belgrade until 1875. On personal request Kállay was relieved from his duty as a diplomatic agent in 1875. He was motivated by the wish to take a more active part in the political life of the Dual Monarchy. Tomislav Kraljačić, *Kalajev režim u Bosni i Hercegovini (1882–1903)* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1987), 53.

² Thalloczy, xxix.

rian, Kállay repeatedly aimed to provide an overriding and lofty philosophy for his rule. He felt that he had clear insight into the historical development that shaped the underlying make-up of the people in the Balkans and, in particular, in Bosnia. He was aware of the efforts of his predecessor to help create a new Bosnian awareness and an invented Bosnian language, which was named at first *Landessprache* (*zemaljski jezik*) and then later renamed *Bosnische Sprache* (*bosanski jezik*). Kállay even attempted to expand these premises by explaining that Bosnia had a historic specificity of its own. Most importantly, Bosnia was permeated with the spirit of the ancient East more so than with medieval anachronisms or ideas of the Western world. Therefore, according to Kállay, new institutions and innovations should be carefully introduced taking into account the existing circumstances:

As soon as I stepped to the helm of the government of these provinces I knew that I had to act decisively if I wanted to accomplish something worthwhile. That meant to awaken the spirit of the West, a strong feeling of statehood, without harming the peculiarities of the single-minded, yet not to let the petty and divisive particularities continue to take root. The sorry state of the southeastern part of Bosnia could demonstrate where this spirit of particularity was leading. So long as I am at the helm of these lands, I shall strive to instill in the Bosnian people the spirit of statehood, and moreover of a great and powerful statehood. So long as I adhere to the gist of our obligations that we have taken in respect to these lands, I will continue with my efforts to create something good not only for Bosnians but also for the Monarchy.³

Kállay did act decisively, following the established policy of the Monarchy, by boasting military power rather than providing for the integration and interaction of the population necessary for binding the new domains of the Habsburg Empire to one another. Kállay relied on a large military contingency in order to assure peaceful conditions in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina were surrounded by the largely nationally homogenous states of Serbia, Montenegro, and Croatia, that would have liked to incorporate adjacent territories inhabited by their co-nationals. Kállay was aware of these aspirations and promptly ordered the building of a *cordone militaire*, consisting of a dense network of watchtowers to be swiftly completed by the end of 1882. Each watchtower had at minimum forty to fifty

³ Quoted after Thalloczy, xxxv–xxxvi.

men in attendance. These measures were taken “so that the danger of a new uprising would be removed.”

Kállay took great precautions in establishing a strict watch on the Serbian and Montenegrin borders. There were thirty-five watchtowers in operation. In 1885, Kállay reported that the *cordone militaire* was working well and according to plan. In addition to excessive cost to the government, the *cordone militaire* almost brought to a halt any contact between the populations of these neighboring lands.⁴

While it was earlier purported that the cordon was installed to pacify the border and establish order, the real goal was the creation of a permanent rift between the population of Montenegro and Herzegovina. In a note to the Ministry of War, Kállay stated that the Herzegovinian population should be guarded from political agitation being generated in Montenegro. The *cordone militaire* should “prevent continuous contact between the populations and induce the weakening of the mutual feelings of closeness among related tribes by blood and religion. The existing ties with the neighboring population of Montenegro should be severed and the people of Herzegovina directed to develop a complete and conscious devotion to our state.”⁵

Austro-Hungarian military forces were adamant in keeping the borders under tight control. All these manipulations of the Austro-Hungarian authorities were known in Montenegro and the Herzegovinian border became known as the proverbial “Chinese Wall.”⁶

Other measures included strict passport control between Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, and Bulgaria. By September of 1883, new passport regulations had already been approved by the Joint Ministry of Finance. The Government admitted that some regulations were “Draconian.” Nevertheless the regulations were approved due to the overriding concern for peace and order. Kállay was warned that some “very severe” regulations could cause an unfavorable impression abroad.⁷

Kállay decided that the agrarian reforms in Bosnia-Herzegovina should be postponed, taking into consideration the position of the Muslim landowners as the socially responsible class for further development of Bosnian society. Moreover, the rising state-sponsored industrialization drive was financed by the additional taxation of the rural population in addition to foreign capital. All these measures produced a stagnation of the largely agrarian economy in

⁴ Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Joint Ministry of Finance, BH, Pr. No. 98/1885; quoted after Kraljačić, 100–01.

⁵ Quoted after Kraljačić, 101–02. The date of the mentioned report was 1889.

⁶ Kraljačić, 106.

⁷ Kraljačić, 102.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was already afflicted by low productivity. The consequences of uneven economic growth and unresolved land reforms remained at the center of a difficult socioeconomic situation.

The Monarchy was aware that the ideas in opposition to their rule could be spread with books and periodicals, which were harder to control than political agitation by word of mouth. Accordingly, strict censorship was instituted and the possession and dissemination of forbidden dailies and books were penalized with 50 to 300 gulden or with a prison term in duration from one to three months.⁸

By the end of 1884, the Land Government had proposed to ban ten dailies that were being published in Belgrade. These dailies were already forbidden in Hungary due “to the propagation of pernicious national tendencies.” The “naiveté and thoughtlessness” of the populace in Bosnia-Herzegovina would make such things even more influential. The following dailies were forbidden: *Dio*, *Istok*, *Jedinstvo*, *Mlada Srbadija*, *Narodna misao*, *Nova Srbija*, *Radnik*, *Ujedinjenje*, *Zvono*, and *Odjek*.⁹

In December 1887, additional papers were blacklisted: *Šabački glasnik*, *Glas naroda* published in Leskovac, and *Radikal* whose owner was Pera Todorović. *Radikal* continued the policies of the former journal *Samouprava*, which had been forbidden earlier in 1881. By the middle of 1887, the popular humorous journal *Brka* published in Belgrade was also forbidden.¹⁰

Textbooks and history books published in Belgrade were also banned since these books contradicted the officially accepted viewpoints by presenting historic events in a different light. In February of 1894, the following history textbooks were forbidden: *Srpska istorija* by M. Jović; *Istorija srpskog naroda* by Lj. Kovačević and Lj. Jovanović. According to the authorities, these books presented “the tradition of the Serbian Nemanjić Empire in a tendentious manner.” Similar reasons dictated the banning of *Srpska istorija sa slikama*, and *Istorija srpskog naroda* by Panta Srećković. The book *Istorija Srba*, by M.S. Ubavkić, was forbidden due to its “aggressive and tendentious content.”¹¹

The departure for education in Serbia was not directly forbidden, but the certificates and diplomas of higher learning were not valid in Bosnia-Herzegovina or elsewhere in the Monarchical lands. Candidates holding such degrees had to pass additional examinations and possess a command of for-

⁸ Kraljačić, 121–22.

⁹ Risto Besarović, ed., *Kultura i umjetnost u Bosni i Hercegovini pod austrougarskom upravom* (Sarajevo: Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, 1968), 431.

¹⁰ Kraljačić, 122.

¹¹ Kraljačić, 123.

eign languages, such as German and/or Hungarian. Even with such additional qualifications, jobs were not easy to find.¹²

The authorities were also aware of the influence of Serbian writers from Vojvodina, Croatia, and Dalmatia. Therefore, the opposition press such as *Zastava*, from Novi Sad, and *Srbobran*, from Zagreb, were also forbidden in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The reason for the censoring of these periodicals was “the expressed animosity towards the Land Government (*Landesregierung*), the Dual Monarchy, and because of the spreading of Pan Slav indoctrination.”¹³

With the growth of the national consciousness, more papers were banned and by 1898 only the paper *Naše doba*, from Novi Sad, was still permitted. This paper had a subvention from the Land Government (*Landesregierung*).¹⁴

Over all, Kállay proved that during his stewardship in Bosnia-Herzegovina he could stabilize the situation and pacify the people. His political adversaries in Vienna soon came up with a biting comment: “Kállay kam mit *seinem* [added emphasis JMDj]. Volk gut aus.” They obviously were alluding to the fact that Kállay had Slavic ancestry on his maternal side. His mother, Amalie von Kállay nee Blaskovic de Ebetska, was of Serbian descent. Moreover, Kállay had started his political career by running for the position of representative of the Serbian minority in Hungary. Kállay had great interest in the history of the Serbian people and he spoke Serbian well. Above all, Kállay was a born Hungarian and educated at Budapest University; in Viennese political circles, he befitted the image of the “other.”

Kállay's longtime friend and biographer, Lajos Thalloczy, was aware of the difficult position that Kállay occupied during his lifetime as a native Hungarian serving in Vienna, but also as an Austrian official in his native Hungary. Thalloczy pointed out that Kállay was accepted in Vienna as a high-ranking official of the Habsburg Monarchy but never as an Austrian, which he indeed was not nor did he pretend to be.¹⁵ Obviously, he had opponents among the members of the government and also among those in opposition to the government in Vienna as well as in Budapest.

In 1883 Kállay was elected to the ranks of the Hungarian Academy of Science. His acceptance speech was titled: “Hungary on the Border between the East and West.” Kállay's speech was later translated into Serbian and published in 1905 in Sarajevo under the title *Ugarska na granici istoka i zapada*.

¹² Kraljačić, 129.

¹³ Besarović, 443.

¹⁴ Kraljačić, 140.

¹⁵ Thalloczy, xxxii.

Kállay planned to use this splendid occasion to elucidate his understanding of Hungary's historic role as a mediator between the Eastern and Western civilizations. While explaining Hungary's position, he explained his own predicament and the political course that he was to follow as the highest-ranking official of the Austro-Hungarian administration in charge of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Kállay believed that Hungary was ideally suited to facilitate an understanding between the East and the West due to its geographic position. He singled out Hungary's historical role as a guardian of Europe from the time of the Turkish invasion. The Hungarian people had embraced both the Eastern and the Western paradigms in their culture and therefore were called upon to provide a civilizing mission. Hungary participated in the Christians' crusades to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims. These events promoted closer contact with the Christians of Western Europe. Moreover, the Hungarian people acted as defenders of Christian Europe from Turkish expansion in the sixteenth century. Therefore, Hungary was justly called to fulfill its historic mission.¹⁶

Kállay expounded his understanding of the differences between the Eastern and Western civilization, aiming to justify the Hungarian intervention in Balkan affairs. Most of all, Kállay wanted to provide additional credence for his own long term plans as the highest official in charge of the political, economic, cultural, and educational development in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Kállay argued that the Eastern spirit evolved in the ancient East, encompassing Africa, Asia, and classical Greece. In Europe, the Eastern spirit encircled the Baltic states and reached over the Eastern Carpathian region to the shores of the Adriatic. Russia and the Balkan peoples were included in the domain of the East.

Kállay purported that the character of the East was manifested in the exaggerated individualism that presented a hindrance for creating a cohesive and powerful state. The West, on the other hand, inherited the Roman idea of statehood uniting different nationalities, customs, and points of view.

Interestingly enough, Kállay thought that Turkey did not belong to the domain of the Eastern spirit from the very beginning. The change occurred later and Turkey eventually succumbed to the Eastern spirit. It is very likely that Kállay placed Turkey outside the Eastern domain in opposition to the historical and cultural grounds due to the policy of deference for Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the other hand, Kállay placed old Greece within the domain of the Eastern spirit.¹⁷

¹⁶ Benjamin Kállay, *Ugarska na granici istoka i zapada* (Sarajevo 1905), 61–62, 68.

¹⁷ Kállay, 64.

It would be difficult to accept Kállay's classification having in mind the exceptional role both Greece and Rome played in the foundation of Western culture, exercising a unique influence on medieval Europe and the civilization of the Renaissance.¹⁸

All in all, it is apparent that Kállay did not consider the Eastern and Western civilizations as equal. Kállay's dichotomy of the ethnically divisive East versus the united, civic West disregarded the fact that both civilizations contained ethnic and civic components. The existence of regional diversities and the drive of centrifugal forces fostering independence precipitated the fall of historic empires in both the East and the West throughout history.¹⁹

Kállay bemoaned the fact that the East lacked cohesion and an overriding *Staatsidee*. Therefore, Kállay considered as his most important task the instillation of the spirit of statehood in the newly acquired regions of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although Kállay seemed to believe that the Dual Monarchy exemplified a firmly established idea of statehood, some leading politicians did not share this opinion. The weakening of the centripetal forces binding the provinces with the capital of the Dual Monarchy was well known and often enough discussed by those in power. Count Gustav Kalnoky, Foreign Minister to Francis Joseph, realized with regrets that Austria's glory depended on military power of the Habsburg monarchy from the very beginning:

Since the time when the Habsburg territorial possessions were first united, the monarchy had developed more in the sense of a power (Macht) than in the sense of a state (Staat). Power and purpose in external matters were more recognizable than its purpose as a state.²⁰

In the same memorandum to Francis Joseph written in the mid 1880s, Kalnoky stated that there existed no cohesion within the Empire and that the former states were steadily drifting away.

Kállay's generous assessment of the role of the Dual Monarchy as a consolidated entity misinterpreted the reality of rising movements for independence throughout the provinces ruled by Austria-Hungary, including Bosnia-Herzegovina. The resistance to colonial exploitation of the resources and riches of the land strengthened the drive for national independence.

¹⁸ Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York: Harper, 1958), 177–78.

¹⁹ Karen Barkey, "Thinking about Consequences of Empire," in *After Empire*, ed. Karen Barkey and Marc von Hagen (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 108. Compare also Solomon Wank, "The Habsburg Empire," in *After Empire*, 48–49.

²⁰ Quoted after Wank, 48.

In the course of the 1890s, the efforts of the representatives of the Serbian Orthodox School Councils from Sarajevo, Mostar, Donja Tuzla, Brčko, Gračanica, Stoci, Doboj, Bosnska Gradiška, Prijedor, Novi, Dubica, Sanski Most, Zvornik, and Bijeljina, demanding autonomy for their schools, had a decisive impact on the strengthening of the Serbian national consciousness in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These Serbian communities managed by sheer persistence to achieve their coveted goals. Starting from the first Memorandum, submitted to the Emperor in 1896, and pursuing their demands with dogged determination, the Serbian Orthodox School Councils finally received the desired autonomy in educational and religious affairs in 1905. It was a long struggle of more than nine years and, intermittently, many excellent supporters were persecuted, imprisoned, and/or fired from their respective professional positions.

A unique testimony of this struggle was manifested in the three *Memoranda* submitted to the Emperor. Each of these documents pointed to the harsh rules and regulations that provoked widespread concerns. The signatories named the individuals, schools, teachers, and headmasters who suffered severe consequences due to their demands for necessary improvements leading to better education. In the process, the individual demands for better education grew in strength and became a veritable movement supported by the population and their elected leaders. The movement also helped to abate the efforts of the Austro-Hungarian government in creating a “Bosnian nation” and a “Bosnian language.”²¹

Kállay tried to shrug off the rising voices for independence as evidence of lack of understanding for his endeavors, promoting an imaginary *Staatsidee* that would bring Bosnia-Herzegovina under the sway of the Western world. He repeatedly stated that he truly liked the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina and did his utmost to improve their lot but did not expect understanding from the populace or the Monarchy. Kállay himself stated in a speech in Budapest in front of an Austrian delegation:

I am proud that I am able to govern in Bosnia and I feel close to this land. I do not know anything more honorable than to bring this land on the road of progress to the benefit of the land and its people, but also to the great advantage of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy once

²¹ *Bosansko-hercegovački zbornik, Tri carska memoranduma* (Novi Sad: Miletićeva štamparija, 1902). Compare also Mirko Maksimović, “Crkvena borba i pokreti,” in *Napori Bosne i Herzegovina za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje*, ed. Pero Slijepcević et al. (Sarajevo, 1929), 70–106.

the significance and the value of these lands in the Monarchy are correctly understood.²²

Kállay did not count on gratitude and he was equally aware that he could not accomplish all that he wanted. As a Joint Minister of Finance, he tried to establish a precarious balance between leading political parties in both Austria and Hungary, in addition to providing a viable agenda for his administration in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The historian Lajos Thalloczy, a longtime friend and colleague of Kállay, wrote in retrospect that Kállay's far reaching and overly ambitious plans would inevitably fail to materialize during the relatively short span of any politician's life. Yet Kállay aspired to solve some of the problems on the road to consolidation.²³

Thalloczy pointed out that Kállay's dedicated work was not appreciated enough. Even his successes were downplayed and observed "with a tyrannical disinterest."²⁴ He was not appreciated in Hungary nor in Austria, although he carried out the mandate given to him by the Dual Monarchy the best he could. In Austria, Kállay was not considered an Austrian statesman; that indeed he was not. It is also very likely that he was perceived in Hungary with caution, some questioning his true loyalty. He was often criticized by the population and its leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thus, the public opinion reflected the general malaise and lack of cohesion questioning Kállay's political credence and turning against him, often with vengeance.

During the early years of his political career in Budapest and Belgrade, Kállay aspired to cultivate collaboration between neighboring states, leading up to a future Danubian confederation. He was recognized as an expert on Slavic political affairs and minority issues and often declared a Serbophile and Slavophile sympathizer. Due to his interest in the Serbian minority in Hungary and Slavic history in general, Kállay was appointed to serve in Belgrade as a consul and diplomatic agent of the Dual Monarchy. During his long diplomatic tenure, starting in 1868 and lasting until 1875, he worked towards weakening the Russian influence while establishing closer ties between Serbia and the Dual Monarchy. In addition, he pursued extensive scholarly research and managed to write two exceptional volumes dedicated to the history of the Serbian people. In autumn of 1877, he declared that he was guided in his work by his sincere affection for the Serbian people and their unique and honorable history. He acknowledged the importance of Serbia during the

²² Thalloczy, xxxiii.

²³ Thalloczy, xxix.

²⁴ "Man betrachtete seine sogenannten Erfolge mit tyranischem Gleichmut." Thalloczy, xxiv.

Medieval Ages: "... the Serbian state managed to achieve a place among the most prominent and most powerful states not only in the East but also in the rest of Europe."²⁵

Kállay identified more closely with the policies of the Dual Monarchy after his appointment to the position of Finance Minister in charge of the occupied provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In order to secure these provinces and prepare for their final annexation to the Dual Monarchy, Kállay relied most of all on military force. He also kept a close watch over the educational, cultural, and religious associations promoting a unified national platform. He tried in vain to uphold the policy of Bosnian specificity (*Bosniankentum*) and to create a rift between the neighboring ethnically and historically related peoples. Kállay proceeded to develop a theory of an existing chasm between the Eastern and the Western civilizations while trying to bring Bosnia and Herzegovina under the sway of the Dual Monarchy. He trusted that the strong idea of statehood (*Staatsidee*) would bring stability to the region and help solve the Eastern Question. These policies produced the opposite effect by strengthening the resistance to colonial exploitation and fueling the drive for national independence.

Observed from a broad vantage point, there is in fact no contradiction between Kállay's assessment of his role as a representative of the Dual Monarchy. He was aware of the existing tensions, the discrepancies between official prerogatives of political and economic subjugation, and the perceptions of the regional national elite, advocating the dissolution of imposed political and economic bonds. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Habsburg empire was bordering on disintegration as a historic entity. Francis Joseph came to comprehend the growing strength of the national movements for independence and the inevitability of the demise of the Dual Monarchy. In the midst of World War I, he declared that he had been aware for a long time that the Dual Monarchy presented an anomaly in the world of his days.²⁶ The events following the turmoil of World War I proved the truthfulness of these perceptions.

²⁵ Venjamin Kalaji, "Predgovor," *Istorija Srba* (the Serbian translation of *History of Serbs*), x–xi.

²⁶ Wank, 48.