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Srđan Mičić, PhD
Research Associate
Institute for Recent History of Serbia

Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality

The Collective Security or the Regional Security: Cases of the Little Entente, the Balkan Locarno Pact and the Balkan Entente during the Interwar Period

Serbia was experienced in the alliance politics during the wars for liberation and unification from 1912 to 1918. The position of Belgrade was significantly changed after the First World War had finished. Until 1918 Serbia was a Balkan state which had two empires in its neighbourhood – Habsburg and Ottoman – therefore it had to employ all its national potential in diplomatic and military purposes in order to work on the liberation of its compatriots and unification of South Slavs.¹ After 1918 the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS) / Kingdom of Yugoslavia was the Balkan, the Danubian and the Adriatic Sea country. It had a dominant position on the Balkan Peninsula. In the Danubian region it had to take into account various national interests of the successor states of the Habsburg Monarchy and the restoration of the German influence. In all three regions it had to face the Italian claims. Consequently, the differences in the Yugoslav foreign policy concepts in the three regions existed. The basis of the Yugoslav foreign policy during the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s was the defense against the Italian threat. This policy could be implemented in two manners: through direct communica-

1 For further reading: Dragoljub R. Živojinović, *Amerika, Italija i postanak Jugoslavije 1917–1919*, (Београд: Научна knjiga, 1970); Милорад Екмечић, *Ратни циљеви Србије 1914*, (Београд: Просвета, 1990²); Ђорђе Станковић, *Nikola Pašić, saveznici i stvaranje Jugoslavije*, (Београд: Nolit, 1984); Ђорђе Станковић, *Србија 1914–1918: ратни циљеви*, (Нови Сад: ИП „Прометеј“; Београд: Радиотелевизија Србије, 2014); Мира Радојевић, Љубодраг Димић, *Србија у Великој рату 1914–1918*, (Београд: Српска књижевна задруга, 2014²); Андреј Митровић, *Србија у Првом светском рату*, (Београд: Службени гласник, 2015²).

tion with Rome or through communication with its neighbours and the Great Powers against Italy. On the Balkan Peninsula the outline of the Yugoslav foreign policy was to secure the obtained position by preventing the penetration of influence of the Great Powers and by agreements with the neighbours under the terms set by Belgrade. In the Danubian region the Kingdom of SCS / Yugoslavia primarily aspired to prevent the restoration of Habsburgs and a dominant influence of any Great Power. This was the main reason why the Yugoslav foreign policy during the entire interwar period was active on the Balkans and mostly passive in the Danubian Europe. The second important reason was the heritage of the Serbian elites' historical experience in the diplomacy in the Balkans, since they preserved the leading role in the Kingdom of SCS / Yugoslavia.

Since the principal goal of the Yugoslav foreign policy was to prevent Italy to expand its territory to the east coast of the Adriatic Sea and to reduce the danger from the Italian threat in other two regions, the basic method was to maintain the alliance and friendly relationship with other European Powers which could be the means to dissuade Rome from its aggressive intentions.² The logical direction was to preserve a good re-

2 For further reading: Živko Avramovski, *Balkanske zemlje i velike sile 1935–1937. Od italijanske agresije na Etiopiju do jugoslovensko-italijanskog pakta*, (Beograd: Prosveta, 1968); Vuk Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1918–1933*, (Beograd: ISI, 1971); Bogdan Krizman, *Vanjska politika jugoslavenske države 1918–1941: diplomatsko-historijski pregled*, (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1975); Vuk Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1933–1941*, (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1976); Anna Garlicka, *Polska–Jugosławia 1934–1939. Z dziejów stosunków politycznych*, (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk: Zakład narodowy imienia ossolińskich PAN, 1977); Desanka Todorović, *Jugoslavija i balkanske države 1918–1923*, (Beograd: Narodna knjiga–ISI, 1979); Dušan Lukač, *Treći Rajh i zemlje jugoistočne Evrope I–II (1933–1941)*, (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački zavod–Balkanološki institut SANU–Prosveta–Rad, Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga, 1982); Gligor Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918–1941.*, (Novi Sad: Institut za istoriju, 1984); Vuk Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata (Da li je Jugoslavija bila francuski „satelit“)*, (Beograd: ISI, 1985); Živko Avramovski, *Balkanska atanta (1934–1940)*, (Beograd: ISI, 1986); Enes Milak, *Jugoslavija i Italija 1931–1937*, (Beograd: ISI, 1987); Vuk Vinaver, *Svetska ekonomska kriza u Podunavlju i nemački prodor 1929–1935*, (Beograd: ISI, 1987); Любомир Панайотов, Костадин Палешутски, Добрин Мичев, *Македонија и бугарско-југословските одношења*, (Софија: БКП, 1987); Pavel Hradečný, *Politické vztahy Československa a Jugoslávie v letech 1925–1928 v zahraničním i vnitřním kontextu*, (Praha: Academia, 1988); Кръстьо Манчев, *Југославија и меѓународните одношења на Балканите 1933–1939*, (Софија: БАН, 1989); Васил Ал. Василев, *Правителството на БЗНС, ВМРО и бугаро-југословските одношења*, (Софија: БАН, 1991); Arnold Suppan, *Jugoslawien und Österreich 1918–1938. Bilaterale Außenpolitik im europäischen Umfeld*, (Wien: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik; München: Verlag Oldenbourg, 1996); Milan Vanku, *Sprsko-jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi kroz vekove*, (Beograd, 2005); Massimo

lationship with France and Great Britain from the First World War since the Russian Empire – as the most reliable supporter from the war period – no longer existed.³ During the Peace Conference in Paris it was obvious that French and British statesmen and diplomats were not ready to argue with Italy because of Kingdom of SCS. Therefore, they expected Belgrade – as a weaker party and less important entity in the international relations – to give in to the demands of Rome.⁴ Another problem was

Bucarelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia (1929–1939)*, (Bari: V. A. Graphis, 2006); Никола Жежов, *Македонското прашање во југословенско-бугарските дипломатски односи (1918–1941)*, (Скопје: Институт за историја, 2008); Бојан Димитријевић, Станислав Сретеновић, „Спољна политика Краљевине СХС/Југославије 1918–1941.“, *Историја 20. века*, Бр. 2 (2008); Stanislav Sretenović, *Francuska i Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918–1929*, (Београд: ISI, 2008); Саша Мишић, *Албанија: пријатељ и противник. Југословенска политика према Албанији 1924–1927*, (Београд: Службени гласник, 2009); Luciano Monzali, *Il sogno dell'egemonia: l'Italia, la questione jugoslava e l'Europa centrale (1918–1941)*, (Firenze: La lettere, 2010); Бранислав Глигоријевић, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић у европској политици*, (Београд: Завод за уџбенике, 2010²); Срђан Мишић, *Југославија и аншлус Аустрије 1938. године*, (Београд: Службени гласник–ЕСРД UPUN, 2010); Árpád Hornyák, *Hungarian-Yugoslav relations 1918–1927*, (Boulder: Social Science Monographs; Wayne: Center for Hungarian Studies and Publications, Inc., 2013); Jana Škerlová, *Věrnost za věrnost? Československo-jugoslávské politické vztahy v letech 1929–1934: Prání, rozpor, realita*, Dizertační práce, Historický ústav Filozofická fakulta Masarykova univerzita, Brno, 2014; Гордана Г. Ристић, *Спољна политика Краљевине Југославије у периоду од 1934. до 1939. године*, (Београд: Завод за уџбенике, 2015); Milan Sovilj, *Československo-jugoslávské vztahy v letech 1939–1941. Od zániku Československé republiky do okupace Království Jugoslávie*, (Praha: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2016); Иван Ристић, *Бугарска у политици Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца: (1919–1929)*, докторска дисертација, Филозофски факултет, Београд, 2017; Бојан Симић, *Милан Стојадиновић и Италија. Између дипломатије и пропаганде*, (Београд: ИНИС, 2019); Срђан Мишић, „Спољна политика југословенске краљевине 1918–1941“, у: *Српски народ и југословенска држава: спољна политика 1918–1990*, каталог изложбе, аутори изложбе и каталога Јелена Ђуришић, Драган Теодосић, (Београд: Архив Југославије, 2020); Милан Ристовић, *Mussolini ante portas. Италијански фашизам и југословенско суседство (1919–1925)*, (Београд: Службени гласник, 2021).

3 Никола Поповић, *Односи Србије и Русије у Првом светском рату*, (Београд: Народна књига–ИСИ, 1977).

4 For further reading: Богдан Кризман, „Питање граница Војводине на Париској мировној конференцији 1919. године (дипломатско-историјска скица), *Зборник Матице српске за друштвене науке*, бр. 24 (1959), 31–72; Ivo Lederer, *Yugoslavia at the Paris peace conference: a study in frontiermaking*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); Andrej Mitrović, *Jugoslavija na konferenciji mira 1919–1920*, (Београд: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika SR Srbije, 1969); Александар Хорват, *Барања 1918–1922*, (Нови Сад: Мало историјско друштво–ИК „Прометеј“, 2013); Á. Hornyák, *Hungarian-Yugoslav relations 1918–1927*, 54–62; Андреј Митровић,

the crisis of Anglo-French Alliance which had emerged and then ended the war alliance in 1922.⁵ Therefore, the Kingdom of SCS soon faced the need to choose one out of two Great Powers as its support against Italy.

There were several factors in this choice. The relations with Great Britain was not friendly due to pre-war problems. The coup d'état in May 1903 – when the King Aleksandar Obrenović and the Queen Consort Draga were assassinated and the Karađorđević dynasty returned to the throne – lead to the breaking of Serbian-British diplomatic relations. They were re-established after the compromise dismissal of the conspiring officers from the Serbian army in 1908. Serbian foreign policy from 1903 to 1914 had the closest cooperation with Russia and France among the Great Powers. Britain pursued its policy in the Southeast Europe relying on the Habsburg Monarchy until the Russophobia in one segment of the British elites was not overcome in 1916.⁶ This is why Serbian foreign policy was opposed to British tendencies on two tracks. Serbian-British relations did not change significantly in the period from 1914 to 1918.⁷ The opportunities to establish close Yugoslav-British relations after 1918 were very limited. Particularly because the Foreign Office was estimating that part of eastern- and central European states could disappear as a consequence of the German-Soviet agreement and the renewal of Russian influence in the Balkans.⁸

Another important factor was the development of the situation in the countries of the Danubian region. The restoration of the Habsburg dynasty represented a danger for both foreign and interior policy of the Yugoslav state. When signing the Treaty of Rapallo in November 1920 the Kingdom of SCS and Italy made a commitment by a special agreement

Разграничење Југославије са Мађарском и Румунијом 1919–1920, (Нови Сад: ИК Прометеј; Београд: Радио-телевизија Србије, 2019²); Dr Ivana S. Krstić-Mistrđželović, „Delegacija Kraljevine SHS u Versaju i Vojvodina“, *Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta u Novom Sadu*, editor-in-chief Prof. dr Slobodan Orlović, God. LIII, Br. 3, (Novi Sad: Pravni fakultet, 2019), 1011-1028.

5 Sharp Alan, „Anglo-French relations from Versailles to Locarno, 1919–1925: The quest for security”, in: *Anglo-French Relations in Twentieth Century: Rivalry and cooperation*, editors Alan Sharp, Glyn Stone, (London: Routledge, 2000), 120-125.

6 Harry Hanak, *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary during the First World War*, (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1962).

7 Александар Раствоић, *Велика Британија и Србија 1903–1914*, (Београд: Историјски институт, 2005).

8 Искандер Едуардович Магадеев, „«Тень империй»: проблемы стаильности ц центральной и восточной Европе в оценках британских дипломатов и политиков (1920-е годы)“, *Новая и новейшая история*, том 65, выпуск 4, 2021, 83, 84.

to take joint actions against the restoration in Austria or Hungary.⁹ After the first attempt of Karl von Habsburg to reclaim the Hungarian throne in March 1921, the Italians launched the initiative that the Yugoslav government should announce which member of the dynasty they would not contend as the prospective candidate for the king.¹⁰ In this manner they changed the essence of the issue. For the Kingdom of SCS a particular person did not represent the danger but it was the process of restoration of the Habsburg monarchy which would have a disintegrating impact on the Yugoslav state. Therefore, in order to prevent the restoration two directions had to be taken. The first was to conclude agreements with particular successor states. The second was to prevent agreements between the Great Powers with Hungary and Austria based on the peace treaties revision (the restoration of the Habsburgs, changes in the state borders, modifications of the military reductions, etc.) The first threat to the Yugoslav foreign policy was the readiness of France to create a new policy towards the Danubian countries relying on Budapest and the prospective Hungary-Romania-Poland union in 1920.¹¹ Almost simultaneously, there was the Italian initiative to create its own Danubian policy relying on the Hungarian-Romanian personal union from 1919 to 1920.¹² For this reason the fundamental tendency of Yugoslav statesmen was to prevent the formation of new policy concepts of the Great Powers towards the countries of the Danubian region which would be based on the close cooperation with Hungary and/or Austria. In this regard more attention was paid to the activities of Budapest than to Vienna, as the Hungarian side showed less willingness to accept the international order established at the Paris Peace Conference. A more lasting success was achieved in establishing

9 V. Krizman, *Vanjska politika jugoslavenske države 1918–1941*, 29.

10 Архив Југославије, Београд, Збирка Војислава Јовановића – Марамбоа (335), кутија 15, фасцикла 2 посланику Будимпешти Милан Ђ. Милојевић председнику Министарског савета и министру иностраних дела Николи Пашићу, Пов.Бр.604 од 19. априла 1921. године (further: AJ).

11 V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1918–1933*, 129–135; Anne Orde, „France and Hungary in 1920: Revisionism and Railways”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Jul., 1980), 476–489; Anikó Kovács-Bertrand, *Der ungarische Revisionismus nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Der publizistische Kampf gegen den Friedensvertrag von Trianon (1918–1931)*, (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997), 84–86; Á. Hornyák, *Hungarian-Yugoslav relations 1918–1927*, 83–86.

12 V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1918–1933*, 198; Andrea Schmidt-Rösler, „Pläne für eine Personalunion zwischen Rumänien und Ungarn 1919–1932”, *Ungarn-Jahrbuch. Zeitschrift für die Kunde Ungarns und verwandte Gebiete*, Band 20, Jahrgang 1992, (München: Verlag Ungarisches Institut, 1993), 98–106; Á. Hornyák, *Hungarian-Yugoslav relations 1918–1927*, 63–69, 86–88.

cooperation with France,¹³ while the cooperation with Italy was in most cases only a temporary suspension of the opposing policies of Rome and Belgrade.¹⁴ The Yugoslav statesmen were ready to accept the French system of collective security – which was primarily directed against restoration of the German power – due to the significance of French support to accomplish their own goals in the Danubian region.

The Little Entente

Apart from the policy which was directed towards the Great Powers, the Kingdom of SCS did not neglect the cooperation with the successor states of the Habsburg Monarchy with which it shared the same or similar national interests. Consequently it accepted to form the alliance with the Czechoslovakia and Romania. Although there was a difference in the relations with these two countries, the Yugoslav statesmen accepted the idea of this alliance as the basis for the Danubian countries' policy against the re-evaluation of the regional security structure created after the Great War.¹⁵ During the 1920s the cooperation with Czechoslovakia statesmen was much easier. It was based on the positive historical experience. Serbian statesmen as well as Croatian and Slovene politicians from the Habsburg Monarchy had established good relations with the prominent Czech politicians and intellectuals before 1914. During the First World War these connections were deepened through support provided by the Serbian government to the Czech emigration operations,¹⁶

13 V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*; S. Sretenović, *Francuska i Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918–1929*.

14 E. Milak, *Jugoslavija i Italija 1931–1937*; M. Bucarelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia (1929–1939)*; L. Monzali, *Il sogno dell'egemonia*; M. Рыстровић, *Mussolini ante portas*.

15 For further reading: Eliza Campus, *Mica Întelegere*, (București: Editura Științifică, 1968); Dr Milan Vanku, *Mala antanta 1920–1938*, (Titovo Užice: IP „Dimitrije Tucović“, 1969); Eliza Campus, *The Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance*, (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste Romania, 1978); Magda Ádám, *Rich-tung selbstverrichtung. Die Kleine Entente 1920–1938*, (Budapest: Corvina; Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1988); Zdeněk Sládek, *Malá dohoda 1919–1938: Její hospodářské, politické a vojenské komponenty*, (Praha: Karolinum, 2000) [Serbian edition: Здењек Сладек, *Мала антанта 1920–1938. Њене привредне, политичке и војне компоненте*, (Београд: Службени гласник, 2018)].

16 For further reading: Tomaš Masarik, *Nova Evropa*, (Prag–Zagreb, 1920); T. G. Masaryk, *Svetska revolucija. Ratne uspomene i razaranja 1918–1918*, (Beograd: Kosmos, 1935); Dr. Eduard Beneš, *Svjetski rat i naša revolucija. Uspomene i razmišljanja iz doba borbe za slobodu naroda*, (Zagreb: Tipografija, 1938); Božena Vranješ-Šoljan, „T. G. Masaryk i nova Evropa nakon Prvog svjetskog rata“, *Radovi*, knj. 37, (Zagreb: Zavod

which engaged itself to prevent the agreement between the Emperor Karl and the Slovenes in the Habsburg Monarchy.¹⁷ At the personal level Yugoslav politicians and statesmen had a particularly positive attitude towards Tomáš Masaryk¹⁸ and Edvard Beneš. Close relationship was also established with the Plenipotentiary Minister in Belgrade Jan Šeba. There were no diplomatic secrets for him;¹⁹ and the Minister of Foreign Affairs,

za hrvatsku povijest, 2005), 213-224; Мира Радојевић, „Српско-чешка сарадња у Првом светском рату“, у: *Studia Balcanica Bohemo-Slovaca*, Svezak 1, Sekce historie, politologie a etnologie, usp. Pavel Boček, Ladislav Hladký, Pavel Krejčí, Petr Stehlík a Vaclav Štěpánek, (Brno: Ústav slavistiky Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy university–Historický ústav Akademie věd České republiky–Maticе moravská, 2006), 281–298; Ladislav Hladký a kolektiv, *Vztahy Česků s národy a zeměmi jihovýchodní Evropy*, (Praha: Historický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, 2010); Марина Јанковић, „Томаш Гарик Масарик и Јужни Словени: Масарикова улога у Фридриховој афери“, у: *Од Мораве до Мораве II*, Из историје чешко-српских односа, editors: Верица Копривица, Александра Корда-Петровић, уредник Чешког дела Вацлав Штјепанек; (Нови Сад: Матица српска; Брно: Матица морavsка, 2011), 113-141; Зоран Бајин, „Мирослав Спалајковић на Фридриховом процесу“, *Зборник Матице српске за историју*, Бр. 85 (2012), 97-110; Vratislav Doubek, Ladislav Hladký, Radomír Vlček a kolektiv, *T. G. Masaryk a Slované*, (Praha: Historický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, 2013); Милош Ковић, „Масарик и Срби: политичке идеје. Сажетак“, *Српска политичка мисао*, год. XXVII, св. 68, Бр. 2/2020, 14-40.

- 17 АЈ, Фонд Двора Краљевине Југославије (74), кутија 2, јединица описа 6, листови 608, 609.
- 18 One of the more evident problems in the bilateral relations was the lack of official visits of King Aleksandar and Nikola Pašić to Czechoslovakia and Tomaš Masaryk to the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia. King Aleksandar only made an unofficial visit to the Czechoslovak president of the republic. Masaryk was passing through the Kingdom of SCS in 1922 and promised to make an official visit in 1923. Pašić suggested only once to make an official visit to Czechoslovakia but he gave up after a negative response. Masaryk refused to make an official visit to Belgrade and King Aleksandar refused to attend the 80th birthday celebration of Masaryk in 1930. (Архив Српске академије наука и уметности, Београд, Заоставштина Милана Антића 14.387, предмет бр. 8437 (further: Архив САНУ); АЈ, Фонд Министарства иностраних послова Краљевине Југославије (334), кутија 93, јединица описа 296, лист 176; АЈ, Фонд Посланства Краљевине Југославије у Енглеској – Лондон (341), кутија 31, јединица описа 80 Гавриловић – Étrangères Belgrade, Пов. Бр. 481 од 25-X-1923; Јан Šeba, *Paměti legionáře a diplomata*, připravil Jindřich Dejmek, (Praha: Historický ústav, 2016), 200; Todor Stojkov, „O nastojanju jugoslavenskih vladajućih krugova da obezbede režimu monarhodiktature podršku čehoslovačke vlade (1929–1931)“, v: *Československo and Juhoslávia. Z dejín československo-juhoslovanských vztahov*, red. Jozef Hrozič, (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied, 1968), 276; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 184; Ladislav Hladký, „T. G. Masaryk a jižní Slované: konstanty a proměnné v rámci starého příběhu“, in: Vratislav Doubek, Ladislav Hladký a Radomír Vlček, *T. G. Masaryk a Slované*, (Praha: Masarykův ústav AV ČR, 2013), 246; J. Škerlová, *Věrnost za věrnost?*, 94).
- 19 Kosta St. Pavlović, *Vojislav Marinković i njegovo doba (1876–1935)*, Knjiga druga, (London, 1956), 117.

Momčilo Ninčić, used to comment deciphered correspondence together with him.²⁰ In the beginning the relations between the Kingdom of SCS and Romania was not much cordial. Although there had existed a historical heritage of good Serbian-Romanian relations up to 1914, during the First World War and the Paris Peace Conference the issue of their claims towards Banat was raised. Two attempts of Karl von Habsburg to reclaim the Hungarian throne in 1921 had a favourable impact on the establishment of allied relations, since Belgrade and Bucharest realised that they had a mutual interest – the defence of the profits gained from war.²¹ The bilateral relations were strengthened by the dynasty marriage between the King Aleksandar and the Princess Mărioara (Maria) which facilitated surmounting of the disputes related to the mutual border in Banat.²²

The Little Entente was formed with the primary goal to ensure the regional security structure by preventing the rebalancing of the international order in the Danubian region established at the Paris Peace Conference. Since Hungary did not show any readiness to accept the outcome of the war, the alliance of the three member countries had an anti-Hungary character at the beginning. However, the dissolution of the Anglo-French alliance raised an issue of the security structure arrangement in the continental area of Europe. Therefore, a new alliance had to be established in line with the new situation. Cancellation of further French support to Hungary in the Danubian region from 1920 to 1921 made way for comprehension between the Little Entente and France at the Genoa Conference in 1922.²³ The French occupation of the Ruhr region sent a distinct signal that Paris would not tolerate revisionism in Europe which coincided with the fundamental aim of the existence of the Yugoslavia-Czechoslovakia-Romania alliance. Therefore, the three member countries soon accepted to become an integral part of the French system of collective se-

20 J. Šeba, *Paměti legionáře a diplomata*, 239.

21 A. Митровић, *Разграничење Југославије са Мађарском и Румунијом 1919–1920*, passim; G. Попи, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918–1941.*, 25-46; M. Vanku, *Sprsko-jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi kroz vekove*, IV 32, IV 33, V i VI 15-19.

22 Александар Ђ. Маринковић, *Женидба краља Александра Карађорђевића*, (Београд, 1999).

23 Вук Винавер, „О спољнополитичкој оријентацији Југославије 1920–1925.“, *Зборник Матице српске за друштвене науке*, бр. 44 (1966), 33-35, 40; M. Vanku, *Mala antanta 1920–1938*, 18, 19; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 40-42; Dragan Bakić, „The Great Britain, the Little Entente and the Genoa Conference of 1922“, *Istorija 20. veka*, 3/2011, 111-123.

curity in East Europe.²⁴ On this foundation the idea of a possible membership of Poland and/or Greece in the existing alliance was being developed as well as the expansion of its activities on the territory from the Baltic Sea to the Aegean Sea. These endeavours were unsuccessful due to the opposing interests of Czechoslovakia and Poland in the north region; and the discordant Yugoslav and Romanian interests with the Greek interests in the south region.²⁵ The short period of close cooperation between the Little Entente and Poland from 1925 to 1926 was caused by signing of the Pact of Locarno which did not guarantee the eastern borders of Germany and ended when Józef Piłsudski acceded to power.²⁶

Involving the Little Entente into the broader French concept of the collective security policy strengthened the multilateral character of the foreign policies of the three member countries. Since the Danubian Europe was not the region of primary importance for the Yugoslavia's foreign policy, the initiative within the alliance was left to Evdard Beneš. Yet, the changes made in the security structure on the continent had effect on the first modifications of the Yugoslav foreign policy at the multilateral level. The first three Ministers and Minister Representatives of the Foreign Affairs Ante Trumbić, Milenko Vesnić and Nikola Pašić showed little interest in the work of the League of Nations. As members of senior generations of politicians and statesmen, who either lacked experience in diplomacy (Trumbić) or who had great experience in diplomatic and foreign policy activities (Vesnić and Pašić) in different international circumstances prior to 1919, they could not easily adapt to the new concept of constant

24 V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 51-53; S. Sretenović, *Francuska i Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918-1929*, 214.

25 AJ, Фонд Посланства Краљевине Југославије у Француској – Париз, Виши (388), кутија 15, јединица описа 36, листови 166-169; AJ, Фонд Посланства Краљевине Југославије у Румунији – Букурешт (395), кутија 13, јединица описа 127, листови 388, 389; E. Campus, *Mica Înțelegere*, 51, 52, 55-59, 64-68; Andrzej Essen, *Polska a Mała ententa 1920-1934*, (Warszawa-Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1992), 14-134; Bohumila Ferenčuhova, „La vision slovaque des relations entre la France et la Petite Entente (1918-1925)”, in: *Nations, cultures et sociétés d'Europe centrale aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles. Mélanges offerts au professeur Bernard Michel*, sous la direction de Catherine Horel, (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2006), 86, 87, 90, 94, 95, 98, 99, 101, 103.

26 AJ, 395, к. 14, j. o. 144, листови 494-497; E. Campus, *Mica Înțelegere*, 72, 74; M. Vanku, *Mala antanta 1920-1938*, 38; A. Essen, *Polska a Mała ententa 1920-1934*, 150-177; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda 1919-1938*, 69; Isabelle Davion, “Integrations de la Pologne dans a Petite Entente: chevol de Troie de la France et serpent de mer diplomatique”, *Valahian Journal of Historical Science*, no. 2 (2004), 73, 74; B. Ferenčuhova, „La vision slovaque des relations entre la France et la Petite Entente (1918-1925)”, 95.

multilateral diplomacy which the League of Nations was based on. However, younger generations had much more understanding for this type of activities. Miroslav Spalajković – as a close associate of the Prince Regent Aleksandar Karađorđević – was the first delegate of Yugoslavia's delegations at the first and second sessions of the League of Nations Assembly.²⁷

Having taken the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 5 January 1922, Momčilo Ninčić changed the previous course of the Yugoslav diplomacy at the multilateral level. He introduced the practice that minister should be the first delegate at the sessions of the League of Nations Assembly. At the same time, through frequent reorganisation within the ministry operations and conducting preparatory actions to open the Permanent Delegation in 1923, 1924 and 1926 he showed interest to work in Geneva.²⁸ His engagement for the League of Nations was not only the reflection of the altered practice in diplomacy and the changes in the international law, but also of his wish to engage Geneva in the relations between Belgrade and Rome. Since the great powers had a crucial influence on the League of Nations Council, he could count on the support of the French diplomats and statesmen and the diplomats who were officials in that international organisation. The aim was to alleviate the aggressiveness of the Italian foreign policy towards the Balkans on basis of the fundamental principles of the League of Nations – among which one of the most important was to preserve world peace.²⁹ The Little Entente had the similar aim, so the three member states started to harmonise their activities in Geneva. Even though Ninčić was gradually creating his reputation and style in Geneva, he lagged behind Beneš³⁰ who was considered to be the spokesperson of the alliance.³¹ Vojislav Marinković was the first Yugoslav Foreign Minister who managed to build the statesmen reputation before the League of

27 Miroslav Spalajković was the Minister without portfolio in the Government of Stojan Protić and the deputy Foreign Minister from 19 February to 18 August 1920 and at the time of the first two sessions of the Council of the League of Nations he was an MP (1920) и (1921) (Зоран Бајин, *Спалајковић. Дипломата и контрареволуционар*, (Нови Сад: ИК „Прометеј“, 2021), 203, 207, 211).

28 Срђан Мићић, *Од бирократије до дипломатије. Историја југословенске дипломатске службе 1918–1939.*, (Београд: ИНИС, 2018), 89-93, 97-99, 101, 102, 234-236.

29 Enes Milak, „Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca i Rimski sporazum (1922–1924)“, u: *Istorija XX veka*, Zbornik radova XIV–XV, odgovorni urednik dr Živko Avramovski, (Београд: ISI–IRO „Narodna knjiga“, 1982), 151, 152.

30 Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмет бр. 9443.

31 K. Pavlović, *Vojislav Marinković i njegovo doba (1876–1935)*, Knjiga druga, 76, 78, 81; Id., *Vojislav Marinković i njegovo doba (1876–1935)*, Knjiga peta, (London, 1960), 93.

Nations.³² His work was facilitated when he was selected for a semi-permanent member of the League of Nations Council in 1929.³³

The importance which the Little Entente attributed to the multilateral diplomacy regarding the defence of its interests was obvious in two issues. During the reorganisation of the League of Nations Council in 1926 – which was the consequence of the signing of the Pact of Locarno by which Great Britain, France and Italy recognised the German status of a Great Power and at the same time all four European Powers were liberated from the supervision of the League of Nations over their crucial national interests – the Little Entente managed to secure a position of a semi-permanent member of the Council with the promise that one of its representatives would always be elected for a member. In this manner the three member states ensured a permanent right to vote in the body which had the executive authority within the Geneva institution.³⁴ Another important issue was a constant endeavour to guard principle of the collective security at the regional level in disputes and resolutions, by which they defended *raison d'être* of the alliance.³⁵ The accumulat-

32 Коста Ст. Павловић, *Дневник 1930–1932*, приредили Срђан Мићић, Наташа Милићевић, Београд: Историјски архив Београда–ИНИС, 2020, 117–119, 122, 123, 182–194, 196, 225, 242; Id., *Vojislav Marinković i njegovo doba (1876–1935)*, Knjiga četvrta, (London, 1957), 127, 128; Id., *Vojislav Marinković i njegovo doba (1876–1935)*, knjiga peta, 91–93.

33 At the Conference of Ministers of the Little Entente in Belgrade in May 1929 all three member states made a commitment to support the candidacy of the Kingdom of SCS. Then the Romanians tried to deny their support, justifying it by the Beneš's behavior, but they had to give in. Marinković was elected a representative of the Little Entente which had a guaranteed place of a semi-permanent member (АЈ, Фонд Сталне делегације при Друштву народа – Женева (159), кутија 4, фасцикла III посланик у Берну и стални делегат у Женеви Илија Шуменковић – МИД, Пов. Бр. 543 од 18. августа; Шуменковић – МИД, Пов. Бр. 593 од 9. септембра 1929; АЈ, 159, к. 5, ф. 23 Шуменковић – МИД, Пов. Бр. 417 од 25. маја 1929; АЈ, ф. 395, к. 20, j. o. 205, листови 142–145).

34 Charles Howard-Ellis, *The Origin, Structure and Working of the League of Nations*, (London, 1928), 140–153; Antonín Klimek, Eduard Kubů, *Československá zahraniční politika 1918–1938: kapitoly z dějin mezinárodních vztahů*, (Praha: Institut pro středoevropskou kulturu a politiku, 1995), 58.

35 АЈ, 159, к. 2, ф. III делегат у Припремној комисији за Конференцију о разоружању Лазар Марковић – Агенцији „Авала“, за Илију Шуменковића, Ка Пов. Бр. 114; АЈ, 159, к. 2, ф. IV стални делегат у Женеви Константин Фотић – Војиславу Маринковићу, Пов. Бр. 421 од 6. јула 1928; АЈ, 159, к. 46, ф. 4–1 Фотић – Богољубу Јевтићу, Стр. Пов. Бр. 14 од 13. октобра; Стр. Пов. Бр. 15 од 13. октобра; Стр. Пов. Бр. 19 од 5 новембра 1932; Srđan Mićić, „The influence of France and Italy's (Central) European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, *Istorija 20. veka*, 1/2020, 42.

ed experience of the Yugoslav statesmen and diplomats within the Little Entente was later implemented in the ranks of the Balkan Entente from 1934.³⁶ This was even more significant since the *point faible* of the former alliance was replicated to the latter one. That is to say, it was impossible to achieve a permanent agreement in joint defence of the member states in case one was attacked by a neighbouring Great Power. Regarding the Yugoslav Kingdom that was Italy during the largest part of the interwar period. This is why the League of Nations represented a useful instrument of dissuasion until the crises caused by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the Italian-Abyssinian war from 1935 to 1936. The latter case was a clear signal for all small and middle-size European countries that Geneva could not protect them from the aggressive intentions of great powers.³⁷

The Pact of Locarno had two important consequences not only for the Yugoslav foreign policy but also for the regional security structure both in the Balkans and in the Danubian region. The first was an obvious intention of the European Powers to exclude themselves from the international order established at the Paris Peace Conference and to pursue their foreign policy exclusively in line with the national interests.³⁸ Therefore, a way towards a new agreement of European Powers was be-

36 During 1932, after Turkey became a new member of the League of Nations and when it seemed that a new Turkey-Greece-Bulgaria bloc would be formed in the Balkans – under Italian patronage – Ankara advocated that the new group receive the same status as the Little Entente in the Council of the League of Nations (Иво Андрић, *Дипломатски списи*, приредио Миладин Милошевић, (Београд: Просвета, 1992), document no. 48, p. 113). In Geneva the formation of the Balkan Treaty in February 1934 was explained as the recommendation of the League of Nations for making regional treaties. (АЈ, 159, к. 46, ф. 4-3 Богољуб Јевтић – лично за посланика, Пов. Бр. 2480 од 5. фебруара 1934). Diplomatic representatives of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente continued to jointly defend the theses on the necessity to organise peace at the regional level 1934-1936 (АЈ, 159, к. 26, ј. о. 17 в. д. сталног делегата др Иван Субботић – ПО МИП, Пов. Бр. 627 од 14. септембра 1935; АЈ, 159, к. 27, ј. о. 8 Субботић – лично за Милана Стојадиновића, Пов. Бр. 979 од 23. јула 1936; АЈ, 159, к. 31, ф. 29-ХIVа Субботић – ПО МИП, Пов. Бр. 1258 од 29. септембра 1936).

37 For further reading: Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanske zemlje i velike sile 1935-1937*.

38 Андреј Митровић, *Време нетрпеливих. Политичка историја великих држава 1919-1939*, (Београд: Српска књижевна задруга, 1974), 392-394, 514, 515; Ћedomir Попов, *Od Versaja do Danciga*, (Београд: Nolit, 1976), 341-346; Matteo Luigi Napolitano, *Mussolini e la Conferenza di Locarno (1925). Il problema della sicurezza nella politica estera italiana*, (Urbino: Montefeltro, 1996); *Locarno Revisited: European Diplomacy, 1920-1929*, edited by Gaynor Johnson, (London-New York: Routledge, 2004), 8-36, 55-108; Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed. European International History, 1919-1933*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 24-26, 29, 31-33.

ing formed by which their mutual disagreements and conflicts would be settled at the expense of the interests of the lesser subjects of international relations. The Little Entente statesmen had this possibility in mind every time when in the following years the Great Powers took the initiative to reorganise the international relation at the continental level. Another important consequence was the idea to copy the Locarno model in certain regions of Europe. Since the Locarno Pact was limited to the west borders of the Weimar Republic, an open space for German revisionism and revenge remained at the east and southeast borders. Therefore, the Little Entente had to have a watchful eye on imposing the Locarno model on the Danubian region by the Great Powers. The Kingdom of SCS took special care that the same principles were not applied to the Balkans. The fundamental idea of the Yugoslav statesmen was that the regional security structure had to be formed primarily on basis of the regional countries' national interests and not for the sake of securing the Great Powers' interests. Belgrade did not want to surrender the initiative to any of the Great Powers on the Balkans. With regard to the Danubian region, Yugoslav diplomacy followed and supported Edvard Beneš as well as it did in most other affairs of the Little Entente during the 1920s. However, the experience with the application of the Locarno model influenced the statesmen of the three member states to be cautious with all new initiatives of the Great Power for the reorganisation of the Danubian region – no matter which centre of power they originated from – which followed in the first half of the 1930s.

For the Yugoslav foreign policy the imposition of the Locarno model had one more important component. That is to say, signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cordial Cooperation (the so-called Rome Pact) on 27 January 1924 had the goal to harmonise Yugoslav and Italian foreign policies in the Balkans and in the Danubian region. The main creators of this policy were King Aleksandar and Momčilo Ninčić while Nikola Pašić was much more reserved.³⁹ Simultaneously, Czechoslovakia concluded the Treaty of Alliance and Friendship with France on 25 January 1924. That was the response of Prague to the dissolution of the Anglo-French Alliance from the Great War by which it wanted to ensure the protection against the German threat – which it could not ensure through the Little Entente – but at the same time it committed itself to participating in the

39 В. Винавер, „О спољнополитичкој оријентацији Југославије 1920–1925.“, 52-54; E. Milak, „Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca i Rimski sporazum (1922–1924)“, 144-146, 153, 154, 157-166.

general European policy of the new ally.⁴⁰ Beneš tried without success to prevent the signing of the Rome Pact during the Little Entente ministerial conference in Belgrade on 10 January 1924.⁴¹ Afterwards he negotiated with Mussolini in May 1924 about the signing of the Czechoslovak-Italian treaty by which the identical policy of the Little Entente and Italy would be established based on the struggle against the restoration of the Habsburgs, revisionism and retribution in Austria and Hungary. Beneš gave up this initiative due to different French and Italian interests in the Danubian region.⁴² The Yugoslav military attaché in Prague, the Artillery Colonel Mihailo M. Nenadović, gave a positive assessment to the changes in Czechoslovak diplomatic activities. He thought that Beneš realised that he had undertaken excessive alliance obligations towards France and hence abandoned pursuing the “great European” policy. Nenadović came to conclusion that Beneš had taken a more cautious attitude towards the possible dragging of Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of SCS in the large-scale war. In the same time Beneš became careful about *raison d’être* of the Little Entente, which was supposed to protect its own interests in the Central Europe and could not afford to be involved in “either the important issues of European significance or pursue great-European policy”.⁴³

These two treaties showed a clear difference between the foreign policy concepts of Belgrade and Prague. The Kingdom of SCS was ready to come to terms with preponderant neighbour – which posed a threat – but Belgrade was pursuing agreement limited to the regions in which it had

40 Piotr S. Wandycz, *France and her Eastern Allies 1919–1925: French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from the Paris Peace Conference to Locarno*, (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1962), 294-296, 300-302, 306-311, 341-347; Radko Břach, *Československo a Evropa v polovině dvacátých let*, (Praha a Litomyšli: Nakladatelství Paseka, 1996), 119-148; Bohumila Ferenčuhová, „L’Alliance franco-tchécoslovaque dans l’entre-deux-guerres: le poids de l’image du français et du russe/soviétique dans le processus de décision en politique étrangère”, dans: *Images des peuples et histoire des relations internationales du XVIe siècle à nos jours*, dir. Maria Matilde Benzoni, Robert Frank, Silvia Maria Pizzetti, (Paris: Edizioni Unicopli; Milano: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998), 367-370; Wojciech Mazur, „II Rzeczpospolita w planach koalicyjnych działań lotniczych przeciw Niemcom (1921–1939)”, *Przegląd historyczno-wojskowy*, Rocznik XVII (LVIII), Nr. 2-3 (256-257), 2016, 203-206; Bohumila Ferenčuhová, „Malá dohoda medzi Francúzskom a Talianskom v 20. rokoch 20. Storočia (1920–1927)”, v: Slavomír Michálek, Marián Manák a kol, *Dejinné premeny 20. storočia: Historik Pavol Petruf 70-ročný*, (Bratislava: Veda, 2016), 69, 70.

41 E. Milak, „Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca i Rimski sporazum (1922–1924)”, 164, 165.

42 B. Ferenčuhová, „Malá dohoda medzi Francúzskom a Talianskom v 20. rokoch 20. Storočia (1920–1927)”, 70, 71.

43 AJ, 388, k. 12, j. o. 30, листови 380-382; AJ, 395, k. 1, j. o. 1, листови 16-18.

a realistic role. Czechoslovakia was ready to accept the participation in the continental policy of the European Powers in order to obtain protection from the threats of the neighbouring Great Power. These conceptual differences became more visible in the ranks of the Little Entente during the 1930s. Beneš's endeavours to reach an agreement with France concerning strengthening of the cooperation in the issues that were important for all three member states (Anschluss of Austria, restoration of the Habsburgs, respect of the peace treaties) were motivated by his concept of the foreign policy. Almost at the same time the signing of Yugoslav-Italian and Czechoslovak-French treaties indicated the essential weakness of the Little Entente – the member states accepted the cooperation with particular Great Powers in order to protect their national interests thus neglecting the general interest of the alliance.

Therefore, the different aspirations of Belgrade and Prague were understood as weakening of the alliance cohesion, which was enhanced by the feeling of isolation of the Romanian statesmen after January 1924.⁴⁴ The discordance between the Kingdom of SCS and Czechoslovakia led to the delay of the Little Entente Conference of Foreign Ministers at the end of 1924 and the beginning of 1925, which was justified by the dissatisfaction of Czechoslovak government with the state of Yugoslavia's political life.⁴⁵ It turned out that it had been impossible to harmonise the Yugoslav and Italian foreign policies in the long run. Namely, it turned out that the assessments made by Yugoslav General Staff officers in 1924 had been much more realistic than the optimism of diplomats,⁴⁶ because the policy founded on the Rome Pact lost its significance next year.⁴⁷ Thereby, further internal consolidation of the Little Entente was enabled, which

44 AJ, 395, к. 1, j. o. 1, листови 12, 13; AJ, 395, к. 12, j. o. 118, листови 247, 254-256, 262.

45 AJ, 395, к. 14, j. o. 135, листови 74-84, 87, 88, 90, 97, 101; R. Břach, *Československo a Evropa v polovině dvacátých let, 193-196*; Jindřich Dejmek, *Edvard Beneš: Politická biografie českého demokrata, Část první: Revolucionář a diplomat (1884-1935)*, (Praha: Karolinum, 2006), 395.

46 AJ, 388, к. 10, j. o. 25, листови 448, 455-459; Војни архив, Пописник 17 – Архив Војске Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца/Југославије, кутија 17, фацикла 1, предмет бр. 2, рег. 4.

47 В. Винавер, „О спољнополитичкој оријентацији Југославије 1920-1925.“, 57; Bogdan Krizman, „Италија и политички краља Александра и кнеза Павла (1918-1941)“, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, Br. 1 (1975), 38; Id, *Vanjska politika jugoslavenske države*, 45; Ћ. Роров, *Od Versaja do Danciga*, 360, 361; Младенка Ивановић, „Нептунске конвенције између Краљевине СХС и Италије“, *Југословенска држава 1918-1998: зборник радова са научног скупа, одговорни уредник Ђорђе О. Пиљевић*, (Београд: ИСИ, 1999), 188, 189; Goran Latinović, *Yugoslav-Italian economic relations (1918-1941)*, (Banja Luka: University of Banja Luka, 2019), 51.

was manifested at the Conference of Foreign Ministers on 9-11 May 1925. Ninčić, Beneš and Duca draw a conclusion – in light of the negotiations of the four European Powers on their special international status (the Pact of Locarno) – that the international relations in Europe were heading in a dangerous direction. Their standpoint was that countries must not be classified into those with the guarantees and the ones without the guarantees of the Great Powers. As the fundamental aim of the Little Entente they designated the preservation of *status quo* in Europe.⁴⁸ That is why taking the initiatives to sign new treaties in line with the Locarno model – by which Italy and Great Britain could create their own areas of influence on the Balkans and/or the Danubian region – represented a realistic threat to the preservation of Yugoslav national interests.

Ninčić – who, unlike Beneš, did not stay in Locarno during the European Powers conference – immediately took the initiative to arrange a meeting with the Czechoslovak foreign minister and to discuss all the implications of the Pact for the Central Europe and the Balkans.⁴⁹ His instinct was not wrong, since the British State Secretary, Austin Chamberlain, talked to Beneš on 19 October 1925 about the possible Locarno treaty for the Danubian countries. According to the assessment of the Foreign Office, Beneš was a better interlocutor than Ninčić if the intention was to establish the agreement between the Little Entente and Hungary.⁵⁰ Chamberlain's idea was the reconciliation of the former enemies and appeasement of Italian claims in the Danubian region, but with no new international obligations for Britain.⁵¹ Beneš accepted the proposal and took over the role of initiator of the idea within the ranks of the Little Entente.⁵² He reached an agreement with Ninčić at the meeting in Bled on 22 October that there existed a necessity to form the Central European Locarno on

48 E. Campus, *Mica Înțelegere*, 71, 72; P. Hradečný, *Politické vztahy Československa a Jugoslávie v letech 1925-1928 v zahraničním i vnitřním kontextu*, 33; R. Břach, *Československo a Evropa v polovině dvacátých let*, 200-206; J. Dejmek, *Edvard Beneš, Část první*, 395.

49 AJ, 395, к. 1, j. о. 2, лист 67.

50 V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva rata*, 89; Dragan Bakić, „Must Will Peace’: British Brokering of ‘Central European’ and ‘Balkan Locarno’, 1925-9”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (2012), 27, 28, 30.

51 E. Campus, *Mica Înțelegere*, 75; Patrick Finney, „Raising Frankenstein: Great Britain, ‘Balkanism’ and the Search for a Balkan Locarno in the 1920s”, *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 33, Issue 3 (July, 2003), 321, 322; J. Dejmek, *Edvard Beneš, Část první*, 408-410; D. Bakić, „Must Will Peace’: British Brokering of ‘Central European’ and ‘Balkan Locarno’, 1925-9”, 26-29.

52 Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмет бр. 8779.

mutual guarantees.⁵³ They thought that France and Britain should take the initiative because, based on the former experience, they expected the resistance from Italy to any initiative given by the Little Entente.⁵⁴ Duca agreed with their conclusions on 23 October.⁵⁵ However, according to the assessment of Boško Čolak-Antić, the Plenipotentiary Minister in Bucharest, the enthusiasm for the Central European Locarno emerged among the Romanian statesmen only after the visit of the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Georgy Vasilyevich Chicherin, which was interpreted as a danger of disruption of the Romania-Poland anti-bolshevik front and a potential agreement between Poland and the Soviet Union.⁵⁶

It cannot be denied that surmounting the war enmities between the French and the Germans as well as the readiness of the British and the Italians to guarantee the new security structure in West Europe made a strong impression on Momčilo Ninčić. One of his closest associates in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Milan Antić, concluded that his superior was "misled by the pact-mania stream".⁵⁷ Yet, Ninčić showed more willingness to apply the Locarno system in the Central Europe than on the Balkans.⁵⁸ Beneš did not manage to persuade Chamberlain that the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay should take the initiative to form the Central European Locarno.⁵⁹ He suggested to Ninčić that they should return to the original plan that for the Little Entente to take the initiative in order to prevent the reorganisation of the regional security structure from endangering the existence of the alliance and its position regarding Hungary.⁶⁰ Even the affair with the counterfeit French francs in Hungary, which broke out at the end of 1925, did not hinder Masaryk and Beneš from their endeavours to rearrange the Danubian region in line with the Locarno model. They did not want to attack too much the government of István Beth-

53 AJ, 395, к. 1, j. o. 2, лист 67.

54 Živko Avramovski, „Pitanje Balkanskog garantnog pakta i jugoslovensko-bugarski odnosi 1925. godine u svetlu britanske politike na Balkanu“, *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, Broj 2, Godina XXXV (maj-avgust 1984), 101; D. Bakić, „‘Must Will Peace’: British Brokering of ‘Central European’ and ‘Balkan Locarno’, 1925-9“, 28.

55 AJ, 395, к. 1, j. o. 2, лист 68.

56 AJ, 395, к. 13, j. o. 124, листови 93, 94.

57 Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмет бр. 9111.

58 D. Bakić, „‘Must Will Peace’: British Brokering of ‘Central European’ and ‘Balkan Locarno’, 1925-9“, 28.

59 AJ, 341, к. 1, j. o. 2 Ђорђе Ђурић – Momčilu Ninčiću, Стр. Пов.Бр.320 од 12. новембра; Ђурић – Etrangères Belgrade, Рр.Пов.Бр.345 од 4. децембра 1925. године.

60 AJ, 334, к. 7, j. o. 25, листови 591, 592.

len in order to secure Chamberlain's inclination for their plan which was directed against establishing the Italian sphere of influence through Vienna and Budapest.⁶¹ Ninčić agreed with the Czechoslovak point of view that the Italian initiatives for the regional treaties represent the tendency of Rome to establish dominance in the Balkans, disintegrate the Little Entente and isolate France. Therefore, he, as well, was ready to acknowledge the British initiative and he was ready to participate in Mussolini's plans only under condition if France accepts to participate as well.⁶²

The Balkan Locarno, the Balkan-Danubian Locarno and the Balkan Entente

When the Greek press campaign for the Balkan guarantee pact was launched in February 1295, Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs formulated viewpoint that it was impossible to achieve such an agreement as long as Greece and Bulgaria had unstable regimes.⁶³ Actually, in January 1925 Ninčić renewed the idea of joining Poland and Greece to the Little Entente but he officially introduced this initiative at the end of February and the beginning of March.⁶⁴ Hence, he was ready for an agreement with Athens and to accept the rearrangement of the regional security structure in the Balkans, but only under the leadership of Belgrade as he was aware that the Greek foreign policy was inspired by their fear from the alleged territorial claims of Serbs towards Thessaloniki.⁶⁵ Since Beneš came to the same idea, the two ministers easily harmonised their points of view.⁶⁶ Ninčić wanted to overcome the failure of the Rome Pact policy by strengthening the position in the Central Europe and in the Balkans. At the same time, he was evading involvement of the Kingdom of SCS in the general European policy as dictated by the Quai d'Orsay. At the Confer-

61 Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Twilight of French Eastern Alliance 1926–1936: French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from Locarno to Remilitarization of Rhineland*, (New Jersey: Princenton Univeristy Press, 1988), 31; J. Dejmek, *Edvard Beneš, Část první*, 412, 414; Dragan Bakić, *Britain and Interwar Danubian Europe: Foreign Policy and Security Challenges, 1919-1936*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 82, 83.

62 V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1918–1933*, 301, 302; Миле Бјелајац, *Дипломатија и војска. Србија и Југославија 1901–1999*, (Београд: Медија центар „Одбрана“ – Академија за дипломатију и безбедност, 2010), 131-133.

63 АЈ, Фонд Посланства Краљевине Југославије у Турској – Цариград, Анкара (370), кутија 28, јединица описа 80, листови 490-492.

64 А. Eszen, *Polska a Mała ententa 1920–1934*, 160.

65 АЈ, 395, к. 1, ј. о. 2, листови 57-59.

66 R. Břach, *Československo a Evropa v polovině dvacátých let*, 140, 197, 198.

ence of the Little Entente from 9 to 11 May it was obvious that Ninčić was more interested in the Balkans than in Central European issues.⁶⁷ Beneš had tried once again to coax the Italian Under-Secretary of the Foreign Affairs, Dino Grandi conte di Mordano, to accept his idea about the tripartite treaty between Prague, Belgrade and Rome concerning the joint Danubian policy but without visible success.⁶⁸

The negotiations among the Great Powers had effect on the Balkan statesmen. The first initiative was launched by the Greek Foreign Minister Konstantinos Rendis, in spring 1925 to establish a new treaty based on the alliance between Romania, the Kingdom of SCS and Greece. After the improvement of the bilateral Greek-Turkish relations in June 1925, he assigned an important role to Turkey in his plan. Ninčić did not accept the Greek initiative⁶⁹ keeping the stance that only the Kingdom of SCS was eligible to manage the organisation of the regional security structure in the Balkans. Among Yugoslav statesmen and diplomats there existed mistrust towards Athens due to different interpretations of the alliance obligations during the First World War, dissatisfaction with the policy of the Greek government towards the Yugoslav interests in Thessaloniki and the Aegean Macedonia, which resulted in the dissolution the allied relations in November 1924.⁷⁰ Ninčić's attitude coincided with Chamberlain's who did not want the Balkans treaty to aggravate the agreement among the Great Powers.⁷¹

67 Ninčić informed the interlocutors on the bilateral talks with Athens, Beneš informed them on the bilateral talks with Warsaw but the issue of the membership of these two countries in the Little Entente was not raised. (AJ, 395, к. 14, j. o. 135, листови 98, 99; A. Essen, *Polska a Mała ententa 1920–1934*, 164; R. Břach, *Československo a Evropa v polovině dvacátých let*, 200, 205, 206).

68 *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Settima Serie: 1922-1935, Vol. IV (15 maggio 1925 – 6 febbraio 1926), (Roma: Istituto poligrafico dello stato, 1962), No. 124, p. 94.

69 Iordan Constantin-Sima, „La Turquie kémaliste et l'idée du Pacte balkanique dans les années 1925–1926“, *Revue des études sud-est européennes*, Tome XIX, No. 2 (Avril-Juin 1981), 313-316; Ž. Avramovski, „Pitanje Balkanskog garantnog pakta i jugoslovensko-bugarski odnosi 1925. godine u svetlu britanske politike na Balkanu“, 92, 93, 96, 99; Patrick Finney, *The Relations between Entente Powers and Greece 1923-6*, PhD Thesis, School of History, The University of Leeds, 1993, 348, 349; Dragan Bakić, „The Port of Salonica in Yugoslav Foreign Policy 1919–1941“, *Balkanica*, XLIII (2014), 199-200, Jędrzej Paszkiewicz, *Grecja a Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe na Bałkanach 1923–1936*, (Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 2012), 149.

70 Ninčić explained that after the experience in 1915 no one in Belgrade did not trust the Greek guarantees (AJ, 395, к. 1, j. o. 2, листови 57-59).

71 Ž. Avramovski, „Pitanje Balkanskog garantnog pakta i jugoslovensko-bugarski odnosi 1925. godine u svetlu britanske politike na Balkanu“, 87, 88, 91; P. Finney, *The Relations between Entente Powers and Greece 1923-6*, 338, 353; P. Finney, „Raising Frank-

Simultaneously with the meeting Ninčić – Beneš in Bled on 22 October 1925, Mussolini launched the initiative in London and Paris to form the Balkans Locarno as the first step in a wider plan. His assessment was that the Pact of Locarno displayed the weakness of the French policy of the collective security since small countries in the eastern, central and southeastern Europe had been abandoned. He wanted to use a favourable chance to form the Italian bloc in the Danubian region and in the Balkans, so he encouraged the formation of *Locarno danubiano-balcanica* in February 1926.⁷² Ninčić tried to parry the Italian initiative in the Danubian region by two proposals which involved contractual relations with Rome.⁷³ The first was a bilateral treaty for the arrangement of a new security structure in the Central Europe on basis of the anti-German bloc. The second proposal was broadening the Yugoslav-Italian treaty to the tripartite treaty with France, which he actively worked on in February and March 1926.⁷⁴ Pašić did not approve of the Ninčić's idea that the new treaty with Italy (and possibly France) should be based on the anti-German orientation because he thought that "the Germans are people of the future" in Europe.⁷⁵ King Aleksandra provided support to the Foreign Minister in his efforts to reach an agreement with Rome.⁷⁶ Since Mussolini was against the tripartite pact and the Foreign Office did not want to support the Yu-

enstein: Great Britain, 'Balkanism' and the Search for a Balkan Locarno in the 1920s", 322; D. Bakić, „Must Will Peace': British Brokering of 'Central European' and 'Balkan Locarno', 1925-9", 38-43.

- 72 The General Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Salvatore Contarini, concerning the Kingdom of SCS was preparing the ground for the new convergence of views after the Locarno Pact in October 1925 until the official launching of Mussolini's initiative for *Locarno danubiano-balcanica* in February 1926 (B. Krizman, „Italija u politici kralja Aleksandra i kneza Pavla (1918–1941)", 39; Č. Popov, *Od Versaja do Danciga*, 359, 360; M. Ádám, *Richtung selbstvernichtung*, 72, 73; M. Napolitano, *Mussolini e la Conferenza di Locarno (1925)*, 230, 231; H. James Burgwyn, *Italian Foreign Policy in Interwar Period, 1918–1940*, (Westport–London: Praeger, 1997), 36-40; M. Bucarelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia (1929–1939)*, 42, 43; L. Monzali, *Il sogno dell'egemonia*, 40, 41).
- 73 Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмет бр. 8772.
- 74 Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмети бр. 8746, 8779, 8857, 8929; *DDI*, Settima Serie, Vol. IV, No. 164, pp. 120, 121; Č. Popov, *Od Versaja do Danciga*, 359, 360; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 90-92.
- 75 Zoran Janjetović, Srđan Mičić, „Österreich in den Augen der jugoslawischen Diplomatie 1918–1938", в: *Nečakov zbornik. Procesi, teme in dogodki iz 19. in 20. stoletja*, ur. Kornelija Ajlec, Bojan Bakovec, Božo Repe, (Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, 2018), 487.
- 76 Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмети бр. 8929, 8856, 10443 (Записи-Сећања-Људи и догађаји-Југославија-Finis Jugoslaviae, стр. 20).

goslav-French treaty which would isolate Italy, Ninčić stopped halfway – he did not know whether to continue the policy of friendship with Rome or to defend the Kingdom of SCS with the aid of France against the Italian friendship.⁷⁷ The inconsistency of Mussolini's policy forced him to finally turn towards Paris. Ninčić evaluated that the Italian aim was to suppress the French influence, break down the Little Entente and isolate the Kingdom of SCS in order to impose the will of Rome.⁷⁸ The preparatory work on signing of the Yugoslav-French treaty was interpreted in the Yugoslav public as a revival of war alliance, while, for this reason, Mussolini decided to change hitherto policy towards the Kingdom of SCS.⁷⁹ The arrangement of Yugoslav-Italian relations was additionally aggravated by the dismissal of the Secretary General Salvatore Contarini in April 1926, who was at the forefront of the current in the Palazzo Chigi which was pursuing agreement with the Kingdom of SCS.⁸⁰

The failure of the treaty policy with Italy forced Yugoslav diplomacy to adapt to new situation in May 1926. Ninčić gave up further work on the tripartite pact. Milan Antić was advising the new Prime Minister, Nikola Uzunović, that it was necessary to take a stand of anticipation, not give in to the Italian pressure, strengthen military power and wait for the further development of the situation. According to Antić's evaluation, the Italian cooperation with the Balkan countries had not produced the desired results because the fascist regime was too impatient to begin its colonial policy in Europe, Asia or Africa.⁸¹ Further talks about the Central

77 Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмет бр. 10443 (Записи-Сећања-Људи и догађаји-Југославија-Finis Jugoslaviae, стр. 20-22); Архив Србије, Збирка поклона и откупа, кутија ПО-149, предмет бр. 122 строго поверљиви извештај министра помоћника Јована Т. Марковића Николи Пашићу, „Наши односи са Италијом“, Београд, 30. XII 1926. год; Vuk Vinaver, „Engleska i italijansko 'zaokruživanje Jugoslavije' 1926–1928.“, u: *Istorija XX veka*, zbornik radova, Tom VIII, glavni urednik Dragoslav Janković, (Beograd: Institut društvenih nauka, 1966), 79-81; B. Krizman, *Vanjska politika jugoslavenske države*, 46; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 92-96; William A. Shorrock, „France, Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean in the 1920s“, *The International History Review*, Vol 8, No. 1 (1986), 79, 80; Stanislav Sretenović, „Le poids grandissant de l'Italie dans les relations entre la France et le Royaume des Serbes, Croates et Slovènes 1924–1927“, *Istorija 20. veka*, Br. 2 (2007), 26-28; Id, *Francuska i Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918–1929*, 318-324.

78 Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмети бр. 8929, 9413.

79 Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмети бр. 9433, 9545 (лист 9), 10.443 (Записи-Сећања-Људи и догађаји-Југославија-Finis Jugoslaviae, pp. 20-22).

80 L. Monzali, *Il sogno dell'egemonia*, 43.

81 Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмет бр. 8880.

European pact was conceded to Beneš's initiative in 1927.⁸² Yugoslav diplomacy focused on the Balkans after the Italian-Albanian Pact on Friendship and Security (the so-called First Treaty of Tirana) had been signed on 27 November, while Ninčić – deeming he had been deceived by Rome – resigned on 6 December 1926.⁸³

After the Pact of Locarno, the Foreign Office launched an initiative – which relied on the Rendis's proposal – accepting the reality that a necessary precondition was to win over the Kingdom of SCS. Their evaluations were based on the Ninčić's policy of "complete neutrality" at the time of the Greek-Bulgarian military conflict in autumn 1925. They believed that the Yugoslav minister was "unintelligent and unreliable" yet "ambitious and vain" and that they could transform him into a "Balkan" Beneš.⁸⁴ The Quai d'Orsay wanted to counter Mussolini's and Chamberlain's initiatives in the region. Thus, the establishing of *équilibre balkanique* was proposed through the bilateral treaties among the Kingdom of SCS, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. The goal was to strengthen the French influence in the region while Albania was excluded from the plans since it was a part of the Italian bloc.⁸⁵

Ninčić did not accept the initiatives of London, Paris and Rome to apply the Locarno model to the Balkans as he did not want the Great Powers to interfere in the Balkan affairs. His goal was that the Kingdom of SCS settle the disputes with Bulgaria on its own (the attacks of Bulgarian Comitadji on the Macedonian territory) and with Greece (the ownership of the railway Gevgelia-Thessaloniki and regulation of the Free Zone in the Thessaloniki port). His viewpoint was that the revival of Yugoslav-Ital-

82 AJ, 334, к. 7, j. о. 25, лист 605; AJ, Фонд Посланства Краљевине Југославије у Сједињеним Америчким Државама – Вашингтон (371), кутија 32, јединица описа 43, листови 285, 320, М. Vanku, *Mala antanta 1918–1920*, 41; P. S. Wandycz, *The Twilight of French Eastern Alliances 1926–1936*, 88; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda 1919–1938*, 74.

83 В. Krizman, „Италија у politici краља Александра и kneза Pavla (1918–1941)“, 39, 40; С. Мишић, *Албанија: пријатељ и противник*, 125–131.

84 С. Jordan-Sima, „La Turquie kémaliste et l'idée du Pacte balkanique dans les années 1925–1926“, 317, 318; Ž. Avramovski, „Pitanje Balkanskog garantnog pakta i jugoslovensko-bugarski odnosi 1925. godine u svetlu britanske politike na Balkanu“, 90, 91, 94, 95, 99–105, 108–110; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 84–86; P. Finney, *The Relations between Entente Powers and Greece 1923–6*, 261, 353–358, 362, 363; Id., "Raising Frankenstein: Great Britain, 'Balkanism' and the Search for a Balkan Locarno in the 1920s", 322–325, 327; D. Bakić, „Must Will Peace“, 30, 44, 45, 47, 48.

85 S. Sretenović, „Le poids grandissant de l'Italie dans les relations entre la France et le Royaume des Serbes, Croates et Slovènes 1924–1927“, 25.

ian friendly relations was the precondition for securing the peace in the Balkans.⁸⁶ Pašić agreed with Ninčić that it was necessary to regulate the bilateral relations with Bulgaria and Greece before the negotiations for the multilateral regional treaty started.⁸⁷ They rejected Rendis's proposal to leave the conducting of negotiations for the Balkan Locarno to the League of Nations as a supranational entity. Yugoslavia statesmen and diplomats evaluated that Geneva was incapable of making the European Powers subject their national interests to the international order. Therefore, they did not want that Four Great Powers – which had the crucial role in the League of Nations Council – prove their international responsibility by imposing the solution to the Balkan countries. They were particularly cautious towards the possibility of imposing additional international obligations towards the national minorities, since the British, French and Italian statesmen excluded their countries from this segment of the international law during the Paris Peace Conference.⁸⁸

The willingness of Ninčić to use multilateral treaties in bilateral diplomacy – with the priority right of the Kingdom of SCS – was excellently reflected in the negotiations on the Thessaloniki port exploitation. He wanted to exploit the multilateral convention with Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania about the transit through the Free Zone as a means of pressure on Greece in June 1925;⁸⁹ but at the same time he rejected the proposal of Aristide Briand that the French consortium take over the Gevgelia-Thessaloniki railway since thereby he would allow one Great Power to directly interfere in the bilateral relations of the Balkan countries.⁹⁰ Ninčić had a support of King Aleksandar because both of them were convinced that only the Kingdom of SCS could guarantee the national security to Greece but it was not reciprocated. Therefore, they wanted to harmonise the new contractual relations with the existing reality, but also wanted both sides

86 V. Vinaver, „Engleska i italijansko 'zaokruživanje Jugoslavije' 1926-1928.“, 77, 78; Д. Тодоровић, „Питање успостављања дипломатских односа између Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца и Републике Турске (1923–1925)“, 288; Ž. Avramovski, „Питање Balkanskog garantnog pakta i jugoslovensko-bugarski odnosi 1925. godine u svetlu britanske politike na Balkanu“, 101; D. Vakić, „Must Will Peace“, 28.

87 АЈ, 341, к. 1, ј. о. 2 саветник Посланства у Лондону Ђорђе Тодоровић – Etrangères Belgrade, Пов. Бр.309 од 2. новембра; посланик у Лондону Ђорђе Ђурић – Нинчићу, Стр. Пов. Бр. од 12. новембра; телеграм Нинчића, Пов.Бр.8611 од 8. децембра 1925; АЈ, ф. 395, к. 1, ј. о. 3, лист 126.

88 АЈ, ф. 395, к. 1, ј. о. 3, листови 126, 128; АЈ, ф. 395, к. 14, ј. о. 136, лист 169.

89 Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмет бр. 9053.

90 АЈ, 395, к. 1, ј. о. 2, листови 56-59; P. Finney, *The Relations between Entente Powers and Greece 1923-6*, 346-348.

to commit themselves on basis of the extent to which they were ready to provide mutual assistance.⁹¹ King Aleksandar went even one step further than his minister, therefore not hiding his wish to gradually make the Yugoslav border closer to the Thessaloniki port.⁹² During the autumn 1925 and winter 1925-1926 the capability of Ninčin's Balkan strategy to adapt to the changes in bilateral and multilateral relations could be clearly seen. By keeping the initiative in bilateral relations, he was able to use any interruption in the negotiations with Athens to continue the negotiations with Sofia and vice versa.⁹³ The entire potential was particularly visible during the Greek-Bulgarian confrontation.⁹⁴ Ninčić's Balkan strategy did not involve Turkey because *de jure* end of the war enmity and establishment of the diplomatic relations were settled from October 1925 to June 1926.⁹⁵ Ninčić's approach to multilateral initiatives was flexible enough to avoid imposition of the solution by the Foreign Office, the Quai d'Orsay or the Palazzo Chigi. In this manner he managed, until December 1925, to influence the change of the French attitude towards the issue of interfering in

91 AJ, 395, к. 1, j. o. 2, листови 56-59; *DDI*, Settima Serie, Vol. III, No. 671, p. 411.

92 *DDI*, Settima Serie, Vol. III, No. 672, p. 413.

93 AJ, 334, к. 8, j. o. 28, листови 239, 240, 245; AJ, 341, к. 12, j. o. 25 Ђурић – Нинчићу, Пов. Бр. 363 од 24. децембра 1925; AJ, ф. 395, к. 13, j. o. 132, лист 665; Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмети бр. 9028, 9029, 9039; Централен државен архив, Софија, Фонд Българска легация в Атина (322 к), инвентарен опис 1, архивна единица 693, листи 101-108 (further: ЦДА); *Чехословашки извори за българската история*, Том I, със. Йозеф Коларж, Иван Щовичек, Валериан Бистрички, Васил А. Василев, Лидия Манолова, (Софија: БАН, 1985), document no. 220, p. 395; Harry J. Psomiades, "The Diplomacy of Theodoros Pangalos 1925-1926", *Balkan Studies*, Vol. 13 (1972), 8, 9; C. Jordan-Sima, "La Turquie kémaliste et l'idée du Pacte balkanique dans les années 1925-1926", 318; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 86; J. Paszkiewicz, *Grecja a Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe na Bałkanach 1923-1936*, 150, 151, 153; Antonis Klapsis, "Greek Diplomacy towards Fascist Italy, 1922-1940", *Thetis: Mannheimer Beiträge zur Klassischen Archäologie und Geschichte Griechenlands und Zyperns*, Hrsgb. Reinhard Stupperich, Heinz A. Richter, Band 20 (2013), 295; Id., "Attempting to Revise the Treaty of Lausanne: Greek Foreign Policy and Italy during the Pangalos Dictatorship, 1925-1926", *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2014), 247, 248.

94 AJ, 334, к. 8, j. o. 28, листови 226, 235, 236; AJ, 341, к. 12, j. o. 25 Ђурић – Нинчићу, Пов. Бр. 363 од 24. децембра 1925; AJ, 395, к. 13, j. o. 132, лист 665; Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмети бр. 9028, 9029; Александър Цанков, *България в бурно време. Спомену*, (Софија: Прозорец, 1998), 226; P. Finney, *The Relations between Entente Powers and Greece 1923-6*, 359.

95 Д. Тодоровић, „Питање успостављања дипломатских односа између Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца и Републике Турске (1923-1925)“, 282-289; Срђан Мићић, „Југословенске дипломате и дописници за штампу из Смедерева“, у: *Смедеревски крај 1918-1941. Зборник радова научног скупа*, (Смедерево: Историјски архив Смедерево, 2017), 54.

the Balkan bilateral relations. The Quai d'Orsay changed the primary aim from suppressing the British and Italian initiatives to the support to the Yugoslav interests in the region.⁹⁶ Thereby the position of the Kingdom of SCS was made stronger contrary to the British plan for the Balkan Locarno and the Italian plan for *Locarno danubiano-balcanica*. As a result, Ninčić could publicly declare in the National Assembly in March 1926 that settling the bilateral relations was a precondition for finding the multilateral solution.⁹⁷ The head of the III department of the General Political Directory of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁹⁸ Aleksandar Cincar-Marković wrote a report on the possibilities of the customs union between the Kingdom of SCS and Bulgaria, on the order of the Foreign Minister in late 1925 or early 1926. He considered this bilateral customs union as the first precondition for regulating economic and political relations between the Balkan states on the principle "the Balkans for the Balkan nations".⁹⁹ The project was presented to the Bulgarian government by the Plenipotentiary Minister in Sofia Milan Rakić, in January 1926.¹⁰⁰ Afterwards, Ninčić was able to conduct with more aplomb the negotiations on the tripartite treaty with France and Italy in February and March 1926. The issue of the railway traffic of goods between the Kingdom of SCS and Bulgaria was settled in mid-April 1926.¹⁰¹ Only after the government of Andrey Lyapchev had turned down the Yugoslav proposal to sign the Arbitration Pact, Ninčić made a decision to form the Balkan alliance which would be comprised of the Kingdom of SCS, Romania and Greece and which would be directed against Bulgaria, on 22 June 1926.¹⁰² The treaty which was achieved with the government of the general Theodoros Pangalos on 18 August was in favour of the Kingdom of SCS but due to the excessive giving in to the Yu-

96 P. Finney, *The Relations between Entente Powers and Greece 1923-6*, 363, 364.

97 V. Vinaver, „Engleska i italijansko 'zaokruživanje Jugoslavije' 1926-1928.“, 81.

98 After the reorganization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on 5 December 1925, the III department of the General Political Directory was in charge of Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey (С. Мићић, *Од бирократије до дипломатије*, 98).

99 АЈ, Збирка Александра Цинцар-Марковића (310), кутија 4 реферат [шефа III одељења Генералне политичке дирекције Министарства иностраних дела Александра Цинцара-Марковића] о могућности царинског савеза између Краљевине СХС и Бугарске написан на основу строго поверљивог наређења министра [иностранних дела Момчила Нинчића], s.l. [Београд], s.a. [децембра 1925 или јануара 1926], стр. 1-27.

100 V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 97.

101 И. Ристић, *Бугарска у политици Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца (1919-1929)*, 482.

102 Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмет бр. 9791; ЦДА, ф. 322 к, инв. оп. 1, а. е. 527, листи 117-119.

goslav demands the Greek government was overthrown by a coup d'état on 22 August 1926.¹⁰³ Thus Ninčić's attempt to form an alliance of the Balkan countries under the Yugoslav patronage was finished. Soon the Italian influence in Athens and Sofia started to increase in the second half of 1926. Thereby Mussolini expanded his sphere of influence to a broader area of the Balkans¹⁰⁴, beside Albania where he gradually strengthened his positions since 1925.¹⁰⁵

Under the influence of signing of the First Treaty of Tirana, during 1927 Yugoslav political leaders thought that it was necessary that the Kingdom of SCS return to the former Serbian politics from the period 1912-1918, based on the principle "the Balkans for the Balkan nations".¹⁰⁶ Mussolini also influenced the strengthening of the Balkan diplomacy. Due to the aggravation of Italy-French relations, he abandoned the plan for *Locarno danubiano-balcanica* and initiated plan for *quadruplica alleanza*. The goal of the new concept was, after Albania had been subordinated to Italian interests, to make an alliance with Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. In this manner the French influence would be weakened and the Italian

103 V. Vinaver, „Engleska i italijansko 'zaokruživanje Jugoslavije' 1926-1928.“, 86, 87; H. Psomiades, „The Diplomacy of Theodoros Pangalos 1925-1926“, 13; P. Finney, *The Relations between Entente Powers and Greece 1923-6*, 374, 375; A. Klapsis, „Greek Diplomacy towards Fascist Italy, 1922-1940“, 295, 296; Id., „Attempting to Revise the Treaty of Lausanne“, 253.

104 A. Klapsis, „Greek Diplomacy towards Fascist Italy, 1922-1940“, 296; Илчо Димитров, *Българо-италиански политически отношения 1922/1943*, (София: Наука и изкуство, 1976), 100; Димитър Косев, *Външната политика на България при Управлението на Андрей Ляпчев 1926-1931*, (София: АИ „Проф. Марин Дринов“, 1995), 84.

105 Further: V. Vinaver, „Engleska i italijansko „zaokruživanje Jugoslavije“ 1926-1928.“, 82-84, 86-88, 90-94; B. Krizman, „Italija u politici kralja Aleksandra i kneza Pavla (1918-1941)“, pp. 39; Ž. Avramovski, „Italijanska ekonomska penetracija u Albaniju 1925. do 1939. godine“, 146-155, 166-168; P. Finney, *The Relations between Entente Powers and Greece 1923-6*, 331, 332; M. Schmidt-Neke, *Entstehung und Ausbau der Königsdiktatur in Albanien (1912-1939)*, 139-145, 159-171, 200-204; Alessandro Roselli, *Italy and Albania: Financial Relations in the Fascist Period*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 21-25; S. Sretenović, „Le poids grandissant de l'Italie dans les relations entre la France et le Royaume des Serbes, Croates et Slovènes 1924-1927“, 23, 24, 28-30; M. Bucarelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia (1922-1939)*, 43-49; С. Мишић, *Албанија: пријатељ и противник*, 73-131; L. Monzali, *Il sogno dell'egemonia*, 43; B. Глигоријевић, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић у европској политици*, 49-54.

106 Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмет бр. 8838; „Г. Радић о Албанији“, *Политика* од 1. јануара 1927. године. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered this policy as the best mean for preservation of peace and prevention of intrigues in the Balkans, as well as for prevention of great powers' expansionist plans in the region (И. Андрић, *Дипломатски списи*, document no. 118, p. 225).

sphere would be made stronger on the Balkans and the Danubian region, the Little Entente dissolved and the Kingdom of SCS would be surrounded by Italy and its allies.¹⁰⁷ There were changes among the Balkan countries as well. The Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Tevfik Rüştü bey (later Aras), thought until December 1926 that the Kingdom of SCS had to be the pivot for a new gathering of the Balkan nations. Afterwards, he accepted the Romanian thesis that Bucharest could become the centre of the regional security structure.¹⁰⁸

The new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vojislav Marinković, who was appointed on 17 April 1927,¹⁰⁹ had his own concept of the Balkan foreign policy. After 1918 he championed the idea that the fundamental goal of the Yugoslav foreign policy was to establish the military and political arrangement of the Balkans on preventing the Great Powers to enter the region.¹¹⁰ Marinković believed that the revival of alliance of the Balkan nations from 1912 had to be established on the cooperation between the Kingdom of SCS and Bulgaria;¹¹¹ because, even after the experiences from 1913 and 1915–1918, he thought that the new Balkan alliance could only be reached with the consent of Sofia, not without or against it.¹¹² This represented the essential difference with regard to the policy of his predecessor Ninčić. Both of them kept the initiative in Yugoslav hands and put more trust in bilateral than multilateral relations. However, Marinković gave priority to reaching an agreement with Sofia, while Ninčić was inclined towards the agreement with Athens. Yet, Marinković did not insist on reviving the alliances. He thought it was enough to establish peaceful and friendly relations with neighbours after the Scandinavian countries'

107 V. Vinaver, „Engleska i italijansko ‘zaokruživanje Jugoslavije’ 1926-1928.“, 141, 142; M. Luciano, *Il sogno dell’egemonia*, 45.

108 E. Campus, *The Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance*, 27; Florin Anghel, “Romania between Istanbul and Ankara: the Beginning of the Alliance in the First Decade of the Kemalist Republic”, *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, Cilt: 54, Sayı: 1 (2014), 443.

109 King Aleksandar was personally selecting ministers, weakening the influence of political parties and gradually taking over leading role in the state affairs (Dr Branislav Gligorijević, *Parlament i političke stranke u Jugoslaviji (1919–1929)*, (Beograd: ISI-Narodna knjiga, 1979), 224; Јовановић Надежда, *Политички сукоби у Југославији 1925–1928.*, (Београд: Рад, 1974), 204).

110 Архив САНУ, Заоставштина Воје Маринковића (14.439), предмет бр. 43 Војислав Маринковић, „План за једну државну политику“, s.l, s.a и Војислав Маринковић, „Нацрт о једној државној политици“, s.l, s.a.

111 K. Pavlović, *Vojislav Marinković i njegovo doba (1876-1935)*, knjiga četvrta, 16, 17.

112 K. Pavlović, *Vojislav Marinković i njegovo doba (1876-1935)*, knjiga peta, 23, 24.

model.¹¹³ By drawing Bulgaria and Albania into the Yugoslav system on the Balkans, he wanted to close two fronts which Italy could use and he believed that with this the Kingdom of SCS “would bring down Greece in its true ethnographic border and definitely throw Turkey out of Europe”.¹¹⁴ However, the international circumstances in the region did not allow him to realise his intention. Therefore, he modified his approach and reached an agreement with Greece in 1928¹¹⁵ but he could not manage to put Yugoslavia-Bulgaria relations on a new contractual basis. An additional problem was a gradual approaching of Greece and Turkey, on one side, and Italy, on the other side. This represented possible treat for Belgrade from the Italian bloc on the Balkan Peninsula, which would gather Tirana, Ankara and Sofia.¹¹⁶

113 Архив САНУ, 14.439, предмет бр. 286.

114 Архив САНУ, 14.439, предмет бр. 43 Војислав Маринковић, „План за једну државну политику“, s.l, s.a и Војислав Маринковић, „Нацрт о једној државној политици“, s.l, s.a.

115 K. Pavlović, *Vojislav Marinković i njegovo doba (1876-1935)*, knjiga treća, London, 1957, 23-25; Коста Ст. Павловић, *Онакви какве сам их знао*, (Београд: Откровење, 2004), 46, 47; V. Vinaver, „Engleska i italijansko „zaokruživanje Jugoslavije“ 1926-1928.“, 141, 142; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 134, 135, 147; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska antanta (1934–1940)*, 33, 34; Ioannis D. Stefanidis, “Reconstructing Greece as European State: Venizelos’ Last Premiership, 1928-32”, in: *Eleftherios Venizelos: The Trials of Statesmanship*, edited by Paschalis M. Kitromilides, second edition, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 217, 218; Николаос Е. Пападакис, *Елефтериос Венизелос. Грчка, Балкан, Европа*, (Београд: Завод за уџбенике, 2009), 159; Б. Глигорјевић, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић у европској политици*, 73, 74.

116 V. Vinaver, „Engleska i italijansko „zaokruživanje Jugoslavije“ 1926-1928.“, 127, 143, 149, 150, 153; И. Димитров, *Българо-италиански политически отношения 1922/1943*, 101; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1918–1933*, 350, 357, 366-368; V. Krizman, „Italija u politici kralja Aleksandra i kneza Pavla (1918–1941)“, 42, 44-55; Д. Косев, *Външната политика на България при Управлението на Андрей Ляпчев 1926-1931*, 78, 79, 81, 82, 94-97, 143-149, 187-190, 197; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 127, 133, 134; E. Milak, *Jugoslavija i Italija 1931–1937*, 57-63; Dunja Hercigonja, *Velika Britanija i spoljnopolitički položaj Jugoslavije 1929–1933: britanska politika prema jugoslovensko-italijanskim sukobima u vreme svetske ekonomske krize*, (Beograd: ISI, 1987), 104-115; Людмил Спасов, *България, великите сили и балканските държави 1933–1939г.*, (София: СД „Габи-91“, 1993), 10, 11; Ivan Dobrovský, „Bulharsko-jihoslavné sblížování a Makedonská otázka (2. polovina 20. let)“, *Sborník prací Filozofické Fakulty Brněnské univerzity*, Ročník 43, Číslo 41 (1994), 122-125; Dilek Barlas, “Friends or Foes? Diplomatic Relations between Italy and Turkey, 1923-36”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Volume 36, Issue 2, (May, 2004), 237-240; M. Bucarelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia (1922–1939)*, 109, 110, 176, 187, 188, 199, 204-219, 223, 224, 241, 243, 250; I. Stefanidis, “Reconstructing Greece as European State: Venizelos’ Last Premiership, 1928-32”, 216-221; Н. Жежов, *Македонското прашање во југословенско-бугарските дипломатски*

The Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under Marinković's guidance, draw a conclusion on 13 February 1928 that in order to secure peace and guarantee the national security it was necessary to forge regional treaties with clearly defined guarantees as per the Locarno model. In line with the Yugoslav interests, the need for two such treaties was emphasized, one for the region of the Central Europe and other for the Balkans.¹¹⁷ Marinković's point of view was that treaties without realistic guarantees or only with moral guarantees of the League of Nations did not have any significance for the security of the Kingdom of SCS. Thus he insisted that "we have to be tough in providing guarantees and evaluating their effectiveness".¹¹⁸ Consequently, the instructions were given to the Yugoslav delegation in the Committee for the Preparation of the Conference on Disarmament to try to persuade, together with the delegations of Czechoslovakia, Romania and Poland, the League of Nations to make conclusions which would support the idea to secure peace at the regional level through the formation of alliances.¹¹⁹ Simultaneously, Marinković rejected Beneš's initiative from February 1928 to replace the existing Yugoslav-Czechoslovak alliance – whose goal was to protect the Treaty of Trianon – by a new treaty which would guard the peace in Europe.¹²⁰ Thereby he demonstrated that he continued to pursue the policy of his predecessor Ninčić who did not want to assign a greater importance to regional alliances than they had shown for the Yugoslav foreign policy.

односи (1918–1941), 132-135; Н. Пападакис, *Елефтериос Венизелос*, 85; Damla Demiröz, A. Petsas, "The repercussions of the 1930 Greek-Turkish rapprochement on Turkey", *Balkan Studies*, Vol. 46 (2012), 66-68; A. Klapsis, "Greek Diplomacy towards Fascist Italy, 1922–1940", 296, 297; Войн Божинов, *Земното кълбо не престава да се върти, ако ние и да спим*, (София: Лик, 2005), 195; Б. Глигоријевић, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић у европској политици*, 79, 97, 98, 103-117; F. Anghel, "Romania between Istanbul and Ankara", 444-446; Срђан Мићић, "Непознанице о посети Димитрија Димитријевића Турској марта 1929. године", *Токови историје*, Бр. 1 (2014), 202, 203; Иван Ристић, "Бугарска у југословенској политици 1927. године у светлу појачане италијанске акције на Балкану", *Архив. Часопис Архива Југославије*, Бр. 1-2 (2014), 84-86.

117 S. Mičić, "The influence of France and Italy's (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)", 42.

118 AJ, 159, к. 2, ф. IV Војислав Маринковић – Делегацији Краљевине СХС у Припремној комисији Конференције за разоружање, Београд, 16. фебруар 1928. године.

119 S. Mičić, "The influence of France and Italy's (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)", 42.

120 P. Hradečný, *Politické vzťahy Československa a Jugoslávie v letech 1925-1928 v zahraničným i vnitřním kontextu*, 88, 89, 102, 103.

With regard to the organisation of a new Balkan alliance, Marinković did not trust at all the initiatives that had come from Athens and Ankara, especially those which originated from different organisations and were informal in character. However, he was not opposed to creating collective security in the Balkan region. Unlike his predecessors, he took an active role in the ranks of the Little Entente and he was focused on the re-arrangement of the security structure in the Danubian region in the period from 1928 to 1932. The main concern of Marinković and Yugoslav diplomats was to prevent the expansion of international obligations towards minorities; especially in the light of the Bulgarian propaganda for securing the rights of their unacknowledged minority in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia. All these issues determined their attitude towards the operation of the Balkan conferences which created a path to the formation of the Balkan Entente in 1934.

During the preparatory actions for the 27 Congrès universel pour la paix (the Universal Peace Congress) – which was held in Athens in October 1929 – Kosta Kumanudi, the acting Foreign Minister, Milan M. Jovanović, the Counsellor and Chargé d’Affairs of the Legation in Athens, and Pavel Jevtić, the Press Attaché in Athens, paid special attention to the issue of national minorities which was supposed to be item number four in the agenda (although it had not been explicitly written in the invitation for the Congress).¹²¹ It was decided that the Kingdom of SCS would not send the delegation, which was noticed and criticised.¹²² Consequently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs allowed Yugoslav delegations to take part in the Balkan conferences, which were the result of the initiative launched at the 27 Congrès universel pour la paix – but the caution concerning the issue of national minorities and distrust of Greek, Turkish and Romanian initiatives remained during 1930-1932. The existing doubts about the purposefulness of the entire process were also enhanced by the attitude of the Albanian delegations. In fact, they provided support to the Bulgar-

121 The issue of national minorities was planned to be raised withing the item no. 4 of the agenda – „Actualité“ (Архив Југославије, Фонд Посланства Краљевине Југославије у Грчкој – Атина (379), кутија 9 телеграм Куманидија, Пов. Бр. 10920 од 21. септембра; извештај Јевтића из Атине од 21. септембра; Јовановић – Генералној политичкој дирекцији МИД-а, Пов.Бр.668 од 23 септембра; Јовановић – ГПД МИД, Ка Пов. Бр. 668 од 27. септембра 1929).

122 АЈ, Фонд Централног пресбиороа Краљевине Југославије (38), кутија 39, јединица описа 91 Павле Јевтић – директору Централног пресбиора Милану Марјановићу, 17. октобар 1929; реферат Мих. Стојановића, s.l., s.a. [октобар, 1930]; АЈ, ф. 379, к. 9 Јовановић – Маринковићу, Пов. Бр. 704 од 6. октобра 1929. године.

ian representatives to raise the issue of the national minorities' position, which was considered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – in the light of the Yugoslav-Italian relations in the region – to be an Italian diplomatic action aimed against Yugoslavia.¹²³ One of the rare conclusions of the Balkan conferences that was identical to the Yugoslav foreign policy was in relation to the application of the Locarno model to the region. Actually, all nations agreed that the Balkan Locarno was an idea impossible to achieve in October 1930.¹²⁴ The Yugoslav delegation advocated that the treaty should be based on the Little Entente model, i.e. it should have an active approach to international relations and harmonise the national interests of all member states.¹²⁵ Also, Yugoslav delegates were differentiating the Balkan alliance – which excluded Turkey – from the Balkan-Anadolu [Asia Minor] alliance.¹²⁶

In the light of strengthening the cooperation between Athens, Ankara and Sofia, which was assessed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a repeated threat of the formation of the Italian bloc in the Balkans in 1933,¹²⁷ King Aleksandar personally engaged in this issue. He worked simultaneously to overcome the disagreements in the Yugoslav-Bulgarian

123 AJ, 159, к. 9, ф. 4 в.д. начелника ПО МИП др Павле Каровић – Сталној делегацији при Друштву народа, Пов. Бр. 21463 Г.-27 од 22. октобра 1931; AJ, 159, к. 18, ф. 21 Каровић – Сталној делегацији у Женеви, Пов. Бр. 2853 Г.27 од 19. фебруара 1932; AJ, 159, к. 20, ф. 13 в.д. начелника ПО МИП Владислав Мартинац – Сталној делегацији у Женеви, Пов. Бр. 6597 И.83 од 10. априла 1933; AJ, 370, к. 2, ј. о. 13, листови 660-663, 698, 703, 712-714, 719, 720, 729, 730, 748, 749; AJ, 370, к. 6, ј. о. 33, лист 818; AJ, 370, к. 26, ј. о. 76, лист 322; AJ, ф. 370, к. 29, ј. о. 84, листови 629, 631; AJ, 370, к. 43, ј. о. 117, листови 38-46, 60, 64, 66-72, 75, 78-82, 86-88, 90, 91, 100, 102, 104, 105, 107, 109, 114-117; *Извештаји Министарства иностраних послова Краљевине Југославије (август - децембар) 1930. године*, књига I, приредили Нада Петровић, Саша Илић, (Београд: Архив Југославије, 2005), 89, 150, 151; Dr. Pavle Jevtić, „Utisci sa prve Balkanske Konferencije“, *Прва балканска конференција (Рад југословенске националне групе)*, (Београд: Југословенска национална група за Балканску конференцију, 1931), 135-139; Dr. Živko Topalović, „Balkanski rakt“, *Друга Балканска конференција (Рад југословенске националне групе)*, (Београд: Југословенска национална група за Балканску конференцију, 1932), 5-8; „Мемоар југословенске групе о условима за политичко приближавање између балканских народа“, *Друга балканска конференција*, 15, 16; Петър Нейков, *Спомени*, (София: Отечествен фронт, 1990), 333-336; E. Campus, *The Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance*, 47-49; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska antanta (1934-1940)*, 39, 51-60.

124 *Прва балканска конференција*, 11, 12.

125 Ž. Topalović, „Друга Балканска конференција“, 18.

126 *Прва балканска конференција*, 17, 18 Dr. Svetko Gregorić, „Privredni sporazum balkanskih država s industrijske tačke gledišta“, *Прва балканска конференција*, 60.

127 AJ, 370, к. 27, ј. о. 78, листови 522-525; AJ, 370, к. 28, ј. о. 79, лист 166.

bilateral relations in September and October 1933 and managed to reverse the situation at the multilateral regional level during his visit to Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece in October 1933.¹²⁸ Afterwards, he left it to Bogoljub Jevtić, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to finalise the formal affairs of the Balkan Entente formation in February 1934, within which the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had a dominant position.¹²⁹

Influence of European Powers Plans for Reorganization of European Affairs on Reorganization of the Little Entente in the First Half of 1930s

The Great Depression had a crucial impact on bilateral and multilateral relations in Europe from 1929 to 1934. The consequences were first felt in the industrially developed countries, but the agriculture-oriented countries experienced the strength of the impact from 1931. The intensity and duration of the economic depression rocked both the countries and the societies. The Great Powers rejected the *laissez-faire* system – which did not fully recover after 1918 – and they introduced the isolationism policies. They were the most noticeable in the financial field with the establishment of currency blocs (dollar, pound, franc, mark and yen). With some Great Powers the isolationism policy turned into the protectionism and autarchy. Smaller states initiated projects of the regional economic security based on the joint protectionism and placement of products on the world markets. The opposite tendency was the plans devised by the Great Powers for the Central Europe which involved the formation of the economic union networks. Formally the Great Powers promoted these plans as an aid to the smaller states, incapable of dealing with the depression on their own, but essentially these plans of the Great Powers had two goals – to secure their dominant position and to suppress the competition from the regional market.

128 Ž. Avramovski, „Bugarska i Balkanski sporazum“, 195; K. Манчев, *Югославия и международните отношения на Балканите 1933–1939*, 54, 55; Л. Спасов, *България, великите сили и балканските държави 1933–1939 г.*, 16-18; Б. Глигоријевић, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић у европској политици*, 146; Душан Марковић, Срђан Мићић, „Сусрети краља Александра и краља Бориса од септембра до децембра 1933. године“, *Токови историје*, Бр. 1 (2017), 197, 198.

129 E. Campus, *The Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance*, 63-82; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska antatna (1934–1940)*, 79-100, 107-124.

The Great Depression had an effect on the spirits as well. The isolation and defence of national interests altered the behaviour in the international political relations. The ideals of solidarity from the 1920s gave way to the issue of security which was manifested in the dilemma – collective or national security.¹³⁰ The disappearance of solidarity among the countries generated the ideas about preventing the wars which could be caused by straining the international relations. The issue of disarmament – raised at the Paris Peace Conference and partially regulated through peace treaties – during the 1920s was mostly dragged through futile discussions with individual success in limiting naval power. The Disarmament Conference – having been prepared for years within the League of Nations – experienced a failure soon after it had started operating. The Great Powers were not able to reach a general agreement – respecting the security of all the entities in the international relations – because they neglected the arguments of the smaller states due to their egotistic defence of their own interests. They even did not manage to define defensive and offensive armament, since the maritime powers wanted to disarm the land powers and vice versa.¹³¹

130 Džon M. Kejnz, *Ekonomski eseji*, (Novi Sad: Matica srpska-CECOS; Beograd: ECPD UPUN, 1987), 65-72, 135-137, 192-195; Barry Eichengreen, *Evasive stability: essays in the history of international finance 1919-1939*, (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 83-270; B. J. C. McKercher, *Transition of Power. Britain's Loss of World Pre-eminence to United States, 1930-1945*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 63-156; Ivan T. Berend, *An Economic History of Twentieth-Century Europe. Economic Regimes from Laissez-Faire to Globalization*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 63-67; Charles H. Feinstein, Peter Temin, Gianni Toniolo, *The World Economy between the World Wars*, (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 101-104, 140-142, 144, 146-149, 150-156.

131 Č. Popov, *Od Versaja do Danciga*, 427-434; Maurice Vaisse, „La Société des Nations et la désarmement”, in: *The League of Nations in retrospect: proceedings of the symposium*, (Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1983), 245-265; Carolyn Kitching, „The search for disarmament: Anglo-French relations, 1929-1934”, in: *Anglo-French Relations in the Twentieth Century: Rivalry and Cooperation*, edited by Alan Sharp, Glyn Stone, (London-New York: Routledge, 2000), 158-179; Andrew Webster, „An Argument without End: Britain, France and Disarmament Process, 1925-34”, in: *Anglo-French Defense Relations between the Wars*, edited by Martin S. Alexander, William J. Philpott, (Basingstoke-New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 49-71; Sally Marks, *The Illusion of Peace: International Relations in Europe, 1918-1933*, second edition, (Houndmills-New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 68, 69, 98, 99, 117, 122, 123, 129, 130, 134, 136, 137, 141, 142, 144-146; Z. Steiner, *The Lights That Failed*, 372-374, 377-383, 387-389, 426-430, 507-510, 546, 550-553, 557, 566-597, 755-796; Dick Richardson, „The Geneva Disarmament Conference, 1932-1934”, in: *Decisions and Diplomacy: Essays in Twentieth-Century International History*, edited by D.

After the King Aleksandar introduced the personal regime on 6 January 1929, the support of the international entities significant for the Yugoslav foreign policy was important for the Kingdom of SCS. Prague provided the most vigorous support in accordance with the Beneš's instructions, although Masaryk did not agree with the changes that had occurred.¹³² The Quai d'Orsay and the Foreign Office had the identical attitude but with the entirely different motives. The French wanted the Kingdom of SCS to have the fastest possible internal consolidation so that the strong Little Entente could resist Italy. The British wanted to reduce the French influence in order to place their capital onto the Yugoslav market more easily.¹³³ The introduction of the personal regime had a positive effect on the relations with Italy since the Italian services had a narrowed manoeuvre space to engage the Croatian parties and organisations to destabilise the Kingdom of SCS.¹³⁴

The political organisation of the Little Entente

At the multilateral level Yugoslav foreign policy had three goals in this period: 1) to scrutinize the Great Powers' initiatives to rearrange the international relations; 2) to work on the internal strengthening of the Little Entente in order to defend the Danube River Basin; 3) not to allow the rearrangement of the regional security and economic structure on the Balkans which would be aimed against the Kingdom of SCS /Yugoslavia.

Yugoslav Foreign Ministers Vojislav Marinković and Bogoljub Jevtić were pursuing the Central European policy within the Little Entente. They continued to advocate the attitude – in direct communication with European Powers and discussions in the League of Nations – that it was necessary to organise the defence of peace at the regional level and that the

Richardson, G. Stone, second edition, (London–NewYork: Routledge–LSE, 2005), 62–79.

132 An exception in the Czechoslovak diplomatic-consular service was the Consul in Zagreb Jindřich Andriál (Jana Škerlová, „Czechoslovak-Yugoslav relations in the first year of King's Alexanders's dictatorship“, *Istorija 20. veka*, 1/2016, 77–93; Jana Hrabcová, „Československo-jugoslávské vztahy v přelomovém roce 1929“, *Slovanský přehled*, číslo 2, ročník 100 (2014), 273–296).

133 J. Надежда, *Политички сукоби у Југославију 1925–1928.*, 339, 355, 360, 361.

134 E. Milak, *Jugoslavija i Italija 1931–1937*, 45–49; D. Hercigonja, *Velika Britanija i spolj-nopolitički položaj Jugoslavije 1929–1933*, 36, 37; H. J. Burgwyn, *Italian Foreign Policy in Interwar Period*, 45–47; M. Bucarelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia*, 136–153; L. Monzali, *Il sogno dell'egemonia*, 49, 50; S. Sretenović, *Francuska i Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918–1929*, 352.

issues of disarmament and national security were inextricably linked.¹³⁵ They provided formal support for the projects for peace preservation and prohibition of offensive warfare – such as Briand-Kellogg Pact.¹³⁶ They were particularly cautious towards the plans which, under the pretext of preserving peace, actually designed the restoration of Great Powers' Directorate in Europe. A good example was the project of the Federal European Union of Aristide Briand, which was supposed to facilitate the economic strengthening of the continent and surmounting political disagreements. Although they officially supported the plan, Marinković, Beneš and Gheorghé Mironescu later reorganised the Little Entente at the Conference of Ministers in Štrbské Pleso from 25 to 27 June 1930. They introduced a common foreign policy in order to enhance the potential of the alliance and prevent the highhandedness of Briand's French-German concern.¹³⁷

During the second phase of the Disarmament Conference in October and November 1932, the Yugoslav delegate Konstantin Fotić cooperated with the delegates from Czechoslovakia, Romania, France, Poland and Greece on the matters of national security and peace preservation. Even though the representatives of the Little Entente acted in solidarity, there was disagreement between Fotić and Beneš. The Czech minister advocated the idea of peace preservation through a general consultative treaty. However, Fotić defended the Yugoslav thesis that peace and national security would be best preserved with regional pacts for mutual assistance. His major argument was that neither the Covenant of the League of Nations nor the Briand-Kellogg Pact represented an obstacle

135 S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy's (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 41, 42, 45, 46.

136 *Ibid.*, 43. Briand insisted the application of the Pact be limited only against aggressive wars, since France had mutual defence treaty obligations and he especially protected the Little Entente's interests (B. J. C. McKercher, *The Second Baldwin Government and the United States, 1924–1929: Attitudes and diplomacy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 105).

137 P. Wandycz, *The Twilight of French Eastern Alliance 1926–1936*, 172, 173; M. Ádám, *Richtung selbstvernichtung*, 84; Alexandr Ort, *Edvard Beneš: diplomat a politik*, (Praha: Irma, 1994), 33, 34; Bohumila Ferenčuhová, „Edvard Beneš a myšlienka zjednotenej Európy v rokoch 1922–1932“, in: *Edvard Beneš a stredo-eurovropská politika*, ed. Vladimír Goněc, (Brno: Masarykova univerzita v Brně, 1997), 88–89; Traian Sandu, „La Roumanie dans les plans d'intégration européenne des années vingt: entre intérêt national et émergence d'une conscience européenne“, *Ťt Kontinens*, revue de l'Université Eötvös Lorand de Budapest (2005), 37; J. Dejmek, *Edvard Beneš*, Část první, 494, 496; S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy's (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 43–45.

for the Japanese military invasion of Manchukuo.¹³⁸ The readiness of Great Powers to acknowledge the *Gleichberechtigung* for Germany in armament in December 1932 was a great challenge for the Little Entente not only due to the German threat to Czechoslovakia, but because the application of a similar practice to Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria would represent a threat to all three member states.¹³⁹ At the end of November Bogoljub Jevtić, Edvard Beneš and Nicolae Titulescu agreed to hold the Conference of Ministers in Geneva during the extraordinary session of the League of Nations. The aim was to demonstrate solidarity at the time of Hungari-an-Italian and Italian-French rapprochement¹⁴⁰, which strengthened revisionism in the Central Europe.¹⁴¹ Since the Great Powers announced the possibility to accept the *Gleichberechtigung* principle for Germany, at the beginning of December Titulescu suggested changing the location of the Conference of Ministers. He advised having a session in Belgrade in order to emphasise the demonstrated solidarity of the Little Entente since the session in Geneva “would go unnoticed as it has always been so far”. The first two items on the agenda were disarmament and revisionism.¹⁴² The resolution of Five Great Powers on *Gleichberechtigung* dated 11 December was a great blow for the Little Entente because it projected a possible restoration of the Great Powers Directorate. Therefore, Jevtić, Beneš and Titulescu agreed to hold the Conference of Ministers in Belgrade from 18 to 19 December in order to conduct a new reorganisation of the alliance. The main goal was to make the Little Entente strong enough so that they would be ready for the development of the international relations at the regional and continental level. The fundamental idea was to transform the three-member alliance into a supranational entity of international relations. Unlike the reorganisation from Štrbské Pleso in 1930, at the Conference of Ministers in Belgrade it was agreed that in the future the Little

138 S. Mićić, „The influence of France and Italy’s (Central) European projects on Yugoslavia’s re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 47, 48.

139 *Ibid.*, 48.

140 The Italian-French rapprochement was assessed by the Yugoslav statesmen and diplomats as a direct threat to the Yugoslav-French alliance (*Ibid.*, 49, 50).

141 AJ, 159, к. 16, ф. 3 Фотић – лично за Богољуба Јевтића, Пов. Бр. 807 од 25. новембра; телеграм Јевтића, Пов. Бр. 20116 од 28. новембра; телеграм Сталне делегације у Женеви, Пов. Бр. 811 од 29. новембра; телеграм секретара и отправника послера Сталне делегације у Женеви Иве Андрића, Пов. Бр. 811 од 29. новембра 1932; AJ, 395, к. 26, ј. о. 257, листови 426-428.

142 AJ, 159, к. 18, ф. 21 Јевтић – лично за помоћника министра иностраних послера [Константина Фотића], Пов. Бр. 558 од 4. децембра 1932; AJ, 395, к. 26, ј. о. 257, лист 429.

Entente conducts foreign policy free from the influence of all European Powers including France.¹⁴³

Beneš did not manage to persuade Jevtić that the new reorganisation should become the basis for the creation of a wider anti-German bloc.¹⁴⁴ The latter, however, tried to obtain full support of two colleagues for struggle against the Italian revisionism in Europe and the Italian plans to rearrange the security structure in the Danubian region.¹⁴⁵ The Organisational Pact of the Little Entente was signed at the Conference of Ministers in Geneva in February 1933. Instead of the Conference of Ministers, the Permanent Council was introduced while all decisions concerning the foreign policy had to be unanimous. None of the three member states was allowed to sign a bilateral political treaty with third party without consent of the other two members. It was decided to establish the Secretariat of the Little Entente after the model of the General Secretariat of the League of Nations and, based on the previous plans, to establish the Economic Council of the Little Entente. Anticipating the formation of a new Directorate of the Great Powers in Europe, Jevtić, Beneš and Titulescu defined the reorganised alliance as a “unique entity” in the international politics and international law. They made a conclusion that the main task was “the stabilisation of the situation in the Central Europe once and for all”.¹⁴⁶

The difference in the attitudes of the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak statesmen concerning the role of their states and the Little Entente in the European affairs increased during the 1930s. They had been noticeable during the making of Yugoslav-Italian and Czechoslovak-French treaties in 1924; as well as when Beneš suggested to Marinković to expand the scope of the bilateral alliance treaty in 1928.¹⁴⁷ The Czechoslovak statesmen attached great importance to the concept of the “Slavic politics” in

143 E. Campus, *Mica Înțelegere*, 114–115; M. Vanku, *Mala antanta*, 75–77; A. Ort, *Edvard Beneš*, 36, 39; A. Klimek, E. Kubů, *Československá zahraniční politika 1918–1938*, 64; J. Dejmek, *Edvard Beneš, Část první*, 545, 546; S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy’s (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia’s re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 48.

144 E. Campus, *Mica Înțelegere*, 121–122.

145 Ozer Carmi, *La Grande-Bretagne et la Petite Entente*, (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1972), 203; S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy’s (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia’s re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 50.

146 E. Campus, *Mica Înțelegere*, 124, 125; M. Vanku, *Mala antanta*, 77–79; M. Ádám, *Rich-tung selbstvernichtung*, 94; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda*, 121; J. Dejmek, *Edvard Beneš, Část první*, 551, 552.

147 AJ, 159, к. 3, j. o. VII Војислав Маринковић – МИД, Пов. Бр. 533 од 1. септембра; Пов.Бр.545 од 6. септембра 1928; P. Hradečný, *Politické vztahy Československa a Jugoslávie v letech 1925–1928 v zahraničním i vnitřním kontextu*, 102.

Europe, especially while providing support to the Yugoslav-Bulgarian rapprochement from 1925 to 1928. Masaryk worked seriously on the realisation of the idea that the Serbian-Bulgarian reconciliation should be the first step towards the Yugoslav-Bulgarian expansion to the south towards the Straits.¹⁴⁸ Beneš was more reserved. He advocated only the Yugoslav-Bulgarian reconciliation, and considered that the Bulgarians should relinquish Vardar Macedonia and turn towards the Aegean Sea on their own. He was convinced that “there is neither the chance nor the possibility that Bosphorus and Dardanelle belong to the Slavs”.¹⁴⁹

The reorganisation of the Little Entente conducted in Štrbské Pleso in 1930 was formulated by Beneš as the transformation of the anti-Hungary alliance into an instrument of international cooperation in the Central Europe and the European continent.¹⁵⁰ After the new reorganisation had been agreed in December 1932, Beneš's assessment was that the Little Entente had ensured its members not to be treated as colonies by the Great Powers. As an argument, he stated that the three countries had the population of 47 million people, permanent army of 650.000 soldiers and 650.000 km² of rich territory, so that all European Powers would have to count with their strength and would not be able to do anything in the Central Europe without the Little Entente's consent.¹⁵¹ Masaryk had sim-

148 Бранко Лазаревић, „Председник Масарик и Југословенско питање“, у: Т. Г. Масарик: Зборник, приредила Југословенско-чехословачка лига у Београду, редиговао др Драгутин Прохаска, (Београд: С. Б. Цвијановић; Praha: Akciová společnost „Orbis“, 1927), 16, 21.

149 AJ, 334, к. 7, j. о. 25, листови 591-593, 604; AJ, 341, к. 1, j. о. 2 Ђурић – Etrangères Belgrade, Стр. Пов. Бр. 345 од 4. децембра 1925; AJ, 388, к. 15, j. о. 35, лист 23; Архив Србије, Збирка Милорада Павловића-Крпе, предмет бр. МП-1142, листови 1, 2; ВА, п. 17, к. 95е, ф. 3, предмет бр. 5, рег. 1-4; Чехословашки извори за бугарската историја, I, document no. 49. and 56, pp. 98, 110; И. Димитров, *Бугаро-италиански политически одношения 1922/1943*, 90; J. Dejmeek, *Edvard Beneš*, Část první, 412; Petr Stehlík, Ladislav Hladký, „Česko-makedonské vzťahy“, v: Ladislav Hladký a kolektiv, *Vzťahy Čechů s národy a zeměmi jihovýchodní Evropy*, (Praha: Historický ústav AV ČR, 2010), 156; Jan Rychlík, „T. G. Masaryk, Bulhaři a makedonská otázka“, v: *T. G. Masaryk a Slované*, Vratislav Doubek, Ladislav Hladký, Radomír Vlček a kolektiv, (Praha: Historický ústav AV ČR, 2013), 360, 361.

150 A. Ort, *Edvard Beneš*, 33; J. Dejmeek, *Edvard Beneš*, Část první, 494; S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy's (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 45.

151 Jindřich Dejmeek, „Edvard Beneš a Malá dohoda“, in: *Edvard Beneš a středoevropská politika*, ed. Vladimír Goněc (Brno: Masarykova univerzita v Brně, 1997), 30; stejný, *Nenaplněné naděje: politické a diplomatické vztahy Československa a Velké Británie od zrodu První republiky po konferenci v Mnichově (1918–1938)*, (Praha: Karolinum, 2003), 212; stejný, *Edvard Beneš*, Část první, 545, 546.

ilar attitude about the policy of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente after February 1934. He thought that “only world politics is a reasonable and permanent politics”. Therefore, he was convinced the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente compensated for the weaknesses of individual members by the total population, which means by the number of soldiers who could be mobilised in case of war, so that they had to pursue the world politics.¹⁵² After the Organisational Pact had been signed in 1933, the issue of possible transformation of the Little Entente into the Fifth European power¹⁵³ was being raised. The reactions of international entities to this interpretation were different,¹⁵⁴ and in the end it caused the public argument between Mussolini and Beneš.¹⁵⁵

Yugoslav statesmen, diplomats and politicians were much more cautious with regard to the categorisation of the Kingdom of SCS /Yugoslavia and the Little Entente. In January 1920, the first Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ante Trumbić, considered that the new state could not muster powerful army and naval force on its own, since, though it possessed large territory, its population was small and the industry, finance and traffic were insufficiently organised. Thus, he was certain that the Kingdom of SCS had to build defensive force as a precondition to relinquish the international obligations which never everlasting.¹⁵⁶ After the Council of the League of Nations had been reorganised in 1926 – and the Little Entente gain a semi-permanent place – Yugoslav diplomats accepted the interpretation that the “regional groups” obtained an equal status with the Great and semi-Great Powers.¹⁵⁷ The Yugoslav delegate in the Preparation Committee for the Disarmament Conference, Lazar Marković, at the time of tense Yugoslav-Italian relations in 1927, claimed that the Kingdom of SCS belonged to “the range of Middle Powers. We are not a

152 Карел Чапек, *Разговори с Т. Г. Масариком*, (Нови Сад, 1938), 307, 330-332.

153 Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy were considered the four great powers in Europe. Due to various reasons diplomatic circles and press did not frequently consider the USSR to be a great power in Europe mid-1930s.

154 E. Campus, *Mica Întelegere*, 130–133; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda*, 122; J. Dejmek, *Edvard Beneš, Část první*, 552, 553; D. Bakić, *Britain and Interwar Danubian Europe*, 199, 200; S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy’s (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia’s re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 53.

155 S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy’s (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia’s re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 53, 54.

156 *Јадранско питање. Од Париза до Рапала (званична документа)*, (Београд: МИД, 1924), 21-33.

157 *Извештаји Министарства иностраних послова Краљевине Југославије за 1931. годину*, књига II, приредили Нада Петровић, Јелена Бакић, (Београд: Архив Србије и Црне Горе, 2007), 351.

small country and with regard to the area of our country and the strength and vitality, we belong to the category of Middle Powers. We are stronger than some states smaller than us, but we are weaker than the Great Powers in terms of finance and economy. Our need to rely on other countries is greater than the need of the Great Powers".¹⁵⁸ After the reorganisation in Štrbské Pleso in 1930 Marinković made an assessment that due to the "economics of its power" – despite its "modesty in manners and moderation in behaviour" – it gave the impression in the international circles of "a Great Power".¹⁵⁹ The Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented its own view of the reorganised Little Entente in 1933 in a semi-official form through the publications of the Secretaries Vojislav Radovanović and Stevan Ćirković. They did not contain any mentions of the Fifth Great Power formation. According to the given interpretation, the reorganised Little Entente represented a new model of the "international unity" without the precedent, which was something between an alliance of the countries and a weak confederation and it represented a "new international entity in the international community".¹⁶⁰

After the Little Entente's Organisational Pact had been signed, the first great challenge was Mussolini's project for the *Patto a Quattro*, which was officially introduced in March 1933. The negotiations between the four European Powers were being conducted until June.¹⁶¹ France closely collaborated with its allies – including the Little Entente – on redrafting the initial proposal in order to blunt the blade of establishing new Directorate of the Great Powers in Europe.¹⁶² Jevtić and the Plenipotentiary Minister in Rome Milan Rakić thought that the *Patto a Quattro* project was primarily aimed against France, Yugoslavia and the Little Entente in or-

158 „Интересантне изјаве наших политичара о италијанско-албанском пакту“, *Време* од 1. јануара 1927, 5.

159 Архив САНУ, 14.439, предмет бр. 323.

160 S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy's (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 54.

161 Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il duce: Gli anni del consenso 1929–1936*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1996), 445-467; Giancarlo Giordano, *Storia diplomatica del patto a quattro*, (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2000), passim; Gianluca Falanga, *Mussolini's Vorposten in Hitler's Reich: Italiens Politik in Berlin, 1933–1945*, (Berlin: Böhlau, 2008), 33-39.

162 E. Campus, *Mica Înțelegere*, 138, 140, 141; O. Carmi, *La Grande-Bretagne et la Petite Entente*, 212, 213; M. Ádám, *Richtung selbstvernichtung*, 91; J. Dejmek, *Nenaplněné naděje*, 215-217; stejný, *Edvard Beneš, Část první*, 556-560; I. Davion, „Integrations de la Pologne dans a Petite Entente: chevol de Troie de la France et serpent de mer diplomatique“, 82-84, 102; D. Bakić, *Britain and Interwar Danubian Europe*, 201, 202; G. Giordano, *Storia diplomatica del patto a quattro*, 44-47; З. Бајин, *Спалајковић*, 267, 268.

der to make possible further Italian penetration into the Balkans and the Danubian region.¹⁶³ Yugoslav, Czechoslovak and Romanian diplomats were trying to persuade the Quai d'Orsay and the Foreign Office to reject Mussolini's project and the main argument was that otherwise they would be compelled to turn towards Germany as a new support in their foreign policy.¹⁶⁴ With Jevtić's initiative the Little Entente took a firm stand in March and May 1933 that it would not accept the revisionism of the international system without resistance and that it would be ready to defend the national security of member states and the alliance as a whole.¹⁶⁵ The threat with Germany bore fruit and the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joseph Paul-Boncour, formally informed the Yugoslav government that the final redaction of the *Patto a Quattro* would disable the revision outside the limits of the League of Nations.¹⁶⁶ Afterwards, the Plenipotentiary Minister in Paris Miroslav Spalajković – abandoning the general framework of Jevtić's diplomatic action – praised the French diplomacy and Mussolini.¹⁶⁷

After the reorganisation in Štrbské Pleso in 1930 Marinković, as a member of the League of Nations Council, worked on the prevention of the harmonisation of the Article 12 of the Covenant of the League of Nations with the provisions of the Briand-Kellog Pact which would disable provision of mutual assistance in case of war. In this way he wanted to preserve *raison d'être* of the Little Entente by defending the *casus foederis* principle. He managed to postpone the decision related to this matter un-

163 S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy's (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 51, 52.

164 O. Carmi, *La Grande-Bretagne et la Petite Entente*, 233–235, 242, 243; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda*, 123; S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy's (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 52.

165 E. Campus, *Mica Întelegere*, 140–141; B. Krizman, *Vanjska politika jugoslavenske države*, 64–65; A. Ort, *Edvard Beneš*, 39–41; A. Klimek, E. Kubů, *Československá zahraniční politika 1918–1938*, 65, 66; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda*, 125, 126; I. Davion, „Integrations de la Pologne dans a Petite Entente: chevol de Troie de la France et serpent de mer diplomatique“, 84, 85; Laura M. Herța, „La Roumanie et la Yougoslavie entre les deux guerres: évolution, coopération, construction de la sécurité. Interprétations constructivistes“, *Synergies Roumanie*, no. 10, (2015), 110; S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy's (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 52.

166 Историјски архив Београда (further: ИАБ), Легат Косте Стевана Павловића – Лондон (даље: ЛКП), инв. бр. 15, Дневник за 1933. годину, унос за 8. јун.

167 Spalajković even went as far as to assign a part of the responsibility for the Italian aggression towards Yugoslavia to certain Yugoslav political emigrants (З. Бајин, *Спалајковић*, 268).

til September 1930,¹⁶⁸ and it was definitely removed from the agenda in September 1932.¹⁶⁹ The first international acts which the Little Entente signed as a united political entity were within the rapprochement with the USSR. The two parties signed the Convention of the Definition of the Aggression and the Agreement on the Definition of the Aggression in London on 3 and 4 July 1933.¹⁷⁰ In the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs the ratification of the convention and the agreement were assessed as the first step towards the official recognition of the Soviet Union and establishment of diplomatic relations.¹⁷¹ This action was formally justified by the necessity to accurately define an aggressor after the Briand-Kellog Pact – which had banned offensive warfare.¹⁷² Actually, this was a diplomatic manoeuvre. The Quai d'Orsay and the Foreign Office had been warned that the imposition of rearrangement of the international order as per the dictation of Great Powers would compel the Little Entente to search for a new support in the foreign policy not only in Berlin but also in Moscow. As soon as the danger from the Mussolini's plan was eliminated, King Aleksandra distanced himself from the idea of rapprochement with the

168 *Извештају*, II, 351; S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy's (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 45, 46.

169 *Извештају Министарства иностраних послова Краљевине Југославије за 1932. годину*, књига III, приредила Нада Петровић, (Београд: Архив Србије и Црне Горе, 2008), 370.

170 АЈ, 341, к. 2, ј. о. 3 Јевтић – Посланству у Лондону, Стр. Пов. Бр. 210 од 4. априла; Ђорђе Ђурић – МИП-у, Стр. Пов. Бр.333 I-13 од 7. априла и Стр.Пов.Бр.344 I-13 од 11. априла; Јевтић – Ђурићу, Пов. Бр. 8531 од 3. маја 1933; *Извештају Министарства иностраних послова Краљевине Југославије за 1933. годину*, књига IV, приредили Нада Петровић, Јелена Ђуришић, (Београд: Архив Југославије, 2009), 250; *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji. Godišnji izveštaji Britanskog poslanstva u Beogradu 1921–1938*, knjiga druga (1931–1938), ed. Živko Avramovski, (Beograd: Arhiv Jugoslavije; Zagreb: Globus, 1986), 168, 169; Ladislav Deák, „O pitanju normalizacije političkih odnosa Jugoslavije prema SSSR u godinama 1933–1937.“, *Istorija XX veka*, Zbornik radova, Tom IX, odgovorni urednik dr Dragoslav Janković, (Beograd: Institut društvenih nauka, 1968), 246; M. Vanku, *Mala antanta 1920–1938*, 85–87; O. Carmi, *La Grande-Bretagne et la Petite Entente*, 233–235, 242, 243; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda 1919–1938*, 124, 125; Aleksandr Olegovič Peganov, „Sovetsko-francuzkie otnosheniya v kontekste proektov reorganizacii Sredney Evropi, 1931–1934“, v: *Rossiyskie i slavyanskije issledovaniya*, Vipusk 9, Minsk, 2015, 184, 185.

171 The registrar of the IV Section of the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kosta Pavlović, at the time in charge of the Italian affairs, thought that “the attitude of Italy and the society surrounding it made us turn towards Russia again [...]” (ИАБ, ЛКП, инв. бр. 15, Дневник за 1933. годину, унос за 4. јул; Александар Животић, *Московски гамбит. Југославија, СССР и продор Трећег рајха на Балкан 1938–1941*, (Београд: Слио, 2020), 110–112).

172 Архив САНУ, Збирка Односи са суседним земљама (13.657), предмет бр. I-4.

USSR. He was rejecting the idea of Louis Barthou and Edvard Beneš that the Little Entente takes part in the Eastern Locarno Treaty, which projected Paris and Moscow guarantees for the borders in the Eastern and Central Europe. During the establishing of diplomatic relations of Czechoslovakia and Romania with the USSR on 8 June 1934, King Aleksandar vetoed the decision of Jevtić to join that action. His goal was not to provoke Germany – which, at the time, did not jeopardise the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia – by accepting the Soviet guarantees that would not have a realistic value on the Balkans and the Adriatic Sea.¹⁷³

A great blow for Yugoslavia was the assassination of King Aleksandar in Marseilles on 9 October 1934.¹⁷⁴ Jevtić obtained full support from the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente to file a lawsuit before the Council of the League of Nations against Italy and Hungary for their liability in the crime. Under the pressure of the British and French Foreign Ministers Anthony Eden and Pierre Laval, the Italian liability was omitted from the lawsuit, because Britain and France worked on the rapprochement with Italy in order to preserve peace in Europe. The conclusion of the League of Nations Council could not satisfy Yugoslavia, because only a general verdict of international terrorism was made, Hungary was mildly

173 AJ, 38, к. 33, ј. о. 78 циркулар шефа ЦПБ-а др Косте Луковића, Стр. Пов. Ц. П. Бр. 3889 од 10. јуна 1934; ВА, п. 17, к. 110а, ф. 2, предмет бр. 11, рег. 8, 9; *Советско-југославске одношења 1917-1941 гг. Сборник докумената и материјала*, подгот. В. В. Зеленин, М. Апостолски, (Москва: Наука, 1991), документа бр. 221, 222, 224, pp. 271-273; М. Vanku, *Mala antanta 1920-1938*, 111, 112, 119; Вук Винавер, „Неуспех тајних југословенско-совјетских преговора 1934-1938. године (Једна значајна етапа у немачком освајању Подунавља)“, *Зборник Матице српске за историју*, књ. 3 (1971), 43-45; Jacob V. Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi 1934-1941*, (Rijeka: „Otokar Krešovani“, 1972), 61; L. Deák, „O pitanju normalizacije političkih odnosa Jugoslavije prema SSSR u godinama 1933-1937.“, 248-259; Vinaver Vuk, „Austrijski problem' i preorijentacija spoljne politike Jugoslavije 1933-1934. godine“, *Jugoslavenski istorijski časopis*, Br. 1-4 (1986), 136; P. Wandycz, *The Twilight of French Eastern Alliance 1926-1936*, 347-369; Igor Lukes, *Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler: the Diplomacy of Edvard Beneš 1930s*, (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 37-39; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda 1919-1938*, 125-127; Vojislav Pavlović, „L'Attentat de Marseille 1934. La fin symbolique d'une alliance atypique“, dans: *Le Serbie et la France: une alliance atypique: relations politiques, économiques et culturelles 1870-1940*, dir. Dušan T. Bataković, (Belgrade: Balkanološki institut SANU, 2010), 587; А. Животић, *Московски гамбит*, 113-117.

174 Bogdan Krizman, *Pavelić i ustaše*, (Zagreb: Globus, 1978), passim; M. Bucarelli, *Musolini e la Jugoslavia (1922-1939)*, 236-241; Petra Hamerli, „Croatian Political Refugees Living in Emigration in the Interwar Period: The Case of the Croatian Political Refugees in Hungary“, *Hungarian Historical Review*, Vol. 6, no. 3 (2017), 628-644.

reprimanded and the whole issue had been removed from the agenda before the ratification of the Mussolini-Laval Agreement in January 1935.¹⁷⁵

Economic (non)solidarity and economic cooperation of the Little Entente

The Great Depression highlighted one significant weakness of the Little Entente – its inability to harmonise the interests of Czechoslovakia as an industrially developed country with Yugoslavia and Romania as agricultural countries. This problem was noticeable since the Conference of Ministers in Jáchymov in 1927 and came to the fore after 1929. Vojislav Marinković, as an economist, attributed much importance to the economic and financial issues in the international relations. It was evident in his work within the Little Entente and the instructions he was giving to the Yugoslav delegations for the participation in the Balkan conferences. At the Conference of Ministers in Jáchymov Marinković demonstrated the readiness to settle trade relations with Romania and Czechoslovakia.¹⁷⁶ While preparing for the Economy Conference of the Little Entente – which had been arranged at the Conference of Ministers in Bucharest in June 1928 – Beneš procrastinated with its convening in order to condition Yugoslav-Czechoslovak trade negotiations.¹⁷⁷ Afterwards, the Iuliu Maniu's government asked for assistance because they had no experience in forming expert Committees. The acting Foreign Minister Kosta Kumanudi agreed the Romanian requests in January 1929 and sent a Yugoslav expert Slavko Šećerov to help in the preparatory actions. Beneš continued with the procrastination tactics and during the preliminary session,

175 Eliza Campus, *Înțelegerea Balcanică*, (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1972), 147-151; J. Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi 1934–1941*, 71-74; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1933–1941*, 83-97; isti, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 278-281; M. Bucarelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia (1929–1939)*, 298-311; Б. Глигоријевић, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић у европској политици*, 322-332; Jana Škerlová, „Atentát jako hybatel dějin?: Vražda jugoslávského krále a její vliv na mezinárodní politiku ve střední a jihovýchodní Evropě v polovině 30. let“, in: *Promýšlet Evropu dvacátého století: hybatelé dějin?*, editor Jana Škerlová, Martin Vitko, (Brno: Matice moravská, 2017), 22-31.

176 E. Campus, *Mica Înțelegere*, 77, 78; M. Vanku, *Mala antanta 1920–1938*, 61, 62; G. Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918–1941*, 244.

177 AJ, 159-3-VII Маринковић – МИД, Пов. Бр. 547 од 8. септембра; Пов. Бр. 553 од 11 септембра 1928; AJ, 159, к. 3, ф. VIII Илија Шуменковић – лично за Војислава Маринковића, Пов. Бр.10739 од 6. септембра; Пов. Бр. 10739 од 9. септембра; Пов. Бр. 10906 од 10. септембра 1928. године.

the Czechoslovak experts were instructed to avoid accepting a concrete agreement. Under various excuses and manoeuvres of Romanian and Czechoslovak delegates, the Yugoslav proposal that Economy Conference should work on the harmonisation of the economic and political interests of the three member countries was rejected.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, Kumanudi insisted on the delegates not to issue separate announcements, but to make a joint communiqué on the session's results. Afterwards, Beneš tried to postpone convening of the Economy Conference, reduce the number of experts and limit the agenda. Kumanudi and Mironescu accepted his wish for the sessions to be held in secret and to inform the public exclusively via the joint communiqué.¹⁷⁹ In other words, the full solidarity was achieved only in hiding the fact that the problems in harmonisation of the economic interests of the three member countries represented a great weakness of the Little Entente.

The process which was initiated in Jáchymov in 1927 advanced by the ratification of the Organisational Pact in 1933 when the foundation for the beginning of the operation of the Economic Council as an auxiliary body of the Permanent Council was laid. It was then that the main objectives were determined – the economic cooperation of the three member countries and studying the possibility for cooperation with other countries. The latter task was the response to the plans of the Great Powers to reorganise the economic cooperation in the Danubian region in line with their own interests. It turned out that Yugoslavia and Romania could reach agreement more easily and that the problem was an agreement with Czechoslovakia. The two countries arranged a separate, preliminary session in December 1933 in order to agree on a joint attitude. The Economic Council started operating only in January 1934.¹⁸⁰ Eleven sessions were held until March 1938. The solution to the problems could not be found easi-

178 AJ, 395, к. 20, j. о. 206, листови 220, 222, 223-229, 234-237, 239-245; Nicolae Dascălu, „The Economic Little Entente. An attempt at setting up a European Economic Community (1922–1938)“, *Revue des études Sud-Est Européennes*, tome XIX, no.1 (janvier-mars 1981), 83, 84; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda 1919–1938*, 105-107.

179 AJ, 395, к. 20, j. о. 206, листови 238, 246, 305, 306, 309.

180 AJ, 159, к. 19, ф. 8 Фотић – лично за Јевтића, Стр. Пов. Бр. 598 од 5. септембра 1933; AJ, 395, к. 29, j. о. 278, листови 206, 207, 209; *Извештају*, IV, 312, 408, 493; E. Campus, *Mica Înțelegerе*, 126-129, 148-152; M. Vanku, *Mala antanta 1920–1938*, 93, 94; N. Dascălu, „The Economic Little Entente. An attempt at setting up a European Economic Community (1922–1938)“, 85-89; Milan Balaban, *Yugoslav-Czechoslovak Economic Relations between 1918 and 1938 year*, PhD thesis, (Brno: Faculty of Arts Masaryk University in Brno, 2016), 98, 103-105.

ly. Unlike the political agreements which were trilateral, the agreements in the economy sphere were mostly bilateral.¹⁸¹

Economic non-solidarity within the Little Entente reflected on the work in international issues as well. When the plans for the reduction of military reparations were launched – in line with the interests of the Great Powers – Yugoslavia was one of the countries whose interests were sacrificed the most.¹⁸² Therefore, it directly communicated with France and Great Britain, at first not requesting the assistance of the Little Entente in the negotiations on the reduction of German reparations.¹⁸³ At the request of Marinković sent to Mironescu, the Little Entente could not give in to any intrigues of the financial circles, but it had to operate harmoniously against the reduction of the Austrian, Hungarian and Bulgarian reparations.¹⁸⁴ In front of the Committee for the Eastern Reparations in November 1929, the Yugoslav delegate Mateja Bošković achieved full cooperation with the Romanian delegate Nicolae Titulescu,¹⁸⁵ while the Czechoslovak delegate Štefan Osuský helped them to the extent which his government was interested in.¹⁸⁶ The similar situation happened during the discussions about the customs truce from 1929 to 1930 which had been proposed to the League of Nations by France and Britain. Even then a close cooperation between the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak parties was not established.¹⁸⁷

181 M. Vanku, *Mala antanta 1920–1938*, 133-136; N. Dascălu, „The Economic Little Entente. An attempt at setting up a European Economic Community (1922–1938)”, 89-96; M. Balaban, *Yugoslav-Czechoslovak Economic Relations between 1918 and 1938 year*, 107-110.

182 *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji*, II, 7, 8, 35, 36; К. Павловић, *Дневник 1930–1932*, 385, 423, 424; Dr Милан Ђ. Милојевић, *Из области наше спољне политике*, I, (Београд: „Живот и рад“, 1932), 163, 193, 204, 205, 230, 231.

183 М. Милојевић, *Из области наше спољне политике*, 129.

184 АЈ, 395, к. 20, ј. о. 205, лист 202.

185 АЈ, 395, к. 20, ј. о. 205, листови 208, 211.

186 Mironescu, with the support provided from Briand and André Tardieu, influenced Beneš that the Little Entente took a more determined stand (АЈ, ф. 395, к. 20, ј. о. 205, листови 211, 215, 216).

187 АЈ, 159, к. 5, ф. XI в. д. генералног политичког директора др Лујо Бакотић – Сталној делегацији у Женеви, Пов. Бр. 10226 од 10. септембра 1929; АЈ, 159, к. 44, ф. 17 југословенски делегат на Економској конференцији Друштва народа проф. Милан Тодоровић – МИП, Пов. Бр. 173 од 14. марта; Шуменковић – МИП, Пов. Бр. 185 од 16. марта и Пов.Бр.187 од 17. марта; Илија Шуменковић – Кости Куманудију, Министарству трговине и индустрије, Министарству пољопривреде и Министарству финансија, Пов. Бр. 223 од 26. марта; отправник послова Сталне делегације у Женеви Иво Андрић – МИП, Пов. Бр. 281 од 14. априла; телеграм Куманудија, Пов. Бр. 7246 од 14. априла; Андрић – ПО МИП,

Since at the Conference of Ministers in Štrbské Pleso in 1930 a futile discussion on the economic cooperation among the member countries was continued¹⁸⁸, Yugoslavia and Romania looked for a way out in the cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to form the Agrarian Bloc from 1930 to 1933. The aim was to counteract the greatest agricultural exporters at the world market, the USA and the USSR, but at the same time it was a response to the French-German concern which had been designed by the Briand's plan on the European Federation. Czechoslovakia was more interested in the continuation of the agreement policy with Austria, as both were industrial countries.¹⁸⁹ Marinković insisted through the Plenipotentiary Minister in Prague, Albert Kramer, with the Czechoslovak government in February and March 1931 that the fundamental task was to implement the conclusions made in Štrbské Pleso about the economic union of the Little Entente. Consequently, he arranged separate Committees in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to study this issue.¹⁹⁰ As an additional incentive, King Aleksandar and Marinković accepted Beneš's ideas from 1922 and 1928 on the expansion of the bilateral military alliance.¹⁹¹ Under the influence of the German-Austrian plan on the customs union in the Danube River Basin, Beneš's attitude was altered in March 1931 so there was a progress in the Yugoslav-Czechoslovak relations and the discussions on the economic union of the Little Entente were restored.¹⁹² The change of the Prague's manner influenced the evasion of mentioning Yugoslavia and Romania in the context of the Czech-

Пов. Бр. 286 од 16. априла; телеграм Куманудија, Пов.Бр.5146 од 17. априла 1930. године.

188 M. Vanku, *Mala antanta*, 56; E. Campus, *Mica Întelegere*, 119; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda 1919–1938*, 139, 140; T. Sandu, "La Roumanie dans les plans d'intégration européenne des années vingt", 34.

189 P. S. Wandycz, *The Twilight of French Eastern Alliance 1926–1936*, 176; Никола Вучо, „Аграрни блок’ подунавских земаља за време економске кризе 1929–1933“, у: *Светска економска криза 1929–1934. године и њен одраз у земљама југоисточне Европе*, зборник радова са конференције, главни уредник академик Васа Чубриловић, (Београд: САНУ–Балканолошки институт, 1976), 40–46; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda 1919–1938*, 140–142; Oskar Krejčí, *Geopolitics of Central Europe: The view from Prague and Bratislava*, (Bratislava: Veda, 2005), 251, 252, 257, 259; S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy's (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 45.

190 Архив САНУ, 14.439, предмет бр. 513.

191 Архив Југославије, Збирка микрофилмова (797), Заоставштина кнеза Павла Карађорђевића, ролна 11, снимци 1067–1072.

192 АЈ, 159, к. 9, ф. 9 Маринковић, Пов. Број 12537 од 24. јуна 1931; Архив САНУ, 14.439, предмет бр. 518; *Извештаји*, II, 29, 68, 108, 148–150, 287, 383; *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji*, II, 26; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda*, 144, 154, 155.

oslovak-Austrian economic cooperation.¹⁹³ A closer collaboration of the three member countries ensued at the international economic forums, defending their interests from the plans of the Great Powers or supporting the French initiatives together with Poland.¹⁹⁴

The disharmony of economic interests made way for regrouping within the Little Entente. During the 1920s the Kingdom of SCS and Czechoslovakia had a much closer collaboration at the political and military level than it was the case with Romania. The consequences of the Great Depression paved the way for the economic rapprochement of Belgrade and Bucharest, which led to much closer cooperation in other areas during the 1930s.¹⁹⁵ Simultaneously with the work on the formation of the Agrarian Bloc in 1930, Marinković launched the initiative for the Yugoslav-Romanian customs union. His wider concept included a gradual establishment of cooperation among the agrarian and industrial countries, respecting the interests of both groups. He used the development of economic relations between Austro-Hungary and Serbia after the ratification of the Trade agreement in 1881 as the argument in support of his idea. The first step in the implementation of Marinković's plan was the formation of a united Yugoslav-Romanian economic entity – due to the identical economic position – with the population 32 million and more than 500.000 km² of the territory. The next step was the treaty with Czechoslovakia. Marinković believed that in this manner he would establish a model of collaboration between the agrarian and industrial countries, which could be joined by other Central- and Eastern European countries (without the USSR). This

193 *Außenpolitische Dokumente der Republik Österreich 1918–1938 (ADÖ)*, Band 8, Österreich im Zentrum der Mitteleuropapläne 12. September 1931 bis 23. Februar 1933, Herausgegeben Arnold Suppan und Elisabeth Vyslonzil, (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), Dokument no. 1172, 1174, 1181, 1183, S. 54, 57, 77, 85, 88, 89.

194 АЈ, 159, к. 9 ф. 9 Шуменковић – Маринковићу, Пов. Бр. 433 од 23. априла; телеграм Шуменковића, Пов. Бр. 653 од 18. јуна 1931; АЈ, 159, к. 16, ф. 3 Шуменковић – МИП, Пов. Бр. 396 од 30. априла 1932; АЈ, 159, к. 16, ф. 5 в. д. начелника ПО МИП др Павле Каровић – Сталној делегацији у Женеви, Пов. Бр. 2789 Дн.10 од 17. фебруара 1932; АЈ, 310, к. 4 Procès-verbal de la reunion officieuse des representants de la Petite Entente au Fond „B“ tenue à Paris, le 20 Avril 1931; АЈ, 395, к. 29, ј. о. 278, листови 195, 197, 198, 200, 203, 204; АЈ, 395, к. 31, ј. о. 295, листови 294, 296.

195 The visit of King Aleksandar and Queen Maria to Romania in January 1933 had a strong impact on the improvement of the bilateral political relations. Although it had been announced as a family visit, it was used to harmonise the attitudes of the two Kings and their Foreign Ministers before the signing of the Organisational Pact of the Little Entente (*Извештају*, IV, 21, 22; ИАБ, ЛКП, Дневник за 1933 годину, унос за 24. јануар; G. Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918–1941.*, 105-108).

would create a united economic entity with significantly wider foundation which would satisfy the interests of all member countries. Since he was aware that the key lay in making treaties between the agrarian and industrial countries, he was ready to accept the time limit of the treaties, and to modify the provisions in line with the current needs.¹⁹⁶ His proposal was accepted at the Agrarian Conference in Sinaia from 31 July to 1 August 1930, which immediately caused deprecation of the Prague political circles.¹⁹⁷ At the Conference of Ministers of the Little Entente in Geneva in September 1930, Beneš had to give in because he understood the righteousness of the requests made by Marinković and Mironescu, and he had to agree that the economic cooperation was going to be developed on basis of the agreement in Sinaia.¹⁹⁸ On the other hand, the Romanian economic circles had originally supported the Marinković's proposal,¹⁹⁹ and later started to sabotage it together with the Minister of Agriculture Virgil Madgearu.²⁰⁰ Marinković gave up his plan on the Yugoslav-Romanian customs union after the plan on the German-Austrian customs union had been announced on 21 March 1931. He returned to the plan on the Little Entente's economic development which had been generally agreed in Štrbské Pleso in 1930.²⁰¹ The Yugoslav government continued to work on the development of the bilateral economic relations with Romania during the first half of 1932 when there was a disturbance because Belgrade, burdened by the economic crisis, started protecting its agricultural export at the expense of Romanian export.²⁰²

Unlike the internal economic disharmony, the Little Entente had a high level of solidarity in resistance to the Great Powers' plans for the economic rearrangement of the Danubian region. They did not accept the German-Austrian, British and Italian plans which were being developed from 1931 to 1932.²⁰³ Although three member states supported Tardie's plan for *fédération danubienne*, actually they did not want the French dom-

196 AJ, 395, k. 22, j. o. 222, листови 75-85.

197 *Извештају*, I, 24.

198 *Ibid.*, 107.

199 *Ibid.*, 44.

200 AJ, 395, k. 21, j. o. 214, листови 334, 345-347; G. Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918-1941.*, 247, 248.

201 Архив САНУ, 14.439, предмет бр. 513.

202 G. Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918-1941.*, 248-250.

203 E. Campus, *Mica Înțelegere*, 88-94; M. Vanku, *Mala antanta*, 57-59; P. Wandycz, *The Twilight of French Eastern Alliance 1926-1936*, 222-223; Vuk Vinaver, „Austrijsko pitanje i velika preorijentacija kralja Aleksandra prema Nemačkoj (1927-1933)”, *Istorija 20. veka*, br. 1, (1985), 21-25; M. Ádám, *Richtung selbstvernichtung*, 84-85; J.

ination to be established in the region.²⁰⁴ Marinković remained faithful to the Little Entente concerning the German-Austrian customs union in 1931 and because of that he worked against the wishes of King Aleksandar.²⁰⁵ With regard to Tardieu's initiative he believed that it was yet another impotent French initiative which would force the three member states to turn towards the economic cooperation with the politically unfavourable powers.²⁰⁶ The Plenipotentiary Minister in Bern, Milan Đ. Milojević, following the set course of his superior Marinković, criticised the attitudes of the Great Powers because they were interpreting the crisis in the Danubian region as the consequence of the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy, saw the solution in its restoration and also rebuking the successor countries "to be envious of their political and economic independence".²⁰⁷

Military cooperation of the Little Entente

The cooperation at the military level was one of the foundations of the Little Entente since the attempts of Karl von Habsburg to reclaim the Hungarian throne in 1921. In this field a greater progress was achieved in Yugoslav-Romanian relations during the 1920s than it was the case with the political relations, because both countries had to take care of the Bulgarian threat as well.²⁰⁸ In the period from 1929 to 1935 there were some significant changes. The joint military intelligence established towards Hungary in 1927 was expanded to Bulgaria as well in 1929. In the

Dejmek, *Edvard Beneš*, Část první, 509–514, 527; С. Мићић, *Краљевина Југославија и аншлус Аустрије 1938. године*, 36–37.

204 Bohumila Ferenčuhová, „La Tchecoslovaquie et le plan Tardieu”, *Revue d'Europe Centrale*, Tome V, Numero 2 (2c Semestre 1997), 26–29; Vojislav Pavlović, „La Yougoslavie et le plan Tardieu”, *Revue d'Europe Centrale*, Tome V, Numero 2 (2c Semestre 1997), 38, 39; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda 1919–1938*, 119, 150–154, 162.

205 After Marinković had lost his position in 1932, King Aleksandar himself engaged in the improvement of the relations with Germany (*Извештају*, II, 186; К. Павловић, *Дневник 1930–1932*, 212; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 200–202, 222, 223; Id., *Svetska ekonomska kriza u Podunavlju i nemački prodor 1929–1934*, 80, 81, 126–129; E. Milak, *Jugoslavija i Italija 1931–1937*, 58–60; D. Hercigonja, *Velika Britanija i spoljnopolički položaj Jugoslavije 1929–1933*, 96–99; M. Bucarrelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia*, 193–196 Б. Глигоријевић, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић у европској политици*, 125).

206 E. Campus, *Mica Ințelegere*, 101, 102.

207 М. Милојевић, *Из области наше спољне политике*, 259, 260, 266.

208 In the political field Belgrade and Bucharest had completely opposite attitudes towards particular Bulgarian governments since the Romanians were afraid of the solidarity and unity of the South Slavs. (M. Vanku, *Mala antanta 1920–1938*, 29–31; G. Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918–1941.*, 50, 62, 65–68, 73, 75).

same year the first joint war plans were designed in cases of independent Hungarian or Bulgarian attack and the Hungarian, German and Austrian military joint action against Czechoslovakia.²⁰⁹ The elaboration of the war plan in case of the joint Hungarian-Bulgarian attack on Yugoslavian or Romania started in 1931.²¹⁰ After the political reorganisation in Štrb-ské Pleso in 1930 the strengthening of the Little Entente military structure followed by signing a secret, trilateral military convention in May 1931. The member states were obliged to conduct a simultaneous mobilisation in case of the threat of Hungarian attack and once initiated enmity could only be ceased by a trilateral treaty. Instead of the previous practice to hold meeting of the three Chiefs of the General Staff when necessary, a regular annual session was introduced.²¹¹

In January 1931 Marinković raised an issue related to the ratification of the bilateral military treaty with Czechoslovakia. In accord with King Aleksandar, he accepted the ideas of Beneš from 1922 and 1928 to expand the existing alliance to the case of the Italian attack on Yugoslavia or the German attack on Czechoslovakia. At the same time the issue of new military supplies from the Czechoslovak companies for the Yugoslav army was raised.²¹² The negotiations were conducted in the greatest secrecy. Based on the instructions of King Aleksandar in May 1931 Marinković made an agreement with Beneš to sign – apart from the tripartite military convention of the Little Entente – an additional bilateral military convention. It would include simultaneous mobilisation of the two armies in case that one signatory party faced with the mobilisation of the neighbouring Great Power.²¹³ As an addendum to the national security guarantee in case of the conflict with the Great Powers, Marinković and Beneš, based on the agreement between the representatives of the two General Staff, made an additional agreement on the activation of alliance commitments in September 1931. The two parties made a commitment to simul-

209 Mile Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922–1935*, (Beograd: INIS, 1994), 213; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda*, 78, 79; Bojan Dimitrijević, „Military Relations between Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Romania between the Wars”, in: *Români și sârbi în Marele Război / Rumuni i Srbi u Velikom ratu*, coordinatori Ioan Bolovan, Momčilo Pavlović, (Cluj: Presa Unversitară Clujenana; Napoca: Academia Română, 2018), 305.

210 M. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922–1935*, 213; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda*, 78, 129, 130; B. Dimitrijević, „Military Relations between Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Romania between the Wars”, 306.

211 M. Vanku, *Mala antanta 1920–1938*, 59, 60.

212 AJ, 797, Заоставштина кнеза Павла Карађорђевића, ролна 11, снимци 1067-1072.

213 Архив САНУ, 14.439, предмети бр. 642, 650.

taneously conduct mobilisation and attack Hungary in case the Hungarian army began aggression against one of the signatory countries.²¹⁴

The change in the attitude of King Aleksandar and Vojislav Marinković made it possible in 1931 to create the first war plan of the Little Entente in case of the general war in Europe.²¹⁵ Thereby the alliance was supposed to overcome the anti-Hungarian and anti-Bulgarian features and solve one of the greatest weaknesses – the defence of the member states against the attack of the neighbouring Great Powers. The secret character of the Marinković-Beneš negotiations was also necessary in the finance matters for the finalisation of the Yugoslav army armament programme, which was supposed to be finished in 1933 in order to avoid the accusations of the Great Powers, primarily Italy, at the Disarmament Conference planned for 1932.²¹⁶ The Chiefs of the three General Staff closely collaborated as the support to the joint performance of Marinković, Beneš and Titulescu at the Disarmament Conference.²¹⁷ At the session of the Permanent Council in the Peleş castle in September 1933, which King Carol II and King Aleksandar were participating in, Beneš insisted on the necessity for the three member states to finalise their military preparations and presented the programme of his government for the funding of Czechoslovak army equipping. Titulescu accepted his concept and promised that the Romania government would apply the same one.²¹⁸

At that time, the armament of the Yugoslav army was conducted based on the Czechoslovak loan approved in December 1928.²¹⁹ King Aleksandar and King Carol II were directly consulting each other when the new procurements of Czechoslovak armament for the Yugoslav and Romanian army were considered, from February 1930 to March 1931. The main reason was that Škoda did not quote the same prices to the two gov-

214 ВА, п. 17, к. 105, ф. 4, предмети бр. 4 (пер. 1) и бр. 9 (пер. 1).

215 М. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922–1935*, 215, 216; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda*, 130, 131; B. Dimitrijević, „Military Relations between Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Romania between the Wars“, 306.

216 According to the instructions of King Aleksandar regarding the negotiations with France on the new debts, Yugoslavia was forced to procure armament due to its geographical position and political constellation in the neighbourhood, yet it could not do it openly because of the general international situation. (AJ, ф. 335, к. 18, ф. 4, листови 225, 226).

217 ВА, п. 17, к. 105, ф. 4, предмет бр. 7, пер. 1-3; *Извештају*, II, 485, 486; М. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922–1935*, 215, 216.

218 E. Campus, *Mica Înțelegere*, 149.

219 P. Hradečný, *Politické vzťahy Československa a Jugoslávie v letech 1925-1928 v zahraničným i vnitřním kontextu*, 63.

ernments.²²⁰ The discrepancy in prices was caused by the previous business success at the two markets. After the personal regime of King Aleksandar had been established in January 1929, Škoda was at the peak of its power since it had close business cooperation – based on corruption – with the Prime Minister and the head of the so-called “White Hand” General Petar Živković, influential generals and court people. Their representative, Karel Luka, endeavoured to gain the affection of King Aleksandra by presents. Contrary to the Yugoslav market, the position of Škoda at the Romanian market was gradually deteriorated. Due to corruptive actions of their representative in Bucharest, Bruno Seletzky during the making of the contract with the government of Iuliu Manu in March 1930, as well as the registered deficiencies of the delivered armament during the first half of 1931, King Carol II and the Prime Minister Alexandru Vaida-Voevod launched the press campaign in March 1933. Vaida-Voevod used the affair to replace Maniu as the new leader of the National Peasants’ Party and Seletzky was banished from Romania.²²¹ The Yugoslav General Staff became interested in new procurements of Czechoslovak tanks, in 1933, under the influence of the ideas of the General Milan Đ. Nedić, the Commander of the 3rd Army District, on the reorganisation and modernisation of the Yugoslav army. The realisation of this plan began in 1934, after General Nedić was appointed as the Chief of the General Staff on the personal request of King Aleksandar.²²² The large consignment of the Czechoslovak weapons was contracted on the principle of compensation for the Yugoslav raw materials, in December 1935.²²³

Under the influence of Mussolini’s *Patto a Quattro* project and the strengthening of revisionism in Europe, at the Little Entente Permanent

220 AJ, 335, к. 3, ф. 14, листови 1-3, 7, 15, 16.

221 Antonín Klimek, „Československý zbrojní průmysl a Jugoslávie od sklonku dvacátých let do Mnichova“, v: *Československo a Jugoslávie od roku 1929 do rozpadu buržoazních společenských, politických a ekonomických systémů*. Sborník prací z vědeckého zasedání československo-južoslávské historické komise v Martině 19. – 22. 10. 1981, (Praha: Československo-sovětský institut, 1983), 502-505, 507; Alin Pîrnu, „Documente inedite despre „Afacerea Škoda“ ecouri din presa străină“, în: *Armata română și patrimoniul național*, redactorii Marius Olteanu, Nicolae Berbec, (București: Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2010), 207-211.

222 The military leadership decided that the first purchases for tank units would be from France in 1934, and became interested in Czechoslovak weapons again in 1935 (M. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922-1935*, 121; Далибор Денда, *Шлем и шајкача. Војни фактор и југословенско-немачки односи (1918–1941)*, (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 2019), 131; Id, *Тенкисти Краљевине Југославије*, (Београд: Медија центар „Одбрана“, 2020), 163-166, 171).

223 Д. Денда, *Тенкисти Краљевине Југославије*, 171, 172.

Council from 30 May to 1 June 1933 Beneš raised the issue of formation of a Military Committee pursuant to the Article 8 of the Organisational Pact. The committee was to have the role of a joint General Staff or the Supreme Military Council and would replace the annual sessions of the three Chiefs of the General Staff. Afterwards there was a discussion concerning the need to unify the armament. Jevtić, Beneš and Titulescu agreed that the sessions of the Chiefs of the General Staff had not completely satisfied the future roles of the three armies. This is why they made a conclusion that they should seek a detailed reply from their Chiefs of the General Staff related to the formation of a united Military Committee, standardisation of the armament and elaboration of a detailed plan of the economic and industrial mobilisation.²²⁴ Bogoljub Jevtić initiated consultations with the Minister of Army and Navy, General Dragomir Stojanović on 13 July.²²⁵

With the initiative of the Czechoslovak General Staff dated 27 February and the subsequent proposal of Beneš, the Committee for the Material Cooperation started its operation in Prague in September 1933. Its basic task was to determine the requirements of the three armies in case of war. Therefore it was necessary to establish in detail what war materials and raw materials the member states had to import and to create a study on the possibilities of mutual assistance in agricultural and industrial products, raw materials, military-technical research and mutual transport. The Committee of Military Experts started operating in Prague in August 1933. Its task was to study the most important issues concerning the armament, ammunition, explosives, chemical warfare, gas masks and standardisation of the war materials as well as the problems related to transport. The Army Minister, General Stojanović appointed the Inspection of Land Defence of the Ministry of Army and Navy as the authority for the collecting and delivering the information necessary for the operation of the Yugoslav delegates in the two Committees.²²⁶

By signing the Rome Protocols between Italy, Hungary and Austria on 17 March 1934 a new bloc was formed in the Danubian region, which represented a threat to the Little Entente. A need to make the military structure stronger emerged. At the sessions of the Chiefs of the General Staff, experts and the Committees in Bucharest from 21 to 29 March

224 BA, п. 17, к. 30, ф. 1, предмет бр. 1, пер. 4-8; S. Mičić, „The influence of France and Italy’s (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia’s re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933)“, 52, 53.

225 BA, п. 17, к. 30, ф. 1, предмет бр. 1, пер. 4-6.

226 BA, п. 17, к. 19, ф. 1, предмет бр. 26, пер. 1; BA, п. 17, к. 30, ф. 1, предмет бр. 1, пер. 5, 6; BA, п. 17, к. 106, ф. 3, предмет бр. 8, пер. 1.

1934, several decisions and recommendations were made for the closer cooperation between the three armies. The Chiefs of the General Staff drew a conclusion that the tripartite military convention from 1931, which envisaged the aggression of Hungary and/or Bulgaria, was insufficient in case of a general European conflict. Because of the strategic position of the Little Entente, they agreed that the member countries could not wait any longer for the Hungarian aggression to cause a general European conflict. They agreed to sign a new tripartite military convention which would include launching an urgent offensive against Hungary in case of a general European conflict even if Budapest declares neutrality. Relying on the assessments from 1931 and 1932 that 10 days were required for the concentration of the Hungarian troops and three armies of the member states required 17 days²²⁷, they concluded that it was necessary to create a plan of mutual efforts in order to be able within 5 or 6 years to finalise their army concentration on the 10th day of mobilisation. The amendment to the existing plan was also the proposal to sign additional protocols on the joint actions of the air force against Hungary.²²⁸

By the agreement of the railway transport dated 29 March Yugoslavia made a commitment that it had to accept all the war material which would be sent to the Little Entente in the Free Zone in Thessaloniki and the ports at the Adriatic Sea (only after it had developed a railway network between the ports and hinterland). All three countries made a commitment to guarantee the railway transit across their territories and the formation of the Mixed Expert Committees for studying the capacity improvement of the railway network was planned. In order to establish the Niš-Danube-Romania transport connection the Yugoslav and Romanian General Staff made a commitment to urge their governments to build a bridge over the Danube²²⁹. Since it had been concluded that the transport capacities of the Little Entente were “very weak”, especially be-

227 In November 1932 the assessment of the time required for the concentration of the Hungarian troops was reduced and it was thought that it would take (10 days) maximum in case of the aggression on Yugoslavia. In the war plans of the Little Entente from 1931 it was reckoned that the armies of the member countries which had not been attacked could take action on the 17th day after the beginning of mobilisation. (M. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922–1935*, 214–216).

228 ВА, п. 17, к. 29, предмет бр. 30, пер. 13, 14; ВА, п. 17, к. 106, ф. 1, предмет бр. 1, пер. 1–9; ВА, п. 17, к. 106, ф. 3, предмет бр. 11, пер. 1–4.

229 For plans for the construction the bridge over the river Danube, see: G. Попи, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918–1941.*, 260–265; Др Милан Гулић, *Краљевина Југославија и Дунав. Дунавска политика југословенске краљевине 1918–1944*, (Београд: ИСИ, 2014), 192–198.

tween Romania and Czechoslovakia, the two General Staff undertook to work on the expansion of the railway network in this area; and all three General Staff promised to advocate the signing of the fourth agreement with Poland on railway transport which would be replace the conventions from 1925.²³⁰ A special agreement regulated the issues concerning the facilitation of the river transport, load and discharge, maintenance of ships as well as provision of shelter for the vessels and crew.²³¹ By the agreements and the accompanying annexes it was planned, in case of war, that the Central Regulation Committee in Bucharest and the Mixed Subcommittees in Belgrade and Prague start their operation on the 20th day of the military mobilisation of the member country which had been the first to command the mobilisation. The operation of the regulation delegations for the ports was planned as well (with the mandatory head office in Thessaloniki and personnel in the ports at the Adriatic Sea), the transshipment of the war material on the Danube and border-related affairs. The Central Committee was assigned to establish a general transport programme, allocate the tonnage prescribed by the agreements and maintain daily transport records.²³²

The three Chiefs of the General Staff also signed the Treaty on Mutual Assistance in Staff in case of mobilisation and war. The aim was to avoid that one member country mobilise its conscripts if they were doing important work for the state defence of another member country. Furthermore, it was planned to lend necessary staff to the allied countries in case one member country did not require the entire personnel.²³³ A decision on the communication maintenance organisation among the General Staff was made.²³⁴ Although all the above mentioned agreements and proposals were made under the influence of the Italian bloc formation in the Danubian region in March 1934, the ratification of those acts related to the engagement of civil services were on the agenda only at the annual session of the three Chiefs of the General Staff in Belgrade in 1935.²³⁵

230 BA, п. 17, к. 104, ф. 1, предмет бр. 4, рег. 2-21; BA, п. 17, к. 106, ф. 3, предмети бр. 8 (рег. 1, 2) и бр. 9 (рег. 1-10).

231 BA, п. 17, к. 104, ф. 1, предмет бр. 5, рег. 2-16.

232 BA, п. 17, к. 29, ф. 1, предмет бр. 3, рег. 3-12.

233 BA, п. 17, к. 104, ф. 1, предмет бр. 2, рег. 2-5.

234 M. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922-1935*, 217.

235 The ratification was not required for the treaties of military nature. The ratification had to be conducted in the Czechoslovak parliament for the treaties which also involved civil services, thus they would become a public documents (BA, п. 17, к. 29, ф. 1, предмет бр. 59, рег. 1).

The Committee for the Material Cooperation held its second session in Bucharest from 21 to 28 March 1934 as a support action to the session of the three Chiefs of the General Staff. The issues of mutual aid in war material, normalisation, typifying and standardisation of the war material, scientific cooperation, mutual cooperation in personnel and transport were discussed. The conclusion was made that it was necessary to conduct normalisation, typifying and standardisation of the war material which, through the programme of mutual assistance, would be delivered in required quantities for the mobilisation and for the first year of warfare.²³⁶ Based on the conclusion of the Committee for the Material Aid, the three Chiefs of the General Staff signed the agreements on the railway and river transport with the accompanying annexes.

The Czechoslovak delegation in the Committee for the Material Cooperation wanted Yugoslavia and Romania to make a commitment that they would purchase the war material from the Czechoslovak companies.²³⁷ The Committee for the Standardisation and Uniformity of the War Materials of the Little Entente countries started its operation in October-November 1934. The need to make the infantry and air force ammunition as well as gas masks uniform was immediately agreed on. For the Yugoslav delegation it was particularly important that the uniformity of Škoda's 75 mm mountain guns was accepted, which was left for the second session scheduled for 1935.²³⁸ However, the Chief of the General Staff, General Ljubomir Marić, during 1934-1935 opposed the Czechoslovak initiative from the March 1934.²³⁹ Only during the preparations for the third session of the Committee for the Material Cooperation scheduled for November 1936 the Yugoslav General Staff draw a conclusion they should follow the Czechoslovak and Romanian example and designate one General Staff officer who would be solely in charge of the issues at hand. The previous practice had shown that the delegation members, apart from their regular duties, were not able to study in detail and continuously the various problems that were being discussed.²⁴⁰

At the first session of the Committee for the Material Cooperation in Prague in September 1933, the Czechoslovak delegation initiated the establishing of scientific cooperation with mutual reporting, starting

236 BA, п. 17, к. 104, ф. 1, предмет бр. 3, пер. 1-14.

237 M. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922-1935*, 217.

238 BA, п. 17, к. 29, ф. 1, Предмет бр.31, пер. 1; BA, п. 17, к. 97, ф. 2, предмет бр. 5, пер. 1-4.

239 M. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922-1935*, 217.

240 BA, п. 17, к. 104, ф. 1, предмет бр. 1, пер. 1.

from the ascertainment that the technics and materials were two influential factors in the modern conduct of war operations. The goal was to coordinate and equalise the operation of scientific-technical institutes, provide mutual support in personnel and materials and in the end make joint decisions which model was to be accepted by all three armies. At the second session in Bucharest in March 1934, the Romanian delegation specified the goal of the scientific cooperation – for the armies of the Little Entente “to secure the advantage of technical surprise by the quality of its armament”, in order to make them at least equal with the technical progress of the enemy armies and to have a powerful and homogeneous armament in case of war. This is why they suggested the formation of the Joint Committee for the Scientific Cooperation which would inform all three General Staff on the technical progress in new armament of the neighbouring countries and manage the operation of the technical institutes. The Committee for the Material Cooperation determined the first task to be the harmonisation of ideas and methods of operation, then utilisation of scientific information, results and tests. The job was given to the Committee for Normalisation. At the third session of the Committee for the Material Cooperation held in Belgrade in 1935, it was decided to exchange the collected information until 1 May 1936.²⁴¹ Although the Minister of Army and Navy, General Petar Živković and the Chief of the General Staff, General Milan Nedić, ordered the beginning of the preparatory operations for the scientific cooperation of the Little Entente in December 1934, the Yugoslav party was not capable of meeting the obligations previously taken. The military industry did not have either the capacities or experience, there was no central military-technical institute and they lacked in science staff and literature. Therefore it was concluded that the scientific work in Yugoslavia was not organised even at the minimum level required, while in Czechoslovakia and Romania it was based on tried and tested methods.²⁴²

At the first sessions of the Economic Council of the Little Entente in January and August 1934, on basis of the Czechoslovak initiative, the Permanent Industrial Committee was founded. The aim was mutual assistance in industrial development in order to make the defence capacities stronger. The Consular-Economic Department of the Ministry of Foraging Affairs, the Inspection for the Land Defence and the economic circles were in charge of the operation of the Yugoslav delegation in the Commit-

241 BA, п. 17, к. 19, ф. 1, предмет бр. 26, пер. 1-4.

242 BA, п. 17, к. 19, ф. 1, предмет бр. 26; BA, п. 17, к. 29, ф. 1, предмет бр. 27, пер. 1-10.

tee. The first problem they faced with was the non-existence of statistical data on the industrial production, based on which they could evaluate the national security and economic development interests. They reached conclusion that they must not allow the domination of the Czechoslovak industry to prevent the development of the Yugoslav industry and that they should ask for the support from Prague for the development of the industrial branches for which special precondition were fulfilled. There was lack of consensus concerning the placement of the Czechoslovak capital at the Yugoslav market.

At the first two sessions of the Permanent Industrial Committee in August and September 1934 decisions on the necessity to secure the raw material for the Czechoslovak industry and support for the development of Yugoslav and Romanian industries were made according to the urgency degree. The Czechoslovak delegation had to convince its partners that they did not want to hamper but to help out the development of the Yugoslav and Romanian industries. Afterwards the Yugoslav proposals were accepted that it was necessary to precisely establish the possibilities of mutual supplementing of the production in all three member countries and to secure the financial and technical support for the exploitation of natural resources. The Inspection of the Land Defence determined the priority in industrialisation in April 1935 with the conclusion that the construction of factories and foundries should be based on the domestic capital and only in case of deficiency the assistance of Czechoslovak capital should be demanded. At the further sessions of the Economic Council of the Little Entente no concrete solutions were adopted related to the proposals presented in the Permanent Industrial Committee.²⁴³

Balkan Security and Yugoslav Neutrality in the Eve and during the First Phase of the Second World War 1937–1941

The Yugoslavia's foreign policy started gradually to abandon formal and informal alliances. King Aleksandar, dissatisfied with the French policy, started rapprochement with Germany in 1927 and a serious ad-

243 BA, п. 17, к. 29, ф. 1, предмети бр. 4 (пер. 1, 2), бр. 5 (пер. 1, 2), бр. 6 (пер. 1), бр. 7 (пер. 1), бр. 8 (пер. 1, 2), бр. 10 (пер. 1-6), бр. 13 (пер. 1), бр. 14 (пер. 2), бр. 20 (пер. 12-15), бр. 21 (пер. 1-3), бр. 22 (пер. 3-17).

vance was achieved from 1933 to 1934.²⁴⁴ The Laval-Mussolini treaty and Stresa Front in 1935 convinced the Yugoslav statesmen that it was necessary to reduce their dependence on Paris.²⁴⁵ The Yugoslav-German economic relations started to restore since 1934 and they were expanding during the sanctions of the League of Nations against Italy 1935-1936.²⁴⁶ The Yugoslav military circles began to consider their joint action with the German army in the Danubian region due to the Italian threat and weakening of the French support.²⁴⁷ Due to the dissatisfaction with the policy of Edvard Beneš and Milan Hodža – towards the USSR and France – Belgrade was distancing itself from Prague.²⁴⁸

Two events were crucial. The French friendship with Italy during the Italo-Ethiopian War 1935-1936²⁴⁹ and retreating of France behind the Maginot Line after the German remilitarisation of the Rhineland in March 1936. This was a great shock for Belgrade since it was realised that the French army was not going to defend Yugoslavia. This indicated a turning point in the Yugoslav foreign policy.²⁵⁰ Belgrade retreated from the Danubian region, closed itself within the Balkans and endeavoured to improve the bilateral relations with the neighbours.²⁵¹ The military lead-

244 J. Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi 1934-1941*, 69; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 222, 223, 230, 244, 245, 252, 259-261, 264, 267-277; Id, „Austrijski problem” i preorijentacija jugoslovenske politike 1933-1934. godine”, 125-137; Б. Глигоријевић, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић у европској политици*; 134-139.

245 Драгослав Симић, *Гласом писана историја*, (Београд: Клио, 2018), 109, 110; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 284-289; M. Bucarelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia (1929-1939)*, 302-322.

246 Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanske zemlje i velike sile 1935-1937.*, 120-130; D. Lukač, *Treći Rajh i zemlje jugoistočne Evrope I-II (1933-1941)*, 91-95, 114-120, 191-209; V. Vinaver, *Svetska ekonomska kriza u Podunavlju i nemački prodor 1929-1935*, 140-285; Милена С. Коцић, *Економски односи Краљевине Југославије и Немачке од 1929. до 1941. године*, докторска дисертација, (Ниш: Филозофски факултет Универзитета у Нишу, 2019), 112-210; Perica Hadži-Jovančić, *The Third Reich and Yugoslavia: An Economy of Fear, 1933-1941*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 10-58, 77-82.

247 *Außenpolitische Dokumente der Republik Österreich 1918-1938 (ADÖ)*, Band 10, Zwischen Mussolini und Hitler 10. August 1934 bis 24. Juli 1936, Herausgegeben Klaus Koch and Elisabeth Vyslonzil, (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014), Dokument no. 1552, S. 200, 201; Д. Денда, *Шлем и шајкача*, 394-404.

248 M. Vanku, *Mala antanta 1920-1938*, 111-113, 129-133, 150-170; G. Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918-1941.*, 129-168; Z. Sládek, *Malá dohoda 1919-1938*, 186-199.

249 Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanske zemlje i velike sile 1935-1937*, passim.

250 V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 310-319.

251 J. B. Hoptner, „Yugoslavia as neutralist: 1937”, *Journal of Central European Affairs*, Volume XVI, Number II, (July 1956), 159-176; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanske zemlje i ve-*

ers came to a conclusion that the French doctrine of collective security gave way to German-Italian doctrine of bilateral pacts and that Berlin and Rome harmonised their policies and divided their spheres of interest in the Danubian region and the Balkans.²⁵² The Ministry of Foreign Affairs tried to conceal concerns about the development of events.²⁵³ Using the Nikola Pašić's definition of the policy of "carte blanche",²⁵⁴ the Prince Pavle Karađorđević in accordance with Milan Stojadinović, pursued a new foreign policy from 1937. The aim for Yugoslavia was to remain outside the Great Powers' blocs, preserve its freedom of action and make decisions in line with its own interests and international situation.²⁵⁵ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the General Staff were analysing the sustainability of the Belgian and Polish foreign policies – which were avant-garde of a new direction – in various critical situations during 1937–1939.²⁵⁶ Yet, this policy as well as the Yugoslav-Polish accord aroused suspicions among allied states, including Romania.²⁵⁷ The Yugoslav political, military and diplomatic circles were concurring that the main goal of the policy was to avoid opting for one side before Italy did so. Reasoning was to avoid repetition of Serbia's experience with the Treaty of London of 1915. Simultaneously, it was emphasizing the difference between the calculated Yugoslav foreign policy and the extorted Serbian foreign policy. The Yu-

like sile 1935–1937, 131-212; E. Milak, *Jugoslavija i Italija 1931–1937*, 129-141; K. Манчев, *Югославия и международните отношения на Балканите 1933–1939*, 113-136; M. Bucarelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia (1929–1939)*, 328-367; Б. Симић, *Милан Стојадиновић и Италија*.

252 ВА, п. 17, к. 24, ф. 1, предмет бр. 3, пер. 183, 185.

253 *ADŌ*, Band 10, Dokument no. 1647, S. 397; *Documente Diplomatice Românei* (DDR), Seria a II-a, Volumul 18, Partea I, 1 ianuarie – 30 iunie 1936, volumul realizat de Laurențiu Constantiniu, Alin-Victor Matei, (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2008), document no. 240, p. 330.

254 J. Noptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi 1934-1941*, 143.

255 С. Мићић, *Краљевина Југославија и аншлус Аустрије 1938. године*, 53, 121, 132, 133, 135, 136.

256 АЈ, ф. 334, к. 2, ј. о. 15, лист 309; АЈ, ф. 334, к. 7, ј. о. 24, листови 479, 481, 488-491, 496-500, 509-512, 521, 522; ВА, п. 17, к. 24, ф. 1, предмет бр.2, пер. 22, 122, 143; ВА, п. 17, к. 24, ф. 1, предмет бр. 3, пер. 115-118, 149; ВА, п. 17, к. 24, ф. 1, предмет бр. 5, пер. 101, 102; ВА, п. 17, к. 24, ф. 1, предмет бр. 6, пер. 116; ВА, п. 17, к. 25, ф. 1, предмет бр. 2, пер. 75; ВА, п. 17, к. 25, ф. 1, предмет бр. 3, пер. 61; ВА, п. 17, к. 25, ф. 1, предмет бр. 4, пер. 10, 11, 81, 115; ВА, п. 17, к. 25, ф. 1, предмет бр. 5, пер. 87; И. Андрић, *Дипломатски списи*, documents no. 92, 97, 99, 116, pp. 168-170, 176, 179-181, 212, 213; A. Garlicka, *Polska–Jugoslawia 1934–1939*, 130-138, 143-149; Srđan Mičić, „Poljska u jugoslovenskoj spoljnoj politici tokom 30-ih godina XX veka“, u: *Jugoslovensko-poljski odnosi u XX veku*, Zbornik radova, urednici Momčilo Pavlović, Anđrzej Zaćmiński, Dragomir Bondžić, (Beograd: ISI-IHISM, 2015), 85-87.

257 *DDR*, Seria a II-a, Volumul 18, Partea I, documents no. 551, 552, pp. 803, 804.

goslav elites believed that 1.000.000 of their soldiers could be a decisive force for the dominance of one of the belligerent parties and could determine the final outcome of the military conflict; thus providing stronger stance in negotiating the post-war international position of the state.²⁵⁸

The heritages of King Aleksandar in the Balkans were the Balkan Entente and the rapprochement with Bulgaria.²⁵⁹ In order to harmonise these two policies, Jevtić insisted on the time limit of the Balkan Entente's treaty.²⁶⁰ These were two possible Balkan concepts of the Yugoslav foreign policy. The first one secured the solidarity of the majority of the regional countries. The problems were distrust of the Greek observance of the military commitments due to the Serbian experience from 1915–1918²⁶¹, mistrust of the military power of Romania²⁶² and of Titulescu himself.²⁶³ From the Yugoslav and Turkish aspects the Balkan Entente was based on

258 Радоје М. Јанковић, *Како је убијана Краљевина Југославија*, приредила Даница Оташевић, (Нови Сад: ИК „Прометеј“; Чачак: Градска библиотека „Владислав Петковић Дис“, 2021), 46, 50, 51, 80, 87, 190; С. Мићић, *Краљевина Југославија и анишлус Аустрије 1938. године*, 123, 137.

259 Коста Скутунов, *Бурни времена: Цар Борис III отблизо*, (Софија: Синева, 2004), 627, 628, 630, 631; И. Димитров, *Българо-италиански политически одношения 1922/1943*, 216–220; Е. Campus, *The Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance*, 67–71, 75–82; Živko Avramovski, „Bugarska i Balkanski sporazum 1933–1934“, u: *Jugoslovensko-bugarski odnosi u XX veku*. Zbornik radova 2, urednik Dr Živko Avramovski, (Beograd: ISI, 1982), 194–217; *ibid*, *Balkanska antanta*, 68–73, 79, 80, 87–90, 100–106, 115–124, 147–159; К. Манчев, *Југославија и меѓународните одношения на Балканите 1933–1939*, 51–55; Л. Спасов, *България, великите сили и балканските држави 1933–1939 г.*, 8–18, 24, 25, 32–34; Б. Глигоријевић, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић у европској политици*, 144–150; Крџсто Манчев, *Србија и србско-българските одношения (1804–2010)*, (Софија: Парадигма, 2014), 364–367; Д. Марковић, С. Мићић, „Сусрети краља Александра и краља Бориса од септембра до децембра 1933. године“, 181–192.

260 АЈ, 310, ф. 4, ф. „Досије г. Министра Балкански споразум, Букурешт 20–22 фебруар 1939 г.“, реферат III одсека ПО МИП „Рок трајања Балканског пакта“, строго поверљиво, Београд, 28 јануар 1939 год; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska antanta*, 116.

261 АЈ, 370, к. 43, ј. о. 117, листови 345, 351–353, 366, 368, 369, 376, 377, 382, 438–441; Централен државен архив, Лични фонд Дечко Дјанко Караџов (1503 к), инвентарен опис 1, архивна единица 13, листи 13, 14, 16, 32–35; Милан Јовановић-Стоимировић, *Дневник 1936–1941*, приредили Стојан Трећаков, Владимир Шољански, (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 2000), 52; J. Hoptner, *Jugoslaviја и krizi 1934–1941*, 63, 90, 91 Е. Campus, *Înțelegerea Balcanică*, passim; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska antanta*, passim.

262 ЦДА, 1503 к, и. о. 1, а. е. 13, листови 13, 14; М. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922–1935*, 219; Д. Денда, *Шлем и шајкача*, 406. The Kupa River maneuvers in 1937 demonstrated that the Yugoslav military leadership was not at a higher level than the Romanian (Д. Денда, *Шлем и шајкача*, 126–128, 344, 345).

263 АЈ, 370, к. 43, ј. о. 117, листови 368, 394, 395, 401.

the political and military collaboration between Belgrade and Ankara.²⁶⁴ Stojadinović, the Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüstü Aras and the State Undersecretary Affairs Hüseyin Nuğman Menemencioglu shared the same view, in 1936-1937, that the alliance had to keep the same distance from the blocs of the Great Powers.²⁶⁵

There were two currents in Belgrade related to the latter concept, i.e. the Yugoslav-Bulgarian rapprochement and collaboration. The first one was represented by the Prince Pavle, army leaders and the deputy Foreign Minister Ivo Andrić²⁶⁶. They did not believe in honest intentions of Sofia and the Prince Regent fostered a personal mistrust of King Boris III. The second current was led by Milan Stojadinović until February 1939 and then by the deputy Foreign Minister Miloje Smiljanić²⁶⁷. They wanted an agreement with Bulgaria,²⁶⁸ reviving the ideas of Ninčić, Velimir Vukićević, Marinković and King Aleksandar about the political cooperation and the customs union.²⁶⁹ Stojadinović pursued the Yugo-

264 AJ, 370, к. 43, j. o. 117, листови 305, 311, 312, 318, 319, 321, 324-329, 338, 344, 389, 404, 405, 426, 436, 453, 533, 534, 545; ЦДА, 1503 к, и. о. 1, а. е. 13, листови 17, 27, 28; И. Андрић, *Дипломатски списци*, document no. 63, p. 133; DDR, Seria a II-a, Volumil 18, Partea I, document no. 252, p. 342; J. Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi 1934-1941*, 85; Dilek Barlas, Anđelko Vlašić, "The Balkan Entente in Turkish-Yugoslav relations (1934-41): the Yugoslav perspective", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Volume 52, Number 6 (2016), 1012, 1016, 1017, 1019.

265 AJ, 370, к. 13, j. o. 19, лист 402; AJ, ф. 370, к. 43, j. o. 117, листови 465, 466, 549, 550.

266 Andrić was the acting Foreign Minister deputy since April 1937, and the deputy Foreign Minister from November 1937 until March 1939.

267 Smiljanić was the acting deputy Foreign Minister since April 1939, and the deputy Foreign Minister from September 1939 until March 1941.

268 ВА, п. 17, к. 20, ф. 1, предмет бр. 3, рег. 6; ВА, п. 17, к. 103, ф. 1, предмет бр. 1, рег. 8; AJ, 310, к. 4, ф. „Досије г. Министра Балкански споразум, Букурешт 20-22 фебруар 1939 г.“, реферат III одсека ПО МИП „Предмет: продужење Балканског пакта“, строго поверљиво, Београд, 28 јануар 1939 год; ЦДА, ф. 1503 к, и. о. 1, а. е. 15, листи 1, 2; *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji*, knjiga treća (1939-1941), priredio Živko Avramovski, (Beograd: Arhiv Jugoslavije-Jugoslovenska knjiga, 1996), dokumenta br. 67, 88, 102, 105, str. 175, 233, 234, 276, 291; *Цар Борис III в британската дипломатическа кореспонденция (1919 – 1941 г.)*, Том II (1934 – 1941 г.), съставител Митев Димитър, (София: УИ „Св. Кли. Охридски“, 2007), документи бр. 136, 138, стр. 273, 275, 276; М. Јовановић-Стоимировић, *Дневник 1936–1941*, 51, 104, 185, 186, 200; Grigore Gafencu, *Last days of Europe: A diplomatic journey in 1939*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 201; Р. Јанковић, *Како је убијана Краљевина Југославија*, 251, 253, 254; Нил Балфур, Сели Мекеј, *Кнез Павле Карађорђевић. Једна закаснела биографија*, (Београд: Литера, 1990), 69, 70.

269 The idea of the customs union was advocated by Bulgarian politicians in February 1925, Ninčić, Cincar-Marković and Rakić in January 1926, and the PM Velimir Vukićević in July 1927 (AJ, ф. 310, к. 4 реферат [шефа III одељења ГПД МИД

slav-Bulgarian “Anschluss”,²⁷⁰ and the deputy Foreign Minister Vladislav Martinac²⁷¹ was against it.²⁷² Stojadinović operated gradually. He publicly advocated the idea of the Yugoslav-Bulgarian rapprochement as a representative of the Yugoslav Rotarians in Sofia, in 1933 or 1934.²⁷³ Then, in the cooperation with Martinac, he prepared the grounds for the acceptance of peaceful revision of the international treaties within the Balkan Entente. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided support to the Turkish initiative for the revision of the international status of the Straits in the summer 1936 so that Bulgaria could use this precedent for the territorial exit to the Aegean Sea.²⁷⁴ The ratification of the Yugoslav-Bulgarian Pact

Александра Цинцара-Марковића] о могућности царинског савеза између Краљевине СХС и Бугарске написан на основу налога министра [иностранних дела Момчила Нинчића], најповерљивије, s.l. [Београд], s.a. [децембар 1925 или јануар 1926], стр. 1-27; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 97; И. Ристић, *Бугарска у политици Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца (1919–1929)*, 313, 388, 389).

- 270 М. Јовановић-Стоимировић, *Дневник 1936–1941*, 182. Jovanović-Stoimirović, during the Stojadinović’s official visit to Berlin in January 1938, probably under the influence of the PM’s ideas but also based on his own ideals, discussed with German officials possibilities of the Yugoslav-Bulgarian “Anschluss” (Рукописно одељење Матице српске, Рукописна заоставштина Милана Јовановића-Стоимировића (further: РОМС, МЈС), предмет бр. М.13.406, „Александар Стамболијски и ствари које су у вези са њим”, листови 45, 46).
- 271 Martinac was the deputy Foreign Minister from July 1935 until July 1937, but he was unable to perform his duties since April 1937 due to his ill-health.
- 272 ЦДА, 1503 к, и. о. 1, а. е. 13, листови 18, 19.
- 273 РОМС, МЈС, предмет бр. М.13.406, листови 25, 26. Stojadinović was the governor of the 77th Rotarian District (Yugoslavia) in Rotarian 1933/34 year. In this capacity, he was leading the Yugoslav Rotarian delegation to Sofia for inauguration of the first Rotary club in Bulgaria (Dejan Čikara, *U dobrom društvu (Rotari klub Beograd 1928–1941)*, (Beograd: RK Beograd, 2004), 72, 81). He was elected in the Board of Directors of the Rotary International in Rotarian 1934/35 year, probably on merits for supporting organization of the Rotary in Bulgaria (*Ibid*, 83).
- 274 The Bulgarian delegation at the Conference in Montreux did not use the Yugoslav position, which Georgi Kyoseivanov did not like (АЈ, 159, к. 52 ф. 4 Стојадиновић – лично за Суботића, Стр. Пов. Бр. 1789 од 20. јуна, Стр. Пов. Бр. 1835 од 24. јуна; Стојадиновић – Суботић, Пов. Бр. 17739 од 16. јула; Стојадиновић, Пов. Бр. 16655 од 6. јула, Стр. Пов. Бр. 2035 од 14. јула; Суботић – лично за Стојадиновића, Стр. Пов. Бр. 89 од 13. јула, Стр. Пов. Бр. 111 и Пов. Бр. 116 од 17. јула, Пов. Бр. 123 од 21. јула; Суботић – Стојадиновић, Пов. Бр. 101 од 15. јула; Суботић, Пов. Бр. 49 од 6. јула, Пов. Бр. 68 од 9. јула, Пов. Бр. 94 од 14. јула, Пов. Бр. 122 од 21. јула; телефонско саопштење МИП-а од 6. јула; телефонски разговор МИП – Суботић од 15 јула; телефонска саопштења Суботића – лично за Стојадиновића, Пов. Бр. 97 и Пов. Бр. 98 од 15. јула; телефонско саопштење Суботића, Пов. Бр. 920 од 6. јула 1936; АЈ, 370, к. 13, ј. о. 19, листови 403, 408, 428, 451, 453, 494; ЦДА, 1503 к, и. о. 1, а. е. 13, листови 13-15, 18, 23-25, 28, 29; М.

of Eternal Friendship in 1937 brought distrust of further Yugoslav foreign policy among the members of the Balkan Entente. At the same time it was prelude to renunciation of the military provisions of the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine, which ensued in 1938.²⁷⁵ The Turkish statement tried in vain to annul the Yugoslav-Bulgarian pact by persuading Bulgaria to join the Balkan entente.²⁷⁶ Stojadinović and the Bulgarian Prime Minister Georgi Kyoseivanov considered the idea of the bilateral customs union and the military alliance on 31 October 1938.²⁷⁷ The attitude of Stojadinović deepened the distrust between Yugoslavia, Turkey, Romania and Greece but his fall from power on the 5 February 1939 slowed down the rapprochement with Bulgaria.²⁷⁸ The new Foreign Minister Aleksandar Cincar-Marinković followed the policy of cooperation with the Balkan Entente in line with the Yugoslav interests.²⁷⁹ He changed the Plenipoten-

Јовановић-Стоимировић, *Дневник 1936–1941*, 52; П. Нейков, *Спомени*, 392, 394–399).

- 275 AJ, 370, к. 43, ј. о. 118, листови 581–583; ЦДА, 1503 к, и. о. 1, а. е. 15, листови 8–15; Živko Avramovski, „Uticao jugoslovensko-bugarskog pakta od 24. januara 1937. na odnose između članica Balkanskog sporazuma“ *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis*, Br. 2, God. 1965, 3–19; E. Campus, *Înțelegerea Balcanică*, 241–253; Димитър Сирков, *Външната политика на България 1938–1941*, (София: Наука и изкуство, 1979), 53–57, 81–86; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska antanta*, 274–279; Л. Спасов, *България, великите сили и балканските държави 1933–1939 г.*, 95–98, Г. Ристић, *Спољна политика Краљевине Југославије од 1934. до 1939. године*, 72–80; D. Barlas, A. Vlašić, „The Balkan Entente in Turkish-Yugoslav relations (1934–41)“, 1015–1017.
- 276 AJ, Лични фонд Милана Стојадиновића (37), кутија 29, јединица описа 215, листови 532, 533; AJ, 370, к. 8, ј. о. 36, лист 25; AJ, 370, к. 21, ј. о. 68, листови 275, 276, 278–281, 288, 292; AJ, 370, к. 43, ј. о. 118, листови 581–583, 614, 615.
- 277 К. Манчев, *Југославија и меѓународните одношения на Балканите 1933–1939*, 205, 206.
- 278 AJ, 310, ф. 4, ф. „Досије г. Министра Балкански споразум, Букурешт 20–22 фебруар 1939 г.“, реферат III одсека ПО МИП „Рок трајања Балканског пакта“, строго поверљиво, Београд, 28 јануар 1939 год; AJ, 370, к. 43, ј. о. 118, листови 637, 638, 648; Р. Јанковић, *Како је убијана Краљевина Југославија*, 90; E. Campus, *Înțelegerea Balcanică*, 264–266, 268–270, 272; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska antanta*, 288–294; К. Манчев, *Југославија и меѓународните одношения на Балканите 1933–1939*, 242, 243).
- 279 AJ, 310, к. 4, ф. „Досије г. Министра Балкански споразум Букурешт, 20–22 фебруар 1939 г.“ Политичко одељење III одсек, строго поверљиво, „Рок трајања Балканског пакта“, 28. јануар; „Продужење Балканског пакта (Допунски реферат)“, 4. фебруар; Политичко одељење III одсек „Гледиште Министарства војске и морнарице“; IV Политички одсек „Бугарско-румунски односи“, 30. јануар 1939. године; E. Campus, *Înțelegerea Balcanică*, 272, 273; ацеаși, „Les Relations roumaino-yougoslaves dans le contexte des pressions exercitées par e Troisième Reich (1933–1933)“, in: *The Third Reich and Yugoslavia 1933–1945*, eds. Života Antić et al., (Beograd: ISI, 1977), 105; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska antanta*, 291–294.

tiary Minister in Ankara in order to improve the bilateral relations,²⁸⁰ but he did not want to jeopardize the relations with Sofia.²⁸¹ At the beginning of the Second World War the intensity of the Yugoslav-Bulgarian cooperation policy was reduced so as not to provoke the members of the Balkan Entente.²⁸² Cincar-Marinković continued to support Sofia insofar as it suited the Yugoslav interests.²⁸³

For the Yugoslav policy on the Balkans serious problems were caused by the Italian occupation of Albania in April 1939 and the reaction of Turkey which chose the cooperation with France and Britain in May 1939. One Great Power expanded its territory on the Balkans while Ankara gave up its previous attitude that the Balkan Entente should not incline towards the blocs of the Great Powers. Yugoslavia and Romania did not agree with the decision of Turkey.²⁸⁴ Prince Pavle embraced strict

280 Branko Adžemović was dismissed from duty because he had been sending to MFA the unverified information on the disloyalty of Turkey towards the Balkan Entente and Yugoslavia, which additionally complicated the relations between Belgrade and Ankara. The permanent delegate in Geneva Ivan Subbotić was appointed as the Adžemović's successor on 28 March 1939, but he did not assume the duty. Then Ilija Šumenković was appointed as the new Plenipotentiary Minister in Ankara on 20 May 1939 (AJ, 310, к. 4 ф. „Досије г. Министра Балкански споразум, Букурешт 20-22 фебруар 1939 г.“, реферат III одсека ПО МИП, „Реформа Балканског пакта“, настрожије поверљиво, Београд, 12 фебруар 1939 год; AJ, 334, к. 136, ј. о. 459, листови 344, 492; AJ, 334, к. 195, ј. о. 518, листови 816, 819, 823, 847; Тонка Жупанчић, „Посланство Краљевине Југославије у Турској – Цариград, Анкара 1919-1945. (1890-1945)“, *Архив. Часопис Архива Србије и Црне Горе*, Бр. 2, 2004, 14).

281 AJ, 370, к. 21, ј. о. 68, лист 418; *Извештаји Министарства иностраних послова Краљевине Југославије за 1939. годину*, књига X, приредила Јелена Ђуришић, (Београд: Архив Југославије, 2015), 310.

282 Цар Борис III в британската дипломатическа кореспонденция, II, document no. 121, p. 242.

283 AJ, 341, к. 24, ј. о. 55 Цинцар Марковић – лично за Ивана Суботића, Стр. Пов. Бр. 1926 од 17. септембра 1939; AJ, 370, к. 21, ј. о. 68, лист 355; P. Hadži-Jovančić, *The Third Reich and Yugoslavia*, 150.

284 AJ, 370, к. 4, ј. о. 22, листови 408, 410, 411, 460, 486, 489-491, 496, 501, 507, 510; AJ, 370, к. 21, ј. о. 68, листови 323, 324, 329, 331-334; Архив САНУ, 14.387, предмет бр. 9442; *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji*, III, dokumenta br. 52, 64, str. 147, 148, 171; *Извештају*, X, 244; G. Gafencu, *Last days of Europe*, 182, 183; E. Campus, *Întelegerrea Balcanică*, 299-308; J. Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi 1934-1941*, 164, 165; Alfredo Breccia, *Jugoslavia 1939-1941. Diplomazia della neutralità*, (Milano: Giuffrè editore, 1978), 68-74, 120-124, 143-150; G. Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918-1941.*, 210, 211; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska antanta*, 306-310; Л. Спасов, *България, великите сили и балканските държави 1933-1939 г.*, 106, 108; Yücel Güçlü, „Turco-British rapprochement on the Eve of the Second World War“, *Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, Vol. XXVII, 1997, 82-85, 89-93, 100, 101; Brock Millman, *The Ill-Made Alliance: Anglo-Turkish Relations, 1934-1940*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 163, 166-168, 170-183; Džengis Hakov, *Is-*

neutral and together with Cincar-Marinković he defended this policy in Berlin, Rome and London in April and June 1939.²⁸⁵ Just before the Second World War broke out, Yugoslavia had remained the only member of the Balkan Entente which followed the neutrality policy towards the Great Powers' blocs, because it had refused the French and British guarantees despite the increasing pressure of the Third Reich and Italy.²⁸⁶

Since the Yugoslav-Romanian initiative failed at the beginning of the Second World War for the Balkan Entente to unanimously proclaim its neutrality, Yugoslavia wanted to avoid to be drawn into the conflict as did the majority of European countries.²⁸⁷ The government proclaimed its neutrality on 4 September 1939,²⁸⁸ however, Cincar-Marinković assessed that this political course could be preserved only if Italy remained the non-belligerent party.²⁸⁹ The British-French negotiations with Rome about their entering into the war as well as the French suggestions to Belgrade to facilitate its quicker ending by minimal concessions to Italy in September and November;²⁹⁰ indicated that the two Great Powers wanted to influ-

torija savremene Turske, (Prizren: Centar za turkološka istraživanja Balkana, 2011), 145, 146; Milan Ristović, *Turska osmatračnica. Jugoslovensko-turski odnosi u Drugom svetskom ratu i njihov balkanski kontekst*, (Beograd: Čigoja–УДИ, 2013), 31; D. Barlas, A. Vlašić, „The Balkan Entente in Turkish-Yugoslav relations (1934-41)“, 1018.

285 J. Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi 1934–1941*, 164-166; A. Breccia, *Jugoslavia 1939-1941*, 103-105, 124-132, 153-163; Velimir Terzić, *Slom Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1941. Uzroci i posledice poraza*, Tom I, (Beograd: Narodna knjiga; Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga; Titograd: Pobjeda: 1982), 244-246, 249-251; Н. Балфур, С. Макај, *Кнез Павле Карађорђевић*, 114-118; Dragoljub Živojinović, „Yugoslavia“, in: *European Neutrals and Non-belligerents during the Second World War*, editor: Neville Wylie, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 220, 221; Д. Денда, *Шлем и шајкача*, 478-501.

286 Živko Avramovski, „Sukob interesa Velike Britanije i Nemačke na Balkanu uoči drugog svetskog rata“, u: *Istorija XX veka*, zbornik radova II, odgovorni urednik dr Dragoslav Janković, (Beograd: Institut za društvene nauke, 1961), 74-156; Id. „Pokušaj formiranja neutralnog bloka na Balkanu (septembar – decembar 1939)“, *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, god. XXI, br. 1 (januar – april 1970), 158, 159; E. Campus, *Întelegerea Balcanică*, 282-295; G. Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918–1941.*, 197-201; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska antanta*, 294-311.

287 For further reading: *European Neutrals and Non-belligerents during the Second World War*, editor: Neville Wylie, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

288 Јован Дучић, *Дипломатски списи*, приредио Миладин Милошевић, (Београд: Просвета, 1991), документ бр. 173, pp. 362; Ž. Avramovski, „Pokušaj formiranja neutralnog bloka na Balkanu“, 155, 156, 159; A. Breccia, *Jugoslavia 1939-1941*, 190, 194, 195; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska antanta*, 325, 326.

289 *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, Diplomatic Papers 1939 (In Five Volumes), Volume I General, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1956), p. 404.

290 АЈ, 341, к. 7, ј. о. 16 Милоје Д. Смиљанић – Ивану Субботићу, Стр. Пов. Бр. 2904/IV од 29. новембра 1939; АЈ, 341, к. 27, ј. о. 65 Цинцар Марковић, Стр. Пов. Бр. 1691 и Стр. Пов. Бр. 1719 од 6. септембра, Пов. Бр. 19642 од 15. септембра и Пов. Бр.

ence the commitment of the Balkan countries but also that the Quai d'Orsay was ready to trade Yugoslav territories with third party. Mussolini's giving up the original intention to attack Yugoslavia and Greece²⁹¹ made it possible for Belgrade to continue its policy of neutrality.

Prince Pavle wanted the French and the British to open a front on the Balkans so as to have the reason to come closer to the West Powers' bloc.²⁹² However, in the autumn of 1939 he was irritated by the unprofessionalism of the French officers who were conducting the assessment of the plan implementation.²⁹³ The Chief of the General Staff, Dušan Simović, was inclined to the idea of the Balkan front in November 1939,²⁹⁴ but Generals Petar Pešić and Emilio Belić submitted an unfavourable report on the readiness of the French army. It was decided to cancel further military cooperation with France and continue the policy of neutrality in March 1940.²⁹⁵ The attack of the Red Army on Poland in September 1939 caused disbelief in Yugoslavia. Soon the military, political and intellectual circles started to discuss the positive effects on the preservation of the Balkan neutrality and removal of Italian danger.²⁹⁶ With regard to the attack of the Red Army on Finland on 30 November, the members of the Balkan Entente could not harmonise their attitudes. The Yugoslav delegate abstained from voting in the League of Nations Council on the expulsion

26279 од 27. новембра 1939; A. Breccia, *Jugoslavia 1939-1941*, 207-225; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 420.

291 Ž. Avramovski, „Pokušaj formiranja neutralnog bloka na Balkanu“, 168-171; Brian R. Sullivan, „Where one man and only one man led'. Italy's path from non-alignment to non-belligerency to war 1937-1940“, in: *European Neutrals and Non-belligerents during the Second World War*, editor Neville Wylie, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 138, 141, 142; John Gooch, *Mussolini and his Generals: The Armed Forces and Fascist Foreign Policy, 1922-1940*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 484-487, 490-492.

292 J. Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi 1934-1941*, 183, 184; B. Krizman, *Vanjska politika jugoslavenske države 1918-1941*, 118, 119; V. Terzić, *Slom Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1941*, 261-263; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, 418, 419, 425-427; Н. Балфур, С. Макај, *Кнез Павле Карађорђевић*, 124-126; D. Živojinović, „Yugoslavia“, 223, 224; М. Бјелајац, *Дипломатија и војска*, 175-177; Д. Денда, *Шлем и шајкача*, 554-563.

293 V. Millman, *The Ill-Made Alliance*, 224.

294 Д. Денда, *Шлем и шајкача*, 556, 557.

295 Миле Бјелајац, „Лажна неутралност: југословенска помоћ западним савезницима и Грчкој (1939-1941)“, *Војноисторијски гласник*, 1/2020, 114.

296 *FRUS*, 1939, I, 436, 442, 446-448; A. Breccia, *Jugoslavia 1939-1941*, 229, 230; Миле Бјелајац, „Покушај стратешког ослоњања Југославије на СССР 1939-1941.“, *Војноисторијски гласник*, Бр.1-2/2006, 46; А. Животић, *Московски гамбит*, 187-194.

of the USSR – which was preservation of the position of complete neutrality²⁹⁷ – but he voted for the resolution by which the Soviets were declared the aggressors in order to avoid the interpretation that Belgrade supported Moscow policy. At the same time it left some room for the bilateral negotiations,²⁹⁸ for which the Yugoslav government had opted before the beginning of the war.²⁹⁹ After the Soviet-Finland War had ended in March 1940, the Yugoslav-Soviet diplomatic and economic relations were established. Thereby a new support for the foreign policy of Yugoslavia against the German and Italian pressure was generated, which gained in importance after the capitulation of France in June 1940.³⁰⁰

It turned out that the Balkan Entente had the same weakness as the Little Entente. The member countries were not ready for the mutual defence in case one of them was threatened by a Great Power. The Yugoslav foreign policy was based on the appeasement of tensions in the region – in order to prevent further interference of Italy³⁰¹ – and the har-

297 AJ, 335, к. 102, ф. 8 телефонска саопштења помоћника министра Милоје Д. Смиљанић – југословенском делегату у Женеви Гавриловићу и Гавриловић – МИП-у од 13. децембра 1939; A. Breccia, *Jugoslavia 1939-1941*, pp. 231, 232, nota n. 65.

298 AJ, 335, к. 102, ф. 8 телефонско саопштење Гавриловић – МИП-у, 14. децембар 1939; A. Breccia, *Jugoslavia 1939-1941*, 231, 232; A. Животић, *Московски гамбит*, 205, 206.

299 *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1940 (In Five Volumes), Volume I General*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1959), pp. 463, 464.

300 For further reading: A. Breccia, *Jugoslavia 1939-1941*; М. Бјелајац, „Покушај стратешког ослонаца Југославије на СССР 1939–1941.“; A. Животић, *Московски гамбит*.

301 AJ, 341, к. 7, ј. о. 16 Александар Цинцар-Марковић – Ивану Суботићу, Стр. Пов. Бр.2384/XI од 16. октобра 1939; AJ, 341, к. 24, ј. о. 55 Милоје Д. Смиљанић – Ивану Суботићу, Стр. Пов. Бр. 1686 од 4. септембра; Цинцар Марковић – лично за Суботића, Стр. Пов. Бр. 1614 од 30. августа; Суботић – бМИП-у, Пов. Бр. 1156 од 30. августа; Цинцар Марковић – Посланству у Лондону, Пов. Бр. 17952 од 31. августа 1939; Цинцар Марковић – лично за Ивана Суботића, Стр. Пов. Бр. 2688 од 10. новембра 1939; AJ, 370, к. 4, ј. о. 24, листови 594, 595; AJ, 370, к. 21, ј. о. 68, листови 363, 364, 366, 368, 369, 373, 377, 379, 383, 388, 391, 397, 408, 414, 416, 419, 449, 445, 484, 490, 503; 490, 492-494, 532-535, 538, 558; AJ, 370, к. 31, ј. о. 89, лист 273; *Извештају*, X, 459-461, 471; *I documenti diplomatici italiani*, Nona serie: 1939–1943. Volume I (4 settembre – 24 ottobre 1939), (Roma: La libreria dello stato: 1954), 35, 44, 110, 111, 164, 165, 167; *Recollections of a Romanian Diplomat, 1918-1969: Diaries and memoirs of Raoul Bossy*, Volume Two. Editors G. H. and M. A. Bossy, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2003), 323, 326, 327; E. Campus, *Întelegerea Balcanică*, 334, 335; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1933–1941*, 351-357; G. Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumovski odnosi 1918–1941.*, 213-215, 218 Ž. Avramovskii, „Покушај формирања neutralnog bloka na Balkanu“, 154, 155, 158-161; Л. Спасов, *Българо-съветски дипломатически отношения 1934–1944*, 91, 92.

monisation of relations between the Balkan Entente and Bulgaria.³⁰² The ratification of the British-French-Turkish-defensive alliance in October 1939³⁰³ caused the dissatisfaction of Cincar-Marinković because the danger of war spreading across the region emerged again.³⁰⁴ The danger of creation of the Italian bloc on the Balkans was definitely eliminated in December 1939.³⁰⁵ The discord and mistrust among the members of the Balkan Entente were not eliminated even at the last session of the Permanent Council in Belgrade in February 1940. Cincar-Marinković did not want to accept the obligation of a joint defence in the event of an attack by a Great Power on one of the member countries. Prince Pavle finally decided to take the new obligations during the audience with the Turkish and Romanian Foreign Ministers Şükrü Saracoğlu and Grigore Gafencu. The former distrust between Yugoslavia and Turkey continued while the territorial integrity of Romania was supposed to be sacrificed for the sake of Bulgarian membership in the Balkan Entente. The conclusion of the Permanent Council failed later due to various interpretations of Saracoğlu и Gafencu.³⁰⁶ At the time of the Italian-Greek War 1940–1941, the government in Belgrade announced its neutrality. Yet, the state leaders, with Prince Pavle at the forefront, provided military and material support to Athens and did not allow the transit of Italian and German troops across the Yugoslav territory. One of the significant issues for the pres-

302 AJ, 370, к. 21, j. o. 68, листови 424, 446, 456, 465. AJ, 370, к. 31, j. o. 89, лист 277; *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji*, III, 259, 260; *Извештају*, X, 426, 427; *FRUS*, 1939, I, 436, 437, 476, 477; Ž. Avramovski, „Pokušaj formiranja neutralnog bloka na Balkanu“, 164; E. Campus, *Înțelegera Balcanică*, 320; G. Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918–1941.*, 213; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska antanta*, 329–331.

303 Y. Güçlü, “Turco-British rapprochement on the Eve of the Second World War”, 106, 107; B. Millman, *The Ill-Made Alliance*, 219–221.

304 AJ, 370, к. 21, j. o. 68, лист 487; *Извештају*, X, 453, 472, 473, 494, 495; И. Андрић, *Дипломатски списи*, documents no. 165, 168, pp. 256, 258, 259; *DDI*, Serie IX, Volume I, 220, 221.

305 AJ, 370, к. 28, j. o. 81, лист 689; *Извештају*, X, 561; *I documenti diplomatici italiani*, Nona serie: 1939–1943, Volume II (25 ottobre – 31 dicembre 1939), (Roma: Istituto poligrafico dello stato–Libreria dello stato, 1957), 514, 515; *Recollections of a Romanian Diplomat*, 332, 333; Ž. Avramovski, „Pokušaj formiranja neutralnog bloka na Balkanu“, 180; isti, *Balkanska antanta*, 337; B. Sullivan, “Where one man and only one man led”, 143–146.

306 AJ, 370, к. 8, j. o. 36, листови 336–338, 348, 349; AJ, 370, к. 28, j. o. 79, лист 425; AJ, 370, к. 31, j. o. 89, листови 328, 329, 331–333, 335, 337, 338, 340, 350, 352, 355; P. Јанковић, *Како је убијана Краљевина Југославија*, 69; E. Campus, *Înțelegera Balcanică*, 349–357; Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska antanta*, 343–352.

ervation of the Yugoslav international position was to guarantee the access to the Free Zone in Thessaloniki as the most important spot of the maritime transport. In line with the policy of neutrality, the government in Belgrade rejected the British idea for Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey to form a joint defence against Italy and Germany.³⁰⁷

The failure of the Molotov-Hitler negotiations in November 1940 lead to the change in German strategy and the need to close the Balkan front before the conflict with the USSR. The disharmony of Yugoslav and British interests in the region turned Belgrade towards Moscow but the bilateral talks did not result in actual military support. The Italian pressure was reduced by the treaty with Hungary in December 1940. Passing of the German army through Romania and Bulgaria towards Greece increased the pressure on Yugoslavia to finally make a commitment. After joining the Tripartite Pact on 25 March and the coup d'état on 27 March 1941, the government of General Dušan Simović tried to keep the status of non-belligerent party by electing Ninčić Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, it did not succeed in these endeavours. The destiny of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was decided by the April War in 1941.³⁰⁸

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307 A. Breccia, *Jugoslavia 1939-1941*, 343-376, 423-434; V. Terzić, *Slom Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1941*, 339, 340, 354-357, 362, 363; M. Ristović, *Turska osmatračnica*, 29, 30, 34, 36-41; D. Bakić, „The Port of Salonica in Yugoslav Foreign Policy 1919-1941“, 205-214; M. Бјелajaц, „Лажна неутралност“, 116-129.

308 J. Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi 1934-1941*, 192-273; A. Breccia, *Jugoslavia 1939-1941*, 381-697; Martin L. Van Creveld, *Hitler's strategy: The Balkan Clue*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); B. Krizman, *Vanjska politika jugoslavenske države 1918-1941*, 113-137; V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1933-1941*, 372-403; V. Terzić, *Slom Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1941*, 275-552; G. Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918-1941.*, 221-229; D. Lukač, *Treći Rajh i zemlje jugoistočne Evrope I-II (1933-1941)*, 440-519; Д. Денда, *Шлем и шајкача*, 517-543, 574-584, 647-674; А. Животић, *Московски гамбит*, 262-554.

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