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Political transfers between Great Britain and Austria-Hungary before the First World War and national question – draft

The paper analyses the British foreign policy towards the Austria-Hungary from the beginning of 20th century until the First World War (next WW I) ¹ on a background of the whole world political context. Its goal is to define main characteristics of the policy, particularly toward the solution of national problems in the Habsburg monarchy. Britain at the period was interested first of all for preservation of its own colonial empire across the world, so that Europe did not belong between its priorities. Therefore Britain applied a non-active foreign policy towards European countries including the Austria-Hungary and its ally – expanding Germany. Moreover, therefore a liberal party in power in Britain, who tried to avoid wars and played the role of a peace-maker. However, crisis in South Europe and Balkan wars rapidly changed the British foreign policy that became more active towards the Habsburg monarchy. The authors also analysed whether Britain was interested for solution of national problems in the Austria-Hungary, including effort of Slovaks for the independence, which was similarly as Britain a conglomerate of many nations. Britain was not very keen to find solution of these problems because it was a similar multinational empire with own troubles. A overcautious British foreign policy towards Europe on the contrary provoked at some intellectuals in Britain, such as R.W. Seton-Watson and Wickham Steed, the interest for solution of the national problem. They presented in the press articles their own proposals for foreign policy. According to them if the British government more supported national question it could help the Austria-Hungary to become more powerful and stabile Central European power and the barrier of German expansion.

Key words: Great Britain; Austria-Hungary; Germany; relations; before the First World War; national question; R.W. Seton-Watson; Wickham Steed

Introduction

Britain was beside France one of the biggest colonial power in this time. When the queen Victoria died at the beginning of the 20th century it was the empire over which the sun has never set down. British foreign policy also wanted to preserve its colonies and therefore Britain prioritised other parts of the world rather than Europe which had appeared to be stabilised after the Concert

¹ In Anglo-Saxon literature is used WWI instead the First World War. Nowadays we remember 100 years anniversary of the beginning of WWI.

of Vienna. Although the main colonial powers suffered by their internal crisis to preserve their colonies, after the unification of Germany under Prussian rule in the 19th century and its successful development of capitalism. It became a new and dangerous competitor of Britain, which reoriented rapid its foreign policy after 1900. It so reacted on new circumstances in Europe and more global pressures on its accumulation of older. Britain was the most industrial country with the high level of the world market until the middle years of the nineteenth century. But from this time other countries United States and Germany began catch up British economics.² As far as Great Britain commanded 32 per cent of the world's manufacturing capacity in 1870 so by 1910 had only 14,7 percent but USA was stepping-up of industrial production on 35,3 per cent and Germany 15,9 per cent.³ British foreign policy before WWI at the beginning 20th had the interest to keep its colonial formal empire,⁴ the direct control of territory with guaranteed markets and therefore made more economic sense in 1900 than it had in 1850. „*London remained the hub of the world's banking, insurance, and shipping markets until 1914, and Britain's invisible exports therefore helped mask its relative industrial decline.*“⁵ Britain after Boer War finished with isolated politics in the middle of the first decade of 20th century.⁶ It tried finde allies and make a block as the counterbalance of the group Triple Aliance.⁷ Russia, Japan and France were perspective allies for Britain. The alliance with Japan 1902 was followed in 1904 by the Entente Cordiale with France and therefore in 1905 and 1911 in Marocoan crises supported France against the endeavours of Germany which wanted establish its predominance in Maroco. It was the diplomatic isolation of Germany which brought France and Britain much closer together and led to the settling of the practical arrangements for military co-operation in war with Germany.⁸ Anyway Lenin agued in his study “*Imperialism – The Highest Stage of Capitalism*” that capitalism is uneven and there is a permanent effort to obtain new markets. Lenin argued that the effort of Germany to regain new colonies from Britain and France was one of the main reasons of the WWI. Britania continued by ‚allied‘ policy and concluded with Russia a looser arangement in 1907 after the Russo – Japanese war conflict 1904-5. The so – called Triple Entente of three countries Britain, France and Russia was no solid group.⁹ Basicaly Britain so made to maintain the balance of power in Europe.

In Britain the cabinet was ruled by a Liberal party in the analysed period. This party tried to avoid the war and it had rather a defensive and diplomatic foreign policy towards Germany. However, after problems on Balkan the British foreign policy towards the Austria-Hungary became more active. Britain was not very keen to help nations in the Austria-Hungary to become independent because it wanted to preserve its similar, multinational Empire. Despite of the lack of this interest from the British government, there were very important people in the Britain,

² STRACHAN, Hew: *The First World War Vol. I To Arms*. Oxford : University Press, 2003, p. 12 – 13.

³ KENEDY, Paul: *The rise of the Anglo-German antagonism 1860 – 1914*. London : George Allen & Unwin, 1980, p. 291.

⁴ „*The empire itself was enormously expensive, particularly in relation to the costs of its defence*“ See STRACHAN, Hew: *The First World War Vol. I To Arms*. Oxford : University Press, 2003, p.13.

⁵ STRACHAN Hew: *The First World War Vol. I To Arms*. Oxford : University Press, 2003, p.13.

⁶ GEISS, Imanuel: *July 1914*. London : B. T. Batsford Ltd. 1967, p. 26. For the most recent and detailed study see MONGER, W. George: *The End isolation: British foreign policy 1900 – 1907*. London, Edinburgh 1963.

⁷ Germany and Austria-Hungary made in 1879 one power group and Italy enlarged it in 1882.

⁸ BOURNE, M. John: *Britain and the Great War 1914-1918*. New Castle : Athenaum, 1994, p. 5.

⁹ Neither the Triple Alliance nor the Triple Entente were monolithic power blocks without formal and binding agreements for military cooperation between Britain and the others partners.

such as Robert Seton-Watson and Wickham Steed, who were interested for solution of national problems in the Austria-Hungary in their press articles where they proposed the solution of these problems.

To assess foreign policy of the Great Britain as the world power towards the Central Europe between the beginning of the 20th century and the First World War is a quite complicated matter. But it is very difficult to analyse the British foreign policy toward Slovak national question during this period because Slovakia did not exist as a state yet. It was a part of the Austria-Hungarian Empire. It was called Upper Hungary and it was not used another name to distinguish it from other Hungarian territory such as in case of Transylvania, or Croatia etc. In that case it was more visible for the world powers, including Britain. The territory of Slovakia was on the beginning of the 9th century the independent Duchy of the duke Pribina in Nitra. Then it became a part of Great Moravian Empire¹⁰ which was destroyed by Magyar tribes, who came from Asia, in the 9th century. They had occupied this territory which became a part of the Magyar Kingdom. During this period was a custom that the duke from Nitra became the king but after the conquest of Slovakia the king of Hungary did not choose Nitra¹¹ as the capitol of the kingdom. Its homogeny lasted for centuries until the beginning of the 19th century when a national aspects of ethnic subjects of Hungary including Slovak became more visible. The image of a Slovak territory from language point of view is not clear because there was not any Slovak secondary school with exception of short existence of three Slovak secondary schools. For Hungarian central government Slovaks as a nation did not exists, so they did not need secondary schools or universities. Therefore Slovaks had worse position in the Empire as other subdued nations, for example, Romanians in Transylvania, Croats, Serbians in Vojvodina.¹² Moreover, Slovaks were under pressure of magyarisation. historian Gogolak – describes it as „*horrible damaging effect typical for unhuman and decayed magyarisation*“.¹³ Based on circumstances written above it is clear that Slovakia was not visible for other countries, including Britain.¹⁴ The British foreign policy towards Slovakia is not possible understand. It is possible to observe it rather towards the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Therefore the authors observe political transfers between these two states, although they pay attention to situation of Slovaks as well. This study also analyses to what extend was Britain interested for solution of national problems in the Habsburg monarchy.

¹⁰ See ČÁKY, Milan: Politický význam pôsobenia misie Konštantína a Metóda na území Slovenov (do roku 868) (The political significance of Constantine and Methodius's mission in the Slavic territory (Before 868) In *Studia Politica Slovaca*, Časopis pre politické vedy, najnovšie politické dejiny a medzinárodné vzťahy, č. 1, roč.V. Bratislava : Ústav politických vied SAV, 2012, p.152 – 155.

¹¹ It was custom in the Great Moravian empire, where the ruler had a special position. It was the result of the previous development when Slavonic people where ruled by duke Pribina who had the main settlement in Nitra. Later was this Slovak territory included to the great Moravian empire by its ruler Rastislav.

¹² See nearer DANIŠ, Vladimír: On the question of nationalism and the status of the Slovak nation in Hungary at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century with emphasis on the Central European context. K otázke nacionalizmu a postavenia Slovákov v Uhorsku na prelome 19. a 20. storočia s dôrazom na stredo európsky kontext. In FERENČUHOVÁ, Bohumila, GEORGET, Jean-Louis. a kol.: *Politické a kultúrne transfery medzi Francúzskom, Nemeckom a strednou Európou (1840 – 1945): prípad Slovenska. Political and cultural transfers between France, Germany and Central Europe (1840 – 1945)* Homage a Dominique Lassaingne . Bratislava : Veda 2010, s. 179 – 181, 196 – 198.

¹³ GOGOLAK, László: *Beiträge zur Geschichte des slowakischen Volkes*. Band 3, München : Verlag Oldenburg 1967, p. 88.

¹⁴ For the most recent and detailed study of Slovak history see TEICH, Mikuláš – KOVÁČ, Dušan – BROWN, M. Martin (edit.): *Slovakia in history* . Oxford : University Press, 2013.

There is an interesting question – to what extent central government understood the national question in the Empire and when this question became important. It is interesting because Britain was also a mixture of some nations such as England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, although they were officially presented as British nation. It is interesting to observe on how Britain understood nationalism in other world powers. By the way, it started increase of tension between protestant Ulster and Roman Catholic Dublin at the end of 1913 and it lasted until the beginning of the First World War.¹⁵ It would deserve a bigger attention but it is a topic of this work because it is oriented towards a different topic.

Anglo-Saxon historiography and British foreign policy before WWI.

Before we start to analyse our topic we can rise together with historians Steiner and Nelson an interesting question: „*Why should a state which had for more than hundred years preserved its distance from the European continent become involved in war which many knew would be of unparalleled destructiveness because an Austrian archduke was assassinated in a place which English could not locate on the map?*“¹⁶ We will not search for the answer to this question but we will analyse relations between Britain and the Austria-Hungary before the WWI as it was mentioned above. How were their characteristics until the time when the Habsburg Empire decided to solve the Serbian problem and Britain wanted to participate because it wanted to preserve its colonies and to maintain the balance of power in Europe. Therefore from August 1914 Britain became involved in the WWI; although Britain was not approximately one hundred years militarily involved in Europe. The authors uses also publications of British and American historians to observe their attitudes to the analysed topic. These information are used in our analysis.

Therefore historical studies of Anglo-Saxon historians at that period were oriented mainly towards Germany and its foreign policy because it was an opponent of Britain before the war and a main participant of the First World War. The most important were: *The Origins of the First World War. Great power rivalry and German war aims*,¹⁷ *The Genesis of the World war: An Introduction to the Problem of War Guilt*,¹⁸ *German World Policy and the Reshaping of the Dual Alliance*,¹⁹ *The German Problem Reconsidered. Germany and the World order 1870 to the present*,²⁰ *Germany and the origins of the First World War*,²¹ *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914*,²² *The Origins of the First World War*,²³ *The German Idea of Militarism: Radical*

¹⁵ See STEINER S. Zara – NEILSON Keith: *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*. Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2nd ed. 2003, p. 228 – 231.

¹⁶ STEINER S. Zara – NEILSON Keith: *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*. Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2nd ed. 2003, p. 4.

¹⁷ KOCH, H. William (edit): *The Origins of the First World War. Great power rivalry and German war aims*. London : Macmilian Press LTD, 1972.

¹⁸ BARNES Harry Elmer: *The Genesis of the World war: An Introduction to the Problem of War Guilt*. New York 1927.

¹⁹ ANDREW, Ch.: *German World Policy and the Reshaping of the Dual Alliance*. IN *Journal of Contemporary History* 1966.

²⁰ CALLEO, D.: *The German Problem Reconsidered. Germany and the World order 1870 to the present*. Cambridge 1978.

²¹ HEVWITSON, Mark: *Germany and the origins of the First World War*. Oxford : Berg 2004.

²² KENEDY, Paul: *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism 1860 – 1914*, London 1980.

²³ JOLL, James: *The Origins of the First World War*, London, New York : Longman 1984. This book was published in the

and socialist Critics.²⁴ In some these books authors are oriented towards foreign policy towards the Austrian-Hungarian Empire in context to Germany and its foreign policy because both were allies. For example, in the book edited by H.W. Koch in the chapter “*Britain and Germany in 1914: The July Crisis and War Aims*”,²⁵ where about the crisis before the war is written about a British pressure at Russia to balance German pressure at the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. In another book, author Joll argues that Britain declared the war against the Austrian-Hungarian Empire on August 12th. Therefore the authors pay attention to the book which analyses the British foreign policy and German foreign policy.

Frankly, English historians ignored the Austria-Hungary foreign policy in analysed period until F.R. Bridge published book “*From Sadova to Sarajevo: The Foreign policy of Austria-Hungary, 1866 – 1914.*” in 1972.¹⁷ Its originality is in the analysis of the wider period – since 1866. Another book of this author *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary 1906 – 1914: A diplomatic history*²⁶ is oriented towards diplomacy. It is summary of messages, opinions and attitudes of diplomats to particular international events, which had happened in the analysed period. However, the book helped to complete the mosaic of studied topic. Another book of Anglo-Saxon origin from Samuel R. Williams Jr: *Austria-Hungary and Origins of The First World War* was published in 1991.¹⁹ It is valuable for this particular historical analysis, oriented towards the Austrian Foreign policy before the WWI.

The national question in the relations between Great Britain and Austria-Hungary

The British Foreign Policy towards the Austrian Empire before the WWI developed though a few phases which had an impact on international relations on a Balkan peninsula. The development was characteristic by near collaboration between Germany and Austria and those two states created a Triple Alliance together with Italy. By the way, the British foreign policy in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century could be considered as defensive and careful which it totally different from the German foreign policy. This British policy was accepted by Unionist Party¹⁹ in period 1902 – 1905 and also by Liberal party in period 1906 – 1914. The British Empire was not keen to expand its colonial territories but Germany wanted and needed new one. Similarly, France was a great colonial power at the time, especially in Africa. A German foreign policy was expansive and wanted the war rather sooner than later. One of the main reason was closer collaboration between France and Russia. For example, France promised to build a big rail network in Russia etc.

Relations between Britain and France countries had not been good and occasionally threatened to break into armed conflict. According to historian Bourne the advantages to Britain of dip-

second edition in 1992 and than again in the third edition in 2007 by publisher MARTEL GORDON. This book was published in 2nd edition in 1992 and the 3^d edition in 2007 by the author JOIL James.

²⁴ STARGARDT, Nicholas: *The German Idea of Militarism: Radical and socialist Critics*. Cambridge : University Pres, 1994.

²⁵ HATTON, P. H. S.: *Britain and Germany in 1914: The July Crisis and War Aims*. In KOCH, H. William (edit): *The Origins of the First World War. Great power rivalry and German war aims*. London : Macmilian Press LTD ,1972, p. 30 – 34.

²⁶ BRIDGE, F. R.: *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary 1906 – 1914 A diplomatic history*. London : Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972.

lomatic *rapprochement* with France were readily apparent, France hostile to German ambitions in Europe but fearful of German power, was also anxious for increased diplomatic support. The result was the abovementioned Anglo-French Entente.²⁷ Moreover historian Bourne develops its ideas: „*The Entente was concerned solely with outstanding colonial issues of mutual concern, some of which now appear remarkably trivial. The most important agreement was that which dealt with respective spheres of interest in Egypt and Morocco. The Entente was created without consideration for the European balance of power. It was certainly not intended by Britain to be anti-German*”.²⁸ This argument is valid also in case of Austria-Hungary – the main German ally. It was very actual in the Habsburg monarchy where was a danger of splitting the empire. Bridge argues: „*The possibility that Austria-Hungary, torn asunder by nationalist conflicts, might disappear altogether from the ranks of the Great Powers was clearly of some relevance to Anglo-Austrian relations*”.²⁹ In case of national crisis in the Habsburg monarchy Britain rather supported original status quo without changes of the empire’s structure.

This attitude was visible during a serious crisis in constitution in 1903 when Hungarian politicians wanted the revision of dualistic law and to obtain a bigger independence from Vienna. There was a serious threat of splitting the Austria-Hungary to two parts. The British government decided not to act at the time. „*The only safe course is to wait and see.*”³⁰ Britain announced to Vienna that it wished the preservation of a present status and it supported a stable, powerful power in the Central Europe.²¹ Britain was not interested for the change of relation between Austria and Hungary. It was better for other nations in the empire, including Slovaks. For example if Hungary became more independent, the oppression of other nation would be easier. However, it was not a long-term solution. Despite of British absence of support for Hungarian, the ambassador acted as a democrat. For example, when Austrian Kaiser dissolved Hungarian parliament, requesting the reforms of dualism, using a military power the ambassador proclaimed „*It was an attack against freedom of Hungary and its parliament.*”²¹ It was against liberal, democratic customs in Britain at the time. However, In case of massacre in the Slovak village Cernova, the British response was not so critical although Hungarian policemen killed some people there on 27 October 1907. The British embassy in Vienna considered it as one of example of conflicts between Hungary and Austria.²¹ It was not really true because it was a conflict between the Hungarian government and oppressed Slovaks. A General Consuls in Budapest viewed the conflict by Hungarian eyes.²¹ British diplomats were more loyal to existing power structures in the Austria-Hungary, and therefore the British government was not correctly informed about national problems. It was one of the reasons of the British non-activity in Central Europe.

The increase of the interest of Britain towards Europe was accelerated by tensions on Balkan. As a consequence of the Bosnian crisis in 1907 relations between Britain, France and Russia became closer. The British foreign policy towards the Austria-Hungary became more visible in 1909 during solution of Bosnian crisis, when London played a positive role. British politicians believed that foreign ministry in Vienna Count Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal could weekend ties between Austria-Hungary and Germany. There were some opportunities to improve relations

²⁷ BOURNE, M. John: *Britain and the Great War 1914 – 1918*. New Castle : Athenaeum, 1994, p. 4 – 5.

²⁸ BOURNE, M. John: *Britain and the Great War 1914 – 1918*. New Castle : Athenaeum, 1994, p. 5.

²⁹ BRIDGE, F. R.: *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary 1906 – 1914 A diplomatic history*. London : Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972, p. 35.

³⁰ National Archives London, (NAL), Foreign office (FO) 7/1352, Plunkett to Lansdowne, 11. 12. 1904.

between the British and Habsburg monarchy by personal ties between the Austrian and the British representatives. For example Austrian Ambassador in London Count Albert von Mensdorff attended Edward's funeral and Archduke Franz Ferdinand visited George V, in Windsor. However, these ties did not influence the struggle between Britain and allies Germany and Austria-Hungary.³¹

A certain activity of the British government towards the Austria-Hungary is visible after the second Balkan War 1913 and in this case also solution of national question in South Europe. British foreign Secretary Edward Grey was very active at solution of Balkan problems at international conference. There according to him should be solve the compensation of Turkey for its loss by Austria-Hungary and to end the parallel quarrel between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria.³² For him it should be demonstrated to the Russians the value of British friendship, and the foreign Secretary felt that the German action would only alienate Slavonic affections generally. Therefore Britain needed to continue to work as closely as possible with Russia.³³ After the second Balkan War Europe was without Turkey what gave a new chance to the danger old Austro-Russian rivalry. Moreover, Slavonic nations were supported by Russia. By the way, Austria-Hungary's Slavonic problems threatened the very existence of her Empire. This war was even more strengthened collaboration of the states of Triple Entente and woke the Concert up. In this complicated situation Britain tried to play the role of peace maker. It is visible from the activities of the foreign Secretary Grey during peace negotiations between the Turkish and Balkan representatives and signing the treaty in December 1914 in London. Previously, Grey proposed the place of the negotiations in Paris but based on Austrian pressure it has happened in London.²⁴

A strong, negative reaction of the British government against the Austria-Hungary is visible in case of ultimatum sent by the Austria-Hungary to Serbia shortly before the beginning of the WWI. The Habsburg monarchy was under pressure of Germany to start the war. The Austrian ambassador Count Mensdorff gave privately to Grey some ideas of the Austrian demands in London on 25th July; particularly, of the time limit which was to be set for Serbia to acceptance them. For a moment Grey was frightened by the implications: „*The possible consequence of the present situation were terrible. If as many as four great powers of Europe – let us say Austria, France, Russia and Germany – were engaged in war, it seemed to me that it must involve the expenditure of so vast would be accompanied or followed by great industrial states, this would mean a state of things worse than that of 1848, and, irrespective of who were visitors in the war, many things would be completely swept a way.*”³⁴ From the point of view of liberalism the Austrian ultimatum was unacceptable because liberals prefer a peace solution of international conflicts. On the other hand, from a realist perspective Britain did not hesitate to use a military power against nations who threatened its own colonial empire. Grey was critical towards countries who wished the war, including the Austria-Hungary. His negative attitude is visible from his reaction to arrogant ultimatum mentioned above which he described „*as the most formidable*

³¹ BRIDGE, F. R.: *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary 1906-1914 A diplomatic history*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972, p. 21 – 30, 180 – 200.

³² STEINER S. Zara – NEILSON Keith: *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*. Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2nd ed. 2003, p. 93.

³³ STEINER S. Zara – NEILSON Keith: *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*. Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2nd ed. 2003, p. 94.

³⁴ GOOCH, G. P. – TEMPERLEY, Harold (eds.): *British Documents on the Origin of War 1898 – 1914*, Vol. XI, London 1926, No. 86, p. 70.

*document I had ever seen addressed by one State to another that was independent.*³⁵ He acted as a liberal politician who appreciated the independence and sovereignty of each state. Britain was governed by a liberal party at the time.

British intelligentsia and national question of Habsburg monarchy

However there were more problems in international relations between Britain and Austria-Hungary. Some representatives of British intelligentsia were not sure about survival of Habsburg multinational state for example Robert William Seton-Watson and Henry Wickham Steed. They pointed at Austrian oppressing rule of nations. First Seton-Watson's writing was very offensive against Vienna's reject of dual monarchy law reformation between Austrians and Magyars. The Times reporter in Vienna Steed generally supported Seton-Watson. However he was more confident in viability of Habsburg monarchy.³⁶ Seton-Watson later knew that nationalities in Hungary had not rights and were oppressed. He started publish articles in the English newspapers about this. A historian Williamson argues very exactly: „*Of the eleven nationalities, the German-Austrian and the Magyars were obviously dominant politicaly. Separatly they controlled the political structure in the two halves of the monarchy By contrast the Magyars, their political status enshrined by the Ausgleich of 1867, grew more powerful. Not only did the Magyars seek to maintain their privileges, Budapest ran roughshod over other nationalities under their jurisdiction. Serbs, Croats, Slovaks and Rumanians found little tolerance or understanding from their Magyar overlords. Thus the Magyars were at once both a nationality problem for the entire monarchy and the first cause of still more nationality problems by their own intolerance towards other groups.*”³⁷

Seton-Watson understood this reality³¹ and therefore he became an important representative of the British intelligentsia who published his opinions about the British foreign policy towards the Austria-Hungary, particularly about solution of national problems. He could not avoid relations to Germany who was an ally of the Austria-Hungary. Nevertheless, he previously was interested for relations toward Germany because he was a germanophile. He wanted good relations between Britain and Germany which he considered as an important for the European security. He considered German newspapers as responsible for tensions between Britain and Germany regarding their publishing German ambitions in Morocco and Boer wars in South Africa. He argued the newspapers were publishing terrible lies, was previously holder of pan-germanic ideas but he changed his mind when he recognized expansion plans of Germany in Europe and its railway project Berlin – Baghdad.

³⁵ GOOCH, G. P. – TEMPERLEY, Harold (eds.): *British Documents on the Origin of War 1898 – 1914*, Vol. II, London 1926, No. 91, p. 73.

³⁶ See too BRIDGE, F. R.: *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary 1906 – 1914 A diplomatic history*. London : Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972, p.21 – 30, 36 – 40. HANAK, Harry: *Great Britain and Austria during the First World War: A Study in Formation of Public Opinion*. London : Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 1 – 35. STEED, Wickham: *The Hapsburg Monarchy*. London : Constable Ltd. 1913.

³⁷ WILLIAMSON, R. Samuel, Jr.: *Austria-Hungary and Origins of The First World War*. Basingstoke, London : Macmillan Press, 1993,3d edition, p. 25 – 26.

Seton-Watson tried to find solution of complicated situation in Europe such as on how to stop German expansion. He saw a solution in creation of steady progressive foreign policy towards Europe. He pointed at negative consequences of defensive, non-active foreign policy towards Europe which supported German expansion and its pressure toward the Austria-Hungary. They considered the solution of national problems in this empire for very important matter. According to him more active policy of great powers including Britain to Austria-Hungary in the its national question could help to became strong balance power in Central Europe and barrier against Germany. He declared this theory in his papers *The Future of Austria-Hungary and the Attitude of Great Powers* and *The Southern Slav Question and Habsburg Monarchy*.³⁸ He considered Habsburg monarchy as an important for maintaining the balance of power in Europe. In case of stability and solution of national problems in this Empire to according Seton-Watson view that it is possible to see a German expansion to Euftrat without fears. Steed argued similarly that only strong monarchy can be check of Germany.³⁹ These attitudes about the solution of this problem were rational. However, the situation was more complex and the solution would require more offensive British foreign policy which paid more attention to other parts of its colonial empire rather than toward Europe where its interests were limited to markets and economy.

Seton-Watson continued to publish information about internal issues in the Habsburg monarchy, particularly about solution of national problems. He could get information directly during his personal visits of the country. During his study in Wiena he observed social relations and politics of Austrian government toward effort of Hungarian politicians to obtain a bigger independence by modification of *Ausgleich* (Compromise) law from 1867. Although he previously supported Hungarians after his personal visits and meetings with representatives of other nations such as Romanians from Transylvania, Serbians from Vojvodina and Slovaks he changed his attitude and stood against them.³⁴ He judged their policy of magyarisation and restriction of rights of other nations by the Hungarian government. From his point of view it was a wrong policy and it was one of main barriers to achieve a stability in the Empire. He published it in newspaper articles under heading "*Political prospects in Austria and in Hungary in two parts*". British people got from him report about blood tragedy in Cernova 1907⁴⁰ in *The Spectator*⁴¹ and Steed also published about this in *The Times*.⁴² Public of Britain could read in *The Spectator*⁴³ about court where rebels from Cernova were judged. Slovaks did not help from british diplomats but from few representatives of british intelligentsia. They published about difficult position of Slovaks

³⁸ See nearer DANIŠ, Vladimír: K problematike národnostnej otázky začiatkom 20. storočia a R. W. Seton-Watson. (On the problem of nationality question at the beginning of 20th century and R. W. Seton-Watson.) In BALVÍN, Jaroslav – VAVREKOVÁ, Lenka a kolektív: *Interra 6. Interkulturalita a národnostné menšiny: v sociálnych, filozofických, pedagogických, kultúrnych, historických a prírodovedeckých súvislostiach*. Zborník z rovnomennej medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie konanej 22. – 23. októbra v Nitre. Organizátori: Hnutie R Spiš, Hnutie R Nitra, Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre – Fakulta sociálnych vied, Ústav romologických štúdií, Spišská Nová Ves : Hnutie R-Spiš 2008, p. 427 – 429.

³⁹ *History of the Times*, iii, 476-7.

⁴⁰ See nearer DANIŠ, Vladimír – DVORŠČAKOVÁ, Zdislava : Vzťahy Andreja Hlinku a R. W. Seton-Watsona. (The relations of Andrej Hlinka and R. W. Seton-Watson.) In *Historica Olomucensia* 44, 2013. Sborník prací historických XXXI, Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, Olomouc 2013, s. 78 – 79.

⁴¹ *The Spectator*, 2. 11. 1907.

⁴² *The Times*, 29. 10. 1907, n. 38476, p. 5. Fatal rioting in Hungary.

⁴³ *The Spectator*, 1908, n.4168, p. 782 – 783. A monster trial in Hungary.

in Hungary. However, there was a negative reaction of diplomats regarding these articles. For example Consul General John Clarke proposed that Hungarian politicians should act in British press against Seton-Watson, or he defended Hungarians.⁴⁴ A similar position presented a new Consul General Howard in Budapest who replaced Clarke.⁴⁵ It was visible on Howard's biased comment in *The Times* about election in Skalica in 1910.⁴⁶

Seton-Watson and Steed published also about the solution of national problems of Slavonic people in the South, which became increasingly important in British politics. Seton-Watson supported unity of them in territory of Croatia-Bosnia- Dalmatia, for example in articles in *The Spectator*. According to him this unity could exist in short time in the monarchy or as an independent from the monarchy.⁴⁷ However, Steed supported this union as a part of Austria-Hungary in *The Times* because of agricultural character of these peoples.⁴⁸ Both Seton-Watson and Steed influenced public opinion and proposed that British government should be more interested for solution of national question in the Austria-Hungary. It led to project *The New Europe* under leadership of Seton-Watson in 1913 and its application started in 1916.⁴⁹ It consisted of two communities – *New European* and *The New Europe Society* and journal *The New Europe* which was the first published on 19. October 1916. It presented the idea of creation of a modern Europe based on freedom and self-determination of oppressed nations.⁵⁰

Conclusion

The authors of this paper tried to draft shortly political transfers between Britain and Habsburg monarchy and their influence on national question before WWI. At first the British foreign policy was oriented mainly towards the preservation of its empire during the analysed period. The expanded policy of Germany and its ally the Austria-Hungary was against British interests. Germany wanted new colonies, including their retaking from existing colonial powers and therefore it became the opponent and later the enemy of Britain.

Britain had its own troubles to preserve its empire, which was multinational and spreaded across the globe. The Habsburg monarchy, where more than half of population was created by other than two ruling nations, had similar problems. Britain tried to not intervene in this national matter. He considered it as an internal issue of the Austria-Hungary because Britain was also

⁴⁴ NAL FO 371/196, Clarke to Goschen, No 72, 16. 12. 1907.

⁴⁵ See nearer BRIDGE, F. R.: *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary 1906 – 1914 A diplomatic history*. London : Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972, p. 37. For the most recent and detailed study see too BRIDGE, F. R.: British foreign Office and National Questions in the Dual Monarchy 1900 – 1914. In ROBERTS Evans – KOVÁČ, Dušan – IVANIČKOVÁ, Edita (editors): *Great Britain and Central Europe 1867– 1914*. Bratislava : Veda 2002, p. 55 – 57.

⁴⁶ NAL FO 371/827 Howard to Cartwright, No 51, 20. 6. 1910.

⁴⁷ *The Spectator* 9. 10. 1909.

⁴⁸ *The Times* 23. 6. 1910.

⁴⁹ Archives of Library of School of Slavonic and East European Europe Studies of University College London (SSEES AL), Fond SEW /2/1/2.

⁵⁰ See DANIŠ, V.: R. W. Seton-Watson a začiatky projektu The New Europe (R. W. Seton-Watson and the beginnings of the project The New Europe). In *Studia Politica Slovaca*. Časopis pre politické vedy, najnovšie politické dejiny a medzinárodné vzťahy, č. 1. Bratislava : Ústav politických vied SAV, 2014, roč. VII, s. 43 – 65.

multinational empire. Britain tried to find a peaceful solution of problems in Europe and this policy applied also towards Germany and the Austria-Hungary. Because of increasing danger of these two states its policy became more offensive and it developed into entering to the WWI in Belgium in August 1914. Britain was forced to enter the war when Germany oriented its expansion to Western Europe and its attack of Belgium and the next advance to the west was dangerous for Britain. Theoretically, Britain could be more active policy to Central Europe early but it preferred more reserved policy.

Despite of a non-active British foreign policy towards part of this continent there were important persons in Britain, such as R. Seton-Watson and W. Steed, who pointed out at these national problems. Their activities which culminated at the end of the WWI, contributed to higher interest of the British government to help oppressed nations in the Austria-Hungary.

The article is also dedicated to memory of soldiers and people who died or suffered in the WWI because we remember 100 years anniversary of the beginning this terrible war.