

STUDIES

FRIENDS AND FOES CZECHS/SLOVAKS AND SERBIA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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TASIĆ, Dmitar. Friends and foes: Czechs/Slovaks and Serbia during the First World War. *Historický časopis*, 2020, 68, 5, pp. 797–814, Bratislava. By presenting the most recent scholarship on the intense, although not turbulent, relations between Serbia on one side and Czechs and Slovaks on the other, this article aims to show how the unique experience of being on opposite sides during the First World War did not necessarily lead toward creation of animosities and controversies. On the contrary, it not only resulted in support, understanding and cooperation but also led to the creation of new and deepening of existing liaisons in the decades that followed the first global conflict.

Key words: Great War. Serbia. Czechs. Slovaks. Naturalization. Volunteers. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. Milan Rastislav Štefánik. Kragujevac mutiny.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/histcaso.2020.68.5.2>

Introduction

Connections between Serbs and Czechs and Slovaks before the First World War were intensive and numerous. They were equally intense on the cultural as well as on the economic level. We only have to mention the names of Konstantin Jireček, Pavel Jozef Šafárik and his nephew Janko Šafárik, all of whom during the 19th century left deep marks in the history of not only Serbs but also other Balkan Slavs.¹ At the same time, many Czechs in particular were attracted by the possibilities to develop their businesses in the Principality of Serbia, at that time a small country still under Ottoman rule, but with a considerable level of autonomy. Many of them came and settled there, so already in 1869 a Czech cultural association *Česká beseda* was founded in Serbia. The majority of Czechs and Slovaks lived ordinary life as small entrepreneurs, lecturers, engineers, physicians, musicians, miners or civil servants.

1 SELENIĆ, Slobodan. *Jugoslovensko – čehoslovački odnosi (1945–1955)*. (Yugoslav – Czechoslovak relations 1945–1955). Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2010, p. 26. ISBN - 978-86-7005-082-2.