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Miroslav Spaljković, the Serbian Minister in Russia in the July Crisis of 1914

Abstract: One of those who played a supporting role in the prologue of the great European tragedy of 1914 was Miroslav Spaljković, the Serbian Minister in St Petersburg. Known as a sworn enemy of Austria-Hungary, he was a close associate of the Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić. The latter was aware of Spaljković's weaknesses but trusted him nevertheless. Although Spaljković had spent a brief period of time in St Petersburg prior to the July Crisis and could not have exerted considerable influence on the Russian ruling circles, he spared no effort to secure support for Serbia in the face of Vienna's sabre-rattling. In fact, the Russians did not need a Serbian diplomat to point out what was obvious: that they could not allow the destruction of an independent and pro-Russian Serbia on the southern border of Austria-Hungary. Having sensed the political mood in St Petersburg, he enthusiastically reported to his government that Serbia would not be left in the lurch. His dispatches boosted self-confidence in Serbia and made its leaders firmer in their resistance to Austria-Hungary's demands.

Keywords: Serbia, Miroslav Spaljković, July Crisis 1914, Russia, Austria-Hungary, First World War

Although a century later almost all principal facts regarding the July Crisis of 1914 have been long established, there is still ample scope not only for new interpretations, but also for the elucidation of certain details which are important for understanding the outbreak of war. Activities of certain secondary participants in the July Crisis no doubt merit an in-depth study of their impact on the course of events. In history, just like in theatre, supporting roles in great tragedies are more captivating than leading roles in ephemeral plays. Miroslav Spaljković, the Serbian Minister in Imperial Russia, found himself in such a role in the build-up to the First World War.

In his doctoral thesis, awarded in Paris in 1897, Spaljković intended to prove that the sovereignty over Bosnia-Herzegovina belonged to the Ottoman Empire and not to Austria-Hungary that had occupied the province since 1878. Two years later, he tried to influence French public opinion with an expanded edition of his thesis, in which he pointed out the similarity between the Treaty of Berlin and the Treaty of Frankfurt, arguing that both treaties contained "a permanent cause of war" in future.¹ The young Serb obviously placed his hopes

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¹ M[iroslav]-J. Spalaikovitich, *La Bosnie et l'Herzégovine: étude d'histoire diplomatique et de droit international* (Paris 1899), XXXIII: "Universal suffrage and the principle of nationalities

in the alliance between France and Russia, two of the Great Powers which were, he wrote, most interested in the destiny of the Serbian nation.² He also asserted that Russia had “no personal interest in the Balkans [...] apart from defending Orthodox religion and the rights of the oppressed people”, as opposed to Austria-Hungary which rightfully considered Russia’s attitude “as the greatest obstacle to its conquering ambitions”.³ Furthermore, he wrote that the national interest compelled Russia to prevent *Drang nach Osten*, in which Austria-Hungary was but Germany’s tool.⁴ According to Spalajković, Vienna hesitated to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina due to its fear of internal crisis,⁵ while for Serbia and Montenegro the unification with those regions was their “true and unique *raison d’être*”; and the clash of interests over the province was essentially “the eternal antagonism between the two ideas, that of Greater Serbia and that of Austria as a Balkan power”.⁶ Because of that he warned that “the Serbian question” would be “a source of troubles and dangers for Europe, until it has been solved in a just manner”.⁷

Spalajković soon entered Serbian diplomacy and for a long time he wrote nothing but reports. It took him eleven years to publish his second book – in fact, a booklet about Camillo Cavour. He wrote about Piedmont but he had Serbia on his mind, following his homeland’s diplomatic defeat in the Annexation

stem from the same social principle, the one of democracy based on the will of the people to freely determine their destiny in foreign as well as internal affairs”, Spalajković cleverly made use of both democracy and revanchism in the culminating year of the Dreyfus affair. “Republican France would commit a fatal mistake if it renounced to invoke, in its foreign policy, the principle of nationalities, today when, in the name of that principle, it has to claim two brutally torn provinces [Alsace and Lorraine], and when so many Slavic nationalities in the East (in Austria and Turkey), devoted to France and inspired by the same democratic spirit, aspire to constitute themselves in autonomous political units.” (ibid., XXX)

² Ibid. XXVIII.

³ Ibid. XII.

⁴ Ibid. XXVIII–XXX.

⁵ That crisis, Spalajković foresaw, would lead to the formation of a “new political entity that would comprise, apart from Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia, Slavonia, Srem and Hungarian Banat (former Serbian Vojvodina), Dalmatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina”: “Who knows whether the Habsburg Monarchy would, by annexing another million and a half Slavs, prepare its own ruination!” (ibid. XXII–XXIII).

⁶ Ibid. XXVI; cf. Miroslav Spalajković, “Političke istine”, *Srpska riječ*, 23 February 1921, 1.

⁷ Spalaikovitich, *La Bosnie et l’Herzégovine*, XXV. In a memorandum, written with the view to persuading the British not to extradite him to the Yugoslav communist authorities in December 1945, Spalajković wrote that this thesis embodied his entire political activity: “union of all Serbs and resistance to Pan-Germanism in all its forms” (Spalajković family papers. “Mémoire relatif au Dr Miroslav J. Spalaikovitich, ancien ministre plénipotentiaire de Yougoslavie”, 1).

Crisis: "Bright future was waiting for that small state and its House of Savoy. Piedmont changed its policy, as befitting the weak; [...] it gained as much in victories as in defeats."⁸ The ambitious and rising Secretary-General of the Serbian Foreign Ministry also wrote that Cavour's role had been "very uncomfortable": "Italy's feelings pushed him into action; however, the moment for action had not yet come. He had to encourage and promise but not fulfil; he had to keep a train full of steam without commanding ahead."⁹

One of the consequences of the Annexation Crisis was the Friedjung trial in Vienna (December 1909). Spaljković appeared as a witness in that cause célèbre and proved that the document which had been used by the Ballhausplatz to show that he had participated in financing the Croat-Serb Coalition in Croatia was a poor forgery. He later helped the Czech opposition leader Tomáš Masaryk to make use of the Friedjung affair against the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Aehrenthal, which led to his conflict with the Austro-Hungarian Minister in Belgrade, Count János Forgách. This conflict was so fierce that Forgách wrote to Aehrenthal that Spaljković was a "half-mad deadly enemy" of the Habsburg Monarchy and, moreover, a "Russian spy". The Serbian Foreign Minister Milovan Dj. Milovanović barely succeeded in preventing his assistant from challenging the haughty Forgách to a duel. The incident ended with Forgách being transferred to Dresden and Spaljković to Sofia. Forgách labelled Spaljković a Russian spy mainly because of the latter's close relations with Nicholas Hartwig, the Russian Minister in Belgrade. In addition, Spaljković was also one of the closest collaborators of the Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić.¹⁰

In June 1912, shortly before the First Balkan War, Spaljković told the British chargé d'affaires in Sofia Colville Barclay that Russia, after having helped the formation of the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance "as a barrier to Austrian advance", should impress on Great Britain and France "the desirability of driving the Turks out of Europe". When Barclay remarked that he "failed to grasp what advantages Russia and especially England and France would reap from such a policy, which would probably cause a European war", Spaljković replied that "a European war was not a necessity". In Spaljković's view, Russia believed that Germany's support to Austria-Hungary would not be unlimited and wanted to localise a future war. Nevertheless, he observed that a victory in a European war (he obviously meant a short one) "would mean the crushing of Germany, the recovery of Alsace Lorraine to France, the saving of millions a-year in ship-

⁸ Miroslav Spaljković, *Kavur: patriot i diplomat* (Belgrade 1910), 5–6.

⁹ *Ibid.* 28.

¹⁰ For a biased account see Friedrich Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad: die Hintergründe des Dramas von Sarajevo* (Vienna 1975), 147–168, 185–189; a different view is given in Zoran Bajin, "Miroslav Spaljković na Fridjungovom procesu", *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 85 (2012), 89–112.

building to Great Britain, in fact, the beginning of an era of peace in Europe".¹¹ After the outbreak of the First Balkan War, Spalajković adopted a conciliatory attitude towards Austria-Hungary. In November, in an interview for the *Neue Freie Presse*, he praised Vienna's passive attitude, and even tried to convince his Austro-Hungarian colleague in Sofia that relations between the Dual Monarchy and Serbia had reached a turning point; the two countries could establish a joint protectorate over Albania.¹² In June 1913, Spalajković was said to be a candidate for the post of Foreign Minister, which prompted the Austro-Hungarian Minister in Belgrade Stephan Ugron to ask for instructions from the Ballhausplatz. Count Berchtold responded that, in view of Spalajković's recent moderation, his "unpalatable candidacy" should not be thwarted; however, if Ugron were directly asked for his opinion, he was instructed to state that Spalajković's record was not conducive to improving relations between Belgrade and Vienna.¹³

When a crisis emerged in September over delimitation of the border between Serbia and Albania, Spalajković was the Foreign Minister *ad interim* (Pašić was in Paris), and he took a hostile attitude towards Austria-Hungary.¹⁴ The Russian chargé d'affaires Basil Strandmann recalled that Spalajković had reproached him because of the policy pursued by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov. Spalajković considered Russian policy "weak and unworthy of a great state" and claimed that "it would be sufficient for Russia to 'bang its fist on the

¹¹ *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898–1914* [hereafter: BD], vol. IX/1 (London 1933), 573; Alfred Rappaport von Arbengau, "Spalajković", *Berliner Monatshefte* 7 (1935), 563–564. On the eve of the war, Spalajković informed Pašić how the Russian Minister urged him to facilitate the sending of Serbian reinforcement to the Bulgarian army: "I told Mr. Nekliudov that Serbia knows well what she is doing and that she had agreed to send part of her army to Bulgaria not only for military reasons, but also for political ones, so that, in the future, when we and Russia, in particular, need it, we could demand from Bulgarians, with good reason, to send their army to Serbia to fight against another enemy who is much more dangerous and stronger than Turkey." (*Dokumenti o spoljnoj politici Kraljevine Srbije 1903–1914* [hereafter: DSP], vol. V/2 (Belgrade 1985), 802)

¹² "Die Wünsche Serbiens: Gespräch mit Dr. Spalaikovic", *Neue Freie Presse*, 16 November 1912, 2; *Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von der bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914: diplomatische Aktenstücke des Österreichisch-Ungarischen Ministeriums des Äusseren* [hereafter: ÖUA], vol. IV (Vienna; Leipzig 1930), 912–913, 920–923, 969.

¹³ *Ibid.* VI, 723, 745–746.

¹⁴ Spalajković told the irritable chargé d'affaires von Storck that Austria-Hungary, with millions of Serbs *within its borders*, was acting as the protector of the Albanians "against the brothers of this highly-cultured nation", while its agents stirred up Albanian brigands' attacks against Serbia; Storck retorted accusing Serbia of injustice against the Albanians. Shortly before Pašić's return to Belgrade, Spalajković's statements became moderate, but Storck still advised the Ballhausplatz to be extremely cautious with the Serbs, especially with Pašić who, he claimed, lied less than Spalajković only because he talked less. (*ibid.* VII, 295–296, 373, 376–377, 387–388)

table' so as to make whole Europe submit to her will".¹⁵ Because of Spaljković's stance, St. Petersburg impatiently awaited for Pašić's return to Serbia.¹⁶ Nonetheless, the Prime Minister's presence in Belgrade did not prevent the culmination of the crisis following Vienna's ultimatum on 17 October; but the Serbian government gave in and eliminated the possibility of a war.¹⁷ "There was no doubt that Spaljković would have reacted to the Austrian ultimatum in a completely different way, which could have led to major complications", Strandmann wrote in his memoirs. "Pašić's complaisance caused Spaljković's discontent, so he openly talked about his disagreement everywhere, claiming that Austria-Hungary could not have done anything if the ultimatum had been rejected."¹⁸

At the beginning of 1914, Spaljković took up his new post in the St Petersburg Legation. Having received his letter of credence, Sazonov insisted that the Serbo-Bulgarian rapprochement was necessary: Serbia could not allow difficulties in the East to prevent her from pursuing an active policy towards Austria-Hungary.¹⁹ During the audience with the Emperor, Spaljković followed Pašić's instructions and talked about Serbia's need to undertake security measures on the Albanian border. Not concealing his satisfaction with deterioration of the situation in Albania, the Tsar assured Spaljković that Rus-

¹⁵ Vasilij N. Štrandman, *Balkanske uspomene* (Belgrade: Žagor, 2009), 225.

¹⁶ Alluding to Spaljković's designation as a new Serbian Minister in St Petersburg, Sazonov's Assistant Anatoly Neratov told the Austro-Hungarian chargé d'affaires that further pressure on Belgrade was not advisable: "Mr. Pašić is absent, and Mr. Spaljković, who is a hothead and whom I prefer to see here than in Belgrade, would only be made obstinate by a 'demonstration.'" (ÖUA, VII, 386; Friedrich Stieve, ed., *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel Iswolskis 1911–1914: aus den Geheimakten der russischen Schriftwechsel Staatsarchive*, vol. III (Berlin 1926), 295; Vladimir Ćorović, *Odnosi između Srbije i Austro-Ugarske u XX veku* (Belgrade 1936), 499)

¹⁷ Ernst Christian Helmreich, *The diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912–1913* (London 1938), 422–429; Samuel R. Williamson, *Austria-Hungary and the origins of the First World War* (New York 1991), 151–153; F[rancis] R[oy] Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo: the foreign policy of Austria-Hungary, 1866–1914* (London 1972), 359–360; Ćorović, *Odnosi između Srbije i Austro-Ugarske*, 500–509.

¹⁸ Štrandman, *Balkanske uspomene*, 230. At the end of October, Sazonov warned the Serbian Minister Dimitrije Popović that some of Spaljković's statements about Serbia's long-range plans regarding Albania had leaked to Vienna. Moreover, he confided in the British chargé d'affaires that "Serbia had been more to blame than was generally supposed" because Spaljković "had held the most imprudent language with regard to Serbia's coming to an understanding with Essad Pasha" to crush the Albanian government and settle the question of Serbia's access to the Adriatic Sea. (DSP, VI/3, 457; BD, X/1, 49; Helmreich, *The diplomacy of the Balkan Wars*, 421)

¹⁹ DSP, VII/1, 128–130.

sia would try to secure Serbia “from that side.”²⁰ Pašić soon had an important discussion with Nicholas II when he visited St. Petersburg together with the Crown Prince Aleksandar. He said that Serbia required peace in order to recover and arm herself, and asked for rifles, ammunition and artillery. The Russian Emperor promised aid. Pašić stated that the Yugoslavs in Austria-Hungary understood that their salvation could come only from Russia or Serbia. If one of the Tsar’s daughters became the Queen of Serbia, he went on, “she would gain affection of all the Serbs and perhaps later be crowned as “the Empress of the Serbo-Croatian, Yugoslav nation.”²¹ Spaljčković informed Belgrade that the reception given to the Crown Prince and Pašić exceeded all expectations and augured sympathies and support from Russia, which had grown indifferent to Bulgaria.²²

The visit was successful indeed, but the armaments promised by the Emperor did not arrive in Serbia quickly. The decision in this matter lay with the Ministry of War where, regardless of the support Spaljčković received from V. A. Artamonov, the Russian military attaché in Belgrade on leave, opinion prevailed that the armament of Russian army had priority over any shipment abroad.²³ Spaljčković and Artamonov suggested to Pašić and Hartwig that, although the people in St Petersburg were “completely certain that Serbia would mobilise in the case of a European war and spring into action,” it would be wise to reinforce that belief with the Serbian offer to conclude a military convention

²⁰ Ibid. 136; Arhiv Srbije [Archives of Serbia], Belgrade [hereafter: AS], Ministarstvo inostranih dela – Političko odeljenje [hereafter: MID-PO], 1914, box IV, file VI, M. Spaljčković to N. Pašić, 21 January/8 January (Old Style), 1914; *Dnevnik imperatora Nikolaia II* (Moscow 1991), 442.

²¹ M[ilosh] Boghitschewitsch, ed., *Die auswärtige Politik Serbiens 1903–1914*, vol. I (Berlin 1928), 414–421; Nikola Popović, *Odnosi Srbije i Rusije u Prvom svetskom ratu* (Belgrade 1977), 31–33; Djordje Stanković, *Nikola Pašić i jugoslovensko pitanje*, vol. I (Belgrade 1985), 138–139. Spaljčković told the French chargé d’affaires, who had heard that the Serbian Prime Minister talked of possible conflicts with Bulgaria, Turkey and Austria-Hungary in order to receive Russian aid, that Pašić had wanted “to talk about all eventualities”. (*Documents diplomatiques français (1871–1914)* [hereafter: DDF], 3^e Série (1911–1914), vol. IX (Paris 1936), 310)

²² AS, MID-PO, 1914, b. V, f. V, M. Spaljčković to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29/16 January, 1914; 30/7 January 1914; 2 February /20 January 1914. At the same time, Spaljčković allegedly complained to “some Russian gentlemen” of the lack of understanding for Serbian interests in St. Petersburg. Since the German Ambassador shared this information with his Austro-Hungarian colleague, the latter misled Vienna with his conclusion that the Serbian Minister was not satisfied with the results of Pašić’s visit. (ÖUA, VII, 817)

²³ DSP, VII/1, 381–382, 446.

with Russia.²⁴ Spaljković told Sazonov that Serbia would certainly actively support Russia in every eventuality: “Serbia, however, will not do anything against Russia’s will and together with Russia it will patiently wait for the day of score-settling, especially because she needs to recover [from the war against Turkey] and because Russia is getting stronger in time and Austria more shaky. Yet, if an unexpected turn of events leads to a general war, only armed Serbia will be able to respond to call. The Russian General Headquarters should consider our front against Austria an extension of the Russian front.” Having praised Pašić’s “patience and prudent policy”, Sazonov replied that he did not believe there was “such force that could prevent the Serbian people from attacking Austria” in case of war, but that they should wait “for certain little papers to disappear and the persons who signed them to die.”²⁵ Nevertheless, the question of armaments for the Serbian army was still unsolved in early summer.²⁶

In February, Spaljković informed Pašić about the rumours of Sazonov’s imminent replacement and the possibility of Hartwig’s taking his place. Spaljković emphasised that the change in the Foreign Ministry would be certain if someone more energetic took Berchtold’s place, because Russia would then need “a more decisive and determined minister.”²⁷ However, in late March he wired that Sazonov’s position did not seem shaken any longer and that “greater experience and greater determination” could be observed in his work.²⁸ This did not prevent him from stressing “Hartwig’s immense diplomatic and statesmanlike abilities and the correctness of his views and conduct during the Balkan crisis” to the recently appointed Prime Minister Ivan Goremykin. The latter was in agreement,²⁹ but the appointment of a foreign minister in Russia did not depend much on a prime minister, especially on an old bureaucrat such as

²⁴ Arhiv Jugoslavije [Archives of Yugoslavia], Belgrade [hereafter: AJ], Zbirka Jovan M. Jovanović Pižon [hereafter: JJP], box 2, M. Spaljković to N. Pašić, 19/6 March 1914; Milorad Ekmčić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije 1914* (Belgrade 1973), 66.

²⁵ DSP, VII/1, 546–547; Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, 56.

²⁶ Popović, *Odnosi Srbije i Rusije*, 33–34.

²⁷ DSP, VII/1, 281, 327–328; AS, MID-PO, 1914, b. IV, f. VI, M. Spaljković to N. Pašić, 16/3 February 1914. Hartwig’s role was also noted in Russian nationalist circles, which wanted him to replace Sazonov whom they considered too cautious. Cf. Anatolii Venediktovich Ignat’ev, *Vneshniaia politika Rossii 1907–1914: tendentsii, liudi, sobytia* (Moscow 2000), 43; Sean McMeekin, *July 1914: countdown to war* (New York 2013), 52; DDF, 3, IX, 381.

²⁸ DSP, VII/1, 559.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 699.

Goremykin.³⁰ Therefore, Spalajković's efforts to lobby for Hartwig, which he did not keep secret of,³¹ resulted only in Sazonov's increasing distrust in both men.

Of course, the mere fact that he was Hartwig's protégé, which played a part in his appointment to St. Petersburg,³² made Spalajković's personal relations with Sazonov more difficult. Hartwig had no qualms about disparaging the head of Russian diplomacy: he proclaimed that Sazonov, whose sole important diplomatic position had been at the Holy See, was capable of "nothing more than reading papal encyclicals".³³ Not surprisingly, Sazonov did not hold his slanderer in high esteem either. "Sazonov did not like Hartwig and Hartwig knew it", Spalajković succinctly recorded many years later. "There were differences both in their mentalities and abilities. They were both filled with Slavic feelings. They were both sincere Russian patriots. Sazonov knew Western Europe well, while Hartwig knew Eastern Europe, Austria and the Balkans in particular, which was especially important for Russian interests. Because of his education and his conceptions, Sazonov was closer to the mindset of Russian intellectuals, while Hartwig, entirely imbued with traditional-historic feeling about Russian and Slavic mission, was closer to the soul of Russian people."³⁴ And although he had more sympathies for Hartwig, Spalajković admitted that Sazonov had been "an honest statesman, perfectly loyal, driven by a sincere and enlightened sympathy for Slavic nations, especially Serbia".³⁵

³⁰ Vladimir Nikolaevich Kokovtsov, *Iz moego proshlogo: vospominaniia 1903–1919 gg.*, vol. II (Moscow 1992), 267. Spalajković and Goremykin had a mutual acquaintance, journalist Yevgeny Shelking – the former proposed to his government to decorate him. Cf. AS, MID-PO, 1914, b. VI, f. VIII, M. Spalajković to N. Pašić, 13 May/30 April 1914; Eugene de Schelking, *Recollections of a Russian diplomat: the suicide of monarchies (William II and Nicholas II)* (New York 1918), 214–216. Shelking had been a diplomat, but his career had been destroyed by his passion for gambling. Although an intrigant and alleged police informer, he was intelligent and he had protectors among reactionary ministers. Cf. Anatoly Nekludoff, *Diplomatic reminiscences before and during the World War, 1911–1917* (London 1920), 88–89.

³¹ AJ, JJP, b. 35, M. Dimitrijević to J. Jovanović, 19/6 May 1916; b. 36, R. Jovanović to J. M. Jovanović, undated (1916); b. 38, M. Nenadić to J. Jovanović, 18/5 May 1916.

³² Štrandman, *Balkanske uspomene*, 229. "Before my departure for Russia at the end of 1913, Hartwig told me that he considered my new duty to be an inseparable part of his mission in the Balkans, and he did not conceal his satisfaction with Pašić sending me to St. Petersburg", Spalajković remembered. "Our viewpoints entirely coincided in all matters without exception." ("Nikola Hartvig: iz uspomena Dr. M. Spalajkovića", *Pravda*, 23 July 1939, 10)

³³ Andrej Toshev, *Balkanskite vojni*, vol. I (Sofia 1929), 367–368; DDF, 3, X, 734.

³⁴ "Nikola Hartvig: iz uspomena Dr. M. Spalajkovića", 10.

³⁵ M[iroslav] Spalajkovitch, *Une journée du Ministre de Serbie à Pétrograd: le 24 juillet 1914* (Paris 1934), 9. (The text of the speech titled "Les journées d'inquiétude vécue à Pétrograd" in AS, Lični fond Miroslava Spalajkovića, 83.)

In March, Spaljković extensively reported to Belgrade on fierce polemic between the Russian and German press,³⁶ the origin of which he found in the German fear of Russia's intention to "conduct an active Balkan policy, i.e. to impose, even with force of arms, its Balkan programme on Austria and Germany". That fear, he claimed, was fuelled on account of the knowledge of "colossal proportions" of Russian military preparations: "Once you have added that Goremykin, who is not considered a friend in Germany, arrived to power, along with a possibility that energetic and decisive Hartwig takes Sazonov's place [...] then the storm raised by German and Austrian semi-official press becomes completely understandable from a psychological point of view." According to Spaljković, an article on Russia's readiness for war inspired by the Minister of War Sukhomlinov caused "general approval and joy" and, "after ten years of silence", restored faith in the strength of the Russian army.³⁷ He also drew attention to the rumours regarding a possible alliance between Russia, France, Germany and Great Britain and the partition of the Dual Monarchy based on the alleged conversations between Wilhelm II and Sukhomlinov.³⁸

Though he attentively followed European politics, Spaljković was primarily interested in the Balkan affairs. He lobbied Russian journalists to take a favourable view of Serbia and he soon boasted to Pašić that Bulgarian influence on the press was suppressed.³⁹ The Bulgarian Minister, General Radko Dimitriev, tried to convince him of the necessity for Serbo-Bulgarian reconciliation with the Russian mediation. Having underestimated his immense Russophilia, Spaljković did not believe *Napoleoncheto* (Little Napoleon) because he thought the Bulgarian was just aiming to separate Serbia from Greece and Romania.⁴⁰ Moreover, their discussion carried on through the Russian press and turned into a fierce polemic.⁴¹ Pašić found the whole affair unpleasant, so he reproached his

³⁶ Valentin Alexeevich Emets et al., eds., *Istoriia vneshnej politiki Rossii: konets XIX – nachalo XX veka* (Moscow 1999), 418–425; Sergei Sergeevich O'denburg, *Tsarstvovanie imperatora Nikolaia II*, vol. II (Munich 1949), 134–135; Oleg Rudol'fovich Airapetov, *Uchastie Rossiiskoi imperii v Pervoi mirovoi voine (1914–1917)*, vol. I (Moscow 2014), 16–17, 20.

³⁷ DSP, VII/1, 448–451, 485–487.

³⁸ Spaljković and the French chargé d'affaires were told at the *Novoe Vremya* office that this information came directly from Sukhomlinov, but it was most probably the result of the former Prime Minister Witte's intrigues. Cf. *ibid.* 559–561; DDF, 3, X, 20–21, 33–34; George Buchanan, *My mission to Russia and other diplomatic memories*, vol. I (London 1923), 182–183; Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije*, 75–76; Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, 236–237.

³⁹ DSP, VII/1, 294; AS, MID-PO, 1914, b. IV, f. VI, M. Spaljković to N. Pašić, 27/14 March 1914.

⁴⁰ DSP, VII/1, 545–546.

⁴¹ "Razgovor sa g. Spaljkovićem. G. D-r Spaljković o zauzeću Jedrena i o srpsko-bugarskim odnosima", *Samoupravna*, 24 March/6 April 1914, 1–2; "Srbija i Bugarska. Razgovor sa g.

minister. Spaljković responded with a personal letter in which he promised to cease polemics, claiming that Sazonov did not blame him for the unfortunate affair.⁴² In fact, the polemics between the two Ministers continued in disguise. Spaljković found out that an unnamed Bulgarian statesman whose interview was published in May, in which he denounced the alleged forced recruitment and executions in Macedonia, was Radko Dimitriev himself. The Serbian Minister responded in kind in the pages of *Novoe Vremya* – in the form of an interview with a certain statesman in Belgrade.⁴³

In the spring of 1914, Spaljković was preoccupied with several questions of major importance for Serbia, apart from the relations with Bulgaria. He discussed the possibility of unification between Serbia and Montenegro, the rectification of the Serbian-Albanian border and the Oriental railways with Sazonov and the Assistant Minister Neratov. The two men received his arguments with sympathy. Nevertheless, Spaljković warned Belgrade that the news about interference of the Serbian army with politics left an extremely negative impression in St. Petersburg and had to be refuted so as not to hinder the solution of “the question of Albania” in Serbia’s favour. He also talked about the Oriental railways with the Italian Ambassador, Marquis Carlotti, who told him that

Spaljkovićem”, *Samouprava*, 27 March/9 April 1914, 1–2; “Miroslav i Ratko”, *Štampa*, 3 / 16 April 1914, 1; “Diplomatski predstavnici i štampa”, *Samouprava*, 3/18 April 1914, 1.

⁴² In that letter, Spaljković also wrote about an interesting conversation he had had with the journalist Vsevolod Svatkovsky as well as the news he had received from his friend in Sofia, the British Minister Bax-Ironside: “Svatkovsky, whom you know well too, stopped by yesterday. He had returned from Vienna the other day. He had also visited Sazonov and told him [...] [that in] Austria conciliatory policy towards national minorities was being pursued. [...] Austria does not do it because she truly wants to alter her domestic political system, but because it needs to complete its military programme without major internal friction, and then she would revert to her old system. Svatkovsky says that Russia should do the same, especially regarding the Poles. It is not enough to make military preparations, but one’s domestic policy should also [...] be shaped so as to ensure success in case of war. And once Russia has defeated Austria, she can return to her *russification system in Poland*. Sazonov shares this viewpoint completely. But unfortunately, Svatkovsky says, there are other ministers who oversimplify the matter. [...] Sazonov told Svatkovsky that, at the moment, no efforts are spared to close ranks between the Powers of Triple Entente, and, for that reason, negotiations between Russia, France and England were underway. If possible, a formal alliance will be made. The English Minister writes to me from Sofia that [...] King Ferdinand’s position has become increasingly difficult [...] The English Minister does not believe that a European war will break out in the next two years. Much will depend, he says, on how long the Austrian Emperor will survive.” (AS, MID-PO, 1914, b. VII, f. VI, M. Spaljković to N. Pašić, 15/2 April 1914)

⁴³ Ibid. M. Spaljković to N. Pašić, 23/10 April 1914.

“Russia is becoming so powerful that the whole world bows to her and everyone endeavours to gain her friendship”.⁴⁴

Spaljković wanted to spend the beginning of the summer resting in his dacha in Finland.⁴⁵ His plan was, however, spoiled because of the strained relations between Greece and Turkey,⁴⁶ and then the news reached him about the Sarajevo assassination of 28 June. The death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand was followed by the mob attacks on the Sarajevo Serbs and their property and the news of the alleged arrest of his father-in-law Gligorije Jeftanović, one of the political leaders of Bosnian Serbs.⁴⁷ That is why he asked Sazonov, who tried to calm him down, to enquire into the fate of Jeftanović and Milan Srškić (Jeftanović’s other son-in-law) via the Russian Consulate in Sarajevo. However, when the information to the effect that neither of them had been arrested

⁴⁴ DSP, VII/1, 620, 649, 666–667, 703, 772, 794–795; VII/2, 130–131, 260, 297; AS, MID-PO, 1914, b. VII, f. X, M. Spaljković to N. Pašić, 13 May/30 April 1914; b. X, f. III, M. Spaljković to N. Pašić, 18/5 June 1914.

⁴⁵ Narodna biblioteka Srbije – Posebni fondovi [National Library of Serbia – Special Fonds] [hereafter: NBS-PF], Arhiva Grgura Jakšića, R 558/IX/637, M. Spaljković to G. Jakšić, 17/4 April 1914.

⁴⁶ Spaljković informed Neratov on 16 June that Pašić, who was worried because of a possibility of war between Greece and Turkey, thought that the Great Powers should intervene in Athens and Constantinople in order to preserve peace in Europe at all costs. Having received a reply that all necessary steps had been taken, he informed Pašić that the Russian government was content with the advice he had given to Greeks and pleased that he remained in power, which was a guarantee of Serbia’s “wise conduct” in the future. (*Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia v epohu imperializma: dokumenty iz arkhivov tsarskogo i vremennogo pravitel'stv 1878–1917 gg.* [hereafter: MO], Ser. 3: 1914–1917 gg., vol. III (Moscow 1933), 315; AS, MID-PO, 1914, b. VIII, f. III, M. Spaljković to N. Pašić, 18/5 June 1914)

⁴⁷ Andrej Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War 1914–1918* (West Lafayette 2007), 18–19; MO, 3, IV, 64–65; “Un soulèvement aurait été préparé en Bosnie-Herzégovine”, *Le Matin*, 30 June 1914, 3. Rumours spreading across Sarajevo that Spaljković and Prince Djordje Karadjordjević were behind the assassination were simply absurd. As for Jeftanović, the assassins were hostile to him and the older generation of the Bosnian Serb politicians. Princip stated during the trial that it was not true that he knew “Jeftanović or Spaljković,” and Čabrinović even said during the investigation that the Young Bosnian group in Belgrade had discussed eliminating Jeftanović, whom they considered to be a political turncoat. (Vladimir Dedijer, *Sarajevo 1914* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1978), vol. I, 29, 264–265, 429–430; vol. II, 256; Vojislav Bogičević, ed., *Sarajevski atentat: izvorne stenografske bilješke sa glavne rasprave protiv Gavrila Principa i drugova, održane u Sarajevu 1914 g.* (Sarajevo 1954), 275). Friedrich Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, 114–116, tried to obfuscate the matter with his tendentious interpretation of a story told by Gligorije’s son Dušan Jeftanović, whose unreliability is further amplified by the fact that it was published eleven years after his murder in 1941. (Vojislav Bogičević, “Posle boja kopljem u trnje!.. Prilog istoriji sarajevskog atentata”, *NIN*, 20 July, 1952, 10; Nikola Dj. Trišić, *Sarajevski atentat u svjetlu bibliografskih podataka* (Sarajevo 1964), 402–403)

reached him on 5 July, the Serbian diplomat had already voiced his resentment in Russian newspapers.⁴⁸

On 29 June, the *Vechnee Vremia* published a statement from “Serbian diplomatic circles” that the entire Russian press attributed to Spalajković. According to that statement, the Sarajevo assassination had nothing to do with Serbia because there were no revolutionary organisations in that country; also, there was no Black Hand, which was a fabrication of the Viennese diplomatic circles.⁴⁹ It was the irritation of the persecuted Serbs and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, in particular, the rumours of Franz Ferdinand’s personal responsibility for the oppression that were the true reasons for the assassination. An anonymous Serbian diplomat also reminded of the fiasco of the previous high-treason trials in Austria-Hungary and stressed that, despite all endeavours to prove that there had been a conspiracy plotted in Belgrade, he was convinced that the investigation would show that Serbia had no connection with “that disgraceful thing”. Two days later, the *Novoe Vremia* published another statement from “the Serbian diplomatic circles” claiming that the Austro-Hungarian authorities suspected and targeted all Serbs and that the Jesuits stirred up conflicts between the Catholic and Orthodox Christian Serbs. Furthermore, there was a veiled threat that Jeftanović’s arrest, a provocation to the entire population of Bosnia, could cause major complications.⁵⁰

The news about the statements attributed to Spalajković promptly reached the Vienna press. Budapest’s *Pester Lloyd* fiercely denounced him because, as a

⁴⁸ MO, 3, IV, 110, 132. Sazonov told Spalajković that he did not consider the Austrian accusations important and that Europe’s sympathies towards Serbia would only increase after the violence perpetrated against the Bosnian Serbs. Simultaneously, he wanted him to urge Pašić to restrain from any overhasty step and to calm passions in Serbia and Bosnia at all costs (DSP, VII/2, 469, 476; Mark Cornwall, “Serbia”, in *Decisions for war 1914*, ed. Keith Wilson (London 2006), 60–61).

⁴⁹ In July 1917, after the execution of the Black Hand’s leader Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević Apis, Spalajković told the Foreign Minister in the Russian Provisional Government Tereshchenko “about that group of officers, about their sectarian solidarity, their terrorizing the dynasty, the Government, the population, their fatal influence on our [Serbian] internal and foreign affairs, our relations with Bulgaria and Austria in 1913 and 1914, about the character and the intentions of Colonel Dimitrijević, who wanted to play a part of Enver Pasha in Serbia and establish military oligarchy.” (AS, MID – Strogo poverljiva arhiva, 1917, 323, M. Spalajković to N. Pašić, 10 July/27 June 1917); cf. Hans Uebersberger, *Österreich zwischen Russland und Serbien: zur Südslawischen Frage und der Entstehung des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Cologne; Graz 1958), 305–314.

⁵⁰ ÖUA, VIII, 281–284; Trišić, *Sarajevski atentat u svjetlu bibliografskih podataka*, 18, 23–24; Cornwall, “Serbia”, 66, 89; Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York 2013), 388–389. It should be noted that Spalajković soon suggested to Belgrade to decorate Manuilov, an editor in the *Novoe Vremia*. (AS, MID-PO, 1914, b. VI, f. VIII, M. Spalajković to N. Pašić, 13 July/30 June 1914)

“lawyer of the Sarajevo murderers”, he had pleaded for mitigating circumstances and it demanded from the Serbian Government to call him to account.⁵¹ The Ballhausplatz asked for a translation of the Serbian Minister’s “untrue as well as improper” statements from the chargé d’affaires in St. Petersburg.⁵² Having sent it, Czernin claimed that the purpose of Spaljković’s statements was to further poison Russian public opinion against Austria-Hungary and he observed that it was high time to stop his “mendacious talkativeness”.⁵³ On 6 July, Czernin expressed his anger with the “tactless interviews” full of untruths before Sazonov, who tried to explain Spaljković’s irritation away by reminding of the attacks on his family in Sarajevo. “The conversation, that was at times rather stormy, ended quite friendly since Mr. Sazonov, after all, admitted the Serbian Minister’s lack of tact and proper upbringing”, Czernin informed Vienna.⁵⁴

In the meantime, Spaljković professed to the Russian press that the accusation that “the criminals” had operated under command from Belgrade was groundless and that Serbia, which sincerely expressed her condolences to the Habsburg Monarchy, would continue to do everything in her power to maintain good neighbourly relations.⁵⁵ The Russian newspapers also published that Spaljković had explained to Sazonov, who had fully agreed, the Serbian attitude and pointed out the impossibility of having Austro-Hungarian officials conduct an investigation in Belgrade.⁵⁶ Spaljković wired Pašić that the Russian press, after some initial confusion, was not misled by Vienna and condemned the “savage attacks on the innocent Serbs in Bosnia”. He found it inconvenient to write about the impression that the death of Archduke made in St. Petersburg: “The feeling of satisfaction is general.”⁵⁷

Spaljković was struck by Hartwig’s sudden death in the Austro-Hungarian Legation on 10 July, which was a severe blow since both he and Serbia lost their principal friend and supporter. Sazonov took Hartwig’s death “quite indifferently”, but he thanked the Serbian minister for a magnificent funeral in

⁵¹ “Aeußerungen des serbischen Gesandten in Petersburg Spaljković”, *Neue Freie Presse* (Abendblatt), 2 July 1914, 2; *Pester Lloyd*, 3 July 1914, 1–2; “La campagne serbophobe”, *Le Figaro*, 4 July 1914, 2.

⁵² ÖUA, VIII, 264.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 285; Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, 112.

⁵⁴ ÖUA, VIII, 337–338. Czernin complained of Spaljković to the Italian Ambassador as well, cf. *I documenti diplomatici italiani* [hereafter: DDI], Quarta serie: 1908–1914, vol. XII (Rome 1964), 136.

⁵⁵ “Izjava g. Spaljkovića”, *Samouprava*, 24 June/7 July 1914, 2.

⁵⁶ DDI, 4, XII, 103–104.

⁵⁷ DSP, VII/2, 504, 514; Cornwall, “Serbia”, 61; Popović, *Odnosi Srbije i Rusije*, 46; Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, 102–103.

Belgrade.⁵⁸ Soon the rumours about Hartwig's poisoning reached St. Petersburg. Although Spalajković was not so naive to believe in them, a quarter-century later he developed a fantastic theory that the Ballhausplatz, and especially Forgách, aware of Hartwig's heart condition, had instigated the Minister in Belgrade Giesl to inflict "as much nervous agitation as possible" on the Russian so as to remove, in this brutal way, the greatest obstacle to the plan to localise the Austro-Serbian conflict.⁵⁹

Although the Ballhausplatz did not use such methods, an insidious blow in the form of the ultimatum to Serbia was being prepared there.⁶⁰ Neratov told Spalajković that Sazonov, who was briefly absent from St. Petersburg, believed that Austria-Hungary would not dare to undertake any measures.⁶¹ On his return, however, Sazonov became very anxious because of the alarming news he received; he blamed, apparently under Spalajković's influence, Forgách (then the Second Section Chief at the Ballhausplatz) and the Hungarian Prime Minister

⁵⁸ Štrandman, *Balkanske uspomene*, 274–279; MO, 3, IV, 263–267; DSP, VII/2, 547; "Nikola Hartvig: iz uspomena Dr. M. Spalajkovića", 10; Airapetov, *Uchastie Rossijskoj imperii v Pervoj mirovoj voine*, I, 25. Two weeks later, acting on instructions from Belgrade, Spalajković suggested Sazonov to send a new minister to Serbia immediately. On his own initiative, he proposed the *Counsellor of the Embassy* in Vienna Prince Kudashev, because he was "most convenient due to the close distance [between Vienna and Belgrade]" and because some friends recommended him as "an entirely loyal and honest man, who is the only one capable of replacing Hartwig to some extent." (AS, MID-PO, 1914, b. II, f. VIII. M. Spalajković to N. Pašić, 24/11 July 1914)

⁵⁹ "Nikola Hartvig: iz uspomena Dr. M. Spalajkovića", 10.

⁶⁰ Imanuel Geiss, ed., *July 1914, the outbreak of the First World War: selected documents* (New York 1974), 89–101; Annika Mombauer, ed., *The Origins of the First World War: diplomatic and military documents* (Manchester 2013), 238–239; Williamson, *Austria-Hungary and the origins of the First World War, 197–203*; Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der Habsburgermonarchie 1914–1918* (Vienna 2013), 102–115. During the initial discussions in Vienna about the content of the ultimatum, it was suggested that the Serbian government's apology for Spalajković's statements be demanded. Yet, in article 9 of the final version, no names were mentioned in connection with the requested explanation of anti-Austrian statements made by Serbian officials from 28 June onwards (Luigi Albertini, *The origins of the war of 1914*, vol. II (Oxford 1953), 171, 288). Count Forgách further revised the ultimatum and he had a major role in the drafting of article 9, as well as the key article 6 (*ibid.* 255–256; Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, 210). Afterwards, Spalajković attributed to his personal enemy an even greater share of blame, claiming that Forgách had borne in mind their conflict and the fact that he had left Belgrade compromised while drafting the text of the ultimatum ("G. dr. M. Spalajković nam govori o Forgaču, Fridjungovom procesu i ulozi 'Politike'", *Politika*, 28 February 1929, 2).

⁶¹ DSP, VII/2, 589–590.

Tisza for being the main supporters of war.⁶² Pašić was also anxious and, on 18 July, he sent a circular note to all legations except that in Vienna, in which he emphasised a peaceful stance of the Serbian government and pleaded for the help of the Great Powers.⁶³ Having partially altered and strengthened it, Spaljkočić rewrote Pašić's note into a memorandum in French, which claimed that the press campaign against Serbia excited the public opinion in Austria-Hungary in order to prepare "desirable conditions for the blow premeditated in certain government circles in Vienna and Budapest". It also stressed that Serbia wanted peace and good neighbourly relations with the Dual Monarchy and, for that reason, she was willing to agree to judicial process in Serbian tribunals "against the possible accomplices in the crime of Sarajevo"; but Serbia "could not, in any case, accept a possible demarche of a kind that any state, which wanted to preserve its independence and dignity, would refuse". When this memorandum was sent to Sazonov, he was already preoccupied with the visit of the French President Raymond Poincaré.⁶⁴

On 21 July, Poincaré talked to the diplomatic corps in the Winter Palace. While waiting to greet the President, Spaljkočić told the British Ambassador "with considerable emotion" that he regarded the present crisis "as the most dangerous one through which Serbia had passed during the last two years" and emphasised that the Serbian government was willing to meet any legitimate demand on the part of the Dual Monarchy. However, Tisza and Forgách were inflaming the "public opinion so as to force the aged Emperor's hand". To Buchanan's remark that "if Serbia adhered to her present correct attitude it would be impossible for Austria to find a pretext for attacking her", Spaljkočić replied that Austria-Hungary would fabricate some incident for that purpose. Buchanan

⁶² Sazonov told the German Ambassador that the actual chiefs of the bellicose faction were Count Forgách, "an intriguer of the worst kind," and Count Tisza, "a fool". A few days later, he repeated the same to the British Ambassador, adding that he feared that Forgách's influence at the Ballhausplatz was all-powerful (*Die deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch 1914*. Herausgegeben im Auftrage des Auswärtigen Amtes (Berlin 1921), 139; BD, XI, 118). In fact, Forgách was not the main supporter of war, Tisza even less so; but the former substantially influenced the latter to stop opposing the idea of settling scores with Serbia for good, cf. Rauchensteiner, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der Habsburgermonarchie*, 104; Graydon A. Tunstall, Jr., "Austria-Hungary," in *The Origins of World War I*, eds. Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig (Cambridge 2003), 118; Fritz Fellner, "Austria-Hungary," in *Decisions for war 1914*, 11–12.

⁶³ DSP, VII/2, 595–598; Mombauer, *The Origins of the First World War*, 283–285.

⁶⁴ DSP, VII/2, 611–614; MO, 3, IV, 374–377; Thomas G. Otte, *July Crisis: the world's descent into war, summer 1914* (Cambridge 2014), 209–210. At the same time, Spaljkočić asked Russian and French journalists to start "an energetic campaign against Austria-Hungary's hostile stance and intentions towards Serbia" (DSP, VII/2, 615).

repeated to Poincaré what Spalajković had told him.⁶⁵ And the French President resolutely stated to the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador (who avoided to specify what was demanded from Serbia and falsely claimed that the matter was still under consideration) that he hoped the Habsburg Empire would not descend on a small country which had friends. Count Szápáry wired the Ballhausplatz that he suspected the Serbian Minister, whom Sazonov had recently characterized as “unbalanced”, of having a hand in Poincaré’s “tactless” and “sounding like a threat” utterance.⁶⁶ After his conversation with the ambassadors, the French president just shook hands with the disappointed ministers. He only stopped before Spalajković and asked him for news from Serbia. After receiving a reply to the effect that the situation was rather grave, he said: “We will help you to improve it.”⁶⁷

Spalajković’s words were soon going to prove accurate despite Szápáry’s attempt to convince him that the responsible people in Vienna were not agitated with regard to Austro-Serbian relations.⁶⁸ A true state of affairs became clear to Spalajković when he received on 24 July a dispatch from Belgrade that informed him of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to Serbia.⁶⁹ He immediately phoned to arrange a meeting with Sazonov, who had a busy day ahead of him. Sazonov’s first reaction to the news was ominous: “It’s a European war!”⁷⁰ When Szápáry read him the ultimatum with commentaries, Sazonov countered that it was all “Count Forgách’s doing” and that Austria-Hungary wanted to go to war with

⁶⁵ BD, XI, 61–62; Buchanan, *My mission to Russia*, I, 188.

⁶⁶ ÖUA, VIII, 337–338; Sindey Bradshaw Fay, *The origins of the World War*, vol. II (New York 1929), 281–282.

⁶⁷ Maurice Paléologue, *La Russie des tsars pendant la Grande Guerre*, vol. I (Paris 1921), 8–11; Spalaikovitich, *Une journée du Ministre de Serbie à Pétrograd*, 9–10; Raymond Poincaré, *Les origines de la guerre* (Paris 1921), 206–209; Raymond Poincaré, *Au service de la France*, vol. IV (Paris 1927), 251–256; Raymond Poincaré, *Comment fut déclaré la guerre de 1914* (Paris 1939), 34–35; John F. V. Keiger, *France and the origins of the First World War* (London 1983), 151; John F. V. Keiger, *Raymond Poincaré* (Cambridge 1997), 167; Otte, *July Crisis, 1917–1918*; Stefan Schmidt, *Frankreichs Außenpolitik in der Julikrise 1914: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Ausbruchs des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Munich 2009), 79–80; DSP, VII/2, 622–623. After the departure of the French delegation, Spalajković cabled Belgrade that the Tsar and the President had talked about Serbia (*ibid.* 645).

⁶⁸ DSP, VII/2, 632; Ćorović, *Odnosi između Srbije i Austro-Ugarske*, 673.

⁶⁹ In that ciphered dispatch sent via Vienna, a Serbian translation of the ultimatum was delivered to Spalajković. The content of the dispatch was difficult to decode, but its meaning was grasped nevertheless. Just before noon, a non-ciphered dispatch with the original French text of the ultimatum arrived via Bucharest, cf. Spalaikovitich, *Une journée du Ministre de Serbie à Pétrograd*, 10.

⁷⁰ MO, 3, V, 45; Mombauer, *The Origins of the First World War*, 321.

Serbia and was setting fire to Europe.⁷¹ After a lunch with the French and British ambassadors and the Romanian Minister, Sazonov attended the meeting of his Cabinet, which decided to demand from Vienna, together with other Great Powers, a prolongation of the deadline given to Serbia for a reply, to advise Belgrade not to engage in hostilities and entrust the Great Powers to find a solution, and to ask for Tsar's approval for mobilising four military districts and the fleet "should the subsequent course of events so require".⁷² Following this meeting, he received the Serbian Minister in his office.

"The day was beautiful, one of those summer days that give St Petersburg the air of festivity", Spaljković recalled twenty years later how he had brought the text of the ultimatum to the Choristers' Bridge. "A warm and sunny day, where everything breathed the joy of living, while the paper that I nervously clutched in my hand promised to introduce shortly the reign of death."⁷³ The spasm of anxiousness was soon eased as Sazonov condemned the ultimatum "with disgust" and professed that it contained demands "that no state could accept without committing suicide". Sazonov also said that Serbia could "undoubtedly" count on Russia's help, but he did not specify if military assistance was included. After all, these matters were "for the Tsar to decide and consult with France". He mentioned that he had wired Strandmann with his instructions,⁷⁴ and advised Serbia to withdraw her troops into the interior, if unable to defend herself, and appeal to the Great Powers. Spaljković replied that this advice would be practical only if Austria-Hungary were to invade only the border area, but devastation of the entire country could not be allowed; the war could be avoided, he was certain, only if Russia impressed on Austria-Hungary and Germany her resolve to carry out general mobilisation should the conflict not be discussed by the Great Powers.⁷⁵ After leaving Sazonov's office, the Serbian

⁷¹ ÖUA, VIII, 645–648; Geiss, *July 1914*, 174–178; Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, 212–213.

⁷² MO, 3, V, 45–46; Geiss, *July 1914*, 186–187; Mombauer, *The Origins of the First World War*, 322–326, 331–332; Dominic C. B. Lieven, *Russia and the origins of the First World War* (New York 1983), 141–144; Albertini, *The origins of the war*, II, 297; Ignat'ev, *Vneshniaia politika Rossii*, 213–214; Airapetov, *Uchastie Rossiiskoi imperii v Pervoi mirovoi voine*, I, 36–37.

⁷³ Spalaïkovitch, *Une journée du Ministre de Serbie à Pétrograd*, 10–11. Spaljković's memories of July 1914 are generally rather impressionistic.

⁷⁴ MO, 3, V, 41–42; Geiss, *July 1914*, 187–188; Mombauer, *The Origins of the First World War*, 321. Nevertheless, Strandmann decided not to communicate this advice to the Serbian government since the matter was left to his discretion (Štrandman, *Balkanske uspomene*, 308–309).

⁷⁵ DSP, VII/2, 648–649; BD, XI, 93; Spalaïkovitch, *Une journée du Ministre de Serbie à Pétrograd*, 11–16; Sergey Sazonov, *Les années fatales* (Paris 1927), 189; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 462; Cornwall, "Serbia", 79–80; Otte, *July Crisis*, 238; Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije*, 69–70; Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, 212. Sean McMeekin's account of the conversation

Minister met the good-humoured German Ambassador and asked him how to find the way out of the crisis. Count Pourtalès did not want to be drawn into discussion and simply retorted that everything depended on Belgrade alone, since the matter was one between it and Vienna. Not pleased with such disingenuousness, Spalajković brusquely responded that he was wrong and that he would realise not before long that it was not “a matter between Serbia and Austria, but a European one”.⁷⁶ He then wired Pašić what Sazonov had advised him. Although the official journal of the Russian Foreign Ministry stressed that the advice was that of “extreme moderation”,⁷⁷ it was still based on the premise that Serbia should not accept all points of the ultimatum.⁷⁸ Spalajković, of course, did not dare to draw explicit conclusions, but he underscored the great bitterness and general opinion in St. Petersburg that Serbia could not submit to the Austro-Hungarian demands: “The Ministerial Council decided to take energetic measures, even mobilisation. The Tsar’s sanction is being awaited. An official communiqué in which Russia takes Serbia under her protection is going to be published.”⁷⁹

Indeed, on 25 July, the *Pravitel’stvennyj vestnik* and other newspapers published the government’s statement that it “vigilantly monitors the development of the Serbo-Austrian conflict to which Russia cannot remain indifferent.”⁸⁰ In the afternoon, Spalajković cabled that the Russian government was holding a session in the Emperor’s presence, that all preparations for mobilisation had been ordered and that it would be declared “right away, if the Austro-Hungarian Minister left Belgrade”; after the session he wired that “decisions favourable for Serbia” had been made and that the army exhibited “utmost bellicosity”.⁸¹ In the

between Sazonov and Spalajković is largely inaccurate or even fictional. Although he refers to Luigi Albertini’s classical book, his account entirely lacks Albertini’s impartiality and scrupulosity regarding the use of all available documents, see McMeekin, *July 1914*, 185–186.

⁷⁶ DSP, VII/2, 636; Spalajkovič, *Une journée du Ministre de Serbie à Pétrograd*, 16. Just a few minutes later, Pourtalès realised that this was not only Spalajković’s personal opinion when he heard Sazonov energetically opposing the notion of a *local conflict and stating that the question was a European one*. Cf. F[riedrich] Pourtalès, *Mes dernières négociations à Saint-Pétersbourg en juillet 1914* (Paris 1929), 21–22, 88–90, 96–98; MO, 3, V, 46–47; Geiss, *July 1914*, 190–191; Mombauer, *The Origins of the First World War*, 322.

⁷⁷ MO, 3, V, 46; Geiss, *July 1914*, 190; Mombauer, *The Origins of the First World War*, 322.

⁷⁸ Albertini, *The origins of the war*, II, 354–355.

⁷⁹ DSP, VII/2, 636; AJ, JJP, b. 11, M. Spalajković to M. Bošković, 25/12 July 1914; Cornwall, “Serbia”, 80; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 462; Otte, *July Crisis*, 238–239; Ćorović, *Odnosi između Srbije i Austro-Ugarske*, 711; Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, 222–223.

⁸⁰ Emets et al., *Istoriia vneshnej politiki Rossii*, 434; Oldenburg, “*Tsarstvom imperatora Nikolaia II*”, II, 146; Albertini, *The origins of the war*, II, 358–359.

⁸¹ DSP, VII/2, 669–670, 681; Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije*, 70; cf. Leonard Turner, “The Russian mobilisation in 1914”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 3/1 (1968), 75–76.

evening, he had further information that, after the Tsar's surprising show of determination, it had been decided to "go to any length in protecting Serbia", as well as to mobilise the Kiev military district and take preparatory measures in others. Spaljković also reported that all final-year cadets had been promoted to an officer rank "in a demonstrative manner": "In all circles without exception, the greatest resolve and jubilation reigns on account of the Tsar and the government's stance."⁸² After midnight he wired that the Russian public opinion was appalled at the false information that the ultimatum had been entirely accepted. But the real answer,⁸³ which accepted only that part of the ultimatum concerning "culprits" brought about "general jubilation and praise to the Serbian government": "Tonight Russian students and civil servants have exhibited their sympathies in front of our Legation. [...] All military measures have been taken. An indescribable enthusiasm for the Emperor and the government to enter the war has been aroused within all classes of the Russian nation. No other event has ever been more popular."⁸⁴

On 26 July, Spaljković's optimism peaked since he felt that a moment for action à la Cavour was fast-approaching: "I officially inform you that the Russian army will cross the frontier the moment Austria-Hungary attacks Serbia, and therefore it is crucial that you inform me immediately about that. It is also of paramount importance to keep the spirit of the Serbian army and people high in the beginning. All the troops should be withdrawn from the Bulgarian frontier since we are guaranteed complete safety from that side. The outbreak of war is

⁸² DSP, VII/2, 674–675; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 463; Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije*, 70. The following day, the Minister in Paris Vesnić wired that France would stay with her ally Russia, whose government had taken "an energetic attitude" and would not allow the destruction of Serbia (DSP, VII/2, 672).

⁸³ The Serbian Prime Minister sent the text of the reply to the ultimatum to his Minister in the Russian capital via an unenciphered dispatch; yet, it arrived after some delay, as most dispatches between Belgrade and St Petersburg did in those days. Nevertheless, Sazonov must have been pleased when Spaljković handed it to him, because problems with receiving and decoding Strandmann's dispatches were even more serious. "He finds your response to be a piece of great political wisdom," Spaljković cabled Pašić. "It will serve him as a powerful tool against Austria-Hungary, which must be condemned because it rejected it." (DSP, VII/2, 719; MO, 3, V, 85; Popović, *Odnosi Srbije i Rusije*, 57)

⁸⁴ DSP, VII/2, 668; Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, 234–235. The former chargé d'affaires in Berlin Miloš Bogičević, who became a tool of the German propaganda after the war, wrote that as early as 23 July Spaljković had informed "by circular message" all Serbian legations "that the Russian Government had ordered the mobilisation of two million men" and that the enthusiasm for war had been tremendous. Given the absurdity of sending such confidential information by circular dispatch, this statement was not a case of faulty memory, but rather constituted an intentional falsification of documents from the captured Serbian archives, cf. Milosh Bogitshevich, *Causes of the war: an examination into the causes of the European War, with special reference to Russia and Serbia* (London 1920), 66–67.

impatiently being awaited here. The present moment is unique because Russia is determined to go to the very end and perform a historic act. In my opinion, we are facing a splendid opportunity to use this event wisely and achieve the full unification of the Serbs. It is desirable, therefore, that Austria-Hungary should attack us. In that case, ahead in the name of God!" Informing Pašić about the General Headquarters' approval of the immediate shipment of arms to Serbia and the Tsar's belief that the Serbs would "fight like lions", Spalajković claimed that 1,700,000 men would be mobilised to launch a "most energetic offensive" as soon as Austria-Hungary attacked Serbia. Moreover, he pointed out that Germany's stance was still not clear and that it could use the opportunity to share in the partition of Austria-Hungary: "Otherwise, the French military plan will be executed so that a victory against Germany is also certain."⁸⁵ Yet, Spalajković was more reserved in public than in his dispatches. When a large crowd of people made its way to the Serbian Legation, he appeared at the window and, having received an ovation, made a speech, "expressing the filial sympathy of his country for Russia"; but he closed the window when the cry of "down with Austria" was raised.⁸⁶

Spalajković's optimistic dispatches from St. Petersburg boosted self-confidence in Serbia. Pašić regularly informed the Cabinet about their content.⁸⁷ He also let Spalajković know that the spirit of the people was elevated after they heard that Russia would not leave them in the lurch.⁸⁸ On 27 July, in the wake of Pašić's oblique refusal of British mediation, Strandmann gained the impression that Serbian ministers were afraid of appearing willing to yield further, after making the utmost concessions in response to the ultimatum. He also believed that "under the influence of Spalajković's dispatches which described the enthusiasm spreading across Russia, they do not think it advantageous for Serbia to shift the focus of the question from St. Petersburg onto some other European

⁸⁵ DSP, VII/2, 680–681, 688; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 468; Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, 235–236; Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije*, 70–71. During the New-Year reception in 1915, Nicholas II praised the Serbian victories. Spalajković responded that the Serbian army, which was "Russia's left wing", owed much to the Tsar, "who watches over Serbia and who always said that the Serbs would fight like lions." The Emperor smiled at the Serbian Minister's witticism to the effect that a special celebration of the centenary of the Congress of Vienna should be prepared for Austria-Hungary (AS, MID-PO, 1915, b. XII, f. VII, M. Spalajković to N. Pašić, 15/2 January 1915).

⁸⁶ BD, XI, 184.

⁸⁷ Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije*, 72. Apparently under the influence of Spalajković's reports, Pašić wired the chargé d'affaires in Berlin that Russia's stance was excellent (DSP, VII/2, 683).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 682.

capital”.⁸⁹ And Spaljković’s optimistic dispatches continued.⁹⁰ Having forgotten the similar scenes he had seen two years earlier in Sofia, when the short-lived solidarity of the two Slavic nations had ended in fiasco, he wrote about “constant grandiose demonstrations” in the streets and in front of the Serbian Legation: “Unanimity of the people and the army. Enthusiasm and belligerence have reached their peak.”⁹¹

On 28 July, Spaljković reported to Pašić that Sazonov believed that “certain detente” was taking place, and he hoped that, with the help of London’s mediation, the dangerous situation could be defused, including the threat of a localised war that Berlin desired. Spaljković also reported how Sazonov had praised Pašić for complying with Vienna’s demands “to the utmost extent”; Sazonov thought that a conflict should be evaded so as to allow Serbia to “gain time and the possibility to grow stronger and wait for a favourable moment”.⁹² Just as he relayed Sazonov’s optimistic views to Niš, where the Serbian government had moved in the anticipation of an attack from the north, Spaljković received Pašić’s dispatch with the news of Austria-Hungary’s declaration of war on Serbia. He immediately informed Sazonov about this “deplorable act” on the part of a Great Power against “a small Slavic country that had just emerged from a long series of heroic and exhausting struggles” and conveyed the hope of “the entire Serbian nation” that “the civilized world” would reprove such an act, and that Russia, as “Serbia’s protector”, would severely punish it.⁹³ Spaljković soon apprised Pašić of “tremendous enthusiasm” in the Russian capital, which was no exaggeration, because the news of the declaration of war on Serbia caused mass demonstrations. Thousands of people, cheering Serbia and France, gathered in front of the Serbian Legation, where the Minister showed himself at the balcony and, having been greeted with acclamation, rendered a short speech.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ MO, 3, V, 165–166; Štrandman, *Balkanske uspomene*, 324; Cornwall, “Serbia”, 83. That same day, responding to a dispatch sent after the ultimatum had been delivered, Nicholas II wrote to Regent Alexander that Russia would by no means leave Serbia alone (MO, 3, V, 145; DSP, VII/2, 691–692). According to Minister of Economy Velizar Janković’s memories, Pašić did not conceal his excitement when he informed the members of Cabinet about this dispatch (AS, Varia, 1104, V. Janković, *Ultimatum Austro-Ugarske Srbiji 1914 godine*, 12; Djordje Stanković, *Nikola Pašić, saveznici i stvaranje Jugoslavije* (Belgrade 1984), 44.

⁹⁰ DSP, VII/2, 679, 687.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 682; Popović, *Odnosi Srbije i Rusije*, 58.

⁹² DSP, VII/2, 719–720. Although he was temporarily optimistic, Sazonov did not exclude the possibility of war and, claiming that Romania and Greece had agreed to stop Bulgaria’s intervention, suggested to the Serbs not to disperse their troops (*ibid.* 709).

⁹³ MO, 3, V, 177–178; DSP, VII/2, 711; Otte, *July Crisis*, 358.

⁹⁴ DSP, VII/2, 717; “La déclaration de guerre provoque de l’enthousiasme à Saint-Pétersbourg”, *Le Matin*, 29 July 1914, 3; “L’impression à Saint-Pétersbourg”, *La Croix*, 30 July 1914, 2; “L’opinion russe”, *L’Ouest-Éclair*, 30 July 1914, 2; Milenko Vukićević, “Petrograd u početku

On 29 July, Spaljčković wired Pašić that, if Austria-Hungary embarked on military action against Serbia, Russia would immediately declare not only mobilisation but also war: "In fact, Russian mobilisation has already been completed. The Russian government does not waver. The odds are increasing that the situation will improve after the statements and assurances given by Germany here."⁹⁵ In the evening, however, a peaceful solution seemed much less likely. Spaljčković informed the Choristers' Bridge about the bombardment of Belgrade and wired Niš that the Tsarist government, having concluded that compromise was now impossible, opted for "war, which will be announced as soon as mobilisation and concentration of the entire army had been completed, and, in the meantime, it would continue the talks with Germany only to conceal its intentions and buy some time": "That plan will be carried out with greater prospect for success, if Austria-Hungary is content with the occupation of Belgrade and some border areas. So, the die is cast. Please, stay strong and do not lose heart."⁹⁶ The die was indeed cast the following day and Spaljčković informed Niš about the Tsar's *Ukase* regarding partial mobilisation, which was a ruse, he stated, for general, "but secret" mobilisation, "so that Germany would not attack Russia too soon."⁹⁷ In his next dispatch, Spaljčković repeated that the Russian government was "determined to go to war, be it localised or not, and there is no going back". He considered the localisation of the war between Russia and Serbia against Austria-Hungary possible, since an official from the Choristers' Bridge had confidentially told him that Germany was in "a desperate situation" because it did not want war. The Serbian Minister was further encouraged by

Velikoga rata 1914. godine", in *Krv Slovenstva: spomenica desetogodišnjice Svetskog rata*, ed. Aleksije Ksjunjin (Belgrade 1924), 102. The atmosphere in the streets of St. Petersburg definitely made an impression on Spaljčković, but it could be assumed that the optimistic tone of his dispatches was designed to prevent despondency in Serbia. Szápáry's information, if it was true, suggested that the Serbian Minister had placed his hopes in the British mediation, and, consequently, had become very depressed after receiving the news about the declaration of war (ÖUA, VIII, 897).

⁹⁵ DSP, VII/2, 726. That same day, Spaljčković transmitted the Serbian government's plea for a loan in the amount of twenty million francs – it was immediately approved (MO, 3, V, 211; DSP, VII/2, 754).

⁹⁶ DSP, VII/2, 730; Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije*, 74; cf. Turner, "The Russian mobilisation in 1914", 87.

⁹⁷ DSP, VII/2, 735. Spaljčković was no doubt pleased when he read a dispatch from the Serbian Minister in London Mateja Bošković claiming that "England has given assurance to France that it would help it in the case of German attack", although the latter in fact wired him because he was concerned about Russia's attitude: "Let me know, for God's sake, what's going on with Russia. It is pestered from all sides to refrain from military action in our favour. Would it leave us alone in this unequal fight?" (AJ, JJP, b. 11, M. Bošković to M. Spaljčković, 29/16 July 1914).

the President of the Duma Rodzianko, who told him that the enthusiasm of the Russian nation was even greater than that in 1876 and that war was inevitable.⁹⁸

On 1 August, Rodzianko visited Spaljković leading the Duma delegation and stated, with his thunderous voice, that Russia would accept peace “only after defeating the Germans”.⁹⁹ The Russian General Staff informed the military attaché Branislav Lontkijević that general mobilisation had been declared and that Serbia should draw in as many enemy troops as possible.¹⁰⁰ Spaljković sent Pašić this encouraging news: “No matter how diplomatic action develops, Russia is categorically determined to solve the entire Slavic question this time. The situation is as follows: everyone here feels and considers the Austro-Hungarian attack on Serbia to be an attack on Russia, and the bombardment of Belgrade to be a bombardment of St. Petersburg. Germany’s absurd efforts to localise the war between Serbia and Austria-Hungary have long failed; the success of the English programme to localise the war between Serbia, Austria and Russia becomes more and more likely [...]. The highest representatives of the Russian army ask you to hold out heroically and to get over the destruction of Belgrade which will be compensated to us hundredfold.”¹⁰¹ But Spaljković’s hopes that London could restrain Berlin were groundless and, in the evening of that fateful day, the Choristers’ Bridge informed him that Germany had declared war on Russia. “Here reigns complete calmness and self-confidence”, he wired Pašić.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ DSP, VII/2, 742–743.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 771.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 756.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 772. On 31 July, Spaljković sent two memoranda to Sazonov informing him on the systematic bombardment of Belgrade, the Serbian mobilisation and concentration of troops, the enthusiasm among the people for defending their country and the disturbing stance of Bulgaria (MO, 3, V, 287–288). The following day, he boasted to Pašić that his dispatch about the bombardment of Belgrade made the “utmost impression” on the Russian government and public opinion, but he complained that the Press Bureau “mentions only a few details which suggests that the damage is insignificant”, and because of that “it weakens the impression and impedes the plan for further actions.” For that reason, he asked for and later received another dispatch in which the continuation of bombardment was presented more dramatically (AS, MID-PO, 1914, b. II, f. VII, M. Spaljković to N. Pašić, 1 August/19 July 1914).

¹⁰² DSP, VII/2, 777. In his “belletristic memoires”, the Soviet author Mikhail Zenkevich ironically evoked the atmosphere of the Palace Square at the outbreak of war: “The chiming is so deafeningly joyous, gun salvos so loudly-solemn, the crowd so enthusiastically charged and white phantoms far away over there, at the palace windows, are bowing so kindly. – Spaljković, Spaljković is coming! ... And the crowd rushed and pushed me to the wall. Out of the car that is slowly making its way and excitedly humming, the gold-embroidered plume tricorne and the Serbian Minister’s smiling face with a crooked nose are flashing. ‘Long live!’ – resounds along the square.” (Mikhail Aleksandrovich Zenkevich, *Muzhickii sfinks* (Moscow 1994), 15). The unanimity reigned in the centre of the city, while on 1 August around 27,000 workers staged a demonstration against the war in the Vyborg District. A small group of

Two days later, he reported that Serbia's attitude left "the most favourable impression on the Russian government and the public opinion" and that "mass demonstrations" had taken place in front of the Legation, during which Rodzianko had rendered a speech.¹⁰³ On 4 August, Spalajković wired that the Russian mobilisation was "brilliant and beyond any expectation": "The Russian government receives very good news from all sides." This included the German declaration of war on France, the alleged possibility of an agreement between Greece and Turkey and the British declaration of war on Germany. As a result, the Serbian Minister was pleased to observe the "indescribable jubilation" in St. Petersburg.¹⁰⁴ Patriotic feelings were also vented at the solemn session of Duma on 8 August, on which occasion the greeting dispatches from the Serbian and Montenegrin parliaments were read aloud and Spalajković himself was given a standing ovation.¹⁰⁵

The carnage of war followed shortly. "In the Carpathians, Russian and Austrian regiments already grappled with each other; two ancient and powerful empires were struggling desperately," Spalajković wrote many years later. "The death spread its inexorable power all around ... Poor people! Who thought of them, of the wails of their families, of the cries of their souls in those harsh days!"¹⁰⁶ But at the time he was primarily interested in achieving a victory. In late August, Spalajković informed Pašić that the Russian army was advancing on all fronts and that panic seized Vienna and Berlin; after the Serbian victory on the Cer mountain and the Russian capture of Lemberg, he claimed that the final success was "already halfway guaranteed".¹⁰⁷ Evidently, Spalajković believed, like so many others, in the illusion of a short-war, but the march of events disillusioned

anti-war demonstrators even marched on the Nevsky Prospect, but it was quickly dispersed by enraged patriotic crowds, cf. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *The February Revolution: Petrograd, 1917* (Seattle 1981), 90.

¹⁰³ DSP, VII/2, 786. Since Rodzianko lived near the Serbian Legation, the demonstrators asked to see him one evening after another. The President of the Duma would appear on the balcony, and that time he went out in the street and rendered a speech from the top of a car (Mikhail Vladimirovich Rodzianko, "Krushenie Imperii", *Arkhiv russskoi revoliutsii XVII, ed. Iosif Vladimirovich Gessen* (Berlin 1926) 79).

¹⁰⁴ AS, MID-PO, 1914, b. II, f. VII, M. Spalajković to N. Pašić, 4 August/ 22 July 1914; 5 August/ 23 July 1914; b. XV, f. V, M. Spalajković to N. Pašić, 4 August/22 July 1914; b. IV, f. IV, M. Spalajković to N. Pašić, 5 August/23 July 1914.

¹⁰⁵ Popović, *Odnosi Srbije i Rusije*, 58; Dittmar Dahlmann, "Parliaments", in *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, ed. Jay Winter, vol. II (Cambridge 2014), 34–36; Paléologue, *La Russie des tsars*, I, 63–65; Rodzianko, "Krushenie Imperii", 81–82.

¹⁰⁶ Miroslav Spalajković, "Stradanja", in *Milan Srškić (1880–1937)* (Sarajevo 1938), 61.

¹⁰⁷ AS, MID-PO, 1914, b. XV, f. V, M. Spalajković to N. Pašić, 26/13 August 1914; 28/15 August 1914; 3 September/21 August 1914; 5 September/23 August 1914.

him soon. Russia initially had a military superiority over Austria-Hungary,¹⁰⁸ but the German offensive in the spring and summer of 1915 placed her in a difficult position.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, Russia offered, together with Great Britain and France, the territories that Serbia aspired to on the basis of her Yugoslav programme and even Macedonia that constituted a part of pre-1914 Serbia to neutral states as a price for their entrance into the war.¹¹⁰ Although Spaljković had full understanding for Russian troubles, the question of borders led to his outbursts in Sazonov's office.¹¹¹ In July 1915, he wired Pašić: "It is clear to me that we are only making their pain worse with our pleas because of their inability to give us everything we want. The circumstances are stronger than Russia which was not prepared enough to complete her Slavic mission alone. It is neither our nor her fault that the war started prematurely, but now it is not the time for complaints but for realistic policy to achieve such success as the present grave situation would allow with as little sacrifices as possible."¹¹² By the end of 1918,

¹⁰⁸ Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914–1917* (London 1985), 70–91, 113–128; Rauchensteiner, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der Habsburgermonarchie*, 248–256, 306–318; Geoffrey Wawro, *A mad catastrophe: the outbreak of World War I and the collapse of the Habsburg Empire* (New York 2014), 169–252; Airapetov, *Uchastie Rossijskoj imperii v Pervoi mirovoj voine*, I, 132–135; II, 45–52.

¹⁰⁹ Stone, *The Eastern Front*, 128–191; W[illiam] Bruce Lincoln, *Passage through Armageddon: the Russians in war and revolution 1914–1918* (New York 1986), 117–163; Airapetov, *Uchastie Rossijskoj imperii v Pervoi mirovoj voine*, II, 65–79, 129–172, 213–221; A[natolij] I[vanovich] Utkin, *Pervaja mirovaia voina* (Moscow 2001), 188–198, 206–209.

¹¹⁰ Z[byněk] A. B. Zeman, *A diplomatic history of the First World War* (London 1971), 11–20, 40–45, 73–77; Robert H. Johnston, *Tradition versus revolution: Russia and the Balkans in 1917* (Boulder 1977), 46–47, 59–60.

¹¹¹ Spaljković's outbursts induced Sazonov to think about suggesting Pašić to replace him, cf. Štrandman, *Balkanske uspomene*, 396–397. In addition, Spaljković was in personal conflict with his two secretaries in the Legation, who tried to blacken him as much as possible. "Mr. Spaljković talks everywhere about his bad relations with Mr. Sazonov, sometimes he threatens him, and usually accuses and judges him", one of them wrote to the Assistant Foreign Minister Jovan Jovanović in Niš. "He says that discussions like this take place between him and Mr. Sazonov. Mr. Sazonov to him: Vous êtes fatal pour votre pays. Vous êtes fou [You are fatal for your country. You are mad] etc. Mr. Spaljković to him: Vous êtes ignorant. Vous ne savez rien du tout des affaires des Balkans [You are ignorant. You don't know anything at all about the Balkan affairs] etc." (AJ, JJP, b. 35, M. Dimitrijević to J. Jovanović, 19/6 May 1916)

¹¹² AJ, JJP, b. 2, M. Spaljković to N. Pašić, 17/4 July 1915. When in August 1915 Russia, France and Great Britain exerted tremendous pressure on Pašić to cede a large part of Macedonia to Bulgaria in order to induce Sofia to join the Entente Powers, he asked his diplomats for their opinion. The majority was against this proposal, but not Spaljković. "In such a fateful moment for Russia no Serb who has ears and heart can waver", he wired to Niš, "because without Russia we would have been neither born nor ever become what we are today, and it must not be forgotten that Russia has always been our only protector in this world; therefore, when Serbia makes sacrifices for Russia, it endures them also for herself and

the situation considerably changed and allowed Serbia to achieve almost all of her war aims, but with immense casualties and without Russia's participation, which had been unthinkable four years earlier.

Based on his reconstruction of events, Luigi Albertini concluded that, "if assurances of full support had not come from St. Petersburg" (which, he explained, "does not mean that Russia should have tolerated the humiliation and violation of Serbia which might have had incalculable repercussions in the Balkans"), the Serbian government would have replied to the ultimatum with full formal acceptance and a small reservation "so skilfully worded as to make it very difficult for Austria to construe it into a rejection."¹¹³ Mark Cornwall, who used the published Serbian diplomatic documents that had been mostly unknown in Albertini's time, accurately observed that there is no evidence that Belgrade "was ready to accept all Austria's terms and was only stiffened to offer resistance after receiving a clear message of Russian support on the 25th". However, his contentions that "the exact opposite seems to be the truth" and that "Pašić was probably disappointed at the degree of Russian support" are rather questionable.¹¹⁴ It seems that Albertini was closer to the mark when he claimed that the Serbian reply had become firmer after "full support" had been given from St. Petersburg. The fact that Regent Alexander wired Nicholas II on 24 July expressing Serbia's willingness to accept those Austro-Hungarian demands that the Emperor might suggest seems to confirm such view.¹¹⁵ Besides, the similar cases of the Annexation Crisis in 1909 and the Albanian crisis in the autumn of 1913 suggest that without Russian support the Serbian statesmen would probably have yielded in the last moment, hoping to evade later the execution of their pledges. That must have been especially true for the prudent Russophile Pašić, who was notoriously cautious. "In politics, especially foreign affairs, he trod carefully, as *when one walks on a rotten plank*", his pupil Spalajković remembered.¹¹⁶ Due to his temper, Spalajković never learned to walk on a rotten plank during his diplo-

for her future." (Popović, *Odnosi Srbije i Rusije*, 164–167; Stanković, *Nikola Pašić, saveznici i stvaranje Jugoslavije*, 153–155; AS, MID-PO, 1915, b. XIII, f. IV, M. Spalajković to N. Pašić, 8 August/26 July 1915)

¹¹³ Albertini, *The origins of the war*, II, 360–361.

¹¹⁴ Cornwall, "Serbia", 73, 77. Cornwall was not quite fair to Albertini when he wrote that, in that particular instance, the latter had been "relying primarily on hearsay evidence" collected by Luciano Magrini. Albertini used almost all known documentary sources and it was only because of their scarcity that he relied to a greater degree on not highly reliable sources such as Magrini's interviews. On the other hand, the memoirs of the "maverick" Prince Djordje which Cornwall used could hardly be regarded as a highly reliable source.

¹¹⁵ DSP, VII/2, 637; Richard C. Hall, "Serbia", in *The Origins of World War I*, 109; Cornwall, "Serbia", 75–76; Albertini, *The origins of the war*, II, 352.

¹¹⁶ Miroslav Spalajković, "Gospodin Pašić: državnik – diplomat – filosof", in *Spomenica Nikole P. Pašića 1845–1925* (Belgrade 1926), 33.

matic career. However, in 1941, when Yugoslavia found herself alone in the face of Hitler's ultimatum-like demand to join the Axis, he publicly opted for signing the pact with Germany,¹¹⁷ despite his prior Germanophobic attitude and his dim view of Czechoslovakia's attitude in the crisis of 1938.¹¹⁸

Such contradictions invite further research into Spaljković's personality, and in particular the reliability of his reports from St. Petersburg. The Serbian historian Ekmečić has written that, in July 1914, Spaljković was intermittently "carried away by his enthusiasm outside the boundaries of reality."¹¹⁹ The Soviet historian Pisarev has even claimed that Pašić did not trust Spaljković, who misinformed him about Russia's stance wiring his fantasies and falsities.¹²⁰ The former Serbian Minister in Vienna, Jovan M. Jovanović, wrote in his notes after the Great War that Spaljković was "fanciful, sometimes an optimist, sometimes a dark pessimist" and that Pašić had been aware of his tendency to "exaggerate" and even report "an invented thing."¹²¹ Pašić knew Spaljković's faults, but he doubtlessly trusted him, since he always appointed Spaljković to the most significant Legations and stood by him in spite of all objections. His telegrams exuded an exaggerated optimism and relayed very subjective estimates; such reporting in part reflected the atmosphere of patriotic demonstrations in the streets of St. Petersburg that no doubt strongly affected the Serbian Minister. Eager to reinforce the resistance of the Serbian government in the face of Austria-Hungary's pressure, he delighted in sending news from Russia, which

¹¹⁷ M[iroslav] Spaljković, "Rat i Jugoslavija", *Politika*, 25 March 1941, 1.

¹¹⁸ "A nation that does not defend itself cannot expect anyone to help it," Spaljković wrote in an unpublished article. "This is the first and foremost political truth which was confirmed by the last bitter experience of the Czechoslovakian nation. [...] Czechoslovakia had a positive alliance treaty with the strongest military power in Europe – France; Serbia had not had a single ally and could have counted with certainty only on the moral protection of Russia. Czechoslovakia collapsed because she did not want to defend herself; faced with the ultimatum from Berlin, she submitted without resistance. However, in 1914, after the ultimatum from Vienna, Serbia had responded with guns to the declaration of war." (NBS-PF, Arhiva Živka Miličevića, R 725/II/45, M[iroslav] Spaljković, "Odlučnost Srbije 1914 godine")

¹¹⁹ Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije*, 71.

¹²⁰ According to Pisarev, Spaljković was "suggesting to the Serbian government the idea of Russia's readiness for an immediate entry into war against Austria-Hungary, whereas the Tsarist government warned Belgrade about the danger of a military confrontation, which was advantageous to the German bloc." (Iurii Alekseevich Pisarev, *Tajny Pervoi mirovoi voiny: Rossiia i Serbiia v 1914–1915 gg.* (Moscow 1990), 9, 92) *In the twilight of the Soviet Union*, Pisarev wrote both as a patriotic apologist and a representative of Marxist-Leninist historiography, whose animosity Spaljković earned because of his *thirty years of personal war against communism, which started in January 1918 when he shouted at Lenin that he spit in his face* (Joseph Noulens, *Mon ambassade en Russie soviétique 1917–1919*, vol. I (Paris 1933), 188–189; George F. Kennan, *Russia leaves the war* (Princeton 1956), 336).

¹²¹ AJ, JJP, b. 44, J. M. Jovanović's notes, undated.

were magnified, with uncorroborated details and personal opinions of his interlocutors from semi-official circles, but not substantially inaccurate. Spalajković's personal enmity towards Austria-Hungary and Count Forgách certainly contributed to such behaviour.

On the other hand, the Austrian historian Friedrich Würthle has written that Spalajković could take credit for convincing the Russians of the need for their intervention and that 24 and 25 July were the "pinnacle of his St. Petersburg mission". Arbitrarily interpreting Spalajković's memoirs, Würthle has claimed that on 24 July "Sazonov at first advised that the ultimatum be entirely accepted, but Spalajković made it clear to him that that was absolutely out of the question". Moreover, Würthle has overemphasised Spalajković's influence on Sazonov and Nicholas II. In his view, Spalajković, an advocate of Greater Serbia, spared no effort to facilitate the outbreak of war and thus, usurping a role that he was not supposed to play, he contributed to the aggravation of crisis.¹²² Sazonov and other Russians did not need Spalajković to convince them of what was obvious: that they could not allow the destruction of an independent and pro-Russian Serbia whose army would be a serious threat to the southern borders of Austria-Hungary in case of a European war. But the Russians did not find it opportune to tell that explicitly to the Serbian Minister. Spalajković sensed the political mood in St. Petersburg and he reported to his government, with exaggerated enthusiasm but quite accurately, that Serbia would not be left in the lurch.

UDC 94(497.11):327"1914"
929 Miroslav Spalajković

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¹²² Würthle, *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, 213–215, 221, 243.

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