Apple of Discord

Armour, Ian D.

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Chapter 2

Kállay Goes to Belgrade

In the summer of 1867, Baron Prokesch-Osten, Francis Joseph’s ambassador to the Sultan, expressed his dissatisfaction with the quality of the Monarchy’s diplomatic representation in Belgrade. It was necessary, he wrote Beust, to convince the Ottoman government that the Habsburg Monarchy was making a serious effort to restrain Prince Michael Obrenović. This required

a politically and socially competent agent . . . to work against Russian influence
and keep the Prince on the right path. We would thereby steal a march on Russian efforts in Constantinople.¹

Prokesch-Osten, an advocate by December 1867 of a provisional occupation of Serbia, as “act de pouvoir,” was not the only influential voice raised in favor of some more forceful presence in Belgrade, at a time when Prince Michael’s policy in the Balkans still seemed alarmingly warlike. That Prince Michael still needed restraining seemed to be the general opinion among imperial officials.²

In his desire for a stronger voice in Belgrade, however, Prokesch-Osten was to get rather more than he bargained for. The Hungarian government wanted the same thing, but for quite different reasons. Andrássy, as we have seen, had a variety of urgent motives for wishing to maintain the hold he believed he had established over Prince Michael at Ivánka. Serbia’s non-involvement with the Hungarian Serbs and the Croats; the cessation of preparations for war in the Balkans; the weaning away of Serbia from Russian influence: all these influenced the Hungarian premier. The fear of Russian incitement of the Hungarian South Slavs, in the event of a European war, was particularly prominent in Hungarian political circles that autumn, as foreign observers could not fail to notice.³ In view of Serbia’s strategic importance on Hungary’s frontier, and the insufficient importance
attached by Beust, in Andrásy’s opinion, to the Russian threat, it was imperative to have someone appointed to Belgrade who would represent Hungarian interests there as well as Habsburg ones, and on whom Andrásy could rely to keep him informed as to Beust’s eastern policy in general.

To these considerations was added the conviction that Prince Michael, autocrat and Hungarian landowner that he was, would be more influenced in his pro-Hungarian policy by someone comparable to him in social status. Someone who was noble, conversant with South Slav affairs and the Serbian language, but above all Hungarian: such a combination of qualities was a rarity in Hungarian politics, and virtually unheard of in the Habsburg diplomatic service. Andrásy’s choice fell on the young politician, Benjámin Kállay.4

Kállay’s appointment on 2 February 1868 was generally seen as evidence of the Hungarian government’s influence under the new system.5 While a seemingly ideal choice from the point of view of the Hungarian government, and with much to recommend it as far as winning over Prince Michael was concerned, it was not necessarily agreeable to Beust. Beust was also obliged to accept the nomination by Andrásy, in March 1868, of another Hungarian, Count Béla Orczy, as one of his department heads within the foreign ministry. This was specifically so that Andrásy might be kept informed of important developments in foreign policy. The unspoken truth was that Orczy was there to act in Andrásy’s name and restrain Beust from what Andrásy considered to be an irresponsible adventurism.6 Kállay’s appointment was thus part of this same process of securing guarantees for the Hungarian government’s constitutional entitlement, under paragraph 8 of the Settlement Law, to be consulted over foreign policy. Both appointments, moreover, were the result of Andrásy’s personal application to the Emperor Francis Joseph. And to heighten the impression on Prince Michael of the new importance attached to the Monarchy’s representative in Belgrade, Kállay’s post was upgraded from that of consul-general to “diplomatic agent and consul-general.”7

The man thus elevated to one of the most sensitive postings in the Austro-Hungarian diplomatic service was not yet twenty-nine years old. Kállay was born in Pest on 22 December 1839, the son of the successful administrator István Kállay, who died when Benjámin was only five, and Amália Blaskovich. On his father’s side Kállay more than met the requirement of noble blood, since the Kállays were one of the oldest noble families in Hungary.8 The family was, however, comparatively

Figure 4. Benjámin Kállay
poor, and the young Kállay was one of the many Hungarian nobles who had to work to make ends meet. Privately schooled under the supervision of his mother, a strong-minded woman and fervent patriot, Kállay attended the University of Pest, where he studied law, physics, chemistry and mathematics. He had long since manifested an extreme precocity, especially in mathematics, although as he confessed at one point, he did not feel that he brought a particularly original talent to the subject. When asked his true talent, he replied: “I only have one, and I hate it: it’s politics.”

Benjámin Kállay’s chosen means for exercising his political talent were, in Hungarian terms, unusual. By the end of the 1850s he was already turning his attention to the acquisition of foreign languages, especially Near Eastern ones. He learned Russian and modern Greek; sat under the famous Orientalist, Armin Vámbéry, to study Turkish; and, most remarkably in a young Hungarian nobleman, set himself to learn Serbo-Croat, and began cultivating links with the Hungarian Serb community in Pest and nearby Szentendre.

Such an orientation could only have been with some sort of career in the diplomatic service in mind, or as a political voice on nationalities within Hungary, or as a scholarly authority on Near Eastern affairs. The roots of Kállay’s decision, however, remain a mystery. His mother’s family name was Croat or Serb in origin, but this did not mean much in a country like Hungary where the same could be said of many other families. More likely as an explanation is the general political situation in which Hungary found itself at the outset of the 1860s, when a satisfactory settlement of Hungarian differences with the Habsburg dynasty seemed so hard to attain.

Perhaps the most important influence on Kállay’s choice, in his early twenties, was his acquaintance with Baron József Eötvös, a leading liberal politician as well as the foremost Hungarian authority on the nationalities question. At the National Casino, the most prestigious club in the country, Kállay attracted the attention of Eötvös, who was impressed by his obvious ability and seriousness, and prophesied a brilliant future. And it was about this time, too, that Kállay began to take an interest in the South Slavs, “recognizing,” in Thallóczy’s words, “the great importance of the Balkan peoples, especially the Serbs, as far as Hungary was concerned.” The acquaintance with Eötvös encouraged Kállay to make his journalistic début with a number of articles, in Serbian, published in the Hungarian Serb press, and extolling Serbo-Hungarian friendship. The response both in Hungary and in Serbia was apparently a favorable one.

Another important contact for Kállay was Count Gyula Andrássy, who despite the sixteen year difference in age appears to have regarded the younger man very much as a personal friend. What remains unknown, however, is to what extent Andrássy influenced Kállay, or Kállay Andrássy, on the subject of relations with the South Slavs. In view of Andrássy’s known position, and Kállay’s
later correspondence with him while at Belgrade, this is perhaps something of a
chicken-and-egg argument: the two men obviously influenced one another, al-
though they did not always see eye to eye on individual subjects.

In his search for a political role Kállay at first concentrated on the domes-
tic scene. Despite his good relations with the leading Deákists he was not, even
at the outset of his career, a strict party follower, in so far as such a thing even
existed in Hungary in this period. He also cultivated links with Baron Pál 'Sen-
nyey, who was appointed lord high treasurer in July 1865 and was thus, until the
formation of the Andrássy government in February 1867, effectively in charge
of internal government affairs in Hungary. In 1865, therefore, 'Sennyey had
his hands firmly on the levers of power, a crude but compelling reason for an
ambitious young politician to hedge his bets by voicing some support for him.16
Nevertheless Kállay’s motives were unlikely to have been purely opportunistic.
For one thing his own austere principles, which he modeled on those of his fa-
ther, made such manoeuvring for personal advantage out of character. Equally
important might have been 'Sennyey’s own reputation as a man, in many
people’s eyes, too willing to serve “Vienna.” This would have done 'Sennyey
no disservice in Kállay’s view. Later in his career, Kállay was to become one
of the most prominent representatives of “Viennese” Hungarian nationalism,
which regarded close cooperation with the Habsburg Monarchy as vital to Hun-
gary’s interests, since only by such cooperation could those interests adequately
be safeguarded.17

It is not surprising that, when Kállay stood for election to the diet in the
November 1865 elections, he was repudiated by the Deákists. He claimed to be
standing on a Deákist platform, but lost the election anyway. The seat he con-
tested was the Serb-populated constituency of Szentendre; and a fragment in the
Kállay papers gives some idea of how he courted the Szentendre electors.18 Kál-
lay paid fulsome tribute to the Serbs’ heroic past and present aspirations. The
Hungarians could only count on a happy future “if we progress along the glorious
path of civilization hand in hand with the Slavs.”19 Discussing Eötvös’s recent
work on the nationality question, Kállay attempted to damp the expectations this
had raised among Hungarian Slavs by pointing out that Eötvös’s purpose was to
establish the general principles of the question, not specific solutions. He assured
his audience, however, that “complete equality before the law will constitute the
basis of our agreement, [and it will be] extended in the same way to languages
as well, which is one of the most essential elements of nationality aspirations.”20
The nationalities would thus be guaranteed “their greatest treasure . . . their indi-
viduality” and, this being the case, would have no further objections to remaining
in “the common homeland.”21

His attempt to get into parliament having failed, Kállay continued to culti-
vate his image as a friend of the Slavs, and went on a round tour of the Balkans
in 1866.\textsuperscript{22} His major achievement between 1865 and 1868, however, was an excursion into the realm of political philosophy. Kállay undoubtedly saw himself as a liberal, and to prove it he introduced to the Hungarian public in 1867 one of the classic texts of nineteenth-century liberalism, John Stuart Mill’s \textit{On Liberty}.

In a lengthy introduction, Kállay nailed his flag firmly to the mast of liberty, the desire for which “is deeply rooted in human nature.”\textsuperscript{23} Individuality, and the freedom to express it, was for Kállay the litmus test of a liberal society, although he specifically denied that this had come about through some inevitable progressive tendency in human history. Kállay also examined the relationship between individuality and the force of most natural interest to a Hungarian politician, nationality.\textsuperscript{24} The most distinctive part of Kállay’s reflections on nationality is also the one of most interest in view of his subsequent career. For Kállay most “nation-individualities” (p. lx: “nép-egyéniségek”), as he called them, were too weak to stand on their own. To protect themselves they had to unite in ad hoc defensive alliances, which could be dissolved when no longer needed. The “basic principle of the balance of power,” in future, had to be based on the self-interest of nations. Just as individuals in society had to unite to resist the tyranny of state and society, so, on the international level, nations could best preserve their individuality in this kind of “free union” (p. lxi: “szabad egyesülés”).

The relevance of these passages lies in Kállay’s professed faith in the idea of a Danubian confederation, however vaguely worded. For Kállay interest in such schemes may well have waned, once the essential stability of the Dualist settlement became apparent. Yet at the outset of his Belgrade posting Kállay still seemed to cherish what he referred to as “my dear old ideas” of confederation, and duly made note of similarly minded people he encountered in Serbia.\textsuperscript{25} In the first months of his appointment he certainly discussed the concept with leading Serbs, including Michael’s war minister, Milivoj Blaznavac.\textsuperscript{26} For the Serbs, the fact that a rising Hungarian politician could discuss such things at all was remarkable. However, Kállay’s federalism gave way rapidly to the conviction that the interests of Hungary were best served within the Habsburg Monarchy, and by ensuring that the latter, with Hungary’s assistance, dominated the Balkan Peninsula. Like Andrássy, too, Kállay remained convinced there could be no South Slav state unless it was firmly under Austro-Hungarian control.\textsuperscript{27}

Personally Kállay was well equipped for his new career in Belgrade. He was familiar with French, German and English, had studied Russian and Turkish and, as Andrássy rather floridly informed Prince Michael, “has made a profound study of the Serbian language—and speaks it very fluently.”\textsuperscript{28} In addition to his reputation as an intellectual, he was accustomed to move in the first circles in both Pest and Vienna. “A little bit cold in outward manner,” Andrássy advised Michael, “you will find him very confident, and a complete gentleman.”\textsuperscript{29}
The chilly exterior was less a pose than many assumed. For Kállay was a man of vaulting ambition, with a lonely sense of his own destiny. A year after his appointment to Belgrade he confided in his diary that “I won’t give up the hope that one day yet I shall govern some nation.”

Imre Halász, who ran Andrássy’s press office after the latter became foreign minister in 1871, and who in the mid-1870s worked closely with Kállay, described him as “a rather withdrawn man, serious, sober, soft-spoken, a model of Stoic calm.”

Halász also knew Kállay well enough to be convinced that he was “a complete freethinker of the most decided and intransigent type,” who regarded religion “purely as a factor of practical politics, almost as a different political tool.”

What was even more remarkable about Kállay was the cold-blooded calculation he brought to everything he did. Repeatedly, in his Belgrade diary, he describes how this or that person “may be of use” to him, a criterion he applied as coolly to a succession of female conquests as to more professional contacts.

Kállay seems to have regarded most of humanity, in fact, as so many tools to be manipulated. The result was a ruthlessness of approach which could on occasion contemplate even the most extreme measures, inclusive of murder, and which contrasted oddly with his view of himself as a liberal.

But for the moment Kállay seemed the right man for the job. In Serbia the rumor that a Hungarian was about to be made the Monarchy’s representative had at first aroused “great consternation”; but this changed to general satisfaction when it was learned that Kállay, the well-known Serbophile, was the choice.

Prince Michael, according to the British consul, “does not disguise his satisfaction.”

The Prussian consul, Rosen, saw a little deeper, especially the essentially Hungarian nature of this new development:

As far as his mission is concerned, the latter . . . has been summed up by a leading article in Pester Lloyd, which advises . . . the Serbs to seek support among the Hungarians for the resolution of the political mission incumbent upon them. The article . . . completely ignores the existence of an Austrian imperial state.

Implicit in Rosen’s remarks was the central fact about Kállay’s presence in Belgrade, which was the literally dual nature of his role there. Officially he was the representative of the Habsburg Monarchy. Unofficially, however, Kállay was Andrássy’s man, as everybody knew even before he went to Belgrade. The extent to which this became a commonplace was revealed in the (perhaps unwitting) references Rosen was making, within the year, to “the representative of Hungary-Austria.”

Kállay had no excuse for pleading ignorance of Beust’s Balkan policy, since the latter provided him with copious instructions prior to sending him off to Belgrade. In his despatch of 5 April 1868, Beust showed himself considerably more inclined to reform in the Ottoman Empire than Prokesch-Osten, but nevertheless firm in drawing limits to Serbian expansion.
It was obvious to Beust that the Serbian government’s assurances that it had no further demands on the Porte, in the wake of the fortress settlement, did not count for much. On the contrary, Serbia still seemed to want complete independence as a state, territorial enlargement at Turkey’s expense, and probably after that at its northern neighbour’s too, in the final analysis foundation of a realm including all South Slavs.

The powers had been obliged as recently as December 1867 to remonstrate with Prince Michael about the level of Serbian armaments. For Austria-Hungary this aspect of Serbian policy was all the more worrying, given reports that Prussia was ready to sell a large surplus stock of rifles to the Serbs. Now, in April 1868, intelligence indicated that a secret treaty of some sort had been concluded between Serbia and Romania. Without detailed knowledge of the treaty’s contents Beust was apt to regard it as yet another purposeful weapon against Ottoman integrity, rather than the last, rather futile, element in Prince Michael’s Balkan alliance strategy that it was. It would be a great mistake, Beust advised, to regard Serbian plans for a war of liberation as abandoned. Kállay’s first task was to learn as much as possible about Serbia’s Balkan alliances. In addition, he must warn Belgrade emphatically against “risks . . . to which she might be tempted by an unreflective urge to action or through incitements from abroad.” Beust’s assessment of the balance of forces in the Balkans made sense, and was anything but superficial. In his opinion it would be dangerous to underestimate the Ottoman Empire’s powers of resistance. Serbia would be unwise to provoke a general conflict, since its Balkan allies were likely to be unreliable, and even Russian help was a questionable safeguard against defeat.

Beust put his finger on another verity when he expressed the conviction that “Russia on its own, without an understanding with Austria, is not in a position to conduct a war of aggression against Turkey.” The clear implication of these remarks was that it would be Austria-Hungary and Russia who regulated affairs in the Balkans, and not Serbia. The Treaty of Paris, which placed Serbia under the collective protection of the signatory powers, was a perfectly adequate guarantee of the Principality’s constitutional autonomy; to attack the Ottomans would be to infringe the Treaty, and the powers would be justified in abandoning Serbia to its fate in that case.

On the subject of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Beust was categorical. It is hard to square his robust rejection of a Serbian administration in these two provinces with the assertions of his critics that he was somehow in favor of such a scheme, or at least undecided. Beust described it as an idea . . . which aimed at securing satisfaction for Serbia’s expansionist ambitions by peaceful means, but whose realization for all that would have dealt a palpable blow to the political order on our own southeastern borders.
In the year since the plan first surfaced, Beust observed, nothing seemed to have come of it. Nevertheless, “Were it ever to come to the fore again, your honor would have to make it your business to counteract it to the utmost of your ability.” Beust might have been pardoned for assuming that Kállay, as a Hungarian, agreed with the need to oppose the emergence of a greater Serbian state. He was to be rudely disillusioned within the year.

Beust did what he could to dispel the Serbian conviction that Austria-Hungary was only interested in preserving the Ottoman imperium, and indifferent to the plight of the Ottoman Empire’s Christian population. He wanted Kállay to combat this “completely baseless belief . . . most categorically.” There was also a purely practical consideration at work: “the preservation of the sympathies of our Slav and Romanian peoples’ foreign relatives. . . . This interest in our view has no less weight than that of Turkey’s survival.” Somewhat less plausibly, Beust claimed that it was precisely because the Porte regarded Austria-Hungary as its well-wisher that the latter was in a unique position to influence Ottoman policy in a sense favorable to the Balkan Christians. Kállay was also expected to counter Serbian suspicion that Austria-Hungary itself aimed at annexing Bosnia: “The imp. roy. Government will certainly be the last to undermine in any way whatsoever territorial boundaries agreed by treaty.” Beust must have realized that the value of this last assurance was strictly conditional. But there can be equally little doubt that his preferred option was to keep Austria-Hungary out of Bosnia. He was thus unlikely easily to be converted to the sort of scheme hatched by Andrássy for a Serbian presence there, and with these general guidelines in his pocket Kállay, as he departed for Belgrade, must have realized this.

Kállay arrived in Belgrade on 19 April 1868, and presented his credentials the same day. Commenting on Michael’s formal speech of welcome, which praised the Emperor’s choice of diplomatic representative, Kállay noted that “They always praise a newcomer. I believe, however, they will praise me even more on the occasion of my departure.” Kállay’s determination to make his mark would have been the greater had he realized just how tenuous Austria-Hungary’s, or rather Hungary’s, influence in Serbia really was. For Prince Michael, at the time of Kállay’s arrival, was actively playing the Prussian card. The interest shown by Bismarck, earlier in the year, in supplying Serbia with arms was hardly philanthropic. It showed rather the Prussian minister president’s keen awareness, as in 1866, of Serbia’s potential use as a distraction in the event of the widely expected Franco-Prussian conflict, which could so easily degenerate into a general European war, with Austria-Hungary siding with France. Now, late in April, Prince Michael put out his own feelers in response.

The Prince sent the diplomat Jovan Ristić on a mission to the capitals of the great powers. Ristić’s purpose was to sound Bismarck as to the role the latter envisaged for Serbia in the event of a European war. “Serbia has to follow the
lead of those who make it rain and shine,’” Rosen reported the Prince as saying. Michael clearly had not completely abandoned his thoughts of a Balkan uprising and attack on the Ottoman Empire, despite the negative policies he had pursued in this regard since meeting Andrássy at Ivánka in August 1867. He was as convinced as ever that “Attempts at reform are not going to solve the Eastern Question.” The deciding factor in his mind seems to have been the possibility of Prussian support against Austro-Hungarian intervention, as well as the fact that nothing concrete had come of Andrássy’s promises at Ivánka.59

Ristić, however, drew a blank when he reached Berlin in May 1868. Bismarck was taking the cure, and later fell sick for several months. Ristić settled down to await Bismarck’s return to the direction of Prussian policy; he was still waiting when, on 10 June, Prince Michael’s murder made the question academic.60

The fact that such contacts were being sought, however, enables us to put Prince Michael’s expressions of gratitude for Austro-Hungarian attentions in their proper light. Michael could appreciate the upgrading of the Monarchy’s diplomatic representation in Serbia, and he was undoubtedly interested in whatever the new Hungarian presence in Belgrade had to offer. This did not prevent him from keeping his options open. Blaznavac, who succeeded Michael when he took over as first Regent, was to accept Hungarian assurances more unreservedly.

Kállay’s first contacts with Prince Michael concentrated on railways and Russian influence. It was the first of these which bulked largest in Michael’s mind. The Prince’s anxiety to link his country by rail to the outside world, after all, had been one of his principal reasons for seeking the cooperation of Austria and Hungary the previous year. Michael was particularly worried at the activities of a financial consortium investigating the construction of a line through Bosnia and the Sancak of Novi Pazar, rather than Serbia, a prospect which spelled economic disaster for the latter.61 Kállay assured Michael, in Andrássy’s name, that the Hungarian government strongly favored a Serbian route.62 The Prince even harked back to a remark made by Andrássy at Ivánka, to the effect that “the basis of a truly reasonable eastern policy is represented by that which alone is capable of establishing harmony among the different nationalities,” and that the railway was an excellent practical means to this end.63 He ended by giving what Kállay most wanted to hear, a promise to decide on the railway question soon. In return, Kállay offered a fresh hostage to fortune by linking
construction of the railway to the Bosnian scheme. When the Prince expressed the hope that the railway would be a firm tie between Serbia and its northern neighbor, Kállay replied: “I hope so too, but only if Bosnia remains remote forever, at least from us.”

On Pan-Slavism, Michael confessed to puzzlement as to why the great powers, Austria-Hungary to the fore, persisted in regarding it as anything other than “an incorporeal ghost.” Obviously the Balkan Slavs were bound to Russia by ethnic and religious ties, but there could be no question of their giving up their separate identities. Michael argued that as long as the Slav nations retained their languages, they could not be assimilated by anyone. He did, however, accept Kállay’s thesis that it was not Pan-Slavism, but “Pan-Russianism,” which constituted the real danger: the threat to subordinate every Slav people to Russian interests. Even then, Michael claimed, no one in Serbia wanted Russian domination. It was the same disclaimer that leading Serbs had been making for years, but Kállay showed no more sign of having taken the point than any of his predecessors.

From the moment he arrived in Belgrade, Kállay pursued a number of objects with a view to establishing Hungarian influence on a firmer basis. He lobbied hard with Vienna for concessions such as the speedy conclusion of a postal convention between the Monarchy and Serbia, and the renunciation by the Monarchy of its right to exercise consular jurisdiction on behalf of Habsburg subjects within Serbia, both much-resented legacies of Ottoman rule. He also built up a network of contacts and more surreptitious means of control. In immediate terms this consisted of cultivating high-level sources of information, in the recruitment of agents, and the buying of newspaper influence.

For much of his intelligence, Kállay relied on the experience of his vice-consul Svetozar Theodorovics, a Hungarian Serb from Szentendre, and on the Habsburg army officer in charge of the Monarchy’s postal station in southern Serbia, a Captain Emil Čučković. He also depended heavily on the advice of the Hungarian ministry of the interior in monitoring traffic between Serbia and the Monarchy’s Slavs. Here the interests of the Monarchy and the Hungarian government often marched together; but at other points they clashed directly, especially where the Austrian military was involved. Kállay had some reason for regarding the military with exasperation. According to Theodorovics,

> They talk so indiscreetly and arrogantly about a takeover of Bosnia, that afterwards, of course, it’s hard to convince the Serbian government of the sincerity of our government’s opposite viewpoint, even with the greatest of efforts.

Kállay accordingly took steps, through Beust, to exclude the Austro-Hungarian military from intelligence activities in Serbia itself, which may have produced more balanced reporting of events there, but which also ensured that what got reported back to Vienna was largely a matter of Kállay’s choosing.
In his purchase of newspaper influence, Kállay made two contacts who were to serve him well throughout his stay in Belgrade. These were the journalists Rosen and Popović. Miloš Popović was the editor of the conservative, semi-official *Vidovdan*, had done much to introduce Eötvös’s views on the nationality question to the South Slav world, and was typical of the sort of Serb Kállay hoped to work with in Belgrade. Later that same year Kállay was to find an opportunity to subsidize *Vidovdan* directly; but in the meantime he acquired another ally in the person of Popović’s assistant editor, Dr. Michael Rosen, who also worked in the press bureau of the Serbian government. Rosen, like Popović, but for more crudely financial reasons, was interested in promoting Serbo-Hungarian friendship. In addition to writing pro-Hungarian articles in *Vidovdan*, and pro-Serbian articles in the Hungarian press, he also became, next to Captain Čučković, Kállay’s most prolific source of information.

“Personal contacts” assumed a literal meaning where Kállay’s relations with women were concerned. This is not to say that his numerous affairs while in Belgrade were undertaken specifically for intelligence purposes—far from it. There is no evidence, in a diary which records a singularly cold-blooded promiscuity, that Kállay seduced the wife of the Italian vice-consul, or took advantage of a traveling female acquaintance from Budapest, or dallied cynically with the pregnant wife of the British legation secretary at St. Petersburg, *en route* to join her husband, or maintained until 1870 an opera singer in Vienna, all in the interests of the Habsburg Monarchy, or even the Hungarian state. But here was no careless philanderer. Kállay was fully alive to the possible opportunities such adventures might present, as well as the dangers. When the wife of the rising opposition politician, Aćim Čumić, sent a note to Kállay in early 1871, informing him that she was in love with him, Kállay was naturally suspicious, since he had only met the woman once. He got his deputy consul to find out more about her, “because I don’t know whether there isn’t some other intrigue hidden behind this affair.” In the event, Mrs. Čumić’s interest turned out to be purely carnal, and since her husband did not enjoy access to government circles, the affair began without political overtones. Toward the end of 1871, however, Aćim Čumić’s potential as member of a possible alternative government went up, and Kállay found that intimacy with the man’s wife paid intelligence dividends. Mrs. Čumić was quite happy to keep her lover posted on all the goings-on in the anti-government camp throughout 1872. At the end of that year, however, Kállay unceremoniously dumped her, having become engaged in the meantime. Two years later there is a laconic entry in the diary: “Čumić has driven his wife out.”

Even more brutally calculating was Kállay’s exploitation of a Mrs. Ivanović, a well-connected Belgrade lady. When, in October 1869, he first recorded that “Ivanovicska . . . is behaving as if she is terribly in love with me,” Kállay’s first thought was that this too might be a plot, since he had met members of the Russian
consulate at her place before. But, “if it is true, I shall by all means make use of
this love, because she could be of service to me with her knowledge of the coun-
try.” In the course of a rapid conquest, Kállay made clear the purely utilitarian
nature of the affair: “Even though she doesn’t take my fancy, I will continue with
this fairy tale, it will possibly be of use to me.” Kállay had the first fruits of
persistence even before seduction: on 7 November, “after a little dalliance,” the
infatuated woman had volunteered the information that the Russian consul had
just received a courier from his country’s representative in Habsburg Ragusa.

More detailed information, from then on, was Kállay’s for the asking. When
he heard from Vienna that two Serbian officers had appeared in Montenegro,
and were training Montenegrin troops, Kállay could secure their names from
Mrs. Ivanović. He could confirm through her whether, and when, this or that Ser-
bian minister was passing through Constantinople, and what his mission was;
or learn that a Serbian agent, name supplied, had been sent secretly into Croatia, and
had reported back to the Serbian Regents. Mrs. Ivanović even passed on details
of troop movements, and discontent in the army over government spying on its
officers, garnered from her soldier brother. In 1872 she was able to keep Kállay
informed on the movements of a messenger between the Serbian government and
the Croatian National Party, a matter of high concern to the Hungarians. In re-
turn for these services, Mrs. Ivanović received a venereal infection, a pregnancy
scare and—one must be fair!—the means to combat both. None of this appears
to have troubled Kállay unduly, although he did worry about the danger of being
blackmailed. Fortunately for him, the lady seems not to have been vindictive,
since she decided to leave Belgrade in December 1873, some six months after
Kállay’s marriage.

While Kállay was busy extending his contacts in Belgrade, Andrássy’s last
major initiative during Prince Michael’s reign was being discussed in Pest. This
was the outcome of an approach made by General István Türr to Colonel Orešković
at the beginning of May: would Orešković meet him in Pest for talks? Having
obtained permission from his superior, Blaznavac, Orešković traveled up to Pest
toward the end of the month. Behind this lay an invitation to acquaint Orešković
with Andrássy. The object was the further discussion of the Bosnian question.

The pre-history of Andrássy’s intervention in the Bosnian question, in partic-
ular the question of his objectives in offering even a part of Bosnia-Hercegovina
to the Serbian government, has already been discussed. It seems incontestable
that the offer made at Ivánka, in August 1867, was a sincere one, as long as
Andrássy’s essential condition is borne in mind, the close association of such an
enlarged Serbia with the Habsburg Monarchy. Equally certain, in view of Beust’s
recent instructions to Kállay, is the essential independence of the offer which
Andrássy now repeated to Orešković, that is, its independence of any control or
approval on the part of the Austro-Hungarian chancellor.
Andrássy began by expressing his conviction that, in an age of railways and telegraphs, close links between states were unavoidable, especially for small states like Serbia which hoped to avoid impoverishment. The implication was that close relations with Austria-Hungary, as opposed to Russia, were to be desired. Orešković replied that, on the contrary, “only a strong and independent Serbia would dare enter into close relations with Hungary,” because it “would not have to fear that a Hungary equal to her would place her individuality as a nation and state in question.” There could be no firm basis for Serbo-Hungarian friendship, in his opinion, until Serbia had been strengthened by the acquisition of not only Bosnia-Hercegovina but “Old Serbia” (the area around Niš) as well.

This gave Andrássy the opportunity to say that he did not have anything against such a merger, but that the time was not yet ripe. Hungary needed time to “consolidate itself,” in order to fulfil its task of “protecting a free Europe from Russian barbarism.” “First of all,” he told Orešković, “Russia must be driven back, and when this has been achieved then the time will have come for you South Slavs to free yourselves and unite.” Only then could the Hungarians dare to abandon the Ottoman Empire, without fearing the latter’s immediate absorption by Russia.

Orešković in an extraordinary exchange showed his weakness as a negotiator. The South Slavs of the Ottoman Empire, he told Andrássy, were waiting because they had to; but even if, as Andrássy said, Austria-Hungary “needed” the Ottomans, the time would come when the Slavs could dispense with their northern neighbor’s permission to rise up. In any general war Austria-Hungary would have to deal with Russia, and the Balkan Slavs would not have to fear Austro-Hungarian intervention then. Instead, they would make their own contribution to the Monarchy’s discomfiture, for the Slav regiments of the Military Border would also rise up. In a general war, he insisted, Austria-Hungary’s chances would not be good, and it was obvious which side Serbia would be on.

Andrássy tried a different tack, reminding Orešković that he had already admitted the Ottoman Empire was not sustainable in the long run: “at the moment we are only propping it up until we have beaten back Russia; when that is done then we will abandon it and will raise you [the South Slavs] up.” All Serbia would have to do, he added, would be to refrain from attacking the Ottomans. To this, however, Orešković raised one of the principal objections to such a strategy from the Serbian government’s point of view, an objection moreover that was to recur again and again in Kállay’s own reports from Belgrade. In any general upheaval, regardless of how Serbia conducted itself, there was always the likelihood of a spontaneous uprising, especially in Bosnia; and in this case any Serbian government would find it impossible not to join in. Orešković, for all his foolishness, had articulated a central truth about the South Slav question in the 1860s and 1870s, a truth that became apparent in 1875 when the Hercegovinian
and Bosnian revolts sparked one of the great diplomatic crises of the century. To Andrássy’s revelation that Prince Michael, at Ivánka, had said he would not allow Serbia to become involved in an Austro-Russian conflict, Orešković simply reiterated that “A government in Serbia which, in these circumstances, opposed the national will and its deepest feelings, would fall the same day that it showed this, and the Prince himself would be driven out of the country.” It was a precise forecast of the situation in which Michael’s successor, Prince Milan, found himself in 1876.98

Things would be different, Orešković assured Andrássy, if the Serbs could be united in their own state. Hungary would not be strong enough to threaten such a union; the only danger would be from Germany and Russia, and this could be dealt with by a defensive alliance of the southeast European nations, especially one that included Hungary.99 In a remark that echoes Kállay’s reflections of 1867 on the “free union” of nationalities, Orešković said “We want a strong and even more independent Hungary, because only in alliance with such are we secure and capable of preserving our freedom against a third, stronger power.”100 And Serbia, he reminded Andrássy, would be all the more bündnisfähig if it included Bosnia.

It was at this point that the two men began to grope toward what appeared to be common ground. Andrássy reminded Orešković of the Croats, who not only had their own claim to part of Bosnia, but were supported by the “strong military party . . . who work in Vienna so that Bosnia and the Hercegovina can be annexed.”101 Andrássy stressed that he would prefer Serbia to take Bosnia and the Hercegovina than for them to be annexed by the Monarchy.102 However,

it is to be feared that if you were to try to annex Bosnia, you would get into a struggle with the Croats who, from the other side, would invade it. Such a struggle . . . would oblige us to intervene; and if we intervened, a third party would intervene, and so on, so that would bring a European war down on our heads.103

Orešković responded that the Hungarians need not intervene. All they had to do was to restrain Austria from intervening, and to mediate between Serbia and the Croats. Serbia was not aiming to destroy the Ottoman Empire; it just wanted to unite all the Ottoman Serbs in one administrative unit. The Croats could be placated by letting them have “Turkish Croatia,” that is, the Bosnian district of Bosna Krajinna.104

Andrássy seized upon this, with the remarks quoted in the previous chapter.105 The Serbs could take Bosnia, he said, and Hungary would not intervene; it would even try to help behind the scenes. But Serbia would have to act soon, if possible by the next spring, because if circumstances arose in which Austria-Hungary found itself at war with Russia, “then you don’t dare attack Turkey in any way, and we, cost what it may, would have to be against you.”106 And when Orešković asked if he could repeat all this to his own government, Andrássy assured him that he could.
Before Orešković returned to Belgrade he was made an additional offer, this time in great secrecy via General György Klapka. According to Klapka, Andrássy was “ready to conclude a treaty with Serbia, by which Serbia would annex Bosnia and the Hercegovina, while the Crown of St. Stephen, that is, Croatia, would annex Turkish Croatia.”

In compensation for renouncing this part of Bosnia, Serbia would also annex the paşalık of Niš. The treaty would be a strictly secret one between Serbia and Hungary, but in order to implement it the approval of France, which Andrássy engaged himself to obtain, would be desirable. Serbia’s main obligation, in the event of its takeover of the territories in question, was to conclude a further treaty with Hungary based on the principle of mutual defense.

The idea of a Serbo-Hungarian alliance was to be shunted back and forth for the next two years: as late as the autumn of 1870 Kállay submitted a similar proposal to Belgrade in Andrássy’s name. But was Andrássy serious? On the face of it the proposal was ludicrous. Neither Andrássy nor the Hungarian government was in a position to conclude foreign treaties of this nature; and even if they were, it is hard to see how Andrássy can have expected such a treaty to have binding force, if it were to remain secret from everyone except, egregiously, the French Emperor. To the Yugoslav historians who have touched on the subject, both the alliance and the proposals about Bosnia were attempts to draw the teeth of Serb nationalism by keeping the Serbian government waiting for something that would never come.

Yet it is hard to doubt the sincerity of Andrássy’s denial of an interest in acquiring any part of Bosnia in 1868, however much he may have modified his position over the next three years. Assuming that Andrássy was telling the truth in this respect, and that Serbia could somehow be won over from Russian influence, there is a certain fractured logic to the idea of allowing Serbia to take over Bosnia, as long as such an enlarged Serbian state were firmly under Hungarian control. One would like to know more about what Andrássy thought, if anything, of the ideas on the association of nation-states, propounded by Kállay in his introduction to John Stuart Mill, and echoed in May 1868 by Orešković. Unfortunately neither the Kállay-Andrássy correspondence nor Kállay’s diary throws much light on this; yet it seems likely that Kállay would have discussed such a solution with Andrássy at some time or other. With the Ausgleich barely a year old, could Andrássy have been toying with the possibility of a Danubian confederation, in case this constitutional arrangement with the Habsburg Monarchy did not work out?

If Andrássy’s sincerity is to be questioned, it is also necessary to accept that he deliberately deceived his chosen man in Belgrade, Kállay. For Andrássy, who had a capacity for appearing all things to all men, this is a possible explanation, but in this case ultimately unconvincing. Certainly Kállay himself believed in the Bosnian scheme. As he expressed it to Andrássy on 31 May, the latter “sent me
here so that I could expressly declare that we harbor no desire to conquer Bosnia-Hercegovina.” All the subsequent references to the plan in Kállay’s diary attest that he was indeed, in Wertheimer’s phrase, “Feuer und Flamme” for it.

What Kállay, and above him Andrássy, hoped to gain by dangling the prize of Bosnia before the Serbian government is another matter. A possible answer is the Croatian question. For Andrássy’s government, in the year when they had to conclude the Nagodba with the Croats, the urge to divide the nationalities facing them must have been strong. Kállay expressed this with simple force later in the year. “It would really be a beautiful result,” he wrote, “if I could alienate the Croats and Serbs from one another.” And the ideal “apple of discord” was the Bosnian question. Late in May 1868 this need to keep Croats and Serbs apart constituted one of the themes of Kállay’s last letter to Andrássy before Prince Michael’s death. This makes clear his concern that recent Croatian claims to Bosnia were a threat to the goodwill he had recently built up.

At the heart of Andrássy’s and Kállay’s strategy regarding Bosnia was an ambiguity that was not resolved until both men finally accepted the inevitability of annexing the province to Austria-Hungary. In 1868 they would rather have avoided such an acquisition. But even in 1868 Kállay, at least, could envisage an eventual annexation, and could put it in Andrássy’s head, if it was not already there to begin with:

I think it ... very probable, that Bosnia ... will sooner or later become part of our territory. ... But the time for this has still not come; now we must at all costs convince the Serbs that we don’t intend starting anything with regard to these provinces.

Kállay had reason to think his mission successful after a couple of months in Belgrade. He had the goodwill of Prince Michael who, according to Orešković, was quite pleased with the news from Pest, and the Hungarian government appeared to hold all the threads in its hands for further improvement. Then an event occurred which seemed to undo everything that Kállay and Andrássy had achieved up to that point, and to put their whole policy of binding Serbia to Hungary once more in question.

Notes

1 Prokesch-Osten to Beust, 25 July 1867 (private), HHSA, PA XII/88; cited incorrectly by Grgur Jakšić & Vojislav J. Vučković, Spoljna politika Srbije za vlade Kneza Mihaila (Prvi Balkanski savez) (Belgrade: Istorijiski Institut, 1963), 461, as ‘PA XII/85, 25 June 1867’.


9 Kállay kept a diary in 1863–65 which is largely a record of financial dealings: MOL, P344, 40.cs. E/b; see also Kállay Diary, 15 & 16 Oct. 1868 (Dnevnik), 100, 101.


12 Thallóczy introduction to Kállay, Geschichte des serbischen Aufstandes, vii, ix; Vámbéry to Kállay, 20 Mar. 1902, MOL,P344,Bb/519; Ress, Kállay Béni, 101–2. For an example of Kállay’s fluency in Greek, see Spuridon N. Basileiades, Galátea: Dráma öt felvonásban. Új-görögtől fordította Kállay Béni [Galatea: Drama in Five Acts. Translated from Modern Greek by Béni Kállay] (Budapest: Olcsó Könyvtár, 1875).


14 “Kállay Béni ifjúsága,” OSZK, FH 1689/1 13, folios 3–4; Thallóczy introduction to Kállay, Geschichte des serbischen Aufstandes, vii-viii; Ress, Kállay Béni, 103–6.


18 “Glas o pitanju narodnosti iz Ugarske” [A Voice on the Question of Nationality from Hungary], 4 Aug. 1865, MOL, P344, 44.cs. E/f8; title in Serbian, text in Hungarian.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.


25 Kállay Diary, 3, 6 & 12 May 1868, 26 June 1868 (*Dnevnik*, 13, 15, 18, 44). On the latter date Kállay wrote about “My dear old ideas!” and the concepts of confederation “over which as a youth in my lonely little room I brooded so much.” The translation in *Dnevnik* (44) is faulty.

26 Kállay Diary, 6 May 1868, (*Dnevnik*, 15).


29 Ibid.

30 Kállay Diary, 29 Apr. 1869 (*Dnevnik*, 175).


32 Ibid.


34 On the Miletić murder plot, see below, Chapter 6.


36 Longworth to Stanley, 21 Feb. 1868, PRO, FO 78/2033 (no. 12).


38 *E.g.*, Rosen to Bismarck, 5 Jan. 1869, *APP*, X, no. 408, p. 427; cf. Decsy, *Prime Minister Gyula Andrássy’s Influence*, 55, who finds the Hungarian flavor of Kállay’s appointment entirely natural: “It was Kállay’s duty . . . to prepare the ground for Serbia’s removal from Russian influence, and to learn the real motives behind Beust’s Balkan policy.”
40 Beust to Kállay, 5 Apr. 1868, in Vučković, no. 195, 349.
43 Beust to Kállay, 5 Apr. 1868, in Vučković, no. 195, 350.
44 Ibid., 350–51.
46 Beust to Kállay, 5 Apr. 1868, in Vučković, no. 195, 352.
48 Beust to Kállay, 5 Apr. 1868, in Vučković, no. 195, 352.
49 Ibid., 353; italics added.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid. Vučković (355, note 3) correctly points out, apropos of this passage, that it does not agree with Andrássy’s suggestion to Serbia in March 1867 of a partition of Bosnia. That is precisely the point.
55 Kállay to Beust, 21 Apr. 1868, HHSA, PA XXXVIII/177.
56 Kállay Diary, 20 Apr. 1868 (*Dnevnik*, 5).
57 Reiswitz, *Belgrad-Berlin, Berlin-Belgrad*, 100–1, and 121, quoting Bismarck to Werther, 17 Mar. 1868, in *GW*, vol. 6a, no. 1103, 313.
61 Kállay to Beust, 28 Apr. 1868, HHSA, PA XXXVIII/177; Kállay to Andrássy, 29 Apr. 1868, OSZK, FH 1733/79–80; Kállay Diary, 28 Apr. 1868 (*Dnevnik*, 8–9).
64 Ibid., 28 Apr. 1868 (*Dnevnik*, 10). Kállay also noted how, in his reports to Vienna, he deliberately left out “that I talked about the railways in Andrássy’s name.”


69 Kállay Diary, 3 May 1868 (*Dnevnik*, 13).

70 Kállay to Beust, 18 May 1868, HHSA, PA XXXVIII/177, and minute. There is no record of this exchange in KA 5409, the Evidenzbüro file for this year. See also Ian D. Armour, “Austro-Hungarian Covert Activity in Belgrade 1868–1875,” *The South Slav Journal* 26, no. 1–2 (2005): 1–4.


74 Kállay Diary, 2 Mar. 1871 (*Dnevnik*, 365).
Chapter 2

76 Ibid., 23 Dec. 1871 (Dnevnik, 427).
78 Kállay Diary, 3 Dec. 1874 (Dnevnik, 618).
79 Ibid., 26 Oct. 1869 (Dnevnik, 238).
80 Ibid., 4 Nov. 1869 (Dnevnik, 242).
81 Ibid., 7 Nov. 1869 (Dnevnik, 242).
82 Ibid., 2 and 4 Dec. 1869 (Dnevnik, 249, 249–50).
83 Ibid., 25 Aug. 1870 (Dnevnik, 324).
84 Ibid., 1 & 28 Aug., 4 Sept. 1871 (Dnevnik, 396, 400, 401).
86 Ibid., 3 May 1872 (Dnevnik, 466).
87 Ibid., 12–13 Feb. 1870 (Dnevnik, 269).
88 Ibid., 13 Nov. 1873 (Dnevnik, 568).
89 Jakšić & Vučković, Spoljna politika Srbije, 363–64.
90 Orešković Memorandum, 16/28 July 1868, in Vučković, no. 198, 356–82.
91 Ibid., 357.
92 Ibid., 357–58.
93 Ibid., 358.
94 Ibid., 358–59
95 Ibid., 359–60.
96 Ibid., 360.
97 Ibid.
100 Ibid., 362.
101 Ibid., 364.
102 Ibid., 365.
103 Ibid., 364–65.
104 Ibid., 365.
105 Ibid. See Chapter 1; note 118 refers.
107 Ibid., 367.
108 Ibid; also Jakšić & Vučković, Spoljna politika Srbije, 464.
110 Jakšić & Vučković, Spoljna politika Srbije, 463–64; Vučković, 381, note 8; Krestić, Hrvatsko-ugarska nagodba, 375–77.
112 Kállay to Andrásy, 31 May 1868, OSZK, FH 1733/92.
113 Wertheimer, Graf Julius Andrásy, 1:461.
114 Kállay Diary, 19 Nov. 1868 (Dnevnik, 116).
115 Kállay to Andrásy, 31 May 1868, OSZK, FH 1733/91–92.
116 Ibid., ff. 92–93.
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