Chapter 8

The Bosnian Question Revisited
1870–71

It is ironic that the Hungarian attempt to revive the Bosnian question should have been launched on 23 November, for the same day saw the dispatch of Beust’s circular to the Monarchy’s representatives in Belgrade and Bucharest.¹ This was to prove the time bomb which, two months later, brought the fragile edifice built by Andrássy and Kállay crashing to the ground.

In late November, Beust was faced with the need to react somehow to Russia’s unilateral renunciation of the Black Sea clauses. He associated himself with a number of proposals for discussion at the forthcoming international conference at London, which had their origin in Andrássy’s fertile brain but which were illusory to say the least.² On a simpler level, however, Beust needed to convince the Russians that he meant business, an ultimately fruitless exercise in view of the Monarchy’s essential powerlessness. Part of this exercise involved squashing any ideas of trouble-making in the Balkans. The Beust circular was designed as a direct admonition to what the Ballhaus considered the two most likely sources of unrest in the Peninsula, the Serbian and Romanian governments.

To Beust the connection between the Russian declaration and a threat to the status quo in the Balkans was self-evident. “The Russian move,” he wrote to his consuls in Belgrade and Bucharest, “is . . . all too well suited to put feelings in the lands directly or indirectly belonging to the Ottoman Empire in a considerable state of excitement,” and this might create a sense that the status quo in the Balkans was no longer tenable. Beust expressed the hope that neither the Romanian nor the Serbian government would be lured into taking steps “which would conjure up unforeseeable disaster for their country.” The passage which was to cause all the trouble,
when it became public two months later, was not at first sight controversial. Serbia and Romania, Beust wrote, must be under no illusions that Austria-Hungary’s leaders were resolved to preserve the 1856 settlement, and “for its preservation to deploy the whole force of the Monarchy in case of necessity.” In Beust’s view this determination on the part of the Monarchy happened also to serve the interests of both Serbia and Romania, and should be accepted in this sense.\(^3\)

Just when Andrásy, through Kállay, was attempting to breathe new life into the Bosnian plan, with the added bait of an alliance or entente of sorts between Serbia and the Monarchy, Beust’s circular introduced a decidedly jarring note. Far from encouraging Belgrade to look upon a division of Bosnia as possible, it invoked the Treaty of Paris and the status quo, and virtually threatened the vassal states with war if they endangered either. Beust had not always made his unease at Andrásy’s schemes as clear as he might have done; in fact his acquiescence in Hungarian meddling at times amounted to a weak-minded acceptance. The circular of 23 November was a substantial corrective to this tendency, and indeed might well have been conceived as a well-placed torpedoing of whatever it was Beust suspected Andrásy of contemplating in relations with Serbia.

That being so, and given the ambiguity of Kállay’s position between Vienna and Pest, it is perhaps not surprising that the Beust circular at first vanished without trace. There is no mention of the circular in Kállay’s diary,\(^4\) nor does the original survive in the files of the Belgrade consulate.\(^5\) Nor did Kállay raise the matter with the Regents, as the circular clearly enjoined him to do.\(^6\) The evidence, or rather lack of evidence, suggests that Kállay quietly consigned his unwelcome instructions to the fire.

Quite apart from the possibility that Beust might easily query whether the contents of the circular had been communicated to the Regents, Kállay was gambling against the odds. Since 1868 the Austro-Hungarian foreign ministry had been in the habit of publishing selected documents on foreign affairs, and it was entirely conceivable that the circular of 23 November, which usefully demonstrated the Monarchy’s support for the status quo, would find its way into one of these so-called *Rotbücher*. But Kállay, at the end of 1870, was convinced he was on the verge of a breakthrough with the Bosnian plan. His determination to ignore Beust’s instructions so blatantly was undoubtedly due to his awareness of something which remained hidden to the chancellor. Not for the first time, Andrásy had secured the highest possible authority for new overtures to the Regents. The Emperor Francis Joseph himself was involved; and for a tantalizing few weeks it seemed as if, at long last, Serbia might be drawn securely into the Monarchy’s orbit.

The final stage of the Bosnian negotiations, in the winter of 1870–71, was a Hungarian-led and executed affair, even when the assent of the monarch is allowed for. For one thing, Beust and the foreign ministry were, with the Emperor’s agreement, deliberately kept in the dark. In their approaches to the Serbian gov-
ernment, Andrásy and Kállay were once again pursuing their own “foreign policy,” in blithe disregard of the practical obstacles to its realization. Beust might still have enjoyed the Emperor’s overall confidence, but as far as relations with Serbia were concerned Andrásy increasingly behaved as if his views, rather than Beust’s, were the ones that mattered.  

Andrássy’s fresh approach to Belgrade owed much to his sense of isolation at the crown council of 14 November, convened to discuss the Black Sea crisis. If, as Andrássy at first feared, Beust and the Emperor refused to take the threat from Russia seriously, then it was all the more important for Andrássy to do what he could in the one quarter, Serbia, where through Kállay he had a direct influence. As far as the Bosnian question was concerned, Andrásy must have realized, by now, that Beust was not really in favor of the scheme. The chancellor had certainly shown no signs of disappointment when, in the autumn of 1870, the British government so emphatically disavowed any involvement in such a project. Andrásy’s proposed carve-up of Bosnia, in return for Serbia’s unequivocal alliance with the Monarchy, thus paradoxically had to be put to the Serbian Regents without Beust’s knowledge. What was even more paradoxical, as Andrásy admitted to Kállay in late October, the Ottoman government, another key factor in the equation, still refused to have anything to do with the Bosnian plan.

Kállay, because of the vague nature of his brief from Andrásy, and because the recent acquittal of Alexander Karadordević had seriously soured his relations with the Regents, felt his way carefully at first. His chosen instrument was Colonel Orešković, the (frequently self-appointed) mediator between Belgrade, Pest and the Croatian nationalists in Zagreb. As it happened, Orešković returned to Belgrade from talks with Andrásy, on the subject of his proposed propaganda campaign in the Military Border, at the end of the first week in November. Orešković expressed his support for the Bosnian project, although for this Croat exile Croatia’s interest in the division of Bosnia was never far from his mind. He promised to talk to the Regents and “seriously propose an alliance with Hungary, however, if they should incline towards Russia. . .in Bosnia he will start such an agitation in favor of Croatia that Serbia will never be able to acquire Bosnia.” As usual with Orešković, much of this was bombast, since he hardly possessed the full confidence of the Croat nationalist leadership.

Over the next few days, Kállay employed Orešković as a species of Trojan horse for ascertaining the Regents’ receptivity to Andrásy’s proposals. With Kállay’s approval, Orešković played the “Vienna military reaction” card when he told the Regents, on 13 November,
The Regents ought “to come out once and for all on this,” Orešković urged, since he was shortly to see Strossmayer in order to agree on “the position Croatia has to take up towards the Hungarians.” Implied was the suggestion that it might be the Croats, and not Serbia, who benefited most from any opening up of the Bosnian question.

Orešković also echoed Andrássy’s extraordinary claim that Prussia was prepared to tolerate “any action . . . by Austria-Hungary against Russian influence in the East.” As the Colonel described it to the Regents, a treaty had been concluded between Austria-Hungary and Prussia, and “in the East Austria is being guaranteed a free hand.” Serbia would be foolish to range itself on the wrong side in any impending conflict. Even allowing for Orešković’s tendency to exaggerate, however, this was a serious claim to be making, on the basis of nothing more substantial than Andrássy’s assumptions about the future community of interests between Germany and the Monarchy. Yet Kállay’s private record shows no qualms about backing a statement which could so easily be proved false.

If Kállay required fresh evidence of how low Hungarian stock had sunk in Belgrade, he had it in Blaznavac’ assertion to Orešković that “an agreement is possible, only because of the Karadöredević business they now can’t have much trust in Hungary.” Despite the rather unsubtle pressure brought to bear by Orešković, both Regents remained stubbornly ill-disposed. On 17 November, for example, Kállay learned that Ristić “doesn’t want to know about an alliance with Austria.” The attitude of both Regents might also have been affected by the news of Russia’s renunciation of the Black Sea clauses, only a few days before.

Kállay made his own approach to the Regents on 17 November. He had to spend much of the interview reassuring them that the Hungarian government intended taking the Karadöredević case to a higher court. The Black Sea crisis, too, had had its effect. Blaznavac was particularly apprehensive, and made the connection Kállay doubtless dreaded. If the powers did not pull Russia up for its unilateral action, “it will thereby establish its prestige in the East and in this case it will be difficult to struggle against it.”

On the Bosnian question, Kállay pretended to be acting on his own initiative, but that “in so far as I am acquainted with Andrássy’s intentions, I believe that something could be done and that seriously.” The time for talk, in other words, was past. In a couple of days, Kállay would lay before the Regents “his” (in reality Andrássy’s) plan, and would hope for a clear answer. To heighten the Regents’ sense of being surrounded by unreliable elements, by comparison with which Hungary must appear a rock of salvation, Kállay even described Orešković as “an agent of the military party,” a slander agreed on by prior arrangement with Orešković himself. These scare tactics appeared to work. Two days later Kállay had the satisfaction of learning that Blaznavac and Ristić were “already much more inclined to negotiate with us. They recognize that Serbia’s situation is critical.”
Yet the Regents’ attitude on matters of detail seemed if anything to be hardening. Orešković who, despite his new stigma as a supposed creature of the Vienna military, still had the Regents’ ear, reported on 20 November that they “would not possibly agree, in case they acquire Bosnia, to cede to the Croats the Croatian part of Turkey [i.e. of Bosnia] as far as the Vrbas.”23 Or rather, they would, if the Monarchy were to cede its own southern tip of Dalmatia to Serbia, and with it access to the Adriatic. Since the Vrbas River bounds the entire northwest corner of Bosnia, this sudden caprice seemingly ruled out any sort of division.

On 23 November, when Kállay finally set forth his formal plan to Blaznavac, this fresh obstacle soon reared its head. Kállay started by outlining the basic deal:

in case of war with Russia, either they [the Serbian government] would occupy Bosnia, or, if the Porte protested against this, we would guarantee that, upon conclusion of the war, we would, if necessary by force, get Bosnia for them.24

Blaznavac preferred the first option. At the back of his mind, undoubtedly, was the fear that, once in Bosnia, the Monarchy might not be so keen to pull out again. Kállay, however, warned Blaznavac that a Serbian occupation of Bosnia could have a bad effect on the Croats, “who would probably provoke an uprising in the Turkish part of Croatia, in their interest and to Serbia’s detriment, and we didn’t want the expansion of Croatia.”25

This did not impress Blaznavac. Serbia, he said, would cede northwest Bosnia “up to the Vrbas” [a Vrbaszig] in order to placate the Croats; but in return it wanted “some insignificant territory” on the southern frontier of Montenegro, “and on the other side of the Boccha di Cattaro.”26 The rationale for this, it emerged, was that

by this the principle of compensation [i.e., to the Sultan] for Turkish Croatia would still be reached; on the other hand they would completely encircle Montenegro, which was nothing but a tool in the hands of Russia.27

In effect, Austria-Hungary was being asked to exchange its naval base at Cattaro for the northwest corner of Bosnia, while the Ottoman Empire made an additional, internal border adjustment in Serbia’s favor.

Kállay, not for the first time, found himself at something of a loss. He reiterated his conviction that allowing the Monarchy to annex northwest Bosnia was “the sole means which might satisfy the Croats.”28 The reciprocal cession of Cattaro, however, was a new idea and, although Kállay liked it, he would have to refer the matter back to Andrássy. As for the general feasibility of the scheme,

The greatest difficulty would arise if it didn’t come to war [i.e., with Russia] because it would then be hard to persuade Turkey to cede Bosnia. With regard to this I said that Andrássy had already taken steps and that they hadn’t found a favorable reception with the Porte.29
In the face of Serbian suspicion, these were embarrassing admissions to be forced to make. The Porte was forewarned and obdurate; and the entire plan was virtually impracticable without the outbreak of war and upheaval.

Undoubtedly one of the factors which kept the Serbian government interested in the Bosnian plan, despite their growing scepticism about Andrássy’s ability to make good his promises, was their consciousness that Russia was unlikely to be of assistance. On the contrary: the renunciation of the Black Sea clauses paradoxically made the Russian government an even firmer supporter of the Balkan status quo than it had been hitherto. In return for the Porte’s acquiescence on the Black Sea issue, the Russians were willing to offer the Ottoman Empire a renewed guarantee of its territorial integrity, and thus gain a tactical ally at the projected international conference. In November 1870 rumors about this guarantee, which implied there could be no change in the status of Bosnia, were already reaching the Serbian Regents; as Dr. Rosen reported to Kállay on the twenty-fourth, “Even Ristić is against the Russians.”

The obvious annoyance in Belgrade with Russia caused Kállay to claim to Beust, somewhat implausibly, that any Serbo-Russian understanding was out of the question. The realization was gaining ground in Serbia, according to Kállay, that Austria-Hungary was the only power from which it could hope for anything, as well as the only power which could seriously threaten it. Kállay concluded that “Serbia honestly desires the preservation of the Turkish Empire; this is indeed the best guarantee for its own survival.” Naturally, the Serbian government had not given up its hopes of taking over the administration of Bosnia; but they knew full well that this could only take place, Kállay stressed, “with the help of the Western powers, but especially of Austria-Hungary, and under the suzerainty of the Porte.”

At no point did Kállay do more than hint to Vienna at what was really being negotiated. Beust might well have gathered from the above that his subordinate was still encouraging the Regents to dream of a Serbian share in Bosnia, but the details of what Andrássy and Kállay hoped to spring upon him as a fait accompli remained hidden from him.

In fact the Hungarian initiative appeared on the verge of a breakthrough. Four days after the despatch just mentioned, on 28 November, Kállay had a meeting with all three of Serbia’s Regents. Jovan Gavrilović, the shadowy third Regent, was no more than a political makeweight, but his presence at this stage of the negotiations seemed to indicate a symbolic commitment to act on the part of the real men of power, Blaznavac and Ristić.

This meeting was held specifically to discuss the Bosnian plan and the question of a formal agreement on the matter between Serbia and the Monarchy. For the benefit of Gavrilović, Kállay began by rehearsing, as if it were his own plan, everything so far discussed with the other two Regents. The Regents agreed with the following summary:
as long as there is no war they [the Regents] would like diplomatic activity which would prepare the terrain, and when that was completed, the takeover of Bosnia by the Serbian army, in which case we would proclaim our intention not to intervene, while secretly we would help them with money and arms. With regard to this I expressed my opinion that this would not pose any great difficulty. In case war breaks out between us and Russia, let Serbia take over Bosnia, and we would guarantee its possession after the war; they, however, must assure us of their friendly neutrality.34

Kállay added that, in the event of an Austro-Russian conflict, it would be inadvisable for Serbia to march into Bosnia at once, since at this point the Ottomans could still be expected to have substantial numbers of troops stationed there. However, “once the Turkish army was already preoccupied, and the excuse existed they could provoke an uprising in Bosnia and go in under the pretext of maintaining order on the Porte’s behalf.”35

The Regents appeared to have no difficulty in accepting this scenario. What should have caused Kállay concern, however, was a detail he set down in his diary that evening. Despite Ristić’s reservations about a formal agreement, the Regents said “they would accept it if the minister of foreign affairs signed it.”36 It was a crucial proviso, which threatened the whole basis of the projected understanding. Short of a change of foreign minister, it is hard to see how it could be complied with; but then Kállay in late November was hoping for precisely such a change at the Ballhaus.

Another indication of future difficulties was the reaction to Kállay’s proposed division of Bosnia along the River Vrbas. It was clear that this also found little favor with Ristić, who preferred not to discuss such details. Instead, said Ristić, the Serbian government would negotiate directly with the Croatian National Party on the territorial division, and in the event of a partition along the Vrbas line would be looking for compensation in the shape of Cattaro. To this, Kállay merely replied that “we at least didn’t want the aggrandizement of Croatia, but this would be in their [the Serbs’] interest, because otherwise they would have trouble with the Croats.”37

Kállay was enough of a realist to see that all was not yet clear sailing, and as he prepared to leave for Pest he was in sombre mood. He pondered whether he should resign his post, “if I don’t find that Andrássy is pursuing a more energetic policy.”38 Much of Kállay’s pessimism was due to the unpromising international scene, since he had gathered from the press that “we are going to give way in the Black Sea question.”39 He would see what Andrássy said to the latest proposals from the Regents, but “I fear I am right, and that the time for energy from his point of view has still not come.”40

The remarkable thing about Kállay’s despondency was the degree to which he associated success or failure in his Belgrade mission with Andrássy’s policy,
rather than Beust’s. In actual fact a great deal depended on whether, in the end, the foreign policy establishment of the Monarchy as a whole could be induced to back the Bosnian plan. Possibly this essential backing would be secured by a change in personnel, an event which, given the Emperor’s personal interest in Andrásy’s scheme, was at least conceivable in November 1870. Nevertheless Andrásy was not yet foreign minister, and the Serbian Regents showed every awareness of this awkward fact.

Between 1 and 23 December, Kállay saw Andrásy a total of five times in Pest. Andrásy was less than pleased with the failure to secure a firm acceptance of the Monarchy’s right to northwest Bosnia. He remained optimistic, however, and, on the basis of an ambiguous enquiry by the Ottoman ambassador, believed that “the Turks are beginning to become friends with this idea.”\textsuperscript{41} Such an assumption, for which no other evidence exists, was on a par with Andrásy’s belief in the Monarchy’s “free hand” for action against Russia. Deciding on the precise limits of the territory Austria-Hungary should claim, in fact, appeared to Andrásy the main problem in the Bosnian question, far transcending the matter of Ottoman cooperation. At Kállay’s second interview with him, on 8 December, Andrásy still had to “think this over a bit more, and will also speak to the Emperor.”\textsuperscript{42}

On 11 December, Kállay handed over to Andrásy “a list, in which I have noted down the principal points of the agreement to be concluded with the Serbian government.”\textsuperscript{43} This document, which as it turned out represented the closest the Hungarians ever got to finalizing the negotiations over Bosnia, has not survived in its original form. Instead, the points drafted by Kállay resurfaced later in three separate versions.

One, in Kállay’s hand but fragmentary and of questionable provenance, cannot even be dated with certainty.\textsuperscript{44} Nevertheless it clearly planned for a secret treaty with Serbia, and obliged the Monarchy, in case of a war with Russia in which Serbia was either an Austrian ally or a benevolent neutral, to permit a Serbian occupation of Bosnia “even during the war.” Even if Ottoman protests made this impossible during hostilities, Austria-Hungary engaged to detach the provinces afterwards from the Ottoman Empire, “which would be compensated for this in Asia.” If Serbia managed to secure the Porte’s agreement to a handover in time of peace, “then we would be obliged to claim for ourselves the part roughly up to the line Narenta [Neretva]-Verbas [Vrbas] as frontier rectification.”\textsuperscript{45} This, incidentally, was the first mention of the Neretva River as a further delineation of Austria-Hungary’s share, and made it clear that what the Hungarians had in mind was the entire western third of Bosnia, as far south as Metković on the Dalmatian frontier.

The other two surviving versions of the draft treaty are the virtually identical notes preserved by Jovan Ristić, on the basis of his interview with Kállay at the end of December, to be dealt with shortly. Ristić’s posthumously published third volume of memoirs contained a translation of his original notes of the in-
terview, which he wrote down in French at the time and, according to his own account, “in his [Kállay’s] presence, [and] at his dictation.” In their published, Serbian form these notes differ from the French notes taken at the time only in minor details. The sole significant inaccuracy is that Ristić in his memoirs describes the interview as having taken place in the autumn of 1870, an error repeated by Vojislav J. Vučković when he published the French text in 1963. The Kállay diary, however, makes it clear that the only draft treaty set down on paper in this fashion, between Kállay and the Regents, was that discussed on 27 December. It also seems probable, in the light of the above evidence, that what Kállay read out to Ristić was the final form of the list he submitted to Andrássy in Pest on 11 December.

On 15 December Kállay saw Andrássy again, and learned that he was now backing away from the idea of a formal treaty at all. From being bent on war, as late as 24 November, Andrássy had apparently calmed down considerably, claiming that “since war with Russia, it seems, has been averted, we don’t have to conclude a treaty with the Serbian government, but just give one another a verbal guarantee.” Nevertheless Andrássy announced that he was to see the Emperor personally the next day. “With Beust, however, he can’t speak about this.”

Map 6. Plan for the Partition of Bosnia-Hercegovina, 1870–71
Renouncing a formal agreement did not, however, in Andrásy’s eyes, mean renouncing Austria-Hungary’s claim to northwest Bosnia. In return, Andrásy was prepared to guarantee that, if a dispute between Serbia and the Porte should flare up in time of peace elsewhere in Europe, the Monarchy would not only adopt a policy of non-intervention, but would prevent the intervention of other parties. Andrásy also stressed, on 21 December, that he had indeed discussed the whole matter with the Emperor, “who has accepted it.” Kállay was authorized to “communicate His Majesty’s assent with regard to the Bosnian affair. But Beust must know nothing about the whole thing.” Clearly this state of affairs would not continue indefinitely. Andrásy’s sudden reluctance to contemplate a formal treaty, despite Francis Joseph’s personal involvement, actually reduced the chances of getting Blaznavac and Ristić to commit themselves.

The terms which Kállay laid before Ristić, on 27 December, were concrete enough. In the absence of Blaznavac, who was sick, Kállay informed Ristić of the Emperor’s approval of the conditions proposed. He also claimed, with more presumption than accuracy, that “the minister for foreign affairs would sign the eventual treaty.” On the ticklish question of why a formal treaty was no longer required, Kállay fell back on the fact that the threat of war had receded, hence “we had to reach agreement only with regard to those elements on which we could later conclude a treaty.”

The points which Ristić then jotted down, in Kállay’s presence, covered a wide variety of possibilities. In any Serbo-Turkish conflict, for instance, the Monarchy would not intervene, and would ensure that no other power did so either. If Serbia provoked a conflict, it undertook to let the Austro-Hungarian government know of its intentions in advance. If the Porte started hostilities, or if it was uncertain which side had initiated them, Serbia would still be bound to warn Austria-Hungary before deploying any Serbian forces in Ottoman territory. In each eventuality, Austria-Hungary engaged to preserve a benevolent neutrality vis-à-vis Serbia. In the event of Austria-Hungary’s direct involvement in war with “a foreign Power”—in plain parlance Russia—Serbia would preserve a friendly neutrality. In return, the Monarchy engages after the war to procure for Serbia Bosnia, the Herc[egovina]. and Old Serbia (boundaries to be determined) in such a fashion as to have these provinces annexed to Serbia, with which they would form a state placed under the suz[erain]ty of the Porte, in the current conditons of Serbia.

The Monarchy moreover undertook to enforce this occupation “if necessary by war.” The inevitable quid pro quo for this was northwest Bosnia: “As soon as Serbia has annexed these provinces Austria will occupy, for its part, the part of Bosnia up to the Verbas and Narenta.” Should trouble break out in Bosnia while Austria-Hungary was still at war, then both parties would consult with one an-
other “in order to enter into the countries, which, in the cases provided for, would form the integral part of their states.”

As Kállay recorded that evening, this was where his own draft ended. Ristić, however, tacked on a final clause. According to this, if the Ottomans actively resisted this joint Austro-Serbian intervention, either on Serbian soil or on their own territory, “the condition of maintaining the suzerainty of the Porte lapses, and Austria engages to recognize Serbia as an independent State, and [to] work in this sense with the other Powers.” Kállay sensibly pointed out that he could make no comment on this addendum, and on that point the two wound up their discussion.

Ristić was a notoriously cautious and suspicious individual. Nevertheless, if his memoirs are to be believed, he personally accepted that the Hungarian initiative with regard to Bosnia was sincerely intended. Ristić at least in retrospect made a clear distinction between the traditional machinations of Vienna, after 1867, and the policies pursued by the Hungarian government, which “entered on to a completely different track and showed a friendlier disposition towards Serbia.” Ever since Andrássy’s encuentro with Prince Michael at Ivánka, Ristić conceded, the Hungarian government had demonstrated its desire for good relations. There was, to be sure, a certain sting in Ristić’s remark that Andrássy, as minister president, had tried “to attach the neighbouring Balkan nations, and especially Serbia, to Hungary—but for as cheap a price as possible.” But Ristić had to recognize the encouragement Andrássy had given Serbia’s national aspirations, even if he “shrunk from the very thought of changing the shape of the Ottoman Empire.”

Ristić saw the contradictions inherent in Andrássy’s policy between 1867 and 1871. The Hungarian was a politician whose country found itself “in an insufficiently consolidated monarchy,” and whose domestic policies were often dominated by nationality issues. As Ristić asked himself, “how could he dare even to think of inspiring and strengthening those nationalities on Hungary’s borders?” Was this not playing with fire, “which could easily spread to his own premises?” Ristić explained this paradox, accurately enough, with reference to the overriding Hungarian concern with Russia, and the need, in the event of an Austro-Russian struggle, to ensure that Hungary was not caught between two fires.

According to Ristić’s account, Kállay deployed some powerful arguments in his attempt to gain the Regents’ confidence. A comparison with Kállay’s own personal record reveals that some of the things he told Ristić were true, while others were not the whole of the matter, or were simply false; but Ristić naturally could not know this. On the crucial issue of Francis Joseph’s involvement, for instance, Kállay said “that the Emperor had informed him in brief; that he would receive orders to work for the joining of Bosnia to Serbia.” Beust, moreover,
had not only accepted the project; he had, claimed Kállay, “instructed Kállay that he could start work on the business which Count Andrássy had advised.” Finally, Kállay revealed that Andrássy had already sounded the Ottoman ambassador in Vienna on the subject, a detail which, as it happened, Ristić was able to verify from his own sources.

Ristić thus did not share the conviction expressed to him by Bishop Strossmayer, at the start of 1871, that the entire scheme was “a Hungarian swindle.” On the contrary: in a passage written admittedly in the mid-1870s, at a time when Andrássy was in a powerful position, Ristić insisted that Andrássy “meant honestly by us with his proposal.” Such recognition did not, however, preclude a thoroughgoing skepticism as to Andrássy’s ability to work miracles. Ristić was just as conscious as Strossmayer of the basic objection to the Bosnian plan: that it did not square with the well-known views of Beust on the Eastern Question. Ristić knew well enough by early January what stand Beust meant to take at the London Conference on the question of the Black Sea clauses. He could hardly dispute Strossmayer’s reminder that Beust would stress “above all the integrity of Turkey.”

The assumptions behind the proposals, in Ristić’s judgment, were all too questionable. For instance, Serbia was bound to observe a friendly neutrality toward Austria-Hungary in the event of the latter going to war; but since the likeliest opponent in such a conflict was Russia, would Serbian neutrality really be possible? Nor was Ristić happy at the prospect of handing over to the Monarchy, in the event of a Habsburg victory, what he revealingly described as “a third of these Serbian lands.” Rightly or wrongly, Ristić feared the consequences for the Regency of accepting two such positions: “Would we not... enter into conflict with the feelings and interests of all Slavs, not to mention our own people?”

Just as worrisome for Ristić was the clause which provided for the occupation by the Monarchy and Serbia of their respective shares of Bosnia, in the event of disorders breaking out there. For Ristić this was one of the points which made the whole plan unacceptable. He evidently hoped that Austria-Hungary’s occupation of the northwest corner of Bosnia would be only temporary. However, it could happen that Austria would maintain its occupation, but that we would not be in a position to do this with ours. What a miserable result that would be! We would have put ourselves under Austria’s thumb, while she occupied our Serbian lands!

And in the event of such a catastrophe, from the Serbian point of view, who would guarantee that Andrássy, whom the Regents could trust, would remain at Hungary’s helm? Who would wager that, in return for Serbia’s neutrality, the perfidious Monarchy would not in fact occupy Serbia itself? In short, too much in the plan hinged upon Andrássy’s continuing presence and influence.
The scenario would be worst of all if the Monarchy suffered defeat in a war against Russia, in which Serbia had sat on the sidelines as a supposedly friendly neutral. Serbia would be exposed to the rancor of Russia and the Slav world for its support for the Habsburg Monarchy, hence “we would share its destruction, without even firing a shot.” Since Ristić considered an Austro-Hungarian defeat the most likely outcome, it is not surprising that in the light of all these reasons he preferred to wait upon events. Nor is it any wonder that Blaznavac too increasingly found the Bosnian plan “full of dangers.”

It was to be some time before Kállay realized it, but he was to advance the Bosnian question no further. As on previous occasions, the Regents made repeated promises, over the next few weeks, that they would give their answer soon; but this receded, mirage-like, continually into the future. Matters were to continue in this fashion for several more months, with the Regents assuring Kállay that a detailed reply to the alliance proposals was imminent, and Kállay besieging Andrássy for some fresh instructions, on the strength of which he could put the negotiations back on the agenda. Noticeable, too, was a further stiffening in the Serbian conditions: by late March 1871, the Regents were suggesting that Austria-Hungary’s share in any partition of Bosnia should not extend beyond the River Una, a considerable reduction.

In reality, however, there was very little to negotiate. On 24 January, Kállay learned for the first time that the Regents knew about what Ristić, in his memoirs, called “The first bomb, which exploded over this confidential relationship.” The supplementary volume of the Austro-Hungarian Rotbuch had finally reached Belgrade, and in it was published Beust’s circular of 23 November. As Ristić complained to Kállay, the explicit threat to Serbia and Romania, in the circular, was an affront to “their national self-esteem”; certainly it had created “an extremely bad impression” in Belgrade. To this, Kállay’s attempt to demonstrate that the circular “didn’t have any significance and that because of this I hadn’t mentioned it to them [the Regents],” must have sounded lame even in his own ears.

Ristić, by his own account, accepted Kállay’s explanation, and even describes Kállay as being “so much wiser than his chief [Beust] that he did not make any use whatsoever of this note with the Serbian government.” What Ristić forebore to mention, but which both men knew perfectly well, was that there was a glaring contradiction between the policy avowed by Andrássy, and that which Beust continued to represent. While Andrássy promoted a plan which had as its centerpiece a reordering of the status quo in the Balkans, Beust was still, it seemed, prepared to threaten Serbia with condign punishment if it disturbed that status quo. The alleged assent of the monarch himself to Andrássy’s scheme, one must remember, was as far as the Regents were concerned just that: they only had Kállay’s word for it. An inherently improbable plan, given the obstacles in the way, appeared to be opposed by one of the key figures in the Monarchy’s foreign
policy establishment. Unless the Hungarians’ vaunted endorsement from the Emperor was made obvious, moreover, it looked as though Beust’s opposition to the plan would be decisive.

Beust’s November circular was certainly a more realistic appraisal of the relationship between Serbia and the Monarchy than that which Kállay had been promoting for the past three years. Its revelation at a time when the Monarchy was confidently claiming Serbian support at the London Conference, however, had a devastating effect. There was no disguising the leverage that the circular gave the Regents, in citing Austrian, if not Hungarian, malevolence as an excuse for non-cooperation over issues raised at the London Conference, such as the regulation of the Danube. The official press in Serbia immediately echoed this tone of outrage, and there was a sudden rash of leading articles complaining about Austrian arrogance and insensitivity.

Kállay at first made no mention of these reactions to Beust, as if he hoped against hope that the issue would die away. In a despatch to Andrássy on 28 January, however, Kállay did not conceal his alarm at the possible consequences of “this tactless telegram,” which he saw as the culminating point in a long series of “blunders by Austrian statesmen.” Beust’s stress on the inviolability of the 1856 treaties, and his slighting references to Balkan national aspirations, had created such a bad impression, Kállay wrote,

the first because it diametrically contradicts the well-meaning proposals expressed by Your Excellency in the interests of these provinces, the second because small, backward nations, which have nothing else but the concept of a future national greatness, are apt to be sensitive on this point.

Noting the hostile replies in newspapers like Jedinstvo and even Vidovdan, Kállay drew some comfort from the fact that the Vidovdan leader “is laying great stress on the differences which exist between the policy of Count Beust and Hungarian policy,” a line which was apparently dictated by Blaznavac himself. Kállay expressed the conviction that Andrássy’s standing in the Balkans, by contrast to that of Beust, had if anything increased by comparison. However, “since the common foreign minister is still Count Beust, the bad effect will sooner or later extend to the policy of the entire Monarchy.”

The discomfiture of both Andrássy and Kállay can only have been heightened by the news that General Stratimirović, the Hungarian Serb politician, had tabled an interpellation of Andrássy on the subject in the Hungarian parliament on 1 February. Stratimirović pointedly asked whether the Hungarian government was in agreement with the policy set forth in the November circular; whether in fact the Monarchy should not be following “a liberal policy of support for the emancipation of the Christians” in the Balkans; and why the same neutrality, observed so strictly in the West, was not also applied to the East.
For Andrásy, who had spent the last four years trying to implement a policy favorable to Serbian, if not Romanian aspirations, to be arraigned publicly in this fashion for Beust’s sins must have been galling. In the meantime, Kállay attempted to enlighten Beust as to the effect of the circular. Something clearly had to be reported officially to Vienna, since Kállay had only just seen Blaznavac who, as Kállay recorded privately, made no secret of the fact that the circular’s effect was “extraordinarily unpleasant for him personally.”

The Regent complained that the circular “made difficult if not impossible the work of consolidating good relations with us. . . . The Russians could never have done anything so useful to their interests as Beust’s telegram.” To this Kállay made the bold assertion that “although Beust even wrote telegrams in the matter what he wanted wasn’t happening, the Emperor was completely won over to a policy which assigned Bosnia to Serbia.” However necessary to placate Blaznavac, such language clearly would not be acceptable in Kállay’s dispatch to Vienna.

Kállay at first tried the tactic of recalling Beust’s past expressions of goodwill toward the Balkan Christians. The frequency of these, Kállay claimed, had gradually created in Serbia the conviction that its welfare was “most securely to be achieved for the most part through a closer association with the policy of its mighty neighbor Austria-Hungary.” For “Austria-Hungary,” here, it was of course really “Hungary” which Kállay had in mind. His next observation, though, was a more straightforward reflection of his priorities. This Serbian loyalty was important, he wrote, because of that “extremely damaging influence which a Serbia hostile to us could exercise among the South Slav populations of our Monarchy, especially on the occasion of a foreign war.” This ultimate disaster had so far been avoided. Not only had Russian influence waned, but “Serbia’s relations with our South Slavs can, on the contrary, be termed rather hostile than friendly.”

The circular of 23 November, however, was perceived as a threat, and “a threat on the part of mighty Austria can inspire all the more apprehension here, because the danger for little Serbia in this case would be imminent.” Making the same point he had made to Andrásy, about the touchiness of Serbian national feeling, Kállay went so far as to claim that Beust’s own instructions had consistently ordered him, Kállay, “not to confront Serbian national aspirations abruptly.” Since Beust’s circular appeared to do precisely that, Kállay feared for the results: “Every step which estranges Serbia from us has, necessarily, a gravitation towards Russian policy as a consequence.” And so indeed it proved, although Kállay completely ignored the extent to which his own and Andrásy’s dabbling in secret diplomacy had contributed, and was still contributing, to this result.

To Andrásy, on 6 February, Kállay held to it that the Regents continued to look to Pest: “all their trust centers on Your Excellency alone.” In view of what both Regents were now openly saying about Serbia’s relationship with the Monarchy, however, Kállay’s belief in their loyalty to Andrásy seems increasingly like...
whistling in the dark. It was significant that Blaznavac, especially, made a direct, if unsubtle, link between the maintenance of good relations and the Monarchy’s good offices for Serbia. As for Ristić, Kállay was fully aware that the second Regent had always been more sceptical of the benefits to Serbia of a close association with the Monarchy, even under Andrássy’s aegis. Kállay would hardly have been surprised at the scornful tone of Ristić’s comments, in December 1870, to Serbia’s representative in Constantinople: “Who is going to give us Bosnia over the diplomatic table? For that we need a different time and circumstances.”

By early February 1871, with Serbia being upbraided by Vienna for its position on the Danube question, the revelation of the Beust circular had clearly hardened Ristić’s attitude still further. Replying to General Ignatiev’s taunt that Serbia had abandoned its leadership of the Balkan Christians, Ristić informed Hristić on 7 February that “When the moment comes to act, then the impatience will disperse like mist and all minds will be with us.” He dismissed as nonsense a report, attributed to Ottoman sources, that Serbia intended lobbying for the administration of Bosnia at the London Conference: “We know perfectly well that we can’t request Bosnia from anyone, so we shan’t be asking it from the conference either.” If that “anyone” is to be taken literally, Ristić evidently no longer set much store by Andrássy’s Bosnian plan, assuming that he had ever done so.

In mid-February, and with the London Conference entering its final stage, Kállay received a lengthy justification from Beust for the publication of his November circular. It was clear Beust was in no mood to accept the strictures of the Serbian press and government circles. Instead, he went on the offensive, listing all the benefits Serbia had derived from the Monarchy in recent years. These included the evacuation of the fortresses in 1867; securing the recognition of the hereditary nature of the Obrenović succession; and sponsoring the 1869 Constitution. The Regents, Beust insisted, were completely misinterpreting the circular if they saw in it evidence of a new, anti-Serbian policy on the part of the Ballhaus. “Far from pursuing thereby views hostile to Serbia, . . . the only cause that I have devoted myself to pleading is that of the maintenance of the treaties guaranteeing the rights of the Principalities.” Beust followed this up with a second despatch the same day, making yet another appeal for Serbia’s support over the question of regulating the Danube.

Kállay went to see Ristić on 17 February. He started by reading out Beust’s dispatch of 12 February, justifying the November circular, and got the impression that Ristić was “extremely pleased with it.” On the subject of the Danube, however, and despite deploying every possible reason why Serbia should support Austria-Hungary, Kállay ran into a brick wall:

Although he [Ristić] didn’t say so outright, I could already see that they aren’t going to do so. I mentioned that if they maintain their opposition this is nothing other than mistrust of us.
With Blaznavac, whom he saw the same day, Kállay received an identical response: emollient assurances that Beust’s explanations more than made up for the November circular; prevarication and a promise to think it over with regard to the Danube.102

Whatever protestations of satisfaction Kállay received from the Regents, their subsequent refusal to give way over the Danube was probably reinforced by the ill will which Beust’s circular had generated. The Regents had received a sharp reminder that the Austria they were most familiar with, the Austria that threatened, and took Serbian insignificance for granted, still existed. Not only did this cast a questionable light on Hungarian assurances of friendship, it clashed with any attempt by Vienna to play down the original intent of the November circular. Ristić, admittedly in retrospect, claimed that Beust’s reluctance to see his February dispatch published, as the Regents suggested, proved that the November circular “could not have any other meaning than that which we had given it, and in addition to us everyone else who read it.”103

Most important from Kállay’s point of view, his credibility as a negotiator was fatally undermined. By February 1871 there was no lack of reasons for the Regents to treat his interpretations of either Austrian or Hungarian policies with scepticism. The Karađorđević case remained in limbo, and Ristić at least was increasingly dismissive of the Bosnian scheme. The need to smooth over Beust’s circular appears to have taxed Kállay’s powers of explanation to the limit. Filip Hristić informed Ristić from Constantinople that, according to the reports the Italian embassy there was receiving from its consulate in Belgrade, “Kállay’s position . . . has become untenable.”104 The Regents, Joannini was supposed to have informed his superior in Constantinople,

have perceived now that all Kállay’s fine words have been words only and nothing else . . . Kállay has . . . been so compromised and shamed before the Serbian government, that he can’t go out of his house.105

Kállay’s own record does not quite bear out this highly colored report; but what he did set down is evidence enough that things had gone seriously wrong.

On 20 February Andrássy rose in the Hungarian parliament to answer the Stratimirović interpellation. In a reply concerted with Beust, Andrássy denied utterly that the chancellor had threatened Serbia and Romania with armed intervention. Beust’s intentions had been, on the contrary, to emphasize just how much the 1856 settlement guaranteed “the contemporary international position and rights” of the vassal principalities.106 Stratimirović’s concerns were thus “completely groundless.”107

The statement was an anodyne account, which quite ignored the unmistakable note of menace in the November circular’s promise to deploy “the whole force of the Monarchy” against any threat to the status quo. Andrássy’s reply
also studiously sidestepped the real point of the circular, which was not aimed at developments within the principalities themselves, but rather at their possible provocation of revolt in neighboring Ottoman provinces. Such a warning had especial relevance for Serbia’s known aspiration to gain control of Bosnia, an aspiration which Andrássy and Kállay had of course been encouraging for the past three years. Neither Kállay’s diary nor the relevant Serbian sources comment on the reception Andrássy’s statement got in Belgrade, but it is hard to imagine how it could have failed to remind the Regents of the dichotomy afflicting “Austro-Hungarian” foreign policy.

Notes
4 Kállay Diary, 24 Nov.–1 Dec. 1870 (Dnevnik, 343–44).
5 HHSA, PA XXXVIII/187.
6 Kállay Diary, 23 Dec. 1870 et seq. (Dnevnik, 348 ff.)
8 Andrássy to Kállay, 24 Oct. 1870, OSZK, FH 1733/73; see also Imre Ress, Kapsolatok és keresztutak: Horvátok, szerbek, bosnyákok a nemzetállam vonzában (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2004), 196–97.
9 Kállay Diary, 10 Nov. 1870 (Dnevnik, 338).
10 Ibid.
12 Kállay Diary, 13 Nov. 1870 (Dnevnik, 338–39).
13 Ibid. (Dnevnik, 339).
15 Kállay Diary, 13 Nov. 1870 (Dnevnik, 339).
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 17 Nov. 1870 (Dnevnik, 340).
18 Ibid., 13 Nov. 1870 (Dnevnik, 339).
19 Ibid., 17 Nov. 1870 (Dnevnik, 340).
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid. (Dnevnik, 341).
22 Ibid., 19 Nov. 1870 (Dnevnik, 341).
23 Ibid., 20 Nov. 1870 (Dnevnik, 341).
24 Ibid., 23 Nov. 1870 (Dnevnik, 342).
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid. (Dnevnik, 342–43).
29 Ibid. (Dnevnik, 343).
31 Kállay Diary, 24 Nov. 1870 (Dnevnik, 343).
32 Kállay to Beust, 24 Nov. 1870, HHSA, PA XXXVIII/187.
34 Kállay Diary, 28 Nov. 1870 (Dnevnik, 343–44).
35 Ibid. (Dnevnik, 344).
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 29 Nov. 1870 (Dnevnik, 344).
39 Ibid; in the Hungarian original, “hogy a Pontus kérdésben engedni fogunk.” This is one of the rare passages where Radenić’s translation in Dnevnik falls victim to Kállay’s miniscule handwriting. The Serbo-Croat version is “će oni popustiti u važnoj stvari” (they are going to give way in the important question), which is an understandable misreading of “fognak” for “fogunk” and of “fontos” for “Pontus.”
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., 3 Dec. 1870 (Dnevnik, 345). For the dismissive view which the Ottoman government, in reality, took of the Bosnian plan, see Prokesch-Osten to Beust, 1 Aug. 1870, HHSA, PA XII/96; Prokesch-Osten to Beust, 5 Aug. 1870, HHSA, PA XII/97; and the discussion in Chapter 5, above.
42 Kállay Diary, 8 Dec. 1870 (Dnevnik, 346).
43 Ibid., 11 Dec. 1870 (Dnevnik, 346).
44 Draft treaty with Serbia, no date (although a reference to the Regency dates it to before August 1872), MOL, P344, 44. cs., F/b.1, written by Kállay. There is also a copy of this in the Andrássy family papers: MOL, P4; see Franz-Josef Kos, Die Politik Österreich-Ungarns während der Orientkrise 1874/75–1879 (Cologne & Vienna: Böhlau, 1984), 61–62.
45 Draft treaty with Serbia, no date (although a reference to the Regency dates it to before August 1872), MOL, P344, 44. cs., F/b.1.
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47 Ibid., 3:140; “Austro-Hungarian proposal of a treaty with Serbia, which Kállay dictated to Jovan Ristić [Austro-ugarski predlog ugovora sa Srbijom, koji je Kalaj izdiktirao Jovanu Ristiću], [Belgrade, autumn 1870],” in Vučković, no. 222, 428–29. The original is in the Ristić papers, now in the Serbian State Archive. See also the detailed discussion by Radenić in his introduction (Dnevnik, xviii-xix), as well as his Nachwort (822), and in note 261 (733) to Kállay’s entry for 27 Dec. 1870.

48 Kállay Diary, 27 Dec. 1870 (Dnevnik, 348–49).

49 Ibid., 15 Dec. 1870 (Dnevnik, 347).

50 Ibid. József Galántai, A Habsburg-Monarchia alkonya: Osztrák-magyar dualizmus 1867–1918 (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1985), 239, who quotes the passage from Ristić’s memoirs cited in note 46 above, neglects to point out that the question was being raised in Belgrade without Beust’s knowledge.

51 Kállay Diary, 21 Dec. 1870 (Dnevnik, 348).

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid., 27 Dec. 1870 (Dnevnik, 348).

54 Ibid.


56 Kállay Diary, 27 Dec. 1870 (Dnevnik, 349).


58 Kállay Diary, 27 Dec. 1870 (Dnevnik, 349). Ristić, Spoljašnji odnošaji Srbije, 3:142, makes no mention of adding a final clause, or of Kállay’s reservation.

59 Ibid., 3:134.

60 Ibid., 3:138.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., 3:139.

64 Ibid.


66 Ristić, Spoljašnji odnošaji Srbije, 3:143.

67 Ibid. Cf. Kállay Diary, 23 Nov. 1870 (Dnevnik, 343).


69 Ristić, Spoljašnji odnošaji Srbije, 3:143.


71 Ristić, Spoljašnji odnošaji Srbije, 3:144–45.

72 Ibid., 3:144.

73 Ibid., 3:145; see also Kállay Diary, 24 Jan. 1871 (Dnevnik, 357–58).

74 Ristić, Spoljašnji odnošaji Srbije, 3:146.

75 Ibid.

76 E.g., Kállay Diary, 4 Mar. 1871 (Dnevnik, 365); Kállay to Andrássy, 4 Mar. 1871, OSZK, FH 1733/212–13; Kállay Diary, 16 Mar. 1871 (Dnevnik, 367); Kállay to Andrássy, 16 Mar. 1871, OSZK, FH 1733/214

77 Kállay Diary, 28 Mar. 1871 (Dnevnik, 371); Kállay to Andrássy, 29 Mar. 1871, OSZK, FH 1733/217–18.

78 Ristić, Spoljašnji odnošaji Srbije, 3:146

79 Kállay Diary, 24 Jan. 1871 (Dnevnik, 357–58).

80 Ibid. (Dnevnik, 358).

81 Ristić, Spoljašnji odnošaji Srbije, 3:147.

Ristić, *Spoljašnji odnošaji Srbije*, 3:147–48, 148, where one such passage, probably from *Jedinstvo*, is quoted.

84 Kállay to Andrásy, 28 Jan. 1871, OSZK, FH 1733/206, 204.

85 Ibid., ff. 204–5.

86 Ibid.


89 Ibid; the passage quoted is on 424.

90 Kállay Diary, 4 Feb. 1871 (*Dnevnik*, 359).

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 Kállay to Beust, 4 Feb. 1871, HHSA, PA XXXVIII/191.

94 Kállay to Andrásy, 6 Feb. 1871, OSZK, FH 1733/208.


97 Ibid.

98 Beust to Kállay, 12 Feb. 1871, HHSA, PA XXXVIII/191.


101 Kállay Diary, 17 Feb. 1871 (*Dnevnik*, 361).

102 Ibid. See also Kállay to Beust, 18 Feb. 1871 (no. 7), HHSA, PA XXXVIII/191.


105 Ibid.


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