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HUNGARIAN—CROATIAN INTERSTATE RELATIONS (1941—1944)

The displacement of the international balance of forces in favour of Germany at the end of the '30's basically changed the historical possibilities of Central European nationalities. The Versailles-system, which caused and restricted these nationalist efforts at the same time, collapsed. Reversionist movements rooted in Trianon lost their global character disturbing European order owing to the weakening of the Western democracies and the superiority of Germany and they seemed to be solvable within the frames of a regional conflict restricted by Germany. The new power-relations had a similar effect on the Croatian efforts for autonomy that had been thrashing windward politically for centuries. The German and Italian interests behind the „punishment” of the refractory Yugoslavia opened the way for the right-wing radical nationalist forces that had been exiled until that time and had been forced into a marginal position from political point of view even within the Croatian national movement, that is, the ustasas between the two World-Wars. They were driven to the stage of history not by the social, political or cultural forces of the movement but by the wind of foreign affairs and the tempest of the war.

The first modern Hungarian—Croatian interstate relations were created by and, at the same time, confined within limits by this European background shortly described above both in chronological and qualitative senses.

The diplomacy of the two states were interested, almost exclusively, in two questions from the very beginning: the question of the status of Muraköz and — through its prism — the problem of minorities living in this territory. As is well known, the Italian—German agreement recording the dismemberment of Yugoslavia, concluded on 24 April 1941 stated that Croatia bordered on Hungary along the Drava and besides Bácska and Banat, which were finally placed under German military administration, Muraköz and the region beyond the Mura belonged to Hungary, too. However, the two countries were obliged to make bilateral contracts concerning these two latter regions.¹

The Hungarian army marching into Muraköz was ordered by Henrik Werth, chief of staff — owing to the disorder — to treat Croatian inhabitants, unlike Serbians living in Bácska, „in a friendly manner”; they could not organize ceremonies of marching in, either,

¹ Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda Jugoslavije. (Hereinafter: ZDNOR) Dokumenti Nemačkog Rajha 1941. XII. 1. Beograd, 1973., document No. 23., pp. 72—75. To the Hungarian attitude towards MURAKÖZ, see *Diplomáciai iratok Magyarország külpolitikájához. (Diplomatic documents to the Foreign Affairs of Hungary)* 1936—1945 (Hereinafter: DIMK) volume V. Compiled by GYULA JUHÁSZ. Edited by GYULA JUHÁSZ and JUDIT FEJES. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1982. doc. No. 752, p. 1068., doc. No. 773., pp. 1091—1093.

and the introduction of Hungarian military administration was postponed to a later time than in Bácska.²

At the cabinet-meeting of 21 April 1941, Prime Minister Bárdossy, referring to the fact that „there had been numerous incidents” during the occupation of Muraköz and that further worsening of the situation could be expected, suggested initiating negotiations as soon as possible and the Parliament agreed to this. They accepted the point of view according to which Hungary would maintain its conceptual sovereignty in Muraköz, however, they were ready to pass administration to Croatia on set conditions, but by any means temporarily. The railway „Murakeresztúr — Csáktornya — German border” would belong to Hungary and Hungarian companies could extract oil in Muraköz. Extensive right of peage should be provided for the railway traffic between Gyékényes—Šušak—Fiume, including the right of access for Hungarian trains and the establishment of fuel-depots. They demanded a free zone and the establishment of Hungarian storehouses in the port of Šušak. Besides, the negotiations would have to decide how Croatian authorities would ensure the protection of property and compensate against possible damages. According to the government’s point of view conceptual agreement should be achieved in the matter of the navigability of the river Drava and its opening for Hungarian ships. Finally, the Hungarian border should be along the middle line of the channel of the Drava and the Danube. They related this formula to the idea of the mutual exchange of population.³

The Croatian point of view was first detailed by Poglavnik Ante Pavelić, leader of the Independent Croatian State, to László Bartók, Hungarian chargé d’affaires in Zagreb. In the beginning Pavelić considered the position of the Hungarian government to be acceptable and expressed his hope that the region would be passed to Croatia as soon as possible and he would have been ready to renounce Gola and Dalja belonging to Croatia in exchange, but he definitely opposed the idea of the exchange of population, and not without reason. As a matter of fact, if he had accepted it, Croatia would have weakened one of its winning cards, the Croatian ethnic composition of the region. The Croatian government argued on the basis of the ethnic principle and historical right. The former was based on the dominantly Croatian character of the population of Muraköz, while historical arguments were based on the fact that Muraköz had been a part of Hungary until 1918 but it had been under the control of Croatia between 1848 and 1861.⁴

The Croatian attitude, however, had lost most of its flexibility by the time of the negotiations that began in Zagreb on 28 May: they were not willing to give any compensation for the administration of the region any more.⁵ In my opinion, this can be

² HIL (Archives of the Institute of War History) VKF 1941—1. eln. No. 1. Confidential military command of administration. 11 April 1941.

³ OL (National Archives) K—27. Minutes of the Cabinet’s session of 21 April 1941.

⁴ OL K—63. Küm. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) res. pól. 1941—67. a—293., 301. The conversation with Pavelić is published by: DIMK, vol. V. doc. No. 788, pp. 1118—1120.

⁵ HIL VKF 1941—15263 pres. doc. and *A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország. Német diplomáciai iratok Magyarországról 1933—1944. (The Wilhelmstrasse and Hungary. German diplomatic documents on Hungary 1933—1944)* compiled, edited and the introductory study is written by: GYÖRGY RÁNKI, ERVIN PAMLÉNYI,

explained also by the fact that Muraköz was upgraded in the eyes of the Croatian government because of the defeat in the Italian—Croatian border-negotiations. On the other hand, they judged that Hungary — unlike Italy — was not in the position that its claims should be granted without reservation.

Both partners got support from Germany after the failure of the negotiations. However, the actual leaders of Croatia, Siegfried Kasche, German ambassador in Zagreb, and Glirse von Horstenu, the German general, unambiguously declared that they did not intend to play the part of a judge, which meant — in this case — that the status of Muraköz could not be subjected to debates and the agreement on the problem of the administration depended on the two parties. For purposes of emphasis the general reminded Pavelić that the Führer would approve of a solution of this kind, too: the attention of Hungary was mainly directed to the fact that serious German interests were tied up with the consolidation of Croatia, that is why they had to make concessions in the question of the Croatian compromise claimed (railway traffic towards the Adriatics, a free zone in the port of Šušak, the question of the navigation on the Drava, the exchange of population).⁶

The negotiations took a new turn in June. Secretary of Foreign Affairs Lorković brought up the idea of the common possession of the region. However, László Marosy, the ambassador's deputy objected to condominium on behalf of his government and he suggested the expression: „the state border is the Drava, the administrative border is the Mura” instead. Marosy tried to make the Croatian Secretary of Foreign Affairs Mladen Lorković accept the Hungarian point of view by expressing uncompromisingly: if a decision is not made shortly, his government cannot choose but to eliminate the „intolerable temporary situation”. Pavelić, in opposition to Lorković, did not even want to hear about the condominium of the region and declared in a theatrical tone of voice not surprising from him at all: „he can always stand with head erect in front of the Croatian people if he can refer to the Hungarian military occupation as the manifestation of violence rather than entering into a bargain with Hungary on this question”.⁷

The intention to negotiate of the Hungarian government — if there was any in a serious form at all — disappeared completely by the end of June. Marosy's attention was called to the fact that — from that point on — he was authorized only to inform the Croatian government that „the intention of maintaining Muraköz is getting more and more definite in Hungarian public opinion” and he was not allowed to enter into any negotiations.⁸ On 28 June the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed Döme Sztójay, ambassador in Berlin about the Hungarian—Croatian negotiations, the reasons of the failure and the planned introduction of military administration. They asked him to pay special attention to the following: this information „cannot be like a request for the agreement of

LORÁNT TILKOVSKY and GYULA JUHÁSZ. Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1968. (Hereinafter: WIL). doc. No. 421, p. 600., doc. No. 434, p. 613.

⁶ OL K—63. Küm. pol. 1941—67—3559.

⁷ OL K—63. Küm. res. pol. 1941—67. a—363., and DIMK vol. V. doc. No. 824. p. 1159., WIL doc. No. 434.1. p. 613.

⁸ DIMK vol. V. doc. No. 815. pp. 1150—1151., doc. No. 824. p. 1159., doc. No. 868. p. 1215.

the Imperial government or cannot have the form as if we wanted to leave the question of Muraköz in the hands of the axis powers in our measurements".⁹ This also meant that the matter of the exchange of population was removed from the agenda for a while, too. Sztójay met Ernst Woermann, German deputy undersecretary of Foreign Affairs once again at the beginning of September and — in order to avoid occasional misunderstandings, repeated the point of view of his government: they regarded the negotiations with Croatia on Muraköz as definitely finished and they did not see any chance in the future of changing the situation in question within the framework of a possible agreement. Woermann took notice of Sztójay's statement and repeated the „reserved” attitude of the German government.¹⁰ This meant that Germany had practically understood the unilateral annexation of Muraköz to Hungary. Croatia was defeated in the question of the border by its Hungarian neighbour, too. In spite of this, Croatian governments hoped all the time that there would be some opportunity for rearranging the border, if not at some other time, after the victorious end of the war. Until this time arrives — as Lorković detailed to Bartók several times — „the most important desire of the Croatian government is not to touch the ethnic composition of the regions mentioned above”.¹¹

Hungarian—Croatian relations became definitely worse after the failure of the negotiations. Mutual frontier outrages were frequent and negative change occurred in the ethnic policy of the Hungarian government concerning Croatians. The census and expulsion of the so — called „settlers” and immigrants, that is, persons who had settled down after 1 December 1918, started here, too. Not only expulsions but also the activation of nationalist organizations operating with official support in the territories of the two countries were sources of debate. The press of neither of the two countries spared each other. Croatian newspapers attacked the annexation of the region to Hungary fiercely, while the Hungarian press was proving violently that „Muraköz” was not inhabited by Croatians but by Sokac and Bunyevác (Catholic Serbian) people who spoke the so-called „Muraközi” language.¹²

After the one-sided solution of the debated question of territory it was not in the interest of the Hungarian government to further strain relations between the two countries, so much the more as they were worried about the approach of the two little states established with the help of Germany, that is, of Slovakia and Croatia to Rumania; they regarded this fact as giving rise to the possibility of the establishment of a new Little Entente. Croatia had to accept the facts, although it did not renounce Muraköz. It did not get any support not only in the annexation of Muraköz but the Croatian effort to deepen the situation was also suppressed in Berlin.

⁹ DIMK vol. V. doc. No. 890. p. 1244.

¹⁰ WIL doc. No. 422. pp. 618—619.

¹¹ OL K—63 Küm. pol. 1942—67—59.

¹² OL K—428 MTI (Hungarian News Service) Litograph. 1132. 18 July 1941. OL K—149 BM (Home Office) res. 1942—2—8376., 10429., OL K—28 ME (Prime Minister's Office) Kisebbségi o. (Dept. of Minorities) 1942—R—19705.

The new Prime Minister and Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Miklós Kállay ordered the ambassador Marosy right after taking up his post to make efforts to advance in the ethnic question on mutual terms and to make initiating steps in this direction. The note sent to the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the ambassador on 12 March 1942 listed the offences committed against Hungarian people in Croatia, the wrangling of the permission of the Hungarian Cultural Community in Croatia, the activities of nazis in Osijek, and the question of schools, and definitely called the attention of the Croatian government to the danger that „the way of treating Hungarian people in Croatia would have consequences on the position of Croats in Hungary”. Marosy had a longer conversation with Secretary of Foreign Affairs Lorković when he passed him the note. The latter defended himself by saying that, although he had not actually permitted the operation of the Hungarian association, its members could organize themselves without restriction. When Marosy's partner blamed him for the fact that no Hungarian school operated in Croatia while teaching was in progress in 13 so-called Croatian—Hungarian, 5 Wendish-Hungarian, 7 Bunyevác-Hungarian and 15 Sokac-Hungarian mixed schools in Hungary, the secretary of Foreign Affairs defended himself by saying that it was not his fault but that of the previous Yugoslavian governments, and that the intention of the Croatian government to change this situation is „unconditional and serious”. At the same time he expressed his disagreement with the division of the Croats in Hungary into Sokac and Bunyevac people because, as he said: „national name serves as a link in the spiritual life of a nation and if there is no possibility to acknowledge it freely, this fact brings about the spiritual estrangement and secession of that fraction of the nation”.¹³ He also referred to the fact that education was not in Croatian but in the „Muraközi” language and, while Marosy could maintain relations with Hungarians in Croatia, Gaj, the Croatian ambassador in Budapest did not have any possibility for that.¹⁴ The Croatian government prohibited the activity of the nazis in Osijek after a long period of wrangling and permitted the operation of the Hungarian Cultural Community. According to the Croatian Ministry of Education 12 Hungarian sections were set up in Croatian primary schools in the academic year of 1942—43.¹⁵ Croatia profited from this favourable result and suggested a Hungarian—Croatian cultural agreement following the example of the Croatian—Rumanian agreement already existing. The Hungarian government, however, definitely evaded this proposal. The only thing that happened in this context was the fact that the Hungarian ambassador, Arnold Van der Venne suggested the revision of textbooks from the point of view of ethnic policy in the autumn of 1944. Although the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs received this suggestion „with great benevolence”, they thought that „its realization in practice is not possible in our critical times”.¹⁶

After the failure of the plan of population — exchange the Hungarian government came up with a new idea; they initiated the repatriation of scattered Hungarian people in

¹³ OL K—63 Küm. pol. 1942—67—31.,32.

¹⁴ Ib.

¹⁵ OL K—63 Küm. pol. 1942—67—105.

¹⁶ OL K—63 Küm. pol. 1942—67—104., 1944—67—102.

Bosnia „exposed to peril” by the Croatian government. Marosy and Lorković signed the agreement on this in April 1942. According to this the Croatian government assumes to buy the possessions of the transmigrating people who could take their countervalue with them. In response, the Hungarian government modified its earlier order on the basis of which Croatian people exiled from Hungary or leaving the country voluntarily could not take even their personal property with them. The agreement included the resettlement of the population of four Bosnian villages stricken by civil war: Gunja, Vučinjak, Brčko and Bjelina.¹⁷

Ambassador Marosy tried to provide solemnity for the relocation, following the example of the colonization of Székely people in Bácska, but his intention was disconcerted by the Croatian civil war and the German „cleansing” actions directed against partisans. The German—Hungarian agreement, according to which Hungarians „had to demonstrate their national status with small Hungarian flags” during the German cleansing activities, can be called tragi-comic. As a matter of fact, there were many occasions when even Hungarian people planning to move out became the victims of German military actions. During the relocation which finished in September 1942, altogether 395 families, 15,552 persons were removed into former Dobovljac villages of Bácska, among the Székely people who had settled there before from Bukovina. People from Gunja were settled in Hadikliget (Vetemik), people from Brčko were relocated in Hadiknépe (Sirig), while for the new home of the population of Bjelina they nominated Hadiknépe and Horthyvára (Stepaničevo).¹⁸

The Kállay-government brought up the idea of the exchange of population again in February 1944 and they imagined to make only a „momentary exception” to it, with respect to the situation in Croatia, that is, the war. The Croatian government had already given up its negative attitude by that time and only insisted on the claim that Croatian emigration to Hungary had to be bound to a term of several years. The Croatian government undoubtedly wanted to create a favourable atmosphere for the re-examination of the question of Muraköz with this attitude and the Hungarian government brought up the question again — in the given situation — not in hope of a quick solution, either, but in the hope (which was already rather vain) that they could strengthen their territorial position in the Southern parts referring to the legal apparatus of the agreement in case of a post-war rearrangement. These negotiations, however, became negotiations on refugees soon because of the changing of the military situation, and the Hungarian government had to apply the formula of „momentary exception”. During the negotiations which finished in May the main object of debate between ambassador Marosy and his partner, Gaj, leader of the Political Department of the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the question of treating refugees as emigrants who leave the country for ever (this was Gaj’s idea) or allow

¹⁷ OL K—28 ME Kisebbségi o. (Dept. of Minorities) 1942—R—24333.

¹⁸ A. SAJTI ENIKŐ: *Délvidék 1941—1944. A magyar kormányok délszláv nemzetiségpolitikája* (ENIKŐ A. SAJTI: *The South 1941—1944. The Southern Slav Ethnic policy of Hungarian Governments*) Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1987. p. 102. More detailed information about the settlement of Székelys in Bácska: ib. pp. 53—73 and A. SAJTI ENIKŐ: *Székely telepítés és nemzetiség-politika a Bácskában — 1941.* (ENIKŐ A. SAJTI: *Settlement and Ethnic policy of Székelys in Bácska — 1941*) Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1984.

them, for a definite period of time, to return to their original home. It turned out during the negotiations that — in opposition to the principle accepted already — Croatia wanted to treat refugees as emigrants leaving the country permanently and asserted a right to their property. Marosy succeeded in achieving Gaj's approval of determining a definite period for returning and regarding refugees as real emigrants only after this period of time. Further problems emerged owing to the fact that Gaj was dismissed as a result of the usual and frequent replacements of staff in the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His successor, Rieger was completely uninformed about the matter and came up with a new proposal. Marosy and Rieger signed the Hungarian—Croatian agreement on the matter of refugees finally, on 4 May. According to the agreement the matters of the emigrants would have been treated by a mixed committee and Croatian emigrants could have returned to their original home within two years, while those who intended to remain could assume Hungarian citizenship. They could have taken their property with them, too. The order prohibited the admission of Jewish and Greek Orthodox people and only those Hungarians would have been admitted who had joined the Hungarian Cultural Community. The agreement, however — owing to the development of the military situation — could not have been realized in practice.¹⁹

After the German occupation of Hungary Croatia thought that the time for making reminder steps in the matter of Muraköz in Berlin had arrived. When Marosy blamed Djordje Perić, Croatian Secretary of Foreign Affairs for this, „he declared, without any embarrassment, that he had considered opportune to remind Berlin of the fact that Muraköz belonged to Croatia according to the Croatian point of view”. Then he criticized the policy of foreign affairs of his predecessor Lorković, who — in his opinion — had renounced the triangle of Baranya from the very beginning and thus, as Lorković mentioned, the Croatian government did not hold „trump card” to be played in the question of Muraköz. At the same time he tried to calm Marosy by saying that his step made in Berlin did not mean open discussion on the problem of the region at all.²⁰ Of course, it did not depend on the Croatian government but rather on the fact that Germany repressed the Croatian attempt counting on possible Hungarian—German conflicts again. It is important to note that Germany was not in the position to redraw the map of Europe already.

The concluding moment of Hungarian—Croatian relations was the idea of co-operation in military actions against partisans which was brought up by Glaise von Horstenau, German general in Zagreb. According to the plan both armies could cross the border in a 30- km-distance during the battles. The Sztójay-government negotiated the question of the Germans at the cabinet-meeting of 17 August 1944. The Secretary of Foreign Affairs detailed the plan that Germany should call upon the Croatian government to turn directly to the government of Hungary with this claim. However, the Hungarian government could play a part that would have served the defence of the borders of the

¹⁹ OL K—63 Küm. pol. 1944—67—13., 18., 36., and OL K—74 I. Bejövő számjeltávirat (Incoming code — telegram) Zagreb. 5 May 1944.

²⁰ OL K—63 Küm. pol. 1944—67—40.

country even in this case and „could not assume to take part in actions like this reaching as far as the coast of Dalmatia”. The Minister of Defence detailed his conception that the line determined by the government could not reach more than 10 km from the border. According to Minister of Finance Reményi—Schneller the government could argue well towards Germany with saying that they wanted to avoid evoking the impression in Croatian public opinion that Hungary intended to rearrange the empire of Stephen I by crossing the borders. The Cabinet finally accepted the following decision: Hungary is ready to supply troops against Croatian „gangs” only upon the application of the Croatian government and enters into battle in a 10 km — distance from the Hungarian—Croatian border. Hungarian military forces would enter deeper only in case of „the conclusion of a new agreement on this matter between the governments of Hungary and Croatia interested in this situation”.²¹

Pavelić was not enthusiastic about the German general's idea, either. He was afraid of the possibility that Hungary would interpret the principle of crossing the border in a special way and utilize it to satisfy its territorial claims. He might have remembered the earlier German plan made before the dismemberment of Yugoslavia, which counted with Croatian autonomy achieved with the help of the Croatian Peasants' Party under the aegis of Hungary. This would have meant practically, as he detailed it to Ciano, Italian Secretary of Foreign Affairs that he would not preserve his power even for twenty-four hours.²²

If we evaluate the question of Muraköz exerting basic influence on Hungarian—Croatian relations within the whole of the Southern policy of the Hungarian governments, we can conclude that this policy was characterized by a special kind of dualism in the beginning, especially at the time of the government of Bárdossy. Strong-arm policy, internments, mass expulsions and punitive razzias against Serbs in Bácska²³, and the „distinguished”, friendly treatment of Croats in Muraköz. These, of course, were motivated by clear and explainable reasons: by the existing and exaggerated „Yugoslavism” of the Serbs in Bácska, the over-estimation of the actual strength of partisan-movements in this region and — owing to the lack of Serbian statehood, there was no risk of potential revenge, and there was not any significant Hungarian minority in the territory of the remaining Serbia. It was not the impatient trend of Hungarian nationalism, represented mainly by military circles at this time, that became dominant in the Croatian ethnic question like in Bácska but its tolerant traditions. The existence of the mother-country belonging to the federalist system of Germany, evoking the impression of autonomy, played an undoubtedly important role in this. That is why — beside the significant difference in the number of Hungarian and Croatian nationalities living in the territory of the two countries —, the policy of reciprocity proved to be a feasible way in spite of the difficulties mentioned above. The solution of the debates concerning the regional questions of Muraköz, as I mentioned earlier, depended mainly on the attitude of Germany and not on the two governments, in spite of appearances.

²¹ OL K—27 Minutes of the Cabinet's session of 17 August 1944.

²² OL K—74 I. Incoming code-telegram. Zagreb, 9 September 1944., Tajni arhivi grofa Ciana (1936—1942) Beograd, 1962.501.

²³ ENIKÓ A. SAJTI: *The South 1941—1944*, pp. 11—53., 128—168.

The problem of Muraköz was not arranged as a regional matter, in accordance with German interests after the war, but according to the global European interests of the winners. Because of the anti-German struggles of partisans the problem of Muraköz was not brought up as a self-contained Croatian or Hungarian question at the peace-negotiations but as the territorial claim of Yugoslavia struggling by the side of the Allied Forces.

The idea of the independent Croatian statehood went a similar way, too. The image of the Independent Croatian State was filled exclusively with negative contents during the short period of its establishment and existence in contemporary international opinion and not without reason. The new and radical change of international forces, the end of the cold war and the collapse of the two-pole world were necessary for the old and new Great Powers to forget it and for the Croatian efforts for independence to get historical follow-wind instead of the headwind under completely new external—internal conditions and not independently from the internal and structural problems of Yugoslavia.

Magyar—horvát államközi kapcsolatok (1941—1944)

A szerző az európai nemzetközi erőter változásával, valamint a magyar kormányok délvidéki politikájával összefüggésben tárgyalja az első, modern kori magyar—horvát államközi kapcsolatok létrejöttét és alakulását. Abból indul ki, hogy a hosszú idő óta történelmi ellenszélben vitorlázó horvát függetlenségi törekvések a háború idején a náci Németországtól kaptak politikai, katonai támogatást. Ez azt jelentette, hogy a horvát nemzeti mozgalmon belül eddig marginális helyre szorult extrém nacionalizmus, az usztasák jutottak rövid történelmi szerephez. E kronológiai és minőségi értelemben is korlátok közé szorított kapcsolatok centrális kérdése a Muraköz hovatarozásának kérdése, valamint ennek prizmján keresztül a két ország területén élő kisebbségek problémája volt.

A tanulmány részletesen kitér a Jugoszlávia felosztását rögzítő bécsi német—olasz megállapodás alapján folytatott magyar—horvát határtárgyalásokra, ezek kudarcának okaira, a német kormány ezzel kapcsolatos magatartására. A német „semlegesség” lehetővé tette, hogy Magyarország 1941. július 1-én egyoldalú lépéssel az ország részévé nyilvánította a Muraközt, s bevezette a katonai közigazgatást. A tárgyalások kudarca miatt érezhetően megromlottak a magyar—horvát kapcsolatok. Gyakoriakká váltak a határincidensek, s negatív változás következett be a két ország kisebbségpolitikájában is. Magyarországon, a Bácskához hasonlóan, megkezdődött a délszláv telepések és az ún. bevándoroltak kiutasítása. Horvátországban pedig hivatalos sugallatra aktivizálódott az ottani magyar nyilasok tevékenysége. A tanulmány további részében a szerző kitér a két kormány lakosságcserére vonatkozó álláspontjára, az ennek kapcsán folytatott tárgyalásokra. Megállapítja: mivel az usztasa Horvátország soha nem mondott le a Muraközről, ragaszkodott a terület „népi állagának” megőrzéséhez, így e tárgyalások egészen a háború végéig nem mozdultak ki a holtpontról, amikor is menekültügyi tárgyalásokká váltak. De a reciprocitásra építő magyar álláspont sem volt alkalmas a megegyezésre, mivel szándékosan nem vette figyelembe a két ország területén élő horvát, illetve magyar kisebbség eltérő létszámából fakadó különbségeket. Magyar kezdeményezésre egyedül a boszniai magyarok hazatelepítését sikerült elérni.

Az 1941—1944 közötti magyar—horvát kapcsolatok záróakkordját a németek által felvetett közös magyar—horvát partizánellenes katonai együttműködés gondolata képezte. Tanulmánya végén megállapítja: a Muraköz hovatarozása a háború után a győztesek globális érdekeinek rendelődött alá, nem önálló horvát vagy magyar kérdésként vetődött fel, hanem a szövetségesek oldalán harcoló Jugoszlávia területi igényeként. Hasonló megítélés alá esett a Független Horvát állam rövid fennállása alatt negatív tartalommal telítődő független horvát állam gondolata is. A nemzetközi erőter újabb, gyökeres átalakulásának kellett ahhoz bekövetkeznie, hogy nem függetlenül Jugoszlávia belső, strukturális válságától, egy regionális háború következményei között, történelmi ellenszél helyett ismét történelmi hátszelet kapjanak a horvát függetlenségi törekvések, felvetve egyúttal a magyar—horvát államközi kapcsolatok újraépítésének szükségességét.