

We continue with our potted history of Bosnia, up to the end of the First World War.

1876 Serbia and Montenegro revolted against the Ottomans and were easily defeated, the Russians came to their assistance conducting a successful campaign against the Turks and reaching the outskirts of Istanbul. They then created a much enlarged Bulgaria incorporating most of what is now the European part of Turkey. The 'Great' Powers, alarmed at Russian expansion convened the congress of Berlin in 1878 in order to diminish Russian gains and re-establish the European balance of power. The boundaries of the Balkans were redrawn and Bosnia-Hercegovina was awarded to the Austria-Hungarian empire to 'occupy and administer' to the chagrin of the Serbs who had hoped for the annexation of Bosnia to Serbia.

Although the Catholic Bosnians welcomed the Arrival of Austro-Hungarian troops in Bosnia during the summer of 1878, many of the Muslims were aghast. In Sarajevo the Muslims overthrew the Ottoman authorities and with the help of Bosnian staffed battalions of the Ottoman army began a campaign of guerrilla resistance. They were abetted by some Bosnian Serbs. However the Austro-Hungarians were determined and with the use of over a quarter of a million soldiers defeated the Bosnians before the onset of winter.

The new Austrian administration was keen to discourage political activity and supported the revival of religious hierarchies and promulgated the concept of Bosnjastvo or Bosnianism as an alternative to Croatian and Serbian nationalist or Muslim identities. This encouraged loyalty to Bosnia and emphasised Bosnia's unique history and cultural traditions. Unfortunately the idea of a regional patriotism did not hold much popular appeal and the two strands of their policy were contradictory since the Christian hierarchies particularly were a catalyst for ethnically based opposition to Austrian policy, looking towards Croatia and Serbia in the Catholic and Orthodox persuasions respectively. Anxious to avoid major political upheaval, the Austrians also disappointed the Christians since they only undertook very minor land reform, doing little more than giving the Christian peasants the right to buy their holdings from the Muslim landlords. They had however to compensate the landlords at the full market rate, which most were too poor to do. Thus the Muslims remained the main land owners in a feudal system almost unique in modern Europe.

In the early years of the twentieth century Austria began to liberalise its policies and allow political activity within limits. Bosnians were allowed to form political parties, publish newspapers, and to refer to their ethnic background. The government negotiated with representatives of all political parties and allowed substantial religious and cultural freedom to both the Bosnian Muslims and Serbs.

In 1908 the Austro-Hungarian monarchy finally gave up the pretence that it was merely administering the area on behalf of the 'Great Powers' and formally annexed Bosnia-Hercegovina. In spite of diplomatic tension and antagonism from the Bosnians the crisis passed without armed conflict, and subsequently the Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire and all Bosnian political parties formally recognised the annexation.

In 1910 the Austrians created a new constitution for Bosnia with elected representation with complicated arrangements to ensure an even ethnic balance, and a leading role for middle and upper class citizens hoping for moderate manageable parties sympathetic to the monarchy's interests. The Serbs, Croats and Muslims each formed modern style political parties to promote the interests of their respective groups. The Serb and Croat parties were nationalistic and hopeful of union with Serbia and Croatia respectively. Each tried to encourage the Muslims to declare themselves as Croats or Serbs, and the Muslims, while generally maintaining their confessional identity, would lean to one side or another as expedient, earning themselves a reputation for political opportunism. In this situation the Muslims were necessary to the other two sides to give them the necessary political majorities. Exploiting their role as the holders of the balance of power the Muslim landowners were able to reach agreements with the leaders of other parties to maintain the feudal status quo to the detriment of the peasants.

This political pattern continued in Bosnian politics right up to 1992 when the Nationalist extremists decided that they could do without the Muslims and simply take Bosnia for themselves.

Initially the Muslims formed parliamentary alliances with the Bosnian Serbs. However as tension mounted between Austria and Serbia which had won large tracts of land from the Ottoman Empire in 1912 and 1913 nationalist expectations were aroused in the Bosnian Serbs which began to destabilise the parliamentary coalition. The Bosnian Serbs were suspicious of Austrian attempts to create a Southern Slav area (Croatia and Bosnia) which would limit Serbian expansionism, and on June 28, 1914 Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by Bosnian Serb students in Sarajevo. Anti Serb rioting broke out in Sarajevo, while the major parties in

the Bosnian parliament condemned the killing. Parliament was then adjourned never to reconvene, thus ending Austria's efforts to establish limited constitutional rule. A month later Austria, ignoring Serbian efforts at conciliation, declared war on Serbia. As the result of various mutual assistance treaties other parties were drawn into the conflict. Germany, Austria-Hungary and their allies against Russia, England and France. World War One had begun. During the war there was little fighting in Bosnia although major campaigns took place in Serbia. After initially successfully resisting the Austrians Serbia was conquered. Its army, however, made a successful retreat to the Adriatic shore and escaped to Corfu, and was able to take part in the campaign which drove the Austrians out of its territory. Before and during the war, the Austrians conducted political trials against Bosnian Serbs and many were imprisoned or executed - the first time in Bosnian history that a significant number of people were killed for their national or ethnic affiliation.

As the war ended the Austro-Hungarian Empire which had dominated central European politics for 500 years ceased to exist almost overnight. In 1917 the Corfu Declaration, negotiated between representatives of the Serbian Government and the Yugoslav Committee, a group of Croats, Slovenes and Serbs who had fled Austrian territory and were representing Southern Slav interests agreed to create "a constitutional, democratic, parliamentary monarchy" under the Serbian Karadjordjevic dynasty. This actually came into being at the end of the war and lasted until 1941.