A Portrait of Ivo Pilar

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When I published a brief Biography and two bibliographies on Ivo Pilar on the basis of literature which had appeared before mid-2000, I never imagined that they would have to be updated so soon. Yet during the intervening five year period, more works on the “Pilar theme” have been published than in the whole duration preceding the year 2000: over 30 scholarly and expert studies of Pilar’s life and his opus, but also a good number of his previously unpublished/unknown writings have come to light. As a result, this Portrait, even though it maintains the formal structure of the above-mentioned Biography, is in fact a new text, integrating the most important new discoveries and information with bibliographic references.

Ivo Pilar was born on 19 June 1874 in Zagreb, where he also died on 3 September 1933 in unclear circumstances (Suicide? Politically motivated murder?). • FAMILY. Czech by ancestry, his father’s family originated from Brod on the Sava: Ivo was the son of Gjuro Pilar, a professor at the University of Zagreb, who was a geologist and palaeontologist with a European-wide reputation, and the nephew of the architect Martin Pilar. His mother Klementina was the daughter of an entrepreneur, prominent cultural figure, and deputy mayor of Zagreb, Gjuro Crnadak. • EDUCATION. He attended primary school and classical gymnasium in Zagreb, following which he completed a one year course at the College for World Commerce (Hochschule für Welthandel), but went on to study law, specializing in national economy (Volkswirtschaft) and sociology in Vienna. He rounded out his legal education in Paris at the École de droit. He then obtained a doctorate in law in Vienna in 1899. • WORK IN HIS FIELD. After completing his studies, he worked briefly as the secretary to the director of a Viennese joint-stock iron industry corporation, but in 1900 he left for Sarajevo, where he worked first in banking (as secretary to the director of the provincial economic land bank), and then from 1901 in the judicature: he was an official of the judiciary and a legal clerk. He led a private legal practice from 1905 to 1920 in Tuzla, and then, until his death, in Zagreb. In his Tuzla period, he rep-

2 For the same reason, two bibliographies appear at the end of this collection: Bibliography of the Publications of Ivo Pilar (selection) and Literature on Ivo Pilar (selection).
Ivo Pilar's certificate of baptism

and Pilar was in contact with the highest officials in the Monarchy. In conjunction with Croatian political tradition (and the program of the united Croatian opposition from 1894), Pilar considered Bosnia and Herzegovina Croatian lands by state right. Mindfully and convincingly pointing out all of the negative aspects of the constitutional system created by the Croato-Hungarian compromise, he sought out the forms and solutions which he considered most applicable for the existential needs of the Croatian people within the Habsburg Monarchy. His best and most well-known work on this issue was the book “Die südslawische Frage und der Weltkrieg” (Vienna, 1918). The political elites of the Monarchy were deaf to these and did not have the understanding to recognize either the insights which stemmed from the results of Pilar’s research or, on the basis of these, to solve the Croatian problems in the wider context of the very relevant South Slav Question, on which the Monarchy would founder. In the newly created, first Yugoslav state community, from its earliest days weighted down by unsettled national and social issues (a harsh Great Serbian cen-


6 Of this aspect of Pilar’s creativity, nothing was published until 2000, when a few foundational studies appeared. I direct the reader to - besides those just mentioned - especially the following: Paveskovic, 2001; Matkovic, 2002. Kolar, 2002.

7 Rogic, 2001, p. 15.

8 See: Bibliography of the Publications of Ivo Pilar (selection), in this issue.


11 See: Grijak, ibid., 101ff; Matijevic, 2001; Matijevic, 2001. Grijak, 2002, see also: Apel nadbis-
to cultural modernization, but really it was a “call for the modernization of Croatian society as a whole”. He had two principal ideas within this framework: democratization and European Croatia. He was quite respected as a legal practitioner: his sense of and dedication to the promotion of the modernization process he proved early on with his extensive work on the application of the General Austrian Civil Code to the conditions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where until that time shariah, common throughout the Ottoman Empire, had been in use. Pilar’s notion of the process of modernization (from a theoretical, methodological, and pragmatic point of view) was clearly shown by the breadth of his scholarly interests: he was interested in the problems common to a variety of related disciplines in the social sciences, so much so that in terms of some of them he published, for Croatian circumstances, pioneering works. Sociology, psychology. Works of sociology and his activity as the founder and president of the Sociological Society of Zagreb still needs to be researched, and the very first study of Pilar’s psychological writing concluded that it was the effort of a rather important and competent author. About two decades after political geography/geopolitics was established as a scientific discipline in the leading European countries (Ratzel, 1897; Kjellén, 1899, Mackinder, 1904), and in the period when it received practical application (Mackinder 1919, Bowmann, 1921), but when a conceptual and effective difference between political geography and geopolitics had not yet been established, Pilar was the first Croatian author to write about this: The Political Geography of the Croatian Lands. Geopolitical Studies (Sarajevo, 1918) was “the first treatise which deals with Croatian subject matter within the scope of a political geography”. As a result, Pilar occupies a pioneering position in the development of Croatian political geography: “he opened new themes and introduced previously unknown concepts into Croatian geography”. Pilar came into contact with banking immediately after the conclusion of his University studies. It was mentioned above that he was the lawyer for a banking concern, but his most important contribution in this field came at the end of his life. It is widely believed that “there is no better analysis or comprehensive review of the crisis in banking which broke out in 1931 and 1932 than Pilar’s texts” published in Zagreb in Obzor; he published an excellent summary of the problem in his 1932 book, Immer wieder Serbien, printed in German in Berlin.

As is evident from the discussion above, not even the accessible (published) multi-disciplinary works of research by Pilar (political geography, geopolitics, sociology, anthropology, psychology) have yet been sufficiently examined or subjected to scholarly-critical analysis and tested for their validity (which is even more true of his unpublished writings). A thorough, necessarily interdisciplinary effort of critical evaluation of all aspects of his work has only now begun, which implies the need to prepare a critical edition of at least the most relevant segments of his opus.

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1144 ROGIĆ, ibid., pp. 15-17.
1155 ©AKIĆ, 2002.
1166 KLEMEN.CO-POKOS, 2001, pp. 41-43, 47.

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In this article, the author compares the viewpoints of Ivo Pilar and Robert William Seton-Watson, two brilliant publicists, on the South Slav Question as the key problem in southeast Europe in the period up to 1918. He shows how before the First World War both sought a solution to this complex problem, particularly the aspect of Croat-Serb relations, exclusively within the framework of the Habsburg Monarchy. The difference between them lay in the fact that Pilar sought to affirm Croatian statehood, while Seton-Watson to create a new Yugoslav statehood. During the war, Seton-Watson held the view that it was necessary to establish an independent Yugoslav state outside the Monarchy in order to solve the Yugoslav question, but Pilar cemented his standpoint that the Monarchy was the only possible solution for Croatian interests.

On the turn from the 19th to the 20th century, despite the quickened pace of social modernization and the gradual improvement of the economy, the national question in the Habsburg Monarchy was sharpened. Crisis in the dualistic system quickened the tempo of change among the various nationalities of the Monarchy who felt stunted in their development. The Austro-Hungarian administration had difficulty in meeting the demands for national equality and democratization. Its paranoia stemmed from the fact that any disturbance in the constitutional balance between Germans and Hungarians, the two most numerous peoples of the Monarchy. According to the Monarchy’s elite, if that were to occur, the cohesion of the whole Empire would be imperiled. Since the wielders of power were then not ready to accept any changes that would reflect the diversity of the community, political instability was endemic.

One of the greatest hotbeds of dispute was the South Slav Question. This issue was geographically tied to two larger areas. The first included the so called southern regions of Austria-Hungary: Banal Croatia, Dalmatia, Istria, Gorica, Carniola, the...