





the Orient [...] a Western style for dominating, reconstructing and having authority over the Orient.”<sup>3</sup> Bringing together these two ideas, it may be concluded that Kürnberger treated the Austro-Hungarian Empire like a component of the Oriental sphere. The truth is that quite often Habsburg statesmen have themselves given evidence for such proposals. Chancellor Metternich claimed that “Asia begins on the Landstrasse” (i.e. in the eastern suburbs of Vienna),<sup>4</sup> while the young emperor Francis Joseph often dreamed of governing Austria according to the Byzantine/Oriental principles of Russian autocracy.<sup>5</sup> In 1910, the Magyar conservative leader Baron Sennyey, referring to the Hungarian administrative system, argued that “we are in mid Asia.”<sup>6</sup>

Along with that form of Austrian “Self-Orientalism,” the vision of Austrian Oriental backwardness found even more faithful advocates in relevant British scholarship: “Aged,” “decayed,” “declined,” “corrupted,” “old,” “weak,” “bankrupted” are only a few of the adjectives that past and contemporary English intellectuals have

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<sup>3</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in H. W. Steed, *The Hapsburg Monarchy* (London: Constable & Co., 1913), xvii. Although this phrase is often quoted, it is not known whether Metternich indeed said so and on which occasion.

<sup>5</sup> On the governing attitude of the neoabsolutist emperor, see Josef Redlich, *Kaiser Franz Joseph von Öster-reich: Eine Biographie* (Berlin: Verlag für Kulturpolitik, 1928), 82f. See also Steven Beller, *Francis Joseph* (London: Longman, 1996), 31-62 and Alan Palmer, *Twilight of the Habsburgs: The Life and Times of Emperor Francis Joseph* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997), 49-63.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in R. W. Seton-Watson, *Corruption and Reform in Hungary: A Study of Electoral Practice* (London: Constable & Co., 1911), 85.

used for the description of the late Dual Monarchy.<sup>7</sup> In order to conclude whether a kind of British Orientalism actually existed towards the Habsburg Monarchy before its dissolution, one should refer to the origins of the serious British intellectual interest in that edge of Europe. That can be traced back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a distinguished British scholar, Robert William Seton-Watson (1879-1951), travelled extensively in the lands of the Monarchy, came into contact with its peoples, and depicted his experiences and attitudes in a series of writings published in the decade preceding the First World War. Our main aspiration is to try to track the evidence of his special Oriental view of the ancient Danubian empire through the careful examination of his most important works: *The Future of Austria-Hungary and the Attitude of the Great Powers*; *Racial Problems in Hungary*; *Corruption and Reform in Hungary*; and *The Southern Slav Question and the Habsburg Monarchy* (all published between 1907 and 1911). His rich *Correspondence with the Yugoslavs*, written between 1906 and 1941, is also a valuable research subject.<sup>8</sup>

The concept of *representation* is of vital importance for our undertaking, since, as Said emphasizes, Orientalism is not the depiction of some platonic truth about the Orient, but only a system of representation and interpretation of it by the Occident,

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<sup>7</sup> Some typical examples of that British view are A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy (1809 -1918): A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (London: Harper & Raw, 1948); Edward Crankshaw, *The Fall of the House of Habsburg* (London: Penguin, 1963); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and the Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), esp. 42-45; and Alan Sked, *The Decline and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918* (London: Penguin, 2001). Regarding generally the evolution of the British historiography on the Monarchy, see Alan Sked, "Historians, the Nationality Question, and the Downfall of the Habsburg Empire," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series*, 31 (1981): 175-193, esp. 190-193; and Peter Pulzer, "Austrian Studies in the United Kingdom," in *Global Austria: Austria's Place in Europe and the World*, eds. Günter Bischof and Fritz Plasser (New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2011), 274-278.

<sup>8</sup> The two-volume work *R. W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs: Correspondence, 1906-1941* (London-Zagreb: British Academy Press, 1976), comprising a huge amount of letters from Seton-Watson to his South Slav friends and vice versa, was published under the supervision of his sons, Hugh and Christopher. For the needs of the current paper, the first volume (1906-18) presents the greatest interest.

according to the latter's cultural standards.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, we will examine whether Seton-Watson, having a specific template in mind of what an occidental state should look like — that of Britain and Western Europe in general — projected these views onto the Austro-Hungarian Empire (even unwittingly), finding the latter unable to adjust to the norms of the occidental European state and thus belonging to the oriental sphere. If Western Europe was for Seton-Watson a synonym for progress, democratic civil rights, bureaucratic honesty and efficiency (the quintessence of the Occidental), then a state, even a European one, that bore the opposite characteristics should logically find its place in the Oriental world. Besides, according to Said himself, late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century orientalism was “racist, imperialist and almost totally ethnocentric,”<sup>10</sup> qualities that allow the mental construction of an intellectually and culturally superior “West” at the expense of an inferior Austria. Therefore, the current research will trace signs of Austria-Hungary being described as a stagnated, backward, despotic and culturally inert, or even decayed, state in Seton-Watson's writings in order to reveal such an oriental lens.<sup>11</sup> Direct references to Asia and comparisons of the Dual Monarchy with it which argue for the supposedly oriental nature of the latter (note also Kürnberger's

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<sup>9</sup> Regarding Orientalism as an invented image constructed according to Western representations, Said argues (202-203): “Orientalism can thus be regarded as a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient. The Orient is taught, researched, administered, and pronounced upon in certain discrete ways. The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire. If this definition of Orientalism seems more political than not, that is simply because I think Orientalism was itself a product of certain political forces and activities. Orientalism is a school of interpretation whose material happens to be the Orient, its civilizations, peoples, and localities.”

<sup>10</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 204.

<sup>11</sup> Concepts of power and dominance were particularly significant in the formation of Orientalism for Said, as he pointed out that the “West most easily associated [with] theses of Oriental backwardness, degeneracy and inequality [...]”. *Orientalism*, 206. These comments, applied in our case, acquire a special gravity if one considers that Seton-Watson wrote in an era of universal Western (occidental) dominance.

words), as well as profound comparisons between Austria and Britain in order to emphasize the perceived inferiority of the former, will be given particular attention as crucial evidence of orientalism in Seton-Watson's thought.

Finally, it should be noted that this contribution does not stand alone in the effort to bridge the gap between Saidian postcolonial theory and the history of Austria-Hungary. In recent years, a new historiographical trend has managed to prove the existence of an Oriental vision from the western, Germanic part of the Empire towards the empire's eastern part,<sup>12</sup> while the role of Austrian Orientalists in the 'discovery' and the mental re-construction of the Asiatic Orient has also been pointed out.<sup>13</sup> Next to these novel suggestions and interpretations, our goal is to show that the Monarchy became a subject of British Orientalism as expressed by R. W. Seton-Watson during the Age of Imperialism.

## II

On the eve of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the lands and the people of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy remained largely unknown to the British public. The only exceptions to that rule were the imperial capital Vienna, which was considered civilized enough for the

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<sup>12</sup> Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1994) and esp. *idem*, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Robert Lemon, *Imperial Messages: Orientalism as Self-Critique in the Habsburg Fin de Siècle* (London: Camden House, 2011); Johann Heiss and Johannes Feichtinger, "Distant Neighbors: Uses of Orientalism in the Late Nineteenth-Century Austro-Hungarian Empire," in *Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History: From Germany to Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. James Hodkinson et al. (London: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 148-165. Lemon deals more with writers and intellectuals, whilst Heiss and Feichtinger focus mainly on policy-makers.

<sup>13</sup> Friedrich Schipper, ed., *Zwischen Euphrat und Tigris. Österreichische Forschungen zum Alten Orient* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2004); Hannes Galter and Siegfried Haas, eds., *Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall: Grenzgänger zwischen Orient und Okzident* (Graz: Leykam, 2008); Hannes Galter, "Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall und die Anfänge der Orientalistik," in *Kunst und Geisteswissenschaften aus Graz. Werk und Wirken überregional bedeutsamer Künstler und Gelehrter: vom 15. Jahrhundert bis zur Jahrtausendwende*, ed. Karl Acham (Vienna/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau, 2009), 457-470.

British to visit, and the Hungarians, whose fight for freedom against the Habsburg yoke in 1848 impressed liberal Englishmen, who considered the Magyars their equivalents on the Continent.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, only a limited number of books on Hungary appeared in Britain, such as John Paget's *Hungary and Transylvania* (1839) and C. N. Knatchbull-Hugesson's *The Political Development of the Hungarian Nation* (1908), both of which were generally pro-Magyar. Regarding the Czech lands, the situation was equally poor: there were only a few books by Count F. Lützow, C. E. Maurice and P. E. Turnbull at the turn of the century. The smaller Habsburg nationalities were completely unknown to the British.<sup>15</sup> The relatively limited transportation infrastructure, the vastness and remoteness of the country, and the difficulty of the Monarchy's languages made its peoples and cultures inaccessible to the wider British public in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even those who were considered specialists on Central Europe knew hardly any Danubian language other than German, while their interest was rather diminished after the publication of a couple of relevant books.<sup>16</sup>

The isolation of the Danubian lands from the English-speaking world was to come to a gradual end after the arrival of the young and enthusiastic scholar Robert William Seton-Watson in Vienna. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Seton-Watson

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<sup>14</sup> Susan Hansen, "British Radicals' Knowledge of, and Attitudes to Austria-Hungary, 1890-1914," 名城論叢 (=The Meijo Review, published by The Society of Economics and Business Management, Meijo University, Nagoya, Japan), 11 (2012), 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> Hansen, "British Radicals", 6f. More analytically, see Harry Hanak, *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary during the First World War: a Study in the Formation of Public Opinion* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962), 1-10; Wilfried Fest, *The Habsburg Monarchy and British Policy, 1914-1918* (London: George Prior Publishers, 1978), 12; F.D.R. Shipton, "British Diplomatic Relations and British Attitudes to the Monarchy in the years 1885-1918," (PhD. Diss., University of Sussex, 2012), 1-27.

<sup>16</sup> Hansen, "British Radicals", 4f, 21-22. Well-known British "specialists" on the Habsburg Monarchy (and particularly on Hungary) in the mid- and late 19<sup>th</sup> century were J. Toulmin Smith, Richard Bright and H. Ellen Browning.

devoted his life to the Danubian peoples. Seton-Watson was born in London in 1879 — although of Scottish origin — <sup>17</sup> and was educated at Oxford under the supervision of H.A.L. Fisher. After graduation in 1901, he traveled in Europe and studied at the universities of the Sorbonne, Berlin and Vienna.<sup>18</sup> He reached the Habsburg capital late in 1905 and quickly developed bonds with significant Austrian intellectuals like the historian H. Friedjung and the jurist J. Redlich, as well as — far more important — with the British correspondent of the *Times* in Vienna, H. W. Steed.<sup>19</sup> Over the next several years, Seton-Watson constantly travelled all over the Monarchy, discussing the internal problems of the state with people of various nationalities, learning their languages (eventually he obtained mastery of Magyar, Czech and Serbo-Croatian) and writing articles and books about the Empire and its peoples. Early in 1906 he travelled in Hungary, then in the midst of a severe crisis in its relationship with the emperor

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<sup>17</sup> His ethnic origins seem to have played an important role in the formation of his attitude towards the smaller nations of Central Europe. He was strongly persuaded that since the Scots and English could live together peacefully in Great Britain, so could Slavs, Magyars and Germans within one united Monarchy. Shipton, “British Diplomatic Relations,” 43; British Academy (BA), *Correspondence, 1906-1941, vol.1: 1906-18*, 11.

<sup>18</sup> Hanak, *Great Britain*, 20-21; Hugh and Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe: R. W. Seton-Watson and the last years of Austria-Hungary* (Seattle: Washington Univ. Press, 1981), 8-20 (this standard work on Seton-Watson contains large quantities of otherwise unpublished primary material from his personal papers); László Péter, “R. W. Seton-Watson's Changing Views on the National Question of the Habsburg Monarchy and the European Balance of Power,” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 82, 3 (Jul., 2004): 655-679, 656-658; and also Gertrude Schopf, “Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie und Seton-Watson,” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Vienna, 1953), 10-11. In Vienna Seton-Watson attended lectures of German culture and literature while he improved his competence in the languages of the Empire.

<sup>19</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 28-31; Scopf, “Seton-Watson,” 12. Seton-Watson described his association with Steed as “one of the most fruitful friendships of my whole life.” For Steed see briefly Hansen, “British Radicals,” 22-26; Thomas Angerer, “Henry Wickham Steed, Robert William Seton-Watson und die Habs-burgermonarchie: ihr Haltungswandel bis Kriegsanfang im Vergleich,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für öster-reichische Geschichtsforschung*, 99 (1991): 435-473, 437f; and above all Peter Schuster, *Henry Wickam Steed und die Habsburgermonarchie* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1970): the only monograph yet dedicated exclusively to Steed. I express my gratitude to Prof. Angerer for providing me a copy of his valuable article.



Francis Joseph regarding the issue of the language of the Hungarian regiments in the Joint Army.<sup>20</sup>

Seton-Watson's only knowledge about Hungary during that early stage came from secondary material, and thus he thought that Hungary was a paradise of equal civil rights and constitutionalism<sup>21</sup>. He was greatly disappointed, therefore, when he travelled for the first time to Hungary, coming into contact with the Magyar policy of modern state-building, which involved the gradual Magyarization of Hungary's ethnic minorities. The young scholar perceived that policy as a harsh and brutal strategy of national assimilation that the leading Magyar race forced on the smaller nationalities of Transleithania. This was totally unacceptable for the civilized, democratic, occidental world.<sup>22</sup> The social tensions within Hungary are recognized also by modern scholarship, as is the inability — or the unwillingness — of the ruling caste to provide a satisfactory solution.<sup>23</sup> Affected by the introduction of universal suffrage in Austria in 1907, Seton-Watson stated: “an Austria rejuvenated by universal suffrage, pursuing a liberal and

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<sup>20</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 31f. On the domestic conditions of the Monarchy and the conflict between the Magyars and the Emperor, C. A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire, 1790-1918* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 749-752; Gunther Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette: Purdue Univ. Press, 1976), 130-138; and Andrew Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), 190-200. The European (particularly the British) press was largely in favor of Hungary during the crisis, admiring its political stability and homogeneity versus the chaotic situation in Austria. Peter, “Changing Views,” 663-664, 666-667.

<sup>21</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 13.

<sup>22</sup> Hanak, *Great Britain*, 22; Peter, “Changing Views”, 671-672; Shipton, “British Attitudes,” 48f. When Seton-Watson returned to Vienna completely disillusioned, he cried to Steed: “They lied to me, they lied to me!” Shipton, “British Attitudes,” 42. Steed himself discusses the whole incident in H. Wickham Steed, L. M. Penson, W. J. Rose, Milan Curcin, Lev Sychrava, and V. V. Tilea, “Tributes to R. W. Seton-Watson: A Symposium,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 30, 75 (Jun., 1952): 331-363, 332. According to Steed's account, the Magyars were initially very hospitable to Seton-Watson, but his later contacts with representatives of other nationalities dramatically transformed his attitude towards the ruling elite of Transleithania. That intellectual transformation of Seton-Watson is noted also in Nicholas Miller, “R. W. Seton-Watson and Serbia during the Reemergence of Yugoslavism, 1903-1914,” *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 15, 1-2 (1988): 59-69, 59-60; and Angerer, “Haltungswandel,” 456-457.

<sup>23</sup> Bryan Cartledge, *The Will to Survive: A History of Hungary* (London: Timewell Press, 2006), 285f.

farsighted policy of racial tolerance and forcing the Magyars to abandon their tyrannous designs of hegemony, might rapidly become one of the strongest states on the Continent,” while he condemned the “Magyar megalomania and assimilationist policy.”<sup>24</sup> Although he was an optimist, believing that the situation in Hungary could be improved via drastic reforms, the first hints of Orientalism in his thought, born of his witnessing Magyar despotism and corruption, are clear. Nonetheless, in that early stage, he still admired Austria, which was still for him a firm member of the occidental family, and believed wholeheartedly in the role of the Habsburg Empire in the European balance of power in general and as a civilizing force in the Balkans in particular.

### III

The role of the Habsburgs as a European Power was exactly the topic of Seton-Watson’s first short book, *The Future of Austria-Hungary and the Attitude of the Great Powers*, published early in 1907.<sup>25</sup> That brief but nonetheless insightful study “was a pointer to his commanding interest in the movement which led to the disruption of the Habsburg Monarchy and of the Ottoman Empire” and thus deserves our attention.<sup>26</sup> Seton-Watson, although recognizing the domestic problems of the Empire and the demand for reforms, stood clearly in favor of its preservation because it “is the pivot of the balance of power and its disappearance would be a European calamity [...] Britain and France must make every effort to preserve the Dual Monarchy” (however modified

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 40. See also Peter, “Changing Views,” 673.

<sup>25</sup> Published under the pseudonym Scotus Viator (Wandering Scot), *The Future of Austria-Hungary and the Attitude of the Great Powers* (London: Constable & Co., 1907). See Hanak, *Great Britain*, 24; Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 41, Shipton, “British Attitudes,” 43-45; Thomas Angerer, “Haltungswandel,” 457-458.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in L. M. Penson, “Tributes to Seton-Watson,” 338. Penson admired him deeply and acknowledged his immense knowledge of Central European history. See *ibid.*, 340.

internally).<sup>27</sup> The book examines the relations of Austria-Hungary with Germany, Russia, Italy and the Balkan states and the possible effects on those powers after a hypothetical disintegration of the Empire. It argues that its dissolution is impossible without a general European war (“today the need for an effective barrier against Slav aggression affords the surest justification for Austria-Hungary’s continued existence”)<sup>28</sup> and concludes that the advantages of the Empire’s continued existence for all its rival successors are, after all, fewer than its drawbacks. Democratic reforms were essential, but their shortage or lateness were not sufficient reason for the dismemberment of that great state, particularly since there was no better alternative.<sup>29</sup> Therefore the Monarchy, for all its setbacks, should continue its existence as the guardian of peace and stability in East-Central Europe in order to avoid chaos and “Balkanization.”<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the need for urgent domestic reforms in the Monarchy and especially in Hungary is not forgotten: “The days of the supremacy of one race over another are past, at any rate for Europe; and the Magyars, instead of indulging in Oriental daydreams, must

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<sup>27</sup> Seton-Watson, *Future of Austria-Hungary*, 4, vii. See also Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 30, 41 and Peter, “Changing Views,” 675. Regarding the necessity of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, particularly from the French point of view, Schopf, “Seton-Watson,” 15-17.

<sup>28</sup> Seton-Watson, *Future of Austria-Hungary*, 24. The metaphysical doctrine of the Habsburg mission to protect the European civilization either from the Turks or from the Russians is more than visible in the book. See for instance, *Future of Austria-Hungary*, 60, for “the historic necessity of a strong Central European State”. See Hanak, *Great Britain*, 25. For Russia as a threat to Austria in Seton-Watson’s mind, see also Schopf, “Seton-Watson,” 20-21.

<sup>29</sup> Tilea, “Tributes to Seton-Watson,” 356f and Miller, “Yugoslavism,” 61.

<sup>30</sup> The British public — and Seton-Watson as well — until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century regarded the Balkan peoples as primitive but pure freedom fighters against the tyrannical and decayed Ottomans. The brutal murder of the unpopular king Milos Obrenovich of Serbia in 1903 and the replacement of his House by the competitive Karayiorjevic dynasty sent a wave of horror at the Kingdom of Serbia through the European press because “these deeds cannot happen in a European state but only in a central Asian khanate.” Seton-Watson fully incorporated that view, strengthening even more his faith in the necessity of a strong Habsburg state, at least until the Balkan wars. In 1909, he stated that: “Rightly or wrongly, I regard the present regime in Serbia as thoroughly corrupt and inefficient - worse even than the Hungarian - and the tragedy of 1903 and the Novakovic murders seem to me only symptomatic of the depravity of the governing classes.” Quoted in Miller, “Yugoslavism,” 61-62. Also Schopf, “Seton-Watson,” 24-27 for the need of domestic democratic reforms in Austria-Hungary.

accommodate themselves to the hard logic of facts. Their mad policy of forcible assimilation aggravates the very evils which it is intended to remove.”<sup>31</sup>

Conclusively, in that initial work, Seton-Watson somehow compromised his Gladstonian liberal belief in the rights of small nations due to his balance-of-power calculations.<sup>32</sup> In young Seton-Watson’s thought, the traditional British policy of maintaining the balance of power in Europe was, for the time being, prevailing. Nevertheless, in the way he perceived the Monarchy, and particularly Hungary, he acknowledged the presence of decadent and authoritarian elements in the heart of the Empire, which rendered the preservation of Hungary’s occidental status a highly uncertain issue.<sup>33</sup>

#### IV

*The Future of Austria-Hungary* was Seton-Watson’s first large-scale work, but it was his second major publication, *Racial Problems in Hungary*, published a year later, that established him as an authority in his country on the people of Danubian Europe.<sup>34</sup> After 1906, Seton-Watson came in contact with the ruthless policy of Magyarization

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<sup>31</sup> Seton-Watson, *Future of Austria-Hungary*, 50.

<sup>32</sup> Miller, “Yugoslavism,” 60.

<sup>33</sup> Seton-Watson, *Future of Austria-Hungary*, 10. On the issues of the balance of powers, Fest, *Peace or Partition*, 1. From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Austria played a vital role in British continental policy. As Lord Palmerstone put it (1849): “The political independence and liberties of Europe are bound up with the maintenance and integrity of Austria as a Great European Power.” On the diplomatic relations of the two powers and the bonds of “traditional friendship” that supposedly united them, Schopf, “Seton-Watson” 22-23 and Shipton, “British Attitudes”, 63f. as well as the more insightful studies on the subject by A.F. Pribam, *Austria-Hungary and Great Britain, 1908-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951) and F.R. Bridge, *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary, 1906-1914: A Diplomatic History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972).

<sup>34</sup> Published again under the pseudonym Scotus Viator, *Racial Problems in Hungary* (London: Constable & Co., 1908). See also Tilea, “Tributes to Seton-Watson,” 357; Schopf, “Seton-Watson,” 29f; Hanak, *Great Britain*, 26-27; Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 62, Angerer, “Haltungswandel,” 459-460; and Shipton, “British Attitudes,” 42f.

followed by the Hungarian elite in the eastern half of the Empire, and set himself the task of bringing forward the rights of the oppressed nationalities — the Rumanians, the Croats, the Serbs and particularly the Slovaks — with whom he felt a special affinity.<sup>35</sup> The book examined mainly the period from the revolution of 1848 onwards and focused on the relations between the Magyars and the other nationalities of the kingdom, putting a special emphasis on fundamental injustices and the provocatively superior treatment of the Magyars: “the non-Magyar nationalities are the victims of a policy of repression which is without any parallel in civilized Europe.”<sup>36</sup> The initial enlightened policy towards the nationalities of the late 1860s was abandoned during the premiership of Koloman Tisza (1875-1890) and his Hungarian Liberal Party,<sup>37</sup> who did not hesitate to follow a policy of sheer oppression.<sup>38</sup> The governmental structures of the country were openly characterized as “half-Asiatic” (a direct sign of orientalism!),<sup>39</sup> whereas the Nationalities Law of 1868, which officially protected the liberties and the free evolution of the nationalities, remained unenforced. One of the greatest examples of Magyar tyranny and despotism was, according to Seton-Watson, the election procedure, in which “Every imaginable violence and trickery was employed to secure the return of Government candidates, the whole administrative machine was placed at their service

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<sup>35</sup> Hanak, *Great Britain*, 22, 27; and Angerer, “Haltungswandel,” 456-457.

<sup>36</sup> Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems*, 204. Also Schopf, “Seton-Watson,” 30-35.

<sup>37</sup> In 1905, the preeminent Hungarian politician J. Kristoffy “admitted [to Seton-Watson] that Deak’s enlightened policy towards the nationalities was reversed by Kalman Tisza in the mid-1870s, and that the nationalities were now excited and violent because for fifty years a policy of repression had been used towards them.” Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 50.

<sup>38</sup> Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems*, 167f. Tisza had stated that “there is no Slovak nation,” showing thus his inclination towards Magyarization.

<sup>39</sup> See Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems*, 237.

and money was poured out like water. The nationalities were ‘voted’ as effectually as the Negroes in the Southern States.”<sup>40</sup>

The conscious and provocative circumvention of the law by the authorities themselves also provides evidence of orientalist perception in Seton-Watson’s work. The authoritarian *fin-du-siècle* premier Istvan Tisza (son of the previous premier) was totally convinced of the exclusive role of the Magyar nobility in leading the country.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the vicious circle of Magyar chauvinistic hegemony would and could continue eternally. Indeed, as the decades passed, Magyar methods became even more brutal: in the 1896 elections “arbitrary limits were set upon the right of speech and of assembly and indeed many of the Opposition candidates and their supporters were arrested by the authorities in the middle of the campaign.”<sup>42</sup> Even army battalions were used for the voters to be “persuaded.”<sup>43</sup> Red tape was used according to the officials’ will, and the law was interpreted in favor of the leading party and nation. Corruption was the rule and not the exception, because “wholesale bribery has always been recognized in Hungary as a political instrument of the first importance.”<sup>44</sup> The whole state mechanism did not change much, since “the county administration still remains medieval under the transparent veil of modernism”<sup>45</sup> and was being manned by

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<sup>40</sup> Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems*, 168. Dr. M. Ivanka, a friend of Seton-Watson, noted in 1907 that elections in Hungary “were always an expensive affair.” See Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 44. It is characteristic that the non-Magyar population of the country (54%) was represented by only 44 deputies in the parliament, while the Magyar numerical minority had 400 representatives! Schopf, “Seton-Watson,” 36.

<sup>41</sup> Cartledge, *Will to Survive*, 286.

<sup>42</sup> Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems*, 184-185.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 187, 256.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

“inefficient and intolerant officials<sup>46</sup> [...] whose standards are hardly those of Western Europe.”<sup>47</sup> Favoritism, ignorance and brutality were nothing but common features of the “Asiatic” conditions of Hungarian administration.<sup>48</sup> The juridical system similarly “moves at an Asiatic pace” due not only to the ‘flexibility’ of laws, but also because of the unpredictability of the sentences, the underrepresentation of the nationalities and the extremely slow and inert attitude of Hungarian justice.<sup>49</sup> To make matters worse, one could observe that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Magyar administrative repression (particularly against the Slovaks) had increased.<sup>50</sup> The author states, quite sadly, that even gifted statesmen like Francis Kossuth, Count Apponyi and Count Andrassy have very limited opportunities to react to corrupted milieu and “scarcely veiled medievalism”<sup>51</sup>. Seton-Watson did not hesitate to compare the circumstances of his homeland directly with those in Hungary: “Habeas Corpus, press freedom, strict severance of the judicial from the executive arm, unrestricted right of association and assembly [...] are virtually non-existent in Hungary, [...] are conceptions wholly alien

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 292. Seton-Watson also states that “The chief curse of Hungary is its bad administration and until a thorough revision of the much-vaunted system of county government is undertaken, matters are bound to go from bad to worse.” Note the direct contrast between Western Europe and Hungary, i.e. between the occidental and the oriental.

<sup>48</sup> Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems*, 242-247 and particularly 243 for the direct comparison to Asia. In November 1907, the Romanian journalist D. Lascu published an article which criticized the authorities’ attitude towards the nationalities, with the characteristic title *Furor Asiaticus*. The article was of course confiscated. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems*, 303.

<sup>49</sup> Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems*, 314-317 and especially 314 for the comment on Asia. In enforcing the law the Magyarization policy was also present.

<sup>50</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 48.

<sup>51</sup> Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems*, 269f.

to the Magyar spirit, and indeed incompatible with the monopoly of political power by a single race.”<sup>52</sup>

Finally, Seton-Watson complains bitterly that while the above described situation may have been generally known to the West, nonetheless “the public opinion of the civilized world” stood inert and indifferent towards this humiliating violation of these fundamental rights.<sup>53</sup> In short, some of the most significant elements of the Oriental state, such as despotism, stagnation, moral decline, inertia and backwardness, were profound and well-rooted in Seton-Watson’s thought, whose feelings about the political regime in Hungary were summarized in a letter to a friend a few months before the publication of his book:

My impressions of Hungary are now less favorable than ever. If I have judged right, their whole political life is *corrupt and rotten*, and the building of the Magyar hegemony is slowly but surely collapsing. [...] The choice is still there, even at the eleventh hour, but the ruling classes are far too infatuated and too corrupt to choose aright. A clearance must be made within the next two years, or social revolution is bound to come.”<sup>54</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

The truth is that, up to a certain extent, Seton-Watson retained his hopes about the improvement of the situation in Hungary through immediate reforms concerning justice, education, politics and civil rights, and in fact he made numerous suggestions in his book.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, as the outbreak of the First World War approached, he came to

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 274-275, 292. Note the profound antithesis between the progressive, occidental nature of Seton-Watson’s Britain and the stagnated, irrational, “medieval” and finally oriental Hungary.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 351. Thus, he implies that Hungary was no part of it.

<sup>54</sup> Letter of Seton-Watson to Miss Lorimer, 24 June 1907. Quoted in Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 52.

<sup>55</sup> For instance in pages 252f, 277f, 392-414. See also Peter, “Changing Views,” 675.



realize the doomed nature of his hopes and gradually lost his remaining faith in the Magyar political system.

## V

Seton-Watson's condemnation of the Magyar political order acquired new vigor after the general elections of 1910 in Transleithania, where governmental violence and voting manipulation reached even more astonishing levels. Seton-Watson, who was then in Hungary, depicted his experience of the election in his new book, *Corruption and Reform in Hungary: A Study of Electoral Practice*.<sup>56</sup> The book described the conduct of the election of 1 June in three constituencies of Slovak population, six of Romanian and one of German. His information came from official documents, signed eye-witness statements and press reports. His language has become even harsher against the Magyars: "An exposure of the almost unparalleled corruption and violence which characterized the general elections of June 1910, will enable the reader to judge of the demoralization of public life in Hungary and the glaring inefficiency -to use no severer term- of the administrative machine."<sup>57</sup>

At the same time, he bitterly accepted the fact that this unparalleled corruption was by no means a novel phenomenon since, according to him, an honest election in a non-Magyar constituency over the past forty years had been very rare.<sup>58</sup> Hungary had a representative government only nominally.<sup>59</sup> Terrorism, violence, bribery and red-tape

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<sup>56</sup> R. W. Seton-Watson, *Corruption and Reform in Hungary: A Study of Electoral Practice* (London: Constable & Co., 1911). It should be noted that in this publication he used his real name instead of his usual pseudonym. See Tilea, "Tributes to Seton-Watson," 357; Schopf, "Seton-Watson," 48-52; Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 81-82. For these elections, Cartledge, *Will to Survive*, 287.

<sup>57</sup> Seton-Watson, *Corruption and Reform*, v.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

tricks were the main pillars of “the decay of the electoral and parliamentary system in Hungary [which] resorted to wholesale violence and corruption at the elections of 1910 and virtually disenfranchised its non-Magyar opponents at the point of the bayonet.”<sup>60</sup> Once again, troops of the Joint Army were used in order to “preserve order,” since non-Magyar agitators tried to obscure the electoral process in numerous cases, according to the Magyar press (!).<sup>61</sup> Electoral officials favored the governmental candidates, while freedom of speech and action was virtually non-existent for the opposition candidates.<sup>62</sup> Summing up, Seton-Watson stated that “‘Gold and blood’ would form a suitable title for a book dealing with electoral abuses in Hungary; for almost everywhere these were the two decisive factors which secured the victory of the present Government.”<sup>63</sup> Demoralization, corruption and violence were Seton-Watson’s key words in the relevant chapters of his book, which classified Hungary once more as a stagnated, oriental state in the British scholar’s consciousness.

As desired and necessary as reform was, it was also highly improbable. Seton-Watson regarded the system as so corrupted that it was difficult to find a point to begin. Secondly, the deputies that were elected into parliament through these corrupted methods would never turn against them, and thus a few privileged families kept control

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 5-6.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>62</sup> See *Ibid.*, 24, 35 and 39-40 for the various ways that officials used the electoral bureaucracy so as to confuse the non-Magyar voters and deprive them their right to vote. The non-Magyar parliamentarians of the 1910 election were only eight (less than five percent of the parliament’s seats), a rather ridiculous number for a country in which forty percent of the population were non-Magyars. See Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 80-81.

<sup>63</sup> Seton-Watson, *Corruption and Reform*, 113.

of the political system.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, he suggested some reforms to be taken in order to avoid social explosion, these being very close to his earlier ideas in *Racial Problems in Hungary*. Briefly, he proposed the introduction of universal suffrage, following the example of Austria, in order for the oligarchical ruling system to come to an end. Additionally, he supported the virtual enforcement of multilingualism in the administration instead of the sole use of Magyar, since a large proportion of the non-Magyar population had limited fluency in that language. Thirdly, he suggested modifications to the electoral procedure in order to make them impartial, and finally he stood firm on the real enforcement of the Nationalities Law, which granted substantial cultural autonomy to the nationalities.<sup>65</sup> These were signs that in Seton-Watson's optimistic spirit, the backward, 'oriental' status of Hungary could be overcome, although he himself did not regard that development as very likely.

## VI

At this point it would be useful to observe the reaction of the (Austro-) Hungarian authorities and its press towards those two polemical studies of Seton-Watson. The *Neue Freie Presse*, the bastion of the Viennese liberal press, let them pass almost unnoticed, because it was well disposed to the Magyar point of view in order not to damage the equilibrium of the 1867 compromise<sup>66</sup>. The Hungarian elite, from its perspective, could not initially comprehend how an Englishman, whose country ruled an empire equally heterogeneous and multinational, could be so hostile towards the

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 26, 69-70 and *Racial Problems in Hungary*, 324f.

<sup>65</sup> Seton-Watson, *Corruption and Reform*, 37, 157-162. Also Schopf, "Seton-Watson," 38-42.

<sup>66</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 62.

Magyar efforts to create a centralized, homogenous state.<sup>67</sup> In 1908, the Budapest pro-governmental newspaper *Pester Lloyd* announced that “The author Scotus Viator [...] has repeatedly mis-represented Hungarian conditions in a malicious and false manner.”<sup>68</sup> What Seton-Watson regarded as corruption and maltreatment of the nationalities, the official Magyar view considered the only viable solution for the Hungarian state against a deeply uncomfortable or even dangerous multinational situation.<sup>69</sup> Progressively, the Budapest chauvinist papers of that time regarded him as “Hungary’s Enemy No. 1” and came to dislike the name of Scotus Viator more than that of any other author in Europe.<sup>70</sup> A Magyar statesman, Count Eszterhazy, attempted to answer Seton-Watson’s assertions in the columns of the newspapers. The latter responded, but the struggle was unequal because the Hungarian newspapers published only Eszterhazy’s point of view.

At the same time, a series of books and articles were published in English to propagate the Hungarian cause.<sup>71</sup> Seton-Watson’s *Racial Problems* contained “not mistakes but lies” organized by the Slav enemies of the Hungarian nationality, while his *Corruption and Reform* was nothing more than “fantasies, if not lies.”<sup>72</sup> The outcry and furor of the chauvinistic section of the Hungarian Press was boundless, especially

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<sup>67</sup> Geza Jeszenszky, “The Hungarian reception of Scotus Viator,” *Hungarian Studies* 5, 2, (1989): 147-165, 148-149.

<sup>68</sup> Seton-Watson, *Corruption and Reform*, 86.

<sup>69</sup> Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems*, 245f.

<sup>70</sup> Curcin, “Tributes to Seton-Watson,” 348-349. The amount of attention that the Magyar press dedicated to Scotus Viator was by itself a proof of his works’ popularity within the Monarchy.

<sup>71</sup> Jeszenszky, “Scotus Viator,” 149-150. One of the most influential of these books was Arthur Yolland’s *The Constitutional Struggle of the Magyars. An Answer to Scotus Viator & Co.* (London: Polsue, 1907).

<sup>72</sup> Jeszenszky, “Scotus Viator,” 151; Seton-Watson, *Corruption and Reform*, 86-88.

towards the latter book and particularly when leading British newspapers like the *Times*, *Standard* and *Morning Post* began to adopt Seton-Watson's views and became increasingly anti-Magyar.<sup>73</sup> Seton-Watson himself was hardly affected by that wave of hatred, as he never let concern for his reputation change his attitude to a particular subject. During that period, the Magyar authorities continued to claim that a pro-Slav conspiracy hid behind these accusations, and some conservative circles even claimed that Seton-Watson was funded by "Austrian imperialists."<sup>74</sup> The only positive reaction to Seton-Watson's writings in Hungary came from the distinguished radical economist and political scientist Oscar Jaszi. He opposed the official assimilation policy and welcomed Seton-Watson's work as "a profound, thorough and full analysis" by a well-meaning and honest Western man of culture (*Kulturmensh*). Seton-Watson responded kindly to that unusual attitude, and that was the beginning of a long and fruitful correspondence.<sup>75</sup> Most importantly, his *Racial Problems* provoked the interest of the British public, and Oxford University considered it "an original contribution to historical learning"; because of it, Seton-Watson was awarded a doctoral title "for his friendly action towards the Slavs."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Jeszenszky, "Scotus Viator," 152; Peter, "Changing Views," 668-670.

<sup>74</sup> Jeszenszky, "Scotus Viator," 153. During his slightly later contacts with the South Slavs, Seton-Watson was charged of being inclined towards Austria, which cannot be considered as fully accurate, especially since he was no more popular in the Viennese leading political circles than he was in their Budapest equivalents. Curcin, "Tributes to Seton-Watson," 348-349.

<sup>75</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 14-15; Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 67; Jeszenszky, "Scotus Viator," 151. Oscar Jaszi (1875-1957) was one of the most charismatic Hungarian intellectuals of his time. After 1919 he emigrated to the United States and worked as a university professor of political science. His most important work, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1929), exercised a tremendous influence on Habsburg and Central European studies in America.

<sup>76</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 22 (29 December 1910), 72 (original in German).

## VII

In the late 1900s, when Seton-Watson's name was associated for good in the British and Central European public with the Kingdom of St. Steven and its nationalities, his interest was piqued by the Southern Slav peoples of the Empire (the Slovenes, the Croats and the Serbs) and the so-called South Slav Question, around which the western Balkan policy of the Monarchy was built. That question regarded the relations of the Monarchy with Serbia and whether the Habsburg Southern Slav peoples should be separated from the Empire and united with the Balkan state, or if the latter should be incorporated into the Dual Monarchy. That question became more intense in 1878, when the Monarchy occupied and began to administrate Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Habsburg authorities (and especially the soul of the entire undertaking, Benjamin von Kallay [1839-1903], governor of Bosnia, 1882-1903), acting via an oriental lens of their own and following their own civilizing mission in the Balkans, tried to transform the former Ottoman province into a modern, Western and organic part of their Empire. Thus, they aimed to prove the continued vitality of the Dual Monarchy and its role as a carrier of civilization in South-eastern Europe.

At least materially, this ambitious project met with success until the beginning of the First World War.<sup>77</sup> In 1908, the province was officially annexed. That became possible mainly via German diplomatic assistance, but not without infuriating Russia and Serbia, which felt humiliated by the outcome of the Balkan crisis of 1908/09.<sup>78</sup> Closely related to that episode are the Zagreb Trial or High Treason Trial and the

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<sup>77</sup> See Heiss and Feichtinger, *Uses of Orientalism*, 154-158 for that kind of Habsburg-initiated orientalism.

<sup>78</sup> For the diplomatic crisis of 1908, see briefly Cartledge, *Will to Survive*, 290-291.

subsequent Friedjung Trial (1909), which hold a central place in Seton-Watson's last pre-war book,<sup>79</sup> *The Southern Slav Question and the Habsburg Monarchy* (1911).<sup>80</sup>

During the crisis, charges of treason and association with Serbia had been trumped up against fifty-three leading Serbo-Croats in Croatia as an excuse for war by both the Austrian and Hungarian authorities, who wanted to break the ties between Croats and Serbs and thus reduce the Serbian threat.<sup>81</sup> The government tried to prove that there was evil cooperation between certain Habsburg subjects and the belligerent kingdom of Serbia, in order to justify an energetic foreign policy. These charges had to stand public examination in a trial, which took place in Zagreb from March to October 1909. Seton-Watson compared it to “the Dreyfus trial for the fierceness of the party passion which it aroused.”<sup>82</sup> From the beginning, there was little faith in the fairness of the trial and it inspired little public interest.<sup>83</sup> However, the trials were of outstanding importance to Seton-Watson's opinion of the Monarchy because they were characterized

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<sup>79</sup> R. W. Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question and the Habsburg Monarchy* (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1911). The chapters that interest us mostly are IX and X (174-287). Angerer, “Haltungswandel,” 462f. Early in 1908, Seton-Watson was attracted by the South Slav question and travelled in the southwestern provinces of the Empire, where he made acquaintances with preeminent South Slavs like Frano Supilo and Jovan Ducic. BA, *Correspondence*, 14.

<sup>80</sup> Before the publication of this book, Seton-Watson published a brief pamphlet under the title *Absolutismus in Kroatien* (1909), in which he focused on the way that Croatia, then a part of the Hungarian administration, was ruled by its autocratic Ban (i.e. governor) Rauch. Seton-Watson noted that Rauch's style of government was as repressive and undemocratic as that of the central Magyar government in Budapest. Although he made some suggestions for the improvement of the situation, it was evident that in his mind Croatia and the rest of Hungary belonged to the same category of despotic, stagnated states lacking democratic legitimacy, strengthening thus his oriental view towards them. This short brochure was later incorporated into *The Southern Slav Question*, functioning as background for the discussion regarding the 1909 trials, and because of that it will not be examined separately here. On *Absolutismus in Kroatien*, Schopf, “Seton-Watson,” 58-65.

<sup>81</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, 177f; Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 68-70; and A.J.P. Taylor, *Habsburg Monarchy*, 218-220.

<sup>82</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, 208.

<sup>83</sup> Miller, “Yugoslavism,” 63-64.

by the purely political Austro-Hungarian aims:<sup>84</sup> “The indictment is a unique example of generalization, for it is so worded that if a specific act of treason were proved against one single of the prisoners, all the others would thereby would be implicated in his guilt.”<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, the entire trial was largely based on forged documents. In Zagreb, the Habsburg *Rechtstaat*, the state characterized by the rule of law, which allowed the Dual Monarchy to be regarded as a member of the European, occidental family, suffered a severe blow that discredited the idea of the civilized, impartial Austro-Hungarian state, pushing it dangerously toward oriental status: “From the very first it showed itself to be one of the grossest travesties of justice in modern times,”<sup>86</sup> and “The whole trial is a travesty of justice, inspired and controlled by what to English ideas is a despotic government.”<sup>87</sup> Regarding the judges, his comments were far from flattering.<sup>88</sup> He wrote to his friend Steed: “I can honestly say that the judges give me the impression of being collected from a Verbrecherkolonie [colony of convicts].” In his notes he recorded that “The President [of the Court] is the best from an exceptionally bad lot,” and he commented on one of the judges: “a voice, which can only be described as slimy. Shoves head forwards and strains eyes in expectancy of favorable answer [from witnesses]. Endless Suggestieren [prompting of witnesses].”<sup>89</sup> Of another, he wrote: “He

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<sup>84</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, 201-202.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>87</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 16-17.

<sup>88</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, 191.

<sup>89</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 69.



gives the impression of an excitable avocet, not of a judge. Here there should be calm and dignity, there is continuous and spasmodic movement. No one who watched him in court could fail to be struck with the open manner in which he espoused the side of the prosecution.”<sup>90</sup>

The trial finally ended with the expected verdict, and the prisoners were found guilty of conspiring with the Kingdom of Serbia against Austria-Hungary, but (strangely enough) they were sentenced to minimal punishments of five or six years in jail. The subversion of the judicial authority by the executive, in Seton-Watson’s eyes, meant a supreme violation of one of the most sacred values of the modern state by Austria, which in Seton-Watson’s thought put its occidental status into serious doubt. In the next few years, this doubt would become even more intense.

At the peak of the Balkan crisis and during the Zagreb trial, the distinguished historian and friend of Seton-Watson, Heinrich Friedjung, published an article in the *Neue Freie Presse*, based on documents shown to him by the Imperial and Royal Foreign Ministry.<sup>91</sup> These suggested that Serbia had been plotting against the security of the Monarchy and therefore had used the Serbo-Croat coalition in Croatia. In combination with the proceedings in the Zagreb trial, these charges constituted a pretext for the invasion of Serbia in the early stages of the crisis.<sup>92</sup> The result was that a new court was summoned in Vienna to examine the validity of Friedjung’s accusations. This trial attracted much greater interest than the previous one, and was “of the greatest

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<sup>90</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, 190.

<sup>91</sup> On the attitude of the Viennese Press towards the South Slavs, Robin Okey, “The *Neue Freie Presse* and the South Slavs of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1867-1914,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 85, 1 (Jan., 2007): 79-104.

<sup>92</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, 200-201, 209f; and Miller, “Yugoslavism,” 64.

importance for all Europe.” The proceedings in court did not go well for Friedjung, since it was proved that a number of the documents he had used were false. Although he stated that what he did was only for the good of the fatherland (Friedjung was a strong advocate of Habsburg power),<sup>93</sup> and eventually the affair was settled out of court, his intellectual prestige was permanently wounded, along with the international moral position of the Monarchy, since the forged papers had supposedly passed the scrutiny of the Foreign Minister, Count Alois von Aehrenthal. Seton-Watson himself was profoundly influenced by the revelations of the Friedjung trial, and he started to see the Habsburg government through another, less optimistic and more condemnatory lens. Writing to his uncle George in 1910, he commented:

[The trial] is also the most ruthless exposure of the medieval methods of diplomacy and of secret workings of international relations, which the modern world has yet seen. From time to time espionage scandals crop up in various countries, or fragments of diplomatic secrets are dragged before the courts. But never before has the whole foreign policy of a Great Power been tried in open court and found wanting, as has been the case in this trial.<sup>94</sup>

Thereupon, apart from the chauvinistic policies of the Magyars, he began to feel suspicious of the entire Monarchy and particularly of its foreign policy. He continued: “we are confronted with the fact that the whole fabric of the Austrian foreign policy for two years was based upon systematic theft and forgery,”<sup>95</sup> which “should cease to be the main pillars of foreign policy in a state that deserves the title of a Great Power.”<sup>96</sup> Eventually, he argued that the whole Foreign Service was full of forgers and concluded

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<sup>93</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, 211, 258-259.

<sup>94</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 15(1 January 1910), 66. Note that negative characterizations of the ‘medieval’ character of the state were also in use by Seton-Watson in Hungary’s case and are also present here.

<sup>95</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 15 (1 January 1910), 67.

<sup>96</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, viii; Shipton, “British Attitudes,” 50f.

that “The atmosphere of the whole trial was inexpressibly foul; but I have learned lessons from it, which will last me all my life.”<sup>97</sup> As Seton-Watson recounts, Aehrenthal was ridiculed by the press of the Monarchy and was criticized as an untrustworthy and vicious dilettante in politics and diplomacy<sup>98</sup>. For the first time in his life, Seton-Watson seriously doubted the capacity of the Habsburg power-system to rule the Danubian basin, and the shadow of a decayed and corrupted orientalism started, in Seton-Watson’s mind, to embrace the Viennese authorities as well.<sup>99</sup>

### VIII

Nonetheless, after the two fiasco trials, he did not lose all his hopes. Particularly in regard to the South Slav Question, his position, until well into the Great War, was that a solution containing a kind of Yugoslav unity must be found “within the bounds of the Habsburg Monarchy” due to the profound backwardness of Serbia: “The triumph of the Pan-Serb idea would mean the triumph of Eastern over Western [i.e. Habsburg] culture and would be a fatal blow to progress and modern development throughout the Balkans.”<sup>100</sup>

A different solution “would not be desirable either to the interests of the Croats and Serbs or in those of Europe as a whole.”<sup>101</sup> The Habsburgs (meaning at least the government of Vienna), for all of their drawbacks, were still the bearers of a civilizing

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<sup>97</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 15 (1 January 1910), 67. Seton-Watson observed both trials as an accredited journalist, and thus his notes on the Friedjung trial were so detailed. BA, *Correspondence*, 18-19.

<sup>98</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, 285-286.

<sup>99</sup> Miller, “Yugoslavism,” 63.

<sup>100</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, 336-337 and BA, *Correspondence* (17 October 1909), 51-52, where he repeats his view. See also Miller, “Yugoslavism,” 62, 64.

<sup>101</sup> BA, *Correspondence* (17 October 1909), 51; and Shipton, “British Attitudes,” 46.

mission in the Balkans and thus, according to Seton-Watson, territorial annexations would be welcome.<sup>102</sup> “Since the Bosnian crisis, everyone knows that Austria-Hungary is one of the strongest powers on the Continent, and likely to become stronger, not weaker in the immediate future.”<sup>103</sup> Seton-Watson continued to believe that the Monarchy was capable of domestic reform, since there were statesmen willing to risk such an undertaking. Above all, he had in mind the imperial heir, Franz Ferdinand,<sup>104</sup> whose plans of a trialistic<sup>105</sup> reorganization of the Empire among Austrians, Magyars and South Slavs would, in his opinion, represent progress in the right direction.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, he did not feel hostility for Serbia and believed that the issue of the South Slavs could be solved via mutual trust and cooperation between the two states.<sup>107</sup> He continued to fear that a radical change of the territorial status quo in the western Balkans could bring a general war between the Tsar and the Emperor. Instead, peaceful trialism would protect the interests of both the Slavic nationalities and the dynasty.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Seton-Watson’s perpetual optimism for the Habsburgs is discussed in Angerer, “Haltungswandel,” 463f.

<sup>103</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, 63. Also Schopf, “Seton-Watson”, 56-57; and Shipton, “British Attitudes,” 46f.

<sup>104</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 64-65, 95-98; Shipton, “British Attitudes”, 49-50. Certainly his friendships with persons in the narrow circle of the heir, such as the journalist H. Funder and Baron Chlumechy of *Österreichische Rundschau* played a significant role in his turn. BA, *Correspondence*, 15.

<sup>105</sup> The term “Trialism” referred to plans for a reorganization of the late Habsburg Empire into a polity with three major components, one Austro-German, one Magyar and one South-Slav, instead of the two (Cisleithanian and Transleithanian) that existed after 1867.

<sup>106</sup> Regarding the theoretical framework, the advocates, the opponents and the date of the trialist plan in the Monarchy, see Schopf, “Seton-Watson”, 68-82.

<sup>107</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 17. He was positive towards Serbia *per se*, but he was strongly against aggressive Serbian nationalism that wanted to create a centralized Great Serbia by incorporating the southern Austro-Hungarian provinces. Instead he advocated a Habsburg-initiated trialism or, later during the Great War, Yugoslavism with the equal participation of all South Slavs into a federal state. Schopf, “Seton-Watson,” 67f.

<sup>108</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 21.

Seton-Watson was not, of course, informed of the conspiratorial initiatives of Serbian nationalist circles, who, supporting Serbian irredentism in the southern Habsburg provinces, had founded the notorious “Black Hand” terrorist group in 1901, which eventually came to exercise substantial influence over Serbian foreign policy. They planned and executed the assassination of Seton-Watson’s “hero,” the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in late June 1914, although it is still not quite certain whether the Serbian government had knowledge of or approved that dubious plan.<sup>109</sup> Whatever the truth, Seton-Watson was equally devastated and alarmed when he was informed of the assassination. His growing pessimism and uncertainty for the future was evident in his correspondence: “I can assert without trying that his death — and right away the repercussions of his death — vanished my most expensive hopes and that for the first time in my life, I see the future with doubt.”<sup>110</sup> In another letter, he noted: “If Franz Ferdinand had been allowed his chance, he would have helped on this idea a further stage, by a modified form of Trialism within a centralized Monarchy.”<sup>111</sup> His doubts were for the seemingly doomed efforts of a peaceful South Slav solution and the dark clouds of the impending conflict: “By removing the one man who had the energy, the will and the power to undertake a radical reform of the Dual System, they [i.e. the Black

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<sup>109</sup> The Black Hand attempted this daring undertaking since it was persuaded of Russian support towards Serbia in case of an armed conflict. The nationalist activity of the organization continued until 1917, when a clash of interests with the Serbian Crown Prince led to its dissolution. For the Black Hand, see Joaquim Remak, *Sarajevo: The Story of a Political Murder* (New York: Criterion Books, 1959) and particularly for the Austro-Hungarian perspective, Barbara Jelavich, “What the Habsburg Government knew about the Black Hand,” *Austrian History Yearbook*, 22 (1991): 131-150.

<sup>110</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 97 (30 June 1914), 165 (original in German).

<sup>111</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 103 (21 July 1914), 171. Franz Ferdinand had developed a wide network of communication with eminent personalities of both the Transleithanian and the South Slav nationalities and he intended to work for the improvement of their situation against the Magyar elite and the nationalistic Serbian elements when he ascended to the throne. Shipton, “British Attitudes,” 53-54.

Hand] have immensely increased the dangers of a situation, both as regards Austria-Hungary and Europe as a whole.”<sup>112</sup>

Although Seton-Watson was almost persuaded of the Serbian government’s innocence,<sup>113</sup> he was relentless on the partial responsibility the Austrian authorities had for the course of events: “Of course it is natural and inevitable result of the Monarchy’s lamentable foreign policy and of internal misgovernment, that a revolutionary movement should have arisen on the south, and I had long felt the danger of these mad youths getting utterly out of hand.”<sup>114</sup>

Losing, as the weeks passed, his hopes for an essential domestic reform of the Monarchy, progressively persuaded of its bankrupt and ineffective nature and disappointed by the hatred of the Viennese papers against Serbia in July, Seton-Watson turned decisively to Serbia. During and after the Balkan wars, Seton-Watson had developed a more friendly perspective towards the Slavic kingdom, which was becoming “the South Slav Piedmont.”<sup>115</sup> He appreciated it greatly after its astonishing wartime victories and the warm welcoming and treatment of the Serbian officers, whom, during the conflict, he visited at the front.<sup>116</sup> The inability of the Empire to deal

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<sup>112</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 103 (21 July 1914), 171-172.

<sup>113</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 103 (21 July 1914), 173 and 104 (22 July 1914), 174-175.

<sup>114</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 104 (22 July 1914), 174.

<sup>115</sup> Shipton, “British Attitudes,” 56.

<sup>116</sup> In a letter he concluded that “many of the [Serbian] officers clearly showed themselves to be not only good soldiers but highly civilized and intelligent Europeans.” Quoted in Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 94.

with the South Slav issue became even more apparent to Seton-Watson,<sup>117</sup> especially after the unacceptable Austrian ultimatum: “I find it utterly impossible to approve the provocative tone and monstrous demands of the Austrian Note,”<sup>118</sup> which could only lead to disaster since “Austria has been maneuvered into a position in which she is really fighting for the Dual System and Magyar hegemony.”<sup>119</sup> From his words, it becomes obvious that from the struggle between the Western and progressive and the oriental and backward elements within the Empire over the past years, the latter had won a momentous victory, bringing the Monarchy to its doom. By the beginning of the Great War, he was sure of the corrupted, unhealed and thus essentially oriental nature of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as he was equally convinced of the vigorousness of the Balkan national states.<sup>120</sup> In early August he wrote to his wife:

The solutions I have advocated for years — South Slav, Hungarian — died a natural or rather a most unnatural death at midnight before last. From now onwards the Great Serbian State is inevitable; and we must create it. [...] Dalmatia, Bosnia, Croatia, Istria must be united to Serbia: at the final settlement we must save the Diet of Agram. Romania must have all her kinsmen.<sup>121</sup>

His attitude was also dictated by the simultaneous British declaration of war on the Dual Monarchy.<sup>122</sup> Since his government was an enemy of Austria, he could not remain

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<sup>117</sup> He wrote in September 1913, showing the immense gravity of the Balkan Wars’ result: “While a year ago Austria was faced with the problem of how to retain the sympathies and loyalty of the Southern Slavs today she has to consider how it is possible to regain them.” Quoted in Shipton, “British Attitudes,” 55.

<sup>118</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 105 (27 July 1914), 176.

<sup>119</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 106 (31 July 1914), 177.

<sup>120</sup> His attitudes were depicted in his book, *The Rise of Nationalities in the Balkans* (London: Constable & Co., 1917). With the Balkan Wars he experienced a radical transformation of his former opinion towards the Serbs and the Balkan states in general. Miller, “Yugoslavlism,” 66-67; BA, *Correspondence*, 20-21.

<sup>121</sup> Quoted in Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*, 101-102 and Shipton, “British Attitudes,” 56.

<sup>122</sup> Hanak, *Great Britain*, 36f; Fest, *Peace or Partition*, 26-33; Shipton, “British Attitudes”; 56-57. On the war declaration, F.R. Bridge, “The British Declaration of War on Austria-Hungary in 1914,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 47, 109 (Jul., 1969), 401-422.

its friend, especially because, by then, not only civilians but also superior governmental and military officials had asked for Seton-Watson's experience and advice regarding Central Europe in order for the Allies to know and understand their enemy better.<sup>123</sup>

“The Great War is a hideous proof that the policy of racial dominance and forcible assimilation is morally bankrupt.”<sup>124</sup> After the hostilities started, Seton-Watson's view of the Monarchy and its peoples continued to harden: the Habsburg Empire appears as an unjust, backward, stagnated and corrupted institution, that is, an oriental state on European soil, that had no place in the 20th century and therefore had to be replaced by vigorous national states. During the gloomy circumstances of the First World War for the Austro-Hungarian Empire,<sup>125</sup> he energetically supported the independence of the Yugoslavs and the Czechoslovaks, substantially affecting public opinion.<sup>126</sup> The Serbian Society of Great Britain and, especially, the pro-Slavic, nationalistic journal the *New*

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<sup>123</sup> BA, *Correspondence*, 108 (24 August 1914), 179. Colonel E. M. House wrote to Seton-Watson: “I have more than passing reasons for wishing to be thoroughly informed regarding South-Eastern Europe, and because of your knowledge of that region I would appreciate your helpful suggestions in regard to books and papers.” Seton-Watson's well-known and analytical response to the Foreign Office in October contains a valuable summary of his knowledge of and perspective towards the Monarchy, its circumstances and peoples. BA, *Correspondence*, 109 (1 October 1914), 180-186.

<sup>124</sup> Quoted in Shipton, “British Attitudes,” 59.

<sup>125</sup> Among the most valid and detailed histories of the wartime Empire are: Z.A.B. Zeman, *The Break-Up of the Habsburg Empire, 1914-1918: A Study in National and Social Revolution* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961); Arthur J. May, *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy, 1914-1918* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Univ. Press, 1966); Leo Valiani, *La Dissoluzione dell' Austria-Ungheria* (Milan: G.Forsetti, 1966); Herwig Holveg, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997); Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der Habsburgermonarchie* (Vienna/Köln/Weimar, Böhlau, 2013); Helmut Rumpler, Peter Urbanitsch, eds., *Die Habsburgermonarchie, 1848-1918: Vol.XI: Der Erste Weltkrieg* (Vienna: Verlag d. österr. Akademie d. Wissenschaften, 2014); John Deak, “The Great War and the Forgotten Realm: The Habsburg Monarchy and the First World War,” *The Journal of Modern History* 86, 2 (June 2014): 336-380.

<sup>126</sup> Kenneth Calder, *Britain and the Origins of the New Europe, 1914-1918* (New York/Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976); W.R Callcott., “The Last War Aim: British Opinion and the Decision for Czechoslovak Independence, 1914-1919,” *The Historical Journal* 27, 4 (Dec., 1984): 979-989; James Evans, *Great Britain and the Creation of Yugoslavia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008).



*Europe* (1916-1920), served these purposes.<sup>127</sup> However, Seton-Watson, along with his friend Steed, reached the peak of their influence in official politics in 1918, when working in Lord Northcliffe's Department of Propaganda in Enemy Countries.<sup>128</sup> They directly influenced the British policy towards the Dual Monarchy, with noteworthy results.<sup>129</sup> It was largely due to Seton-Watson's and his associates' systematic efforts that the Entente's foreign policy turned gradually in favor of the Slavic national movements in East-Central Europe and against the very existence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

## IX

The question of whether Seton-Watson's view of the Monarchy can be classified as an Orientalist one — as Said defined it for the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century — is complicated one for two basic reasons. The first is that in the eight years preceding the war, his attitude changed radically, and often not only in one direction. From the naïve foreigner who admired the Magyars, he turned into a passionate opponent of their state- and nation-building policy, after coming in close contact with members of their oppressed nationalities. Indeed, judging from his two relevant books, his perspective can be characterized as that of a Westerner towards an Oriental country. Similar remarks can be made about his attitude toward Habsburg justice and foreign policy during, and

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<sup>127</sup> Harry Hanak, "The New Europe, 1916-20," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 39, 93 (Jun., 1961): 369-399; *idem*, *Great Britain*, 174-202; Arthur May, "R. W. Seton-Watson and British Anti-Habsburg Sentiment," *American Slavonic and East European Review* 20, 1 (Feb., 1961): 40-54.

<sup>128</sup> Michael Sanders, "The Wellington House and British Propaganda during the First World War," *The Historical Journal* 18 (1975): 119-146; Gary Messinger, *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1992) 162-183; Mark Cornwall, *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary: The Battle for Hearts and Minds* (London/New York: Macmillan Press, 2000), 174f.

<sup>129</sup> Generally on that issue: Harry Hanak, "The Government, the Foreign Office and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 47, 108 (Jan., 1969): 161-197; Fest, *Peace or Partition*, 45f; William Hay, "A Problem postponed: Britain and the Future of Austria-Hungary, 1914-18," *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 13, 3 (Sep. 2002): 57-80.

even after, the 1909 trials. These advocate for the Orientalist view, but there are other arguments standing for the opposite case. For the writer of *The Future of Austria-Hungary*, at least until 1914, the Monarchy as a whole, influenced by its progressive, Austrian elements, was an essentially western and civilized state (in contrast to its Balkan neighbors), a necessary ingredient of the European equilibrium, that participated equally in the occidental family. Moreover, Seton-Watson's faith in Franz Ferdinand and his reforming circle to the end shows that despite its oriental traces, the Monarchy had a surplus of regenerating forces, which, under the right guidance, could help the occidental elements prevail. Eventually, that did not happen, and with the ultimatum to Serbia, the powers of "theft and forgery,"<sup>130</sup> typical examples of an oriental, stagnated state, which, according to Seton-Watson, dominated Habsburg foreign policy since 1909/10, assumed, in his mind, the leading position in the Empire.

The second reason, which can indirectly be inferred from the first, is a general difficulty that faces those dealing with late Habsburg history. The Austro-Hungarian Empire itself was perhaps one "indivisible and inseparable" unit in the field of international relations, but this external unity embraced domestically a whole cosmos of different cultures and nationalities. These nationalities, commonly ruled under the scepter of the Habsburg monarch, had each and every one its own special characteristics and even its own autonomous evolution within the ranks of the vast empire. Seton-Watson came in contact with the most important ethnicities of the Monarchy, that is, the

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<sup>130</sup> See p.15 and footnote 97.

Austro-German, the Magyar, and the South Slav,<sup>131</sup> but, at least initially, he did not hold the same opinion of all of them regarding their cultural progress and to what degree they could be classified as “Western”. That means, for our purposes, that Seton-Watson might have formed a positive image of one nationality (predominantly the Austro-German), but at the same time a totally negative one of another (typically the Magyar). This simultaneous coexistence of several dissimilar attitudes toward the different parts of the Monarchy certainly complicates the situation and renders a general and absolute characterization of the entire multinational empire an impossible task.

Seton-Watson considered the Austro-German part of the Monarchy the bastion of “Westernness” until 1910, when he was shocked by the Zagreb trials. Nevertheless, he continued to support the reformatory plans of the heir presumptive, Franz Ferdinand, who Seton-Watson firmly believed could still restore the Monarchy to its rightful place as an occidental state. These dreams lasted until the summer of 1914, when, along with the Archduke, Seton-Watson’s hopes for the imminent rebirth of the Habsburg Monarchy also perished. Having lost its last hope for reform, the Austrian part of the empire was in no better condition than the Hungarian one, on which Seton-Watson had held a clear attitude since 1906: the Magyars were a stagnated people that ruled their nationalities in a despotic way. In 1914, all Seton-Watson’s views seem to converge into one direction: since the Magyar part of the Empire and the imperial foreign service and policy were desperately ill and incapable of reform, and since every hope for a decisive internal modernization and purification was eventually lost, then the oriental elements

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<sup>131</sup> One can bring forward many arguments against the fact that the South Slavs consisted one single nation, but for the goals of the current paper all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes of the Monarchy will comprise one category. Besides, at least until 1914, Seton-Watson himself did not made a clear distinction between them.

in the Empire, as described mainly in his *Racial Problems in Hungary* and in his post-1910 correspondence, had utterly prevailed. By the beginning of the Great War, Seton-Watson seemed to have overcome his former hesitations and formed his final and permanent verdict regarding the nature of the Danubian monarchy. For him, the Habsburgs were a living anachronism, an obstacle to the progress of their people; therefore, their authority had to be replaced by a conglomeration of vigorous national states. The Dual Monarchy, as perceived by Seton-Watson in 1914, had lost its right to be considered a part of the Occidental world, and was more like a stagnated, oppressive and rather irrational Oriental empire.

The answer that we have extracted perhaps offers only a slight contribution to the existing research regarding Seton-Watson, but it by no means answers every question of his pre-war activity. Questions such as his relation to the Czechs, whose leader, Masaryk, Seton-Watson saw for the first time at Friedjung's trial,<sup>132</sup> remain unanswered, while his contacts with smaller nations, such as the Ruthenians or the Slovenes, also remain unexplored by modern scholarship. One should not forget that, while Seton-Watson was perhaps the preeminent foreign intellectual affiliated with the Monarchy, he was not unique. His contemporaries, like H. W. Steed and the Frenchmen Luis Eisenmann and Ernst Dennis, also visited and studied the Monarchy extensively in the same period. Academic interest related to Steed also remains low, ignoring his

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<sup>132</sup> Seton-Watson and Masaryk's relations were characterized by mutual understanding and admiration and played a crucial role in the struggle for Czechoslovak independence. See Seton-Watson's study, *Masaryk in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1943). In matters of the Friedjung trial, Seton-Watson acknowledges that Masaryk's presence as a witness against the historian, his wide knowledge and detailed testimony influenced decisively the final verdict. Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, 251-255.

substantial contribution to the future and welfare of the Danubian peoples.<sup>133</sup> The same is true for the work of Eisenmann and Denis, who also dedicated substantial ink to the affairs of the Empire.<sup>134</sup> One can only hope that the approaching centenary of the Empire's end might give birth to a renewed interest in the late Habsburg Monarchy from a European and global perspective.

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<sup>133</sup> In recent years, only one work relevant to Steed has been published: Andre Liebich, "The Anti-Semitism of Henry Wickham Steed," *Patterns of Prejudice* 46, 2 (2012): 180-208.

<sup>134</sup> That lacuna is perhaps a part of the wider weakness of the French-speaking historiography in regards to Austria-Hungary. See Jacques Le Rider, "Austrian Studies in France," in *Global Austria: Austria's place in Europe and the World*, eds. G. Bischof and F. Plasser (New Orleans: UNO Press, 2011), 279-281.