

## **The Perception of the Republic of Turkey in the Croatian Press (1923-1945)**

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### **Abstract:**

The article analyzes the perception of the Republic of Turkey from 1923 to 1945 in Croatian press. The articles mainly addressed political issues relating to Turkey, but there were also numerous articles about Turkey's history, economy, culture etc. The emergence of the Republic of Turkey after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1923 came as an incentive for the Croatian press to set aside the negative connotations concerning the Ottoman Empire and the critique of its socio-political order, and to praise the results of the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923) and the institutional changes introduced by the new Republican regime. Turkish President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is the person mentioned the most in Turkey-related articles in the Croatian press of the period, as his emergence as the Turkish national leader, his reform efforts and his death in 1938 were widely explored. The creation of the Independent State of Croatia in 1941 was characterized by the new regime's interest in the chance to acquire Turkey's international recognition of the Independent State of Croatia. Therefore the Ustasha press propaganda used every opportunity to commend Turkey's neutral diplomatic stance between the warring coalitions of World War II, and introduced Turkey as the most mentioned of the non-Axis countries in the Croatian press of the period.

**Keywords:** Turkey, Croatia, Newspapers, Croatian-Turkish Relations, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

### **Introduction**

The term "Croatian press" in the title of this article denotes periodical publications released in the Southeast European territories widely populated by Croats, i.e. in the territories of the Kingdom of

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Yugoslavia in the period from 1923 to 1941 and the Independent State of Croatia from 1941 to 1945, notably in the cities of Zagreb, Split, Osijek, Sarajevo etc. There are numerous publications which fall within this description, to name only a few: daily newspapers *Jutarnji list*, *Narodne novine*, *Obzor* and *Novosti*, as well as other weekly, biweekly and monthly press: *Hrvatski dnevnik*, *Seljački dom*, *Hrvatski radnik*, etc. Their general characteristics will be explained below. For the purpose of this article, almost all of the periodicals published during the interwar period were examined, because the aim was not to include only the few most important newspapers, but to give a comprehensive overview of the Croatian press of the period. Furthermore, all Turkey-related aspects were examined, from political to economic and cultural issues.

The period noted in the title was examined in order to demonstrate how the Republic of Turkey was perceived among Croats during Turkey's formative years. The Croatian nation in 1918 became a part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (or Kingdom of SHS), a country deeply involved in the political issues in Southeast Europe, because during this period Balkan countries experienced Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany's political penetration into their peninsula. Considerable socio-political changes in the first decades of the new Turkish republic aroused the interest of the public opinion in numerous European countries, as well as in the Kingdom of SHS, partly because of the possibilities of Yugoslav cooperation with the new Turkish state. The interest partly grew out of the fact that for centuries the Ottoman Empire and Turks were perceived among Croats and other Balkan nations as the oppressors who caused destruction and backwardness in Southeast Europe.<sup>1</sup> With the emergence of the Republic of Turkey, the Croatian press and their readers began to change their view of the Turks for the better, as will be shown below. The Croatian interest toward Turkey grew even stronger in the final four years of the investigated period (1941-1945), during the existence of the Independent State of Croatia (Croatian: *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, abbreviation: NDH), a World War II fascist puppet state which was fighting for its international recognition and thus intended to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey.

The aim of the article is to research the breadth of interest the

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<sup>1</sup> Dino Mujadžević, "The Image of Ottomans in Croatian Historiography: Changing Narratives in Elementary School Textbooks in Croatia - 1980s to 2000s," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 34, No. 3 (2014): 295.

Croatian press toward Turkey, and to ascertain whether the Croatian press and public exhibited the same fascination with interwar Turkey's comprehensive Kemalist transformation as did the public in countries throughout Europe of the period.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Period of Croatia's Inclusion in the Kingdom of SHS / Kingdom of Yugoslavia**

The Kingdom of SHS was established in 1918 by the merging of the provisional and short-lived State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (formerly a part of Austria-Hungary) with the Kingdom of Serbia. The Croatian nation thus became a part of the Yugoslav state, which changed its name in 1929 to Kingdom of Yugoslavia. From its very beginning, the Kingdom of SHS was in political turmoil because of the clash of the proponents of a centralized state (Serbian politicians, including the ruling Serbian Karađorđević dynasty) and the proponents of a federalized state (the Croatian and Slovene parties). In 1929, after ten years of political struggle, King Alexander I Karađorđević (1888-1934) proclaimed a dictatorship with the hope to curb separatist tendencies. This event instigated even harsher political clashes and the emergence of the Ustasha movement, established in 1929 as a Croatian extreme nationalist response to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia's pro-Serb policy and repression of Croatian nationalism. The Ustasas would subsequently take over the rule in Croatia in 1941, with the outbreak of World War II on the Yugoslav territory.

As regards the diplomatic relations between Turkey and the Kingdom of SHS, they were fully established in 1926<sup>3</sup> and the two countries reached a rapprochement characterized by a fruitful cooperation and a series of treaties (in 1932, 1933, and 1934), including the Balkan Pact in 1934. Moreover, personal relations between Turkish President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938) and Kingdom of SHS's King Alexander I were very cordial.<sup>4</sup> Those events, however, did not have a significant impact on the Croatian press because, for the period

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<sup>2</sup> For more on this topic see: Jacob M. Landau (ed.), *Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey* (Boulder: Westview Press; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> Negotiations for the establishment of friendly relations started on August 24, 1925: "Uspostava odnošaja sa Turskom," *Jutarnji list* 14 (1925), No. 4869, August 25, 1925, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Tonka Župančić, "Poslanstvo Kraljevine Jugoslavije u Turskoj - Carigrad, Ankara 1919-1945. (1890-1945), istorijat stvaraoća i značaj arhivske građe fonda," *Arhiv* 5, No. 2 (2004): 11-14; Ömer Erden, *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Döneminde Türkiye'yi Ziyaret Eden Devlet Başkanları* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2006), 14-17.

1923-1926, diplomatic relations were not established and newspapers did not have an official diplomatic stance on which to model their own opinion. Ordinary articles relaying news from Turkey remained neutral, and newspapers objectively described Turkish events. For example, the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey on October 29, 1923, and the designation of Atatürk as its president, was an event that was merely mentioned in the Croatian press, as the majority of Croatian publications preserved a politically neutral position.<sup>5</sup> The Zagreb-based weekly newspaper *Slobodni dom*, however, already in November of 1923 published an article stating that it was “undoubtedly a remarkably significant event for the Turkish people, as well as for the entire world of Islam”, because after the fall of the Russian, German and Austrian empires, “this wonderful deed was completed with the fall of the Turkish monarchy [...] Honest, brave and patriotic Kemal-Pasha at the helm of the Turkish people freed his country from the foreign enemy [...] When the Turkish nation attains enlightenment and better education, they will be able to see how great a deed has been done by destroying the monarchist form, and only then will they glorify the men who had done it, and only then will they know the importance of this event for the happiness and prosperity of the Turkish people...”<sup>6</sup> As can be seen from this excerpt, the Croatian press still used to identify Turks with their Ottoman ancestors and Islam, but the sense of new reformist tendencies taking shape in Turkey was slowly finding its way into Croatian newspapers. The rise of Turkey after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1923 came as an incentive for the Croatian press to set aside negative connotations vis-a-vis the Ottoman Empire and the critique of its socio-political order, and to praise the results of the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923) and the institutional changes introduced by the new Turkish republican regime in the 1920s and 1930s. Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans and the Mediterranean was not viewed anymore through the prism of the Ottoman Empire’s hegemonist policies in Southeast Europe, but rather neutrally or even favorably when opposed to Italian imperialistic aims in the Mediterranean Sea

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<sup>5</sup> “Turska republika. Kemal paša prvi predsjednik”, *Novosti* (Zagreb) 17 (1923), No. 297, October 31, 1923, 1; “Proglašenje republike u Angori,” *Jutarnji list*, 12 (1923), No. 4224, October 31, 1923, 1; “Točke turskog državnog ustava,” 12 (1923), No. 4225, November 1, 1923, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Edhem Miralem, “Turska republika”, *Slobodni Dom. Glavne Novine Hrvatske Republikanske Seljačke Stranke* 17 (1923), No. 43, November 7, 1923, 3.

and in the Balkans.<sup>7</sup>

When the Turkish National Assembly abolished the Caliphate on March 3, 1924 and the last Caliph Abdülmecid was sent into exile along with the remaining members of the Ottoman House, the Croatian press followed the event with a neutral attitude, probably because this event had not had direct influence on the Croatian people and the Kingdom of SHS. Some of the articles seemed almost sympathetic toward Abdülmecid and his family, one of the articles stating the Ottoman House "would lose even the rights of Turkish subjects in general, and would have to leave the country in ten days..."<sup>8</sup>This is probably owing to the fact that Yugoslavia was a monarchy, and that the Yugoslav King Alexander I still did not develop friendly relations with Atatürk; or maybe the authors of those articles were not sure how the Muslim (and also Turkish) minority living in Yugoslavia would accept the abolition of the Caliphate. Furthermore, in respect of the political system in Turkey, the Croatian press generally discussed the authoritarian aspects of the Kemalist rule, but in a positive light, as in this article in the general-readership daily newspaper *Novo doba*: "The political and the economic life are ruled by the iron will of the creator of the new Turkey, Gazi Kemal. Through his associates, Prime Minister İsmet Pasha, Minister of the Army Fevzi Pasha, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Tevfik Rüştü Aras, he carries out new reforms through a firmly organized system."<sup>9</sup>The Yugoslavs also experienced authoritarianism throughout the interwar period, and it was probably seen among them as the 'normal' system of governance. Therefore it is not surprising to see comments in the Croatian press praising Atatürk's "great political authority" and the firmness of one-party rule in Turkey. Croatian journalists of the interwar years reflected also on the long-lasting effect of Kemalist reforms<sup>10</sup> which were, as they saw it, "in extreme contradiction with

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<sup>7</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey. A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 182; "Turci i Talijanska Politika na Balkanu," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 18 (1924), No. 114, April 25, 1924, 3.

<sup>8</sup> "Predloženo Ukidanje Kalifata," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 18 (1924), No. 84, March 4, 1924, 1. Other Articles on the Same Topic: "Abolicija Kalifata u Turskoj," *Jutarnji List* 13 (1924), no. 4344, March 5, 1924, 1; "Temelji Nove Turske," *Jutarnji List* 22 (1933), No. 7815, October 31, 1933, 13.

<sup>9</sup> "Splićanin u Kemalovoj Ankari," *Novo Doba* (Split) 18 (1935), No. 295, December 18, 1935, 3.

<sup>10</sup> "Nova Turska i Njene Reforme," *Dom* (Zagreb) 23 (1929), No. 69, December 11, 1929, 2-3; Grga Novak, "Deset Godina Velike Turske Narodne Skupštine," *Riječ. Nezavisna Novinska Revija* 10 (1930), No. 15, December 11, 1930, 13-16.

everything" in Turkish people's history.<sup>11</sup> Although Yugoslavia also experienced numerous socio-political reforms during this period, the Croatian press regarded Turkey's Kemalist transformation as an inexhaustible source of information for their articles during this period and as a phenomenon without precedent.

Not only Yugoslav Muslim journalists – whose affinity towards Turkey generally does not surprise observers – but all Yugoslav journalists of the interwar period alike wrote very favorably about the Turkish War of Independence and subsequent Kemalist reforms. The reasons for such behavior most likely lied in the inclination to stand on the winner's side in the Turkish War of Independence, and in the admiration for Turkey's and especially Atatürk's military and political successes. One exemplary article entitled "The meaning of Kemal's revolution" and released on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic in October of 1933 in the general-readership daily paper *Novostistates*: "The Turkish Empire [...] started to decline in the early 18th century [...] The whole world called this country 'the sick man' [...] The [First] world war finally brought down the Ottoman Empire [...] But the Turkish nation categorically refused to accept [the dismemberment of Turkey] and, gathered around Mustafa Kemal, started its epic battle against injustice, not caring for the obstacles and the suffering it had to endure. [...] Turkish revolutionaries [...] created in the middle of Anatolia a new state, led by the genius of Mustafa Kemal [...] they achieved a great military victory at Dumlupınar and a brilliant diplomatic victory in Lausanne..."<sup>12</sup> The author of the article continues by praising the accomplishments of the Republican People's Party<sup>13</sup> and Atatürk's foreign policy, which "relies on friendships it created and to which it always remained loyal".<sup>14</sup> In the warmongering atmosphere of the 1920s and 1930s, Croatian periodicals emphasized Turkey's peacekeeping policy and its friendly relations with the Soviet Union, as well as with Muslim countries in Asia, namely Saudi Arabia, Persia and Afghanistan. Commentators emphasized the importance of such

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<sup>11</sup> Bogdan Radica, "Kroz Novu Tursku: Augustova Ostavština i Kemalova Fikcija," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 25 (1931), No. 4, January 4, 1931, 10.

<sup>12</sup> "Značaj Kemalove Revolucije," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 27 (1933), No. 299, October 30, 1933, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Another article concerning the Republican People's Party: Antun Šenda, "Nova Turska i Njezino Mjesto u Svijetu," *Hrvatski Dnevnik* (Zagreb), 5 (1940), No. 1657, December 8, 1940, 14-15.

<sup>14</sup> "Značaj Kemalove Revolucije," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 27 (1933), No. 299, October 30, 1933, 11.

alliances for the stability in Western Asia. Turkey, however, attracted the biggest attention among Croatian newspapers for its political and economic ties with the Balkan countries, because these Turkish activities concerned Yugoslavia's immediate vicinity. Croatian commentators were of the opinion that it was Atatürk's "wise foreign policy" what ultimately allowed Turkey to obtain approval in 1936 in Geneva for the re-militarization of the Dardanelles, thus reflecting the leadership cult around Atatürk.<sup>15</sup> Atatürk's deeds were idealistically portrayed in another general-readership daily *Jutarnji list*: "Kemal [...] destroys the old traditional notions of friends and enemies. He follows the old Turkish noble spirit – when the causes of disputes are removed – Kemal is the first to offer his hand in peace to yesterday's rival, turning him into an ally."<sup>16</sup> The admiration for Atatürk was so great that even the negative aspects of the Kemalist rule, such as the persecution of political opponents, or the abolishment of Muslim religious orders and dervish lodges,<sup>17</sup> were viewed favorably by the Croatian press throughout the interwar period – presumably because they were in favor of the perceived modernization taking place.

One of the most important events connecting interwar Turkey and Yugoslavia was the signing of the Balkan Pact in 1934 when the two countries, together with Greece and Romania, declared their guarantee of mutual security in the Balkans. This agreement significantly influenced the two countries' relations and the fate of the Peninsula in the years to come. The signing of the Pact was positively received by the Croatian press, as the majority of commentators expressed hope that the Pact would quell the aggressive tendencies of the Axis Powers. The Croatian public began to view Turkey and Yugoslavia as sharers of a common interest, this being peace in the Balkans.<sup>18</sup> As one commentator stated: "This is how the five-hundred-

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<sup>15</sup> "Kemal Atatürk. Život i Djela Velikog Turskog Vojskovođe i Državnika," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 32 (1938), No. 310, November 11, 1938, 3.

<sup>16</sup> "Ličnost Kemala Ata Turka. Njegovo Svjetsko-Povjesno Značenje," *Jutarnji List* 27 (1938), No. 9625, November 11, 1938, 2. Other articles on the topic of Turkey's pacifism: Stjepan Radić, "Nova Turska kao Seljačka Republika," *Narodni Val Čovječnosti, Pravice i Slobode*, 1 (1927), No. 126, December 16, 1927, 1; Šenda, "Nova Turska," 14-15.

<sup>17</sup> Đorđe Bukilica, "Odlučni Koraci Protiv Derviša," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 25 (1931), No. 9, January 9, 1931, 8.

<sup>18</sup> Nasrullah Uzman, "Balkan Pakta ve Basındaki Yansımaları," in *Yedinci Uluslararası Atatürk Kongresi*, ed. Orhan Neçare (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2015), Vol. II, 1278-1280; Dilek Barlas and Anđelko Vlašić, "The Balkan Entente in Turkish-Yugoslav Relations (1934-41): The Yugoslav Perspective," *Middle Eastern Studies* 52 (2016), No. 6, 1012.



years-old memories of Balkan peoples' bloody fighting with the Turks are irreversibly cast away - Kemal liquidates the struggle between the cross and the crescent by putting in its place the concept of a Balkan treaty."<sup>19</sup>

One of the topics of bilateral relations of Turkey and the Kingdom of SHS / Yugoslavia was the migration of Muslim population from Yugoslavia to Turkey, mostly from the Yugoslav regions of Bosnia, Herzegovina, Sandžak and Kosovo. This phenomenon continued throughout the 1920s and 1930s because the Yugoslav Muslims, in frequent cases with justification, felt that the Yugoslav regime was not favorable toward them, or that the life in a Christian country was not suitable for Muslims. In any case, the Croatian press attentively followed their migration, as Croatian reporters investigated the conditions among the Yugoslav Muslim immigrants in Turkey.<sup>20</sup> In an article entitled "Bosnians in Turkey" its author relates the conditions of life among the Bosnian Muslim immigrant community in Turkey and their role in the progress of contemporary Turkey, where their undereducated members were "the mainstay of conservatism" and "propagators of the Muslim faith". Moreover, the educated members of the Bosnian immigrant community were "the mainstay of Kemal-pasha's reforms". The author continues by naming the prominent members of Turkish society who were of Bosnian origin and laments on the fact that "they live in another country, which became their new home. And today they live and work for it sincerely. And for us, they remain a dear, but sad memory, because they are still - ours..."<sup>21</sup> This last comment was not an exception in the Croatian press of the period, because articles were generally filled with emotional rhetoric regarding their former compatriots currently living in Turkey. This particular topic, aside from the general political developments, was another impulse for the Croatian press to widen their knowledge of the situation in interwar Turkey.

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<sup>19</sup> "Ličnost Kemala Ata Turka. Njegovo Svjetsko-Povjesno Značenje," 2.

<sup>20</sup> Branko Jovanović, "Bosna - zemlja nikada, nikada[...]," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 26 (1932), No. 127, May 8, 1932, 10; Radica, "Kroz Novu Tursku. U Sumraku Carigrada," 11; Bogdan Radica, "Kroz Novu Tursku. U Sumraku Carigrada," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 26 (1932), No. 16, January 10, 1931, 12; "Splićanin u Kemalovoj Ankari," 3.

<sup>21</sup> Branko Jovanović, "Bosanci u Turskoj," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 26 (1932), No.145, May 28, 1932, 9.



### Articles Relating to Atatürk's Death and Legacy

During 1937, indications of Atatürk's worsening health started to appear. As he spent his last months at the Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul, the news of his illness were published throughout the world, as were in the Croatian press.<sup>22</sup> Atatürk died on November 10, 1938, and the next day all Croatian periodicals published comprehensive articles on front pages regarding official Turkish statements and condolences sent by the Yugoslav political leaders.<sup>23</sup> The next day, the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara convened and elected İsmet İnönü (1884-1973) as the new president.<sup>24</sup> The Croatian workers' weekly newspaper *Hrvatski radnik* on November 27, 1938 wrote about the funeral ceremonies in Ankara on November 21, when Atatürk's casket was placed on a catafalque in front of the Parliament building and thousands of Turks paid their respects.<sup>25</sup> The cortege with the casket of "the greatest son of the new Turkey", escorted by many Turkish and foreign dignitaries, processed to the Ethnography Museum of Ankara through a line of people two kilometers long.<sup>26</sup> According to the article, "most of the representatives of the world press think that there would be no shift in the course of Turkish politics regarding the newly executed changes of government officials. However, in diplomatic circles it had not gone unnoticed that, with the death of Atatürk, the people who were giving the direction to Turkish foreign policy in the last couple of years, disappeared from the stage of Turkish public life."<sup>27</sup> This insinuation was not clarified later in the article. Similar insinuations can be found

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<sup>22</sup> "Ponovno pogoršano zdravstveno stanje Ataturka," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 32 (1938), No. 309, November 30, 1938, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Ilija Jukić, "Umro je otac Turaka - Kamal Ataturk, veliki državnik, vojnik i reformator," *Hrvatski dnevnik* (Zagreb) 3 (1938), no. 904, November 11, 1938, 2; "O posljednjim časovima Ataturka: opis liječnika Dr. Nihat Rešada," *Jugoslavenski list* (Sarajevo) 21 (1938), no. 289, December 8, 1938, 3; "Duboka žalost u cijeloj Turskoj. Saopćenje turske vlade narodu povodom smrti Pretsjednika Republike. Saučešće Nj. Kr. Vis. Kneza Namjesnika Pavla," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 32 (1938), No. 310, November 11, 1938, 1; "Kemal Ata Türk umro. Potankosti o posljednjim časovima uskrisitelja i prvog predsjednika Turske Republike," *Jutarnji list* 27 (1938), No. 9625, November 11, 1938, 1.

<sup>24</sup> "Smrt Kemala Ataturka: proklamacija vlade turskom narodu," *Jugoslavenski list* (Sarajevo) 21 (1938), No. 266, November 11, 1938, 1.

<sup>25</sup> "İsmet İnönü - predsjednik Republike Turske: priprema za pogreb Kemala Ataturka," *Jugoslavenski list* (Sarajevo) 21 (1938), No. 276, November 12, 1938, 1.

<sup>26</sup> "Čestitka Kneza namjestnika, I. İnönü: jugoslavenska delegacija na sahrani Kemala," *Jugoslavenski list* (Sarajevo) 21 (1938), No. 268, November 13, 1938, 1.

<sup>27</sup> "Sahrana Kemala Ataturka", *Hrvatski radnik. Glasilo Hrvatskog Radničkog Saveza* 17 (1938), No. 48, November 27, 1938, 2.

in the article relating the news of İsmet İnönü's naming as the new president, after which the author states that İnönü was maybe elected against Atatürk's will, but that he still was a "sincere adherent to the political principles of the late Kemal".<sup>28</sup> Presumably the events in Turkey aroused such an interest in the Croatian press that not even rumors were discarded in the process of reporting from Turkey. One has to take into account that the second half of the 1930s was marked by the fear of looming war, and inquietude spread as regards the future of Southeast European countries.

Numerous Croatian publications released articles describing Atatürk's life and political actions, and dealt with his legacy.<sup>29</sup> Even the Catholic newspapers recognized the importance of Atatürk by publishing long articles devoted to his life. As the author of an article in the Catholic weekly *Katolička riječ* entitled "After Atatürk's death" wrote, his death was "not such an event for a Catholic weekly to deserve a special article. But if the event is not so important, what is important is the personality that descended from the world stage, and the revolution which the deceased Kemal produced."<sup>30</sup> The Catholic newspaper *Vrhbosna*, published in Sarajevo and read by Bosnian Croats, published interesting and prophetic thoughts on Atatürk: "Not even the smallest review books of Turkish history will be without his name. He was a gravedigger who buried the mighty, great, imperialist, all-Islamic, Turkish Empire [...] and a reformist of a small, young and healthy Turkey."<sup>31</sup> Numerous other newspapers published articles detailing Atatürk's biography and listing his accomplishments, in which Croatian commentators indiscriminately included practically all socio-political changes introduced in interwar Turkey up until 1938. Among the most mentioned of these changes were the propagation of Western attire and Western music, the introduction of the Latin script, German trade law, Italian criminal law and Swiss civil law, and especially the emancipation of women,<sup>32</sup> which will be discussed in the following chapter. Catholic newspapers mention also the negative aspects of the Kemalist rule, for instance,

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<sup>28</sup> "Turska je dobila novog predsjednika u osobi dugogodišnjeg premijera Izmet İnönüja," *Jutarnji list* 27 (1938), No. 9626, November 12, 1938, 1.

<sup>29</sup> "Kemal Atatürk. Život i djela velikog turskog vojskovođe i državnika," 2; "Ličnost Kemala Ata Turka. Njegovo svjetsko-povjesno značenje," 2.

<sup>30</sup> Antun Pilepić, "Poslije Atatürkove smrti," *Katolička riječ* 4 (1938), No. 46, November 17, 1938, 3.

<sup>31</sup> Anto Livajušić, "Gazi Mustafa Kemal," *Vrhbosna* 12 (1938), No. 12, December 1938, 268-270.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

that the Kemalist reforms instigated numerous rebellions throughout Turkey, especially in the years 1926, 1929 and 1930, which were crushed in blood. During these events, "catholic missions suffered" and "the number of Catholic priests was reduced almost to zero."<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, Croatian authors did not blame Atatürk for such negative occurrences. His actions were almost exclusively presented as positive, and his death prompted even more positive comments and the perpetuation of his uncritical admiration in the Croatian press. Two years after Atatürk's death, the Croatian Peasant Party's daily *Hrvatski dnevnik* published an article in which its author stated: "Even when Atatürk was still alive, some have wondered whether his work will die with him. Today we see that Turkey has been set up on a healthy and strong foundation and has happily weathered that critical moment."<sup>34</sup> The mentioned daily promoted Croatian nationalism based on the cult of a strong leader, so the Kemalist model based on Atatürk's and then İnönü's leadership was close to their agenda.<sup>35</sup>

### Articles Relating to Turkey's Social and Economic Issues in the Interwar Period

The abundance of articles relating to the political situation in Turkey does not mean that Turkey's social issues were under-represented in the Croatian press; the same applies to economic and cultural issues. One social aspect of Turkey that was frequently mentioned in the Croatian press was the social status of Turkish women and their emancipation, as opposed to the generally negatively viewed status of Ottoman women. In contrast to the latter, women in the republican Turkey had a "substantially better social position than women in many European countries. [...] Women work in offices; they do sports like in other European countries."<sup>36</sup> Articles praising Kemalist reforms regarding women were published in numerous Croatian periodicals, regardless of their political affiliation and readership,<sup>37</sup> and represent a peculiar phenomenon because

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<sup>33</sup> Pilepić, "Poslije Ataturkove smrti," 3.

<sup>34</sup> Šenda, "Nova Turska," 15.

<sup>35</sup> Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey. Kemalism, Religion and the Nation State* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 17.

<sup>36</sup> "Spličanin u Kemalovoj Ankari," 3.

<sup>37</sup> Adolf Gomerčić, "O svemu i svačemu iz Kemalove Turske," *Jutarnji list* 18 (1929), no. 6280, July 30, 1929, 11; "Temelji nove Turske," *Jutarnji list* 22 (1933), No. 7815, October 31, 1933, 13; Léon Pierre Quint, "Od harema do fox-trota," *Jutarnji list* 22 (1933), No. 7862, December 17, 1933, 21; "Turska nastoji razviti jaki i

commentators very rarely bothered to compare the status of women's rights in Turkey and Yugoslavia.

With regard to religious problematic, the Kemalist reforms encompassed also the introduction of many radical reforms with the aim of transforming the old Ottoman state into a new secular republic.<sup>38</sup> The Croatian press generally regarded these reforms in a positive light. In fact, some Croatian journalists were extremely critical toward the old religious system and stated that "all schools of theology and seminaries were closed as places where future priests were fanaticized and becoming the janissaries of their people."<sup>39</sup> Others were pointing out that the religious reform was not as radical as it had seemed to be, stating that the divorce of religious and governmental organizations was performed without hostility toward Islamic institutions.<sup>40</sup>

Croatian newspapers seemed to be also very interested in Turkish capital Ankara, its development during the Republican era, and the contrast between Ankara and the old capital Istanbul. As one article published in 1935 stated, "Ankara is a completely new city", and "throughout the twelve years of the Turkish republic, it has been built in the most modern way according to projects designed by German engineers, and is still being built. It has a number of wonderful streets, which could stand in every Western European city."<sup>41</sup> There are many similar articles describing Ankara as some European capital, in Croatians' eyes seemingly detached from its "Asian" surroundings, i.e. its rugged and underdeveloped Anatolian interior. Istanbul, on the other hand, was described as very lively and "still orientally colorful and interesting,"<sup>42</sup> as if Ankara was therefore boring. Thus even during the interwar era of admiration for Kemalist modernization and denigration of all things Ottoman, the Croatian

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zdravi podmladak," *Jutarnji list* 24 (1935), no. 8576, December 11, 1935, 10; "Muslimanska žena kod nas i u Turskoj," *Jutarnji list* 28 (1939), No. 9980, 20; "Iz života suvremene Turkinje," *Osvit* (Sarajevo) 3 (1944), No. 121, June 18, 1944, 7.

<sup>38</sup>Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, 9-12.

<sup>39</sup> Stjepan Radić, "Nova Turska kao seljačka republika," *Narodni val čovječnosti, pravice i slobode* 1 (1927), No. 126, December 16, 1927, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Šenda, "Nova Turska," 14-15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. Other articles on the topic of Ankara: Radica, "Kroz novu Tursku. U sumraku Carigrada," 11; "Nagli razvoj Ankare - modernog pustinjskog grada," *Jutarnji list* 24 (1935), no. 8568, December 3, 1935, 10; "Turska nastoji razviti jaki i zdravi podmladak," 10; "Turska na pragu dvaju svijetova," *Osvit* (Sarajevo) 1 (1942), No. 16, June 14, 1942, 2.

public could still read articles perpetuating the fame of Istanbul as an oriental spectacle.

Croatian periodicals published a number of articles describing Turkish economy and giving generally positive assessments of its economic reforms, which were qualified as positive as its socio-political reforms. One article published in 1933 stated: "The abolishment of *dhimmi*, distribution of the land among peasants, favoritism of agriculture, especially of wheat culture, liberation of peasants from usurious debts by giving long-term loans, creation of peasant cooperation, establishment of big loan institutes, construction of railroads, all of that without any loans or help from abroad, creation of an independent national industry, development of maritime trade [...] are living testimonials of success".<sup>43</sup> These changes were viewed as exceptional undertakings evolving with an unprecedented pace, as the country's infrastructure, industrial facilities and cultural institutions were being built.<sup>44</sup> Weekly newspaper *Ekonomska politika*, which focused on Yugoslav and international economic issues, on July 20, 1935 published an article praising Turkish economy. The article was authored by Mehmet Kemal, ambassador of Turkey in Switzerland and Turkish delegate at the League of Nations. In his article Kemal described the aspects of Turkey's planned economy, namely its aims toward progress in the fields of industrialization, agrarian development and public works. He emphasized that in the last twelve years Turkey built 3,000 km of railroads and 9,600 km of roads. The economic development was combined with the amelioration of workers' rights, claimed Kemal, and concluded that Turkey "consolidates its firm will to be the factor of social peace, prosperity and success in the circle of the international family".<sup>45</sup> This seemingly propagandist article, whose discourse is very similar to the articles published by Croatian authors previously cited, was published without any comments or explanations – as if the stated facts were widely known or accepted among the readers of this economic weekly. Articles containing the same level of trust in Turkey's economic capacities can be found in many other Croatian newspapers of the period. All in all, Croatian publications in general chose to convey only the positive aspects of Turkish interwar

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<sup>43</sup> "Značaj Kemalove revolucije," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 27 (1933), No. 299, October 30, 1933, 11.

<sup>44</sup> "Kemal Atatürk. Život i djela velikog turskog vojskovođe i državnika," 3.

<sup>45</sup> Mehmet Kemal, "Planska privreda Kemalove Turske," *Ekonomska politika* 1 (1935), No. 13, July 20, 1935, 7.

economy, and the Croatian public was deprived of any balanced analysis.

### Articles on Cultural Issues and Events in Turkey in the Interwar Years

Croatian newspapers regularly published articles about Turkish culture, mainly about Turkish language, literature and arts. The articles regarding the Ottoman heritage in Croatia were widespread during the analyzed period, especially in the 1930s.<sup>46</sup> The general perception of Turkish culture was, expectedly, that it experienced a complete revival when the Turkish republic was formed, and that the Kemalist government decided to model its culture on Western European cultural trends. One paradigmatic article, entitled "The renaissance of Turkish music: from Sultans' 'janissary orchestras' to contemporary symphony orchestras - modern Turkish music is based on Anatolian musical folklore", states: "The true folk melody remained alive in the countryside. Anatolia is the heart of present Turkey and that is from where the new Turkey takes its musical treasure [...] The Young Turkish revolution threw away the weight of Sultan-like lavishness and Oriental mentality and started a powerful life under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk. [...] In Kemal's Turkey, modern musical schools are being opened, symphonic and chamber orchestras are being founded, vocal societies organized." The commentators also put emphasis on the revolutionary aspect of the cultural development, stating that "the Kemalist revolution was not only a political, but in the full sense a cultural revolution too."<sup>47</sup> The Croatian press in a similar fashion viewed the Turkish literature: as a revived art which benefited greatly from the Kemalist endeavor.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Kasim Gujić, "Naponi Bosne za Oslobođenje ispod turske vlasti. Hercegovački ustanak (1875.-1878.) doveo je do izгона Turaka iz Bosne i Hercegovine," *Narodne novine* (Zagreb) 99 (1933), No. 251, 3; Emilij Laszowski, "Izdajica Blaž Krpić. Tko je nevjeroj pomogao Turke, kad su god. 1536. zauzimali Požegu i druge neke slavonske gradove," *Hrvatski list* (Osijek) 19 (1938), No. 190, 12; Savić Marković Štedimlija, "Carigradski 'Hrvatbaša'," *Jutarnji list* 28 (1939), No. 10015, December 10, 1939, 17.

<sup>47</sup> Milan Katić, "Renesansa turske muzike: od sultanovih 'janjičarskih orkestrara' do savremenih simfonijskih orkestrara - moderna turska muzika bazira na anatolskom muzičkom folkloru," *Novosti* (Zagreb) 32 (1938), No. 108, April 21, 1938, 13.

<sup>48</sup> "Roman Kemal-pašine Turske. Pabirci po turskoj književnosti," *Jutarnji list* 25 (1936), No. 8827, August 23, 1936, 23.

### Turkey in the Croatian Press During the Independent State of Croatia (1941-1945)

The NDH was a puppet state of the Axis Powers Germany and Italy from 1941 to 1945. It was established on April 10, 1941, after the occupation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia by the Axis Powers. The NDH consisted of the territories of modern-day Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as some parts of modern-day Serbia. It was controlled by the Ustasha movement with its leader Ante Pavelić, the self-proclaimed Poglavnik (i.e. headman). The NDH was granted international recognition only by the Axis Powers and by countries under Axis occupation. It was also recognized by Spain, but other neutral nations did not recognize the NDH. Therefore the Croatian authorities aspired to acquire the recognition from some neutral countries, for instance Turkey – especially because the Ustasha movement espoused Islam and Bosnian Muslims as part of their definition of the Croatian nation, and hoped it would help them in their intention of approaching Turkey. With this aim, the NDH leaders sent four diplomatic missions to Turkey, but all four missions were unsuccessful, because Turkey insisted on its neutrality in the world conflict. The Croatian government changed its approach and tried to achieve the same goal by introducing a pro-Turkish newspaper in Turkish language, which would strengthen Croatian-Turkish ties. In addition, Croatian newspapers of the time were publishing numerous articles regarding Turkey's foreign policy, economy, culture, etc. Especially political matters were extensively followed; for instance, the news of retirement of diplomat Tevfik Rüşti Aras from the position of the Turkish Ambassador in London in 1942 was deemed to be important enough to be printed in Croatian newspapers.<sup>49</sup> It is important to mention that all newspapers of this period were under the influence of the Ustasha propaganda; otherwise, they would have been prohibited. In such conditions, articles praising Turkey's socio-political structure were a normal occurrence. One typical Turkey-related article of the mentioned era, published in the Sarajevo-based Muslim daily *Osvit* in 1942, states as follows: "Kemalist Turkey [...] carried out the process of Europeanisation, finally connecting itself spiritually, civilizationally and economically with Europe. [...] One who wishes to get to know the Turkey of today must visit at least Ankara and a number of other

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<sup>49</sup> "Ruždi Aras umirovljen," *Osvit* (Sarajevo) 1 (1942), no. 1, February 22, 1942, 3; "Umirovljen Aras turski poklisar u Londonu," *Hrvatska svijest* 7 (1942), No. 115, August 1, 1942, 3.



important Anatolian cities. Only on Anatolian soil one comes to understand the image of a changed Turkey, a land of work and prosperity. Today, Ankara is a symbol of a comprehensive turnaround in the new Turkey: the name of this city became a symbol of revival and renaissance of a rejuvenated nation.”<sup>50</sup> Numerous other articles having the same laudatory tone were published in the Croatian press, especially between 1941 and 1943, when Turkey was still viewed in Croatia as undecided between the Allies and the Axis Powers.

The aforementioned Turkish language newspaper published in Zagreb, entitled *Doğu ve Batı* (East and West), was published monthly from April 6, 1943 to August 15, 1944, and it had the financial support of the NDH Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The editorial board stated that the purpose of the newspaper was to “strengthen friendly ties” between Turkey and the NDH, and to “first set up cultural ties, then economic ties, and through these also political ties” between the two countries.<sup>51</sup> Articles dealing with political, economic and cultural events in contemporary Turkey were published in the newspaper’s every edition. The editorship stressed the importance given to Turkey in the Croatian press: “Every news, every article and statement given by the official Turkish sources comes across great interest here [i.e. in the Croatian public]. At the same time, political figures at the head of the Turkish government protect their people with a realistic outlook from war and war aspirations, because until now they had implemented their policy with such wisdom and clairvoyance [...] The Croatian press, and especially the leading newspapers: *Hrvatski narod* and *Nova Hrvatska*, publish more and more news and articles on Turkey.”<sup>52</sup> According to the editors of *Doğu ve Batı*, the level of attention the Croatian public, and especially its Muslim part, paid to events in Turkey, was extremely high. An example of this phenomenon is the article published in the *Doğu ve Batı* and relating the earthquake in the Turkish city of Adapazarı on June 20, 1943, which states: “From the first day, the Croatian press has posted news of the damage caused by the earthquake in Adapazarı and its surroundings. The horrors that befell its inhabitants shook the hearts of Croats, who sympathize with the sorrow of the Turkish people on

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<sup>50</sup> “Turska na pragu dvaju svijetova,” 2.

<sup>51</sup> Hifzi Bjelevac, “Hrvat Müslüman Basımevi Doğu ve Batı,” *Doğu ve Batı* 2 (1944), No. 8, August 15, 1944, 13-14.

<sup>52</sup> Hifzi Bjelevac, “Hrvatların Türkiye’ye karşı ilgisi,” *Doğu ve Batı* 1 (1943), No. 2, June 7, 1943, 6.

the account of its victims".<sup>53</sup> We have to take into consideration, however, that it was in the interest of the editorship of the *Doğu ve Batı* (even falsely) claim that the level of the attention of the Croatian public toward Turkey was high.

Croatian newspapers of the period were publishing numerous texts relating to Turkey and, especially, its international stance, but a genuine current of Turkey-related articles was issued almost daily in the Sarajevo-based newspapers *Osvit* and *Muslimanska svijest* (in 1941 renamed *Hrvatska svijest*). The reason for this occurrence was the fact that the Bosnian and Herzegovinian region of the NDH had the greatest concentration of Muslims, who traditionally nurtured close ties with Turkey as the successor of the Ottoman Empire. This is owed to the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina was a part of the Ottoman Empire until 1878. Thus, a large portion of Turkey-related articles concerned historical ties of Ottomans and Croats and accentuated this topic. Examples are numerous; for instance, the article entitled "Croatia and Turkey", published in the *Doğu ve Batı*, starts with the sentence: "History has for more than four centuries linked the Croatian and Turkish peoples."<sup>54</sup> The weekly paper *Hrvatska svijest* published not one, but two articles in the same edition, praising Ottoman rulers as artists and poets, and boasting with the fact that 23 Ottoman grand viziers were supposedly "of Croatian descent".<sup>55</sup> Those kinds of articles are multitudinous, as intellectuals were presumably encouraged, in one way or the other, to publish similar articles.<sup>56</sup> One person that needs to be mentioned in this context is Bosnian-Herzegovinian journalist and publicist Munir Šahinović Ekremov (1910-1945), who was the main propagator of Croatian nationalism among Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslims from 1935 to 1945.<sup>57</sup> In 1939, Šahinović published a book entitled *Turkey - today and tomorrow*, an extensive overview of Turkey's socio-political, economic

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<sup>53</sup> Hifzi Bjelevac, "Adapazarı'daki Ağır Felaketler Münasebetiyle," *Doğu ve Batı* 1 (1943), No. 3, July 15, 1943, 3.

<sup>54</sup> Salih Baljić, "Hrvatistan ve Türkiye", *Doğu ve Batı* 1 (1943), No. 2, June 7, 1943, 1-2.

<sup>55</sup> Mehmed Sulejmanpašić, "Turski vladari kao umjetnici i pjesnici", *Hrvatska svijest* 6 (1941), No. 104-105, October 22, 1941, 7; Mehmed Sulejmanpašić, "Hrvatski narod dao je Turskoj Carevini dvadeset i tri velika vezira", *Hrvatska svijest* 6 (1941), No. 104-105, October 22, 1941, 11-12.

<sup>56</sup> Hazim Šabanović, "Dopisivanje bosanskih vezira sa zapovjednicima u Hrvatskoj", *Hrvatska svijest* 6 (1941), no. 107-108, November 5, 1941, 10.

<sup>57</sup> Zlatko Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu 1878.-1945. Doba utemeljenja* (Zagreb: Medžlis Islamske zajednice u Zagrebu; Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, 2007), 423-424.

and cultural position during the period 1923-1939.<sup>58</sup> His book was widely advertised both in Yugoslavia and the NDH<sup>59</sup> and large sections of it were published on the pages of Šahinović's Sarajevo-based newspaper *Muslimanska svijest* from June 29, 1939 to February 1, 1941. Thus, its readers were able to become familiar with all sorts of aspects of life in contemporary Turkey.

As regards the articles relating to Turkey's international position, those generally tended to describe Turkey's position as leaning towards the Axis Powers, because it would have suited the wishes of the Ustasha government in seek for another ally in the war; it was a sort of wishful thinking.<sup>60</sup> According to one article published on May 3, 1942 in the *Osvit* (which, one has to bear in mind, was a state-influenced newspaper), entitled "Relations between Germany and Turkey are still developing in terms of friendship which was never clouded".<sup>61</sup> Another *Osvit* article – entitled "On whose side is Turkey?" and published on March 8, 1942 – states that "it seems as though, from the beginning of the war, the decision of Turkey to actively join the war was expected at any moment". The author continues by comparing Atatürk, who opposed the Versailles Treaty's decisions concerning Turkey, with Adolf Hitler, "a God-given leader" of Germany who also opposed the Versailles Treaty and "united all nations of Europe", and concludes that Turkey "by nature of things" can only be on Hitler's side in the current war. Furthermore, the author lists a number of other reasons and states that "there are no reasons not to believe the repeated claims about the sympathies Turkish people today have towards Germany", which "through every new victory" in the fight against the Soviet Union "more and more rips the ring around Turkey", so that "the Turkish people have even more reasons to help Germany's fight and not to do anything that would harm this fight. Therefore, the only way for Turkey is the one we Croats are following. Any other way would mean its

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<sup>58</sup> Munir Šahinović Ekremov, *Turska – danas i sutra. Prosjek kroz život jedne države* (Sarajevo: Muslimanska svijest, 1939).

<sup>59</sup> "Turska – danas i sutra[...]" od Munira Šahinovića Ekremova," *Muslimanska svijest* 4 (1939), No. 61, June 29, 1939, 1; Antun Šenda, "Hrvatsko djelo o Turskoj," *Hrvatski dnevnik* (Zagreb) 5 (1940), No. 1657, December 8, 1940, 14; "Turska – danas i sutra'," *Hrvatska svijest* 7 (1942), No. 109, February 10, 1942, 1.

<sup>60</sup> Šahinović Ekremov, "Politički položaj Republike Turske," 1-2.

<sup>61</sup> "Vojnička suradnja Turske i Njemačke," *Osvit* (Sarajevo) 1 (1942), No. 10, May 3, 1942, 2.

suicide.”<sup>62</sup>Another reason for Turkey’s entry into the war on the side of the Axis were the “tensions in Russian-Turkish [i.e. Soviet-Turkish] relations” in early June 1942, which forced the author of the article published in the *Osvit* on June 7, 1942 to conclude that “the armed conflict between Russia and Turkey is unavoidable”. These tensions and the “shipping of army material” from Germany to Turkey “shows on whose side Turkey is”.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, the Croatian press also defended Turkey’s right to neutrality and condemned the Allies for “showing open aspiration to use Turkey, which is strictly neutral, as a passage to the threatened Soviets. This means that they have in mind breaking Turkish neutrality and exposing them to the mournful fate of the peoples of Syria, Iraq and Iran.”<sup>64</sup> The Ustasha movement’s newsletter *Spremnost* even denied the rumors of Turkey’s rapprochement towards the Allies: “The visit of the President of the English government to Turkey [...] gave rise to enemy propaganda to prematurely and unreasonably show a wholehearted wish for Turkey to enter the world war on the side of England and the United States. Some have even gone so far to have seen Turkey in a state of war! Clearheaded politicians [...] have not been agitated by the visit of Winston Churchill to Turkey...”<sup>65</sup> When the tide of war shifted in favor of the Allies, the Croatian press still assumed that Turkey would keep its neutrality. Moreover, when it was obvious that Turkey would join the Allies, Croatian articles were full of justification for such an act, on the grounds that Turkey was probably forced to join the Allies.<sup>66</sup>

Another aspect of Turkish-Croatian ties during the existence of the NDH is the aforementioned large number of immigrants in Turkey from Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were called “Croatian

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<sup>62</sup> Nazif Bubić, “Na čijoj je strani Turska?”, *Osvit* (Sarajevo) 1 (1942), No. 3, March 8, 1942, 2.

<sup>63</sup> “Zategnutost u rusko-turskim odnosima može dovesti do oružanog sukoba,” *Osvit* (Sarajevo) 1 (1942), No. 15, June 7, 1942, 1.

<sup>64</sup> “Anglosasko shvaćanje neutralnosti Turske,” *Osvit* (Sarajevo) 1 (1942), no. 19, July 5, 1942, 8. Further articles on the topic of Turkey’s neutrality: Šenda, “Nova Turska,” 14-15; “Odgovor turske vlade Londonu,” *Hrvatski narod. Glasilo Hrvatskog ustaškog pokreta* 5 (1943), No. 892, November 23, 1943, 1; “Nakon prvog koraka Turske,” *Hrvatski narod. Glasilo Hrvatskog ustaškog pokreta* 6 (1944), no. 1110, August 16, 1944, 1; “Turska u igri ‘saveznika’,” *Hrvatski narod. Glasilo Hrvatskog ustaškog pokreta* 7 (1945), No. 1288, March 18, 1945, 1-2.

<sup>65</sup> Matija Kovačić, “Položaj i probitci Turske,” *Spremnost. Misao i volja ustaške Hrvatske* 2 (1943), No. 51, February 12, 1943, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Ivo Vučićević, “Između dva zaraćena tabora. Oko problematike sadašnje turske politike,” *Spremnost. Misao i volja ustaške Hrvatske* 2 (1943), No. 95, December 17, 1943, 2.

Muslims" by the Ustasha propaganda. As one article in the *Doğu ve Batı* puts it: „Everyone knows how great closeness toward the Republic of Turkey feels the Muslim part of our nation [i.e. the Croatian nation]. It is clear that the rest of our nation nourishes the same feelings. We can say that we are in family ties with Turkey; because a huge part of our nation has relatives in Turkey“.<sup>67</sup> Another example comes from the newspaper *Osvit*: “Today, a couple of hundreds of thousands of our people, having been forced by troubles to leave their homes, in Turkey enjoy all rights, work freely and prosper, and no one tried to take away their Croatian honor, customs and the purest Croatian language.”<sup>68</sup> The authors of such articles exaggerated the number of immigrants, the strength of their ethnic affiliation and the quality of Croatian language skills, but the effect of these articles must have been significant. The indicator of this effect is the column in the *Osvit*, entitled “Ours in Turkey”, with two sub-columns, “News from Turkey” and “Voices from the homeland”. In the first one, messages arriving from the Croatian (i.e. Bosnian) immigrants in Turkey were published, and in the second one, the messages from the Muslims in the NDH, and both were looking for their family members living in Turkey and the NDH, respectively. Usually the messages were sent by the people who could not find their relatives and were hoping that the readers of the *Osvit* could help them in any way. This column was a regular column and dozens of messages were published during 1944.<sup>69</sup>

### Articles Relating to Turkey’s Economy (1941-1945)

During the existence of the NDH, Croatian newspapers shifted from the mere description of Turkish economy to encouraging a Turkish-Croatian economic cooperation. In the article published in April, 1943, under the title “The possibility of economic and trade transactions between the Republic of Turkey and the Independent State of Croatia” the author ascertains that the NDH had the wish to renew trade with its “close neighbor Turkey” (although they were not

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<sup>67</sup> Hifzi Bjelevac, „Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ve Müstakil Hırvatistan Hükümeti Arasında İktisadi ve Ticari Muamelaatın İmkânı,” *Doğu ve Batı* 1 (1943), No. 1, April 6, 1943, 3.

<sup>68</sup> Bubić, “Na čijoj je strani Turska?”, 2.

<sup>69</sup> “Naši u Turskoj”, *Osvit* (Sarajevo) 3 (1944), No. 118, May 28, 1944, 5; “Naši u Turskoj,” *Osvit* (Sarajevo) 3 (1944), No. 119, June 4, 1944, 5; “Naši u Turskoj,” *Osvit* (Sarajevo) 3 (1944), No. 120, June 11, 1944, 5; “Naši u Turskoj,” *Osvit* (Sarajevo) 3 (1944), no. 121, June 18, 1944, 5. The column continues in the following editions.

neighbors) because of the "affinity of the Muslim population of the NDH towards Turkey". The fact was that they had relatives in Turkey and were in close contact with them. Considering the level of trade between Turkey and Yugoslavia in 1939, stated the article's author, "there is no reason for such a fruitful trade in goods not to continue between the NDH and Turkey". The author proceeds by stating that a Trans-Danubian Joint-Stock Company for compensatory works with Southeast European countries had been founded in Zagreb "with the goal of starting economic transaction, first of all with Turkey".<sup>70</sup> There is no information on the result of this economic endeavor. The general direction of World War II, however, in 1943 turned decisively in favor of the Allied Powers and thus against the NDH and its economic plans.

Even the articles on economic issues justified Turkish neutrality in the war. The article entitled "Problems with currency in Turkey" alleges that, in early 1943, "the rise of the cash turnover [of the National Bank of Turkey] originated mostly from the economic needs arising from keeping the army on standby with the aim of preserving Turkish neutrality in the war". In comparison with the pre-war period, Turkey significantly increased the wages of its army, which is "the guardian of neutrality and constantly under arms".<sup>71</sup> Unbiased articles concerning ordinary and regular events were also published, for example, the article about the annual Izmir International Fair in August 1943.<sup>72</sup> Other economic topics covered in the Croatian press, for example, were the state of Turkish cooperatives and agriculture,<sup>73</sup> the development of Turkey's railway network,<sup>74</sup> etc.

### **Culture-Related Articles about Turkey (1941-1945)**

The interest for reports on Turkey-related cultural developments was far greater during the NDH period than it was in the former period. The *Doğu ve Batı* published a number of articles relating to famous Ottoman and Turkish personas, for example, architect Sinan the Great,<sup>75</sup> statesman Ahmet Şefik Mithat Pasha<sup>76</sup> and writer Tefrik

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<sup>70</sup> Bjelevac, "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ve Müstakil Hırvatistan Hükümeti", 3.

<sup>71</sup> "Türkiye'nin Valuta Mes'eleleri," *Doğu ve Batı* 1 (1943), No. 6, November 1, 1943, 11.

<sup>72</sup> Hifzi Bjelevac, "İzmir," *Doğu ve Batı* 1 (1943), No. 4, August 15, 1943, 2-3.

<sup>73</sup> "Tursko zadrugarstvo," *Osvit* (Sarajevo) 3 (1944), No. 120, June 11, 1944, 2.

<sup>74</sup> Šenda, "Nova Turska," 15.

<sup>75</sup> Hifzi Bjelevac, "Mimar Sinan ve Heykeltraş Ivan Meštrović," *Doğu ve Batı* 1 (1943), No. 5, September 15, 1943, 1-2.

Fikret.<sup>77</sup> Some of the articles were copied from Turkish newspapers.<sup>78</sup> Other Turkish cultural aspects examined in the Croatian press during the analyzed period were Turkish theater, visual arts, museums, educational system, Turkish language, and research institutions.<sup>79</sup> As regards Croatia-based cultural projects, when Croatian publicist and translator Ivan Esih in 1942 published his book on the subject of Turkish loanwords in Croatian language, the *Doğu ve Batı* chief editor wrote that Turks have “for five hundred years ruled the Balkan countries. The Turks have never wanted to impose their own language to foreign nations. Some words stayed in the Bulgarian, Greek, Albanian, Croatian and Serbian languages in its original form and with the beautiful harmony of the Turkish language.” The Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina “do not know Turkish, but they know so many Turkish words which other Croats, who were not born in Bosnia, do not understand. To remove this obstacle,” Ivan Esih “wrote a manual for Turkish [...] With this small manual we find out that the Croatian language uses more than four thousand Turkish words.”<sup>80</sup> The *Doğu ve Batı* issued also an article about Muhamed Garčević, translator from Arabic and Turkish and employee of the Croatian Ethnographic Museum in the city of Banja Luka, where Garčević intended to initiate Turkish language courses. The article stated that “the people [of Banja Luka] showed great interest in the Turkish language”.<sup>81</sup> This event must also be viewed in the context of the Ustasha government’s initiative to influence greater Croatian-

<sup>76</sup> Reşad Kaynar, “Mithat Paşa - Bir İdealistin Hayatı,” *Doğu ve Batı* 2 (1944), No. 8, August 15, 1944, 5-6. The original article was published in the Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet*: Reşad Kaynar, “Mithat Paşa,” *Cumhuriyet* 21 (1944), April 24, 1944, 2.

<sup>77</sup> Ziyaeddin Fahri Findikoğlu, “Tevfik Fikret’in Ahlak Felsefesi,” *Doğu ve Batı* 1 (1943), No. 5, September 15, 1943, 5-6. The original article was published in the *Cumhuriyet*: Ziyaeddin Fahri Findikoğlu, “Tevfik Fikret’in Ahlak Felsefesi,” *Cumhuriyet* 20 (1943), August 19, 1943, 2.

<sup>78</sup> For instance, the article published by writer and publicist Selim Nüzhet Gerçek and relating the book *Ayasofya ve Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1943) by Ali Sami Boyar, Turkish painter and journalist: Selim Nüzhet Gerçek, “Ayasofya ve Tarihi,” *Doğu ve Batı* 1 (1943), No. 4, August 15, 1943, 12.

<sup>79</sup> Gomerčić, “O svemu i svačemu iz Kemalove Turske,” 11; Quint, “Od harema do fox-trota,” 21; Annie Penić-Zloch, “U hramu turske umjetnosti. Zemlja, gdje je umjetnost još u povojima,” *Jutarnji list* 23 (1934), no. 7943, March 11, 1934, 21-22; “Turska nastoji razviti jaki i zdravi podmladak,” 10; “Higijenske, umjetničke, propagandističke i znanstvene ustanove Ankare,” *Jutarnji list* 24 (1935), No. 8587, December 22, 1935, 33.

<sup>80</sup> Hifzi Bjelevac, “Dr I. Esih: Turcizmi (Hrvat Dilinde Türk Lisanının İzleri),” *Doğu ve Batı* 1 (1943), No. 1, April 6, 1943, 10.

<sup>81</sup> Hifzi Bjelevac, “Banja Luka’da Türkçe Öğretme,” *Doğu ve Batı* 1 (1943), No. 2, June 7, 1943, 8.



Turkish rapprochement. But the biggest cultural project concerning Turkey was to be the publishing project announced on August 15, 1944 on the pages of the *Doğu ve Batı*. According to the newspaper, the NDH government offered financial resources for the publication of a Turkish grammar book which would “follow all the rules of Turkish orthography and utilize new terminology”. Furthermore, the NDH government opened a tender for a “practical Turkish-Croatian and Croatian-Turkish dictionary”, a “collection of poems in Turkish” and for the publication of “the chosen works of ten to twelve of the best Turkish storytellers and essayists, members of the new Kemalist literature”.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, the editorship of the *Doğu ve Batı* was intent on publishing one of the classical Turkish novels, *Nur Baba*, written by Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, which was being translated in Sarajevo at the time.<sup>83</sup> Unfortunately, none of these ideas came to life because of the imminent fall of the NDH with the end of World War II.

## Conclusion

The analysis of Turkey-related articles in the Croatian press during the period 1923-1945 reveals that the Croatian public was, through the Croatian newspaper medium, extremely well acquainted with the socio-political, economic and cultural situation in the Republic of Turkey. In the second part of the 1930s and in the early 1940s, Turkey-related topics were a habitual phenomenon in the Croatian press, and the average Croatian reader of the period had the potentiality to be very well informed on the situation in Turkey. The frequency of Turkey-related topics had its peak in 1938 around the death of Atatürk, when Croatian newspapers published a great number of articles detailing Atatürk's life and deeds, the influence of Kemalist reforms and the possible impact his death could have had on Turkey's future. Another peak of interest for all things Turkish was during the Independent State of Croatia, when the Ustasha propaganda machinery attempted to influence Turkey's involvement in World War II on the side of the Axis and greater Croatian-Turkish rapprochement by publishing all sorts of Turkey-related articles. This subsequently propelled Turkey to the top of the list of the most mentioned of the non-Axis countries in the Croatian press of the

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<sup>82</sup> Hifzi Bjelevac, “Edebi Müsabaka,” *Doğu ve Batı* 2 (1944), No. 8, August 15, 1944, 13.

<sup>83</sup> Hifzi Bjelevac, “Hırvat Müslüman Basımevi Doğu ve Batı,” *Doğu ve Batı* 2 (1944), No. 8, August 15, 1944, 13-14. The novel *Nur Baba* was eventually printed in 1957 in Sarajevo in translation by Fetah Sulejmanpašić.

period. Although Turkey was not a neighboring country of neither the Kingdom of SHS / Yugoslavia nor the Independent State of Croatia, the research showed that it apparently was a country of special interest, as the Croatian press regarded it important enough to publish numerous articles about various Turkey-related events. During the Yugoslav period, Turkey's perception in the Croatian press was generally favorable or at least neutral, and mostly based on the contrast between the negativity of the old Ottoman Empire and the positivity of the new, modern, Western-oriented, republican and reformed Turkey. As for the period between 1941 and 1945, Turkey's perception in the Croatian press became extremely positive, but one has to bear in mind that the Ustasha propaganda machinery controlled all Croatian newspapers, and most likely it was the Ustasha propagandists' wishes – and not the Croatian journalists' free choice – what was responsible for numerous and very favorable articles about Turkey.

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