"Bosnische Post" Newspaper in Sarajevo, 1884-1903 by: Carl Bethke

The "Bosnische Post" was published during the Austrian-Hungarian period in Sarajevo from 1884 to 1918, initially several times a week, and then, from 1896, every day. Its founders, editors, and probably readers included many people who did not have German as a mother tongue but used that language as lingua franca in a specific, immigration-related environment. In the following, the history of the newspaper is described using archival sources and content from its foundation until 1903, i.e. during the term of office of Benjamin Kállay, the minister of finance responsible for Bosnia, and the then regional head, Freiherr Johann von Appel, and his Ziviladlatus Hugo von Kutschera. Kallay's successor István Burián tried to reorient the Bosnian policy after 1903 - this "New Course" had considerable consequences for the development of Bosnische Post, as the author has previously demonstrated elsewhere.

Dating from the occupation by Austria-Hungary in 1878, scores of immigrants arrived in Bosnia and Hercegovina. In addition to the colonists in rural areas, they were mainly urban groups such as soldiers, merchants, skilled workers, experts and civil servants. The latter ones used German for internal communication; knowledge of a Slavic language, however, was a welcomed qualification for being hired. As a result, an urban immigrant milieu emerged that mainly consisted of Croats, but included also German, as well as Czechs, Slovenes and members of other groups. One can assume a number of in 1910 114,591 immigrants, making up alone 35.33% of the population of Sarajevo. Even though - or because – these immigrants came from many different parts of the empire, it was the German language, which became a widely spread, commonly used “medium of communication”, among the civil servants but also in other social spheres and situations, e.g., in industry, science, among military officers, in certain schools, or within in the Ashkenazic Jewish community.

The political environment: Bosnia in the age of Kállay, Appel and Kutschera (1882-1903)

Aside from the conditions and restrictions of the Austro-Hungarian “mandate” in Bosnia and Hercegovina, imposed by international law by means of the treaties of Berlin 1878 and Istanbul 1879, it soon became apparent that the Austro-Hungarian administration was also politically reliant on the cooperation with the local elites, especially of the dominant Muslim group, in view of the ongoing challenges being posed by Serbia and Montenegro: In particular the introduction of compulsory military service in 1881 could not be enforced until a Serbian-led uprising had been quashed in 1882, not the least thanks to the assistance of notable figures such as Mehmed Kapetanović, who prevented a Serbo-Muslim alliance from forming.
Therefore, under the newly appointed Austro-Hungarian Finance Minister, Benjamin von Kállay, who was responsible for the administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1882 until his death in 1903, the government developed a renewed programmatic basis for their policies. At the time, the administration was being spearheaded by Croatian-born governor (Landeschef) Johann Freiherr von Appel, the new strategy became particularly prominent thanks to Hugo von Kutschera, who was as a Ziviladlatus since 1887 responsible for domestic and cultural policy. It aimed at the creation and development of authentic Bosnian institutions and the promotion of Bosnian identity, over time it was connected with a certain pro-Muslim sentiment. These policies had lasting effects on the image of the Austro-Hungarian period, even though its “classic” time ended by 1903, when a further change of constellations took place.5

Within this framework, it appears that the political support for the foundation of newspapers and magazines was an important and highly visible instrument of implementation - one prominent example was the “Vatan” published in Ottoman language in 1884, the same year in which the newspaper “Bosnische Post” was founded, too. Publications such as these, however, were also at odds with the needs of a growing readership, seeking information and entertainment, at a time when the press was growing significantly in importance all over Europe. This made the production of print media a favoured entrepreneurial activity and a commercial interest, too. The founding of Bosnische Post was initially not a government-led project, while it was soon accompanied by commercially ambitions to establish a printing company.6

The founding father: Julije Makanec, “the emblematic figure of the Sarajevo kuferaši”7

Although Bosnische Post was published in German language, the founder was actually of Croatian descent: his name was Julius Makanec, married to a Luise Löschner. He originally came from Zagreb and arrived in Sarajevo in 1879 as a 27-year-old doctor, working initially for the city authorities and then changing to the function of a police doctor in 1881. At the end of 1883, Makanec applied to the Bosnina government for a licence to found a German-language newspaper. The then Ziviladlatus Fedor von Nikolić, expressed his doubts about the profitability, but in the letter he sent to the Finance Ministry in Vienna he expressed no further objections. Following the granting of the licence on 9 December 1883, the first issue of “Bosnische Post” appeared on 3 January 1884 with Makanec as the publisher and Eugen Ritter von Toepffer who, like many of his successors, came from Vienna, as the editor. In May, the production was relocated from the state printing house to “Spindler und Löschner”, the newspaper’s own printing house and the first private printing company founded in Sarajevo during Austro-Hungarian rule.8 Well-equipped in terms of technology it offered also address
cards, business cards, menus, posters and similar items. These associated commercial aspects proved soon to be essential for the financing of the newspaper, but Makanec was without any doubt as well one of the leading exponents in the “establishment” of the Austro-Hungarian administration. In 1884, he initiated with top government officials such as Konstantin Hörmann and representatives from the Bosnian elite, such as Mehmed Kapetanović the Sarajevo Museums Association, which appealed for antiquities at first to be surrendered to the office of Bosnische Post. That association was the founding platform for the later Landesmuseum which opened on 1 February 1888. This means that in the initial phase two “symbols” of Hapsburg prestige projects and identity politics were in the person of Makanec closely linked.

In the first issue, the lead article defined as a core aim of the newspaper to familiarise the “broader circles of the monarchy with the relationships, requirements and achievements” in “New Austria” and to strengthen the “feeling of belonging”. In a further edition soon after, the paper turned against the migration of “our Muslim brothers”, Bosnia and Herzegovina were called upon to provide a “safe refuge” to the Muslims and to ensure their continued existence and development. On the other side during the first three months, three articles appeared about immigration, however two of them warned of the unsuccessful private migration of Germans. The third painted a more ambiguous picture but dealt with a very specific case: It explained the settlement of “South Tyroleans” – Italians – in Konjik and Mahovljani (Banja Luka) as a measure to counter the effects of the devastating floods in South Tyrol during the autumn of 1882. The fact that the newspaper was not advocating a Croat agenda got soon noticed by i.e. “Sriemski Hrvat”. Bosnische Post responded: “For Bosnia, for its schools and for its development, only one point of view can be relevant – that of the Bosnians”. From the end of 1884, Bosnische Post received support from the Foreign Ministry in the form of 100 subscriptions, which also covered the shipping costs. On 30 November 1884, the Finance Minister decided that half of the associated total costs would be covered by the Bosnian government. In an end-of-year-review, Bosnische Post underlined that “we are far from the development of a cultural or ethnic war in those areas where the complete absence of such wars has to date brought the greatest benefit, particularly for the Austrian migrants, who have already suffered enough from the misery of the prevailing social conditions in our fatherland”. But it had been assumed that the Monarchy would be more interested in the newspaper, which resulted in the failure of the transition to a daily newspaper. Civil servants and merchants were seen as a target audience. Despite its reputation as a “government publication”, it
claimed to be objective; however, but pointed out the political remit of the press: “the influence of the press over the opinions formed by individuals is fixed and undeniable”.

**Basic structures and core issues communicated**

Bosnische Post appeared on Thursdays and Sundays and comprised four to six pages. Its layout adopted the style of contemporary Viennese newspaper, which remained basically unchanged until 1918: the top half of the front page was dedicated to political issues, at first mostly in form of lead article or commentary, but which were in 1896 largely replaced by brief news and headlines. The bottom half of the first page was reserved for feature articles: these often comprised literary texts or other essay (including “letters”), usually accompanied by the name of the author, which eventually spanned over a number of issues. In this first years, these texts dealt often with regional topoi, both informational and bellettristic. The second and third pages contained further “political reviews” (often international), “daily reports”, and lots of local and regional news. Correspondents’ reports came from Bosnia, and especially Zagreb, Vienna and Budapest. Practical aspects were provided in the form of event guides and reviews from the social and cultural calendar, as well as the business section, official announcements and information regarding law and court rulings. Despite certain rearrangement in its political and commercial strategies, as well as changes to editors, - in terms of its content, the newspaper retained a distinct canon of topoi, throughout its history. This included a certain “progressive agenda”, like a specific Austrian version of a civilisation mission, which manifested itself i.e. in the form of reports concerning the development of infrastructure, transport routes and railways, or on the establishment of industries, also aspects of urban development and town planning were scrutinised on that basis, including the expansion and practice of local self-governance. On the other hand, the praise of the Hapsburg administration in Bosnia, made it to degree necessary to identify with the country and its inhabitants and to believe in its future; with agendas aimed to bring about changes rather than ascriptions of immutable (racist) classifications. Moreover, Bosnische Post avoided identifying with the Germans as a group: this could have been an indication of the multinational readership from all over the monarchy, be it as migrants, or as readers from outside.

One specific characteristic of Bosnische Post, literally visible at a first view and significant in comparison to other Bosnian papers, was its extended advertisement section, in later years it expanded to sometimes more than half of the newspaper, often with opulent graphics and designs. This resulted in the newspaper becoming a proverbial window into the Viennese way of life as, alongside some companies from Sarajevo (at first, predominately those established by
migrants), (mail-order) companies from Austria and Vienna featured heavily. Moreover, at least one part of the offered goods were explicitly luxury items, not available in Sarajevo, next to some items which were maybe preferably ordered by mail due to their very intimate nature.

Bosnische Post, especially in the investigated period, largely represented a self-image of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a European state which got along with its Muslim population at best; citing an article Vatan as a source, it was claimed in 1885 that their position in Bosnia was more comfortable than under British and Russian rule or within the Balkan countries. At the same time, the article remembered the reader that the opposition to the introduction of conscription laws had been less marked among the Muslims than it was among Orthodox Christians, and cited examples of Muslims which had meanwhile started an army career. It was Milena Mrazović, the later owner and editor in chief who gave already in this early years as a young collaborator the newspaper’s feature pages a strongly Bosnian air with many regional related essays, reports and stories; added to this, historic presentations were provided, for example, in 1885 and 1888 by Josef Koetschet, a Swiss man who had been active in the city since 1863, first as an Ottoman city and military doctor. These texts and contributions were intended to support proximity to and trust in the newly won homeland and its particularities; nevertheless it is undisputable that these same literary representations of Muslims were not free of contemporary oriental clichés. But one should keep in mind that the Austro-Hungarian strategy was at its core aiming at cultivating differences between the Ottoman Empire and the Bosnians and not at essentialising Muslims. When Mehmet Beg Kapetanović emphasised the loyalty of Muslims to the Habsburgs in 1886, and formulated the basic features of Bosniak patriotism that set itself apart from the Ottoman Empire, supportive contributions by Muslim landowners appeared in Bosnische Post. The series of articles was printed out as a brochure. Other, particularly literary texts were also translated and published in the paper or its other publishing’s, thereby granting native authors “a voice”. This included also Serbs, for example, in October 1887 Nike H. Besarović’s “Mula Meho”, which had first appeared in the literary paper Bosanska Vila 1885, was printed by Bosnische Post as well.

Second careers in Sarajevo: The example of Eugen Ritter von Toepffer (1885-1889)

At the end of 1885, the Ban (local ruler) of Croatia-Slovenia, Khuen-Hedervary complained to the Bosnian government about the representation of the relations in Croatia by Makanec in Bosnische Post. This might have been one reason why Makanec, whose brother was a parliament deputy in Croatia, sold the newspaper in the summer of 1886 - just to his former editor,
Toepffer, to whom the Landesregierung from their side attributed an “entirely correct attitude”. Makanec, died in July 1891 in Jeddah, while accompanying a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Eugen Ritter von Toepffer, came from a well-respected Viennese family, and had originally arrived in Sarajevo as an actor and dramatist. He became more successfully, however, in managing Bosnische Post, - including a printing company using the name of “Bosnische Post”, which produced ever since not only the paper itself, but also a total of around 140 monographs and 30 periodicals in both German and Bosnian. Significantly, Toepffer soon considered a publication three times a week, as observers considered the newspaper to be “excellently edited”, - the German Embassy e.g. sent its articles to Berlin to provide in 1888 information about the visit of Crown Prince Rudolph in Bosnia. The paper optimistically claimed that ten years ago everyone who had been moved to Bosnia had been greatly regretted but that now there was a shift - citing the Slovenian Member of Parliament, Karel Klun, who had said in the Reichsrat that he would have been happy if so many investments would be done in his home region as well. Bosnische Post commented, alluding to the language tensions between Slovenes and Germans, that in Bosnia no one would go crazy because the children have to learn German in school: This episode might show that its editors were not free of national “emotions” but that these were in general, “kept under control”.

**Sarajevo’s “good women”: Milena Mrazović, German author, Croatian roots (1889-1896)**

Toepffer died on 26.7.1899 and inherited Bosnische Post to his much younger female assistant Milena Mrazović. According to “Österreichisch-Ungarische Buchdrucker Zeitung”, he died a few days before being able to take Mrazović to the altar. Mrazović, was born on 28/12/1863 in Vienna, as the daughter of Andrija Mrazović, a civil servant, originally from Bjelovar (Croatia) “from an old Croatian family of nobility”, while her mother was a born Bartel. After 1878, her father was sent to Bosnia (Banja Luka) as the district secretary. Milena taught in a Catholic girl’s school in Sarajevo in 1884 and 1885. For Bosnische Post Milena Mrazović(-Preindelsberger) became one the most remarkable personalities in the newspaper’s history, and one of the first women in such a position throughout Europe. She was a member of the Sarajevo Museum Association and became, following Makenec, in 1889 the first female member of the Viennese Anthropological Society.

The Landesregierung respected Toepffer’s last will and authorised the succession. This might speak for Mrazović’s well known talent, although the transfer of a supposed semi-governmental paper to a 26-year-old woman could also indicate the limited importance attributed to the
paper. The editor in charge should initially be Alfons Kullich (1850-1914), - a man with obviously no journalistic experience: Even more, it seems that Kullich had fallen into some debt during his military service, before he became a clerk for a haulage company owned by the Viennese businessman Johann Baptist Schmarda. Landeschef Appel wrote to the Ministry on the 20th of August that Kullich's employment in the country’s service “beforehand” could still not be taken into consideration, but that his employment as an editor was not to be objected to. In any case, Appel recommended that the ministry grants the continuance of the paper under the condition, that this approval could be removed at any time without the provision of reasons. The permission was issued from Vienna at the beginning of September, Kullich’s time as editor however turned out to be one of the shortest in the history of Bosnische Post, as he gave up this post in February 1890, to open a riding school in Sarajevo.

Kullich’s successor as editor in charge was Hermann Tausk, born in today’s Slovakia. He had worked for Agramer Tagblatt and was the first experienced journalist as the paper’s editor in charge. Tausk was of Jewish origin, his son Victor would later become a well-known psychoanalyst. In 1891, Tausk quit his post, but returned to Sarajevo in 1892 and continued to work for Bosnische Post. In the meantime, Adolf Flachs and Adolf Landau had been editors in charge, but by 1892, Mrazović appeared as ”editor in chief“ in the imprint section.

One has to consider the increasingly nervous political mood in this years, among other factors, due to the rise of the Radical party in Serbia, - which could be noticed even in polemics between the legal Serbian newspaper, Bosanska Vila, published with government support, and Bosnische Post. In the opinion of the German Consul, Bosnische Post, as well as the (Muslim) newspaper Bošnjak, showed loyalty towards the government but wrote for his taste “in too adulatory a manner”. According to a letter published in Bošnjak local Serbs however saw the Bošnjak as well as the Bosnische Post both as their enemies, but for sure, circumstances made the symbolic affirmation of the alliance with the Bosniak elite important. e.g. on the occasion of the funeral of the deceased mayor Fadil Pašić. But in April 1893, the publisher of the Bošnjak, Kapetanović, became Pašić’s successor, and Jusuf Beg Filipović took his place. Until then, the Bošnjak had often been an ally of Bosnische Post, but then in 1893, its pages levelled accusations against Mrazović, due to a book she had just published in Berlin: Selam. Sketches and Stories from the Life of the Bosnian People. It contained eight of her reports from the commentary section in Bosnische Post, which may have been inspired by day trips taken to the surrounding area with a friend on horseback. The Bošnjak, however, found that the book showed the Muslim population in a disgraceful light, as the author did not really know the lifestyle that she wanted to describe, and so it lost all value. The young woman had
apparently created characters in her fantasy world who may appear in western European novels but not among the Bosnian people. Surely Mrazović was likely a notably provocative personality for her time, who e.g. took part in a horse race. A little later, Bosnische Post announced an organised tour to the Landesmuseum for well-to-do Muslim women to remove “misgivings”, which might also indicate certain tensions.

It is quite possible that the aversions of Bošnjak were directed against Mrazović personally. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Bosnische Post on February 1, 1894, congratulations were expressed with the words that it had been founded to counter all the false news that was spread in the world about the homeland. This was successful - and then it was emphasised how the paper was, with the greatest success, edited by Tausk. In September 1894, a new building for the paper’s offices and a printing plan, designed by Mrazović, were completed, near to the new cathedral, including five large, luxurious apartments also for Mrazović herself. But just a little while later, a personal crisis arose between Mrazović and the ambitious Tausk, caused by the latter’s desire to travel to Croatia due to an eye illness, something which Mrazović refused to accept. When Tausk travelled nonetheless, Mrazović fired him on the 15th of November (he had eight children). Tausk tried then to reach the government’s approval to found his own newspaper, proposing the title of Sarajevoer Tagblatt, while Mrazović strove already to sell her paper to Schmarda. The government representative for Sarajevo, Berks, supported her in this plannings, but to him it seemed politically more important to use the property of Bosnische Post, in order to found a government-friendly paper for the Serbian public. At the end of the year Tausk and Mrazović even faced each other in court. Any new newspaper was the result from that conflict; Appel also warned the Finance Ministry not to grant a concession to another collaborator of Bosnische Post, Gjuro Vrnjanin, a Croat, for a new journal - it had been discovered that Vrnjanin, himself without any resources, had links to the “pan-Slavic” Slovenian deputy Vošnjak. But Tausk’s plans were not (yet) implemented either, a newspaper called “Sarajevoer Tagblatt” was only launched from 1904/07 as an alternative to Bosnische Post, although not by Tausk. However, Tausk was able to establish himself in Bosnia, at least in the mid-term, namely as press officer for the Bosnian government. He also worked as a translator. After a failure with the “Sarajevo Wochenschrift” which appeared in 1908, he founded in 1912 another weekly newspaper, the ”Südslawische Revue”. However, after a few month he left suddenly Sarajevo and returned to Zagreb. He died in 1916 and in the obituaries Croatia was called his second home.
Coinciding with this, internal difficulties and the governments thoughts on the future of the newspaper, an even more serious political crisis began to emerge, which consequences would determine the developments in Bosnia for the years to come. While the opposition of the Serbs was more or less a given fact, even though with increasing meaning since the early 1890s, was the political alliance with the Muslim elite for a long time supposed to be a core element of the political strategy of Landeschef Appel and finance minister Kállay - the Ziviladlatus Kutschera knew even Ottoman. By the mid 1890s, however, an opposition movement started to emerge among the Muslims, too. One factor stimulating that movement was the subordination of the assets of the Muslim religious foundations (Vakuf) under the control of the state in 1894. Moreover, at the end of the same year a petition was received by the Sultan from the emigrants in Istanbul, with further complaints with regard to the situation in Bosnia. On the other hand, the fears of the government about a rapprochement of Serbian and Muslim opposition seemed to become more realistic: On January 9, 1895, a letter from ef. Mehmed Spahić from Mostar (the centre of the Muslim opposition) was presented in Bosnische Post, in which he warned against a "Serbian current" among the Muslims - after he himself had temporarily supported it, he now wants to publicly distance himself from it. At that time, e.g. in the final phase of the Mrazović era, Bosnische Post was still publishing articles which tried to actively communicate the policies of the government on the controversial issues: i.e. at the general meeting of the Vakuf Commission on February 11th, 1895 in Sarajevo, when the meari-sensitive issue. It was explained that the assets held by the foundation had grown to 300,000 crowns thanks to the reorganised Vakuf administration; this was justified by the objective of the state government to promote the Muslim school system. The latter was highlighted as a key benefit, and as a means of reducing Muslim emigration. As a practical step, the promotion of Muslim reading halls (Kirraethna) was encouraged, however, as the article did not mention, these Kirraethnas stood in Mostar under the influence of the opposition. Intrigues of the Muslim emigration were especially feared. Bosnische Post relied here sometimes on the Croatian press and overtook e.g. on May 24, 1895 a notice from the Slawonische Presse (Osijek) about Muslim emigrants in Istanbul, who allegedly worked towards an attack on Austria-Hungary from Serbia, Montenegro and Russia. From the time we read also about good-will gestures i.e. a womens teferić (picnic) in Ilidža with noble Muslim ladies, wives of top-officals (i.e. Miss Kutschera) and Milena Mrazović.
1896: The end of the Mrazović era. The sale of Bosnische Post to Schmarda.

Contrary to Berks statements about the "hysterical" Mrazović, the contemporary women’s movement considered her career as a role model, and therefore mentioned her e.g. in the magazine "Die Frau" published by Helene Lange in Berlin or in a study on professional women published in the Verlag der Frauen -Rundschau 1905. Her lectures may have contributed to that fame: However, as the Bošnjak reported in March 1896, on one of her speeches in Vienna, Mrazović painted then a pretty picture of "our people" and brought to attention everything that is beautiful and good among them. The audience agreed emphatically.

But, at that time, Bosnische Post was already close to being sold. On March 26, 1896, the purchase request of the Viennese entrepreneur Johann Baptist Schmarda was forwarded to the Minister of Finance, who approved it. Appel added to the proposal that better editorial work could be expected from the new owner, which had been desired for a long time. In her farewell note in Bosnische Post, Mrazović stated with an ironic undertone that she hoped that her resignation would be advantageous for the company, since it is now in the hands of a man: “A woman’s ability, in public life, is and remains a restricted one”. A comment somewhat evasively praised her "genuine Slavic tenacity", and that the newspaper had been identified with her, but also tried to attribute "male" traits to her and further speculated on that.

In November 1896, Milena Mrazović married the eye specialist Josef Preindlsperger. Heinrich Renner (Berlin 1897), retroactively judged that Mrazović had excellently understood how to form texts and feature articles in an appealing manner. She continued to write monographs on Bosnian topics, including the "Bosnian Skizzenbuch" (Innsbruck 1900, Dresden 1909), travel literature (e.g. Die bosnische Ostbahn) and novels. She also contributed to the prestigious volumes of "Die Österreichische Monarchie in Wort und Bild" (1901) and joined the Association of Writers and Artists in Vienna. In 1919 she left Sarajevo with her family and went to Vienna where she lived in an apartment furnished in Bosnian style. She died on 20.1.1927.


Franjo/Franz Selak (1847-1906) was an editor of Bosnische Post from November 15, 1894 to November 1897 but became editor in charge only after Mrazović had left office. Having studied in Graz and Vienna, he was initially a grammar teacher, but had run into "political or moral difficulties". He had then lived for 25 years in Zagreb as a translator and journalist for
German-language newspapers from Zagreb and Prague. During his stay in Sarajevo, he translated literary texts and wrote articles in Bosnian for the magazine "Nada", launched in 1895. The new owner Schmarda had the ambition to transform Bosnische Post into a daily newspaper. While Kállay assured his support, the Foreign Ministry refused prematurely (21 May) to increase the level of financial support - due to the low value (!) of the paper. The transition to a daily newspaper took place on October 1. Schmarda, however, preferred to appear only since November 3 as owner and publisher in the paper. The newspaper’s structure changed relevantly: Those editorials that had commented on the political and social developments in Bosnia, just as in a diary, with the current date as their headline, appeared less and less. Instead, the front-page headlines were now mostly filled with agency reports, so-called telegrams. At the same time, the advertisement section was expanded, which probably contributed to the financial sustainability. Whether the advertisements paid off commercially is difficult to estimate. Schmarda understood publishing the newspaper despite losses as "a patriotic duty"; it would be possible that this may have influenced some advertisers as well.

Moreover Bosnische Post avoided since then more than ever to discuss “unpleasant“ or disputable or critical issues or aspects - a characteristic Schmarda would call in 1899 „self-censorship“. This applied e.g. to the rise of the Muslim opposition: The reader thus learned e.g. in 1898 that the wife of top official Konstantin Hörmann headed a school for Muslim girls, where they were educated, among others, in Bosnian by the “švabska gosport”, obviously with the support of their mothers. The report suggests that these girls came from the families of the elite (including the theological elite); however, it did not mention that there were also voices who were suspicious of non-Muslim conversion intentions behind the teaching.

From November 15, 1896 to the end of 1898, Schmarda published a sister newspaper in Croatian language, the "Bosanska Pošta". Before the paper was launched, Schmarda invited Safer Beg Bašagic, in the following years an opinion leader among loyal Muslims, to cooperate. According to the announcement made in Croatian in Bosnische Post, it was intended to cultivate and develop love and loyalty to the dynasty and at the same time be the flag-bearer of modern progress. Schmarda made Gjuro Vrnjanin editor-in-chief. The editorial office rejected the mistaken idea that the newspaper was a translation of Bosnische Post, and underlined that it was completely different from the "German colleagues". It was only "by chance" that the same title was carried and that it was only the telegram messages that were shared. In May 1897, Tausk assumed the management of the paper. But as he was “too involved with other tasks”, he was succeeded in August by Josip M. Čebular, as the new head of the paper.
Bosnische Post was not even in these year’s always balanced. Thus, in 1897 it supported with harsh words, the actions of the government against the opposition movement in the Serbian church congregations. However, in this case this crisis had already attracted international interest anyway – so Bosnische Post could simply overtake articles published already e.g. in the Neuen Freien Presse (Vienna). In its own contributions, it communicated largely the position of the government or presented it in a broader historical background. Significantly, the German consul based his reports meanwhile more on international press clippings than on articles from Bosnische Post. The lack of reliable background information from within the country led in this year to the emergence of rumours about pervasive anarchy, - as origin of such “scare stories,” assumed Bosnische Post British, French or Russian sources.

In August 1897, Selak left Bosnische Post allegedly at his own request "for health reasons" – as a matter of fact, he subsequently tried to establish his own newspaper, the "Stimmen aus Bosnien", with the claim to be independent. However, without major financial support, the paper survived only from August 1898 to February 1899. Selak died on the 9.6.1906 in Zagreb. One obituary praised him as a polyglot translator but called him “welt-fremd”.

Young men from Vienna: Oskar Hirth (1897-1901) and Franz Mach (1901-1906)

While Selak remained only an editor in charge, his successor Oskar Hirth (1869 to January 25, 1932) was designated with the title of an “Editor-in-Chief” in the imprint. With Hirth, a generation change was initiated: Like his successor Franz Mach, who had nearly the same age, he came from the German-liberal Neue Wiener Tagblatt, and, like him, he returned after a few years in Sarajevo to this paper (1901), where he became later the editor in chief. Hirth stemmed originally from Lower Austria but had lived as a child for ten years in Sarajevo. He knew Bosnian, had attended high school in Sarajevo, and gathered initial experiences in the services of Bosnische Post already as a high school student. Like his two successors, he was a reserve officer and quite young (28 years). The recruitment Viennese journalists was probably useful to bring the paper closer to the standards, networks and advertising markets of the newspaper industry in other parts of the monarchy and, vice-versa, helped maybe to give Bosnia a stronger presence in the Vienna press. However accusations by the opposition for being the voice of a quasi-colonial regime could hardly be countered by such short-term "imports".

The Muslim opposition articulated their gravamina in these years mostly at public meetings or in petitions. Bosnische Post avoided to comment on this, but preferred to translate and promote instead the views of “loyal Muslims” to their German readers – not as part of the news section, but by translating selected literary works, - or by giving summaries of lectures given
by their representatives at Muslim reading halls (Kiraethana); additionally there was a listing of who was present for the events in the circle of top officials on the one hand, and of the Bosniak elite on the other, including references to the get-togethers that followed such evening. The speakers thereby came “from both sides,” e.g. Konstantin Hörmann, who spoke at the end of July 1897 to this audience with regard to Bosnian history. In praise of a lecture by Safet Beg Bašagić in Bosnische Post from 1898, it could be noted how he had become one of the esteemed and favoured contact persons for the administration-sphere, replacing the already ill mayor Kapetanović, who died at the end of 1899. At one of this occasions, Bašagić presented his history of Bosnia. It was published as a book by the Bosnische Post, which made e.g. at this opportunity the Bošnjak national narrative familiar to its readers.79

Bašagić became a soon proponent of those younger Muslim intellectuals who adopted in the late 1890s a pro-Croat stance as an alternative to the rapprochement of the Serbian and Muslim opposition. This was in favour Bosnische Post as well, to demonstrate the risks a Montenegrin-Muslim alliance, the paper did not hesitate to translate as well articles from „Hrvatsko Pravo“, that is, from the paper of the followers of Ante Starčević and his “greater Croatian”ideas.80 However, it seems that Bosnische Post preferred the secular wing of Croat nationalism, probably for the inclusive component towards the Bosnian Muslims. This was evident e.g. in 1900 on the manifestations of the Croat Trebević choral society, which were, even though nationalist, presented by Bosnische Post benevolent and as a quasi “official” public event; the year before, severe disputes surrounding the consecration of the society’s flag had ended with a victory of the Secularists. The positive reaction of Bosnische Post differed e.g. here from that of the Budapest based Pester Lloyd but stood in opposition to Catholic bishop Stadler as well, while it was in line with the Appel administration if not an expression of their strategies81; as e.g. the German consul found the depictions of Bosnische Post therefore” faint and formless. Clear, because Kalláy-friendly “.82

To be precise: such conclusions were drawn from the way local events or single persons were presented, commented or silenced, as one could hardly speak of an open "communication" of governmental politics or analytical journalism during in this years, -- the newspaper was then mostly filled with "brief news“, business developments, advertisements and short stories. In a similar way it was e.g. more the absence of symbolic references to Catholicism in Bosnische Post which ”said a lot““, not outspoken programmatic anti-clericalism. But one could say that the newspaper largely avoided identity politics or community building based on confessionalism throughout its existence, even though surely most of its readers belonged to the Catholic
church. Bosnische Post had Jews among its most prominent editors like Tausk and later Steinhardt (1910-1918) and among many of its readers as well, names like Lewy (a local Brewery) indicate that a part of the companies, which advertised in Bosnische Post, belonged to Jewish families. Even though the newspaper was otherwise closely connected to the Viennese public and it’s Zeitgeist, it showed no signs of antisemitism. Instead we find regularly briefly, but "friendly" and respectfully notifications and references also on events of the local Ashkenzai and also the newly founded (1896) Protestant congregations in Sarajevo. Reports in Bosnische Post and in other semi-official newspapers informed e.g. about the attendance of prominent members of the government and the Sarajevo establishment at Protestant weddings and funerals; a similar way to demonstrate a balanced approach on church-related issues might be seen by the way the administrations supported „symbolically“ the building of an impressive protestant church in Sarajevo - then (1899) one of the biggest building of the city.

However, Bosnische Post remained as reserved towards German national aspirations as it was towards all national movements, although these, too, gradually became more noticeable in reaction to the strengthening of Southern Slavic nationalism. A dinner party (Tischgesellschaft), which started to meet in 1899, transitioned into the free association of the “Deutsche Stammtisch ” in 1906 and developed by 1908 into the Verein der Deutschen in Bosnien und Hercegovina (German national association of Germans in Bosnia and Herzegovina). The association or its predecessor was only sporadically mentioned in Bosnische Post in the context of urban social life, however, as was its Czech counterpart (Češka Beseda).

From an economic point of view, the changeover to daily appearance resulted within a few years in considerable difficulties. On 20.7.1899, Schmarda requested from the state government that every authority and every agency should be asked to take on a subscription to the paper. He pointed out that thanks to dispatch services, news often reached Bosnians even on the same day; nevertheless, despite e.g. advertising at train stations, he had not been able to to increase the number of subscriptions to more than 700. He distributed the newspaper in the monarchy in the same way as abroad “in order to familiarise the reader with the cultural advances of my second fatherland”. To be sure, a letter dated 16.9. to section chief Benko in state government shows that he also held censorship and self-censorship responsible for the difficulties: The newspaper had, according to Schmarda, to avoid a conflict between preventive self-censorship and reader interest, while any free expression of opinion and criticism appeared to be impossible. To secure further publication, he suggested the acquisition of 300 subscriptions. Upon enquiries, the state government established a circulation of 860 and authorised Schmarda’s request on 13.11.1899.
Franz Mach (1872 - 1938), Hirth’s successor as of 1.9. 1901, also came from Lower Austria, respectively Wiener Neustadt. He attended the military academy there, after graduating as First lieutenant of the reserve since 1894, he was previously employed as an editor at the Neuer Wiener Tageblatt – like Hirth-, to which he would later also return; moreover, he had also already worked for the “Prager Tageblatt” and other papers, and as a translator too. During his military time, he acquired several Slavic languages at the varying garrisons, but not Bosnian; yet he studied the national language, and Schmarda assumed it would be easy for him to acquire Bosnian as well. 89 The successor to Mach, Hermenegild Wagner (as of 1906) also came from Viennese professional journalism (Österreichische Volkszeitung), Like Hirth he had attended school in Sarajevo, and was a reserve officer as well. His mother was Croatian, he himself had studied in Zagreb. 90 According to Edit Walter both the Neue Wiener Tagblatt as well as the Österreichische Volkszeitung belonged among those papers that had individual journalists covertly on the payroll of the foreign ministry. 91

The year 1903 marked a major turning point in the history of the Austro-Hungarian administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina: on the one hand, the political upheaval caused by the change of dynasty in Serbia and the growing unrest in Croatia changed, and on the other hand, the death of the previous Finance Minister, Kállay, of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, who was responsible for Bosnia, had serious effects: his successor István Burian dismissed the former Landeschef Appel and embarked on a "new course". 92 This was intended to entail a departure from the previous pro-Bosniak policy and a greater openness towards the Bosnian Serbs, as well as a reduction of the previous position of the German language, - which led, among other things, to shortenings in funds for Bosnische Post. 93 Until the relaxation of press censorship in 1907, journalistic scope remained during these years more limited than ever, which possibly had consequences for the orientation of their readers, - since the politically analytical and commentary articles in those years referred more to Croatia than to Bosnian domestic politics - while the Bosnian Serbian press became increasingly active, and the once allied Bošnjak at the same time lost its former prestige and importance 94.
Outlook and summary

When the Bosnian Post first appeared in 1884, there were still lots of German-language newspapers in many parts of the monarchy. But unlike in the Russian or French "nationalising empires" this phenomenon had already been in decline at least since the compromise of 1867 - many German-speaking groups who had immigrated to non-German areas in the 18th century or earlier were in a process of assimilation. Therefore, the introduction of German as an administrative language in Bosnia in 1878, -in a region without significant German population-, was an unusual decision, as a result of Bosnia's particular international legal situation, and the political difficulties, but which was maintained until 1918. To challenge this position of the German language became a core issue of the anti-Habsburg opposition in Bosnia. But on the other hand the language conflict in Bosnia differed from that in other regions, as there was at least no "antagonism" between two ethnic-linguistic groups, even though the "language question" as well as the distinction between immigrants and locals remained socially and politically meaningful. However, German native speakers were in Sarajevo only a minority within a broad community of immigrants, that was composed from members of many nationalities and language groups from all over the Monarchy. The function and social role of the German language in this situation as a Lingua franca was therefore in every respect specific.

The Bosnische Post got support from the Common Ministry of Finance, the Bosnian government and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but it was not really a "governmental paper": This is why, significantly the owner, Schmarda, had been trying repeatedly since 1896 to compensate for his deficits by means of "hidden" subsidies, such as public printing orders for his printing house affiliated to the newspaper. According to the structure of the Habsburg monarchy, “donations” -and influences-, had probably, in the course of the 34 years history of the newspaper, various sources and motives, but a precise reconstruction without the (non preserved) archives of the newspaper remains difficult. In 1912 Landeschef Potiorek claimed 1912 that the government had previously “a certain influence” on the Bosnische Post.

Instead I would suggest to explain the frequent evaluation as a "semi-official" newspaper rather by the fact that it was linked to a certain milieu close to the Bosnian government and its state officials (and therefore had surely "good connections"). It was this position, that made the paper a symbol of the Austro-Hungarian lifestyle, and as well a mirror of the multiple political upheavals and changes of that period, - in particular the turn of 1903, and the crisis of the political "climate" (actually indeed sharpened by crop failures and floods), that emerged in the mid-1890s. The latter was largely determined by the rise and growth of nationalism,
especially the Serbian and Muslim opposition movements. It has to be assumed that the paper itself even contributed to the dynamics of that crisis: Even government officials (Berks) spoke of a "flattening" of the paper; its “reluctant” course after 1896 was probably guided by political caution and commercial considerations, but it could also have been understood as ignorance, indifference and powerlessness – all the more as the simultaneous commercialisation of the paper and the "import" of young journalists, could be interpreted in a similar direction.

However seen its history as a whole and over the decades, the Bosnische Post could definitely be identified with a distinct political-cultural position: In a historical period of time, that was increasingly characterised by the rise of the national movements, it represented a monarchical and imperial but at the same time “civic” and emphatically secular attitude, - corresponding to the transnational and multilingual, interdenominational structure of its readers. It thus proved to be an antipode to the emerging national movements of the time - and was therefore understood and judged by them as a challenge, if not as a threat: Significantly, when the Bosnian parliament was first elected in 1910, the Bosnische Post was immediately attacked there as a symbol of Germanness 100 - although the paper had never understood itself in such a way. This is all the more significant since German national aspirations had become by around 1900 apparent in Bosnia too by, i.e. even the husband of Milena Mrazović and individual employees of the Bosnische Post were members of the "Verein der Deutschen". 101 However even though such an option was present in the immediate social enviroment of the editors it was nonetheless deliberately not taken into account as part of the newspaper contents and image. Similarly the paper avoided any identification as “catholic”, even though the belonging to the Catholic church was a common characteristic for a majority of immigrants.

The story of Bosnische Post reminds us that the practices in connection to "multilingualism" within the Habsburg monarchy were not and could not be performed “abstractly” or within a vacuum and were therefore never entirely “neutral”. Instead, in still many situations, especially in urban spaces, the use of the German language was a tool or a widely spread and accepted modus operandi for the communication. The Habsburg monarchy was not a “nationalising empire”, but it encompassed societies which were in many ways on the edge of modernity and had therefore a need for functional context-free communication (in the sense of Ernest Gellner). Especially in an environment like the one of Bosnische Post, the German language had therefore not the meaning of a national language and its use did not constitute any commitment to it, as it did not “belong” to one group, but served as a medium or channel of
communication between many people, - within the highly diverse group of immigrants, increasingly between locals and Kuferaši - but also between Bosnia as country and cultural setting “on the one side”, and the Central European, especially German speaking countries “on the other“: Even though Bosnische Post addressed most of all inhabitants of Sarajevo, the share of subscribers from outside was - according to a figure from 1907 37% exceptionally high. Considering this and its contents as topics -as briefly sketched in this paper-, one could describe this “communication” hardly as a “one way street” only: On the contrary, it regularly presented a selection of Bosnian authors, ideas, views and issues to a much broader “European” audience, including those connected to Islam and Bosnian Muslims- it was famous as a “shopwindow” of Vienna, but offered insights to Bosnia to. My conclusion is therefore that the newspaper, even though it appeared in German, was more a “space of encounter” between cultural spheres, -in its time and of course in a particular situation and perspective- than it made a serious contribution to the spread of German hegemony or that of “German” culture.
die Situation in der Herzegowina. ibd., January 15-20, 1882. Prezidijalni spisi ABiH ZMF Pr. 62/1882


7 Milenko Jergović: Smrt u Džeddi [http://kolumneinfo.blogspot.de/2015/11/smrt-u-dzedi.html]

Kuferaši was a Bosnian colloquial term of the time for mostly middle class urban immigrants of diverse ethnic origin, similarly „Swabian“ was used as a synonym of „Western“ (i.e. in the sense of vaccination as a „Swabian“ innovation: Protiv kolere, in: Bošnjak, 6.10. 1892).

Eventually Kuferaši originates from a game of words, as it is likely to be explained by the German word „Koffer“ (suitcase), while the arabic/islamic term Qufr means „unbeliever“


9 Die Buchdruckerei Spindler und Löschner in Sarajevo, in: Bosnische Post, 22.3.1884.


12 Ansiedlung von Süd-Tirolern im Okkupationsgebiet, in: Bosnische Post, 23.3.1884.

13 Jadikovke iz Bosne, in: Sriemski Hrvat, 29.3.1884; Sarajevo, 2. April, in: Bosnische Post, 3.4.1884, the same article turned also against the depictions of Srbski List, Zadar.

14 k. u. k Ministerium des Äußeren, Literarisches Bureau: Vortrag wegen Subventionierung des in Sarajevo erscheinenden politischen Tagesblattes „Bosnische Post“. Wien, 3.10.1884.


16 Sarajevo, 31. Dezember, in: Bosnische Post, 1.1.1885

17 Sarajevo, 17.Januar, in: Bosnische Post, 18.1.1885; translated from Vatan, September 1884.


21 Književne i kulturne bilješke, in: Bosanska vila, 16.10.1887; Kruševac, 308.


Eugen Ritter von Toepffer, in: Bosnische Post, 27.7.1889; Kruševac, 169.


Izvještaj Zemaljske vlade zajedničkom ministarstvu finansija u vezi sa promjenom izdavača lista „Bosnische Post“. Sarajevo, am 15.8. 1886, in: Kultura i umjetnost, Nr. 169.


Mali vjesnik, in: Sarajevski List, 26.2.1890


Mali vjesnik, in: Sarajevski List, 8.3.1891; Kruševac, 171


Vladin povjerenik za zemaljski grad Sarajevo Berks u pri vatnom pismu izlaze mišljenje o sukobu Milene Mrazović i Hermana Tauska, vlasnika i urednika lista „Bosnische Post“, i nekim drugim pitanjima u vezi sa pokretanjem i uredivanjem listova u Bosni i Hercegovini. Sarajevo, am 29-ten November 1894, in: Kultura i umjetnost, Nr. 177.

Urednik i vlasnica novine, in: Bošnjak, 3.1.1895; Kruševac, 175

Izvještaj Zemaljske vlade Zajedničkom ministarstvu finansija u vezi sa zahtjevom dra Vladislava Nieča i Dure Vrignanina za koncesiju odnosno prenos koncesije za izdavanje lista „Bosnische Post“. Sarajevo, am 28. März 1895, in: Kultura i umjetnost, Nr. 178; Bethke, 141.

z.B.: Antun Hangi: Die Moslims i n Bosnien-
Hercegovina. Sarajevo 1907

Bethke, 146f.; Pejanović, 64f., 82; Petlevski


Sarajevo, 11. Februar, in: Bosnische Post, 11.2.1895.

Sarajevo, 15. März, in: Bosnische Post, 15.3.1895.


Teferić na Ilidži, in: Bošnjak, 8.8. 1895.

Die Frau 3 1895, 253; Eliza Ichenhäuser: Die Journalistik als Frauenberuf. Berlin 1905, 33.

Što u Beču govore o Bosni?, in: Bošnjak, 5.3.1896.


Sparks; Milena Mrazović: An die geehrten Leser!, in: Bosnische Post, 6.5.1896.

Heinrich Renner: Durch Bosnien und die Herzegovina kreuze und quer. Berlin 1897, 55.

Džambo, 12-15, occasionally she wrote even later for the „Post“: ebd.: 12; Marianne Baumgartner: Der Verein der Schriftstellerinnen und Künstlerinnen in Wien: (1885-1938), 374


Sparks 2014, 112-115, 152.; Kruševac, 171f. xx


Schlussprüfung an der türkischen Mädchenschule, in: Bosnische Post, 15.7.1896; for dissenting voices on that: Okey, 101.


Sparks, 2014, 112-115, 152.; Kruševac, 171f. xx


Sarajevo, 4. Oktober, in: Bosnische Post, 4.10.1898; comp. Okey, 132; Kraljačić, 294.

Die Fahnen-Feier des Trebević, in: Bosnische Post, 5.6.1900; Pester Lylod, 5.6.1900

Finck: An seine Durchlaucht, den Herrn Reichskanzler Fürsten zu Hohenlohe-Schillingfürst. Sarajevo, den 9. Juni 1900 PAAA R 12920; see Okey, 121-122

For biographic details: Bethke, 156

An open rejection was however rare too: Sarajevo, 30. April, in: Bosnische Post, 1.5.1889.

Trauung, in: Bosnische Post, 13.3.1901; Pogreb, in: Sarajevski List, 18.3.1900.

Die neue evangelische Kirche, in: Bosnische Post, 18.11.1900; ebd., 20.11.1899.


(Dschmarda, Bosnische Post, to Gemeinsames Ministerium) Wien, 19.11.1906,ABiH, ZMF, 1906, Br. 12860


Bethke, 145, 171.


Bethke, 143f.

On that Južbašić, and Bethke, passim


William Miller, Travels and Politics in the Near East, London 1989, 113


Landtag, in: Bosnische Post, 19.7.1910


Mandl: „Abschrift eines Privatbriefes aus Wien vom 2. April 1907“ HHSA PL 107, 246 1907