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In January 1929, King Alexander of Yugoslavia proclaimed a Royal Dictatorship over his country. He believed that such strong action was necessary because there was a very real danger of civil war, for the animosity and disagreement which had existed between the Serbs and the Croats since the inception of the Kingdom had reached the point of open murder with the killing of the Croat leader and two of his colleagues in the Yugoslav Parliament.

Alexander believed that national unity was his chief responsibility and he hoped that, by removing the party political system, he might inspire his people to think of themselves as Yugoslavs rather than as Serbs or Croats. But despite his efforts to improve the quality of government, to streamline the methods of administration and to eliminate corruption, he failed - not only because of an entrenched hostility towards absolutism amongst an intensely democratic people, but also because of the dearth of men with any capacity for sound government or inspired leadership.

During the course of his Dictatorship, he came to realize that even if he secured a viable settlement between his people at home, there could be no sure future for his Kingdom unless he took steps to secure its international position. To this end, he attempted to come to terms with Mussolini recognizing these men as Yugoslavia's most immediate opponents. Only when his efforts failed - through no fault of his own - did he seek to strengthen Yugoslavia's existing treaties with the Little Entente and to complement this alliance in the north with a similar Entente in the Balkan peninsula.

It was precisely because of his successes abroad, rather than his failures at home, that his enemies arranged his assassination. His death united the Yugoslav nation but greatly weakened its position abroad.

THE ROYAL DICTATORSHIP

IN

YUGOSLAVIA, 1929-1934

(As seen from British Sources)

by

DAVID SHEPHERD

A Thesis submitted for the
Degree of Master of Letters in
History in the University
of Durham.

April 1975

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Foreword.

This dissertation has been prepared under the supervision of Dr. A. Orde to whom I owe a very special debt of gratitude for her comments and criticisms which have been invaluable in the presentation of arguments and in the interpretation of events.

I should also like to thank the staffs of the Public Records Office, the British Museum Library, the National Library of Scotland and the library of the University of Dundee for their help and assistance in the collation of material for this thesis.

Finally, I should like to express my thanks to my wife but for whose constant prodding and tender ministrations, this manuscript would never have been completed.

David Shepherd.

April 1975.

Preface.

It would be fair to say that in the last sixty years, Yugoslavia has twice been born. In 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was established to bring together the large number of South Slavs living in the Balkan peninsula and, of them, to make one nation; in 1945, the state was revived and reconstituted as a Federal Peoples' Republic. But both as a Kingdom and as a Republic, the great problem facing all Yugoslav leaders, statesmen and politicians, has been to make that unity a reality and, at the same time, to protect their country from all those who seek to promote - or profit by -- national disunity.

The history of Royal Yugoslavia in the years 1918-1941 falls into three clearly defined periods. At first, there was a period of constitutional monarchy when the nation was governed by a Government responsible to a democratically-elected Parliament (1918-28). Following this, there were six years of royal dictatorship under King Alexander (1929-34). Finally, there was the Regency of Prince Paul (1934-41). Each of these periods was brought to an end by some violent act - murder in the Skupština, assassination in Marseilles, a coup d'état and the German invasion.

To obtain a composite and balanced picture of Royal Yugoslavia, it would be necessary to consider all these periods together in a single work, but in a thesis of this size, such a task is clearly impossible. I have therefore confined myself to the central portion of Yugoslavia's inter-war history - that of the royal dictatorship - and I have endeavoured to show not only how it came about and what it sought to do, but also to offer some critical appreciation of one man's attempt to solve an apparently intractable problem which has faced all Yugoslav leaders since their country was born.

But, unfortunately, this period of Yugoslav history presents considerable difficulties for the historian. Immediately the royal dictatorship was proclaimed, strong laws were imposed to ensure that - in newspapers, books, statistics and agency reports - only the official view would be heard. At that time, 76% of the population were peasants and the illiteracy rate for those over the age of 10 was 44.61%. It will therefore be seen that there exist very few personal records of life under the Dictatorship. Of those who wrote freely about conditions in Yugoslavia, some (such as Pribićević and Adamić^{*}) were highly critical, whilst others (such as foreign diplomats and responsible journalists) were prepared to give the King a chance and therefore retained open - if somewhat pessimistic - minds. Most of the books and memoirs which have been written about the royal dictatorship were written after Alexander's death and their accounts are to some extent coloured by that event (Graham, Patterson, Armstrong). Other books (notably by French authors such as Faure-Biquet, Novak, Eylan, Augarde and Sicard) are so obviously hagiographs that they are of no use at all.

Very few of the actual participants in the events of 1929-34 survived the Second World War in a position - or with the opportunity - to write their memoirs (Djilas, Maček, Stojadinović^{*} and Henderson being the exceptions) and, for many years, the history of pre-war Yugoslavia has been eclipsed by the more epic confrontations between the Partisans and the Axis and Tito and Stalin. It would perhaps not be fair to say that research into the documents and records of the royal era have been officially discouraged in Yugoslavia; but it is a fact that only recently have Yugoslav historians (Culinović, Stojkov) begun to publish their own studies of the inter-war period.

In order to produce this study of the royal dictatorship, I have therefore had to rely somewhat heavily on the one substantial body of material available to me which provides a continuous record of day-to-day political activity during the regime - namely the despatches and general correspondence of the British Legation in Belgrade and its Ministers, Sir Howard William Kennard and Sir Nevile Henderson. These are contained in the Public Records Office in London,

under the series F.O. 371, volumes 12978-87 (1928); 13705-12 (1929); 14438-48 (1930); 15269-74 (1931); 15994-97 (1932); 16827-32 (1933) and 18452-64 (1934).

I was well aware of the disadvantages of using such a source - the narrow scope of the diplomatic world in Belgrade, the absence of any real comment as to what difference government decisions made to individual people at grass-roots level, and the detached acceptance of the status quo. But, on the other hand, there were certain advantages. Both Sir Howard Kennard and Sir Neville Henderson had easy access to King Alexander and both men were able to see the architect of the Dictatorship at close quarters, to hear his policies expounded at first hand (not through distant rumour) and to see precisely what King Alexander was trying to do. They were also able to witness the problems that faced the King, the shifts in power and could pinpoint the regime's faults and failings. They were also in close contact with many of the regime's leading men (Marinković, Srškić, Švrljuga) and, from time to time, they had private conversations with opponents of the Dictatorship, with the pre-Dictatorship politicians who - although pensioned-off - still managed to keep close to opinion in the capital and feeling in the country. In the foreign field, the British Minister was sometimes privy to aspects of royal diplomacy, unknown to the Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs, and occasionally, he was instrumental in changing the King's mind.

It will therefore be appreciated that, by using these despatches and general correspondence from the British Legation - together with such other books, memoirs, articles and reports as do exist - I have been able to obtain a valuable insight into the inner workings of the royal Dictatorship.

In this thesis, I have not set out to attack the regime because it was a dictatorship and "anti-democratic" (which it undoubtedly was). Nor have I accepted any pronouncements or claims by the regime at face value. What I have done is to make three assumptions; (a) that the creation of a Yugoslav state by the peacemakers at Versailles was a wise and good act; (b) that a united and strong Yugoslavia is an

important factor for peace in Central Europe and the Balkans; and (c) that everything done in Yugoslavia - Kingdom or Republic - should be judged by the extent to which it consolidates that unity and adds to the well-being, happiness and security of her people. And it is in this spirit, that I have approached the Royal Dictatorship in Yugoslavia from 1929-1934.

* Although I have made use of certain books - by Adamić, Stojadinović and Meštrović - in the compilation and presentation of this thesis, I should like to make it clear that these sources must be treated with great caution. Because in their approach to the Dictatorship and in their consideration of events and personalities, they contain errors of fact and judgement and all too often present their highly-coloured and very personal interpretations in a false and misleading way. As I have said elsewhere in this thesis, my only justification in using such material is that it reveals the contemporary allegations - both lies and half-truths - made by those who were hostile to the regime.

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Chapter 1

The Historical Background

When Gavrilo Princip fired his fatal shots into the car carrying the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife through the streets of Sarajevo, he had little idea that his impetuous act would provoke a major European war. Similarly, Count Berchtold and the other Austrian officials in the Ballhausplatz, when they issued their ultimatum and declared war on Serbia, little imagined that the outcome of that war would be the dissolution of the centuries-old Empire and the creation of a sovereign and independent South Slav state. Before the war, there seemed to be only two possibilities open to the future inhabitants of the Kingdom. One was "Trialism" - the plan to turn the Dual Monarchy into a Triple Monarchy and give the South Slavs a similar standing to the Hungarians within the Empire.¹ The other was "Greater Serbia" - the policy of expanding the Serbian Kingdom to include Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Vojvodina and Montenegro and to obtain for Serbia a suitable outlet to the sea.² The outbreak of war dealt a severe blow to both these projects. Following the assassination of the Archduke, all thought of "Trialism" was abandoned and the Empire reverted to a policy of severe repression.³ Serbia, for her part, was attacked in force by Austria but, although her army put up a long and vigorous resistance for some eighteen months, the combined

1. R.G.D. Laffan, The Guardians of the Gate (Historical Lectures on the Serbs), (London 1918) p. 169.

2. C. Jelavich, "Nikola Pašić: Greater Serbia or Jugoslavia?" Journal of Central European Affairs, 11 (1951) pp. 133-52.

3. Laffan, op. cit., pp. 271-74.

forces of the Central Powers eventually inflicted defeat and the Serbian government and army retreated through the mountains of Albania to the security and exile of Corfu.

The main proponents of a sovereign and independent South Slav state were a number of Slovenes and Dalmatians who fled the Empire at the beginning of the war and formed a Yugoslav Committee in London.⁴ With the financial support of South Slavs living in America, the Committee drew attention to the sufferings and atrocities endured by their fellow-countrymen under the Austrian yoke. They publicized the great sacrifices made by the Serbs in the Allied cause and urged British and French statesmen to use their influence to create a united Yugoslav state in which Serbs, Croats and Slovenes would each have an equal part. But their efforts met with little response.⁵ The Allies were more interested in defeating Imperial Germany than in dismembering Austria-Hungary and, whilst there was any possibility of signing a separate peace with the Empire and bringing the war swiftly to an end, there could be no official support for a Committee whose policies were so obviously dependent upon dismemberment. The Committee also found that they had little support from the Serbian government-in-exile. As early as November 1914, the Prince Regent and his Cabinet had declared their primary war aim to be "the liberation of our subjugated

4. Notably Frano Supilo, a journalist from Fiume, who had been a member of the Croatian Diet (the Sabor) and a chief architect of the Serbo-Croat coalition in it. Upon his death in 1917, leadership of the Yugoslav Committee passed to Dr Ante Trumbić, formerly Mayor of Split and a member of the Austrian Reichsrat.

5. For the difficulties faced by the Yugoslav Committee, see D. Šepić, Supilo Diplomat. Rad Frana Supila u Emigraciji 1914-7 godina, (Zagreb 1961).

brothers: Serbs, Croats and Slovenes"⁶ but Nikola Pašić, the Serbian Prime Minister, was deeply sceptical of the Committee's plans which he was sure would lead to an organic Yugoslav state in which Serbia would simply be one of several constituent parts.⁷

The matter remained unresolved until the spring of 1917 with the Committee continuing its work in London and the Government in Corfu re-arming and re-grouping its forces. But, in March 1917, there came news of a revolution in Russia. The news had a profound effect upon Serbia's leaders who had always looked to Russia for political and diplomatic support and Pašić realized that unless he came to some agreement with the Yugoslav Committee, the initiative would pass elsewhere. Indeed, on May 30, 1917, the Yugoslav Club in the Austrian Reichsrat put forward a declaration demanding

"the unification of all territories of the Monarchy inhabited by Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in one independent political body, free from all foreign domination and founded on a democratic basis under the sceptre of the Habsburg dynasty."⁸

Rather than be left behind, Pašić invited Dr Trumbić and representatives of the Yugoslav Committee to Corfu where they issued a joint Declaration calling for the union of all Southern Slavs into a single, independent, democratic state, a constitutional monarchy under the Karadjordjević dynasty, to be known as the Kingdom of

6. F. Šišić, Jugoslavenska Misao, Istorija ideje Jugoslavenskog narodnog ujedinjenja i oslobodjenja od 1790-1918 (Belgrade 1937) p. 268.

7. Jelavich, loc. cit.

8. F. Šišić, (Ed) Dokumenti o Postanku Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1914-1919, (Zagreb 1920) p. 94.

Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.⁹ Both the Serbian government-in-exile and the Yugoslav Committee were agreed that, within the new Kingdom, freedom of religion would be guaranteed and both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets retained, but they were unable to agree as to what type of political system they should adopt. Dr Trumbić and the Committee favoured a federal system but the Serbs insisted on the "centralism" to which they were accustomed, and the Declaration was left deliberately vague on this point. However, in all other respects, the Declaration of Corfu marked a moment of great significance. The cause of Yugoslav unity now became the official policy of Serbia and the Allies were informed that no future arrangement for South-East Europe would be accepted unless it embodied the principles enunciated at Corfu.¹⁰

But when the moment of liberation came, neither the Yugoslav Committee nor the Serbian government found themselves in a position

9. The Declaration of Corfu was signed on July 20, 1917. The first publication in Serbian was in Pravda (Salonika) July 29, 1917. The full text can be found in Šišić, Dokumenti, pp. 96-100. An English translation appears in Appendix A.

10. I.J. Lederer, Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference, (Yale 1963) p.26. In the Treaty of London of April 26, 1915, which secured Italy's entry into the war, Britain, France and Russia promised her the Dalmatian coast and parts of Albania. Italy, therefore, refused to accept the Declaration of Corfu and refused to let more than a few hundred of the 18,000 Austrian South Slav prisoners in Italy go to Salonika and join the Serbian army. On April 10, 1918, at the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities, Italy recognized the principle of self-determination but it was not until September 8, 1918 that the Italian government agreed that "the movement of the Yugoslav people for independence and the constitution of a free state corresponds to the principles for which the Allies are fighting and to the aims of a just and lasting peace." R.J. Kerner, Yugoslavia (London 1949) p. 94.

to influence events. As civil authority within the Austrian Empire disintegrated, political power passed to the local population themselves. In August 1918, Dr Korošec¹¹ established a Slovene National Council in Ljubljana and, throughout all the South Slav lands, similar revolutionary councils were set up. On October 19, 1918, representatives of each of these councils¹² gathered in Zagreb to form a Yugoslav National Council (Narodno Vijeće). For ten days, leaders from the different political parties met to discuss the formation of a national government and, on October 29, 1918, the Croatian Sabor formally severed its links with the Empire and transferred all legislative and executive authority to the Narodno Vijeće.¹³ Amid great popular enthusiasm, the Council proclaimed the creation of an independent and sovereign Slovene, Croat and Serb state¹⁴ and announced that the government's first task would be to effect a union with Serbia and Montenegro.¹⁵

11. See "Biographies of Leading Personalities"

12. On the basis of one representative per. 100,000 people.

13. The Narodno Vijeće was given formal recognition by the Emperor on October 31, and the Austrian fleet was handed over to them (largely to prevent it falling into Italian hands).

14. The order of nationalities in the title is worth noting. The only party to oppose the Narodno Vijeće were the Frankists.

15. Stjepan Radić, the peasant leader (see "Biographies") had supported the plan for union with Serbia since August 1917, although he would have preferred a republic to a kingdom and would have liked to see the Bulgars included in the new state. Kerner, Yugoslavia, p. 89. However, as the Council planned to seek union with Serbia and Montenegro, Radić is reported to have said: "During 800 years of struggle, we have not abdicated before the Austro-Hungarians; there is no reason to abdicate before Serbia now that we are free." R.G.D. Laffan in Yugoslavia, (Nations of Today Series, Ed. Buchan) (London 1923) p. 243.

Two delegations were dispatched by the Council, one to Geneva¹⁶ to meet representatives of the Yugoslav Committee¹⁷ and Serbian party leaders,¹⁸ the other to Belgrade where they were received by Prince Alexander.¹⁹ The delegation which travelled to Switzerland were most anxious to secure Allied recognition for the Narodno Vijeće. They also intended to protest vigorously against Italian occupation of Slovene and Dalmatian lands and, if possible, lay the foundations of the new Yugoslav state.²⁰ However, they encountered strong opposition from Serbia's Prime Minister. Although fully in agreement with their desire for recognition and their protest against Italy, Pašić had not come to Geneva to decide the political structure of the new state. He had come simply to sign a declaration of solidarity with the Council delegation and the Yugoslav Committee. Since Pašić has often been accused of pursuing a "Greater Serbia" policy, it is interesting to note his opinion, expressed only a few days before the Geneva meeting:

"Serbia," he said, "regards it as her duty to liberate the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Once freed, they will enjoy the right of free dis-

16. Led by Fr Korošec, newly-elected President of the Narodno Vijeće.

17. In order to give support and status to the Yugoslav Committee, Korošec had appointed Dr Trumbić as the Council's official representative abroad.

18. Pasic was the sole representative of the Serbian government; but Milorad Drasković (Indep. Radical), Marko Trifković (Progressive) and Dr Vojislav Marinković (Dissident Radical) were there to represent the Serbian Opposition-in-exile.

19. Alexander became Prince Regent on June 24, 1914 and succeeded to the throne on August 16, 1921. Some measure of the precipitate nature of events can be gained by noting that the Serbian Army did not reach Belgrade till November 1; the delegation arrived on November 8 and Prince Alexander and the Serbian General Staff on the following day.

20. Lederer, Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference, p. 47

position, that is to say, the right to declare themselves either in favour of uniting with Serbia on the basis of the Declaration of Corfu or, if they wish, of constituting themselves into small states as in the distant past. Not only do we not wish to pursue an imperialist policy, but we do not desire to limit in any way the rights of the Croats and the Slovenes to their self-determination; nor do we insist upon the Declaration of Corfu, if it does not correspond to their own desires".²¹

Pašić therefore proposed that the Slovene, Croat and Serb state and Serbia remain separate for the time being. Within Serbia, there would be a coalition government, in which members of the Opposition parties would act as spokesmen and representatives for the South Slavs formerly within the Empire, whilst the Narodno Vijeće would appoint their own committee to advise the Serbian Cabinet on matters of foreign policy. For obvious reasons, this proposal proved completely unacceptable to Dr Trumbić and the Yugoslav Committee.²² They wanted a joint Yugo-Slav government with twelve portfolios equally distributed between the Serbian government and the Narodno Vijeće. Internal affairs in the Slovene, Croat and Serb state would continue to be managed by the Council - as would affairs in Serbia by the Serbian government - until a popularly elected Constituent Assembly had drawn up and approved a new national Constitution.²³

At the insistence of the French government, who wished to see

21. La Serbie, October 28, 1918.

22. A.S. Pavelić, Dr Ante Trumbić: Problemi Hrvatsko-Srpskih Odnosa, (Munich 1959) p. 175. Also, Lederer, op. cit., pp. 47-49.

23. Lederer, ibid.

the Yugoslavs united at the moment of victory, Pašić deferred to the wishes of the Yugoslav Committee and the delegation from Zagreb. A declaration, embodying their proposals was published on November 9,²⁴ but its impact was blunted by the subsequent resignation of Pašić²⁵ who claimed that neither his Cabinet nor the Prince Regent would accept it. This was not in fact the case, and the whole episode caused much ill-feeling and distrust.²⁶ Fortunately, there was little time to quarrel. The Italians were busy extending their forces at Zara and Šibenik. All manner of Italian intrigues - designed to disrupt the Yugo-Slav union - were reported.²⁷ The subjects of the newly-created Slovene, Croat and Serb state began to panic. Disturbances occurred in Zagreb. Within the Narodno Vijeće, bitter arguments arose between the "federalists" and the "centralists". The economy was at a standstill. Despite the Geneva declaration, there were rumours that the Allies regarded the South Slav state as enemy territory to be parcelled out and still more urgent demands by the Slovenes and Dalmatians that immediate action should be taken to withstand the Italians.

Faced with these serious problems, the Narodno Vijeće asked the Serbian government to send Serbian troops into their territory,²⁸ and, on November 24, the Council voted in favour of a complete union between Serbia, Montenegro and themselves.²⁹ A second deleg-

24. For the text of the Geneva declaration, see Šišić, Dokumenti, pp. 236-37.

25. On November 12, 1918.

26. Lederer, Yugoslavia at the Peace Conference, pp.50-1.

27. Ibid., pp. 63-66

28. The representative of the Serbian General Staff was Col. Dušan Simović (later architect of the 1941 coup) who worked very close with Pribičević, a member of the Vijeće.

Ibid., p. 51.

29. Šišić, Dokumenti, pp. 255-56. A similar declaration was made by the Montenegrin Assembly on November 26.

-ation, led by Ante Pavelić³⁰ and Svetozar Pribičević,³¹ was sent to Belgrade on November 25 to settle the details. With the political and diplomatic situation so pressing, the delegation was in no position to dictate its own terms.³² The Serbian Government demanded that the Narodno Vijeće should accept the Karadjordjević dynasty and the institution of a centralized administration based on Belgrade. The delegation agreed. Thus, on the evening of December 1, 1918, Prince Alexander formally proclaimed the union of Serbia and the lands of the independent Slovene, Croat and Serb state into a United and Sovereign Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.³³

But although the Triune Kingdom had been proclaimed, much was still to be done before that Kingdom could become a reality. The new state consisted of many disparate parts. Slovenes from the Austrian Empire; Croats still smarting from their experience of Hungarian domination; peasants from the highlands of Bosnia;

30. Pavelić was leader of the Croat exclusivist Starčević party.*

31. Pribičević was a Serb, living in Croatia, who had been leader of the Serbo-Croat coalition in the Croatian Sabor. It was at his instigation that the Vijeće sent a second delegation to Belgrade without waiting for the return of Korosec from Geneva. Pavelić, Dr Ante Trumbić, pp. 189ff. Pribičević was a man of many moods (see Biographies) who at this time was a strong believer in a centralized, unitary state. The hand of Col. Simović may also be seen.

32. The delegation brought proposals for the setting up of a State Council, containing the Vijeće, 50 members from Serbia and 5 each from the Vojvodina and Montenegro. They also wanted the Prince Regent to choose a united Yugo-Slav Cabinet from this Council. They suggested that the Council, which would sit until a Constituent Assembly had been elected, should meet in Sarajevo (neutral ground). However, the delegation's terms of reference made no provision for any breakdown in the talks or for the ratification of any terms obtained. The delegation therefore had a free hand.

33. Šišić, Dokumenti, p. 282.

* Dr. Ante Pavelić was President of the Narodno Vijeće but was not the Dr. Pavelić who was Poglavnik of the later "Independent State of Croatia."

seafaring folk from the coasts of Dalmatia; wild farmers from the Kingdom of Montenegro; proud and independent Serbs and the poor, backward and often illiterate inhabitants of Macedonia, who had only recently been liberated from Turkish misrule.³⁴ Each of these groups within the Kingdom came from different cultural, political and administrative backgrounds, some basically Austrian, others basically Turkish, but each with different variations to suit local conditions. Within the new state, there were also many minority groups - Germans, Hungarians, Albanians and Turks - in all, some 1,876,923 people - each with their own cultures and traditions.³⁵ Five and a half millions of the population belonged to the Orthodox Church; over four and a half million to the Roman Catholic Church; and well over a million were Moslems.³⁶ In the

34. According to one source, the proportions were as follows:-

Serbia and Macedonia	4,129,638	Croatia	2,710,883
Montenegro	199,857	Slovenia	1,056,464
Bosnia - Hercegovina	1,889,929	Vojvodina	1,380,413
Dalmatia	650,139	Total	12,017,323

C.A. Beard and G. Radin, The Balkan Pivot: Yugoslavia, (New York 1929), p.29.

35. According to the 1921 Census, the nationalities were:-

South Slavs	9,931,506 (83%)	Rumanians	231,068 (1.9%)
Other Slavs	176,482 (1.5%)	Turks	150,322 (1.3%)
Germans	505,790 (4.2%)	Italians	12,553 (0.1%)
Hungarians	467,658 (3.9%)	Others	69,875 (0.6%)
Albanians	439,657 (3.7%)	Total	11,984,911

Central Bureau of the Presidency of the Ministerial Council, Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1919-29, (Belgrade 1930) p. v.

36. According to the 1921 Census, the religious persuasions were:-

Orthodox	5,593,057 (46.7%)	Jews	64,746 (0.5%)
Roman C'lic	4,708,657 (39.3%)	Greek C'lic	40,338 (0.4%)
Moslem	1,345,271 (11.2%)	Others	3,325 (0.01%)
Protestant	229,517 (1.9%)	Total	11,984,911

Central Bureau, ibid. Percentages given by the Bureau are, in all instances, approximate.

spoken language, there was a remarkable homogeneity but, in the manner in which it was written, there was a clear division between the ^{Croats} ~~northern half of the Kingdom which~~ ^{who} wrote in the Latin script, and the ^{Serbs} ~~southern half which~~ ^{who} used Cyrillic.

It had been the hope of those who had signed the Declaration of Corfu that the new state would transcend all these differences of culture, worship, outlook and tradition, but the fact that those who created the Kingdom chose to retain the cumbersome title of "Serbs, Croats and Slovenes"³⁷ seemed, to many, to perpetuate a disunity and a diversity, which could so easily be exploited.

But for almost two years, any ill-feeling between the different national groups - or any sense of injustice or grievance - was overshadowed by the exhilarating feeling of victory and triumph that the South Slavs were at last one nation. Political leaders realized that their first task was to consolidate their achievement and protect their new state from all its enemies. A coalition government was formed in December 1918,³⁸ bringing together political leaders from all parts of the country. Dr Trumbić, the chief architect of the Corfu Declaration, was made Minister of Foreign Affairs and Nikola Pašić, the wartime Prime Minister of Serbia, was sent to Paris to represent the new country at the Peace Conference.³⁹ Between November 1918 and November 1920, treaties were signed with Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria, agreement was reached with Rumania over the

37. Rather than the simpler title of "Yugoslavia" by which the state was immediately known abroad.

38. Stojan Protić (Prime Minister) Fr Korošec (Deputy Premier), Pribičević (Interior), Davidović (Education), Trifković (Justice).

39. By his attitude to the Zagreb delegation at Geneva, Pašić had temporarily lost the confidence of the Prince Regent. But his powerful character, his shrewd political judgement and his great international reputation made him an excellent choice for the Peace Conference.

division of the Banat and a plebiscite was held in Southern Austria to determine the wishes of Slovenes living near Klagenfurt. Most important of all, the long drawn-out quarrel with Italy over her claims in Dalmatia (and, in particular, the occupation of Fiume) was settled.⁴⁰ When peace and security had at last been firmly established and the boundaries of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes finally drawn, the secondary task of determining the political structure of the Kingdom began. The Provisional Parliament,⁴¹ which had sat since March 1919, was dissolved and a Constituent Assembly elected.⁴² But as the great work of constitution-making began, the differences in attitude between the two halves of the Kingdom were revealed.

The Serbs, who had been at war almost continuously since 1912, returned from exile with an intense desire for peace and security. They regarded themselves - quite justifiably - as one of the victorious Allies and they were fully determined to share in the fruits of victory. In the course of the war, their country had been devastated by the enemy, their cities and towns destroyed, and so the first instinct of the Serbs was to build:-

"Most of the people who wanted to build,
having lost everything in the war and suffered

40. By the Treaty of Rapallo, November 12, 1920.

41. A body chosen to include representatives from all parts of the Kingdom and to prepare for a Constituent Assembly. It consisted of 84 Serbs, 62 Croats, 32 Slovenes, 24 from the Vojvodina, 12 Dalmatians, 12 Montenegrins, 24 Macedonians, 42 from Bosnia-Hercegovina and 4 from Istria.

42. Elections to the Constituent Assembly were on November 28, 1920. The results were as follows:- 92 Democrats (Davidović-Pribičević), 91 Radicals (Pašić), 50 Croatian Peasants (Radić), 27 Slovene People's Party (Korošec), 32 Moslems (Spaho), 58 Communists and 69 others.

great privation during the times of occupation and exile, lacked money even for a decent suit of clothes, but their passion for prosperity had been enhanced by their recent experiences and they now begged, borrowed and stole everything in sight to finance their building projects.⁴³ For years, there was political chaos in Yugoslavia, accompanied by a wide scramble for government jobs and most of those who got good jobs stole enough in a couple of months to erect homes for themselves, which were better than their pre-war dwellings, and finance the building of a couple of apartment houses, a hotel, an office-building or a warehouse."⁴⁴

Proud of their role as liberators and regarding the new, united Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as their own particular achievement, the Serbs did not confine their efforts simply to bricks and mortar. They began to assert themselves in every aspect of national life and showed little inclination to share authority or power with anyone - not even with their fellow Slavs:-

"The average Serb," said one writer, "will sooner trust an Orthodox Serb of dubious character and honesty than a Croat or Slovene of proven high

43. In 1921, 76% of the population were peasants or in some way dependent on agriculture. Of the other 24%, only 21.2% could actually be regarded as city dwellers. Central Bureau of the Presidency of the Ministerial Council, Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1919-1929, pp. v-vi.

44. L. Adamić, The Native's Return, (New York 1934) p. 244. His description of the re-building of Belgrade (pp. 245-6) explains much about the Serbian character in the post-war period. The population of Belgrade grew from 25,000 in 1918 to 226,070 in 1929.

character and unquestionable integrity....

Two second cousins are closer than two blood brothers or a father and son in France or some Western country. They adhere to one another through thick and thin. If one Serb gets ahead, his first impulse, which he never disobeys, is to help all his relations.

Now, take the Serb distrust of everything and everybody who is not a Serb, couple it with Serb clannishness and you have a general explanation why, after the Serbs had initially occupied the commanding positions in the new Yugoslav state, all the big jobs were immediately filled with Serbs; why Slovenes and Croats were and are kept out of them; why most of the non-Serbs who have government jobs are mere clerks (and) why a Croat or Slovene, no matter how able, is almost invariably elbowed out of a high position, if he accidentally attains it." ⁴⁵

And so, when the time came to make the new Constitution,⁴⁶ the Serbs proposed that the Constituent Assembly should adopt an enlarged and extended version of their own pre-war Serbian Constitution. The national government and parliament would be established in Belgrade and all the traditional executive and judicial institutions of pre-war Serbia would be retained. For the last two years, the country had been ruled by a centralized military command and a centralized civil authority - both emanating from Belgrade - and it seemed, to

45. Ibid., pp. 249-50.

46. For the background to the Vidovdan Constitution, see H.L. McBain and L. Rogers, The New Constitutions of Europe, (New York 1922), pp. 344-78. See also Beard and Radin, The Balkan Pivot, pp. 30-56.

the Serbs, that the continuation of a strong, centralized government had the advantage not only of perpetuating their own political tradition but would also be the wisest and most sensible policy for the new state.⁴⁷

But the Croats and Slovenes felt differently. For years, their sole political aim had been to secure a greater measure of freedom and autonomy for the South Slav provinces of the Empire. Now, ^{being} ~~having~~ ~~free from foreign domination~~ ~~fought and suffered in war and having played a significant part in the work of liberation~~, they confidently expected to have an equal share in running the new Kingdom and shaping its political future. When they discovered that this was not to be the case, that the Serbs had seized all the main administrative posts and that the centre of power would be Belgrade, there was great resentment and bitterness. In the elections for the Constituent Assembly, Stjepan Radić, leader of what was then considered an extreme form of Croat feeling,⁴⁸ received a large popular vote. Together with the Frankist and Federalist parties and others who resented Serbian domination of the new Kingdom, they put forward their plan that the country should be divided into six autonomous provinces,⁴⁹ each with an independent government and constitution, which could be modified only by unanimous consent. Within this, the loosest of confederations, the functions of a central

47. Kerner, Yugoslavia, pp. 121-122.

48. Radić, who by this time was a staunch republican and autonomist, had been in prison from March 1919 - February 1920 and March-November 1920. Yet, was released in time to take part in the elections for the Constituent Assembly, in which his party gained 50 seats.

49. (1) Serbia and Macedonia, (2) Croatia-Slavonia, Dalmatia and Istria, (3) Montenegro, (4) Bosnia-Hercegovina, (5) Vojvodina, (6) Slovenia. The Croat tendency to lump Serbia and Macedonia together is significant, implying a common "barbarism" in non-Catholic provinces.

government (ie. in Belgrade) would be minimal - simply defence and foreign affairs.⁵⁰

To the Serbs, the proposals put forward by the Croats seemed a direct threat to the precarious unity of the Kingdom, a repetition of the unhappy dualism of the Austro-Hungarian Empire⁵¹ and, in the prevailing international situation, a constitutional idea that was politically unsound.⁵² But to the Croats themselves, these proposals did not seem unreasonable. Having been under Austrian and Hungarian rule for so long, the Croats wanted to be free. They wanted to have their own say in everything that happened. They wanted to escape domination by some distant central government. They wanted power in their own hands - in Zagreb.⁵³ They did not believe that the freedom they expected, the power they wanted and the local autonomy they needed could be achieved in a legislative assembly over two hundred miles away. Because they now distrusted the Serbs and suspected that they intended to impose their own views brutally and unfeelingly throughout the Kingdom - whatever alternatives were suggested - the Croat proposals for confederation were advanced not only on the merits of "Federalism" or "local autonomy" over "centralism" but also as a test of Serb sincerity towards both Croats and Slovenes in letting them have an equal and individual say in the structure and administration of the Kingdom.

50. But there were some who thought that Croatia should have separate diplomatic representation abroad. See Kerner, Yugoslavia, p. 518.

51. The Times, 5 Apr. 1922.

52. From 1918-1941, there was always the fear that, at the first sign of weakness, Italy would occupy and annex Croatia and Slovenia. The irredentist activities of Bulgaria and Hungary added to this fear.

53. The Slovenes - unlike the Croats - preferred a strong central government but their proposals aimed to balance Catholic and Orthodox provinces in favour of the Catholics, to prevent Serb domination.

Although many other proposals were laid before the Constituent Assembly,⁵⁴ they carried no great weight and did little to resolve the deadlock between the main protagonists. The Serbs would not compromise. Neither would the Croats. For over six months, the Assembly engaged in bitter and protracted debate. However, by this time, Nikola Pašić had returned from Paris, his reputation as a statesman greatly enhanced. Appointed by the Prince Regent as the only leader capable of commanding a majority, Pašić used his considerable skill and bargaining powers to obtain political support for the Serbian proposals. With the help of the Moslems and other smaller parties - but without the desired two-thirds majority - Pašić succeeded in getting the Assembly's approval for a highly centralized state, a single national parliament and a range of administrative and judicial institutions in the Serbian tradition.⁵⁵ Despite the whole-hearted opposition of many Croats - who eventually boycotted the Assembly - the Prince Regent accepted the majority decision and promulgated the Kingdom's first Constitution on June 28, 1921.

For four years, the Croats refused to accept the Vidovdan Constitution and kept away from Belgrade. Their leader, Stjepan Radić was a curiously eccentric figure:-

"Extremely short-sighted and generally untidy, he looked like a cattle-buyer. Often he went about collarless, shirt open, disclosing his broad hairy chest. At political meetings, he appeared in peasant boots and a well-worn, soiled sheepskin coat. He was an eccentric, a demagogue. Anything but a great mind. He made political capital out of the

54. Beard and Radin, The Balkan Pivot, pp. 30-56.

55. McBain and Rogers, New Constitutions of Europe, p. 347.

conflicting impulses, vague desires, aspirations and keenly felt wants of the rural masses who had been neglected and exploited for centuries. Playing upon the vanities of the illiterate, socially-backward peasantry, he gradually moulded its instincts and prejudices into new political aims and tactics. He spoke in parables often he talked for three, four, five hours at a stretch, rhythmatically (sic) repeating and contradicting himself, uttering no end of nonsense; but that never hurt him."⁵⁶

Radić was greatly loved by the ordinary people and it was perhaps not surprising that some regarded him as the "uncrowned King of Croatia". His party, the Croatian Peasant Party, grew steadily in size as Radić unrelentingly attacked the central government in Belgrade. He made his followers aware of the unfair treatment Croatia and her people had received. He condemned - with some justification - the way local government officials rode roughshod over local feelings and exercised their petty tyrannies over the peasants.⁵⁷ He alleged that the Croats were taxed more heavily than the Serbs.⁵⁸ He consistently denied the central government's right to speak for Croatia abroad and, throughout 1922, he engaged in a fierce controversy over the new electoral law, claiming that the Croats were entitled to at least half the seats in the Skupština (Yugoslav National Assembly). He accused successive governments of dragging their feet in the matter of Agrarian reform⁵⁹ and bitterly condemned them for allotting 25% of the 1922-23 budget to military purposes. In 1923, Radić paid a visit to Moscow and was well received by leaders of the Communist

56. Adamić, The Native's Return, pp. 274-5. 57. Kerner, op. cit., p. 125. 58. E.J. Patterson, Yugoslavia, (London 1936) p. 101. 59. See below, pp. 21-22.

International. He made no secret that, in the years after the war, he corresponded regularly with Lenin. Fearful not only of a resurgence of Communist activity⁶⁰ - but also of the dangers of separatism - the Government closed down many Croat societies and, from time to time, some of Radić's meetings. But no matter what steps the central government took, Radić's popularity increased. In 1920, fifty CPP (Croatian Peasant Party) deputies were elected; in 1923, seventy; in 1925, sixty-seven. Even in their absence from the Skupština, the Croats could not be ignored.⁶¹

Although Radić did change his mind and allow his party to attend the Skupština in Belgrade,⁶² his decision did not make parliamentary life any easier:-

"In ten years, there were twenty-five ministries, only one of which was reversed by direct vote of the Skupština. Intrigues within and without the

60. Following a bomb attack on Prince Alexander in May 1921 and the assassination of the Minister of the Interior, Milorad Drasković, on July 21, 1921, the Communist Party was proscribed.

61. The boycott of the Skupština by 50 CPP members and 16 other Croat deputies - together with the expulsion of 58 Communist deputies - reduced the Assembly to 295 members, in which there was a delicate balance of coalitions between the Radicals and Democrats. The attitude of the Croats outside the Assembly, produced strong ripples within, which constantly affected the political complexion of the Skupština.

62. Radić's decision to allow CPP members to sit in the Skupština was accelerated by the widespread anger among the Croats and Slovenes that Pašić's government should have signed the Pact of Rome on January 27, 1924 - ceding Fiume (and many Croat nationals) to Italy. Radić hoped that if his party allied themselves to the Democrats, he might defeat Pašić. In fact, his intervention led to a permanent split in the Democrat Party. It is also worth noting that, even when the CPP came to Belgrade, Radić refused to let them form part of any government.

Cabinet were responsible for the fall of the rest. For the greater part of that period, there were 21 different parties and minority representation was not solely responsible for this state of affairs. All kinds of political motives and irresponsibilities were in operation and parties, both large and small, split into smaller fragments or coalesced into unstable unities. Even the historical Radical party was only a federation of three groups - that of Vukičević, of Pašić and of Uzunović. Party discipline was almost absent and, on one occasion, Radić in full parliament, described the ministers, whose colleague he was, as pigs." ⁶³

The constant crises which plagued each of the twenty-five governments from 1919-1929 ⁶⁴ meant that essential legislation was continually delayed. Few laws were passed ⁶⁵ and, often, the sitting of the Skupština was suspended for several months to avoid further dissension:-

"How the country suffered from parliamentary intrigue may be judged by the records of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. The most pressing need after the war was the adjustment of land systems and the re-organization of

63. Patterson, Yugoslavia, pp. 99-100.

64. For a complete list of ministries between 1918-1929, see F. Čulinović, Jugoslavija između dva rata, (Zagreb 1961), Vol 2, pp. 287-301.

65. The number of laws passed in the period 1919-28:- 1919 - 9 ; 1920 - 2; 1921 - 18; 1922 - 113; 1923 - 6; 1924 - 21 ; 1925 - 13; 1926 - 19; 1927 - 14; 1928 - 51. Central Bureau, Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1919-29, p. xiv.

agriculture. Serbia owed all to the peasants and had a duty to them. And the people most in need of help in Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Hercegovina were of farming stock. Yet less was done for the peasants than for any other class of the community. A competent Serb authority remarked that the peasant had not improved his position since the days of Kara George....

From 1918 until the dictatorship, there were some twenty changes. The first Minister for Agriculture lasted a month; the second, four months; the third, two weeks; the fourth, four months; the fifth, three months, when a Minister for Agrarian Reform was appointed. But the heads of the two ministries were constantly changed and the only man who could stand his job for more than a year was Krsta Miletić, who lasted from 18 July 1921 to 6 January 1923. It will be clear that nothing resembling a five-year plan for agriculture could be made when there was no prospect or even desire for continuity of office." ⁶⁶

Recognizing that Radić and his Peasant Party were the main source of unrest within the Kingdom, Nikola Pašić eventually decided to take firm action against them. In January 1925, following a number of violent "separatist" speeches by the Croat leader, Radić was arrested and imprisoned. His party was banned and its newspaper, the Slobodni Dom suppressed. Such strong measures induced an immediate change of heart in the Croat leader, who announced, in March 1925,

66. S. Graham, Alexandér of Yugoslavia, (London 1938) p. 122.

that he would now accept the Vidovdan Constitution and recognize the Karadjordjević dynasty. His declaration came as a great surprise - not least to his own supporters - but it brought immediate results. Radic was released from prison in July 1925, the restrictions on his party were lifted, the CPP joined the Radicals to form a Serbo-Croat coalition government and, in November 1925, Radić became Minister of Education.

No one could claim that Radić was in any way a success as Minister of Education. In fact, it was reported that he left the department in complete chaos.⁶⁷ Nor could he be described as an easy person to work with. At one time or another, he viciously attacked all his government colleagues in public speeches, causing no less than three Cabinet crises in six months.⁶⁸ The British Minister wrote later:-

"Radić was extremely indiscreet and would even give the Press such distorted versions of his conversations with the King and members of the diplomatic corps that it was never safe to hold any conversation with him."⁶⁹

But, whilst Radić and his party were in government, working in coalition with the Serbs, there was always the possibility that the quarrels, resentment and distrust of post-war years might be forgotten. Certainly it showed that reconciliation between Croats and Serbs was

67. Public Record Office, London. Foreign Office Political Correspondence, F.O. 371. Kennard (Belgrade) to Cushendun, 16 Aug. 1928, C6315/173/92.

68. His speeches in Bosnia in February 1926 against Pašić produced a crisis in April (Pašić waited till the Budget had been passed). In mid-April, his public attacks caused Uzunović to offer his resignation; and in October, he attacked a Czechoslovakian delegation in Zagreb, again provoking Uzunović to resign.

69. Kennard to Cushendun, 10 Aug. 1928, C6202/173/92.

not impossible and that both could work together.

But, unfortunately, the period of reconciliation did not last. The government of which Radić was a member had done its best to support and implement the Pact of Rome. Despite all the evidence of Italian intrigue - in Austria, in Hungary and in Bulgaria⁷⁰ - it had believed that an understanding could be reached with Mussolini. But, in November 1926, the Italians signed a political treaty with Albania,⁷¹ which was regarded in Belgrade⁷² not only as a blow to all hopes of friendship between the two countries, but also as a decidedly hostile act. The event led to a serious Cabinet crisis, the downfall of the government and a new coalition, in which Radić had no part.

It was a situation which did not appeal to the Croat leader. For an uneasy eighteen months, he had held a position of responsibility, he had been a respected Government figure, he had talked and dined with the King. But, what was more significant, he had seen his political opponents at close quarters. He knew what sort of men they were. During the period he had been in coalition with them, a whole series of scandals had been discovered involving many leading

70. For an outline of Italy's diplomacy in the Balkans at this time, see A Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy, (Princeton 1970) pp. 315-352.

71. Although the ruler of Albania, Ahmed Zogu was helped to power by Yugoslavia, he subsequently turned to Italy for help. A financial agreement was signed in March 1925, the Treaty of Tirana in November 1926 and a military alliance in November 1927.

72. Who, it must be admitted, also had a political interest in Albania. In considering Yugoslavia's relations with Italy during this period, it is sometimes difficult to decide whether Yugoslavia's hostile reaction to the Italian presence in Albania was motivated by a genuine fear of "encirclement" or was rather just plain jealousy.

figures.⁷³ ~~Radić knew very well that "in seven out of ten cases, as soon as a minister became an ex-minister, he went into business and built himself a palace in Belgrade or retired to the Riviera."~~⁷⁴ ~~It was almost a custom.~~ Radić was therefore able to base his attacks on even more just foundations. When he left office, he declared that although he loved and respected the Serb people, he was determined to fight the corrupt men in power.⁷⁵ At first, people paid little attention to Radić's attacks - they had heard them before - but, in October 1927, the Croat leader surprised the political world by joining up with Pribićević - hitherto a staunch "centralist" and leader of the Independent Democrat Party⁷⁶ - and Jovanović in a joint Opposition bloc against the Government.⁷⁷

Official party newspapers in Belgrade called them the prećani front,⁷⁸ but it was not the Opposition's intention to confine themselves merely to the prećanski. In January 1928, an appeal was made

73. Pašić himself was obliged to resign because of the involvement of his son. His resignation and subsequent death deprived the Kingdom of the one man capable of holding the warring political factions together. Corruption was by no means confined to the Serbs. Mr Kennard quotes several examples of corruption, notably one Croat, Nikić, who made such a fortune out of his tenure of the Ministry of Mines and Forests that he was not only dismissed from office but also expelled from his party (a rare happening). However, he later bought his way back into political life by large donations to public funds. Kennard to Cushendun, 16, Aug. 1928, C6315/173/92.

~~74. Adamó, The Native's Return, p. 342.~~

75. H.D. Harrison, The Soul of Yugoslavia, (London 1941), p. 180.

76. The surprise was the greater in that Pribićević, as Minister of the Interior, had been responsible for Radić's imprisonment in March 1919. The account of how the coalition was formed is given in S. Pribićević, La Dictature du Roi Alexandre (Paris 1933) pp. 60-61.

77. Jovanović was leader of the small Serbian Peasant Party.

78. Prećani is the Serbo-Croat term for those who lived to the north of the rivers Sava and Danube. A translation would be "trans-riparian".

to the Democrat party, inviting them to join the CPP-ID Coalition.⁷⁹ Their appeal succeeded in provoking yet another Cabinet crisis, lasting sixteen days. The Democrats were tempted. The Radicals declared themselves willing to form a coalition with the CPP - but neither party was willing to co-operate with Pribićević, who was regarded by all the Serbian parties as a turncoat or traitor and whose aggressive nature had won him few friends.⁸⁰ The Croat leader refused to enter any coalition without his new-found friend⁸¹ and it seemed, in early 1928, that unless he could make the task of government impossible without the co-operation of the CPP-ID bloc, Radić's political future would be bleak indeed.

Radić and Pribićević therefore set about the task of making government impossible. Day after day - inside the Skupština and without - they embarked upon a series of speeches, attacking and vilifying Serbian political leaders and all things connected with Serbia. When the Skupština re-assembled at the beginning of March, Radić was suspended for three days for misuse of the King's name. The CPP boycotted the Assembly in protest and then declared that the Croatian people would never accept a budget debated in their absence.⁸²

79. In official documents and books, the Radić-Pribićević Opposition bloc is often referred to as the "Peasant-Democrat" Coalition, which gives the misleading impression that the Davidović Democrats were united with the CPP. Since Radić was united with the Independent Democrats, I have chosen to refer to the Opposition coalition as the CPP-ID.

80. On January 23, 1928, Pribićević, who had consistently attacked the Serbs and called them barbarians, suggested in a public speech that the great Serbian victory at Kajmačalan in November 1916 was won as much by the Croats as the Serbs, a suggestion which caused enormous anger in Belgrade. Pribićević, La Dictature...., p. 62.

81. Even though, for the first time, King Alexander had invited Radić to form a government.

82. Kennard to Sir Austen Chamberlain, 7 Mar. 1928, C1956/173/92.

Big demonstrations were organized in the northern part of the Kingdom and Dr Trumbić declared that if there was war between Italy and the Kingdom, he did not believe that the prečani would fight.⁸³ The fact that the Croats had a genuine grievance was shown by the many voices which suggested that the Constitution should be modified - perhaps to include a second chamber, perhaps to modify the electoral law - but certainly to de-centralize and give greater local autonomy.⁸⁴ But the Serbian parties in government would not consider it. One writer observed:-

"The State had got itself into a vicious circle. There was not likely to be a curtailment of party faction unless the Constitution could be reformed but the Constitution could not be reformed because of the existence of party faction."⁸⁵

It was at this unfortunate moment that the Government decided to lay the Nettuno Conventions before the Skupština for ratification.⁸⁶ Their decision raised the Opposition to fever pitch. There were student demonstrations in Dalmatia and Belgrade. The CPP-ID Coalition were convinced that Croat interests were again being sacrificed. Within the Skupština, Pribićević and Radić organized a series of

83. Kennard to Chamberlain, 7 Mar. 1928, C1956/173/92.

84. Kennard to Chamberlain, 15 Mar. 1928, C2166/173/92.

85. Patterson, Yugoslavia, pp. 101-2.

86. In the prevailing atmosphere between the Kingdom and Italy, the ratification of the Nettuno Conventions (see Chapter 4) were regarded by the Italians as a token of Yugoslav sincerity but the Croats feared that the Serbs were going to repeat the Pact of Rome and "sign away" more of their land and people to Italy. On the other hand, it should be noted that Vukičević, the Radical Prime Minister, was under attack from his own party for sacrificing his party's great traditions.

obstructionist and provocative tactics which prevented any serious work being done.⁸⁷ Opposition deputies sustained a continuous pandemonium - banging desk-lids and shouting abuse at the Serbs:-

"One day, the doors of the Skupština were flung open and a naked man, alleged to have been beaten by the police, was carried in to show his bruises. Another day, four members who had been expelled from the House for disobeying the President the day before, refused to accept his ruling and insisted on taking their seats. When invited to leave, they refused. Finally a squad of gendarmes was called in and amid a terrific uproar, a most undignified game of hide-and-seek was played among the benches of the parliament before the four were caught and thrown out. When it was all over and order had been restored, Pribićević rose and made a violent protest against the unconstitutional entry of police into the Parliament."⁸⁸

Such were the standards and conduct of parliamentary life in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. It had become, in the words of one writer, "a circus and a madhouse".⁸⁹ Few of the hopes of the liberators - or liberated - had been achieved. The goal of unification was as far away as ever.⁹⁰ Croats and Serbs were still divided. In the circumstances, it did not seem that they could ever be reconciled. The only place where reform could begin - the Skupština- had become

87. Annual Report for 1928, (Vol. 13708) C99/99/92. Para 104, p.23.

88. Harrison, The Soul of Yugoslavia, p. 181.

89. Adamić, The Native's Return, p. 341.

90. Central Bureau, Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1919-1929, p. xiii.

a farce and thing of contempt. For this, the Serbs were as much to blame as the Croats, but to those who were intensely nationalistic, it seemed that the Croats were primarily responsible for all that had happened. Warnings were uttered in the Skupština that such provocation and such insults would not go unpunished. There were threats that "heads would roll". Finally, on June 20, 1928, a member of the Radical party, Puniša Račić, went to the tribune to utter a final warning:-

"Never," he said, "have Serbian interests been so endangered as now. As a Serbian⁹¹ and a deputy, as I see danger threatening my country, I must openly say that I shall use another weapon to defend Serbian interests."

Seeing that his words had no effect and that the chorus of insults continued, Račić drew a pistol from his pocket and fired five shots, killing two of the Croat front bench immediately and fatally wounding Stjepan Radić.⁹²

91. Račić was in fact a Montenegrin. See "Biographies".

92. For a contemporary account of the murders in the Skupština, see Appendix B.

Chapter 2

The Causes of the Dictatorship

The murders in the Skupština in June 1928 marked a watershed in the political life of the Kingdom. Before they took place, it had been assumed that parliamentary democracy would work. Although Serbs, Croats and Slovenes came from widely different backgrounds and traditions, it was thought that, given time and a little practical experience, a Western-type parliamentary system would evolve. But after the murders, many people came to the conclusion that the type of political life envisaged in the 1921 Constitution just could not be achieved in a situation where one national group was constantly at the throat of the other, where there was mutual mistrust, jealousy - even hatred. Some voices had already suggested that the Constitution should be revised. Others that the whole structure of the Kingdom be changed. There had been calls for a non-partisan Prime Minister - a General, perhaps - to over-ride the warring factions. The idea of dictatorship had also been raised. But some still clung to the hope that the parliamentary system could be made to work and believed (despite all that had happened) that if the Croats would simply accept the system as it was, and co-operate - instead of tearing their opponents to shreds - then drastic change would not be needed. For just over six months, the matter was left in the hands of the politicians. There was time for assessment to be made. Time for reconciliation. An opportunity for some acceptable alternative to be found. But, as the months passed and nothing was achieved and no settlement reached, the full extent of the deadlock between the

Croats and Serbs was seen. The royal dictatorship was not imposed in sudden fear and panic. Only when it became clear that there would be no parliamentary solution to the problem did the King intervene.

Although two of the leading members of the Croatian Peasant Party had been shot dead by Račić¹ and three others seriously injured,² it was a matter of some relief - particularly to the Serbs - that Stjepan Radić had been wounded rather than killed.³ It was felt that, if he had died in the Skupština, there might well have been civil war.⁴ As it was, there were violent protests and demonstrations in Zagreb, in which four were killed, thirty wounded and 160 arrested. But the violence was short-lived. The Cabinet sent out immediate instructions to the local commanders to maintain law and order. A communiqué was published saying that all medical treatment for the injured deputies - and financial support for bereaved families - would be paid for by the State. Telegrams of condolence were sent by the Prime Minister. But the most impressive contribution to peace was a visit by King Alexander to the hospital where Radić had been taken. At his bedside, the King expressed his sorrow at what had happened. Radić was greatly moved by the King's concern and kissed his hand.⁵

When the shock was over, there was universal condemnation of the shootings. Newspapers throughout the country examined the circum-

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1. Radić's nephew, Pavle Radić, and Đjuro Basariček (see Biographies).
 2. Stjepan Radić, Dr Pernar and M. Grandja.
 3. Radić did not die until August 8.
 4. H.F. Armstrong, "After the Assassination of King Alexander", Foreign Affairs (New York), Jan. 1935, p. 210.
 5. Mr Roberts (Belgrade) to Chamberlain, 20 June 1928, C4939/173/92. Pribičević, who was no friend of King Alexander, claimed that he "flew" to the hospital to be with Radić, that the King's visit did not take place and was invented for purely political reasons.

stances of the crime, some suggesting that the deaths were part of a plot,⁶ others stating that the Opposition leaders were morally responsible for what had happened and had got what they deserved.⁷ Many newspapers singled out Pribićević, the Independent Democrat leader, as the villain of the piece. Odjek - the Democrat party paper - said that it was "high time his satanic endeavours to make differences between the Serbs and the Croats, ever since the foundation of the Yugoslav state, should be shown forth in their true light."⁸ Other newspapers blamed right-wing Serbian extremists and pointed out that a scurrilous newspaper - Jedinstvo - had appeared in mid-June, publicly suggesting that someone should murder Radić and Pribićević.⁹

Whilst the newspaper editors interpreted the event according to their individual lights, the Croat deputies travelled home, vowing that they would never return to Belgrade.¹⁰ Two large funerals were held in Zagreb but although they were attended by large crowds there was no incident.¹¹ The Croats were shocked and saddened, not only by what had happened, but also at the unfeeling attitude shown by the Serbs. In Belgrade, there was only one hour's mourning for the dead and merely two black flags on view. In the opinion of many

6. For instance, the Novosti, (Zagreb). Roberts to Chamberlain, 26 Jun. 1928, C5040/173/92.

7. In particular, the Samouprava (Radical party paper) and the Slovenec (Ljubljana). 8. Odjek, 24 Jun. 1928.

9. The editor of Jedinstvo, Dr Vlada Ristović, was murdered in Zagreb on August 4. He had visited the city incognito but had been recognized. He was shot by a locksmith named Sunić, after being beaten up by the crowd.

10. S. Pribićević, La Dictature du Roi Alexandre (Paris 1933) p. 75.

11. The funerals of Pavle Radić and Basariček were paid for by the city of Zagreb, the Opposition leaders having refused to accept the Government's condolences. Over 200,000 attended the funerals, at which the speeches were of an unusually moderate tone. Ibid.

Croats, Dr Perić, the President of the Skupština, was personally responsible for allowing the crime to take place,¹² but it was noted that he had not resigned. Nor had the Radical Party made any effort to condemn Račić for his deed. The Government, too, remained in power. The Croats felt that the least they could have done would be to resign.¹³ Vukičević was, in fact, desperately trying to keep his Government together, unwilling to resign until he had seen Radić and made far-reaching concessions. But Radić was in hospital, well-guarded against any such manoeuvres and surrounded by friends and party members who intended to get him safely back to Zagreb as soon as his health permitted.¹⁴

The political consequence of the murders was a hardening of attitude on the part of the Croats. At a meeting on June 21, the leaders of the CPP-ID Coalition declared that they would no longer sit in a parliament where the blood of their friends and colleagues had been shed.¹⁵ They would not attend the Skupština again unless they received complete satisfaction for all they had suffered, nor would they return until their future safety was fully guaranteed.¹⁶ Before Pribičević left for the funeral ceremonies in Zagreb, he had an audience with King Alexander, who asked him what he thought should be done. Pribičević replied:-

"What ought to be done first is for the Government to be dismissed, the chamber dissolved and free and honest elections held for a new Assembly. I feel sure that the freely elected

12. Despite the atmosphere of murder, Dr Perić had not suspended the sitting and had left the Chamber, leaving Račić to commit his crime.

13. Roberts to Chamberlain, 27 Jun. 1928, C5103/173/92.

14. Roberts to Foreign Office, 3 Jul. 1928, C5185/173/92.

15. Pribičević, La Dictature...., p. 72.

16. Roberts to Foreign Office, 22 June 1928, C4858/173/92.

representatives of the people will quickly settle the question of reparations and sanctions which the Croats have demanded and also give guarantees for the full equality of rights."

Pribićević noted that the King did not seem very happy with his reply and said that he was unwilling to dismiss the Government and call elections, firstly because this would make people think the Government were to blame for the murders and, secondly, because he had "no wish to see the Croats exposing the corpses as part of their election campaign."¹⁷

Both the Radical and Democrat parties held special meetings at the beginning of July to decide what should be done. Neither party was anxious to withdraw from the Government on its own but, fortunately, both parties were agreed that there should be a "concentration" government (with representatives from all parties) and that this Cabinet should take charge as soon as possible.¹⁸ Vukičević therefore handed in his resignation on July 4 and left the King with the delicate task of sounding out political leaders and trying to bring them together. His first choice was Aca Stanojević, an elder statesman of the Radical Party and a lifelong friend of Pašić. But Stanojević's efforts met with little success for Radić refused to see him,¹⁹ and without Radić, there could be no concentration government. The King next invited Radić himself to form a government. Radić was not unwilling to try but insisted that if he were made Prime Minister, he would immediately dissolve the Skupština and order fresh elections. He also refused to have in his Cabinet any Serbs who had been part of Vukičević's

17. Pribićević, op. cit., pp. 73-74.

18. Roberts to Foreign Office, 4 July 1928, C5211/173/92.

19. Pribićević, op. cit., p. 77.

government. The King told Radić that he could not agree to the dissolution and fresh elections unless the other parties agreed. Radić stressed that these were his minimum demands.²⁰

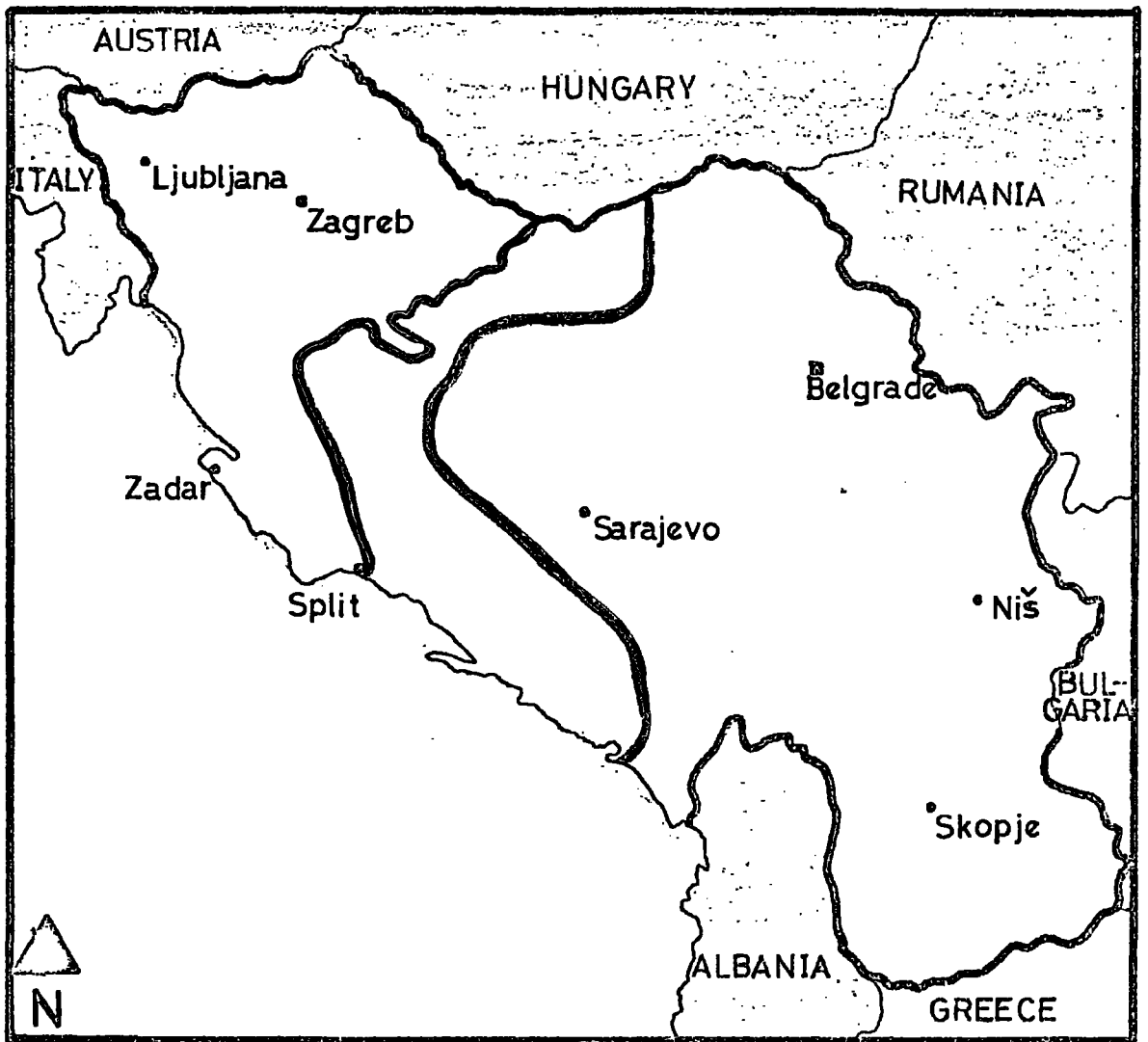
But whilst Radić was negotiating with the King and suggesting a peaceful way out of the crisis, other members of his party were publicly declaring that the time for negotiation was over. In a speech on July 6, Josip Predavec, Vice-President of the CPP, said that since Croatia and Serbia came from quite different cultures, they could never form a united state. He told his audience that the idea of "Yugoslavia" was a "poetic fiction" and claimed that those who had been martyred for the Croat cause would soon see their hopes fulfilled. As far as he was concerned, the time was too late for an all-party government. By the crime of June 20, the Serbs had built a wall between them, effectively dividing Serb and Croat.²¹ The speech greatly annoyed King Alexander²² and he summoned Pribićević - the only active leader of the CPP-ID Coalition in Belgrade - to the Palace on the evening of July 7 and suggested to him that if Predavec's speeches were a faithful reflection of Croat feeling, then it might be better to "amputate" Croatia and leave the Croats and Slovenes to fend for themselves.²³

20. Ibid., pp. 79-80.

21. Roberts to Chamberlain, 11 July 1928, C5464/173/92.

22. Pribićević, op. cit., p. 78.

23. The "Amputation" theory was originally put forward by the Serbian Radical, Stojan Protić, in the newspaper, Radikal, in December 1920. His argument was that Serbia had made a mistake in uniting with Croatia and Slovenia. She should instead have united with Montenegro, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Southern Dalmatia, Vojvodina and parts of Slavonia. This smaller, united Kingdom should have been called Serbia. The theory envisaged the withdrawal of Serbian troops, leaving the Croats and Slovenes on their own. Protić believed that this would have had the effect of making the Croats and Slovenes clamour to



MAP SHOWING RIVAL 'AMPUTATION' PROJECTS

The red line allegedly shows the frontier envisaged by the Serbs in 1928.

The blue line was a Croat counter-suggestion, claiming the greater part of the Dalmatian coast.

According to Pribićević, the King said that, as far as he was concerned, when Radić returned to Zagreb,²⁴ he could announce the separation of Croatia from the Kingdom. The Serbs no longer wanted to have anything to do with the Croats and, in the King's opinion, separation would be best. A few Serbian detachments would be left on the Yugoslav frontier to prevent Italian annexation, but once Croatia had organized her own defensive measures, these units would be withdrawn. Pribićević was amazed by the King's suggestion and said that the King and his advisers should pay no attention to people like Predavec, who were easily carried away. He, Pribićević, and Radić were the only spokesmen for the Opposition and, as far as he was concerned, he categorically rejected all idea of "separatism" or "amputation".²⁵ It was later admitted that the policy of "amputation" had only been mentioned in order to secure from the Opposition leaders a condemnation of the views held by Predavec and others.²⁶ If this was the King's intention, then his plan worked. For that night, Pribićević - in consultation with Radić - submitted to Alexander a formal statement of the CPP-ID position:-

"The Peasant-Democrat Coalition rejects the very

23. (contd) get back into the Kingdom - but on Serbia's terms. Pasić condemned the idea when it was first mooted and, once the 1921 Constitution had been adopted, the whole idea of amputation had been dropped.

24. Radić was due to leave hospital and return to Zagreb on July 8.

25. Pribićević, op. cit., pp. 80-84. Pribićević says that he told the King that if the leaders of the other political parties had agreed to "amputation" they should have been arrested for high treason. It seems - from this incident - that the King was relying on Pribićević's traditional "centralism" to pull Radić and the CPP back from the brink.

26. Kennard to Cushendun, 6 Sept. 1928, C6797/173/92.

idea of opposition to the state as such and declares most categorically that it has proved itself by its history and its labours more patriotic than its accusers. The speech of M Predavec, provoked as it was by the methods of government recently adopted and by what has occurred in the Chamber, as also by the proposal to resolve the crisis by renewing the old system, can at the worst be only interpreted as the expression of a desire to bring about the revision of the Constitution by legal means with a view to the guarantee of equality of rights to all sections of our people. By its proposals for the solution of the present crisis, the Coalition demands a change in the system, not in the State." ²⁷

The King now ventured to create a neutral government led by a non-political figure. The idea of a general had been in his mind for some time but, up to the end of June, he had been reluctant to put the idea into practice unless the various parties agreed.²⁸ Radić, himself, had nothing against a general as Prime Minister - in fact, he had upset many of his opponents by suggesting the idea in February 1928 - but he would only give his support to a neutral government which carried out his minimum demands - the dissolution of the Skupština and fresh elections.²⁹ On July 12, King Alexander invited General Hadžić to form a non-political government, his intention being that the new government should get all the urgent business³⁰

27. Roberts to Chamberlain, 11 July 1928, C5464/173/92.

28. Roberts to O.G. Sargent, 29 June 1928, C5146/173/92.

29. Pribičević, op. cit., p. 84.

30. Passing the Nettuno Conventions, legislating for a foreign loan and the raising of Račić's parliamentary immunity.

through the Skupština, then adjourn till October 20, when parliament would be dissolved and elections fixed for December 1928 or January 1929. But whatever the King's plans, he was disappointed; for, after almost a fortnight of waiting for distinguished non-political personalities from all over the country, from Italy and from London,³¹ to come to Belgrade, General Hadžić was forced to admit that he could not form a Cabinet and handed the matter back to the King. Alexander made no further effort to reconcile the different parties. Instead, he recalled one of the leading members of the Vukičević Cabinet - Dr Korošec - and invited him to form any government he could. Dr Korošec, although a Slovene and a Catholic, was as unacceptable to the Croats as Vukičević had been; and his Cabinet, chosen within four days, proved to be much the same as that which had resigned on July 4.³² Far from bringing reconciliation and an end to the crisis, it seemed that the choice of the new Cabinet would simply widen the breach between the two halves of the Kingdom.³³

There can be no doubt that throughout the lengthy political crisis, the attitude of the Croat people was one of extreme moderation. Perhaps they were thankful Radić was still alive and able to fight for their cause. Certainly, they gave him a warm welcome when

31. The Hadžić "neutral" Cabinet would have consisted of people such as Rakić, the Yugoslav Minister in Rome; Djurić, the Minister in London; Tartaglia, the Mayor of Split; and Dr Štampar, a leading Government health official.

32. Seven Radicals, four Democrats, two Slovenes and one Moslem; Kennard to Chamberlain, 2 Aug. 1928, C6014/173/92.

33. According to the Times correspondent in Belgrade, the Korošec government was not expected to last longer than three months. "It is regarded as a makeshift to gain time for a bargain to be struck with M. Radić." The Times, July 30, 1928.

he returned to Zagreb. Flags were flying in the city and his home was protected both by the police and by an honorary guard of peasants.³⁴ But his health continued to cause concern. There were complications.³⁵ On July 27, Radić was moved to a hospital and a specialist brought from Vienna. Daily bulletins were published. On August 8, he died. For two days, his body lay in state in the Seljački Dom³⁶ in Zagreb; then on August 12, he was buried. Over 300,000 people attended his funeral, including thousands of peasants from all over Croatia. It was estimated that the funeral procession alone was over eight miles long.³⁷

In the meantime, the Government had re-opened the Skupština to allow essential legislation to be passed. But when the first session was held, only 130 deputies were present.³⁸ The Croats and their allies made it clear that they would boycott the Assembly until their demands had been granted. At a meeting of the CPP-ID Coalition, held on August 1 in the building once occupied by the Croatian Sabor, three resolutions were passed. The first stated that, in the opinion of the Coalition, the rump Skupština left in Belgrade had no power to legislate for the Kingdom as a whole and that any financial agreement (such as a foreign loan) entered into by the Government would not be regarded as binding. Secondly, they pledged themselves to conduct a determined struggle to obtain a new

34. Consular Report from Zagreb (July 1928) C5468/173/92.

35. Diabetes and pneumonia.

36. Literally, "The Peasants' Home" - headquarters of the CPP.

37. Kennard to Cushendun, 16 Aug. 1928, C6316/173/92.

38. The government raised the immunity of Račić, paid homage to Basariček and Pavle Radić and presented their programme which included a draft law for the ratification of the Nettuno Conventions. For a copy of the government programme (in French) see Avala press agency hand-out in despatch from Kennard to Chamberlain, 2 Aug. 1928, C6015/173/92.

structure for the state in which all nationalities would have equal rights. Thirdly, they invited all who shared their views to join them.³⁹ As a result of their appeal, Dr Trumbić⁴⁰ and Dr Pavelić⁴¹ joined the Peasant Party to present a united Croat front against Belgrade.

But, to the Government, the Opposition seemed a very makeshift affair. It was a Coalition, but only in name. It had no constructive political programme. It had no considered plans for constitutional reform. And it was unlikely that it would ever have any plans for constitutional reform because the Coalition now consisted of centralists, federalists, autonomists and separatists, who would never be able to agree. The Government believed that the Opposition had nothing in common except their desire to exploit a tragic event for their own selfish purposes, and felt that it would be only a matter of time before the Coalition split up.⁴²

But after the death of Radić, the Croatian Peasant Party elected a new leader, Dr Vladimir Maček. Dr Maček was not a colourful figure and lacked many of the more endearing characteristics of his predecessor. But he had been one of Radić's chief advisers and, as a lawyer, he now brought to the dispute a professional tenacity and an incomparable talent for obstruction.⁴³ On August 20, he issued

39. For the full text of the CPP-ID resolutions, see Pribićević, op. cit., pp. 93-4. 40. The only Croat Federalist deputy. Joined the CPP on Aug. 4. 41. The only Croat Frankist deputy. See ch. 9. 42. Kennard to Cushendun, 16 Aug. 1928, C6315/173/92. 43. Kennard to Cushendun, 16 Aug. 1928, C6316/173/92. There was relief in some circles that Maček - rather than Predavec - had been chosen, Predavec being regarded as ambitious and easily carried away. Once elected, Maček said that the Croats were now determined "to secure their freedom within the historical boundaries of the triune kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia or - as he put it - from Zemun to Kotor."

his first statement denying the right of the Korošec government to represent Croatia at the Inter-Parliamentary Conference then meeting in Berlin.⁴⁴ He also sent a delegate to the Conference to "represent Croatia in the face of world opinion."⁴⁵ The Government warned Dr Maček that his behaviour represented "an attack upon the unity of the state" but Pribičević retaliated by publishing in his newspaper, Glas (The Voice), the full story of how the political leaders in Belgrade had suggested to the King in July that he should "amputate" Croatia.⁴⁶ His disclosures provoked a major row which lasted for over a week. Whilst accusations and denials were being made, Dr Maček made a statement to the Press. He said that since the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was a voluntary creation, the idea of "amputation" was unthinkable. But, like Radić before him, he stressed the absolute necessity for each section of the state to have equal rights and said that, if these were not granted, then the Croats would not be afraid to separate. The British Minister reported:-

"The statements of Dr Maček have caused no little sensation in the country as, in the effort to clear himself from the charge of separatism, he has for the first time unmistakably declared himself in favour of a federalist state."⁴⁷

In September, the CPP-ID Coalition decided upon a new method to embarrass the Government and draw attention to their cause. There

44. Kennard to Cushendun, 22 Aug. 1928, C6464/173/92.

45. His delegate was Dr Juraj Krnjević, a prominent member of the CPP.

46. Kennard to Cushendun, 6 Sept. 1928, C6797/173/92.

47. Kennard to Cushendun, 12 Sept. 1928, C7003/173/92.

would be a social boycott. As from September 20, no member of the CPP-ID would have anything to do with any member of the Government or any of its supporters. They would discontinue social relationships of every kind. The idea was widely debated in the press before it was put into operation and although it proved impossible to enforce - and not very effective - the fact that the Croats were willing to cut off all contact with a large section of their fellow-countrymen caused much bitterness and ill-feeling.⁴⁸ On October 21, at a mass-meeting of some 10-15,000 peasants at Sisak, Maček re-affirmed his Party's decision never to re-enter the Skupština in Belgrade. He said that they would carry on their fight outside the Skupština until they won freedom for their people and their fatherland. He repeated Radić's words: "There is no longer any law. There is no longer any constitution. There are only the people and the King." But, said Maček, the King had so far done nothing and he hinted that the Peasant Party might once again become republican in outlook. Pribičević, in his speech, repeated that the Croats would not regard themselves bound by any foreign loan and Dr Pernar, one of the survivors of June 20, made it clear that the Coalition would not enter into any conversations with the Serbs until the Serbs were ready for a free Croatia beside a free Serbia.⁴⁹

Many people in Belgrade felt that the meeting at Sisak - and all that had been said - had made the task of reconciliation more difficult. There were unmistakable signs that the Croats were moving to an impossible position from which they would not be able to move except at the price of eating their words and looking foolish.⁵⁰

48. Kennard to Cushendun, 27 Sept. 1928, C7386/173/92.

49. Kennard to Cushendun, 24 Oct. 1928, C8029/173/92.

50. Ibid. See also Kennard to Cushendun, 18 Oct. 1928, C7852/173/92, which suggests an element of rivalry in the CPP-ID, each party trying to outdo the other in extremism.

Many politicians therefore hoped that some initiative might be taken before it became too late. Speaking at the Radical Party Conference on September 24, Stanojević said that they must clear a way for "a fraternal agreement with our brothers, the Croats." The Radical Party had always believed that there should be agreement between Serbs and Croats and he was sure that a compromise could still be arranged. But although the many other speakers at the Conference also showed a great desire to conciliate the Croats, they did not consider calling for the dissolution of the Skupština and fresh elections which, as was well-known, were the Croats' minimum demands.⁵¹

At the Democrat Party Conference on October 27, Davidović said that his party had nothing against constitutional revision, if this was the means of bringing Serbs and Croats together. But those who wanted to revise the Constitution should say in what way they wanted it revised.⁵² Dr Vojislav Marinković, the Democrat Foreign Minister, was less conciliatory. He told the Croats that, whether the Constitution was revised or not, he could personally guarantee that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes alike would service any loan the Government raised.⁵³ But, as was pointed out at the Conference, the Constitution could not be revised unless 60% of the Skupština agreed and there would have to be negotiations and a rapprochement if this was to come about.⁵⁴

But there was still a sizeable - and powerful - body of opinion

51. Kennard to Cushendun, 27 Sept 1928, C7386/173/92. The Government did in fact use a businessman, Miloš Savčić (an ID member), to act as a go-between, but without success. Pribičević said to him that there could be no hope of agreement whilst the present "Serbian hegemony remained in existence."

52. Kennard to Cushendun, 30 Oct. 1928. C8181/173/92

53. Annual Report for 1928, (Vol. 13708), C99/99/92, Para 118, p.27.

54. Kennard to Cushendun, 30 Oct. 1928, C8181/173/92.

in Serbia which felt that the Croats should be left to "stew in their own juice."⁵⁵ The editor of the newspaper Vreme suggested that now the Croats had imposed a social boycott, the Government should impose a financial boycott which would soon bring the Croats to their senses.⁵⁶ The Director of the National Savings Bank, Dr Nedeljković, in a most forthright article on November 1, said that the Croats had always hated the Serbs and that any agreement between them would, of necessity, be to the detriment of the Serbs.⁵⁷ Many Radicals in the Vukičević wing of the party made speeches deliberately inciting the Serbs against the Croats - ending their attacks with the cry "Živeo Račić!"⁵⁸ - and on November 18, the Minister of Public Worship, Cvetković,⁵⁹ led 700 supporters into a rival Radical meeting in Prokuplje, interrupted a speech calling for reconciliation with the Croats and broke up the meeting with force.⁶⁰ Such was the power exercised by the "hard-line" Radicals that the Government was afraid to make any positive move for fear of resignations and another political crisis.⁶¹

In the end, it was the Democrats who provoked the crisis. At the beginning of December, there were several clashes between police

55. The Times, 21, Nov. 1928

56. Kennard to Cushendun, 19 Sept. 1928, C7221/173/92.

57. Vreme, 1 Nov. 1928.

58. "Long live Račić!"

59. Cvetković was later Yugoslav ~~Foreign~~ ^{Prime} Minister under the Regency and signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy in March 1941.

60. The Times, 20 Nov. 1928.

61. On October 22, the editor of Narodni Val (National Wave), a CPP newspaper, was arrested for hinting that King Alexander would not long survive Radić. This was taken by the police as a threat against the King's life, but it also reflected current feeling in Zagreb that the Serbian extremists who killed Radić might next turn upon the King - especially if he were to do anything to help or conciliate the Croats. Consular Report from Zagreb, 12, Nov. 1928, C8574/173/92.

and students in Zagreb as celebrations were being held to mark the tenth anniversary of the Kingdom.⁶² It was a minor skirmish but three people were killed. The CPP-ID Coalition accused the Government of provoking trouble by allowing the celebrations to take place.⁶³ The Democrats blamed the CPP. The Radicals blamed Communist extremists.⁶⁴ As a protest against the deaths, the students at Zagreb University went on strike and the University was closed. On the initiative of Dr Korosec,⁶⁵ a new Veliki Župan (Regional Commander) General Maksimović, was sent to Zagreb. At the time, this appointment was seen as a movement by the Government against the Croats⁶⁶ but with the benefit of hindsight, it seems simply that the Government was anxious to preserve law and order.⁶⁷ The CPP denounced the appointment as

62. On December 1. The celebrations consisted of a Thanksgiving in the Cathedral and a military torchlight procession in the evening. Students hung black flags from the Cathedral and were arrested. Upon their arrest, shots were fired at the police by persons unknown. Later, there were more black flags and more shots. The torchlight procession was followed by a crowd shouting abuse at the Army.

63. In fact, the Government had tried to minimize any possible conflict by holding their main celebrations on October 7-8 to commemorate the breakthrough at Salonika- precisely to avoid the emotive national question.

64. With some justification. As Pribičević noted, there had been a marked increase in Communist activity during the summer as Communists sought to exploit the disunity. Kennard to Cushendun, 11 Sept. 1928, C7005/173/92.

65. The appointment of General Maksimović, a Serb and formerly Professor at the Military Academy in Belgrade, may well have been made at King Alexander's insistence. Kennard to Chamberlain, 18 Dec. 1928, C9712/173/92.

66. The retiring Župan warned the public of Zagreb that the law for the protection of public safety held penalties of death or 20 years imprisonment for those who had caused trouble.

67. A similar appointment had recently been made in Skopje. Kennard to Chamberlain, 7 Dec. 1928, C9251/173/92.

unconstitutional and Dr Maček said: "the worse the Government measures, the better. The whole situation will turn into a conflagration which will swallow up the despots in Belgrade."⁶⁸ Using the excuse that Korošec had failed to consult his Cabinet colleagues before the appointment of the Veliki Župan,⁶⁹ Davidović persuaded those of his party who were in the Government, to resign. For some time, he had been disappointed by the bland, complacent way the Government had been neglecting the Croat problem.⁷⁰ He had been persuaded by Dr Marinković that he should remain in the Coalition, but Marinković was now a sick man and had to go to Switzerland for a cure.⁷¹ Davidović believed that now was the time to come to some agreement with the Croats.⁷² Against the advice of the King,⁷³ but confident that he could gain some slight political advantage,⁷⁴ Davidović withdrew his members from the Government and, on December 30, Korošec also resigned.

68. Kennard to Chamberlain, 12 Dec. 1928, C9407/173/92. 69. Ibid.

70. Korošec's attitude was that nothing could be done for the moment. Eventually, he believed, a Coalition Government (including the CPP-ID) would be formed. But he thought that the choice of Prime Minister and the distribution of portfolios would prove extremely difficult. He therefore did nothing to hasten agreement.

71. Marinković suffered from tuberculosis.

72. Kennard to Chamberlain, 18 Dec. 1928, C9712/173/92.

73. Who wished to see the Budget passed before any decisive change was made in the Government. The Times, 21 Nov. 1928.

74. According to one writer, Davidović believed he had received reasonable approaches from the Croats and intended to bring about the Cabinet's fall by proposing to indemnify the peasants for recent bad harvests, even though no resources were available for this. He then planned to use the ensuing elections to make peace with the Croats - fighting on the slogan "a bonus for the peasants" - and would win wide support and form a government with the Croats. The King made efforts to prevent Davidović precipitating the crisis and managed to postpone it for five days. Armstrong, "After the Assassination...", op. cit., p 212.

Two courses now lay before the King. Either he could go through another lengthy political crisis with protracted negotiations with each of the political leaders, hearing the same sterile arguments and allegations, and eventually end up with another unstable government coalition.⁷⁵ Or else, he could exercise his personal initiative and take power into his own hands. The idea had been in his mind for many months, probably ever since the murders in the Skupština.⁷⁶ But, at that time, both public opinion and the Press had been against the idea of dictatorship.⁷⁷ Now, as the country faced its second major crisis in less than a year, with Italian troops close to the frontier and a pressing need for a foreign loan to stabilize the dinar, Alexander felt that this was perhaps the time to act.

But, before he made his final decision, he decided to have one last meeting with the Croat and Independent Democrat leaders. Dr Maček and Pribičević were invited to come to Belgrade to see the King. Maček

75. Kennard to Chamberlain, 4 Jan. 1929, C103/97/92, reports that "the Press and public opinion are, as usual, revelling in every kind of possible and impossible combination, complication and all the features of the tragi-comedy which constitute a parliamentary crisis here. And, no doubt, all the politicians are thinking how they can best exploit the situation in their own interests without regard for those of the unity of the Kingdom."

76. Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p. 212. According to the Times' Belgrade correspondent, plans for the dictatorship were laid as early as August 1928, whilst the King was on holiday at Han Pijesak in Bosnia. Many of those who were to be his leading ministers under the dictatorship were there - notably Marinković, Uzunović, Srškić, Maksimović, and General Živković. The Times, 16 Jan. 1929. The King was certainly talking openly about the possibility of dictatorship in November 1928 when he visited Paris. See S.W. Tyrell (Paris) to Chamberlain, 9 Jan. 1929, C211/97/92 and the letter from C Howard Smith to Kennard, 16 Jan. 1929, C405/97/92.

77. Consular Reports for June 1928, C5466/173/92.

saw the King on the morning of January 4, 1929 and has given us his own account of the meeting:-

"I gave him (the King) a detailed account of all the grievances the Croats had been harbouring against the regime since 1918. I emphasized that the core of the trouble was that State policy was not only being decided without the Croats but was actually aimed to harm them; for it had certainly proved detrimental to their rights and interests. The principal fault rested with those in Serbia who considered Yugoslavia as an enlarged Serbia rather than a new multi-national state. I then quoted the historic advice of the old Magyar statesman, Francis Deak to the Emperor Franz Josef: 'If a vest is buttoned the wrong way, the only thing is to unbutton it and button it again the right way.' To consolidate Yugoslavia, it would be necessary to go back to 1918 and start all over, this time with the true representatives of Croatia taken into account." ⁷⁸

According to the King, ⁷⁹ Alexander then asked Maček to state the Croats'

78. V. Maček, In the Struggle for Freedom, (Pennsylvania 1968) pp. 121-122. It was Maček's first meeting with King Alexander. Maček noted that "the King listened in silence to what I had to say, scribbling a few notes in his agenda." Maček regretted that the meeting lasted only half-an-hour, after which 'he graciously dismissed me.'

79. Armstrong, op. cit., p. 213. Armstrong says that not long after these talks, the King gave him an account of the conversations and an exact description of the demands posed by Maček, reading them to me from the entries he had made in his diary in Maček's presence. Armstrong states that the demands harmonized with what he had ascertained in his own talks with Maček "though now they were expressed in much

minimum demands:⁸⁰

"In reply, the Croat leader demanded that elections be called at once for a Constituent Assembly to draw up a new Constitution. The King must agree, he said, that under that Constitution, the country would be divided into seven states with 'historic frontiers', each with a separate legislature and a separate administration.⁸¹ Delegations from these state legislatures would meet in Belgrade to supervise foreign relations. But the control of education, commerce (excluding foreign), finance (except international), railways, telegraphs and even the post office would remain in the hands of the local assemblies. Finally, the army was no longer to be national but each state would raise its own forces and these could not be called upon for service outside its borders except with the approval of the local legislature."⁸²

79. (contd.) more detail and with solemn finality." Although Maček does not say that his federal plans were discussed on Jan 4 (only on Jan 5), it seems clear - both from Pribičević and Armstrong - that they were discussed on both days.

80. At a speech at Križevici, on Dec 30, Maček declared: "Once and for all" that he was seeking "complete autonomy for Croatia". He said that he hoped "to see the same happy result also in Slovenia, Bosnia Hercegovina, Vojvodina and Montenegro." He concluded by saying that if, after this, any Serbian politician persisted in asking him what the Croats wanted, he must be either "a fool or an ass." Letter from H.M. Consul (Zagreb) to Kennard, 2 Jan 1929, C106/97/92.

81. The seven states would be Croatia -Dalmatia, Slovenia, Vojvodina, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro.

82. All accounts of Maček's demands agree - except for this ref-

The King saw Pribičević on the afternoon of January 4, 1929. By all accounts, it was not a happy meeting. According to Pribičević, the King immediately read out what Maček had proposed. Pribičević said that he thought the proposals were not unreasonable and that the King should not miss any opportunity to remedy the situation. He felt that the King should nominate a Government which would tell the Skupština that the Constitution was to be revised. The Chamber should be immediately dissolved and elections held for a Constituent Assembly. The Constitution could then be revised legally.⁸³ According to what Pribičević told Maček, the Independent Democrat leader had reproached the King for his total incomprehension of the political situation. He pointed out that the King had been able to spare "no more than twenty minutes" to talk to Dr Maček, the representative of all the Croats, while spending hours at interviews with relatively obscure personalities from Serbia:-

"In answer to Pribičević's remonstrances, the King rolled up the sleeve of his uniform and pointed to his veins with the bland remark:
"I cannot possibly deny my own blood". Pribičević thereupon had challenged him: 'You will

82. (contd.) reference to the position of the Army, which occurs only in Armstrong's account, "After the Assassination...." (Foreign Affairs, New York) pp. 213-4. Between August and December 1928, Maček stated that foreign affairs and defence would be left to a central government; but the idea of local armies had been raised in 1920-1.

83. Pribičević, La Dictature...., pp. 101-2. His views had not changed since the previous July and he still held firmly to the resolutions of August 1, 1928. His advice to the King corresponds exactly with what he told the British Minister in December 1928. Kennard to Sargent, 21 Dec. 1928. C9747/173/92.

have to decide whether you want to be King of the Serbs alone or of the Croats as well. Should the second be your choice then come to Zagreb and solve the Croatian question on the spot.' After this, Pribićević told me, he had turned on his heels and left the King's office without another word, slamming the door hard behind him." ⁸⁴

King Alexander later told the British Minister that he had been very dissatisfied with his meeting with Pribićević, whom he had found "unbalanced and insincere". ⁸⁵ Pribićević was a man of energy and mercurial temper and a strange combination of fanatical patriotism and egoism which led him to identify his personal well-being with the well-being of the State. ⁸⁶ The King had no further dealings with Pribićević.

The King now consulted the Serbian political leaders and acquainted them with the CPP-ID proposals. They rejected them out of hand. But Davidović suggested that, if possible, a compromise should be worked out. ⁸⁷ The King therefore invited Dr Maček to see him again the following day to discuss the problem once more:-

"At this second audience on January 5, Alexander asked me to expound my conception of a re-organized Yugoslavia. I complied readily enough. I said that the very existence of Yugoslavia depended on its being founded on a truly federal basis that would keep intact the seven federal unities within their histor-

84. Maček, In the Struggle for Freedom, pp. 122-3.

85. Kennard to Chamberlain, 11 Jan. 1929, C480/97/92.

86. Armstrong, "After the Assassination....", p. 213.

87. The Times, 7 Jan. 1929.

ical boundaries as they had existed in 1918
 All of these should have separate govern-
 ments and parliaments for their autonomous affairs.
 A central government would assume authority over all
 common affairs, linking the different unities
 together in their relation to foreign countries
 as one representative state. To the King's remark
 about possible divergences between the laws of the
 different unities, I replied that I did not believe
 in the probability of such conflicts, since all
 autonomous laws would be subject to approval by
 the common King. Alexander had no comment on my
 last words but nevertheless thanked me for the
 'valuable information', adding determinedly: 'Be
 assured that I have been properly convinced that
 things cannot go on in this way. I shall take them
 into my own hands and am confident that I can
 succeed in putting an end to all these conflicts.'⁸⁸

According to the King's account, the only modification that Macek
 proposed at his second meeting was that the future federal Kingdom
 might be best with just five states. He thought that federal Croatia
 should consist of part of Bosnia-Hercegovina and the Adriatic Coast
 as far as the Gulf of Kotor. In return, the Croats would agree to
 the Serbian federal state absorbing the whole of Macedonia and the
 remaining part of Bosnia-Hercegovina.⁸⁹

Possessing the Croat's final demands, the King called in
 Professor Slobodan Jovanović, an expert in constitutional law, and

88. Macek, In the Struggle for Freedom, pp. 123-24. The gap in the
 account is yet another list of the seven states.

89. Armstrong, op. cit., pp. 213-4.

asked him whether "a monarchy, an army, a customs union - and the rest separate - would amount to a proper union?" Jovanović said that, under constitutional law, it was a union very similar to that of Austria-Hungary. The King said no more." ⁹⁰

When the British Minister went to Zagreb to see Dr Maček in December 1928 to find out what the Croats really wanted, he had asked Dr Maček what the Croats would do if their demands were not accepted. Very hesitantly, Maček had admitted that "revolution would be the only alternative." ⁹¹

The King was now faced with the situation where the Croats were resolute in their demands for federalism and the Serbs equally resolutely opposed. At one extreme, there was "amputation", at the other "revolution". And in the background was the Army - "the one organization which is universally respected throughout the Kingdom" ⁹² - whose opinion had been clearly stated by General Kalafatović in July 1928: "The Army" said the General, "will never allow irresponsible politicians to wreck the future of Yugoslavia." ⁹³

The King told a leading French journalist:

"The machine is no longer functioning. I had to decide - either to take the responsibility upon myself or to declare publicly that I was incapable of saving my country from the chaos which was bordering upon anarchy. There was the dilemma:

90. Pribičević, La Dictature du Roi Alexandre, p. 103.

91. Kennard to Sargent, 21 Dec. 1928, C9747/173/92.

92. Kennard to Cushendun, 16 Aug. 1928, C6315/173/92.

93. Report by the British Military Attaché, Colonel Giles, on feelings within the Army after the death of Radić. 23 Aug. 1928, C6468/173/92.

either to risk the unity and possibly the
future of my country or to expose myself and
my person, by taking the necessary power into
my hands for the time being. I did not hesitate
long." 94

94. Central Bureau of the Presidency of the Ministerial Council,
Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1919-1929, (Belgrade 1930) p. ix .

Chapter 3

The Royal Dictatorship

The timing of the coup d'état was carefully planned. It took place early in the morning of January 6, 1929, at the very moment when the Orthodox Church was celebrating its Christmas Festival and the newspaper offices had closed for a three-day holiday. The newspapers which had gone to press on the previous evening, made no mention of the impending coup and the only indication that something had taken place was a series of posters hastily stuck up on the street corners of Belgrade, which contained a Royal Proclamation by King Alexander:

"To all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes,

"The highest interests of the nation and of the State, as well as their future, compel me, both as Sovereign and as a son of my country to address myself directly to the people to tell them openly and sincerely the course my conscience and my love for my country compel me to take.....

"My expectations, and those of my people, that the evolutions of our internal political life would bring about order and consolidation within our country, have not been realized. Both parliamentary life and political outlook generally have become more and more negative, and both the nation and the State are today suffering from the consequences of this state of affairs.....

"The regrettable disputes and the events in the

Skupština have undermined all the confidence of the nation in this institution. All harmony - and even those elementary relations between parties and individuals - have become altogether impossible. Instead of developing and strengthening the feeling of national union, Parliamentarism as it has developed has begun to provoke moral disorganization and national disunion....." ¹

The King declared that it was his sacred duty to preserve national unity by any means in his power and he announced that, in the interests of the State, he had decided to suspend the 1921 Constitution and dissolve the Skupština. Henceforth, all laws and executive authority would be conducted by royal decree. ²

Later in the day, as if to give substance to the Proclamation, a special edition of the Službene Novine (Official Gazette) appeared. It gave the text of four new laws to be issued by royal decree. ³ The first law defined the power of the Crown and the Supreme Administration of the State. The law declared that the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was no longer a "constitutional and parliamentary" monarchy but a "hereditary" monarchy in which all power and authority would be vested in the King alone. ⁴ The second law was a Defence of the Realm Act, giving the police extra powers to enforce public security. The

1. Translation of the King's proclamation from the French text in Augarde and Sicard, Le Roi Chevalier, (Paris 1935), pp. 112-115.

2. Ibid. A full text of the Royal Proclamation appears in Appendix C.

3. Službene Novine III, (Belgrade, 6 Jan. 1929). For English texts of the first three laws, see contents of despatch from Kennard to Chamberlain, 10 Jan. 1929, C322/97/92.

4. This law consisted of 21 clauses which replaced Parts iv, v, vi and viii (Articles 90-93) and xiv of the 1921 Constitution. By it, the powers of Government ministers were also substantially reduced.

Act made it illegal to hold political meetings either indoors or out-of-doors, forbade the carrying of arms and empowered the police to act at their own discretion against "chauvinistic, national or confessional associations".⁵ The third law abolished all country and district councils and made provision for the appointment of royal commissioners - or commanders - (Velike Župane) to exercise the King's will at a regional level.⁶ The fourth and final law imposed complete censorship upon the Press.⁷ With the publication of these four laws, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes became a royal dictatorship - and remained so for the rest of Alexander's reign.

For his new government, the King chose fourteen ministers - including six Serbs and four Croats.⁸ Only three members of the previous Cabinet were retained and five of the new ministers were unconnected with any political party. General Hadžić, who some had thought would be made Prime Minister,⁹ was given the War Office, whilst Dr Marinković remained Minister of Foreign Affairs, much to the relief of those who feared a change in the foreign policy of the Kingdom.¹⁰ Most of the other appointments were unexceptional - even dull - but the choice of General Živković¹¹ as Prime Minister

5. Law on Public Security - again consisting of 21 clauses.

6. Law modifying Provincial Municipal Administration - 8 clauses. Six Župans were appointed on Jan 23 and four others on Jan 25.

7. The Press Law consisted of 16 clauses and gave the new Government complete power over all newspapers and publications. For a full text of the Law in English, see translation from Službene Novine III (6 Jan. 1929) in despatch C714/97/92. (Vol 13706).

8. A list of the members of the Živković government is given in Appendix D - together with subsequent changes.

9. Kennard to Chamberlain, 10 Jan. 1929, C321/97/92.

10. Memorandum on conversation between O.G. Sargent and Djurić, Yugoslav Minister in London, 7 Jan 1929, C97/97/92.

11. See "Biographies".

aroused widespread speculation as to whether the coup had been forced on the King by the Army or whether Alexander was using the General as an instrument for his own purposes.¹² Time was to show that the King was very much in command of his country but, nonetheless, many people wondered why he should have chosen such a controversial figure as his chief minister in the new Government.¹³

Mr Kennard, the British Minister, saw the King on January 11 and asked him why he had made this particular choice. Alexander explained that a complete impasse had been reached in the parliamentary system and that the standard of administration in the Kingdom was "asiatic" in character.

"In speaking of General Živković, he (the King) did not insist that he was a man of great ability, but that he had energy and, above all things, iron nerves - a most essential quality in this country."¹⁴

Alexander might also have added that the General was a man of unquestioned loyalty, in whom he had complete trust. Opponents of the regime, unwilling to attack the King, heaped on Živković their wrath.¹⁵ They described him as the most hated man in Serbia and said

12. Kennard to Chamberlain, 10 Jan 1929, C321/97/92

13. Živković was well-known to be a member of the "White Hand" organization. Many rumours circulated about him - some, emanating from the Italian Legation in Belgrade, alleged that he was a homosexual, whilst others declared that he had obtained lucrative commissions from Government contracts. None of these rumours was ever substantiated. 14. Kennard to Chamberlain, 11 Jan 1929, C480/97/92.

15. See conversation between Kennard and Dr Gregor Zerjav, a Slovene lawyer and member of the CPP-ID Opposition Coalition, on January 12. Zerjav was a close friend of Pribičević. Kennard to Chamberlain, 12 Jan. 1929, C481/97/92.

that he was intensely unpopular in the Army. They predicted an increase in ministerial corruption, ruthless suppression of opponents and ultimately civil war. But Srškić and Marinković, who were colleagues of Živković in the new government, assured Kennard that although he was

"a man of little education, he had considerable political sense, was energetic and hard-working, a pastmaster in the art of compromise which rendered it unlikely that he would act impetuously and without due regard for the exigencies of the situation."¹⁶

Marinković told Kennard that it would take at least two to three years before the King's programme could be fully implemented and that the new regime would remain in power until the administration had been thoroughly overhauled and reformed.¹⁷

The new Government began its work with great zest. New laws establishing the lines of authority within the State were rapidly drawn up.¹⁸ The law courts, the Audit department and the Regional Commissioners all had their roles defined.¹⁹ Further measures affecting schools and post-office savings were passed²⁰ and many

16. Kennard to Chamberlain, 10 Jan. 1929, C321/97/92. 17. Ibid.

18. Law concerning Council of State and Administrative Courts, Službene Novine, 8 Jan. 1929; translation - C583/97/92. Regulations regarding the State Court for the Protection of the State, Službene Novine, 17 Jan 1929; Regulation on the Composition of the Council of State, ibid., translations - C722/97/92. Law on the Competence of the Council of Ministers, Službene Novine, 29 Jan 1929; translation - C903/97/92.

19. Laws of Jan 20 (C722/97/92), Jan 11 (C556/97/92) and Jan 22 (C722/97/92) respectively.

20. Laws of Jan 17 and Jan 20 - translations of both in C722/97/92.

minor administrative changes were introduced to ensure the smooth running of the State. Before the month was out, new laws governing contracts for public works and a proper scale of wages for public officials were announced.²¹ A Criminal Justice Bill was signed but publication was delayed.²²

This spate of legislation was in itself very impressive and made an appreciable change from the torpor of previous years. But the Minister of Justice admitted to Kennard that things were happening too quickly and that many of the bills being published were poorly-drafted and had not been properly thought out. To remedy this deficiency, a special law was passed on February 2, providing for a body of experts to join the Ministry of Justice, who would be responsible for improving the quality of bills being produced.²³

On January 21, 1929, all political parties in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia were abolished and those in Serbia on January 24.²⁴ Croatian clubs in Dalmatia were also closed down and anyone likely to be hostile to the regime was placed under strict police surveillance.²⁵ Not unnaturally, the speed and activity of the King and his Government left the old politicians highly disgruntled. Trumbić and Pribićević were silent but Dr Maček was reported to have told a Hungarian journalist that "he had no faith in the new Government and feared the worst." He denied the truth of this report but, not long afterwards, in an interview with a journalist of Le Matin, he spoke

21. Laws of Jan. 26 and Jan 29: Details given in C903/97/92.

22. Ibid. 23. Law instituting a Supreme Legislative Council, Službene Novine, 2 Feb. 1929. Kennard to Chamberlain, 6 Feb. 1929, Srškić told Kennard that a number of Slovene and Croat legal experts would be appointed to the Council.

24. Kennard to Chamberlain, 25, Jan. 1929, C722/97/92.

25. V. Maček, In the Struggle for Freedom, (Pennsylvania 1968), p. 126.

out strongly against the Greater Serbia policy of Maksimović, Srškić and Uzunović. He denied that he had any wish to see the Kingdom broken up, but expressed his doubts as to whether the King could resist the wiles of the Serbian politicians.²⁶ At the end of January, there was talk of a "Democratic Front" against the new regime. The Front, it was thought, would consist of Democrats, Independent Democrats and former members of the CPP, but nothing came of the plan, partly because of the strong determination of the Dictatorship to resist all opposition and partly because of the immense public support for the King - particularly in Croatia.²⁷ There was a general feeling of relief that there had been no financial repercussions as a result of the coup. In fact, the economic situation was much improved because the rapid selling of the dinar had been halted and there was a growing public disposition to regard politics as "dead".²⁸

But, even though the Government was spared immediate opposition and the acrimony of public debate, they still had many difficulties to face. Two months were spent writing - and, in some cases, re-writing - the laws of the regime and Ministers gradually came to grips with the problems which had been bedevilling the country since 1918. On March 21, 1929, they published a programme of reforms which they hoped to bring about. The main objectives of the programme, which had been prepared under the personal supervision of King Alexander, were:-

(1) the reduction of administration and expenditure; (2) an end to

26. Mr Boden (Zagreb) to Kennard (Belgrade), 23 Jan. 1929. Mr Boden also reported that the people seemed to believe in the King's good faith. The fact that there were five Croatsians - reputed to be "good" Croatsians - in the Cabinet was also a re-assuring factor. Kennard to Chamberlain, 25 Jan. 1929, C722/97/92.

27. Mr Boden to Kennard, 30 Jan. 1929, C905/97/92; the suppression of the Serbian political parties made a good impression in Zagreb.

28. Kennard to Chamberlain, 31 Jan. 1929, C903/97/92.

corruption in the public services; (3) the unification and codification of laws and (4) the application of improved methods to agriculture, mines, forestry and other commercial enterprises.²⁹ The wording of the programme was extremely vague and Kennard observed that

"there is a general impression that General Živković and his government are feeling nervous as to the magnitude of the task which they have set themselves."³⁰

There were also grounds for supposing that much of the cost of carrying out the fourth objective would be dependent on the Government obtaining a foreign loan and, by the middle of March, this seemed more and more unlikely.³¹ Large credits, obtained by previous governments and now requiring repayment, had only just come to light,³² and the French government chose this moment to insist on the rapid settlement of war and pre-war debts on a gold basis. The French also let it be known that they disapproved of the Dictatorship and M. Daud, the French Minister in Belgrade, made representations for an early return to constitutional rule.³³ In these circumstances, there appeared little hope of large-scale economic reform and the regime's plans for stabilizing the dinar, reducing direct taxation and maintaining

29. Kennard to Chamberlain, 26 Mar. 1929, C2326/97/92.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Kennard to Chamberlain, 4 Apr. 1929, C2468/97/92. For instance, 2½ milliard dinars were required to pay for large arms purchases obtained from Škoda in 1928.

33. Ibid. Kennard added: "One cannot help feeling considerable sympathy with King Alexander who has acted throughout in the best interests of his country and it is a tragedy that he should be unable to find any adequate support from those whom he has chosen to assist him in the task of regeneration."

a high customs barrier seemed optimistic indeed.

The only hope for immediate action seemed to be in the administrative sphere. Here, the programme had suggested that several Ministries - notably those for Agrarian Reform, Health, Posts and Telegraph and Religious Affairs - be abolished and their functions taken over by other Ministers.³⁴ Almost immediately, steps were taken to implement the programme. On March 31, Alexander signed a law on the Supreme Administration of the State, which came into force on April 3.³⁵ The law reduced the number of Ministries from sixteen to twelve and Krulj (Minister of Health) and Alaupović (Religious Affairs) were obliged to resign. Kumanudi, who had been Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs whilst Dr Marinković had been in Switzerland seeking treatment, (and whom many had expected would be dismissed) was retained as Minister without portfolio. Other changes brought about by the law were the abolition of the post of "Under-Secretary" and the creation of a Press Bureau. One of the most significant changes, however, was that in future Ministers would be answerable to the King alone and could be impeached at his will (previously an impeachment required a two-thirds majority in the Skupština). Quite clearly, the lines of authority were being tightened, administration streamlined and expenditure reduced; and, by the beginning of April, there was a visible

34. Kennard to Chamberlain, 26 Mar. 1929, C2326/97/92. Agrarian Reform was to go to Agriculture, Religious Affairs to the Minister of Justice, Health to be a part of Social Politics and Posts and Telegraphs come within the Ministry of Works.

35. Law for the Supreme Administration of the State, Službene Novine, 3 Apr. 1929; see Kennard to Chamberlain, 3 Apr. 1929, C2467/97/92. This law represented an addition and emendation of the first law issued by the King on January 6, 1929.

reduction in corrupt practices in government circles.³⁶

In the Army, too, there were cuts. On April 13, 1929, a royal decree was published, announcing the retirement of the Chief of Staff, two Army Commanders, eighteen divisional generals, eleven brigadier generals and others holding senior commands.³⁷ Those hostile to the regime immediately assumed that this "purge" revealed a deep divergence of opinion within the Army. But, as in the civilian administration, these changes represented an attempt at economy, a desire for improved efficiency and a cutting away of "dead wood". The British Military Attaché reported that the King had said that

"his senior generals were veritable 'colossi' with the gift of living for ever... there was also a considerable percentage of senior officers who had reached their present rank as rewards for services and bravery in wartime, whose mental capacity did not reach the standard necessary for training the Army in time of peace..... When I hazarded the opinion that possibly such a drastic overhaul might create a certain amount of discontent, he answered that he was quite convinced that the Army, as a whole, looked on these changes as justifiable and he was happy in his own mind as to the present

36. Kennard to Chamberlain, 4 Apr. 1929, C2468/97/92. These cuts in public expenditure produced an increase in unemployment. For instance, the city of Belgrade sacked 900 employees at once, and it was believed that some 5000 civil servants would eventually be dismissed. Kennard to Chamberlain, 16 Apr. 1929, C2822/548/92. The cost of paying pensions to those dismissed proved a heavy burden on the nation's finances - for in the 1929-30 Budget, no less than 13% of the total revenue of £44.2 millions had already been earmarked for pensions. The Times, 5 Feb. 1929, p. 23 (review Section).

37. Kennard to Chamberlain, 16 Apr. 1929, C2822/548/92.

condition of affairs, more particularly as regards the future efficiency of the Army, since the interest and the keenness of the younger generation of officers had thereby received a much-needed and wholesome fillip."³⁸

But the very fact that the Government was at this stage unable to do more than carry out administrative reforms in the civil service and the Army seemed to many a clear indication that things were drifting. In the Vojvodina, there were bitter complaints that the Government had done nothing to reduce taxation and that there was no one to represent the Vojvodina in the Cabinet.³⁹ There was also considerable uncertainty as to how the Kingdom would be sub-divided in any future scheme. Wild rumours circulated and, in March, a group of leading Bosnians - including the Archbishop of Sarajevo and the Bishop of Banjaluka - published an article on "the indivisibility of Bosnia-Hercegovina" in their newspaper, Franjevački Vjesnik, and recommended a return to constitutional rule.⁴⁰ At the end of March, Toni Schlegel, the editor of Novosti, was murdered in Zagreb. Schlegel had been one of the most active Croat supporters of the regime. Various interpretations were laid upon his murder - some blaming Croat extremists, others the Communists and a large body of uninformed opinion suspecting that the Serbs had murdered him themselves to discourage the King from visiting Zagreb - but there was little doubt that the murder was political in intent and was an unpleasant warning to the Government.⁴¹ At a more humble level of discontent, there was also

38. Col. Giles to Kennard, 23 May 1929, C3719/548/92.

39. Kennard to Chamberlain, 26 Mar. 1929, C2326/97/92.

40. Consular Report (Sarajevo) contained in despatch C2651/97/92.

41. Consular Report (Zagreb) contained in despatch C2651/97/92.

See also Maček, In the Struggle for Freedom, p. 135. Two members of the Ustaše (see ch. 9) - Hranilović and Soldin - were later arrested, tried and hung for the murder.

much grumbling that the new Government had raised the price of rakija (brandy) from one to two dinars.⁴²

The King and Živković, for their part, were quite sure that the old politicians were responsible for many of the rumours and much of the unrest. Grol and Davidović, in particular, were known to have campaigned widely for the replacement of Dr Švrluga, the Croat Finance Minister,⁴³ and Dr Spaho and his Moslem deputies were behind much of the dissatisfaction in Bosnia.⁴⁴ There were also regular reports of dissension in the Cabinet - stories of the King backing the Croats against the Serbs - and the resignation of Korošec and the dismissal of Maksimović were continually predicted.⁴⁵ All these rumours had a most unsettling effect and the Government had no difficulty in tracing their source. On April 21, a royal decree was published, pensioning off and retiring thirty-nine former Cabinet ministers, including Vukičević and Davidović.⁴⁶ But although the decree had the effect of discrediting the former politicians, it did not silence them. So the Government decided to make a public example of one of their number and, early in May, it was announced that Pribičević had been interned. Pribičević had come to Belgrade ostensibly to see his wife who was ill, but he had stated publicly that he intended to meet and have talks with politicians opposed to the regime. He was met at Belgrade railway station by the police, placed under house arrest and then moved to Brus, a small Serbian village near Kruševac.⁴⁷

42. Kennard to Chamberlain, 16 Apr. 1929, C2822/548/92.

43. Kennard to Chamberlain, 10 Apr. 1929, C2649/97/92.

44. Consular Report (Sarajevo) for Mar. 1929, C2651/97/92.

45. Kennard to Chamberlain, 4 Apr. 1929, C2468/97/92.

46. Kennard to Chamberlain, 23 Apr. 1929, C3018/97/92. The despatch also brought news of further reductions in the numbers of civil servants in the Ministries of Justice, Commerce, Interior and Foreign Affairs. * See page 69

47. Kennard to Chamberlain, 22 May 1929, C3716/97/92. Pribičević spent two years in internment, either at Brus

On May 22, Kennard had an audience with King Alexander, who explained to him why Pribićević had been interned. The King said that it had been foreseen that former politicians would try to intrigue against the regime and it was necessary to show that no intrigues would be tolerated. He went on to tell Kennard that the administration of the country was going along well but that the future sub-division of the Kingdom and the degree of autonomy to be granted to its component parts would not be considered until the unification of the various laws and the co-ordination of the services of the State had been carried out. He told the British Minister that he intended to go to Croatia before the end of the year but he feared that the trial of Puniša Račić, which was due to be held the following week, would be exploited by the Croats and lead to renewed agitation by the politicians of the old regime. Kennard noted that the King was in good spirits and seemed more satisfied with the Živković government than was popularly supposed.⁴⁸

On May 27, 1929, the trial of Puniša Račić began in Belgrade. It was, in many senses, a cause célèbre for Račić was accused of three pre-meditated murders (Basariček, Stjepan Radić and Pavle Radić), one attempted pre-meditated murder (Grandja) and one attempted murder (Dr Pernar). The defence lawyers claimed that Račić had been continually insulted by Radić and that the Croats had made the Skupština a national shame. They had "thrown mud" at everything sacred to Serbia; but Račić, they claimed, had acted in the best Serbian and Montenegrin

47. (contd.) or in hospital in Belgrade. According to Maček, op. cit., pp. 127-28, he was allowed to leave the country after representations by Masaryk, President of Czechoslovakia. (For a slightly different account, see note 58 in ch.5). He died of lung cancer in Prague on September 15, 1936.

48. Kennard to Chamberlain, 22 May 1929, C3716/97/92.

*46. Additional Note. This pensioning off of former ministers after one year en disponibilité was according to the law. An ex-minister could be en disponibilité for only one year.

tradition! Račić, in his own evidence, declared that he had only fired his revolver when he noted that Dr Pernar was about to shoot him and that the other deaths were caused in self-defence during the ensuing uproar. Thirty-five lawyers appeared for the accused.⁴⁹ A

Western magazine commented sarcastically upon their efforts:-

"Counsel for the defence came to the help of the Court in regard to the difficulty of reconciling the size of the murderer's 'bag' with his conception of his honour, which only one of the victims had assailed, by inveighing against the Croats as a people, and leaving it to the Court to endorse the contention that the killing of Croats can be no murder. If Račić had been content with one victim, it might have been difficult for a Balkan bench to shut its eyes to the native temperament and to the cheapness in which life is held among primitive peoples; but the Belgrade Court will appear in Western eyes to have strained both logic and the meaning of words to allow an 'impulse' to discharge all six chambers of a revolver."⁵⁰

Račić was found guilty of murder without pre-meditation but the Court disallowed his plea of self-defence. They condemned him to twenty years penal servitude for the murder of Basariček, fifteen years for the murder of Stjepan Radić, twenty for that of Pavle Radić, with five years for the attempted murder of Grandja and six months for his assault on Dr Pernar. Since the total sentence was greater than the legal maximum, the Court commuted the sentence to one of twenty years

49. Letter from Kennard (Belgrade) to Arthur Henderson (London), 11 Jun. 1929, C4322/97/92.

50. Near East, 13 Jun. 1929.

penal servitude.⁵¹ It says much for the restraint of the Croats - and even more for the strong controlling powers of the regime - that the verdict of the Court produced no violent reaction in Zagreb. Former members of the Croatian Peasant Party remained convinced that there had been a travesty of justice but, for the most part, there was a genuine desire to let the unhappy memories of June 20 die a natural death. No relatives of the deceased had been present in Court with the exception of Basariček's widow, who said she did not seek punishment but compensation.⁵²

What interested the country most was what form the Kingdom might take in the future and a wide variety of different opinions were voiced. The Croats suggested that the oblasts (regions) of Maribor and Ljubljana should be merged and two principal oblasts should be established in Croatia with their capital at Zagreb. The Croats also claimed Bihać and Banjaluka - both regarded by the Bosnians as part of their territory - and Srem, a claim which was strongly contested by the Serbs.⁵³ By July 1929, rumours were circulating that the regime would come to an end in the autumn⁵⁴ and various groups of former

51. Kennard to Henderson, 11 Jun 1929, C4322/97/92. The trial ended on June 7. Two others on trial with Račić (Jovanović - charged with attempted murder of Pernar; and Popović - charged with incitement to murder Stjepan Radić) were found Not Guilty. Dr Pernar was admonished for provoking Račić. And Dr Perić, President of the Skupština, was also admonished for not having restrained Dr Pernar. 52. Ibid.

53. Kennard to Henderson, 18 Jun. 1929, C4592/97/92. The country was at that time divided into oblasts, srez (districts), and opština (communes) with Veliki župan, Načelnik, and Gradski načelnik (royally appointed commissioners over each region, district and town respectively).

54. Ibid. Kennard reported that Marinković was now so well recovered after his treatment in Switzerland, that he might well supersede Živković as Prime Minister, since Marinković was one of the few former Ministers who enjoyed the King's confidence.

politicians banded together and busily prepared draft constitutions to replace the dictatorship. Davidović and Grol - with the support of many former Radicals - collaborated with Maček and Krnjević to produce an imaginative scheme sub-dividing the Kingdom and giving local autonomy to the different regions. They proposed that the 33 oblasts which then existed, should be reduced to seven distinct provinces,⁵⁵ and that each province should have its own Governor-General. A central government, with a bi-cameral legislature, would be set up in Belgrade and be responsible for foreign affairs, army, finance, customs, commerce, and education. These proposals represented a considerable advance on the terms demanded by Dr Maček at his January meeting with King Alexander and the Croats declared that if their new proposals were accepted, they would waive their claims to Bihać, Banjaluka and Eastern Srem.⁵⁶

But the former politicians had no power to enforce their proposals - however far-reaching and imaginative they might be - nor was the King in favour of any federal or quasi-federal solution. So, at the beginning of August, the internal administration of the Kingdom remained exactly as it had in January at the time of the coup d'état (with the addition of the royal commissioners) and, despite all the promises of reform, there was no sign of any imminent change. On June 21, a law had been passed, extending the authority of these royal commissioners⁵⁷ and re-defining the standards expected of public officials (which had slipped) but this did nothing to dispel the

55. The seven provinces were to be 1) Slovenia-Prekomurije; 2) Croatia-Slavonia; 3) Vojvodina and Eastern Srem; 4) Serbia (1912 frontiers); 5) Macedonia and the Sandžak; 6) Dalmatia; 7) Bosnia-Hercegovina. Apparently, Montenegro did not enter into their plans.

56. Kennard to Henderson, 18 Jun. 1929, C4592/97/92.

57. Leigh Smith (Belgrade) to Henderson, 27 Jun. 1929, C4855/97/92.

atmosphere of drift and uncertainty which lay heavily upon the Kingdom. On August 23, Kennard wrote to London:-

"I hope to see the King in about a fortnight's time and try and get a frank expression as to what His Majesty really thinks of the results of dictatorship. There are all kinds of rumours that he is fed up with it and seriously contemplated getting rid of Živković during the last two months. I cannot however obtain chapter and verse and Živković's position seems as strong as before."⁵⁸

Kennard managed to see the King sooner than he expected. It was his final meeting with Alexander and he found him:-

"in good health and spirits and by no means so nervous as to the general situation as some information had led me to believe. He did not, however, speak so enthusiastically about the regime as when I last saw him."⁵⁹

Alexander told him that the plans for internal reform were now well advanced and the number of oblasts would soon be reduced from thirty-three to seven or eight. In deciding the character of the new regions, Alexander was careful to point out that economics -and not history - would be the determining factor.⁶⁰ The King said that he knew all about the plans of the ex-politicians but thought that it was far too early to talk about a new Constitution.⁶¹

Although the King seemed satisfied - if not enthusiastic - with

58. Kennard to O.G. Sargent (London), 23 Aug. 1929, C6626/97/92.

59. Kennard to Henderson, 31 Aug. 1929, C6961/97/92. Kennard's time as Minister in Belgrade was drawing to a close. He was due to leave on September 11, 1929.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

the regime, Kennard felt that Alexander was not fully in touch with the mood of the country:-

"Under the parliamentary regime, His Majesty had to grant audiences to many politicians who, while they may have endeavoured to mislead him as to their own interests, at least kept him informed of the malpractices of their opponents; but now his Majesty sees practically no one except his Ministers and a few intimate friends and thus, no doubt, learns little of the darker side of the situation." ⁶²

But, although there were many wild rumours circulating outside the palace, the King seemed determined upon his course. For, when Kennard paid his final courtesy visit to General Živković and said that he presumed that the Prime Minister would still be "in the saddle" for quite some time:-

"General Živković replied in a subdued tone that this depended entirely upon the will of the King and that he, personally, would prefer to return to his military duties."

Kennard continued:-

"I have further questioned other members of the Cabinet whom I know well, but they can give me no indication that any change in the regime is likely within the near future." ⁶³

Early in October - less than a month after Kennard's departure - all the uncertainty and speculation came to an end. After nine months

62. Final letter from Kennard to Henderson, 10 Sept. 1929, C7092/97/92.

63, Ibid.

of silent preparation, the King and his Ministers at last made public their plans for the future organization of the State.⁶⁴

No longer would it be called the "Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes" but the "Kingdom of Yugoslavia" (Kraljevina Jugoslavija).⁶⁵ For many years, the country had been known abroad as Yugoslavia but, since 1918, the over-wordy official title had been retained, principally to express the free association of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in a South Slav Kingdom. But, over the years, this had become a source of embarrassment - an all-too-obvious reminder of the bitter divisions within the Kingdom - and the change to "Yugoslavia" represented very much the will and the policy of the King, who was determined to suppress local nationalism and emphasize the common nationhood of the South Slav peoples.

His policy was seen even more clearly in the internal re-organization of the Kingdom.⁶⁵ Here, the State was divided into nine Banovinas, each under the responsibility of a Ban (Governor). None of the titles of the old regions (Croatia, Serbia etc) was retained. Instead, each of the Banovinas was called after a river, and the re-drawing of the administrative map showed that on many occasions, economic considerations had cut across traditional, historical boundaries.

The new Banovinas were as follows:-

64. Leigh Smith to Foreign Office, 3 Oct. 1929, C7551/97/92.

65. For official translation of the Law proclaiming the new title of the Kingdom, see Leigh Smith to Henderson, 5 Oct. 1929, C7671/97/92. Although the title in Serbo-Croat was "Jugoslavija" the custom of the British Foreign Office was to spell it "Yugoslavia" - and this was approved by the Yugoslav Legation in London. Letter from Djurić, 8 Oct. 1929, C7699/97/92.

66. Leigh Smith to Henderson, 4 Oct. 1929, C7606/97/92. Philip Leigh Smith was chargé d'affaires in Belgrade from November 1928 to April 1932.

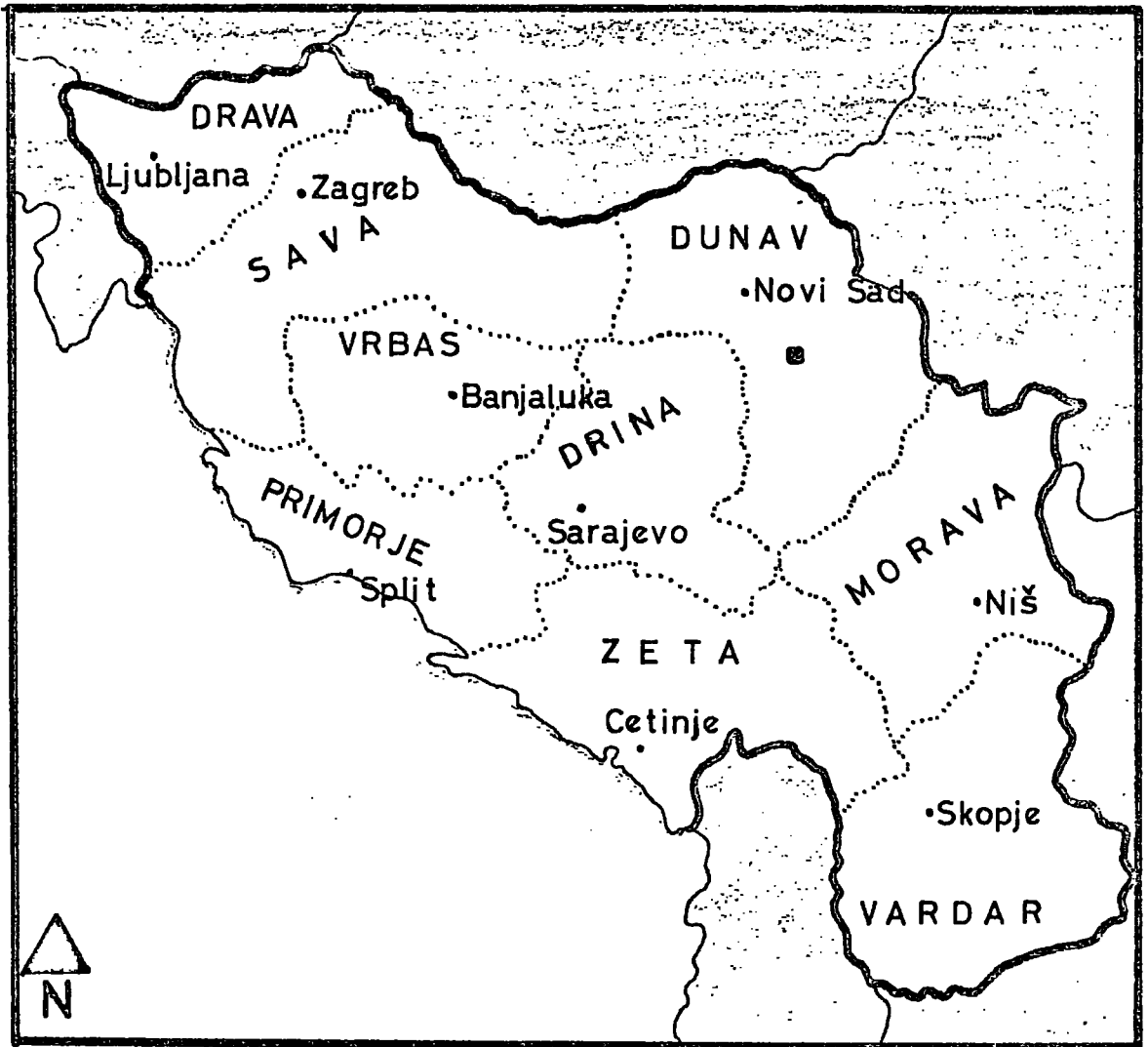
<u>Banovina</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Capital</u>	<u>Population</u>
1) Drava	2 Slovene <u>oblasts</u>	Ljubljana	1,144,298
2) Sava	3 Croat <u>oblasts</u>	Zagreb	2,704,383
3) Vrbas	Part of Bosnia	Banjaluka	1,037,382
4) Primorje	Dalmatia and West Hercegovina	Split	901,660
5) Drina	Bosnia and West Serbia	Sarajevo	1,534,739
6) Zeta	Montenegro and the rest of Hercegovina	Cetinje	925,516
7) Dunav	Syrmia, Vojvodina and North Serbia	Novi Sad	2,387,295
8) Morava	Central and Eastern Serbia	Niš	1,435,584
9) Vardar	South Serbia and Macedonia	Skopje	1,574,243 ⁶⁷

One thing that was immediately obvious from the re-arrangement was that Serbia was divided into three parts, none of which had its capital at Belgrade. The object of the new sub-division therefore marked a decision on the part of the King to place the capital, Belgrade, above individual claims and make it the city of the whole nation. It was also designed to remove the impression of Serbian hegemony in the Kingdom, which had long been regarded as one of the chief obstacles to national unity. By contrast, the central areas of Croatia were kept together and the city of Zagreb put on a par with the other Banovina capitals. This might have been interpreted as a slight to the second city of the Kingdom, but it was reported that the Croats were generally pleased with the new arrangements.⁶⁸

Of the nine Bans appointed to administer the new areas, five

67. E.J. Patterson, Yugoslavia, (London 1936), p. 120.

68. Leigh Smith to Henderson, 10 Oct. 1929, C7816/97/92.



MAP SHOWING BANOVINA BOUNDARIES
IN YUGOSLAVIA

were Serbs, one Croat, one Slovene, one Montenegrin and one Dalmatian;⁶⁹ all were responsible men, who enjoyed the confidence of the King. They were made responsible for:-

"all general administration, particularly in the sphere of agriculture, public works, forests, mines labour, sanitation, schools and economic and intellectual developments in their areas."⁷⁰

But, despite these substantial responsibilities, the Bans would still be under the control of the central government and, in everything they did, would act in conjunction with the appropriate department in Belgrade.⁷¹ Beneath the Banovinas spread an even greater system of local government. The entire country was sub-divided into 338 districts (which embraced 6,575 municipalities) and 36 autonomous towns with their own individual administration.⁷² But all government executive authority would be operated through the Bans and the Banovina system and the sub-divisions (gathered in to six, seven or eight groups per Banovina)⁷³ ensured that decisions taken in Belgrade would be implemented along certain strong, clear and uniform lines.

During the next month, several additions were made to the new system. A law of October 24, 1929 laid down that Bans could raise sur-taxes and also certain local taxes subject to the approval and control of the Minister of Finance.⁷⁴ On the following day, departmental inspectors were appointed to ensure public security and inspect those aspects of Banovina administration which were inaccessible to the Ban

69. See Appendix E.

70. Leigh Smith to Henderson, 10 Oct. 1929, C7816/97/92. 71. Ibid.

72. Central Bureau of the Presidency of the Ministerial Council, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1919-1929, (Belgrade 1930), p. xi.

73. Neville Henderson to Arthur Henderson, 5 Feb. 1930, C1141/1141/92 Para 137.

74. Ibid.

himself.⁷⁵ A final law of November 7, 1929 organized the inner workings of the district groups within the Banovinas and made provision for a consultative body to be known as the Council of the Banovina. With all this system given rapid assent by the King, the Bans assumed their functions on November 11, 1929.⁷⁶

With this system of internal government and with the new title of the State clearly showing the intentions of royal policy, the King and his Ministers consolidated the work of the first nine months of the dictatorship.⁷⁷ None of the former difficulties were removed. The Kingdom was still divided; the former politicians were still awaiting their return to power; memories of the parliamentary era were still bitter; corruption was still to be found in high places⁷⁸ and emigré Croats were either plotting the overthrow of the Kingdom or urging European leaders to work for an end of the regime and a fair deal for their homeland.⁷⁹ But, at long last, the Kingdom of the South Slavs possessed a leader - albeit a King - with certain clear ideas of what could be done and what he could achieve. He possessed a willing and

75. Ibid. 76. Ibid 77. Leigh Smith in his despatch to Henderson, 10 Oct. 1929, C7816/97/92, said that the new Banovina system was due entirely to the King and that his Ministers were not consulted. He also suggested that the King had only introduced the system after Mr Lionel de Rothschild had spoken to him at Bled and urged stability as an essential pre-requisite to a foreign loan. This suggestion was given substance by a remark by Dr Švrluga, the Finance Minister, that the October 3 reforms would be well received by financial circles abroad. However, later actions by the King suggest that the reforms were planned by a small inner Cabinet. The need for a foreign loan was a perennial problem - not one demanding lightning reforms. The extent and the complexity of the Banovina system show evidence of long and careful planning over many months.

78. Kennard to Henderson, 10 Sept. 1929, C7092/97/92.

79. See ch. 9.

obedient government and a loyal Prime Minister to enable those ideas to be turned into practical realities. And with the authority of his own personal dictatorship - backed by the loyalty of the Army - it seemed that he was also guaranteed the time and the security necessary to achieve those ends.

Chapter 4

The Attitude of Italy

Having now come to grips with the internal problems which threatened the unity of his Kingdom, Alexander used the personal powers available to him by the dictatorship to tackle the major external problem which had troubled Yugoslavia ever since the war - the attitude of Italy. For six years, from 1918-24, Yugoslav diplomats had struggled patiently to resolve the many disputes between the two countries - particularly over Fiume - and when the Pact of Rome was signed on January 27, 1924, it seemed that all they had hoped for had been achieved.¹ Outstanding differences had been resolved and they were now bound by a treaty of friendship which was to last four years. But, whilst the diplomats congratulated themselves on their achievement and concluded a series of conventions² to cover minor details, the Yugoslav government discovered that Mussolini had embarked upon a wholly different policy and was steadily building up the Italian position in Albania, signing financial, political and military agreements with Yugoslavia's southern neighbour.³ The duplicity of Italian foreign policy - which was only fully realized when the Treaty of Tirana was signed on November 27, 1926 - brought all the efforts of post-war years suddenly to a close. Those who had worked for an understanding with Italy felt bitter and disillusioned and such was the measure of Italophobia within the Kingdom, that no Yugoslav government dared to present the Nettuno Conventions before the Skupština for

1. A Cassells, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy, (Princeton 1970) pp. 142-5.

2. The Nettuno Conventions were signed on July 20, 1925.

3. Cassells, op. cit., pp. 317-336.

fear of immediate riots and political upheaval:

"It is difficult," wrote one observer, "to expect a suspicious and primitive country, which has suffered from centuries of aggression, to believe the re-assuring declarations of M. Mussolini, when it observes the activity displayed by certain Italian representatives here and in other neighbouring states, which appears to be aimed at encircling it with a ring of potential enemies. The periodical onslaughts of the Italian press and the bellicose tone of public declarations on the other side of the Adriatic further strengthen its nervousness and the Yugoslav has become so obsessed with the nightmare of Italian aggression that he sees it everywhere in an exaggerated form."⁴

The reaction of Yugoslav leaders was to seek a closer link with France. But this, in itself, made things more difficult, for Mussolini was then able to say that Yugoslavia preferred alliance with France⁵ to genuine friendship with Italy. Since Mussolini refused to consider any suggestion of a tripartite agreement between Yugoslavia, Italy and France,⁶ the Yugoslavs found themselves in a very difficult position, the more so since they were surrounded by revisionist states whose claims against Yugoslavia were supported by Italy. Even though the Pact of Rome was maintained - and even extended for a certain time⁷ - there was a constant sense of insecurity and a permanent feeling that

4. Final despatch from Kennard to Henderson, 11 Sept 1929, C7093/965/92.

5. A treaty was signed between France and Yugoslavia on November 11 1927.

6. Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy, p.335.

7. The treaty, which was due to expire on January 26, 1928 was twice extended by a period of six months and would continue until January 26, 1929.

Italy was only waiting for the Kingdom to disintegrate before she - and others - stepped in.

During the autumn of 1928, when the political situation within the Kingdom was one of increasing deadlock and uncertainty, the Yugoslav government did everything it could to show friendship towards Italy. The Nettuno Conventions were at long last ratified by the Skupstina⁸ and an Italian military delegation was invited to Belgrade to share in the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Salonika breakthrough in 1918. In December 1928, the Yugoslav Minister in Rome, Rakić, was authorized by his Government to renew the existing agreement between the two countries or, if Mussolini were willing, to conclude a completely new treaty to replace the Pact of Rome. The Yugoslav Minister found Mussolini more than willing and Rakić was invited to draw up - in general terms - the sort of treaty his Government required.⁹ In view of the diplomatic difficulties of the past three years, this was progress indeed. But, when the royal coup d'état occurred in January 1929, the Italian government changed their mind. They stated that they were now in no hurry to sign any agreement¹⁰ and proposed that, on January 26, when the Pact expired, a formal announcement should be made that the Pact would not be renewed.¹¹

Although the reaction of the Italian government was a disappointment to King Alexander, it was not unexpected. The Italians were in the throes of an election campaign and Mussolini was understandably cautious in recognizing a new regime whose inner stability and future

8. In the absence of the Croats. The Conventions were passed on August 13 and the instruments of ratification were exchanged in Rome on November 14, 1928. The Yugoslav government also agreed to compensate Italy for the last round of anti-Nettuno riots in Sebenico, where Italian property had been damaged and the Italian Consul - General injured. 9. Sir Ronald Graham (Rome) to Chamberlain, 1 Jan 1929, C123/123/92. 10. Kennard to Foreign Office, 16 Jan 1929, C437/123/92. 11. Kennard to Foreign Office, 24 Jan 1929, C634/123/92.

policy were as yet unclear. King Alexander was aware of this and, by private diplomacy, he endeavoured to assure Mussolini that the proclamation of a dictatorship had in no way altered the course of Yugoslav foreign policy. In early March 1929, Prince Paul,¹² who was in Italy for a royal wedding, had a private meeting with the Italian leader:

"Paul, who found Mussolini quite affable, began the conversation by pointing out that it was quite erroneous to suppose that the new regime had any bellicose intentions and that Živković, whom he had known for 26 years, was essentially a 'pacific' general who desired above all things good relations with Italy. Mussolini said that he for his part also desired good relations with Yugoslavia....." ¹³

After this promising encounter, King Alexander tried to show that Yugoslavia's desire for conciliation was not confined to mere words. Measures were taken to control the anti-Italian tone in many Slovene newspapers and steps were taken to dissolve the Orjuna, a nationalist organization which so often indulged in anti-Italian demonstrations. Frontier officials, too, were encouraged to be more friendly.¹⁴

However, there arose in April 1929 one of those freak outbursts of ill-will which so regularly punctuated Italy's relations with Yugoslavia. The Giornale d'Italia published an article by its Trieste correspondent, Dr Gaida, revealing the existence of a document apparently published by the Yugoslav Government in 1922, entitled "Instructions

12. See "Biographies".

13. Kennard to Sir Ronald Lindsay, 6 Mar. 1929, C1853/123/92.

14. Memorandum by Chamberlain, 12 Apr. 1929, C2602/123/92.

for War Service".¹⁵ These instructions were ostensibly written for use by comitadjis serving on the north and western frontiers of the Kingdom bordering on Italy, and gave a full description of how guerilla warfare should be organized "in such minute and ghastly details that it would seem incredible that any War Office could officially sanction them."¹⁶ The Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately denied the authenticity of the document¹⁷ and expressed their surprise that the Italians should allow such an article to be published when the Yugoslav government was doing its best to avoid any further conflict between them. The Italian Government claimed that they had been unaware that Dr Gaida had secured permission for the article to be published¹⁸ but this did not prevent him writing a second, similar article in the Giornale d'Italia on May 5.¹⁹ Further provocation was provided by a visit of Signor Grandi - then Under-Secretary of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs - to Tirana on April 16 and slanderous allegations about the private life of King Alexander in such papers as Il Popolo di Trieste.²⁰ On May 22, in a speech to the Italian Parliament, Mussolini declared that the Yugoslav upper classes were hostile towards Italy and that the Government in Belgrade had failed to carry out the terms of the Nettuno Conventions

15. Giornale d'Italia, 14 Apr. 1929.

16. Daily Telegraph, 16 Apr. 1929.

17. Jevtić, the Minister at Court, showed Kennard an original copy of the document which the Yugoslav government had obtained secretly from Hungary in 1925. The French military attache claimed that he knew who had fabricated it. Kennard to Chamberlain, 16 Apr. 1929, C2823/123/92.

18. They claimed that Dr Gaida had submitted the article to the censors when the highest officials of the Foreign Ministry were away, Ibid.

19. Text and translation of second article sent by Sir Ronald Graham (Rome) to Foreign Office, 6 May 1929, C3393/123/92.

20. Kennard to Chamberlain, 28 May 1929, C3922/123/92. Il Popolo was founded in 1920 and was regarded as the mouthpiece of the Partito Nazionale Fascista di Trieste.

in good faith.²¹ All these incidents were a severe test of King Alexander's sincerity. With strict censorship of the press, no recriminations were made against Italy and the outstanding differences over the Conventions - which were by no means one-sided²² - were peacefully settled at Abbazia on August 22.

As King Alexander began the task of uniting his Kingdom, giving it its new official title and re-drawing the administrative boundaries, fresh problems arose. During the Italian elections in March 1929, five Slovenes living in Istria, all members of the Orjuna, were arrested for firing shots at the electors of Pisino as they went to the polls.²³ The ringleader, Gortan, and his four associates were put on trial in Pola on October 16. All were found guilty. Gortan was sentenced to death and the others were sentenced to thirty years' imprisonment. The decision of the court at Pola caused immediate anger throughout Slovenia - the more so as Gortan was swiftly executed - and there were demonstrations in Croatia and Dalmatia and two Italian sailors were attacked at Gruz.²⁴ On October 30, thirty-three other Slovenes living in Istria were arrested for distributing leaflets saying "Glory to Vladimir Gortan! Death to Fascism!"²⁵ The Yugoslav government bore these pinpricks with restraint and replied calmly to the four notes of protest sent from Rome.

21. Foreign Office memorandum following protest by Djurić, 24 May 1929, C3771/123/92.

22. Difficulties had arisen over the organization of the international railway station at Fiume, and the Italian claim for the same preferential rates to be given to Italian shipping in the Thaon di Reval dock at Fiume as was given to Yugoslav shipping at Sušak.

23. One was killed, two wounded. Leigh Smith to Foreign Office, 16 Oct 1929, C7882/123/92. Djurić asked the Foreign Office for Britain's help in exercising moderation if the opportunity arose. It did not.

24. Leigh Smith to Arthur Henderson, 1 Nov. 1929, C8321/123/92.

25. Leigh Smith to Henderson, 6 Nov. 1929, C8543/123/92.

These incidents gave rise to further hostile articles in the Italian press, which did nothing to improve relations between the two countries. Towards the end of October, a Franciscan friar from Albania was murdered in mysterious circumstances near the Yugoslav border.²⁶ A few days later, Mussolini declared that, if Yugoslavia attacked Albania, war would inevitably ensue. Signor Grandi declared that Italy would loyally carry out the terms of her alliance with Albania.²⁷ And yet, there was no Yugoslav threat whatsoever.²⁸ The Italian military attache in Belgrade publicly boasted that he had stolen military documents from the Yugoslav Ministry of War. Dr Marinković, the Yugoslav foreign minister, was convinced that Italy was determined to provoke a major incident and, for that reason, his Government was afraid to make an official protest.²⁹ On December 29, a French warship visited Sebenico and the Italian press alleged that the visit had been arranged to arouse fresh hatred against Italy.

"Scarcely a day passes," wrote the British minister in Belgrade, "without the appearance in the Press, of either Italy or Yugoslavia, of mutually abusive articles. Small but irritating provocations, unfriendly demonstrations, charges and counter-charges in respect of ill-treatment of minorities, the expulsions of Italians from Yugoslavia or Yugoslavs from Italy, succeed each other incessantly."³⁰

Who was responsible for these continued outbursts of hostility? Sir Ronald Graham reported a conversation he had had in the middle of

26. Leigh Smith to Henderson, 1 Nov. 1929, C8321/123/92.

27. Memorandum by Sir Eric Drummond on conversations held with Mussolini and Signor Grandi, 30 Oct. 1929, C8371/123/92.

28. Memorandum of conversation between Marinković and Drummond, 4 Nov. 1929, C8614/123/92. 29. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 2 Jan. 1930,

C143/141/92. 30. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 31 Dec 1929, C141/141/92.

December:-

"I was recently talking with the chief proprietor of the Giornale d'Italia and asked him why his paper, which is inspired by the Palazzo Chigi,³¹ was so consistently anti-Yugoslav and was always starting hares. He told me quite frankly that his instructions were to keep up a certain condition of anxiety and uncertainty as to relations between Italy and Yugoslavia so that Yugoslav efforts to obtain a loan in London might fail owing to a lack of confidence there. He added that a good proportion of any money the Yugoslavs received would certainly be devoted to armaments. This seems a dangerous game but one thing is certain, the Italians have no desire whatever for a row with Yugoslavia; they are not in the least prepared for a fight and even the rumour of a conflict would bring about an economic crash, with the lira depreciating to any degree."³²

King Alexander seems to have realized that the Italian Foreign Office and its newspapers were waging "a war of nerves" and that unless someone put an end to it, it would continue indefinitely.³³ In January 1930, Prince Paul was due to be present at the wedding of the Italian Crown Prince and Alexander let it be known through Signor Galli, the Italian Minister in Belgrade, that he would like to arrange a meeting between Prince Paul and Signor Grandi in Rome.³⁴

31. The Italian Foreign Office.

32. Sir Ronald Graham (Rome) to O.G. Sargent, 19 Dec. 1929, C10017/123/92.

33. This was also Henderson's belief. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 31 Dec. 1929, C141/141/92.

34. Henderson to Sir Robert Vansittart, 13 Mar. 1930, C2643/141/92.

Representations had also been made in London through Sir Robert Vansittart to bring an end to the press campaign.³⁵ With the approval of Mussolini, the meeting took place and the exchanges between Prince Paul and the Italian Under-Secretary were most frank. The meeting established that there was no real obstacle in the way of a rapprochement between the two countries and it was agreed that a "newspaper truce" should be initiated right away. Once the atmosphere had calmed down, then conversations on wider issues would begin.

The existence of this meeting was kept secret for over two months because King Alexander was uncertain as to whether Mussolini would really approve the line Signor Grandi had taken. However, Mussolini had subsequently received Rakić - his first meeting for fourteen months - and had been most conciliatory, suggesting that he and Grandi pursue the matter further as soon as the Under-Secretary had returned from a conference in London. King Alexander told Mr Henderson that

"what he wanted was an agreement, not like the Pact of Rome of limited duration, but for a long period of years. He disclaimed vehemently any thought of irredentism in Istria or Gorizia, saying that Yugoslavia had all the territory she aspired to. All Yugoslavia wanted was 40 years of peace...." ³⁶

But the fair words spoken by Mussolini and Grandi were hardly matched by their deeds. The "newspaper truce" lasted for a mere three months - from February to April 1930 ³⁷ - and at the end of that time, far from entering into conversations on wider issues, the situation

35. Memorandum by Vansittart following conversation with Grandi and Bordonaro, 11 Mar. 1930, and subsequent letter to Mr Henderson, 14 Mar. 1930, C2000/141/92. 36. Henderson to Vansittart, 13 Mar 1930, C2643/141/92. 37. Henderson to Vansittart, 28 Mar. 1930, C2561/141/92.

grew steadily worse. In early May, the Italian police arrested nine Slavs of Italian nationality in connection with an explosion in the offices of the newspaper Il Popolo di Trieste.³⁸ This was only one of a series of outrages which had occurred in the area and, at first, the police had been uncertain whether it was the Communists, the Slavs or even dissident Fascists who had caused the explosion.³⁹ Suspicion eventually fastened upon the Slavs, who were arrested, and since all admitted to being members of the Orjuna (which had been officially dissolved on January 6, 1930)⁴⁰ there was ample scope for accusations of bad faith on the part of the government in Belgrade.⁴¹ Furthermore, although Signor Grandi had by now returned from his conference in London, there was still no sign of the promised talks between himself and Rakić.⁴² In addition, the press polemics had been resumed. On May 30, 1930, two thousand Italian troops were landed in Albania and, soon after, the Italian government announced that a further £5 millions would be spent on its armed forces.⁴³

The King told the British Minister that a quarter of Italy's revenues were spent on arms. Against whom were they directed? Mr. Henderson suggested that Italy was trying to keep up with France.⁴⁴ Signor Galli, the Italian Minister, agreed. "Italy," he said, "had no designs against Yugoslavia." If that were the case, said the British Minister, why had the proposed talks between Grandi and Rakić come to nothing? Rather lamely, Galli said that the Italians were waiting for Rakić to make the first move. Mr Henderson told the Italian Minister

38. On 10 Feb. 1930. One reporter and three members of staff were killed.

39. H.M. Consul (Trieste) to Sir Ronald Graham (Rome), 26 Feb. 1930, C1725/141/92. 40. As the Yugoslav's contribution to the private

agreement concluded between Prince Paul and Grandi in Rome in Jan. 1930.

41. Graham (Rome) to A. Henderson, 7 May 1930, C3638/141/92.

42. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 20 Jun 1930, C5025/141/92.

43. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 10 Jul 1930, C5663/141/92.

44. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 20 Jun 1930, C5025/141/92.

that, from his talks with King Alexander, he knew that Yugoslavia was willing to see a great increase in economic co-operation with Italy once agreement had been reached.⁴⁵ Galli asked whether Yugoslavia would spend less on armaments if Italy signed an agreement. Mr Henderson said that he thought this was very likely providing that the agreement was of ten or twenty years duration.⁴⁶

But, despite all these omens of goodwill, the Italian attitude remained unchanged. Symbolically, a Yugoslav pleasure steamer - the "Karadjordje" - was sunk by an Italian ship during the summer and, in the first days of September 1930, a further trial of Slovenes was mounted in Trieste.⁴⁷ This was the trial for those arrested in connection with the explosion in the offices of Il Popolo but, since May, the size of the case had greatly increased and by now there were eighteen in the dock, charged with a total of 99 crimes, including 13 murders, 31 armed assaults, 8 acts of political terrorism and 18 acts of incendiarism.⁴⁸ It was clearly going to be a cause célèbre. But the Yugoslavs noted that the trial was timed to co-incide with the special festivities laid on to mark the seventh birthday of the Crown Prince. Great crowds would be gathered in Belgrade for the occasion and many foreign delegations had been invited. The Yugoslav government suspected that the Italians intended to announce the sentences just at the moment when it would make the most impact. This they did. Although the trial was one of great complexity, it was rushed through the Court

45. Throughout the period 1929-32, despite all the polemics, Italy remained Yugoslavia's best customer and fourth in the list of countries exporting goods to Yugoslavia. Graham to Sir John Simon, 13 Nov. 1933, C10138/1231/92. (Vol. 16830).

46. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 10 Jul. 1930, C5663/141/92.

47. It was reported from Austrian and Czech sources that a total of 2172 Slovenes and Croats had been arrested and shot in Italy during the past 7 years. Leigh Smith to A. Henderson, 10 Sept 1930, C6985/141/92.

48. Sir Ronald Graham to A. Henderson, 5 Sept. 1930, C6901/141/92.

in three days - the last sitting being from 9am to 11pm on September 5 - and sentence passed a quarter of an hour later at 11.15pm the same night.⁴⁹ The executions of four of the accused were performed the following morning - on the Crown Prince's birthday - at 6am and ten Italian warships were brought to Trieste harbour to discourage protest by the local population.⁵⁰ To prevent any hostile reaction against Italy, the Yugoslavs withheld all mention of the sentences until after the festivities were over.⁵¹ The Italian press promptly attributed their silence to guilt but, later, both Signor Galli⁵² and Signor Grandi said that they had been impressed by Yugoslavia's restraint.⁵³

It was suggested - not least by the Italians themselves - that the chief difficulty standing in the way of a rapprochement between the two countries was Yugoslavia's close dependence on - and friendship with - France.⁵⁴ Ever since the war, French influence had been very strong within the Kingdom and the relationship was not entirely due to sentimental attachments formed in battle. Large pre-war debts to France gave French commercial interests a great opportunity and were frequently used to further sales of French arms.⁵⁵ Any loan which was

49. No appeal against the sentences was permitted. 4 were condemned to death and 12 to prison terms of 2½ to 30 years. Mr Osborne (Rome) to Foreign Office, 6 Sept. 1930, C6838/141/92. For good measure, there was also a frontier incident at Sljivice on Sept 3, where, it was claimed, 3 Italian militiamen clashed with 2 Orjuna members. One Italian was killed, another wounded.

50. Leigh Smith to Foreign Office, 5 Sept 1930, C6837/141/92.

51. Leigh Smith to A. Henderson, 10 Sept 1930, C6985/141/92.

52. N. Henderson to O.G. Sargent, 19 Sept 1930, C7213/141/92.

53. Graham (Rome) to A. Henderson, 1 Oct 1930, C7509/141/92.

54. Graham (Rome) to A. Henderson, 30 May 1930, C4341/141/92.

55. For example, the sale of 4 French submarines in early 1930. Letter from N. Henderson to Sargent, 14 Feb 1930, C1354/141/92. See also a letter from R. H. Porters (a representative of Rothschilds), 7 Mar. 1929, C1910/47/92.

was required would almost always be raised on the Paris market and strong pressure would be put on Yugoslavia should she show any signs of going elsewhere.⁵⁶ In particular, the Franco-Yugoslav treaty of November 1927 was regarded by many observers as the most serious obstacle to any improved relations with Italy.⁵⁷ The Italians were sure - or, at least, said they were sure - that the Treaty contained secret military clauses directed against them.⁵⁸ Yugoslavia, they believed, was France's "Trojan horse" in the Balkans, an obstacle to their own imperial designs. They were convinced that France was responsible for the anti-Italian campaigns and demonstrations and that her chief policy was to deny Italy of her rightful status as a Great Power. The French Press did little to discourage these views. Nor, except under severe pressure, would the French minister in Belgrade:

"The French government certainly do little to dispel these fears," wrote Kennard, "and it is unfortunate that they should be so unsatisfactorily represented in Belgrade. I have rarely succeeded in inducing my French colleague to join me in any counsels of moderation here, either because he has no instructions from Paris or else because he is afraid of giving offence and affecting French popularity. The only occasion when the French legation become aroused is when there is a chance of a contract

56. Confidential Treasury Report by Mr Leith Ross following visit to Belgrade, 28 Mar. 1929, C2411/47/92.

57. Foreign Office memorandum by Mr Balfour, Jan. 1931, C179/129/92.

58. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 23 Feb. 1931, C1399/129/92. "I would mention here that M. Galli has always expressed to me and did so on this occasion, his firm belief that there is a secret military annexe to the Alliance in addition to the text as communicated to the League of Nations." The French minister solemnly and with equal frequency, denied it.

going to a British or other foreign firm.

On the other hand, the country is continually flooded with French propaganda of the most nauseating nature which keeps alive the spirit of the war and whose object is merely to remind this country that they owe their salvation to France alone." ⁵⁹

It was Mussolini's declared belief that "Yugoslavia may be friends with Italy or friends with France. She cannot be friends with both." ⁶⁰ So, wrote O.G. Sargent, in a Foreign Office memorandum of October 1930, "it is almost hopeless to expect that there can be any Yugoslav-Italian détente until France and Italy have come to terms with each other." ⁶¹ This, both then and subsequently, did not seem very likely.

But, it was not just a question of France. There was also Bulgaria. Ever since the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878, the Bulgarians had believed that Macedonia was legitimately theirs. The outcome of two Balkan wars and the Great War, in which they had supported the Central Powers and were utterly defeated, had done little to diminish their claims and, after the Peace Conference, Italy became the chief supporter of successive Bulgarian governments, who made the annexation of Macedonia a fundamental issue of policy. The Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, which perpetrated acts of terrorism within Yugoslavia (but which was sheltered by Bulgaria) received arms and money from Italy and its leaders were frequently

59. Kennard to A. Henderson, 11 Sept 1929, C7093/965/92.

60. Foreign Office memorandum, 21 Dec 1932, C10764/51/92. Grandi had said the same thing to Prince Paul. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 13 Oct. 1930, C7809/141/92.

61. Memorandum on Henderson's despatch, 13 Oct. 1930, C7809/141/92.

and warmly received in Rome.⁶² But it is extremely doubtful whether the Italians were really interested in Bulgaria's aspirations except as a means to extend their own influence in the Balkans and threaten Yugoslavia on every side.

"The Italian Government," wrote one observer, "would seem to have a very definite policy, namely that of preventing Yugoslavia from developing into a Great Power, rivalling Italy on the Adriatic and enjoying a prominent position in the Danube basin on the one hand, and in the Balkans on the other."⁶³

It was typical of King Alexander's methods that, soon after proclaiming the dictatorship, he should have taken steps to improve relations with Bulgaria. In March 1929, negotiations were initiated with Bulgaria with a view to preventing the continual violations of the frontier by terrorists, the settlement of long-standing matters of land ownership and the establishment of a Permanent Mixed Commission to investigate and settle incidents occurring along the border.

Alexander's initiative found a temporary response in Sofia and, on February 14, 1930, a Convention was signed at Pirot to deal with all these problems.⁶⁴ But it could hardly be imagined that a Yugoslav-Bulgarian rapprochement would commend itself to the Palazzo Chigi and it was not long before Italy made her disapproval felt. Athanas Bourov, the Bulgarian Foreign Minister, who had conducted his country's side

62. For a full consideration of Yugoslavia's relations with Bulgaria, see D. Shepherd, Relations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria 1918-1941, (Unpublished M.A. thesis - University of Durham) - particularly for this period, pp. 115-159.

63. Memorandum on Yugoslav-Italian relations, 20 Jan 1930, C575/141/92.

64. L.S. Stavrianos, Balkan Federation. A History of the Movement towards Balkan Unity in Modern Times, (Northampton, Mass. 1944) p. 228.

of the negotiations, was subjected to Italian-inspired attacks in a Sofia newspaper.⁶⁵ The Macedonian terrorists, who had taken full advantage of the opening of the frontier to mount a vigorous campaign of bombings and shooting, were sent increased shipments of arms from Italy⁶⁶ and, in March 1930, a M.R.O. bomb exploded in the War Office in Belgrade. But Italy's efforts were not merely subversive. On October 4, 1930, it was announced in Rome that King Boris of Bulgaria would marry the Princess Giovanna di Savoia of Italy. The marriage, which had been the subject of rumour for over two years, took place on October 25; but there were many who considered that the match had been arranged solely in the interests of diplomacy.⁶⁷

The royal marriage, coming as it did after to so many tangible signs of Italian hostility, seemed to give Alexander little hope of coming to terms with Mussolini.⁶⁸ His minister in Rome, Rakić, despite Signor Galli's advice to initiate a démarche, was still unable to get

65. J. Swire, Bulgarian Conspiracy, (London 1939), pp. 225-6. The attacks were inserted at the instigation of the Italian minister in Sofia, Signor Piacentini. 66. N. Henderson to O.G. Sargent, 14 Mar. 1930, C2147/141/92. Henderson reported that the American minister in Belgrade, Dr Prince, had told him that he had "definite knowledge that the centre of the Italian organization for assisting the M.R.O. against Yugoslavia is at Trieste and that arms are being consistently shipped to small Bulgarian ports for use by the comitadjis." It is also significant that Italy was given free access to the port of Varna in March 1930. 67. Henderson had a meeting with Alexander on October 10. Prince Paul, who was also present, declared that he had known Princess Giovanna from childhood and that there could be no question of the marriage being a love-match. In Yugoslavia generally, the marriage was seen as a political arrangement directed against their country. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 13 Oct. 1930, C7809/141/92. 68. Since it was widely believed that a secret military alliance had been signed as part of the marriage deal. This, however, was later denied. N.P. Nikolaev, La destinée tragique d'un Roi, (Uppsala 1952), p. 56.

in touch with Grandi.⁶⁹ Not until December 5, 1930 was a meeting arranged but, even then, Rakić was informed that Mussolini did not want to resume further conversations. As far as the Italian leader was concerned, there was "no hurry".⁷⁰ The Yugoslav Government decided that since relations were at a poor level now was the time to expel the Italian military attache, Colonel Visconti. The Italians, for their part, put pressure on the Credito Italiano to prevent any Italian bank participating in the international loan, Yugoslavia was trying to raise.⁷¹ In February 1931, the Italians suggested that Albania was the only outstanding issue between their two countries and that, if the Yugoslavs would recognize Italy's "special position" in Albania, then the Italians would put an end to all agitation in Dalmatia.⁷² The Foreign Ministry in Belgrade were wary of such blandishments. They had heard them all before. This was not the sort of agreement Yugoslavia wanted. So the Italian proposals were studiously ignored.

But King Alexander felt that it would be a mistake to reject any possibility - however slight - which might lead to better relations with Italy. The regular processes of diplomacy had led nowhere - and seemed to hold little prospect for the future - so Alexander decided to make a private approach to Mussolini without the knowledge of his Foreign Minister, Dr Marinković.⁷³ His choice of intermediary was Guido Malagola Cappi, an architect, whom King Alexander had known for

69. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 20 Nov. 1930, C8603/141/92.

70. Sir Ronald Graham (Rome) to Vansittart, 5 Dec. 1930, C9005/141/92.

71. N. Henderson to O.G. Sargent. 18 Feb. 1931, C1284/129/92.

72. The sudden raising of the issue of Albania was due to the illness of Albania's ruler, King Zog. The Treaty of Tirana was due for renewal in December 1931 and there were fears that, in the event of Zog's death the Italians would simply annex Albania.

73. Dr Marinković was not informed until the end of March 1932.

some time and who had recently designed a villa for the Italian leader. Alexander felt that the international standing of his country had improved in many ways during 1931⁷⁴ and that, with economic difficulties facing most European countries, the climate was favourable for talks. Throughout the autumn of 1931, the principles governing a new Italo-Yugoslav Commercial Treaty were discussed and hopes that both countries might reduce their military expenditure, were raised.⁷⁵ But King Alexander really hoped to secure a long-term agreement, particularly (as the Italians had suggested) with regard to Albania. By March 1932, Alexander had received - through Cappi - the text of a draft agreement, consisting of three clauses.

The first clause suggested that Italy and Yugoslavia should mutually guarantee the integrity and independence of Albania; the second that Yugoslavia should accept the predominance (prevalenza) of Italian interests in Albania (as recognized by the Treaty of Tirana and the Ambassadors' Conference of 1921); and thirdly, that Italy should take no action in Albania which might be prejudicial to Yugoslavia's interests.

The King told Mr Henderson in confidence that whilst the first clause was exactly what he wanted, he could never agree to an Italian prevalenza in Albania. He said that he was "prepared to admit the importance of those interests and to undertake to respect them" and

74. In May 1931, Yugoslavia raised an international loan of £8.3 millions (see ch 6) and, in the same month, managed to avoid considerable embarrassment by careful handling of events at Zara, where the Italians had set up guns, trenches, and wire entanglements, claiming that Yugoslavia was about to attack the town. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 11 May 1931, C3443/129/92; and also 27 May 1931, C3787/129/92.

75. Henderson was first acquainted with the secret processes of Alexander's diplomacy on November 23, 1931, by Signor Galli. N. Henderson to Vansittart, 24 Nov. 1931, C9241/129/92.

had returned the agreement to Mussolini with these suggestions.

The King said that:-

"if Mussolini would meet him half-way, he would be willing to sign an agreement at once. His Majesty also laid stress on the economic advantages he was prepared to give Italy if the treaty was concluded." ⁷⁶

In fact, according to Cappi's minutes of a conversation held with King Alexander on February 22, 1932, the King had even considered offering Italy the facilities of the bay of Kotor, Yugoslavia's deep-water naval base on the Adriatic as a gesture of goodwill and as an indication of his desire for Italy's friendship.⁷⁷ In his conversation with Henderson:-

"His Majesty added that Mussolini had expressed a desire that any agreement should be for the duration of not less than 10-15 years. To this he had replied that he was more than ready to consent. Mussolini also asked his views about the Albanian army. His Majesty had answered that, in his opinion, no Albanian army, or one as small as possible, was probably in the interests of both countries." ⁷⁸

(This remark was in keeping with Alexander's oft-stated belief that Albania should be the "Belgium of the Balkans"). ⁷⁹

Although these were promising signs, Alexander was no more

76. From Sir Neville Henderson's meeting with King Alexander on March 26, 1932. Sir Neville Henderson to Sir John Simon, 30 Mar. 1932, C2746/51/92. Henderson was knighted on January 1, 1932.

77. Quoted by J.B. Hoptner, Yugoslavia in Crisis, 1934-41, (Columbia, 1962) p. 19. 78. Henderson to Simon, 30 Mar. 1932, C2746/51/92.

79. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 23 Feb. 1931, C1399/129/92.

successful than his professional diplomats had been. Mussolini refused to meet him half way. He insisted on prevalenza. According to those closest to him, the Italian leader was still hoping for a general revision of treaties throughout Europe and was unwilling to prejudice his future expectations by any premature agreement with Yugoslavia.⁸⁰ But there is ample evidence to suggest that Mussolini was really only interested in agreement with Yugoslavia whilst that country was strong. When negotiations first began in 1930-1, it seemed that Alexander had gone a long way towards consolidating his Kingdom. By 1932, there were many signs pointing the other way. And so, Mussolini decided to wait. "I am going to sit at my window," he told Cappi, "and see what will happen before I go on with the negotiations."⁸¹ When Mussolini's words were repeated to King Alexander, all attempts to reach agreement with Italy came to an end.

"I suppose," wrote Henderson, "the truth to be faced is that Italy will never be friendly to this country until it is quite certain that Yugoslavia will settle down as a united country. Instead of helping her to become so, and so possibly creating a debt of gratitude, Italy would rather do what she can to upset that unity by intrigue or any method short of war so long as there is a chance of getting rid of a too powerful neighbour."⁸²

Following Alexander's fruitless attempts to reach a personal agreement with Mussolini, relations between the two countries rapidly deteriorated. This was not because of any deliberate act of government

80. Henderson to Simon, 14 May 1932, C3980/51/92.

81. Henderson to Sargent, 26 Apr. 1934, R2644/59/92.

82. Henderson to Sargent, 22 Jun. 1932, C5504/51/92.

policy but simply because the previous restraints - particularly upon the Press - were withdrawn. The King, who in the summer of 1932 had actively discouraged his Foreign Minister from seeking renewal of the five-year old Franco-Yugoslav treaty,⁸³ now instructed his Government to proceed with all haste and the alliance was renewed on December 2, 1932.⁸⁴ There was talk of Yugoslavia making considerable additions to her fleet - two flotilla leaders, six torpedo boats and a submarine⁸⁵ - but, although the regime did nothing to provoke anti-Italian feeling, certain members of the public were swift to notice the change and to take advantage of it. On December 1, 1932, the Venetian lions of St Mark at Trogir were destroyed by an unknown hand. For many years, the lions had been regarded as a symbol of "Italian" culture and predominance in Dalmatia and their destruction provoked two weeks of riots, protests and demonstrations in Zara, Rome, and Trieste.⁸⁶ The Italian Press seized eagerly upon the incident and mounted another anti-Yugoslav campaign.⁸⁷ In return, Novosti (of Zagreb) published a detailed list of Italy's hostile acts towards Yugoslavia

83. Henderson to Simon, 22 Mar. 1933, C2183/44/92. It will be realized that, in conducting his secret negotiations with Italy, King Alexander ran a considerable risk of offending France, particularly since he intended to abandon the French alliance in exchange for an agreement with Mussolini.

84. Lord Tyrrell (Paris) to Simon, 2 Jan. 1933, C85/44/92. As a matter of courtesy, the Italians were informed before the renewal was publicly announced. The treaty was to last for a further five years.

85. Henderson to Simon, 19 Dec. 1932, C10898/51/92.

86. The Times, 14 Dec. 1932.

87. In particular, an article by Dr Gaida in the Giornale d'Italia, 5 Jan. 1933, listing all the anti-Italian organizations allegedly supported by Yugoslavia. Dr Gaida's article was generally regarded as the official answer to those who were accusing Italy of aggression in South-East Europe. Sir Ronald Graham (Rome) to Simon, 7 Jan. 1933, C335/44/92.

and accused the Italian Government of supporting the disturbances in the Lika district in Croatia earlier in the year.⁸⁸ Sir Ronald Graham wrote to Sir John Simon:-

"It is unfortunately true that Italian comments on Yugoslav affairs have for a long time been at best unfriendly, at worst not only malevolent, but scurrilously so; and if it would be too much to say, as some critics do, that there is actual Government inspiration behind the violent attacks, there is no doubt at all that if the Government strongly disapproved, these attacks would stop."⁸⁹

The Yugoslavs, after some ten years of diplomatic effort to reach a peaceful settlement with Italy - and after countless disappointments, were well aware of the situation. Nothing they could do - and no concessions they might make - would change the attitude of Italy. Mussolini was only interested in the disintegration of Yugoslavia and he was prepared to wait - and work - for years to achieve that end.

In November 1932, General Gömbös, the Hungarian Prime Minister and self-confessed admirer of Mussolini, visited Rome and the Yugoslav Government suspected that his visit was connected with a secret military pact directed against Yugoslavia.⁹⁰ Their suspicions were further increased when Wickham Steed published in the Sunday Times a report of the Volta Congress, alleging that one of the secret agreements reached at that Congress was the destruction of Yugoslavia and the establishment of a Danubian Confederation under German and

88. See ch. 9. The bombs used in the disturbances bore the imprint - "Milano". 89. Graham to Simon, 24 Dec. 1932, C10954/51/92.

90. Foreign Office summary of Yugoslav-Italian affairs in 1932, C376/44/92.

Hungarian leadership.⁹¹ In January 1933, the Yugoslavs discovered that the Italians were supplying Austria with rifles and machine-guns in complete defiance of Articles 132 and 134 of the Treaty of St Germain.⁹² In the same month, they received warnings that two motor boats, filled with armed terrorists, were about to leave Italy for Krk and Trogir to provoke yet another incident.⁹³ A further supply of arms was shipped to the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization⁹⁴ and there were strong rumours that Italy was about to enter into a customs union with Albania.⁹⁵ Faced with these many threats to national sovereignty and with such clear evidence of Mussolini's ill-will, King Alexander was in no mood to acquiesce. In February 1933, he said to Sir Nevile Henderson:-

"I shall tell you one thing in complete confidence; something is going to happen this spring. I cannot go on being harried any longer..... I am only happy when I am taking action; what I cannot endure is sitting still when I am being attacked on all sides."⁹⁶

What new policy the King had in mind was - at that time - not very clear. But, certainly, King Alexander had no intention of any further dealings with Italy. Rakić, the Yugoslav Minister in Rome, was recalled and retired.⁹⁷ And in his departure, the earnest hopes with which the King had begun his policy of conciliation, perished.⁹⁸

91. Sunday Times, 20 Nov. 1932.

92. The so-called "Hirtenberg" affair. Survey of International Affairs, 1933.(London 1934), p. 247.

98. Although the recall of Milan Rakić from Rome coincided with a change in King Alexander's policy towards Italy, his removal from that post was not primarily due to any change in policy, but rather to personal antagonism between Jevtić, the Foreign Minister, and Rakić.

Chapter 5

The Toils of Dictatorship

However, the attitude of Italy made King Alexander only the more resolute to establish the unity and consolidate the security of his Kingdom. He found himself in a strong position. All executive power was in his hands; all laws necessary to implement his personal authority were in force; he possessed a Council of Ministers obedient to his will and, with the backing of a loyal army, all signs of opposition could be swiftly and ruthlessly suppressed. Having such a strong position, the King was most favourably placed to see his policies brought into being. In October 1929, as we have seen, the King proclaimed that his Kingdom would henceforth be known as Yugoslavia and, later in the same month, he had introduced a new structure of regional government which he hoped would supplant and overrule the old nationalisms of the past.

But although the King was dedicated to making his Kingdom truly Yugoslav, he still relied heavily upon the Serbs to see that his policies were carried out. In six of the new banovinas, a Serbian majority had been artificially established and five of the Bans were Serbs.¹ It was also to be noted that whereas the Serbs comprised only one third of the population of the Kingdom, a large proportion of the civil servants and 90% of the officers in the Army were Serbs.² The

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1. Henderson to Sargent, 31 Jan. 1930, C986/144/92. After a certain delay, Henderson took up his duties in Belgrade on 14 Dec. 1929. Sir Nevile Henderson, Water under the Bridges, (London 1945), p. 169. See also N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 16 Dec. 1929, C9886/965/92.
 2. Henderson to Sargent, 31 Jan. 1930, C986/144/92.

new British Minister, Neville Henderson, also observed with some surprise that the Narodna Odbrana (National Society), long a Serbian stronghold and widely regarded abroad as an instrument of the pre-war "Greater Serbia" policy, was still very much alive and that General Živković, the Prime Minister, was its President.³ Despite this overwhelming preponderance in favour of the Serbs, the peoples of Croatia, Dalmatia and Slovenia seemed, at this stage, relatively satisfied with the regime and, if the reports in the heavily censored press were to be believed, were willing to give the King a fair opportunity to make his policies work.⁴ No one - least of all the King - imagined a quick solution to the nation's problems or a brisk return to constitutional rule. So, in the autumn of 1929, the general atmosphere in the country was one of waiting to see how the King's plans would work.

But not everyone was pleased. In Croatia - and amongst the emigres abroad - there were some who wished to see the overthrow of the regime. In December 1929, the Zagreb police discovered a plot by a number of students to cause a series of bomb outrages on the occasion of the King's birthday celebrations.⁵ There had already been several incidents in November⁶ and a bomb explosion on December 1, the anniversary of the foundation of the Kingdom.⁷ The police, therefore, decided to take no chances. A full investigation was made. The ring-leader, Cvetko Hadžija,⁸ was arrested together with an accomplice. Six

3. Henderson to Sargent, 31 Jan. 1930, C986/144/92.

4. La Yougoslavie, (Belgrade 1929), Issues 12 (pp. 1-2) and 14 (p.1).

5. December 17. 6. The Times, 1 Nov. 1929 (p. 15) and 16 Nov. 1929, p.11

7. The Times, 3 Dec, 1929, p. 13. 8. Cvetko Hadžija, former head of the Croatian Youth organization, had already been arrested in connection with the murder of Toni Schlegel (see above p. 67) but was later released. On his release, he claimed that he had been approached by Professor Jacob Jelašić (a former CPP deputy) and asked to take part in terrorist activities. Jelašić promised adequate funds. A former Austro-Hungarian colonel, Vilko Begić, was also implicated and arrested. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 27 Dec. 1929, C10101/97/92,

other conspirators were named, the majority of whom were members of Croatian nationalist youth organizations. The objectives of the conspiracy were three in number. Firstly, it was planned to blow up a train carrying Croatian delegates going to Belgrade for the celebrations. Secondly, to blow up Zagreb Cathedral during a service and, thirdly, to destroy the Hotel Esplanade in Zagreb during a ball on December 17. Six bombs had been prepared by the conspirators and four were discovered.⁹

Following police investigations and the interrogation of suspects (eventually twenty-four in number) Dr Maček's name was raised. Maček reports:-

"The police discovered that I often gave financial help to the University organization of the CPP, most of whose members had taken part in this plot; therefore I too was arrested on December 22."¹⁰

Under examination, all the accused - with the exception of Dr Maček - confessed their guilt. Maček, for his part, declared that the allegations against him were untrue and only obtained under duress.¹¹ Nonetheless, all the accused were taken to Belgrade to answer charges in the Court for the Defence of the State. Looking back on his arrest, Maček declared:-

"The regime hoped to have me condemned to several years of penal servitude and thus to eliminate me from politics."¹²

There was perhaps an aspiration to martyrdom in Maček's attitude. For Dr Dečak, the lawyer acting for Maček, declared that, on October 7,

9. Maček's account, minimizing this incident, can be seen in his book, In the Struggle for Freedom, (Pennsylvania 1968), p. 129. 10. Ibid.

11. The Times, 28 Dec. 1929, p. 7.

12. Maček, ibid.

1929, the King offered Maček^V the post of Ban to the ~~Sava~~^{Savska} banovina but Maček^V had demanded that Dalmatia be made part of the banovina as the price of his acceptance. This the King refused to do. Dr Dečak^V said that the offer had greatly embarrassed Dr Maček^V and that the Government, having failed to win him over, had decided instead to destroy him and had deliberately implicated him in the December bomb plot. ¹³

The stage was now set for another major political trial. The charges were undoubtedly raised on criminal proceedings but the presence of Maček^V and members of Croat nationalist organizations inevitably made the trial a political cause célèbre. Maček^V himself showed every desire to do battle with the regime for, although fifty Serbian lawyers offered to defend him, he chose Dr Trumbić, the Croat Federalist leader,¹⁴ as his defence counsel. Maček^V also contacted Krnjević, one of his supporters abroad, and asked him to bring his case before the next session of the League of Nations.

The trial, which began on April 24, 1930, lasted forty-seven days. Maček^V was accused of giving money (about £56) to the defendants in the full knowledge that it would be used for terrorist activities. He was also charged with giving instructions about pistols and their use; and for writing a newspaper article encouraging a belief that

13. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 24 Jan. 1930, C707/144/92. The remarks of the defence lawyer, although strongly hostile to the regime, reveal an interesting insight into the inner workings of the dictatorship and - if true - suggest that, even at this stage, the King was trying to conciliate the Croat leader and give him a major part in managing the life and destiny of the Croat population.

14. The choice of Dr Trumbić came after Dr Drljević - Maček's first choice of counsel - was arrested and confined to a small village near Niš^V. His arrest, only nine days before the trial, was not explained.

Croatia would shortly secede from Yugoslavia to become a separate independent state. Maček strongly denied that he had given any instructions about the use of firearms and refuted the interpretation which had been placed upon his newspaper article, but he admitted that he had given money for "charitable purposes". Since all the defendants declared that the allegations against Maček had only been extracted under torture,¹⁵ the prosecution concentrated upon the "separatist" activities of the Croat leader.

To this, Maček had a clear reply. Croatia, he said, had left the Austro-Hungarian Empire to join the Triune Kingdom in order to gain greater freedom. However, the Serbs had regarded the Kingdom as an extension of Serbian hegemony but there could be no free Croats without a free Croatia. He denied any responsibility for "separatist" propaganda and asked whether there could really be any need for propaganda for something which was "in the minds of old men and women, even on their deathbeds." He concluded:-

"No, gentlemen, propaganda is not necessary for that which is the political faith of the whole people under any paragraph of the present emergency laws. And did such a penalty exist, I would still refuse to conceal this faith and still less would I forswear it, because I know that I am backed by the whole Croat nation and by the great majority of Serbs, at least in the ex-Austrian provinces, the more so as behind me there stands my great country tortured, lacerated, down-trodden, for centuries persecuted, but never reduced to slavery." ¹⁶

15. Dr Trumbić, in a strong speech against the Zagreb police said that "methods of Turkish violence" would never solve the Croat problem.

16. For a full report of the trial, N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 19 June 1930, C5021/144/92.

After this highly-coloured and politically-loaded defence, the acquittal of Dr Maček came as a great surprise. The Court found that no terrorist organization had been responsible for the bomb plot but they remained convinced that there had been a genuine conspiracy in which some - if not all - the defendants were involved. Fifteen of the twenty-four were pronounced guilty and given sentences ranging from fifteen years hard labour to permanent loss of civil rights and imprisonment. The other nine defendants - including Maček - were found "not guilty" and released.¹⁷

Whilst the trial was in progress, a reconstruction of the government took place. Dr Stanko Šibenik, a widely-respected Croat,¹⁸ was made the new Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and his predecessor, Dr Frangeš was reduced to being Minister without portfolio. Three other ministers entered the government - one Croat, one Slovene and one from Hercegovina¹⁹ - among them Dr Preka who, on April 22, had brought 1500 Croats to Belgrade to demonstrate in favour of the regime.²⁰ The demonstration was arranged by the Government and was a colourful affair with many bands and flags in evidence. It seemed that the Government was trying to broaden the basis of its support and to show that Maček was by no means the only political figure in Croatia for if men like Šibenik could co-operate with the regime, others might follow their example.

There is little doubt that the Government expected Dr Maček to be found guilty of the charges levelled against him:-

"I understand that General Živković assured his

17. Ibid

18. See "Biographies".

19. Dr Neudorfer, Dr Švegel and Preka respectively.

20. La Yougoslavie, (Belgrade 1930) Issue 31 (p.1) and Issue 33 (p.1)
See also N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 22 Apr. 1930, C3241/144/92.

colleagues that the proofs against him (Maček)

were sufficiently strong to secure condemnation...."²¹

And that the reconstruction of the Council of Ministers - now including eight Croats and Slovenes - was designed (in the event of his condemnation) to answer any charge from abroad that the regime was hostile to the Croats. So, when Maček was acquitted, Henderson wrote:-

"I am inclined to think that the outcome of the trial is a smack in the face for Živković."²² But later, Henderson had second thoughts:-

"I have reason to suspect that the acquittal was inspired by the Government in as much as in May and June it did not feel itself strong enough to convict Maček and consequently refrained from producing all the proofs of his complicity which it possessed".....²³ "It shrank, in fact, from exposing itself to the additional criticism, not only in Croatia but also abroad, which Maček's condemnation might provoke."²⁴

But it may well have been that the regime - and King Alexander in part-

21. N. Henderson to O.G. Sargent, 16 July, 1930, C5812/144/92.

22. N. Henderson to O.G. Sargent, 18 June, 1930, C5030/144/92.

23. It is a matter worth noting that, whilst Maček was on trial in Belgrade, another trial was proceeding in Zagreb. Josip Predavec, a friend of Maček and formerly Vice-President of the CPP, was accused of mishandling the affairs of various peasant co-operatives of which he was a director. He was President of the Agrarian Co-operative Bank in Zagreb, which went bankrupt whilst he was President. He was found guilty and sentenced to 3½ years imprisonment and 3 years loss of civil rights. Maček, In the Struggle for Freedom, pp. 133-4, gives a different

slant to circumstances and is not entirely accurate in his account. Henderson suggests that since most of the CPP leaders were involved in the affair, had Maček not been facing more serious charges in Belgrade, he might well have found himself in the dock with Predavec in Zagreb. His trial and acquittal therefore preserved Maček's repute

as Croat leader. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 24 Jun 1930, C5190/144/92.

24. Henderson to Sargent, 16 July 1930, C5812/144/92.

icular - still hoped to secure the support and co-operation of Dr Maček, whose authority in Croatia was undoubted, and were unwilling to press matters too far.²⁵

Certainly, the King was not finding it easy managing the affairs of State. As royal dictator, his was a lonely life. Because of the strict censorship he had enforced, he was cut off from the frank opinions of his people and found himself dependent upon such information as his officials chose to lay before him. His ministers, although hand-picked for their loyalty, were of an inferior quality²⁶ and his utter dependence upon the Serbs - both for the purposes of administration and in ensuring the unquestioning support of the Army - was highlighted by the Croat conspiracy and the political trials which followed. The King was anxious to win popular approval for his new plans for the Kingdom and was eager to see them implemented but, at the same time, he was reluctant to let the great powers he had assumed, slip from his control. The full extent of the King's dilemma was clearly seen in the summer and autumn of 1930.

In July, after nine months devoid of any additional reforms, the Government announced that each Banovina would have a Banovina Council to deal with local affairs. The Councils would be merely consultative bodies with no legislative powers and their membership would be decided by the Minister of the Interior.²⁷ Although the scope of the Council's activities was strictly limited and completely

25. The consideration of the Government towards Dr Maček is shown by the fact that when he needed medical treatment for a derangement of the bile (which had been aggravated by his term of imprisonment) the Government immediately issued a passport to permit him to travel abroad.

Macek, op. cit., p. 134. 26. Henderson to Sargent, 16 Jul 1930 C5812/144/92

27. The total membership of all the Banovina councils would be 512 (ranging from 86 in the largest - Savska - to 31 in the smallest - Primorska). N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 4 July 1930, C5406/144/92.

The Government announcement was made on July 3.

under the control of the central government, many considered that the announcement marked a first step towards constitutional rule and speculation was rife. So much so that the Government was obliged to issue a declaration on July 9 stressing the groundlessness of all the rumours currently in circulation and re-affirming the Government's intention to go on "till the consolidation of the Yugoslav state was accomplished." ²⁸ The Government declared that there would "never be a return to a parliament and party system in the old form" and that "following the law of October 3 (1929), the old historical frontiers were abolished for ever" and that the division of the country into nine Banovinas was regarded as a final and irrevocable decision. The Politika, considering this declaration, observed that, whilst it said nothing new, in its "resoluteness, clarity and consistency, it bears the character of a definite political programme." ²⁹

"To my mind," wrote Henderson, "the declaration bears the stamp of the King's conception. The idea of Yugoslavia, one and indivisible, is His Majesty's. The dominating personalities in the present Cabinet - such as Živković, Marinković, Uzunović and Srškić - are all such arch-Serbs brought up on the old Pašić pan-Serb traditions and it is evidence of the predominating influence of the King that he has bent them to his will in this respect..... Yugoslavism, in my opinion, is far from being a measure of desperation. It has a certain strain of idealism which appeals to the Slav temperament. Time is also in its favour..... Providing that King Alexander survives, there is no reason why he should not be able to realize his policies

28. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 9 July 1930, C5658/144/92.

29. Ibid.

and enforce his ideals on the country." ³⁰

As if to re-inforce the strength of the Government's position (but more probably to explore public opinion at local level), General Živković embarked upon a month's tour of the country, making speeches "ad majorem gloriam Regis Alexandri." ³¹ The British Consul in Sarajevo, Mr Gilliat-Smith was not very impressed with his performance and reported that the Prime Minister's visits to the Drina and Zeta Banovinas had failed to arouse much enthusiasm for the regime. However, the Consul expressed his view that it was not so much the ideals of the regime which were disliked, but rather the people who put them into practice. ³² Later, in September, General Živković paid a similar visit to Zagreb where, much to the surprise of observers, he received a warm reception. ³³ One of the most immediate results of the Prime Minister's tour was a Government decision to amend the Press Law. General Živković discovered that the Law made it practically impossible to criticize the work of municipal, banovina or state officials. The amendments to the Law were introduced on September 17 and enabled public criticism to make itself heard, in the hope that officials would be more careful about corruption and the conduct of their administrative work. ³⁴

30. N. Henderson to O.G. Sargent, 16 July 1930, C5812/144/92. Henderson also recalled that, in his first audience at Dedinje, King Alexander told him: "What I require is 40 years of peace in which to build up a tradition of honest administration. That is the only foundation for Yugoslav unity." Henderson, Water Under the Bridges, p. 182.

31. Henderson to Sargent, 15 Aug. 1930, C6595/144/92.

32. Leigh Smith to A. Henderson, 5 Sept. 1930, containing consular report from Mr Gilliat-Smith (Sarajevo), C6885/144/92.

33. Henderson to Sargent, 26 Sept. 1930, C7381/144/92. It was felt that Živković's visit foreshadowed one by the King.

34. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 17 Sept. 1930, C7152/144/92.

Before the General made his tour, the Government had been actively considering the possibility of launching an "official" political party - the Yugoslav National Party - to which all people of eminence would be invited to join.³⁵ But, at the last minute, the Government discovered that there was no great enthusiasm or support for a party sponsored by the regime. Memories of the previous political parties were still fresh; old loyalties still strong. The King and his Ministers were much embarrassed for they had intended to launch the new political party on September 6,³⁶ the Crown Prince's seventh birthday. Great banquets had been prepared; Ministers and Bans were to be decorated in solemn assembly; the body of Kara Djordje was to be moved to its last resting place at Topola and a large military demonstration had been planned at Banjica, near Belgrade, to which many foreign delegations had been invited. The celebrations went ahead as arranged³⁷ but, instead of some new political initiative, the King and his Government produced yet another declaration:-

"All the Ministers in the present Cabinet have only one programme, namely that which was pronounced in the Royal Proclamation of January 6, 1929 and in the Government declaration of July 9 last. All the Ministers in the present Government must therefore be considered members of a homogenous Cabinet. Being

35. Leigh Smith to A. Henderson, 5 Sept. 1930 C6886/144/92. Later in September, a proposal was made that 3 political parties should be created - one of the right under General Živković, one of the centre under Dr Marinković and one of the left under Dr Topalović - a leading Socialist.

36. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 29 Sept. 1930, C7443/144/92.

37. The mausoleum at Oplenac (on the hill above Topola) is the last resting place of all the Karadjordjević family.

38. Peter II of Yugoslavia, A King's Heritage, (London 1955) p. 9.

convinced that a proper development of national and state life excludes in the future the return or revival of former political parties, they declare that they are prepared to participate in their future political work unanimously and only on this basis, regardless of the party to which they belonged." ³⁹

In reading this colourless and unnecessary statement, it is difficult to escape the impression that, although the royal dictatorship had successfully abolished the old parliamentary regime and produced the administrative machinery for a new Yugoslavia,⁴⁰ they were far from clear as to what they should do next. Even the very boldness of the language in the declaration scarcely veils the sterility and barren emptiness of Government policy.

However, one man did not sign the declaration. Dr Anton Korošec, the Slovene leader, former Prime Minister and more recently Minister of Mines and Forests,⁴¹ found himself unable to co-operate with the Government any further. He left Belgrade for Maribor before the declaration was signed but reserved his resignation for a Cabinet meeting later in the month, when a proposal was made for the abolition of all religious organizations throughout the country. The proposal was particularly aimed at the "Mary organizations" in Slovenia, which were

39. Leigh Smith to A. Henderson, 5 Sept. 1930, C6886/144/92.

40 Although volume of legislation is no proof of effective government, it is worth noting that, in one year of dictatorship, 183 laws and 535 rules and decrees were promulgated, against 110 laws in ten years of parliamentary government. E.J. Patterson, Yugoslavia, (London 1936) pp. 105-106.

41. Although appointed Minister of Communications in Jan. 1929, he took his new portfolio on August 5, 1929, The Times, 6 Aug. 1929, p.9. As Minister under the regime, he played a very quiet and self-effacing rôle.

said to be a cloak for the old Clerical Party of which Dr Korošec^v was head, and it was suggested that the Minister for Mines and Forests, together with other Ministers, should go to Slovenia and explain this new government measure. Upon this delicate and personal issue, Korošec^v chose to resign. Henderson wrote:-

"The King is likely to be embarrassed by the resignation as it will now be harder for him to claim that he unites all Yugoslavs irrespective of race. There is also the religious difficulty since the Catholic Church stands behind the Slovene Clerical Party and Korošec^v. The King is also in difficulty as to whether to refuse the Catholic Church privileges it has elsewhere or whether to upset other religious bodies in Yugoslavia by giving Catholics privileges which they have been refused."⁴²

The King saw very clearly the dangers of Dr Korošec's^v resignation and the impact on the regime should other Ministers follow his example. So, instead of issuing repeated declarations of loyalty to the Yugoslav ideal and stressing their unanimity of purpose, it was decided that the Council of Ministers would spend the month of October visiting different parts of the Kingdom to see for themselves what needed to be done and to measure the strength of local opinion. Since the Press Law had been modified in September to allow the free expression of criticism, the local newspapers revealed that, as the Ministers toured the country, the complaints of the population became more and more vocal and, correspondingly, the promises of the Ministers became more and more lavish! The most regular complaints were those of over-

42. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 29 Sept. 1930, C7443/144/92. Korošec's^v place in the Council of Ministers was taken by Dušan Serbec, Ban of the Drava Banovina - also a Slovene.

taxation, faulty assessment of taxes and the inability of the peasants to sell their wheat at a decent price. The Ministers were told that there were too many State officials; that they were inefficient and often corrupt and that Press censorship had prevented their faults being exposed. There were not enough railway stations, not enough rolling stock, poor roads and too few technical schools. It was also felt that the Government spent far too little on education⁴³ and that whilst the salaries of teachers remained low, standards would never improve.⁴⁴

After hearing the feelings of the people at first hand, the Ministers returned to Belgrade to lick their sores. Many of the criticisms voiced were undeniably true - especially about the State officials - but the Ministry of Communications strongly denied that there was any lack of rolling stock. The Ministers were obliged to admit that the complaints about the peasant's wheat were more than justified. The price of wheat on the world market was very low. Yugoslavia had no commercial treaties abroad and this meant that it was extremely difficult to penetrate the markets of the industrial nations without undercutting world prices. But, if they did this, they would have to meet the deficit from their own budgetary revenue, which was already hard pressed.⁴⁵

But the Government had promised to make reforms and on December 11, 1930, after a Cabinet meeting presided over by the King, it was agreed to lessen the general burden of taxation and lower the expenses of production. Land tax was reduced by 2%; the tax on pasture land by 50%. The export duty on wool was abolished as was the

43. Total budget estimates for 1929-30 were £44,210,000 (12,158 million dinars) of which 33% was to be spent on the armed forces. The Times, 5 Feb. 1929, p. 23.

44. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 29, Oct. 1930, C8112/144/92.

45. Ibid.

import duty on agricultural machinery. A reduction of 50% in the state excise on wine was agreed and it was announced that the collection of unpaid taxes would be postponed for five years. The Government promised to improve roads and village sanitation, to build more hospitals, modify communal laws and re-organize the work of municipal authorities. Incompetent officials would be dismissed. More facilities would be provided for exports and greater encouragement would be given to the building of hotels. Not without justification, the Politika described the Government's proposals as "comprehensive."⁴⁶

But, as the British Minister observed, it was not the Government that gained credit for the reforms, but the King:-

"People - and in particular, the peasants - still pin their faith on His Majesty, who is regarded by them as the one sincerely disinterested man in Yugoslavia, who honestly desires nothing but the good of the country. They are ready to give him almost unlimited credit and to believe that such errors that are committed are due to the evil influence and guidance of his Ministers."⁴⁷

Riding on the crest of popularity from his Government's recent reforms, the King decided to pay his long-expected visit to Zagreb. Giving only two days warning of his intentions (to forestall any subversive preparations by his opponents), Alexander and Queen Marie arrived in the Croatian capital on January 25, 1931 and received an enthusiastic welcome from the people of the city. The royal couple stayed in Zagreb for ten days and toured all the local sights. Their car was regularly stopped by flag-waving crowds and the King was at

46. Politika, 12 Dec. 1930.

47. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 27 November 1930, C8787/144/92.

pains to be informal and show that he thought the intense police precautions were unnecessary. The visit was the occasion of great demonstrations by those loyal to the regime⁴⁸ and during the whole of Alexander's stay, only one bomb exploded - and that without injury.⁴⁹ All in all, the visit was a conspicuous success and the King returned to Belgrade assured of the loyalty of his Croat subjects and confident of the intrinsic stability of his position.

Certainly, he had little to fear from the old politicians. Without power and under constant police surveillance, they were reduced to drawing up "paper" plans for the re-organization of the Kingdom and circulating them to each other in a vain attempt to reach a common mind as to how the country should be run. During the autumn of 1930, they drew up proposals - broadly similar to those put forward in the summer of 1929⁵⁰ - suggesting that the State be decentralized and full powers given to each of the historic provinces to choose their own governor and elect their own parliament. They proposed that a provisional government should be formed to write a new Constitution but that no Minister in the ^vŽivković Cabinet be included. The new Constitution, thus written, would be submitted to Parliament and accepted or rejected en bloc. The old politicians planned that once they had the agreement of all the former parties to these proposals, they would submit a memorandum to the King and to foreign governments to show that the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were capable of planning their own future and reaching agreement together.⁵¹ But the old mistrust and rivalry between them prevented any useful or constructive agreement

48. Consular report from Mr G.H. Bullock (Zagreb) to N. Henderson, - 28 Jan. 1931, C723/304/92.

49. The bomb exploded in the Yugoslav Young Men's Society building.

50. See above p. 72.

51. Leigh Smith to A. Henderson, 29 Dec. 1930, C9470/144/92.

being made and, by February 1931, they were still haggling over their particular proposals with nothing concrete achieved.⁵² When General Živković heard about their efforts, he issued a strong statement to the Press, saying that everything in Yugoslavia was already being carried out according to democratic principles and that the Government of the regime would gradually develop into a true democracy.⁵³

The continuing disunity between the former politicians was accentuated by the refusal of Dr Korošec to be party to any of their schemes. When he resigned from the Government, many opponents of the regime confidently assumed that he had only resigned in order to raise a Catholic Front against the regime. But Dr Korošec was now to be found in Belgrade University giving lectures on the co-operative movement in agriculture!⁵⁴ Dr Maček, who had suffered poor health from his time in prison,⁵⁵ did little more than give interviews to foreign journalists⁵⁶ and Svetozar Pribićević, without whose approval no political scheme could ever get off the ground, was still very much at the mercy of the regime. For two years he was detained at Brus and then, because of ill-health, transferred to a nursing home where he lived in comparative comfort. Rather than return to the narrow confines of Brus, he staged a hunger-strike and, with the help of friends abroad,⁵⁷ was allowed to go to Karlovy Vary

52. Leigh Smith to A. Henderson, 11 Feb 1931, C1079/304/92.

53. Leigh Smith to A. Henderson, 29 Dec 1930, C9470/144/92.

54. Henderson to Sargent, 17 Mar. 1931, C1929/304/92.

55. Maček. In the Struggle for Freedom, p. 134. 56. Ibid., p. 137.

57. A British M.P., Dr Leslie Burgin wrote to Mr Dalton, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, asking for steps to be taken to get Pribićević released, on the grounds that there would be a serious risk of revolution in Yugoslavia if this were not done. The Times, 9 June 1931. Dr Burgin's letter is a significant insight into British understanding of Yugoslavia's internal affairs.(cont. p. 122)

and, later, to Paris, where he wrote a vicious book attacking King Alexander and his regime.⁵⁸

But although the King and his Ministers had nothing to fear from the old politicians, they found themselves facing a deep and mounting unease, which manifested itself in bomb attacks and rumour. After two months of peace - encouraged perhaps by the financial reforms and the royal visit to Zagreb - violence erupted. Dr Milan Šufflay, a university professor and supporter of the former Frankist party, was ambushed and killed in Zagreb on February 19. Šufflay had helped Maček to translate foreign news reports into Serbo-Croat and it was believed by those hostile to the regime that his death had been arranged by agents of the city police.⁵⁹ Early in March 1931, there were rumours in Vienna of a plot to kill eighty leading Croats - including Dr Maček and Dr Pernar. Two conspirators were arrested; a third named.⁶⁰ Late in February, a series of bomb attacks occurred at Niš (in Serbia) and, throughout March, there were numerous explosions in Belgrade itself. The magazine, Truth, reported nervousness inside Yugoslavia, with fights between peasants and tax-collectors, guerilla attacks on the

(contd from p. 121) Dr Beneš also contacted the British Foreign Office to see if they could get him released; but Dr Beneš' appreciation of Pribičević's importance was somewhat diminished because, in his letter, he referred to him as M. Preobrajensky, F.O. memorandum C4811/304/92, referred to in memorandum C4064/304/92. Henderson was asked to use his good relationship with Marinković to alleviate Pribičević's condition - successfully, as it appeared. Henderson to Sargent, 2 Jul. 1931, C4905/304/92. 58. S. Pribičević, La Dictature du Roi Alexandre (contribution a l'étude de la Démocratie), Paris 1933.

59. Maček, op. cit., p. 135.

60. Stefan Tomljenović, Branko Cverger and Ljubomir Belosević - all members of the Mlada Jugoslaviija organization (specifically terrorist in character). Sir Eric Phipps (Vienna) to A. Henderson, 16 Mar. 1931, C1802/304/92.

Orient Express and hundreds of arrests.⁶¹ The reports were exaggerated,⁶² but many security checks were made, those with irregularities detained and a number of Communists executed.⁶³

Other rumours suggested dissension within the Council of Ministers. General Živković, never very popular in the public eye, was reported to have had a bitter quarrel with Dr Marinković, the Foreign Minister, and tried to get him dismissed.⁶⁴ There were regular reports, well-substantiated, that his policy of promoting personal favourites in the Army had provoked strong resentment⁶⁵ and the elaborate security precautions taken at the funeral of General Hadžić showed that the Prime Minister did not underestimate the possibility of attempted assassination.⁶⁶ The question arose: "Would Živković be forced to resign?" One observer thought not:-

"General Živković has long been tired of the, to him, uncongenial task of Prime Minister and is forced to remain in office by the King who needs a strong hand to rely on in moments of crisis against refractory ministers and obnoxious opponents. In this case, it is not too much to expect

61. Truth, 29 Apr. 1931. 62. Henderson, Water Under the Bridges, p.188.

63. Annual Report for 1931. Henderson to Sir John Simon, 1 Jan 1932, C53/53/92. (Vol. 15994)

64. Henderson to Sargent, 16 Apr. 1931, C2632/304/92. It is interesting to note that rumour suggested that Jevtić (Minister of the Court) and a close relative of Živković, would replace Marinković. This was later to happen.

65. Report from Major Oxley, Military Attaché, contained in letter from Henderson to Sargent, 30 Apr 1931, C2953/G/304/92. Particular distress was caused by the dismissal of General Kalafatović, regarded as one of the best officers in the Yugoslav army, who had been Chief of the National Defence Committee for 4 months before quarrelling with Živković over a contract for a munitions factory. Henderson to Sargent, 5 Nov. 1930, C8277/1145/92.

66. Henderson to Sargent, 30 Apr. 1931, C2953/G/304/92.

that if the situation continues to improve during the present year, the King may feel General Živković is no longer indispensable and may replace him by a civilian and more competent Prime Minister." ⁶⁷

But for the moment, the King had no desire to change his Prime Minister. He had no desire to change anything. Events in Spain, where the monarchy was overthrown in April 1931, were a frightening reminder of what could happen to a King. One day in power; the next, in exile. But fortunately for Alexander, Yugoslavia was not like Spain. Even though the malcontents, who gathered in the coffee-shops, referred with glee to the remedial effects of the new "Spanish mixture", ⁶⁸ Alexander was popular. He held the reins of government tightly in his own hands. His aim was to unite the peoples of Yugoslavia; that too was popular. The Army was loyal to the Crown and there was little danger of conspiracy. In June 1931, as if to demonstrate the strength of his position, the King paid a second visit to Zagreb and was again warmly welcomed by the people. Security precautions were relaxed, the police less in evidence and many speeches on the theme "King and People" were made. ⁶⁹

The royal dictatorship, it seemed, not only occupied a position of unassailable strength in the Kingdom but also had little intention of change. Despite the barren emptiness of Government policy, the unpopularity of the Council of Ministers, the bomb attacks, ⁷⁰ the rumours

67. Leigh Smith to A. Henderson, 11 Feb. 1931, C1079/304/92.

68. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 2 Jul. 1931, C4909/304/92.

69. Mr K. Boden (H.M. Consul in Zagreb) to N. Henderson, 2 June 1931, C3953/304/92. General Živković, who was with the King, attended the funeral of Dr Drinković, which made a good impression on the Croats.

70. During July-August 1931, there were 15 perpetrated or attempted bomb outrages.

of dissension and the fate of the Spanish monarchy, King Alexander gave the impression that he was still well-satisfied with the structure of his regime and would permit only minor modifications to it. At the end of June, he contented himself with some small changes to the Cabinet,⁷¹ removing the more obvious failures,⁷² and bringing in new blood to cope with his country's economic problems; and, at a meeting of the Council of Ministers on July 24, the possibility of a return to some form of parliamentary government was discussed.⁷³ But even though there was no evidence to suggest an early return to constitutional rule, the news that the subject had even been discussed, produced a spate of rumours.⁷⁴ The rumours spread so widely and so rapidly that the newspapers were compelled to publish the report of an interview accorded to a correspondent of the "Havas" agency by the King. In the interview, the King stressed that there would be no early changes in the regime and whatever developments were made would certainly mark no return to the old system but rather be a constitutional extension of what already existed.⁷⁵

In a conversation with Nevile Henderson on August 19, 1931, the King confirmed that the rumours were entirely without foundation:-

"His Majesty gave me to understand that his plans were still incomplete and indefinite. He said he could not tell me more than that as he did not know

71. See Appendix D for Cabinet changes.

72. The most obvious failure being Dr Švrluga, who had been a highly unsuccessful Minister of Finance.

73. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 14 Aug. 1931, C6422/304/92.

74. The rumours included the following:- Korošec would be the new civilian Prime Minister; one third of the Parliament would be nominated by the King; the changes would be announced on August 15th - the tenth anniversary of the King's accession.

75. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 14 Aug. 1931, C6422/304/92.

himself how the scheme could be worked out. All he could say was that he aimed at a Parliament which would share the responsibility of Government with him; a return to normality along the lines of the Yugoslav ideal; a Parliament which could afford scope for free criticism and give the peasant direct representation in the Administration. He was not going to be like King Alfonso, whose patience, in the end, had failed him." ⁷⁶

From his conversation with the King, Henderson drew the following conclusions:-

"It is clear from the above that the date of promulgating a new constitution is distant. I found the King worried and depressed and far from well. He told me that he was suffering and had always suffered from a disease of the bladder but that he counted on the good effects of the cure which he always takes in September at some waters near Niš. He complained bitterly about being overworked and was seriously concerned about his health." ⁷⁷

Confident that nothing was likely to happen in the immediate future, Henderson went on holiday. His belief that there was no constitutional reform impending was shared by Dr Marinković who, on September 1, assured the Greek Minister that the Government had nothing in mind. ⁷⁸ However, on the evening of September 2, the King gathered together his Ministers to dinner in Belgrade and announced that, on the following day, he would grant a new Constitution to his people.

76. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 20 Aug. 1931, C6764/304/92.

77. Ibid. 78. Leigh Smith to the Marquess of Reading, 3 Sept. 1931, C6856/304/92.

Chapter 6

The Constitution of 1931

The question arises:- Why, at this particular moment, after such persistent denials, did the King proclaim the new Constitution at the time he did? All the evidence suggests that the Constitution of September 3 was not some speedy invention written in a matter of days, but a complex and carefully written document¹ composed over a period of months and kept in cold storage until the time seemed ripe for a return to constitutional rule. Why then, should he have chosen this particular moment? Was it really the fear of a repetition of the events in Spain and the overthrow of the monarchy? Or was it because the King, always a fatalist,² was worried about his health and feared that illness or death would create a political vacuum at the heart of his Kingdom? After two-and-a-half years of personal rule, was he finding life as a dictator too hard to bear? Was he unhappy about his continued dependence upon the Serbs? Or distressed by the incompetence of his Council of Ministers? Might it not be that, as he suggested to Henderson, there was a need for some public assembly where the voice of criticism could be heard? All these were cogent reasons for a return to constitutional rule but they were reasons that could have justified the promulgation of the Constitution at many another moment in the life of the Dictatorship. What was it

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1. The fullest study of the new Constitution is given by D. Lučić, La Constitution du Royaume de Yougoslavie du 3 septembre 1931, (Paris 1933) where a full text of the Constitution is given on pp.263ff. The original Serbo-Croat text is given in Službene Novine, 3 Sept. 1931; and in Ustav Kraljevine Jugoslavije (Zagreb 1933) in book-form.
 2. Sir Nevile Henderson, Water Under the Bridges, (London 1945) p. 194.

that compelled the King to act so suddenly after so many apparently sincere denials?

It was suggested at the time that the principal cause for the King's sudden move was the steady deterioration in the country's financial condition.³ Until the summer of 1931, Yugoslavia had coped admirably with the international money crisis and the recession in world trade.⁴ She had even managed - at a time of exceedingly hard credit and in the face of much hostility - to get a loan of £8.3 millions from France to stabilize her currency and provide ready capital for industrial development.⁵ But, gradually, the slump in world prices for agricultural products and timber reached the point where the Yugoslav government was obliged - on political grounds - to buy wheat from the peasants at a highly uneconomic rate, in the full knowledge that when the grain was resold on the world market, they would perhaps lose £3 millions.⁶ This was a sum they could ill afford to lose. For, in June 1931, President Hoover had proposed a moratorium on German reparations and Yugoslavia, which had been receiving an annual sum of £4 millions from Germany, found that her previously favourable trade balance had melted away and there was severe pressure on the dinar on the world market.⁷ At home, the widespread distress of the peasantry was aggravated by a severe drought in Southern Yugoslavia which meant that the harvests in Montenegro, Hercegovina and Macedonia were a complete failure.⁸ A special committee of the Ministry of

3. Leigh Smith to the Marquess of Reading, 3 Sept. 1931, C6856/304/92.

4. The Times, (Financial Supplement), 10 Feb 1931, p. 23.

5. For details of the loan and the economic position, see Appendix F.

6. Annual Report for 1931. Section 6. C53/53/92 (Vol. 15994)

7. The Yugoslavs stood to lose £1.7m in goods and £2.2m in cash.

8. Memo by F.O. on Yugoslav economic condition, Oct. 1931, C7278/95/92.

The additional cost of the harvest failure was £900,000 - a sizeable sum for a country whose total budget was only £4.8 millions.

Finance had been meeting all summer and its proposals - consisting of a series of drastic economies - had been placed before the Council of Ministers at the end of August.⁹ It was therefore felt by informed circles in Yugoslavia that King Alexander's unexpected proclamation of a new Constitution was the immediate outcome of the financial crisis which had afflicted the country. Those "in the know" declared that the French had refused to give a further loan to stabilize the dinar unless there was a return to constitutional rule and enemies of the King suggested cynically that the economies proposed by the special committee were likely to be so drastic that Alexander would prefer the onus of responsibility to rest upon representatives of the people rather than upon himself.¹⁰

It was also significant that only a few days before the proclamation of the new Constitution, the King had been involved in talks with Stanojević, Davidović and Dr Korošec with a view to strengthening and enlarging the basis of Government support. He had also tried to win Croat approval by modifying the boundaries of the Sava Banovina to include Slavonia, which had traditionally been regarded as part of Croatia.¹¹ But his efforts were unsuccessful. Stanojević and Davidović were either unwilling or unable to accept the conditions laid down by the King, the Croats proved unresponsive and when Dr Korošec, who had at first agreed to co-operate, saw that he was alone, he too backed down.¹² The former politicians, it seemed, were adamant in their refusal to have anything to do with General Živković or the dictatorship. And yet the King desperately needed help:-

"I am convinced," wrote Henderson, "that His

9. Leigh Smith to the Marquess of Reading, 3 Sept 1931, C6856/304/92.

10. Ibid. 11. The Times, 1 Sept. 1931, p. 11. Aca Stanojević was the spokesman for the former Radical Party.

12. The Times, 3 Sept. 1931, p. 9.

Majesty's main objectives were to give the people some share in the administration, to diminish his own responsibility and to relieve himself of some of the excess of work which is undermining his health. His honest desires in this sense were accelerated by the increasing economic difficulties." ¹³

The conclusion can therefore be drawn that it was not the financial crisis alone that prompted Alexander to act. Nor would it be right to believe that the King produced his Constitution merely as a sop to French opinion. That was not his way. What can be said is that the financial crisis facing Yugoslavia made Alexander realize the limitations of personal rule. The former politicians - and many other loyal subjects - would not associate themselves with a dictatorial regime. There must be a return to constitutional rule. Only then would the King obtain a wider measure of popular support.

But it is doubtful whether the Constitution of September 3 did anything to encourage the former politicians to co-operate more willingly with the King. Firstly, it was introduced by royal decree - rather than by popular consent; and, secondly, it was tailored very much to Alexander's personal taste. Under the terms of the Constitution, Yugoslavia was declared to be a "hereditary and constitutional" monarchy ¹⁴ with legislative power vested in the King and Parliament and executive power in the King and his Ministers. ¹⁵ The King would retain the power to confirm and promulgate laws. He would appoint officials, grant amnesties, and, with merely the consent of his Ministers, could

13. Henderson to the Marquess of Reading, 18 Sept. 1931, C7137/304/92.

14. Article 1. It is worth noting that, under the Vidovdan Constitution, the Kingdom was described as a "constitutional and parliamentary" monarchy.

15. A full study of the legislative structure can be found in Lučić, La Constitution du Royaume de Yougoslavie, pp. 55-141.

dissolve parliament and call fresh elections. The King would possess special powers to intervene in case of emergency or war and, more significantly, he was granted the right to conclude political treaties with other countries on his own initiative - without parliamentary approval. Until elections were held, the King would continue to issue laws by royal decree.¹⁶

The Skupština (or Parliament) would meet in Belgrade on October 20 each year and would consist of two assemblies - the Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. Forty-eight senators would sit in the Upper House, half appointed by the King and half elected by the people,¹⁷ and, in the Chamber, there would be 305 deputies elected by universal male suffrage every four years. No bill could be considered unless it had the support of more than one-fifth of the members in either house and each assembly had the right to question a government minister on his policy or actions and receive a reply. In the event of any disagreement between the Senate and Chamber, the King would determine the outcome.¹⁸ All laws promulgated since January 6, 1929 would remain in force except that conferring upon the King supreme administrative power in the Kingdom, which was now repealed.¹⁹

Four days later, an electoral law was issued, governing the

16. Articles 29-40.

17. Articles 50-53.

18. Articles 54-76. For a study of the executive powers possessed by King and Parliament, see Lučić, op. cit., pp. 142-209. One of the noticeable features of the new Constitution was the introduction of "ministerial responsibility" for each and every government decision. It has also been pointed out that, under the new Constitution, the King was no longer regarded as responsible for the actions and decisions of his government. (Ed) ~~Zivotic~~, La Yougoslavie d'Aujourd'hui, (Belgrade 1935) p. 121.

19. The laws regarding Banovina administration, issued during the first two years of the Dictatorship, were incorporated into the Constitution (Articles 77-99). See also Lučić, La Constitution du Royaume de Yougoslavie du septembre 3, pp. 176- 189.

manner in which deputies for the Lower House would be elected.²⁰

Voting, the law stated, would take place on a Sunday and would be done in public. There would be no ballot boxes in the polling stations and each voter would record his vote verbally.²¹ As a further measure of control, no party was permitted to contest the election unless it had nation-wide support. An elaborate procedure was drawn up, requiring a party to be approved by the Court of Cassation in Belgrade and then to secure 60 supporters for its programme in each of the 305 constituencies before it could even begin to function as a political party. Having overcome these obstacles, it could then hold meetings without having special permission from the Minister of the Interior, merely by notifying the local police chief twenty-four hours in advance. When voting was complete, the votes for each party were to be added up and the majority party automatically given two-thirds of the seats in the Lower House. The opposition party - or parties - would then occupy the remaining third of the House in proportion to their size. Should a deputy elected to Parliament as a representative of an approved national party desert that party, he must immediately resign. This last provision ensured that there would be no fragmentation of the parties once they were elected to Parliament. "The King's fixed intention," wrote Henderson, "is to obtain a majority for a Yugoslav party which will be free from the old religious, regional or professional political taints."²²

20. Zakon o izboru narodnih poslanika za narodnu skupstinu od 10 septembra 1931 sa izmenama i dopunama od 26 septembra 1931 (Belgrade 1932).

The Electoral Law of Sept. 10 - together with the Senatorial law of Sept. 30 - is summarized in Appendix G.

21. It was noted by a contemporary observer that verbal voting was a feature of Rumanian and Hungarian voting systems. The Times, 14 Sept. 1931, p. 11

22. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 14 Aug. 1931, C6422/304/92.

"The Times" correspondent commented:-

"The intention of the Law is obvious. The Dictatorship is to drop gently from the heights on to a well-stuffed Parliamentary mattress. The Yugoslav party will applaud its descent, pass the new Constitution, vote supplies and then perhaps vanish discreetly until the next budget has to be passed.

The achievements of the last two years will thus be preserved and any acts of indemnity that are required will be passed by a loyal majority. The Government will then have time to devote special attention to economic questions, which are less pressing in Yugoslavia than in some neighbouring states, but nevertheless require attention. Above all, the Law is designed to promote the formation of the national Yugoslav Party, which is King Alexander's dream, a party in which Serb and Croat, Moslem and Christian, Orthodox and Catholic will forget their past differences and co-operate for the common good. If the new Parliament lives for four years - so its champions argue - the whole nation will have accepted the new ideal and the organic unification of Yugoslavia and its peoples will be no longer an aspiration but a fact.

These are the obvious advantages of an electoral law which has been so framed as to leave the result of the impending election in no possible doubt."²³

To prepare the way for a return to constitutional rule and to secure a broader basis of representation in his Government - which was

23. The Times, 25 Sept. 1931, p. 13.

to be the backbone of his proposed Yugoslav Party - the King re-shuffled his Cabinet, bringing in eight new Ministers, three of whom were Serbs, two Croats and two Slovenes.²⁴ The immediate task of the enlarged Cabinet was to deal with the economic problems which faced the country. Very little could be done to mitigate the effect of the Hoover proposals but, as has been said, the Special Committee of the Ministry of Finance had drawn up a series of drastic remedies to make more money available to the Government to buy up the peasants' grain, for which there was no immediate market, and to make provision for those parts of the nation stricken by drought.²⁵

On September 4, the Cabinet approved economies of £2.6 millions and, on September 23, raised tobacco duty by 20%.²⁶ Officials and officers in the Army and Navy found their pay cut by 5-6%, civil servants by 5-8% and Cabinet Ministers by 25% - realizing a further £1.4 millions.²⁷ Early in October, all the controls which had been relaxed when the dinar had been stabilized by the French loan in May, were restored.²⁸ These measures were not as drastic as Djuric, the new Minister of Finance, would have wished²⁹ but they were enough to restore international confidence in the dinar for, when he went to Paris on October 22, Djuric negotiated a further loan of £2.4 millions, stabilizing the dinar and providing the necessary capital to finance the export of grain in a very poor market.³⁰ Fortunately for the

24. See Appendix D for changes. 25 See above, p. 129.

26. This measure was extremely unpopular and did little to help the Government in its election campaign. Henderson to Sargent, 18 Sept. 1931, C7180/304/92.

27. It was said that the Prime Minister's cut in salary was even higher. The Times, 23 Sept. 1931, p.11.

28. Službene Novine, (Belgrade), 8 Oct. 1931.

29. Annual Report for 1931, Section 7, C53/53/92. (Vol. 15994).

30. Henderson to the Marquess of Reading, 23 Oct. 1931, C7963/95/92.

Government, the world price for grain rose during the last two months of the year and Yugoslavia's expected loss of £3 millions proved to be a loss of no more than £1 million.³¹

The Government, having grappled with the country's most pressing financial problems, turned its attention to the forthcoming elections - fixed for November 8. Since there was no doubt about the outcome of the election, public interest turned upon the attitude of the former politicians and how far they might co-operate with the new constitutional regime. As early as September 18, there were rumours that Maček, Korošec, Davidović, Jovanović and Stanojević would boycott the elections³² and speculation mounted as to what would happen if no one stood against the Government party. Henderson wrote:-

"The Opposition looks as if it is going to thwart the well-meaning intentions of the King. If it does not participate in the elections, I imagine a fictitious opposition list will be set up, possibly with Marinković, who is still in Geneva, as its leader. But such a course would make Parliament farcical."³³

These rumours of a boycott were confirmed on September 25, when a declaration, drawn up by leaders of all the former political parties, was sent to the Press Bureau and to foreign correspondents, saying that they unanimously condemned the new Constitution and called upon the people to keep away from the polls. Because their declaration was unsigned, the Press Bureau refused to publish their views, so a

31. Having secured the second French loan and done his best to improve Yugoslavia's finances, Djurić asked the King to allow him to return to his post as Yugoslav Minister in London. The King agreed.

32. Henderson to the Marquess of Reading, 18 Sept. 1931, C7137/304/92.

33. Henderson to Sargent, 18 Sept. 1931, C7180/304/92.

second and milder declaration - signed by Stanojević, Korošec, Spaho, Davidović and Jovanović - was submitted, making it clear that they would not participate in the elections because, in their opinion, "the people were prevented by the Constitution and by the Electoral Law from manifesting their real desires."³⁴ Maček and Pribičević issued their manifesto later, committing their parties to a similar policy of non-co-operation:-

"The Constitution and Electoral Law, coming after three years of absolutism, preserve all the Dictatorship's laws so that it is impossible for anyone under the electoral law to stand for election except candidates who are favoured by the police. Our adherents fill the prisons of Croatia for attempting to collect signatures for our list."³⁵ There can be no other answer of the people to such developments than to abstain from the elections and leave the polling booths empty and deserted on November 8. Therefore, the people have no responsibility for the decisions and resolutions passed by a parliament elected in such a way."³⁶

A suggestion was made by the Croats that a "joint positive programme" should be considered by the main opposition parties, but the idea came to nothing.³⁷ It was therefore noticeable that, although the former politicians were united in criticism, they had not one single item of constructive policy to put forward.

³⁴. Henderson to the Marquess of Reading, 2 Oct. 1931, C7484/304/92.

³⁵. The Croats had not been collecting names for electoral nomination lists but for those prepared to support the Croat leaders in abstaining from the polls. See The Times, 3 Nov. 1931, p.11

³⁶. Summary of the Croat leaders' manifesto, The Times, 23 Oct 1931, p.11.

³⁷. Henderson to the Marquess of Reading, 8 Oct. 1931, C7640/304/92.

In the meantime, the Government party under General Živković continued its preparations for the election. A manifesto was issued on September 28, stating that for the last two-and-a-half years, the Council of Ministers had carried out the King's wishes to the full. The people were therefore urged to demonstrate their desire for unity within Yugoslavia, to signify their approval of the Government's record and give the General's party their vote on November 8.³⁸ It seemed to some that this appeal made the election more of a referendum than a contest between opposing parties and this was particularly true in Serbia where free use was made of the King's name and the population told that a vote for General Živković was a vote for the King.³⁹ But despite all the signs that the election would be a "one horse race", the Government wanted more than a mere vote of confidence. They wanted a "proper" election and, when it became clear that the former politicians would not take part, the Government set up several of their own candidates in each constituency to give the electorate a greater measure of choice in whom they returned to parliament.⁴⁰

Although there were rumours of unrest and disturbance - and sinister references to the Obrenović dynasty and its fate⁴¹ the election campaign passed comparatively quietly. Dr Marinković, speaking on October 25 to a mass meeting at Kučevo, told his audience that the major problems relating to the organization of the State had been settled once and for all. The new Parliament would concentrate on the many lesser problems which troubled the State and, only when

38. The Times, 30 Sept. 1931, p. 11. 39 The Times, 7 Nov 1931, p.9.

40. Henderson to the Marquess of Reading, 8 Oct. 1931, C7640/304/92.

41. Henderson to Sargent, 2 Oct. 1931, C7489/304/92. Alexander Obrenović, ^{King} Prince of Serbia (1889-1903) had dealt in a high-handed manner with his political opponents and altered the constitution to suit himself. He was murdered, together with his Queen, in June 1903.

the Government had proof that things which had happened in the past would not recur, would there be any change in the constitutional situation.⁴² Clearly, the Government was taking no chances - either politically or electorally. One former politician, Miša Trifunović, returned to his native town of Užice to muster support against the regime and was promptly arrested and fined 19,000 dinars.⁴³ Another political leader, Davidović, went to Čačak and there urged the people to boycott the election. The police treated him with more respect than Trifunović but nonetheless ordered him to leave the town immediately or else be sent back to Belgrade on a vagrancy charge!⁴⁴ In Croatia, reaction to the election was one of disinterest.⁴⁵ Only in Belgrade, three days before the poll was there any clash with the police. A group of students descended upon a cafe where Maksimović, a Government minister, was about to speak. They were driven out by the police and returned to their hostel cheering the King, singing national songs and shouting "Down with Živković!" and "Down with the Government!" One student received a bayonet wound in the clash, 18 students were arrested and the University was closed until the elections took place.⁴⁶

The result of the election was never in doubt and when the returns had been counted, it was found that no less than 65.4% of the electorate had cast their vote for the Government list - there being no alternative but to abstain.⁴⁷ A high poll of 80% was recorded in

42. The Times, 26 Oct. 1931, p. 11.

43. £83. Trifunović was one-time Minister of Education under the parliamentary regime. 44. The Times, 7 Nov. 1931, p. 9.

45. Henderson to Sir John Simon, 11 Nov. 1931, C8531/304/92. In Zagreb, the only reported incident was a small bomb which exploded harmlessly.

46. The Times, 6 Nov. 1931, p. 13 and 7 Nov. 1931, p. 9.

47. 65.4% is the figure given by Henderson in his despatch to Simon, 11 Nov. 1931, C8531/304/92, but Henderson gives no actual figures to show how he reached this total. The Yugoslav population (1931 Census) was 13,934,038, of which 6,791,627 were males. Of these, (contd. p.140)

Moravska (Central Serbia), but only 34% in Primorska (Dalmatia). Good turn-outs were reported in Belgrade (66%), Ljubljana (82%) and; even in Zagreb, 42% of the electorate went to the polls. The Opposition leaders immediately claimed that the figures were false. Only 22% voted in Zagreb, they said, and in Zlatar, the constituency belonging to Dr Neudorfer (the Minister of Agriculture), they pointed out that, whereas the Government claimed 3000 votes, their reports suggested that the real figure was only 320.⁴⁸

With more than a touch of humour, Henderson commented:-

"Whatever the actual figures may be, the Government and the King, with whom I had a brief conversation on the subject yesterday, profess themselves fully satisfied with the results. In a declaration to the Press, the Prime Minister observed that the total of those who voted for his list in all Yugoslavia is higher than the total votes cast for all the parties at the last election in 1927..... The local Press even adds that not only has General Živković's list received nearly twice as many votes in Croatia as were given in 1927 to the CPP but it received in this Banovina alone 23,000 more votes than were given to the CPP throughout the whole of Yugoslavia; similarly, that General Živković's list received in Slovenia alone,

(contd) the total number eligible for adult male suffrage was 3,483,345. E.J. Patterson (London 1936), p. 120. Patterson records in his book, Yugoslavia, the total votes cast as 2,342,250 (p.108). S.Graham, Alexander of Yugoslavia, (London 1938) gives a slightly different figure of 2,342,245 (p. 157). On either of these figures, the total would be 67.24%. 48. Henderson to Simon, 11 Nov. 1931, C8531/304/92. The Opposition claimed an 11% turn-out in the Croat towns and 5-9% in the country districts.

13,000 votes more than were given to the Slovene Clerical Party in the 1927 elections throughout the whole country; and finally, that General Živković's list received from two to five times as many votes in their own constituencies as were given in 1927 to the Democrats', Independent Democrats' and Moslem leaders respectively.

In fact, in 1927, there does not seem to have been a single person who was half as popular anywhere as General Živković is everywhere in 1931. Such a chorus of approval sounds almost suspicious but, if true, justifies General Živković in concluding that on 'this historical day the Yugoslav people have thunderingly declared that the Kingdom of Yugoslavia is implanted on their souls.'" ⁴⁹

However, it would seem that the outcome of the election was not so much a personal triumph for General Živković but rather a vote of confidence in the King and his honest attempts to bring the different national elements in Yugoslavia together.⁵⁰ The former politicians, for their part, were very surprised at the number of votes cast and immediately assumed that the returns had been falsified or obtained by police intimidation, although there was no evidence of such methods.⁵¹ The high turn-out in Slovenia was reported to have

49. Ibid. 50. Mr R.T. Smallbones, the British Consul in Zagreb, reported that the highest polls in Croatia were in those areas visited by the King during his stay in Zagreb in Jan. and June 1931. Consular report from Zagreb, 11 Nov. 1931, C8533/304/92.

51. The Times correspondent in Belgrade, Mme Samsonova, writing before the election, pointed out that although the State Board for Elections was above reproach, the same could not be said for the local electoral committees which consisted of State Board nominee, one representative of the local chief of police and one representative of the (contd)

been encouraged by Dr Korosec, who himself abstained but who secretly advised his followers to give the King their support.⁵² Doubtless, there were many instances of intimidation, corruption or falsification of returns⁵³ - particularly in Croatia; but, in the opinion of the Government, the election had been conducted fairly and Yugoslavia had made the transition from pure dictatorship to limited constitutional rule without difficulty.

Having been returned to power, the Government proceeded to organize itself for full parliamentary activity which had been planned to begin in January 1932. The national party which had been led by General Živković at the election, was re-named the "Yugoslav Radical Peasant Democratic Party" on December 7,⁵⁴ and before the end of the year, the laws governing the period of full dictatorship were repealed. Elections to the Senate were held on January 3, 1932⁵⁵ and there was a Government re-shuffle on January 4-5.⁵⁶ The size of the Council of Ministers was reduced from 22 to 14. Kumanudi, who had held a variety of ministerial posts since January 1929, left the Cabinet to become President of the new Chamber of Deputies. All the extra Ministers

(contd from p. 141) Government Party. By refusing to take part in the election, the former politicians lost their place on the local electoral committees where they would have had a good vantage point to consider the honesty and genuineness of the returns. The Times, 7 Nov. 1931, p. 9.

52. Smallbones (Zagreb) to Henderson, 11 Nov. 1931, C8533/304/92.

53. Ibid. For instance in Zagreb, strong pressure was put on the police, state officials and labourers employed by the State to go to the polls. But, according to the 1931 Census, only 3.5% of the population were employed in the civil service and government-paid jobs so their influence on the final result was not great. E.J. Patterson, Yugoslavia, p. 121.

54. A title obviously designed to accommodate all shades of political opinion!

55. Although the Senatorial Law provided for 48 elected and 48 nominated, only 46 were elected and 28 nominated by the King.

56. See Appendix D.

without portfolio who had been appointed in September 1931, were dismissed and General Živković surrendered his responsibility for the Ministry of the Interior to Dr Milan Srškić, but remained Prime Minister. The two new Houses were formally convened by the King on January 18, 1932 and the new parliamentary session was opened by the King in the presence of the Government and heads of foreign missions. The British chargé d'affaires reported that the King had re-stated the principles upon which Yugoslavia was to be run and was well received by the deputies and senators, "his speech being regularly interrupted by loud and sincere applause." ⁵⁷

But outside Belgrade's Little Theatre (where the new parliamentary session was formally convened)⁵⁸ there was less enthusiasm for the new constitutional regime. The students, who had already clashed with the police in a minor way before the elections, now began to make their opposition felt. On December 7-8, there was a serious disturbance in Belgrade University. After a few preliminary shouts of "Long Live the King!" students bombarded the police with stones, clamoured for political liberty and called for the dismissal of General Živković. Extra police re-inforcements were used to break up the disturbance, several students were severely injured (some with

57. Leigh Smith to Simon, 25 Jan. 1932, C910/433/92.

58. Although the foundation stone for the new Skupština (or "House of National Representatives" as it was originally called) was laid on August 27, 1907, it was not occupied by deputies and senators till October 20, 1936. Information Service Secretariat of the Federal Assembly, Yugoslav Federal Assembly, (Belgrade 1965), pp. 6-9. One contemporary observer reported that the King, who was reported to be very superstitious and regularly consulting clairvoyants, had been told by an old woman in Macedonia that he would be assassinated when he opened the new parliament building. For this reason, it was believed, the new Skupština remained unfinished. L. Adamić, The Native's Return, (New York 1934) p.348.

bayonet wounds) and the University was closed down until December 20.⁵⁹ Sir Nevile Henderson was not particularly worried by their demonstration and even believed that some good might come of it:-

"If they (the students) were instrumental in removing Živković, Srškić and Maksimović, the result would be advantageous. Not that I have anything against Živković himself. I believe him to be merely a loyal servant of the King but for the other two I have not a good word to say and I consider their influence to be entirely and solely bad. The best thing for this country would be a change of Prime Minister and Cabinet."⁶⁰

But there was no change of Prime Minister or Cabinet. There was simply a re-shuffle. The same all-too-familiar faces continued to travel in the large ministerial limousines and yet, they seemed to have no talent for solving the many economic problems which continued to bedevil the country. The difficulty that faced the Government was an international one, affecting the whole world, over which the Yugoslav leaders had no control. But this was not something the peasants understood. They only knew that sugar, salt, petrol and matches were scarce, that it was becoming increasingly difficult to sell their produce at an economic rate⁶¹ and that the Government kept raising taxes and making life even more burdensome. The budget for 1932-33, which was the first significant matter to be discussed

59. The Times, 12 Dec 1931, p. 9. The students' organization issued a statement stressing that the students were not Communists but Nationalists manifesting the general feeling of discontent. See also ch. 9.

60. Henderson to Sargent, 11 Dec. 1931, C9332/304/92.

61. Adamić, The Native's Return, p. 290.

by the new Skupština,⁶² did little to help. The Minister of Finance, Milorad Djordjević, told the Chamber of Deputies that there would have to be a cut of 133 million dinars in government expenditure during the coming year⁶³ and, since 45% of what was spent went in wages to public officials and government employees, there would be a reduction in salaries rather than actual dismissals. The Minister stressed his determination to preserve the stability of the dinar, but to the peasants, who comprised over three-quarters of the Yugoslav population, the point was merely academic - if not incomprehensible.

The students, therefore, continued to show their hostility to the regime,⁶⁴ knowing that they had a large measure of support amongst

62. The first act of the new Skupština was an address in answer to the Speech from the throne. The address expressed approval for the King's action of January 1929. It asserted that it was the right and duty of His Majesty as supreme guardian of the interests of the Yugoslav people to lead the country out of chaos, that the Dictatorship was the only legal way to the regeneration of the country and that General Živković had acted in accordance with the principles of full legality and absolute equality. The Times, 28 Jan. 1932, p. 9.

63. £580,000. The King's Civil List was reduced by four million dinars (£17,460). Sir Nevile Henderson to Simon, 7 Mar. 1932, C1957/325/92. Adamić quotes one of his informants as saying that although the King had his Civil List cut by 5% and had the fact printed on the front page of the newspapers, the following week he transferred all the employees of the royal household to the State payroll. Adamić, The Native's Return, pp. 346-7. It is worth noting that Adamić gained much of his information from those bitterly hostile to the regime and has a tendency to present King Alexander - and his actions - in the worst possible light. The debates on the budget continued until March 5, when the deputies voted 257-11 in favour of the estimates.

64. Student riots in January 1932 led to 50 arrests and those in April 1932 resulted in a further closing of the University for a fortnight.

the people, including a sizeable proportion of those who had abstained in the November elections. Even in Parliament, there were beginnings of opposition. Dr Andjelinović, formerly Yugoslav Minister in Vienna before becoming a deputy, gathered a number of his colleagues together and, in the corridors of the Skupština, they blamed the Government for the absence of freedom at the elections, for their Pan-Serbist attitudes, for the oppressive influence of the Press Laws and the lack of civil equality. Knowing the growth of public discontent, Dr Andjelinović also spoke out against the further financial burdens imposed in the budget and - most significantly - his criticism was widely reported in the Press.⁶⁵

Although there was no evidence to suggest that the Prime Minister was anything other than a loyal and dedicated servant of the King, all the blame for the country's misfortunes and all the dissatisfaction with the regime were focused upon the figure of General Živković. Sir Nevile Henderson, whilst conceding that the Prime Minister was unpopular both in the Army and throughout the country, felt that their choice of scapegoat was somewhat unjust since many of the mistakes attributed to the General were committed by other members of his Government or by subordinate ministerial officials.⁶⁶

"But," he wrote, "the fact remains that the chief hostility to the regime is centred in the opposition to the person of General Živković. The King must be aware of this and, though his reluctance to part with so loyal a servant is understandable, His Majesty must also realize that the unpopularity of his Prime Minister is re-acting against himself with increasing force."⁶⁷ Sooner or later therefore,

65. Henderson to Simon, 5 Mar. 1932, C1955/433/92. 66. *Ibid.*

67. Evidence of this is given in the report from Mr Smallbones (Zagreb) to Henderson, 3 Mar. 1932, C2456/433/92.

he will probably be obliged to make the inevitable choice between loyalty to proven friends and the interests of his dynasty." ⁶⁸

There was also reported to be opposition within the Cabinet to the continued presence of military men in leading positions, now that the country had returned to constitutional rule. It was also said that the King had tried to persuade General Živković to surrender his army rank and become a civilian Prime Minister. This, it was said, led to a quarrel between the two men, with Živković telling Alexander: "I am a soldier, not a politician." ⁶⁹ It seems likely that the matter at issue was not whether Yugoslavia should have a civilian or military Prime Minister but whether there was any worthwhile reason for retaining General Živković now that he had become a political liability to the regime. It was reported that General Živković, himself, had been rapidly tiring of his duties and position. For some time past, he had been taking less interest in state affairs and had allowed the reins of power to slip into other hands. ⁷⁰ The quarrel - if quarrel there was ⁷¹ - brought a parting of the ways. General Živković was dismissed and his place taken on April 4, 1932 by the Foreign Minister, Dr. Marinković.

68. Henderson to Simon, 5 Mar. 1932, C1955/433/92.

69. S. Graham, Alexander of Yugoslavia, (London 1938), p. 157.

70. Notably those of Dr Srškić, Minister of the Interior. See consular report from Zagreb, 3 Mar. 1932, C2456/433/92.

71. Reading the accounts of many confrontations between King Alexander and others, it seems likely that there was a short and fairly spiteful quarrel. On Živković's quarrel, Graham says:- "That humility or pride seems to have shocked the King and he neglected Živković for the rest of his reign, even failing to nominate him as regent in case of his death." Graham, op. cit., p. 157.

In considering the development of Yugoslavia from September 1931 until the fall of General Živković, the following spring, it cannot be said that the Constitution of 1931 brought any great or immediate benefit to the Yugoslav people. To those who preferred straightforward dictatorship, it signified an unnecessary weakening of the principle of law and order and administrative efficiency; to those who believed in parliamentary democracy, it was an inadequate sop. The elections, instead of acting as a safety valve, had proved an irritant, opening the regime to accusations of corruption and dishonest electoral practice, which could not easily be disproved. The Constitution of 1931 re-introduced a pale shadow of parliamentary democracy which - for reasons beyond its control - could do nothing to improve Yugoslavia's financial position. By promulgating the Constitution, King Alexander did little to reconcile the former politicians or diminish their hostility. Ultimately, he lost the one man who could be trusted faithfully and honestly to carry out his commands. Judged by these considerations, the Constitution of 1931 could not be regarded as either a great - or even a partial - success.

Chapter 7

A Puppet Parliament?

Up to this point, we have considered three distinct phases in the history of Yugoslavia under the royal dictatorship. The first period was the opening months of the regime when the King and his Ministers were trying to make up for the lethargy of post-war years and lay the foundations of a genuinely "Yugoslav" state. The second stage was the period of almost two years when Alexander tried to show how effectively the Kingdom could be run without the old politicians. His efforts, however, co-incided with a serious financial situation which compelled him to seek a greater measure of consent for his actions and a broader basis for his power. But, as we have seen, his third step - the introduction of a constitutional regime - very quickly achieved precisely the opposite of what he had intended.

With the appointment of Dr Marinković as Prime Minister, we come to the fourth and final phase - a period of growing disillusionment, not only amongst the people but also on the part of Alexander himself. He had ^{tried to unite} ~~united~~ the Kingdom. He had provided new administrative machinery. But - and this revealed the poverty of the regime - there was no social policy, no real plans to help the peasantry, no particular ideals to which the King's supporters could appeal. The only outward manifestation of the Dictatorship was a series of second-rate cabinets, filled with nondescript personalities, who were not only unrepresentative of the great mass of the people, but also proved to be just as incompetent (and occasionally, just as corrupt) as the politicians of the pre-dictatorial era.

But, at first, the appointment of Dr Marinković was seen as a great step forward. It was reported that he had been instructed to draw up new administrative boundaries for the Banovinas which would conform more closely to their historic character, to extend the powers of the local district councils and to prepare for the restoration of normal parliamentary life.¹ But, in fact, the Cabinet chosen by the new Prime Minister was identical to that of General Živković² and in his statement of policy to the Skupština on April 6, 1932, he promised nothing new:-

"In order to uphold the unity of the State," he said, "the Government would muster all loyal elements. Convinced that the majority of the population applauded that unity, it would endeavour by a new system of groupings, to foster a loyal national development..... The Government felt certain that in the arduous economic struggle, the Yugoslav people would display the same readiness for sacrifice, courage and determination as in the arduous fight for national liberty and unification."³

For those who had hoped for great changes, his words were a bitter disappointment and the Times reported that one part of the Skupština had received his statement in complete silence.⁴

There were so many different problems facing the new government that Dr Marinković would have been well advised to have announced some firm new policy - particularly towards agriculture - rather than repeating the stale old clichés about national unity which had been heard so many times before. Since he had a very small personal following

1. The Times, 4 June 1932, p. 9.

2. See Appendix D.

3. The Times, 8 April 1932, p. 13.

4. Ibid.

in the Skupština, it is probable that, had he taken a strong line on some matter such as help for the peasants, he would have immediately been defeated;⁵ but then he could have gone to the country on an issue which commanded widespread support.⁶ As it was, Dr Marinković struggled vainly and briefly to gain the support of his colleagues who were both suspicious and unsympathetic.⁷ Very quickly, news of divisions within the Cabinet became common knowledge and, before he had been three weeks in office, two ministers had resigned and several deputies had seceded from the Government party.⁸

The issue which divided the Cabinet was precisely the one on which Marinković, as a civilian Prime Minister, should have given a positive lead. For many years, high taxation and poor world prices for grain had caused great distress in the rural areas of Yugoslavia and deprived many peasants of what little capital they had. Each year, the peasants were obliged to seek credits from banks to purchase seed and then, in the autumn, repay their debts with the money received from the Government in exchange for their produce. In a good year, this was not difficult. But in a bad year - such as 1931 - not only was there a poor harvest in many parts of the country, but also very low prices abroad. As we have seen, the Government was compelled to help out the peasants by paying a higher price for their grain than they could actually hope to recover on the world market.⁹ To meet this deficiency, Yugoslavia had had to borrow money from France. No longer could Yugoslavia count on increasing revenue from taxation¹⁰

5. Henderson to Simon, 5 Jul. 1932, C5966/433/92.

6. Since over three-quarters of the nation were employed in agriculture.

7. Henderson to Simon, 15 Apr. 1932, C3327/433/92.

8. In mid-April, Dr Nikić and 4 other deputies seceded from the Government party and formed a "National Peasants' Club" and on April 21, Dr Preka and Dr Šibenik, both Croats, resigned from the Cabinet.

9. See above, p. 135

10. Board of Overseas Trade memorandum on Economic Situation in Yugoslavia, 20 May 1933, C4590/266/92. (vol 16830).

because the peasantry were already deeply in debt to the banks - or to moneylenders. Many were considerably in arrears in paying their taxes - some as much as several years behind; and for those who had had a poor harvest in 1931 and for those who had seen their property swept away in the severe flooding in the early months of 1932, there was the dismal prospect of no further security to offer the banks and, perhaps, no further credit.¹¹

To remedy this situation, General Živković and his Ministers had already tried to limit government spending and cut down on salaries. But what was really needed was some carefully thought out scheme of Agrarian reform. The Marinković government inherited a three-part bill, prepared by the Minister of Agriculture, Juraj Demetrović. This proposed that there should be (a) a permanent reduction in the interest rates paid by the peasants both for those debts which had been outstanding for several years and for those recently incurred; (b) a prohibition on the forced sale of peasant property to repay creditors; and (c) a plan to convert all peasant debts to private creditors to government debts. This bill, which might have gone a long way towards protecting and helping the peasantry, provoked a major outcry amongst the financial men in Yugoslavia, many of whom had considerable business interests at stake. On April 19, 1932, in response to their pressure, the Marinković government introduced a simple inoffensive bill postponing the sale of all peasant property (for outstanding debts) for six months. This measure, which was designed merely to tide the peasants over the summer - in the hope of better harvests and better international prices - was immediately agreed.¹²

11. Mr Smallbones (Zagreb) to Henderson, 29 Apr. 1932, C4173/433/92.

12. Henderson to Simon, 9 May 1932, C4172/325/92. One of the most damaging allegations against the Marinković Government was that, whereas General Živković had the reputation for being completely disinterested in money, Dr Marinković - even after becoming Premier (contd

But this did not solve the underlying problem of peasant indebtedness. Many institutions were carrying on business on the strength of outstanding loans which could never be repaid. In Sarajevo, in March 1932, many bankruptcies were reported¹³ and, in April, dealings in the Prva Hrvatska (the First Croatian Savings Bank) were suspended after it was revealed that, because of outstanding loans, the Bank was unable to repay depositors the £8,000,000 they had invested.¹⁴ To the Croats, the suspension in the Bank's dealings seemed clear evidence of the Government's hostility towards them. Leading members of the Government, wrote Sir Nevile Henderson

"..... may give lip service to the well-intentioned theories of His Majesty in regard to the Yugoslav doctrine" but "in practice, care is taken by the Ministers and their agents to ensure that the non-Serb population and officials are treated as inferiors. This is the sore which really rankles. Unless this sense of inferiority is dispelled, there will not only be no co-operation but serious danger of some great upheaval." ¹⁵

Amongst the peasants - not only in Croatia, but also in Serbia - there were many who talked openly of republicanism. In Bosnia and Western Serbia, bands of destitute peasants entered towns and looted shops. In Uzice, 200 peasants made a local fair the occasion for a revolt,

(contd) had retained his connection with the Belgrade Stock Exchange and took a lively interest in his personal fortune. In a broadcast speech from Berne by a member of the Green International, Dr Marinković was accused of having banked 1 milliard dinars in Switzerland. ~~What-~~
~~ever the truth of the allegation,~~ ^{Although the allegation was untrue} the broadcast and subsequent rumours did little to enhance the Government's reputation.

13. Consular Report from Sarajevo, 3 Mar. 1932, C2456/433/92.

14. Smallbones (Zagreb) to Henderson, 29 Apr. 1932, C4173/433/92.

15. Henderson to Simon, 9 May 1932, C4173/433/92.

overpowered the police and escaped into the hills.¹⁶ There was more unrest in Belgrade University which was closed till the end of June. In Maribor, in Slovenia, a military conspiracy was discovered.¹⁷

"In many quarters of Belgrade," wrote the Times correspondent, "it is felt that a solution must come soon if the country is not to fall into disorder. Forseeing this danger, the military have begun to move in different directions - some demanding an intensified dictatorship, while others are supporting the old parties in the hope of saving the country from a dangerous explosion."¹⁸

In this rapidly deteriorating situation, all that Dr Marinkovic appeared to offer was the prospect of fresh elections in the autumn or late summer. Since early May, he had been saying that his administration was a temporary expedient and that he was preparing for a "big change".¹⁹ But no change was yet to be seen. Such efforts as he had made to restore normal parliamentary life (these were the much-heralded revision of the Banovina boundaries and a modification of the electoral law) had got no further than the lobbies of the Skupština and had succeeded solely in dividing the deputies into two opposing groups,²⁰ neither of which were willing to give him their support.²¹

16. The Times, 4 Jun. 1932, p.9. 17. The army plot was alleged to be at Communist instigation, but was in fact engineered by nationalist-minded officers hostile to the regime. 16 were involved; 1 fled the country, 1 committed suicide, 4 were sentenced to death, 6 imprisoned and 4 acquitted. The Times, 17 Jun. 1932, p. 13 and 21 Jun. 1932, p. 13.

18. The Times, 4 June 1932, p.9. 19. Henderson to Sargent, 18 May 1932, C4136/433/92.

20. The Maksimović group, representing "no change" and the Bristolians (so named because they met in the Hotel Bristol) led by Dr Kramer - a younger and more progressive group, some 160 in number.

21. Henderson to Simon, 5 July 1932, C5966/433/92.

Dr Marinković's solution to this deadlock was a dissolution. But to the deputies, themselves only recently elected, the thought of returning to the hustings again so soon seemed personally undesirable and, in the prevailing situation, politically unwise.

It is likely that at a fairly early stage in his premiership, Dr Marinković realized the impossible situation he was in but - at the King's request - he stayed on long enough to represent Yugoslavia at the opening stages of the Lausanne Conference.²² That done, he resigned. In April 1932, he told Sir Nevile Henderson that he had only become Prime Minister because he felt that the country needed his help.²³ He said that he was "willing to sacrifice his health and possibly his life to get something done; but he was not prepared to risk them in order to achieve nothing."²⁴

As his successor, the King wished to appoint Dr Kramer, formerly Yugoslav Minister in Prague and a member of several recent Cabinets,²⁵ who was a strong supporter of the King's "Yugoslav" policy and leader of a powerful body of opinion in the Skupština. But, according to one report, the Army brought pressure to bear on the King and encouraged him to change his mind.²⁶ The name of General Kostić was mentioned. But the King was opposed to General Kostić as much as the Army dis-

22. The international conference which was held at the end of the Hoover moratorium to decide on the future of reparations. The Conference agreed to make the general conditions of the moratorium permanent, so that Yugoslavia - for her part - would receive no more reparations from Germany but would herself, in turn, be no longer required to meet her outstanding inter-allied debts.

23. Henderson to Sargent, 4 Apr. 1932, C2823/433/92.

24. Henderson to Simon, 5 July 1932, C5966/433/92. Marinković resigned on June 30, 1932.

25. He had previously been Minister of Public Works and Minister of Commerce.

26. Foreign Office memorandum on report by Major Oxley, British military attaché in Yugoslavia, 16 July 1932, C4173/433/92.

approved of Dr Kramer.²⁷ In the end a compromise was reached and Dr Milan Srškić, "the most energetic and probably the most able and unscrupulous of the King's ministers since the commencement of the dictatorship"²⁸ was appointed as Yugoslavia's new Prime Minister.

There can be little doubt that the choice of Dr Srškić represented a backward step so far as the King's regime was concerned. Dr Srškić had occupied a leading position in all the Cabinets under the Dictatorship, had drafted many of its laws and had been the right-hand man of General Živković.²⁹ He was believed to be a keen supporter of "Greater Serbia" and was alleged to have organized attacks upon the lives of his political opponents.³⁰ This was hardly likely to commend him to the Croats. But neither was he popular with the Serbs. As an Austrian subject before the war, he had voted for the annexation of Bosnia and Hercegovina and had made violent speeches against Serbia following the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand.³¹ Sir Neville Henderson considered that such an appointment "cannot but create an unfortunate impression" but he also saw one advantage:-

"In this respect, his nomination as Prime Minister may be a blessing in disguise, since as he cannot rise any higher, he may well thereafter fall and

27. Henderson to Simon, 5 July 1932, C5966/433/92. 28. Ibid.

29. See "Biographies".

30. Henderson to Simon, 5 July 1932, C5966/433/92. On June 7, Dr Mile Budak (Vice-President of the former Croat Constitutional Party) was stabbed and wounded in Zagreb. Since Dr Srškić was Minister of the Interior under Dr Marinković and since former politicians were kept under close police surveillance, it seemed that the attack could hardly have happened without official approval. The Times, 9 Jun 1932, p. 11. See also, the letter from R.W. Seton-Watson, The Times, 11 June 1932, p. 8.

31. During the war, Srškić left Austria for Russia. Later he worked for the Yugoslav cause in Entente countries,

disappear altogether." ³²

But, if the King had chosen Dr Srškić to restore a greater measure of authority over the country and to prevent a lapse into anarchy, he could not have chosen a more suitable person. The very fact that Dr Srškić was now Prime Minister led to a complete lull in political agitation.³³ His appointment ³⁴ also co-incided with the holiday season, a period of extremely hot weather and a very successful harvest. On August 6, the new Prime Minister outlined his policy to a meeting of the Government party. As might have been expected, it contained no surprises. Dr Srškić re-iterated the impossibility of returning to the old party system and stressed that the transition to liberalism must be a gradual process. With little enthusiasm, he suggested that there might be some modification in the laws to help the peasants and held out distant hopes of greater decentralization.³⁵ It was not an ambitious programme and added little lustre to the regime, as the King found when he toured through Bosnia and Hercegovina during July. The official press described the royal visit as having evoked great enthusiasm but according to those on the spot, he received a very cool welcome in Sarajevo and many complaints in Montenegro - particularly from the peasants.³⁶

During all these months, the old politicians had been lying low, waiting to see how the regime would develop, confident that, as King

32. Henderson to Simon, 5 July 1932, C5966/433/92.

33. Srškić chose as his Minister of the Interior, Zika Iazić, who had been Ban of the Vardar Banovina since November 1929, and had administered Macedonia with fairness and justice in the face of MRO terrorism. As head of Intelligence, Srškić chose Bedeković, former chief of police in Zagreb, who is normally described by opponents of the regime as a "notorious sadist".

34. Srškić took office on 3 July 1932.

35. Leigh Smith to Simon, 8 Aug. 1932, C6891/433/92. 36. Ibid.

Alexander faced increasing problems, he would ask for their help. But, although they remained on the sidelines, they were by no means inactive:-

"From 1931 on," Maček wrote, " my activity was limited to receiving and talking to people from all parts of Croatia who poured in on me daily and to giving interviews to foreign journalists who poured in. At such interviews, I inevitably expressed sharp criticism of the dictatorship without worrying about what might happen to me." ³⁷

A close watch was kept on Dr Maček by the royal police³⁸ but from time to time, fresh approaches were made to the Croat leader to see whether he had had a change of heart. One such approach was made whilst Dr Marinković was Prime Minister.³⁹ Dr Švrljuga and Dr Bertić⁴⁰ made a special visit to Dr Maček to see if there was any chance of him co-operating with the Government. Maček, apparently, was much amused and asked why, if the Government had received an 85% vote at the polls, should they bother to consult the other 15%? ⁴¹ The government emissaries reported that Maček still insisted on free elections and a new Constituent Assembly. To others who spoke to him, he stated that the Croats must be given complete financial autonomy and be allowed to raise their own army. Unless this was agreed, there could be no thought of co-operation.⁴²

37. V. Maček, In the Struggle for Freedom (Pennsylvania 1968) p. 137.

38. The Times, Letter from R.W. Seton-Watson, 11 Jun. 1932, p. 8.

39. Consular report from Sarajevo, 3 Mar. 1932, C2456/433/92.

40. Švrljuga, a Croat businessman, was made Minister of Finance in Jan. 1929. His support for the King had made him highly suspect to the Croats. His wife was the Queen's lady-in-waiting. Dr Bertić was a lawyer from Zemun.

41. Henderson to Simon, 9 May 1932, C4173/433/92.

42. Consular Report from Sarajevo, 3 Mar. 1932, C2456/433/92.

It was unlikely that Dr Srškić, who was resolutely opposed to the old political system, would make any further approaches to the Croat leader - or to any party politician. Very soon after he took office, the Agrarian leader, Jovanović, was put on trial under the Defence of the Realm Act and sentenced to twelve-months imprisonment.⁴³ During October and November 1932, a series of highly-coloured reports about Yugoslav police atrocities began to appear in the Daily Express⁴⁴ and other foreign newspapers. Lurid headlines such as "Serbs use Bastinado on the Croats" and "Hideous Tortures now Revealed!" appeared. A group of British MPs⁴⁵ who came to Zagreb saying they were only interested in "child welfare and sanitation schemes"⁴⁶ returned home and produced a pamphlet entitled "The Croats under Yugoslav Rule". Furthermore, a strongly-worded article was published in the Manchester Guardian on September 30, 1932. Although Dr Maček could by no means be accused of instigating these articles, it was he who had showed the MPs round Croatia and it was he who had given an interview to British journalists.⁴⁷ The police therefore arrested Dr Maček but, when he declared that he had been mis-reported, he was released.

However, in November 1932, Maček, who had been reproached by certain of Pribičević's supporters for being too slack in fighting the regime,⁴⁸ called together a meeting of all leading members of the former CPP-ID Coalition and produced an agreed Opposition statement, sometimes known as the "Zagreb Points". Those present at the meeting pledged themselves to work for the destruction of the dictatorship and their statement reflected both their indictment of the regime and their

43. The Times, 3 Oct. 1932, p. 13

44. In particular, the issues of 31 Oct., and 1-2 Nov. 1932. The special correspondent was H.J. Greenwood.

45. Notably Mr Rhys Davies and Mr Ben Riley.

46. Mr Boden (Zagreb) to Henderson, 19 Oct. 1932, C9159/433/92.

47. Ibid.

48. Maček, In Struggle for Freedom, p. 137.

proposals for reform.

"We must point out," Macek wrote, "that Serbian hegemony, imposed from the start on Croatia and on all other lands on this side of the Sava, the Drina and the Danube, has acted destructively through its obvious incapacity to govern, its tyranny and its use of immoral means. It has monopolized all the powers of the State and destroyed our moral values and our progressive institutions as well as our traditions. It has not respected the material possessions of the people and even robbed it of its spiritual peace. This state of misrule reached its peak when the absolutist regime was introduced on January 6, 1929, re-inforcing the hegemony with fatal consequences and worst of all, abolishing civil and political freedom.

Considering these disastrous experiences, we have arrived at the inevitable conclusion that we must go back to the starting point of 1918 in response to the pressing need to conduct a decisive and organized battle against the hegemony, in order to free our lands from it and deprive it of its power and influence by eliminating its representatives."⁴⁹

49. My italics. Maček gives the Zagreb points in full, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140. (see Appendix H). Maček says that the signatories were himself, Trumbić, Predavec, and Šutej for the CPP; Budak for the Frankists and Vilder, Krizman and three others for the IDs. According to Maček, Dr Pavelic of the Ustaše (see ch 9) was very annoyed that Budak should have signed it. It is also worth noting that at the time the "Points" were signed, Josip Predavec (supposedly a signatory) was still in prison. He was not released until 13 July 1933 and was killed the following day at his home in Dugoselo by a peasant who owed him money.

Copies of the statement were sent to leaders of all other parties proscribed under the Dictatorship. They expressed themselves in broad agreement with the CPP-ID.⁵⁰ A copy of the statement reached the Government early in December and the "Points" were published only to be attacked.⁵¹ The Srškić government, it seemed, were not afraid of agreements between ex-politicians who, after all, had little power. What they did object to was the image of Yugoslavia conveyed abroad by interviews with foreign journalists. Articles appeared in the New York Times,⁵² the Freie Stimme⁵³ and the Petit Parisien. The last article, which appeared in the French newspaper on January 28, 1933, proved the last straw for the Srškić government. Maček and Trumbić were both arrested and interned.⁵⁴

At the same time, Dr Korošec, former leader of the Slovene party, and two of his supporters were arrested for issuing a manifesto in favour of a federal constitution for Yugoslavia.⁵⁵ Dr Spaho, the Moslem

50. Mr Macrae (Zagreb) to Henderson, 14 Dec. 1932, C24/24/92. (1933 file Vol. 16827). See also the Times, 17 Feb. 1933 which reports a Manifesto issued by the Radical, Agrarian and Democrat party executives condemning the domestic policy of the regime and announcing that they - together with all Opposition parties - are at war with the regime. However they were only united in their opposition to the regime. There was no thought of co-operation for constructive purposes. Henderson quotes an unnamed Radical leader as saying that, although Radicals, Democrats, Moslems, Agrarians and Slovenes were in complete agreement and would work together at any time, they would not work with the CPP-ID which had gone too far towards republicanism. Henderson to Simon, 17 Feb. 1933, C1865/24/92.

51. Maček, op. cit., p. 140.. 52. 20 Nov. 1932.

53. 21 Jan. 1933.

54. Maček was interned at Čajniče in Hercegovina.

The Times, 1 Feb. 1933, p. 9.

55. In Jan. 1933, Korošec distributed a declaration on behalf of his former party throughout Slovenia. His attack on the Government came at the same time as the Catholic Church criticized the regime for political motives in the Sokol organization. Henderson to Simon, 21 Jan. 1933, C767/24/92. The Government denied the Church's criticism and the King

leader, was also arrested for distributing "false information".⁵⁶ On March 6, the trial opened in Zagreb at which Dr Pernar, another former CPP deputy (and victim of the Račić shootings) was accused with five others of distributing seditious leaflets printed in Vienna, calling for the overthrow of the regime, urging the use of force to resist the authorities and advocating "the death of 10 Serbs for every Croat peasant killed."⁵⁷

Three years before; when Dr Maček was first arrested, the Government had shown itself most unwilling to provoke the Croat people and very hesitant about bringing their leader to trial. Then, the judicial process had taken forty-seven days and Maček was acquitted. But, on this occasion, the Srškić Government showed itself much less concerned about Croat opinion. Maček was charged with having agitated in favour of a change in the structure of the State and his trial, which began on April 24, 1933, lasted only two days.⁵⁸

The case for the prosecution was that in conversations with foreign journalists and in the "Zagreb Points", Dr Maček had made

(contd from p. 162) went out of his way, during the opening of a new school in the Šumadija, to condemn all thought of federalism in Yugoslavia. The Times, 17 Feb. 1933, p. 11. Dr Korošec was interned at Vrnjačka Banja in Serbia. 56. The Times, 2 Feb. 1933, p. 9. 57. The Times, 7 Mar. 1933, p. 13. The prosecution claimed that Dr Pernar was involved in the Lika conspiracy (see ch 9). Henderson to Sargent, 22 Oct. 1932, C9159/433/92. One of the "atrocities" stories given publicity abroad, was that Dr Pernar had had his finger nails torn out. This was revealed to be untrue. Henderson to Sargent, 14 Nov. 1932, C9639/433/92.

58. The impartiality of the Court may be judged from the fact that two Croats among the seven judges hearing the trial were old enemies of Maček; that very few defence witnesses were actually heard and that two British MPs who wished to testify on Maček's behalf, were refused entry to the country. Henderson to Simon, 30 Apr. 1933, C4130/24/92.

statements in favour of "separatism" which, under the Defence of the Realm Act, was an offence. Maček, in his defence, repeated that he was not in favour of "separatism". What he was against was Serbian hegemony and domination over Croatia. The Croats, he said, must have a voice in the organization of the State. When pressed, he declared that this was impossible under the 1931 Constitution. For this reason, he and the other politicians had come together to see how the State could be reconstructed afresh and how the Croat people's desire for an independent Croatia could be achieved within the boundaries of the present Yugoslav state.⁵⁹ If this was a crime, he said, he was ready to bear the consequences.⁶⁰

The Court decided that a crime had been committed. They declared that Dr Maček was guilty of propaganda in favour of "separatism" and on April 29, they sentenced him to three years' imprisonment.⁶¹ The verdict of the Court took many by surprise. In Zagreb University, there were loud protests and demonstrations; a Croatian flag was hoisted and several students were injured in clashes with the police. The leaders of the former political parties in Serbia also issued a protest. They spoke of "political persecution" and "terrorism by an anti-national regime". Their protest was suppressed by the police but still managed to gain wide publicity.⁶²

59. The Times, 25 Apr. 1933, p. 13.

60. Maček gives an account of his defence, op. cit., pp. 147-8.

61. One of the deciding factors in the eyes of the Court, was that the Zagreb Points had been published in the Italian Press before the Yugoslav authorities knew anything about it. This seemed to disprove Maček's defence that the Points were a confidential agreement between the former party leaders. The Times, 1 May 1933, p. 13. Maček was sent to Mitrovica prison with the privilege of custodia honesta - which meant considerable benefits. Maček, op. cit., p. 148. Maček remained there until July 1934 when, suffering from oral sepsis and heart trouble, he was transferred to a Zagreb hospital. Op. cit., p. 153.

62. The Times, 3 May 1933, p. 10.

Had the Srškić Government been as efficient in the conduct of its administration as it was assiduous in the pursuit of its opponents, there might perhaps have been some justification for the prosecution of the former politicians. But it is a fact that during the nineteen months that Dr Srškić was Prime Minister, nothing of any value or substance was achieved and such things as the Government did do, seemed to those who were concerned with the internal development of Yugoslavia, little better than "window-dressing".

For instance, one of the promises continually being made by Dr Marinković was that the Banovina boundaries of 1929 would soon be revised to give greater local autonomy. This policy was inherited by Dr Srškić. In October 1932, Dr Kramer told Sir Nevile Henderson that when the Skupština re-assembled on October 20, this would be one of the first bills to receive attention. Dr Kramer said that the bill, which was already drafted, would be of a radical nature - proposing that the large sums of money which had previously been paid into the State Treasury, would in future be retained and administered by the Banovina Councils themselves. It was expected that the bill would face great opposition from the Serbian members of the Government - and, in particular, Dr Djordjević - but the bill had the fullest support of the King.⁶³ Nevertheless, little more was heard of it. In February 1933, its delay was officially "regretted" and, in April, Dr Srškić said that it was being actively considered by the Cabinet.⁶⁴ Yet, by January 1934, there was still no sign of it.

Another example was the revision of the Electoral Law of September 1931. This Law, which had been used in the first elections under the new Constitution, had come in for considerable criticism, since it

63. Henderson to Sargent, 3 Oct. 1932, C8419/433/92. Dr Djordjević was Minister of Finance from November 1931 - December 1934.

64. Henderson to Simon, 30 Apr. 1933, C4130/24/92.

made the rules for electoral candidates so demanding that it was almost beyond the powers of any opposition party to muster a nationally-based list of candidates. This, critics of the regime would say, was probably what was intended, but in fact plans were made early in 1932 to make it easier for opposition parties to take part.⁶⁵ These plans encountered strong hostility within the Government and it was not until February 1933, that they were approved.

In Dr Srškić's defence it must be stated that the political situation existing during his premiership was considerably more complex than that which faced General Živković. The Skupština, which had become divided into two main groups during the premiership of Dr Marković, was now divided into five or six competing factions, whose powerful lobbying made the passage of legislation a hazardous process. In November 1932, Dr Srškić was obliged to resign and rebuild his Cabinet in order to adjust to these changes⁶⁶ and the complexion of his Government became, thereafter, not so much a group of like-minded men dedicated to a particular programme, but a coalition of the leaders of those factions whose support was essential if the Government were to remain in power.⁶⁷

What the Government did "achieve" was a law on communal councils,⁶⁸

65. Henderson to Simon, 20 Feb. 1933, C1926/24/92. The changes in the Law provided (a) for a redistribution of seats in favour of towns and cities; (b) the victorious party to occupy 60% of the seats in the Skupština instead of 66%; (c) Parties would in future need only 30 signatures in half the constituencies - but those constituencies to be in at least 6 of the 9 Banovinas (This would enable parties to put up candidates without dependence on Croatia or Slovenia, where it would have been difficult for any non-Slovene or non-Croat party to obtain signatures); (d) elected deputies could now resign from the Government party so long as they joined no organization with religious, party or regional connotations. 66. The Times, 8 Nov. 1932, p. 13.

67. Henderson to Simon, 3 Mar. 1934, R1568/30/92. (Vol. 18452)

68. The Times, 10 Nov. 1932, p. 13.

a modification of the law on associations and meetings,⁶⁹ and a much-needed moratorium on the repayment of interest by Yugoslavia on her loan from France, of which the first instalment was due in the autumn of 1932.⁷⁰ The Government also achieved some sensational "successes" in the municipal elections in the summer of 1933. The overall turn-out at the polls was reported to be in excess of 65% and, of those who voted, the Government claimed between 92-96% support! The results were so obviously falsified that they were an embarrassment:⁷¹

"It is difficult to believe," wrote Henderson, "that he (Srškić) can remain so much longer. His Cabinet is more corrupt than in the days of Živković. I doubt it is ever for two consecutive minutes in agreement. It is merely by the will of the King that it holds together at all.

Why the King so wills it is hard to fathom. The difficulty is presumably that of finding a substitute who would not be even less satisfactory than Srškić. For that is one of the main handicaps

69. Henderson to Simon, 2 Mar. 1933, C2216/24/92.

70. The Times, 1 Aug. 1932, p. 15.

71. Henderson to Simon, 16 Oct. 1933, C9144/24/92. Four examples from the official results:

		(% Electorate Voting)	(% for Government)
Drinska	—	75%	92%
Primorska	—	60%	95%
Savska	—	55%	80%
Dunavska	—	65%	96.4%

It was immediately noted that it was extremely unlikely that even 80% of 55% would have voted for the Government in Savska (Croatia). The CPP estimated the figures to be nearer 20% and alleged that the Government had "authorized" the percentages before the poll. The Ministry of the Interior later admitted that the Government vote in Croatia was 26% and Slovenia 37%. O'Malley to Henderson, 5 Dec. 1933, C10608/24/92.

of the regime - the dearth of capable and honest men with a glimmering of statesmanship."⁷²

Supporters of the King might argue that his considerable involvement in foreign affairs had removed him from the sphere of internal politics but Louis Adamić, who had a personal audience in March 1933, reports that the King was in regular touch with the Skupština by telephone during the debates on the passage of the budget.⁷³ This was a particularly stormy occasion - reminiscent of the scenes in the pre-1929 Skupština,⁷⁴ when the Minister of Finance battled not only against the Assembly but against his own Cabinet colleagues through a debate lasting ninety-four hours.⁷⁵ Both the Ministers of Finance and Agriculture offered their resignations to the King but, according to rumour, the King informed them that they were civil servants and as such were obliged to carry through his policy.⁷⁶ This particular incident shows not only that King Alexander was still very much involved in the day-to-day affairs of his Kingdom but, also, that having called a Constitution into being and permitted a Skupština to assemble, he was much less master of his own house. In the opinion of Sir Nevile Henderson, by early 1933, the King had become the prisoner of a "time-serving clique" who were preventing him from governing as he had said he would in his Royal Proclamation of January 1929.⁷⁷

What should the King do? Should he dissolve the Skupština and hold fresh elections? Or should he merely dismiss his Prime Minister

72. Annual Report for 1933, 2 Jan. 1934, R47/30/92. (Vol. 18452).

73. L. Adamić, The Native's Return, (New York 1934) p. 349.

74. Henderson to Simon, 3 Mar. 1934, R1568/30/92. "The Skupština is no longer an obedient servant of the Government but a very critical body. Recent debates have suggested that a democratic regime was in power. "

75. The Times, 21 Mar. 1933, p. 13.

76. The Times, 6 Mar. 1933, p. 11.

77. Henderson to Simon, 12 Feb. 1933, C1864/24/92.

and choose someone else? One thing was certain. Most of the deputies who had been elected in November 1931 were

"of such a tarnished reputation that the majority would be unlikely to be returned again, even in rigged elections." ⁷⁸

It is quite possible that, in view of his increasing concern with foreign affairs and his emergence as a figure of some international standing, King Alexander wished to avoid any domestic election contest which might cause him embarrassment or affect his reputation abroad. It is equally probable that King Alexander realized that, although Dr Srškić was more of a liability to the regime than an asset,⁷⁹ he alone of all his Ministers was the one man capable of keeping all the factions in the Skupština behind the Government - an achievement which a new Prime Minister might find impossible.

But after almost two years of inactivity and stagnation, there were many matters requiring serious attention. The moratorium on peasant debts, fixed for a year in April 1932, had been extended indefinitely in December of that year. But the debts incurred could not just be written off⁸⁰ - they totalled some £15 millions - and so

78. Henderson to Simon, 30 Jan. 1934, R906/30/92.

79. In October 1931, Djurić (speaking of Srškić, Uzunović and Maksimović) told Henderson that the King loathed some of his Ministers but, for political reasons, could not get rid of them. On another occasion, Henderson told the Queen that the King's friends did him as much harm as his enemies. "Much more", replied the Queen. Henderson to Sargent, 30 Oct. 1931, C8187/95/92.

80. Because the total national budget was still only £53 millions and there were no reserves or means for raising that sum. A "book transaction" would have left many banks with considerable deficits and caused many bankruptcies, which would have affected other areas of the economy. The only alternatives were repayment or the conversion to government debts. But this required legislation and the deputies would not vote against their own financial interests.

long as the matter was postponed, there could be no hope of any material improvement in the life of the peasantry and no measure of financial stability for any institution whose existence was dependent on the payment of these outstanding loans.

"Thanks to the generosity of France in postponing various debt settlements and also very largely to the minting of 1,000 million dinars worth of new silver coins, it is still being found possible to be keeping up the pretence of making ends meet in the budget. But those dealing with Government finances and those familiar with financial practice in this country are only too well aware that official statements are largely fictitious..... The monthly returns published since (1932-3) show that on the whole, expenditure is being greatly reduced to meet falling revenues.....No official statements with regard to the floating debt are being published and it is no doubt piling up at an alarming extent. Unquestionable proof of this is given by the Government practice of issuing bonds instead of cash payments." ⁸¹

One of the other major (and by no means unconnected) problems facing the country was that of corruption in high places. A single instance will suffice ⁸² - that of the National Bank:-

"It is common knowledge that no less than 300 millions

81. Board of Overseas Trade memorandum on the Economic Situation in Yugoslavia, 20 May 1933, C4590/266/92. (Vol. 16830).

82. Other examples would be the Bosnian land scandal. The Times, 3 Mar. 1934, p. 11; or the irregularities in placing railway-building contracts by Radivojević, Minister of Communications, which cost the Yugoslav Government 800 million dinars (£4 millions). Henderson to Simon, 3 Mar. 1934, R1568/30/92.

(ie. £1½ million) of the Bank's capital has been withdrawn in the form of credits to themselves by the Governor and four of the principal directors, none of whom are in a position to replace the credits and they have only been spared bankruptcy to save the face of the Bank. A further 400 millions (ie. £2 millions) is known to have been divided as credits among 25 other persons, either directors or friends of the Bank.

A moratorium has been granted in the case of many of the more important banks and the remainder are doing practically no business..... It is generally recognized that the banking system will sooner or later have to be completely re-organized and undoubtedly a large number of banks will never be rehabilitated."⁸³

In the autumn of 1933, after considerable diplomatic success abroad, King Alexander returned home with the express intention of coming to grips with the domestic problems facing his country. In this, he acted from a position of strength.⁸⁴ On November 23, 1933, Dr Srškić announced that, on the King's orders, the Government intended to use its parliamentary authority to issue by decree a whole series of measures calculated to relieve the economic situation.⁸⁵ Amongst these, were the repayment of peasant debts,⁸⁶ the rehabilitation of

83. Board of Overseas Trade Memorandum on the Economic Situation in Yugoslavia, 20 May 1933, C4590/266/92.

84. Henderson noted:- "Not since I have been here has his position in the country been stronger than it is today." Henderson to Sargent, 16 Oct. 1933, C9173/663/92. (Vol. 16830).

85. Henderson to Simon, 27 Nov. 1933, C10526/266/92.

86 By the new draft laws, it was intended that the peasants would liquidate their debts over a period of 12 years, beginning 14 Feb. 1934.

financial institutions, the promotion of public works to relieve unemployment and new laws for banks and co-operative societies. Behind all this, there were plans for a greatly increased taxation to meet the current deficit - an increase amounting to 650 million dinars (ie £3 millions).⁸⁷

As in the past, so now, the plans for reform became embroiled in the financial committee of the Skupština. Nor could the Cabinet agree.⁸⁸ The financial measures and the budget for 1934 would prove very unpopular. On January 24, 1934, Dr Srškić went to see the King - most probably to tell him that there was little hope of his policies being approved. By all accounts, it was a stormy meeting. Dr Srškić offered his resignation and, at the end of the meeting, the King told Srškić that "not only did he accept his resignation but he never wanted to see him again."⁸⁹

There were many reasons why Alexander was willing to accept his Prime Minister's resignation, not least because of the delay in implementing reform and the refusal of the Government to tackle corruption. But, according to Dr Srškić's public statements after the meeting, his resignation was simply due to the fact that he was against the higher taxes which were to be introduced in the forthcoming budget. This Alexander could not accept. He published a formal repudiation of Dr Srškić's statements. He told Sir Neville Henderson that "he was tired of shouldering the responsibility for everything which was unpopular in the land and he was going to hit back." And what was more, he had informed Dr Srškić privately that, if he went on spreading lies, he would put him in prison.⁹⁰

87. The Times, 25 Jan. 1934, p. 9.

88. Telegram from Henderson to Foreign Office, 24 Jan. 1934, R467/30/92.

89. Henderson to O'Malley, 17 Feb. 1934, R1244/30/92.

90. Ibid.

As his new Prime Minister, the King chose Nikola Uzunović, a one-time Prime Minister in the pre-1929 Skupština⁹¹ who had been Minister without portfolio in many of the Cabinets under the dictatorship. The most charitable description of Uzunović was that he was "an old Serbian Radical hack"⁹² and, certainly, he represented no improvement on his predecessor except that he did manage to get the 1934 Budget through the Skupština.⁹³ It was a surprising choice on the part of Alexander. But perhaps it was again only a temporary expedient. For there is evidence to suggest that King Alexander was planning another of his surprises.⁹⁴

In May 1934, the King told Henderson that he was working on plans for greater decentralization and local autonomy which he would eventually present to his Ministers as a fait accompli:-⁹⁵

"He had had before him for some time," it was reported, the draft of an amended Constitution. He had at last decided to yield to the advice of most of the dissidents and have a federal Kingdom.⁹⁶ For democracy to have a

91. See "Biographies".

92. Comment by Foreign Office official on news of his appointment. Telegram from Henderson to Foreign Office, 24 Jan. 1934, R467/30/92.

93. Henderson to Simon, 14 Feb. 1934, R1246/1246/92, gives details of the 1934 budget. Even after pruning by the financial committee, taxation (both direct and indirect) rose by 12½% (538 million dinars). Shops in Belgrade closed as a one-day protest.

94. H.F. Armstrong, "After the Assassination of King Alexander", Foreign Affairs, (New York), Jan. 1935, pp. 207-208.

95. The King's own words. Henderson to Simon, 6 May 1934, R2935/30/92.

96. It is worth noting that the King's conversion to federalism - with greater autonomy for the Banovina - increased after his month-long stay in Zagreb from December 1933-January 1934. The Queen had spent several weeks in Croatia in October-November 1933 and it was believed that what she heard also influenced King Alexander's opinion. Henderson to Simon, 24 Dec. 1933, R30/30/92. (Filed under 1934, Vol. 18452).

"chance, the jealous races must be put in federal compartments. He would grant autonomy on the American plan. Each of the existing provinces would become a separate state with resident governor, state elections, domestic budget, control of education and police, but federated in the unity of Yugoslavia with the King above party and state. He said that he had decided to give effect to this after his return from France. Then he would announce a general election and appoint a new Prime Minister having responsibility to Parliament. In his mind, he had moved towards freedom....." 97

There seems little doubt that some such plans were in King Alexander's mind, but whether they were of such a generous and liberal conception is open to question. What the King said to Henderson was that he had decided to give more autonomy to the local Banovinas, so that if things went wrong in Croatia, it would be the Ban and administration of Croatia that would get the blame; not Belgrade. And, in a most revealing slip of the tongue, the King added that "it would be easier for him to control nine Bans than three hundred odd deputies." 98

97. S. Graham, Alexander of Yugoslavia, (London 1938) pp. 47-8. Graham says that his evidence for the King's views at this time came from Jevtić, Yugoslav Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister, who was with the King on the journey to France. Maček says that whilst he was in prison, the King contacted him through Šubašić, because he was anxious about unrest in Croatia. Maček refused to help Alexander in any way so long as he was in prison. However, a few days before the King's visit to France, Šubašić reported the King as saying: "I shall free him on my return from France. But then I shall deal with him in person." V. Maček, In the Struggle for Freedom, pp. 153-4. Maček was released by Prince Paul on December 22, 1934. Before he left for France, the King also spoke of the impending release of Dr Korošec and four other Slovenes who were interned. They were to be released whilst he was away. Henderson to Simon, 13 Oct. 1934, R5743/30/92.*

98. Henderson to Simon, 6 May 1934, R2935/30/92.

*Korošec was released by Prince Paul immediately after the assassination and accompanied the King's body from Split to Belgrade.

Chapter 8

The Royal Diplomat

It was perhaps a relief for King Alexander to turn from his troubles at home to the more rewarding field of foreign affairs. There, at least, he was a free agent. Unlike his plans for the internal development of Yugoslavia, which must needs be handled by inept ministers and cut to pieces by a fractious assembly, the conduct of Yugoslav foreign policy could be done in his own way and in his own time. ¹

Recognizing that Italy represented the most serious threat to the integrity and security of his Kingdom, Alexander had spent the first four years of his dictatorship trying to come to some long-term understanding or agreement with Mussolini. Both orthodox and unorthodox channels of diplomacy had been used - to no effect. It was clear - as indeed it had always been clear - that Italy did not like a strong Slav neighbour on the other side of the Adriatic and that, far from seeking a peaceful settlement of their differences, Mussolini was only interested in Yugoslavia's disintegration. Reluctantly accepting this unhappy fact, King Alexander gave up his efforts to woo Italy. Instead, he embarked upon a new policy which would achieve for his country a new place and a new role in European affairs; a policy which would perhaps improve the standing of his regime at home and establish a lasting security for Yugoslavia abroad.

1. From July 1932, King Alexander's Foreign Minister was Bogoljub Jevtić (see Biographies). Jevtić was Minister of the Court from January 1929 and was related by marriage to General Živković. He was therefore very much a "King's man".

Since 1921, Yugoslavia had been a member of the Little Entente, a political combination of Central European states, whose chief aims were to uphold the treaties concluded at the end of the war, to maintain peace and prevent - by force, if necessary - a restoration of Habsburg rule.² Every year, the foreign ministers of the three countries came together to discuss the problems facing Europe and the Entente, seeking a common approach to international disputes and planning how best they might co-operate within the League of Nations to reach a peaceful solution. This they had done for eleven years with growing confidence and success. By 1932, the possibility of a Habsburg restoration seemed remote indeed. But there were by now much greater threats to European security. There was the economic depression which had caused grave distress in all the agricultural states of Central and South-Eastern Europe; there was the clamour for treaty revision by Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria (assiduously encouraged by Italy); and, most serious of all, a resurgence of German militarism, the demand for equality of armaments and the threat of Hitler.³ In the face of these problems, each of which threatened the carefully-constructed security of Europe, it was natural that the Little Entente countries should join more closely together.

In December 1932, at the second high-level conference in less

2. The Little Entente consisted of Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia and was founded on treaties between Rumania and Czechoslovakia (23 Apr. 1921), Rumania and Yugoslavia (7 Jun. 1921) and Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (21 Aug. 1922). These treaties had been renewed on 21 May 1929 and an Act of Consolidation, Arbitration and Judicial Regulation added to them. From 1930, the Little Entente permitted any one of its foreign ministers to act on behalf of the others in cases of emergency.

3. On 29 Aug. 1932, France received a note from Germany suggesting equality of armaments. When France refused, Germany withdrew from the Disarmament Conference. This was before the advent of Hitler.

than a year, the member states of the Little Entente decided to put their alliance on a firmer footing. There would be a Permanent Council of their Foreign Ministers, a permanent secretariat and an Economic Council to promote a greater volume of trade between them.⁴ As a result of their decision, a Pact of Organization of the Little Entente was signed on February 16, 1933. From this moment onward, the foreign policies of the three different countries would proceed as one. No member would sign any other political treaty without the consent of its two partners; nor would any economic agreement having political consequences be made without the unanimous approval of the Entente Council. The Foreign Ministers would now meet three times a year - instead of just once - and the original treaties of alliance were extended for an indefinite period.⁵

The Little Entente Pact was not conceived of as an exclusive or inward-looking organization. It was considered to be the first step in the formation of a new international community which would include all Central Europe.⁶ Earlier in 1932, it had been hoped that a confederation involving all the Danubian nations might be achieved and M. Tardieu, the French Prime Minister, had circulated a memorandum proposing that Austria and Hungary, together with the Little Entente, should work out a means of economic co-operation between them. Once agreement was reached, the Great Powers would provide funds for a "durable reconstruction" of each of the Danube states. This had been

4. Foreign Office summary of Yugoslav-Italian relations in 1932, C376/44/92. (Filed under 1933, Vol. 16828).

5. R. Machray, The Struggle for the Danube and the Little Entente, 1929-38, (London 1938) pp. 111-119. A full text of the Pact of Organization can be found in N.J. Padelford, Peace in the Balkans, (New York 1935) pp. 190-193.

6. Speech by Dr Benes to Czechoslovakian Parliament, 1 Mar. 1933, "Le Pacte d'organisation de la Petite Entente et L'Etat Actuel de la Politique Internationale."

a most promising idea, which would have done much to remove the political vacuum in Central Europe. But Germany was against it; Italy was opposed and M. Tardieu, himself, was defeated in the French elections.⁷ In the absence of the Great Powers, neither Austria nor Hungary showed much desire to make any agreement with the Entente and so, leaving the way open, should any other state wish to join, Rumania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia embarked upon a policy, not only of mutual security, but also of economic unity and consolidation in Central and Eastern Europe.

It was this policy which King Alexander now made his own. On January 23, 1933, he travelled to Sinaia and held informal talks with King Carol and members of the Rumanian government. It was his first such visit abroad and proved very satisfactory. It was agreed that, if Italy were to attack Yugoslavia, Rumania would mobilize 350,000 men to discourage Hungary or Bulgaria from joining in the attack and Yugoslavia would do the same for Rumania, should she become engaged in war with Russia. In addition, it was agreed that a new bridge should be built across the Danube at Turnu Severin, linking the two countries.⁸

Italy, too, was in the construction business at this moment. Considerable earthworks were being raised near Fiume, blockhouses were being set up and a large new motor road was being built in great haste to link Fiume with Trieste.⁹ There was also much road-building in Albania.¹⁰ At the same time, information reached the Yugoslav government that the Italians had arranged for large-scale terrorist

7. Machray, *op. cit.*, pp 88-93.

8. Palairret (Bucharest) to Simon, 31 Jan. 1933, C1742/663/92.

9. Sir Ronald Graham (Rome) to Simon, 10 Jan. 1933, C540/44/92. The road was due to be complete in October 1933.

10. H.D. Harrison, *The Soul of Yugoslavia*, (London 1941) p. 237.

incursions from Albania, Hungary and Bulgaria to be mounted in the spring.¹¹ In the past, such reports would have created anxiety in Belgrade but on this occasion, as Henderson noted, there was a quiet confidence:-

"A good deal of this increased confidence..... is certainly due to the re-organization of the Little Entente which has given this people the impression that, together with Czechoslovakia and Rumania, they really almost constitute the fifth great power in Europe."¹²

Confident in his new-found strength, King Alexander hinted that he might make some pre-emptive strike - possibly against Bulgaria.¹³ Early in February, he ordered widespread troop movements throughout the country and sent major re-inforcements to the Bulgarian border. These military movements caused considerable anxiety to the Italians¹⁴ and led to a sudden halt in the Italian press campaign against the Entente, silencing even the most die-hard anti-Yugoslav newspapers.¹⁵

Italy was swift to realize the importance of the new pact and to see how great an obstacle it was to her own designs in Central Europe. In March 1933, when the British Prime Minister was visiting Rome, Mussolini suggested the idea of a Pact between the four Great Powers of Europe (Britain, France, Germany and Italy) Together, they would deliberate on all the problems facing the continent and, when they had reached agreement, they should make it their task to see that their decisions were obeyed. Accompanying this suggestion was

11. Henderson to Simon, 22 Feb. 1933, C2183/44/92.

12. Henderson to Simon, 17 Apr. 1933, C3795/24/92.

13. Henderson to Simon, 22 Feb. 1933, C2183/44/92.

14. Henderson to Simon, 16 Feb. 1933, C1866/1866/92.

15. Graham (Rome) to Vansittart, 10 Mar. 1933, C2388/44/92.

a proposal that the Pact should allow equality of arms to Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria and that steps should be taken to revise the Peace Treaties under Article XIX of the Covenant. In return for the Pact, there would be a guarantee of peace for ten years throughout Europe. ¹⁶

Opposition to Mussolini's proposal was widespread and vehement in the Little Entente, Poland and the Baltic states; and their press was unanimous in condemning it.¹⁷ Just at the moment when the Little Entente had established itself - perhaps not as a Great Power - but certainly as the predominant power in Central Europe - Mussolini was proposing that other nations, including Hitler's Germany, should decide the fate of Europe over their heads. The rejection of the Four Power Pact was the first concerted act by the newly-organized Entente. Statesmen in Western Europe were, at first, willing to give a cautious welcome to the Pact, hoping that perhaps it might signify an end to the hostility between Italy and France.¹⁸ But the members of the Entente made it abundantly clear that the Pact was not only contrary to the whole spirit of the League, but also that good relations between nations could hardly be helped by agreements aimed at the disposal of rights belonging to other states. A special Conf-

16. Machray, The Struggle for the Danube...., pp. 119-128.

17. It was in hearing Jevtić's speech to the Skupština on the iniquities of the Pact - a judicious, sober and dignified speech - that Henderson's opinion of Jevtić increased 100%. Previously he had described him as "untrustworthy and inadequate". Henderson to Simon, 5 Jul. 1932, C5966/433/92, and Henderson to Vansittart, 2 Apr. 1933, C3363/3363/92.

18. And correspondingly between Italy and Yugoslavia. This was the substance of Aliosi's talks with Jevtić in Geneva. Aliosi asked Yugoslavia not to be afraid of the Pact because it would help Italy's relations with France. Jevtić suggested immediate Yugoslav-Italian talks in Rome if this were so. But Aliosi said that this would be better after the Pact had been signed. Henderson to Simon, 26 Jun. 1933, C6074/44/92.

erence of the Entente was called, representations were made to British and French leaders and, by June 1933, the Mussolini pact was reduced to^a consultative treaty which recognized the principle that the rights of every state could not be affected without the consent of the interested party.¹⁹

The action of the Entente had proved successful. By carefully concerted action, they had made their opinion felt. But it was clear that, in the general uncertainty of the times, there would be similar threats to the small countries of Europe²⁰ and that unless the Entente stood firm, the peace settlement, the Covenant and the League might easily be undermined. In June 1933, therefore, the first steps were taken to set up the Economic Council of the Entente. Each country appointed a team of five delegates, assisted by experts, whose job it was to examine the commercial, agrarian, industrial and fiscal policies of the three states to decide where co-operative activity could begin. The ultimate objectives of the Council were to be a common economic programme but it was realized that this would take some time. In the meantime, mixed Chambers of Commerce were to be established and special attention would be given to joint ventures in shipping, aviation, posts, telegraphs and tourism.²¹

During the late summer, King Alexander began to make his own diplomatic moves. On September 18, he caused considerable surprise by spending an hour talking to King Boris in the station at Belgrade.²² King Boris, who had long been supported by Italy and whose attitude to-

19. Machray, The Struggle for the Danube...., pp. 126-8.

20. For instance, at the World Economic Conference in June 1933, Germany submitted a memorandum stating that her economic problems could only be solved by her permanent control of raw materials in South-West Russia and South-East Europe. Ibid., p. 129.

21. Ibid., pp. 127-8

22. The Times, 19 Sept. 1933, p. 12.

wards the IMRO extremists was ambiguous in the extreme,²³ had never met or spoken to Alexander since 1918.²⁴ Both kings had been in opposing camps. The meeting was a first step on King Alexander's part to bring Bulgaria into some closer relationship with the Entente.

Later in the same month, King Alexander was present at the Little Entente Conference at Sinaia.²⁵ At the meeting, the recent Nazi disturbances in Austria were discussed²⁶ (in the light of the recently signed convention defining "aggression")²⁷ and the first series of proposals produced by the Economic Council were accepted and approved.²⁸ When the Conference was over, King Alexander trav-

23. D. Shepherd, "Relations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria 1918-41" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis - University of Durham) p. 128.

24. It was the more surprising because for years, King Boris had believed - or said that he believed - that King Alexander was behind attempts to assassinate him. J. Swire, Bulgarian Conspiracy (London 1939) p. 209.

25. September 25-27, 1933.

26. During the year 1933, bomb attacks had reached the level of 200 a year; there was a considerable number of attacks on the Jewish community and regular rumours of Anschluss. In April 1933, Dollfuss visited Mussolini to ask for help and again went to see him at Riccione in August. Beneš was in favour of an Austro-Hungarian Customs Union but, from time to time, there were reports that King Alexander was in favour of Anschluss if only as a counterbalance to Italy. See Annual Report for 1931, C53/53/92 (Filed under 1932, Vol. 15994). Also, The Times, 21 April 1931, p. 13. Also a letter from Henderson to Vansittart, 22 Dec. 1933, R59/59/92 (Filed under 1934, Vol. 18453)

27. This was a convention signed in London on July 3-4, 1933 between the USSR and eleven other states. It declared that "support for forays by armed bands on another state" constituted an act of aggression. R.J. Kerner and H.N. Howard, The Balkan Conferences and the the Balkan Entente 1930-1935 (Berkeley, California 1936) pp. 117-9.

28. It was agreed to co-operate on railway and river transport; to unify the commercial and customs codes, to abolish visas, to create a postal union. As a practical step, each state undertook to draw up a list of commodities it wished to buy from the others in 1934. Machray, op. cit., pp. 134-6.

elled by sea, in the Yugoslav Navy's newly-acquired cruiser, "Dubrovnik", to Varna where he had a second meeting with King Boris of Bulgaria. From there, he sailed to Constantinople for what was described as a private visit. "The chief significance of the visit", wrote one observer, "was its occurrence".²⁹ The Turks themselves were surprised and delighted and tried to extend his stay, arranging special banquets and sight-seeing tours. But King Alexander stayed only twenty-four hours. He managed to have a private conversation with Kemal Atatürk and, five days after his visit, it was announced that agreement had been reached for a Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression between the two countries, to be signed later in the year.³⁰ From Constantinople, the King went to Corfu where he met Greek leaders and thence returned home. Sir Neville Henderson described the royal tour as "a great success":-

"The contacts which His Majesty established are the best bases for developments...And psychologically, the impression created in this part of the world has been most opportune and favourable... it is the first time that Yugoslavia has taken a leading part in the game of Balkan unity."³¹

The visits of King Alexander were followed by many diplomatic exchanges at a lower level. Titulescu, the Rumanian Foreign Minister, travelled to Sofia and Ankara.³² Jevtić and the Turkish Foreign Minister had talks in Geneva. In November, the Turkish Minister visited Sofia and Belgrade. Gradually, it became clear to observers of the scene

29. Mr Morgan (Constantinople) to Simon, 12 Oct. 1933, C9174/663/92.

30. It was signed on November 27, 1933.

31. Henderson to Sargent, 16 Oct. 1933, C9173/663/92.

32. A Rumanian-Turkish Treaty was signed on Oct. 18, 1933. Previous to this, a Turkish-Greek Pact was signed on September 14, 1933.

that the initiatives of King Alexander and the new structures of the Little Entente were not merely designed to ensure the mutual security of their three countries, but to achieve something much wider:-

"All these visits may be regarded as a collected attempt by interested states to establish a settled guarantee of peace and amity in South-East Europe. A powerful movement is afoot in almost every one of the states concerned, to liberate Balkan and Central European diplomacy from the rivalries of the Great Powers. Behind this rests the belief that the Balkan countries, by settling their differences amongst themselves, may cease to have an interest in Continental alliances and may thus make a decisive contribution towards the maintenance of European peace."³³

By now, Italy had begun to realize the difficulties of her own position. She had little liking for France and was seriously worried as to what might happen in Austria.³⁴ If the Anschluss took place, what would be the German attitude to Trieste?³⁵ On October 14, 1933, Hitler announced that Germany was withdrawing from both the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference. The news of Hitler's action caused intense anxiety in Central Europe and gave further encouragement to those who were trying to form a new power bloc in Eastern Europe.³⁶ In February 1933, Suvich, the Italian Secretary of State, had said contemptuously that there was no point in Italy having any

33. The Times, 11 Oct. 1933, p. 11.

34. Henderson to Simon, 27 Sept. 1933, C8744/44/92.

35. Henderson to Simon, 23 Jan. 1933, C768/44/92.

36. Machray, The Struggle for the Danube...., pp. 136-138.

dealings with a "tottering regime" but now the leader of that country, far from maintaining himself by a "bloody repression" as Suvich supposed,³⁷ was travelling round the Balkans encouraging fresh hopes and fresh alliances - clearly the chief pace-maker in Balkan diplomacy. By September 1933, Italy was hinting that she was perfectly ready to meet the Yugoslavs half-way, "should the latter indicate any disposition towards friendliness". Indeed, it was said, that the only reason why Signor Galli was still serving in Belgrade was because it was proposed to take a forward step in negotiations with Yugoslavia.³⁸

Jevtić, in conversation with Sir Nevile Henderson, agreed that all the new developments in the Balkans would be incomplete until Yugoslavia reached some understanding with Italy, but there were obstacles to such an understanding; in fact, one obstacle in particular - the King himself. When Signor Galli returned from a visit to Rome in November 1933, he told the British Minister that he had had a long interview with Mussolini whom he had found better disposed than ever towards an agreement with Yugoslavia and that the Italian leader was quite ready to open negotiations on a long-term treaty between them. Very unwisely, Henderson suggested that he himself should relay the offer to the King at the earliest opportunity:-

"I mentioned to His Majesty what M. Galli had told me. The King flared up like a rocket. He said that he did not want to have anything to do with Italy. She was utterly unreliable and false. An agreement with her would be entirely

37. Graham (Rome) to Sargent, 18 Feb. 1933, C1952/44/92.

38. Henderson to Simon, 27 Sept. 1933, C8744/44/92. Rumours of Galli's departure had been aired since December 1932. He eventually departed in January 1935 to become Italian ambassador in Ankara.

one-sided. He himself was absolutely loyal and if he gave his word, he would keep it. Italy never would. He was not going to cheat his people by signing an agreement that they believed was genuine which he knew would not be. It was, he said, exactly as if he had married the Queen knowing that she intended to deceive him. If he had believed that, he would not have married her and he was not going to make a treaty with Rome in similar circumstances." ³⁹

What Henderson did not know at that time ⁴⁰ was that Mussolini had already put out feelers through a certain Signor Cosmelli, formerly First Secretary at the Italian Legation in Belgrade. Cosmelli had written to a friend in the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry stating that Mussolini was prepared to offer the most generous terms in exchange for an agreement with Yugoslavia. What Mussolini offered were certain modifications to the Italian frontier in Yugoslavia's favour, a guarantee of the existing Yugoslav-Hungarian border and a satisfactory arrangement between the two nations over Albania. In return, Mussolini demanded that Yugoslavia surrender the island of Krk, guarantee the Italian frontier from Switzerland to the Adriatic and give up her membership of the Little Entente. On the King's advice, this magnanimous offer was refused. ⁴¹

39. Henderson to Vansittart, 25 Nov. 1933, C10569/44/92.

40. He was not told until May 1934.

41. Henderson to Simon, 6 May 1934, R2933/59/92. Italy's desire for a Yugoslav guarantee of Italy's frontier is the most significant aspect of Mussolini's proposals. It is clear that he feared either a German drang nach suden or a Yugoslav-German partition of North-East Italy. All that Mussolini did get from Yugoslavia in the autumn of 1933 was a new trade treaty to replace the Commercial Treaty of 1924. Graham (Rome) to Simon, 13 Nov. 1933, C10138/1231/92.

By December 1933, King Alexander was already too involved in the next stage of Entente diplomacy to be bothered with unsubtle machinations by Italy. Together with the Greek, Rumanian and Turkish leaders, he was about to create a new political combination in the Balkans which would support, strengthen and complement the Little Entente in the north.

The need for some such combination had been realized for several years. Ever since 1930, an unofficial series of conferences had been held, at which the opportunities for greater co-operation in the Balkans had been considered.⁴² At first, the conferences had been concerned primarily with economic problems - more collaboration in areas of transport and communications, the possibility of a Customs Union, the creation of joint Chambers of Commerce and Industry - but very quickly, the delegates realized that if there was going to be any worthwhile development or any real economic co-operation between the different countries, there would have to be some measure of political unity.⁴³ It is probable that, had there been no external threat to nations such as Yugoslavia or Rumania, the conferences might have continued for some time before they made their point. But, in the atmosphere of fear and anxiety in Europe, with the steadily increasing demands for treaty revision and the renewal of German might (with the certain dangers this would pose for Eastern Europe), the goal of political confederation was no longer simply an attractive idea; it was an urgent necessity. And this was recognized by the Fourth Balkan Conference meeting in Salonika in November 1933:-

"Our supreme duty is to advance more and more quickly in that direction which illuminates the ideal of the complete union of the

42. Kerner and Howard, The Balkan Conferences...., pp. 30-41.

43. N.J. Padelford, Peace in the Balkans, (New York 1935) pp. 13-22.

six Balkan nations." ⁴⁴

But not all the nations were interested in Balkan unity. Bulgaria, for her part, stood to gain more from treaty revision than from any alliance with Rumania or Yugoslavia; and Albania was by no means a free agent. The visits that King Alexander had made, were designed not only to bring a Balkan alliance nearer, but also to overcome the resentment and hostility between Bulgaria and her neighbours. Such changes could not be wrought overnight. A closer relationship must be built. In December 1933, King Boris and Queen Ioanna came to Belgrade for a four-day visit.⁴⁵ They were treated to several banquets and receptions, a pheasant shoot, and they participated in the blessing of the Slava cake in the royal chapel. Both the Bulgarian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister were present during the visit and Mushanov told the Press that the visit was intended to "efface the sad memories of the past and to fight for the safeguarding of peace." He said "he felt optimistic and convinced that Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were advancing to a happier future."⁴⁶ But despite all the optimism and the genuine welcome which was extended to King Boris, the Bulgarian King still did not feel willing to join in any Balkan Entente. A trade agreement was signed between the two countries and a communique published, stressing the need for better relations, but nothing else. In January 1934, King Boris visited King Carol in Bucharest and again made it plain that, whilst Bulgaria was interested in peace, she would not sign any pact.⁴⁷

44. Machray, The Struggle for the Danube and the Little Entente, (London 1938) p. 139.

45. December 10-13, 1933.

46. The Times, 14 Dec. 1933, p. 13.

47. Machray, op. cit., p. 148. Unfortunately, as Titulescu discovered on his visit to Sofia on Oct. 12-13 1933, Bulgaria still did not accept the Treaty of Neuilly as the post-war settlement in the Balkans.

According to the Bulgarian Minister in Belgrade, his country felt unable to sign any document until her various disputes - notably with Greece - had been settled. If these were settled, then Bulgaria might sign pacts of friendship and non-aggression with each of her four neighbours, but she would not be part of an Entente.⁴⁸ It was generally felt that if the Balkan nations were to wait until these disputes were settled, they might wait a very long time. But, on the other hand, what value would a Balkan Pact be - or what strength would a Balkan Entente have - if Bulgaria did not join? There was the danger that a Pact without Bulgaria might become a Pact against Bulgaria and then all Yugoslavia's friendly efforts would be in vain. The three foreign ministers of the Entente travelled to Belgrade on January 23, 1934, to discuss this problem with King Alexander.

King Alexander, although most anxious to consolidate the Balkan nations at the earliest opportunity, was inclined to wait a little longer and give the Bulgarians time to re-consider their attitude. Titulescu claimed that he had found an ingenious formula for a general guarantee for the security of Balkan frontiers without undue insistence on the status quo.⁴⁹ Tsaldaris, the Greek Minister, said that whatever Pact they made, it should be written in such a way that Bulgaria could sign it.⁵⁰ But, although King Alexander was still inclined to wait,⁵¹ events in Europe dictated a swift settlement. In Austria, a state of civil war between Dollfuss and the Socialists was

48. The Times, 25 Jan. 1934, p. 9. See also L.S. Stavrianos, Balkan Federation. A History of the Movement towards Balkan Unity in Modern Times, (Northampton, Mass. 1944) pp. 238-9.

49. The Times, 24 Jan. 1934, p. 9. 50. The Times, 2 Feb. 1934, p. 11.

51. The Times, 24 Jan. 1934, p. 9. For a fuller consideration of King Alexander's feelings towards Bulgaria at this time, see Shepherd, Relations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, 1918-41, pp. 145-53.

in the making and there was no telling whether Germany might intervene, Italy go to Dollfuss' support and Europe be plunged into another war. The Yugoslavs overcame their hesitations. The Balkan Pact was initialled in Belgrade on February 4, 1934 and signed in Athens five days later.⁵²

The first article of the Pact was a mutual guarantee of the security of all Balkan frontiers. The second pledged the signatories not to sign any political treaty or assume any political obligations to any other Balkan country without the consent of the other partners. Thirdly, the Pact was said to be open to any other Balkan state and their adherence would be warmly welcomed.⁵³

There now existed in Central and Eastern Europe two diplomatic alliances, binding together five nations for an indefinite period. The Little Entente was the guarantor of peace and stability in the Danube basin; the Balkan Entente in the peninsula. Both these Ententes were designed to maintain the post-war settlement, to support the League of Nations and to resist treaty revision. Each alliance contained a group of states whose combined populations entitled them to be considered (numerically, at least) as a major European power,⁵⁴ and together, they amounted to a political bloc 65,000,000 strong, second only to the Soviet Union. The ultimate intention of both Ententes was to encourage the economic as well as the political unity of their member states and, together, they constituted a considerable benefit to peace and a potential obstacle to aggression in Central and Eastern Europe.

52. The full text of the Pact can be found in Padelford, Peace in the Balkans, pp. 186-7

53. Ibid.

54. The Statesman's Year Book for 1933. The combined populations of the Little Entente were 46,050,325 - larger in number than France, Britain or Italy; whilst the combined population of the Balkan Entente was 51,177,021. The German population was estimated at 62 millions in 1933. Although the nations of the Ententes were weak industrially and militarily, this did not mean that their political unity was unimportant.

To those who had ambitions in that area, the creation of a second Entente added considerably to their difficulties.⁵⁵ The Italian response to the signing of the Pact was to seek an even closer understanding with Austria and Hungary. In February 1934, Suvich travelled to Vienna and Budapest and, the following month, Dollfuss and Gömbös travelled to Rome where a series of protocols were signed. The first of these was a consultative pact providing for regular meetings between the three countries to discuss matters of common concern. The second was an economic treaty designed to help Hungarian agriculture and Austrian industry. Trade between them would be encouraged, facilities in the Adriatic ports would be made available and a permanent commission of experts would be set up to formulate concrete proposals for future economic development.⁵⁶ This was in many ways a smaller - and poorer - imitation of the Entente. But it was significant that, whilst Italy was building her own "rival bloc", her Foreign Secretary felt obliged to assure the Yugoslav Minister in Rome that, in whatever arrangements were made, "Italy would always bear in mind Yugoslav interests."⁵⁷

The German reaction to the signing of the Pact was considerably more subtle. The Germans knew perfectly well that the Ententes were both directed against them.⁵⁸ They also noted that the power axis on which both pacts depended was the axis, Belgrade-Bucharest. Both nations were part of the French alliance system and this was one of

55. In December 1933, the Italian Secretary of State, Suvich, complained that it was very difficult to negotiate with any member of the Little Entente, since one had to negotiate with three nations at once. Drummond (Rome) to Simon, 9 Dec. 1933, C10899/44/92.

56. The Protocols of Rome, March 17, 1934. In Sept. 1933, Italy had submitted a memorandum on economic co-operation to Austria and Hungary. Events in Europe had an accelerating effect on this - as on the Ententes.

57. Aliosi to Dučić. Drummond (Rome) to Simon, 2 Mar. 1934, R1422/59/92.

58. Ibid.

the weak links in the chain. Both Rumania and Yugoslavia were agricultural nations and both had suffered considerably from the world depression. So, instead of attacking or rivalling the Ententes in any way, Germany set about increasing trade with Yugoslavia, buying up large quantities of Yugoslav products and paying for them prices well above the world market level. The intention of this policy was that Yugoslavia - and the other Balkan countries - should become so dependent on Germany that, eventually, the economic weapon could be used as an instrument of tactical and political diplomacy to divide the Yugoslavs from their allies in the East and the West.⁵⁹

The first step in this process was the signing of a Yugoslav-German Commercial Treaty on May 1, 1934.⁶⁰ The treaty, which was very favourable to Yugoslavia, was due to come into force the following month and last for two years. Jevtić told Henderson that he was very satisfied with the treaty. Germany was anxious to establish her economic position on the Danube and Yugoslavia was only too willing to get a commercial agreement in her favour.⁶¹ A fortnight after the

59. G. Hutton, Danubian Destiny. A Survey after Munich, (London 1939) describes the German methods of economic penetration in the Balkans, pp. 158-165 and 168-170. Yugoslav exports to Germany rose from 8% in 1929 to 38% in 1938. Correspondingly, Yugoslav exports to Italy decreased from 25% in 1929 to 9% in 1937. Henderson warned King Alexander of the dangers of such a course, as early as March 1934. Henderson to Vansittart, 9 Apr. 1934, R2295/59/92.

60. Henderson to Simon, 5 May 1934, R2695/481/92. Together with the Commercial Treaty, Yugoslavia signed a Tourist and Consular Agreement. Mr Newton (Berlin) to Foreign Office, 2 May 1934, R2587/481/92. The ways in which Germany took advantage of this agreement are outlined in H. Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe between the Wars, 1918-41 (London 1945) p. 384.

61. Henderson to Simon, 6 May 1934, R2774/481/92. A secret supplementary agreement was signed on May 1. This would increase Yugoslavia's minimum annual exports to Germany to £4.4 millions instead of £3.85 millions as indicated in the official treaty. In exchange, Yugoslavia agreed to denounce the (contd)

Treaty was signed, Field Marshal Goering called in on Belgrade on his way to Athens. He expressed himself "delighted" to meet Yugoslav statesmen and tried (in vain) to obtain an audience with the King. "The German people," he said, "were grateful that after the world war, Yugoslavia had held out the hand of friendship to the German people without any reserve." ⁶²

Although the Yugoslavs - and, in particular, King Alexander - were under no illusions about Germany's ambitions, ⁶³ they were willing to show a greater measure of friendship for Germany because, by 1934, Germany had established herself as the natural counterweight to Italy in Central and Eastern Europe. Ever since Hitler had appeared and ever since the possibility of Anschluss had increased, the Italian intrigues against Yugoslavia had diminished. Even in Bulgaria, one of Italy's strongest allies, there had been a sudden coup d'état. A pro-Yugoslav government was established and immediate and successful steps taken to destroy the terrorist movement once and for all. ⁶⁴ During his visit to Belgrade, Goering did not hesitate to take advantage of Yugoslavia's traditional fears and spoke of Italy with great bitterness and hostility. ⁶⁵

In July 1934, when there was an attempted Nazi coup in Austria, the Yugoslavs gave help to the Nazi terrorists who were fleeing the

(contd) aviation agreement with Air France, for flights from Belgrade to Vienna and Budapest and concede the routes to Germany's Lufthansa. Cowan (Belgrade) to Carr, 11 June 1934, R3418/481/92.

62. Newton (Berlin) to Simon, 25 May 1934, R2939/2939/92.

63. Sir N. Henderson, Water Under the Bridges, (London 1945) p. 182, quotes Alexander as saying:- "Yugoslavia's immediate danger is Italy; after her will come Germany; but the last and greatest menace of all will be Russia."

64. Shepherd, Relations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, pp. 153-56.

65. Henderson to Sargent, 24 May 1934, R3186/2939/92.

country.⁶⁶ They made no complaint when the Yugoslav consulate at Klagenfurt was damaged by bombing⁶⁷ and there was reason to believe that some of the Austrian Nazi propaganda centres were to be found on the Yugoslav side of the border.⁶⁸ It was also noted that Yugoslav efforts to suppress such propaganda showed little vigour.⁶⁹ In August 1934, the Italian newspaper, Messagero, published an allegedly genuine map of Grossedeutschland, with Trieste and the Trentino in Germany and parts of Southern Austria in Yugoslavia.⁷⁰ King Alexander told Sir Neville Henderson that he was quite sure that Germany would one day be supreme in Central Europe and that it was inevitable that Yugoslavia would reach some understanding with her. "Germany had assured him that she regarded the unity and stability of Yugoslavia as a desirable and necessary factor in European politics,"⁷¹ but he told Henderson (on October 3) that he had received reliable reports from a source within the German Foreign Office that "Hitler's main objectives today in foreign policy were a close understanding with Italy and Hungary. As you will see, said His Majesty, no mention of Yugoslavia!"⁷²

Nevertheless, the growing independence of Yugoslavia in foreign policy and the possibility that, like Poland,⁷³ she might make some bilateral treaty with Germany, caused much anxiety in France. M. Barthou, the French Foreign Minister, visited Warsaw and Prague in April and Bucharest and Belgrade in June. His visits were designed to discover

66. Mr Murray (Rome) to Simon, 11 Aug. 1934, R4556/59/92.

67. Sir W. Selby (Vienna) to Simon, 13 Jan. 1934, R327/327/92.

68. Mr Hadow (Vienna) to Simon, 20 July 1934, R4203/327/92.

69. Murray (Rome) to Foreign Office, 23 Sept. 1934, R5207/59/92.

70. Murray (Rome) to Simon, 11 Aug. 1934, R4556/59/92.

71. Henderson to Simon, 6 May 1934, R2934/2934/92.

72. Henderson to Simon, 5 Oct. 1934, R5742/59/92.

73. The Polish-German Treaty was signed on January 26, 1934.

how strong France's eastern alliances really were and to see whether an Eastern Pact, involving the Soviet Union, could perhaps be achieved. M. Barthou was given a rapturous welcome in Bucharest and made an honorary citizen of Rumania.⁷⁴ But his real purpose was to attend the Permanent Council of the Little Entente which was meeting in Bucharest from June 18-20.⁷⁵ Barthou wanted to be at the Conference in order to make sure that the Little Entente realized how important it was to create a strong diplomatic front against Hitler in Eastern Europe. The Russians themselves had seen the danger of German expansion and, on June 9, the Little Entente had taken the step of recognizing the Soviet Union and establishing diplomatic relations. Both Czechoslovakia and Rumania had done this but, although Jevtić was in favour,⁷⁶ the same could not be said for King Alexander who had an intense loathing for "bolshevism".⁷⁷ On his visit to Belgrade, therefore, Barthou was not only trying to gauge the strength of the Franco-Yugoslav alliance but also to persuade King Alexander to overcome his objections to the Soviet Union and to complete his already considerable achievements by reaching accord with Moscow.⁷⁸

But King Alexander was not going to be hurried into any decision - least of all a treaty with the Soviet Union - just because France wanted it. The Yugoslavs were now on good terms with the Germans and the Germans - for obvious reasons - were stoutly opposed to any policy which might increase the French "encirclement" of their country.⁷⁹ Besides, the Yugoslavs were also anxious to reach some

74. Machray, op. cit., pp. 157-8.

75. Ibid., pp. 155-6 .

76. Ibid., p. 155.

77. Henderson to Simon, 25 June 1934, R3659/3643/92.

78. The Times, 26 June 1934, p. 13.

79. On September 10, 1934, Germany formally denounced the proposed Eastern Pact.

closer understanding with Bulgaria and complete the task of consolidating the Balkan nations.⁸⁰ Signing a treaty with the Soviet Union would gravely prejudice the visit King Alexander intended to make to Sofia in September. It could hardly be imagined that King Boris would welcome a Soviet ally! It was also felt that France could have done a great deal more to help Yugoslavia in her economic difficulties of the past few years.⁸¹ Why should Yugoslavia immediately do what France wanted when France had done so little to help her ally when she was in distress? For all these reasons, King Alexander was unwilling to make an immediate commitment to Barthou's policies. Nonetheless, the King allowed himself to be persuaded to the extent of promising that he would visit France some time in the autumn.⁸²

What France had probably not yet fully realized was the extent to which Yugoslavia had developed her own position in foreign policy since the early months of 1933. Yugoslavia was no longer a satellite of France. In talking to Henderson about his forthcoming visit, Alexander stressed his determination not to be dragged in the wake (à la remorque) of France.⁸³ Yugoslavia was now a leading and influential

80. The Times, 26 June 1934, p. 13. According to one writer, King Alexander had always preferred an alliance with Bulgaria to any kind of Balkan Pact. K. Todorov, Balkan Firebrand. The Autobiography of a Rebel, Soldier and Statesman, (Chicago 1943) pp. 252-3.

81. The Times, 26 June 1934, p. 13.

82. The French had originally proposed that Alexander visit France in March 1934 as a demonstration of French support for the Little Entente. As such, the visit had been announced in the French Press in March. For this reason, the King decided not to go. Henderson to Vansittart, 19 Mar. 1934, R2052/2052/92. The autumn visit was promised as a personal gesture of friendship to Barthou. Mr Cowan (Belgrade) to Carr, 28 June 1934, R3910/2052/92. It has been said that, if King Alexander had been a constitutional monarch and had had a responsible Cabinet, his Ministers might well have opposed the visit. S. Graham, Alexander of Yugoslavia, (London 1938) p. 31.

member of two Ententes, exercising a substantial responsibility in the affairs of Central and Southern Europe. For her own security - but not just to suit the French - Yugoslavia was willing to consider a pact with Moscow.⁸⁴ But King Alexander was insistent that his country must preserve her full independence of action. It did not seem therefore that the visit in October would be very productive, and Sir Neville Henderson, after last-minute conversations with the King, reported that the most that could be expected would be a re-affirmation of the French alliance.⁸⁵

Before he left for France, the King found himself involved in another outburst of unpleasantness with Italy. For months, the Yugoslav Press had avoided any clash with the Italians but - suddenly - in September, both sides published a series of polemics, attacking each other.⁸⁶ Whether this outburst was caused by Italian fears of a closer understanding between Germany and Yugoslavia or whether the Italians really feared that Yugoslavia might lay claim to the Venezia Giulia, as Istra suggested,⁸⁷ is uncertain. But many harsh things were said - the most wounding being a jibe in a Yugoslav journal that the Italian army held the "world record for running away".⁸⁸ Henderson believed that the campaign had got out of hand because both Jevtić and Alexander had been away ~~Jevtić in Geneva,~~

83. Henderson to Simon, 5 Oct. 1934, R5742/59/92.

84. Jevtić is quoted as saying that Alexander intended, on his return from France, to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, Graham, Alexander, p. 48. This may have been Jevtić's view but I do not believe it was Alexander's.

85. Telegram from Henderson to Foreign Office, 6 Oct. 1934, R5482/5482/92

86. Murray (Rome) to Simon, 18 Sept. 1934, R5130/59/92; Cowan (Belgrade) to Simon, 17 Sept. 1934, R5154/59/92; telegram from Henderson to the Foreign Office, 24 Sept. 1934, R5236/59/92.

87. Murray (Rome) to Foreign Office, 23 Sept. 1934, R5207/59/92.

Istra was a Zagreb newspaper.

88. Machray, op. cit., p. 166.

~~the King~~ in Sofia.⁸⁹ Perhaps the hostile Italian feelings were a reaction against Alexander's journey to France.....⁹⁰ Perhaps they were a protest against his visit to Bulgaria.....

Ignoring the attitude of Italy, King Alexander and Queen Marie made a state visit to Sofia at the end of September. The visit was to repay that made by King Boris to Belgrade in December 1933 and, doubtless, King Alexander hoped that this further gesture of friendship would bring a Yugoslav-Bulgarian rapprochement even closer. Considering the legacy of hatred for Yugoslavia which had been generated for years within Bulgaria and the constant attacks of the Macedonians which had continued right up till their dissolution in May 1934, the reception King Alexander received was a considerable triumph. He walked with complete freedom and ease through the streets of Sofia and showed no fear for his personal safety.⁹¹ When he came back to Belgrade, Sir Neville Henderson said how glad he was to see him return unharmed.

"I was never in the least nervous on that subject

89. Henderson to Simon, 5 Oct. 1934, R5742/59/92. A total of 51 anti-Italian articles appeared in the Yugoslav press in September 1934 - after many months without the slightest provocation (as even the Italians admitted) Cowan to Carr, 4 Jan 1934, R219/59/92. But see also Henderson to Simon, 30 Sept. 1934, R5429/59/92 and C.F. Melville, Balkan Racket, (London 1942) p. 31, which suggests that the King himself may have been involved in the Press campaign. It is worth noting that both Britain and France were suggesting that the time was ripe for an agreement between Italy and Yugoslavia. King Alexander did not think so. Henderson to Simon, 5 Oct. 1934, R5742/59/92.

90. During Barthou's visit in June, the Italian fleet had manoeuvred off Durazzo.

91. J. Swire, Bulgarian Conspiracy, (London 1939) p. 291, reports that several thousand extremist suspects were removed from Sofia before the visit to prevent any untoward incident.

in Bulgaria", said the King - and added,
"That sort of thing is much more likely
to happen to me in France than there." ⁹²

92. Henderson, Water Under the Bridges, p. 194.

Chapter 9

Opposition and Regicide

When the dictatorial regime was first established, there were many who hoped that King Alexander would succeed where the politicians had failed. It was hoped that, by fairly drastic action, he might unite the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, put an end to corruption and graft in high places and institute new standards of conduct and morality in government. To the Croats, the King's action was seen as an end to Serbian hegemony within the State and the beginning of a more just and equitable treatment for themselves. The King appeared to be the one man who stood above party and parliament; the one man who had the good of all his people at heart; the one man who could be trusted.¹ At first, it was widely believed that the Dictatorship would be a temporary expedient.² Within a few months, people thought, the King would have put things in order and normal parliamentary life would be resumed. The regime itself also gave this impression.

But, by the time it was realized that there was no easy answer to Yugoslavia's problems and that the King could not achieve miracles

1. The Times, 8 Jan. 1929, p. 14, records the enthusiastic reception given to the King's action in newspapers in Zagreb and favourable reports from Split, Sibenik, Subotica and Vinkovci.

2. Kennard to Chamberlain, 4 Apr. 1929, C2468/97/92. (Vol. 13707). When King Alexander was asked how long the Dictatorship would last, he said "several long months at least". Kennard to Chamberlain, 11 Jan. 1929, C480/97/92. (Vol. 13706). See also T. Stojkov, Opozicija u vreme Šestojanuarske diktature, 1929-35 (Belgrade 1969)p. 340. Also, Adamić, The Native's Return (New York 1934) pp. 343-4.

overnight, all means of public protest had been suppressed. The old political parties had been abolished, censorship imposed, meetings and associations forbidden and the police given strong powers to overcome all signs of opposition to the regime. There was therefore little that the politicians could do. Either they could sink their principles and co-operate with the regime. Or else, they retired from public life. As Dr Maček and others found to their cost, any illegal political activity very quickly led to arrest, prison or internment. Even when the laws governing associations and meetings were relaxed in 1933, there was still nothing that they could do. Neither the Serb nor the Croat politicians could reach any common decision - not even on how to attack the regime. The Serbs believed that a parliamentary solution was a priority; the Croats, that a solution of the "national question" should come first.³ They could not agree. They could not fight. They were condemned to impotence. And the Dictatorship, knowing¹ the sort of men they were, knew that it had little to fear from them.

Unable to make any impression within Yugoslavia, Dr Maček sent several of his CPP colleagues abroad in the hope that international pressure might be brought to bear on the King. On August 25, 1929, Košutić (Radić's son-in-law) and Dr Juraj Krnjević left the Kingdom secretly and travelled to Vienna.⁴ In September, Krnjević sent a letter to the Secretariat of the League of Nations, drawing attention to the illegal activities of the military dictatorship in suppressing the Croat people.⁵ In December 1929, Košutić and Krnjević travelled to London to obtain the support of the British Government;

3. Stojkov, *Opozicija*, p. 341.

4. *The Times*, 28 Aug. 1929, p. 11. The Živković government refused them permission to leave legally. Dr Trumbić and Radić's widow also left the country.

5. Foreign Office memorandum to Prime Minister, 10 Sept. 1929, C7105/97/92.

but the Foreign Secretary, Mr Arthur Henderson, refused to see them.⁶ In April 1930, an appeal was sent to the League of Nations, declaring that political rights in Yugoslavia had been destroyed, and that the Croats, as a minority people, demanded action by the League. The League declared that the Croats were not considered as a "minority" people under the terms of the Treaty and their appeal was dismissed.⁷ Košutić, who had been living in Italy during his exile, now travelled to Geneva, Berlin and Vienna and made two visits to the United States to publicize his cause. But his efforts proved very unsuccessful; he was refused entry into Great Britain in 1931 and, when he did manage to reach London on a German no-nationality pass, his visit caused great embarrassment to the British government.⁸ The only visible outcome of their mission by these exiles was the promotion of a series of sensational articles in foreign newspapers, highlighting the worst aspects of the Dictatorship.⁹

It might have been thought that, of all the political forces at work in Yugoslavia prior to the dictatorship, the Communist Party would have been the most ably equipped to express popular disapproval and discontent. The party had been outlawed since 1921, it had its own secret organization and printing press and, judging by its performance in the one post-war election it was allowed to contest, it commanded sizeable support.¹⁰ But it appears that, like everyone

6. See letter in the Manchester Guardian, 19 Dec. 1929; also C.F. Melville, Balkan Racket, (London 1942) pp. 26-28.

7. The Times, 23 Apr. 1930, p. 11.

8. Foreign Office memorandum following the entertaining of Dr Kosutic at the House of Commons, 23 Nov. 1932, C10508/433/92.

9. It was believed that many of the stories appearing in British newspapers in the autumn of 1932 were due to their influence. One article in the Daily Herald, allegedly by "Our Special Correspondent in Belgrade" was in fact by Dr Krnjević. Aide-memoire by Djurić on press attacks in Britain, 10 Feb. 1933, C1869/24/92.

10. In the 1920 elections, to the Constituent Assembly, 58 Communist deputies were returned.

else, the proclamation of royal rule took the Communist Party by surprise at a moment when the leadership was already disorganized. The Central Committee of the Party fled the country immediately, leaving behind them "the senseless slogan of 'armed uprising'!"

According to Djilas,

"no one took that too seriously except for a few youths. These unfortunate young men attempted to get hold of some ammunition and lost their lives in an encounter with the police."¹¹

When the dictatorial regime was established, an old opponent of the Communist Party, Milan Aćimović, was appointed Chief of the General Police and chief administrator of police in the Ministry of the Interior. He had been in charge of the suppression of the party in 1920-1 and he brought to his new task a vigour and a determination to hunt out its members and a callous indifference as to the methods of interrogation.¹² Each member of the Communist Party who was arrested, was severely tortured until he revealed his contacts - and all that he knew - with the result that the organization of the party was swiftly broken and most of its leading members put in jail. In January 1929,

11. M. Djilas, Memoir of a Revolutionary, (New York 1973) p. 20.

12. Ibid., p. 73. See also L. Adamić, The Native's Return, (New York 1934) p. 255, and p. 281. "A young radical came to ask me whether I would come to a certain house and see burned-out armpits and other marks of torture on the bodies of men and women who had passed through the torture rooms of Belgrade and Zagreb police stations...." Aćimović became Minister of the Interior in the Nedić Government under the German occupation in September 1941. He was "the most hated and most compromised of all Nedić's ministers". Political Branch, Allied Forces in Europe, Handbook of Yugoslav Personalities, (Bari 1944), Vol. 1. p. 1.

"only a dozen or so Communists were in prison. At first they enjoyed relatively liberal treatment. However, as the number of Communists in jail began to grow, the regime treated them as hard-core criminals, which resulted in clashes with the authorities through protests and hunger strikes." ¹³

Despite suggestions that many thousands of political prisoners were in captivity during the Dictatorship, ¹⁴ it is worth noting that the highest number of Communists in jail during the regime was 250 and the number of nationalists about 50 and that all these detainees were contained within the three prisons of Mitrovica, Lepoglava and Maribor. ¹⁵ These figures do not include those who were interned in small villages in South Serbia, those who died in battles with the police or those who perished in unsuccessful attempts to cross the frontier. ¹⁶

The imprisonment of so many leading party members - and the heavy hand of the police against all who had any dealings with them - effectively prevented any concerted action by the Communists against the regime. From 1929-31, there was not the slightest sign of public

13. Djilas, Memoir, pp. 157-8.

14. Adamić, The Native's Return, p. 32. A high figure - of 1000 Communists alone - is given by F. Maclean, Disputed Barricade, (London 1957) p. 61.

15. Djilas, op. cit., p. 132.

16. Kennard to Chamberlain, 1 May 1929, C3183/3183/92; and 20 Jun. 1929, C4636/3183/92. Djilas says that "although the party was banned, and its members persecuted, the situation was not as dangerous as it was to become (ie. after 1934). "Whippings were rare and not nearly as severe as they became later; sentences were infrequent and mild and there were almost no murders." Djilas, op. cit., p. 20. Maclean, however, states that over 100 party members were killed. Disputed Barricade, p. 61.

protest by the party.¹⁷ Even within the University of Belgrade - an institution which continued to enjoy complete autonomy under the dictatorship-- there was no organized movement of dissent.¹⁸ The first real demonstration against the regime - in which both Communists and non-Communists took part - did not occur until December 1931 and, even then, the object of hostility was not the King but General Živković and the fraudulent elections.¹⁹ Although dissatisfaction with the regime spread from Belgrade University to Zagreb and Ljubljana, it was not until the autumn of 1932 that the ground was ready for a Communist organization in Belgrade University²⁰ and, even then, it was some two years before the leaders of that organization could make any contact with the Central Committee in Paris. By 1938, Djilas says, there were still no party organizations in Bosnia or Macedonia.²¹ So, although the Communist Party remained stoutly opposed to the dictatorship and was, perhaps, the one political force to emerge stronger and more coherent from that period it cannot be said that it either embarrassed the regime or provoked much resistance.

Having no political outlet for opposition, the nation demonstrated its inner feelings in other ways:-

"In the course of my two years as a student, young people sought relief in a special form of bohemian existence, in which alcohol was perhaps not the chief solace. For one thing, they spent most of their time in smoke-filled rooms, in groups created according to common

17. Djilas, op. cit., p. 20.

18. Ibid., p. 14.

19. Ibid., pp. 46-63. Cf. letter from Henderson to Sargent, 11 Dec. 1931, C9332/304/92. Both accounts agree that the King was not the object of popular discontent.

20. Ibid., p. 98.

21. Ibid., p. 286.

interest. Some gambled; others chased women and drank....." ²²

Throughout society as a whole, there was a greater mood of abandon:-

"Belgrade was a faithful reflection of the mood in the country. Cafes were full and people were drinking as if the world were submerged in prosperity..... Always the same court photographs, the same official press coverage, the same expressions of loyalty and affection for His Majesty, who united us all, always the same favourable quotes about us from the foreign press, always the same old songs about the Salonika Front and the blood spilled for freedom and unity. There were no strikes, no public meetings or manifestos, no opposition newspaper or magazine. All the forces that yearned for a breath of fresh air were packed into underground cellars. Belgrade was lively, colourful and full of contrasts - an ostentatious display of newly-acquired wealth on the one hand, and misery, hunger and unemployment on the other. It was a setting that gave form and encouragement to the conscious rebellion of the young" ²³

But there was no "conscious organized rebellion" of the young or old, of the poor or distressed, of Communist or non-Communist against the regime. Those who wished to voice their opposition did so privately; those who wished to use violence were swiftly overcome.

"Until disaffection spreads to the Army," wrote

22. Ibid., p. 10. He also says (p. 34) "It is interesting to note that the leftist movement took little root among artisans. Their protest seemed to be expressed in alcoholism...."

23. Ibid., p. 9 and pp. 12-13.

Henderson, "I shall be disinclined, subject to complete bankruptcy or assassination, to believe in the possibility of an overthrow in the existing order of things." ²⁴

The only real opposition to the regime came not from those inside Yugoslavia but from those without; from Bulgaria, Italy and Hungary. As we have seen, the governments in each of these countries laid claim to different parts of the Kingdom; claims which could only be satisfied by a general revision of treaties in Europe or by the destruction of the Yugoslav state. Their opposition to the regime was aroused precisely because King Alexander's policies of consolidating and strengthening his country - by dictatorship at home and diplomacy abroad - made treaty revision more difficult and the realization of their goals almost impossible. In the past, the Bulgarians had been the only nation to support armed incursions into Yugoslav territory but, with the coming of the dictatorship, the Italians and Hungarians discovered a new group of discontents, who were not only hostile to the regime but who were also quite willing to work for the destruction of Yugoslavia in order to bring about their own independent Croat state.

As early as October 1928, Dr Ante Pavelić,²⁵ a lawyer from Zagreb, and a member of the Frankist Party,²⁶ had set up Croat committees in Rome, Vienna and Budapest. At that time, his principal object was to make Croatia a part of Hungary under a Habsburg King,

24. Henderson to Simon, 15 Apr. 1932, C3327/433/92.

25. See "Biographies".

26. For the background to the Croat independence movement, see I.J. Lederer and P.F. Sugar, Nationalism in Eastern Europe (Washington 1969) pp. 420-423.

but, in January 1929, he formed a Croatian revolutionary organization--Ustāše - whose aims were the exact antithesis of all that King Alexander stood for.²⁷ It could not be expected that the regime would tolerate the existence of the Ustāše, so Dr Pavelić and his supporters fled the country²⁸ and set up their organization at Pesaro in Italy.

From Italy, Dr Pavelić began his attack on Yugoslavia. In April 1929, he and Gustav Perčec, formerly an intelligence officer in the Austro-Hungarian army and more recently a defence lawyer for Macedonian students accused of seditious activities in Skopje, went to Sofia to meet leaders of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization. There they received a warm welcome. Speaking from a hotel balcony, Dr Pavelić said that "in the future, the existence of Croatia within a Yugoslav federal state was unthinkable" and Perčec declared that now legal methods had failed to detach Croatia, there remained only illegal methods to achieve their ends.²⁹ The visit to Sofia and the public denunciation of all things Serbian, caused much anger in Belgrade.³⁰

27. The Ustāše was formed on January 7, 1929. Their name derives from the Serbo-Croat verb - "ustati" - to rise up. The Ustāše oath, taken before a table covered with the Croatian national flag, on which were placed a knife, a revolver and a crucifix, concluded with these words: "I swear that I will fight in the ranks of the Ustase for the conquest of a free independent Croat state by doing all that I am ordered to do in that direction. If I fail my oath, by the rules of the Ustāše, the penalty of death awaits me. May God help me. Amen." Translation of oath from the Sentence pronounced by the Tribunal for the Protection of the State at the Oreb trial, March 1934. Contained in despatch from Cowan to Foreign Office, 12 Nov. 1934, R6375/30/92. (Vol. 18452)

28. On January 9, 1929. 29. From a Foreign Office profile on Percec, Dec. 1934, R6931/5524/92 (Vol. 18462). An account of the visit is given by S. Christowe, Heroes and Assassins, (London 1935) pp. 210-6.

30. The Times, 22 Apr. 1929, p. 13.

Both Pavelić and Perčec were tried in absentia for crimes against the state. The trial was held from July 11-17, 1929. Both were found guilty and sentenced to death.³¹

From 1929 onwards, many of the bomb outrages and terrorist activities in Croatia were found to be connected directly with Dr Pavelić and his Ustaše organization. Police investigations following the death of Toni Schlegel, the editor of Novosti,³² eventually uncovered the existence of a "Legion of Croat Fighters for the Liberty and Independence of Croatia".³³ The "legion" was responsible for several bomb outrages in Yugoslavia and was actively engaged in smuggling explosives over the frontier from Hungary.³⁴ When they were brought to trial in May 1931, the defendants admitted meeting Dr Pavelić at Pećs and joining the Ustaše. They were provided with bombs by Dr Pavelić and assisted by Hungarian officials in getting across the border.³⁵ Once in Croatia, they had not only killed Schlegel, but attacked a police barracks, placed bombs on several bridges and caused disturbances in factories in Zagreb.³⁶

31. The Times, 13 July 1929, p. 15; and 18 July 1929, p. 13.

32. See above, ch. 3, p. 67.

33. The Times, 29 Apr. 1931, p. 13. According to Djilas, Memoir, p. 131, the Croats involved in terrorist activities preferred to think of themselves as "nationalists" rather than "ustāše" since the latter were associated with Italy, towards whom many Croats had mixed feelings.

34. Another group were arrested at Valpovo on 23 Aug. 1930.

35. The Times, 3 May 1931, p. 13; and 7 May 1931, p. 13. The Hungarian Government hotly denied any connection with the terrorists, The Times, 18 Feb. 1931, p. 13; and 21 Feb. 1931, p. 11. In a communication, dated November 1934, from the Yugoslav Government to the Council of the League of Nations, "with reference to the responsibility incurred by the Hungarian authorities in connection with terrorist activities directed against Yugoslavia", twenty instances of Hungarian involvement were cited between March 22, 1929 and March 15, 1934, League of Nations Official Journal (December 1934) pp. 1772-1828.

36. The Times, 7 Aug. 1929, p. 9.

From 1929-1933, this was to be the pattern of Ustase activity within Croatia. There were attacks on international trains, the killing of local dignitaries, sudden explosions in public buildings in Zagreb and occasional gun battles with the police. The placing of bombs on trains - both inside and outside Yugoslavia - was a technique successfully employed by the Macedonian terrorists for many years.³⁷ It had the "advantage" of drawing international attention to the internal condition of Yugoslavia, frightening travellers, discouraging investment and suggesting that the situation was beyond the control of the police. In the brief two month period from June-August 1931, there were no less than eleven bomb outrages on international trains.³⁸ Following the Schlegel murder, two other local dignitaries were shot - the mayor of Nova Gradiska (in February 1931) and Dr Neudorfer, a former member of the CPP who had supported the King and been Minister of Agriculture under the dictatorship (in August 1933). Among the buildings attacked were factories, banks, a provincial tax department and the Yugoslav Young Men's Society hostel in Zagreb.³⁹

37. The Times, 4 Aug. 1931, p. 9.

38. The Times, 6 Aug. 1931, p. 9. Other bombs were discovered on the trains even before they arrived in Yugoslavia., The Times, 4 Aug. p.9 The group caught at Valpovo stated that they had been ordered to bomb international trains. The Times, 25 Aug. 1930, p. 9. Djilas says that bombs placed on trains caused disgust - even amongst those hostile to the regime; it did not achieve its objective; rather it strengthened the position of the Dictatorship. Djilas, Memoir, p. 12.

39. All these attacks were of a spasmodic and erratic nature, in which only six were killed and five wounded. The ineffectiveness of the terrorist campaign says much for the efficiency of the royal police and frontier officials. It also explains why the Ustase later chose Marseilles for their assassination attempt. Survey of International Affairs 1934, (London 1935) p. 543.

The most serious incident, which evoked widespread comment abroad, was the Lika Uprising of October 1932. For some time, arms had been smuggled into Croatia through Fiume.⁴⁰ One night, a group of uniformed Ustaše terrorists, equipped with modern weapons, attacked a police station and took five hostages. The attack was followed by attacks on four police barracks, in which the Ustaše members had the support of many of the local population, who were dissatisfied with the regime. Copies of the Ustača - the Ustaše news-sheet - were distributed throughout Croatia and, because the capture of the terrorists took several days, there were rumours that the revolt was spreading into Northern Dalmatia. The regime took the Lika Uprising very seriously. Four hundred police re-inforcements were rushed to the area; then a further thousand. A mountain battery from Bosnia and two mounted machine-gun sections were also dispatched in case the situation got out of control.⁴¹ According to enemies of the regime, the police acted with considerable brutality and used torture - even on innocent peasants in the district - to find out what was happening.⁴² The ring-leader of the uprising - Juco Rukavina - was brought to trial and sentenced to death; but his sentence was reduced to life imprisonment by the King.⁴³

By the end of 1933, it had come to the ears of the Yugoslav government that the Ustaše were not just a group of discontented

40. A major uprising against the regime was planned. I. Avakumović, Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918-45. Ed. Sugar, (Santa Barbara, California, 1971) p. 139.

41. The Times, 10 Oct. 1932, p. 13. See also Henderson to Simon, 17 Oct. 1932, C8846/433/92.

42. Djilas, Memoir, p. 135.

43. The King's compassion was perhaps misplaced for, as Djilas recalls, Rukavina was later released, made a colonel in the Ustaše army in 1941 and "exterminated the Serbs all over Lika with great gusto, believing that to be his mission in life. He hated Serbs....." Ibid., p. 137.

emigre Croats sending occasional groups of terrorists back into Yugoslavia to cause trouble, but a well-organized military establishment, settled in training camps on Italian and Hungarian soil, paid for and supervised by the Italian government.⁴⁴ One report spoke of camps of 500-600 men, clad in grey linen uniforms with the letter "U" on their collars, who were given 5 lire a day for their services.⁴⁵ The camps were reported to be at Borgotaro, Viscetto, San Demetrio and Fontechio in Italy and at Janka Puszta in Hungary.⁴⁶ From all the evidence available to the Yugoslav government, the Italians and Hungarians were not only harbouring and encouraging known terrorists,⁴⁷ but were building up a series of military units which could only be intended for one purpose - to support an armed attack on Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav government carefully gathered together all the evidence they could get about the Ustase camps in Italy and Hungary and presented it to the League of Nations.⁴⁸ To the Yugoslav govern-

44. The information received by the Yugoslav Government came from the interrogation of Oreb and his fellow conspirators. Simon to Henderson, following a memorandum by Djurić, 15 Jan. 1934, R325/30/92.

45. Henderson to Simon, 17 Oct. 1934, R5829/59/92.

46. Dr R.W. Seton-Watson, "King Alexander's Assassination: Its Background and Effects", International Affairs (Jan-Feb. 1935) Vol. XIV, no. 1. The farm at Janka Puszta was bought by Perčec in the autumn of 1931. According to the Hungarians, the farm was evacuated in April 1934. The "agricultural business" was wound up and the farm products sold. Memorandum of the Hungarian Government to the League of Nations, 8 Dec. 1934, League of Nations Official Journal, Dec. 1934, pp. 1829-38.

47. As one writer put it:- "It was difficult for the Yugoslavs to believe that large camps of a semi-military nature could be maintained in countries where police supervision was so thorough as it is in Italy and Hungary without the connivance of the authorities." H.F. Armstrong, "After the Assassination of King Alexander," (Foreign Affairs, New York) Jan. 1935, p. 222.

48. Documents of the League of Nations, C190 M79 (Geneva 12 May 1934)

ment, it appeared to be yet another Italian intrigue in the peninsula. In the 1920s, it had been the Macedonians; now it was the Ustase. The Yugoslavs had never doubted for a minute that one of the chief aims of Italian foreign policy was the destruction of their country⁴⁹ but, whereas in the 1920s they had been weak and ill-prepared to resist (and still hoping to come to some friendly agreement with Italy); in 1934, Yugoslavia was well-armed.⁵⁰ She had many powerful friends. She belonged to two major alliances in Central and South-Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia - neither internally, nor externally - was not the Yugoslavia of 1929 and, whereas the disintegration of the country had then been a very real possibility, the same could not be said in 1934. And wild venture by the Ustase would not go unpunished.

But the Italians thought differently. They had believed, right from the start, that King Alexander's dictatorship was a "heroic policy of despair".⁵¹ They could see quite clearly that the regime had failed to satisfy the moderate political leaders in Croatia and that the ill-feeling and bitterness between Croat and Serb were still there. Even amongst those who had at first given their grudging assent to the need for dictatorship, there was - the Italians felt - a sense of frustration that the King's ministers had failed to provide an adequate solution to the nation's problems and

(contd) and C239 M99 (Geneva, 15 Jun. 1934). A Note verbale protesting to the Hungarian government was sent on March 13, 1934 - the last of fifteen representations made to the Hungarians in four years. Survey for 1934, p. 546.

49. Henderson to Sargent, 26 Apr. 1934, R2644/59/92.

50. According to Adamić, in the ten years from 1923-33, 12,000 wagon-loads of war equipment had rolled into Yugoslavia from France and Czechoslovakia. The Native's Return, pp. 340-1.

51. The Times, 8 Jan. 1929, p. 11.

that the parliament of 1931 had become distressingly like the parliaments they had known before. As for Yugoslavia's standing abroad, the Italians believed that the whole structure of alliances which Alexander had helped to build, was very much his own personal policy. They therefore believed that, if King Alexander were to be removed, the whole Yugoslav mosaic would fall apart. As one writer put it:-

"The plotters failed to destroy Yugoslavia, but they were able, after five years, to destroy the King. As King Alexander became the one man, the State, the only authority, it became more practical to destroy him than to invade Yugoslavia or foment civil war." ⁵²

The first serious attempt on the life of the King was planned for December 1933, whilst Alexander and Queen Marie were visiting Zagreb. The would-be assassins - Petar Oreb and two accomplices - mingled with the crowd in the Jellačić Square in the hope of throwing a bomb at the King as he passed by.⁵³ But Oreb's hopes were thwarted by the enthusiastic welcome given to the King and Queen by the people of Zagreb. It was estimated that some 60,000 came out to welcome them, and Oreb confessed at his trial that he was unwilling to throw

52. S. Graham, Alexander of Yugoslavia, (London 1938) p. 140. This Italian attitude is confirmed in a despatch from Sir Eric Drummond (Rome) to Simon, 12 Oct. 1934, R5684/5524/92.

53. Henderson to Simon, 29 Mar. 1934, R2053/905/92. The three conspirators were Petar Oreb (21) a worker from Korčula; Josip Begović (26) a forestry student from Jurjevac and Ante Podgorelec (27) an apprentice stonemason also from Jurjevac. They entered Yugoslavia illegally on 11 Dec. 1933 from Austria bearing Hungarian passports.

his bomb because of the large number of ordinary people who would be injured and killed.⁵⁴ By the following day, they had made fresh plans and it was their intention to kill the King in the Cathedral whilst a solemn Te Deum was being sung to celebrate his birthday. However, before they could carry out their plan, they were surprised by the police and a gun-battle ensued, in which two policemen were killed.⁵⁵ When Oreb and his accomplices were put on trial,⁵⁶ they admitted that the assassination had been ordered by Dr Pavelić, who had visited Oreb twice at the camp at Borgotaro and offered him 500,000 lire as a reward.⁵⁷ Under examination, Oreb described the various bases used by the Ustaše in Italy and Austria and revealed that there were special hostels in Milan, Trieste, Venice and Zara, which were used by Croat conspirators on their way from camp to camp.⁵⁸ All three members of the group were found guilty of murder and attempted murder and were sentenced to death. Oreb and Begović were executed on May 12, 1934 but King Alexander intervened on behalf of Podgorelec and his sentence was reduced to life imprisonment.⁵⁹

Having failed once did not deter Dr Pavelić. "You may hide yourself, you Gipsy," he declared in one of his pamphlets, "but no matter where you go, we will find you and kill you." "We condemn Alexander the Last."⁶⁰ For his next attempt, Dr Pavelić chose a more

54. The Times, 13 Jan. 1934, p. 9; and Cowan (Belgrade) to Foreign Office, 12 Nov. 1934, R6375/30/92; and translation of the Sentence pronounced by the Tribunal for the Protection of the State in March 1934. Whilst in Zagreb, the King walked freely in the streets and greeted passers-by. He received many delegations and ordered that Dr Maček should be released from jail for 4 days to attend to his father's funeral.

55. Simon to Henderson, following memorandum from Djurić, 15 Jan. 1934, R325/30/92.

56. March 19-28, 1934.

57. Henderson to Simon, 29 Mar. 1934, R2053/905/92.

58. The Times, 22 Mar. 1934, p. 13. 59. The Times, 14 May 1934, p. 13.

60. Maclean, Disputed Barricade, p. 62.

experienced assassin - Vlado Chernozemsky.⁶¹ Chernozemsky, who was a Bulgarian and a member of the Macedonian organization, had performed several political murders in his own country. He had played an active part in his country's occupation of South Serbia during the World War and, since July 1932, he had worked with the Ustaše. He was a man with the unenviable reputation of being a cold-blooded killer, who would have few scruples about killing the King.

When it was announced - in mid-September - that King Alexander would repay Barthou's June visit to Belgrade with a royal visit to France in October,⁶² Dr Pavelić decided that his moment had come. An assassination in France would come as a great surprise since France was Yugoslavia's traditional ally and, it might be supposed, the King would be safer there than anywhere else. His death on French soil would be a great embarrassment to France and might well undermine the whole basis of the Franco-Yugoslav alliance.⁶³ Certainly, it would put an end to the slowly ^{nuturing} plans for a Franco-Italian-Yugoslav understanding by which M. Barthou hoped to complete France's eastern

61. See "Biographies".

62. Although the King promised Barthou that he would repay the visit (Graham, Alexander, p. 222) a decision was not made public until early September. Henderson to Carr, 11 Sept. 1934, R5077/2052/92. The decision itself was not made public till Sept. 17. Telegram from Sir George Clark (Paris) to Foreign Office, 17 Sept 1934, R5097/2052/92.

63. Armstrong, *After the Assassination....* p. 224. "So long as King Alexander lived, the tie with France was unalterable. The murder of the King on French soil in circumstances discreditable to the French police authorities, chilled Yugoslavia's traditional admiration for France and even the extraordinary efforts made by the French government to demonstrate its sorrow and dismay were not entirely successful in removing the impression caused by the inefficiency of the French Minister of the Interior and his agents" See also Graham, op. cit., p. 237, "From the assassination of Alexander dates a coldness to France that was both governmental and national."

system of alliances against Germany.⁶⁴ Dr Pavelić realized only too well that any such understanding would destroy all hopes for an independent Croatia and decided that, if he did not act now, he might very well be out-manoeuved by King Alexander's swift and decisive diplomacy. Although Chernozemsky and two other Ustaše gunmen were moved to Marseilles with great secrecy,⁶⁵ Dr Pavelić's agents in the United States were publicly prophesying the King's death two days before it occurred.⁶⁶

The King was due to land from his cruiser "Dubrovnik" late in the afternoon of October 9, 1934. It was planned that he would be met by M. Barthou and that the two men would drive through Marseilles to the station. From there, a train would take him to Paris. The route from the Quai de Belges to the Prefecture was very sparsely guarded with troops⁶⁷ and the assassin, Chernozemsky, stationed himself opposite the Bourse. As the open royal car, travelling very slowly along the street, reached this point, Chernozemsky ran forward and fired twenty shots into the car at close range. Although M. Barthou

64. Barthou was intending to Rome on October 15 1934 and it was by ~~to~~ ^{to} no means impossible that King Alexander might make a surprise visit to see Mussolini on his way home to Yugoslavia. On Oct. 6, Mussolini made a major speech in Milan in which he spoke of Franco-Italian relations as being on the verge of settlement. But the Germans let it be known in Belgrade that, although they were indifferent to a Franco-Italian alliance, they would regard an Italo-Yugoslav agreement as specifically directed against them. Henderson to Simon, 29 Oct. 1934, R6073/2934/92.

65. Chernozemsky, for his part, travelled from Hungary via Switzerland and entered France bearing a Czechoslovak passport some two to three weeks before the assassination. Clerk (Paris) to Simon, 11 Oct. 1934, R5644/5524/92.

66. J. Swire, Bulgarian Conspiracy, (London 1939) p. 291.

67. This was the matter which particularly distressed the Yugoslavs. The French had guaranteed in advance the safety of the King and refused to allow Yugoslav security men to accompany the King. Graham, op. cit., p. 40.

tried to protect the King, Alexander was fatally wounded and died a few minutes later. His assassin was also killed, struck down by a sabre blow by the commander of the royal guard of honour, who had been riding beside the car. M. Barthou, too, was severely wounded but, because the condition of the King was of such immediate concern, his injuries received little or no attention and he also died. ⁶⁸

The assassination of King Alexander in Marseilles caused a profound sense of shock throughout Europe. Memories of the outcome of the death of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 were still fresh in the mind and international statesmen were aware how easily a crisis in the Balkans could lead to a major war:- ⁶⁹

"If, as seemed only too possible, the Croatian terrorists had the support of Hungary, perhaps of Italy, and the connivance of either of these countries could be traced, we should have an international situation of the utmost danger." ⁷⁰

The possibility of some follow-up attack by military formations of the Ustase ⁷¹ and rumours of Italian troop re-inforcements on the Yugoslav-Italian frontier could not be ignored. ⁷² The efforts of the

68. The King received bullets in the heart and the liver. M. Barthou suffered a broken arm and a severed artery. Chernozemsky, as well as the sabre blow, was attacked - and trampled on - by the crowd. An account of the assassination is given in Appendix I.

69. Survey for 1934, pp. 538-9. The great difference between 1914 and 1934 was that, whereas in 1914, the "backers" (Russia and Germany) were prepared to go to war, in 1934, neither Italy nor France were - the spectre of Hitler being a beneficent incentive to peace.

70. Lord Avon, The Eden Memoirs: Facing the Dictators (London 1962) p. 109. 71. H.D. Harrison, The Soul of Yugoslavia (London 1941) p. 203.

72. Telegram from Henderson to Foreign Office, 2.00 am 10 Oct. 1934, R5563/5524/92. According to Harrison, op. cit., pp 203-4, Henderson was instrumental in arranging for the British Mediterranean

(contd)

Great Powers were therefore directed towards containing the situation and maintaining peace at all costs. The question of responsibility for the crime was referred to the League of Nations⁷³ and pressure was brought to bear on Yugoslav leaders to prevent any violent reaction by the Yugoslav people against Italy or Hungary which might itself endanger international peace.⁷⁴

But, in Belgrade, steps had already been taken to control the situation. When news of the King's death reached the Yugoslav capital, Prince Paul, the King's cousin, summoned General Živković to the palace and, together, they decided what should be done. The royal

(contd) fleet, which had been paying a summer visit to Kotor - to cruise up the Adriatic as far as Sušak. This discouraged any seaborne adventure by the Ustase and was, in itself, a sizeable contribution to peacekeeping in the area.

73. The Yugoslav case was presented to the League in Geneva on November 22, 1934. It was dealt with by the League Council from December 7-10, 1934. How the matter was handled, can best be seen from Sir Anthony Eden's own account, Avon, op. cit., pp. 108-120. The most significant outcome of the League's deliberations was the blame cast on Hungary - not Italy - for harbouring Ustaše terrorists. Italy, it seems, was happy to let her protégée take the responsibility, Survey for 1934, pp. 561-3. But, as will be seen from Eden's final resolution to the Council, ibid., pp. 570-1, no positive accusation was made against Hungary. A French attempt to obtain the extradition of Dr Pavelić proved unsuccessful. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office, 8 Nov. 1934, R6247/59/92. Dr Pavelić was arrested on Oct. 18 in Turin but released on November 26, when the extradition appeal was rejected. Survey for 1934, pp. 560-1. In Italy, there was "no case" against him, but he was later tried in absentia in France and condemned to death.

74. Sir Nevile Henderson was in close contact with the royal palace and Yugoslav leaders following the assassination. Henderson to Simon, R5743/30/92. A telegram sent the same day said: "I have done nothing but urge on all concerned here, maintenance of calm and a correct attitude towards Italy in these difficult moments." Henderson to Foreign Office, 13 Oct. 1934, R5629/59/92.

will could only be opened by two people - the Queen and the Prime Minister - but, since the Queen was in France, the only person available was Uzunović so he also was summoned to the palace. Uzunović had already been busy arranging for the immediate return of the Crown Prince (now Peter II) from England⁷⁵ and for the transfer of the King's body home from France. When Uzunović had been brought - somewhat unwillingly - to the palace, and the royal will opened, it was discovered that King Alexander had stipulated that, in the event of his death, the country should be governed - not by the Prime Minister - but by three Regents, including Prince Paul.⁷⁶ According to one report, Uzunović had himself already nominated his own Regency Council and was reluctant to obey the King's last will and testament. But General Živković proved extremely forceful and Prince Paul threatened to publish King Alexander's will, so Uzunović gave way.⁷⁷

Members of the Cabinet then took an oath of allegiance to the new King and, likewise, all officers in the Yugoslav army and navy; throughout the night, many hundreds took the oath to the new sovereign. The proclamation of the accession of Peter II was issued alongside an official statement announcing the death of King Alexander and black flags were ordered to be hung on all public buildings:-

"All through the night, there was a great discreet activity as if conspirators were moving swiftly and silently to achieve revolution whilst the masses slept. But the object was not revolution, but stability. The assumption of (Yugoslavia's) enemies might be that the assass-

75. In September 1934, the Crown Prince had been sent to Sandroyd preparatory school in England. Peter II, A King's Heritage, (London 1955) pp. 14-23.

76. Graham, Alexander, pp. 233-5.

77. V. Macek, In the Struggle for Freedom, (Pennsylvania 1968) pp. 155-6.

ination meant chaos, separation and civil war. The resolution of the Government was that there should be disciplined calm and a dignified acceptance of Fate." 78

When the news reached the people of Yugoslavia on the morning of October 10, the reaction of the nation was exactly the opposite of what Dr Pavelić and his Ustaše had intended:-

"Instead of taking the removal of the Dictator-King as a sign for a general revolt, the anti-Serb and anti-centralist and anti-dictatorial elements in the country were moved to feel compunction (sic) for their dead opponent and solidarity with their Serbian fellow-Jugoslavs in defence of the unity and independence of their common country." 79

Only in Sarajevo was there any visible disturbance and, there, the objects of local anger were the Italian consulate, the Croat Napredak society and a local Jesuit seminary, all of which had their windows broken.⁸⁰ For the most part

"the position is that everyone here is in a state of frantic emotion, though fortunately passions are divided, particularly against the French who took insufficient precautions, against the Italians who are known to have encouraged political refugees and the Croats, who are believed to have supplied the actual assassin....." 81

78. Graham, Alexander, p. 235.

79. Survey for 1934, p. 551.

80. H.M. Consul Sarajevo to Henderson, 10 Oct. 1934, R5663/5524/92.

81. Telegram from Henderson to Foreign Office, 12 Oct. 1934, R5615/5524/92.

But "for the moment, all is quiet. The people as a whole, Croat peasant as much as Serb, is shocked with grief at the loss of a ruler whose great qualities, as is so often the case, have only been appreciated at their true value when it is too late. Of the depth of that grief, there is no question...."⁸²

The British Consul in Zagreb reported on the Croat reaction as he saw it:-

"The tragedy came as a shock to all classes. The human side of the tragedy precludes all other thought. With peasant women crying in the market square and prominent men and women - many of them bitterly opposed to the late King's political actions - sobbing in the churches, the only thing parallel I can recollect is my memory of Queen Victoria's funeral."⁸³

When the King's body returned home, there were further public scenes of grief. "Along the whole route of the funeral cortege, up the winding railway from the Dalmatian coast, through Bosnia to Zagreb, thence across the Croatian plains to Belgrade, the peasants flocked in by the hundreds of thousands to kneel weeping in the little stations where the train paused or beside the tracks as it slowly passed by. The upsurge of national sorrow - for propaganda can do much but it cannot make people weep - must have been a surprise to those who had platted the assassination."⁸⁴

82. Henderson to Simon, 13 Oct. 1934, R5743/30/92.

83. Henderson to Simon, 13 Oct. 1934, R5695/5524/92.

84. Armstrong, "After the Assassination...." p. 219.

"For when the country realized that the King was dead - and how he had died - at that moment, it felt more closely knit than it had since that day in November 1918, when the Croatian and Slovene national delegations, meeting exultantly in Zagreb, had called on the young Prince Regent to accept the throne of the new Triune Kingdom." ⁸⁵

Although Mussolini had sent a telegram expressing his most heartfelt condolence ⁸⁶ and despite the fact that many Italian newspapers - even those most traditionally anti-Yugoslav - contained long and flattering obituaries of the late King. ⁸⁷ Mussolini still remained hopeful that internal events in Yugoslavia might work to his advantage. ⁸⁸ Certain Italian radio stations - notably that at Bari - continued to put out stories of an impending dissolution of the Yugoslav state. The broadcasts only ceased when an official protest was lodged by Ducic, the Yugoslav ^{Minister} ~~charge d'affaires~~ in Rome, on October 12. ⁸⁹ Furthermore, two Italian army corps remained in a state of readiness ⁹⁰ and the Ustase continued as if nothing had happened. ⁹¹ But, although Mussolini still had his hopes, other nations

85. Ibid.

86. Graham, Alexander, p. 238.

87. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office, 10 Oct. 1934, R5572/5524/92.

88. Drummond (Rome) to Foreign Office, 16 Oct. 1934, R5700/59/92.

This telegram followed an interview with Mussolini.

89. Telegram from Henderson to the Foreign Office, R5625/59/92, 13 Oct. 1934. Newly-minted coinage for Croatia was also being circulated in Zara. When Dučić protested, Suvich was very unresponsive, but on the following day, Suvich informed him with great courtesy that the broadcasts would cease. Manchester Guardian, 15 Oct. 1934. Suvich, himself, was of Croatian origin. His grandfather was a Croat and his father a naturalized Italian. He was described as a "natural friend of Croat emigres abroad" Henderson to Vansittart, 7 Apr. 1934, R2295/59/92.

90. Henderson to Foreign Office, 10 Oct. 1934, R5663/5524/92.

came to Yugoslavia's side and re-affirmed their belief in her existence as a state. On October 20, Field Marshal Goering issued a press statement saying that it was "in the interest of Germany both as regards her own peace as well as for the maintenance of peace in the whole of Europe that a strong and powerful Yugoslavia should exist."⁹² And, in England, the British Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, declared in a speech in Northampton, that "a strong, united, prosperous and contented Yugoslavia is a major European interest."⁹³

From the evidence - both inside Yugoslavia and without - it can be seen that those who opposed the royal dictatorship did not achieve their goal. Those who wished to see a resumption of democratic and constitutional government lost the one man who might have made it possible. Those who wished to see a federal solution for the Kingdom were likewise disappointed. For the Communists, the death of the King postponed for seven years the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, which might have alleviated their political suppression. Instead, the party faced even stricter controls under the Regency.⁹⁴ But, most unsuccessful of all, were those who hated the "Yugoslav mosaic", who wished to destroy the Kingdom and establish their own separatist state. By their actions, calculated to foster disintegration, the Ustaše succeeded in creating a greater sense of national unity than the Yugoslavs had ever experienced.

"Indeed, it might be said, without either
paradox or disrespect, that King Alexander

91. Drummond (Rome) to Simon, 22 Oct. 1934, R6005/59/92.

92. Henderson to the Foreign Office, 21 Oct. 1934, R5823/30/92.

93. Armstrong, "After the Assassination...." p. 225.

94. Djilas, Memoir, pp. 205-211.

did more to justify his title of "The Unifier" through his unsought death than through his deliberate policy as the first ruler of the infant Yugoslav state. His enemies as well as his friends in Yugoslavia were ready to regard him, post mortem, as a martyr to his political faith; and, in all Yugoslav minds, his disinterested and single-minded devotion to his ideal now overshadowed the element of perversity in the ideal itself and the high-handedness of the methods by which the late King had attempted to realize this ideal dictatorially." ⁹⁵

It was said at the time that King Alexander's dying words were "Preserve Yugoslavia" (Čuvajte mi Jugoslaviju). ⁹⁶ The story may well have been apocryphal but, as Sir Neville Henderson said, it is what the King would have said, had he had the chance. ⁹⁷ It is worth recording that on the archway at Oplenac, through which the coffin had to pass on its way to the Karadjordjević mausoleum the following words were inscribed: "Sleep in peace; we will preserve Yugoslavia". Wrote Henderson, "It may well be that his dying words 'Preserve Yugoslavia' will endure when everything else is forgotten." ⁹⁸

95. Survey for 1934, p. 551.

96. C.F. Melville, Balkan Racket, p. 35.

97. Henderson to Simon, 13 Oct. 1934, R5743/30/92.

98. Henderson to Simon, 22 Oct. 1934, R6068/30/92.

Chapter 10

King Alexander...An Assessment

Although Alexander was King of Yugoslavia for almost fourteen years - and absolute ruler of his country for six of those years - it must be admitted that, even after his death, he remained something of an enigma. Before 1929, very little attention was paid either to him or his country, such comment as there was being concentrated on the personalities of Nikola Pašić or Stjepan Radić, who provided a more colourful picture of political opinion within the Kingdom. During the period of parliamentary rule, Alexander kept very much in the background, performing the ceremonies and duties required of a constitutional monarch, and, when he became Dictator, he took steps to make himself even more remote. Unlike his predecessors - the Princes and Kings of Serbia - who had lived in palaces in the centre of Belgrade, Alexander withdrew to a new home which he had built on a hill at Dedinje, overlooking the city.¹ The strict censorship imposed by the dictatorship also contributed to this feeling of remoteness and those who wished to know their King better were obliged to choose between the exaggerated mystique accorded to royalty in the official press or to listen to the rumour and hearsay - often malicious - of those who were hostile to the regime. Outside Yugoslavia, Alexander was largely unknown. Until he began his royal diplomacy in 1933, his only visits abroad were private visits to France or Switzerland for

1. Peter II, of Yugoslavia, A King's Heritage, (London 1955) p. 4. "This was a magnificent building on the top of a hill, two and a half miles outside the town. We had bought the entire hill and had about ten miles of road in it." At the foot of the hill, there was an army barracks.

medical² or personal³ reasons - and, as such, attracted little publicity. After his death, he became the object of legend - the Unifier, the Martyr, the Strong Man of the Balkans - and it is difficult for any writer of Serbian or Yugoslav history - a history so full of soldiers, heroes and saints - not to present Alexander as yet another in his country's long line of tragic warrior-kings.

But those who saw him in the flesh during his lifetime viewed him differently. To ^{some of} them, he was not a distinguished-looking leader; in fact, if anything, he seemed rather insignificant.⁴ Milovan Djilas, who saw him on a royal visit to Berane (Montenegro) in September 1925, described him as "scrawny and unprepossessing";⁵ and Rebecca West, watching him on a newsreel in 1934, noted that his face was neither tranquil nor handsome.⁶ Louis Adamić, who was granted an audience with the King, observed him closely:-

"Alexander is not handsome, nor is he the contrary.

He is five-foot nine and slight of build. His carriage is military, his movements are easy and agile.

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2. According to Sir Howard Kennard, Alexander suffered from some abdominal complaint (most probably colitis) which had a debilitating effect on his health. Kennard to Howard Smith, 27 Apr. 1928, C3004/3004/92. Whether this was caused by the war, overwork or heredity is uncertain. But both Prince Paul and Alexander's son, Peter, had stomach disorders, Peter II, *op. cit.*, p. 3. For several years, Alexander travelled regularly to Paris to see a specialist. His condition was later helped by Dr Stanković, who was nominated as one of the three regents.
3. According to several accounts, King Alexander had large amounts of money deposited in Switzerland. The sum most chiefly mentioned is 400 million dinars (£2 millions). Henderson to Simon, 9 May 1932, C4173/433/92. Also J. Gunther, *Inside Europe*, (London 1936) p. 373. *Later evidence suggests this sum was greatly exaggerated.*
4. "In pictures, as the American magazine *Time* unvaryingly pointed out, he resembled a small-town dentist". Gunther, *ibid.*, p. 374.
5. M. Djilas, *Land Without Justice*, (London 1958) p. 251.
6. R. West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, (London 1942), Vol. 1, p. 16.

His slowly sloping brow, heavy eyebrows, slightly-hooked nose, prominent chin are typically Balkanite. He is dark-complexioned, and has a short mustache. His dark hair, parted on the side, is graying at the temples. His mouth is rather sizeable, his lips are pale, thin and tense. His dark-brown eyes, deep in their sockets and with slight shadows under them, have a look which may mean almost anything." ⁷

One of the first things people noticed about King Alexander was his preference for military dress. ⁸ ~~It was~~ ^{One hostile writer} said that he realized what a poor figure he cut in civilian clothes and, for that reason, he was almost always seen - and photographed - in one uniform or another. ⁹

A further feature of his character, which was noted by all who met him, was his great ability to charm: - ¹⁰

"A deft actor," wrote Adamić, "he was charming to all; simple, democratic everywhere, with just enough pomp now and then to impress those who liked to be impressed. He kissed peasant babies throughout the Kingdom. He stopped his car, went into the fields, chatted with peasants, patted them on their backs, joked with peasant women, tasted their bread, became godfather of their children." ¹¹

Foreign reporters who came to Belgrade to interview Alexander often

7. L. Adamić, The Native's Return, (New York 1934) pp. 328-9.

8. V. Bartlett, "King Alexander of Yugoslavia". In the series, "Strong Men of Europe", Listener, 19 July 1933, p.87.

9. Adamić, op. cit., p. 329.

10. C. Eylan, "Chez le Roi Alexandre Ier", Revue des deux mondes, 1 July, 1934, pp. 40-52.

11. Adamić, op. cit., p. 340.

found a different man to the one they were expecting. They came to meet a dictator but, instead, they found a quiet, gentle man with a warm smile who appeared genuinely anxious to please. It was perhaps an act - part of the public relations duty incumbent upon any King or Queen; but in almost all the descriptions of Alexander, we gain an impression of a simple, ordinary, hard-working man who, although a King, did not seem to be of the stuff of which dictators are made.

"He had nothing in common with the dictatorial demagogues of postwar Europe who grimace and shriek. He had no high-pressure advertising agents and no propaganda machine for hurling his opinion through the ether upon the ears of his subjects or neighbours. There was nothing theatrical or meretricious about him, either in appearance or action." ¹²

Alexander was born in 1888 - in exile.¹³ His father was the grandson of Karadjordje, the pig-dealer who had first raised the standard of revolt against the Turks; his mother was Princess Zorka, daughter of Prince Nicholas of Montenegro. When he was very young, his mother died of tuberculosis¹⁴ and for the next eight years,¹⁵ he

12. H.F. Armstrong, *After the Assassination of King Alexander*, (Foreign Affairs, New York), Jan. 1935, p. 209.

13. Alexander was born in Montenegro, then an independent principality ruled by Prince Nicholas. Although his grandfather had been Prince of Serbia (1842-59), he was deposed by the Skupština in favour of the Obrenović dynasty which ruled Serbia until 1903. Alexander's father was employed by Nicholas to rebuild and reorganize the Montenegrin army.

14. In March 1890, when Alexander was fifteen months old.

15. Following a quarrel between his father, Peter, and Nicholas.

lived with his father in straightened circumstances in Geneva. In 1898, the political fortunes of his family changed.¹⁶ His father was received by the Tsar in St Petersburg and accepted Nicholas II's offer to educate all his children at the best Russian schools. Whilst his father succeeded to the throne of Serbia,¹⁷ Alexander became a member of the Corps de Pages at St Petersburg and later, a student in the Russian military academy. In 1909, he was summoned to Belgrade and made Crown Prince in the place of his brother, who had ~~murdered~~ ^{caused the death of} a servant. He fought in the Serbian army in two Balkan Wars and became Prince Regent in June 1914.¹⁸

As might be expected; these many changes of fortune in the first twenty-five years of his life left their mark:-

"The difficult circumstances of his youth have had their psychological effect upon his character. They have left him with an inferiority complex in some respects, a tortuous method of dealing with men and business, an inability for friendship, a certain instability of purpose and a mind which seems either to trust nobody or to give its confidence to the most unworthy objects of it. Hence his worst trait as a ruler, his incapacity to choose good and honest advisers. His impatience is another failing. He eats in a hurry, takes his pleasures in a hurry and..... often allows his impatience to get the better of his truer judgement."¹⁹

The one area where Alexander found himself perfectly at home was the

16. Because of the increasing dissatisfaction with Alexander Obrenovic, last of his dynasty's rulers. 17. In 1903.

18. King Peter became gradually crippled with rheumatism.

19. Annual Report for 1932, C747/747/92. (Contained in Vol. 16830).

Army. The forces over which he had command played a major part in the victory at Kumanovo and he acquitted himself with distinction in the Second Balkan War. As Commander-in-Chief of the Serbian Army in 1914-5, he succeeded in repelling attacks by the Austrian army and, when his troops were finally forced to retreat, Alexander personally marched with his army over the mountains into Albania - an exploit in which over 100,000 died.²⁰

"Regent Alexander, like his father, shared the nation's agony and participated in its heroism. He endured hardships as no other ruler or general in the World War. He emerged from the war as a popular hero of the people, admired and respected by persons of other nationalities - journalists, officers, diplomats, doctors and relief workers in the Balkans, most of whom, of course, knew only of his war record."²¹

The insinuation made by Adamić is that, although King Alexander was valiant and brave in battle, he was in normal times - both before and after the war - a scheming, cunning politician, intent only on obtaining for himself absolute power:-²²

"He revels in all the license of sovereign power. Everything goes through his hands. No instructor in any secondary school can be transferred or elevated to a higher grade without the royal signature. It's a disease with him, this craving for direct personal authority..... He is ambitious for

20. G. Gordon-Smith, Through the Serbian Campaign, (London 1916) pp 148-75

21. Adamić, The Native's Return, p. 338.

22. Ibid., p. 336.

fame. The fame of another person within Yugoslavia he considers an insolent invasion of the royal prerogative. As soon as a man achieves eminence in politics, he finds ways and means to do away with him. He likes only yes-men who know how to keep themselves subdued, in the background. He is spiteful, ungrateful. He uses a man, then tosses him aside." ²³

Adamic therefore asserts that, throughout the period of parliamentary rule, Alexander was instrumental in creating the political crises which made government impossible in the 1920s and that it was he who set one nationality against the other, dividing the nation, and thus preparing the way for his own assumption of dictatorial power.²⁴

But I do not think Adamic's assertions are either convincing or conclusive. According to all the evidence available, King Alexander was brought up in a strong democratic tradition. His father, who translated John Stuart Mill's essay "On Liberty" into Serbian,

23. Ibid., pp. 345-6. In this extract from his book, we see a particularly extreme example of how Adamic can twist a normal fact to convey the worst possible impression. According to the Law on Civil Servants (Article 103), public officials were divided into ten classes. Changes in classes VIII-X (those considered as junior civil servants) were performed by ministerial decree; but those in classes I-VII (considered as senior civil servants) were appointed, transferred or promoted by Royal decree on the proposal of the competent minister. Even then, a royal signature was considered merely as a formality in classes III-VII. For a junior teacher (class VIII or IX), no royal signature was needed; and even for a senior teacher (classes V-VII) that signature was a formality.

was taut and rigid.")

only obtained his throne at the express invitation of the Skupština and, from his earliest days as Crown Prince, Alexander had grown up in a world inhabited by such redoubtable parliamentarians as Protić and Pašić. Serbia's great allies, France and Great Britain, were both strong democratic nations and, with the example of the murder of the Obrenović family in 1903²⁵ and the memory of the slaughter of the Russian royal family at Ekaterinburg in 1918 still fresh in the memory,²⁶ Alexander was well aware of the perils of absolute rule.²⁷ Furthermore, it can be argued that, until Pašić died (in 1926), King Alexander had very little influence on the events in the Skupština and that, in that period, the most potent and obvious factor for disunity within the nation was the political obstruction of Stjepan Radić and the Croatian Peasant Party. All his life, Alexander was liberating, uniting and consolidating.²⁸ He was a constant factor in the evolution of his people.²⁹ Only when that evolution proved impossible - and revolution or civil war seemed the only alternatives - did Alexander intervene. And then as in everything that he did - as we have seen - it was not the glory of himself or his dynasty that he

25. H. De Windt, Through Savage Europe, (London 1907) pp. 143-157.

26. Rebecca West reports that, before the World War, Alexander fell in love with one of the Tsar's daughters and that, in January 1914, Pašić went to Russia to discuss the possibility of a royal marriage. Black Lamb and Grey Falcon, Vol. 1, p. 610. If this were the case, it would not have been easy for Alexander to forget the fate of the Romanovs.

27. Rebecca West, watching the newsreel of the King's death, says, "at each showing of the film, it could be seen more plainly that he had not been surprised at his own murder. He had not merely known of it as a factual possibility, he had realized it imaginatively in its full force as an event." Ibid., p. 21.

28. A. O'B Christić, "King Alexander of Yugoslavia" (Contemporary Review) Feb. 1934, p. 210.

29. Ibid.

sought, but simply the unity, strength and general well-being of his country, Yugoslavia, which he believed it was his kingly duty to maintain.³⁰

In his royal proclamation of January 6, 1929, Alexander justified his assumption of dictatorial powers by claiming that the parliamentary institutions and political system established under the Vidovdan Constitution had so conspicuously failed in their task that they had become the principal cause of division and disruption within the Kingdom. That the King was right in making this claim, there can be little doubt. Not only had it proved impossible for members from different parts of the country to work and take counsel together, but their differences had reached the point of open murder. This, perhaps, could have been the moment for members of the Skupština to realize the damage they were doing to themselves and to their country. But, instead, it became an excuse for the parties to take up even more entrenched and hostile positions, in which neither side would give way. In these circumstances, parliamentary government became impossible. It could not continue. Alexander's solution was to abolish the Constitution. But, as Sir Nevile Henderson has said,

30. Had Alexander really been interested in seizing absolute power at the earliest opportunity, he would certainly have intervened after the murders in the Skupština or after Radić's death. The fact that he delayed a further five months is a clear sign that he still hoped for a last-minute change of heart by the politicians. As Henderson said:- "He was a soldier first and last and his recognition of this fact made him slow in his decisions as a statesman." Henderson to Simon, 13 Oct. 1934, R5743/30/92. In his royal proclamation, Alexander stated "It is my sacred duty to preserve by all means national unity and the State. I am determined to fulfil my duty without flinching until the end!" See Appendix C.

the Constitution was only abolished in order that the political parties might be abolished for it was they, rather than the Constitution, which had failed.³¹

"The Crown," wrote the Times Balkan correspondent, "has been reluctantly but inexorably forced into the political arena as the only neutral element in a complex situation and, for that very reason, is bound to risk its neutrality by definite, constructive action."³²

But even if the circumstances warranted the intervention of the Crown, was there no alternative to personal rule? Could Alexander have avoided outright dictatorship? As we have seen, the options open to the King were few in number. He could have called a Constituent Assembly to draw up a new Constitution in which the Croats would have a greater measure of autonomy and self-governemnt. But he well-remembered that the previous Constituent Assembly had spent two years wrangling over the details and that there would have been no Constitution at all, had it not been for Pašić's determined efforts. In the dangerous political situation which faced the country in 1929 - with passions mounting - he could not afford to allow more time to be spent in open - and, most probably, sterile - debate. Nor could he be sure that it would achieve anything, for he knew that the Serbian politicians were opposed to any form of federalism or devolution. "Amputation" - the cutting off of Croatia and Slovenia - was one option which Alexander could have chosen but, as we have seen, he believed it was his duty to maintain the unity of his Kingdom and, in this, he had the support of the Army. Alexander might also have chosen a military government - filled with army officers - and given

31. N. Henderson to A. Henderson, 29 Sept. 1930, C7443/144/92.

32. The Times, 9 Jan. 1929, p. 11.

them a mandate to rule (as Radić himself had suggested)³³ but one of the most interesting things about the Dictatorship was that the Army was kept completely in the background - well away from political power - and Alexander preferred, for paternalist rather than despotic reasons, to take the responsibility of government into his own hands, which he believed would be the option most acceptable to the majority of his people.

To help him in his task, Alexander chose as his close associates, men whom he could trust, those without strong party affiliations, people who were experts in their own particular field. Throughout the Dictatorship - and most particularly during the first three years - Alexander was careful to include in his Cabinet a fair proportion of Ministers from each of the different regions of the Kingdom. The one essential qualification required of all his Ministers was that they should share his belief in Yugoslavia and that, together, they should work towards that goal. The King believed - rightly - that his people were profoundly disillusioned with the party politicians and that once they saw Serbs, Croats and Slovenes working together as Yugoslavs for a strong, united and prosperous Yugoslavia, they would give the new regime their full support.

All the evidence suggests that Alexander's intentions were genuine, honest and well-meaning. And so were his policies - a new title for his country; new local boundaries; a new Constitution; a new two-chamber parliament; completion of the long-delayed unification of laws, codes and administration; an end to corruption in government

33. E.J. Patterson, Yugoslavia (London 1936) p. 104. On 19 Feb. 1928, Radić said, "Our national army, which is our national shrine in its finest form, can perhaps alone provide a generally recognized leader strong enough to drive away corruption unmercifully, as well as lawlessness, to destroy partisanship in administration and to overcome the political terrorism which is turning our entire country into a great penitentiary."

departments and a new efficiency and economy in running the country.

What Alexander was really interested in doing was making the machinery of state work - as a single unit, with all the parts working together. It was, I think, a wholly legitimate goal. What he did not seek - and he may therefore be criticized for this - was a new or imaginative programme of social or agrarian reform which might have benefitted the peasant community, who amounted to almost 80% of the population. Alexander was blinkered in the sense that his eyes were simply on the Yugoslav ideal. Doubtless, he believed that when the constitution, parliament and administration worked properly, these pressing matters would receive urgent attention.

"A dictatorship," wrote Henderson, "must offer rapid and spectacular achievements if it is to retain its prestige." ³⁴ And there is clear evidence, both from the royal proclamation and from what was stated at the time, that Alexander and his Ministers believed that the task of purging the old and establishing the new could be done in a very short time.

This is where King Alexander made his first mistake. Although the initial spate of legislation was breath-takingly impressive and the broad lines of the new Yugoslavia were made clear at an early date, there was more to making a nation one than simply passing laws. The habits, customs and outlook of a whole generation had to be changed. But the Yugoslav people have always been intensely political in their outlook, strongly democratic in their principles and vocal in their expression. However disappointing the party politicians may have been - and whatever damage they may have done to the country - the people had rather enjoyed sitting in their cafes, drinking their Turkish coffee and sipping their sljivovica, arguing and complaining. The Croats, although initially glad to see the "hated" Skupština dissolved, were

34. Henderson to Sargent, 16 Jul. 1930, C5812/144/92.

less than happy to discover that their beloved Croatia had disappeared from the map to be replaced with the "S^{ovska} ~~Sava~~ Banovina". They had wanted more identity - not less! And they quickly decided that if the new regime was going to suppress the freedom of speech and destroy their national identity, then they were against it.

The Serbs, for their part, were more kindly disposed towards the regime. After all, the King himself was a Serb and would not do anything to harm their interests. But it was not long before the Serbs -and the Slovenes - became disillusioned. The new ministers did not seem any great improvement on their predecessors. ~~They were not well-known~~. In fact, they seemed rather faceless men. And after their first outburst of efficiency, they appeared rather surprised and resentful that the nation should not have given them their wholehearted support. This, in turn, made the Ministers less sure that the King's policies were the right ones. With strict censorship in force, both Alexander and his Ministers were working in a vacuum. They did not know what the people were really feeling. They had no desire to kill the Yugoslav ideal by forcing it down the peoples' throats too fast. So the policies of the Dictatorship were slowed down, the new Constitution was put into cold storage and plans for a new Parliament delayed.

But the longer the Dictatorship continued, the less justified did the King's actions appear, the more dubious his original motives became and an increasing number of people began to wonder if the Dictatorship really had any plans for the nation or whether it had assumed power for the sake of power itself. The regime therefore found itself open to precisely the same criticism as Alexander had laid against the party politicians. He, too, had failed to bring "order and consolidation" within the country. Despite the pressing urgency

of their need, he had done nothing to satisfy "the complaints of the labouring masses, patriotic but exhausted"³⁵. He, too had failed to resolve the deep-rooted differences between Serb and Croat. And, far from binding the nation together, he and his Ministers had created an equally "unhealthy political situation" to that which he had sought to remedy in January 1929. Alexander's failure to work a swift cure - even assuming that a swift cure was possible - caused great disillusionment with the Dictatorship and discouraged many who might otherwise have co-operated with it from coming forward.

It is perhaps difficult for us to realize how small were the human resources upon which King Alexander could call. Three-fifths of Serbia's manpower had been lost during the World War and, with them, nine-tenths of her university students. A large number of talented young Croats had also died fighting for the Austrian Empire.³⁶ There were therefore many of the "old guard" but very few of the "new guard". Thus, although Alexander had driven the old politicians from power and pensioned them off, it was not long before he realized how much he needed their help.

We can see now that, in promulgating the Constitution of 1931, and holding fresh elections, the King hoped that he might either persuade the old politicians to sink their differences and return to Belgrade or else he might fill the Skupština with new men, amongst whom there might be people of real ability. But, unfortunately, as we have seen, the King received neither the support of the old politicians nor any fresh talent. The deputies returned to the Skupština were not only second-rate material, voted in unopposed on the official

35. In November 1928, Sir H.W. Kennard wrote: "if the peasant were given order in administration, impartiality of the law and help where help is needed, the Opposition would be rendered powerless." Kennard to Cushendun, 18 Nov. 1928, C7852/173/92.

36. R. West, Black Lamb and Grey Falcon, p. 612.

government list, but as prone to faction and disagreement as their predecessors in the pre-1929 parliament. This meant that Alexander was obliged to rely on the same collection of Ministers who had already proved themselves neither efficient nor inspiring. And, at the same time, he had to watch a Skup^Vstina - which although of his making, was soon beyond his control - tearing up, watering down and interminably delaying essential reforms in government, agriculture and finance. As we have shown, this unhappy situation grew and developed in the last three years of the Dictatorship. During that time, there was little or no progress towards the new Yugoslavia of Alexander's dreams nor a return to full parliamentary democracy. The King was well aware that, in the eyes of his people, he was the one who bore full responsibility for all that happened during the regime and there is ample evidence to suggest that, by late 1933 or early 1934, the King knew that - in the task of solving the internal problems facing the country - his Dictatorship had failed.

This, however, did not mean that Alexander had been wrong to proclaim a royal dictatorship, nor that, having failed, he should hand over to someone who could do better. As has been made abundantly clear, the one thing which the parliamentary regime and the Dictatorship both lacked, was an available supply of capable, honest and disinterested men. Even those who had considerable doubts about the wisdom of dictatorship were obliged to admit that the King was the one man who could hold the country together. Although, by 1934, the plans and hopes of 1929 had conspicuously failed, there is clear evidence to show that, undaunted, Alexander was planning fresh changes in his regime - away from personal rule and a central parliament - towards a federal solution. And there is little doubt that, had he lived, these changes would have been made and the whole manner and style of royal dictatorship taken yet another and different turn.

It is therefore impossible to give a final judgement upon the internal policy of King Alexander's dictatorship because his own plans and efforts were never allowed to reach fruition. What can be said with some certainty is that the personal rule of 1929-31 lasted too long and did not provide the swift solution which would have made everyone satisfied. What the King discovered - and what subsequent rulers of Yugoslavia have also discovered - was that there was no easy solution to the problem facing Yugoslavia. To reconcile the Croats and the Serbs and to make the nation really one, would take many years - and perhaps even several generations - to achieve. Nor did the Parliament of 1931-34 help. It was not sufficiently democratic to win popular support; nor was it sufficiently absolutist to execute the royal will. In bringing it into existence, the King suffered the worst of both worlds.

In the six years that King Alexander was royal dictator, he failed - but this is not to say that his Dictatorship was a failure. Even with a strong political party, a powerful ideology, a policy of federal republics and thirty years as a united nation - the rulers of post-war Yugoslavia have not been spared the same antagonism and disagreement between Croat and Serb. The fact that King Alexander - in a mere six years - did not succeed, is by no means a confession of failure.

But if, in 1934, King Alexander found himself profoundly dissatisfied with events at home, the same could not be said for his policies abroad. One of his chief reasons for proclaiming the dictatorship was to improve the international standing of his country in Europe. He hoped that the prospect of strong government, an efficient administration and honesty in high places would attract foreign capital to

Yugoslavia and he reckoned that the more powerful and the more united he could make his country, the more he could resist Italian intrigues and adventures in the peninsula, which he saw as the chief external threat to his Kingdom.

It was in a way symptomatic of Alexander's methods that he should have spent a full four years (1929-32) trying to reach some understanding or agreement with Mussolini. Just as he had tried patiently and forbearingly to make the parliamentary regime work, similarly, King Alexander spent a great deal of time and diplomacy trying to improve Yugoslav-Italian relations. Again, as we have seen, the fact that he failed to reach any agreement with the Italian dictator was not his fault. Every avenue of diplomacy was explored; the most generous offers were made. And the only criticism which we might level against Alexander was that he spent too long trying to secure an understanding when it must have already been perfectly clear that Mussolini was not interested.

One of the principal features of King Alexander's character was an unwillingness to be forced into any sudden decision. He preferred to act when he himself decided - to spring surprises at times of his own choosing; but when he made some sudden move, it usually represented some major change in royal policy. Once Alexander realized that all his efforts to woo Mussolini were doomed to failure, he was very swift to develop his country's existing links with Czechoslovakia and Rumania. For years, the Little Entente had been a sort of pale French shadow in Central Europe, judiciously preserving the status quo in the Danube basin and adding its weight to the lengthy deliberations of the League of Nations. Now, in a very short time, the Little Entente became a significant political factor in European affairs. It could not be claimed that this change was due simply to Alexander's royal diplomacy but, equally, without a strong Yugoslav

initiative, nothing would have been possible.

It was, as we have seen, very much Alexander's wish that the Little Entente should be complemented by some equally powerful treaty in the Balkan peninsula and the Balkan Entente took shape so rapidly that at least one of the signatories - Turkey - found herself taken by surprise at the sudden arrival of a Yugoslav monarch on a personal visit to Constantinople. The fact that King Alexander showed unwillingness to sign any treaty in the Balkans without the fullest participation of Bulgaria - together with his very determined efforts to improve relations with King Boris by making two visits to Bulgaria in less than a year - show that his wish was not to build a pact against anyone but simply to consolidate the Balkans and Central Europe against foreign aggression - just as he had tried to unite and consolidate his own country from within.

The diplomatic initiative mounted by King Alexander in the years 1933-34 did much to change the standing and relative importance of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe and, had he lived, it is not too much to say that the two Ententes would have provided a more formidable and united obstacle to the designs of the dictators than they did in the hands of lesser men. From the evidence available, it is clear that the Germans realized the aims and objectives of his policy and did their best to secure good relations with Yugoslavia - as one of the most important - and fragile- links in the chain. Italy, too, was beginning to realize that a treaty with Yugoslavia would have been much better than two solid Ententes speaking with a single voice. But France - and, most probably, Great Britain as well - still thought of Yugoslavia as a minor ally of the West, a satellite dependency, a poor relation of France. It was a picture that King Alexander was well on his way to shattering at the time of his death.

All that King Alexander achieved for his country in international

affairs was done almost single-handedly and - perhaps because he was not dependent upon any subordinate ministers - with extraordinary success. His royal diplomacy showed something that his internal policy did not - that Alexander was a man of real vision, skill, ingenuity and courage, capable of great patience and forbearance towards known enemies, but also fast-moving and determined in pursuing policies and making treaties which would bring peace and security to Eastern Europe. It is, I think, significant that - within Yugoslavia - where his policies were steadily frustrated and impeded and where he proved very unsuccessful in following through his plans and hopes to a satisfactory conclusion, there was very little opposition to his regime. But, abroad - and particularly in Italy - where his vision of a united and strong Yugoslavia was considered a real and serious possibility and where his skill as a statesman was clearly recognized (and feared) the opposition was strong, organized and - in the outcome - deadly.

The marked contrast between the King's achievements abroad and the perpetual frustrations he experienced at home can, I believe, have only one explanation. That, at some moment after he proclaimed his royal dictatorship, Alexander realized that the task of healing his country's divisions and making Yugoslavia one nation was going to be a very long and slow business and that no amount of legislation would bring the result any quicker. The task, he realized, would take years rather than months and, in that time, Alexander knew, the most pressing problem would not be the inner workings of the Yugoslav state but the external security of his Kingdom. It is therefore possible to detect a shift in Alexander's preoccupations some time after November

1929, when the first flood of legislation had passed, away from the process of unification to an increasing concern with the threat of Italy, the rising power of Germany and the need for wider political unity in Central and Eastern Europe. It seems certain that Alexander believed that, if he could secure international peace and security for the foreseeable future, then he would be able to take his time in bringing about - gradually and peacefully - the sort of Yugoslavia he wanted.

For this reason, King Alexander was quite willing to delay his planned reforms. There was no hurry for a Constitution; no need for a hasty return to democratic rule. Each stage in the process of unifying the nation could continue slowly..... and whether the new Banovina structures were introduced in June 1934 or June 1935 was, to Alexander, a mere technicality. What did matter was that the task of protecting the country by international agreement should proceed rapidly. This was the sphere in which King Alexander concentrated his greatest efforts and where he achieved the most spectacular results. And he must have noted with satisfaction that the more he improved his country's standing abroad, the more he consolidated his position at home.

There is no doubt that, in the world of 1929-1934 with the widespread economic depression and the rise of the dictators in Italy, Germany and the Soviet Union, King Alexander was wise to follow the policy he did. But the price of delaying reform at home meant that, by the time Alexander died, the nation had advanced little from the position reached by December 1931. The old parliamentary system had been abolished; the new parliamentary regime had been discredited (almost before it began). Essential legislation was neglected and the Croats and Serbs were still unreconciled. Neither democracy nor dictatorship had succeeded in overcoming the deep disunity; no alter-

native leaders had emerged - either to assist the King, or to oppose him. There was no proper able government and no coherent opposition. Everything hung upon one man.

It would have been reasonable to suppose that, since so much depended upon King Alexander, that - after his assassination - the whole state would have collapsed and the Croats have taken the opportunity to seize the autonomy they had so long desired. But this was not the case. Instead, a common grief united the Yugoslav people as no amount of legislation could ever have done, and commentators have pointed out that, paradoxically, in death, King Alexander achieved the object he had been aiming at for all his life.

But, whilst this is undoubtedly true so far as the internal condition of the country and people were concerned, the fact remains that the death of Alexander brought to a sudden and tragic end the one policy which was vital to the future well-being of Yugoslavia. Not the process of unification - but the alliance system upon which the peace and security of the Kingdom depended, was irreparably broken. Before his death, there had been a strong and visible growing together in Central and Eastern Europe; but, after, many politicians and statesmen - particularly in Yugoslavia - believed that they had more to gain by bi-lateral treaties with Italy and Germany and sacrificed a common unity for temporary and illusory advantage. It was not an illusion which Alexander would have shared. From his long and futile dealings with Mussolini, he knew the very real dangers his country faced and that, without strong friends and powerful alliances, Yugoslavia could not survive. Therefore, although the Regency, which followed the assassination, was able to capitalize upon the very real feelings of grief and loss which animated the nation, and could take some steps towards reconciling the Croats and the Serbs, it abandoned the one fundamental policy which Alexander pursued and which alone

could have enabled a genuine reconciliation to take place.

The Royal Dictatorship was one man's solution to an intractable problem. That it was a problem that merited such strong-handed action can be judged by the fact that the disagreement and disunity between the Croats and the Serbs is still as much a cause for anxiety today - forty years after the death of King Alexander - and that the continued existence of the Yugoslav state is still in doubt. As in the days of King Alexander, the nation is still held together by the power and will of one man and the last thirty years of Communist rule have witnessed as many changes of direction - from collectivization to de-collectivization, from one Constitution to another, from centralism to devolution and back to a central solution - as Yugoslav leaders try to solve the one problem which is apparently insoluble. It may be that from another man's death, Yugoslavia will come closer to being truly one nation but yet again - in the death of a strong ruler - there is a very real possibility that, in different hands, Yugoslavia may today - as in 1934 - lose the unique international position which protects her independence and security.

In King Alexander, therefore, we do not see some vicious or cruel dictator seeking power for power's own sake - an "Al Capone of the Balkans" as Adamić called him - but a quiet, responsible and sensitive man who, although he appeared weak, insignificant and indecisive, did in fact possess a vision which he relentlessly pursued. It was perhaps in a way symbolic that, in a land which was born in violence - and where democracy perished violently - that a man of his vision and his ideals should likewise die a sudden and violent death.

Appendices

A: The Declaration of Corfu.

1. "The state of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, also known under the name of Southern Slavs or Yugoslavs, will be a free and independent kingdom of united territory and unity of citizenship. It will be a constitutional, democratic and parliamentary monarchy under the leadership of the Karadjordjević dynasty, which has shown that it shares the ideas and sentiments of the people and places the nation's freedom and the nation's will above all else.
2. "This state will be known as 'The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes', and its ruler as 'The King of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes'.
3. "The state will have a single coat-of-arms, a single flag and a single crown. These emblems will be composed of the present existing emblems. The unity of the state will be symbolized by the coat-of-arms and the flag of the kingdom.
4. "The special Serb, Croat and Slovene flags rank equally and may be freely hoisted on all occasions. The special coat-of-arms may be used with equal freedom.
5. "All three national designations - Serbs, Croats and Slovenes - shall enjoy absolutely equal rights in the whole territory of the kingdom, and each may be freely used on all public occasions and in dealing with the authorities.
6. Both alphabets, the Cyrillic and the Latin, shall similarly be absolutely equal and either may be freely used in the whole territory of the kingdom. Every central and local authority shall be bound to use either alphabet in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants.
7. "All recognized religions shall be freely and publicly exercised. The Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Mohammedan creeds, which are numerically strongest amongst our people, shall rank equally and have the same rights in relation to the state.
8. "The calendar will be unified as soon as possible.
9. "The territory of the kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes will contain all that territory inhabited by our three-fold people in

a compact and continuous body, and cannot be mutilated without injury to the vital interests of the whole. Our nation demands nothing that belongs to others. It demands only what is its own. It desires to free itself and achieve its unity. Therefore it consciously and firmly refuses every partial solution of the problem of its national liberation and unification. Our people puts forward as one indivisible whole the problem of their deliverance from Austro-Hungarian domination and their union with Serbia and Montenegro in a single state forming an indivisible whole. In accordance with the rights of self-determination, no part of this united territory may without infringement of justice be detached and incorporated into some other state without the consent of the nation itself.

10. "In the interests of freedom and equal rights of all peoples, the Adriatic Sea shall be free and open to all.

11. "All citizens throughout the territory of the kingdom shall be equal and enjoy the same rights towards the state and before the law.

12. "The franchise for the election of deputies to the National Parliament, as for the communes and other administrative assemblies, shall be equal and universal and shall be effected through direct and secret ballot by communes.

13. "The Constitution, to be drawn up after the conclusion of peace, by a Constituent Assembly, elected by universal suffrage, will be the basis of the entire life of the state. It will be the source and consummation of all authority and of all rights by which the entire life of the nation will be regulated. The Constitution must be passed in its entirety by a numerically defined majority in the Constituent Assembly. The Constitution, like all other laws passed by the Constituent Assembly, will only come into force after having received the royal assent.

"The nation of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, thus united, would form a state of about 12 million citizens and prove... a powerful bulwark against German aggression and the inseparable ally of all those civilized peoples and states who have upheld the principles of law, national freedom and international justice. As such, it will be a worthy member of the new community of nations.

B: The Murders in the Skupština, June 1928

On June 20, 1928, the day's proceedings began with a discussion of the report on the previous day's debate. A CPP deputy, Mastrović, objected that the report made no mention of the fact that the Radical deputies, Toma Popović and Puniša Račić, had declared: "Heads will have to fall here; until Stjepan Radić is killed, there will be no peace." Mastrović continued: "We feel that we are in an atmosphere in which attempts are being made to create a psychology of murder, the murder of those who represent the most progressive and vigorous section of the people." "I request the President of the Skupština to put an end to this, for anything of this kind would be the ruin of our state."

The Skupština refused to allow the words proposed by Mastrović to be included in the report, whereupon Toma Popović rose to explain the cause of his dispute with Radić at the previous day's sitting. His language was such as to call down a rebuke by the President (Dr Perić) after which he continued as follows:

"If your leader, Stjepan Radić, who is making fools of the Croat people, continues his insults, I assure you that his head will fall here."

The CPP-ID Coalition deputies, at this, jumped from their seats and rushed towards the President's table, but Toma Popović continued:

"Serbia will not be responsible, but you yourselves will be responsible, since you are absolutely unfitted to enter the Skupština."

Amid the general commotion, the President interrupted the sitting, which was resumed 10 minutes later when Dr Perić announced the infliction upon Toma Popović of a written reprimand for his language. The President then gave word to Puniša Račić who desired to make a personal explanation in view of the attack made on him by Mastrović in his speech.

Račić entered the tribune and complained that the President inadequately protected the honour of the deputies of the majority

against the insults which were heaped on them day after day by the Opposition; he then proceeded as follows:-

"Never have Serbian interests been so endangered as now. As a Serbian and a deputy, as I see the danger threatening my country, I must openly say that I shall use another weapon to defend Serbian interests."

Amid the uproar which ensued on the Opposition benches, Pribičević exclaimed:-

"Do you wish it heard even in London that threats of weapons are made here?"

The President endeavoured to tranquilize the opposition and begged Račić to conclude his speech. The latter proceeded to refer to the attitude of the CPP in the early years after the armistice, when amid the general confusion, Dr Pernar, a Croat deputy, cried out to him:- "You used to rob the begs!" thereby referring presumably to Račić's previous career as a comitadji. Hereupon, Račić called out to Dr Perić:

"Mr President, I request that you will punish him or I will punish him myself."

Above the ensuing pandemonium, was heard the voice of Račić:-

"If anyone dares to put himself between me and Dr Pernar, he will die."

At this point, Dr Perić interrupted the proceedings and left the Chamber.

When Račić realized that the President had left the Chamber without inflicting any punishment on Dr Pernar, he cried to the latter: "Take back your words!" and at the same time, drew a revolver from his hip-pocket. The action was concealed from the deputies by the tribune but was noticed by a Radical member of the Cabinet sitting on the ministerial bench and by a Radical ex-Minister who both rushed forward to hold him back. The latter, however, thrust them back saying "Let me alone, a Montenegrin cannot forgive this insult!"

According to another version, Račić covered Dr Pernar with his pistol, and twice ordered him to stand up and apologize, which he refused to do. He therefore fired a shot at Dr Pernar who was hit in the left shoulder, his lungs being affected. A number of Croat deputies seeing the danger to Stjepan Radić surrounded him in order to protect him. Four further shots followed in quick succession. The second hit Basariček above the heart and proved fatal within ten minutes. The third hit Grandja in the left hand and slightly wounded Stjepan Radić.

By this time, the deputies were seized with panic and the unfortunate Stjepan Radić, who is so short-sighted that he cannot see

what is going on more than a yard from him, was left alone. He himself was the victim of the fourth shot which hit him in the stomach. Pavle Radić, who was a little distance away, when he saw his uncle deserted, made a dash forward to stop Račić but he was too late and he himself received the fifth shot. He died within five minutes of entering hospital. Stjepan Radić was operated on and it is uncertain whether he will live. The condition of Dr Pernar is serious but not dangerous, while the wound received by Granja is slight.

In the general confusion, Račić escaped. He left through a back entrance, jumped into a car and drove to Rakovica, a village in the neighbourhood of Belgrade. It is not clear whether this car was specially waiting for him, but, if so, this - and the fact that contrary to custom, he mounted the tribune nearest the Opposition - would seem to show that the action was premeditated. At Rakovica, he arranged with a friend to put his affairs in order and returned to Belgrade where he gave himself up to the police. He asked to be received by Dr Korošec for this purpose but the latter replied that he did not intend to receive a common criminal.

From a despatch from Mr Roberts (Belgrade) to Sir Austen Chamberlain,
20 June 1928, C4939/173/92. (Vol. 12982).

C: The Royal Proclamation of January 6, 1929.

"To all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

"The highest interests of the nation and of the State, as well as their future, compel me, both as Sovereign and as a son of my country, to address myself directly to my people to tell them openly and sincerely the course my conscience and my love for my country oblige me to take.

"The hour has come when there can and may not be any intermediary between the King and his people. Notwithstanding my best efforts and the patience I have displayed in the execution of my exalted task, my soul has been torn by the complaints of the labouring masses, patriotic but exhausted, who by a natural process of reasoning have arrived at the conclusion that the way we have hitherto followed can no longer be pursued.

"My expectations and those of my people that the evolutions of our internal political life would bring about order and consolidation within our country have not been realized. Both parliamentary life and political outlook generally have become more and more negative, and both the nation and the State are today suffering from the consequences of this state of affairs.

"All useful institutions within the State and the development of our national life have been jeopardized. Such an unhealthy political situation is not only prejudicial in internal life and progress, but also to the development of our external relations as well as to our prestige and credit abroad.

"Parliamentary life, which as a political instrument was a tradition of my late father, has also always been my ideal, but blind political passions have so abused it that it has become an obstacle to all profitable work in the State. The regrettable disputes and the events in the Skupština have undermined all the confidence of the nation in this institution. All harmony - and even those elementary relations between parties and individuals - have become altogether

impossible. Instead of developing and strengthening the feeling of national union, Parliamentarism as it has developed has begun to provoke moral disorganization and national disunion.

"It is my sacred duty to preserve by all means national union and the State. I am determined to fulfil my duty without flinching until the end. To maintain the union of the people and safeguard the unity of the State, the highest ideal of my reign must also be the most imperative law for me and for all.

"This duty is imposed upon me by my responsibility in the face of my people and in the face of history, by my love for my country and by my deep gratitude towards the innumerable and precious victims who were sacrificed to this ideal. To seek a remedy for this evil in a change of parliament or government as has been the practice hitherto, or even by fresh elections, would merely be a loss of precious time, of which many years have already been sacrificed to such vain expedients.

"We must therefore seek fresh methods of work and open new avenues. I am convinced that at this grave moment all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes will understand the sincerity of their King's word and that they will be the most loyal helpers in my future efforts to realize as quickly as possible the organization and administration of the State in a manner best suited to the general needs of my people and the interests of the State. I have therefore determined and decided that the Constitution of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes of June 28, 1921 is no longer in force. All laws of the country will remain in force unless suppressed by my decree should occasion arise. New laws will be promulgated in the same manner. The Skupstina elected on December 11, 1927 is dissolved.

"In communicating my decision to my people, I order all State authorities to conform to this decision, which must be obeyed and respected by all."

D: Cabinet Changes under the Dictatorship.

January 1929.

Prime Minister	- General Petar Živković.	Serb.	No party.
Interior	- Božidar Maksimović.	Serb.	Radical.
+Foreign	- Dr Vojislav Marinković.	Serb.	Democrat.
+Communications	- Dr Anton Korošec.	Slovene.	Slovene Party.
+War and Marine	- General Stevan Hadžić.	Serb.	No party.
Finance	- Dr Stanko Švrljuga.	Croat.	No party.
Social Affairs	- Dr Mate Drinković.	Croat.	No party.
Religion	- Trigomir Alaupović.	Croat.	Democrat.
Justice	- Dr Milan Srškić.	Bosnian.	Radical.
Agriculture	- Dr Otto Frangeš	Croat.	No party.
Health	- Uroš Krulj.	Bosnian.	Radical.
Public Works	- Stevan Savković.	Bosnian.	Radical.
No Portfolio	- Dr Lazar Radivojević.	Serb.	Democrat.
" " "	- Nikola Uzunović.	Serb.	Radical.

(+ in previous Cabinet)

Changes

- 24 Jan. 1929, Želimir Mazuranić apptd. Minister of Work & Industry.
- 24 Jan. 1929, Kosta Kumanudi apptd. Minister of Posts and Telegraphs.
- 3 Apr. 1929, Krulj dismissed. Not replaced.
- 3 Apr. 1929, Alaupović dismissed. Not replaced.
- 3 Apr. 1929, Kumanudi (Posts & Telegs) becomes Minister without portfolio.
- 6 Apr. 1929, Hadžić (War) replaced by Dragomir Stojanović.
- 22 Jul. 1929, Mazuranić (Work & Industry) incorporated into Ministry of Finance (Švrljuga)
- 5 Aug. 1929, Korošec (Communications) replaced by Radivojević.
- 5 Aug. 1929, Radivojević (Mines and Forests) replaced by Korošec.
- 1 Sept. 1929, Work and Industry (Švrljuga) taken over by Juraj Demetrović.

- 23 Jan. 1930, Savković (Public Wks) replaced by Filip Trifunović.
 19 May 1930, Drinković (Social affairs) replaced by Dr Preka.
 19 May 1930, Frangeš (Agriculture) replaced by Dr Stanko Šibenik.
 19 May 1930, Drinković, Frangeš and Dr Mirko Neudorfer become
 Ministers without portfolio.
- 28 Sept. 1930, Korošec (Mines & Forests) replaced by Dušan Serneć.
 16 Feb. 1931, Srškić (Justice) replaced by Dimitrije Ljotić.
 16 Feb. 1931, Trifunović (Public Works) replaced by Kumanudi.
 19 June 1931, Šibenik (Agriculture) replaced by Dr Neudorfer.
 19 June 1931, Demetrović (Work and Industry) replaced by Kumanudi.
 19 June 1931, Kumanudi (Public Works) replaced by Serneć.
 19 June 1931, Serneć (Mines and Forests) replaced by Šibenik.
 19 June 1931, Preka (Social affairs) replaced by Kostrenčić.
 19 June 1931, Švrljuga (Finance) replaced by Djordje Djurić.
 19 June 1931, Dr Frangeš (No portfolio) dismissed.
-

September 1931.

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| +Prime Minister | - General Petar Živković. | |
| +Foreign | - Dr Vojislav Marinković. | |
| +Communications | - Dr Lazar Radivojević. | |
| +War and Marine | - General Dragomir Stanić. | |
| +Finance | - Dr Djordje Djurić. | |
| +Social Affairs | - Dr Kostrenčić. | |
| Justice | - Dr Dragutin Kojić. | |
| +Agriculture | - Dr Mirko Neudorfer. | |
| Public Works | - Dr Albert Kramer. | |
| +Mines and Forests | Dr Stanko Šibenik. | |
| +Commerce | - Kosta Kumanudi. | |
| +Education | - Božidar Maksimović. | |
| +No portfolio | - Dr Milan Srškić. | Kosta Timotijević. |
| +" " " | - Nikola Uzunović. | Dr Ivan Palacek. |
| +" " " | - Dr Nikola Preka. | Andre Stanić. |
| " " " | - Dr Stanko Švrljuga. | Ivan Pucel. |
| " " " | - Paul Matica | Dr Avda Hasanbegović
(+ in previous Cabinet) |

Changes

- 19 Nov. 1931, Djurić (Finance) replaced by Milorad Djordjević.
-

January 1932.

Prime Minister - General Petar Živković.
 Foreign - Dr Vojislav Marinković.
 Interior - Dr Milan Srškić.
 Finance - Milorad Djordjević.
 Agriculture - Juraj Demetrović.
 Mines & Forests Dr Stanko Šibenik.
 Communications - Dr Lazar Radivojević.
 War and Marine - General Stano^{vić}.
 Social Affairs - Dr Kostrentić.
 Education - Dr Dragutin Kojić.
 Public Works - Dr Preka.
 Commerce - Dr Albert Kramer.
 Justice - Božidar Maksimović.
 Physical Education Dr Dragan Kraljević.

There were no changes.

April 1932.

The Marinković Government was identical to General Živković's Cabinet of January 1932, with the exceptions that Živković disappeared and Marinković became both Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Changes.

21 Apr. 1932, Preka (Public Works) replaced by Dr Srkulj.

21 Apr. 1932, Šibenik (Mines and Forests) replaced by Dr Pogačnik.

July 1932.

Prime Minister - Dr Milan Srškić.
 Foreign - Bogoljub Jevtić.
 Interior - Žika Iazić.
 Finance - Milorad Djordjević.
 Agriculture - Juraj Demetrović.
 Mines and Forests -Dr Viktor Pogačnik.
 Communications - Dr Lazar Radivojević.
 War and Marine - General Dragomir Stojanović.
 Social Affairs - Ivan Pucel.
 Education - Dr Dragutin Kojić.
 Public Works - Dr Stevan Skrulj.

Commerce	- Ivan Mohorić.
Justice	- Dr Ilija Sumenković.
Physical Education	- Dr Dragan Kraljević.
No portfolio	- Dr Albert Kramer.
" " "	- Božidar Maksimović.
" " "	- Hamdija Karamehmedović.

There were no changes.

November 1932,

Prime Minister	- Dr Milan Srškić.
Deputy Prime Minister	- Dr Albert Kramer.
Foreign	- Bogoljub Jevtić.
Interior	- Žika Iazić.
Finance	- Milorad Djordjević.
Agriculture	- JuraJ Demetrović.
Mines and Forests	- Father Matica.
Communications	- Dr Lazar Radivojević.
War and Marine	- General Dragomir Stojanović.
Social Affairs	- Ivan Pucel.
Public Works	- Dr Stevan Skrulj.
Education	- Dr Radenko Stanković.
Commerce	- Dr Ilija Sumenković.
Justice	- Božidar Maksimović.
Physical Education	- Dr Hanžek.
No portfolio	- Dr Dragutin Kojić.
" " "	- Dr Hamdija Karamehmedović.

Changes

8 May 1933, Demetrović (Agriculture) replaced by Ljubo Tomašić.

20 Oct 1933, Tomašić (Agriculture) replaced by the Prime Minister,
Dr Milan Srškić.

January 1934.

The first Uzunović Government was similar to the Srškić Government it replaced with the following exceptions:-

Nikola Uzunović replaces Dr Milan Srškić as Prime Minister.

JuraJ Demetrović replaces Dr Sumenković as Minister of Commerce.

Dr Sumenković replaces Dr Stanković as Minister of Education.

Ministries of Agriculture and Mines and Forests left vacant.

April 1934.

Prime Minister	- Nikola Uzunović.
Foreign	- Bogoljub Jevtić.
Interior	- Žika Iazić.
Finance	- Milorad Djordjević.
Agriculture	- Dr Dragutin Kojić.
Mines and Forests	- Dr Ulmanski.
Communications	- General Svetislav Milosavljević.
War and Marine	- General Milan Milanović.
Social Affairs	- Dr Fran Novak.
Public Works	- Dr Stevan Skrulj.
Education	- Dr Ilija Sumenković.
Justice	- Božidar Maksimović.
Commerce	- Juraj Demetrović.
Physical Education	- Dr Budislav Andjelinović.

E: Bans appointed in October 1929.

1) Drava	Dušan Serbec	- Professor of Ljubljana. Formerly Minister of Public Works.
2) Sava	Dr Josip Šilović	- Professor of Zagreb University. A lawyer.
3) Vrbas	Gen. Milosavljević	- Retired General. Former Minister of Communications.
4) Primorje	Dr Ivo Tartalja	- Vice-President of the Municipality of Split. A lawyer.
5) Drina	Velimir Popović	- Former Radical Minister without portfolio.
6) Zeta	Krsta Smiljanić	- A Montenegrin retired general.
7) Dunav	Daka Popović	- Former Minister of Agrarian Reform. Member of the Radical party.
8) Morava	Djordje Nestorović	- State Councillor. A lawyer and member of Democrat party.
9) Vardar	Žika Iazić	- Assistant Minister of the Interior.

F: The Background to the French Loan

At the time the Royal Dictatorship was proclaimed, there was talk in the financial world of an international loan being made available to Yugoslavia in order to stabilize her currency.¹ The size of the loan envisaged was about £12 millions, of which half would be used to stabilize the currency and the other half used for development.² The prospect of the Yugoslav loan - as an economic proposition - was viewed with some cynicism by the British Foreign Office who did not think the bankers fully appreciated the political situation within Yugoslavia.³ A representative of the Bank of England, Mr Siepmann, was in contact with the Yugoslav Minister of Finance,⁴ but the Foreign Office recommendation was that British investors should not be invited to subscribe to any loan for Yugoslavia unless there was a definite assurance that at least 50% of any orders placed on the strength of the loan would go to British industry.⁵

A Mr Porters, of Rothschild's bank, travelled to Yugoslavia in February 1929 and had talks with Dr Švrljuga, the new Minister of Finance under the dictatorship. From these talks it emerged that Yugoslavia did not want to be tied to any specific commitment as to how or where the loan should be spent. What Yugoslavia wanted was immediate liquid funds and, if these could not be produced by a British bank, then Yugoslavia would turn to France for help.⁶

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1. Letter from Rothschilds to Foreign Office, 1 Jan. 1929, C47/47/92.
 2. Foreign Office memorandum by O.G. Sargent, 15 Jan. 1929, C416/47/92.
 3. Foreign Office memorandum attached to the Rothschild letter, 3 Jan. 1929, C47/47/92.
 4. Sir H.W. Kennard to Sir Austen Chamberlain, 2 Jan. 1929, C98/47/92.
 5. O.G. Sargent to Rothschilds, 5 Jan. 1929, C47/47/92.
 6. Talks between Mr Porters and the Yugoslav Minister of Finance, 5 Feb. 1929, C1173/47/92.

However, whilst Mr Porters was in Belgrade, he discovered that during the summer of 1928, the then War Minister had entered into contracts with Škoda and other Czech firms, amounting to 2,500 million dinars. Apparently, this sum (of around £9 millions) was either "unknown" or "forgotten about" by the Yugoslav Ministry of Finance for their official liabilities - upon which the talks about a loan were proceeding - were reckoned at only £4.5 millions.

"The Finance Minister told me that the disclosure had come as a complete surprise to him and he stated that, unfortunately, his predecessors had granted without question any sums demanded by the War Minister. All of them had worked on the assumption that they would not be in office for long and that they had simply left their successors to clear up any difficulties that might arise afterwards." ⁷

All in all, some £18 millions had been voted for military purposes during 1928 - half of the sum being met from the budget (20% of it) and half to be paid over the next ten years in annual sums. ⁸

"The impression I gain not only from Švrljuga but also from other Ministers to whom I have spoken is that they are only just beginning to realize the extent of the errors and omissions of their predecessors. The new men I believe to be absolutely sincere in their efforts to clean up the situation, but they are realizing more and more the magnitude of the task before them." ⁹

The Foreign Office felt that all their doubts about the loan had been amply justified:-

"Rothschilds have been treated abominably. They sent out a man to treat about stabilization and reconstruction on sound financial lines. He is presented with false balance sheets and finds out the truth by chance, which is that a country which is admittedly in a precarious financial position, has been induced to pledge the future

7. Mr Porters to Rothschilds, 7 Mar. 1929, C1910/47/92.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

to a vast extent for purely unproductive expenditure in war preparations. It seems possible that this sort of thing may seriously compromise the future of Yugoslavia." ¹⁰

To the British Foreign Office, the whole idea of a loan seemed out of the question and the general attitude was "leave it to the French"¹¹ who, it was reported, were eager to obtain any advantages they could get.¹²

Once the Yugoslavs had discovered the extent of their own liabilities, some of the more expensive ventures considered by the new Government were dropped.¹³ In April, great efforts were made to curtail government expenditure¹⁴ and Mr Porter informed Dr Švrljuga that, if the Yugoslav Government could put its political and financial house in order, Rothschilds would be prepared to make a loan of £8 millions.¹⁵ Their genuine interest in this venture was confirmed by Lionel Rothschild who visited King Alexander in Bled in September 1929. And Dr Švrljuga told Kennard that he hoped that perhaps some loan could be arranged by the spring of 1930.¹⁶

The French, however, were not to be left behind. Ever since the war, they had regarded themselves as Yugoslavia's primary benefactor and they were most unwilling to allow any other nation - or even any international consortium of bankers under the aegis of the League of Nations¹⁷ - a stake in the Yugoslav financial world. King Alexander told Henderson:-

"that ever since the beginning of discussions at Paris (on Serbia's pre-war debts to France)

10. Foreign Office Memorandum on Mr Porter's letter, 14 Mar. 1929, C1910/47/92.
11. O.G. Sargent to Kennard, 23 Mar. 1929, C2074/47/92.
12. Confidential Report by Mr Leith Ross (Belgrade) to Treasury, 28 Mar. 1929, C2411/47/92.
13. For instance a loan to purchase more equipment for Yugoslav railways (£5½ millions). Mr H. Sturrock, Commercial Secretary (Belgrade) to Mr Farrer (Department of Overseas Trade) 10, April 1929, C2776/47/92. 14. See ch. 3, pp. 64-66.
16. Kennard to Arthur Henderson, 13 Sept. 1929, C7097/100/92.
15. Kennard to Chamberlain, 29 Aug. 1929, C6874/47/92.
17. This was suggested by Mr Montagu Norman of the Bank of England, Foreign Office memorandum, 13 Mar. 1930, C2081/1145/92.

he had been besieged by the French Minister here with proposals of one kind or another. During the negotiations, several indirect offers of loans had been made to the Yugoslav delegates. He (the King) had refused to consider any of them..... Generally speaking, the impression I derived from my conversation with the King was that His Majesty sincerely desired to go to London rather than anywhere else for money..... but that he is so anxious to obtain a loan in order to develop his country and convince his people of the benefits of the present regime that he may in the last resort, not be able to resist French blandishments." ¹⁸

In May 1930, Dr Svrljuga paid an official visit to France and spoke of the pressure put on him to obtain a loan under French auspices. ¹⁹ In July, a representative of a French bank arrived in Belgrade and offered Yugoslavia a loan of 1,500 million French Francs, repayable over a period of 20 years. ²⁰ None of these efforts would perhaps have had any result but for the decision of Rothschilds to make a loan to Austria in July 1930. This decision greatly annoyed King Alexander. ²¹ To him, the Austrians were not only a less deserving nation, they were also an ex-enemy. Profoundly irritated, he lost patience with Rothschilds. Whilst Marinković continued to assure the British Minister that the French loan would not come to anything, and that he would tip the Cabinet scales in favour of Rothschilds, ²² reports reached Henderson that Bogoljub Jevtić, then Minister at Court and confidential servant of the King, had paid two secret visits to Paris in October 1930. ²³ Marinković knew nothing of these visits which were done secretly while he was in Geneva. ²⁴

Later, he told Henderson:-

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18. Nevile Henderson to Arthur Henderson, 13 Mar. 1930, C2081/1145/92.
 19. Henderson to Sargent, 21 May 1930, C4177/1145/92.
 20. P. Leigh Smith to O'Malley, 5 Sept. 1930, C6914/1145/92.
 21. Henderson to Sargent, 5 Nov. 1930, C8277/1145/92.
 22. Henderson to Foreign Office (Telegram) 23 Nov. 1930, C8587/1145/92.
 23. Nevile Henderson to Arthur Henderson, 7 Nov. 1930, C8307/1145/92.
 24. Henderson to Foreign Office (Telegram) 10 Nov. 1930, C8348/1145/92.

"The decision to turn to France had been taken at a moment when the political situation appeared to Yugoslavia so desperate as to compel her to seek immediate financial aid and in the circumstances France could furnish effective help." ²⁵

On December 5 1930, Dr Svrljuga informed Mr Porters that the Yugoslav Government would not proceed any further with Rothschilds. The way was therefore left open for the Union Parisienne to conclude a loan worth 2,280 million dinars (£8.3 millions) repayable at 7% over a period of 40 years. For King Alexander, there were certain benefits to be gathered from such a loan. It was not subject to delay. It was political - but in the autumn of 1930 when relations with Italy and Bulgaria were poor, this was an advantage. There were no strings attached. Details of the loan agreement were made public in May 1931. ²⁶

25. Ibid.

26. The Times, 9 May 1930, p. 11.

G: The Electoral Laws of September 1931.

1) The Law of September 10.

The Electoral Law of September 10 was concerned with the election of deputies to the lower house of the new Legislature.

- 1) The Chamber of deputies would be elected for 4 years and would assemble in Belgrade each year for a session beginning Oct. 20. If the Chamber was dissolved within that 4 year period, a general election would take place within 3 months of the dissolution and a new Chamber convened within 4 months at the latest.
- 2) Voting would take place on a Sunday and would be direct and public. Votes would be recorded verbally in the polling stations.
- 3) There would be 305 seats in the new Lower House:-

City of Belgrade	3	Primorje	20	Morava	32
Drava	25	Drina	37	Vardar	37
Sava	58	Zeta	20	Total 305.	
Vrbas	22	Dunav	51		

The principle guiding the distribution of seats was that if the capital of a Banovina had 50,000 inhabitants or more, it received one seat; if 100,000 or more - two seats. In the event, the only local capital to have two seats was Zagreb. The remaining seats were distributed proportionately through the rest of the banovina.

- 4) No party could contest the election unless it had nationwide support. A new party must have the support of 100 people and present its programme to the Court of Cassation. If approved, the party must then draw up a nomination list, with the written consent of at least 60 supporters in each of the 305 constituencies. The Court of Cassation would then decide whether the party had full national support in each constituency and give official approval in the Službene Novine. All this would have to be done at least 25 days before polling day. Once the party had been legally constituted, it could call political meetings without special permission from the Minister of the Interior but it was required to notify the local police 24 hours before a meeting was held.

All candidates standing for election must have at least 200 supporters in their constituency and must submit a certificate to the local court to show that the leader of his "list" has approved his nomination.

- 5) The determination of the result of the election is as follows:-
 - a) First of all, the total votes secured by each nomination list is added together to see which list has the majority.
 - b) The leader of the majority list is automatically a deputy (even if he is defeated in his own constituency). So also are all candidates who secure 50,000 votes (ie. a clear majority)
 - c) The Belgrade constituency seats are awarded to candidates on the winning list.
 - d) The victorious party is awarded two-thirds of the seats in the new Chamber, and the seats are distributed in proportion to the total number of seats held by each banovina.
 - e) The other one third is distributed in proportion to the other competing party or parties.
- 6) A deputy must give up his seat if he becomes a civil servant or a state contractor. Also, he must surrender his seat if he ceases to be a member of the party on whose nomination list he was elected.

2) Law of September 30.

The Upper House would consist half of royal nominees and half of elected senators. The Banovinas would elect 47 Senators and Belgrade 1 Senator, making an elected total of 48 (96 in all).

A Senator was required to be 40 years old or over, a Yugoslav subject, and a person able to speak, read and write the national language. He could not be a member of the Upper House and the Lower House at the same time.

An elected senator would sit for a period of six years once he was elected. However, in three years time, half the elected senators would retire or stand for re-election.

Election of a senator would be on the basis of an extremely restricted franchise. Only deputies, Banovina councillors and local mayors would be eligible to vote.

There would be one senator for every 300,000 of the population.
 (Hence in the Sava banovina, there would be a need for 9 Senators.

And there would be 650 entitled to vote:- 58 Deputies

85 Councillors

507 Mayors

The 650 would choose the candidates for election according to accepted party lists.

To determine the result of the senatorial election, each "list" would be divided by 1, 2, 3, etc to determine the exact number of candidates from each list for the Senate. Thus, for example, the 650 electors in the Sava banovina, voting for 4 lists to elect 9 Senators, would determine the number of seats as follows:-

	+1	+2	+3	+4	+6	+7	+8	+9
Party A	<u>250</u>	<u>125</u>	<u>80</u>	60	40	35	30	25
Party B	<u>200</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>70</u>	50				
Party C	<u>140</u>	<u>70</u>	50	35				
Party D	<u>60</u>	30						

Thus Party A and Party B would have 3 senators; party C - 2; Party D 1.
 In the event of a tie between the last two candidates, votes would be cast to see which one it would be.

From two despatches from Sir Neville Henderson to the Marquess of Reading, (1) 17 September 1931, C7136/304/92. (Vol. 15271).
 (2) 5 October 1931, C7585/304/92. (Vol. 15272).

H: The Zagreb Points

1. "Subscribing to the principles of democracy we consider the sovereignty of the people as the foundation on which the organization of the State must rest and the people themselves as the sole and unique source of all political sovereignty and of all public power.
2. "The peasantry, viewed as a collective concept, is the depository of the national culture and the basis of economic life, upholds the social structure as well as its standard of moral values, and represents the majority of the nation; it should form the cornerstone in the organization of our national life.
3. "We must point out that Serbian hegemony, imposed from the start on Croatia and on all other lands on this side of the Sava, the Drina and the Danube, has acted destructively through its obvious incapacity to govern, its tyranny and its use of immoral means. It has monopolized all the power of the state and destroyed our moral values and our progressive institutions as well as our traditions. It has not respected the material possessions of the people and even robbed it of its spiritual peace. This state of misrule reached its peak when the absolutist regime was introduced on January 6, 1929, re-inforcing this hegemony with fatal consequences and, worst of all, abolishing civil and political freedom.
4. "Considering these disastrous experiences, we have arrived at the inevitable conclusion that we must go back to the starting point of 1918 in response to the pressing need to conduct a decisive and organized battle against that hegemony, in order to free our lands from it and deprive it of power and influence by eliminating its representatives.
5. "Only by carrying out the programme previously laid down can the new organization of the common state be undertaken. Without entering into details at this time, the principal basic ideas underlying such an organization may be summarized as follows:-

"The Commonwealth, as we conceive it, must be an association of interests, founded with the free consent of each member, ruling out domination of one or more over the others and thereby giving each the right to safeguard its particular interests on its own territory, or to administer, in concert with the others, the joint affairs of general concern, on the strength of mutual agreement. Thus will progress be assured in respect to the moral development, as well as to the gradual improvement of material conditions, among the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The individual interests of minorities speaking a foreign language shall be specially guaranteed."

From Vladko Maček, In the Struggle for Freedom,
(Pennsylvania State University Press 1968) pp. 139-140.

I: The Assassination of King Alexander.

The King arrived in the early afternoon. His vessel, the "Dubrovnik" was escorted to the harbour at Marseilles by units of the French First Mediterranean Fleet. At 4.00pm, the King landed at the Quai des Belges and was received by M. Barthou and a guard of honour, composed of colonial and Senegalese troops together with the 140th French Infantry Company.

After the usual presentations had been made, M. Barthou and the King proceeded to a waiting motor car, the rear half of which was open, leaving the occupants to the full view of the crowd. The King took his seat on the right and M. Barthou took his place beside him. The streets leading from the Quai de Belges to the Prefecture were but sparsely lined with police and gardes mobiles, who were stationed at intervals of about 5 yards from each other along the route, and it is noteworthy that there were no other troops on duty except those who formed the ceremonial guard of honour.

When the procession, which was going at walking pace, turned into the Place de la Bourse, an outburst of whistling and jeering by a section of the crowd took place. Certain observers of what subsequently happened have since stated their belief that this outburst was a preconceived arrangement destined to draw away the attention of the police while the murder took place. At all events, the hostile demonstration, which does not seem to have been large, was quickly drowned by a roar of cheering. The royal car was just passing the Bourse, when a man was seen to dodge his way through the police cordon and after running across the road to the car, to jump on the running board. Holding on with one hand, he fired some twenty shots from an automatic pistol at the King and M. Barthou. It was discovered later that the assassin also carried a bomb. M. Barthou, it is thought, put out his hand in an attempt to divert the weapon and was shot through the arm, a bone being broken.

At this juncture, Lieutenant-Colonel Piollet, the commander of the guard of honour which had received the King on his arrival, who

was riding beside the carriage on the left, cut down the assassin. The pistol, which would still fire as long as there was pressure on the trigger, was still firing as the assassin lay on the ground, which may explain how General Georges and certain persons in the crowd were wounded and an agent killed. A bullet was also fired from the direction opposite to that in which the assassin was shooting, but this may have been discharged by one of the police, several of whom fired at the assassin.

Immediately the outrage had taken place, there was a scene of considerable confusion, police and gardes mobiles charging wildly into the crowds while the King lay unconscious in the car and M. Barthou continued to bleed to death from a severed artery. The King was then taken into the Prefecture and it was found that he had been struck by two bullets, one of which had lodged in the liver and the other in the neighbourhood of the heart. His Majesty died a few minutes after being carried into the building.

M. Barthou, who displayed the greatest courage and whose own condition seems to have passed unnoticed in the general disturbance took a taxi to the Hôtel Dieu, where a transfusion of blood was immediately performed, too late, however, to save his life. It was the opinion of the doctors who attended him that had a tourniquet been applied immediately after the outrage, his life would not have been endangered. A chapelle ardente was later prepared at the Prefecture in which were laid the two bodies, pending their removal from Marseilles.

The assassin, whose skull had been cleft by a sabre cut and who had been badly battered by the crowd, died in a few minutes without regaining consciousness. His name is given as Peter Kelemen and he is stated to be a Croat, born in Zagreb in 1899. He had in his pocket a Czech passport, which may have been forged, issued earlier this year, from which it appears that he entered France by way of Vallorbe from Switzerland some three weeks ago....

The Queen of Yugoslavia meanwhile had been travelling overland from Belgrade and intended to join the King's train at Lyons on its way from Marseilles to Paris. Her Majesty's train was stopped at Besançon and the tragic news broken to her by M. Peretti de la Rocca, Prefect of the Doubs. The Queen decided to go at once to Marseilles, where she arrived on the morning of October 10, and was met by the President of the Republic, who had travelled to Marseilles the previous night, accompanied by M. Herriot and M. Tardieu, representing the

French Government.....

Arrangements have been made for the body of the King to leave Marseilles by the vessel in which His Majesty had made the journey to France the previous evening and the cruiser left at sunset, escorted by a division of French destroyers, together with two cruisers, one of which is carrying M. Piétri, the Minister of Marine who, with Marshal Pétain, will represent the French Government at the funeral.

From the despatch from Sir George Clerk to Sir John Simon,
October 11, 1934, R5644/5524/92. (Vol. 18458)

Biographies of Leading Personalities

BASARIČEK, Đjuro. b. Zagreb. Educ. Zagreb. Son of well-known educationalist. Was one of the first intelligensia to join CPP. During World War, set up Narodna Zaštita (National Society of Protection) which saved lives of many starving children in Hercegovina, Bosnia and Dalmatia. Became CPP deputy in 1918. Deputy for Tuzla (Bosnia). Ironically, one of the CPP deputies most actively engaged in rapprochement with the Serbs. Died in Skupština, 20 June 1928.

CHERNOZEMSKY, Vlado. b. 1899. Real name, Veliko Dimitrov. Agent of Bulgarian War Office. In occupied South Serbia during War. On return to Sofia in 1918, came under the Mihailovist wing of the Macedonian Revolutionary Org. Sept. 1924, murdered Dimov (Communist deputy in Bulgarian parl.) Dec. 1930, murdered Tomalevski, veteran member of M.R.O. July 15, 1932 left Bulgaria to work with Ustase. Under cover name of Peter Kelemen, killed King Alexander in Marseilles on Oct. 9, 1934 and was himself killed.

DJORDJEVIĆ, Milorad. b. 1896. Šabac. Studied law in Algiers. After war, became official in the Yugoslav Ministry of Finance. June 1931 became Vice-Governor of the National Bank. Nov. 1931, Minister of Finance. "An ardent protector of the state purse against extravagance."

DJURIĆ, Djordje. b. 1880. Belgrade. Educ. Belgrade, Cologne and Paris. Doctorate at Univ. of Paris. 1911, Apptd. Extraordinary Prof. of Political Economy. Asst. at Reparations Comm. Yugoslav Min. in London, 1925-31. Min. of Finance June-Nov. 1931. A very rich man. From 1931, again Yugoslav Min. in London.

JEVTIĆ, Bogoljub. Career Diplomat. London and Paris 1919-23. Minister in Tirana 1926-8. Minister in Vienna 1928-9. At time of Dictatorship, recalled to be Minister at Court. No friend of Marinković or Švrljuga. Minister of Foreign Affairs July 1932 - November 1934. Prime Minister of Yugoslavia 1934-5.

KOROŠEC, Anton. b. Biserjani, Styria, 1872. Educ. Ptuj, Maribor and Graz. Degree in Theol. at Graz. Held a chaplaincy post after ordination until 1899. Espoused Slovene Nationalist cause. Editor of Slovene Master from 1898. Elec. as Slovene Clerical Party deputy to Styrian Diet in 1906 and thence to Reichsrat until 1918. In 1917,

became Pres. of the Yugoslav Parl. Club and in May 1917 publicly decl. in favour of Yugoslav state. Took leading part in forming National Councils in Ljubljana in Aug. 1918 and the Narodno Vijeće in Zagreb in Oct. 1918. Deputy Prime Minister in first Yugoslav Cabinet. Min. of Communications, Feb. 1920; Minister of Education July 1924, Minister of Interior, Feb-July 1928. Prime Minister of Yugoslavia July 1928-January 1929. In First Dictatorship Cabinet until Sept. 1930. Returned to Univ. life. Arrested and interned, January 1933. Released after the assassination.

KRAMER, Albert. b. 1882. Educ. Graz and Prague. Lawyer. Editor of Jutro. Gen. Sec. for Slovenia in Narodno Vijeće. Member of delegation to Belgrade in Nov. 1918. Twice Minister of Commerce 1919-20. Not a friend of Dr Korošec. A member of the ID. Until Jan. 1931 was Yugoslav Min. in Prague. Joined Dictatorship Cabinet in Sept. 1931, rose to be Deputy Prime Minister under Srškić. General Sec. of Yugoslav National Party. Regarded as somewhat untrustworthy. A friend of Pribičević.

KUMANUDI, Kosta. b. 1874, Belgrade. Educ. Belgrade and Paris. Lect. in Belgrade Univ in 1902. Professor of Law, 1904. Pre-War republican. In 1920, became a Democrat deputy. In 1921-2, was Min. of Finance. Mayor of Belgrade until 1929. Held a variety of posts under the Dictatorship. Nov. 1931, became Chairman of new Chamber of Deputies. Suave and well-groomed but a hopeless financier. Left finances of Belgrade in terrible muddle.

MAČEK, Vladko, b. 1879, Educ Zagreb. Became Croat deputy and President of the Zagreb Provisional Council. A lawyer by profession. Was legal adviser to Radić. Appointed his successor in Aug. 1928. Took extreme views on Croatia for fear of being ousted by extremists incl. Radić's widow. Pensioned out of politics in Apr. 1929, he nonetheless found engaged in a running battle with the regime and was tried in 1930 and 1933, acquitted the first time and imprisoned on the second.

MARINKOVIĆ, Vojislav. b. 1876. Educ. Paris. Financial official in Serbian Ministry of Finance until the coup of 1903. Revived the Progressive Party in 1903. Became deputy in 1905. In 1913 was the Serbian rep. at Paris at Conf. to liquidate Balkan War Debts. From 1915, leader of the Progressive Party. In 1916, Serbian delegate at the Inter-Allied Conf. in Paris. Minister of Agriculture 1915-8. Often acting Foreign Minister in Pašić's absence. In 1919 created

the Democratic Union. Minister for Foreign Affairs in many pre-Dictatorship Cabinets and from Jan. 1929-July 1932. From April to Jul 1932, he was also Prime Minister of Yugoslavia. He was an able financier and President of the Belgrade Stock Exchange. He suffered from tuberculosis.

PRINCE PAUL. b. 1893. Cousin of King Alexander. Nephew of King Peter. Educ. Oxford. Acted as Sec. to King Alexander in early days of Kingdom. Appointed Prince Regent upon the assassination of Alexander, according to royal will. Regent of Yugoslavia till March 1941.

PAVELIĆ, Ante. b. 1889. Signatory to decl. in favour of indivisible Yugoslav state in Reichsrat in Oct. 1918. Croat nationalist. Was an early member of CPP and signed its first programme as Sec. In 1921 and 1922 appealed to Alexander against treatment of Croats. Became Frankist. Entered Skupština as deputy in 1924. A lawyer. Gave support to CPP-ID Coalition in Aug. 1928. By Oct. 1928, was intriguing abroad. Jan. 1929, founded Ustaše and fled abroad. Led Croat emigres and engineered plots against Yugoslav state during Dictatorship. Was responsible for the death of Alexander. Became leader of Independent Croat State in 1941. Fled Yugoslavia for South America in 1945.

PRIBIČEVIĆ, Svetozar. b. 1875. Karlovac. Is a Serb from the Lika District. Educ. Zagreb. Schoolteacher. Elec. Croatian Sabor 1900. Leading member of Serbo-Croat Coalition in Croatia and in Narodno Vijeće. Played leading part in the foundation of the state. Determined centralist until Jan. 1928. Was Min of Interior 1918-21. Min. of Education 1920-5. Left the Democrat Party in 1924. Formed ID party. Joined forces with Radić against Vukičević in 1927-8. Fell foul of the Dictatorship. Interned. Later went to Prague and Paris. Died in 1936.

RACIĆ, Puniša. Radical deputy from Montenegro. During the war he was a comitadji. Because of his enthusiasm for national liberty he was elected a deputy and became a most unwelcome satellite of Pašić. He married into a very respectable Belgrade family but continued to show violent traits - on one occasion, offering to go to Zagreb with 6 followers to give Radić 25 blows with a whip to make him change his political policy. Killed three in outrage in Skupština in June 1928. Tried 1929. Sentenced to 20 years imprisonment.

RADIĆ, Pavle. b. 1880 at Trebarjevo Desno, near Zagreb. Of peasant stock. Educ. Zagreb and Prague. Bank employee. Employed by Ogulin Savings Bank for 15 years. Got involved with formation of peasant co-operative societies in Croatia. Elec. deputy in 1923 for Banjaluka. Acted as leader of CPP in 1925 whilst Radić was in prison. Was Minister for Agrarian Reform from July 1925 - Jan. 1927. Shot in the Skupština on June 20 1928.

RADIĆ, Stjepan. b. 1871 at Trebarjevo Desno. Educ. Karlovac and Zagreb. At an early age took part in demonstration against Hungarian Ban of Croatia and was expelled from school. Travelled to Russia and Prague. Constantly involved in anti-Hungarian protests. In jail, 1895. In 1897 went to Paris to study political science and got degree. Produced pro-Serbo-Croat periodical Hrvatska Misao and acted as correspondent for foreign newspapers in 1901. Founded and propagated the CPP from 1902-8. In 1910, ten CPP deputies were returned to Croatian Sabor. Imprisoned 1911 for nationalist agitation. Became republican, anti-Triune Kingdom and was in prison from March 1919 to Feb. 1920 and then March 1920 to Nov. 1920. For more recent events, see ch. 1. Died August 1928.

ŠIBENIK, Stanko. b. 1885. Croatia. Educ. Zagreb. Was a judge until 1918 and then he became interested in agriculture. Became a member of the CPP and was Minister for Agrarian Reform in 1927. He was described as "the best and most honest of all appointments."

SRŠKIĆ, Milan. b. 1879. A serbian lawyer from Bosnia. He was formerly an officer in the Austrian Army reserve but he deserted. went to Switzerland and from there began to work for the Yugoslav cause in Entente countries. In 1924, he was elected as a deputy and became Minister of Commerce in the same year. Suspected of underhand deals, he was dismissed and re-appointed as Minister for the Unifying of laws in 1925. In 1926, he was appointed Minister of Justice - and again in 1929. In July 1932, he became Prime Minister a post which he held until January 1934. Bitter opponent of Moslems.

ŠVRLJUGA, Stanko. b. 1880. Croatia. Educ. Zagreb and Vienna. Vice-President of the Croatian Discount Bank. President of the Zagreb Stock Exchange. Director of several other banks. His wife was lady-in-waiting to the Queen. He was Minister of Finance from Jan. 1929 to June 1931.

UZUNOVIĆ, Nikola. b. 1873. Nis. In 1897, he entered the Serbian Magistrature and became President of the Court of First Instance at Niš. In 1904, he became Mayor of Niš. He entered the Serbian Skupština as deputy for Niš in 1905 and represented the town till 1912. During the Balkan Wars, he was Pres. of the Toplice dept. Re-elected to the Skupština in 1921, he held a variety of ministerial posts. In April 1926, he succeeded Pašić as Prime Minister. He occupied a place in most of the Cabinets under the Dictatorship and was Prime Minister from Jan-Nov. 1934. "He has no great abilities but is relatively well-meaning."

ŽIVKOVIĆ, Petar. b. 1879. Negotin. The son of a coppersmith. Was educated at Zajecar and the Military Academy, Belgrade. In 1899, a subaltern and in 1903, a lieutenant of the Guard. In 1910 he became a Captain and served in the Balkan Wars. He became a colonel in 1915 and First Adjutant to King Peter in 1916; in 1917, he was made Commander of the Royal Guard. When, in 1923, the Royal Guard was raised to Division status, he became a General. A long-standing supporter of King Alexander, he was also a member of the "White Hand" organization.

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