

# ALEXANDER OF JUGOSLAVIA

Strong Man of the Balkans



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# ALEXANDER OF JUGOSLAVIA

## CHAPTER I

### VLADA THE CHAUFFEUR

IN the summer of 1934 there was living in Italy an uncouth ruffian who was frequently seen in the company of the elegant lawyer Pavelitch, at Trieste, at Turin, at Brescia, at a villa on Lake Garda, at Borgotaro, at "Bulgarian Village" where there was an army of terrorists, mostly Croats but told to call themselves Bulgarians. Vlada the Chauffeur was, in fact, a Bulgarian: he did not have to lie. The most redoubtable political murderer in Bulgaria, he had been lent for service abroad. Alleged to have committed some thirty murders, he was in some danger from the relatives of the deceased because blood calls for revenge. But with all provided, clothes, food and plenty of money, he found himself in more comfortable circumstances and wrote to Bulgaria, "I prefer it up here. The people are more cultured."

He was a man of many false names—Georgief, Stoyanof, Dimitrof, Chernozemsky, Suk, Kerin, Kelemen, Velitchko; but he was most commonly known as Vlada the Chauffeur. To the most flourishing of his mistresses, Katia, who kept a restaurant in Sofia, he was known as Vlada. But his face was so unforgettable that no change of name mattered. When the photographs of the dead man appeared in the Sofia newspapers it was at once realized that the murderer of King Alexander was Vlada the Chauffeur.

His head, emerging from a starched collar and



crowned by a business man's hat, arrested the attention. The big olive-shaped eyes had the stony impertinent glare of a man who cared for no one. It was a broad Tartar face. The slightly hooked nose brooded over a long, flexible, brutal mouth. His round ears stood out from his head as if always on the alert. He was not very young. His thirty-seven years were crowded with violent experience. There was something about him which would cause a man to beware of picking a quarrel with him in the street. Apart from that, he was powerfully built. But in a quarrel he would never have recourse to his fists. He was quick and certain with his revolver, a man who when ordered to kill never made a mistake.

The lawyer Pavelitch was the chief, the *poglavnik*, the man whose command was law. More than that, he had the money and could pay for what he wanted. Vlada the Chauffeur, with village-school education and no language beyond his own, could not follow the intricacies of the lawyer's plots. All he understood was that Pavelitch had enemies and wanted them removed. He was conducting a political feud with the aid of foreigners. That much Vlada the Chauffeur understood. He had been making clockwork bombs and teaching green revolutionaries how to jump cars and kill the occupants. He had taken squads in revolver practice but it had bored him. The pay was good but the adventure was slight. The leaders liked to have him as company because they were always afraid of being shot. They appreciated having a bodyguard who was quick on the trigger. They would not send him on dangerous exploits: they kept him in reserve.

In the previous December they had picked a man in "Bulgarian Village," near Borgotaro, to go and kill King Alexander at Zagreb, given him bombs and revolvers and promised him a king's ransom—simple-minded Peter Oreb. Vlada had not picked him to do

the job. They had picked him. He was no good. He lost his head, got arrested and then confessed everything he knew in the hope of getting a light sentence. Vlada the Chauffeur mocked Pavelitch. "You send an ex-smuggler. He knew enough to smuggle the arms across the frontier but he had never killed a man in his life. What did you expect?" Pavelitch sardonically reminded him that the money which had been offered Oreb was waiting and could still be earned.

Alexander, who was quite unafraid of assassins, decided to make a state visit to King Boris of Bulgaria in Sofia. There was a great chance to kill him. But Vlada the Chauffeur would not go. There was a warrant out for his arrest and he had but to set foot on Bulgarian soil to be arrested, on his face alone. Pavelitch was enraged. He had publicly condemned Alexander to death. The king's death was required. Petty outrages such as blowing up passenger trains did not satisfy Pavelitch's employers. They threatened withdrawal of financial support if a capital crime were not achieved. Hungary had been forced, after complaint to the League, to disband a terrorist camp on her frontier. Italy might be forced to do the same at Borgotaro. Pavelitch had publicly condemned Alexander to death and began to look ridiculous. It became urgent to make good his international boast that Alexander would be removed within the year.

Vlada the Chauffeur was ready. Alexander had announced that his next state visit would be to France. After that he would go to England. He would never go to England. The deed must be done in France. "It's nothing more to me than removing a tree," said Vlada the Chauffeur. "You get me safely to France and I'll do it."

Pavelitch made his plans and organized a complicated conspiracy to kill the King. He had the man who was capable of doing it but this time he would leave nothing to chance. He would lead a gang into

France. If the attempt failed at Marseilles it would succeed at Versailles. If it failed at both places there was still Lausanne where, on his return journey, the King intended to pay a visit to his oculist. Vlada the Chauffeur was the silent man in many groups where the plans were discussed in languages which he did not understand. When he was free he amused himself with women. Despite his ugly face and big cavernous mouth filled with gold teeth, he had a fascination with the sex. He had married and divorced, married again and had had several other women in Bulgaria. It was said he could not live without killing. It was equally true that he could not live without women. Women and murder were his chief interests in life.

And the fearsome record of this man, even if only partially disclosed, was not a handicap with a certain sort of woman. It was possible to admire Vlada the Chauffeur. That doubtless explains the part played in the murder of Alexander by the mysterious blonde girl, Maria Vudrasek, who carried the bombs and revolvers to Marseilles and handed them to the assassins on the fatal morning. Only twenty-four years of age, she could hardly have realized what she was doing. The share in the false glory of the exploit outweighed the censure of conscience.

It was, of course, dangerous to take this girl along. One of the leaders had been betrayed during the previous year by his mistress, Yelka, who, after gleaning all the information she could about the terrorists, had decamped and published her memoirs. But on the other hand a lady's suit-case was seldom submitted to more than a cursory inspection by the courteous customs officials of France. The presence of a lady was also useful in diverting suspicion. One of the younger conspirators fell for Maria Vudrasek. Pavelitch talked with her and pronounced her to be true metal. Sophie Perovsky killed Alexander II of Russia. Why should not Maria Vudrasek have a hand

in killing this other Alexander? It was decided to use her.

At length the plans were matured. The weapons were procured and they were absolutely first-class. The helpers were chosen. One of the leaders gave his chauffeur, who was also his personal bodyguard, Pospichil, a man second only to Vlada. He was to have charge of the attempt at Versailles in case that at Marseilles failed. He and the others had some practice with the new Mausers and Walther pistols. It was explained to Vlada that the Mauser could be used with the rapidity of a machine-gun but he was not interested in that. He intended to take aim. One shot would be enough.

Kvaternik made a journey into Switzerland to negotiate the exchange of a large sum of liras. It was a precaution. The Italians were their hosts and patrons. It would be invidious if any of the gang was arrested with Italian money on them. He returned to Turin and met Pavelitch and Maria Vudrasek and Vlada the Chauffeur for the final arrangements. Some of the men were in Hungary. Pospichil was taking charge of them and bringing them along. Towards the end of September Maria Vudrasek set off for Paris with the guns and bombs wrapped in frocks and lingerie. She went alone but Pavelitch journeyed in the same train so as to be able to report any mischance and give directions for the dispatch of a second consignment of weapons if the first lot happened to be seized at the Swiss or French frontiers. On the following day Kvaternik received a telegram with the words "Fruit reached Paris in good condition."

That was on the 26th September. On the following day he set off with Vlada the Chauffeur for Switzerland. He gave Vlada a Hungarian passport in the name of Rudolf Suk. He travelled himself as Eugene Kramer. He took a couple of suit-cases which would give them the air of ordinary tourists. Vlada the Chauffeur

packed nothing. Kvaternik took a revolver which he had to leave in a cloakroom in Lausanne. The arm belonged to Pavelitch and represented the last hope of the conspiracy. If Marseilles and Versailles failed, perhaps the chief himself would fire the final shot. But who was to act at Lausanne had not been settled. Pavelitch had merely said: "Leave that to me."

They travelled second class. The other passengers did not look at them with interest. No spy passing by the corridor considered them. Kvaternik with a sheaf of newspapers, mostly Austrian and French, read all he could find about King Alexander's visit to France. He did not try to conduct a conversation with the semi-illiterate Vlada. One would hardly have thought they were travelling together. He was a handsome, elegant young fellow. The son of Colonel Kvaternik of the old Austrian army looked as if he had bought his attire in the best shops in Vienna; an Austrian dandy, he used perfume. He showed a coloured silk handkerchief in the upper pocket of his coat and had fancy socks to match and patent leather shoes. Vlada the Chauffeur, in a cheap ready-made suit he had bought in Budapest, heavy boots, soiled shirt, his face sunk in sleepy melancholy, looked an uncouth figure. One might have put him down as a commercial traveller, but it would have been hard to say what he was travelling in. A traveller in assassinations!

Kvaternik was young in the revolutionary movement. He had attempted to blow up Police Headquarters in Zagreb, the one crime held against him. He had no authority except that delegated by Pavelitch. Before reaching Zurich Kvaternik opened one of his suit-cases and took out an old newspaper on which Pavelitch had written his code sign in copying-ink pencil. Two big purple words were scrawled across two columns. Vlada noticed but made no comment. He had seen the *poglavnik* do it. He knew that Kvaternik was in command and that whatever that

young fellow ordered was law, but he was indifferent. He knew he was the man on whom the plot depended, the killer. He was superior to Kvaternik. Had Maria Vudrasek travelled with them the chauffeur might have felt less indifference. Kvaternik fancied his face with the blonde and might order her to the same hotel bedroom in Paris and Marseilles. She was with Pavelitch and Vlada the Chauffeur trusted him, a family man with wife and children. His going with Maria was strictly business: Vlada the Chauffeur understood that.

At Zurich Kvaternik left his suit-cases in the cloak-room but kept the newspaper with the purple scrawl. He had to meet a Vienna express, which express depended on whether Pospichil had kept to the time-table he had furnished him. With his rough companion he went to the General Post Office and collected a poste restante telegram from Budapest and a letter from Paris. These were satisfactory. All was going according to plan. At one o'clock the three helpers would arrive from Hungary. There was time to go to a restaurant for a snack.

"This city far from Marseilles?" asked Vlada the Chauffeur.

"Got to get to Paris first."

"Plenty of time. We've got to collect the others," added Kvaternik, seeing by the Bulgarian's face that he was impatient.

At the lower end of the long platform at the station Kvaternik took up a stance with Vlada the Chauffeur and unfolded his newspaper. He began to read as the train came in, holding the paper upside-down but close to his eyes as if he were short-sighted. On the reverse side, visible to the passengers emerging from the Vienna express, was the purple handwriting of Pavelitch.

Vlada the Chauffeur had given Kral lessons with the revolver. Kral had been sent to Budapest to learn to drive a car but he had also been given practice in jumping

on the footboard of a moving car, drawing a pistol from an inside pocket and firing. Vlada also knew Pospichil by sight. He had driven Perchets, another chauffeur, to Borgotaro. The tall Raitch, who had been recruited from South America, he had not seen before. Kvaternik must also have known Pospichil. Pospichil came right up to him and greeted him familiarly. Kvaternik handed him the newspaper. Pospichil handed it in turn to the others, who read Pavelitch's message and made no comment.

"So we're all going to kill the King," said Raitch cheerfully, as they walked out of the station, but Kvaternik at once hushed him. "The walls have ears. Now please get our names right. I am Kramer. This is Rudolf Suk. Remember your own names. That is in case anyone questions you."

He led them to a restaurant and ordered a substantial lunch for the three newcomers and a double brandy for Vlada the Chauffeur. Then he went out to make sure that they had not been followed. At the corner of the street he picked up a Hungarian spy who had followed Pospichil and the others all the way from Budapest. He gave the disconcerting information that Pospichil and Raitch had been eavesdropped on their way to Vienna by a Serbian agent circulating in the train. This agent had certainly telegraphed Belgrade that three terrorists were leaving Hungary at the same time the King was leaving Yugoslavia. If Belgrade acted promptly the French police would be waiting at the Gare de Lyon and the Gare de l'Est to arrest the party.

Even Zurich was not safe. Kvaternik returned and hurried the four men out of the restaurant and back to the station. He recovered his suit-cases and took five second-class tickets for Lausanne. Lausanne was not on the direct route Vienna-Paris. There might already be detectives on the Zurich-Paris trains but they were less likely on the express from Trieste. Kvaternik put the men on the train and stood watching on the plat-

form till the last moment, when he also got on. There were only Swiss passengers on that train. But Kvaternik took precautions. He ordered his companions to remain silent all the way to Lausanne. Let them smoke and admire the scenery but say nothing. Kvaternik was frightened by the chance of spies. He was a clever youth but not very brave. He did not intend to risk his own head in this adventure. He must post these dangerous men and then flee to safety in Italy. He had written a letter to himself to a poste restante address in Switzerland and he intended to return and claim that letter on the day of the assassination, so ensuring a complete alibi. He had foreseen most possibilities, including that of danger on the trains from Zurich to Paris, and it was part of the plan agreed by Pavelitch that they should switch from Zurich to Lausanne. But he had not expected that Pospichil, Kral and Raitch would be observed by a Serb agent. He decided that their appearance must be changed at the first possible moment lest a description of them had been wired to Paris and Marseilles.

At Lausanne they all got into the omnibus of the Hotel des Palmiers, registered under their false names and took rooms. Kvaternik paid for a night's lodging for them in advance and then led them out into the city. It was already dark, which was a favourable circumstance as he did not wish them to be observed. He took them to a large store where, first of all, he bought a capacious suit-case. Then they went to the clothing department and the three men from Hungary bought new suits. Kvaternik paid. Then they bought new boots and having packed these and the clothes in the suit-case they returned to the hotel. They changed their clothes. Raitch had had a grey Palm Beach suit with a belt; now he had a dark wine-coloured Swiss suit and braces. The original clothes of Pospichil and Kral could have been identified by any experienced detective as having been bought in Budapest. In Swiss attire they looked



more restrained, rather of a better class. The three could well pass as tourists and were in glaring contrast to Vlada the Chauffeur who, in their company, looked more than ever like a gangster. He would have impressed Hollywood. They went to a barber's to get shaved, but he let the black stubble grow on his face. He did not understand this dressing up. One could shoot just as well in old clothes as in new.

Kvaternik packed the discarded suits in the new portmanteau and carefully hid the revolver which Pavelitch had asked him to consign in the railway cloak-room. Pospichil also had a pistol. He put that in too, because, if by chance arrested, it would look better if they had no arms upon them. Next morning he took the suit-case to the station and deposited it at the *consigne*, putting the receipt in his letter-case.

Kvaternik decided that in any case he would not entrain his party from Lausanne. There might be complications at the French frontier. He preferred to enter France at an obscure customs barrier on the shore of Lake Geneva. It was a bright, sunny morning and they hired two boats and were rowed across the lake to Thonon. There they were regarded as a party of tourists amusing themselves in Switzerland, and had not the slightest difficulty in entering France. After taking a few drinks in the cafés they went to the railway station and Kvaternik took tickets for Paris. In the train he handed out new passports in different names. Vlada the Chauffeur was still Rudolf Suk, a Hungarian, but Pospichil became Novak, Raitch became Benes—they were now Czechs; Kral became Hossek. Their new passports were not only forged documents but had forged visas and they were stamped "Vallorbes," as if the holders had entered France by the main frontier station. Their other passports stamped "Thonon" were taken by Kvaternik, who put them in his pocket.

The night train rushed across the dark country of

## VLADA THE CHAUFFEUR

SAF  
FI  
NY  
PAR

France. There were but few passengers. Kvaternik had a carriage to himself. In the next two compartments were the four terrorists stretched out on the cushions. Vlada the Chauffeur snored; the others were too excited to sleep and lay smoking cigarettes far into the night. Kvaternik was up at dawn and at the first stop bought French newspapers. He stirred up the others to wash and make themselves presentable. "We are not going to Paris," he whispered. "We shall have to get out of this train soon." He handed them each a wad of French paper money. It was Pavelitch's instructions that they all be treated well—"See they want for nothing, give them everything of the best. If you are stingy they may think they won't get a premium when it's all over."

At eight in the morning they all got out at Fontainebleau and had coffee near the principal bus stop. No one paid them the least attention. In truth there was nothing particularly remarkable about their appearance, except that Vlada the Chauffeur had not washed the sleep out of his eyes. He looked even more of a brigand and Kvaternik made a mental note to tidy him up in Paris. There was no time in Fontainebleau. The omnibus for Paris was leaving in ten minutes.

Even the most vigilant police would not be revising the passengers by the motor coach. The bus was full. Vlada was wedged between two stout women with baskets. Kral, being a slow peasant, failed to get a seat and had to stand. Kvaternik was alarmed to see two Russians among the passengers but upon consideration concluded they were merely harmless *émigrés*. The omnibus blundered cheerily along through the morning mist to Paris without incident.

"Now," said Kvaternik, "you have several days in Paris. Enjoy yourselves, see the town, eat at the best restaurants, visit the music halls. When I want you I'll tell you. I'll see you at your hotels every day. Don't pay for anything there. I'll settle the bills."

He then separated his party, took Vlada the Chauffeur and Raitch to the Hotel Regina in the Rue Mazagran. He promised to call for them in an hour. Then he took a taxi to the Gare d'Orsay and placed Pospichil and Kral in a big hotel near the station—a resort of visitors from Toulouse and tourists from Spain. Kvaternik then put his own bags in the Hotel Belle Vue for a night before proceeding to the Commo-dore. Maria Vudrasek and her escort were in the Hotel St. Anne. Thus the conspirators were distributed in four expensive hotels, places where there was but little curiosity concerning the business of guests if they were in a position to pay for costly accommodation.

Vlada the Chauffeur, still rather sleepy, was unimpressed by his sumptuous room at the Regina and he lay down on the bed with his boots on. He was awakened by Kvaternik knocking. Kvaternik was shocked by Vlada's appearance, a hotel bandit, nothing less. He took him out at once to a barber and had him shaved and shampooed. Then he got him a clean collar and tie. He still looked too rough. He took him to an outfitter's and bought him a good suit. It was dark brown, almost a chestnut colour. Vlada satisfied himself that the left inside pocket of the coat was roomy, deep enough to take the whole of the long Mauser pistol. The shopkeeper watched him repeatedly put his right hand in that pocket and then draw it out in the action of raising a revolver but he did not understand the gesture.

As this brown suit might also be observed and remembered Kvaternik bought him also a raincoat. Raitch thought he would also like a raincoat. Kvaternik with a sheaf of bank-notes was ready to pay for all they required. Vlada the Chauffeur was unusually pleased with the transaction. He despised the precaution of changing his attire in order to commit a murder but he was childish enough to like getting a new rig-out for nothing. He gave Kvaternik a mock salute. There

remained but to buy him a new hat and he looked entirely respectable, a prosperous farmer, or a provincial inn-keeper come to town.

Raitch was sent back to his hotel. Vlada the Chauffeur was taken to be paraded before Maria Vudrasek. She was in the foyer of the Hotel St. Anne. She said he looked a swell and Vlada for the first time in his life was bashful. He was annoyed with Kvaternik and would have liked to kill him. The dandy talked rapidly in German. He must have explained that he had bought the new clothes, as if he, Vlada, was not able to buy clothes for himself. But the blonde had no eyes for Herr Kramer; she had only eyes for Herr Suk. She invited Herr Suk to have lunch. "Peter will be there," said she. "And who is Peter?" asked Vlada suspiciously. "You'll know him when you see him," said Maria, smiling mysteriously.

They had lunch at a restaurant near the Opera House. Pavelitch was there. "You will never call me by any other name than Peter," said he in a low voice. But they had a table in a far corner and could not be overheard. The luncheon was a complete success because the blonde made large eyes at the Bulgarian and breathed compliments across the *hors d'œuvres*. "I know you'll do it," she whispered, "because you're a real man. There's only one real man in this room. Well, perhaps two, but Peter is not a man of action. He's just a genius, that's all."

Pavelitch simpered gratefully. Maria was playing her part. She was switching her electricity into the Bulgarian. Georgief—he always thought of him as Georgief—did not need it. He was a man without sympathy or nerves. But the blonde was making sure of him.

"I don't like the man I'm quartered with at the hotel," said Vlada, looking vindictively at Kvaternik. "He doesn't understand me."

"That's all right," said Pavelitch. "You will be

with Kral at Marseilles, so you had better not be seen with him much in Paris. Just a small precaution. Raitch stays here to help Pospichil. He's our number 4. Doesn't count for much, but he is willing to take the first place if we'd let him. He'd make a hash of it like Oreb. We keep him in reserve. You have Kral. You taught him. He's a stout fellow. You will do the big job. I know you won't make a mistake. Kral has to stand at a distance and make a disturbance so that you'll be able to get away in the confusion."

Pavelitch glanced round the restaurant. There was no one near enough to overhear. "The bombs burst forward," he whispered. "They cannot injure the man who throws them. I think Kral has had sufficient practice. You'll have to be smart making the get-away, but the French police always lose their heads and arrest the wrong persons. And there will be swarms of people."

"Be sure you don't get arrested," murmured the blonde. "We want to see you in Italy after it's all over."

"I'll sell my life dearly," growled Vlada. "I don't want to go to prison again."

"You'll get another fifteen years if they catch you," whispered Kvaternik. "And you would not be amnestied until Italy makes war on France. That might not be for another five years."

The guillotine was never mentioned to Vlada the Chauffeur. He did not know that such a thing existed. And he imagined that a political crime would be as lightly punished as in his own country. He had already been in prison several times for murder but never for long. Now he had no measure of the crime he was about to commit. Killing the King of Serbia would be a mere incident in his career. He would survive to kill others. Kvaternik contrived to combine the holiday spirit with the grave reality of the plot. Vlada the Chauffeur was to have a whole week in which to

enjoy himself in Paris. It was only the 30th September, and the King would not arrive in Marseilles until the 9th October.

They walked from the restaurant to the Place de l'Opéra and Pavelitch pointed out a table in the Café de la Paix. That table or the nearest table to it would be their general rendezvous. Pospichil and Kral and Raitch would be shown it also. It was easy to find; they could not make a mistake. It was convenient for Pavelitch because the Hotel St. Anne was just round the corner. Kvaternik would move to the Commodore on the Boulevard Haussmann and that was near. Later Pospichil and Kral would be moved from the Orsay Palace to the Terminus Gare St. Lazare and that would be nearer for them. Kvaternik took Vlada to his hotel and then went to see Pospichil. He had much to say to Pospichil for he would have charge of the attempt to murder Alexander at Versailles should Vlada fail at Marseilles.

Vlada the Chauffeur did not make the most of Paris because he slept a great deal of the time. He was never out when Kvaternik called for him. He was sprawling on his bed. The shops had no interest for him; he did not want to buy anything, was not looking for souvenirs. When Kvaternik made him a present he was not inclined to take it. Kvaternik gave each of the men a pocket compass. "What's the use of it?" asked the Chauffeur. "It will show you the way when you make your escape," explained Kvaternik. "If you want to get to Italy you keep going east. If you want to get to the Spanish frontier from Marseilles you will keep going south-west."

Vlada pocketed the compass with a derisive smile. It was not his intention to tramp across the mountains to Italy. He would make his escape in the company of the blonde. He would fix that but he naturally did not reveal his plans to Kvaternik. His only interest in Paris was to go to the Café de la Paix and wait there

drinking cognac on the chance of Maria joining him. But he was never allowed to see her alone. There was always Peter, the chief, the man who must be obeyed. They went to the Automobile Show, but Pavelitch accompanied them, went to the Moulin Rouge, but Pavelitch was with them. The blonde whispered to Vlada that she preferred him to all the others.

Pavelitch was much more seriously occupied. He procured the official programme of the King's visit. He obtained confirmation that no Serbian police agents would be allowed to go to Marseilles. He learned that General Dimitrievitch—who was attached to the King's person and was to some extent responsible for his safety—had come to Paris by rail instead of accompanying the King by sea. He was being held up by the French, who obstinately refused to modify any detail of the programme. It was unlikely that he would get to Marseilles in time to be able to ensure any special arrangements for the monarch's safety. Pavelitch gathered that no special precautions would be taken at Marseilles and that Vlada the Chauffeur had a fine chance. There were French officials in the pay of Italy and Pavelitch had access to some of these. A party in France favourable to Italy was being organized. Arms and ammunition were already being stored with a view to a rising of the French Fascists. Pavelitch had nothing to fear from those who were in the secret. The removal of Alexander might shock French democracy, but there were Frenchmen who would profit by it.

Arrangements were made for the alternative attempt on the King's life which was to be staged at Versailles in case the attempt at Marseilles failed.

Kvaternik took four bombs and two pistols to Pospichil at the Hotel Terminus St. Lazare. He had wanted Vlada's old clothes to pack them in but the Bulgarian refused to part with them. Vlada gave his old clothes to Pavelitch, telling him he would require

them later. The bombs were put in some old boots which Pospichil bought at a second-hand store and the pistols were wrapped in an old travelling blanket. The chargers and the spare ammunition were thrown loose into the suit-case. The case was strapped as well as locked and Kvaternik gave instructions to Pospichil to take it to the cloak-room at the Gare St. Lazare and leave it there until it would be required. Pospichil and Raitch would be left behind when the others went to Marseilles. They had better stay at Fontainebleau. That would be safer. A room would be taken for them at the Golden Lion Hotel. They would call each day at the post office for letters. In the meantime they must visit Versailles and study the best place for making an attempt on the King's life there. But they would receive instructions at Fontainebleau as to how to proceed. Vlada the Chauffeur and Kral had their passports changed again. They now became Czechs. The Bulgarian got the name of Petrus Kelcmen and Kral became Silvestre Malny.

On the 6th October Pavelitch and Maria, Kvaternik, Vlada the Chauffeur and Kral set off for Marseilles. But they did not go direct. There was still the chance that police agents might be watching for suspicious-looking characters among the passengers arriving at Marseilles station. They went to Avignon and stayed a night at hotels there. The next day Pavelitch, Vlada and Kral went by omnibus to Marseilles. But they did not remain there, did not take rooms in hotels. The police might be interested in strangers in hotels. One could not be sure that the French would not take that precaution. Kvaternik had been sent to Aix-en-Provence, which is about an hour's journey from Marseilles, and had booked rooms for the party there. Pavelitch introduced Marseilles to Vlada the Chauffeur. He was unimpressed. All he wanted to know was when the King was coming. Kral followed cloddishly along the Canebière to the Bourse, to the Vieux Port.



Peasant and tramp and then terrorist, he still remained peasant—dogged, unimaginative, waiting always to be told what he would have to do.

They had lunch facing the Vieux Port but it was dull without Maria. Pavelitch, a man of culture and affairs, was bored by his inarticulate companions. Queer company for a man of his accomplishments! After lunch they at once took the omnibus to Aix. There, in a café on the main street, they found Kvaternik entertaining the blonde. Vlada the Chauffeur frowned heavily. He did not like that. But Pavelitch was relieved. Kvaternik was a highly educated young fellow and had a wealth of conversation.

Kvaternik had news. A message had come through before he left Avignon. The Queen of Jugoslavia had at the last moment decided not to accompany her husband on the destroyer. She was making the journey by rail and would endeavour to get to Marseilles in time to meet her husband there. A small calculation sufficed to show that that would be difficult unless she made part of the journey by air. Would the disembarkation of the King be delayed to enable her to meet him at the quay? It seemed more likely that the Queen would wait in Paris. They ought both to be killed because then there would be a historic parallel. Pavelitch considered that the world would regard a dual assassination as poetic justice, the natural answer, somewhat delayed, to the murder of the Archduke Ferdinand and his consort at Sarajevo.

It was also important that Vlada the Chauffeur should know just who was going to be in the carriage with the King. If it should be some young vigorous minister he might have the presence of mind to strike the assassin's wrist at the moment of firing. Laval was capable of that as an act of mere self-preservation. In the case of the Queen not being able to get there, would the French premier go to Marseilles? Courtesy almost demanded it. But if it were old Barthou it

would not be very dangerous, except for Barthou. Pavelitch's organization had condemned Barthou to death as well as the King of Yugoslavia. He pretended to desire an understanding with Italy but he might oppose the forthcoming conquest of Abyssinia. He was also opposed to Hungary's policy of revisionism and had that year visited the capitals of the Little Entente. He was stubbornly tenacious of the terms of the iniquitous peace treaties. On the other hand, if Barthou were killed the French police would be forced to become more active. Pavelitch and Kvaternik might be arrested before they could get out of the country.

"Well, Eugene, you can leave to-morrow evening," said Pavelitch. He had promised Colonel Kvaternik that his son should come to no harm. Eugene had done his part and done it excellently. He had got the men through to Paris and Marseilles without a hitch.

"Don't say Kramer is going to walk out on us!" exclaimed the blonde petulantly. But Kvaternik had long since made up his mind to show a clean pair of heels. No fair lady could cause him to risk his head. His own programme was worked out with the same meticulous care as that of bringing the assassins across Europe. He had never intended to stay for the shooting. "Kramer is leaving us," said Maria to Vlada the Chauffeur. Vlada grimaced. "It makes no difference," said he.

Maria Vudrasek had already taken a room with twin beds for herself and her "husband." She had been busy while Pavelitch and the others were in Marseilles. She had ripped the material from the top of one of the box-springs and carefully hidden the bombs and revolvers among the springs and straps. Then she had refixed the material again. She had security from inquisitive maids who might open her trunks to see what was the baggage the porter had been told to handle so carefully. This was at the Hotel Nègre Coste.

Kral and Vlada the Chauffeur shared a room in the Hotel Moderne. Kvaternik had a room to himself in the same hotel. He cynically registered himself and Vlada as brothers. The sleepy little town of Aix did not dream what strange guests it harboured on the nights of the 7th and 8th October, 1934. But the presence of the strangers was noticeable. Everybody who had seen them remembered them after the tragic event. Still, the police in Aix did not feel any responsibility for what might happen in Marseilles and they did not signal the arrival of mysterious foreigners.

The omnibus connection with the port was a convenience and it is overlooked to what extent bus service has supplanted train service. Police agents watch the arrivals at the railway stations: they seldom pay any attention to those who come by bus. On the day before the crime the conspirators went by bus to Marseilles to study the best point for the outrage. They bought a plan of the city and the "official programme and guide." The enormity of the plot which was nearing execution did not weigh upon the mind of Maria Vudrasek. She bought herself a frock at Chiffonette on the actual route of the King's procession and not very far from the place chosen for the assassination.

The real business which had taken them that day to Marseilles was quickly accomplished. The deed would be done as the King passed the Bourse. Vlada the Chauffeur would attack from the near side. Probably the King's car would observe French traffic regulations and keep to the right on the Canebière. On the right-hand side he would be much nearer the crowds of sightseers. Kral, who was shorter than Vlada, would be able to watch from the steps of the Bourse. That would give him an advantage in throwing his bombs. It was very near the harbour and Pavclitch and the blonde could watch from the Vieux Port side and be in a position to get rapidly to a ship when

the King had been killed. Actually, Pavelitch had to get a message through to the men waiting at Fontainebleau if the attempt failed. But he refused to believe there would be failure. If Vlada the Chauffeur were successful he intended to leave Pospichil and Raitch to shift for themselves. He must get to the shelter of Italy at once.

The party was almost light-headed and they lunched in a spirit of unusual gaiety. Vlada the Chauffeur was less gloomy than he had been during the whole of the trip. That action was on the morrow cheered him. He was tired of waiting and despised the many precautions. He knew he was going to succeed and he had his own plan of escape, possibly to elope with Vudrasek when it was over. Kral was also more lively and insisted on drinking to free Croatia. He believed he was doing something for Croatia. International politics meant nothing to him. He was a narrow-minded peasant who had been made into a fanatic by reiterated stories of the wrongs of the Croats. Kvaternik was in high spirits because his work was done and he was leaving that night for Switzerland and Italy. The only person who was at all sombre was the man called Peter. He still had much on his mind.

They returned to Aix in the gloom of the October afternoon. Their mood changed somewhat. Aix in the evening seemed sinister, as if the attempt was going to be committed there and not at Marseilles. The event of the coming day threw a backward shadow on the town of Aix. The conspirators hardly knew what to do with themselves. Kvaternik coached Vlada and Kral in what they had to do. Vlada must jump on the footboard of the car and shoot the King. When he was sure he had done that he must step back and throw his bombs, then bolt. Kral must watch carefully and throw his bombs so as to help Vlada. If Vlada were knocked down or arrested he must throw his bombs directly at the King's car. He would use his pistols

only in self-defence. Vlada was warned not to kill Barthou instead of the King. He must not fire at the French Foreign Minister unless the latter was so foolish as to put his body in front of the monarch to save him. How Barthou was to be saved from the bombs Kvaternik did not explain. Kral swore he would stand by Vlada, and Vlada told him he had better, because if he showed the white feather at the last moment he would shoot him dead like a fly. "I never miss, remember that."

"Not so rough," objected Kvaternik. "Mio is just as ready to die for the Cause as you are. You could not have a better helper."

Kvaternik went out for a few minutes and came back with a small suit-case. "To-morrow morning at seven you take this to the Hotel Nègre Coste and ask to see Peter. You will receive your weapons and Peter will give you final instructions."

"No more instructions, I hope," sneered Vlada.

Kvaternik smiled. He had no ill feeling. "I'm going now," said he. "You go to Marseilles and kill the King. It's *au revoir*. We'll meet again in Italy soon."

Kvaternik went to the Hotel Nègre Coste to exchange a few words with Pavelitch. Then he took taxi to Avignon and caught the night train for Switzerland. Next day he went to Montreux and collected a letter addressed by himself to himself. He did so at the hour when the shooting would be taking place. Then he went to Italy to wait for Pavelitch.

Early next morning Vlada the Chauffeur and Mio Kral were admitted to the double room occupied by Maria Vudrasek and her supposed husband. Pavelitch was dressed. She was in pyjamas and dressing-gown. She smiled radiantly on the two men, but Pavelitch's expression was severe. He locked the door and took Maria's chemise from her bed-rail and carefully draped it over the keyhole. He listened attentively to make sure there were no steps in the corridor outside. That

only meant he was nervous. There was not the least likelihood of any last-minute suspicion on the part of the hotel management or the Aix police. Maria unfastened the material of the spring mattress and with her dainty ringed hand and carmined nails scooped out the first of the bombs and handed it to Vlada. Kral stood there with the suit-case wide open and Vlada placed the bombs in as he received them. Then came the chargers for the Mauser and the Walther. They were tied up in a handkerchief. Maria drew forth one of the Mausers. Vlada rapidly opened the breach, looked down the sight, placed a charger in the slot, shut it up again, released the safety-catch and placed the revolver in his inside coat pocket. His lips set in a look of self-confidence. The other three weapons he allowed to be wrapped up and packed in the case.

"Now I've very little more advice to give you," said Pavelitch. "You will catch the one o'clock omnibus to Marseilles. You will not go earlier on any account. The King will almost certainly arrive about four and set off at once to place a wreath on the monument to the men who fell on the Salonika front in the war. A few minutes after four he will be passing the big building we pointed out to you. You will have taken up your stand there and you will kill him. I shall be there watching you to see that you do not fail, and I will pick you up and make good your escape. If I'm prevented, I'll meet you in the restaurant of your hotel here at Aix, you understand. But if I should be arrested or stopped you will not wait for me at Aix, but take a taxi to Avignon, get on the Paris train and join Pospichil and Raitch at Fontainebleau."

Vlada the Chauffeur was too much in awe of the *poglavnik* to make any objection to this programme, but when Pavelitch's back was turned he shot a glance at the blonde and made a knowing grimace. She was probably going away on a ship. He was not going to run to Aix with all the French police in hue and cry.

Pavelitch unlocked the door of the room and looked along the corridor. There was no one stirring. Kral picked up the case and the two men walked out. The door shut quietly behind them. They went back to the Hotel Moderne and put the bombs and pistols and ammunition in their pockets and looked at themselves in the cheval glass. Their clothes looked bulgy, but they could not leave this arsenal in the suit-case. Some servant might open the case or throw it about and explode the bombs. They had their breakfast and, later, their lunch wearing their weapons.

Their room at the hotel had been paid for up to the 9th October. Kvaternik had settled the bill before he left. A maid came to them and asked whether they were keeping the room, but Vlada the Chauffeur waved his hand. When they went out to catch the bus they left the suit-case behind. It was empty, but that seemed to imply that they were returning.

At one o'clock they got seats in a packed omnibus of sight-seers going to Marseilles to shout "Vive le Roi!" when King Alexander arrived. A stout passenger sat on one of Kral's bomb pockets and he had to stand up and rearrange his coat. A little after two they were in Marseilles. The shops were all open. Business was proceeding as usual, but there were already a lot of people standing about, waiting for the show two hours before the King arrived. There were many flags flying. Kral began to feel nervous.

But Vlada the Chauffeur was not affected by the French street excitement and he did not sense that Kral was beginning to show the white feather. He was gruff with Kral as if the Croat were under his command. He got him along to the corner of the Bourse and, having found the place which had been chosen, he remained there, though there was long to wait. He had been warned not to start any conversation there lest they be overheard by police agents. But he did not wish to talk. The time of action was approaching.

Vlada the Chauffeur ignored the gathering crowds. He saw the street would not be lined with troops. There was no cordon of police. It was not going to be difficult. He watched the private cars still circulating on the Canebière and in imagination tackled each one as it came along, rehearsing mentally his short run and leap on to the footboard, then the flash of his revolver from his left inside pocket.

Kral gave a start as he heard the first boom of cannon announcing that the King's boat was in the harbour.



## CHAPTER II

### THE KING GOES TO MARSEILLES

#### I

"HIDE yourself, you gipsy! But it does not matter where you go, we will find you and kill you."

So wrote Pavelitch in April, 1934, in one of the propaganda sheets printed abroad at his expense. He called the King a gipsy because the dynasty of Karageorgievitch is descended from an obscure family which had migrated to Shumadia from the Montenegrin border and came from a cattle-drover and trader of doubtful family name, but known as Black George, *Kara Jorj*. This original Black George took the surname of Petrovitch because his father's name was Peter. He drove pigs to market. He was fully armed and prepared to defend the swine with his life. He became a *baiduk*. There were episodes in his early life which show him as a raider and the sworn foe of Turks, several of whom he killed before he became a leader of men and led the Serbs in victorious revolt against their masters. The people of the Dinara region where his ancestors lived are a blend. There is Turkish blood, there is Albanian, Montenegrin, Greek. But the type of the Karageorgievitch family is predominantly Slav. Alexander, a proud man who never begged of anyone, a brave soldier and a man who despised mere wealth, a man with no taste for a vagabond life—he could hardly be thought to be descended from a gipsy.

But Pavelitch was angry. In December, 1933, he had sent three men from Italy to kill the King at Zagreb.

Not only had the attempt failed but the men had been caught, and one of them, Peter Oreb, had made a full confession, incriminating Pavelitch and compromising Italy. The trial had taken place in March, in Jugoslavia, in a blaze of publicity. The position of Pavelitch, suborned by Italy, was made clear to the Jugoslavs, perhaps to the world. On the 1st of April the three men had been condemned to death.

Pavelitch put a brave face on it, declaring in one of his subsidized papers: "We condemn *Alexander the Last*, and honour Oreb and his companions." He could not afford to admit that Oreb had betrayed him. On the other hand, the Italians were losing patience. If he failed so disastrously in his plots they might have to dispense with his services and expel him from the country. In order to safeguard his position Pavelitch must make another attempt and this time must succeed. He organized the assassination at Marseilles so thoroughly because his future career and personal safety depended on his making good his boast that he would find "The Gipsy" and kill him.

King Alexander, though with a price on his head, was devoted to international peace. He was a soldier by training but had become a pacifist. He knew the dreadful reality of war. As a youth he had fought through the Turkish and Bulgarian campaigns. In his prime of manhood he had gone through the ordeal of the Great War. He had seen enough of lands laid waste and carnage. He was no firebrand. During all the stormy period from 1918 to 1934 he threatened no one. He was repeatedly threatened by Italy but he made no martial response beyond perfecting the organization of defence. To pacify tribal passions within his enlarged territory he sacrificed the proud name of Serbia to call his kingdom Jugoslavia. That sombre word is a collective description: it merely means South Slavia. It was, moreover, his fond hope that the embittered Bulgarians, who are also Slavs, might at some future date cast in

their lot with Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and make of Yugoslavia a still larger and securer collective unity. He did much to assuage the murderous blood-lust which divided Serbia and Bulgaria after the war. It may even be said that he effected a reconciliation. He forgave the outrages on the Macedonian frontier. He made friends. His preoccupation in the summer of 1934 was peace.

King Alexander was well aware that he was threatened with death. He said, "Well, if I die in my bed I shall have a less bloody end than most of my ancestors." In the Great War he was frequently to be seen in the most dangerous places, calmly inspecting trenches and billets with bullets spitting past his ears. He always laughed when remonstrated with. He was familiar with death. So he took no measures for his personal safety. The activity of the police around his person annoyed him. Orders were given that detectives guarding him should keep out of his sight. When he visited Zagreb in December, 1933, ten months before the catastrophe of Marseilles, not even elementary precautions were taken for his safety. The would-be assassins with bombs in their pockets stood but a few yards from the royal car, unmolested, and only the fact that they lost their nerve saved the King and Queen from death. That evening Alexander went out on foot with Atsa Dimitrievitch and mixed with the Croat populace. The crowd about the King was so dense that the court marshal perspired under his heavy overcoat. Any malcontent or hired assassin could have killed the King. Next day, although the plot to murder him had been discovered, the King said, "Come on, Atsa; let's go to the place where they wanted to blow me up;" and despite the marshal's protests they visited the crowded market-place and watched the peasants and the townspeople shopping.

In the fatal year 1934 he took no precautions. He was not an Abdul Hamid who would have a double

to make public appearances and take the risk of assassination. He went about his ordinary business and did not alter his plans. His first interest was to continue the good work with King Boris and try to bring Bulgaria into the Balkan Pact. That pact was one of mutual non-aggression. He hated the phrase so commonly applied to the Balkans, "the powder factory." "There will be no war in the Balkans," said he in 1933. "The one danger has always been in the interference of the great powers in Balkan affairs. But for the meddling of the great powers there would not be even a shadow of danger from this part of Europe." Alexander's object in deciding to visit King Boris in Sofia, in the summer of 1934, was to disentangle the Italian intrigue in Bulgarian politics. Boris had married an Italian princess and promise had been given that the children of the union would be baptized into the Roman Church. Boris had taken the first step away from Rome in having his child baptized into the Orthodox Church. A small matter, perhaps, but Boris was a decent fellow and had given sign that he did not intend to be made the cat's-paw of Rome.

It was a dangerous visit. For Pavelitch's threat must be taken seriously. He had the backing of the enemy, Italy. And Bulgaria had plenty of men who still hated Serbia and would count it virtue to hurl a bomb at the King. The Serbian Minister of the Interior in co-operation with the Bulgarians, packed Sofia with police agents. A number of Bulgarians were placed under precautionary arrest, that is, confined to their homes for the period of the visit.

Alexander was indifferent to the danger he incurred. His court marshal, Atsa Dimitrievitch, who was to some extent responsible for the monarch's safety, was apprehensive, the more so as he developed a poisoned foot and had great difficulty in keeping close to his King. He tells how Boris and Alexander talked far into the night. He was in an antechamber, resting one bandaged

foot on a chair. A Bulgarian aide-de-camp said to him at midnight, "Why don't you turn in and go to bed?" He replied, "The King might want me. I cannot go to bed before my King." At three o'clock in the morning King Boris came in to him and engaged him in conversation. He was struck by the dog-like fidelity of the Serbian general. That type was difficult to find in Bulgaria. He returned to Alexander and said to him, "That Dimitrievitch is a pearl. That's a man worth having. Take care of him!"

General Dimitrievitch, who had served with Alexander in the Turkish War and in the Great War and under him in the victorious advance from Salonika in 1918, was the King's most intimate friend and servant. As marshal his official duties related merely to ceremonial and receptions. But he had become unofficial bodyguard and confidential secretary. He kept the King's cheque-book and wrote his cheques. He was with him in the unconventional hours of the night when Alexander, in pyjamas, lighted cigarette after cigarette and turned the pages of the French classics of which he was so fond. A rubicund hearty fellow, with a broad open face and an endless flow of childish prattle, Dimitrievitch was a man who was honest as the day. His favourite saying now is, "I loved my King alive. I love him dead." But one of the first acts of the government, after the King's death, was to remove the general from his position and to place him under "house arrest." No official reason was given for this disgrace, but the assumption was that the marshal had not done all that was humanly possible to safeguard the sovereign. It was not his business, but he had become the King's watch-dog and he had not barked.

In truth, the poisoned foot was a drag upon the activities of the general. When in the autumn King Alexander discussed his plans for visiting France, he was willing that Dimitrievitch should remain behind

in Belgrade and nurse his foot. The King had decided to proceed to Marseilles by sea. In the past, when he had visited Paris, he had commonly made the journey via Italy and Switzerland. But the relationship with Italy was so bad that he was averse from travelling over Italian soil. In any case, he had a special reason for going to Marseilles. Even had he decided to go to Paris by rail he would have continued the journey to Marseilles. He wished to honour Marseilles, the port from which the first French contingents had sailed to Salonika and the support of the reconstituted Serbian army in the war. He would place a wreath upon the monument in Marseilles dedicated to the *Poilus d'Orient*. There was another sentimental reason. By going on a destroyer from the Gulf of Kotor he would be on Jugoslav territory till he reached the coast of France. No third power would come between him and *la belle France*.

He compromised with Dimitrievitch. He allowed him to go by rail. His marshal was highly necessary in Paris to supervise the King's part in the various ceremonies there. Atsa must see that all was in order there and then hurry to Marseilles to study the French arrangements for the visit, and to be on hand when Alexander disembarked.

No one advised the King not to go to France. The Queen herself had no misgiving. It is, however, conceivable that had the King had a responsible government, had Jugoslavia been at the time a limited monarchy, the ministers of the crown might have opposed the visit. But the King, having dissolved the constitution in January, 1929, had become virtual dictator of his country and was a law unto himself. He was a man who asked no advice, made his own decisions, and could not be shaken from his purpose. For some time he had developed a very great activity in the conduct of foreign affairs. His Foreign Minister, Bogoljub Jevtitch, was capable but he was not allowed

initiative. The initiative was the King's. Jevtitch merely helped to conduct the King's policy. But the policy had the merit of being successful and permanent, not subject to the chance and change of party politics. In the Balkans and elsewhere some politicians can be bribed; but the King could not be bribed. Some states, such as Italy, are at much expense to give financial assistance to politicians in other states. The King of Yugoslavia could not be bought.

Nevertheless, the state visit to France was superfluous. It would have been sufficient to send Jevtitch to Paris. The King's visit to Bulgaria was very risky, but it had some justification. It was a spectacular and dramatic act. It fired the imagination, and the extending of the royal hand of friendship to a bitter enemy was worth more than any pact signed by diplomats. Had the King's car been blown up in the streets of Sofia he would have been blamed for his foolhardiness. The old hatred of Serbs and Bulgars would have flared up once more and the last state of the Balkans would have been worse than the first. But nothing succeeds like success, and the King's achievement resounded in the press of the world. Alexander was becoming as famous as a diplomatist as he had been redoubted as a soldier.

But the visit to France was not worth the candle. There was no such glorious reward as peace in the Balkans. The most that could be expected was that France would pat Alexander on the back and say, "Good boy!" The visit was intended to be of an informative character. The King intended to stay only three days in Paris, certainly not long enough to go into the details of some new pact with France. It was said, during the trial of the assassins, that he had come to put his signature to a new pact of friendship. But that was not accurate. According to Jevtitch he wished to communicate the results of his conversations with King Boris of Bulgaria and report to France the

prospects of the new Balkan Pact which did not yet include Bulgaria. In the previous year he had discussed the future frankly with Kemal Pasha in Stamboul. He had also obtained a confirmation of his policy in the court of Bukharest. He wished to make it clear in the west that there was no longer any likelihood of an outbreak of war on the initiative of any of the Balkan states. That was important. He must clear the whole Balkans from the stigma of being possible war-makers.

After France it was the King's intention to visit England. He would, in any case, have attended the wedding of the Duke of Kent and Princess Marina. And it was Barthou's intention to visit Italy. It was expected that while in Paris the King would discuss a proposed pact of mutual guarantee to embrace the coasts of the Adriatic and the eastern Mediterranean, such a pact to be signed by Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, Albania and Italy. Barthou was anxious that a step should be taken to modify the dangerous hostility of Yugoslavia and Italy. The French were about to come to an understanding with Italy and did not wish it to be jeopardized by a conflict between Italy and Yugoslavia. Alexander was a thorn in the side of Mussolini.

It has become a fashion in France to declare that King Alexander desired peace with Italy. But the King was not a man who cried "Peace, peace!" when there was no peace. It was shown conclusively in March, 1934, in the Oreb trial, that the Italians were ready to pay for the murder of the King. Italy supported Pavelitch and his gang, and even after the trial and its revelations Pavelitch had publicly announced that the attempt at murder would be repeated. Had Italy been desirous for a peaceful understanding the first step must have been the expulsion of Pavelitch from her territory.

In September, a month before the tragedy, Italy



perpetrated a public insult against the Serbs. From the radio station of Bari she broadcast a description ridiculing the behaviour of the Serbs at the battle of Kossovo. The broadcast was in the Serbian language and its offensiveness was calculated. At that time propaganda in the Serbian language was radiated from Bari, much as at a later date anti-British propaganda was broadcast to the Arabs. The Serbs retaliated by ridiculing the Italian army and the defeat at Caporetto. It cannot be said that at the time of Alexander's departure for France there were conditions suggesting the possibility of an entente with Italy. On the contrary, Italy was a mortal enemy who had assassins in her employ. That was something which ought to have been taken into serious consideration before the King ventured into the slackly-policed territory of France.

The King was warned but he replied that he would die when his time came but not before. And he would not change his plans. The Queen says she had become accustomed to the danger of being attacked. "How we escaped being blown to pieces at Zagreb I have never been able to understand." Her Majesty says that at this period the King had developed a nervous habit of looking behind him to see whether he was being followed. Alexander was not in the best of health in October, 1934, rather run down. In his pictures he looks really as if he had reached the end. There was a strange blankness in his face, as if in truth it had no future. But he expressed no misgivings. On the 4th of October he made up the royal party, his cousin Prince Paul; Paul's wife, the Princess Olga; the Queen; Bogoljub Jevtitch.

His departure was unannounced. He stole away from Belgrade in the night and was never seen in the capital again. The prime minister, Uzunovitch, and General Zhivkovitch, commander of the royal guard, were summoned and bade their Majesties farewell at the little suburban station of Topchider. A royal

coach had been added to the midnight fast train for Nish. It would be disconnected at Lapovo and the royal party would proceed by another line to Mitrovitsa. The King was not going direct to the port of embarkation, Zelenika. He wished to show Prince Paul some beauty spots in Montenegro and take Princess Olga to the place where he was born. So they went first to Mitrovitsa, which is near the field of Kossovo, tragic battle of the Middle Ages, when the Serbs went under the yoke of the Turk. But Mitrovitsa had another association, if not for Prince Paul, who was no soldier. From there the right wing of the Serbian army retreated over the mountains to the sea in the most calamitous period of the Great War. The left wing, which included Alexander, passed by Prizren across Albania to meet what was left of the other army near Scutari. What was then a series of cart tracks and goat paths had become a modern highway and motor road, the King's work. And Alexander's party from the railway station at Mitrovitsa went over the ground of that retreat in two smooth-going automobiles.

It was rainy weather and chill. The empty and solitary region had a preternatural grandeur, the mountain heights shrouded in leaden-coloured vapour, fringing downward in grey mist. The visible slopes of the hills were covered with grey boulders, each commonly about the size of a man, looking like fields of the dead that had been turned to stones—ancient, passive, cruel.

The peasants, with bread and salt, came out of their little stone cottages and shouted for the King. The affection of the hill folk for the King was boundless. Was he not one of them by extraction? The ancestors of Kara George had dwelt among those hills. No need to guard him on that journey. The King had insisted on making the journey in an open car so that the peasants might see him as he passed by. He and Prince Paul and Jevtitch were in the first car. The

Queen and Princess Olga followed in a closed car. The rain came down in torrents and the men were drenched to the skin. So soaked were they that at Rijeka they stopped and changed into dry clothes. But the rain did not abate: it whipped them with the lash of the south-west wind. They proceeded to Cetinje, the capital of old Montenegro. The mountain city lay listless, draped in rain-washed bunting. Clouds and mist drove over the roofs of the houses. The flags drooped as at half-mast. But Alexander wanted to visit the house where he was born, the unpretentious stone cottage where Princess Zorka, daughter of King Nicholas, had given birth to him and then, a year later, had died. Alexander was orphaned as an infant. He never knew what it was to have a mother.

The party descended from the cars and the King pointed out to Princess Olga the room where he was born. Olga had never been in Montenegro before and this was new to her. The house is an officers' mess now. It is impressive in that it is unimpressive. It must remind Alexander and others that whatever his achieved greatness his beginnings were very humble, the son of a poor exile. The Karageorgievitches had been put to flight and Prince Obrenovitch ruled then in Belgrade.

But there is something which haunts the imagination in this last visit of King Alexander to his birthplace, in the rain, four days before his death. What instinct prompted him to go there?

In the late afternoon the journey was resumed to Budva, where a royal villa was being constructed, to Zelenika and the sea. Everyone was tired. They went on board the *Dubrovnik*. It was arranged they should spend the night on the destroyer. At dinner they discussed the weather. A great storm was raging on the sea and the outlook for the voyage was unpleasant. The King, even if he did wear an admiral's uniform, was a bad sailor. The Queen suffered from bile. Prince

Paul tried hard to persuade them to cancel the voyage and go by train.

"We sent for time-tables," says Prince Paul. "The King, having looked up the Innsbrück-Basle route, became delighted at the prospect of going by train and agreed to abandon the voyage. That was on the evening of the 5th October. I thought it was settled. We spent a night on that wretched ship. But in the morning, when the King saw the long faces of the commander and his officers, he said he could not disappoint them. They would all get medals if they conveyed him safely to Marseilles. Let the Queen go by rail. He would keep to the *Dubrovnik*."

Jevtitch says, "The King asked the commander whether he could guarantee that in case of rough weather the *Dubrovnik* would not be forced to take shelter in some Italian port. The commander gave the necessary assurance and the King agreed to go by sea. The Queen, as you know, suffers from an internal complaint. It was thought she might be affected adversely by a rough voyage so she went by train."

The final decision was only arrived at on the morning of the 6th October, at early breakfast. There was then some sadness at the thought of the King going alone. But Alexander rallied the drooping spirits of the party. "One more little expedition before I go to France," said he. "Let us go to the Savina monastery before I sail!"

Jevtitch tactfully remained on the ship, declaring that he had certain dispatches to get off. The rest went ashore and proceeded in the royal car to Savina, a little way along the shore from Zelenika, approached by a long quiet avenue of pines; a mile through the pines and not a soul to be seen. Alexander wanted to hold in his hands again the ancient cross, the treasure of the monastery. It had been a gift from Stephen Dushan, Tsar of the Serbs, in 1354.

The car drew up under cypresses before the white

walls of the monastery church. There was an eerie silence; no sound of prayers; the monastery church was locked up. The Queen told me about this visit to the monastery: "The monastery was locked. We could not find anyone, either priest or monk, to open for us. We had not announced our visit and so were not expected. My husband said to Paul, 'I must show you the cross; come on, let's wake them up!' Then the boys did something they shouldn't have done. Of course it was very wrong. They found two ropes and rang the monastery bells. The bell my husband rang was very rarely sounded. It had a peculiar tone and must have greatly surprised those who heard it. A priest appeared as from nowhere running over the flagstone paving towards us and he was greatly surprised to see who it was had arrived. The priest opened the church and the royal party bought candles, lighted them and placed them before the altar. But we were greatly disappointed to hear that the old cross of Stephen Dushan was not at the monastery. It had been sent away. We inscribed our names in a book and went away. But afterwards we heard a curious story about this visit. I am not superstitious. I consider it rather a legend. We heard that the bells the boys had rung each had a name. The bell my husband had rung was called 'Death' and the bell Paul had rung was called 'Life.'"

Three days before his death King Alexander had tolled a bell for himself at the ancient monastery of Savina.

They returned to the *Dubrovnik* and the King went to his cabin and donned the admiral's uniform which he hated. Admiral of a one-ship fleet! He would have much preferred to have remained a soldier. All his life he had worn military uniform but he was to die dressed as a sailor! Queen Marie said good-bye to her husband. She confesses she had a strange feeling as if this were not an ordinary farewell. She was

troubled. She said to Paul and Olga as they drove away that she had had an unpleasant impression, as if something was not right.

There were officers and men seeing the King off. Zelenika is a military station. There was the singing of the national anthem. The *Dubrovnik* moved off from the mole. Smoke surged into the dull atmosphere; the keel of the destroyer cleft the green waters of the gulf. The King in his admiral's uniform stood gazing at the coast he had lived for and fought for. He said not a word. Like a phantom he was removed from Yugoslavia.

## 2

The story that a telephone message was received at Zelenika asking the King to delay embarkation as the police were desirous to follow up the movements of a group of terrorists across Europe appears to be untrue. Prince Paul, the Queen, Jevtitch, all deny knowledge of any such message. They must have known. The departure of Pospichil, Kral and Raitch out of Hungary had been signalled to the police, but further trace of them had been lost. The King left Zelenika on the same day that a group of conspirators left Paris for Marseilles, but that coincidence was unknown to the authorities.

Atsa Dimitrievitch, before he left Yugoslavia, had been a little apprehensive about the monarch's safety. No detectives had been deputed to accompany the King. No agents had been sent in advance to Marseilles and Paris to watch for suspect persons. Everyone in the gang except Vlada the Chauffeur and the blonde lady were known to the police. Their photographs were ranged in albums at the Ministry of the Interior. And Vlada the Chauffeur was "wanted" in Bulgaria. A posse of capable Balkan police would have had a fair

chance of spotting some of the men. When the King had gone to Sofia the police had done their work well. "I do not understand why we are not taking the same precautions at Paris and Marseilles as we took in Sofia," said Dimitrievitch over the telephone to the Belgrade Chief of Police.

"I have had no orders," was the reply.

"You had better take it up with Lazitch," said Dimitrievitch. Lazitch was Minister of the Interior, a favourite of the King, who had promoted him to the Cabinet because of the way he had settled the Macedonian disorders, a man of fine character, though too obedient to the King's wishes. The King did not wish to be guarded in France and that was enough for him. He said that the French had guaranteed in advance the security of the King and that they would not countenance the presence of Yugoslav police upon their national territory. Scotland Yard had also proffered its services and had been refused. That the exit of certain of Pavelitch's men from Hungary had been signalled did not impress him. Hungary had, during the preceding summer, agreed to disband the terrorists encamped on her territory and it was natural that some bad characters should be leaving. Dimitrievitch had no say. He was only the court marshal and it was not part of his duties to organize police protection.

The general was not in a condition to be very active in Belgrade. The King had sanctioned his journey to France by rail on condition that he took a sleeper and nursed his foot all the way. He set off for Paris alone and rather disgruntled. Perhaps he was jealous of Bogoljub Jevtitch, who occupied his position with the King and voyaged in the *Dubrovnik* to Marseilles. He was used to having more say in the arrangements for a royal state visit. But he had been commissioned to do certain things. He must take a suite for the King and Queen at the Hotel Crillon, in the Place de la Concorde. Alexander's bedroom must face the gardens

at the back; he did not wish to be subject to the din of traffic at night. The general had also been told to get the plans of the reception from the French minister of ceremonies and cut the ceremony to the indispensable minimum. The King loathed pageantry and show.

But in Paris the Serbian court marshal found himself regarded as a person of minor importance. Lacking the personal backing of the sovereign he was regarded as a supernumerary, a fussy old general with a game foot, trying to change the cut-and-dried plans of the French Republic. But he got the desired rooms at the Hotel Crillon without difficulty and had decided to quit Paris for Marseilles when the message came through that the Queen had changed her plans and was going to Marseilles by train. Then, that she was too late to get there. It was imperative that the King and Queen should arrive in Paris together, unthinkable that the Queen should be waiting for her husband at the station. Dimitrievitch wanted the Queen's carriage uncoupled at Lyons and then connected with the train bringing the King from Marseilles. Then the sovereigns would arrive together in Paris on the morning of the 10th October.

The French said this was unheard of. Such a thing was never done in France. The railway was privately owned and the officials would never agree to such a novelty. Dimitrievitch was delayed. He sought telephonic communication with the Queen travelling on the Paris express. He was put through to her eventually at Liubliana. Queen Marie was indignant and would not hear of meeting her husband at the Gare de Lyon in Paris. Dimitrievitch told the Yugoslav minister, Spalaikovitch, and he had more success. But it had taken the French a long time to agree to uncouple the Queen's coach. "The trouble is," Atsa explained, "that Jugoslavia is a small country. It does not count for much in France. Had it been the



English King and Queen they would have done all that was required of them at once."

On the 8th October the lame Serbian general went by night train to Marseilles, arriving at the port at half-past nine on the morning of the fateful day. He had but little time to look about him and see what arrangements had been made for the reception of the King. It may be urged that the Serb master of ceremonies had no standing in France, but no Serb official with authority got to Marseilles a day before the event. In the afternoon Dimitrievitch was allowed to escort M. Jacques Pietri, the French Minister of Marine, on board the *Dubrovnik* and introduce him to the King.

## 3

The King and his Foreign Minister, Jevtitch, voyaged to Marseilles. The only other companion on the destroyer was the commander Pavitch. Alexander spent much of the time in his cabin, but he was not ill. For once a rough sea seemed to have no power to upset him. It did not interfere with the programme of work on board. He composed the speeches he would have to make in France, and with the help of Jevtitch compiled lists of the distinguished Frenchmen he was likely to meet, adding notes on their careers.

Jevtitch alone knows how the King spent those days on the sea. He was a short dark man, with glittering face and ears on the alert, not a long-headed man nor having the appearance of a typical diplomat. But Alexander trusted him. Most of the King's chosen men were trustworthy. There were no crooked characters; for the King appreciated character even more than talent. Jevtitch had one of those short, broad heads not uncommon in the Balkans, rather like an earthenware pot with a wide brim, not shaped too fine, but useful. He was quick, intelligent, faithful, perhaps too

impulsive. Affectionately known as Boshko Jevtitch, he returned from Paris after the tragedy on a wave of passionate popular feeling as the one leader in Jugoslavia, the mouthpiece of the clamour for revenge. Had he had effective backing from France or obtained complete international satisfaction for the crime, he would have remained the leading figure in Yugoslav politics for many years.

All that is here set down about the voyage is derived from Boshko Jevtitch. The King was not wistful, neither reviewing his past nor thinking he had come to a dead end in his reign. On the contrary, he was full of plans for the development of his policy both at home and abroad. He was cheerful and business-like all the way:

"No, we did not play cards. That would have been a relaxation, but there was not time for that. But we listened to the radio. On the first day out the wireless did bring us something sensational, causing us a great deal of reflection. We heard Mussolini make a remarkable speech. In the square in front of the cathedral at Milan the Duce addressed the world."

It is possible that Mussolini knew that at that moment Alexander was voyaging towards probable death. That gives the speech, when one reads it after his death, a peculiarly dramatic quality. High functionaries of the Fascist Council must have known what was in the air.

"I know that Kerin (Vlada the Chauffeur) started from Turin. Pavelitch was in Turin. It is impossible for the doings and movements of the terrorist groups in Italy to have escaped the vigilance of the Fascist authorities," said Jevtitch.

One may take it that Mussolini knew something. The speech does not seem to have been addressed to King Alexander. The King, in a sense, was already dead. The words were spoken over the King's head to

those who might come to power in Yugoslavia after Alexander had ceased to matter.

"What did Italy envisage as a result of the murder?" I asked.

"Separatism and chaos. Italy considered she would then be free from the embarrassment of a hostile neighbour. The event has to be taken in conjunction with Italy's imperial policy. She intended going into Abyssinia."

Mussolini, in his speech, reviewed his relationship with each of the important powers in Europe and addressed himself first to Yugoslavia. "We do not see much prospect of improving our relationship with our neighbours beyond the mountains," said he. "At least, not so long as they continue to wound us in our most sensitive part. The first condition for a policy of friendship, a friendship which would be crystallized in diplomatic protocols, would be the discontinuance of those reflections on the valour of those Italian soldiers who shed their blood in the wildernesses of Krass and Macedonia. . . . Nevertheless, we who are confident and strong now demand, for the last time, the possibility of an understanding."

Mussolini was referring to the article in *Vremye* about the disastrous battle of Caporetto, when an army containing many Bosnian and Dalmatian units in the Austrian service routed the Italians, causing casualties amounting to several hundred thousands, a greater defeat than that inflicted on the Russians at Tannenberg. The article had greatly wounded Italy's martial pride. Nevertheless, Italy asked for an understanding with Yugoslavia.

"What did the King think of Mussolini's words?" I asked.

"He thought them hypocritical."

Curiously enough, the understanding which Mussolini demanded he did obtain after the King's death.

The radio continued to bleat his words through the south-west wind over the murky Adriatic. The Duce went on to speak of Austria. Murder was in the air. Chancellor Dollfuss had been shot in the previous July.

"As regards Austria, we will defend with all our power the independence of the Austrian Republic, an independence now consecrated by the blood of a chancellor, a little man but with great spirit," declared the voice of Mussolini.

It was a less resolute and arrogant voice speaking in 1934, the voice of Italy before the Abyssinian conquest, before the Spanish adventure, before the inauguration of the axis of Rome-Berlin. Mussolini warned those in Germany who vainly attempted to frustrate the historical destiny of Italy. No words of friendship for Germany in that speech! He was at that time more interested to have an understanding with France than with Germany. Because if influential politicians in France could be won over he would have a force capable of ham-stringing the efforts of England and the League of Nations when he attacked Abyssinia. He was tapping Laval. He was able to report that "the relationship with France has greatly improved during the last year. If we get the understanding with France we require it will be most profitable and fruitful for European interests generally."

He then made a passing reference to England and the failure of the policy of disarmament. Now that the compromise of disarmament had failed an improvement in the relationship of the various European powers was generally advantageous. Finally the Duce declared his faith that Fascism was the type *par excellence* of European civilization in our age.

"I at once sent a telegram to Belgrade instructing the Press how it should comment on this speech," said Jevtitch. "I asked them to refrain from provocative commentary, merely to report it objectively."

The *Dubrovnik* ploughed its way across the Adriatic

waves. Spray and rain came with the south-west wind; a short twilight, a night without stars. Jevtitch and the King sat below and worked on the speech which would have to be made at the great banquet in Paris in response to the President of the French Republic, words to be spoken the day after his death:

“Je ne saurais mieux répondre aux éloquentes et cordiales paroles qui m’ont été adressées qu’en saisissant cette occasion, qui est une des plus solennelles dans ma vie, depuis la grande guerre, pour vous exprimer les sentiments qui animent toute la nation Yougoslave. . . .”

Alexander was an admirable French scholar. From his earliest years of childhood in Geneva he was familiar with the French language. His father, Peter I, educated in Paris, a volunteer fighting for France in the Franco-Prussian war, spoke French well and was more allied in sentiment to France than to any other country. Jevtitch’s French could not compare with that of his sovereign. But he was able to judge the scope of the speech, how much could be said, what might better be omitted. Alexander’s tendency was to praise France more than she deserved. For a long time France had been but passive in her friendship with Jugoslavia. France did not support Jugoslavia to the extent she expected Jugoslavia to support her in the eventuality of war.

Having composed this first important speech, the King jotted down a few words to say at the military school of St. Cyr, where his father had been educated. That was one of his engagements for the 11th October.

It is probable that during the night Alexander pondered Mussolini’s speech. Italy “for the last time” demanded an understanding with Jugoslavia. Was that a threat? When had she previously demanded an understanding? Two years earlier Jugoslavia had

gone to the limit in approaching the Fascists. The effort for reconciliation had culminated in a personal affront. Alexander was to have had an interview with the Duce, but at the last moment Mussolini rudely refused to meet the King, telling him to "put his house in order first." And since 1932, Italy had all the while aided and abetted terrorism in Yugoslavia. Mussolini had not even wished that the Yugoslav house should be in order.

It is possible that in 1932 Mussolini had meant to say to Alexander, "You have taken a step towards Fascism, but you have not gone the whole hog. When you adopt Fascist institutions I will meet you." Alexander had abrogated the constitution in 1929. Democracy had been tried, but the Yugoslavs had failed. Alexander, against his better judgment, had put himself in almost the same position with regard to his people as a Fascist dictator. He had slipped into the error of paternal government which might have worked in old Montenegro but was unsuitable for a large state and a complex of jealous races. It had proved difficult for the soldier to cope with the turbulent politicians and he had taken refuge in paternalism. But he had not quite abjured democracy. He consciously linked the destiny of his subjects to that of the democracies of the west, especially France and England, with the safeguards of the League of Nations. The King felt he must give the lie to Mussolini's prophecy that Fascism was going to be the type of European civilization in our era.

On the following day Alexander discussed with Jevtitch his plans for the restoration of responsible democratic government in Yugoslavia. The dictatorship and the one-party régime had been a failure since their inception and the King was aware of it. The plans were not entirely new. He had had before him for some time 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. For

democracy to have a chance the jealous races must be placed in federal compartments. He would grant state 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 above state. He said he had decided to give effect to this after his return from France. Then he would announce a general election and appoint a premier having responsibility to parliament. In his mind he had moved towards freedom. He wanted to release the numerous Communist propagandists languishing in gaol. He would recognize Soviet Russia.

M. Jevtitch, in these long conversations on board the *Dubrovnik*, was privileged to learn more of the mind of the King than any other man. That future in which, ironically, he could have no part exercised Alexander's mind unusually. He gave to his Foreign Minister his vision of the Europe to be. The forces making for peace would become united: those making for war would be isolated. The destinies of France and England were indivisible: if one fell the other fell. The Balkan powers were already consolidated. Free from interference on the part of Italy, Austria, Hungary and, as he hoped, Russia, they would enter upon a golden age of peaceful development. Nazi Germany might ultimately absorb Austria, but that would not alter the distribution of forces, because in a war Austria and Germany would in any case act as one. Germany on the Brenner Pass would be a curb upon the ambitions of Italy. Czecho-Slovakia might be alarmed but she would have a counterbalance in the support of Soviet Russia. *Anschluss* would be less dangerous than the restoration of the Habsburg dynasty, with its pretensions to the recovery of all the lost territory of the Austrian empire.

The King drafted the note which he would have required Jevtitch to send to Soviet Russia. He must

obtain assurance from Stalin that Russia had no claim to territory in the Balkans, renounced for ever Bessarabia, and that there would be no more subsidized propaganda for Communism, a mere formality because the Soviet eagerly desired a general understanding with the Balkan powers and Czecho-Slovakia. Both the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact would obtain the support of Russia.

King Alexander was not obviously a dominant factor in European politics, but more depended on him at that time than the world knew. "Had he survived for but one year," said Jevtitch to me afterwards, "the face of European politics would have been altogether different." With him perished most of his plans. His vision of the future faded like an insubstantial dream.

The little destroyer went roaring into a new storm. The spray of the sea lashed the decks and in the sinister commotion of the elements the two men talked of peace, far into the night. When they retired they could not sleep for the uproar of the sea. The *Dubrovnik*, seeking calmer waters, passed through the Straits of Messina rather than keep to the open Mediterranean. But Italian waters were rough, as if partaking of the character of Italian politics.

The turbines thundered through the Tyrrhene Sea. At length, at a distance of 150 miles from the French coast, the French fleet coming from home waters signalled the *Dubrovnik*. A squadron of cruisers and torpedo-boats, accompanied by submarines, crossed the dim horizon, grew near, manœuvred into position, and then accompanied her to Marseilles. The King, sitting between two guns, field-glasses in hand, descried the *Colbert* and the *Duquesne*, the *Forbin*, the *Mistral* and the *Fronde*, and the flagship of Admiral Dubois. The forenoon of the 9th was fair. The sea grew more calm, as if only the Italian part was stormy. The grand south coast of France broke through low mist, the picturesque littoral of Toulon, the cliffs of Cassis and



Marseilles. The King watched the vague picture of Marseilles become clearer and clearer, the forts, the breakwaters, the shipping. Then the *Dubrovnik* made a slow approach to the dead water of the Vieux Port. Guns thundered a salute to the sky. The King of Yugoslavia had arrived.

## CHAPTER III

OH GOD! OH MARSEILLES!

THE official preparations in Marseilles had an impromptu air, as if the monarch were arriving at very short notice. Paris was not co-operating. No extra police were drafted from other cities. No specials were sent from the capital. The Sûreté Générale was not in control. Even the Ministry of War failed to give orders that troops should line the route. It allowed a cavalry escort, trumpeters and some detachments of white and black infantry, these for purposes of parade, not for security.

The crowds began to form in the early afternoon, but they were never dense. There was free movement and everyone had a view of the street. *Per contra*, anyone in the street could look over and see the whole crowd. A capable detective must have noticed Vlada the Chauffeur with Mio Kral, and decided to keep them under observation. The Bulgarian was out of his setting and could be remarked. He had a revolver a foot long in one pocket, a revolver with 3-inch-square cumbrous magazine, not easy to hide from sharp eyes. His lower pockets bulged with bombs and ammunition. He and his nervous companion were hanging about for a couple of hours before the parade started. Certainly, had there been six Serbian police agents watching the crowd during the afternoon these two must have been rounded up before the King's car came groaning up the Canebière.

The swarms of journalists, press photographers, and news-reel men invading the city on the morning of the 9th October must have shown that the press and

the bioscope scented a world event. But Marseilles persistently regarded the King's visit as a small affair. Incidentally, nothing was done to regulate the movements of the camera-men. News-reel operators, especially of America, are among the most daring and intrepid men of our day. They caused delay and confusion. They filmed the murder marvellously and helped to make it possible.

There was, of course, pardonable excitement at the Vieux Port, where Barthou and the Mayor of Marseilles and General Georges with other notables were ranged in a semi-circle to greet the King when he stepped ashore. The cannon blazing from the forts and ships put men's nerves on edge. The low-flying scaplanes caused so much noise that the nervous men waiting could not hear themselves speak.

Foissac, who had to drive the King, came up in an old police car from the prefecture. He was himself a policeman doing duty as chauffeur, a peasant speaking with a strong Provençal accent. Foissac was also nervous. It was the first time in his life that he had been called upon to drive a king. He had driven better cars, but he had never driven a better man. "This car is more like a hearse than an automobile," said he to a police officer. "It won't go more than twenty miles an hour and it is very ancient. Wouldn't it be better to borrow the car of Monsieur the Mayor? After all—the King—it's not every day we have a king here."

"You think you are entered for a race, Foissac," rejoined the officer with a thin smile. "You must not exceed a speed of five miles an hour. Keep her in first! These are your orders."

This car, with the bloodstains on the upholstery and the scratches on the paint-work made by the assassin, is now in a museum in Belgrade. It was and is a museum piece. Much inferior to a Belgrade taxi, its date of construction is 1927, but it does not possess its

original coach-work that appears to have been renewed after a smash. It has a broad, clumsy footboard and a step that looks like a converted tool-box. It has been repainted a drab official black and has the flat, well-worn cushions of an old taxi.

"Bring out the rubber-tired buggy!" The use of this car was in itself a disgrace to Marseilles. In the service of the police force it was commonly used for the arrest of some high-placed courtesan or the wife of some great crook like Stavisky. One can imagine such a dame in the seat given to Alexander. She is being taken in this car to the prefecture, accompanied by two gendarmes with waxed moustaches. Very fitting!

King Alexander, wearing his admiral's uniform, little white collar and tie, two-cornered admiral's hat with gold braid inches deep, his breast slashed scarlet with the Legion of Honour, stepped out of a little boat with Pietri and Jevtitch and Dimitrievitch, on to the Quai des Belges, where a squad of French marines shouted a sevenfold hurrah. A group of veterans of the old Salonika front stood to attention. Barthou greeted the King a little patronizingly. The old Frenchman is a friend, but at the Vieux Port he represents France. He must not be servile. The King of Jugoslavia's importance must not be exaggerated officially. The King has a grave, almost imperceptible smile. Perhaps he does not like the roaring sound of the engines of the planes overhead, the thunder of the guns. He hates all fuss. It is an awkward official moment. But the bands play the national anthems of Jugoslavia and France. The camera-men click and snap, the news-reelers wind their reels. The populace surging forward shrieks dementedly "Long live the King!"

A little girl in Provençal dress came forward, pushed by her mother up to the King. She curtsied and held up a bouquet of wild autumn flowers. That was unrehearsed and unofficial, a smile from *la belle France*. The King was touched. The constraint dropped from

his features like a mask, and those who looked on could see that he had become happy in Marseilles.

Warm afternoon sunshine flooded across the scene and helped the camera-men, who were still very busy. The hood of the old car was pulled down so that the King and Barthou could sit in the sun. The hood disclosed only half of the interior of the car. It gave air to those who sat in the back seats. General Georges would have a collapsible side seat, what the French call a *strapontin*, and he would be in the shade of the narrow wooden roof, an honour to be in the same coupé with the King and Barthou, but a most uncomfortable sitting posture for a famous general. The Mayor led the King and the French Foreign Minister to the car, where they sat on the shallow grey cushions at the back. General Georges arranged his legs under the *strapontin* so as not to interfere too much with the gouty feet of the old French minister. General Georges was attached to the person of the King for the period of his visit to France. He was honourable bodyguard, but he carried no weapons.

The three men were in the car for quite a while before Foissac put in the clutch. They heard the clash of horses' feet, the cavalry manœuvring into position. The two mounted escorts, Colonel Piolet on the right, Captain Vigoreux on the left, stood waiting at the back. Jevtitch, Pietri and the Mayor of Marseilles got into a second car, Dimitrievitch and the local chief of police into a third. The procession formed up and was ready to start. It was ten minutes past four. But it was impossible to get going because eight camera-men barred the way. They were in a line in front of the King's car at a distance of a few feet. One of them acted as spokesman and addressed Foissac the chauffeur. "We should like one or two more shots," said he. "Perhaps you would not mind waiting a few minutes."

There seemed to be no one with authority to say "No." The camera-men had their way and it was a

quarter-past four when they signalled Foissac that they were satisfied. Trumpeters and *gardes mobiles* rode up the Canebière and the cars, in first gear, followed at a walking pace, greeted by salvos of "Vive le Roi!" The seaplanes descended, roaring towards the roofs, causing a noise as of great wings striking the walls on each side of the Canebière. The engine of the King's car made a terrible din. But above the noise was the human hubbub of the people shouting for his Majesty. The King had to speak loudly. He turned to Barthou and said, "I am very happy to be in France." But these were the last words he ever uttered.

On Alexander's face there was a wan smile. He may have been happy, but his face was not radiant with happiness. It was a blank face with a faint smile. That smile, caught by the photographers while he was alive, remained long after he was dead and stands fixed for ever in the death mask of the King.

King Alexander incessantly acknowledged the cheers of the populace, raising his hand to the gold braid of his hat. The noise was deafening. Overhead roared the low aeroplanes and from each side of the Canebière blared the plaudits of the people. Only two minutes had elapsed. The car approached the Bourse. General Georges put his head out at the window on his left to look ahead and see whether the cavalry escort was at hand. Actually it was not at all near the King whom it was supposed to be escorting, but was gallivanting away in front as if it belonged to a circus procession.

At the same moment that General Georges put his head out of the window on the left something happened on the right. A man in brown, a bunched figure like a wild cat, had bounded on to the stepboard of the car. Such was the noise overhead and all around that General Georges thought that the shots which he heard were far away.

Colonel Piolet, with his horse indolently grazing the

hood of the car, saw the man in brown jump on the foot-board of the car, but he thought it was a photographer.

The police agent, Celestin Galy, on duty at the Bourse on the right-hand side of the procession, saw the man leap on to the car and supposed it was some fellow who wanted to touch the King for luck.

Commander Vigoreux, on the other side of the car, deafened by the roaring of the seaplanes overhead, thought he discerned the rattle of machine-gun fire, but he continued undisturbed on horseback following the car.

Foissac the chauffeur, driving the car, saw the man in brown disengage himself from the crowd on the pavement, plunge through the cinematographers who were filming the show, and approach the car. When he heard the shots he turned about, saw the assassin and with one hand tried to push him off while he still continued to drive at a walking pace, but on second thoughts he stopped the car. The *vivas* for the King continued after the King was shot. No one seemed to have at once understood. The *vivas* continued and then suddenly changed to a hoarse roar of guttural conversation, like the sound of a gale entering a forest. There was a stamping and chafing, then a lurching, hoarse questions and exclamations, uneasy surging, surprise, screams.

General Georges had heard nothing from inside the car. He drew his head in at the window and looked round. Never can any man have had a greater surprise than he had then. Blotting out the opposite window was the monstrous visage of Vlada the Chauffeur, with protruding jaw and set blazing eyes, the blood-lust incarnate. Alexander the King lay sunk in the right-hand corner of the car with a bullet near his heart. Barthou, moaning in agony, had slipped on to his knees on the mat. A hand with a long slim-barrelled

Mauser was covering Alexander, ready to fire again. All this General Georges realized in the twinkling of an eye. He did not hesitate. He flung open the left-hand door of the car and sprang into the street.

The agent, Celestin Galy, on duty in the street opposite the Bourse, was armed with a revolver, but he did not draw it. He heard the shouting of the crowd change to angry murmurs. He strode forward, but he did not hear the shots. He put his right hand on the shoulder of the assassin, who was crouching in at the window of the car, and he ordered him to get off. Vlada the Chauffeur at once turned upon him and shot him through the stomach. The police agent fell, rolling in agony in the street.

The mob then knew for certain that it was assassination. Pandemonium was let loose in the Canebière. The policeman-driver, Foissac, had got down from his seat and invited death by pulling the Bulgarian by the tail of his coat. But by that time General Georges had got round and he rushed up to the assassin to seize him by the collar. But Vlada the Chauffeur turned about with rapidity, covered General Georges with his Mauser, firing at once and wounding him in the side, then taking precise aim and shooting him in the region of the heart. The general tumbled backwards, but with two more shots the murderer put bullets through his right arm and his left arm.

Meanwhile Barthou, who had been shot in the right arm above the elbow, staggered out of the car into the street by the door which General Georges had left open. An artery had been severed. His blood flowed in a stream, gushed from him, splattering the pavement and the coats of the howling mob.

Jevtitch got out of the second car, a diminutive, perturbed figure in frock coat and top hat, hurrying anxiously between policemen and sightseers. He got into the King's car by the open door by which Barthou



had got out and at once he placed a hand on the breast of Alexander to feel his pulse. Dimitrievitch got out of the third vehicle in bewilderment and fright.<sup>1</sup>

The murderer was not looking into the car any longer. He was at bay. For the moment unassailed, he held his revolver ready to repel attack. With his left hand he extracted another charger which he was prepared to insert in the Mauser the moment the first was exhausted. But he had become angry because it appeared that his helper, Kral, was leaving him in the lurch. If he, Vlada, was to make a run for it and escape, now was the moment for Kral to throw his bombs into the crowd. His eyes sought Kral. He fired two shots at the people on the steps of the Bourse. Perhaps that would startle Kral and make him do his duty. But Kral had a nervous brain-storm. He was frightened by what he had seen. He slunk backward out of the lynching crowd and then ran to get into the provincial omnibus just starting for Aix-en-Provence. The news-reel men were still busy. For them it was the scoop of the universe, but they did not get the escaping Kral.

<sup>1</sup> According to General Dimitrievitch, he reached the royal car before Jevtitch and bending over the monarch he caught his last dying whisper, which was "*Chuvajte Jugoslaviju!*" (Save Jugoslavia!) In converse with the general I felt rather incredulous about this. If he had got there in time to hear anything I suggested that it might have been "*Chuvajte Kralitsu!*" (Take care of the Queen!) But Atsa Dimitrievitch was very firm about it and imitated expressively with his lips how he had heard the words. Certainly it sounded more like an expiring sigh than an articulate sentence.

But upon reference to Bogoljub Jevtitch I was informed that Dimitrievitch never entered the King's car and that he did not see him until they reached the prefecture. That left me in rather a quandary, but as between the two men I felt that the Foreign Minister was the more likely to have the truth. Nevertheless, for state reasons it has generally been allowed that the King's last words were "Save Jugoslavia!" That was about the best thing he could have said under the circumstances and is most likely to be perpetuated in Serbian history. [s. G.]

The drama was still going on. Colonel Piolet, who had clumsily backed his horse—he was an infantry officer—drew his sabre and began a tardy attack upon Vlada the Chauffeur, beating him on the head. He was egged on by women screaming. Two women had already been killed by spent bullets. The populace wanted to lynch the assassin, but it was not brave. It was stampeding. People were underfoot in the roadway and on the pavement. One can imagine the result if Kral had indeed thrown his bombs as he had been instructed.

Colonel Piolet had taken the murderer by surprise. Having received several blows on the head, the Bulgarian fell on to the footboard of the car and rolled to the ground. He fired upward from the roadway. Then a plucky but over-excited policeman jumped on him and snatched what he thought was the revolver. It was the charger. Another policeman came up and shot Vlada in the head, quietening him but not killing him outright. The mob gained courage and surged forward, stamping on the prostrate terrorist, kicking him, shrieking and shouting. Police then came in swarms, elbowing the crowd roughly, fighting the mob. They made a cordon about the car.

Jevtitch was still bent over the King. He had been joined by Colonel Pavlovitch, the Chamberlain. They were still hoping that the King was not dead. They stretched his short body on the length of the two cushioned seats. Jevtitch, with a small penknife used for opening letters, cut open the King's starched collar to give him air. But he could not unbutton the King's waistcoat. The admiral's uniform was too tight. It seemed to prevent his breathing. Jevtitch began hacking through the broad red band of the Legion of Honour with his little knife. The French decoration seemed to tie death and the King together. Jevtitch frenziedly cut it through. Then he sliced down the King's vest and opening the uniform right up, blood

suddenly spurted from the released body on to his hands and face.

But he felt and found the wounds. He even noticed that the top of the King's right thumb had been notched by the fatal bullet that went to his heart. Alexander had been shot through his saluting hand, through the hand which acknowledged the shouts of *Vive le Roi!* There was blood now everywhere except on the face of the King, which was as white as marble. On his lips was the fading smile which had not quite faded. There was no sign of pain of any kind. Some last thought was on his face, but it was not fear of death, no, nor spasm of mortal agony. And nothing more could be done. There was a strange hush of death in the midst of a hurly-burly as of hell let loose. Jevtitch was helpless and desperate and unspeakably moved. Alexander had been very fond of him. They were bound, not so much as subject and sovereign as friend and friend, by deep affection.

When the murderer was down on the ground and the crowd had taken courage, surging forward once more, some men dashed to the car to stare at the dead King. There were wild, frightened faces looking down from the back of the car and hands outstretched along the upholstery, as if wishing to touch the dead King. Photographers demanded unimpeded view of the body. There was a confused jabbering as of angry apes. Anger was the note of the rapid French, but anger against the assassin.

But Foissac got back to the driver's seat and on orders from the chief of police started up again. He now went into top gear and, sounding lustily on his horn, clove a way through the people. That was strange. The dead King continued upon the line of route. Prostrate on the cushions, he looked up to the dim bunting with eyes that did not see. Only the crowd in the immediate vicinity of the Bourse had realized what had happened. The car got quickly



Vlada the Chauffeur being struck down by Colonel Piolet just after firing the fatal shots



The murdered King being lifted from the car



The dead King being borne to the house of the Prefect of Police

*Photos: E.N.A.*



through the excited mob and reached masses of sight-seers who were still waiting for the King. From the Canebière into the Rue St. Ferréol, where the public were all cheering and still crying *Vive le Roi!*

But the car drew up at the prefecture. Tea was set out there because it had been intended that after the ceremony of placing a wreath on the monument to the fallen soldiers King Alexander, M. Barthou and other notables should return to the prefecture for tea before his Majesty went to the railway station to take the train to Dijon to meet the Queen. The King's body was carried into the chief magistrate's room and laid upon a sofa. Blood now trickled from the lips which still preserved their vague smile, making it possible to believe that the King yet lived. Several doctors had offered their services, but were not allowed to examine the wounds. A gendarme had been sent post haste to a hospital to fetch the most highly qualified doctor in Marseilles. He reached the hospital at 4.30 p.m. and Dr. Assali, chief medical officer of colonial troops, came at once. Dr. Assali took one glance at the body, took up a wrist, felt for the pulse, and then gave an almost indignant glance at the people gathered round, as much as to say, "Why did you bring me here?" "Life has ceased," said he.

He entrusted the examination of the dead body to another doctor and hurried to the military hospital to see what he could do for General Georges, who lay unconscious there. It was found that King Alexander had been shot twice, first through the chest and then through the abdomen. It was the first bullet that had killed him, not actually passing through the heart, but near enough for death to have been almost instantaneous. In his subsequent evidence to the court, the second doctor, Raoul Olmer, declared: "Nous n'avons pu que constater le décès qui avait dû être très rapide."

General Georges was the next to receive attention. His condition was parlous in the extreme. He had been

shot through the left breast, through the abdominal wall and through both arms. The metal in a Serbian decoration had deflected one bullet from his heart. He lay between life and death for five months, but Dr. Assali saved him.

The plight of Barthou in the Hotel Dieu was not so desperate, had he received prompt attention. But Marsilles had completely lost its nerve that afternoon. Barthou was allowed to bleed to death. He was lying on a tilted operating table, the idea being that on an incline he would lose less blood. His arm had been tied with a girl's handkerchief, at the wrist, while the wound was above the elbow! Dr. Bonnal, when he arrived and saw this, was indignant. He administered ethyl chloride and worked on the wound, finding at once the two extremities of the severed artery and joining them again. Had this been done at once when Barthou arrived in hospital there is little doubt but that he would have been saved. But it was too late. The old man had lost too much blood. Other doctors arrived and commenced a transfusion, but during that transfusion Barthou died.

In another ward Celestin Galy was speechless in agony. In the women's ward were Yolande Paris and Mme Durbec, one shot through the right hip, the other through the right thigh. Both died.

In another room lay the murderer with bleeding face and nose smashed by the heel of some man in the crowd. He still breathed, but was inarticulate. Later in the evening he also died—never having said a word since he fired the first shot which killed Alexander.

## CHAPTER IV

### MIO KRAL

MIO KRAL admitted afterwards that his courage failed him, or, as he put it, he did not throw his bombs because so many women and children might be killed. That failure to support the principal assassin at the critical moment in the Canebière saved him from the guillotine. But Kral's obligation as helper was not merely to facilitate escape. He had his Mauser and his Walther, loaded and ready, and abundance of reserve ammunition. In the case that the Bulgarian had been arrested or shot, or for some other reason failed in his attempt, the principal rôle fell to Kral. He understudied the principal actor. But considering his mental state there was no strong supposition that he could have himself committed the murder unaided.

Kral was only twenty-seven, a poor, narrow-brained degenerate from a family ruled by the Austrians before the war, one of those pious peasant Catholics who seldom have enough converse with intelligent priests to get fanaticism smoothed out of their frustrate souls. He had become a tramp. He had left his village and wandered into foreign lands, been put in prison for vagabondage. But a serious talk with a simple father might have lured Kral away from murder. Priests had no influence in Pavelitch's camps. The assumption of the approval of the Church was used by him without the permission of the Church. In all the evidence given afterwards there never was one word about a priest. Pavelitch knew well enough that "Thou shalt do no murder!" holds good for Catholics as for others.



Mio Kral kissed the Cross and went to kill the King. He had been told that what the *paglavnik* decreed was blessed by Holy Church. He agreed that his own life was forfeit if he failed to obey instructions and also that his soul was damned. He desired a glorious rôle, a martyr's crown. But he did not know himself. The cannon firing in Marseilles, the expectant crowd, the tension, the shots, the minute of great noise and drama, were too much for his emotions. He slunk back out of the mob and fled precipitately.

He got on to an omnibus plying between Marseilles and Aix-en-Provence. In a sense he was fortunate. Not one of the other passengers was agitated. Those Frenchmen who had witnessed the drama were still discussing it in the streets. Not for them to take a bus to Aix! Not even the driver of the omnibus knew what had happened. Mio Kral drove to Aix ahead of the news. That was well for him because a nervous foreigner might well have come under the observation of the police. The police of Aix knew nothing. No telephone message had conveyed the dire news. Kral returned to the hotel from which he had departed at midday and there was nothing peculiar in that.

He expected to be met at the hotel. He would have to confess that he had left his comrade in the lurch, that he had not thrown his bombs. But he was ready to admit that his nerve had failed him. He believed the King to be dead. The main object was achieved and it was likely that Pavelitch would be lenient to him. He could face Pavelitch, though he had not been able to face mass murder. He sat in the restaurant of the hotel and smoked cigarette after cigarette. He ordered nothing, said he was waiting for someone.

Those who organized the murder were callous in the extreme. Beyond giving them pocket-compasses they made no provision for the escape of the assassins. At the moment of the crime Kvaternik was already in Montreux, in Switzerland, receiving the letter written

by himself to himself. He had done his allotted part and left the rest of the responsibility to Pavelitch. He would not have been on hand to organize an attempt at Versailles had the Marseilles plot failed. It was not he who was going to forward instructions to Pospichil and Raitch waiting at Fontainebleau.

But there is no doubt that the murder in Marseilles was watched by someone who had authority, probably "Peter," who did not have to have a message from Pavelitch ordering the men to obey him because he was himself Pavelitch. Unidentified by anyone in the frenzied crowd, he looked on critically while Vlada the Chauffeur carried out his orders. With him no doubt was Maria Vudrasek, the blonde lady. Had there been a failure, it was he who would have given immediate instructions to Pospichil and Raitch. Equally upon him devolved the duty of facilitating the escape of Kral and Vlada the Chauffeur, supposing them not to have been arrested. Was he to have picked up the two assassins at the hotel at Aix? Of that we cannot be sure. Perhaps Kral was merely waiting for the Bulgarian on the chance that he might have made a dash for it and escaped.

In truth, had Kral thrown his bombs there is a fair chance that in the confusion and panic the two men might have escaped the flustered police and both got on to the Aix omnibus. A provincial omnibus was the last place likely to be searched for the assassins. It was shrewdly calculated. There was at least a chance.

But the observer, having realized that the King was dead, ensured his own safety by making an immediate escape. He did not notify Pospichil and he left Kral to shift for himself. Kral had not carried out instructions. He had not thrown the bombs. His blood was on his own head.

Kral was more and more nervous. The news had not come to Aix, but it might come at any moment. When it was dark he went up to his room and ripped

the covering from the spring mattress on his bed, hid the bombs, the pistols and the ammunition and then tacked the covering in place again. He had no particular originality. He did what he had seen the blonde lady do. He had not freed himself from incriminating evidence, supposing he had been arrested that evening. Mattresses are liable to be shaken. The whole hotel might have been blown up. Better for him to have dumped them in the Rhone.

Better not to have waited two hours at the hotel. Time was precious if he wished to escape before the hue and cry. But he was expecting someone. The man who was to have warned Pospichil must pick him up. How otherwise was he to get away from France, how get to the safety of Italy? There was only one thing he knew, go north to Switzerland by the way he had come, like a dog, by Avignon to Paris, to Fontainebleau, to Thonon, across the Lake of Geneva. Then would come the adventure, going east by compass over the mountains of Switzerland to Italy.

At length the news came to the hotel. There was a lot of animated talk. Kral did not understand French but he guessed what it was about. Someone off the seven o'clock bus came into the hotel and was a centre of interest. He had seen everything. One might have thought from his gestures that he had been in the middle of it, that bullets had flown by his head. His story provoked murmurs and exclamations of indignation from the men, sighs of horror from the women. Perhaps he was not entirely believed, but another man came rushing in with next day's edition of the *Marseilles Matin* with staring headlines, sensational pictures of the crime, photos of Alexander and Barthou.

Kral, in indescribable agitation, rushed out of the hotel and sat in the first taxi he could find. "Avignon!" said he in a hoarse voice and he had to repeat it several times before the taxi-driver understood that the passenger wanted to be driven all the way to Avignon, a big fare.

The taxi-driver was engrossed, reading the evening paper but he put the paper aside. A big fare!

The passenger seemed so agitated and in such a devilish hurry that the driver had some doubt as to whether he ought to take him. He looked like a criminal, a man who had just robbed someone or committed a murder. It was the eyes of the man that seemed most strange. Later, in court, it was only by the eyes that this driver could identify Kral.

He drove out of Aix. But he had not enough petrol for the route. When he stopped at the *octroi* to fill up he saw that the passenger was in a great state of consternation. He hid at the back of the car so that no one in the street should see him.

Off they went again and the cabby drove hard. It was a dark night and there was a howling wind. The cabby was frightened, more than frightened. Perhaps he was driving some desperate character who would spring on him and murder him. He kept giving a backward glance, driving as fast as he could, but keeping an eye on his fare. By the glow of cigarettes he saw the man's eyes. Whenever they passed a car coming from the other direction Kral huddled into the back of the car as if to avoid being seen or to give the appearance that the taxi was empty.

The driver was relieved when they got to Avignon. Kral did not want to be driven to any particular address. In an empty street he made signs to the chauffeur, who stopped. Then Kral got out and handed him two hundred francs. The cabby gave him some change, which he did not count. He walked off quickly. The chauffeur, with a weight off his mind and good money in his pocket, went off for a drink. Kral found the railway station, where he had not long to wait for a train coming from Marseilles. He took a ticket for Paris. He skulked at the far end of the platform till the train came in. No one noticed him. He got safely into the train unobserved and found an empty carriage,

where he stretched himself out and pretended to sleep. The conductor came and punched his ticket. No one else paid him the slightest attention.

But he could not sleep. The panic of Marseilles was still in his blood. The headlines of the newspaper he had overlooked seared his eyes. He was not overjoyed that the King was dead. The deed which he had been told would be glorious was now no more than murder. His only interest was to save his own skin. Kelemen—he had got used to calling Vlada the Chauffeur Kelemen—must be in prison, probably being tortured to extract the truth. Kelemen would not dare betray Pavelitch, but he might denounce Kral, because Kral had run away instead of throwing his bombs.

But it was not to the interest of Pavelitch that Kral should be arrested, perhaps tortured and made to confess things. Kral still had faith that the *poglavnik* would save him. He remembered advice given him in Paris: "If you are in any difficulty, come to the big café near the Opera House." He now clung to the hope that at Paris, at the Place de l'Opéra, he would see someone, perhaps Kramer. He steadfastly thought of Kvaternik under the name of Kramer as he had been instructed. Kramer had said "Au revoir!" He must be looking after Pospichil.

He arrived in Paris in the morning. The police were not watching the arrivals from Marseilles. The Gare de Lyon had its workaday air, everyone going about his business. The newspapers had sensational captions, but there was no sensation. People were not gathered in groups discussing the murder, as Kral had imagined they would be. He could not read French, but he bought a paper to look at the pictures. There were two photographs with the name Petrus Kelemen, one of him as a smart business man taken from his false passport, the other the dreadful distorted face of the dead murderer taken from the morgue. Kelemen was dead. Kral was not horrified. He was actually relieved

because dead men tell no tales. And the French believed his real name was Kelemen!

Kral felt better in Paris. The great city seemed to shelter him. There were so many people that the interest in individuals was divided down to nothing. He watched for a bus marked Opéra and hopefully boarded it. Then he had his morning coffee and *brioche*s like a citizen of the world at the café at the old table. But no one came to greet him there. He felt lost. Fear began to surge back on him. The place to go to was not Paris but Fontainebleau. Pospichil and Raitch were there. But they would be leaving that day. He paid his bill. He watched for a bus marked Italie. If only that bus were going to Italy and not merely to the Place d'Italie where the buses started for Fontainebleau! But no bus for Italie came along. Panic got him again. He jumped into a taxi and surprised another cabby. "Fontainebleau!" he cried.

He waved money at the taxi-driver and told him to drive to Fontainebleau, to the *gare*. He knew that much French. The Parisian cabby at once suspected he was a crook and notified the police after he had set down his fare and taken his money. Kral, at Fontainebleau railway station, took a second-class ticket to Évian on the Swiss frontier and then he disappeared. The police had some difficulty finding him. They did not imagine it was an accomplice of the assassin of Marseilles and they did not take much trouble. Kral had to satisfy himself that Pospichil was not in the town before he set off alone for Switzerland. In a town of 18,000 inhabitants that was not too easy and he could not go to hotels and ask. That would be inviting suspicion. The police, baffled, became more alert in the evening and telephoned Paris that there was a mysterious foreigner lurking in Fontainebleau. Paris replied that all strangers must be identified. Paris was sending three detectives; they would arrive in an hour.

At nine o'clock a gendarme found Kral, who had returned to the station to wait for the train. Kral turned pale, but he offered his passport for inspection with a steady hand. The passport seemed to be in order. The photo tallied. The name was given as Malny. But when the gendarme made a movement to search him he bolted. It was dark. Kral had a good pair of legs and was running for his life. He was soon clear of the town and into the forest. The Forest of Fontainebleau is extensive. One can easily hide in it.

The difficulty, especially in the month of October, was to find something to eat. Kral slept out and it was bitterly cold. All next day he concealed himself, only coming into the open after nightfall. He wandered far from Fontainebleau and then tried to find a wayside shop where he might buy food. But he had no luck. The shops in this region are mostly in the villages. There is not such a thing as a coffee-stall or an inn on the dark narrow roads between the high trees. Kral became weak through hunger and being weak became confused. He did not use his compass to any purpose. He might have travelled by night like those escaping war prisoners who traversed hostile Germany and got to the Dutch frontier during the Great War. He might conceivably have got that way to Italy, picking up food where he could at night. But he wandered in circles in the forest. On the fourth day he came to a main road and decided to keep to it. He slept the fourth night in a ditch by the side of the road. On the fifth day he was so hungry he became reckless and trudged along in the daylight. To be arrested had become a lesser calamity than to be starved to death. He saw by the guide-posts he was on the way to Paris. He did not care. He still had seven hundred francs and if he could get to the big city he had a better chance of hiding away. He might find a compatriot who would befriend him.

On the afternoon of the 15th October there was a telephone message to the police at Melun. The message

was that a suspicious-looking character had been into a bar at the cross roads for Corbeil. He had paid two francs fifty for a coffee that only cost sixty centimes. That was the suspicious circumstance which betrayed Kral. Police were sent out and, a quarter of an hour later, they brought the man to the police station. Kral made no resistance. He was happy to be under arrest. They fed prisoners, didn't they? That was all he wanted—food. He was ready to talk, tell a long story. He had spared the women and children of Marseilles. But give him food.

Meanwhile Pospichil and Raitch had been arrested at the Swiss frontier. Kelemen had been identified from Sofia as Vlada the Chauffeur. As soon as the portrait of the murderer appeared in the Sofia papers the talk went round. Many people recognized the face. The Italians arrested Pavelitch and Kvaternik in Turin, a precautionary arrest. They did not keep them long in prison and they refused extradition. They took care that no incriminating documents fell into the hands of the French police. In due course Pavelitch and Kvaternik were secretly removed to quarters only known to the Italian authorities. They did not expel them from Italian territory. What happened to the blonde lady, Maria Vudrasek, no one knows. But the story is that she is on some obscure island with the other two.



## CHAPTER V

### MAN AND KING

THE murder of Alexander shocked Britain and America. It caused consternation in France, grief and rage in Serbia, chivalrous regret in Bulgaria. It plunged Kemal Attaturk into Oriental sorrow. It awoke an echo of Pan-Slavism in Soviet Russia, where Stalin is reported to have said that 150,000,000 Russians stood behind Yugoslavia. It was not entirely unexpected in Germany, but it was regarded as unfortunate. For the Germans, a brave man, a fine soldier and a possible friend had perished. Germany had clean hands. She could, without reserve and with complete sincerity, pay homage to "our old but heroic enemy." Italy and Hungary had known that the murder was possible and had expected it. They expressed official sympathy: "The assassinations at Marseilles have profoundly wounded the conscience of the civilized world," but only in these lands the removal of the King was an unqualified relief.

The political significance of the death of Alexander was something concerning which men could have varying opinions. There were even those who honestly believed it would help Yugoslavia, giving her the chance to revert to a democratic régime. But about Alexander the man no one could honestly speak an evil word. In many ways he was a model. Fathers could place his life before their sons as an example. There were no skeleton cupboards, no moral blemishes. To the English he would be a gentleman, but he was better than that. He had something of the quality of Abraham Lincoln, though he was not so wise, something of the quality of Wolfe, or Gordon.

He had had a father whom he could admire. We are used to thinking of King Peter as an old man, the King Peter with the burly weather-beaten face of the old campaigner, the man who had to be carried on a stretcher through the snows of the Albanian retreat. But he also was a hero. He shouldered a rifle in the Great War like a common soldier. He had fought all his life for freedom. He believed so much in freedom that he translated John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* into Serbian, from the French. The cause of France seemed to him the cause of liberty and he volunteered for France in the Franco-Prussian war. He joined the Foreign Legion, was wounded and later taken prisoner. But the same night as he was captured he broke away from the Germans, swam the icy Loire and got back to the French army. The rheumatism which he had in later years is said to date from that night. The French decorated him for bravery. That was in 1871 when he was twenty-seven. Four years later he appeared in disguise in Bosnia and Herzegovina and raised the standard of freedom. These provinces were still under Turkish rule. As Peter Mrkonitch, he organized armed bands and helped to free Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Moslem. He was unable to incorporate these provinces in Serbia. Austria-Hungary coolly assumed a protectorate and later annexed the lands which Peter had helped to set free. But Peter became known to the Serbs as the "Liberator." After he came to the throne he fought the Turks again and liberated Macedonia and southern Serbia. But despite his glorious career he never became proud or arrogant or set himself high above his people. He was brother in arms to every Serb.

But it was not until 1903 that he was called to be King. Until then the Obrenovitches ruled in Belgrade. For the greater part of his life Peter was an exile, but never embittered, always living for his country and freedom.

In 1883 he married the eldest daughter of King Nicholas of Montenegro, the Princess Zorka, and he went to live opposite the palace in the little house where Alexander was born. Zorka bore him five children, first Elena, who lived to marry the Grand Duke Constantine of Russia, then Milena, who died in childhood. Prince George was born in 1887 and Alexander in 1888. The fifth child only lived three weeks and the Princess Zorka died in childbirth. Alexander became an orphan at fifteen months. He grew up without a mother, a sad experience for any child. Prince Peter Karageorgievitch had to be father and mother in one. He did not marry again and no other woman came into his life to share his family care. He might have had much help in Cetinje from the willing household of King Nicholas, but he renounced that when his wife died. He was not on the best of terms with his father-in-law. Peter was too democratic in spirit to countenance the tyranny he saw in Montenegro, and he was too honest not to be disgusted by the financial operations of the poet King.

Almost immediately after the death of Princess Zorka, Peter removed with his children to Switzerland and took furnished rooms in Geneva. He was very poor, but was not oppressed in spirit because of that. He even added to his family by adopting another baby. His brother Arsène, married to Princess Demidof, had a baby son, Paul. He added little Prince Paul to his family in Geneva. Of course he had a nurse to help cope with these tiny children—some cousin—but as soon as the boys were old enough he helped teach them to read. He was a strict and solemn school-master and ruled his household with a rod of iron. Woe betide any of the children who was late sitting down to meals!

But there was a backyard, or rather an interior yard, where the children romped. Toys were sent to them, especially by Aunt Helen, who was very fond of Sandro

and sorry that the children had gone away from Cetinje. Sandro was Alexander's pet name. They had even a toy horse and carriage, very handsome, and Alexander could sit astride the horse while Prince Paul sat in the carriage.

Alexander was fonder of Paul than he was of his elder brother George or of his sister. And this childish attachment was a thing that persisted. Long afterwards, when Alexander became King, he still must have Prince Paul near him. He did not crave the presence of Elena or of Prince George. But his cousin Paul must be his neighbour at Bled, in Slovenia, and at his palace outside Belgrade.

The 24th October, 1896, was a great date, when Aunt Helen married the heir to the throne of Italy and Peter took the children, all except Elena, to Rome for the festivities. Elena did not have enough marks at school and was punished by being left behind.

Alexander grew up speaking French, went to an elementary school in the town and sat with Genevan boys and girls of his own age, working sums on a slate, poring over history books, learning geography and drawing maps, though he was never asked to draw a map of the Balkan Peninsula, that part of the world not being thought sufficiently important for Swiss children to study. Only older pupils learned about the Balkans. Little Sandro was a good boy, better behaved than his elder brother George. He was a favourite with his teachers and sometimes obtained better marks than his father thought he was entitled to. But he was a characteristic schoolboy who went every morning with his satchel on his shoulders. He played games in the playground and the street, and was popular with the other boys. At home a Serbian lady called each day, generally in the evenings, to teach him his own language. His father taught him Serbian history, showed him Serbia on the map of Europe, showed him Bosnia and Herzegovina, the places where battles

had been fought. The children grew up to be proud of being Balkan and Serb.

It was a poor household in Geneva. There was no wealth, no luxury. There was not so much food as at Cetinje. King Peter could almost live on black coffee only. He brought up his children to be most frugal, a habit that remained with Alexander all his life. He never was much interested in eating and drinking.

But there was ambition. The father believed in the future of his family, a future in the service of the Slavs. He enjoyed some influence through the Montenegrin court. Montenegro was small and insignificant, but the daughters of King Nicholas were connected with the grand world. Zorka had married Peter, an exile, and that seemed a poor match. But Helen had married the heir to the throne of Italy. A third married the Grand Duke Nicholas, the uncle of the Russian Tsar. Montenegro enjoyed an intimate friendship with the Russian court and church. The Russian connection was still the strongest hope of the Slavs, other than their belief in themselves. Peter kept up a correspondence with Russia and decided to commit his children to the protection of the Romanoffs. When Alexander was ten years old he must say good-bye to Geneva and his playmates and go to school in St. Petersburg. The *École des Pages* accepted the young prince.

Sandro made the long journey but he did not go alone. George and Elena went to Russia to be educated also. Prince Peter was left to his clubs and his newspapers and political friends in Geneva. But he kept young Paul with him. His own children never returned to Geneva, but he went to Russia at Christmas and Easter and sometimes in the summer to be with them in the holidays. It was a holiday for him also. Russian hospitality was boundless and he and they were more comfortable in Russia than in Switzerland.

The boy Alexander learned Russian. He spent over eight years of his youth in Russia, from 1898 to 1903, and later from 1903 to 1908. There seemed every likelihood of his becoming more a Russian than a Serb. But that did not happen. He never really submitted himself to Russian influence. The only thing Russian about him in later years was his accent sometimes when speaking Serbian. Although he may have been somewhat mollycoddled in the company of Russian princes, he remained the hard Serb. He did not become sentimental or write poetry, he shed no tears. No one ever saw Alexander weep after he was ten years old. He did not become a philosopher or an intellectual. On the other hand, he got no bad habits. When later he was a military cadet he did not indulge in heavy drinking or get involved in any disturbing love affair. He managed to find Balkan company in St. Petersburg and seemed to prefer it to that of Russians.

At school he shone in mathematics. He seemed to show a scientific bent. He had no flights of fancy or imagination. His mind grasped readily the limited and defined. What was always interested him more than what might be. A young realist! Under the circumstances, although he was a frequent and welcome visitor in the palaces of Nicholas II, where the talk was perhaps too much of prayer and miracle, he never became a fanatic in matters pertaining to religion. He was not free-thinking, but he was tolerant. He very definitely did not believe that there were miracles in modern life. A man must fight for what he believed and back the rightness of his cause with a strong right arm. And he never had repentance moods or grieved over sins, but that was natural because he seldom did anything which could trouble a reasonable man's conscience.

Did the Romanofs guess, when they adopted the Karageorgievitch family, that one of these princes would play a great part later in Serbia? They gave the

sons the freedom of the Winter Palace; they planned for Elena's marriage to the Grand Duke. It is probable there was political calculation. They were confident of the future of Serbia, and, alas, of the future of the Romanof dynasty. But Elena might not have made that exalted marriage had not Prince Peter been called to the throne.

Alexander Obrenovitch had made an unpopular marriage with Draga, a widow and the daughter of a shopkeeper. She had been childless by the first marriage and it seemed likely she would be childless by the second. In Serbia, a childless marriage is considered punishment by God, a childless queen a disgrace. King Alexander Obrenovitch was also unpopular for other reasons. A military conspiracy formed against him, and one night a band of armed men burst into the old palace in Belgrade, shot both Alexander and Draga and threw their bodies into the street, an appalling double murder that caused the name of Serbia to suffer for many a long year.

Peter Karageorgievitch had no part in this crime and was not privy to the conspiracy. It was as much a surprise to him as to other people living in Geneva. The grandfather of Alexander Obrenovitch had killed the original Kara George, the first liberator of the Serbs. Grandfather had killed grandfather, but there was no blood feud. Prince Peter did not lust for the blood of the Obrenovitches. But as he profited by the murder, some have thought erroneously that he bore some of the guilt. In 1903 he was, by popular election, made King of Serbia. George and Alexander were then withdrawn from the *École des Pages* and continued their studies with private tutors in Belgrade. But Prince George was heir to the throne.

Prince George exhibited a very different temperament from that of Alexander. He was exuberant, whimsical, given to fads and violent preoccupations, whereas Alexander was obedient and studious. In the Serbian family what the father ordains is law. The son dare

not set himself against it. But King Peter soon had much trouble with Prince George, who was of an unruly temper that did not brook opposition. He behaved as if the heir to the throne were above the law. Men's lives were in danger from his passions. It is possible that he had some physical defect which would have rendered him childless. He has never married. King Peter never explained adequately why he disinherited him. Primogeniture is almost a holy right, something not lightly to be set aside. But in the wild condition of Serbian politics, with freedom from the Turks only half won, Peter was probably justified. His successor must be one who could carry the burden of leadership without estranging the people over whom he ruled.

King Peter told his elder son that he would have to renounce the succession and he renounced it. There was no rebellion. On the 27th March, 1909, at the age of twenty, Alexander became heir to the throne. Prince George loathed Prince Alexander because he had taken his birthright. But he never contrived anything against him. He remained loyal. He fought in the Serbian army during the war, going to Paris and London after the Albanian retreat, subsequently living as a country gentleman near Nish. After the assassination at Marseilles he said, "I regret him as King but not as brother," showing that he did not forgive. But King Peter's orders could not be disobeyed.

Alexander had completed his Russian education in the previous year. He now occupied himself with military manœuvres and affairs of state. The youth of twenty fast became his father's right-hand man. It was characteristic of King Peter that he shared his confidence. He did not jealously guard his position. He was a king who walked the streets of Belgrade without a bodyguard. He was not above sitting in a public restaurant or café. In his bearing he was completely democratic. But he preferred the company of soldiers to all others. Soldiering



had first place in his mind. And in that neither he nor Alexander was idle. The little army was raised to a state of excellence. The capacity and character of officers were gauged. King Peter was always preparing. Serbia's freedom from the Turk had yet to be achieved and he would strike again.

Until the outbreak of war with Turkey, in 1912, Alexander's advance in rank was slow. In 1905 he was a corporal. When he became heir to the throne, in 1909, he was made second lieutenant. King Peter was not the sort of monarch who thought his sons must of necessity be generals. He conceived of soldiering as a hard trade and had a contempt for dandy officers who had not yet smelt gunpowder. Alexander was a smart young subaltern. The face of the young man was much more alert than that with which the world became familiar later on. It was a face which could be read by anyone: it contained no mysteries. There were the eagerness and obedience of a well-trained but mettlesome horse.

But he was not wanted for cavalry charges. It was not enough to be brave and intrepid. King Peter was not entirely satisfied with his Russian training. In the millionfold army of Russia the responsibility of the individual officer was naturally much less than in the army of a small state. In Serbia every officer of ability must be prepared for the eventuality of very large responsibility. Alexander was deliberately prepared for taking command in the field. At the outbreak of the war with Turkey he was only a colonel. But he was very soon commander of the 1st Army. He won his first fame at the battle of Kumanova, where his army routed the Turks, and he made a victorious entrance into the royal city of Skoplje.

In that battle he showed great valour and fought in the very front ranks of his own army. He pleased his father tremendously, for Peter liked a brave soldier. Alexander showed then, as ever afterwards, that he had

no fear of death. That being killed was a tragedy never entered his mind.

But it would be a mistake to think that the strategy of Kumanova was conceived in the mind of the young prince. It was not on his initiative. He was merely in agreement with Putnik, Stefanovitch, Mishitch, his father and the rest. Serbia had not found a young Napoleon. Serbia has a talent for war. Her officers throughout the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and in the Great War with Austria, Germany and Bulgaria, showed outstanding ability. There were no duds. There never was one-man leadership in any campaign. The responsibility was divided and the glory ought to be shared with many men. Alexander was a capable officer like the rest. But the outstanding fact is that he was very young. At the age of twenty-three he commanded a victorious army in the field and did himself and Serbia the utmost credit.

In the following year, 1913, the Bulgars made a treacherous attack on their allies and began a foolish war without ultimatum or declaration. On the night of the 16-17th June they suddenly assailed the Serbian 1st Army. But the young commander was not taken off his guard. He counter-attacked and drove the Bulgars back, over their old frontier, in confusion. That success, perhaps more than Kumanova, showed the older generals that the heir to the throne was of worth to them in the field. White-bearded, resolute Putnik, with his massive little face; the bold *voivod* Stefanovitch, with long, white rolling moustache; acute and intellectual Mishitch, all men of sixty or over, came up and congratulated the stripling, the tiny prince with features of a falcon. Alexander smiled modestly, the faint smile of a youth who would minimize his own exploits but is pleased to have the praises of the old men.

When in August, 1913, the victorious army returned to Belgrade, the capital was delirious with excitement.

The modest prince bore himself well: the cheering did not turn his head. King Peter saw that the people had accepted the heir as sincerely as it had adopted him. Let the crowds rally round Alexander! Peter was sixty-nine and in poor health, but he had support in his old age. In June of the following year he virtually allowed Alexander to be King. The young prince became Regent. In all but title he became King of Serbia.

This was decreed on the 11th of June, 1914, little more than a fortnight before the world-shaking catastrophe in Sarajevo. The successes of the Serbian army had inflamed the imagination of the Slav youth in the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Slavs there still languished under the rule of Austria-Hungary. There was a conspiracy of schoolboys in Sarajevo, aided and abetted certainly by some Serbs in Belgrade though not by the King or by any responsible politicians. School children set the world on fire. They plotted and succeeded in killing the heir to the Austrian throne.

At the very outset of his regency Alexander had to cope with the effects of this assassination. The Austrians sent their monstrous ultimatum, couched in such terms that it seemed no other settlement but war was possible. Behind the young head of Alexander was the long head of Pashitch, one of the cleverest politicians of his day. Guided by him, Alexander and Peter examined the document and instead of flatly refusing its terms extracted everything with which they could possibly comply. The world was surprised by the humility of Serbia's answer. Any other state but Austria-Hungary would have discovered in it a basis for argument. But Austria was bent on war. They had been the passive enemy of Serbia throughout the two Balkan wars, and the success of the Serbs was a blow to the realization of their plans for extension in the Balkans. Serbia must be beaten while she was weak. She must not be given time to organize herself to become a menace.

Alexander remembered his friendship with the Romanofs. Before answering the ultimatum he sent a telegram to the Tsar, Nicholas II. He said he was willing to make an investigation and to punish any Serbian subjects found to have had any part in the Sarajevo crime. But he pointed out that the demands Austria made were so humiliating that no self-respecting state could submit to them all. Only forty-eight hours were allowed for an answer and the Austrian forces were already concentrating on the frontier. He told the Tsar he would do what Russia advised, and begged him to take the kingdom of Serbia under his protection.

The Tsar replied at once that his only desire was to avoid bloodshed. He said he would use every effort to calm the Austrians and avert war. He advised Alexander to do everything in his power to make his, the Tsar's, task easier, everything compatible with Serbia's honour. The Tsar would work for peace to the last. But if, in spite of his most sincere wishes, he did not succeed, the Tsar assured the Regent that he would not remain indifferent to the fate of Serbia.

But the Austrians would not be mollified by Serbian humility. Serbia must drink the hemlock cup. The ambassador was withdrawn; the order for invasion was given.

Nicholas II prematurely ordered the Russian mobilization, prematurely because the Serbs soon showed that without interference or aid they could defeat the armies of Austria-Hungary. A terrible surprise was in store for the bullies of Vienna and Budapest. The Serbs were less prepared for war but they were tried. They were nationally homogeneous and not a horde of rebellious races. Their troops were braver, their officers superior in intelligence. But no one knew that in advance. It seemed a foregone conclusion that Austria would overrun little Serbia with the greatest ease and exact the maximum penalty, probably annexing the country. The Russians were concerned. The Tsar

was stirred by Alexander's appeal. He called up his men from the utmost limits of his empire. It took a long while to mobilize that great Russian army. But in reply the Kaiser mobilized also and with the swiftness of lightning. France then must mobilize. Germany, without waiting the outcome of events, decided to raid her old enemy, France, and plunged across Belgium instead of going to the assistance of her ally, Austria. No one was at pains to localize the conflict. World war was enkindled. Apart from the Battle of the Marne the first big victory of the Allies was a Serbian victory.

There had been little compulsion upon Serbs to join the army, no Prussian militarism. They were rugged mountain folk, independent and disinclined to recognize anyone as master. In general they were ready to fight when work on their farms was slack, but while fighting they never forgot their land and cattle in the background. King Peter announced that any man who did not want to fight could go home. But Alexander was the new generation, with a more realistic outlook. He believed that victory could be won, but he called every Serb to defend his country.

The Serbs were in no position to defend Belgrade against the Austrian onset. They had but little heavy artillery and were uninterested in fortress war. They could not spare a garrison to fight to the bitter end in a beleaguered city. The defence of the capital was left to a few gendarmes and volunteers. The main army at once retired to more advantageous terrain. Its possibilities lay in the open, in free and rapid movement. The Austrians were flattered by the ease with which they crossed the Danube and the Sava, but when they attacked south of Belgrade they encountered a very stubborn resistance. But the Serbs must have been appalled if not frightened by the tremendous and sustained bombardment from the Austrian artillery, at that time the most powerful in the world. Their own petty field guns were soon silenced. The Serbs

realized they were fighting a more redoubtable foe than the Turk. But they fought back day and night: they shot away the greater part of their ammunition. It was a war of big guns versus rifles.

Alexander was tireless. He was always at the front and in the most dangerous sectors, encouraging everyone with his presence. The bursting of shrapnel in his vicinity moved him not a whit. He was as cool and calm as in a drawing-room. No nerves! His little head never made involuntary movements to avoid splinters of shell. He never quaked even when men were blown to bits within his sight. In the midst of awful war he was at home. But his face was grave. He did not make jokes with the men. The Serbs do not like people who make jokes at serious moments. Only when he seemed narrowly to have missed death men would see a gentle smile on his lips. Death and he were on quite friendly terms.

The Serbian army slowly retired in the face of tremendous odds, dug new trenches. Old King Peter, rifle in hand, was in the trenches fighting like a common soldier. Late summer had gone. It was the rainy, muddy season. In a short while the heavy guns of the enemy would be in difficulties. Alexander and his generals were resolved on a counter-attack, but awaited fresh supplies of ammunition. The enemy had not yet met the Serbs man to man. They underestimated the capacity of the Serbs to fight back. Suddenly, at the end of November, the whole Serbian army struck, and struck furiously, and all the little field guns were barking again because ammunition had come up. At the first blow in the centre the Austrians began to retire, but the orderliness of this movement was compromised by another even more violent attack from the left flank and a panic flight of divisions through divisions, the greatly extended line doubling up in confusion. That was the moment for the Serbs to show their quality. They had the enemy on the run, an

enemy that greatly outnumbered them but whose very numbers were a source of bewilderment. The fighting army of Alexander drove on, never allowing the Austrians a moment to recover their wits. The whole vast punitive force which was to thrash little Serbia was in ignominious flight, throwing away weapons and equipment as it went and not stopping till it reached the Danube whence it had come. 320 officers and 42,000 men surrendered; 142 heavy guns were taken and 60,000 rifles, 4,000 horses and vast quantities of ammunition, to say nothing of field equipment and provender. In its headlong flight the Austrian army did not fire back. Old King Peter, in a ramshackle car, went ahead of the Serbian army shouting, "Faster, faster!" to the chauffeur. He was one of the first to enter Belgrade. He went first to the cathedral church and then to his palace. Some student had pulled down the Austrian flag from the palace and he handed it to King Peter. The old man threw the black and yellow rag on to the ground, trampled on it and spat on it.

Prince Alexander and Prince George also entered in glory. Father and sons celebrated a great victory. The first campaign was ended. The enemy did not fight back, having no further stomach for conflict with the Serbs. The Regent was in high spirits. Soon it was his birthday: he was twenty-six. Congratulations—not on his birthday but on the victory—showered in from Russia, France and England. The Serbs had wrought a great service which was appreciated. Alexander himself took a larger view of the war than did either King Peter or Pashitch. All that King and statesman hoped was that the Austrians would finally withdraw and leave Serbia to develop in peace. That was the time when it was confidently predicted that the war would be over by Easter. It already seemed something of a stalemate. But Alexander began to think of the disintegration of the Austrian Empire and the liberation of the Croats and Slovenes.

There was a long lull in the war. Something even worse came to decimate the Serbian population, and that was the frightful typhus epidemic of 1915. The wounded recovered or were invalided out. The hospitals became full of typhus patients. Alexander was less a soldier than an inspector of hospitals. All his energy was given to combating the disease. His own health was not very good. He had a grumbling appendix and chronic violent indigestion. About the same time he began to notice that he was getting short-sighted. But he had no time to attend to these troubles. He did not admit that there was anything the matter with him.

Except that he had become rather heavier in the face, he looked very well. But when the war was resumed on this front it put a very heavy strain upon him.

Secretly the Austrians were trying to get a separate peace with Serbia. It is a pity it was not arranged, because one separate peace must infallibly have led to others. Russia had no cause for quarrel once the independence of the Balkan States was guaranteed. France and England did not wish to prolong the bloodshed one day longer than was necessary to obtain an honourable peace. But the Serbs could not seem to desert their allies, least of all Russia. On the 23rd of August, 1915, at Nish, the Serbian parliament voted for the continuance of a war of liberation and thereupon the government rejected the Austrian overtures for separate peace.

Not the Austrians but the Germans answered that renunciation, the German general staff, the redoubtable Mackensen. If the Austrians could not cope with the wretched Serbs the Germans would take the matter in hand. At the beginning of October, Mackensen launched his great offensive. The Bulgarians saw their moment to take revenge for their humiliation in 1913, and they allied themselves to the Central Powers,



attacking Serbia in the flank and rear. The Serbs were compelled to make an immense strategic retreat from the Danube to the mountains of Albania and Montenegro, fighting delaying actions, rear-guard actions against the Germans and Austrians on the one hand and against the Bulgarians on the other. They put up a brilliant defence that evoked the admiration of the Germans themselves. There never was a rout or panic flight. The main army withdrew intact, shepherding the parliament, the diplomatic corps, the allied missions, the nurses. But it did seem to the higher command of the enemy that the army had retreated merely to perish in the snowy wildernesses of Albania, perish or surrender *en masse*.

Alexander, King Peter, Putnik and the other generals decided to plunge to the Adriatic shore across the mountains. Neither Putnik nor King Peter was fit. They had to be carried most of the way along precipitous narrow trails, sometimes in blinding snow. There was intense frost and scarcely any food. The Albanians shot down the stragglers. Hundreds of men perished of exhaustion and frostbite.

The Regent Alexander was also most unwell. He could hardly ride for pain. But he did not admit it. Where so many others were suffering it was not for him to complain. He rode ahead of the army. Perhaps he hoped to get to some hospital in time. Only when he was nigh falling off his horse did he receive medical attention. He was taken to a little house and operated upon at once. That was at Lesh. He continued the retreat with unhealed wound, borne on a stretcher at the head of a body of troops.

The Serbs did not know whether there was pursuit and they could not be sure that even when they reached an Albanian port on the Adriatic they would be saved. The weary trek to Dratch continued. How exhausting it was for Alexander no one could tell, for he never complained. Those French and English accompanying

the army were astonished at such endurance. They advised that the Regent be put on the first boat and taken away to be nursed, to Italy or some island. King Peter was also in favour of that. "Even if the worst befall us, let not the enemy have the triumph of capturing the heir to the throne!" But Alexander replied in a weak voice, "We must have ships for all. I shall not leave till the last soldier has embarked."

These words have been more quoted than any other Alexander ever spoke. He would stand by his people to the last extremity and nothing could move him. He had developed under the stress of war and had become a very stubborn man. He was of very different mettle from King Nicholas of Montenegro, who had also evacuated his country and got to Dratch. King Nicholas got away to safety on the first boat.

The situation at Dratch seemed pitiable in the extreme. There were no supplies, no transports. The Allies had failed in their promises. They had assured Alexander that there would be adequate assistance, but that assistance had devolved upon Italy, who was jealously perturbed by the presence of the Serbian army in Albania.

The Regent, now commander-in-chief, but very ill, lay in bed at Dratch and, thinking of the desperate plight of Serbia, had recourse once more to the Romanofs. His mind went back to happy days in St. Petersburg and his conversations with the Tsar. He trusted Nicholas II and knew him to be a friend. So from his sick bed he dictated a letter to the Tsar:

In hope and faith that on the Adriatic shore we should receive succour promised by our allies, and the means to reorganize, I have led my armies over the Albanian and Montenegrin hills.

In these most grievous circumstances I appeal to your Imperial Majesty, on whom I have ever relied, as a last hope and I beseech your high inter-

vention on our behalf to save us from sure destruction and to enable us to recoup our strength and offer yet further resistance to the common enemy.

To that end it will be necessary for the Allied fleet to transport the army to some more secure place, preferably Salonika. The famished and exhausted troops are in no condition to march to Vallona as designated by the Allied higher command.

I hope that this my appeal may find response from your Imperial Majesty, whose fatherly care for the Serbian people has been constant and that you will intervene with the Allies to save the Serbian army from a catastrophe which it has not deserved, a catastrophe otherwise inevitable.

No one stirred to save the Serbian army till the Tsar got busy. The governments of the west paid little attention to the Serbian exploit, which only became famous after the war was over. It needed a sharp note from Sazonof to spur the Allies to activity.

Tsar Nicholas replied:

With feelings of anguish I have followed the retreat of the brave Serb troops across Albania and Montenegro. I would like to express to your Royal Highness my sincere astonishment at the skill with which under your leadership, and in face of such hardships and being greatly outnumbered by the enemy, attacks have been repelled everywhere and the army withdrawn.

In compliance with my instructions my Foreign Minister has already appealed repeatedly to the Allied powers to take steps to ensure safe transport from the Adriatic. Our demands have now been repeated and I have hope that the glorious troops

of your Highness will be given the possibility to leave Albania. I firmly believe that your army will soon recover and be able once more to take part in the struggle against the common enemy. Victory and the resurrection of great Serbia will be consolation to you and to our brother Serbs for all they have gone through.

Then the French and British began to send food through a supply station at Brindisi. The transport of the troops was delayed all through December, January and February and March. The Serbs believed that the Italians sabotaged the efforts of the French and British, but all three powers were dilatory. The fate of Serbia was merely a question of extra man-power. Were the rags of the Serbian army worth salvaging for service on other fronts? Fortunately the Bulgarians did not decide to raid Albania. The Germans withdrew their main forces for other activities and the Austrians were idle. The Serbian army was not subjected to any further attack. But it was a long time before it was entirely removed to Corfu. Alexander remained to the last. Peter went prematurely to Salonika.

Pashitch and the parliament and the greater part of the army were on Corfu. There was relief and rest and then spring sunshine. Alexander completely recovered after his long and painful convalescence. But he was not content to have his forces left stranded on the Greek island. He must have uniforms, rifles, ammunition, equipment, plan and direction. He left Corfu and set off to convince the Allies that a real offensive from Salonika must be organized and that the restored Serb army must be sent there. That had been King Peter's conviction. That was why the old king had gone there right away.

The Regent visited Rome, Paris, London, to present his case and found many people willing to give him lunch but few to listen to his plans. General Dimitrie-

vitch describes his efforts in London: "It proved hard to convince the British higher command. Prince Alexander sits at a large table surrounded by staff officers. The table is covered with green cloth to which is tacked a large map of Europe. Alexander has to explain the strategic significance of the Salonika front and to convince them that an offensive there would help to win the war. It is difficult. The British higher command and the specialists cannot see it. The Regent's plea is that a successful blow struck from Salonika into the centre of Serbia would relieve the pressure on the other fronts. The British position on the western front is not too bright. They are hard pressed. At length they agree that there is something valuable in the Salonika plan, not only for Serbia, but for the whole Allied cause."

The Prince Regent achieved his mission. There remained but to buy a few French books to take back to Corfu and to have his eyes tested. In Bond Street he bought those rimless glasses without which he was seldom seen again in public. He ordered a dozen pairs: he intended to be well provided.

Some ten thousand men had been transported from Albania to the French colony of Tunis. They also were brought to Corfu, where the man-power of the Serb nation was concentrated, some 160,000 men. They were having a holiday of a kind, but drilling all the while. They were ready to resume the fight whenever the Allies were ready to transport them to a scene of action. In the summer of 1916, some three months after the arrival at Corfu, the re-embarkation for Salonika commenced. Salonika was no longer to be merely a side-show. French, British, Russian and Italian contingents were also designated for that front.

The co-ordination of the efforts of this mixed force was no easy matter, subject as it was to the changing moods of western politicians. But the little Serbian

army was a compact unit and soon went into action. In the early autumn it was again on Serbian soil, fighting the Bulgars. On the 30th September it stormed Kaimakchalan. On the 19th November Alexander drove into Monastir (Bitol), which had fallen to the Serbian army. That was, however, all. There was no winter offensive. The forces in front of Alexander were too great. During all the following year the Salonika armies marked time. The aspect of Europe at war changed because Imperial Russia collapsed in revolution. The fall of Nicholas II was naturally a great blow both to King Peter and to the Regent. They believed in freedom but had no illusions as to Lenin and Trotsky.

King Peter said, "We Serbs are all peasants, but free peasants. My grandfather was a peasant and I set more store by that than by my throne." But that did not mean he would ever fight for a dictatorship of working-class politicians. Both Peter and Alexander had an unpleasant experience of politicians, whom they regarded as the necessary parasites of a state.

Then America entered the war and it was the signal for great numbers of Serb, Croat and Slovene immigrants volunteering for the Salonika army. In June, Alexander edited a manifesto to the effect that he was fighting for a free Yugoslav state combining the three peoples, Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, in one.

All through the following year the Salonika army grew. In September, 1918, the great offensive began, British, French, Italian, Russian, Serb contingents and armies at length co-ordinated and fully equipped. Marshal Franchet d'Esperey was in command, but the spear-head of the forces was the army of Alexander. The time had come. The Germans had shot their bolt. Bulgars, lacking support, withdrew, crumpled up. The army of Salonika struck and triumphed. It made an end of the war. Before the end of the month an armistice was concluded with Bulgaria. On the

29th October Alexander marched into Belgrade once more.

The war was won and in a short while the empire of Austria and Hungary died. Serbia took possession of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Croatia and Slovenia and a part of southern Hungary which became known as the Voivodina.

## CHAPTER VI

### HEIR OF LANDS AND TROUBLE

ALEXANDER was not wounded in the war and he came out of it in good health, in the prime of life, unshattered either in body or nerves. He had become experienced in the handling of men and of getting his own way. His will had developed. He was not a man who was in two minds about anything. But victory had not given him a swelled head and his temper was equable.

He had become a moderate pacifist, one who did not wish the Great War to be repeated or continued, but who knew nevertheless that the army must be kept in a state of preparation for any eventuality. He was ever conscious that soldiers and not civilians, least of all politicians, had won the war, and had an instinctive knowledge that soldiers guaranteed the peace. The members of the Serbian parliament, even those who were young and able-bodied, never shouldered a rifle. They had some hardships, removing with the army to Corfu, but they regarded themselves as privileged persons. It was not easy for him after the armistice to become a civilian and a mere politician, and he did not try. It was a long while before he had himself measured for civilian suits and when he did possess mufti he was seldom seen in it. Military habit had become ingrained and the soldier prince in due course became the soldier king.

When the war was over he continued to live under discipline. He did not relax and have a good time. He ate sparingly, as if the rations were still limited. Perhaps unlike a soldier he indulged in no hard drinking. A small glass of wine with his lunch and another with his



dinner were all he asked. Dimitrievitch told me that he reckons that if one put together all the *rakkeia* that Alexander drank in his lifetime it would not amount to more than a litre. And yet the royal *slivovitsa* made at Oplenats is about the best in the country. But the Prince Regent had one weakness; he smoked endless cigarettes.

He gave his uniforms to be cleaned and repaired, for he disliked wearing anything new and was fondly attached to old garments. He did not wear things once and then throw them aside. The mentality of a frugal family remained. To the end his handkerchiefs were darned. He ordered the old palace to be cleaned and the rubbish the Austrians had left to be taken out and burned. But when it was cleaned he would not live in it. It must be prepared for King Peter; he would not usurp his old father's hearth. He went to live in a one-story house across the way, but a little up the main street of Belgrade, an old-fashioned stone house with a great backyard. He ordered in straightback chairs and solid tables, his old camp writing-table and soldier's bed.

The royal guards were on sentry outside the house, but it was an unpretentious building. There all the day and half the night he received generals, politicians, delegates, with coffee and cigarettes endlessly relayed. It was decidedly a bachelor's establishment. No woman helped. Few women were received. For there was no feminine interest in the life of Alexander.

The war and the revolution in Russia had destroyed one possibility for Alexander. He could not marry into the Romanof family. He is supposed to have had a long-standing romantic attachment to one of the Tsar's daughters, who was murdered at Ekaterinburg, and that the young Grand Duchess once gave him a ring which he cherished. That is probable, for King Peter had spoken to Tsar Nicholas II about it and in January, 1914, Pashitch, visiting St. Petersburg, made a

formal proposal and the Tsar said he would regard such a match with favour.

Prince Alexander was thirty years of age in December, 1918, and it was important for the Karageorgievitch dynasty that he should soon find himself a wife and obtain an heir. Thoughts of marriage did not naturally occupy his mind very much, but Pashitch was insistent. His father's advice must be sought. But King Peter had not returned to Belgrade.

King Peter did not take part in the campaign of 1918, nor did he make a state entry into his recovered capital. He remained behind in Greece and grew a long white beard. It was only in September, 1919, that he returned to Serbia, first going to an hotel at Arangelovats and then slinking into Belgrade practically unobserved. He would not live in the old palace because he preferred to think that he was not a king any more. People saw him in the street and did not recognize him. He had a calm and benign face and looked like a saint. Two years of rest and peace had smoothed away the lines of care from his old face. But then he cut off his flowing beard because his people knew him better without it. He went to live in a villa on the hill of Topchider, a few miles from Belgrade, and he lived there to the end. His voice was heard occasionally, criticizing this and that, but he took no real part in affairs of state.

Father and son did not live together as might have been expected. But the Karageorgievitches are not a clan. They rarely gather in numbers under the same roof. The larger family feeling does not exist. Prince Arsène, King Peter's brother, elects to live in Paris, avoids Serbia. Alexander's sister Elena lives in voluntary exile in Switzerland. Alexander and George were not reconciled. King Peter went away to live by himself at Topchider. The only relative who remained comparatively intimate with Alexander was Prince Paul.

Prince Paul was left behind at Geneva when the other

children went to St. Petersburg. He remained with Peter. When Peter was elected King, in 1903, he brought Paul back with him to Serbia. He had private tutors. During the war he went to Oxford and completed his education. He never had to serve in the army. But he returned to Serbia and became Alexander's only confidant within the royal family.

But King Peter was drawn nearer Prince George, his elder son, whom he had disinherited. He had always seemed more fond of George than of Alexander, even at the time of the removal from the line of accession. Prince George was often in attendance upon his father during the campaign, especially in 1914, bringing munition boxes for the old man to sit on, adjusting his binoculars, furnishing him with rounds of ammunition when the King wanted to fire. He was a tall and handsome fellow. When the war was over he had fewer medals than Alexander, but he looked a proper figure of a man. Any father would have been proud of him and it is likely that King Peter was a little sorry for him, too. Prince George, moreover, had the merits of the defects of his temperament. He might be extravagant of phrase and action when in a rage, but he was more sensitive and had sympathy, while Prince Alexander had a dignified reserve and was always the same; cool, easy and polite, a man with a smile but no store of laughter or tears.

The Regent emerged from the war more a European than a Serbian. His father reverted to type and was sheerly Balkan. But Peter had no reason to regret giving Alexander the conduct of affairs. He would make the sort of monarch the new triune kingdom required. If only he would find a Slav wife!

King Peter would have been content had his son chosen to unite himself to a Serbian lady, but Alexander thought that would give some family too much influence in affairs. He was stubborn; he had developed a long chin. Not even his father could argue with him

for long. And King Peter was in his second childhood: he was not very reasonable.

In the summer of 1921 Alexander made a visit to Paris and while he was there the old King died. The only person with Peter at the end was his disinherited son, Prince George. His death greatly agitated Alexander, who became suddenly ill, was confined to his bed and ordered by his doctor not to travel. The funeral in Belgrade took place without him. Prince George was chief mourner.

When Alexander returned he submitted himself to Parliament for formal acceptance and was proclaimed King. Within a year he went to Bukharest and sought the hand of Princess Marie, the daughter of King Ferdinand of Roumania. The match was a surprise for many Serbs, but Alexander must have known his mind for some time. He was going to make alliance with the European dynasties because his country had joined the west. Princess Marie seemed a good choice because she had some Slav blood, being on one side descended from Tsar Alexander II of Russia. Perhaps he prized more the fact that she was also descended from Queen Victoria. The young and beautiful Marie was very English. Prince Paul and she got on famously. He also was very English.

This English connection had some importance later because the children both of Alexander and of Paul were brought up in an English atmosphere and were sent to English schools.

Of course King Alexander was rapturously congratulated on his marriage, though some may have wished he had married a Slav. But when, in 1923, Queen Marie gave birth to a son and heir, she attained a great popularity. A woman does not mean much in Serbia till she has a child. She means more if she bears a son. Queen Marie bore two more sons, no daughters. She became ideal.

Normally before marriage there ought to have been

the coronation, but the King was opposed to that. He said it was too expensive for his poor country, but it is really because he hated ceremonies. He was never crowned. He was a king who never wore a crown!

The King had given orders that a new palace should be built alongside the old palace in the main street in Belgrade. It was finished in time for him to receive his Queen there. At first they made their home in the midst of the city. It was spacious but almost as simply furnished as the little house he had been inhabiting across the way. His rooms there were still those of a soldier and rather Spartan. But the Queen introduced the feminine touch in the reception rooms, showing her great taste for handicraft and embroidery. In a sense the sovereigns lived apart in their home. The King was not uxorious. He did not allow the Queen to have any influence upon his decisions. "The Queen," said he, "has no part in affairs of state. I admire her because she is devoted to her children and seeks no other sphere of interest." But they found one another companionable. The King took her to his farm at Oplenats. They went on many picnics and behaved among the peasants with complete freedom from embarrassment. Wherever Alexander travelled Marie went with him.

But the finding of a suitable consort could only have been a minor problem in the early years following the war. The peace, reconstruction, reparations, consolidation of the new territories, occupied Alexander's mind to the exclusion of other considerations. First there was the problem of the terms of peace. Europe in war had been noisy but the Babel of peace-making was even noisier and no one understood anyone else's language.

The issue in Europe had been greatly complicated by America's entry into the war and the fourteen points of President Wilson. The making of peace was also a conflict. The view of France was that spoils go to

the victors; the view of Italy was that the Allies should respect the deal which had been made with her when she went into the war. Italy had come in on a contract. The view of Britain was that all future enemies should be eliminated. The view of America was that the nations of Europe should go into committee as friendly powers. England gave lip service to the right of self-determination for small nations, but she had signed away in advance some of the territory which is now Jugoslavia. The future of Serbia was a very considerable problem.

Was Serbia to have Dalmatia? A large portion of it had been promised to Italy. Was Serbia to have Croatia? It had always been understood in London that the Croats would have the right of opting what they wanted to do. Was Serbia to have a slice of Hungary? Was she to retain Macedonia? No one asked what prospect there was of Serbia being able to live in peace and amity with neighbours who considered they had been despoiled.

"Great Serbia" was born at a time when Serbia was in ruins and the towns swarming with cripples. England, when she became united with Scotland, took the name of Great Britain. Why should not the Serbs, united with Croats and Slovenes, become Great Serbia? The objection was that even with additions Serbia had not become great. She was not a great power. She ranked after Italy and perhaps after Poland. She was still merely a Balkan state. But the pretensions of what were left of the Serbs were great enough. The childish greed for territory which obsesses most nations had free play in Belgrade. Serbia wanted all there was to be had.

Serbia's man-power had been reduced by three-fifths and one must also take into consideration the destruction of the children. Thousands had been lost at the time of the retreat. As many children as grown men had perished. The population which survived was war-stricken. Only in Berlin after the war could one see

so many broken men as in Belgrade. Most of the power went naturally to the old men who had not fought but had managed to survive. Grey-bearded Pashitch, seventy-three years of age, was the greatest man in the land. He lived to be eighty-one and was in power the greater part of the time. The only young man who had any influence was the Regent Alexander, and he was thirty. From a shell-shattered capital paved with cobblestones, an overgrown village dominated by an ancient fortress, the Serbia of cripples and old men claimed the heritage of Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, Dalmatia, Slavonia, Slovenia and the Voivodina.

Montenegrins, not being divided either by Church or language, may be considered one with the Serbs. They elected to dethrone King Nicholas and cast in their lot with the new state. Bosnia and Herzegovina were glad to escape from Austrian rulership on any terms. Only the Moslem element asked for guarantees. The one Slav region which did not want to be linked to the destiny of greater Serbia was Croatia. The Croats had not foreseen the downfall of the Austro-Hungarian empire and though discontented were unprepared for it. The Croats in Alexander's army had been mostly volunteers from America, not from Austria. Desertions from the Austrian army of Croats had not been so marked as that of the Czechs and the Poles. They fought as well as any other units in that international army. The collapse took them by surprise. They had to make their minds up in a hurry as to what kind of political future they required. Many would have preferred to inaugurate a new state, a Croat republic, imitating the Czechs. Some even talked of a "Great Croatia" which would have taken over Serbia. Zagreb was unscathed by war and felt highly superior to ramshackle Belgrade. But the western powers would not hear of setting up yet another state. Some politicians were ignorant of the existence of the Croats. The Croats had not advertised their cause like the Czechs. But

self-determination was the order of the day and if these Slavs had chosen to be incorporated in Hungary or united to Italy it is possible that their claims would have been considered sympathetically. Italy was ready to present the peacemakers with a *fait accompli* by occupying the country. The Croats were in a panic. They dared not unite their destinies with that of the defeated powers. On the other hand, they were afraid of being absorbed by victorious Italy and forced to become Italians. And racial pride rendered it intolerable to become governed by the Serbs, to whom they felt superior in culture, manners, cleanliness and religion. "We once had a king of our own," they wailed; "he was called Tomislav." But the only Croats who wanted a kingdom were the partisans of the Habsburg dynasty. More were in favour of a republic. Only immediate occupation by the Serb army prevented the setting up of a Soviet régime. It went against the grain to have to acknowledge a Serbian king. But the Croats had no real choice. The Serbs had liberated them and they had to take the consequences. On 24th November, 1918, the Zagreb National Majority appointed a commission to negotiate with the Serbs, demanding that the question of the seat of government, what should be the national flag, and what form the new state should take, should be decided by free vote. A constituent assembly was to be called to settle these fundamental matters, but until that assembly had completed its work the Croats agreed to acknowledge King Peter and his Regent Alexander.

The general election did not take place for a year and then produced surprising results. The Communists, generally considered negligible, won 58 seats. Raditch's Peasant Party only won 50 seats. The Slovenes, under Dr. Koroshets, a Roman Catholic priest, won 27 seats. The Moslems voted for themselves and won 24. The Serbian Radical Party only got 91; the Democrats, made up of Serbs and Croats, 92. Pashitch, now president



of the assembly, deliberated and intrigued and argued for eighteen months before a settlement was reached. Then the St. Vitus Day Convention was agreed and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was ratified and had a constitution. Alexander took oath to abide by this constitution, and for better or for worse Croatia was incorporated in the new state which in time was to be called Yugoslavia. But from the first there were strongly disaffected elements in Croatia. The flame of separatism was never extinguished. Great Britain had her Catholic Ireland; Great Serbia had her Catholic Croatia.

The new kingdom had seven frontiers, those of Albania, Greece, Bulgaria, Roumania, Hungary, Austria, Italy. It ought to have been strong internally to face calmly so many possibilities of external difficulty. At the commencement of the peace era only one of the countries bordering on Yugoslavia could be said to be definitely friendly. That was Roumania, and that was one reason why Alexander chose to ally himself with the family of King Ferdinand by marriage. Hungary, despoiled of the Voivodina, where there was a large Magyar population, remained an enemy, biding her time. Austria retained a contempt for the Serbs, a barbarous race which, through the help of strong allies, had profited by the dismemberment of the empire. Vienna, as a centre of news service, was able to distribute disguised propaganda to the world. Bulgaria smarted from defeat and the final loss of territory which she had held and coveted so much. With peace, Italy had ceased to be an ally and had become an enemy. She was bitterly opposed to the extension of Serbia across the Balkan Peninsula and unwilling to recognize a kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. She was assimilating half a million Slovenes in her new territory and intended that they should be Italians without the possibility of appeal to an outside power. Italy regarded the whole of the Dalmatian coast as historically

Italian and only waiting to be restored to the sceptre of Rome. She considered that she was cheated by the peace treaties and thereupon commenced that strange policy of identifying her interests with those of the defeated powers. Albania, in which persisted a tribal hostility to the Slavs, became an unofficial Italian protectorate and a potential base for an invasion of Dalmatia.

Throughout his reign Alexander strove to mitigate international jealousy and enmity. He may have failed to solve the internal problem, which was well-nigh insoluble, but he had more success in foreign policy. Very fittingly at the spot on the Canebière in Marseilles, where he was murdered, black stones have been inlaid in the roadway to make the word PAX. He sought peace and security on every hand. There was no sword-waving or provocation. He resented the legend that wars began in the Balkans, endangering the peace of the west and European civilization, and it was his object to show that his country was a force on the side of peace and in no sense a menace to any neighbour.

He lived to see the Germans desiring economic partnership—perhaps friendship. He assuaged the bitterness of Austria. He won over the Bulgarians. Two states alone baffled him, Italy and Hungary. These countries exploited the differences between Serbs and Croats and tried by financing and organizing terrorism to weaken the fabric of this new weak, loose, and unconsolidated state. Italy was the leader. Incident followed incident, outrage followed outrage throughout the reign of Alexander.

## CHAPTER VII

### DEMOCRACY FAILS

DEMOCRACY depends for its life upon political freedom, and political freedom depends on individual freedom, freedom of the mind and will. But Democracy is not a gift. President Wilson could not give it to the small states he championed. In a sense it is inherited. Generations work for it: men die for it. It is won by fighting and it is bequeathed. It is not possible to take a savage tribe, or some primitive race or backward, undeveloped nation, and make it democratic overnight.

But that was the assumption of the peace treaties. Wilson strove to make the world a super-state on a universal democratic basis, all nations respecting the rights of others and co-operating to obtain fullness of life and expression. It was fine, but it could not be realized by appending signatures to the covenant of the League of Nations. It was like a voice saying, "Let there be Light!" but it was only the voice of Wilson, not of humanity as a whole.

The assumption was that individual states would preserve free institutions and that their representatives at Geneva would be the voices of the democracies of the world. The assumption failed: therefore the League failed. But a paradox remained. States like Jugoslavia could be ever loyal to a moribund League while domestically they had been forced away from freedom and democratic government.

The races composing the state known afterwards as Jugoslavia had very little experience in Democracy. The Serbs were the most democratic, a violent race

escaping from centuries of thralldom to the Turk, dedicated to national freedom. They had at least fought for freedom. But it was national freedom. If, in the war with Austria, some of them consciously fought to liberate the Croats it was because they believed that the Croats were Serbs also. The Serbs were the only race with any experience of parliamentary and constitutional government. Milan Obrenovitch was obliged to grant a liberal constitution in 1889. When his successor, Alexander Obrenovitch, tampered with the constitution he was murdered and the Serbs invited the man who had translated Mill on Liberty to be their King. He was King by popular election and was obliged to respect the political freedom of his subjects. That obligation happened to coincide with his personal inclination. He removed his son George from the succession lest political freedom be endangered by the unruly disposition of the heir. Alexander was not quite so democratically minded as his father but he also, upon accession, submitted himself to parliamentary election.

In the peace era after the war the Serbs at least understood the practice and mechanism of parliamentary government. A parliament had even sat at Corfu and deliberated throughout the tragic years when Serbia was said to be non-existent. It was a group of turbulent Serb politicians which had been elected by Serbs and it naturally came back thinking of itself as Serb rather than Yugoslav.

In the empire of Austria-Hungary Croatia lay under the jurisdiction of Budapest and was governed by a Hungarian viceroy. From the status resembling that of a conquered province it had been moving towards self-responsibility, but the progress had been tardy. It had had its petty diet but the franchise was limited to less than a twelfth part of the population. In 1918 manhood suffrage was granted by Austria-Hungary, but that was a war measure designed to stem the tide of

revolution. The diet was not entirely elective. It was composed of nominated officials, landowners, clerics, and a number of Croat representatives elected on the limited franchise. The Croat population was one of the many racial oppositions in Austria-Hungary, but they had been so long in subjection that few dreamed of emerging from the empire as a free and separate national community. The fall of the empire was a surprise. The Croats had suddenly to decide what they were and what they wanted. Many were acutely conscious of themselves as Croats. None thought of themselves as Roman Catholic Serbs. Only a few were ready to call themselves Jugoslavs.

But the Serbs also were not certain what the Croats were—a conquered enemy, or a sort of Serb, or ‘brother’ Slavs like the Bulgars. King Alexander had had no contact with the Croats and at the outset knew little about his new subjects. He was obliged to accept the Serb assumption that Serbs and Croats were one people. He sent his army at once to occupy Croatia. The down-trodden Croatian peasants were rising to make an agrarian revolution. He stopped that. At the outset he was obliged to control Croatia, not a very auspicious opening for a democratic régime. But then the Croats themselves had no experience. The masses were more ready for Marxism than for Democracy.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, after 400 years’ servitude to the Turks, went under the government of Austria-Hungary and had even less experience of Democracy than Croatia. The people were extremely backward. Not only were the peasants illiterate, but about a fourth of their number were serfs. Slavery lingered on there after it had been abolished from the rest of Europe. There was no freedom of Press or speech, and the provinces were most rigorously governed. They had a large Moslem population of Slav extraction, not Turkish. These people thought of themselves first as Moslems and only secondarily as Serbs. It proved very difficult

to persuade them to think of themselves as Jugoslavs. In southern Serbia the people had quickly to set aside the Bulgarian language and speak Serb. As their native dialect is something between the two that was not so difficult. But they thought of themselves as Macedonians. There was a Moslem minority which was unchangeably Turkish.

In the Voivodina there were large Hungarian and German minorities who had no inclination to identify themselves with the new state. This province had sent representatives to the Hungarian parliament, but the peasant masses were without votes.

The Slovenes were better prepared than most, having enjoyed adult suffrage since 1907. They sent a compact body of Slovene representatives to the Austrian Parliament and had attained a higher degree of political development than the Croats. They proved in the upshot more capable of assimilating the political conception of Jugoslavia.

It is not surprising that when the representatives of all these races and sections came to Belgrade, confusion was worse confounded. The reverse of the Pentecostal miracle was achieved. They spoke with tongues and none could understand them. Parliament was a collection of minorities unwilling to cohere to obtain ends which they had in common. Speeches were loud, emphatic and unrestrained. No one was able to convince anyone else on the floor of the house. From the first Alexander was exasperated. What a contrast to the *esprit de corps*, the unanimity, the ordered purpose of the army! Politicians are the soldiers of peace, but they showed themselves as untrained men, far less efficient than the soldiers of war. The soldiers had been first-class: the politicians were no class at all.

But still the political experiment was begun honestly. The elections were free. There was no interference on the part of King Peter or of the Regent Alexander. The framing of the new constitution was left to the

elected Parliament. "Make your decisions, whatever they are we will abide by them!" There were many plans, each supported by a sectional majority but out-voted by the other minorities *en masse*. At length, after several crises, when it seemed that the parliamentary system would not work at all, the largest minority, the Serbs, bought the Slav Moslems by agreeing to compensate Mahometan landlords for confiscated lands. The Moslems then agreed to the Serb draft of a constitution and it was voted over the heads of Croats, Slovenes and the rest. All the others had wanted federal systems but had been divided as to details and they had not learned to compromise. The Croat *bloc* declared roundly, in 1922, that the constitution had been obtained by fraudulent means. They had been tricked by the wily Pashitch.

The new constitution granted representative government and freedom of religion. But power was centralized in Belgrade and there was not adequate guarantee for individual rights, freedom of speech and of public meeting. It gave the government of the hour extensive power of control by police. In the Balkans, when political persuasion fails, the gendarmerie is the stand-by of authority.

The new constitution was the 1903 constitution of Serbia, re-edited to embrace Croats and Slovenes. Even Pashitch was conscious that a federal system would have been better. On a free vote Parliament would have chosen to have a republic, making Alexander the first president. It had the great example of the Czechs and Slovaks, who seemed happier under Masaryk. If Alexander had agreed to it there would have been a republic. But he was for kingship and the dynasty. Had he allowed a republic it might have swiftly developed into a Soviet republic and the dictatorship of the proletariat. He was not going to allow his country to follow in the destructive course of Bolshevism.

It was a confused time. The Parliament of 1920

camped among the stones of Belgrade. Trams had not begun to run. The cafés were lighted by oil lamps at night. Newspapers had only just got started again. Gossip and rumour ran unchecked from café to café. The menace of Communism and revolution was the boggy of the time. Fifty-eight Communist members! That was the first turnip lantern in the Belgrade night. Communism must be put down.

Very soon after the assembly of the first Parliament a decree was promulgated dissolving all Communist organizations and prohibiting the Communist press. That decree was carried into effect with violence by the police, and was answered by violence by the Communists. On the day of the promulgation of the St. Vitus' Day Constitution an attempt was made by a Communist to assassinate the Regent. A bomb thrown from an unfinished building missed its mark, becoming entangled in telegraph wires: the man was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment. Two months later the Communist Party was pronounced illegal and debarred from having representatives in the Skuptschina. The first Parliament of 1920 had 58 Communists; the second, in 1923, had none. In July, 1921, the Minister of the Interior, Drashkovitch, had been killed by a young Communist and that murder together with the attempt on the life of the Prince Regent had caused violent animosity against the Marxists. But in the 1920 elections the Communists had polled as many as 200,000 votes. These voters were mostly in the poverty-stricken areas. The war against the oppressor had been won and the under-dog wished to raise his head. This under-dog has, to this day, remained a political problem in Jugoslavia. There are too many people on the verge of beggary. But the members of the first Parliament did not stop to consider the consequences of banning any one political party. Democracy's chances of development are impaired once a certain political creed, no matter how abhorrent, has



been made illegal. What is more, the dispersal of the Communists by gendarmerie gave a precedent for dragooning other political parties and disposing of the personal liberty of difficult politicians. There never was another election in Yugoslavia free from police interference.

After Communism, the next trouble of Alexander was the Croat *bloc*, which emulated Gandhi and refused to co-operate. In vain Alexander addressed to the hostile Croats comfortable words: "Separated for centuries but not alienated from the one family, separated by the brute force or cunning of the mighty empires of Rome, Byzantium, Vienna and Stamboul, but never broken in spirit, we have faithfully preserved the holy traditions of bygone generations. For centuries we have endured under difficult historical conditions and under the influence of varying faiths and we have developed where and how we could our mutual or individual traits, always remembering, always knowing that we are brothers and that we are one." . . . The Croats did not intend to be at one with the Serbs unless the Serbs accepted their programmes.

Stephen Raditch was the leader of the Croat *bloc* which won 50 seats in the election of 1920 and 71 seats in the election of 1923. After Nikola Pashitch, he was the most remarkable man in the new country, the uncrowned king of Croatia, having a position among his own people similar to that enjoyed in Ireland at one time by Parnell. He was not a great statesman. A weathercock in politics, it is difficult to systematize his views without disclosing a mass of contradictions. But he owed his fame to a gift for sentimental oratory. He spoke a language that even the most illiterate could understand. He was always like a father telling fairy stories to his children. He was beloved by the masses, and tiny tots in the streets sang songs about him, a legendary personage even before he died.

This Stephen Raditch is a key person in the study

of the reign of Alexander. His life was united to hope for the new country: his death was a tragedy that led to further tragedy. The assassination of Alexander at Marseilles, in 1934, must be connected historically with the murder of Raditch in 1928. It gave Italy and Hungary their opportunity to organize racial revenge. That King Alexander had been a firm friend of the Croat hero was no hindrance. Raditch was the figure-head of the Croats and the Serbs could be advertised as the eternal enemy. The murder of Raditch made the problem of Serbo-Croat conciliation almost insoluble.

Raditch was forty-seven in 1918, a plump little moon-faced man, always smiling, not Balkan in appearance but surely Slav. He might have been a Russian. The Serbs do not like facetiousness and playfulness and with difficulty tolerate a waggish politician. They could not understand why he exercised such overwhelming influence on the Croats. But he had not grown up among the Serbs and they did not know him.

He was a man of the people, one of eleven children of poor peasants on a seven-acre farm near Sisk. He and his brother Ante seemed clever and went to school in Zagreb, the rest stayed on the land. Stephen's political adventures began when he was sixteen. He was sent to prison for shouting in a theatre. He had cried out, "Down with the Viceroy!" The Hungarian police could not tolerate even a childish demonstration in the Opera House. When he was set free he found himself rather a hero among the other boys. But his headmaster advised him to keep away from the school for a while lest he be forced by the authorities to expel him. He must not lose the right to matriculate.

With time on his hands Stephen decided to go to Russia. He became very enthusiastic for the Russians and rapidly learned the language. He had an extraordinary facility for languages. When he returned to Zagreb he told his schoolmates that they must learn Russian and began a private class, teaching them him-

self. This at once provoked suspicion and he was placed under police surveillance, on suspicion of being a Russian military spy.

The behaviour of this feather-brained lad seemed so peculiar that it was decided to arrest him again and he was placed in a home for mental deficients. Three official doctors examined him and reported that he was mad but harmless. The authorities banished him from Zagreb and sent him back to work on his father's farm. But he continued his studies and passed his matriculation as an external student a year or so later.

He obtained permission to reside in Zagreb and was entered at the university, where he at once began to organize a political movement among the students. He edited a patriotic Croat protest, was arrested and sentenced to four months' imprisonment. There was no trial or sentence: he was just seized and gaoled. He was fed by political friends through the prison bars and amused himself by learning Czech. He prepared himself to go to Prague and study law. In the following year he was arrested in Prague and then banished from that city. He went to Budapest, learned Hungarian and entered the university there. That was at the beginning of 1895: he was only twenty-four.

He was a good-natured youth, capable of getting quickly excited but not of violence. He never struck anyone in his life, did not carry fire-arms and was not interested in the bomb as a political instrument. Wherever he went he carried a village guitar, *tamburitsa*, about with him and sang to it. Being a Croat rather than an Austrian or a Hungarian, calling for a Croat king, demanding a Croat flag and the official use of the Croat language, all this was to him a game. He was not a fanatic. When travelling between Budapest and Zagreb he infallibly quarrelled with railway officials because his ticket was printed in Magyar and not in Croatian. On one occasion a conductor pushed him off a train because of this. He organized demonstrations

to burn the Hungarian flag, unfurl the Croatian flag and cry "Long live the Croat King!" though there was no king of Croatia.

Once more in Zagreb he was arrested by the Hungarian authorities, tried for sedition, and sent to prison for six months. By that time he had become popular and was already a well-known personality. When he was liberated he was sent under police escort to his village, but he could not be hidden there. He was resorted to. Already he was a leader. But he wanted to go to Russia again. The money for the journey was subscribed and in June, 1896, he set off for Moscow.

In Moscow he entered the university and continued his studies. He had his banjo with him and one cannot think that he studied very seriously. He had become a rolling stone. He stayed only five months and then went to Paris. He had not enough money to enter himself at the Sorbonne, so he quitted Paris for Lausanne, where he resumed his education. He was at home in every city and every university, speaking all the principal languages in Europe. But, after all, he finished his education in Paris at the school of political science and took the title of *Lauréat des Sciences Politiques*. Then his life as a journalist began.

He returned to Zagreb, again took part in demonstrations, was again arrested and again sentenced to six months' imprisonment. When he got out of gaol in February, 1903, he was at liberty for little more than a month before he was arrested again and kept in durance till August. In the following year he helped to organize the Croat Peasant Party, the party which he eventually represented in the Parliament at Belgrade.

The police left him unmolested for some years. He wrote articles, pamphlets, books. He went to Prague again. He was now married to a Czech. He met the delegation from the first Russian Duma. He was always greatly attracted by Russians.

In 1908, when Austria annexed Bosnia and Herze-

govina, Raditch approved. He did not share the Serbian indignation. He did not like the pretensions of the Serbs, certainly did not regard the Serb as "big brother," but rather as some sort of wild cousin. The annexation added territory to the hypothetical "great Croatia." In St. Petersburg he explained this view to the Russians and urged upon them to recognize the annexation. Austria was not grateful. A period of arrests and imprisonments followed. That his wife might have a means of living while he was in gaol, he started a Slav bookshop in Zagreb. He was a member of the Diet, leader of the Peasant Party which gained increasing influence, but the immunity of members did not save him from imprisonment. Repeatedly after he was elected his election was annulled.

When the Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated in Bosnia, Raditch condemned that as he condemned all terrorism. But he welcomed the war, out of which he believed would come a new Austria and a betterment of the position of the Slavs in the Empire. He foresaw a Triune Kingdom of Austrians, Hungarians and Croats. The Croats would be masters of annexed Serbia and then "Great Croatia" would be realized. Raditch caught the war fever. He wrote poems in praise of Franz Joseph. When in December, 1916, Franz Joseph died, he wept over him as a wise man and a martyr and the father of his people. But he had no illusions concerning the new emperor, Karl I. He continued to be loyal as regards the war, but in opposition to Habsburg politics. The Russian revolution and the democratic appeals of President Wilson made a strong impression on him and he obtained a new vision of the outcome of the war. When the Germans began to fail he was already a defeatist. Very soon he became a republican. He visited the Bulgar minister in Vienna and implored Bulgaria to cast in her lot with all the southern Slavs—in a republic.

His following in Croatia was peasant and working-

class. There was a strong opposition from Prebitchevitch and the Serbian minority in Croatia, from shopkeepers and the professional classes and what may be called the representative men in Croatia. Practical-minded people saw that with the Serbs winning by force of arms their King could not be removed by Croat sentiment. The Croats would have to make a deal with the Regent Alexander. Raditch opposed. He would not accompany the executive delegation to Belgrade. He appealed to President Wilson for a peasant republic in Croatia. But the Serbian troops had occupied the province. In March, 1919, Raditch was arrested by the Serbs for his subversive propaganda and was sent to prison for eleven months. Other leaders, including Dr. Machek, were imprisoned also. A popular agitation resulted and 167,000 people signed a petition to Wilson. Raditch called that the "first republican reflector," light shining out of darkness. At the end of February, 1920, Raditch was set free, only to be arrested again within a month and sentenced to two and a half years' imprisonment. So at the very beginning, the treatment of the popular leader was unfortunate and it seemed to the peasant masses that they had merely exchanged one tyranny for another.

In June, 1920, while Raditch was in gaol, Alexander made a state entry into Zagreb and the townspeople gave him a great welcome, though these demonstrations for the Karageorgievitch were highly deceptive. Although Raditch was only amnestied from prison on the day of the first election, his party managed to win fifty seats. In the next election his became the second strongest party, with seventy-two seats.

Parliamentary democracy was maimed because this compact body of Croat nationalists refused to co-operate. But Raditch was not so much to blame as Pashitch and Prebitchevitch, who took no steps to conciliate the Croat leader. They underestimated his significance and did not foresee the influence of Raditch upon the

whole destiny of Yugoslavia. Otherwise they would not have been so rash as to make a martyr of him by imprisoning him.

But there was still a chance of reconciliation because Raditch was so good-natured. No amount of persecution could make him bitter. He had something of the quality of George Lansbury—an undying sweet-tempered pacifism. He did not wish strife, not even verbal strife. "We are opponents: we are not enemies," he said of the Serbs. He believed that the Serb peasant could be made to see that monarchy was just an old wooden plough and that they would find a republic more practical. King Alexander regarded him with tolerance. It was not on his orders that the police watched him so much. The country was police-ruled. The police were sheep-dogs who must keep the flock together. Raditch had no objection to keeping in the flock, but let the flock be a republic, not a monarchy. Raditch said flattering things about Alexander, but the King could not intercede for someone who wished to push him off his throne. King Alexander bore himself with great correctitude as the sovereign of three peoples, and showed no preference for Serbs or antipathy to the Catholic Church. The imbroglio of Belgrade politics cast no shadow on him and his popularity with his new subjects grew steadily. He had proved himself a brave soldier and a patriot and he was an honest man. The stigma did not fall on him but on the Serb politicians.

Raditch slipped off abroad in July, 1923. First he went to London and although he was not received by prominent politicians he was much influenced by the British point of view, especially by the arguments of Wickham Steed. He was told that his idea of a republic was fantastic and that he had much better work for the establishment of a limited constitutional monarchy such as obtained in England. The king to be the symbol of unity! He went from London to Moscow and told the Bolsheviks they were wrong. They ought not to

have a dictatorship of the proletariat, but a peasant republic. But the English impression remained. He said he was no separatist. The Croats would co-operate in the state of Yugoslavia and work for a republic. He was still harping on the republic after he had secretly resigned himself to monarchy. He allowed the Croat Peasant Party to take part in the debates in Belgrade. Things were moving in the right direction.

But the Serbs still did not understand him and they nearly wrecked the state again by pressing for the proscription of Raditch's party. Soon after he returned from Russia the party was declared illegal. The government proceeded to deal with it as they had dealt with the Communists. Raditch had said to a French journalist on the 17th October, 1924, "We will take the oath of allegiance to the King. King Alexander is honoured in Croatia and beloved in Serbia. We want to make him ever more honoured and beloved." But in December Raditch's party was declared illegal.

On the 2nd January, 1925, Dr. Machek and other leaders were arrested. Raditch hid himself in a recess behind racks of books in his bookshop, but the gendarmes in their search of the house soon found him and hauled him off to gaol. He was not dismayed. He was more at home in prison than out of it. But he realized that this imprisonment and the dispersal of his party was of no service either to Yugoslavia or himself. Before the blow fell he had decided to make peace and he was not deterred by being imprisoned. With the help of his nephew he edited a new declaration. Paul Raditch, son of his brother Ante now dead, visited him in prison and got a statement from him which he took to Belgrade to read in Parliament. In this statement Raditch recognized the monarchy and the constitution.

There were negotiations after that, fall of the government, reconstruction. Paul Raditch had audience of the King. On the 18th July Pashitch announced to an astonished people that Stephen Raditch had accepted a



Cabinet post, as Minister of Education, and that three others of his proscribed party had been appointed ministers. That day Raditch was liberated from prison and went straight to the King. He stayed to lunch. He talked to Alexander for hours. The King liked him immensely. From prison to the Cabinet, from prison to the palace! It was a surprising *dénouement*. But Raditch knew who had intervened. It was not old Pashitch, who merely said, "Well, in politics as in life, you cannot go on fighting a man who ceases to strike back." When Raditch got out of prison his first words were, "Thanks to God, the people and the King!" It was the King's intervention. Alexander wanted peace and unity. The violence of his Serb supporters disgusted him. When Raditch recognized the constitution Alexander decided to raise him right up to power and give the Croats their fair share in the administration.

During the last years of his life Raditch was a more frequent visitor at the palace than any other politician. For one thing the Queen much preferred talking to Raditch than to Pashitch, whom she could never understand. The Queen had learned some Serbian but Pashitch spoke a dialect that was nearer Russian than Serb, and he could not speak in any other language that Queen Marie could understand. "All I remember him saying to me was, 'That is that,'" said the Queen. But with Raditch her Majesty talked in English, which she regarded as her mother tongue. The intimacy of the royal family and Raditch may be gathered from the following words of the Queen: "You know he had become almost blind. He really could not see to eat his food. Often when he came to lunch I would take his plate and cut up his meat for him so that it would be easier for him. He was often with us, and my husband and I were very fond of him."

And Raditch as minister made no revolutionary innovations. He found posts and pensions and sinecures for many Croats. That was the privilege of ministers

and in that respect he was no better than the Serbs. But he started a campaign against corruption. There was much corruption in high places and the exposure was good propaganda for his party. He went on the stump in Serbia, visiting districts which had previously been forbidden to him, and he carried his slogans to the Serb peasants, merely dropping the word "republic." He was still out for a state founded exclusively on the requirements of the peasantry. He preached a hatred of town influence. "God made the country; the devil made the town," said he. "Christ was born in a village; He was crucified in a town!" He trusted the people, but from the term "people" he excluded townspeople, shopkeepers, manufacturers, financiers. Otherwise he spoke like a true democrat. "When I am with the people I am bathing in the ocean," was another characteristic utterance.

There is no doubt that he continued to irritate the old guard of Serb politicians. He made new enemies by his charges of corruption and newspapers attacked him with unbridled licence. The withdrawal of the freedom of the Press was a measure of the subsequent dictatorship, but it should not be forgotten that when the Press was not gagged it comported itself badly, demanding blood. It provoked murder and was morally irresponsible. The Press earned the repression which followed at a later date.

The epithets flung across the floor of the house were as insulting and violent as those used by journalists. In English "parliamentary language" implies a certain restraint of phrase. In Belgrade it would have to imply the very opposite. The Skuptschina was a sort of zoo where some of the animals were uncaged. One may call it Democracy, but it was not a pleasing spectacle. The debates passed from one unnecessary crisis to another. Members seemed to think they were elected to evoke passions rather than to find a common ground or proceed wisely about the country's business. Raditch

himself was disgusted and was soon telling the King that he ought to send a posse of troops and make a Pride's Purge.<sup>1</sup>

Raditch survived several parliamentary pandemoniums. He even dared to take part in the accusation of corruption levelled against Pashitch's son. There was no doubt that the hands of the younger Pashitch were not clean, but it was a dreadful humiliation for the ancient prime minister, then turned eighty years of age, and a humiliation to the Radical Party itself. But Raditch and his Croats were necessary to Alexander for the work of unification. It was unthinkable that Raditch should be sacrificed. That would have meant a renewal of Croat disaffection. Pashitch resigned in April, 1926, and he died before the end of the year. The Cabinet was reconstructed under Uzunovitch and Raditch retained his ministerial post. Crisis followed crisis. The Cabinet was reconstructed six times in one year, but Raditch remained.

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<sup>1</sup> How the country suffered from parliamentary intrigue may be judged by the records of the Ministries of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. The most pressing need after the war was the adjustment of the land systems and the reorganization of agriculture. Serbia owed all to the peasants and had a duty to them. And the people in most need of help in Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina were the 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 has not improved his position since the days of Kara George. The cause of the tiller of the soil should have been placed above politics. But no co-ordinated effort was possible when the responsible ministers were changed every few months. 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 also appointed. But the heads of the two ministries were constantly changed and the only man who could stand by his job for more than a year was Krsta Miletitch, who lasted from the 18th July, 1921, to the 6th 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.

But in April, 1927, a Radical intrigue succeeded. Vukitchevitch made alliance with Dr. Koroshets and his compact Slovene party and decided to drop the Croat votes. At the general election which followed Raditch made a counter alliance with the Democratic party and together they won 122 seats, almost enough to outvote all other parties combined. He then decided to be reconciled to his old foe Pribitchevitch who, as leader of the Independents, had 20 seats. The Radicals were enraged by this opportunism and their administration obviously would not last. The King was ready to dismiss Vukitchevitch and offered to make Raditch prime minister. But Raditch advised a temporary dictatorship. The King had better send a general and make a clean sweep of the old gang of politicians. Raditch in Parliament threatened the government with a general. Alexander must have been startled by the suggestion of a military *coup d'état* and rejected the advice, though he kept it in mind. He had long since lost patience with the politicians, who, by their eternal wrangles, stopped progress and spoiled his reign.

Then happened the momentous tragedy second only to that of the assassination of the King at Marseilles—Stephen Raditch was murdered.

Parliament assembled on the 26th April, 1928. Raditch, leading the opposition, declared for General Zhivkovitch. "We approve the idea of a general as prime minister. For that would mean that the King obtained the position which is his due, arbiter among us. What more natural than that the King, who is the glory of the monarchy, should become the arbiter of our destinies and make the necessary compromise. And it would then be natural to have here a general who was not a partisan but the representative of the King." This and succeeding speeches of an obstructive nature on the theme of a military administration caused uproar at every session. There were shrieks of "Blood-fiends! Butchers! Bashibazuks!" One Bel-

grade newspaper declared that Raditch and Pribitchevitch should be murdered for Yugoslavia's good.

If you call the devil he will come. At the session of the 20th June a wild Montenegrin deputy, a member of the Radical Party, arrived with a revolver determined upon execution. This man, Punisha Rachitch, already highly embroiled with the Croat group in Parliament, opened fire on Raditch's supporters. With his first shot he wounded Pernar, from whom he had demanded apology for obstruction; with his second he killed Dr. Basarichek; with the third he shot Stephen Raditch in the stomach; with the fourth he wounded Granja; with the fifth he killed Paul Raditch. Only then was he overcome and the weapon taken from him. The wounded were removed to hospital, the dead remained.

One can but repeat the Shakespearean phrase: "Then you and I and all of us fell down!" This was a greater blow than Austrians, Germans, Bulgarians, 'Turks ever struck at Serbia. It was also a blow at the King, an affront, for Raditch had been his favourite, the man the King delighted to honour, a favourite without favouritism.

Stephen Raditch was mortally wounded and King Alexander was overwhelmed by grief—grief and consternation. He hurried from the palace to the hospital and sat at the bedside of the stricken leader. Raditch was in great pain but fully conscious. He clasped both hands of the King together in one of his. "All will yet be well," he whispered. "Thanks to God and to you. I'll recover. I have so much to do."

Alexander said comforting words. He sent for his own doctor. He bade Raditch hope. "Vukitchevitch is resigning. I want to proclaim you prime minister. All power shall be in your hands," said he. A man between life and death must have something to live for. The King put the premiership before the leader's fading eyes. But Raditch shook his head. He still thought it would be better to have a general.

The bullet was extracted. The wound healed. There seemed prospect of Raditch's recovery. He was sufficiently recovered to be removed to Zagreb. But at the Croat capital complications ensued. He died on the 8th August. His death was peaceful. All his last observations were directed to averting strife and ill-feeling. He did not ask revenge. All he asked was that the peoples live together peacefully. But these last Christian wishes have seemed to be in vain.

His body was carried to the house of assembly of the Peasant Party, where it lay in state and hundreds of thousands of people defiled in front of it to look for the last time in the lineaments of the uncrowned king of Croatia. Death had put the seal upon the man's greatness. One might have doubted while he was alive, but it was certain when he was dead. The burial place of Raditch in Zagreb has become a Croat shrine, not perhaps what Raditch would have wished. It is an altar of Croat nationalism, not an altar of Jugoslavia.

With a heavy heart King Alexander tried to regulate the position in Parliament. The Croat deputies decamped to Zagreb and did not return. The only thing possible was a national front ministry drawn from all parties who would serve. As the outrage upon the Croats had taken the form of an attack by one of the Orthodox Church upon Catholics, the King would not appoint a Serb prime minister. He chose for premier a Catholic priest, Dr. Koroshets, the leader of the Slovenes. But with racial passions inflamed and eighty-five deputies refusing to appear in Parliament there seemed no promise of political peace. As Alexander said, parliamentarism was not functioning except as a negative force causing daily more dissension in the land. Raditch's advice remained with him. Some of Raditch's last words had been, "I am afraid for the country. Now there is only the King and the people." On the 6th January, 1929, King Alexander dismissed the Parliament and made General Zhivkovitch his premier, thus in-

fringing the constitution. In a statement to the people he declared that the preservation of unity was the greatest aim of his reign. Parliamentarism remained his ideal. But it had for the time being failed and other methods would have to be tried. Thus the dictatorship was inaugurated.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ANTE PAVELITCH

ON the 7th January, 1929, the day after the announcement of the suspension of the constitution, a secret society called the Ustasha was founded in Zagreb. It was officially called the Croat Revolutionary Organization. Ante Pavelitch was named *poglavnik*, supreme chief, though members of the society deny that he actually founded it.

Ante Pavelitch was one of the members of parliament elected by Zagreb, so it cannot be said that he was without substantial following. But he never was a member of Raditch's party, although at one time he sought alliance with it. As long as Raditch had been working for a separate Croat state he approved of Raditch, although Raditch viewed him with contempt. Pavelitch was a Frankist. He had a political history dating from before the war.

The Frankists, taking their name from their founder, Ivo Frank, were in the pay of Hungary. Before the war they were an organization of Croats working against Croat nationalism in Austria-Hungary. After the war they tried to use this same Croat nationalism in order to get the Habsburgs restored. Frankist and legitimist became almost synonymous. They entered the service of revisionism. Before the war influential Frankists easily obtained rank and position. It was part of Hungarian statecraft to find out what Croats could be bought. A nucleus of Slav opposition to the Slavs, a hired Croat clique was organized to disprove the statement of Raditch that the Croats were unanimous



in their opposition to Hungary. No man of strong convictions joined the Frankists. The Croat members of the party were sheerly opportunist, out for what advantages might be obtained for themselves by selling Croat nationalism to the Hungarian masters.

The result of the war was not what any Frankist would have desired. Hungary ceased to dominate the Croats. The Slavs of the Balkans raised a new banner of Pan-Slavism, with the conception of a state of southern Slavs. The Frankists were forced into a paradoxical position. They had to forget that they had been opposed to Croat nationalism because that nationalism had become so valuable as a means of cultivating dissension with the Serbs. The Frankists had to work for an independent Croat state under the protection of Hungary. The hope of beaten Hungary lay in the weakening of the new Slav state. Unlooked-for help was forthcoming from ex-enemy Italy. Italy bitterly resented the formation of the kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. It was too big and threatening. She wished the Slav territory of Austria-Hungary parcelled out in petty states so as to be able to divide them and dominate them.

From the time of the making of the peace treaties Italy began to have a common ground with Austria and Hungary. All three states resented the emergence of Yugoslavia. And this resentment may explain why Italy determined to support the cause of revisionism. But Italy, despite complaints, had done well out of the peace settlement. She had taken extensive territory inhabited by Austrians and Slovenes. No programme of strict revision for all parties concerned would suit her because she had decided to give nothing back to Austria. But she supported Hungarian revisionism because it was directed in part against Yugoslavia. If the Voivodina could be restored to Hungary, and Croatia detached from Serbia to become a satellite state, Italy would have a free hand to take over, colonize and

assimilate ancient Illyria, the whole eastern shore of the Adriatic.

The Frankists in 1919, with their pockets empty, shorn of power and position, were allotted a new and ultimately lucrative task. They must foment ill-feeling between the Serbs and the Croats, bring about an armed rising and achieve the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The theory was that the new kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was not a homogeneous entity but a conflict of hostile races, religions and interests. It would task the genius of a Bismarck to unify it. Italy was confident that it could not hold together. Hungary was encouraged by Italy. Austria, perplexed by her own problems, was less interested, but those personages who hoped for a restoration of the Habsburg dynasty worked secretly in co-operation with Italy and Hungary. The Frankists were well posted both at Vienna and Budapest. But they were impoverished after the war. They were short of funds and could do little unless financial support from Italy were forthcoming.

That Italy was willing to go to some expense was proved by the encouragement she gave to the partisans of the Montenegrin monarchy. Hundreds of Montenegrin monarchists had been afforded shelter in Italy, placed in camp, armed and drilled with the object of using them for an attack upon Yugoslavia via Albania. That little army of rebels had been demobilized and dispersed before Mussolini came to power, but the Italian attitude was not improved after the Fascist march to Rome. The Italian answer to the formation of the Little Entente was a project for the establishment of a central European Catholic state comprising Austria, Bavaria, Hungary and Croatia. It became increasingly urgent to detach Croatia from Yugoslavia. Why not recruit an army of rebellious Croats, similar to that of the insurgent Montenegrins? The assassination of Raditch and the establishment of the Serb dictatorship were highly favourable circumstances. The Croats had

reverted to non-co-operation. They were bitter. Racial feeling ran high and the Church could be used to increase it.

The principal leaders of the Frankists were the Croat, General Sarkotitch, who had remained an Austrian subject, Colonel Perchevitch, late of the Austrian army, Ante Pavelitch, Gustave Perchets, intelligence officer in the Hungarian army, and Branimir Jelitch. Of these the one of most intelligence was Ante Pavelitch, a lawyer and member of parliament. Raditch said that the Croats regarded these persons with shame and humiliation, and that no party based on Hungarian or Italian intrigue could find backing except among the more ignorant or demoralized. Dr. Machek became the leader of the Croats after the demise of Raditch, but he never dreamed of leading the Croat Peasant Party into the Frankist adventure. The existent political parties could not be used by Italy and Hungary. At best they could only be provoked or stampeded into civil war.

The Croats are on the whole a passive people. They have more culture than the Serbs but they have less taste for violence. They do not take naturally to arms. That is demonstrated by their history under Austria-Hungary. They were always in a ferment but there was never an armed rising. This is a race which has been tamed by centuries of subordination to a superior culture. They do not naturally resort to violence to win their freedom: they must be goaded into it. They were not fitted for the rôle which Italy and Hungary cast for them, unless the idea was that they could be *forced* into a civil war with the Serbs.

Still there was discontent, there was unemployment. There were disgruntled persons and criminals. There were young enthusiasts whose careers had already been compromised by arrest, young people who had been expelled from schools for their political opinions. There were those who could be secretly enrolled in an army of

independence if someone were willing to support them and pay them wages. But such an army could not be organized on Yugoslav territory. Even if it escaped the vigilance of the police it would be denounced by the Croats themselves. The army must be organized either in Italy or in Hungary. The Hungarian government put no difficulty in the way of establishing training camps for such an army on its territory, near the Yugoslav frontier.

Pavelitch planned to organize a raiding army on the Hungarian side of the river Drava, something similar to the army of Bulgarian bandits which raided Serbian Macedonia. The Macedonian Revolutionary Committee was the terror of southern Serbia. When later it was dissolved it was found to be in possession of over ten thousand rifles with an immense reserve of bombs and ammunition. The V.R.M.O. was no amateur society. If murders, robberies and outrages similar to those the Bulgarians had organized could be committed on the northern frontier the authority of the Yugoslav government would be shaken and there would be constant encouragement for disorder.

At first, however, nothing more was done than to appeal to Croat youth and obtain membership for the secret society. All that members had to do was to take an oath of obedience. There was nothing to pay, no membership dues. The ritual of taking the oath was picturesque, something to appeal to youth. The Croat flag was spread on a table. On it was placed a knife and a revolver and on these a cross. The candidate spread his open right hand on the cross and repeated a formula: "I swear before God and all that I hold sacred that I will observe all the laws of this society and will execute without conditions all that I am ordered to do by the supreme chief. I will scrupulously preserve all secrets entrusted to me and will betray nothing, no matter what it may be. I swear to fight in the Ustasha army for a free independent Croat state under the

absolute control of the supreme chief. Failing in my oath, I shall accept death as the penalty. God help me, Amen!"

This also had to be signed. It sounded dangerous and therefore may have been attractive to very young men. Sometimes such societies are formed in a moment of exaltation, but one never hears much more of them. Pospichil, who was later sent to kill the King, was one of the first to be sworn in. He says there were a thousand who joined on that 7th of January, 1929. He probably exaggerates. In any case, if there were a thousand it proved extremely difficult to collect them later on and persuade them to wear the Ustasha uniform. But names were wanted more than men. Pavelitch, the supreme chief, had a good enough list to present. If he seemed to have the men it would be easier to get the money. Having formed his secret society, he went to Vienna.

In Vienna he met various Frankists and Italian agents. At that time Italy was lavish in her financial support of the Heimwehr and of those persons upon whom she could reckon for support against Germany. She was still a determined opponent of *anschluss*. That did not concern Pavelitch. He required support for his own political venture, the army he proposed to raise.

He met Gustave Perchets and Jelitch, who had formally expatriated themselves by taking out Hungarian passports in Budapest. That was the first service of Hungary. Hungary was prepared to give Hungarian national passports to any members of the Ustasha for whom they might be required. But Italy was not absolutely convinced that Pavelitch meant business. He must first make alliance with the Macedonian Committee in Bulgaria, study its methods and plan something on the same scale. Italian agents in Bulgaria had sounded members of the Committee and found them ready to co-operate. The Bulgarians sent a delegate to Vienna to confer with Pavelitch and Perchets.

This was Nahum Tomalevsky, an important member of the Committee.

It is considered probable that the Italians supported the Macedonian Committee, but it is certain that Nahum Tomalevsky was privy to Pavelitch's plans, knew of Italy's part in the plot and of the help promised in Hungary. He became the unfortunate possessor of dangerous secrets. At a later date, after the Macedonian Committee had broken into factions, he was murdered by the same man who later killed Alexander. Dead men tell no tales. But in the winter of 1929 he brought an invitation to Pavelitch and Perchets to come to Sofia.

The three men set off together by way of Hungary and Roumania. They naturally avoided Yugoslav territory. The followers of Ivan Michailof crowded the railway station at Sofia and gave the two Croats an uproarious reception such as might have been accorded royalty. Pavelitch made a stirring speech in answer to the address of welcome, telling the Macedonians that he had come to make a common front. "Now is the time for brother Croats and Macedonians to work together for the liberation of our peoples reduced to slavery," said he. "Long live free Macedonia and Croatia!"

For these and similar utterances he was tried for high treason in Belgrade, found guilty and condemned to death on the 15th July, 1929. But of course he did not make an appearance at the trial. He was not seen in Jugoslavia again.

Ivan Michailof, who was the head of the Macedonian band, admitted the two Croats to many of the secrets of the Macedonian Committee, explained the organization and reviewed its activities. Gustave Perchets was shown a bomb factory and had explained to him the mechanism of infernal machines. It would appear that he made a careful study of the latter, for he started making them when he got back to Vienna. Pavelitch

was not shocked by the record of Ivan Michailof's band, the many murders and incendiarism. Michailof's men dashed across the frontier at night and raided farms in southern Serbia, shot down the peasants, set fire to houses, plundered, rode back. Vlada the Chauffeur, who afterwards killed King Alexander, was a typical bandit in the employ of Michailof, driving out in a fast car on a moonless night, waylaying Serbs, murdering and robbing them. The whole border had been terrorized. According to Michailof, the ultimate effect of this would be that the population would soon rise in revolt and make common cause with their brethren in Bulgaria.

The Serbs had been forced to send great numbers of troops to guard the Bulgar frontier. Bulgaria was caged in Serbian barbed wire. Conditions prevailed that almost amounted to a state of war. But subsequently Michailof's band was checked by Lazitch, governor of the Vardar province. He wrote to King Alexander, giving some remarkable advice. He said that the Macedonians of south Serbia had not the least desire to be united to Bulgaria. "Let the King authorize the arming of the population, send us 200,000 rifles and the people themselves will make peace." The timid politicians in Belgrade were scandalized by the suggestion. "Give the Macedonians arms? Why, there would be a rebellion at once, and these people would make common cause with Bulgaria." Lazitch, who was a native of these parts, said, "No, you do not understand, they are ours. They will never turn against us." King Alexander said, "That's the man for my money. He understands his people and trusts them. I will trust them also." The King authorized the distribution of arms and ammunition to the farms. Lazitch became a great local hero. The cut-throats from over the border had a very hot reception next time they raided. And they were cowardly. They did not come again. King Alexander congratulated Lazitch.

He had found one of the new men he wanted to serve him under the dictatorship. Lazitch was soon made Minister of the Interior.

But in 1929 there was no prospect of failure for Michailof. He was so powerful that the Bulgarian government itself dared not interfere with his activities. Pavelitch and Perchets were impressed. What Michailof had done they could imitate. They could achieve even more because Croatia was more vital to the existence of Yugoslavia than Macedonia. They felt they could convince the Italians. That was even more important than any immediate success because the Italians had the money. As exiles from Yugoslavia they had no means of subsistence unless the Italians supported them.

So they left Sofia for Varna on the Black Sea coast and took boat to Stamboul. At Stamboul they transhipped for Athens. At Athens they got on an Italian ship and sailed for Rome. At Rome they were received as plenipotentiaries of the Croat people but none the less secretly. Their arrival was not even observed by spies. Great secrecy was required and they were not admitted into the presence of Mussolini. They were interviewed privately by a number of leading Fascists who endeavoured to form an estimate of their character. That Pavelitch was condemned to death in Belgrade impressed the Italians favourably. The man could never return to Yugoslavia till the existing régime was overthrown. That made him secure: he was not likely to betray Fascist plans. The Serbs must think him both important and dangerous: they took him seriously. He had been a member of the Parliament: he was a representative man. He might be raised eventually to be the Duce of a new Fascist state in Croatia. With an army behind him he might one day make a march on Zagreb, imitating Mussolini's march on Rome. Both men were sounded on their Fascist views and expressed themselves sympathetic. They would do all in their power to advance Italian policy. It was well under-



stood that in the event of Croatia gaining her independence she renounced all pretensions to Dalmatia. In the event of a break-up of Jugoslavia, Italy would annex the Adriatic coast from Fiume to Cattaro.

There was no written contract. It was a "gentleman's agreement." Such agreements are made when the mutual interest is sufficient to make a signed document superfluous. For Pavelitch and Perchets this agreement was a gamble. They would be well paid as long as they proved serviceable, but at the whim of their employer they might be cast off into an inhospitable world. They must constantly show results in order to ensure continued financial support. They gambled on two possibilities: Either they would make enough money in five years to retire from the business, or war would break out between Jugoslavia and Italy.

The Fascists decided to have Pavelitch domiciled in Italy and gave him a villa on the Viale Castelfidardo, at Pesaro. They showed their habitual lavishness in the funds they placed at his disposal. The struggling lawyer, who had never known what it was to be free from financial worry, became a rich man. Perchets was given ample credit at Vienna and would receive his subventions through an Italian agent there. He would be able henceforth to indulge his taste for luxurious night life.

Neither of the men abjured his Yugoslav nationality, but Pavelitch obtained an Italian passport under the name of Antonio Serdar and was quite free to use it to make journeys to Budapest, Vienna, Berlin, wherever he wished. He was not debarred from leaving Italy, because his masters knew he was bound to return. Perchets obtained a new passport from the Bulgarian Legation in Rome and became Matthew Tomof, a Bulgarian journalist.

It was believed that Pavelitch had begun to enroll an army in Croatia and he was told that he must transport it to Italy and recruit it further by all means in his

possession. Some years of preparation were necessary, for Pavelitch would not be able to march on Zagreb with a mob of raw levies, least of all against the intrepid Serbs. For the moment Italy was not interested in Hungarian assistance and was not willing that the main army of invasion should be merely in the service of Hungarian revisionism. The Magyars could strike when the time came and cause a diversion, making the Serbs fight on two fronts, but the first object in the adventure must be the acquisition of Dalmatia for Italy. Land near Brescia was allotted to Pavelitch for the formation of the first armed camp.

Orders were given for the manufacture of uniforms for this army, something distinctive. The men must not resemble Italian soldiers. Quarters would be prepared at the Brescia camp. Rifles and ammunition, bombs, explosives, targets, would be sent.

Perchets must make his headquarters at Vienna, organize an international Press campaign against Jugoslavia and do all he could to keep King Alexander nervous while the army of invasion was being prepared. He volunteered the information that he had made a close study of infernal machines at Sofia and that in his belief the maximum disturbance would be achieved by blowing up trains in Jugoslavia. They must fulfil their promise to the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee and keep northern Jugoslavia in a frenzy through terrorism. His programme was approved.

King Alexander, being dictator, was more vulnerable than if he had a ministry responsible to Parliament. All outrages would be considered as protests against a Serb tyranny, at least they could be so interpreted abroad. And if the Serbs lost their heads in repression it would give Italy a pretext to intervene to restore order. Perchets would make liaison with Colonel Perchevitch in Vienna and with Branimir Jelitch and would keep in close contact both with Rome and Budapest.

So the two leaders of sedition separated for the time.

Pavelitch went to Pesaro and Perchets went to the Austrian capital. Pavelitch had more responsibility, but Perchets had more scope for luxurious living. As Matthew Tomof he took a spacious apartment on the Wiedner-Gurtel, sumptuously furnished. He became lavish in his expenditure and began to live the life of one of the new rich. He might be seen every night at expensive cabarets and obviously had money to burn, the richest Bulgarian journalist ever seen in Vienna.

He lived with Jelka Pogorelets, a dark Croat girl whom he had first adopted and then seduced. She was a gipsyish creature, with the meagre ambition of wanting to become a cabaret artist. She liked music and dancing, and the sparkle of night life in Vienna made her think that being a turn was a career. She was Perchets's dancing partner. But she was capable: she could run an apartment, supervise servants, and she could do secretarial work. Perchets made her his housekeeper and also his secretary. He was somewhat idle: he could not attend to all his letters himself. Considering the secret and dangerous career on which he was embarked he was very rash. This untutored girl was capable of curiosity.

Perchets never stinted her with money. She could buy what costumes she liked. Vienna fashions were at her disposal. She could expend what she liked on cosmetics and beauty treatment. He did not supervise the household bills. Jelka wondered where all the money came from. When she asked him the question he was angry, but when she had to handle his correspondence she soon discovered that her lover and almost everyone else connected with him was in the pay of either Italy or Hungary. As she understood that Perchets was going to marry her she became anxious. She would loathe having a spy for husband.

At first Jelka did not realize that her lover was going to make bombs and blow up innocent people on trains. She was ready to work for a free Croatia and

liked to think that the men who visited the apartment were patriots, but it was a shock to discover that they were in the pay of a foreign power. But she kept her counsel: she did not at first quarrel with Perchets. Perhaps she was too much in love with him. She even showed a smiling countenance to the Italian Press Attaché, Moreale, though she knew that most of the money came through him. He was at that time the agent for financing the Heimwehr and was in close contact with Prince Starhemberg.

## CHAPTER IX

### LONELY DICTATOR

THUS, at the same time that Alexander became dictator the plot to destroy his country was hatched. 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 to foment a civil war. A greater blow could be inflicted upon the new state by striking down the one prop of its government. King Alexander had moved out of the company of responsible politicians into a dangerous loneliness. Did he not make a mistake?

When he assumed dictatorship King Alexander became more aloof, more hedged in majesty. He was far removed from the mood of King Peter, who said, "We are peasants. My grandfather was a peasant." A king needs a Parliament if only for the sake of company. The behaviour of the politicians had been outrageous, but the hush from the Parliament house was disconcerting. King Alexander never moved as freely among the people as King Peter had done. He was a stage removed from the source of his power. King Peter had been called to be King: his son inherited kingship.

Princes and lords may flourish or may fade,  
A breath can make them as a breath has made!

Peter Karageorgievitch was made King by the breath of the people and never forgot it. He never had

pretensions to greater power than was given him by Parliament and he was ready to relinquish the power he possessed as soon as the task appeared too heavy for him. King Alexander, united by marriage to European royalty, had more sense of permanence. Instead of being subject to the will of his people, he took the destiny of his people under his personal responsibility. His suspension of the constitution was praised at the time, because the common man was at the moment tired of the political wrangle and it was felt that the dictatorship would bring the King into closer personal contact with the masses. The politicians had done little or nothing to right the many grievances of the common people.

The King's appearance went against him. In Serbia men with hirsute faces are always popular. That was part of the secret of Pashitch. When Stephen Raditch at length shook hands with Pashitch he held the old man's fingers in his hand a long while and gloated on that face with its long beard. "Elijah!" he exclaimed. King Alexander not only grew no beard or side whiskers but shaved off his little black moustache. He ceased to look like the characteristic Serb of his age and resembled more an American. In civil attire he looked like a college professor from the Middle West. In short, he was rather a foreigner.

He deliberately went away from Serbism. As King of Yugoslavia he must not appear too much of a Serb. Henderson, the British minister at Belgrade, said he was the only real Yugoslav he ever met. He sought to portray in himself a new type, a man who was not Serb or Croat or Slovene, but Yugoslav. He was aided by the fact that through upbringing he was already cosmopolitan. He was more European than his subjects. Childhood in Geneva and St. Petersburg had denationalized him.

With a view to making himself as much King of the Slovenes as of the Serbs he had taken up summer resi-

dence at Bled in the Julian Alps, on the confines of Austria and Italy. The diplomatic corps followed him there and were thankful for the comfort of modern hotels and the pleasant odour of old Austria. Bled was utterly non-Balkan. A Serb there must feel he is abroad. The shopkeepers speak German by preference. Croats and Slovenes talk German there to show that they are cultured. For these races, although politically abjuring the old Austria, have an inferiority complex and must talk German in order to affirm that they are really Europeans and not barbarians from the Balkan peninsula. Alexander, with his wife and children, spent the happiest and most carefree part of his life at Bled.

His cousin, Prince Paul, took a villa twelve miles from Bled, beside the romantic lake of Bohinja. He lived there with his wife and family, often entertaining relatives of the Greek court, Prince Nicholas, Princess Helena and their daughter, the Princess Marina, who afterwards married the Duke of Kent. There was an English governess. Everyone spoke English. Alexander and Marie were frequent visitors, and as the Queen of Yugoslavia preferably spoke English there was a strong British influence in that corner of the realm. It was decided to give the King's sons an English education. Curious how Alexander, who had no affiliation with Great Britain, pursued the same course as Nicholas of Russia had done. The court language in St. Petersburg was also English. But otherwise Prince Paul did not have much influence on the King. It is doubtful whether Alexander ever sought his cousin's advice on political questions. He was fond of him. They had romped together as children. But until he nominated him to be Regent, in case of his sudden death, he never meditated allowing him to share in the responsibilities of government. He acquired for him a villa at Dedinje and had it put in order so that they might be neighbours in Belgrade also, but Paul and his family did not spend much time there, much preferring Bohinja

to the capital. He lived as a private citizen and was, indeed, too poor for his position. The King also was poor. There was not much money in the royal court. Alexander employed Prince Paul to go to London and raise money on the King's life insurance so that he might have the capital with which to exploit a gold mine which had been discovered. Prince Paul kept in touch with British political trends and kept the King informed, but he was not used for diplomatic missions.

But Prince Paul was the only royal personage upon whom the King could have called to relieve him of some of the burdensome functions of state. Paul's father, Prince Arsène, lived a carefree existence in Paris and had renounced court life and politics. The King's sister Elena was a widow, living in Switzerland. His brother, Prince George, was "put away." The monarchy, as far as the Karageorgievitch family was concerned, lived in isolation. As if to accentuate this isolation the King, in the same year that he became dictator, removed from the centre of Belgrade to a hill on Dedinje, outside the suburbs. Till then the kings and princes of Serbia had lived on the main street of Belgrade behind the fine sentries in their boxes, behind the gilt-topped railings and flower garden of the Stari Dvor. Peter, when he was invited to become King, in 1903, had to inhabit the apartments where Alexander Obrenovitch and Draga had been murdered. He said he could not sleep: the ghosts of the dead sovereigns haunted the place. He ordered the palace to be pulled down. That original palace stood in the square that is now in summer a luxuriant flower garden. Peter built himself a new palace. That palace looked like a left wing of an unfinished building. He left it during the war but never returned to live there. Alexander wanted him to live there after the war was over. But the old monarch thought he would merely be in the way; he preferred to go into complete retirement in a modest villa far from the centre of the city. Alexander had been



obliged to build himself another palace, a right wing, similar in design and balancing the older house where his father had held court.

But Alexander did not like the trams hurtling past his home, nor the swarms of people sitting at tables on the pavement at the corner of the street, nor the forming up of unofficial delegations outside the palace gates. Neither he nor the Queen liked living in constant publicity. He gave orders for another palace to be built at Dedinje, some miles away, amid the Topchider uplands. In December, 1929, he removed to Dedinje and never again inhabited the palace on the main street. So the people lost some of the sense of possession which comes from having the sovereign living in the midst of them.

"The time has come when no one should stand between the people and the King," declared Alexander when he annulled Parliament. But in a physical sense he contradicted himself when he removed out of Belgrade. It is difficult for an autocrat to combine being King with living the life of a country gentleman. But politically he was not nearer his people. A Parliament, be it ever so rowdy, combines the people with the throne. The rise of General Zhivkovitch, acting for the King and speaking in the King's name without any popular mandate to do so, made the King seem farther away. It made the monarch lonely. It also made him a target for abuse, even a target for the bullets of assassins.

For three years, without intending to do so, Zhivkovitch usurped the King's position, put him into partial eclipse so that the people could not discern who was running the country or what was the King's part in government.

Peter Zhivkovitch was a cavalry general, commander of the King's guard, with headquarters in the vicinity of the royal palaces at Dedinje. He was not in the same category as the heroes of the war, Putnik, Mishitch,

Stepanovitch. His soldiering did not undergo the test of a command of an army in the war. A Guards colonel, he was only promoted to the rank of general in the year 1924.

He belonged to the faction of the Serbian Black Hand which, in 1903, conspired to murder the Obrenovitch King and Queen, Alexander and Draga. The officers of the Black Hand remained under a cloud during the reign of King Peter, and though Zhivkovitch dissociated himself from its activities, the connection may account for his slow advancement. He served throughout the Balkan wars and the Great War, and was in the retreat through Albania; yet he only attained the rank of colonel. The Black Hand, after the accession of Peter, became a more secret organization: its aim was to keep the control of the dynasty in the hands of the army. It was finally liquidated at Salonika in 1917, after an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Regent Alexander. Colonel Zhivkovitch came into prominence after that event by organizing a bodyguard for the Regent on the Macedonian front.

His career up to the time he became prime minister had no national significance. He was no politician. His name had not been associated with achievement of any kind. He had not even been a man behind the scenes. He had not been entrusted with any important tasks even of military administration. He had absolutely no experience in government, but he was the King's friend. An intimacy had sprung up between the sovereign and the general. The commander of the royal guard was constantly in contact with the King. And Alexander liked him.

King Alexander had a penchant for men of good character but not much brain. In a country of so many opportunities and so much corruption the King, when he found an honest man, "grappled him to his heart with hoops of steel." Zhivkovitch was a man who lived simply on his salary, contracted no debts, was shy of

using influence and possessed a childlike loyalty. He was stout, the sort of man who slept o' nights, not a lean Cassius. He had a ready and engaging smile. His conscience was always clear. So, when plagued by politicians, Alexander would ask his opinion and obtain a manly, soldierly comment on affairs.

As a personality the King found Zhivkovitch refreshing. That must account for the frequency with which statesmen being received at the palace found the general there, a tacit listener to the conversation. Except for Stephen Raditch, most of them resented the soldier having any opinion on affairs of state. It was recognized that the army was strictly non-political and could never be brought in as the arbiter between the parties.

But there were no accidental ties binding the King and Zhivkovitch. They shared no hobbies. The King went shooting regularly and was an excellent shot. Zhivkovitch confessed to me ruefully, "I only went on one shoot with his Majesty. I am no hunter." One may surmise he was a bad shot. Alexander was fond of a rubber of bridge, but the general did not play cards. The King was a bibliophile, but Zhivkovitch seldom looked at a book and did not know French. He could not share the King's literary interests. And he was no military strategist: he could not discuss campaigns with him. Yet Alexander called him by his Christian name and for many years he was the nearest person to the King.

It was remarkable that the democratic Raditch should advise the King to make Zhivkovitch premier, that a Croat should desire to see a Serbian general in control. The Croat leader had intimate converse with Zhivkovitch only in the fatal year 1928. Their first important meeting was on the occasion of the baptism of the King's second son. On the 19th January, Queen Marie had given birth to another boy, and King Alexander, as a compliment to the Croats and perhaps at the

suggestion of Raditch, decided to name the child after the legendary king of Croatia, Tomislav. Another gesture to show he was a true Yugoslav and that his children were as much Croats as Serbs! Raditch was enchanted. Suppose the heir died, there would be another Tomislav, King Tomislav the Second. The name Tomislav is a rallying cry of the Croats.

Raditch's praise of the King might seem fulsome or indiscriminating, but not to Zhivkovitch. He approved a man who spoke so highly of the sovereign. And in any case he knew that Alexander liked Raditch. So he invited the Croat politician to visit him at Topchider. They met again and talked much of the army. Zhivkovitch recalled an incident when the Russian contingents arrived at Salonika in 1916. The Russian officers did not like the promiscuous way colonels and majors and even generals would eat and drink together with the rank and file. A Russian colonel spoke to him about it. But Zhivkovitch said that Serb officers could not sit down to eat while the men went hungry. They must look after their men before they looked after themselves. Old King Peter did not mind sitting in a trench and sharing rations with private soldiers. "You see, the Serbian army is truly democratic."

Raditch was impressed. The Austrian and Hungarian officers had had a lofty disregard for their men, as if without rank a man was a mere animal. "I think," said Raditch, "the army has a truer instinct for democracy than any of the political parties striving for power in Belgrade." When Raditch talked to him of the violence of some leaders, the venality of others, Zhivkovitch showed a cheerful non-committal ignorance. The general had a fresh and invigorating personality, just the man to teach the politicians that country comes first. So Raditch began to advise the King to impose a dictatorship with Zhivkovitch in control. Not till after Raditch was assassinated did that advice mature in the King's mind.

But it was too easy a way out. Alexander, who was a shrewd judge of character, must have known that Zhivkovitch was merely a "yes-man." Whatever the King arranged the general was likely to approve. He would not stand up for his own opinions, because he had no opinions. All he required to know was the King's mind on any subject and that would guide his actions and utterances. King Alexander moved on the assumption which is common in Jugoslavia that the state is a small one without pretensions to be a great power or to have influence in Europe, a peasant-cum-army state. But what had been possible in little Serbia was not practical in the aggrandized kingdom of Jugoslavia. He had inherited the complication of politics of the Austrian empire and it was imperative that he should find men of talent to cope with it.

Raditch's advice had been, "Find capable men outside the antagonisms of politics and appoint them to the ministries!" He wanted the King to make a clean sweep of the senior politicians. He approved Zhivkovitch for premier because the general was completely outside politics and therefore likely to be impartial. At the same time he was a man who could not be bought and would not push his own material interests. But it was not easy. The system in Jugoslavia does not allow men of talent to shine. It is no land of opportunity. There is no publicity for the achievements of young men. No one who is at all young is considered of importance. The seniors keep him severely in the background. There is no quick way for men of parts to come to the front, and Alexander is not to be blamed if in this respect he cannot be said to have known his own people. He could appoint Zhivkovitch but he could not give him a supporting ministry drawn from capable men who were outside politics.

There is no doubt that, dating from the 6th January, 1929, when the King announced the dictatorship, the people began to sulk. His popularity was still un-

impaired. But everyone was expecting inspired personal leadership and the dawning of a new era. The public was also tired of the old gang of politicians. So the disillusion was great when Zhivkovitch's Cabinet was announced. Uzunovitch, Marinkovitch, Koroshets, the professional politicians, had returned. The only difference was that this Cabinet was responsible to the King alone and was to be allowed to govern without the check of parliamentary criticism.

The ministers were even more subservient. They had to do what they were told. The King and General Zhivkovitch sat in conclave. They ran the country without being capable of doing so to the advantage of the country. The supporting ministers drew their salaries, appointed their relatives and friends to posts, accepted the usual presents from contractors and manufacturers and could not be brought to book because there was no Parliament and because criticism in the Press was forbidden. Those who defend the King's action in this conjuncture say he had no other course open to him. He had to use the men he knew. After the assassinations in Parliament in 1928 and the subsequent deadlock it was manifest that the constitution would not work. The King was a realist in politics. If one system failed he must try another.

Zhivkovitch's outlook seemed refreshingly simple and hopeful. The country was tired of the political wrangle, shocked by the murders, distrustful of party politics but endlessly devoted to the sovereign. It desired peace and unity more than anything else. The King must first make unity and then free institutions could gradually be restored. Unity must be imposed from the throne. So unification became the main plank of Alexander's domestic policy. It is clear that the King was very trustful with Zhivkovitch and that the two soldiers together were more naïve than they were apart. "They wept like anything to see such quantities of sand." Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Bosnians,

Montenegrins, Herzegovinians, Shumadians, Macedonians, must be swept away for a country of Jugoslavs only.

In October, 1929, came the first fruit of the new régime. Yugoslavia was proclaimed and the country was divided into a set of new provinces with new names. In order to get rid of local patriotism and sectionalism, Croatia became the Savska province, Slovenia became Dravska, Montenegro and Herzegovina were lumped together to become Zetska, Bosnia became Drinska, Macedonia became Vardarska, the Voivodina and part of Serbia became Dunavska. Some wit remarked of Serbia, "Once you were a principality, then you became a kingdom, but now you are merely a province."

The King hoped that in time Croats would forget they were Croats, the Serbs that they were Serbs, the Slovenes that they were Slovenes and that upon being asked what they were would proudly reply that they were Jugoslavs.

The historic provinces and countries had been named after rivers, except Dalmatia, which had been named after the sea. It is as if in Great Britain, Wales were named Severnia, Ireland Shannonia and Scotland Clydea.

Serbia, which had fought her way to independence out of centuries of bondage and oblivion, ceased to exist as a political description. It was parcelled out in various *banovinas*. The national flag of Serbia was removed into a museum of historical curiosities, and the Serb regiments were paraded to renounce the flag for which they had fought and to salute in its place the new flag of Yugoslavia.

Jugoslavia means the country of the southern Slavs, but it has the disadvantage of its meaning being never likely to be understood except in Slav countries. To the western world the name was an ugly novelty, too like that of Czecho-Slovakia not to be confused. The



*Frederick*

KING ALEXANDER IN CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH





name "Serbia" had the advantage of having won a position in the minds and hearts of many people. It was not new. It had won its place on the map. It had history and it had had an unforgettable part in the war. But the name "Jugoslavia" had to win recognition, had to get history and tradition. The change of name helped to reduce the significance of Alexander's kingdom. "One of the new mushroom states which sprang up after the war."

Zhivkovitch, as Minister of the Interior, arranged for large deputations to come from the new provinces to express their loyalty to the King and their faith in his leadership. On the 17th December Alexander received a large delegation of Croats from the Savska province and from Dalmatia, renamed Primorska. On the 25th December he received the South Serbians and Macedonians from Vardarska. On the 29th, the Montenegrins and Herzegovinians; on the 19th January, 1930, a deputation of Bosnians and Slovenes and also of Serbs. In general the deputations were mixed so that it would be impossible for a spokesman to say "We—" anything else but "—Jugoslavs."

The changes were accepted calmly. There was the indifference of a dog who stands by when his master changes his name, indifference and some tail-wagging. Since the inauguration of the dictatorship public opinion was very difficult to assess. The Press, which had so shockingly abused its freedom, had been put under police control and any paper expressing a distasteful opinion could be confiscated forthwith. Editors must confine themselves to news. Opinions must be submitted. In this anomalous position they printed photographs of Zhivkovitch in uniform every day and hailed all as for the best. If a man's reputation could be destroyed by having his photo printed every day it must have ruined Zhivkovitch. His face did not convince one as the answer to Jugoslavia's problems. I saw him about this time. He received me in general's uniform

and looked magnificent. His first words were, "You know, we have come to look upon you people who write as very dangerous. I say nothing for publication." That was the military outlook. Journalists often give away secrets of strategy.

But it is not really very much use calling a house divided against itself "Harmony Home." The racial antagonism still remained. And there were other divisions. Yugoslavia is even more sharply divided by creed than by tribe. The Serb commonly calls his religion Serbian, identifying nationality and Church. But a Yugoslav may be anything, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Old Catholic, Moslem, Jewish. The creeds could not be unified by proclamation.

The nation is also divided by alphabets. The Serbs and Montenegrins use Cyrillic letters, somewhat similar to the Russian and Bulgarian alphabets. The Church uses old Slavonic. The Croats have a Latin script with a set of accents of their own. The Moslems of Skoplje read Arabic. King Alexander meditated a bold step in 1929, the standardization of script. To show his impartiality he proposed to sacrifice the alphabet of the Serbs and adopt Croatian. But that was more than the Serbs would endure in the name of unity. The Orthodox Church resented the project. It looked like a step towards Yugoslavia becoming a Catholic country.

The King showed plainly that he had no manner of bias against the Roman Catholic Church. He was ready to receive the blessing of Roman bishops and to go to divine service in their cathedrals. He decorated the Archbishop of Zagreb, Mgr. Bauer, with the highest order in the realm, the great star of the Order of Kara-george. Zagreb was worth a mass. He was careful not to attach an Orthodox father confessor to his person. He did not make the sign of the cross in the eastern way for fear of offending those who made it in the western way. He did not emulate the Tsars of Russia in religiosity. He showed no interest in miracles and did

not seek out holy men for converse. The Serbs did possess one outstanding religious leader, Nicholas Velimirovitch, Bishop of Ohrid and afterwards of Zhicha, a man to whom thousands flocked. But when occasion arose Alexander did not advance him to be Patriarch as was well within his power. He preferred the safer Varnava. The Orthodox Church must not be allowed to advance to a position of power as it had done in the old Russia. Both churches were in part supported by the state and Alexander understood himself as a King of both Eastern and Western Catholics. Rome could not be interfered with, but the Serbian Church was more dependent on the state, making it possible for the King so to arrange the election of the Patriarch that one-third of the votes were at the disposal of the government. The Patriarch became the King's nominee. The Orthodox Church, which had preserved the nationhood of the Serbs through the centuries, was deliberately frustrated for the sake of Jugoslavia.

The King pursued a religion of good works and enlightened materialism. In a crisis he invited no one to pray. He was interested in the restoration of ruined churches and monasteries, but more as an antiquarian than a religious man. He sent money gifts to people in distress. He was limited but he was a man of his word. His loyalties were lifelong. He kept his promises. He told no lies. When asked a difficult question by an interviewer it was noticeable that he did not resort to euphemisms. He had a horror of ministers who used their position to enrich themselves, dismissed them when they were found out, and never re-appointed them. He was perhaps too righteous for the people he had to govern. He felt that very few got a beating from the police who did not deserve it. He was not cruel, but he had a rough-and-ready way of dealing with politicians who thwarted him.

Svetozar Pribitchevitch, who led the "independents," the left wing of the Democratic Party, declared for a

republic. He was a Serb, but a Serb of the old Serbian minority in Croatia, an ex-Austrian subject. He had not fought in the ranks of Serbia and was not united to the monarchy by the sentimental ties which bound the Serbs of Serbia. He was a man of intellectual honesty, probity and ability. He was recognized as a front rank man and held the post of Minister of Education for several years. He was also a leader of the more intelligent journalism and his newspaper, the *Retch*, attracted some of the best writers of the country. The *Retch* was liberal, rather like the Russian *Retch*, which was its inspiration. It stood for the liberty of the subject and free untrammelled democracy, and in due course it was suppressed.

The greatest achievement of Pribitchevitch's career was his alliance with Stephen Raditch. The truly democratic elements had made a common front combining both Serbs and Croats. But Raditch came to have a much stronger faith in Alexander than Pribitchevitch ever had. In hospital Stephen Raditch wrote a funeral oration for Paul Raditch and Basarichek, who fell by the assassin's hand in Parliament and he gave it to Pribitchevitch to read at the grave. He said, "We believe in our people as the people believe in us. We believe that the King at this moment faces a very difficult problem, but King and people will solve it together."

That King and people would solve it together was not apparent in the régime set up on the 6th January, 1929. Pribitchevitch had some angry converse with the King, being quite capable of browbeating the monarch. Having a strong will and stubbornness of character, he was as difficult to move as Alexander. He remained in intimate contact with the Croats, whose tendency, since the death of Raditch, was also republican. "The people must decide," was his bedrock. Pribitchevitch came to the conclusion that the main hindrance to a unity of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was the dynasty. Despite Alexander's effort to be a colourless Yugoslav,

he was the symbol of the hegemony of the Serbs. The military and the police directed from Belgrade controlled the whole country and there was no prospect of freedom while these forces had no Parliament to check them. That Parliament had failed to work did not impress Pribitchevitch. It would work if not subject to interference from interested parties. It would function as it should if there were a republic and an elected president.

Pribitchevitch was interned, taken from his home to a place far from his supporters, placed under house arrest and subjected to police surveillance. He fell ill, but that did not mollify Alexander and Zhivkovitch. He remained behind the barbed wire of the police. President Masaryk then interceded for him, appealing to Alexander to send the liberal leader into Czechoslovakia, where they would care for him. The King acceded, but it was a humiliating request on the part of Masaryk. The Czechs thought highly of this man even if the Serbs did not. Svetozar Pribitchevitch disappeared from the political arena of Yugoslavia and ultimately died abroad. It was a loss.

The first ministry under the dictatorship started without Croat support. There was only one Croat in that cabinet and he resigned during the following April. There was only one Slovene, Dr. Koroshets, and there were no Moslems. The Democrats were represented, both right and left wing, but it was predominantly a Serbian Radical ministry. A number of Croats willing to serve for the ministerial salary were found later, but they were all ministers without portfolio. The first of these, Mirko Najdorfer, signed on on the 5th May, 1930. He was afterwards murdered by one of Pavlitch's terrorists so as to deter other Croats from taking government posts.

Dr. Koroshets, the leader of the Slovenes, resigned in September, 1930. He had been moved from the Ministry of Communications to the Ministry of Forests and Mines, hardly the place for a priest. His ardent

religious nature craved higher responsibilities. He had been premier, but in the Cabinet of Zhivkovitch he had but little weight. Although his place was taken by a member of his party, his secession was a manifest weakening of the cause of racial unity. He swayed the opinion of the whole of Slovenia.

The King prepared a new constitution to take the place of the St. Vitus' Day Constitution enacted on the 21st June, 1921. That he had sworn to abide by the original constitution did not deter him. Constitutions do not naturally derive from monarchs, but from a people as a whole. No doubt, had the King lived he would have promulgated yet a third constitution. He did not consider constitutions holy. If one did not work, it could be changed. His new plans did not appeal to the man in the street or rank-and-file politicians. But the King took complete responsibility. Bogoljub Jevtitch, Minister of the Court, read the text of the revised constitution to Zhivkovitch and he replied that the results obtained were due to the initiative of the King alone.

By royal command a Senate came into existence. Ministers who by the original constitution had been responsible to Parliament now became responsible to the King alone. The ballot ceased to be secret and voluntary and became open and obligatory. The authorities must be able to check for whom a citizen voted. The power to introduce new laws was vested in the King and his Cabinet, the Houses of Parliament merely having the power to confirm them or explain them, but such laws must be voted by both houses or they became null.

On the eighth of November, 1931, a general election was held but only one party was allowed to take the field. The election was a demonstration of what the new constitution really meant, an all-powerful government with the backing of a sham popular representation. This was a curious election. There were no posters.

No one was even allowed to scribble political slogans on walls. Newspapers were not allowed to voice opposition to the government list. All who had the franchise were ordered to exercise it whether they wished to or not. Croats had to vote for Serbs. The Serb, Croat and Slovene peasantry were shepherded to the polling booths by the police. But even upon compulsion half the people in Croatia, Slovenia and Dalmatia did not vote. Out of three and a half million electors in the whole country some 2,325,245 men were persuaded to record votes. All the 306 Members of Parliament elected were supporters of the government and there was no opposition whatever. A one-party Utopia was realized.

The King pretended to be pleased with the result, but it is known that he had sleepless nights and had become irritable. The return of parliamentarism, even of the one-party kind, restarted the turmoil of 1928. The one party, calling itself the National Party, began to murmur against the continued presence of a general in the Cabinet. They had nothing personally against Zhivkovitch, but the spurs of a cavalry officer were out of place in politics. They wanted the removal of even the semblance of military dictatorship. "Back to politics!" was the cry. In January Zhivkovitch ceased to be Minister of the Interior. In April he ceased to be premier. He wanted to get out. His pride was touched. "I am a soldier," he confessed; "I am not a politician." King Alexander was angry. "I'll remove your rank and you can remain premier as civilian," said the King. But Zhivkovitch preferred his military rank. That humility or pride seems to have shocked the King and he neglected Zhivkovitch for the rest of his reign, even failing to nominate him as a regent in case of his death. But the general was fortunate in not having to shoulder the responsibility of coercing those who refused to accept the new constitution.

Both Croats and Slovenes demanded a reconsidera-



tion of their position in the state. They said they had joined Serbia in 1918 on certain agreed conditions. Their leaders refused to keep silence. Koroshets, for the Slovenes, proposed Catholic home rule in the west. The King considered his statements treasonable and had him interned on the island of Hvar, off the Dalmatian coast. Suffering from diabetes, he obtained permission to go to a sanatorium at Split, where he remained till the King's dead body was brought on a warship to that port, when he joined the procession of mourners and was informally pardoned. Prince Paul, as Regent, promoted him to be Minister of the Interior. Such are the ups and downs in a politician's life in Yugoslavia.

Dr. Machek, who had become leader of the Croats, was a lawyer and an intellectual, very different from Stephen Raditch. He had no link with the village and the peasant, but he had inherited some of Raditch's glory. The King did not make a friend of him as he had done of Raditch. Perhaps he found him anti-pathetic. Alexander was at home with soldiers and with naïve or open-hearted politicians like Raditch, men whose peasant origin was written in their faces. To please the King there had to be something in a man which he could identify as Balkan. There was nothing Balkan about Machek. His face belongs more to Vienna and the west. He opposed the new constitution even more vigorously than Koroshets.

After the murder of Raditch the Croats had to be placated lest the breach between the races should become unbridgeable. Croatia made a cult of Raditch. He was the martyr who had died for his motherland, Croatia. His grave is more visited and adorned than the grave of any unknown soldier. Blood speaks and the feud was expressed by three million people whispering against Serbia. Youth was continually in a ferment. There were demonstrations and parades. In order to hold a public meeting one had to have police permission, a restriction always galling to the Croats. Naturally

enough, unauthorized meetings took place and they were dispersed by the use of the truncheon. When there was resistance the gendarmerie opened fire. There were harmless people killed and wounded and many arrests. And every affray with the police fanned the flames of racial animosity. There was no appeal, because the gendarmerie were above the law. The only means of countering brutality lay in secret agitation and in protest abroad. The scandal of popular maltreatment was aggravated by the murder of Prof. Schufflai on the 18th February, 1931. In this it was considered that the Zagreb police were gravely compromised.

Dr. Machek was the quiet champion of a persecuted people. There was nothing aggressive in his behaviour. He expressed his loyalty to the dynasty but demanded a decentralized state, with a large measure of home rule at Zagreb. He never gave the slightest encouragement to Pavelitch or let him think that it was possible to foment an armed rebellion in Croatia. But to him the new constitution of the 3rd September, 1931, was a scandal. The Croats had been cheated. They had accepted unity with the Serbs and Slovenes on terms which had been communicated to the western powers and approved by them. Serbia had acquired her extensive new territory after the war subject to guarantees of racial self-determination. The Croats would never have agreed to come in on the terms of the new constitution. Great Britain and America would not have sanctioned such treatment of the Croats. In November, 1932, he framed a resolution condemning the hegemony of Belgrade and demanding a return to the open position of December, 1918, restoring to the Croats the right of self-determination. The resolution was signed by six politicians besides himself and communicated to the foreign Press in the form of interviews. Machek was arrested under the Defence of the Realm Act, tried, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. He was

amnestied by Prince Paul very soon after the death of the King.

It is, no doubt, vain to consider what might have been; but if the King could have come to an understanding with Machek the course of history would have been changed. It would have been made clear that Pavelitch had no backing in Croatia and that to raise an army of independence on foreign soil was a waste of money on the part of the Italians. The King would have been able to stop the terrorism which was raging at the time, and he would have averted his own doom. Italians, Hungarians and Austrian legitimists derived much encouragement from the coercion of Croatia.

But Alexander did not realize that. He dwelt in a fool's paradise and even imagined that in 1932 Yugoslavia was stronger and that, with the new constitution, the races were consolidated and presented a united front. Marinkovitch, who was in ill health and too old for his job, considered that Italy had been impressed by what Alexander had achieved. The Italian Minister in Belgrade, Signor Galli, seems to have played a double part, assuring Marinkovitch that the move towards Fascism on the part of Yugoslavia was highly acceptable to Mussolini, but at the same time sending the Foreign Minister in Rome exaggerated accounts of the spirit of revolt in Yugoslavia.

Galli, by combining natural and artificial phenomena, could present a picture of Yugoslavia on the brink of revolution. He could report the continued boycott of the government by the Croats; the discontent of the Slovenes; disaffection of the leaders, Machek and Koroshets. The dictatorship had even been deserted by its strong man, Zhivkovitch. Possibly the army was no longer staunch. Many Serbs had become critical. Pribitchevitch had been forced into exile. Montenegro was restive. These were the natural phenomena. Add to them the list of outrages, the murders and bomb explosions and the Italians could imagine that Jugo-

slavia would shortly fall to pieces. But the outrages which began in 1929 were mostly artificially contrived. They did not take place as the result of the indignation of the people; but it just needed these blowings up of trains and explosions in barracks to make the general picture convincing to Mussolini.

King Alexander would have felt relief if Italian enmity could have been removed. He bore no grudge against Italy, nursed no grievances. It is to his credit that, despite unparalleled provocation, he never bore himself aggressively towards Italy, never threatened. He saw some resemblance between his own political position and that of Mussolini. Parliamentary government had failed in Rome and the Duce had stepped forward to save his country. Democracy had for the time failed in Belgrade and King Alexander had taken the necessary steps to unite all warring factions. "United we stand: divided we fall," was the motto of Fascism that Alexander had adopted when he created Yugoslavia. Grandi had said that Italy was ready for an understanding. "Come to us without the Little Entente and without France and we will see what we can do for you!"

Such terms were naturally unpalatable, but Signor Galli, in 1932, seemed to suggest something better, a general appeasement, the inauguration of a new era of peace. As a result of his opinions, freely expressed, Marinkovitch had considerable correspondence with Grandi. Would it not be possible for the Duce and King Alexander to meet and deal with all their difficulties as man to man? But the Yugoslav Premier and Foreign Minister was very ill and was forced to retire from office on the 3rd July, 1932.

Srshkitch became premier and Bogoljub Jevtitch, who had been Minister of the Court in the previous administration, became Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Italian conversations still continued. Jevtitch went to Rome but he did not find the accommodating spirit that Marinkovitch had led him to expect. He

waited on the doormat of the Italian Foreign Minister. A wretched Balkan politician had arrived at the portals of the Eternal City and the grandeur of modern Fascist Italy oppressed him. He was forced into the position of humble suppliant. His King wished to do homage to the great Duce. That showed the proper spirit. But Mussolini preferred to wait a little. He would not bolster up a tottering throne. He was certainly not going to sign away his presumptive right to Dalmatia over a cup of tea with the Serbian King. To the proposal for a meeting with the King he replied arrogantly. Alexander must first of all consolidate the internal divisions of his country, then if he would apply again he would consider it. "I wait at my window," said Mussolini.

That amounted to an affront. From that time on Alexander worked more vigorously to thwart Italian policy in the Balkans. But the phrase, "I wait at my window," was seen afterwards to have a sinister meaning. Mussolini was staging a revolt at Lika on the boundary of Croatia and Dalmatia. His window looked across the Adriatic. He was going to drop a lighted match into the supposed powder factory of Croat and Dalmatian disaffection and watch the effects. Perhaps Jugoslavia would be blown to bits. Then he could move in and impose Fascist order on the other side of the Adriatic.

## CHAPTER X

### INTERNATIONAL SABOTAGE

GUSTAVE PERCHETS made life more pleasant for himself and his companion by buying a car. Pospichil was his chauffeur. He was not such an addict of night life in the city that he could not break away and get the fresh air of the mountains. He visited the Brenner Pass. He met envoys from Italy at the frontier. He received consignments of ecrasite and tolite and brought back stores of explosives to the apartment in Vienna. Some two kilogrammes of that ecrasite went off very soon in a barracks of gendarmes in Zagreb.

But houses in Vienna, even those which enjoyed protection, were not immune from police search. So Perchets took a small farm at Klingenbach, in the Burgenland. It was a remote and quiet place near the Hungarian frontier. The explosives were transferred to the farm, which became a bomb factory. Perchets began to have a hobby, the making of bombs and infernal machines. He had a taste for the ingenuity of clock bombs. In Vienna he bought small striking clocks and altered their mechanism so that they only struck the half hours, then so that they only struck at a given time and then that instead of striking they ignited a fuse. He brought the adjusted clocks and the required metal containers to Klingenbach and completed the machines. He had a trusty assistant, Franjo Shimunovitch, and when he went away he left him in charge, to continue the work and make sure that no stranger got access to the farmhouse.

Meanwhile Pavelitch had agents in Croatia, recruiting for his army, and those who had already sworn to obey

him were called up. Only a few responded to his call but they were daring fellows. They had the option of going to Italy to train or of serving Perchets. There was no need for Perchets to have more than six tried men at his disposal: he was not raising an army and it was easy to keep him supplied. The most daring of the helpers of Perchets was Mio Seletkovitch, who opened the campaign against trains by trying to blow up the Zagreb-Belgrade express at Strizivoina.

The first bombs made were rather cumbrous, suitable for placing on the permanent way, even more suitable for the blowing up of police headquarters at Zagreb, which was one of the early exploits. Perchets thought out something more effective for his attack upon the railway services. He had been successful, but according to Pavelitch he was not weakening the *moral* of Yugoslavia. The Serbs could stand a lot of explosions: they had iron nerves. Something must be done that would really terrorize the population. Perchets had it.

A small type of infernal machine was made for use in railway carriages. These explosive clocks with a very quiet tick were contrived by Perchets. International trains were chosen for the outrages so as to discourage visitors to Yugoslavia. Few tourists would arrive if it got around that the trains were unsafe. It would help to advertise the instability of conditions in Yugoslavia. It seemed a good plan and had the advantage of being much safer for the men who carried the bombs. It was not necessary to travel into Yugoslav territory and run the risk of being arrested. The bombs could be hidden in the trains in Austrian territory, and timed to go off after they had passed the frontier.

Special attention was given to the Paris-Belgrade express, the train which leaves Paris at seven in the morning and arrives in Belgrade at nine the following night. This train emerges from Austria between dawn and daylight at the time when the weary passengers are

snatching their last sleep before the breakfast-car is hitched on. The station of Villach is somnolent, even in midsummer, when the early morning twilight is in conflict with the still burning station lamps. The train stops and seems to dream. Then slowly it trails out of the station in the gloom of the mountains to the last halt in Austria, Rosenbach.

Perchets's men, with their infernal machines in suit-cases, commonly boarded the train at Villach. Sleepy but benevolent Austrian conductors punched their tickets and disappeared. Passengers would generally be too weary to pay the least attention to the doings of newcomers. The terrorists were able to find suitable hiding-places for their clock-bombs, set them, start them ticking, dispose of them and then step off the train at Rosenbach.

This had the desired effect. The most appalling train explosions took place. Passengers were maimed or blown to bits—as often as not foreigners, for there are seldom many Serbs in the through carriages of that train coming from abroad. This form of terrorism got much more on the nerves of Yugoslav officials than the blowing up of buildings or attempts to kill police officers. They had to answer for the persons of foreign subjects done to death or injured on their trains. It was, moreover, sabotage of a kind that threatened tourist traffic. And no one could be brought to justice. Soon it became clear that the infernal machines had been placed on the trains while the latter were still on foreign territory.

As the Austrian government was at first incredulous it proved a difficult problem to cope with. Passengers who were unaware of the extent of the outrages began to think that the Yugoslav police were losing their wits. The police boarded the trains at the frontier, looked under all the seats of all the carriages, examined the racks and packages hanging from hooks. They turned out the lavatories and then locked the doors. They



inspected the hot-water pipes. But when they found bombs they did not advertise the fact. No one knew. The Press were seldom told anything. One can imagine with what detail and circumstance such outrages would be reported in the British or American Press. Jugoslavia was dumb. The government would at least deny the satisfaction of publicity to the terrorists. The news went by word of mouth but the Serbs received it with their usual imperturbability. If they had a fault it was that of being too little shocked.

But secrecy and preventive measures failed. The police did not find all the hidden bombs. More explosions occurred, some of them far from the frontier. There was a sensational explosion at Zemun, where a certain Professor Brunetti was travelling to Belgrade with his wife and children. His wife and infant son were blown to bits before his eyes. The professor and several others were mutilated. At Zemun, on the other side of the Danube from Belgrade! Perhaps the bomb was really timed for the Danube bridge.

This was also an international train and still stronger measures had to be taken at the Austrian frontier. The through carriages from France and Switzerland ceased to be through carriages. At Jesenitse all passengers from abroad had to get out of their compartments on to the platform. Then the train was shunted into a siding and a new train which had not been abroad would be backed into the station and passengers continued their journey in that.

At the same time spies were sent into Austria to find out who was responsible for the crimes. At last they were able to provide the Austrian government with a list of names. An indemnity was claimed for damage done and the Austrians were asked to place the terrorists under arrest. The Jugoslavs never got any indemnity. But the Austrians had to pay some attention to these demands. Perchets and his collaborators enjoyed too high a protection to be put in prison. But the Austrians

did what they could. They requested Perchets, Seletkovitch and the others to leave Austrian territory without delay. Perchets had to pack up and go to Budapest. The others went to a training camp in Italy.

Colonel Perchevitch, who was not incriminated, remained in Vienna and became Pavelitch's chief agent in Austria. He had established a Press agency at his house on the Karolinengasse. From this centre damaging news about Jugoslavia was disseminated to the world. Like Riga for Russian news after the revolution, Vienna became the source of innumerable lying or tendentious telegrams. The object of this Press campaign was to deprive Jugoslavia of all political sympathy in the west and prepare the way for British and French indifference to her fate should she become the scene of civil war.

But in 1930, despite their manifold activity, there were not more than thirty Croats associated with Pavelitch. Hundreds may have sworn to obey him, but they remained quietly in Croatia. They might be ready to join in an armed rising, but they were not available for active co-operation. The number of recruits coming out of Jugoslavia was disappointing to Pavelitch, clearly indicating that however much some Croats might yearn for independence they would not sell themselves to Italy and Hungary. Pavelitch was forced to advertise and make propaganda. He obtained the money to start a series of newspapers. There were *Independent Croatia*, the *Croat Defence*, *Ustasha*, and, perhaps the most important, *Gritch*, published in German, French and English. Besides these he found the money to print many pamphlets. None of these publications brought in any revenue. For the most part they were distributed gratis and one is obliged to remark on the enormous cost of these enterprises. Money flowed like water for Pavelitch and his associates.

These were all printed abroad but were smuggled in bulk into Croatia and Dalmatia and distributed illegally.

Those who received them probably read them but were quick to destroy them so as to avoid suspicion of being distributors. But they circulated freely outside Yugoslavia and were read by the emigrants, who were much in the dark as to what was happening in their country. It was easy to convince factory workers in Belgium or ranchers in South America that Alexander had caused the murder of Raditch and that the Serbs were shooting down Croats like rabbits. And it was not difficult to persuade some of them that an army of Croat patriots was forming on Italian soil. They wrote enthusiastic letters to Pavelitch from the most outlandish places. A few sold all that they had and repaired to Italy or Hungary to take part in the glorious work. "Say you have an army and you will get an army."

Pavelitch soon had enough men in uniform to parade and make a show. He had himself and the first recruits photographed for propaganda purposes. That was very convincing and caused a glow of pride in the hearts of some ignorant emigrants. The men in uniform looked to be genuine soldiers, part of the great new Croat army of national independence. The Fascists, in their bureaux in Rome, also liked those photographs. They were deceptively convincing. It did appear that the Duce of the Croats was doing something.

In 1931 Pavelitch sent Branimir Jelitch to the Argentine, Brazil and Uruguay, with ample financial credit and cases of printed propaganda. His mission was not to convince these distant republics of the rightness of the Croat cause, but to obtain recruits for the training camps. In South America the gathering of supporters for revolutions was nothing new, though Yugoslavia must have seemed a far cry. Jelitch lived in style. The men he took over were offered wages from the moment they signed on. That was a feature of the Ustasha brigade. Everyone was paid. Some of the richer volunteers were squeamish about accepting pay, but they were exceptional.

Perchets ceased to be Mathew Tomof, a Bulgarian journalist, and obtained another passport. No use the police trying to trace Tomof any further. He became Emil Horvat, a Hungarian subject of independent means. Pavelitch visited him in Budapest to discuss new plans. Perchets's base was now Hungary. No more terrorism could be launched from Austria. The time had come for Perchets to share in the major enterprise. Recruiting was looking up. Pavelitch hinted at hundreds of new men flocking to the standard. A second training camp might be started in Hungary, similar to the camp in Italy. Perchets agreed to co-operate and he leased a farm at Yanka Pusta, near the Drava, four miles from the Yugoslav frontier and not far from the Zagreb-Budapest main line. He took this in the name of Emil Horvat. It was only a small property with two houses, one of which could be used as officers' mess and the other as a place for the men. But sheds for making bombs or for storage could be quickly erected or outlying cottages could be rented. The work which had been in progress at Klingensbach was transferred to Yanka Pusta. The protection given by the Hungarian authorities was more reliable than Vienna protection had been. If they could get the necessary recruits they could raid the Croat border with impunity. The activities of the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee could be imitated.

Perchets's method of recruiting, apart from sending agents to Belgium and France, was to beguile peasants from the Yugoslav side of the frontier to run into Hungary. Once they had crossed the frontier they were placed under arrest at Csurgó. Then they were imprisoned for several days before being confronted with Perchets. They were then invited to go to Yanka Pusta. If they did not agree to go they had the option of being returned to Yugoslavia, where they would be arrested, or for returning to the Hungarian prison. They generally elected to go to the farm, where they

took the oath and became little more than slaves of the commandant.

Yanka Pusta was not so well found as the camp at Borgotaro in Italy. The men were paid a small wage and they were fed and clothed, but there was continual discontent, insubordination. Perchets shot a man dead with his own hand. Several men took the risk of running back into Yugoslavia and placing themselves at the mercy of the police there. They denounced the camp as a fraud. Most said that they had been lured there under false pretences and gave a full account of the activities. The Yugoslav government was well informed but helpless. Helpless because the Hungarian government would not move for a long while and Perchets had high protection there.

The attempts to blow up through carriages on the Paris-Belgrade expresses ceased. The trains from the Hungarian frontier to Osijek and Vinkovtsi received attention. Attempts were made to blow up several small railway stations. Nothing really daring marked these enterprises. It seems peculiarly mean to leave an infernal machine under a seat in a waiting-room and then get on a bicycle and pedal off into obscurity. All that such acts strove to demonstrate was that the Belgrade government was incapable of protecting its people and that it was not safe to travel by train. Rather more spectacular was an attempt to blow up worshippers as they were going into an Orthodox church in Zagreb and an explosion in a barracks full of soldiers the same day. No terrorist dared to go to Belgrade and make an attempt on the life of General Zhivkovitch or upon any ministers of the crown.

The making of infernal machines had become a hobby. The methods of Catherine de Medici were imitated. Thus it was tried to kill a Zagreb judge by the present of an interesting book. Tolite or some other rapid explosive was secreted in the binding. The book was rather stiff to open, as some new books are, and

to read parts of it freely the cover had to be bent back. At a certain page a tiny fuse ignited and the reader would be blown to bits. This book was sent to the judge by post but it was opened at the frontier. Its pornographic contents and pictures were a fatal snare. A group of frontier police overlooked the shoulders of an inspector who was turning the pages. Suddenly the volume exploded. The inspector was killed and two policemen were maimed for life.

More serious was the transport of arms and ammunition into Yugoslavia and the establishment of secret arsenals, on similar lines to those affected at a later date by the Fascists in France, though on a much smaller scale. A number of flat-bottomed boats for use on the frontier river Drava came into use for gun-running. This river had to be watched day and night by the Serbian armed patrols, but although on one occasion they fought the raiders they were unable to stop the whole of the traffic. There must be stores of arms and explosives still undiscovered on Yugoslav territory. There was a terrific accidental explosion of one of these secret arsenals in October, 1933, and the dead body of one of the terrorists was found near the place. He was Krobot, one of those who had been recruited in Brazil.

The establishment of secret arsenals in Croatia and Dalmatia was Pavelitch's provision in case of a rising. The rebels must be able to get arms quickly or they would be crushed before they had time to assert themselves. Perhaps Pavelitch had convinced himself that the people were ready for civil war. A curious effect of propaganda is that it sometimes convinces those who write it instead of those for whom it is designed. Pavelitch must have boasted to Italian officers and high-placed Fascists that "the day is at hand."

-Hence Mussolini's phrase: "I wait at my window." What was he expecting to see? That at the applying of a match the whole country would flare up? In the summer of 1932, when he said these words, he was

supporting another camp at Zara, the Italian port in central Dalmatia. Zara is an isolated Italian possession in Dalmatia, a thorn in the flesh of Jugoslavia. There a band of men, mostly Dalmatian but with some Montenegrins, was being trained by a man called Servazzi, under the control of Ante Pavelitch. They recruited from the Dalmatian peasants and fishermen, but all told were never more than 200. They made free gifts of rifles and revolvers to people. A regular commerce grew up as peasants who had received free revolvers sold them for a hundred dinars and came back for more. Italy was informed that the coastal population was armed and was ready to rise. Mussolini had his fleet in readiness to make a descent when the time came. The French and British fleet seemed interested in what was afoot. At length the time seemed ripe for action and a raiding party was landed on the Lika coast, north of Zara. The people of the region had generally voted Independent and were sore at the treatment meted out to their representative, Svetozar Pribitchevitch. Now was the time for them to show their spirit and fan a local insurrection into civil war.

The raiding party, all in uniforms and bearing rifles, met with no resistance from coast-guards. They commandeered donkeys to carry their ammunition-boxes and baggage and then began a march inland to seize the railhead of Gospitch. The peasants looked at them with mute surprise and did not seem to understand their cries of "Long Live Free Dalmatia! Long Live Independent Croatia!" No one joined himself to them, but they were successful in penetrating nearly twenty miles. Then they began to encounter hostile demonstrations. Finally, nearing Gospitch, they were mobbed by a mixed force of gendarmes and peasants, who sent them running back to the sea much faster than they had come. They left six cases of explosives behind and a great number of Italian cartridges.

Some of the raiders were arrested, but the majority

got back to Zara. They were not decorated. Some of the Italians laughed at them and asked if they had been practising for the Olympic Games. But it was not convenient to hold them long in Zara. They were shipped to Fiume and thence sent to Borgotaro and told to report to Pavelitch.

Many exploits of terrorism were arranged from Zara, including the bombing of the 54th Infantry regiment at Split. But there were no more attempts at invasion. Civil war was postponed. Better preparations must be made. Above all, more men were required. Pavelitch hoped that Yanka Pusta would develop on a scale greater than his Italian recruitment. He visited the Hungarian camp and paraded the men. It was rather a disappointing turn-out, only forty-five all told. Twelve of these had come from South America and another twelve from Belgium. There were some Bulgarians who had been sent by the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee. Had the opposite bank of the Drava been seething with revolt there must have been swarms of young men coming over to be sworn in to the Croat flag. But he still announced that Croats and Dalmatians would rise in revolt. He told the paraded men that Italy would soon declare war on Jugoslavia.

But perhaps he was beginning to doubt that. Italy's plan seemed to be to let Pavelitch's men start the revolt without the employment of the Italian regular army. It might be due to his exaggeration of what he could do with his own men unaided. Some time or other he would have to make good his words. He dared not let the Italians know how pitiful was the force which Perchets had raised. The Fascists were paying much more than the services warranted. Still, he must continue to bluff them. His personal income and position depended on that.

Part of his bluff was to mint Croat money—five-*kuna* pieces with the words "Croat Free State" embossed.



As there was no such money as the *kuna* recognized, these coins could not be changed into any other currency, though they might well be bought as curiosities. And they would not purchase anything, except at the canteens of the Italian camps.

There are signs that in 1933 the Fascists became discontented. Yugoslavia had not been obviously weakened by terrorism. There was no unrest, no political ferment. The various political parties remained passive under the dictatorship. The propaganda conducted in the foreign Press had raised no agitation against the Yugoslav government. Great Britain had privately expressed her desire that Yugoslavia should return to democratic institutions, but she was too much occupied with other more pressing problems to take sides in Balkan politics. France was engrossed by the spectre of resurgent Germany. Travellers to Yugoslavia heard little or nothing of the train wrecks and outrages. They reported an uncommonly peaceful country. Tourists swarmed to the Dalmatian resorts.

To make matters worse for Pavelitch, his lieutenant, Perchets, became involved in several scandals. He had shot a man dead with his own hand. Another had committed suicide in despair. There was insubordination. One of the South Americans demanded the money for his passage back home. He declared that he had been brought over on false pretences and that the whole movement was a fraud. He had come to Hungary at his own expense and that may have accounted for his independent spirit. Perchets had him locked up in the camp prison. Several other men, led by Seletkovitch, mutinied. Perchets sent some others to shoot Seletkovitch. Civil war looked like breaking out in Yanka Pusta instead of in Croatia.

But Perchets's men failed in their attempt on Seletkovitch and it looked for a moment as though Perchets himself might be seized and most likely killed. He rushed for his car and departed from the camp at full

speed. In Budapest he sought military aid to quell the mutiny and a number of Hungarian soldiers were sent to restore order. The insubordinate men were overcome and sent under escort to Pavelitch in Italy.

Perchets had been frightened and still expected vengeance. He changed his name and his address in Budapest and obtained another passport. He was now Joseph Steiner. When next he visited Yanka Pusta he had an armed guard all night. When he returned to Budapest he was afraid he might have been followed. He changed his name and his passport again. In order not to be traced he separated from his mistress and they had different lodgings. He kept Pospichil with him as bodyguard.

Then he had a quarrel with Jelka Pogorelets. He began to go about with another girl. Perhaps he did not want to be seen in cabarets with the striking Croat girl. Her presence identified him. Or he may simply have grown tired of her. It was a matter of jealousy. Jelka Pogorelets was attached to him in spite of his baleful activities, which she fully realized. But the presence of a rival was too much for her. After one or two scenes she decamped. He allowed her to slip out of his clutches. For a conspirator in a responsible position he was most remiss, for she got away with all the secrets, into Jugoslavia.

In order to secure her position with the authorities in her own country she told all she knew. The Serbs are slow at propaganda but this provided an opportunity too good to be missed even by them. She was encouraged to write an account of her life with Perchets and shortly afterwards there appeared a series of sensational articles in the Zagreb *Novosti*, showing him up, compromising Pavelitch, Perchevitch, Italy, Hungary. Her articles ruined the reputation of Perchets. It was weakly replied that she had been all along an agent of the Belgrade government, playing a double rôle. But Belgrade was not smart enough to have placed a pretty

girl spy with a leading terrorist. In any case, what she wrote bore the stamp of truth and was believed by the Croats themselves. Perchets was obliged to efface himself. He disappeared in the late summer of 1933 and was not heard of again. Probably he remained in hiding in Hungary under yet another name. All the efforts of the police failed to connect him with the Marseilles crime. His chauffeur, Pospichil, disavowed any further connection with him. But of those who went ultimately to prison for the murder of King Alexander no one knows more than Pospichil. Perhaps at some later date his lips may be unsealed.

Colonel Perchevitch became commandant at Yanka Pusta in place of Gustave Perchets. He lived at Vienna in the high society of the partisans of Otto Habsburg. He had not much time for training soldiers. In any case, after the revelations of Jelka the Yugoslav government began to protest to the Hungarian government. The camp's existence was an international scandal. Early in 1934 Jevtitch made a complaint to the League of Nations. Hungary must disband the terrorists whom she had been encouraging and sheltering on the Yugoslav border. There was damning evidence which could be set before the League. Rather than endure the humiliation of being called to order from Geneva Hungary agreed to negotiate directly with the Yugoslav government for a settlement. As a result, the camp at Yanka Pusta was dissolved. Some of the men went to Italy. The others settled at Nagy Kanisza, six miles away from Yanka Pusta. No one was arrested. The situation was not entirely cleared up. The false Hungarian passports were not recalled. International sabotage continued but the instigators had received a blow.

## CHAPTER XI

### LITTLE ENTENTE AND BALKAN PACT

ALEXANDER never was perturbed by the frontier raids and explosions. He travelled freely in the trains, even on the dangerous line from Jesenitse. He avoided no personal danger and at the worst period of outrage he went regularly to shoot in the Julian Alps within a kilometre of the Austrian frontier. He did not hustle his Home Secretary to get to grips with the terrorists. Domestic and personal danger did not weigh with him. What did give him to think was the international aspect of these crimes. It was borne in upon him that Jugoslavia had serious enemies and that membership of the League of Nations was not a certain guarantee that he would not be involved in war. So far as the League was concerned he had bowed to the superior judgment of the west. Not for him to question the inspiration of America, the faith of Britain. The forming of the Little Entente had not been done on his initiative; it represented the thought of other minds, Masaryk, Benes, Titulesco, Pashitch. The League in its first conception did not seem to need the support of subsidiary alliances.

But it ought not to have needed the Locarno Pact. It ought not to have needed the Briand-Kellogg Pact. From the first the organism of the super-state did not seem to be healthy. A whole series of tonics had to be administered. And all the while its life force ebbed. It seemed to have been born old and an invalid. The small nations were soon aware that the diffused support of Geneva was not equal to the support of strong friends in an old-fashioned alliance.

The Serbs missed Russia and nothing could make up for the defection of the great Slavonic nation of the north. King Alexander never forgot that Russia stood by Serbia in the fateful moments of 1914. He was not forgetful of the fact that Tsar Nicholas had, in 1915, insisted on the transport of the Serb army stranded on the Albanian shore. He was grateful to the dead. But the revolution was a blow to all the southern Slavs. It left them without ethnic support, a branch cut off. In the nineteenth century, Serbs, Bulgars and even Croats and Slovenes and certainly Montenegrins looked to Russia as a mighty force of Slavdom which gave them the right to hold up their heads and believe in their own future as Slavs, inspiring resistance to the Austrian and war against the Turk. The proletarian revolution put Slavophilism into the archives. The followers of Lenin had enough to do to organize the new state. They were not even faintly interested in brother Slavs unless brother Slavs followed their example and made a Marxist revolution.

The political leaders of Serbia—and no doubt Alexander—were, in 1918, afraid that a revolutionary tidal wave might come from Russia and engulf them. But although there was persecution of Communists in the early part of the reign there never was a virulent anti-Bolshevik campaign. Distrust of Soviet Russia gradually faded as international interests came into alignment. The Slavs of the Balkans must look to Russia even if she be red. Blood is thicker than theory. That was why it was possible after the King's death for the Moscow radio to proclaim that Soviet Russia was solid behind Yugoslavia.

Alexander gave shelter to the remnants of Wrangel's army and to thousands of refugees, but that was not a political act. It was merely the natural expression of gratitude to the old Russia. The Serbs did not forget their ex-allies. Of all nations of Europe they proved the best friends of the unhappy Russians. They not

only took them in but gave them the means of living. Some they placed on the land, some they brought into the timber industry. Engineers from the southern railways of Russia were given a subvention and allowed to develop road transport. Professors were given chairs in the universities. Hundreds of Russians obtained posts to teach in the schools. Actors and producers were given the run of the theatres and produced ballet and Russian and Serbian plays, raising the stage to a European level. Architects and painters were used for the restoration of the monasteries and the construction of the royal church at Oplenats. Old frescoes were restored by the Russians. Facilities were granted for the education of Russian children. So the exiles found a second home in Yugoslavia.

These Russians have taken no part whatever in Yugoslav politics. Not one of them has ever come into the open to express an opinion. Only in their passivity have they been a political factor. Their very presence in Yugoslavia counted for something. They had no voice but they made it difficult for King Alexander to seek an understanding with Soviet Russia. He was only slowly brought to the view that ultimately Yugoslavia would need the diplomatic support of Russia. In 1932 and 1933 Alexander had to make up his mind whether he was going to range his country with the powers of the Left or with the powers of the Right. He could play for the strong support of Germany or of Soviet Russia. Mussolini's behaviour turned the scale towards the Left. The Little Entente, which had been a series of bilateral agreements, must be changed into a stronger instrument.

He instructed Jevtitch to sound the leaders of Roumanian and Czecho-Slovak policy and in reviewing the situation Benes was found to be strongly in favour of an understanding with Soviet Russia. The mutual obligations of the Little Entente powers were revised in February, 1933, in a new pact. The three powers

agreed to vote as one on all matters of international importance. They would give one another mutual assistance in repelling an aggressor. They would not sign separate treaties with other powers except by mutual consent. Mutual consent appears to have been available in the case of Soviet Russia.

Hitler had come to power in Germany in the previous month and the whole outlook of central Europe was changed. A strong and dangerous Germany was arising, determined to avenge the humiliations of past defeat. The first ghost of the dead war to appear was Prussia. The Little Entente and France soon began to call another shade out of the limbo of the past, Russia. Shrewd commentators at that time said that all the war alliances and the war fronts were to be renewed. Italy, not to be behindhand, signed a pact of non-aggression and neutrality with Soviet Russia on the 2nd September, 1933.

That seemed to guarantee that in the developments of the following years Italy would range herself with the powers of the Left, but the states of the Little Entente did not ascribe much importance to this treaty. Italy, aiding and abetting Hungary's programme of revisionism, and drawn to Nazi Germany by a kindred political outlook, was not likely to line up either with Democracy or Communism.

King Alexander had his own plan for securing peace in the Balkans, and peace in the Balkans concerned him much more than peace in western Europe. He believed that a solidarity of the nations on the Balkan peninsula was a first requirement. Let it become unprofitable for a western power to start a war there and impossible through diplomatic intrigue to set one Balkan state against another. He received assistance to that end in an unexpected quarter. The King of Bulgaria made a move to reconcile Bulgars and Serbs.

In August and September, 1933, Boris and Joanna, King and Queen of Bulgaria, went on a series of unofficial

visits to Rome, Paris and London. The Sofia Press was in the dark, but hoped that "some political profit might result to Bulgaria." In London their Majesties preferred to be incognito, a Mr. and Mrs. X at Claridges. They were lonely sovereigns and the newspapers did not pay them much attention, though they were photographed often enough. In a Belgrade paper they were shown watching the sparrows snatching crumbs in Hyde Park. Boris at this time had a feeling of isolation. He was ready for friendships, but his country was under a cloud. Too many people had been murdered there. But he obtained advice and help in London. The kindly and peace-loving George V took a hand. Why should not King Boris, on his way back to Sofia, stop off at Belgrade and shake hands with King Alexander? A talk at Belgrade station while the train waited?

"The way to resume is to resume," said a famous American. And the French say, "It is the first step that counts." Jevtitch, the Foreign Minister, was agreeably surprised when the message came through from London that King Boris would like to meet Alexander in an informal way as he was passing through Belgrade. King Alexander was not particularly enthusiastic. For a moment he was taken aback. He was never a man who was quick at the uptake when other people made suggestions.

"Yes, I'll meet him," said he, but his voice was almost a growl.

"Where? Shall we invite them to come to the palace?"

"No," said the King. "I'll do as he suggests, meet him at the railway station."

Jevtitch was pleased. The few who heard in advance that a meeting had been arranged thrilled with a new hope. A commercial treaty with Bulgaria had been signed in the previous May. The Serbs began to whisper of a new era. One can tell the weather by the observation of the flight of birds, and when Boris and



Joanna alighted in the capital of Jugoslavia the auguries were good.

There was one bond of kinship. Joanna was Alexander's cousin. She was the daughter of Princess Helena of Montenegro, now Queen of Italy. Alexander's mother and Helena were sisters and Alexander, when he was a child, was the favourite of Helena. Helena married the heir to the throne of Italy but never ceased to be very fond of Sandro. Her daughter Joanna had played with little Sandro as a child. But the war separated the families, and after the war Italy became hostile to the Serbs. A Queen of Italy has no influence in politics, otherwise Helena might have made possible the projected visit of Alexander to Italy in 1932.

The surprise of the meeting at Belgrade station was the rapturous greeting of King Alexander by his cousin Joanna. "Sandro!" she cried and hugged him and kissed him as he stood there, cold and formal on the platform.

That human outburst of feeling made all the difference to the meeting of the sovereigns. Instead of being stiff, it was cordial. They walked along the platform to a sort of *de luxe* waiting-room and drank Turkish coffee and smoked cigarettes and chatted like old acquaintances. Boris and Alexander had been friends but that was long ago, before the 1912 war with Turkey, when they were each heir to the throne of their respective countries. Rivers of blood had come to separate them. But suddenly there was not blood any more. They had shaken hands. They were sipping coffee together.

The possibility of real friendship and co-operation with Bulgaria had dawned on the mind of Alexander. Ruzhdy Aras had spoken to Jevtitch at Geneva about a collective agreement in the Balkans. Titulesco of Roumania had taken up the idea. Alexander was already determined to form a Balkan Pact and the happy chance of the meeting with Boris yielded the new hope that Bulgaria could be persuaded to join. There

was only half an hour before the train started for Sofia, but he talked international politics most of the time.

But King Boris would not promise to sign any agreements. The Mushanof ministry in Sofia was the most favourable to Jugoslavia that Bulgaria had had since the war, but it was still in peril from the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee, who pursued an anti-Serb policy guided by Italy. Boris was not almost an autocrat, like Alexander. He was a comparatively helpless monarch who wanted to rule in peace while extraneous political feuds raged year in and year out in his capital. All he could indicate was personal goodwill. When opportunity arose he would profit by it to make a real friendship between brother Slavs.

The station bell rang. The man who calls the names of stations was heard bellowing: "Train for Nish, Tsaribrod, Sofia, Stamboul!" The royal party stood up and filed out from the waiting-room. The King and Queen of Bulgaria were escorted to the waiting express and into their sleeping-car. The barriers closed; the whistle blew and the heavy train began to lumber slowly over the rails. Boris and Joanna were at the carriage windows and waved back to Alexander like ordinary travellers. Joanna blew a kiss to her cousin Sandro.

King Boris had invited King Alexander to visit him on Bulgarian soil.

There is no doubt the commercial treaty had prepared the way for an *entente*. Demetrovitch said: "The new treaty signed on the 24th May puts an end to an abnormal economic relationship which has been peculiarly disadvantageous to two peoples who are both neighbours and brothers. Almost thirty-seven years have passed since the last treaty of commerce between Serbia and Bulgaria . . . the new treaty inaugurates a new era of economic co-operation."

The Belgrade Press, reduced to apathy by the lifeless politics of one-party government, was aroused by the

arrival of Boris. Comment was restricted but it showed its interest by the prominence it gave the news. A new hope was born. The name Yugoslavia began to mean something more—Southern Slavia, that might also include the Bulgars. There is one desire which unites but also divides most of the peoples of the Balkan peninsula: they wish to belong to something large. The phrases "Great Serbia," "Great Croatia" expressed that craving. The name "Yugoslavia" is also an expression of it. Alexander merits praise for the steps he took to be reconciled with Bulgaria, but there is no gainsaying the fact that kings stood in the way of an even better policy. A union of Serbs and Bulgars in one state was devoutly to be wished. That is one reason why there is always a majority for federalism in Yugoslavia. The greater measure of domestic rights accorded Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia, the more chance that Bulgaria would ultimately pool her national interests and come into a great union of free states. The Bulgarians have as much right as the Serbs to call themselves Yugoslavs and such a name is not distasteful to them, though they would never submit to be ruled by the Serbs. Some Bulgar politicians have been attracted by it, notably Stambulisky.

King Alexander had no such Utopian plans. He merely hoped to strengthen Yugoslavia by uniting all peoples living on the Balkan peninsula to resist interference on the part of the outside powers. The intrigues of Austria and Russia and the policy of Great Britain had caused most of the Balkan troubles of the previous fifty years. He was convinced that if the western powers could be forced to *keep out* there would be a sure and lasting Balkan peace. The menace in 1933 was from Italy. Italy, having established a base for Balkan intrigue in Albania, had announced in the spring of the year that the direction of her territorial expansion would be eastward. Perhaps Mussolini did not quite know his own mind at that date, for the

expansion, when it took place, was not eastward but into Africa. But Greece and Turkey were apprehensive as to Italy's intentions. There is not one power that would welcome the Italian flag on the peninsula. Kemal Pasha, who regarded Asia Minor as an extension of Europe and of the Balkans, was roused by the Italian threat and it was understood that he was willing to come to an agreement with Yugoslavia to conclude some sort of pact of mutual assistance.

Alexander promised to visit Kemal. He would have liked to have gone to him with Bulgaria in his pocket. But there was still the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee, the redoubtable Michailof ready to assassinate anyone who engaged Bulgaria in a pact with Yugoslavia. The Bulgarian government had to tackle Michailof before there could be the assurance of peace between the states. King Alexander decided to unite Roumania, Turkey and Greece with Yugoslavia in his new pact, leaving Bulgaria to realize that there could be no advantage in being left out of a common understanding.

King Alexander had met King Boris on the 18th September. Before the end of the month he set forth with the Queen upon a series of visits designed to give royal confirmation to the terms of a pact to be signed in November. He ordered his destroyer, the *Dubrovnik*, to proceed to Constanza on the Black Sea. After calling upon his brother-in-law Carol, in Roumania, he would return the courtesy of Boris and Joanna by disembarking at Varna. Then he would continue his voyage to the Bosphorus and hold converse with Kemal Pasha. Thence to Greece.

The sovereigns were at Bukharest on the 30th September. They left Constanza on the 3rd October, reaching Varna in the afternoon. Boris and Joanna had come to the Black Sea port and had arranged a rousing welcome, guns firing, flags flying, military music. For the first time since the war King Alexander

set foot on Bulgarian soil. He was cheered by the Bulgarians in the streets of Varna. That was an event in the history of the two countries. Cars were waiting and the royal party was conducted to the palace of Evsinograd, where it sat down to tea. The conversation of Belgrade railway station was renewed and the reconciliation of embittered brother races was taken a step further. Alexander and Marie stayed to dinner with Boris and Joanna. The official bulletin said the meeting had been cordial. Perhaps, after all, the entertainment was a little dull. The King and Queen of Yugoslavia did not stay long. By half-past ten they were back on the *Dubrovnik*. Boris had pleaded for time for the consideration of the pact. It was encountering a secret but powerful opposition from certain politicians.

The *Dubrovnik* got under way and in the misty morning of the next day entered the Bosphorus, with the wonder of Stamboul on either hand. It glided across the still, green, shadowy water to face a white marble palace of the Sultans. On the shores school-children in masses had been paraded so that the youngest Turkey might salute the King of Yugoslavia. They waved handkerchiefs to the *Dubrovnik* as it passed.

A little white yacht like a bird started from the palace quay and came to the Yugoslav destroyer. On it was Ruzhdy Aras in charge of three immense bouquets of flowers for the Queen. It was early. The Queen was not fully dressed. Alexander, in his admiral's uniform, descended into the yacht, which took him back to the palace leaving the Queen behind. A royal salute was fired. Out of the palace came Kemal Pasha in top-hat and frock-coat. He was carrying white gloves and a walking-stick. He stared at Alexander with an intense expression as if he would look through him. Kemal was curious: he was a judge of men. The King had the smiling indifference of one who seldom falls under the influence of another even though the other be a genius. But the Turk was pleased with what he

saw—a real man, a worthy friend. According to Dimitrievitch, who was present, he gloated on Alexander, following him about with his eyes. He embraced him many times and lavished oriental compliments upon him such as, “If your Majesty were an apple I would place you over my heart.”

Kemal led Alexander through the palace to his private cabinet, across halls of alabaster and porphyry, glittering with crystal ornaments. There were gorgeous heavy carpets under their feet. There were modern French paintings on the walls. The Gazi kept Alexander talking over coffee and Turkish delight till eleven, when he accompanied him back to the *Dubrovnik* to fetch the Queen. The King changed into civil attire and became a tourist. The Queen asked Kemal to free them for the rest of the day so that they could see the city. They would come to the marble palace for the entertainment in the evening.

So for the whole of the afternoon Alexander and Marie went sightseeing and visited museums and mosques and shrines. They were cheered as they entered the ancient cathedral of St. Sophia. Though Alexander was an Orthodox monarch he was not one of those who dreamed of restoring St. Sophia to Christianity. The Turks knew that. He was neither a Greek nor a Russian. They could cheer him wholeheartedly. He came as a friend, with no designs on the shrines of the Orthodox East.

The King and Queen were so taken up with the sights of Constantinople that they had to hurry back to the *Dubrovnik* to dress for Kemal Pasha's banquet. That was going to be an event of oriental magnificence. King Boris's hospitality was pallid beside that of the Turks. At length the sovereigns arrived and met Kemal again and Ismet Pasha and Ruzhdy Aras and the greater part of the government, and the wives of the ministers, and Kemal's own choice selection of beautiful women. It was modern Turkey without veils and the women

were superb. A band played the anthems and then played some of the hottest jazz. The dinner, in European style, French cuisine, was served exclusively on gold and lasted two hours. There was a magnificence quite unknown in Yugoslavia and a mingling of the oriental and the modern, but all in grand style. It was one of Kemal's all-night entertainments. There was time for eating and drinking, for dancing and card-playing and for private and confidential conversations apart from the many guests.

Smoking long Turkish cigarettes, Kemal and Alexander played poker after dinner. The Queen took a hand for a while, and then Ismet Pasha and the Foreign Minister. The luck of the cards was with the King and the counters piled up in front of him. According to Atsa Dimitrievitch, who was there, the King cleared everyone out at last with a full house and then with a gesture swept all the counters aside and said, "Nobody pays. Let's talk of politics!"

Kemal was in great good humour and was ready to enter into agreements even in excess of those contemplated by Alexander. He was convinced of the advantage of a Balkan Entente based on a similar treaty to that of the Little Entente. He did not require to be persuaded. He went further. He gave secret assurance to Alexander of military assistance in the case of war arising from an infringement of the independence of Austria. In the event of a war with Italy, Turkey would be Yugoslavia's ally.

It was quick work. The King and Queen returned to their ship shortly after midnight. They were escorted by Kemal and a number of Turkish dignitaries. The stars glittered over Constantinople. The sovereigns were serenaded. Anthems were played. Then Alexander and Marie retired but Kemal and the rest returned to the Sultan's palace to continue festivities until four in the morning.

No one would deny that Kemal had an instinct for

affairs. He was a man of greater force of character than Alexander, a genius, a sort of Turkish Peter the Great who raised his people out of Asiatic sloth and fatalism. He had cause for rejoicing because he wished Turkey again to play a part in European affairs. The west had concluded that Gladstone's phrase had been realized and that the Turk had been driven out of Europe "bag and baggage." But Alexander confirmed that the Turk was still a Balkan factor and had an interest in keeping western powers out of the peninsula. And behind Kemal was Soviet Russia, bent upon thwarting western capitalism. In joining forces with the Gazi Alexander moved appreciably into the influence of Moscow. But the movement was not entirely of his own volition: it was a resultant of other forces and movements.

It was Kemal's plan that the Balkan Pact and the Little Entente should be unified and that both should obtain the support of Soviet Russia. The outstanding difficulty had disappeared. Moscow had no further pretension to the restoration of Bessarabia by Roumania. In the following year the Little Entente passed a formal resolution calling upon Yugoslavia to recognize Soviet Russia. This would have been done but that the murder of the King intervened. Prince Paul, whose mother was a Russian aristocrat and whose wife is a descendant of the Romanofs, became Regent and Yugoslav foreign policy was deflected into a different course. Otherwise Czecho-Slovakia in her understanding with Moscow would have been associated not only with the French Republic but with the Balkan States.

The King did not proceed from Stamboul to Athens as had been expected but instead went to Corfu, where he dedicated a monument to the Greeks who fell in the war, and visited those places, like shrines to him, where the Serbian army had encamped in 1916. General Stepanovitch and the Greek vice-premier Condilis were with him. He was deterred from conducting the negotiations for signing the pact by the stormy opposi-



tion of Venizelos. He left that to his minister in Athens. The King was unable to understand what Venizelos and his partisans wanted, beyond getting back into power. Greece could not continue indefinitely playing a double game, supporting Italian policy and at the same time professing friendship for Yugoslavia. And she must forget her furious enmity towards the Bulgars and the Turks. History could not be rewritten for the benefit of the Greeks. Fortunately the premier Maximos was in favour of the pact, though he wished assurance that it did not mean conflict with Italy. The Yugoslavs pointed out that on the contrary it implied insurance against a conflict with Italy. If Italy had the Balkan powers divided her intrigue for expansion at their expense would be facilitated. But if the Balkan powers stood together the Italians would be frightened. Mussolini made much noise in 1933, but he was not so brave at that time as he became after the Abyssinian conquest and alliance with Germany.

Alexander meditated involving Albania in his pact, but to quiet Greek apprehension he moved cautiously. He gave the Albanians secret assurance that Yugoslavia renounced for ever any claim to Albanian territory and allowed it to be known that he desired to see Albania free and independent. The Italian protectorate over Albania was a thorn in the Balkan flesh, but it was also galling to the Albanians, who were ever restive under Italian control. Albania was a potential base for military operations in case of an Italian war. The danger impelled Alexander to seek friendship with Bulgaria. Because if the Italians could reckon upon a simultaneous attack from Macedonia and Albania, the whole of southern Serbia might be lost as well as part of the Dalmatian shore.

The Balkan Pact was signed at Athens on the 27th November, 1933, and simultaneously at Belgrade by Ruzhdy Aras on the part of Turkey. Bulgaria still delayed action.

But to avert disappointment at the caution of the premier Mushanof, Boris and Joanna paid a state visit to Belgrade early in the following month. Possibly the Bulgarian Queen had a hand in arranging that. Joanna wanted to see more of Sandro. This time the King and Queen of Bulgaria came as honoured guests, not merely to be received on a railway station as in July. They stayed at the palace. Boris and Alexander went shooting. The promise of the reconciliation of the two nations who had been at enmity for twenty years remained. Both monarchs ardently desired it and worked to realize it, an example of kings having more power for peace than politicians. King Boris went far ahead of his government in carrying the olive branch.

## CHAPTER XII

### ATTEMPT AT ZAGREB

THE pact of the Little Entente was insurance against the revisionism of Austria and Hungary. The Balkan Pact was insurance against Italy. The overtures to Bulgaria were designed to show that the general peace would not be endangered by the Balkan powers falling out among themselves. They had the further object of discouraging foreign interference and intrigue. The prospects of Italian irridentism were not very bright in the autumn of 1933. Mussolini was suspicious, perhaps jealous of Hitler. The new Germany certainly wished to incorporate Austria in the Reich and might have ultimate designs on Austrian territory lost to Italy, perhaps even on Trieste. Fascism was obliged to run counter to Nazism by lauding Bolshevism. But there was the prospect of Italy becoming isolated in central Europe.

Probably it was during the autumn of 1933 that Italy decided upon the conquest of Abyssinia. The European adventure was postponed because of the Balkan Pact. King Alexander stood in Mussolini's way. The Duce was angry but he did not intend to fight Yugoslavia. The little nations would beset him like wasps. Hitler would laugh at his legions setting forth to conquer Illyria and meeting with every possible mishap. Better to win renown on a safer field. De Bono assured him of a very easy victory in Abyssinia. Military achievement was needed to enhance the prestige of the army. For words alone cannot make an army valiant. The Nazis must become convinced of the power of Fascism in arms. No one really knew what the Duce

had done for the Italian army, not even King Alexander. It had been mechanized to such an extent that it was immeasurably superior to the army which had fought in the war against the Germans. Any lack in fighting qualities had been more than made up by increase in equipment, improvement in weapons. Mussolini determined to make the Abyssinian invasion a parade of his forces before the world.

But Jugoslavia was not ignored. Mussolini finds it very difficult to forgive opposition or diplomatic success scored at his expense. King Alexander had made himself prominent in countering Italian schemes. He was therefore an enemy. Jugoslavia was a one-man country. Remove this too-energetic sovereign and it would be helpless. The quarrels of incompetent politicians would recommence and the disaffection of the Catholic races would make for confusion. It was the opinion of Jevtitch that Mussolini wished to have his hands free for his Abyssinian adventure so that he would have no dangerous enemy waiting to attack him when his armies were in Africa.

Pavelitch was told by his "control" that he must arrange the murder of the King. His campaign of terrorism had petered out; for the year 1933 was unremarkable in terrorism. Perchets had made a fool of himself by allowing his lady secretary to run away and publish her memoirs of terrorism. Hungary was in danger of exposure before the League. The Croats showed no sign of rising in revolt. Count Ciano must have pointed out to Mussolini that there was little prospect of a return for the money which had been lavished like water on Pavelitch and his men. Pavelitch had been presented with a villa and received a large salary. The men in his camps had to be fed, clothed, armed, paid. His journals had to be supported, his many agents in Austria and elsewhere to be paid. And there was nothing to show for the expense except some pitiful bomb-explosions in trains. Landing his army to start a

civil war began to look hopeless in the face of Alexander's activities. But the Croat Duce could at least do one thing: he could remove the one man who was thwarting Italy at the moment. Among the many men at his disposal there must be someone capable of a capital exploit, the murder of the King.

Pavelitch's choice fell on Peter Oreb, a tall and powerful young peasant from one of the Dalmatian islands, and as assistants he deputed two other young men, Begovitch and Pegorelats. They were all three well trained in pistol-shooting and the throwing of bombs. Oreb was considered the best of the men in the Italian camps, though he had never before attempted an assassination. It would have been the first murder in his career. But he was a strong fellow, active and daring, and not likely to submit tamely to arrest. The scene for the assassination was Zagreb. The King had announced that on the 17th December, 1933, he would celebrate his forty-fifth birthday at the Croat capital. Oreb and his companions must blow up the royal carriage as it passed across the Jelachitch market place.

There was deep snow on the mountains and the three men were rigged out as skiers. They looked like typical devotees of winter sports, the sort of youthful enthusiasts one may encounter anywhere in the Tyrol in December, whose skis were adequate explanation of their appearance in any obscure village. With bombs and pistols in their pockets they glided over the virginal snow of the Julian Alps, slid from Italy into Slovenia unobserved, and then clattered into a third-class carriage of the first train and travelled to Zagreb. They had Hungarian passports, of which Pavelitch had a store ready for any emergency. Each of them had two thousand dinars to spend and there was the promise of a very large reward if they succeeded. Oreb would have his freedom and capital with which to start life afresh. He believed what he had to do was easy.

He had never been in Zagreb, but he believed that

everyone there hated the King. He did not ask himself why, if the King were so unpopular there, he ventured to visit it to celebrate his birthday. In the Italian camps they said Croatia was merely waiting for Pavelitch's signal to rise in revolt, only waiting for Italy to declare war on Serbia. Pavelitch had said to him that it would be easy to escape after he had done the deed because the people would be on his side and would save him from the police.

So they were a light-hearted trio in the Zagreb train. Only Begovitch, in joking, told Oreb that he had orders to shoot him if he showed the white feather. Begovitch was Oreb's policeman. But he was only twenty years old, a soured student whose life had been spoiled by politics. He ought to have been at a university but was a soldier in Italian pay, waiting for revolution to resume his studies. His playful smile masked a jealous watchful nature. He was chosen because he was the sort of weakling who would not let the strong man Oreb fail in his task. He would watch him like a cat.

Oreb was some years older, but in spirit he was younger. There was a certain devil-may-care irresponsibility about him. He had sworn to obey Pavelitch and he had to go when he was ordered. But he was not taken aback, made no protest, expressed no doubt as to his ability to do what he was told. He was probably without imagination. At least he could not imagine the scene in a great city when he would have to throw a bomb at the royal car. He was an islander, something less than a mere provincial. He had lived a life of crime, but it was petty crime. Nothing spectacular characterized his exploits on Korchola. The illegitimate son of a peasant girl, he had to shift for himself at an early age. He had worked for a smuggler. Then he became a smuggler on his own account. He started with sugar. Owing to the state monopoly the price of sugar in Jugoslavia was almost three times the world price. By bringing over contraband sugar from the

neighbouring Italian island of Lastovo he made a meagre living. From sugar he turned to silk and any other Italian products waiting in the boats in the channel. It was a night business and he risked being shot by customs officers. There is not much parley when Yugoslav customs officers run down a smuggler. Oreb's life was constantly in jeopardy in this hazardous business. But it is probable he took that risk as lightly as he did that of going to Zagreb to kill the King.

Later he discovered a more profitable line. Two of Pavelitch's agents appeared on the Italian island looking for smugglers who would carry arms, ammunition and the newspapers *Gritch* and *Ustasha* into Dalmatia. They had their receivers waiting on the mainland and this traffic paid handsomely. It was easier. Nevertheless, Oreb was caught at it. But he broke gaol and fled, got on to a boat and took refuge on the island of Lastovo. He was told he would be taken care of. All he had to do was to join the army of independence which was waiting to set Dalmatia free. He was taken on a boat to Zara and then to Trieste. He was treated well. Just as a new recruit gets the King's shilling to buy himself a drink, so the poor smuggler, Oreb, was "treated" wherever he went. "Soup and a plate of meat and a bottle of wine for my dinner!" he exclaimed afterwards to the judge. He who had been used to wolf maize bread and rough mountain cheese, washed down with imitation coffee!

At Trieste he was met by Seletkovitch, the man who had specialized in blowing up trains. Seletkovitch did not seem to have been punished for his mutiny at Yanka Pusta. He was invested with Pavelitch's authority at Trieste. Oreb was sworn in and took his oath of obedience to Pavelitch, whom he had never met or heard of until then. He was then taken to Brescia, where Seletkovitch left him and he was handed over to a sergeant and conducted to Borgotaro where he got on to an omnibus and reached the first camp. At the

quartermaster's stores he received a khaki uniform and was marched to a small barracks where he found some sixty other soldiers, all in high spirits because the pay was good and the training nothing to affect anyone's nerves. Pavelitch's soldiers were better found than the regular Italian army. The food was better and within limits there was more freedom. He was told to say in the villages that he was a Bulgarian, a petty precaution lest the Yugoslavs got wind of the presence of an army of liberation upon Italian soil. Not that it was large enough to be called an army. Oreb visited other camps in northern Italy, at Bardi, Raffi, Gabrioli. There were not more than a few hundred men all told.

The Italian police never asked him any questions. These men in uniform went absolutely unmolested in this Fascist country where everyone is watched and controlled. But privates in the Italian army did not salute Pavelitch's officers and they did not have to salute Italian officers. Units of the Italian army often passed on the roads but exchanged no greetings. In the bars they saw large pictures of Mussolini, but in their own quarters they had equally large portraits of Pavelitch. He was their grand man. He inspected them on parade and addressed them with high-sounding phrases as if they were a host and not merely sixty men. Perchets, Jelitch, Perchevitch visited them but they were more aloof. Although their numbers were small there was enough to make them feel that they were part of a movement that was assured of success. Italy was behind them. When they had to fight, they would not fight alone. And they were assured that the Croats and Dalmatians would rise in their support. They would rapidly be promoted to be officers when the war came. There was much more *esprit de corps* than had ever obtained in the Hungarian camp. For Pavelitch was a more capable commandant than Perchets. He lived in luxury but he saw to it that his men had good rations. There were fewer risky exploits than were



detailed to the men on the Hungarian frontier of Yugoslavia.

They marched, they drilled, went to musketry and bombing practice. They learned to fire with revolvers. The life was that familiar to anyone who has ever been in military training. Life was even monotonous. It was only in November, 1933, after the signing of the Balkan Pact that it was evident that something new was afoot. Pavelitch and the other officers had a number of private talks with individual men. They asked questions. They made tests of men's nerves. It began to be rumoured that some were going to be chosen for a special exploit. Pavelitch seemed to take a fancy to Oreb, invited him to his villa, flattered him, asked him his life story, wanted to know if he was ready to take a chance to make his fortune. "Half a million lira are waiting for someone!"

Half a million lira, one could live in comfort for the rest of one's life on that, take a wife, settle down. It appealed to Peter Oreb. He had never handled even a thousand dinar-note. But he had always been offered definite sums when asked to smuggle arms into Dalmatia. And the money agreed had always been paid without question. He had been on that basis between the islands. That was how his mind worked. To do something one must be paid. No use saying to him there was a glorious deed to perform. He performed glorious or inglorious deeds for cash. He agreed. It was a deal.

King Alexander, despite his dictatorship and the policy of coercion, always kept a warm corner in his heart for the Croats. He was very strongly drawn towards the Catholic parts of his dominion. He could not tolerate separatism and intellectual political leadership, but he had tried to keep Croats in his Cabinets. His friendship with Stephen Raditch had not been insincere. In matters of Church adherence he was impartial. That may perhaps explain how it was that

a Serb king was still popular in Zagreb. Even the imprisonment of Machek had not deprived him of popularity. The Croats like a king, they like the attentions of royalty. So there was no obvious danger in the King's visit to the capital of the Savska province. The governor of the province, Perovitch, was a Croat and the King stayed at the governor's palace. He was being received by the ancient Catholic archbishop, Mgr. Bauer. With the Queen he would attend divine service at the cathedral of St. Stephen, a pleasing gesture. It was as if he chose to disappoint the Orthodox to gratify the Catholics. And he did not come with a parade of military force. He came with faith in his personal security. It was merely one more effort on the part of Alexander to show that he was a true Yugoslav and was as much at home among the Croats as among the Serbs.

The royal car with its Yugoslav pennant left the governor's palace at a quarter to nine on the morning of the 17th December. The people of Zagreb turned out *en masse* to shout for their King. Peasants in their thousands had rolled up in their carts from all the country round about. There were flags and bunting everywhere. Cannon boomed a royal salute. Peter Oreb was taken aback. Mobs were shouting "Long live the King!" There were no boos, no hisses, no sullen faces. Where were the fierce rebels Pavelitch had promised? Oreb had taken up a position on one side of the Jelachitch; Begovitch and Pogorelats were across the way. He was to throw the first bomb but if it failed his confederates were to throw from the other side. The masses of the people delayed the progress of the royal car. It came forward slowly in a growing roar of cheers. Oreb became agitated. The gun-fire shocked his nerves. Being tall, he had an excellent view of the King and Queen, who were smiling, smiling in the face of imminent death. He could not do it. He told his companions afterwards that he did not throw his bombs because so many innocent people

might have been killed. But he did not think that at the time. He was bewildered. He caught the infection of king-worship and followed the crowds to the cathedral.

The King and Queen stepped out of the car and the old archbishop blessed them in front of the cathedral. Oreb was a Catholic. He could not blow up the prelate with the King. He was moved by the blessing of the Church descending upon the man he had been sent to kill. The organ of the cathedral of St. Stephen began to sound, and Alexander and Marie and all the court moved down the aisle. Oreb had proved recreant to Pavelitch but perhaps true to some higher and hidden allegiance.

He rejoined his confederates, who reproached him bitterly for having failed in his duty. He was defiant and mocking. "I notice you didn't throw your bombs either," said he. "You had as good a chance as I had. You couldn't do it. You had a better chance outside the cathedral. But you couldn't kill the bishop. Same here. They deceived us. Didn't they say he was an enemy of the Church?"

"You were the principal," hissed Begovitch. "If you are not a traitor you will have a chance to-morrow."

But the public street was no place for recrimination. They repaired hurriedly to the house where they had been put in hiding by a Zagreb agent. One can imagine they were not a happy party. But it appears that Oreb defended himself stoutly. Pavelitch had been misinformed about the Croats. They were all for the King. What was the use of thinking there was going to be a rebellion?

That evening the police got belatedly on their trail. There were enough plain-clothes men in Zagreb to watch all suspected citizens. But they missed the three strangers. There were strangers in plenty arriving in the city for the occasion. But the police knew the Croat agents who had been in correspondence with

terrorists abroad, men like Herentitch, who received Oreb and probably indicated the lodging where the three men could stay. The police showed their usual lack of thoroughness in not arresting the conspirators before the King's arrival. It was hardly thanks to them that Alexander and Marie escaped being blown to bits on this occasion.

But at seven o'clock the next morning two gendarmes were sent to arrest Oreb. They rang the door-bell and were admitted. The owner of the house held them talking for a moment and that gave the men time. They must have been prepared to resist arrest, because at the moment when the gendarmes opened the bedroom door the tall Oreb, pistol in hand, rushed to meet them and fired rapidly at them point-blank. One gendarme was killed on the spot, the other seriously wounded. The three men then fled for their lives, the long-legged Oreb easily outdistancing the other two.

The wounded gendarme struggled out into the street and flung himself in the police car, which had brought him to the house, giving the driver orders to go in pursuit. The body of the dead gendarme lay in the doorway of the bedroom, and to escape, Oreb and the others had jumped over it. They had gone out at the front door, dashed past the waiting car and bolted down the street.

Begovitch and Pogorelats were speedily arrested but Oreb got on to a tramcar and was soon hurtling away to the outskirts of the city. He set off on foot into the open country. But he knew that a description of him would at once be telephoned to the rural police, so he stopped in a village and finding a house occupied by gipsies went in and made a deal with them, changing his clothes and offering money to the people if they would hide his bombs and pistol. It had been unnecessary to bring the bombs with him, but he must have had them in his pockets at the time the police had come to arrest him. Had he been more collected in his headlong

flight he would have seen that it would have been safer to hide his weapons in some ditch. He lost his head when he took the gipsies into his confidence. They talked. The whole village soon knew of the strange visitor. Oreb thought that even if they got to know they would say nothing to the police. Again he was wrong. The police were soon told all about it and he was arrested.

Peter Oreb in custody showed another side of his character. He admitted his guilt freely and told no lies. Begovitch and Pogorelats stoutly denied that they had been sent to kill the King, but Oreb made a clean breast of it. It might otherwise have been difficult to prove, except by circumstantial evidence. But Oreb had already killed a gendarme. For that he was certain to be executed. Even had he killed Alexander also, a man cannot be executed twice. There was nothing to deter him from confession unless he were a passionate devotee of Pavelitch. That he was not. He had come to understand that Pavelitch was a cheat. He had been told that the Croats wanted the King killed and that they would shelter him. He had found them all cheering for the King. He had been assured that there was going to be an armed rising, but that was wrong. All the men in uniform in the Italian camps were being cheated. He had been offered a large sum but he could never have got back to receive it. Oreb was simple-minded, almost childish, and one should not judge him too hardly, although he did kill a policeman. He never had much of a chance to become an honest man and a law-abiding peasant. For he had the stigma of illegitimacy and was given into the hands of smugglers in his childhood.

He told the whole story to the Zagreb police. The Hungarian passport received much attention. In this document his name was given as Benedict Emil, a Hungarian subject. Oreb at once disclosed his true name and nationality. He declared he had never been

in Hungary and he would not allow it to be assumed that he had entered Jugoslavia from the Hungarian frontier.

Had King Alexander been assassinated at Zagreb it was the intention of those Italians who were instructing Pavelitch to allow the blame to attach to Hungary. Much the same situation might have arisen as arose after the murder at Marseilles when the rage of the Serbs was let loose upon the Magyars—somewhat unjustifiably, for the Italians were more compromised than the Hungarians. Hungary was incriminated in terrorism, but had in December, 1933, begun to check the activities of the Pavelitch groups on her territory. The use of a Hungarian passport in Oreb's case tended to throw back the onus of international guilt upon Hungary.

Oreb gave explicit information about the camps in Italy, their location and the number of the men. He told all he knew about Pavelitch. He enriched the archives of the sleepy Yugoslav police. The whole complicity of Italy was unveiled. It was a frightening and, indeed, dumbfounding story. Had Alexander been hotheaded it would have called for an ultimatum to Italy, possibly war. But the King, though agitated, was always on the side of peace. He would not kindle war just because of danger to his person. He did not even decide to bring the matter before the League of Nations. The most he would do was to sanction the free uncensored publication of Oreb's revelations and let his own people grasp that a foreign power wished to profit by disaffection to stir up civil war.

Although it was known that an attempt on his life had been contemplated, King Alexander went out on foot in the streets of Zagreb and mixed with the people as one of themselves, partly to show that he was not afraid. His agitation did not spring from knowledge of personal danger. He had faced death a hundred times with equanimity. What weighed on his mind was the thought of the blow intended to be struck at Jugo-

slavia through him, the calculation that the state would not hold together if he were killed.

Pavelitch frequently referred to the King in his newspapers as "Alexander the Last." He predicted that there would be no more Karageorgievitch kings. When Alexander went the dynasty would perish with him. The heir to the throne was only ten years old and such confusion must ensue before young Peter came of age that the dynasty might seem condemned. In December, 1933, after the arrest of Peter Oreb, Alexander gave this matter his serious thought. Only by God's grace had he escaped being killed on his birthday. No thanks were due to the police. Only the cheering Croats and an impulse in Oreb's heart had saved him. The men had been there in the Yelachitch with their bombs and they had allowed him to pass. A great power had been helping these men. That power might not allow itself to be baffled or discouraged by one failure. The attempt might be repeated. And the danger could not be dealt with because it lurked beyond the frontier.

In the event of the King's sudden death the prime minister, Uzunovitch, would be left in supreme power, but this old Serbian politician, a devotee of party politics, was hardly the man to lead a united people. All the irreconcilables would be clamouring for revolutionary legislation. Even if the Queen survived she had no experience of statecraft and was incapable of coping with Yugoslav politics. Some better provision must be made for the eventuality. The King stayed at Zagreb until Christmas and then departed to his villa at Bled to make his will.

There was deep snow; the mountains were clad with dreaming pines. There was not one boat on the quiet, desolate lake, no tourists. Bled at Christmas time was a perfect place for meditation on life and death. He had sent his marshal, Dimitrievitch, to spend the holiday with his family in Belgrade. He could not be bothered

with him. He called Prince Paul for a long and serious talk.

Prince Paul was the only relative whom he could call to his assistance. His brother, Prince George, had been removed from the succession and though in middle age the unruly son whom King Peter had disinherited might prove to have outlived his early irresponsibility of character, Alexander could not appeal to him. The brothers were not on friendly terms. If Alexander nominated him Regent he might easily persuade the legislature to make him King. Alexander had abrogated the constitution which he had sworn to observe. Prince George would not find it difficult to get the act annulled which had excluded him from the throne. The only other male relative was his uncle, Prince Arsène, but Arsène preferred to live in Paris without responsibility. He was completely out of touch, and while the old man might consent to come and be the Sovereign he would hardly be ready to take the thankless task of being Regent. There only remained Prince Arsène's son, Paul.

Prince Paul was naturally in favour of the Queen being nominated Regent until her eldest son came of age. But there was always the possibility of the Queen being killed at the same time as the King. They went everywhere together. Had the bomb been thrown at Zagreb there was as much likelihood of the death of Marie as of Alexander. And even should she survive him, Alexander did not like the idea of the responsibility of government resting on her shoulders. She would be a puppet in the hands of the politicians. Whatever went wrong would be blamed on to her. And much was certain to go wrong. He did not wish any shadow to rest on his line. If Paul became Regent, and there should happen to be unfortunate developments, that would not matter so much. Young Peter would become more and more popular and the people would await his coming-of-age with impatience.



The King had not until that moment regarded his cousin as his right-hand man. The Prince had not been associated with affairs of state, never sat in conference with ministers and had held no official post of any kind. His goings and comings were seldom remarked in the press and he was, in fact, a little-known personality. Equally the Prince had no intimate knowledge of the personnel of Yugoslav politics. He was a private gentleman who followed the King's doings with sympathy. His position was that of family friend who shared the domestic confidence of Alexander and Marie. Some have greatness thrust upon them: that was Prince Paul's position. He demanded that the regency be shared, if not with the Queen at least with two others. The provisions of the constitution, in the case of the infancy of a sovereign, envisaged the appointment of three Regents.

Two years previously the King had had a right-hand man whom he trusted more than anyone else in the realm, General Zhivkovitch, to whom he had entrusted the domestic government of Yugoslavia under the dictatorship, but he no longer saw eye to eye with the general. He surmised that in Zhivkovitch he had a passive critic of the régime and he could not tolerate critics. For that reason the name of Zhivkovitch was not mentioned in the testament which he signed at Bled. It was a peculiar disposition of power. To the name of Prince Paul he added the names of Dr. Stankovitch and Ivo Perovitch, the Governor, at whose palace he had stayed at Zagreb. General Tomitch, commandant of the Belgrade garrison, was named in reserve, in case one of the three Regents should die before the heir came of age. It amounted to giving the whole of the royal prerogative in trust to his cousin. The other men had not sufficient weight to outbalance him on any important question. Alexander seems to have given but little thought to the question of who were to be the other Regents assisting Prince

Paul. He had seen much of Perovitch during his stay in Zagreb and the name was uppermost in his mind. Dr. Stankovitch was a heart specialist and Minister of Education, otherwise only a friend. They were named as a formality to spare his cousin the responsibility of having to act alone. The testament was a secret document. It came as a surprise to everyone but Prince Paul when it became known after the King's death.

Nine months after these deliberations at Bled the attempt on the King's life was repeated. And it was organized by the same persons who sent Oreb to Zagreb to kill him. December, 1933, Zagreb! October, 1934, Marseilles! Much was said, after the event, of the King's prescience, of his presentiment of the ultimate tragedy. But if Alexander did have foreknowledge it did not weigh upon his mind. He did not behave like a doomed man. His life in 1934 was one of great energy and freedom of action. He had made the provision for the regency merely as a wise precaution.

In March, 1934, the trial of Oreb, Begovitch and Pogorelats caused a sensation in Yugoslavia though not much attention was directed to it by the foreign press. The news agencies working through Vienna rendered Oreb's revelations as colourless as possible. It was hinted that the confession was obtained by torture and was not a free admission. Yugoslavia might have done more to seize the opportunity to impress European public opinion. No representations were made at Geneva regarding the Italian camps. Yugoslavia, with undue modesty, was unwilling to air her grievances against an influential fellow-member of the League. Instead Jevtitch sent a very full *aide memoire* to the Yugoslav ministers in London, Paris and Rome. There were conversations in these capitals but there were not official representations. The result was negligible. France at that time wanted to get to an understanding with Italy. Britain was also sympathetic to Italy. Italy was a lively guarantor of the independence of

Austria which was a matter of first importance in London. In July the Nazis murdered Dollfuss and made an abortive attempt to seize the government of Vienna. Italy made a partial mobilization. She stood as a bulwark of central European peace, and the powers were not willing to offend her. Mussolini was annoyed by Pavelitch's failure but he would not break with him, would not expel him from the country or dissolve his organization. But Borgotaro had come too much into the light. He gave directions for the men in that camp to be moved to other camps. Some of them were sent as far away as the Lipari Isles in the Mediterranean.

## CHAPTER XIII

### LOAN OF AN ASSASSIN

NAHUM TOMALEVSKY, who brought Pavelitch and Perchets from Vienna to Sofia in 1929, revolted against the authority of his chief, Ivan Michailof. He was an important figure in the movement for the liberation of Macedonia and must have been in possession of many secrets. He was by profession a journalist, which meant it was to his interest to store information about everyone who crossed his path on the Balkan scene. He was specially well-informed concerning the foreign connections of the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee and he knew to what extent Pavelitch and Perchets were compromised by the financial support of Italy. He understood the Habsburg monarchist intrigue and the political aspirations of various highly-placed functionaries in Budapest. Possibly his knowledge was more dangerous to himself than to others. He was "the man who knew too much" in Sofia, and must be killed. Vlada the Chauffeur, who has been described as the executioner for Michailof's band, was deputed to shoot him.

In May, 1931, the man who afterwards assassinated King Alexander and M. Barthou shot Nahum Tomalevsky like a dog outside his own home. It was an open and shameless murder. Vlada the Chauffeur was arrested but bore himself with assurance. He had such powerful protection that he believed no one dare punish him for the crime. But he was, nevertheless, tried and condemned to life imprisonment. In prison he knew that there were those outside the prison walls who were working

for him and he was not in the least surprised when in the following year he was set free.

One day he was a "lifer" wearing the striped prison garb, the next he was strolling in ordinary attire in the streets of Sofia as if nothing had happened. There was always plenty of money for him, though he never earned a penny by honest toil. Michailof saw to that. He was in clover, dined at the best resorts and had expensive mistresses. But he was watchful, because Nahum Tomalevsky had belonged to a faction only less powerful than Michailof's band. And the man he had murdered in the previous year had relatives. There is such a thing as the blood feud in Bulgaria, wherein it is laid upon the nearest of kin of a murdered man to be revenged. Blood must be paid for with blood.

Nahum Tomalevsky had a brother who belonged to the Danobist sect, a fraternity which abjured the taking of life. Vlada the Chauffeur traced him to the meeting place of the sect. To the surprise of the Danobist brotherhood the well-known murderer began to visit them. They were vegetarians and their pastor enjoined them not to destroy the life of man or of beast. It seemed a remarkable conversion, but though willing to receive Vlada the Chauffeur, the pastor considered that he ought to express public repentance for his life before joining them. The secretary said to him: "We know you to be a murderer. Are you sorry for the murders you have committed?" Vlada the Chauffeur said "No." He had done as he was told for political reasons. He did not consider himself a criminal. The secretary said he must go away and not come back till he had repented of his murders, for the members of the cult were sworn never to take human life. Vlada the Chauffeur said he was glad of that. Tomalevsky's brother was a member, was he not? If he could be assured that there was no danger to him from that quarter that was all he wanted from them.

Pavelitch and Perchets were interested in the man

who had killed their old acquaintance, Tomalevsky. They shed no tears over the Bulgarian journalist. Perhaps they even rejoiced at his removal. Such a man having parted company with Michailof and entered upon more legitimate political activity might some time or other go to Belgrade and betray valuable secrets. Tomalevsky had paid the penalty of instability. But when a man had to be killed in Bulgaria the executioners made no mistake. Vlada the Chauffeur was the sort of man who could be of real service to Pavelitch. He was more reliable than the Croats. There was some correspondence and the Macedonian Committee agreed to lend their assassin to Pavelitch.

Vlada the Chauffeur disappeared from the streets of Sofia and was not seen again in the cafés. He had been married twice, once divorced: his wives never saw him again. Katia, his mistress at the time, never heard from him. The police lost track of him and yet he was not registered as having passed the frontier. It is probable that he departed with a false passport. In any case he turned up in Budapest in the summer of 1933, in the company of one of Michailof's henchmen, Cyril Drangof.

He was sent to Yanko Pusta and then to Italy. Little is known of his movements abroad and his activities until he was deputed to go to Marseilles. He must have lived rather idly. He was used to a free and profligate existence and could not be bullied or placed under severe discipline. At the trial at Aix-en-Provence he was described as Pavelitch's bodyguard. Pospichil was certainly the bodyguard of Perchets, but Perchets was in danger because there had been disaffection in the Hungarian camp. Pavelitch lived a much more secure existence than Perchets and it is not likely that he used Vlada the Chauffeur for his personal protection. The Serbs, especially after the Oreb revelations, might well have sent some men to kidnap or murder Pavelitch. That would have been the Russian method of dealing

with him; but unlike the Russians, the Serbs will never venture on violence outside the limits of their territorial jurisdiction.

While Vlada the Chauffeur was in Italy the possibility of his returning to Bulgaria was destroyed. The Macedonian Revolutionary Committee was dissolved. The Mushanof Ministry, which seemed to exist on the sufferance of the Macedonian Committee, fell as a result of the *coup d'Etat* of the 19th May, 1934. Georgief, the new premier, proclaimed the Macedonian Committee illegal and the army and police were given the task of rounding up the members and confiscating all arms in their possession. Many known to have been concerned in political murders were arrested and a warrant was issued for Vlada the Chauffeur. He was enrolled in the books of the Committee as Vlada Georgief Chernozemsky. He was not wanted for the murder of Nahum Tomalevsky, for which he had already been tried, sentenced and amnestied. He was wanted for the murder of Christo Traikof, a Communist deputy whom Vlada the Chauffeur, with two others, had set upon in January, 1933, and also for an attack upon another man in March.

When the warrant was issued for his arrest, and the society which paid him disbanded, Pavelitch had a stronger hold upon him. He was a man without a country. His means of support had been cut off and he was absolutely dependent upon his new master. When he was chosen to kill the King he had but little choice of action.

Jugoslavia was pleased with the turn of events in Bulgaria. The Macedonian Revolutionary Committee had some time since ceased to send armed bands into Yugoslav territory, but it was a very strong organization influencing the policy of governments and it was hostile to the Serbs. It had stood in the way of rapprochement, perpetuating the national blood feud. But with Kimon Georgief in power the whole situation changed. There was a mass meeting of Bulgars and Serbs in Belgrade, met

to celebrate the prospects of friendship. Sofia newspapers began to explore the possibilities of alliance. King Alexander decided to make a state visit to the Bulgarian capital in September, 1943.

Bulgaria was excited. When, on 12th July, Georgief engaged the Royal Cinema Theatre in Sofia for a popular meeting to review Bulgaria's position there was scant room for the masses who wished to hear him. He gave orders that all citizens possessing radios must place them on the window-sills of their houses and set them going at full blast so that all the people in the streets might hear his speech. The whole of Sofia barked with the voice of Kimon Georgief. "Folk," said he, "I now turn one of the most sombre and scandalous pages of our recent past. Recall how certain persons and groups of men have raised themselves above the law of the land! In extensive regions of Bulgaria the authority of the state was no more than a fiction. We have emerged from an era when foreign policy which ought to be conducted exclusively by the government was dependent upon frontier incidents. There were times when these incidents endangered the security of Bulgaria. . . . Recall the dead lying in the streets of Sofia and of provincial cities, the outrages with machine guns and infernal machines! Veritable battles took place in the very centre of the capital, some few hundred yards from the Parliament House and in front of the gates of the royal palace. Bulgarian citizens were kidnapped from the capital and the government was powerless to obtain their release. . . . This lamentable state of affairs necessitated the decree contained in paragraph 14 of the manifesto of the 19th May, in applying which the government undertook the re-establishment of the sovereignty of the state in the entire territory of this realm by dissolving the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee. The Ministry of the Interior seized the arms of this organization and the figures of the weapons thus seized provoked general astonishment. The figures

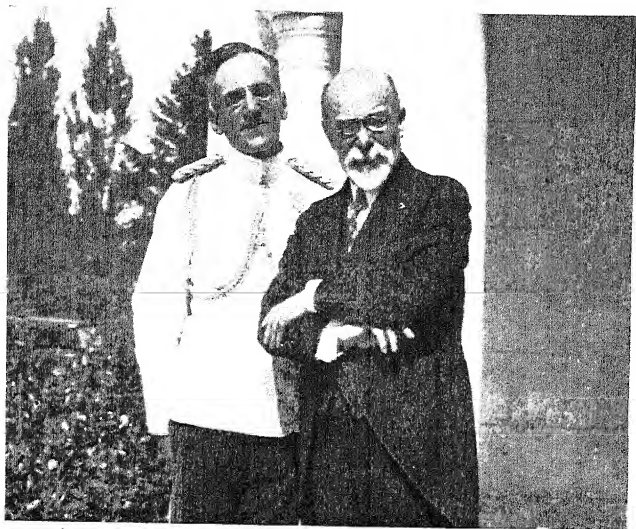


were: 637 revolvers; 15 automatic rifles; 3 grenades; 7,767 bombs; 10,938 rifles (now more than 11,000); 47 machine guns; 701,388 cartridges. . . . These figures of the armament of the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee, if we take into consideration the text adopted by the various Balkan States and others in the pacts which have been signed, wherein the London definition of an aggressor occupies an important place, demonstrate the dangers to which the Bulgarian state was exposed."

The resolute action of the new government entailed the complete failure of the Italian plans in Bulgaria. The amount of money wasted by such a great commercial nation as the Italians in an utterly unprofitable adventure is a paradox of history. Had Fascism been a limited liability company it must long since have gone into liquidation. What did go into liquidation in 1934 was the Italian policy in the Balkans. Bulgaria was liberated from foreign intrigue and became ready to align herself with the Little Entente and the Left side in European politics. A fortnight after Georgief's great speech in the Royal Cinema, Bulgaria recognized Soviet Russia. Yugoslavia had agreed to recognize Moscow. Russia, even Red Russia, must stand behind the Balkan Slavs as of yore.

The visit of Alexander and Marie to the Bulgarian capital in September, 1934, a month before he was murdered in Marseilles, was a brilliant success. The reception was not merely formal and official, but national. A miracle seemed to have been accomplished. The Bulgars were won over. The Serbs shook hands with them again. All Europe was impressed by the event. This seemed the greatest achievement of Alexander, apart from the exploits of war. He had made his name as a man of peace.

But Fate lurked in the background. Warrants were out for the arrest of all the more dangerous assassins of the Macedonian Committee. The arch enemy, Ivan



NG ALEXANDER AND M. LOUIS BARTHO, AT BELGRADE, JULY, 1934





Michailof, who fled to Asia Minor, was promptly arrested by the orders of Kemal, but a more dangerous gangster was lodged in the security of Italy. The whereabouts of Vlada the Chauffeur, lent to Pavelitch, were completely unknown to the police.

In the year 1934 murder as a political means was in vogue. On the 30th June Adolf Hitler took the short way in dealing with Rhoem and General Schleicher. On July 27th the Austrian Nazis murdered Chancellor Dollfuss. In October Alexander was assassinated.

The Yugoslavs were not greatly shocked by the death of Dollfuss. If they were sorry for the man they were not particularly sorry for the state. No very friendly relations ever prevailed between Vienna and Belgrade. The more cultured capital had nothing to teach the more uncouth Balkan city. The way Socialists and Liberals were shot down and the working men's community houses besieged did not hold up an example of enlightened democracy. Indeed Yugoslav politics were far less bloody and brutal than Austrian politics. And then Vienna was a centre of intrigue, much of it directed against Jugoslavia. The government was venal, supported by foreign loans and loans to pay back loans. Added to that there was Italian money and subsidies to politicians and groups. No one could tell what plot against the peace of the Balkans was being hatched in Vienna, what the adherents of the Habsburgs were planning, but Perchevitch and his confederates were conspiring. The ill will against Jugoslavia was manifest in the damaging news circulated from Vienna.

The Germans seemed more easy to understand and there was the admiration of one fighting people for another. The rise of Hitler did not alarm Alexander. He liked a man who was direct and knew his own mind. And the Germans did not approve the cowardly campaign of terrorism connived at by Vienna. They stopped the activities of Pavelitch's agents in Germany. Serbs and Germans understood one another. In May,

1934, they signed a commercial treaty. Goering came to Belgrade shortly afterwards and visited Jevtitch, expressing Germany's wish that Yugoslavia should become united and powerful.

King Alexander was asked whether it meant that Yugoslavia was thinking of deserting France. He said he would always remain loyal to his allies. His less strained relationship with Germany held nothing incompatible with friendship with France. That was true. France was considered to have done but little for Serbia after the war, but the King never wavered in his sentimental devotion to the country for whom his father had fought in 1870, to the France he had been brought up to admire. In a way, Alexander, always reading the French classics, lived with the French. He had become almost French. It is characteristic of the French that they will take help where they can find it. They are logical. The Serbs also are logical, perhaps not so much so, but Alexander saw that there was some profit in having an understanding with Germany, the more so as at that time the Nazis did not see eye to eye with the Italians as regards the future of Austria. Hitler was laying claim to rule every German minority in the world and there was a minority under Italian rule.

The Nazi *coup d'Etat* in Austria in July, 1934, failed. It was not merely the murder of Chancellor Dollfuss that had been contemplated, but an armed rising and the seizure of the power of the state with a view to uniting with Germany. It got little further than the temporary conquest of the radio station of Vienna. The Nazi armed bands overestimated their strength and the support that might be forthcoming from Germany. Italy moved forces to the Brenner and was prepared to occupy Vienna. There ensued a speedy flight of the conspirators over the Yugoslav frontier, over the German frontier. The Yugoslavs interned the rebels of their territory but treated them hospitably. It would be a mistake to imagine that King Alexander was ready

to co-operate with Mussolini on that occasion or that the Duce required his help. That was not a basis for reconciliation as some French writers assert. In 1934 it was not possible to come to terms with Italy unless the hired assassins were first expelled from Italian territory.

## CHAPTER XIV

LOUIS BARTHOUD

If among Alexander's letters he noticed an envelope that obviously contained a bookseller's catalogue he would generally open that at once. Pencil in hand he would scan the lists of old books. He collected rare French books and unique bindings and, in addition, bought books about his own country or the Balkan campaigns. The arrival of book packets at the palace were joyous events. Queen Marie says the pleasure of acquisition was greater than the pleasure of reading. Her Majesty cleared out hundreds of books after his death and presented them to clubs. There was too great an accumulation of volumes at the palace. King Alexander did not employ a librarian and his collection was not catalogued during his reign. On a small step-ladder, in dressing-gown and pyjamas, he might sometimes be found by his court marshal, putting books in their right places or searching for some volume he wished to consult. He knew all his books but could not tolerate anyone else meddling with them. During the war the King's eyesight became weak and he made it worse by much reading of old texts.

The King said to the Queen: "You are happy, you can always find something to do with your hands in your spare time, whereas I can only read." That was true. He had few other recreations, never went to the theatre or cinema, and although he had an ear for music, he did not go to concerts.

One may judge of the King's taste and character by his library. There is nothing vulgar or indecent there, not a volume one needs to hide from children. There

is little that is modern except books on Yugoslavia. Some interviewers from America were scandalized to find him reading Alfred de Musset and Racine instead of the latest successes of the Western world. But he liked the formal and the classical, he did not care for humour, and he had no interest in scandal or in the difficulties of modern bourgeois marriage. But he liked modern books on natural science, read Henri Fabre aloud, and sometimes translated bits for his children and for Dimitrievitch. He was a good reader and also a born *raconteur*. It seems he had a gift for military description and fascinated his entourage when he began telling of curious happenings in his campaigns or describing scenes in the Great War, such as those of the retreat through Albania. But like most Serbs he had no literary gift. He had a royal style of writing which was excellent but he had little flexibility of diction.

Visitors to the palace seemed to find the models of guns in the reception hall more significant than the books. But these models were merely presents from arms contractors desirous of obtaining orders. The books were bought from the private purse. The King had come to have more interest in books than in guns.

When the French government announced that the Foreign Minister, M. Louis Barthou, would visit Belgrade the King was delighted, not so much to be able to converse with him about policy as to exchange news about rare books. Louis Barthou, aged seventy-two, was a dear old grandfatherly person whom it was pleasant to receive. Alexander had met him before. They had corresponded, but mainly about books. Barthou had a very fine collection, better than that of the King, and was an enthusiastic bibliophile. In June, 1934, the plaudits of the populace faded into a rich bookish peace when Barthou entered the King's library at Dedinje. The conversation which took place had little to do with wars and pacts and understandings. It was of rare and



curious volumes and, as a journalist put it, it was "heavily documented."

It is true that with his own hands, there in the library, the King decorated the old statesman with the Order of the White Eagle. But he also presented him with a very rare volume of Racine, and one can be quite sure which of these things the Frenchman valued most.

Barthou had not seen the royal collection before and must have been agreeably impressed by the serried ranks of French books, some in their original covers but many in luxurious and glittering bindings. The King was a connoisseur of bindings also and there were many fine specimens of French workmanship. No one who surveyed this library could doubt the King's devotion to France, and Barthou was impressed. Of all the countries he had visited on this summer mission of 1934, Jugoslavia seemed the most friendly to France.

He was concluding a tour of the capitals of the Eastern states whose destiny since the conclusion of peace had been linked with the support of France. Of these visits the one to Warsaw had been the least satisfactory. Poland had so far abandoned traditional policy as to conclude a pact of friendship with Germany. Poland also shared the Nazi hate of Bolshevism and would have nothing to do with a grouping of the powers of the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact with France if supported by Russia. The racial enmity of the Poles towards the Russians blinded them to the fact that the Germans were the more dangerous enemies. The vanity of this nation never permits it to think that it is not a great power. It co-operates with the Germans as with equals and imagines the Teutons would value their military efforts against the Muscovites.

But Prague, Bukharest and Belgrade had no reserve in their welcome. There were great demonstrations. France could still feel the strength of her safeguarding alliances. But Czechs, Roumanians and Jugoslavs also needed reassurance from France. Barthou's object was

to give moral support and make it plain that France did not overlook the value of the little countries. That the visit did give moral support to the Little Entente is shown by the fact that his journey was resented in Hungary. There were violent demonstrations against Barthou at Budapest and when he passed through the city special police precautions had to be taken for his safety. Hungary was restively biding her time, awaiting the day when the Little Entente would be weakened and left unsupported by France, waiting to recover, with or without Italy's help, her lost territory.

Barthou was a quiet and benevolent old man. There was no fire left in him. He did not get excited by any welcome he received. There was a special session of the Yugoslav parliament in his honour. Many members of parliament wore national costume. Barthou was invited to address the house from the benches of the ministry. He assumed that most members of foreign legislatures understood French, but there could not have been a great many members who could follow him. In any case the speech was not electrifying. The impression that France was still supporting Jugoslavia was enough for Belgrade.

He was taken to view the impressive memorial to France done by Mestrovitch, the only memorable monument in Belgrade and set in a place which dominates the pleasure garden of Kalemegdan. And of course he was taken to Avala to place a wreath upon the grave of the Serbian Unknown Warrior. But there is no Arc de Triomphe in Belgrade. The Serbs have placed their unknown warrior on a hill, on probably the highest point within ten miles of the city, at the top of a steep and densely forested hill. A visit to the shrine is an expedition into the country. In choosing this eminence the Serbs seemed to say: "We are a mountain people; do not seek to find the meaning of Serbia in any city!"

It is difficult for the French to make contact in Jugoslavia. The country is not genteel. There are few

shops worth looking at. There is no fashion in the streets. In the cities the women seem barely one stage removed from peasants and are not adventurous in their behaviour. There are no music halls. In the cafés there are wildly painted gipsy girls who bellow forth oriental songs too barbarous for a Frenchman's ears. In the few bars there are Viennese and Hungarian girls, but they have merely come to make a living out of tourists and commercial travellers. They have little in common with the Yugoslavs. In the houses of the people there is a bare simplicity, no luxury. There are no millionaires, no really rich people. There are few large country houses and estates.

There are, in short, none of the trappings of a great country and it is difficult for a Parisian to believe that he has come to a place other than obscure. There has been latterly a decrease in the numbers of those who speak French tolerably. Barthou stayed at an hotel in the midst of Belgrade but he never heard anyone talking French in the streets of the city. He was not at home. He was only at home with the King in the palace at Dedinje. It is the experience of most visiting Frenchmen. They may profess undying friendship, but they cannot grasp Jugoslavia. It means nothing more to them than a military force which might be at some time at their disposal.

On the 25th June there was a grand luncheon for Barthou at the palace at Dedinje. Not only was the King present but his cousin, Prince Paul, and most members of the government and the Yugoslav minister in Paris. In the course of that luncheon Barthou turned playfully to King Alexander and said: "Won't your Majesty come to Paris? Promise me you will!"

King Alexander replied good-humouredly: "I promise. I'll come to Paris to see you."

So lightly was the fatal meeting in France first mentioned and promised. Who could have guessed that in this pleasant interchange over lunch the two men

were making a rendezvous with death? The King said: "I have long wished to visit a certain bookshop in Paris. I think the proprietor has something I want, but I cannot be sure from the description he sends me." He hoped to snatch a happy half-hour rummaging in an old bookshop.

Thinking of old books, dim light and faded print, King Alexander was reminded of another matter. His eyesight was degenerating rapidly and he was in a wretched state. Without spectacles he looked and felt like a blind man. He would use the opportunity of going abroad to visit his oculist at Lausanne. He did not trust his eyes to any oculist in Belgrade. He could stop at Lausanne on his way home from France.

Barthou was pleased with his achievement. To have obtained the King's promise was a diplomatic success. He improved the occasion by divulging further plans for the future. At the beginning of the following month it was his intention to go to London. He undertook to explain to Sir John Simon the entirely pacific nature of King Alexander's policy. Great Britain seemed to look upon the new Balkan Pact with some suspicion and there were some who imagined that the Balkan States were again becoming aggressive. England was incurably suspicious of the Balkans, seeing that the Great War started out of Balkan intrigue and violence. Britain must come to understand both the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact as insurance against war. Barthou used a new phrase. He spoke of an Eastern Locarno. He thought the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact could be unified and that both Hitler and Mussolini could be persuaded to join in one comprehensive understanding for peace. If Hitler refused, Russia must be brought in despite Poland's obduracy. The old man had pactomania very badly. He wanted also a Mediterranean pact with France, Britain, Italy and Jugoslavia.

One thing was very clear both to King Alexander and Jevtitch. France was now concerned to come to

terms with Italy. Why? The French could hardly fear a war with Italy. Italy still nursed the grievance that she had been cheated in the peace settlement after the Great War. But in 1934 she was not in a position to fight France. She was not on the best of terms with Nazi Germany and was watching jealously over the independence of Austria. She had no friends in Europe. But France possibly foresaw the possibility of the two Fascist powers coming together and wished to forestall it. Paris, equally with London, desired to see the appeasement of all conflicting interests in Europe.

After visiting London Barthou planned to visit Rome, but that would not be until the autumn; better after Alexander's visit to Paris. Alexander had promised to go to Sofia in September. October would be the best month for the King of Yugoslavia. Barthou noted November for Rome. He was going to Italy to try to obtain a complete settlement of all outstanding questions dividing the interests of Italy and France and then to propose an Eastern Locarno. He would go to Mussolini cap in hand. For the Duce flattered himself that he was going to be the arbiter of European destinies. "Let the nations come to me and arrange their future history!" The French in 1934 were approaching him rather too humbly, as if they had not the power to arrange terms as equals. When eventually Laval went to Rome in place of Barthou, who had been killed, he was received with deliberate coldness and the coldness endured until he had agreed to all the Duce required of him and France.

Incidentally, Barthou was desirous that the friction between Italy and Yugoslavia should be removed. France wanted peace with Italy and naturally did not wish to have to support her ally, Yugoslavia, should war break out between them. Alexander said he was far from desiring conflict with Italy, but if war broke out he was prepared. If Barthou could make peace between Yugoslavia and Italy the King would be pleased and

grateful. But Barthou would have to persuade Italy to dissolve the armed camps and expel the terrorists from her territory. Barthou promised to raise the question of the relationship with Yugoslavia. They would discuss that again when the King arrived in France.

That the French had held a brief for Yugoslavia at Rome is clear. What Barthou would have done one cannot say. He was a greater statesman than Laval and more far-sighted; he understood that in any arrangement with Italy he must carry the interests of those Eastern powers who were at one with France in a system of mutual support. In the upshot Laval did nothing. When the Yugoslav premier, Stoyadinovitch, asked him what he had been able to do for Yugoslav interests, he replied, "We have done what we could. We have come to an understanding with Italy." That was all!

No word concerning the King's promised visit to Paris was made public in the summer of 1934, though the news must have been whispered because the promise was made in the presence of a considerable number of men. And little said to a Frenchman remains a secret for long. But nothing had been definitely arranged. There was some correspondence between Paris and Belgrade and it was not until September that an official announcement was made.

The idea of the visit developed in the King's mind. During the previous year he had unveiled a monument to the Greeks who had died on the Salonika front in the war. His mind had been occupied with thoughts of the soldiers of other nationalities. He would have preferred to be honouring the French rather than the Greeks whose share in the effort for victory had been less great. He recalled a promise he had made to a delegation of the *poilus d'Orient* that he would one day lay a wreath upon their monument at Marseilles.

It may seem evidence of an untidy mind that he should not devote himself exclusively to his mission of peace, but fit in a visit to his oculist, a visit to his book-

seller and a provincial function at Marseilles. But he seldom had the opportunity of going abroad.

There was another consideration which weighed with him. He had found his warship, the *Dubrovnik*, very useful. It had enabled him to travel to Varna, Stamboul and Corfu during the previous year in comfort and with dignity. The most dignified way to arrive in France would be on a Yugoslav destroyer. It would indicate Yugoslavia as a sea power with pretensions to be included in a Mediterranean pact should Barthou prove successful. The Serbs are very proud of the fact that they are established on the Adriatic. At that time they had the words "Guard Our Sea" printed on most matchboxes. They had begun to talk of their fleet, though it amounted merely to the destroyer and a few small coastal vessels. By going on the *Dubrovnik* direct to Marseilles the King would not set foot on any intervening soil between France and Yugoslavia. The voyage would be a symbol of union.

But the French government was not very enthusiastic about the Marseilles plan. Paris ought to have the privilege of seeing the King first. To visit the commercial undistinguished port of Marseilles before the capital was undramatic and it would be a drawback having the Marseilles reception reported in the newspapers, before the Paris reception. Moreover, Marseilles, swarming with the people of all nations, haunt of bandits and men wanted by the police, was not safe. The problem of guarding the King's person there was problematic. But when Alexander resolved on any course of action it was not easy to dissuade him. He was set on arriving in France at Marseilles. Barthou promised that he would be there on the quay to welcome him.

Shortly after M. Barthou's visit to Belgrade he was condemned to death by Pavelitch. At least it was announced in one of his newspapers that he and the

King were condemned. But that was long before it was known that they would drive side by side in the same car in Marseilles. He was to be killed because he was supporting the policy of King Alexander. Later, at the murder trial at Aix-en-Provence, the President of the Court naturally called attention to this condemnation. Counsel for the defence was unable to make out a strong case for his theory that the killing of Barthou was unpremeditated. Nevertheless, it was probably an accident. Vlada the Chauffeur had it in his power to kill Barthou, but he only incapacitated him. He shot him in the right arm. It was not a mortal wound and had the Frenchman received prompt and efficient attention he would have walked out from the hospital a few hours after the tragedy with his arm in a sling. There is a theory that he was deliberately allowed to bleed to death in Marseilles, but one can hardly credit that.

But Barthou's strengthening of the influence of the Little Entente and support of Alexander had made him powerful enemies. It was reported after his visit to England in the previous July that revisionism in London had lost ground. Following upon his visit Sir John Simon publicly approved the Balkan Pact. Alexander's enemies in Europe were Barthou's enemies. There were no tears shed for him in Hungary and Italy. His removal made it easier for Italy to bind France in a dangerous agreement to passivity.

Three days after Barthou arrived back in Paris the world was astonished by the Nazi murders. These were so sensational that it was said the date, the 30th June, 1934, would be for ever remembered in history. Barthou's peaceful mission to the Little Entente became a pale, colourless event beside the fierce actuality of the new Europe that was coming into being, achieved by violence and founded on brute force.

There had been a conspiracy against Hitler. Its object has never been revealed, but one may surmise that it was the seizure of power in Germany. The leaders



were accused of unnatural vice, but abhorrence of that could hardly have been enough to provoke the great leader to fly to Munich and shoot Rhoem with his own hand. Rhoem had been a right-hand man of Hitler. In the previous year he had been upon a mission to Yugoslavia feeling the way to an understanding between the two powers. Rumour has it that he was secretly received by Alexander. He was, in any case, a man of considerable significance, a potential leader. The murder of General Schleicher at breakfast with his wife was even more shocking, and unnatural vice could not be urged against him, nor against Von Papen who was held to be implicated in the conspiracy and was also in great danger.

Less than a month after this emerged another date which it was said would for ever be remembered in history, the 25th July, 1934, when Dollfuss was murdered by the Nazis in Vienna. Previous to the murder there had been a terror in Austria partially hidden by press censorship, over a hundred acts of violence every month, most of them perpetrated by the Nazis.

The methods by which the Nazis intended to gain power and rule occupied men's minds for a space to the exclusion of other political interests. Within ten days of the murder of Dollfuss the ancient and ultra-respectable Field Marshal and President, Hindenburg, died and Adolf Hitler became the supreme dictator of the Reich.

The next date which was to be for ever remembered in history was the 9th October, 1934, when King Alexander and M. Louis Barthou were assassinated at Marseilles; but from repeated bludgeonings Europe was becoming gradually insensitive and dazed. These great events soon became dim, half-forgotten tragedies. Other dreadful spectacles froze the imagination of civilized men, the destruction in succession of four members of the League of Nations, Abyssinia, Spain, China, Austria. The murder of nations followed the murder of men.

## CHAPTER XV

### HOW THE NEWS CAME TO BELGRADE

THE news was delayed. The evening newspaper in Belgrade on the 9th October published an account of the King's disembarkation at Marseilles, the tremendous reception. It told how he had placed a wreath upon the memorial of the *Poilus d'Orient*, a reconstruction of an event which never took place. According to this paper, the only evening sheet in the Yugoslav capital, all had passed off happily in Marseilles and the King had left the city by train and joined the Queen at Dijon.

The people of Belgrade went about their ordinary occupations. There was the usual evening promenade on the Knez Mihailoa, a feature of the city, flocks of young folk, chattering, laughing, flirting. The shops were open, café and restaurant life in full swing. There was one peculiar circumstance. Those who were sitting at home listening to their radios were surprised when the broadcasting programme stopped in the middle of a song. They thought the wireless was out of order. They switched on to Zagreb and then to Ljubljana. Both were dead. But no announcement of the catastrophe was made on the radio. Foreign stations were bleating the news all over Europe but Yugoslavs do not care much for foreign programmes and the majority do not understand foreign languages. It was late in the night before the baleful rumour spread.

People set off for the theatre and found that it was closed, but there was no notice, no official explanation. Among those on their way to the theatre about a quarter to eight was General Zhivkovitch. Someone overtook him with an urgent message. Would he repair at once

to the Ministry of the Court? He was rather annoyed that he would be made late for the play. But at the office of the Minister of the Court he was put through by telephone to Prince Paul.

A low agitated voice said: "Peter, the King is dead. . . . Come at once to the palace!"

The news was withheld from the public and especially from the army lest it should prove the signal for disorder. Had it become known to everyone there would have been instant, uncontrollable agitation and possibly martial law and military dictatorship before the night was through. The prime minister, Uzunovitch, had wireless reports but obtusely refused to give them credence. Paris was sensational and contradictory and he had little understanding of the French language. Rome blared information, which might be invented in order to cause a rising, and he did not know Italian. He told the Home Secretary that he believed it was a radio plot, and he ordered all stations to close down. About five o'clock he was told that Marseilles wanted him on the 'phone. "Now the plot thickens," said Uzunovitch knowingly. He was entirely calm and unperturbed.

"This is Jevtitch speaking from the Prefecture at Marseilles. I am sorry to inform you that his Majesty . . ."

Uzunovitch chuckled and rang off.

The telephone-bell buzzed insistently again but the premier would not take up the receiver. The voice had been extremely clear but not quite the voice of Jevtitch. It might very well be some charlatan speaking from Zagreb.

Half a hour later the telephone called him again. "This is Jevtitch speaking from the Prefecture at Marseilles . . ."

"What, again? Well, what is your first name? Bogoljub . . . you've got that right. What was your wife's maiden name? Hm . . . what are the first names of your uncles? Yes. You seem to have made

some study of Boshko Jevtitch. But I don't believe you. You are an intriguer and you had better get off the line as you are obstructing other calls which may be important." He rang off, but Jevtitch tried again and at the third time of asking put up Dimitrievitch and other Serbs at Marseilles to convince the prime minister that it was indeed his Foreign Secretary who had been trying to give him a report, the most important imaginable.

Then Uzunovitch allowed himself to be convinced and heard all that Jevtitch had to say. It is difficult to credit the premier with being as dense as he appeared. He was a long headed but opinionated politician, always a schemer. It is just possible that he deliberately postponed hearing official confirmation of the news and that he required time for the maturing of certain plans. He did not inform either Prince Paul or Zhivkovitch. But he closed all theatres and cinemas and he forbade the newspapers to issue special editions. The police were instructed to disperse any gatherings of people in the streets, but there was none.

Prince Paul was at his residence at Dedinje. As he had no official position, news telegrams were not forwarded to him. The premier never asked his advice and the only official likely to get in touch with him, Antitch, the Minister of the Court, had accompanied the Queen to France. His wireless was not working. When he switched it on he had already missed the first reports. But then he was already agitated because he had had a telephone call from Dimitrievitch who, unknown to Jevtitch, had got in first with the news. The Court Marshal said there had been an attempt on the life of the sovereign. He was trying to break it gently and did not say that Alexander was already dead. He appeared to be too nervous to give more than a garbled account of what had happened. He must bewilder the Prince with confused protestations of his grief.

"You say the King is now in the hands of the doctors? Very well, telephone me again directly a bulletin is issued."

There was a prolonged period of silence. Prince Paul sat watching the silent telephone which held the secret of destiny. At length Dimitrievitch telephoned again. I give the Prince Regent's words describing his reception of the second message. "That general telephoned, 'The King is . . . ' he waited ' . . . dead.' I did not stop to hear any more. I hung up the receiver and took the necessary measures."

Prince Paul could see the empty royal palace from his windows; it was but a few minutes' walk. He strode out of his residence and went at once to the King's. The sentries saluted and let him pass. He hastened to the library, for the copies of Alexander's testament must be found at once, and acted upon. The regency must be proclaimed before midnight. His cousin had said that if he died the Prince would find the documents in the library. That was all. He had not said where. There was no safe. Cabinets, drawers, files, booksellers' catalogues, state correspondence, private letters, bills—the distraught Prince rummaged a long while alone. At length he found the two solid envelopes, sealed with the arms of Yugoslavia, one addressed to the President of the Council, the other to the Queen. They had been placed on a bookshelf between two volumes of Molière.

Prince Paul then summoned three generals, two to do his bidding and the third, General Zhivkovitch, to be a witness to the subsequent proceedings.

Paul knew that he was Regent. The whole weight of responsibility of governing Yugoslavia had fallen suddenly on to his shoulders. He had ceased to be a civilian and an outsider and had become the central personage in the realm. No politician had thought of him as King's representative, as viceroy or successor. An unknown quantity in Yugoslavia, not a soldier, never a cabinet minister, not even a provincial governor, the authority implicit in his person was but slight. He could not face the government, the army, the people

without documents, with merely the verbal report of the King's wishes.

The Prince was outwardly calm when General Zhivkovitch arrived, more so than Zhivkovitch. He had had time to control his feelings. The presence of the general was a moral support. But he had little to tell him beyond the bare fact that the King had been murdered. He had given instructions for all messages from France to be sent to the palace. Fuller information would arrive later. "Meanwhile," said Paul, "we must produce the King's testament," and he moved across to the library shelves and took the two sealed envelopes from between the two books. That was where Alexander had left them. The one addressed to the Queen the Prince put aside. The other, addressed to the President of the State Council, the prime minister, he placed in the general's hand. Zhivkovitch had ceased to be premier two years previously and he could not open the sealed envelope. "This must be opened by Uzunovitch . . ."

Prince Paul then sent an urgent message to Uzunovitch, but the latter replied that he was busy and could not come. He was making his own plans and had already summoned the boy King, Peter II, back from school in England. He had given orders for the body of Alexander to be conveyed at once to Yugoslavia, unembalmed. He had become the most important person in the realm and was not taking orders from Prince Paul. But the premier was soon visited by an officer of the royal guard and brought to the royal palace, practically by force. In the presence of Prince Paul and General Zhivkovitch he broke the seal of the envelope addressed to him.

But Uzunovitch made no difficulty about recognizing the authenticity of the signature of King Alexander and at once signified his acceptance of the King's will. He bowed to the authority of the Regent and gave instructions that all messages from abroad be conveyed

direct to the palace. Then the three men conferred as to the form in which the declaration of the regency should be made known to the public. Telegrams kept coming in, punctuating their deliberations. "Marseilles reports that Barthou has succumbed." "Marseilles reports that the King was wounded in two places, in the stomach and near the heart. He was already dead when he was examined at the Prefecture. The murderer's name is given as Peter Kelemen, born in Zagreb in 1899, a shopkeeper. He passed the French frontier at Vallorbes. . . . The murderer tried to commit suicide but the police prevented him. He was killed by the bullet of a gendarme."

This was followed by a long telephonic communication from Paris which added little except that President Lebrun was leaving for Marseilles. At nine o'clock Paris telephoned: "Her Majesty the Queen was informed by the prefect at Dijon of the tragic death of King Alexander. There are special editions of the newspapers dedicated to King Alexander, to his efforts for peace and his friendship with France. There is consternation in Paris. The Cabinet has just met. General Georges is dead (incorrect). The newspapers had been preparing an appeal that King Alexander, as peacemaker of the Balkans, be awarded the Nobel prize for peace. The President of the Republic, M. Lebrun, has sent to the premier of Yugoslavia, M. Uzunovitch, a declaration of his warmest sympathy. And also to the French minister in Belgrade."

At half-past nine there was a telephonic message from the Yugoslav minister in Vienna reporting the news being published in the Austrian papers, mostly fallacious. Yugoslav had ordered the closing of the Austrian frontier. Orders were being given to mobilize troops on the frontiers of Hungary and Italy. The Queen had learned, while on the train journey across Italy, that an attempt would be made on the life of her husband in France. The heir to the throne, Prince Peter, had been recalled

from England. News, true and untrue, poured through to the royal palace.

Meanwhile it was decided that all members of the Cabinet then present in Belgrade should at once take oath of allegiance to the new King Peter II, likewise all officers of the army and fleet. In the course of the night many hundreds took the oath to the young sovereign. The proclamation of the accession of Peter II was also issued with an official statement regarding 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 while the masses slept. But the object was not revolution but stability. The assumption of enemies might be that the assassination meant chaos, separatism, civil war. The resolution of the government was that there should be disciplined calm and a dignified acceptance of Fate.

Only in the early morning the newsvendors were yelling the names of their papers in the streets and waving their black-bordered sheets. Civilian Belgrade awakened to its most tragic day. It stared at the proclamation confronting it on the front pages of *Politika* and *Vremya*:

#### TO THE JUGOSLAV PEOPLE!

Our great King Alexander has fallen a victim to a treacherous attempt on his life on the 9th October, at 4 p.m., at Marseilles.

With his blood the King-Martyr sealed that work of peace on which he was engaged in allied France.

To the throne of Yugoslavia succeeds his first-born son, His Majesty Peter II.

The ministry, the army and the navy have taken the oath of allegiance to His Majesty Peter II. . . .

GOD SAVE THE KING!



There followed the pent-up flood of news from France which had been accumulating for more than twelve hours, the terror-breathing sensational descriptions from Marseilles. There were no comments, no diatribes, no demands for vengeance, not even criticism of the French. All editorial space was taken by the biographical reviews of the King's reign.

And after reading the terrible news there was no shouting in the streets, no demonstrations of any kind. Only the shopkeepers added their black flags to the many that already hung in every street. The people were dazed and dumbfounded. There may have been some whispers against the Croats but they did not find audible voice. News came from Zagreb that the Croat city was hushed and apprehensive. It seemed that the murderer had been a Croat. All that was known of him was what was given on his forged passport. The assassination had no international aspect on the 10th October. It was a domestic tragedy, the pitiful culmination of the political differences separating Serb and Croat.

But late on the night of the 9th October a Serb journalist had wrung from the prison authorities at Marseilles permission to visit the morgue and look at the corpse of the assassin. On a slab of concrete he stared at the naked body of the murderer, at the hideous face with open mouth and big gold-stopped teeth. It crossed his mind that it was not a Croat face and his opinion was confirmed by the inspection of one of the arms. The arm was tattooed with the sign of the skull and cross-bones, under which was written the words "Liberty or Death," in Bulgarian. There were also the initials of the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee, V.M.R.O.

No comment was allowed on this discovery, as it was not thought desirable to throw any of the blame upon friendly Bulgaria. What King Alexander had wrought in reconciling Serbs and Bulgars was con-

sidered too precious to be endangered by any rash accusation of complicity in the murder. It was characteristic of the new spirit in the Balkans that not one word was breathed against Bulgaria.

All day messages of sympathy arrived from the heads of states throughout the world. Among the first to express his grief was Adolf Hitler. The Germans were spontaneous in their sympathy and published in their papers many eulogiums of their "ex-enemy." Their attitude made a strong appeal to the Serbs. The Germans were standing by them in their tragic hour. The Serbs are more drawn to the Germans than to any other nation and the way the Nazis did honour to the dead king made possible the closer political connection of later years. When, in 1938, Hitler overran Austria, the Jugoslavs did not even call a Cabinet meeting. A spokesman of the government publicly rejoiced that Jugoslavia had a nation of seventy-five million friends on its frontier.

Doubt of France was increased when, in response to clamour in Paris, the French Minister of the Interior resigned, an acknowledgment that the police had proved inefficient in safeguarding the person of the King in Marseilles. No messages of sympathy or promises of statues of Alexander could reduce the growing murmur against France in Jugoslavia. Official declarations of unchanged friendly relationship have to be discounted. From the assassination of Alexander dates a coldness to France that was both governmental and national.

There were more conventional condolences from Austria and Hungary, but the Serbs did not think these states were very sorry. The death of the King might well be thought to help the cause of revisionism. What must have struck those powers who were hostile to the policy of Jugoslavia was the immensity of the sensation of the murder. It caused at least five times the stir that the murder of Dollfuss had caused. England,

France, America, Belgium, remembered the heroic exploits of Serbia in the war and Alexander's great part in them. Yugoslavia, at least in the news, seemed a greater power than she had ever been. The whole post-war press campaign against the Serbs was ruined by the tragedy. No one dared to say that Alexander merely got what was coming to him. No one dared to breathe a word against the dictatorship. The big nations sensed the blow which the little nation had received and most of them gave their moral support. The ranks of the nations supporting the Jugoslavs were closed.

Mussolini saw how the land lay. There was no terror in Zagreb following the murder, no rising of the Croats. The French police were at first completely baffled by the problem of the crime. Mussolini could have given them much information, but he refrained. He sent a grandiloquent telegram to M. Uzunovitch:

"The tragic decease of the exalted monarch of Yugoslavia as the victim of such a dastardly attempt has evoked the keen indignation of the Italian nation which shares the feeling of sorrow of the Yugoslav nation. Pray accept, Mr. Prime Minister, the expression of the most lively and profound sympathy of the Fascist power and of myself personally.—Mussolini."

He expressed his sympathy, but British warships moved up the Adriatic almost implying a hint to Italy: "Hands off Dalmatia!"

But he had become more concerned to preserve a good relationship with France than to become embroiled with Yugoslavia. The Abyssinian invasion would require peace with France. The death of Alexander meant that he had nothing to fear from the other side of the Adriatic. The anti-Italian policy would probably fall to bits. It became important to avoid the blame of complicity in the murder. Fortunately the assassin was dead and could say nothing. No accomplice had been seen at Marseilles. The film

pictures seemed to show that the crime was the work of one man, unaided, the deed of some isolated Croat fanatic, or of some mad Bulgarian. The only disconcerting item of news was that Vlada the Chauffeur was found to have been wearing new clothes which had obviously recently been bought at a shop in Paris. The conspirators had not had the sense to remove the tab of the shop *La Belle Jardinière*. That must put the detectives upon the trail of the assassin.

The French police, as if to make up for deficiency before the crime, had become exceedingly active. The frontiers were closed to foreigners trying to escape from France. On the 10th two suspects, Pospichil and Raitch, were arrested near the Swiss border. They had come to France from Hungary and their activities did not cast a reflection upon Italy. Kvaternik and Pavelitch reached Turin and their doings and correspondence were carefully watched by Fascist agents. Pavelitch was not allowed to make any statement about the assassination. Otherwise he might have been tempted to boast that he had at last carried out the threat of execution.

There was no news explaining the murder in the Belgrade newspapers. Editors ought perhaps to have concentrated upon explanation. Instead they published day after day series of sensational photographs. The actual event at Marseilles had been photographed at every angle by the intrepid newsreel men. The public still stared uncomprehendingly at the assassin on the step of the car, at the snaps of confused gendarmes rushing forward and back, at the picture of Jevtitch in top-hat running towards the royal car, at the picture of the prostrate King lying in the car. Added to that, they had distressing pictures of the little schoolboy, King Peter II, on the steps of the Yugoslav legation in London with swarms of people staring at him.

There was the intimation that the King's body had gone back to the destroyer, the *Dubrovnik*, and was on

its way to Yugoslavia to be buried. More thought of the coming funeral than of the crime! Whether due to the complete success of measures to prevent agitation, or due to national neurosis, the people gave way to sentiment instead of anger; tears, prayers and mourning instead of hot-headedness or fierce demands that the government find an explanation of the catastrophe and obtain satisfaction somewhere.

A change in the disposition of the Serbs was noticeable. After the conclusion of the Great War they had had a tinge of megalomania, but in the course of sixteen years of nervous peace they had become less sure of themselves. King Alexander was the last man in Yugoslavia who was able to speak with a clear voice, seeming to know the mind of himself and the nation. After his death the Serbs were humble, rather confused in mind and outlook and inclined to wait upon events rather than solve any problem by resolute action.

Belgrade was surprised, mollified, dumbfounded by the honour to the dead, the great personalities of Europe who followed with bare heads the bier of the hero King: the President of the French Republic, the redoubtable Goering, King Carol, the Duke of Kent, Prince Arsène Karageorgievitch, come out of his long exile in Paris, Benes, Titulesco, Ruzhdy Aras, Paul-Boncour, Marshal Petain, Pietri, the Duke of Spoleto, Maximos, and many other princes, statesmen and generals accompanied by French troops and marines, by detachments from the armies of the Little Entente, British naval officers and men of the Mediterranean Fleet, kilted Greek soldiers and a hundred magnificent Turks from Kemal Pasha's guards, aeroplanes of the nations roaring overhead. The funeral was an emotional experience stronger even than that of the news of the assassination. The cortège shut off fire like a safety curtain.

The police discipline of the crowds was perhaps a lesson as to how personalities could be guarded in rustic Belgrade. No chance for anyone to rush forward to

use a revolver there. Not one doubtful person known to the police was allowed on the scene. Not a window was allowed to be open on the line of route.

But it was a demonstration of Europe in Belgrade rather than a funeral. For the coffin was not to remain in Belgrade. The dead King still travelled, as if the journey begun on the 4th October to Kossovo, Cettinje, Zelenika, Marseilles, then back over the sea to Split, and by rail to Zagreb and Belgrade went on indefinitely. The body returned to Belgrade station and was put on another train for Mladenovats, in Shumadia, where peasants lifted the coffin and carried it to another hearse and again the journey was continued to Oplenats, the final resting-place of the Karageorges.

## CHAPTER XVI

### FERMENT

POSPICHIL and Raitch had been arrested at Thonon, near the Lake of Geneva, which they wished clandestinely to cross; Kral at the cross-roads beyond the outskirts of the forest of Fontainebleau. The stories they told upon arrest gave a sinister international significance to the crime.

Pospichil and Raitch, as has been recounted, were left in the environs of Paris while Vlada the Chauffeur and Mio Kral were taken to Marseilles to make the first attempt on the King's life. Had the first attempt failed, Pospichil and Raitch had to make a second attempt upon the occasion of King Alexander's visit to Versailles. Pospichil, who was nicknamed the Dragon, was a redoubtable assassin and had already killed several people in his time. His terrorist activities relate to Hungary, Bulgaria and Italy. Achievement must have depended on Pospichil, because Raitch, like Mio Kral, was not a tried man. But the pair were sufficiently dangerous and there is no reason to think that they would not have carried out the orders of Pavelitch.

Their revolvers and bombs, an identical outfit to that which served Vlada the Chauffeur and Mio Kral, had been left in the cloakroom of the Gare St. Lazare, in Paris. No need to risk these being discovered in their hotel bedroom. They could recover them when the moment came to act. No manner of suspicion was likely to attach to them. They were registered in their hotel as Czechs. Their passports, forged in Hungary, showed them to be Czecho-Slovak subjects, curiously enough born on Italian territory—one at Zara,

the other at Gorizia. Pospichil had the name of Novak. Raitch had the audacity to take the name of the man who is now President of Czecho-Slovakia. He was Benes. They had plenty of money and they amused themselves as men on holiday while waiting for news of the crime at Marseilles.

A telegram would arrive for Pospichil in the name of Novak at the post office at Fontainebleau. Failing that, the two men were to keep their eyes open for Kvaternik or Pavelitch at the Café de la Paix, in Paris. The Place de l'Opéra was their rendezvous. So many thousands of various nationalities met there every day that no meeting of these conspirators was likely to be remarked.

The 9th October must have been a day of tense expectation for Pospichil and Raitch. They remained until the afternoon in Fontainebleau. Nothing in the name of Novak had been received at the post office. That seemed to indicate that the journey to Marseilles had proceeded according to plan and that the organizers had had no difficulty with the assassins. Neither Vlada the Chauffeur nor Mio Kral had refused to go on with the perilous attempt. But, like Peter Oreb at Zagreb, they might get an attack of nerves at the last moment, or they might be arrested on the scene of action, or the street might be so heavily guarded by police and military that it would not be possible to get near enough to fire a shot. A bomb was a much less accurate weapon. Bombs might be thrown and yet the King escape. But if the attempt failed Pospichil would hardly get a telegram before evening. There was plenty of time to make further preparations because the King's visit to Versailles was not to take place until the Wednesday. The 9th October was a Monday.

In the afternoon they went into Paris by omnibus and visited the Place de l'Opéra. They thought they might see someone at the café. But there was no one there that they recognized or who recognized them, so they strolled along the boulevard Haussmann and



went into a cinema. Actually they were watching an American gangster film at the time when real gangsters of international politics were putting over a drama more fearsome than anything ever seen on the screen. Next day the cinema proposed showing in Pathé News the disembarkation of the King and the reception at Marseilles, but the cameramen at that moment were photographing a street scene that had never been equalled in news films. Pospichil and Raitch were not men of imagination. They were only concerned with facts. Was the King killed or was he not? They had not long to wait. When they emerged from the bioscope on to the flocking boulevard the newsmen with *Paris-Soir* and *Intransigeant* were yelling their sensational titles. The papers, with the ink still damp and smudged, were being seized by all and sundry. People stood and read. Others having read shouted to one another. Pospichil, who knew some French, bought a paper. There was a bare telegram magnified by huge type: "An Attempt upon the life of King Alexander in the Place de la Bourse, Marseilles. Twenty Revolver Shots fired at the King of Jugoslavia. Several Soldiers Wounded. Consternation in Marseilles. The King Seriously Wounded. One of the Murderers Slain."

That was the 6th edition of *Intransigeant*. Pospichil and Raitch hurried to the bus-stop for Fontainebleau, but before the omnibus started the 7th edition was out announcing in big letters: "Le roi Alexandre de Yougoslavie et M. Barthou sont assassinés."

That was enough for the reserve assassins. They felt some relief. They would not have to do it. Vlada the Chauffeur and Mio Kral had done it. They must get out of France before there was a hue and cry, get to Italy. Curious that they wasted time by going back to Fontainebleau by bus instead of going to the Gare de Lyon. So soon after the event, that it was humanly impossible for anyone to have got from Marseilles to

Paris in the time, they were relatively safe. Measures had not been taken by the police and they were not likely to have been asked any questions. But they went to Fontainebleau and there took return tickets to Evian, on the Lake of Geneva, slavishly following the route by which they had arrived. They explained afterwards that they took return tickets in order to divert suspicion. No one paid the least attention to them.

The midnight train for Geneva carried them away and in a second-class carriage Pospichil and Raitch counted and watched the names of the stations. Raitch had a notebook in which the names of the stations were scribbled in pencil. It was not their intention to go as far as the frontier station of Evian for which they had tickets, but to descend at a station before and get across the Lake of Geneva by boat. Pospichil got out his compass, which he had bought in Paris, and assured himself that it was working. The two men studied a map of Switzerland. They would cross Switzerland partly on foot, partly by car. The compass would be of most use when it came to dodging the frontier guards and slipping into Italy.

But luck was against them. There happened to be a certain M. Petit, chief of the special frontier police, Annemasse-Geneva, who had made a hobby of studying terrorists, especially those of Pavelitch's gangs. About 6 p.m. his wife telephoned him at Annemasse that she had heard on the wireless that King Alexander had been assassinated. He telephoned for confirmation to the French consul at Geneva. Geneva said that both the King and M. Barthou had been killed. Then M. Petit, on his own responsibility, telephoned all the police posts in his department to be on the look-out for suspicious-looking foreigners. He said he was at once sure that the assassin at Marseilles had not acted alone. It was, nevertheless, remarkable that he took such rapid action, there being no possibility of accomplices getting from Marseilles to the Swiss frontier before the following day.

The only smartness Pospichil and Raitch showed was in getting out of the train at Thonon. There was no inspection of passengers at Thonon. But then they went to an hotel to sleep off the effects of the train journey. They had no baggage and they were foreigners. The hotel proprietor asked for their passports and gave them rooms. The police of Thonon came to question them and, although they were quite polite, Pospichil and Raitch realized that the game was up. They had no further chance of getting into Switzerland unobserved. Pospichil pretended to know no French; Raitch prattled in Portuguese, which the police thought was Italian. M. Morel, of the Thonon police, telephoned M. Petit that there were two Italians with Czecho-Slovak passports at an hotel and that their behaviour was suspicious. Petit did not think this communication important and did not hurry to Thonon. But at one in the morning the secret police from Paris telephoned the names Novak and Benes, travelling from Fontainebleau, and requested M. Petit to be on the look-out for them.

M. Petit arrived at Thonon in the early hours of the morning, posted men to guard the entrances of the hotel, wakened up the hotel porter and had himself taken to the rooms occupied by the suspects. Two inspectors of police came up to stand by Pospichil and Raitch while they dressed. Then having first searched them for arms, Petit had them taken under arrest to the police station.

The interrogation commenced. It is not the custom in France to caution prisoners or to inform them that any statement they may make is purely voluntary. The two terrorists were much more communicative than they were afterwards, when interested parties warned them to give nothing away. They confessed their real names and gave abundance of detail in describing their activities since they had left Hungary. There were serious language difficulties, as Pospichil would not make use of the French he knew. He did

not know enough to conduct an elaborate conversation. He preferred to speak broken German. Raitch stuck to Portuguese, which nobody understood. The police had to wait for Serb interpreters before they could get a comprehensive statement.

Of the two men, Raitch was by far the more communicative. But neither thought that they could be held for the murders at Marseilles. They must say they had been at Fontainebleau, because that was their alibi. They admitted they had been with Vlada the Chauffeur, whom they called Suk, that they were under the instructions of Pavelitch, and that they had been told to wait for a poste-restante letter at Fontainebleau. They said they did not know what that letter might contain. No one would know what he had to do until the last moment. They naturally said nothing about the arms which had been left at the Gare St. Lazare, but they gave much information about their life in the camp of Yanka Pusta in Hungary, their practice under the instruction of a Hungarian officer in the throwing of bombs and infernal machines. They said that if they had got through to Switzerland it had been their intention to go back to Hungary. They took no precaution whatever to shield the name of Hungary. They admitted that their passports had been forged in Hungary.

So the first international blame for the murders was thrown not upon Italy but upon Hungary. That may explain why the Press went into full cry after Hungary, though the crime had not been organized from that country. The statements of Pospichil and Raitch gave the first news of the conspiracy. They had made it appear that it originated from Budapest.

Four days later Mio Kral was arrested. To the first question as to his nationality he replied that he was a Hungarian. But he did not keep to that. He soon admitted that he was Mio Kral, a Croat, who had been in Hungary. In September he had been sent to Budapest to take the delivery of an automobile for use in one of

the camps. He had met a man who had given him a forged passport and sent him to Zurich.

On the same day it was discovered in Sofia that the principal assassin was a Bulgarian subject going by the name of Vlada Georgief Chernozemsky, commonly known as Vlada the Chauffeur. A warrant for his arrest had been issued long before the crime. It was stated in Bulgarian papers—and copied in Belgrade—that Vlada the Chauffeur had been afforded refuge in Budapest, that he had gone there with Cyril Drangof, a well-known member of the Macedonian Committee, and that he had been sent as an instructor to terrorists at the camp of Yanka Pusta. Even the movements of Vlada the Chauffeur pointed a finger of guilt at Hungary.

The representatives of the Little Entente, Benes and Titulesco, who had come to the King's funeral, called a meeting at Belgrade and it was unanimously declared that the assassination had not been merely a blow directed against the King and Yugoslav unity, it had been a deliberate attempt to sabotage the existing order in Europe. Ruzhdy Aras and Maximos, on behalf of the Balkan Pact, associated themselves with that resolution and declared the solidarity of Turkey and Greece with Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia was passive. The demonstration of European sympathy at the funeral had been flattering. The nation had many friends and did not stand alone. Both France and Britain had said that a strong Yugoslavia was necessary as a guarantee of stability in Central Europe. Yugoslavia had never felt so important during the King's life as she felt immediately after his death. That was enough; there was no disposition to pick a quarrel. Roumania and Czecho-Slovakia were much more indignant. They saw the stigma resting upon Hungary, Hungary which constantly menaced Roumania and Czecho-Slovakia because she wished to regain the territories lost in the war. It would be a fitting moment for Yugoslavia to square accounts with Hungary.

On the same day that the Little Entente made its declaration Italy, by way of showing co-operation and goodwill, placed Pavelitch and Kvaternik under precautionary arrest. It is possible this action was taken upon representation from France and Britain. By the 19th October the French were in possession of most of the important clues and all pointed to the crime having been organized from Italy with the connivance of Hungary. But France, on the eve of making a settlement of outstanding difficulties with her Latin neighbour, had to do all in her power to avert an open quarrel between Italy and Jugoslavia.

The chief concern of Great Britain was to prevent the outbreak of any war in which the Great Powers might become involved. The Great War of 1914 had sprung from a similar murder, and responsible British politicians were apprehensive in 1934. The first concern was to keep Italy immune. Italian pride must be shielded from a demand of satisfaction on the part of Jugoslavia. Hungary was in a secondary position, being a minor power, but Britain discouraged agitation against Hungary also. The quiet bearing of Jugoslavia during the weeks immediately following the assassination was due to various causes: first, the natural passivity of the Serbs; then British and French advice. The British minister, Mr. Henderson, had several interviews and telephonic conversations with Prince Paul. The Regent inclined to the minister's advice. He was proud of his personal connection with England and bore himself as an Englishman. He repressed his personal desire to avenge his cousin Alexander. The blood feud was in any case bad form. He was predisposed towards the Italians, having an admiration for their art and culture. Russian blood, which is not easily shocked, ran in his veins and he was not unbearably shocked by Italian Machiavellianism. He agreed that it would be better to overlook past differences and get into accord with the Fascists. He was ready to let

bygones be bygones. As regards Hungary, he had some contempt: that was all. Hungary would be made the scapegoat at Geneva. That might annoy the Magyars, but a little humiliation was a small price to pay for their guilt.

Jevtitch had returned to Belgrade from Marseilles a national hero. No one, not even the Regent, had such popular backing. But he had no voice. The initiative was with Prince Paul who, though intending to install a more democratic régime, did inherit the power of King Alexander. What he said went. The Foreign Minister was still overawed by the throne. He was guided by Prince Paul's opinions and took no strong line of his own. He did not seize the occasion of his return to make a pronouncement on the international aspect of the crime, but tacitly accepted the plea that it was not a moment for presenting an ultimatum and threatening reprisals. The Serbs could show themselves more pacific and civilized in 1934 than the Austrians had done in 1914. They were members of the League of Nations, which had the right to settle grievances between states. They had signed the Briand-Kellogg Pact and outlawed war.

Jevtitch divulged to the Cabinet a very limited programme. Complaint against Hungary had been made to the League during the previous summer. Hungary had agreed to disperse her armed camps and to cease sabotage of Yugoslavia but had not carried out her promises. The complaint would be renewed with additional accusation of complicity in the outrage of Marseilles. Uzunovitch was for exposing and chastising Hungary. Jevtitch's mind was not absolutely clear. In Belgrade he waived the case against Italy. Later, at Geneva, he wished satisfaction both from Italy and Hungary.

A mistake was made in not utilizing the opportunity provided by world-wide sympathy before that sympathy faded into the common light of indifference.

It was a vital moment for a thorough testing of the authority of the League of Nations. The League should have been presented with the whole case and world opinion mobilized against international sabotage. France was short-sighted, for very soon her territory was secretly invaded by foreign agents storing bombs and arms for a Fascist rising, blowing up trains and houses. Britain was short-sighted and was soon, through the League, inviting an unwilling Yugoslavia to impose sanctions upon a power she had been persuaded to forgive.

But the Little Entente, which had more cause for animus against Hungary than against Italy, was pleased that Yugoslavia was taking up the cudgels against the Magyars. It approved. The direct attack upon Budapest began on the 16th October, when Jevtitch informed the Hungarian government that the name of the assassin who had killed the King was Vlada Georgief Chernozemsky, reported by the Sofia police to have been resident in Hungary and to have served as instructor at the terrorist schools. A photograph was enclosed and the Hungarians were asked to give further information.

After some delay and conventional promises to look into the matter the Hungarian government replied on the 26th October that "in spite of the most minute and intensive research the royal Hungarian authorities have been unable, up to the present, to establish that the person named Vlada Georgief Chernozemsky has ever been in Hungary. On the contrary, it appears almost absolutely certain that the above-named has never entered the territory of this country."

That closed the correspondence as far as Vlada the Chauffeur was concerned. There is no definite proof that he was ever in Hungary. Jelka Pogorelets was in Belgrade in October, 1934. Interviewed by the police and afterwards by journalists, she did not admit that she had ever seen Vlada the Chauffeur at Budapest or



at Yanka Pusta. She knew Pospichil very well, but she did not know the Bulgarian even by sight. The Serbs assumed, on too slender evidence, that Vlada the Chauffeur had been sent from Hungary to commit the crime. It was shown afterwards that while Pospichil, Raitch and Mio Kral did certainly come from Hungary, Vlada the Chauffeur was brought into Switzerland by Kvaternik, who was living in Italy.

A French newspaper editor sent a journalist to make investigations in Hungary. He was able to publish sensational revelations. He visited the farms which had been used as schools for training terrorists and dished up afresh the whole painful story of Yanka Pusta. According to him, the bomb-throwers and train-wreckers had been still in camp after the assassination. They had only been dispersed about the twentieth of the month, when Hungary was becoming apprehensive of international action. French publicity was skilfully canalized so that the blame should avoid Italy and go exclusively to Hungary. Following the *Petit Journal* the *Paris-Soir* sent its special correspondent who, though nominally under the protection of the Hungarians, reported much that was damaging. These articles were freely quoted by Yugoslav papers and gave the impression of strong support in France for a campaign against Hungary. Every day in the news the front pages were given to Hungarian revelations with such sensational headings as: THERE WAS A FACTORY OF BOMBS AT YANKA PUSTA, say the French authorities; SECRET STORE OF SIMILAR BOMBS DISCOVERED AT BORDEAUX. Another day it was: FORMER HUNGARIAN GENERAL STAFF BEHIND MARSEILLES CONSPIRACY.

Colonel Perchevitch had been arrested in Vienna and the French had applied for extradition. There was a movement to embroil the Austrians as Schuschnigg was a strong supporter of the Legitimists. A certain *agent provocateur* allowed himself to be arrested in

Marseilles, freely admitting that he was one of the terrorists. His task was to throw out as much confusing and contradictory evidence as possible. This man pointed to Colonel Perchevitch as the master mind of the conspiracy, a crude attempt to shift the responsibility from Pavelitch and Italy to the Habsburgists.

Italy kept Pavelitch and Kvaternik strictly incommunicado. It was Mussolini's intention to refuse extradition ultimately, but to keep France and Jugoslavia guessing until after the hearing of the case against Hungary at Geneva. No journalists were allowed to interview them. No detectives had access to them. The Fascist authorities did not subject them to any examination. It had been possible, while refusing to surrender them to French justice, to make an independent investigation of the part played by these men and to publish the findings. Their evidence was of cardinal importance and far outweighed the question of punishment for crime. The French courts were held up by the absence of Pavelitch and Kvaternik and but for the suspense of the extradition proceedings they might have had the trial of Kral, Pospichil and Raitch before the case of Hungary was judged by the League of Nations.

Jevtitch, in an interview to the *Petit Parisien*, declared that "Our first duty is to await the investigation of the Marseilles crime," but it was important for him that the trial should take place before the session at Geneva. But with Laval visiting Rome to make a settlement with Italy, France had no interest in hastening the trial. She did not use much pressure in demanding Pavelitch and Kvaternik. The tension in Europe was so great that had France mobilized opinion against the Fascists she could have forced Italy to co-operate in finding where the true blame for the crime lay.

The Hungarians were staunch. While hotly denying their complicity in the murder they never even hinted that Italy was involved. They had an understanding. The Hungarian prime minister was received by Mussolini

in Rome on November 10th. Hungary was to have the rôle of shock absorber, but in the long run she was assured that she had nothing to fear, as Italy stood behind her.

On the 28th November the Yugoslav government presented its Memorandum to the League of Nations and on the same day Prince Paul set off for London and the wedding of his sister-in-law, the Princess Marina, to the Duke of Kent. It was thought that through his connection with the British Court he would obtain strong backing for the Yugoslav cause.

The Memorandum was moderately worded. It could have been edited to be a powerful indictment of Hungary, but it displayed no more literary skill than the average document emerging from state departments. It expressed the undue humility of the Yugoslavs, "We are a small people, but even a small nation has rights." Nevertheless, it could have been made the basis of a strong denunciation of Hungary had it had a spokesman of the calibre, say, of Lloyd George.

Jevtitch arrived at Geneva on the 3rd December and was warmly greeted by the representatives of the Little Entente. The session began on the 5th. There was a dramatic scene at the outset and Laval intervened to prevent a clash with Italy. The accusation must be pinned down to Hungary. Hungary obstructed and the case took on the usual Genevan dullness. Jevtitch, with his slow speech, seemed in difficulties and the Serbs at home became displeased by the uncertain progress of the complaint. There was a whispering campaign against Jevtitch in Belgrade. The Memorandum had proved to be an ineffective document, not sufficiently strongly worded, not comprehensive. Jevtitch must be held responsible for the half-hearted way Yugoslavia went to Geneva. Why was Italy being spared? Italy was shielding Pavelitch and Kvaternik from justice in order to avoid incrimination. Was there not even more against Italy than was being urged

against Hungary? The Serbs were angry with Laval for eliminating Italy from the accusation. But if Italy could not be blamed at Geneva, Hungary at least should be denounced with vigour. Some politicians, especially of the faction of the prime minister, Uzunovitch, grudged Jevtitch the popularity he had won through being with the King at Marseilles. They saw their chance to bring him down. Either he must obtain satisfaction from the League of Nations or his career would be ruined. Uzunovitch made it difficult for him.

The atmosphere of Geneva was oppressive to Jevtitch. It must be so when a small country pleads its cause to the representatives of great states. There was no equality. A small country to succeed required the strong support of a great power. Thus in the following year Abyssinia was championed by Sir Samuel Hoare and the League applied sanctions against Italy, but Abyssinia by herself could not have got sanctions or anything else, which was clear enough when Britain changed her mind and withdrew her support of the Emperor of Ethiopia. Still later, the republic of Spain, for want of a champion, was unable to enforce her just claims.

But in the inauguration of the League this dependence upon the leadership of great powers was not foreseen. The provision of "One nation one vote" implied an equality of voice. But it soon became apparent that a nation with great financial resources, or a powerful army, or world-wide influence had an ascendancy over all petty nations or groups of petty nations. Jugoslavia without backing made a poor show in the parliament of nations. Young in nationhood, that was to be expected. And youth was abashed at Geneva. "Now, how do you dare to try and make a disturbance?" asked the elder nations.

Jugoslavia comported herself with politeness and dignity in the person of Bogoljub Jevtitch. But he was blindfolded by Laval and had to play blind-man's-

buff with some very slippery gentlemen. He tried repeatedly to pull off the bandage and grab Baron Aloisi and he was told that was not playing the game. It is easy but rather shameful to fool a child. It is not surprising that Jevtitch became angry.

It was a game at Geneva; perhaps not blind-man's-buff, but none the less a game, and that offended the Serbs, who either take the League with deadly seriousness or are ready to resign membership. Still, the young Serbs of to-day have learned to play games and shine internationally in football and tennis. If the skill, combination and goal-getting with which the post-war generation has learned to play football had entered into the composition of their politicians they would win victories. Do not Belgrade football teams win their matches at Rome and Budapest? But their politicians keep the ball to themselves and then fail to score.

But Jevtitch's strenuous and abortive efforts were gravely hampered by the doings of politicians in Belgrade. Uzunovitch was not working with him but against him. While Jevtitch was arguing the case, Uzunovitch took the law into his own hands by starting a campaign of reprisals upon Hungarians. He did not consult his Foreign Minister beforehand and he made no public statement or explanation. Secret orders went to the Minister of the Interior that all Magyars living in Yugoslavia were to be harried and chased back over the frontier into Hungary. The Yugoslav public did not know the origin of these orders and had little part in the persecution, but the newspapers of the world at large knew about it soon enough. The victims of this unworthy act of revenge were mostly poor working folk who had no political activity or enmity. Some of them were old and feeble; some were very young, and the photographs of homeless children huddled on frontier railway stations made a painful impression. The privations of the evicted at once found voice in the European Press, though not in the Yugoslav papers, and

popular sympathy outside Jugoslavia was side-tracked at a critical moment.

The British government had never relished the prospect of a public chastisement of Hungary at Geneva, and Mr. Anthony Eden, on Friday, the 8th December, took advantage of the new sympathy for the Hungarians to diminish the prospects of a sharp decision. His speech that day made a painful impression on Serb public opinion and is not likely to be soon forgotten or forgiven. It put Jugoslavia in the false position of a state trying to exploit the murder of King Alexander to pursue her private ends. Eden evoked more animus than the obstructionist, Laval. Unwittingly he diminished the prestige of Prince Paul, whose influence at the British Court was seen to have less weight than the Jugoslavs had imagined. Serbs never understand England and the paradoxes of her behaviour; her generosity during the war, education of young Serbs at Oxford and Cambridge, nursing of the Serb wounded; and then after the war, coldness, indifference, misrepresentation.

Jevtitch's anger and humiliation may not have been realized by Eden at the time, but that Friday brought war to the door. Jevtitch told his secretaries to pack up: he would not stay after his country had been insulted. Some of those nations represented at Geneva had combined to murder the King and now England and France combined with the murderers to add insult to injury. Jevtitch went to Titulesco's room that night and had a meeting with the representatives of the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact, telling them of his decision to quit Geneva and of the probable resignation of Jugoslavia from the League. They sympathized but did all in their power to smooth him down. Something still might be won. Instead of going away, which would cause a world sensation but might also enkindle European war, he might use the threat of going as a trump card.

But it proved very difficult to persuade him away

from stubbornness to tactics. He kept to his decision. The most he would promise was that he would see Laval and make a complete explanation of his position before he departed. So he went to Laval, who received him with poker face. Laval was not backing him because he could not be sure that Yugoslavia was not going to insist on the complicity of Italy with Hungary. It was not so much a question as to what would be the verdict of the League. The question was, would Yugoslavia accept the verdict when obtained? But Jevtitch must not be allowed to leave. "But France is with you," said Laval. "France is devoted to Yugoslavia and our interests are united. What Eden has said does not matter, because on Monday I will speak for Yugoslavia. I will become a Yugoslav."

"But do you agree to our demands?" asked Jevtitch.

That was the rub. Laval became sunk in thought. "As I have said, if you eliminate Italy completely, France is with you," said he.

"I am not asking for France's conditions. I merely came to tell you that the Yugoslav delegation is leaving Geneva. We will settle our differences with our neighbours on our own responsibility and the League can take what action it thinks fit."

Laval's complexion went drab. "That amounts to an ultimatum and I must have time to consider it," said he. "Please make no public statement, but come to me to-morrow morning."

"No," said the Serb. "You do not seem to understand yet that I am going."

That was annoying and might be true. These Slavs were so impulsive. Laval grunted. He must keep Jevtitch until he had made him compromise. "It is now all a matter of the decision of the League Council," said he. "If you can be guaranteed an acceptable verdict there would be no reason for your going away and creating further international complications. If I

agreed to support your legitimate demands, you would stay?"

"Well?"

"But we do not know, none of us know, what verdict would satisfy you. Come, Monsieur Jevtitch, what are your minimum demands, your absolute minimum? Let me know them, and I will guarantee that they are accepted by a majority of the League."

It seemed that the Frenchman was being forced to compromise, though in reality the Serb was being forced. Jevtitch talked again of his demands and that was all Laval required. If he could keep the Yugoslav case alive on any terms the situation might be saved.

Laval plied Jevtitch with soft talk and with guttural assurances that came from the heart and seemed to come from the stomach. All the Serb said was very true, and every Frenchman sympathized. Let him reduce everything to a formula. The English loved formulæ and would swallow almost anything if told it was a formula.

So Jevtitch returned to his hotel and prepared a statement of his irreducible minimum. Next morning he presented it to Laval. The statement still harped on the responsibility of Italy and had to be re-edited. It must be strictly in accord with the Memorandum which made no mention of Italy. The Serbs must be logical and must not try to drag in extraneous considerations. If they won their case against the Hungarians they could lodge a further complaint against other powers subsequently, if they desired.

Jugoslavia decided to be satisfied with a signal victory over Hungary. The statement was rewritten. Laval seemed to be pleased and said that they must at once find Mr. Eden. But it was reported that Eden was out playing golf. Haste was necessary, if the powers were to be brought into agreement over the week-end. Laval resolved upon a bold move. Without consulting the British delegate he would go direct to the Italians who, in his belief, held control of the situation. If Baron



Aloisi could be made to agree the battle was more than half won. So he took Jevtitch's irreducible minimum to Aloisi. He must have said, "We have reached an impasse. The Serbs threaten to go home and take their grievances back to Belgrade and publish a statement denouncing the League. The last state of this affair looks like being much worse than the first. Now I have obtained an absolute guarantee that there will be no further accusations against Italy. It has not been easy but I have succeeded and France, with your approval and co-operation, will agree to a verdict on these lines. The necessary reassurances can be given to Hungary. It is not very much to ask this small country to take a certain measure of blame, thus making an insignificant sacrifice of prestige in order to save Europe from a conflagration."

Aloisi made no difficulties. He may have been flattered that Laval had come to him first instead of presenting him with a *fait accompli*. But the consent of Hungary must also be obtained in advance. They must have a united front in the League Council and then the voting of the necessary resolution would pass off without incident.

So Jevtitch's minimum was taken to the Hungarian delegates, Ekhardt and Kanya, who both made wry faces. They were angry and uncompromising, but Laval dealt with them like a labour expert dealing with strike leaders. If they did not agree to the terms of the proposed settlement let them state their objections and he would see what could be done to meet their views. So they set to work to whittle away the Yugoslav requirements. Both Saturday and Sunday were very wordy days. The only sort of blame Ekhardt and Kanya would agree to accept was that of possible negligence on the part of obscure officials. It could not be allowed that the Hungarian government had wittingly connived at any part of the Marseilles conspiracy.

Jevtitch, baffled and perhaps bamboozled, remained

on for the promulgation of the findings of the League. With Italy completely eliminated Yugoslavia did not have a good case for branding Hungary with the responsibility for the crime. The grievance against Hungary for harbouring terrorists and issuing forged passports antedated the Marseilles murders by years, a genuine but comparatively minor matter.

The Marseilles conspiracy had been followed by the Genevan conspiracy. On the 11th December the League Council published its decision. It was held as established that the questions relative to the existence of terrorist elements and their activity had not been regulated to the satisfaction of the Yugoslav government. It was established that certain Hungarian authorities, at least through negligence, bore responsibility for acts connected with the assassinations of Marseilles. Convinced that the Hungarian government was willing to fulfil its duty, it invited that government to communicate to the League in due course the measures it would take. A committee was set up to study the subject of international collaboration in the suppression of terrorism. Both Italy and Hungary were to have representatives on that committee. For the rest, the Council condemned the odious crime of the murder of King Alexander and of M. Louis Barthou and demanded that all those responsible be punished, apparently a hint to Yugoslavia that the trial at Aix-en-Provence would make good any defects in the judgment of the League.

That was all the satisfaction that Yugoslavia obtained at the tribunal of the nations. Great Britain was pleased, because it seemed that the League had possibly saved Europe from war. France was pleased because the Jugoslavs seemed to have been pacified. Italy was pleased because no accusations had been tabulated against her. Hungary had been found guilty of negligence. It was rather like that type of English case where the plaintiff is awarded a farthing damages. Even Hungary had cause for some satisfaction. Roumania,

Czecho-Slovakia, Turkey congratulated Jugoslavia. It was the best they could do. But the Jugoslavs knew they had been fobbed off by the other nations. The best their papers could say was that there had been a "Victory of the Yugoslav thesis," as if what was involved was merely some abstraction of right and wrong.

Jevtitch returned to Belgrade and had a hearty reception at the railway station, chiefly from youth, which still looked to him as its leader; but his reputation was not enhanced. He had not come back with glory and he was far from being the hero he had been when he returned from Marseilles. But most people knew better than to hold him responsible for the colourless verdict. The main conclusion was that France and Great Britain had let Jugoslavia down. But as if by magic the grievances against Hungary and Italy faded away. The conviction grew that had Jugoslavia been allied with Germany instead of France she would have had stronger backing.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE TRIAL

OVER a year elapsed after arrest before the prisoners were brought to trial. The procedure of justice encountered obstruction at every step; for large sums of money were at the disposal of the defence and it used them effectively. Even the first trial in November, 1935, was defeated by obstruction and had to be quashed. It was not until February, 1936, sixteen months after the crime, that the case was finally heard. The influence brought to bear on the French authorities was so strong that there might never have been a public trial of the accused. A simple announcement that there was no case might have been made and the prisoners released. Money talks in France and there was plenty of it about.

But no matter how often the hearing might be postponed it was bound ultimately to take place for two reasons. The League of Nations, in the preamble to its resolution of the 11th December, 1934, demanded that all those responsible for the crime be punished. That was a vague and informal demand which might have been ignored. But the other reason was more weighty. France was in disgrace. Through negligence in taking proper precautions she had allowed the King of Yugoslavia to be killed on her soil. At Geneva she had not championed the cause of Yugoslavia as might have been expected of her. If she was going to allow the accomplices of the principal assassin to slip out of her hands she was going to commit a mortal affront to the Yugoslavs.

The friendship and international co-operation of Yugoslavia were important to France. The defection of Yugoslavia might mean the breakdown of her system of alliances. It would prove expensive to offend the strongest country in the Little Entente; it might cause a paralysis of that combination of small powers.

But French policy, in 1935, was short-sighted and confused. There was no clear realization of the Yugoslav domestic situation. Prince Paul was an unknown quantity and the popularity of Jevtitch was overestimated. With the strong backing of France, Jevtitch's position would have been unassailable. And he was a loyal and honest statesman who would have stuck by France. The dilatory action of France had made Jevtitch's foreign policy seem weak-kneed. A week after he returned from Geneva Jevtitch was made prime minister. A general election followed and had he brought real satisfaction to the wounded feelings of the nation he must have swept the country. There would have been no need to dragoon the voters. But there was no longer a semblance of unanimity. Uzunovitch had been dismissed and the Serbs had become divided against themselves. Parliament, when it met, was turbulent and the premier's position soon became untenable. He had to resign and his place was taken by Stoyadinovitch, who did not follow the French tradition.

The new premier represented a complete break with the past. He had no sentimental attachment to the memory of Alexander, as the late King had kept him out of office for nine years. Adroit, smart, tireless, bound by no sentiment or prejudices, a fresh mind faced the problems of international relationships. They thought he could not ride the storm of Yugoslav politics, but they were wrong.

Already when the first trial took place Stoyadinovitch was in power. No one then knew which way he would go or whether he would last. Thoughts of the late

King which had become dormant were re-awakened and once more the Marseilles crime became front-page news in Belgrade. The Serbs seemed surprised that the trial should take place in little Aix-en-Provence and not in Paris, but they were expectant that at long last justice would be done. Yugoslavia sat up and stared over to France.

The President of the Court, in opening the proceedings, invited those present to show homage to the memory of the great soldier of the World War and the passionate friend of France, King Alexander; and also to that of a great servant of France who never ceased to work for the cause of peace, "an apostle of the amity of peoples," M. Louis Barthou. The Counsel for the Defence, M. Desbons, agreed to that but added that he also inclined respectfully before the tombs of all the Croats and all the Macedonians who had died for liberty.

The President then proposed the names of certain interpreters and there commenced a quarrel over interpretation which lasted through this trial and was continued in the second. Desbons alleged that one of the Serb interpreters had almost driven the prisoners to suicide during the preliminary investigation. Apparently it had proved impossible to find a Frenchman with an adequate knowledge of the Serbian language, a curious comment on the Franco-Serb relationship. The only French interpreter relied on a knowledge of Russian, but a Russian can only understand a Croat by guesswork and haphazard, as a Dutchman can guess at the meaning of German. The Yugoslav interpreters were fairly effective, though none of them knew French perfectly, but the defence denounced them as being in the service of the Yugoslav government. Almost at once there was a great row about the translation of the expression *partie civile* as "lawyer." The accused refused to accept the interpreters and the President said, "We continue with the hearing whether they accept or not."

In the afternoon a supplementary French interpreter

was provided but the agitation against the Serb interpreter continued and Desbons accused the President of violating the law. The procurator-general demanded that disciplinary action be taken against Desbons, it being the first time he had heard such words from a member of the French bar. The time of the court was taken up by a verbose defence of his behaviour by M. Desbons. The three prisoners, Kral, Pospichil and Raitch, must have wondered what it was all about. This was not interpreted to them. Suddenly they were no longer on trial but their counsel, M. Desbons, was in the dock, talking tearfully of his soul, his honour and all that he held dear. "You can punish me if you wish, but when you have punished me there will remain a joy which you will not be able to take from me, that, in receiving your sentence, I shall be conscious of having accomplished to the full my sacred mission which is that of defending counsel. The sentence you provoke, the sentence you will pronounce against me to-day, will have no other result than to make me adore this gown which up to now I have only loved."

The court was suspended and when, after an hour's private deliberation, it resumed, the President gave a summing-up of the case against M. Desbons and taking into consideration the intercession of the *Bâtonnier de l'ordre des Avocats* he let him off with the formal penalty of an official reprimand.

Desbons remained silent for hours after that, and the case made some progress. Casteran, a journalist who had represented a French newspaper in Belgrade, was employed to interpret. As he was only available for the one afternoon his place was taken next day by a Yugoslav Moslem, whom Pospichil refused to accept. Desbons wanted to waste the time of the court by reading out all the evidence given at the session of the League of Nations in the previous December. The President refused that. But the case proceeded more calmly because medical evidence on the point of Mio

Kral's sanity was heard. It was to the advantage of the defence if it could be shown that Kral was, if not mentally deranged, at least abnormal and not entirely responsible for his actions.

Kral had declared that while in prison an attempt had been made to hypnotize him. Instead of dismissing that as nonsense the doctors declared that he suffered from hallucinations. Those who followed the progress of the trial were astonished to encounter long disquisitions on the symptoms and proofs of hallucinatory neurosis devoid of any evidence derived from observation of the prisoner. The trial was not going well and Jugoslavs began to be indignant. For this also was obstruction; but even if it were not it must be designed to obtain an acquittal for the terrorist who had stood with Vlada the Chauffeur in the Marseilles crowd.

The doctor from the Toulouse Asylum indicated a "slight attenuation of responsibility." Dr. Digue was then called and gave the results of certain interviews with the prisoner in conference with other professors of practical psychology. They said that Kral had hallucinations which could be both created and cured by his emotions, that he was a nervous subject open to suggestion, implying that if it had been suggested to him in a certain state of mind that he should go to Marseilles and kill the King, he would take the suggestion as his own choice of action. Professor Digue therefore adduced a slight attenuation of responsibility, enough in the long run to save Mio Kral from the guillotine.

M. Desbons made further obstruction on technical grounds but was over-ruled. Then Dr. Euziere gave evidence that Kral bore no signs of being an epileptic, but that he had intermittent or delirious hallucination, that he had circulatory troubles and a rapid pulse. Then came Professor Cornille, who was engaged with M. Desbons in an argument as to whether Kral commonly hesitated when asked a question, trying to have it proved that the reflexes of the prisoner were not



normal. The President got tired of the word-spinning that ensued and cut the argument short, asking the accused whether they had any comments to make. Pospichil said it was the first time he had ever heard tell of such matters.

Almost immediately after that the court usher handed a note to the President for transmission to the foreman of the jury. Desbons at once asked whether the note was in a foreign language and if so that it be translated and made public. The foreman read the note, which was obviously in French, and put it in his pocket. Had it been in Serbian it is hardly likely that he could have read it. The President said that whether the note be made public was a question that concerned the jury.

"But we do not know what is in it," murmured Desbons.

"Nor do I," said the President.

There was then an interval of a quarter of an hour. When the court resumed the President proposed to cross-examine Pospichil but Desbons returned to the subject of the contents of the note which the foreman had received. He had scented a first-class opportunity for causing a long delay, perhaps of having the jury dismissed and a new jury called. The foreman of the jury said that the note referred to personal matters, but that the substance of it could be communicated if desired. But in the interval the note had been destroyed, probably burned. Desbons seized upon the opportunity to try and get the whole of the trial up to that point quashed.

In doing so, of course, he would bring the court at Aix into disgrace. The whole world was watching its proceedings and the whole world was going to see it defeated and befooled by an obstructionist.

"A document has been received by the jury. The court does not know its contents, the defence does not know its contents, and the document has been

destroyed." That certainly was an irregularity and the President of the Court allowed the fact to be certified by the court, hoping that then they might be allowed to proceed with the cross-examination. But Desbons having obtained the certification of the fact said he desired to draw the necessary conclusions and he taunted the procurator with the words, "You will not have the heads of these three men, neither you nor your substitute the executioner."

He would draw the conclusion that the trial had become invalid and that the case must be dismissed, but he was provocative in his exclamations, shouting, "That's justice for you! That's republican justice!" The procurator was in a terrible rage and he and Desbons were shouting together and against one another. At last the prosecution demanded the expulsion of Maître Desbons from the court.

In any case the trial was now destined to come to naught. If Desbons had his way, the court having been forced to admit an irregularity, any verdict the jury might find would be invalidated. If the counsel for the defence were expelled from the bar the case could not go on, the jury must be dismissed and a new trial called.

There is no doubt that the President of the Court was angry, for some pressure had been exerted from Paris to ensure that the case should be heard with a dignity befitting its international aspect. But from the beginning he had encountered an obstruction with which ultimately he could not cope. He was now determined to exact from Desbons the highest penalty the court could inflict. He would be excluded from the Paris bar and debarred from the further exercise of his profession.

Desbons defended himself first and the charges were made afterwards. He showed no repentance for his behaviour and took nothing back that he had said. Instead, he made a hysterical appeal destined more for

the Press than for the ears of the President. He had been the subject of "abominable attacks in infamous journals." Because he was an honest man, devoted to the cult of justice like his father before him. He was the friend of the poor, yes, of the Croats and Macedonians, he admitted it. He risked his career for them, risked being broken. He had pleaded twenty-five years at the Paris bar and he had been decorated with the Legion of Honour. Now, because he was an independent man, they would take away from him the means of earning his daily bread. An ordinary delinquent might be brought up before them and sentenced to a few months' imprisonment, but for his offence they were going to punish him with hunger.

The President of the Court, taking disciplinary action, dealt with him in a very matter-of-fact way, without heat, without epithets or abuse. He tabulated the charges against him: Contempt of court; employment of manœuvres of obstruction; insinuations against the impartiality of magistrates; use of gross expressions in addressing the Procurator General; and failure to accept the ruling of the court with regard to the conclusions drawn from the established fact of the transmission of a letter to the jury. He pointed out that in his defence the counsel had said nothing to extenuate his offence and taking into consideration that he had already received the censure of the court on the previous day he gave the findings of the court. The court pronounced against M. Desbons the sentence of expulsion from the bar.

"Maître, you can leave the bar. You have nothing more to say," said the President.

"I will not leave the bar, unless expelled by military force," answered Desbons.

At a sign from the President a captain of gendarmes approached Desbons. He still protested that he wanted soldiers to remove him. Then he shook hands with the prisoners and was finally led away.

In an interview with journalists on the following day Desbons made a series of strange statements which can neither be contradicted nor confirmed. He said he had been offered, previous to the trial, a sum of 400,000 francs if he would pose a certain set of tendentious questions during the hearing of the case. The object of these questions was to inflame public opinion and hasten a European war. But he had refused. He said it had been known in advance that King Alexander would be killed at Marseilles. Alexander had been allowed to come to Marseilles because certain politicians, not Frenchmen, were interested in his death. "I have been expelled from the bar because it was not wished that I should demonstrate this fact." He said that only five per cent. of the truth was contained in the dossier of the case. The other ninety-five per cent. remained at the bottom of the well. Because he wished to get at the truth he had been represented as Public Enemy No. 1. Five months before the trial commenced he had been told he would be expelled. But he was sure that sooner or later the whole truth would be extracted from the well where it lay hidden.

But if Desbons had been so devoted to truth that he had sacrificed his career for it, he might have said who it was offered him 400,000 francs. If he knew that Alexander had been allowed to go to his death, he could at least have given sufficient detail to show who was inculpated. He hinted that certain Serbs had wished to have the King killed, but he avoided saying any names. If he had so many strong cards to play later in the trial, it is curious that he had retarded his effective entry into the proceedings by a whole series of obstructory objections and questions, curious that he should have wrecked the trial instead of ensuing its steady progress towards the triumph of the defence; for the only real assistance the accused derived from the defence in this abortive trial was the evidence adduced to show that Mio Kral was slightly mad.

It is no secret that large funds were subscribed for the defence of the accused. But no one knows the exact amount of Desbons's remuneration, or exactly from what sources it was derived, or what precisely was required by those who put up the money. Was the amount he received commensurate with the risk he ran? He admits that he had been informed in advance that he would be disbarred.

He also admits that money from one source might gravely have imperilled the course of justice had he accepted it. And money from another source?

There was no need for this money at all. The best counsel obtainable would have been at the disposal of the accused. In such a *cause célèbre* there could be no trouble in finding able counsel. And the government had to defray the expense. It is quite legitimate to take money from a third party, but it may cause dangerous complications in such a trial as this. It is not unfair to assume that Desbons was paid to obstruct.

The impression derived in Yugoslavia was appalling. The French had failed to protect the King at Marseilles. They had also let their Foreign Minister bleed to death. They had failed at Geneva. They had come to an understanding with Italy but had not exerted sufficient pressure to obtain the extradition of Pavelitch and Kvaternik. They had postponed the trial of Kral, Pospichil and Raitch for over twelve months and then provided this spectacle of ineptitude at Aix-en-Provence.

The second trial took place in February, 1936, sixteen months after the crime had been committed. The President of the Court was changed and the much more capable M. Loison took charge. The new counsel for the defence was the *bâtonnier* of the order of barristers, M. Saint-Auban, whose probity was undoubted. But this trial was conducted in a way that would cause astonishment to legal circles in England and America. Important witnesses were allowed to absent themselves for trivial reasons. M. Paul-Boncour, who had been retained at

a very high fee to represent the Queen of Yugoslavia, was not called.<sup>1</sup> The cross-examination was haphazard and important questions persistently side-tracked. The counsel for the prosecution did not know his brief, and the counsel for defence was allowed to make many statements, damaging to King Alexander, which could and ought to have been contradicted. It is said that the French government brought pressure to bear on everyone concerned, a pressure which M. Saint-Auban alone resisted. That may account for the fact that the report of the trial was not subject to severe criticism in French legal journals. The whole affair was governmentally managed and therefore hardly worth the attention of critics.

It has been explained that the Yugoslavs said to the French government, "Please, do not mention this!" and the Italians said, "Avoid that!" while the authorities in Paris also knew certain details of the crime which they did not want aired. The President was instructed to avoid the question of Italian and Hungarian responsibility and rule out all evidence bearing upon that. All he had to do was to treat the accused as common murderers, obtain a verdict to that effect and pronounce a sentence which might be thought adequate to satisfy Yugoslavia. It seems to have been important that the life of Mio Kral

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<sup>1</sup> It appears that the Yugoslav government in 1935 asked Queen Marie to withdraw her legal representative from the trial. M. Paul-Boncour had been retained, on the advice of M. Jevtitch, who fell from power in July, 1935. It is said that Boncour was in possession of highly important evidence and it had been the intention of M. Jevtitch to obtain through him at the trial the satisfaction which had been denied him at Geneva.

On the 6th October, 1935, the Queen wrote to M. Paul-Boncour that "having full and complete confidence in French justice I place my cause in the hands of its representatives, not desiring that any voice, however authoritative, be raised in my behalf, allowing it even to be supposed that I separate my cause from that of France herself."

This renunciation facilitated the task of the President of the Court.

should be spared. In Jugoslavia all three men would have been executed. In London, supposing the prisoners to have been tried in England, Pospichil and Raitch could hardly have been held accessory as they were not in Marseilles at the time of the crime. But Mio Kral, knowing the murder was intended, being armed with bombs and pistols and being on the spot, must have suffered the extreme penalty. It is possible that the international influence of Pavelitch was felt at Aix-en-Provence, shielding Kral from the guillotine. The same medical evidence as to his unhinged state was adduced at the second trial, evidence which would impress no reasonable man. For a short period during his incarceration, waiting for trial, he was observed to be suffering from hallucinations. And that saved him.

The accused resumed the tactics of obstruction in which they had been primed by M. Desbons, but they received short shrift from the President, who told them that if they refused to answer questions the jury would know what deductions to make and they must take the consequences. At first they refused to be represented by anyone except their chosen counsel, Desbons. But they were won over by the tact of Saint-Auban, who defended them with vigour, even with rancour. But they made the same difficulties over interpretation and they went back on the signed statements they had made after their arrest, saying that these statements had been mistranslated and that they had never understood the contents of them. Likewise they denied the evidence they had given in the preliminary investigations. Kral said that shortly after his arrest a Serb police agent had visited him and offered him his freedom if he would agree to go and kill Pavelitch. The others said they had been threatened with reprisals upon their relatives.

Very little new evidence was elicited in the course of the trial. The defence might have shifted a great deal of the guilt on to Pavelitch, the man who organized the assassination. The three men were only his tools,

his instruments, and it is possible that they told the truth when they said they did not even know the purpose for which they had been brought to France. But the prisoners studiously guarded the name of Pavelitch as if their future after the trial depended on his goodwill. And the defence had the audacity to depict him as a hero patriot. Saint-Auban stressed Serb brutality and invited the sympathy of the jury for him because, in 1929, he had been tried for treason and condemned to death at Belgrade merely on account of a harmless political speech at Sofia. The Serbs had no one to put up to refute this and give a full account of Pavelitch's activities, showing that there was more reason for the condemnation of that man than of any other concerned.

According to Saint-Auban, the accused were patriots whose self-sacrifice and devotion to the cause of liberty ought to kindle emotion in the breast of every true son of republican France. According to the President of the Court, who was never impartial, they were hirelings, men who were willing to do murder for reward. If they received so much money before the event and were lodged luxuriously in the best hotels, how much must one think was the amount promised them in case of success? But he would not explore the dangerous question of the source of the money. He interpolated a commentary of irony and sarcasm which delighted a French court but complicated the task of the interpreters. The interpreters were, in any case, inexperienced and when a witness spoke for five or ten minutes the translation was commonly given in a few seconds, a fact which rendered the prisoners extremely suspicious of the course the trial was taking.

The President, Loison, conducted the case, examining the prisoners on the lines he thought advisable. The prosecution scarcely asked more than a dozen questions during the whole of the hearing. The defence cross-examined most of the witnesses, or rather put questions to the President which he permitted the



witnesses to answer or else ruled out of order. In conclusion, the Procurator General summed up the case against the accused and then the counsel for the defence replied and made their various pleas. The jury then retired.

The last word had therefore been with M. Saint-Auban and he profited by it to make a strong appeal for acquittal. He began by applying the word "abnormal" to the proceedings. The abnormality was not due to the way the President had conducted the case but to the genesis of the case and its consequences, an abnormality rendered dangerous because of the obscurity which, despite all the efforts of the police, still enveloped it. Saint-Auban did nothing to disperse that obscurity. He touched on the internal aspect, quoting mendacious Hungarian evidence to the League without quoting the ultimate findings of the League. He quoted Pavelitch to show that his programme was one of legal action. He justified Italy in refusing extradition. Then he made a plea for the Croats fighting for their political freedom. Freedom cannot be attained, never has been attained, without acts of violence. The court must not forget that though the Serb was top dog in Yugoslavia at the moment, the position might be reversed some day later. It must not accept the Serb point of view with regard to the murder of Alexander. This was a purely political assassination.

He retailed the story of the murder of Stephen Raditch, the Croat leader, though he was in the privileged position of having no one coming after him to contradict what he had said. He did not admit that the murderer of Raditch was a Montenegrin, nor did he tell that Raditch was an intimate friend of the King, a court favourite on whose advice the dictatorship was inaugurated. He let it be implied that the murder of Alexander was a just revenge for the murder of Raditch.

That provided the main line of the speech for the defence. If the accused were guilty of complicity, which

he denied formally though unconvincingly, their actions could, nevertheless, be justified by the intolerable wrongs of the Croat people. Raditch, the uncrowned King of Croatia, had been murdered. The murder of Alexander, though as indefensible was, in a way, poetic justice. He told the story of the police murder of Professor Schufflai at Zagreb. Then, as if that was yet another wrong to Croatia, he reverted to the murder of the Archduke Ferdinand and his Slav wife at Sarajevo, in 1914. The people of Sarajevo had erected a magnificent monument to Princip. But in what respect did the assassins of Sarajevo differ from the assassins of Marseilles? The Serbs (and Croats) of Bosnia wanted freedom from the Austrian yoke. Pospichil, Kral and Raitch wanted freedom from the Serb yoke. The consequence of the murder of Sarajevo, which is glorified in the little cemetery with a splendid tomb erected to its memory, was a Europe drowned in blood. "Ah, gentlemen, when I recall this long series of murders I say to myself that the beautiful blue Danube is the beautiful red Danube."

Neither Sarajevo nor Marseilles are near the Danube. To show the Danube as red Saint-Auban might well have adduced Vienna, where political repression since the war had been far more bloody than anywhere in Yugoslavia. Had there been anyone to answer him in court it would have been easy to show that the number of Croats killed by Pavelitch's gang far exceeded the number of Croats killed in the clashes with the police during the period of the dictatorship. There was never the ferocity of the Austrian repression of the Socialists, of the Nazi revolt at the time of the murder of Dollfuss, of Hitler against the Jews or of Mussolini consolidating Fascist power. The cruel and haphazard explosions in trains and under trains in Yugoslavia, in churches and barracks were not answered with a corresponding cruelty by the administration. Of all autocratic or almost autocratic rulers of his time Alexander was the

mildest and most peace-loving. As far as his political enemies were concerned he was never revengeful. He was fond of the Croats and after the Oreb affair he spent a fortnight moving about freely in the city of Zagreb. The terrorists sent by Pavelitch to kill him were brought to book, but there was no hue and cry, there were no supplementary arrests. He did not seize the opportunity to have arrested hundreds of disaffected people and have them tried and shot for supposed complicity in the plot on his life. That would have been the course in Moscow or Berlin or Rome. It was not Alexander's way. He was a man of peace seeking, above all other things, the reconciliation of peoples.

But Saint-Auban made a strong appeal, the sort of appeal that would have swayed the average jury in England and America, though the trial would never have been conducted in that fashion in those countries. It was highly necessary that after the prosecution and the defence had spoken the judge should have analysed these two speeches *pro* and *contra*. But no; Saint-Auban was followed by his two assisting counsel who reinforced his pleas. Then the President asked the accused whether they had anything to say. They would not add a word. The case went to the jury. The President handed to the foreman of the jury thirty-two written questions to which they had to find the answer "Yes" or "No." Majority decisions would be accepted. Unanimity was not required.

The principal questions were: Was there a voluntary homicide of King Alexander and of M. Barthou? And, if it was voluntary, was it premeditated? Was there an attempt on the life of General Georges? Were the accused accessory? Did Mio Kral aid the author of the crime? Did Pospichil? Did Raitch?

On almost all counts the verdict brought in a majority verdict of guilty; the answer "Yes." But Pospichil and Raitch were not considered to have helped Vlada the Chauffeur personally. And they considered that

the police agent, Galy, had been killed without premeditation. All three accused were held accessory to the murders. The verdict was qualified by a rider to the effect that in the case of each of the three men there were extenuating circumstances in their favour.

All three were condemned to penal servitude for life.

This trial had portended to be the trial of Pavelitch, Kvaternik and Perchevitch also. Their names had appeared in the list of accused. But extradition having been refused they were judged in their absence. By decree and without assistance of jury the Court of Assize at Aix condemned Pavelitch, Kvaternik and Perchevitch to death and ordered their effects to be confiscated to the State.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### TO OPLENATS

A FEVERISH hand turns the pages of History, and those who look on have barely time to read, far less to understand them. The diary of the modern world is so sensational that each day successively obliterates, or partially obliterates, from the consciousness the memory of yesterday. The 9th October, 1934, is but yesterday, but how much has happened since then to change the minds of men! One needs but the spectacle of Britain in the fever of rearmament, heaping the Pelion of explosives on the Ossa of engines of war. But in 1934 she still nursed the happy dream of perpetual peace and had made no preparations for war.

On the 9th October, 1934, the League of Nations was still a vital organism. In a few years it became a shattered and helpless wreck.

Mussolini seized Abyssinia and then, unchecked by the League, made alliance with Hitler. He kindled civil war in Spain much in the same way as he had planned to kindle it in Yugoslavia, landing his legions to support one political faction against another. With the help of German big guns and aircraft he destroyed the greater part of Madrid and of many other cities, causing more suffering in a few years than Spain had, up to then, had in the course of her history.

At the same time there was revealed a foreign sabotage of France similar to that worked by Pavelitch's agents in Yugoslavia, but on a much greater scale, so alarming that the French government was obliged to conceal its extent. Democratic France was being undermined and at any moment might be blown sky high.

In 1934 the independence of Austria was guaranteed by England, France and Italy. In 1938 Austria was absorbed by force into the German *reich* and ceased to exist. Germany then declared that she had at length won the world war. Just a striking statement on one of the fluttering pages of History!

Germany, Italy and Japan bound themselves in a pact to resist Communism. Under cover of fighting Communism Japan invaded China. Another page—who runs may read!

The Moscow government—encountering sabotage worked by Germany and Japan through the agency of the Trotskyites—counter-attacked with a reign of terror, bringing to trial and then shooting almost everyone who was implicated. The moral prestige of the Soviet, which stood high in 1934, entered a decline. The support of Russia merely became an added weakness to Czecho-Slovakia and a compromise for democratic France.

The word Disarmament disappeared and the word Rearmament took its place. The phrase “collective security” gave way to the phrase “safeguarding our national interests.” There was no more progress along the road King Alexander was treading when he was removed from the European scene. The new states brought into being in 1918 and secured by the League Covenant began to tremble for their existence. Every state for itself, not each for all and all for each! They were too poor to compete in the armaments race. Jugoslavia would have had to toe the line with three hundred aeroplanes, about fifty modern tanks, one warship, a shortage of machine guns and no heavy artillery worth the name.

King Alexander had been devoted to peace and believed that it could be maintained. His successor had to reckon with the fact that war was inevitable. Alliance with one’s enemies afforded a greater sense of security than the sympathy of one’s friends. Germany,

Italy and Japan were a stronger combination than the rest of the League put together; or so it seemed. Disillusioning England and astonishing France, the new Yugoslavia entered into close political relationships with Germany and Italy. The wrongs which Italy had committed were overlooked by the Yugoslav government. In January, 1938, the Home Secretary, Koroshets, announced in Parliament that "the bandit camps in Italy are being dispersed. A considerable number of Yugoslav subjects not connected with the assassinations in Marseilles or with other acts of terror have already returned. They have become convinced that they were on the wrong road and that there was no place for them abroad. They have made declarations of loyalty and have been restored to their motherland. Others await the decision of the government for permission to return home. Thus, slowly and gradually, the camps in Italy are being definitely liquidated."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Among stories of fugitives from the Italian camps that of Ante Bilankof, printed in the *Khrvatski Glas*, of Winnipeg, in Canada (April 5th, 1938), gives some interesting detail. Bilankof, a Dalmatian, went to Italy in July, 1933, to serve Pavelitch and was sent to Yanka Pusta and then returned to Italy.

"After six months at Yanka Pusta I was sent with six others to Italy and we were detailed to the camp of Olivieto in the province of Toscana. There I met some acquaintances to whom I recounted all that had happened to me in Hungary and they said that their position in Italy was as desperate as mine. We put our heads together how to put an end to conditions of life which had become intolerable. We were all in danger that 'night would devour us,' as the phrase went. That was no exaggeration. One of us, a student named Vlado Kunitch, wrote a letter to Mussolini airing our grievances and begging his intervention on our behalf. But when Mussolini received that letter he sent it at once to Pavelitch. Kunitch was arrested and subjected to the most frightful tortures and then made to dig his own grave before he was killed.

"Pavelitch often came to the camp and he gave orders that we rebels be transferred from the camp of Olivieto to San Demetrio in the province of Abruzzi. There we were divided into two groups and some of us were sent to Fonteccio and others to San Lorenzo. Our opinions were denounced by spies set to watch us.

Koroshets did not reveal what had happened to Pavelitch, Kvaternik and the blonde lady of Marseilles, or whether a friendly Italian government had made any proposals with regard to these terrorists. But the winter of Serb discontent seemed to have passed and the government basked in the sunshine of Mussolini's friendship. The blood feud stood away like a storm cloud on the horizon, sinking into night and oblivion, or awaiting the winds which, like the spirits of the dead, blow with restless violence round a pendant world.

The Yugoslav friendship with Germany was more natural because there was no outstanding account to clear. But it meant a departure from the long dependence upon France and it weakened the Little Entente, a success for Hitler in his effort to isolate Czecho-Slovakia. It made the Little Entente incapable of resisting *anschluss*. That it could combine to resist Hungarian revisionism ceased to be clear. One result of the alliance of Mussolini and Hitler was the power to decree the destiny of the Danubian powers. The Czechs, threatened by the Germans on the one hand and the Magyars on the other, were in a parlous plight. Jugoslavia seemed to have achieved a position

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Pavelitch gathered us together and threatened us with these words: 'Serb blood is to me as water, but if any of you show the slightest insubordination in camp or against officers his blood will be to me as the most stinking water in the canals.' Two men who joined us from Belgium protested against their treatment and were killed.

"As a result our indignation increased and Dr. Budak (one of Pavelitch's henchmen) reported a number of us as anti-Fascists and enemies of Italy. We were arrested and subjected to the most dreadful torture. The torture went on for seventy-two days and I am incapable of describing our sufferings. . . . Every night we were visited by inhuman tormentors and put to the question. Some of us remained for days unconscious after these visits. Some had blood poisoning and died.

"Eleven of us were condemned to death and the rest were sent to Stromboli. There we heard that Perchets had been condemned to death for betrayal."



of temporary security, but the system of mutual guarantee to which King Alexander had been devoted had crashed.

There was one clear relief. The spectre of the Habsburgs had been laid. Vienna ceased to be a centre of intrigue against Belgrade. Budapest became quiescent. In the Nazi conquest of Vienna many documents relating to Colonel Perchevitch fell into their hands, though they were not made public. And papers incriminating the monarchists were seized. Yugoslavia rejoiced when a Berlin newspaper referred to the Habsburgs as a family of degenerates. So, after all, Princip at Sarajevo only murdered a degenerate!

But a tremor passed through the German-speaking populations of Croatia and Slovenia when the seventy-five million "friends" appeared on their boundaries. There was no longer any state capital of Vienna and their choice became Berlin or Belgrade. The domestic situation in Yugoslavia had not improved since Alexander died. The Croats still refused co-operation. The Regent had tried to revert to a democratic régime and found, like Alexander before him, that it would not work. And to make confusion worse confounded the Serbs were divided among themselves. Strong government, a virtual dictatorship, seemed the only practical means of holding the nation together and that accorded with the desires of Berlin and Rome. But it was a dictatorship of the premier minister, not of the throne. The premier, Stoyadinovitch, was a staunch supporter of Germany and Italy.

Prince Paul became in effect the only Regent. The other two did little more than sign their names to decrees. General Tomitch, commander of the Belgrade garrison, who was reserve regent, committed suicide. But there was no need for more than one man to represent the throne till the young King came of age. Paul Karageorgievitch filled the bill.

Mr. Winston Churchill appealed to the Prince to

throw in his lot with the Western democracies because Yugoslavia could never be more than a poor neighbour of the Fascist powers. But action, not speech, is the best argument with the Serbs. Convincing action on the part of the Western democracies had for some time been lacking. France, slow to set her house in order, passed from crisis to crisis. Britain's prestige was weakened by her passivity. The function of non-intervention committees could not be understood, neither could the pretence that some mysterious unknown power was torpedoing ships. Germans punished: Britons protested. Serbs expected Britain to make war on Japan but again she kept peace under protest, almost any peace being considered better than the justest war.

It was hard to understand why Great Britain armed if she would not use force. Not much use explaining that Britain was in advance of the rest of the world in her devotion to the cause of peace. A petty logic was employed. When such great interests were at stake and she did not make war it could be deduced that nothing short of immediate danger to London and the Channel ports would cause her to have recourse to arms. *Anschluss* only evoked another protest, although millions of British pounds were staked in Austria. The British Press was clamorous that the country should never go to war for the sake of Czechoslovakia. If not for the Czechs then certainly not for the Yugoslavs! Increases in German man-power derived from annexations would only cause France and Great Britain to increase their efforts in rearmament equivalently and so become more prepared for the ultimate war.

Yugoslavia does not keep the memory of Armistice Day as it is kept in London, the great gathering about the Cenotaph commemorating the cessation of the "war to end war," commemorating all those who gave their lives that the world might be made "safe for

democracy." The munition factories cease work for the two minutes' silence.

But that the war stopped in November, 1918, was a fallacy. There was merely an armistice, due to exhaustion, and then the strife was resumed. Many have died in the Great War since it was supposed to have ended. There were many other casualties and History may note that *King Alexander also died*.

The body of King Alexander was laid to rest in the crypt of a cold marble church. The tomb which he prepared for himself has a timeless quality. It has the immense dignity and solidity of the sepulchres of ancient kings. It makes one think of Egypt and Tutankhamen or of the tombs of kings in the buried cities of lost Atlantis. It is intended to last. For the Karageorgievitch kings believed they were the first of a long dynasty. "And some I see which triple sceptres bear." At Oplenats, in Shumadia, King Peter built the beautiful marble church. He had a Russian architect who copied a Byzantine model and he constructed a cathedral of which Justinian would have been proud.

The bare temple was even better in King Peter's time, for Alexander spent millions on beautifying it within and made it perhaps too rich. There is a disparity between wild and stony Serbia and the grandeur of the tomb of its sovereigns. Alexander embellished it all through his reign and it was only towards the end that it was open for worship. The Church approved his work. Bishop Nicholas Velimirovitch says that this church alone might immortalize the memory of the great monarch. "From the era of Byzantium there has not been another church which in its interior so expressed the light and beauty of Orthodoxy," says Bishop Nicholas. "Not in the last six hundred years has there been a church in the Balkans so marvellously adorned and there is not its equal among newly con-

structed churches in all Europe. As if foreseeing his untimely death the King hastened the work and with the completion of the church came the completion of his time on earth. As the book of the King's life closed the temple was opened."

But the church should be full of worshippers to have beauty; otherwise the great glittering saints on the walls are lonely over the cold marble floor. There are fifteen hundred figures in relief, copied from twelfth-century frescoes and done in mosaic, covering all the walls with glittering facets mostly of purple and bright gold. The gigantic saints towering upward to the apse remind one of the interior of the cathedral of St. Vladimir at Kiev. But the representation of the eternal must have the presence of the living to make one whole. The tourist, gazing at the mosaic, may be impressed or may be critical, but the worshipper in the midst of the congregation has more chance to find all in harmony.

But the wide low crypt is not adorned. It is paved with glimmering polished marble, but one has entered the chill tomb. Someone has excavated to the basement under time and history. There is a sense of ancient Egypt: "My name is Ozimandias, look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" Under gigantic separate slabs of stone lie the bodies of descendants of Karageorge. There are no pious inscriptions, just the bare names, and over the grave of Alexander an eternal lamp has been lighted.

It is a sixty miles' drive from Belgrade to Oplenats, over desolate hilly country where every turn of the road reveals a lie of the land which looks like a military position or an old battlefield. The land cowers as from the memory of the tramp of armed men, and Nature itself seems to be in ambush. It is not like Belgrade. There is no futile hurry to change to the modes of peace. It is nothing modern; it is not even Jugoslavia. It is Serbian and Balkan. It does not possess much that any

enemy would destroy except the superstructure of the church with its gorgeous mosaic. Even were the beautiful church shattered in another age, the crypt with its massive slabs of stone must endure.

So history rolls on but the sleep of Alexander, called the Unifier, remains undisturbed.

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