

DOKUMENTI

84. 1926., svibanj 20., Prvo izvješće novoga američkog poslanika Johna Dyneleyja Princea State Departmentu o unutarnjoj politici i nacionalnoj heterogenosti Kraljevine SHS u kojem izražava mišljenje da je „iz ovog kaleidoskopskog i pitoresknog kaosa moguće stvoriti stabilnu državu, ali ne dotle dok se bolesti političke truleži i međusobne nepovjerljivosti, koje su sada toliko raširene, ne isprave.“

NARA, M 358, R 4, 860h.00/284

[...] <sup>483</sup>

LEGATION OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Belgrade, May 20, 1926.

No. 8

CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE  
SECRETARY AND UNDERSECRETARY

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,  
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to submit herewith a statement of my first impressions regarding the ground which I should cover in commenting on the present internal political conditions in Yugoslavia.

I. INTERNAL POLITICS.

The internal political situation gives the impression as being one of extreme instability – in fact, the frequent and often unexpected changes of Ministry, so ably recorded and commented upon in detail by my predecessor, Mr. Dodge, would almost serve to convince even the most extreme Serbophile foreigner that the population of the present Kingdom is ill adapted to carry on a stable parliamentary government. I will only allude at the moment to the recent opera bouffe performance of May 15th, when the coalition between the Radical Ministry with Mr. Ouzounovitch as Premier (and incidentally the nominee of the aged and astute Pashitch) and the Croatian Peasant Party, entirely guided by the unscrupulous hand of the influential demagogue Stephan Raditch, broke and caused the dissolution of the entire government and coalition. After a few days

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<sup>483</sup> Državni pečat.

of parley the breach was healed and the whole of the former Ministry except Mr. Paul Raditch, the Minister of the so-called Agrarian Reform, was restored to power. Such a palpably unnecessary proceeding involving the entire country in political uncertainty cannot fail to impress the thinking people, and there are many such in civil life, in the army and among the peasantry, with a feeling both of insecurity and contempt for their form of government. As an illustration of popular sentiment toward the present state of affairs, I transmit herewith a sharp cartoon from the Croatian comic KOPRIVE "Nettles", with translation, a drawing which should really become historic. The break was caused, as has already been set forth in the Legation's despatches Nos. 3044 and 3069, by the Parliamentary interpellation regarding recent revelations of governmental corruption in the present Ministry. Instead of seizing the opportunity offered by the ministerial break to purge the country of its corruptionists and forming a new provisional Cabinet pending an election, the same personnel, besmirched as many of them are by the taint of the recent revelations, are calmly allowed to continue their career for a while longer.

It is only too evident even to the most casual observer that the government circles in Belgrade are riddled with the most shameless corruption. When I recently privately asked an intelligent Serb acquaintance why a cleaner Ministry could not be elected, he asked me whether I knew the story of the wounded lion which refused to allow the flies by which he was covered to be brushed away, because a fresh and more voracious swarm would immediately alight upon him.

I am making allowance for some exaggeration in connection with the parliamentary system and the present personnel and shall endeavor to study it and them from every angle, in order, if possible, to give the Department later on a true picture without prejudice.

My first impression is that the peasantry of the entire country is substantially honest, but that the lack of real civic feeling and its resultant unselfish patriotism causes almost every originally honest native to be corrupted by the desire to gain from the public trough as soon as he raises himself from the peasant status and becomes a businessman or a politician. Of military patriotism there is plenty among all the three peoples, not one of which would fail to rally to the common flag in case of attack from without, but of civic patriotism, of the principle of unrewarded service to the State, there seems to be hardly a trace among the Serbs, Croats, or Slovenes. In other words, the people are mediæval – they have village feeling, tribal feeling, but practically no knowledge of how to obtain a clean service to the Nation. Time alone will show whether this real western ideal of patriotism may develop, but it certainly cannot do so, unless the character and point of view of the governing circle are radically altered.

Furthermore, I believe that the single Chamber Parliament is responsible for much of the instability. It is self-evident that, when a single chamber cannot agree, it must have recourse to the executive and this is precisely what is happening so constantly here. King Alexander, an able and conscientious young man, is the real refuge in every situation of disorder. Although he is endowed with no more *de jure* power than any other Constitutional Monarch, he has become the *de facto* arbitrator in all crucial legislative

disputes, almost in some cases taking the place of a Senate. It is said that he views Mr. Pashitch, who is still behind the legislative leadership, with much the same feelings as those formerly entertained by the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II., toward his great pilot Bismark. However this may be, Pashitch has done much, first for the Serbian State, and later for Yugoslavia, although common report has it that he could have "given points" in the way of manipulations and bribery to the late Richard Croker<sup>484</sup> of Tammany Hall fame. The single chamber system for a mixed nation such as this, is, in my opinion, a most imperfect makeshift, although it works fairly well, and yet not always too well, in such homogeneous political commonwealths as the Canadian province of Ontario. On this subject of internal politics, therefore, I shall hope to have more to write later.

## II. THE MINORITIES.

This is a subject which requires close attention, as it presents many complications. In the heterogeneous mass of tribes included more or less arbitrarily in this Kingdom there are two distinct classes of minority races, – (a) Slavonic, (b) aliens:

(a) Of the two Slavonic minorities, the Slovenes are the more important. Constituting a small nation of nearly two million, they form a party by themselves in Parliament, not large, only 20 members, but capable of making trouble in case of a close vote. They are distinctly national, using and cultivating their own language, quite different from Serb, by means of a nationalistic association (Matica) at Ljubljana (Laibach). Their feeling toward the Croats seems to be one of lofty toleration and towards the Serbs a sentiment closely approaching dislike. I shall have an opportunity to study them while at Bled near Ljubljana in July, where the King and some of the diplomats go in order to escape the heat of the plains.

The second minority of this class is that of the Serb speaking Slavonic Moslems of the southern part of the Kingdom, who form a Moslem party in Parliament. These Mohammedans are struggling constantly to maintain their religious integrity against the Orthodox Serbs and the Catholic Croats and Slovenes. Those Moslems will require special study.

(b) The alien minorities consist of the non-Slavonic Turkish speaking Moslems in southern Serbia, many of whom are now migrating to Turkey with the consent of this country; also of the German-speaking tribe known as Schwaben (Swabians) and of their neighbors the Magyar (Hungarian) population, whose district was incorporated in Yugoslavia by the Treaty of Trianon. Both these latter peoples occupy the Voivodina. The Germane have, I think, little to complain of, as their institutions and language are not objected to by this Government and they have their parliamentary representation. The Hungarians, however, who use the Magyar language, appear to have considerable cause

<sup>484</sup> Croker, Richard (1841. – 1922.), Boss Croker, američki političar. Dominirao politikom Demokratske stranke na kraju 19. stoljeća, bio sudionikom korupcijskoga skandala 1894. (*The Cambridge Biographical Encyclopedia*, 240).

for complaint. The very sound of their language is offensive to the Serbs, in whose territory this remnant is forced to live. The cause of this unfortunate people, who are not permitted to have legislative representation, has been stated rather superficially, but sympathetically, by the French Deputy, Charles Tisseyre<sup>485</sup> in his brochure "Dismembered Hungary", Mercure, Paris, 1924. Their exact statue here I must determine after a personal visit to their territory, as I feel that there may be considerable exaggeration in the accounts which I have heard as to their mistreatment.

Finally, in this connection, there is a so-called Macedonian minority on the Greco-Bulgarian frontier, whose very existence is denied by the Serbs. These "Macedonians" believe themselves to be a dismembered nation and they are supported by the Bulgarians – especially by the Bulgarian Minister here, Mr. Vakarelsky<sup>486</sup>, in their nationalistic effort. Mr. Vakarelsky even went so far as to inform me that they are entitled to autonomy, because they are the lineal descendants of the legions of Alexander the Great: These people speak a dialect of Bulgarian and are a source of annoyance, constant but not serious, to the Yugoslav Government. Their claim, of course, should be studied, but it does not appear to me a very cogent one.

There seems to be little doubt that the Serbs who bore the burden of the war are striving to establish their leadership as the dominant people overall the other races, Slavonic as well as alien. The basically Serbian military organization known as the "White Hand" (Bela Ruka), which is said to permeate nearly the whole army, is reported to be striving to establish a sort of Pretorian Guard, fit to make or unmake governments; in other words, to organize a military fascistic system similar to that of Spain. It seems impossible to get any accurate information regarding this Society, as few if any Serbs will speak about it. Recently, however, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Nintchitch, remarked to Mr. Paddock that he personally is opposed to anything like military rule. This may perhaps be construed as indicating that such a militaristic attempt is in the making.

I shall of course endeavor to investigate further in this field. I think, however, that the undoubted military patriotism which I mentioned above might easily make such an attempt at a military dictator clique possible, should any external danger seem to threaten the state.

The present Kingdom seems a curious mixture of contradictions, viz., of three mutually jealous Slavonic races, one of which (the Serbs) is striving to dominate the others, and yet these three peoples are mutually united by a species of panslavism against all aliens, particularly against the alien minorities which the fortune of war has thrown into Yugoslav territory. The Serbs seem hard and unbending, the Croats appear to have a more pliable and gay disposition with a tendency to ridicule the Serbs, while the Slovenes consider themselves culturally above the other two Slavonic elements. Out of this kaleidoscopic, and picturesque chaos, it is possible that a solid state may one day develop, but not

<sup>485</sup> Tisseyre, Charles.

<sup>486</sup> Vakarelski, Hristo.

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until the disease of political decay and mutual distrust and disease which are now so rampant are eradicated. These evils destroyed former Russia and they may well destroy this state, unless the existing conditions are treated with a firm and clean hand.

I shall try to keep the Department informed, not only as to any general political development which may take place, but also as to the political tendencies within the various racial groups.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,  
John Dyneley Prince<sup>487</sup>  
John Dyneley Prince,  
American Minister

Enclosure:

1. Copy of cartoon.<sup>488</sup>

File No. 800 – Quintuplicate.

**85.** 1926., svibanj 24., Izvješće poslanika Johna Dyneleyja Princea State Departmentu o padu koalicijske vlade NRS-a i HSS-a, najavljenoj parlamentarnoj istrazi protiv Rade Pašića.

NARA, M 358, R 4, 860h.00/285

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LEGATION OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Belgrade, May 24, 1926.

Despatch No. 10

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,  
Washington.

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<sup>487</sup> Vlastoručno.

<sup>488</sup> Vidi sliku 7.

<sup>489</sup> Državni pečat.