

avored by the peculiarities of the Yugoslav non-proportional representation system, since Raditch actually lost over 200,000 votes, or approximately 40 per cent. It is also to be noted that the Raditch party has actually lost four parliament seats, since in 1925 the six Croatian Federalist deputies mentioned in the above list as a separate group, were elected on the lists of the Raditch party. The Croatian Federalists, who represent the Croatian intellectual class, have since completely disavowed Mr. Raditch's demagogic policy, but have failed to succeed, now being represented in Parliament by only two deputies, both of whom are the selection of the city of Zagreb where Raditch was decisively defeated.

I shall include further comments on the political parties and leaders in Yugoslavia based upon the outcome of the elections in a separate report, in accordance with the Department's Instruction No. 92 of July 18, 1927.

As a matter of possible interest to the Department, I am transmitting herewith a comparative statement of the electoral returns in 1925 and 1927, showing, besides the composition of the Chamber, the total number of votes obtained by each party, as well as a statement as to what the returns would have been if a system of proportional representation were adopted; that is, by considering the whole country as one election unit, instead of dividing it into 58 electoral districts as is now the case.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

Carl A. Fisher<sup>544</sup>

Carl A. Fisher,

Chargé d'Affaires ad interim.

Enclosure:

1.- Comparative statement showing the returns of the general elections in 1925 and 1927.

File No. 800-Quintuplicate.

**100.** 1927., rujan 24., Izvješće privremenoga otpravnika poslova poslanstva u Beogradu Carla A. Fishera State Departmentu o rezultatima provedenih izbora s posebnim osvrtom na rezultate u Hrvatskoj koji su pokazali da su osjećaji „za nacionalnu jugoslavensku zajednicu još uvijek podređeni lokalnim vjerskim i rasnim idejama.“

NARA, M 358, R 4, 860h.00/328

[...]<sup>545</sup>

LEGATION OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Belgrade, September 24, 1927.

<sup>544</sup> Vlastoručno.

<sup>545</sup> Državni pečat.

Despatch No. 286 1/2.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,  
Washington.

Sir:

With reference to the Department's strictly confidential instruction No. 92, (File No. 860H.00/319), I have the honor to submit this report on the present political parties and leaders in Yugoslavia, based upon the outcome of the elections of September eleventh. Much of the material for this report was collated by Mr. Engelytchev, the Interpreter of the Legation, whom I desire to commend for his efforts.

As pointed out in the Legation's despatch No. 285 of September 19, 1927, the immediate results of the election were rather indecisive, -- the present Radical-Democratic-Mussulman coalition Government having emerged from the elections with practically the same majority as it formerly enjoyed. However, within the Coalition, the Radicals lost 26 seats, practically all of which were won by the Democrats.

While the immediate results of the elections were not conclusive, as will be seen from the attached table, and the present government continues in an unstable position, two general tendencies are fairly well defined. The first of these is, that sentiment for a national Yugoslav unity is still subservient to local religious and racial ideas, which is demonstrated by the failure of the Radical and Democratic parties to gain strength at the expense of the Croats and Slovenes, as well as the failure of Raditch (Croatian Agrarian) to make headway among the Macedonians or Bosnian Mussulmans. The second general tendency is to be seen in the fierce struggles for leadership within the leading parties.

This internal struggle has been particularly keen within the RADICAL PARTY, where the fight for the late Mr. Pashitch's crown has been especially bitter. In some districts, the Radicals submitted as many as three lists of candidates, representing different factions of the party. Mr. Vukitchevitch, the present Prime Minister, gained a decided personal victory in this contest, and while his fraction severely defeated the so-called Pashitchists, Mr. Vukitchevitch's position as successor to the late Mr. Pashitch is still far from being unassailable. This defeat of the Pashitchists can only be regarded as a healthy sign of reformation within the Radical party, as Mr. Pashitch had, in his dotage, surrounded himself with admitted corruptionists. There is a bloc known as the Radical Center within the Radical Party, which is lead by Messrs. Nintchitch and Ouzounovitch, whose numerical strength will not be clearly known until after the meeting of the Parliament upon October 5. This group views Mr. Vukitchevitch's growing strength with jealousy, and took rather a neutral stand towards his campaign against the corruptionists.

It will be clear from this that the Radical party, which has been dominant since the murder of the last Obrenovitch in 1903, is beginning to lose its prevailing position. This, for the Kingdom as a whole, I consider a rather encouraging sign, because the Radical Party, with its narrow policy of centralization and pan-Serbian ideas, was making little progress toward the conciliation of such parts of the Kingdom as Croatia, Dalmatia, Slovenia, and the Voivodina. The Radicals loss is largely to be attributed to internal dissension, to the lack of Mr. Pashitch's personality as a vote-getter, and to the fact that the usual opportunity to use "persuasion" upon the electors did not exist, since the Democrats, as members of the Coalition Government, also supervised the elections.

Some observers maintain that the tendency of the Radical party to break up is to be attributed to a trend for political groups in this country to align themselves horizontally upon a social basis, instead of vertically, which the present racial and religious traditions have led to. While the parliamentary system in Europe has usually led to political groupings ranging from the left to the right, such a process in this country will be a very slow one, and it is likely that the sectional and religious prejudices will predominate over social or class feelings for many decades to come.

To understand the different tendencies within the Democratic Party, the second most important party in the Kingdom, one must recall that it is the successor to the old pre-war Serbian Democratic party, which was founded as an opposition to the Radicals, -- Pashitch above all. The old party chief, Mr. Davidovitch, now leads the left wing of his party, but since the death of Mr. Pashitch his *raison d'être*, as mouth-piece of the opposition, has greatly diminished, and Mr. Marinkovitch, the present Minister of Foreign Affairs, is increasing his following by his conservative methods and his inclination to cooperate with the Radicals. It is a question whether Mr. Marinkovitch might not choose to adhere to the Radicals if the growing breach between his partisans and those of Mr. Davidovitch's should lead to an open rupture. Most of the Democratic deputies profess not to see the divergence of views between the two leaders, and their ultimate allegiance will no doubt be based upon expediency. Mr. Marinkovitch has the confidence of the King, and the Democratic party seems likely to come more and more under his influence, resulting in a more conservative and tractable policy.

The SERBIAN PEASANT PARTY is neither Serbian nor peasant in its nature. It is composed of intellectuals, who have lost all connection with the soil, and only one of its eight deputies was elected from pre-war Serbia. Its political idea is based on the principle of *laissez faire*, and is somewhat similar to the Kerensky régime in Russia in 1917, in that it fails to recognize that special interests, at least in a state of this kind, will surely force a Government to the Left or to the right. The leader of the party is Mr. Jovan Jovanovitch<sup>546</sup>, formerly a fervent Radical who abandoned his party because of hatred of Mr.

<sup>546</sup> Jovanović, Jovan M. (1869.-?), političar. U diplomatskoj službi Kraljevine Srbije bio je otpravnik poslova u Sofiji, Ateni, predstavnik u Kairu, Crnoj Gori, Skoplju, poslanik u Beču, Londonu (1919.) i Washingtonu (siječanj/veljača 1920.), ministar vanjskih poslova (1912.). Kao zastupnik i „stvarni šef“

Pashitch. Since there has never been an active agrarian question in Serbia, the average Serb peasant is by tradition a Radical or a Democrat, – though the Serbian Peasant Party has had a certain success in Bosnia and the Banat, where the Agrarian Reform has created a certain class-consciousness, as well as a dissatisfaction with the Radicals and Democrats.

The CROATIAN AGRARIAN PARTY has emerged from the elections with the loss of only one deputy, though it received 200,000, or forty per cent less votes than in the elections of 1925. As explained in the Legation's despatch No. 283 of September 19, 1927, this inconsistency results from the fact that the principle of proportional representation is defeated for the reason that the Kingdom is considered as 58 entirely separate electoral districts. Though the party's demagogic leader, Mr. Raditch, has lost a very large part of his following, it is too early to say whether he has passed the summit of his power. In one way Mr. Raditch has increased his personal influence, because the eight dissidents from his party, who in 1926 supported the Radical policy of the time, were all defeated at the polls, thus establishing Raditch's party leadership more firmly than ever. Since 1925, Mr. Raditch has cooperated, in a rather disgruntled way, with the central Government, and at least pretends to have given up his separatist ideas.

The CROATIAN FEDERALISTIS have only two members in parliament, one of which is Mr. Trumbitch, president of the Yugoslav Committee during the War, and a signor, for the Yugoslavs of Austro-Hungary, of the Declaration of Corfu. The Croatian Federalists represent the intellectual class of Croatia and have more culture and are less Balkanized than are the Serbs. They have completely abandoned Mr. Raditch because of his excessive clownishness, and if they can succeed in forming a link with the masses of Croatia they may be able to play an important part in the political life of the Kingdom. With the old Serbian parties undergoing a new alignment, it is possible that the Croatian Federalists with their ideal of a true federal union, will receive some concessions from Belgrade.

The INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS pretend to be the champions of the true Yugoslav ideal, – to the exclusion of all racial and religious differences. As a matter of fact, they are really pan-Serb nationalists more intransigent than are the Radicals and Democrats, and are sometimes referred to as the Fascist Party of Yugoslavia. Mr. Pribitchevitch, the leader of the Party, has succeeded in enlisting more than 100,000 Serbs from Croatia, Bosnia, Dalmatia, and the Voivodina in the Party, and these Serbs continue their Croatophobe tendencies inherited from the days when they were all members of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the elections of 1925 Mr. Pashitch presented a joint list with the Independent Democrats under the name of the National Bloc, but abandoned his allies at the prospect of a coalition with the Croatian Agrarians. Since the Radicals are now in coalition with the Bosnian Mussulmans and the Slovenes, their leanings are inclined to be more moderate and there is now no prospect of a coalition between them and the ultra-Serb nationalists of Mr. Pribitchevitch.

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Zemljoradničke stranke bio je zastupnik u Ustavotvornoj skupštini (1920.) i Narodnoj skupštini (1923., 1925.). (*Narodna enciklopedija srpsko-brvatsko-slovenačka*, sv. II, 176).

The SLOVENE CLERICALS have come out of the elections with 21 deputies, which is approximately the same number the party had in the last Skuptchina. This party undoubtedly bets the most constant following of any party in Yugoslavia, and consistently garners about eighty per cent of all of the votes cast in Slovenia. The party is loyal to the Vatican and is well conducted by the Catholic priest Dr. Koroshets. Its efforts to extend its influence into Croatia have been as unsuccessful as have been the efforts of Mr. Raditch to win the confidence of the Slovene. Father Koroshets has always kept his party free from inter-party intrigues, but since the elections has joined the present coalition government, and was given a representative in the Cabinet. There is every indication that the Slovenes have been promised great local autonomy and privileges for their conciliatory action and for their support of the present Government.

The BOSNIAN MUSSULMANS have shown their usual strength by electing 18 deputies. These Serbs, who embraced Islam during the Turkish rule, practice the Mohammedan religion and guard its traditions much more carefully than does the modern Turk. They have shown themselves impervious to Serb nationalistic propaganda, as well as to Mr. Raditch's semi-communistic teachings. Mr. Spaho, leader of the Mussulmans, has a penchant toward the theoretical liberalism of Mr. Davidovitch, and has fused his party with the Democratic party under the name of the Democratic Union. Raditch has a considerable following in Bosnia among the Croats there, while the Radicals receive the support of the non-Mohammedan Serbs, which divides Bosnia more or less equally between the three parties.

The MONTENEGRIN FEDERALIST PARTY came out of the elections with only one seat as compared to the three mandates which they formerly had. The party had joined with the Croatian Federalist party before the elections, and as the average illiterate Montenegrin elector has only the vaguest notion of what he is voting for, the new principles meant little to him. Since the inhabitants of Montenegro knew only their dynasty before the War they have no traditional tie with any of the present parties they could form a fertile field for an agitator since, due to a fancied or real neglect of local needs by the central authorities at Belgrade, there is considerable discontent in the little mountainous country.

It will perhaps be interesting to observe the results of the recent elections for those parties who, for political and social reasons, are opposed to the present state of things in Yugoslavia, -- that is, the racial minorities and the Republican and Communist parties.

The minority with the largest representation (6 deputies) in the Skuptchina is the GERMAN PARTY, which first put a list in the field in the elections of 1923. This party owes its existence, less to any permanent or natural reason, than to a reaction against the tendency of the Serbian central authorities to look upon the population of the Voivodina as conquered subjects. The German party has no irredentist aspirations, being descendants of the Shwabians who had been Hungarian subjects for generations, and the party would probably never have been formed, had the Belgrade government been reasonable enough

to carry out sincerely the minority provisions of the Peace Treaties. However, a sentiment for union with Austria might be created among the Germans of Slovenia, although this group did not succeed in electing one deputy. The strength of the German party is in its solidarity and no reasonable government should overlook its modest claims.

The HUNGARIAN MINORITY being animated by national sentiments from across the frontier and nourished by a desire for re-incorporation with Hungary, is in an entirely different position to that of the Shwabians. While this group embraces some dangerous and disloyal elements from the Yugoslav point of view, it is no great factor in practical politics because of the divergence of the views of its individual members, who range all the way from Hungarian legitimists to adherents of Bela Ruka. One Hungarian was elected on the Radical list, one as a Democrat, while a third, who presented himself as a Hungarian Independent, was miserably defeated. The problem of reconciling the Hungarian minority to the present régime is a serious one, but there are signs that each year sees slow progress in this direction.

It is a well observed fact that in South Serbia, which is the official designation for Macedonia, the population votes only for the government parties. This "allegiance" is due to pressure from the authorities, to indifference, and to a lack of familiarity with parliamentary institutions, as this party of the country was under Turkish rule until 1913. Since there are no Macedonian candidates, the voting percentage of the population is very small, due to an aversion to all Serbian candidates. The true Radicals and Democrats in South Serbia use election methods almost as militant as do the Macedonian Komitadji in their campaign against Yugoslavia. The situation among the Turkish and Albanian minorities along the southern frontier, and in the Sanjak of Novi Pazar is much the same, except there is even greater indifference, tempered with less animosity toward the Serbs.

The only representative of the REPUBLICAN PARTY was elected from Slovenia because of his personal popularity and not by reason of his principles. Even though the Yugoslav has, in general, no mystic attachment to the person of the king, there exists no enthusiasm for the Republic form of government, save among the Communists.

The COMMUNIST PARTY has no representative in parliament though it polled more than 40,000 votes, – almost as many votes as the German Party, which has six deputies. This discrepancy results from the fact that the Communist ballots are wasted, their vote being scattered. If a system of true proportional representation existed, the party would have obtained five seats. Since the elections for the Constitution in 1920, when the Communists succeeded in electing 52 representatives to parliament, the party has lost heavily for two reasons. The first is the fact that since the attempted assassination of King (then Crown Prince) Alexander in 1921, all Communistic organizations and propaganda has been prohibited by law. Therefore the Communists are obliged to disguise themselves as "Independent Workers", and it depends upon the local authorities, judging each case separately, whether this party may present a candidate to the electorate. For this reason, in Macedonia especially, where the Communists could be counted upon to aid the anti-Yugoslav elements, permission for the Independent Workers to submit

lists has been refused. Then, many electors are discouraged from voting for Communists, because even if elected, a Communist could not take his seat in parliament due to the anti-Communist legislation already mentioned. These artificial restrictions, as well as the fear of voting for a persecuted party, explain in part the decline of the strength of the Communists, though there has been a true loss of Bolshevik sentiment since the days of 1920, when the Yugoslav peasant, suffering from the post-war hardships was ready to listen to the Moscovite panacea. During the recent Sacco and Vanzetti world-wide wave of hysteria the Belgrade police prohibited a public demonstration meeting, which had been announced, and a known Communist is likely to spend a large part of his time in prison. To-day, Communism exists here principally in a latent form, which might become dangerous if the country were subjected to great internal or external perturbations.

One must conclude that the elections have left the situation almost as involved as before, and it is expected that the usual kaleidoscopic cabinet changes are likely to continue, though perhaps with less frequency. Though the progress of unification moves very slowly in this widely diversified country, there are signs that the processes of disintegration, which writers such as Mr. Isaac Bowman viewed with so much disquietude a few years ago, are on the wane, thus causing many careful observers to feel that Yugoslavia may eventually become the dominant power in Eastern European affairs. A spirit of unity is being promoted especially at this time because of the apprehension of Italy, and the resentment toward Bulgaria because of the active anti-Serb campaign of depredations being carried on by the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee.

I have the honor to be, Sir,  
 Your obedient servant,  
 Carl A. Fisher<sup>547</sup>  
 Carl A. Fisher,<sup>548</sup>  
 Chargé d'Affaires ad interim.

Enclosure:

Table showing Yugoslav parties and their strength in elections of 1920, 1923, 1925, 1927.

File No. 800-Quintuplicate.

Copies to E.I.C., Paris.

<sup>547</sup> Vlastroučni potpis.

<sup>548</sup> State Department za ovo je izvješće posebno pohvalio Carla A. Fishera s napomenom da je „primjerna zabilježba stavljena u njegovu evidenciju uspješnosti“ („an appropriate notation has been made upon his efficiency record“). Također je bio pohvaljen i prevoditelj poslanstva. (NARA, M358, R4, dokument br. 860h.00/328, Dopis State Departmenta poslaniku u Beogradu Johnu Dyneleyju Princeu od 7. studenoga 1927.).