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THE YUGOSLAV GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE
AND THE SERB ANTI-CROAT CAMPAIGN

(The writer of this informal memorandum, Stoyan Pribichevitch, is a Serbian by birth; he came to the United States in 1935 and is now an American citizen. He is one of the editors of *Fortune*. He spent the six weeks from April 5 to May 21, 1942 in London.)

I went to England on a special assignment, to collect information and write on the subject of the governments-in-exile. During my stay in England I was in touch with members of the Yugoslav Government-in-Exile. I also had personal interviews with numerous British officials: Ministry of Information, Intelligence Service, and Foreign Office (Anthony Eden). Among other things I discussed with them the Yugoslav problem, particularly the Serbian chauvinist propaganda in England and in the United States. (See "The Serb Anti-Croat Campaign" I and II, this series.)

It is my impression that the storm center of the anti-Yugoslav and Greater Serbia movement in the United States can be found in the Yugoslav Government in London. As is well-known, this Government-in-exile is composed of Serb, Croat, and Slovene nationals. Unfortunately, however, there is no one outstanding and dynamic personality among them.

The majority of the Serbs are "liberals," favor a permanent agreement with the Croats and Slovenes, stand for a federated democratic Yugoslavia, and advocate even broader schemes. For lack of proper leadership, however, they are more or less helpless and have not been able to steer Yugoslav policy along these lines. The Serbian chauvinists are a minority, but are more aggressive and have greater power than the "liberals."

Among the civilian members of the government are: Dr. Momchilo Nincich,* Minister of Foreign Affairs; and Dr. Milan Gavrilovich, Minister of Justice and former Yugoslav Minister to Moscow. Dr. Gavrilovich in the past has been a man in whom the British Intelligence Service has placed a great deal of confidence. At present, however, the British seem to be very much dissatisfied with his attitudes, and it is not unlikely that he will lose their confidence.

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Other leaders of the chauvinistic Serbian propaganda are a group of young Serb Army officers who participated in the Yugoslav coup d'etat of March 27, 1941. The most aggressive in this group is Captain (or Major) Vohoska* (whose family comes from Czechoslovakia). This group or camarilla makes up the permanent entourage of young King Peter.

The Queen-Mother of Yugoslavia, whose husband Alexander II was assassinated, constantly has before her eyes the fate of her husband and fears that a similar fate might befall her son. Dr. Momchilo Nincich, Minister of Foreign Affairs, is the man who keeps himself in power by visiting the Queen more often than is necessary.

The leaders and perpetrators of the violent anti-Croat and anti-Yugoslav propaganda in the United States, such as Yovan Duchich (former Yugoslav Minister to Bucharest and Madrid) and Bishop Dionisije, are not only on the payroll of the Yugoslav Government in London, but also through Yugoslav Minister Fotitch, are linked directly with the London group of Serbian chauvinists. The separatist political line of propaganda in the American *Srbobran* of Pittsburgh is directed from London -- although the Yugoslav Minister Fotitch also plays an independent hand in it -- and most of the condemnatory material against the Croats -- for instance, the hair-raising report of last fall describing the massacre of three hundred thousand Serbs by the Croats in Yugoslavia, which was published in the *Srbobran* -- was sent from London through the Yugoslav Legation in Washington. I want to add that massacres undoubtedly did occur. The figure, however, is impossibly exaggerated and was intended to present the Croatians in an unfavorable light so as to justify both the extremist Serb propaganda and the breaking up of the idea of a future Yugoslavia.

Another example of chauvinist Serb propaganda is the so-called "London Croat Memorandum." This memorandum was written last summer and was the brain-child of a minor Croatian official in London.

In London I have collected enough evidence to piece together the links between Serb propaganda in the United States and the Nazi propaganda machine in Germany. This is how it is done. "Phoney" refugees presenting themselves as confidants of Dr. Vladimir Machek (now interned by the Germans) began to arrive in London last fall. I met one such person. He was the man who had brought the memorandum on Serbian

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massacres to London. He left Serbia with a Nedich passport and arrived in Istanbul without being molested by German or Bulgarian government officials. From Istanbul he went to Ankara. The Yugoslav Information Bureau in Ankara is not under Yugoslav Government control, and it is here that the tendentious news is being fabricated. From Cairo, where there are quite a number of formerly pro-Axis Yugoslav diplomatic officials, come similar reports. It is from there that the man whom I mentioned above arrived with the anti-Croat memorandum in London, where at present he continues his vicious work. Further, pictures of massacred peoples are photographed by the Germans, who take great pains to see to it that Serbians who leave the country take them with them.

The propaganda being disseminated in the United States is actually gathered in Germany, though most of the people disseminating it in the United States might not be aware of this fact. Thus they play into Hitler's hands and do exactly what Hitler wants them to do. This is part of Hitler's diabolical warfare. He makes these people believe that they are fighting for a great Serbian cause.

Since the storm center of the Yugoslav problem can be found in London, I do not believe that it would be in itself sufficient merely to check the *Srbobran* (official organ of the Serb National Federation) or take the matter up with Mr. Fotitch. I believe that the whole matter should be taken up directly with the Yugoslav Premier in London, Dr. Slobodan Jovanovich, preferably with all the members of the Yugoslav Cabinet in London. This could be done through Mr. Biddle. Of course, action here in the United States, particularly with Mr. Fotitch, also would be helpful; but a complete cure can be effected only in London.

As I view it, Yugoslav quarrels on British soil have different implications from Yugoslav quarrels on American soil. In England these wrangles are considered a diplomatic nuisance since they are carried on simply between the refugees and exiles themselves and thus do not seriously affect the interests of the British Empire. In the United States, however, such propaganda of hatred affects at least one million Americans of Yugoslav extraction. It must be remembered that most of the Yugoslavs in the United States live in important defense centers, and adverse propaganda thus undermines the national unity of the American people in this war. For this reason the American Government

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cannot afford to view the matter as a purely foreign quarrel, but must look at it as a problem of paramount importance concerning which not only the State Department should take a serious attitude, but also the Department of Justice, the Office of Facts and Figures, and Colonel Donovan's office.

Members of the British Government discussed the Yugoslav problem quite freely, in fact mentioned it to me without being asked to discuss it. They consider the situation as serious. (Confidentially, Mr. Eden expressed himself in rather unflattering terms about the Yugoslav Government in London.) The British asked me to use my influence to persuade the Yugoslavs in London to settle their disputes and map out a Yugoslav national policy which would satisfy all dissident groups. It was hinted to me that the British will be forced to take some action, however gentle, even though they are less concerned than we are by what is going on. It is possible, for instance, that the British might ask for the removal and possible transfer to Libya of some of the young Serb officers from King Peter's entourage.

By May 21 a movement had been started among the Slovene, Croatian, and some Serbian members of the Yugoslav Government-in-Exile for the purpose of getting together on a common platform and deciding on future policy. This movement was started by Milan Grol, Minister for Communications and an old-time Serbian democrat, and Dr. Turaj Krnjevic, Deputy Prime Minister. The aim of this new movement is to agree on a common Serbian, Croat, and Slovene democratic policy, next to impose this policy upon the Government-in-Exile, and finally to impose it on all diplomatic representatives abroad.

The greatest difficulty in the situation is the absence from the Yugoslav Government-in-Exile of any one strong dynamic personality. For instance, Dr. Milan Gavrilovich, the Serbian extremist, is the most aggressive member of the Cabinet. Mr. Grol, though the most brilliant, is only a pseudo-intellectual without much willpower, besides being a poor politician. Dr. Turaj Krnjevic is just a Croat. The ultimate success of the above-mentioned constructive movement is still in doubt. However, I do think that the efforts of this Serb-Croat combination should be encouraged and helped by those in the American Government who are interested. If successful, such a movement would undoubtedly.

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undermine the strong position which the extremists hold today.

Dr. Slobodan Jovanovich, the Premier, is my former professor. For a period of fifty years he taught social science, history, and politics. He is a brilliant scholar and has amazing abilities as an analytical critic. He is slow, however, to accept advice; further, he is not a man of action. He is definitely one of the greatest living scholars in the Balkans. Now at the age of seventy he has been placed in a position of responsibility where he has to rule an unruly crowd and is forced to make decisions. I have seen him several times and am under the impression that he is afraid to face reality. Constantly surrounded by Serbian extremists, he is terrorized by them. For this reason he cannot be held responsible for anything that goes on within the Yugoslav Government-in-Exile.

Another important factor which should be taken into consideration when evaluating the problem is the following: Almost the entire bureaucratic apparatus in exile with which this or any other Yugoslav Government has to work is nearly one hundred percent the remnant of the former pro-Axis Serbian apparatus. (From Ankara, to Cairo, to London, Capetown, New York, Washington.) The formerly pro-Axis Serbs are now the most radical Serbs because they obviously need an alibi. For this reason also most of the officers in London are anti-Croatian. The quick collapse -- actually only six days -- of the Yugoslav Army in 1941 was due to the incompetence of the high command. To justify such a catastrophe the blame is now put on the Croats who, it is alleged, betrayed the Serbs.

My impression about Krnjevich is that as a Croat he lacks elasticity. He is so rigid and set in his point of view that he is unable to do the right thing at the right moment. Often he commits blunders of omission, which are then used against him. He should have immediately safeguarded Croat interests and by so doing could have forestalled the disastrous effects which the Croat memorandum has had on the Yugoslav people in the United States. The Serbian "liberals" have had continuous difficulties with Krnjevich. It was only last April that he came out with a stern and complete condemnation of the Croat memorandum. Another instance of his stubbornness occurred just recently when he

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refused to speak over the British broadcasting station to the Croats against the Pavelich regime on the anniversary of the foundation of the so-called Independent Croatian State. It would have been better for him to have made an explanation that his refusal was based simply on the ground that the Serb extremist circles had him under pressure. Such is the characterization of a man, who, though utterly honest, is not politically-minded. The British, who like him a great deal, also complain about his rigidity. He must be handled with great care in order not to offend him.

The Slovene members of the Cabinet, even though Catholic, as a group and for obvious reasons support the idea of a Yugoslavia.

King Peter, whom I mentioned before, is very immature mentally, though he has reached the age of 18. I interviewed him, and during the course of our interview he showed much interest in American technology, - the way I was when I was 14 or 15 years old. I understand that he is planning to come to America in the near future. In my opinion, his visit to America would create a great deal of harm unless it is handled very carefully. Of course King Peter would love to come to America -- for reasons which are utterly non-political. He would be accompanied, however, by Momchilo Nincich, although Nincich does not speak a word of English. The men who would like particularly to see the King come to America are those who could in this manner fortify their positions. Obviously the King would be received by the President of the United States. Celebrations would be arranged where people like Duchich, Dionesije, Fotitch and others would play a most prominent role. On the other hand, I just don't know what the attitude of the American Croats and Slovenes, who number well over half a million, will be. I doubt very much that the King's visit to America can be cancelled. However, the American Government should handle this matter with extreme care.

Foreign
*It has just been learned that ~~Prime~~ Minister Nincich and Major Svetislav Vohoska, together with Minister of the Court Radoje Kuezevich, will accompany the King to the United States.

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