

YUGOSLAVIA YUGOSLAVIA

§ I. INTRODUCTION

THE only portion of modern Yugoslavia with which this work need concern itself in detail is the area which in 1918 formed an integral part of Hungary proper—a strip of the southern plain, no more than one-third as large as Slovakia-Ruthenia or one-fifth the size of Greater Transylvania. Yugoslavia, however, comprises also certain much more extensive territories over which the Hungarian Crown exercised, or claimed, sovereignty: Croatia-Slovenia, which actually lay within the frontiers of the Lands of the Hungarian Crown; Dalmatia, which was *de facto* a part of Austria, but claimed by Croat and Hungarian jurists on the strength of an ancient constitutional link with Croatia; and even Bosnia and the Herzegovina, of which Hungary insisted on being considered part owner, after the Austrian Emperor and King of Hungary had annexed those two provinces in 1908. To describe the whole past history and present circumstances of all this territory would take us far beyond the dimensions of the present work; but some account of the Croatian question is essential, if only for the understanding of the problems of the Voivodina.

CROATIA

§ 2. GEOGRAPHY AND POPULATION: THE CROAT

MOVEMENT UP TO 1914

Croatia-Slovenia, as it existed in 1918, was a curiously shaped territory, to look at on the map rather like a battle-axe laid, head outward, along the southwestern frontier of Hungary. The blade of the axe is composed of wild mountains, bounded in the northeast and south-east respectively by Carniola and Bosnia. In the south-west these mountains fall abruptly to the sea; in the north-east, they slope more gently down to the valley of the Save. The axe's shaft is a long, tapering stretch of land bounded by the Save in the south, the Drave in the north. In the west, those rivers are far apart, and green mountains divide them; in the east, as the rivers draw closer, the mountains flatten out into hills; and after the Drave has mingled with the Danube, the hills have merged into a rich, flat plain.

These frontiers are, however, of comparatively modern date. When the Magyars first entered Hungary they found a kingdom

YUGOSLAVIA

CROATIA

357

of Croatia already in existence; but its center was in Bosnia and Dalmatia, and the Save and the Kulpa formed its northern boundary. The union between this kingdom and that of Hungary is usually held to date from 1102, when Coloman I of Hungary ascended the throne of Croatia. Whether he did so in virtue of conquest, of inheritance, or of free election, and whether Croatia was subordinate to Hungary (*partes subjunctae*) or an equal partner (*panes adnexae, regna soda*), the sole link between the two kingdoms being the person of the king, are questions hotly disputed to this day between Hungarian and Croatian historians. Probably, in reality, the original relationship was incapable of definition by modern terms. Certainly it varied greatly from time to time. At some moments Croatia acted as a completely sovereign State; at others she was treated as a vassal. She always, however, retained a large degree of internal independence.

The upper portion of the country between the Save and the Drave—to-day the heart of Croatia—was known at that time as Slovenia, and appears usually to have been regarded as belonging to Hungary (although during some periods a single ‘Ban’ or governor seems to have ruled both Croatia and Slovenia). It enjoyed, however, considerable privileges, which at times approached those of Croatia itself. Most notably, Magyars were not allowed to settle in it. The lower part of the country between the Save and the Drave, Syrmia, was long disputed between Hungary and the Byzantine Empire, and when finally conquered by the former was incorporated as an integral part of Hungary.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Dalmatia and Bosnia passed into the hands of Venice and the Turks respectively. There was a gradual drift of population northward, and ‘Upper Slovenia’ came to be considered as Croatia. We now find the name Slovenia applied to the old district of Slovenia and Syrmia.

In 1526 Hungary was defeated at Mohács. Croatia, whose army was still intact, hastened to make terms with the Emperor, the more eagerly since Hungary seems to have been pressing hard on Croat independence.¹ In fact the Croatian Estates, who were quickly followed by the Slovenian, recognized Ferdinand of Austria as king before Hungary did so. This, however, although an independent act, was no declaration of separation, since the Emperor was not recognized as King of Croatia, but of Hungary.²

The Empire in the event proved just what Hungary had threatened to become—a mother who ate her young. Not only

1. See the interesting letter written by the Ban of Croatia to the Bishop of Zengg when the news of the battle of Mohács arrived, exulting in Hungary’s defeat as the ‘lasting salvation’ of Croatia. Cit. Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, p. 19, n. 2.

2 Marczali, *Ungarisches Verfassungsrecht* (Tilbingen, 1911.) p. 32.

YUGOSLAVIA

358

YUGOSLAVIA

were the privileges of the Estates severely limited, but the territory over which they exercised any effective control was greatly reduced. The Turks had already conquered practically all the old Croatia, as far as Zengg, and Slovenia. Under the Empire the whole southern strip of what remained to Croatia was separated off and formed into a special 'Military Frontier', under the direct authority of the Emperor. When, in 1699, the Lika district and Slovenia were recovered from the Turks, they too were formed into frontier districts, although in 1745 most of Slovenia was restored to the civilian administration, albeit on somewhat uncertain terms, being disputed for the next century between the Ban of Croatia and the Hungarian Estates.

The Austrian rule, and in particular the institution of the Frontiers, was of lasting importance for the Croatian question. On the one hand, they introduced considerable national minorities into what had been nationally an almost homogeneous territory. The indigenous Croat population of the frontier districts was largely reinforced by new settlers: a few of these being Germans, but many more being Serbian or Vlach¹ refugees from the Balkans. These formed an element not only racially and religiously different from the Croats, but also with different political ideals, since their loyalty was given not to the Croatian Estates, still less to Hungary, but to the Emperor of Austria. Partly owing to the influence of these 'Grenzer', partly to the religious differences which obtained in the seventeenth century between Croatia—which easily accepted the Counter-Reformation—and Hungary—where the national party resisted it—Croatia took at times, although not always, Austria's side during her struggles with Hungary which filled that century, and a party grew up which favored severing the constitutional connection with Hungary and joining Austria.

In the eighteenth century, on the other hand, an active pro Magyar party grew up, chiefly among the higher nobility, and when the Austrian centralization reached its highest pitch, under Joseph II, some of the Croat nobles actually wished to see Croatia incorporated entirely in Hungary. A third party, of course, understood that in her then position Croatia enjoyed the best of both worlds, and wished for no change at all.

Last of all came the birth of the national movement in the modern sense of the term. This, in its first stages, was rather Yugoslav than Croatian particularist—it termed itself 'Illyrian' and owed much of its first strength, oddly enough, to Napoleon I, who

1. The Vlach element seems to have been particularly strong in the Lika. They were Orthodox by religion, and afterwards assimilated in language also to the Serbs. Many Serbs were brought into Croatia and Slovenia by the Turks in the intervals during which they occupied parts of those territories,

YUGOSLAVIA

CROATIA

359

for a few years incorporated most of the South Slav districts of the Habsburg Monarchy in a 'Kingdom of Illyria'. As, however, there was at the time no question of rallying round any particular formation outside the Habsburg Monarchy, the political aims of the 'Illyrians' hardly conflicted with those of the pro-Austrian Party.

In the thirties and forties of the nineteenth century the awakening national feeling of the Croats clashed violently with that of the Magyars, resenting in particular the proposed extension of Magyar as an official language to Croatia; and when, in 1848 the 'March Laws' proposed further violence to Croatia's separate status, Baron Jellaëiaë, in the Emperor's name, led an army against Hungary. He and his friends hoped to realize the Illyrian ideal under Habsburg auspices, by uniting Croatia, Slovenia, and Dalmatia with the Serb districts of South Hungary, in a constitutional State ruled by the Austrian Emperor. The Emperor, however, although he used the Croats against the Magyars, had little more regard for the feelings of the one than the other, placing Croatia and Hungary alike under a centralist and absolute régime. When later events obliged him to make his peace again with Hungary, he sacrificed Croatia to her without scruple, inviting the Croats, when they approached him in 1866, to negotiate with Hungary on the basis of respect for Croatia's own historic rights and of the integrity o. the lands of the Historic Crown. Willy-nilly, the Croats were bound to accept this invitation, and concluded the famous Compromise (Nagoda) of 1868, which declared Hungary and Croatia-Slovenia (including the three disputed Slovenian Counties and the Military Frontiers) an indivisible whole, constituting a single unit in international relations (including their relations with other territories under Habsburg rule) but allowing Croatia a Parliament of her own and a wide degree of Home Rule in her internal affairs.

The Compromise, although not unfavorable to Croatia's historic claims, was nevertheless bitterly unpopular in the country. The majority which accepted was only got together by exceedingly corrupt methods, and if the successive 'Bans' (governors) appointed by Hungary were able to retain their hold on the country and even to gather round them a party of 'Unionists', this was due mainly to the exceedingly restricted franchise,¹ which allowed a quite disproportionate weight to the landowners and officials who formed almost the sole Magyarone Party in the country.

The mass of the people detested the Hungarian connection. Easily the most popular figure in the country was M. Starëeviaë, who advocated a policy of pure, uncompromising Croat nationalism.

1. In 1910 only 49,000 persons out of a population of 2,622,000 in Croatia -Slavonia were enfranchised.

YUGOSLAVIA

360

YUGOSLAVIA

His party, however, was meagerly represented in the Sabor owing to the narrow franchise; moreover, it had no practicable policy to suggest, since Croatia could not, in practice, defy Hungary and Austria at once. After his death his party split in two, and the Jewish-born Dr. Frank, who became leader of one of the fractions (now known as the 'Party of the Pure Right', or more popularly as the 'Frank Party') advocated attaching Croatia to Austria, instead of Hungary, as the most practical solution compatible with the ideals of Croat nationalism. But this solution again was impracticable during the lifetime of Francis Joseph who, having concluded the Compromise, abode by it.

The possibility of a Croat-Serb union, which seems so obvious to-day, was by no means equally apparent fifty years ago. The Serbs and the Croats seem to have been closely akin by origin, and when first they reached the Balkans they settled side by side. But thereafter their ways diverged. The Croats looked west, the Serbs east. The Croats adopted Roman Catholicism, and came thereafter under western influences; politically associated with Hungary and Austria, economically also with the Italian States. The Serbs accepted the Orthodox faith, were in close relations with Byzantium, and afterwards passed under the Turkish yoke. The close linguistic community of the two nations came to matter to them much less than the religious, historical, and cultural differences. In the 'Illyrian' movement of the early nineteenth century, indeed, the cultural leaders of the two had visions of a greater national unity, and in 1848 there was a good deal of political co-operation, notably between the Croats and the Serbs of Southern Hungary. The idea of Yugoslav unity was, however, only embryonic at the time, if only because Serbia herself was not yet fully independent, while Bosnia was still under defacto Turkish rule until 1878. After that date Serbia became independent and the Yugoslavs now at last possessed a 'Piedmont' round which their ambitions could center; but apart from the fact that for twenty years the King of Serbia was a mere creature of Austria the strengthening of Serbian national feeling by no means meant a corresponding increase in Yugoslav feeling. On the contrary, so soon as Austria had occupied Bosnia, Croatia began to remember her dim historic claims to that country—thereby infuriating the Serbs, who also had designs on it; while more important still were the dissensions which arose over the position of the Serbs in Croatia. Since the incorporation of the Military Frontiers, these numbered something like 25 per cent. of the whole population, the figure rising to 45 per cent. in the County of Syrmia. As their confidence increased, they began to press for 'equality of rights', which the Croats showed no disposition whatever to grant. Ill feeling

YUGOSLAVIA

CROATIA

361

between the two elements grew rapidly and was skillfully exploited by the Magyars, who supported the Serbs in every way. Count Kuhn Héderváry, who ruled Croatia for twenty years, opened Serbian schools, filled the public offices with Serbs, favored their economic development, appointed a Serb President of the Sabor, and allowed himself to be feted in Mitrovica as 'the Serbian Ban'.

As recently, therefore, as the end of the nineteenth century, relations between the Croats and the Serbs of Croatia were strained, nor was there any strong feeling in favor of union with Serbia either among the Croats or among the Serbs themselves. About that period, however, a certain *rapprochement* began between the younger men, largely under the influence of Professor Masaryk (many of the students of both nationalities used to go to Prague to escape the repressive atmosphere of Croatia). Among the youthful apostles of Yugoslav co-operation it is interesting to find the names of Stiepan Radiæ and Svetozar Pribièeviaè. The hostility was, however, still active enough (there were anti-Serb riots in Zagreb in 1902) when a sudden change came about consequent on the crisis of 1904 between Hungary and the King-Emperor. A number of Croat Deputies, led by M. Supilo and Dr. Trumbiaè, of Dalmatia, took the momentous decision to ally themselves with Hungary against Austria for the price of certain reforms in the Austro Hungarian Compromise, and the incorporation of Dalmatia in Croatia. A resolution to this effect was adopted at Fiume on October 2nd 1905, by 40 Croat Deputies for Croatia, Dalmatia, and Istria, and on October 26th, 26 Serb Deputies agreed to support it. The only dissentients were Dr. Frank's Party, representing extreme Croat Particularism, a few extreme Serbs from the Banat, and the Peasant Party recently founded by Radiæ. The alliance with Hungary broke down within two years over a dispute regarding the official language on the railways; but the Serbo-Croat alliance remained. The Croat elections of 1908 gave the astonishing result of 57 seats for the Serbo-Croat Federation, 0 for the Magyarophil Party, 24 for the Party of the Right, and for the Peasant Party—each of the two latter having been prepared to compromise with Austria, but not with Hungary.

In the same year came the annexation of Bosnia and with it the disappearance of the last hopes of a reconciliation between Serbia and the Monarchy. Thereafter the idea of Yugoslav unity made rapid progress. The feeling of the masses seems to have been well expressed in a court martial for a desertion when a sergeant of the reserves declared that 'the Croats were always loyal to the Emperor, but he did not love them and delivered them over to the Magyars, so that they were forced to turn to the Serbs, who at least spoke their language'. The superior officer who took down

YUGOSLAVIA

362

YUGOSLAVIA

this deposition concluded from it that Croatia would in time be entirely lost to the Monarchy.

It will be convenient to give at this point the population figures of the 1910 census. This gave the total population of Croatia-Slavonia as 2,621,954, of whom 1,630,354 were Croats and 644,955 Serbs, the two nations thus forming together nearly 90 per cent. of the total population.

The most important of the remaining nationalities was the Magyar, whose numbers had risen from a few thousands a half-century earlier to 105,948 in 1910. Only a few of these, however, had their roots in the soil. There were three or four old Magyar villages near the Hungarian frontier, and some thousand more recent colonists who had been settled through the activities of the Budapest banks. There was a certain Magyar or Magyarized upper class, and a Magyar-speaking Jewish business class of some importance in Zagreb. Finally there were the officials: a small number of senior officials and a much larger number of railway employees scattered all over the country (since the railways, under the Compromise, were controlled, not by Croatia but by Hungary). It was through these railwaymen that Hungary was making her chief effort to consolidate the Magyar element in Croatia: schools (known as the 'Julian schools', after the society organizing them) were opened for their children, and inducements held out to the children of other nationalities to attend them. The Germans (134,078) were more numerous than the Magyars, but less influential. In Syrmia they formed a fairly high percentage of the rural population; other villages were round Osjek. Osjek. itself and many other Croatian and Slovenian towns had been mainly German a century earlier, but the German bourgeoisie was losing its individuality, some to the Magyars, others to the Croats.

The 21,613 Slovaks, the 846 Romanians, and the 8,317 Ruthenes were peasant colonists, and the 67,843 'others' included also a substantial quantity of Czech settlers. The remainder were Slovenes on the north-western frontier, some Italians from the coast, and gypsies.

§ 3. THE UNION WITH YUGOSLAVIA

By 1914 the party in favor of Hungary had practically vanished. A proportion of the elder generation, and of the clericals, disliked the idea of making common cause with Orthodox Serbia, but the majority of the active young leaders had become irredentist at heart. There was a certain reaction at the beginning of the War, which both Dr. Frank's and Radid's party applauded, while the Serb-Croat coalition sat silent; and when Italy joined the Allies

YUGOSLAVIA

CROATIA

363

and the terms of the Treaty of London leaked out (as they soon did) Croatian opinion set strongly against the Allies and in favor of the Monarchy. None the less, negotiations were set on foot with a view to realizing Yugoslav unity after the War. A 'Yugoslav Committee' of émigré leaders from Croatia and Dalmatia was founded, which opened up negotiations with the Serbian Government. There were innumerable difficulties, but in July 1917 the so-called 'Declaration of Corfu' was signed between Paçeiæ, the Serbian Premier, and Trumbid, representing the 'Yugoslav Committee'. This affirmed categorically the unity of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and their intention to form a constitutional, democratic, and Parliamentary monarchy, called the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, under the Karageorgeviæ dynasty This was to comprise all the territory inhabited compactly and in territorial contiguity by the three branches of the people, who were to be equal among themselves. The Constitution was to be drawn up by a Constituent Assembly, elected by free, equal, and secret suffrage, and was to allow for the possibility of 'local autonomies delimited by national, social, and economic considerations'. This Pact was signed, as its preamble stated, by 'les représentants autorisés des Serbes, Croates et Slovènes', and the Sabor at Zagreb, asked by Hungary to disavow the Committee, had refused to do so. The Serbo-Croat Coalition refused also to support the 'May Declaration' made by the Yugoslav Club of the Austrian Reichsrat in 1917 for an Austro-Trialist solution of the Yugoslav question. The Slovenes themselves, to whom the Ma) Declaration was chiefly due, were probably being more diplomatic than sincere in enunciating it, and when the imminent collapse of Austria became apparent a 'National Council of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes' was set up in Zagreb on October 6th. This Council claimed to be the sole responsible and authorized party for the conduct of national policy, and declared its object to be 'the union of the whole people of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes on the whole ethnographical territory inhabited by them, irrespective of any political frontiers, in a single entirely sovereign state'. On October 29th the Sabor declared 'all constitutional links dissolved between the Kingdom of Croatia, Slovenia, and Dalmatia on the one hand the Kingdom of Hungary and the Austrian Empire on the other': and called into being a 'Federal State of the Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs' of the ex-Austrian and Hungarian territories. The Bar thereupon surrendered the executive power into the hands of the Council, and two days later the Emperor handed over the Austrian fleet to it. The local Councils which had sprung up in Ljubljana (Lalbach), Split (Spalato), Novi Sad, Sarajevo, &c., recognized the Council as their supreme authority.

YUGOSLAVIA

364

YUGOSLAVIA

§ 4. THE CROAT PROBLEM: 1919—29

The Sabor took its decision of October 29th, 1918 to sever constitutional relations with Austria and Hungary quite freely, and in doing so it undoubtedly expressed the will of the great majority of its representatives. Of the 88 Deputies in the Sabor, only the 9 members of the Party of the Pure Right were against any form of union with Serbia, while no less than 65 belonged to the Serbo-Croat coalition. There is no reason to suppose that feeling in the country was any less strong against the Hungarian connection.

It remains, however, true that no two peoples since the War have bickered more continuously and more acrimoniously, or have shown a more complete and pig-headed reluctance to meet each other's point of view, than the Serbs and the Croats. The story of their relations cannot, therefore, be broken off at this point—which, indeed, constituted a beginning rather than an end.

We have already mentioned the existence of certain very deeply rooted differences in the historical traditions and the national psychology of the two peoples. To these must now be added very fundamental differences, which became exceedingly apparent, in their conceptions of the new State. It is important to realize how little either nation was, in reality, spiritually prepared for the union. The Yugoslav ideal meant a readiness on both sides to join hands; it did not mean that either had renounced its own national feeling in favor of a wider 'Yugoslav' feeling. Serb and Croat, indeed, knew very little of each other in 1918. Serbia's national ambitions had for decades past been concentrated on Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia—where, as in Dalmatia, those ambitions had immediately come into conflict with those of the Croats. The Croats genuinely regarded the Serbs as belonging to another world, and potentially, if not actually, hostile to them. For the average Serb, again, the Croat was a man who spoke, indeed, the same language as himself, but was obviously not of the same nationality, if only because his religion was different.

There was no question of simple fusion, such as took place in Romania, but only of an adjustment of the relations of two kindred but different peoples. Now, unhappily, the ideas of the two as to the proper relationship were, and have remained, incompatible.

To the Serbs the principle of the unitary state was and is fundamental. During their century of gallant and extraordinarily successful national struggles they had increased their territory more and more, but always spreading outward from a central core. The expansion had always taken the form of a greater and an ever greater Serbia, built up firmly round this strong core; and they did not believe any other system durable or even feasible. When,

YUGOSLAVIA

CROATIA

363

therefore, they were offered the juicy morsels of Croatia-Slovenia and Slovenia they did not spew them out (although one party would have preferred to do so), but they never even thought of treating them as other than newly acquired parts of a Greater Serbia still.

It was not that they necessarily wished to 'Serbize' the Croats and Slovenes. This accusation is regularly levied against them, but the best proof of its falsity is that whereas the chief distinguishing mark between Serb and Croat is the difference of religion, no attempt was made to force the Orthodox religion on the Croats, while the Slovenes have in practice enjoyed complete religious and cultural freedom since 1919. But they felt profoundly that the State belonged to them, the Serbs, and that no one else could be allowed to control it—in which fanatical centralism, it is only fair to say, the Serbs of Serbia were easily out-distanced during the first years by the 'preèani'¹ Serbs of Croatia-Slovenia, led by M. Pribièeviaè.

The Croats, on the other hand, had an equally strong tradition in favor of federalism. They, during all their history, had been on the defensive, not the offensive: building up barriers and sheltering behind them, not breaking them down and expanding over new fields. Theirs was the psychology of the weaker party—a psychology which, it must be said, would have made them excessively difficult to handle, even for a far more tactful people than the Serbs. They are essentially negative: they criticize, they oppose everything, but even if they know what they want, it is practically impossible to get them to say it. A Serbian ex-Minister once said to me: 'For the Serbs, everything is simple; for the Croats, everything is complicated.' He told me, in this connection, of one cabinet meeting, from the days when Croats were participating in the Government, at which a Croat Minister rose to his feet and in majestic oratorical periods poured forth a long list of grievances. The Prime Minister, who was genuinely anxious to reach an understanding, whispered to my friend, 'You know, the man's right', then aloud to the Croat: 'That's what you want, is it! Well, all right, we grant it.' Whereupon the Croat, in high indignation, replied: 'Not so fast, not so fast—we must talk about all that.'

I will not dwell on their continual and most tactless harping on the superiority of their culture and morals, which, in so far as it is still true, is due to their long association with Western influences, and is in any case rapidly diminishing—Croats have played a part of unenviable prominence in several of the more recent big

¹ Beyond the river; a term applied to the newly joined territories beyond the Save and the Danube. It is chiefly used of the Voivodina, but also in the more general sense.

YUGOSLAVIA

366

YUGOSLAVIA

financial scandals in Yugoslavia, but it certainly adds to the difficulty of an understanding, and I have at times admired the patience shown by the Serbs under it.

Thus, from the very first, the points of view of the two parties were not merely different, but contradictory. The clash came at the very outset. The Zagreb National Council had sent their President, Monsignor Korošeæ (the Slovene leader), to represent them in Western Europe. The objections of Italy to the existence of the Government which Monsignor Korošeæ claimed to represent were no stronger than those of Paši the Serbian Premier, who wished Serbia alone to be represented at the Peace Conference. Under pressure from various quarters, including the French Government, he gave way so far as to recognize the National Council as 'the legitimate Government of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes living on the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy'; and on receipt of the telegram to this effect the representatives of the Serbian Government, the Zagreb National Council, and the Yugoslav Committee met at Geneva on November 9th and produced the 'Geneva Declaration', proclaiming the union of the two States on the basis that each should exercise complete sovereignty over its own territory, while a joint Ministry should be established for common affairs.

But although the Ministers of this Government were actually appointed, their term of office only lasted until the evening of the same day. The Serbian Government in Corfu, on learning what had been done, immediately withdrew its ministers. The Zagreb Council was left in the dark; it knew nothing of what had been done at Geneva until November 20th. Meanwhile the Prince Regent had appealed to Svetozar Pribièeviæ head of the Serb fraction in the Serb-Croat coalition and a vice-president of the Zagreb Council, to 'hasten the union with Serbia'; at the same time the Serbs of the Voivodina and Slovenia were being urged to declare for direct union with Serbia,¹ and Serbian troops had occupied Croatia, as though it were enemy territory. These methods triumphed: the Council met on November 24th under Pribièeviæ presidency, disavowed the Geneva agreement and decided in favor of a unitary state. It then dispatched to Belgrade a Commission of twenty-eight members with full powers to 'realize the national union completely and radically'. On December 1st this Commission handed over the sovereignty over the 'Yugo-

1. For these details see Pribièeviæ own account in *La Dictature du Roi Alexandre* (Paris, 1933 interesting, but written in a period of great embitterment), pp 40 ff.; Dr. A. Kosutiæ 'The Croatian Problem', in *International Affairs* Jan.—Feb. 1933 (extreme Croat point of view); and, for a neutral account, Dr E Boizer, *The Entstehung des Jugoslavischen Staates* (Berlin, 1929), pp.35ff.

YUGOSLAVIA

CROATIA

367

Slav State' in die ex-Austro-Hungarian territories to the Prince Regent, who received it and thereupon proclaimed 'the union of Serbia with the lands of the independent State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in a single Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes'

The local administrative services and Councils were to continue to act for the time being, while a provisional National Assembly was to be composed by agreement between the Zagreb National Council and the Serb and Montenegrin political parties. Preparations were to be made for the election of a Constituent Assembly on a basis of universal, direct, secret, and proportional suffrage, and the Prince Regent declared solemnly that he would 'always remain true to the great principles of Constitutionalism, Parliamentarism and the widest democracy based on universal suffrage'.

On the strength of this Declaration, a single Provisional. Parliament was got together and a Government chosen, which began work. Serbia had imposed her point of view; but she had overridden opposition, not conciliated it. Even though the decision in the National Council had been taken with only two dissentient voices among the twenty-eight members present, it probably did not represent the considered opinions even of the majority which approved it. It was taken hurriedly, in a moment of extreme national excitement, and was strongly influenced by considerations of international policy, since the conclusion of some sort of agreement was urgent, if Italy was to be prevented from swallowing up the Croatian and Dalmatian coasts.

One of the two dissentient, moreover, was a person of very great importance in the country. This was Radiæ, leader of the Peasant Party who, although the restrictive franchise limited the number of his followers in the Sabor to three, was already beginning to wield the almost hypnotic influence among the Croat people—the most suggestible in Europe—which caused them to follow him blindly for the next ten years. And as luck would have it, Radiæ, who in his career championed almost every conceivable idea, was at that moment an ardent Croat particularist and a republican. He was in favor of a Southern Slav State, but he wished only for a formation elastic enough to admit within it a Croatian Republic enjoying almost complete independence.'

The real Opposition to the unitary State was thus very considerable, and it was not slow to express itself. The decision of December 1st was hardly taken before the Party of the Right was protesting against it, denying the representative character of the mission which had gone to Belgrade and of the decisions reached

1. Extracts from Radiæ's speech on November 24th, 1918, are reproduced in. Paveliæ *Aus dens Kampfe urn den selbstandigen Staat Kroatien* (Wien, 1935), 40-8.

YUGOSLAVIA

368

YUGOSLAVIA

there.¹ On March 1st, 1919 the same party came out with a program of an independent Croatia (with Slovenia), with no more than an irreducible minimum of 'common affairs' with any other State.² Radić, having first—so he alleges—escaped an attempt on his life by bravoes hired by M. Pribicevic,³ organized a monster petition to the Peace Conference for a 'neutral Croatian Peasants' Republic' with a Croatian Constituent Assembly of its own.

The Government took no notice whatever of these demonstrations, except to throw Radić into prison and to keep him there (with one fleeting interval) until November 28th, 1920—the day before the elections to the Constituent Assembly. Not the smallest relaxation was made of the iron military control, and no concession towards Croat particularism.

It was, indeed, conceivably just possible to argue that the measures taken during these two years were of an emergency nature, that the future form of state would be settled by the Constituent Assembly, and that in fact Croatia had been adequately represented in the Government by those who, so far as could be judged, were her proper representatives.⁴ The elections to the Constituent Assembly, however, which—surprisingly enough—were held quite fairly in Croatia, showed Radić's party to be much the strongest, and the supporters of a centralist State to be practically confined to Pribičević's Serbs (the majority of the votes not going to either of these two parties were captured by the Communists). And Radić lost no time in showing his hand: for he forthwith petitioned the Prince Regent as 'the Regent of the fraternal Serbian State' and *tie facto* head of the military power in Croatia, declaring the Address of December 1st, 1918, as 'irrevocably null and void', since it ran counter both to the letter and spirit of the Sabor's decision of October 29th, 1918, to the petition sent to the Peace Conference in February 1919, and to the 'plebiscite of November 28th, 1920'; and asking him to put an end to the dictatorship of the army in Croatia and to allow the country 'to work for a new national and State life in fraternal and equitable agreement with Serbia and in indivisible community with the other Southern Slavs'.⁵

1. Text in Pavelić, *op. cit.*, pp. 48—9.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 52—3.

2. See Radić's autobiographical notes in *Current History*, October 1928 pp. 104—5.

4. In the first (Concentration) Cabinet, which took office on December 2 1st,

1918 the Croat-Serb Coalition was represented by two members and the 'Croat Union', formed by a combination of part of the Coalition with the centralist wing of the Party of the Right, by one. The remainder of the Coalition then fused with the Democrats, and when the latter took office in August 1919 Pribičević continued in his post of Minister of the Interior, which he had filled in the Concentration Cabinet, and Trumbić retained the Portfolio of Foreign Affairs.

5. Pavelić, *op. cit.*, pp. 53—8.

YUGOSLAVIA

CROATIA

369

Thus the Serbs and the Croats had no longer any excuse for not knowing each other's position. Unhappily neither side showed the least sign of wishing to meet the other, The Serbian Radicals, when the Constitution came up for discussion and adoption, rejected a first draft by Protiaë, which had provided for a large degree of autonomy for the historic units, and passed a rigidly Centralist constitution, after shamelessly buying the votes necessary for their majority (those of the Moslems). M. Davidoviaë, leader of the Democrats, was disavowed by his party when he attempted to negotiate with the Croats. When, four years after the adoption of the 'Vidov Dan Constitution',¹ M. Radiã suddenly abandoned his previous intransigent attitude, recognized the dynasty, the frontiers, and the Constitution, and even entered the Government, his new allies made no concession whatever to Croat wishes; and when he returned to the opposition he and other Croat leaders were murdered in the Parliament itself by a Montenegrin desperado, acting in obvious connivance with a considerable number of Serbian Deputies.²

The murder was simply an extreme case of the usual Serbian attitude of riding rough-shod over any opposition, without attempting to meet it. On the other hand, it must in fairness be said that the Croat attitude had been very unhelpful. Radiã's policy of calling in question the whole basis of the State could not but strengthen the Centralists in their belief that they had been right in not allowing the Croats too much rope; besides estranging hopelessly the King and his entourage of Serbian generals. Moreover, his abstentionist policy was extraordinarily unwise. The Serbs were not the people to be checked by it; they simply took advantage of it. The Vidov Dan Constitution could never have been passed as it was if its opponents had taken part in the deliberations. Radiã asked for trouble when in 1924 he went abroad on a false passport, visiting Russia and England, after his party had empowered him 'to initiate diplomatic negotiations with a view to the peaceful realization of Croatia's separate aims'. It was no great wonder that the Government imprisoned him on his return, and a proof of genuine desire to avoid the worst when his recantation was accepted and he himself invited to join the Government. Nor was he a convenient colleague. He dodged in and out of office, attacking his colleagues with as much gusto when in power as when out of it. It was not the fault of the Serbs alone that the 'co-operation' of the two years 1925 and 1926 was hardly better than a farce.

1. So called because it was adopted on June 28th, 1921, on the Serbian national festival of St. Vitua's Day.

2 The shots were fired on June 20th, 1928. Radic himself died of his wounds some weeks later. His nephew and another were killed outright, and two other Croat leaders wounded.

YUGOSLAVIA

370

YUGOSLAVIA

But if the faults were not all on one side this does not alter the complete and disastrous failure of the elected representatives of the Serbs and the Croats to come to any sort of agreement, by Parliamentary methods, regarding their mutual relations. The only result of nearly ten years of futile wrangling was to leave the parties at a complete deadlock: the Serbs entirely unprepared to make any concession, the Croats united as perhaps never before in their history, stubbornly denying the validity of any act committed since November 1918; for not only did they insist, after the murders, that they could not continue to sit in the Chamber where such a deed had been committed, but they declared that it had annulled both the Constitution and the declaration of December 1st, 1918.

§ 5. THE CROAT PROBLEM: 1929—36

King Alexander's attempt to solve the Serb-Croat imbroglio by wiping out Serb and Croat national feeling alike, and welding the whole nation into a single 'Yugoslav' nationality, met with no better results. The idea was not necessarily unsound; a non-party government was clearly called for, and admitted to be necessary by the Croats, and the Parliament which had seen the murders of June 20th, 1928, was really not entitled to much consideration. King Alexander might have carried through his purpose, and have truly earned the name of 'Great' which sycophantic courtiers attributed to him, if he had employed better methods and better servants. Unhappily, however, although he declared when assuming the personal responsibility for the dictatorship that it was to be a temporary measure only until a constitutional government based on the new ideas could be introduced, yet he failed to convince the country that his object was anything else than the establishment of a pure personal absolutism—a belief confirmed, rather than weakened, by the 'Constitution' of 1931.

It is an unhappy truth, but one which needs to be stated, that the King did not succeed in convincing the Croats of his sincerity either as regards the ultimate restoration of democratic liberties, or even on the national question. On the latter point, the Croats probably did him less than justice, for in many respects the tyranny weighed more heavily on the Serbs than the Croats. The Croats, however, could not forget that the King was a Serb, of a dynasty more national than any other in Europe—a dynasty which had risen from the people and had never quite succeeded in standing above parties. Further, he rested his power mainly on the army, which in its highest ranks was exclusively Serb, and on the police. The politicians whom he chose to assist and advise him were nearly all Serbs, and what is more, members of the Radical Party, so that the

YUGOSLAVIA

CROATIA

371

members of all other parties and groups felt that the new régime was not non-party at all, but simply a disguised dictatorship of the Radical Party—a belief which persisted throughout the whole period of the dictatorship, and did much to frustrate its avowed purpose. Finally, in the long series of political trials undertaken under the new régime, the Serbs of Serbia, unless they were Communists, were, on the whole, spared; the murderer of Radio, although sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment, was rumored to have been seen taking his ease of an evening in Belgrade cabarets, but the leaders of the Croats (and of those Serbs who had joined hands with them) were persecuted, tortured, and murdered. These things, together with the fact that the majority of the King's creatures were Serbs (including General Zivkoviæ, the *homo regius*), made the Croats believe that the dictatorship was not in reality an attempt to substitute 'Yugoslavism' for the 'Great Serbia' policy of which they had been complaining ever since the War, but rather an attack on the Croat nationality by new and more effective means.

Moreover, had King Alexander been an angel of light, he could not have carried through his program in less than a generation, at least, for simple lack of the men through whom to work. There were not enough sincere believers in the Yugoslav ideal in the country. The genuine patriots (with a few exceptions) were still Serb, Croat, or Slovene patriots, and they stood aside. The men who came forward to help the King, Serbs and Croats alike (and the King took pains always to include some Croats among his helpers), enjoyed no sort of personal credit. The King himself was interested almost exclusively in foreign policy and in the army. He intervened little in internal affairs, letting his helpers do as they would. Moreover, he had an unfortunate distrust of real ability and could not abide independence of thought, while he either tolerated, or did not perceive, scandalous self-enrichment and gross brutality. Under the dictatorship, the country was ruled worse than it had been in the palmiest days of the Serb Radicals; probably worse in some respects than Croatia had ever been ruled under the most oppressive Ban whom Budapest ever appointed.

Thus, when King Alexander was murdered, and when it again became possible to glean some indications of the state of public opinion, it was found that Croat national feeling was unaffected. The Croats had rallied round Dr. Maèek, Radiæ's son-in-law and successor, as unanimously as they had round Radiæ. The few Croat supporters of the dictatorship were detested as renegades and traitors—far more unpopular, indeed, among their fellows than the Serbs themselves. Nor was Maèek any whit less uncompromising as regards Croatia's demands for civil liberties and for decentralization than his predecessor had been.

YUGOSLAVIA

372

YUGOSLAVIA

It is true that another result could hardly have been expected in the time. A supporter of the dictatorship (I believe, one of its few honest adherents) had warned me that it was impossible to count with the older generation at all. 'But,' said he, 'we shall hold on, and the younger generation will be ours.' This was clearly the crucial point, as regards the national question, and in 1934 I inquired into it as closely as I was able. So far as I could judge, however, the overwhelming mass of the younger generation of Serbs and Croats alike still held by their old loyalties. The young Croats were Croats first and foremost.

Yet, in spite of all this, Yugoslav feeling is, I believe, waxing rather than waning. I was in Belgrade in 1919, during the early days of the union, and received the impression of a thin crust of fraternal sentiment covering a witches' brew of mutually incompatible elements. In 1934 I felt that the crust had broken into little pieces and the varied juices were bubbling angrily on the surface, but a certain uniform sediment was forming at the bottom of the dish. It had not yet set, but it was only a question of time before it would do so.

Even shared tribulation is a bond, and a strong one. It was the common opposition to the King's autocratic methods which brought together the Croats and the Preèani Serbs in 1927, at which time there seemed a reasonable probability that the Democrat Party would also join the Coalition, giving it a majority in the whole country. The King, by his personal action, prevented this,' but the 1935 elections showed a development along the same lines. In these elections Maèek was supported by the Preèani Serbs, the Serb Agrarians, and the Democrats, all these parties agreeing to sink their differences on the centralist-federalist issue in order the better to conduct a radical campaign of opposition to the Government.

More striking still is the case of the so-called Communists, who are persecuted in a way which makes the treatment of the Croat nationalists appear almost indulgent, but nevertheless comprise the great majority of the intelligent and decent educated youth of the country, including far more than the orthodox Marxist and Stalinists. For them, the difference between Serb and Croat has ceased to exist. I remember sitting in Zagreb with a young Croat and a Serb. The Croat said something about the Serbs, whereupon the Serb murmured, quite good-humoredly, that he belonged to the detested nation.

'Toi,' said the Croat, 'tu n'es pas serbe; tu es communiste.'

It is impossible to overlook the growing feeling of solidarity between Yugoslavia's various races, and this will assuredly circum

1. Pribièevia, op. cit., p. 61

YUGOSLAVIA

CROATIA

373

scribe the field within which their future political struggles will be fought out. It must, moreover, be emphasized that neither the Peasant Party nor the Communists are separatist, still less pro-Hungarian. The Communists think in terms of a Federation of the Balkan peoples, including the Bulgars and the Macedonians. Hungary and Italy are for them 'fascist' states, and *a priori* hostile. Nor is the Peasants' Party either separatist or pro-Magyar. Its social ideals—republicanism, decentralization amounting almost to anarchism, enthronement of the free peasant class as the dominant element in the State—are quite incompatible with those on which the Hungarian State has traditionally rested. To charge it with treason to the State is absurd. In 1928, after the Skupština murders, King Alexander himself suggested 'amputating' his country, on the ground that it was impossible to live with the Croats, so that the best thing to do was to separate peacefully. Radiæ on his death-bed refused the offer, and he and Pribièeviaè made a formal declaration repudiating with the utmost energy the very idea of being against the State and declaring most categorically that by the historic action of their leaders in bringing about the union of the State and by their activities among the people since its formation they had given more proofs and guarantees of being for the State than those who insinuated that they were against it.¹

The resolutions passed by the Coalition on October 1st, 1928, equally accepted the Yugoslav State, as did a further series of resolutions adopted in 1932 which, I was informed recently, still hold good.²

Finally, it must be remembered that the Croatian question is no longer confined to-day to the inhabitants of pre-War Croatia. These are now united with the Croats in Bosnia and Dalmatia; and the latter, in particular, exercise a very important influence on Croat opinion. But the Dalmatian Croats have not even any common historic memories with Hungary. It is simply impossible to imagine them submitting themselves to Magyar rule, and equally difficult to imagine the Croats of Croatia consenting to a fresh partition of the 'Triune Kingdom' which is at least reunited to-day, after all its centuries of dismemberment.

The genuine opposition among the Croats to the Yugoslav State

1. Pribièeviaè, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

2. These resolutions are *given* by Pribièeviaè, *op. cit.*, p. 148. They demanded 'the complete application of the principle of the sovereignty of the people', proclaimed the peasantry to be 'the basis of the organization of Yugoslav national life', denounced the hegemony of Serbia, and announced a decisive struggle against that hegemony, returning to the *status quo ante* December 1st, 1918, as the point of departure, and recognized 'the principle and the necessity of the union in one State of the peoples of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes on a basis excluding the hegemony of any one partner'.

YUGOSLAVIA

374

YUGOSLAVIA

to-day is, in fact, confined chiefly to the remnants of the old Frank Party, a group consisting mainly of elderly ex-officials and officers, living, some in Zagreb, others in Vienna. Even these men do not look so much for a restoration of the *status quo ante* 1918 as for the constitution of a sort of federal Catholic Monarchy, to include Austria, Hungary, Croatia, and Bavaria. It is essentially an old-fashioned idea, based largely on impossible premises, the most obvious criticism against it being that the rest of the proposed 'bloc' simply does not exist. For this reason, if for no other, it need not, in my opinion, be taken seriously, even if it may be admitted that at times of particular exasperation its ideas became popular among fairly wide circles whose members have not taken the trouble to think out their implications.

The activities of this group are, as a rule, Platonic enough. For many years past they have hardly extended beyond coffee-house conspiracy. There exists, of course, also an active terrorist group, whose leaders, MM. Paveliæ and Perèeæ, were at one time connected with the Frank Party, but have since gone another way. In 1929 these two gentlemen concluded a formal alliance with the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, then a mighty force in Bulgaria. After 1932 they lived abroad, largely in Italy and Hungary, and were responsible, with the connivance and, in one case at least, the active help of one of those countries, for the organization of a large number of terrorist acts, some childish, others revolting, culminating in the murder of King Alexander at Marseilles in October '934.

It is important to understand the exact position and significance of this group. On the one hand, to represent them as few isolated individuals, without support in the country, would be a mistake. The sober bourgeoisie of Zagreb, who wish to feel when they walk along the street that they will not encounter a bomb or a revolver-shot, dislike them; but they enjoy widespread sympathy among the more reckless elements of the population, who regard them as national heroes like the Hajduks and Ustaši of old. On the other hand, the fact that they have freely accepted help from Italy and Hungary does *not* mean that they are at the head of a popular movement in favor of either of those two States. Italy and Hungary have used them, as they would use any instrument to weaken the Yugoslav State; but they have used Italy and Hungary. Although the Marseilles murder was organized quite without the knowledge of the Yugoslav Communists, the real political ideals of the terrorists are much more akin to those of the Communists than to those of Italy or Hungary. They wish to destroy tyranny and to build up a free order in the Balkans.

In fact, nothing has drawn Croats and Serbs together, again and

YUGOSLAVIA

CROATIA

375

again, so powerfully as any hint of outside interference. The man who above all others prevented serious trouble in the first, tentative period was Signor Gabriele d'Annunzio, to whom, if the Yugoslav Government was properly grateful to its true benefactors, it would erect magnificent statues in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Split. Another if not quite so splendid a monument should with justice be erected to Lord Rothermere. For Yugoslavia is no monstrous birth. It is a seven months' child, and triplets at that, which have had to do with one perambulator and one feeding-bottle. There are sore internal struggles yet to come. The 'Yugoslav problem' will not be solved for many a year to come, but there can be no doubt that it will be solved in the end, and, if the will of the peoples is taken for a basis, within approximately the present frontiers.

§ 6. THE PREÈANI SERBS

What has been said of the Croats applies *afoniori* to the Preèani Serbs. The favors showered on them by Hungary before the War had only kept open the breach between them and the Croats; it had not made them pro-Hungarian. They were the moving spirits in bringing about Serb-Croat coalition—a policy which, although their leaders managed to rebut the charges of high treason brought in extraordinarily clumsy fashion against them, was most profoundly irredentist.

After the War they represented the most extreme centralist tendencies, and in this connection Pribièevic⁵, their leader, acquired a dismal prominence. Whether as Minister of the Interior, centralizing administration, or as Minister of Education, Serbizing schools (he clung to office in one form or another with unexampled tenacity), this 'reincarnation of old Apponyi', as a minority leader described him to me, far outdid any Serb from the Old Kingdom, and must be counted among the four or five men who have done most since the War to injure the cause of Yugoslav unity. At the same time he provided an excellent stalking-horse for the far wilier Pasiæ, who was always able to point out, with perfect justice, that the strongest pressure towards a complete unitary state came from outside, not inside Serbia.

The Preèani Serbs, were, however, gradually disillusioned. The Serbs of Serbia, and particularly the Radical Party, made use of them without giving them their reward.

After the War (writes Pribièeviaë], Belgrade always called on the Serbs of Croatia for help when the national unity was alleged to be in danger, when 'Croatian separatism' had to be combated. But as soon as it felt it to be in its interest to conclude an agreement of any kind with the

YUGOSLAVIA

376

YUGOSLAVIA

Croats, Belgrade sacrificed the Serbs of Croatia without qualms or scruples, thus making them a red rag to the Croats.¹

The fact that Pribièeviaè himself lost office when Radiaè expressed himself ready to enter the Government probably weighed heavily with him.

But, besides this, the Croatian Serbs were not admitted to their share of the spoils. It was the Radical Party machine which during the first years allotted the offices and the sinecures, the positions of power or advantage; and these went almost exclusively to Serbs of Serbia. Even in the posts where the influence of the King was supreme, it was the same story. In the army all the generals and the vast majority of officers were Serbs of Serbia. Pribièeviaè records how he complained of this fact to the King, who replied simply that he could not take ex-Austrian officers into his army.² This policy revealed an attitude of mind very wounding to the Serbs of Croatia, who saw themselves lumped in with the Croats as potential traitors; and it caused quite particular material hardships to the old 'Grenzer' families, from the Lika and elsewhere, who had traditionally been army officers from generation to generation, and knew no other trade.

The Serbs of Croatia suffered also from such local discrimination as was practiced, e.g. the higher taxation levied on the newly acquired districts, this hitting in particular the Serbs of Syrmia. And they suffered also under the great deterioration of the administration, which by general consent compared unfavorably with the Austrian and Hungarian rule.

Then came the political disappointment. 'We wanted union with Serbia', said a leader to me in 1934, 'but with the free and democratic Serbia of King Peter.' M. Pribièeviaè in his book makes much of this factor, Now whether King Alexander was forced into the position which he adopted, or whether (as is more commonly believed in the country) he deliberately worked to bring it about, there will at least be no dispute that under his rule the régime in Yugoslavia moved gradually from one of democracy to one of extreme tyranny. Arid this brought the Preèani Serbs into opposition to the dynasty as well as to the Great Serbian tendencies of the Radical Party.

Thus many causes combined to bring about a change of attitude among them, and in 1927 Pribièeviaè reconciled himself with Radiaè on a common platform of democratic rule and decentralization.

1. Pribicevic, op. cit., p. 192.

1. It is *fair* to say that this situation is now being remedied, especially as regards the technical services, which are now largely officered from the ex-Austrian and Hungarian territories; also that what has been said of the army never applied to the navy.

Swinging right round, he declared that the sole issue of the problem of the Yugoslav State lay in federalization, doing full justice to the historical and national claims of the Croats. Some Serbs would then necessarily remain in Croatia, but he now felt that their rights could be safeguarded by guarantees inserted in a new Constitution, and could not in any case be seriously endangered, since they would still form part of a common State with Serbia.¹ This has been his party's attitude ever since.

Thus the Prečani Serbs have gone the full circle, from extreme centralism to federalism, from 'springing on' Croatia a situation which made a unitary state possible, and then collaborating in its construction, to denouncing the whole series of events which they had made possible. Indeed, one hears more genuinely revolutionary talk to-day from Serbs in Croatia than from Croats, and the active revolts and secessionist movements, such as the Lika Rebellion, have been led by Serbs. But the increased bitterness is probably mainly due to the greater disappointment, and the Lika Rebellion and kindred manifestations must be judged in the light of the character of the local inhabitants, born positivists and activists, turbulent and fearless, compared with the negative, hesitant Croats. Incidentally, the Serbs are not inspired by that invincible detestation of all things Italian which is second nature to the Croats.

Thus, if a revolution were ever to break out in Croatia against the prevailing Yugoslav régime, it would most likely be led by the Serbs of the Lika; but there would be even less excuse for regarding them as pro-Magyar than the Croats. They remain invincibly Serb; I personally believe that after such a revolution they would swing round again to centralism, in no case would they wish to sever their connection with Serbia.

§ 7. THE MEDJUMURJE AND THE PREKOMURJE

The question of the national minorities in Croatia-Slovenia need not be discussed separately. On the one hand, they form too small a percentage of the total population to affect the general situation;² on the other hand, there is nothing in their own position to call for special remark. Their attitude and their treatment alike are best dealt with in connection with the much more important minority

1. Pribičević, *op. cit.*, pp. 189—90.

2. The 1921 census gave the following figures for Croatia-Slovenia: Serbs and Croats, 2,445,429; Slovenes, 21,847; other Slavs, 67,051; Germans, 122,836; Magyars, 70,555; Albanians, 660; Romanians, 1,992; Italians, 5,046; others, 4,177. The diminution in the number of the Magyars must be ascribed chiefly to migration, and to the substitution of Croat for Magyar pressure in certain border cases.

YUGOSLAVIA

378

YUGOSLAVIA

problem of the Voivodina, to which, indeed, the Croatian minority problem forms, in more ways than one, an appendix.

Neither does the frontier call for detailed consideration, as regards the greater part of its course. The Drave formed the historical frontier between Hungary and Croatia-Slovenia, and Hungary accepted it without demur as the new frontier also.¹ Discussion is therefore confined to the three areas acquired by Yugoslavia north of the Drave, and one of these—the Baranya triangle between the Drave and the Danube—belongs rather to the Voivodina than to Croatia, and is discussed under that heading. The other two—the ‘Medjumurje’ and the ‘Prekomurje’—may be mentioned here.

The ‘Medjumurje’ or Mur Island (Murakoz in Magyar) consists of the triangle, 795 sq. km. in area, between the Mur, the Drave, and the old Austrian frontier. Historically, it regularly formed part of Hungary except only during the period of Austrian absolutism, when it was assigned to Croatia, but restored to Hungary in 1868. On the other hand, of a population numbering in 1910 93,837 (Hungarian figures), only 8,245 were Magyar-speaking, with 419 Germans and 74 Slovenes, while no less than 84,735 were Croats. These, although contiguous with the population of Croatia, really formed the southern outpost of the line of Croat settlements stretching northward through the modern Burgenland into Moravia: their ancestors had arrived from the Balkans between 1575 and 1584. They are said to-day to speak a dialect resembling that of some islands off the Croatian coast; although another informant told me that they spoke just like the peasants between the Drave and Zagreb. They were tenacious of their Croat customs and little Magyarized, and, although said to have fought for Hungary against Austria in 1848, they seem to have possessed an active national consciousness in 1918.

The ‘Prekomurje’ (land beyond the Mur) is another small strip, 940 sq. km. in area, immediately to the north of the Medjumurje and running up from the Mur to the Austrian (Burgenland) and Hungarian frontiers where they meet below Szent Gotthárd. It formed an integral part of Hungary from the Magyar conquest to 1919, but the population of 91,436 (1910) is, again, predominantly non-Magyar. In the extreme north there are a few Germans (2,093 in 1910), and when the Mur valley was drained in the nineteenth century some Magyar colonists were brought in and settled on the land newly made cultivable. These, with the usual Magyar landowners and officials, and Magyarized Jews, made up in 1910 20,346

1. Note concerning the Frontiers of Hungary, *Hungarian Peace Negotiations*, vol ii, p. 28: ‘The Drave is the boundary separating us from Croatia. This frontier will serve the purpose as such; for it is an ethnographical boundary too.’

YUGOSLAVIA

CROATIA

379

Magyar-speaking persons, or 22.3 per cent. of the local population. The remaining 66,790 were Slavs, but in this case akin not to the Croats but to the Slovenes.

Hungary has always refused to identify this people with the true Slovenes. She entitles them officially 'Wends' and maintains that they speak a different dialect from the Slovenes proper, have no historical, political, or cultural connection with that people, never participated in the Slovene national movement, and had no desire to join Yugoslavia. She produced at the Peace Conference a memorial from these 'Wends' protesting against annexation, and asked that they should be given an opportunity of declaring their wishes by plebiscite.

It seems to be certain, in any case, that since the Magyarization campaign started in this corner (which it did about 1890, when the Slovene schools were closed and a Magyar burger school opened) it made considerable progress.

On the other hand, the Yugoslavs, while admitting the existence of certain dialectal variations between the Slovene spoken in this area and that spoken farther west, also certain differences in customs (particularly those relating to marriage), folk-lore, &c., and a separate historical tradition, yet maintain that all these distinctions are trivial, but were deliberately exploited by the Hungarian Government, which refused to allow books and newspapers from Austrian Slovenia to enter the Prekomurje. They say also that a vigorous irredentist movement existed, and that when the debacle came, a monster meeting of 10,000 persons, representing all the Slovene communes in the neighborhood, was held at Beltnici, and voted unanimously for union with Yugoslavia.

In any case, the Yugoslav claim to both areas was accepted. The Medjumurje was allocated to Croatia, and afterwards to the Banovina of the Save, the Prekomurje to Slovenia, with its successor the Banovina of the Drave. By to-day, the national question seems to have been settled. In a somewhat hurried visit to the Prekomurje, I could discern no signs of irredentism, and was told on the spot that the dialectal differences were being smoothed out. The Medjumurje seemed to be purely and enthusiastically Croat.

Both areas are, indeed, poverty-stricken. The population is very dense, and migration, both permanent and seasonal, has always been high, the harvest gangs going, before the War, both north into Hungary and south as far as the Balkans. A land reform was carried through (most of the country had belonged to a few great Hungarian families, the Esterhazy, Festetics, &c.) but could not nearly satisfy the local land-hunger, so that the economic situation remains serious. I cannot, however, think that a vote in either area would go against Yugoslavia.