

SERBIA IN PROCESS OF CONSOLIDATION

BY

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Many are the obstacles and exceptional difficulties accompanying the restoration of peace and order in the Serbia which was plunged into war through its own fault and after making a feeble resistance that lasted only twelve days fell into the throes of a bloody civil war. That work of restoration is being effected with the most admirable consistency and indomitable energy (and with the support of the German army of occupation) by General Neditz, the President of the Serbian Government established in office in the September of last year.

For the purpose of ensuring the work of re-organization and construction the Government has issued a whole series of well-considered and judicious ordinances; of these we shall refer to one or two only on the present occasion.

According to an earlier report of the Bureau established to direct the national labour service *secondary school students who have passed the higher certificate examination are included among those required to undertake labour service*. These students have been required to do this service, however, only during the summer vacation; the result being that in the month of October they will be able to register at universities or colleges and continue their studies.

That the measures taken by Government on behalf of the people have not proved fruitless, may be seen from a broadcast given by Premier Neditz early in September in which the fact is established that the yield of this year's harvest was an adequate one. "*I begged you to work and keep order*" — said the General, *inter alia* — "*and you listened to me, for which accept my thanks. Despite the violent propaganda of foreign agents you sowed every square inch of soil — indeed, a relatively larger area than at any time previously. You have saved the Serbian people*

from starvation . . ." In a later passage General Neditz attacked the black market, from which Serbia too had suffered, and begged the peasants to report all persons concealing surplus supplies of cereals. In order to ensure there being no hitch in public supplies, the General begged producers to surrender one-fifth of their stocks of wheat for the benefit of those unable to supply themselves, telling his hearers at the same time that the commander of the German army of occupation did not desire to claim a single grain of wheat from Serbia for export purposes. "*We have won the bread-war*" — said General Neditz in the concluding part of his broadcast — "and now we propose with the ready and generous co-operation of the Serbian farmers to ensure all Serbians alike their daily bread. (*Belgrade newspapers and „Délvidéki Magyarország“*).

On another occasion, about the middle of September, Premier Neditz declared that *those State officials and other State employees who were unworthy to be members of the civil service would be dismissed*; for an end had to be made at all costs to corruption and "graft". The persons to be thus dismissed — unless they were already legally entitled to pensions — would receive compositions representing two months' salaries or wages. "This principle must be borne in mind by every official and every other employee", were the concluding words of Premier Neditz's broadcast: "Serbia before and above all!" (*Belgrade newspapers and „Délvidéki Magyarország“, September 10th.*)

Particularly interesting and strikingly illustrative of the situation was the broadcast addressed by Premier Neditz to the Serbian people on September 1st., the first anniversary of the formation of the Serbian Government functioning under his direction. In this speech the General referred to the fact that in April, 1941, the Serbian people was left in the lurch by its leaders, after the latter had previously plunged it into ruin. These "*leaders*" took to their heels and left to its own resources the people they had sacrificed. "I remained with you" — the General said — "to share your fate in the days of trial. A year ago and until recent months the whole territory of the country was the scene of a violent civil war; and noone's life was safe. Today already

security prevails in the country, and the situation has considerably improved." General Neditz then proceeded to pay a tribute of praise to the Serbian peasant, who by cultivating every inch of land had contributed materially to further the consolidation which is so desirable and so essential to the survival of the country. It had been a difficult matter to repair the homesteads and village houses which had been set on fire by the communistic hordes; but the Serbian farmers had won this battle too. "However, there are still lurking among you jackals, — the agents of foreign interests. Shake them off from you and follow the example of the Serbian youth, who have realized their patriotic and national duty and are endeavouring to fulfil that duty." In conclusion General Neditz expressed the hope that the Serbia which had entered new paths would thrive and prosper in the future. (*Belgrade newspapers and „Délvideki Magyarország“, September 3rd.*)

The work being done by General Neditz and his colleagues for the benefit of the Serbian people is however considerably hampered and the success of their juggling tactics followed in an endeavour to temporize in their present plight very seriously jeopardized, by the difference of opinion (apparently an irreconcilable difference) between them and the members of the "London Yugoslav Refugee Government". The insurrection repeatedly declared by General Neditz and his fellow-ministers to have been liquidated is being continually fanned into flame, not only by Moscow, but also by the *entourage* of the ex-king and the "Yugoslav Government" functioning in London, which has at its head — since the fall of General Dushan Simovitz, the ringleader and stage-manager of the putsch effected on March 27th., 1941 — Slobodan Jovanovitz, a former professor in Belgrade University who enjoys a great reputation. It is therefore comprehensible that General Neditz and the Members of his Cabinet — as also the more prominent Serbian politicians and men figuring in Serbian public life who approve the direction of the policy pursued by Government — should continuously attack in the most violent manner the machinations of the exiled Yugoslav Government, which keeps stirring up trouble and inciting to civil

war, doing so in the service of foreign interests, and should consistently expose the insidious schemes of that Government and its agitation so dangerous to the very existence of the Serbian people.

Of the protests and outbursts of indignation — often extremely passionate — provoked by these machinations one of the most striking was undoubtedly the address delivered in Belgrade on July 21st. last by Dr. Miroslav *Spalajkovitch*, who prior to the outbreak of the first Great War was Yugoslav Minister in St. Petersburg and later on served for ten years as Yugoslav Minister in Paris. This address was relaid also by the Serbian radio and was published the following day in the columns of the Serbian newspaper "*Srpski Narod*" and later on in the Serbian paper "*Obnova*".

In the opening part of his address M. Spalajkovitch noted that under the influence of the events that happened in Belgrade in March last year M. Laval, the friend of the Serbian people, had in his presence exclaimed — "*Why, this is suicide!! What has happened to the Serbians? Have they gone mad?*"

Yet at that moment it was not possible to see all the consequences of the *putsch* carried out on March 27th. There can be no doubt that this *putsch* was the work of military adventurers, men of diseased minds who established the Government of National Disaster, which in a single night staked on a single card and lost all that the Serbian people had created by centuries of labour. Who can forget the closing days of that March, when throughout the whole country the communistic *demi-monde* was wallowing in satanic orgies? These days will remain unforgettable for the Serbian people, — days due to men to whom the speaker applied the words of the ancient Serbian proverb "*Tesko negama pod ludom glavom*" ("*a foolish head paralyses good legs*").

Then M. Spalajkovitch continued: — "*Never has a State collapsed so madly as Yugoslavia... Those who had ruined the State and the people were not satisfied with what they had done, but are still endeavouring to plunge the Serbian people into a still greater catastrophe. Do not*

listen, my countrymen, to the siren voices calling upon you from a foreign shore. Messages are being sent to you by agents paid by foreign countries... They are all alike vain tricksters and mountebanks bent on deceiving town and village who in the past ruined our political parties too. In Yugoslavia politics has been degraded to the status of a dirty industry — the dirtiest of all industries. The country has been corrupted and national defeatism spread abroad. *These agents of foreign interests have employed two dangerous viruses — anti-Serbian, a national Yugoslavism and international communism.* The consequences of this procedure are coming home to us now. This was treachery against the country and a betrayal of the future of the Serbian people. These knights of adventure would fain drive the people to suicide. In Yugoslavia the Serbian soul veritably went to pieces; for in that country it was forbidden even to call oneself Serbian... The Serbian national idea had been completely repudiated. Yugoslav materialism had supplanted Serbian idealism... During the course of the centuries Serbia had been overthrown, national dynasties had been destroyed; but the orthodox Serbian religion had remained: and that had saved the Serbian people and its culture from the Turkish Crescent. The Serbians were no passing reality, but a people boasting of a great historical past whose life was only now about to begin... The Serbian people had a mission, which it had not yet fulfilled. Only one single path lay open to the Serbian nation — *“the path of morality, justice and labour”*.

In the concluding part of his address M. Spalajkovitch spoke of the historical role played by General Neditz and emphasised that the General had in the day of adversity too found the only proper path for the Serbian nation to follow, — the path leading to the New Europe already in process of construction. In the nineteenth century Prince Milos Obrenovitch raised Serbia from the dead, making that country great and up-to-date; while in the twentieth century, under General Milan Neditz, the Serbian State was once more rising from the grave. (*Belgrade newspapers and „Ujvidéki Magyarság“*).

We considered it necessary for the information of our

readers to give a short abstract of *M. Spalajkovitch's* address; for that address — apart from demanding the settlement of accounts with the persons responsible for the *putsch* — contains something of peculiar weight — the enunciation of the need of repudiating Yugoslavism and returning to an exclusively Serbian national political platform. This new trend — in the event of its becoming universally adopted as the common political creed of the Serbian people — does not of course aim at eliminating the endeavour to realize the Greater Serbia dreams in some other form, that having indeed been the leading idea and fundamental political principle avowed by the Serbians even within the framework of the Yugoslav State brought into being under the title of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

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