

NEWS FROM CROATIA

BY

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In our May issue we published abstracts from the statements broadcast by a few Members of the Serbian Government on the second anniversary of the notorious Belgrade "putsch" which led to the collapse of Yugoslavia, and from articles contributed to the press on the same occasion by eminent Serbian politicians. The chief topics of these statements and declarations were — exasperation at the falling to pieces of the Yugoslav State, public denunciation of the unscrupulous authors and ringleaders of the upheaval leading to the catastrophe and the civil war that followed, and the education of the Serbian nation to cope with the new and arduous tasks awaiting it.

Quite different was the character of the anniversary celebrations held on April 10th. by Croatians all over the country to commemorate the second anniversary of the proclamation of an independent Croatian State. *The ground tone of the speeches made at these anniversary festivals was inspired by enthusiastic delight at the achievement of Croatia's liberty and the exalting consciousness that "after so many sufferings and so many feuds, despite the many misfortunes inflicted upon it", the Croatian nation had, with the effectual assistance of the Axis Powers, regained its full sovereignty.* This state of mind of the Croatian people — or of the vast majority of that people —, its self-confidence enhanced by the results achieved during the two years that have passed since Croatia obtained her independence in respect of the organization and adjustment of the machinery of the new State, and its firm and unshakable faith in its future, combined with a resolute determination to challenge all enemies, whether at home or abroad, — all these moments were reflected in a manner worthy of the occasion in the official declarations made at the national celebrations and in the

Croatian Press, from which we quote below a few excerpts in illustration of the situation.

The April 8th. issue of the "*Seljačko Ognjište*" (Peasant Hearth) published an article by Matije Kovačić entitled "*On the Eve of the Great Day*" in which the writer, *inter alia*, declared that „during the past two years, as a result of its position in international politics, the new, independent Croatian State has become internationally too a reality which cannot be spirited away, — mainly because against its known enemies it is supported by friendly States which have enabled the Croatian nation to shake off the fetters of the past and to live an independent life in the new European Order... *In the second year of our existence as an independent State we have had arduous days and have experienced hours in which many Croatians faltered.. Now, however, the terror is on the wane and the bolshevik danger appearing under the guise of "partisan" activity has already become merely a secondary trouble that will shortly cease to exist altogether. The main forces of the "partisans" have been routed, while the small detachments still engaged in the work of devastation will not be able much longer to escape utter extermination...*" "Last year was a year of sacrifices, though also of experience. Even the naivest of our compatriots have already realized that the Croatian nation has to choose between two paths, — either the vindication of its independent State existence leading to the safeguarding of life and the ensuring of the future, or the dark path of Bolshevism, which would involve the loss by the Croatian people of its liberty and the gradual extinction even of its very existence" ("*Hrvattski Narod*", April 8th., 1943).

Statements by MM. Lorković and Budak and the Poglavnik.

We find a number of interesting and most instructive moments in the address broadcast on April 10th. by Dr. Mladen Lorković, former Croatian Foreign Minister, which presented — *for the re-assurance of the Croatian nation — a colourful and encouraging account "of the two years of Croatia's existence as an independent State". "Two years ago*

today", said M. Lorković, *inter alia*, "amid an enthusiasm in keeping with the grandeur of the historical event, success at last crowned the endeavours and arduous struggles of many generations of Croatians, and historical justice was finally asserted. The Croatian nation had achieved what it had fought for in so many a manner — had achieved what was its due. . . The New Europe of Hitler and Mussolini, those two great leaders, had given it what the older Europe had for centuries denied it, — the right to political independence and thereby to a life worthy of its traditions. Today, when we are celebrating the second anniversary of the declaration of our independence, we must realize more clearly than ever before the significance of the two moments upon which the independence of our State is based. The first of the moments ensuring our independence is the unyielding struggle of the Croatian people to achieve its liberty, to which a definitive framework has been given by M. Pavelić, our Poglavnik. The other moment ensuring our national independence is the recognition and the practical assistance accorded us by New Italy and the New German Empire".

In speaking of Yugoslav rule M. Lorković said: — "One of the most serious questions confronting the Croatian State at the very outset of its political independence was the Yugoslav heritage. *The moral and political virus of the Yugoslav system, its economic exploitation and devastations, combined with the systematic endeavour to disrupt Croatian society, have left traces of their corruptive influence on the Croatian nation. In our work of building up our State we find ourselves daily up against the noxious aftermath of Yugoslav rule*".

Speaking of the relations between Serbians and Croatians, M. Lorković added: — "For the solution of the problems confronting us great efforts must be made, exceptional perseverance and resolution displayed, — particularly in view of the fact that the sworn enemies of the Croatian people, of our national independence and our liberty — those who for twenty-two years veritably crucified Croatia — almost immediately after the collapse of Yugoslavia joined hands to nip in the bud and frustrate the work of organizing the Croatian national State which had been initiated with such

great enthusiasm . . . The old enemies of the Croatian nation vented their spite on Croatia because Croatia was in the way of their insane chauvinism and because our State owes its origin to that New Europe which they hate so profoundly. *To help them in the implementation of their wicked scheme they have secured the unconditional support of London and Moscow. And, whereas the Axis Powers, inspired by a spirit of justice, have magnanimously espoused the cause of a small and much-afflicted people, London and Moscow — with the co-operation of political desperadoes, refugees from Yugoslavia who figure as some nondescript "Yugoslav Government" and whose ranks unfortunately include one or two Croatian traitors, though the latter hold only posts of minor importance — have organized robber-bands. The task assigned to these men is to penetrate into Croatia from "abroad" (sc. from Serbia), and then, joining with shady elements like themselves, to devastate the villages and towns of Croatia with fire and sword, to murder the defenceless inhabitants, to destroy their food supplies and to blow up lines of communication, — in short, to employ all the means of barbarism to endanger the lives and the very existence of the Croatian people and the Croatian State . . . Our enemies are however mistaken. On the present anniversary day we are already in a position to affirm with absolute certainty that the efforts of the subterranean forces to destroy the independent Croatian State have failed. Thanks to the self-consciousness of the Croatian nation, to its virility and its selflessness, — to the statesmanship of our Poglavnik and to the magnanimity and generous support of the Führer and the Duce and of the German and Italian Governments —, the Croatian State has already overcome the gravest of its ordeals and is about to enter a period of reconciliation and undisturbed construction. It is in this firm conviction that the Croatian people crosses the threshold of the third year of its national and political independence" ("Hrvatski Nord", April 11th., 1943).*

This extremely interesting — and indeed in many respects extremely remarkable — broadcast was the last official appearance of M. Lorković as Foreign Minister — of the man who after the establishment of the independent Croatian State organized the Foreign Ministry and who,

being only 34 years of age, was probably the youngest foreign minister in Europe. For two weeks later, on April 24th., the Poglavnik accepted his resignation, granting him the title of Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in recognition of his services, and appointed as his successor Dr. *Mile Budak*, the eminent novelist who prior to his appointment to the post of Croatian Minister in Berlin had been the first Minister of Education of the new Croatian State. On May 12th., on the occasion of his departure from Berlin, M. Budak broadcast over the wave-length of the Donau-Alpen station a short address in which, *inter alia*, he declared that *he regarded it as one of the chief objects of the foreign policy of Croatia now entrusted to his direction to continue to secure the friendship and assistance of the Axis Powers with which Croatia was allied and which, the Croatians should be reminded, did not desire to treat Croatia as a vassal State, being on the contrary anxious to see a strong and independent Croatia. This declaration therefore shows that there will be no change of tendency in the foreign policy of Croatia.*

At the opening of an Ustasha course arranged early in May, Dr. Ante *Pavelić*, Head of the Croatian State, defined the guiding principles of Croatian domestic policy in the following terms: — "*Our Ustasha soldiers have never acknowledged — and do not acknowledge today either — that there is such a thing as classwar . . . There must be no barriers raised between Croatian and Croatian; for such barriers prevent the people being united and strong and make it an easy prey for outsiders. The Ustasha spirit today permeates the whole Croatian people; in Croatia today work is a greater value than gold or silver. Only those nations can emerge victorious from the war which work laboriously and have an unswerving faith in their own future. That people which does not possess a State of its own will be lost to sight among the peoples and will disappear, and no one will ever be able to raise it to life again . . . Every one must be inspired by the sublime idea of an independent State and by the exalting consciousness that the Croatian people is once more living in a free and independent country . . . Croatia will leave no stone unturned to ensure the permanence of her existence*

as a State; for that reason she will fight with every means in her power against Bolshevism, the greatest enemy of Europe and humanity. Every one must regard it as his sacred duty to support the Croatian nation and the Croatian State wholeheartedly in this struggle against Communism."

In conclusion the Poglavnik declared further that the whole Croatian people was to be organized within the framework of the Ustasha movement in order to thereby ensure the union of popular forces and the unbroken unity of the internal political life of the country. (v. *Croatian newspapers and "Délvidéki Magyarorság", May 6th., 1943*).

As may be seen from the few excerpts given above, the leaders of the Croatian people — despite the difficulties in evidence in international and domestic politics, the latter difficulties being due primarily to the fact that the authorities have not succeeded in completely liquidating the depredations of the insurgent bands — repose unwavering trust in the virility of the Croatian people and are striving indefatigably to ensure order in the country and to promote the material welfare of the inhabitants.

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