

## NEWS FROM CROATIA

by

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Quite recently several statements have again been made by official factors reflecting the ideas of the present leaders of Croatian political life and their attitude towards certain important questions of domestic and foreign policy. We publish below, for the information of our readers, abstracts from some of these statements and declarations, which are of great interest from several points of view.

On October 17th. Matija Kovačić, Croatian Propaganda Minister, broadcast an exhaustive address on the internal political questions of the Croatian State. "*The most important task facing the Government*" — he said — "*is that of annihilating with the least possible delay the hostile forces endangering the peace and security of the country... The partisans and Chetniks are endeavouring to ruin the independent Croatian State and to subjugate the Croatian people to the Serbian or Communist yoke. The agents of London and Moscow have however succeeded in winning the support of only 10% of the Croatian people*". Practically only morally depraved persons had left their homes and families and joined the ranks of the partisans. "The Poglavnik" — he continued — "offers a general amnesty to all those who abandon the forests and return to Croatian public life. This general amnesty applies also to partisans belonging to the Greek Oriental (Orthodox) Church".

Kovačić then described the life of the Soviet peasantry and established that no person of common sense with a knowledge of conditions in Russia could possibly advocate the Soviet system. . He called the attention of the people also to the circumstance that *the partisans were fighting, not only against the Ushtasha organizations, but also against*

*the Members of the former Croatian Peasants' Party, who had not yet taken their places in public life or adjusted themselves to the new order . . . In his opinion the men who held sway in the forests and mountains were all Serbians; and for that reason he summoned all the insurgents of Croatian and other non-Serbian nationality to return without delay to their families and their homes. Those who defied the summons and continued to lurk in the forests, would be mercilessly shot. "We shall" — continued the Minister for Propaganda — "call to account also those who in any way assist the partisans and Chetniks. We shall exterminate all those who by day live in the villages in the guise of peaceful citizens and in the night are engaged as insurgents blowing up bridges, tearing up the permanent way of the railways and setting fire to villages."*

Here we would note, by the way, that in terms of a recent Order in Council not only the persons actually making the various attempts, but also their accomplices and all accessories too, will be condemned to death. *According to § 5. of the Order in Council the members of the family of the person making the attempt — his parents, his wife and his children too — may be called to account, if it can be ascertained that they had knowledge or at least should have had cognizance of the criminal activity of their relative.* Three kinds of protective measures are enumerated, — death either by being shot or, in more serious cases, by hanging; confinement in a labour camp; and, finally, confiscation of property.

Special interest attaches to the following passage from *Kovačić's* broadcast: — "In foreign countries there are persons who insinuate that the eastern half of Bosnia and Herzegovina will eventually be taken from Croatia, while others again talk of a part of Dalmatia being eventually given to Serbia. These false rumours should not mislead any one. We know that there are people who would like us to lose the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina — and indeed Dalmatia too —, and who would fain see the rest of our country destroyed. Let these people remember, however, that *our frontier is the Drina, and that we shall never again lose this frontier demarcated by Nature herself.* Croatian law

originated on the shores of the Drina; that is the source of the unyielding power and will of the Croats. It is in the interest of the Serbs living in our country too that this frontier should remain unchanged."

The Propaganda Minister then declared that *Tito and Drazha Mihaylovitch were the two greatest criminals in the Balkans*. He emphasised, further, that Russian Cossack troops were already fighting in the Balkans against the partisans and the Chetniks. Finally, he called upon the Croatian people not to allow itself to be cajoled by foreign propaganda, but to place itself unreservedly at the service of the independent Croatian Fatherland. (*Croatian papers and "Délvidéki Magyarország", October 19th., 1943.*)

On November 12th. the *Zagreb Ushtasha* organization held a meeting attended also by the Members of the Croatian Government headed by the Prime Minister, *Nicola Mandić*. At the meeting a long speech on the Croatian partisan movement was made by *M. Makaneč*, Minister of Education, who declared that according to all the data and proofs at his disposal this movement had been originally initiated in foreign countries. *Bolshevism was the hothouse of the partisan movement. The partisans had been introduced into Croatia by Bolshevik Serbs and Marxist Jews who hoped thereby to achieve their objects*. In the name of the Croatian people he could however assure the whole world that it would be easier for the Save, the Drava and the Danube to flow back towards their sources than for Marxist ideas to take root in Croatia. *Makaneč* then spoke of the State-building capacity and determination of the Croats, laying stress upon the fact that in April, 1941, when he staged the Ushtasha revolution, *Pavelić* was supported, not only by his own Ushtasha adherents, but also by the Members of the Croatian Peasants' Party headed by *Maček*. Indeed, it was Members of the *Maček* Guard that disarmed the Yugoslav soldiers and made it clear to the Croatian people that the revolution then in progress would result in vindicating the liberty and independence of Croatia.

"And those persons" — said *Makaneč* in conclusion — "who assert that the Croatian people is divided into factions and does not stand united behind the Head of the State.

Pavelić, make that assertion solely for the purpose of trying by dint of duplicity and machinations to bring about a disunion — and thereby the ruin — of the Croatian people."

Great interest attaches also to the words of Ante Vokić, Croatian Minister for Communications, addressed to a meeting of Croatian railwaymen held at Zagreb in the middle of November in which he dealt with the situation of the Croats within the framework of the Yugoslav State. He established that the conditions under which the Croats lived in the Kingdom of the Serbians, Croats and Slovenes — which in the autumn of 1929 was re-christened and called Yugoslavia — were exceptionally grave in character. The State authorities, the military commands and the schools had all strained every nerve to deprive the Croats of their national character and convert them into Yugoslavs... *"To the terror coming from above we replied with terror coming from below. That was the object of the Ushtasha movement."*

"Ten years ago" — said the Minister — "at the time when the members of the Ushtasha movement initiated a smallscale armed action in the Velebit mountains — what the Croats desired was that *Croatian rifles should be used by Croatian soldiers and that the money in Croats' pockets should be Croatian money. Both these wishes have been converted into reality by the Poglavnik and the Ush-tasha movement...*"

Vokić then read excerpts from a partisan newspaper and described articles written by Tito and some of his lieutenants, from which it may be seen that *the Chetniks and the Communist partisans as far back as the days of Yugoslav rule were engaged in making preparations to settle accounts with the Croatian people, to establish a Greater Serbia and to exterminate the Croats.* "Tito" — continued Vokić — "did not take his men to Serbia to set fire to schools and churches there, — to murder children and adults there —, but that is what his men are doing in Croatia, their object being to ensure there being as few Croats as possible living in the world".

In conclusion the Minister addressed words of encouragement to the railwaymen and stressed that in the territory belonging to the sphere of jurisdiction of the Management

of the Serajevo Railroad — where from the outset the partisan and Chetnik menace had been most serious — of 15,000 railwaymen only two had fled to the forests and enlisted as partisans. "I do not insist" — said the Minister — "that you should all join the Ushtasha organization; I would merely remind you that *it was the Ushtasha movement that created the independent Croatian State, and that it is this movement that is predestined to undertake the work of maintaining that State and safeguarding its future.*" (Croatian papers and "Délvidéki Magyarország", November 15th—16th., 1943.)

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