

IN COMPANY WITH OFFENDERS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD: POLITY OF THE KINGDOM OF THE SERBS, CROATS AND SLOVENES 1918-1941

Hrvoje ČAPO*

The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (hereafter SHS)/Yugoslavia existed for twenty three years, between 1918 and 1941. During that period it was characterized by the harsh use of the state repressive apparatus and latent political dubiousness. The author argues the reasons for such an environment, which he finds in unsolved national questions and an authoritarian political regime. The role of the king was considered crucial in keeping the regime authoritarian and the political structure of the Kingdom fragile. Understanding the polity of the Kingdom is decisive for an indepth overview of its breakup, which is also the goal of this paper. A circle point is made around empirical data out of the Polity IV project, which investigates changes of the world polity forms from 1800 to 2010.

Key words: Kingdom SHS/Yugoslavia, Aleksandar Karadžević, Authoritarian regime, Polity

Introduction

When arguing about the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia, the majority of historiographers have a balanced presentation. The Kingdom was a state, which began its life as a parliamentary monarchy, went through a harsh period of royal dictatorship under the king and ended in a renewed regime of parliamentarism under regentship. Differences in historiographic presentations

* Hrvoje Čapo, Ph. D., Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb, Croatia

arise from diverse interpretations of King Aleksandar Karađorđević's role and the role of the surrounding state policy making apparatus.

Yugoslav Marxist historiographic interpretation of the interwar period was entirely in the hands of the Communist Party.¹ The dominant picture presented the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia as the classic class battle between Serbian bourgeoisie and communist worker-peasant elements.² The “national question” wasn't avoided, but because of the paradigm of “brotherhood and unity” it was subdued in order not to mention any existing national tensions.³ Within these historiographies, the most researched topic of the interwar period was the role of the Communist Party. There existed a two-dimensional portrait of oppressed people and their slave drivers. Centralists like Stjepan Radić, the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party (Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka, hereafter HSS), were placed in the same box as King Aleksandar.⁴

By the breakup of the socialist Yugoslavia in 1990 each of the newly established states had developed its own historiography. New interpretations of the interwar period appeared and were balanced with each state's own experience.⁵ Croatian historiography showed that the Kingdom SHS/Yugoslavia was a highly authoritarian state where King Aleksandar led an ultimate centralistic and unitaristic polity on a Serbian course. The reason for dissolving the Kingdom was the unresolved national question, which eventually burst under Greater Serbian pressure.⁶ On the other hand, Serbian historiography sees King Aleksandar as an

¹ Magdalena Najbar-Agičić, *U skladu s marksizmom ili činjenicama? Hrvatska historiografija 1945-1960* (Zagreb, 2013), p. 376.

² See Ferdo Čulinović, *Jugoslavija između dva rata*, (Belgrade, 1967), Branko Petranović, *Istoriya Jugoslavije 1918.-1988.*, vol. I, (Belgrade, 1988).

³ M. Najbar-Agičić, *U skladu s marksizmom ili činjenicama?*, p. 505. During the socialist period of Yugoslavia the interpretation of the interwar period changed slightly. This happened just after 1960 when the terms like “national harassment” and “national question” appeared in history textbooks used in the Socialist Republic of Croatia. (Snježana Koren, *Politika povijesti u Jugoslaviji (1946-1960.)*. *Komunistička partija Jugoslavije, nastava povijesti, historiografija* (Zagreb, 2012), p. 305). In historiography Franjo Tuđman made an exception in 1967 naming the unresolving of the national question, i.e. the imposition of the “great Serbian hegemony” among the main reasons of the crisis in interwar Yugoslavia. (F. Tuđman, “Uzroci krize monarhističke Jugoslavije od ujedinjenja 1918. do sloma 1941.”, *Forum*, No. 1-2/1967, pp. 73-111, p. 73). The unacceptability of this and similar Tuđman's writing (particularly with WWII subjects) is best seen in the fact that the same year he was expelled from the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and retired from the position of a director of the Institute for the History of Workers' Movement of Croatia in Zagreb.

⁴ Ferdo Čulinović, *Jugoslavija između dva rata*, p. 288.

⁵ It is important to note that also during socialist Yugoslavia each republic had its own institutions for the development of their own historiographies. Thus the term “Yugoslav historiography” rather defines a group of individual republic historiographies which were developing within the same, Marxist framework. (Magdalena Najbar-Agičić, *U skladu s marksizmom ili činjenicama?*, pp. 248-263).

⁶ See Franjo Tuđman, *Hrvatska u monarhističkoj Jugoslaviji*, vol. I, II (Zagreb, 1993), Bosiljka Janjatović, *Politički teror u Hrvatskoj 1918.-1935.* (Zagreb, 2003).

authoritarian character but surrounded by hostility and the destructive intentions of non-Serb political forces. According to these researchers the purpose for dissolving the Kingdom lies in the hostility of the non-Serbian nations that from the beginning of the state had intentions to break it. However, there are multiple conclusions about the polity of the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia, and vary from centralist-unitaristic to liberal-democratic ones.⁷

Between the two World wars Croatian society found itself developing within a state under the Serbian dynasty of Karađorđević. Officially, the state was presented as a result of historical achievement and the desire of South Slavic nations for unity. Nevertheless, instead of equality throughout its existence the Kingdom was characterized by the hard authority of the King's court and the administration in Belgrade. By the 1921 the Constitution of the Kingdom represented a parliamentary monarchy, but instead it really was a hybrid of a modern and the old polity. It was a regime stopped between traditional absolutistic monarchy and the modernization. It was *ancien régime*.⁸

Arguments of non-democratic processes in the new state existed from its early years.⁹ According to this judgment the Act of December 1 was a unilateral move by the Serbian regent Aleksandar Karađorđević who was only answering a wish declared by the members of the National Council of the State of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. Although state polity was yet to be decided, simultaneously two major powers of interests were shown. One was of a Serbian character fought for centralism of the state, the other of Croatian attempt to gain a federalist regime of the Kingdom. The policy structure of the Kingdom did reveal some democratic insignias (like the existence of Parliament, Constitution, Elections, demonstrations) but in its root totally opposite

⁷ See Ivana Dobrivojević, *Državna represija u doba diktature kralja Aleksandra (1929.-1934.)* (Belgrade, 2006), Nikola Žutić, "Srbi i građanski liberalizam u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918.-1929", *Dijalog povjesničara/istoričara 4* (Hans-Georg Fleck, Igor Graovac eds.) (Zagreb, 2001), pp. 341-358., "Antiliberalizam kod Srba u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1934.-1941.", *Dijalog povjesničara - istoričara 6* (Hans-Georg Fleck, Igor Graovac eds.) (Zagreb, 2002), pp. 229-246.

⁸ Tihomir Cipek states that the modernization of the Kingdom of SHS would necessarily have meant the creation of a national state, which would eventually have led to either a radical reorganization of the state or its break-up. Any of the outcomes would also have meant the end of the rule of the Serbian Karađorđević dynasty. In order to maintain the existing state of affairs the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia therefore never developed into a modern state. (Tihomir Cipek, "Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata, Slovenaca / Jugoslavija - ancien régime", *Dijalog povjesničara/istoričara 2*, (Igor Graovac, Hans-Georg Fleck eds.) (Zagreb, 2000): 291-305, 293).

⁹ On 1 December 1918 Regent Aleksandar Karađorđević gave a positive reply to the Statement (Address) of the National Council from Zagreb and declared the unification of the State of SHS with the Kingdom of Serbia, by which the Kingdom of SHS was created. However, the representatives of the National Council were at the time just the representatives of the most prominent political forces and individuals from the State of SHS. Their *ad hoc* delegation expressed their own wish to unify with the Kingdom of Serbia. (See more in Ljubomirka Krkljuš, "Pravna priroda dokumenata od 1. decembra 1918. godine o stvaranju Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca", *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju*, 2004 (Belgrade), No. 69-70: 97-117, 116).

elements were showing (like violating the Constitutional rights, authoritarian regime, political repression or police surveillance).

In this paper I argue about the polity characteristics of the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia through several questions. The basic hypothesis is that the faith of the Kingdom was connected with the faith or King Aleksandar's personality. I will attempt to show this through examples. Whereas the basis of a state representation is its constitution, the characteristic of the regime can be seen out of its practical use. In this paper I aim to analyze the Constitutional promises and its practical enforcement in order to determine whether the Constitution was obeyed or not by the authorities. In a highly centralized state like the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia, the elites in power preserved their position by using a repressive system.¹⁰ In the last part of the paper, and on the basis of data from the Polity IV Project, the polity of the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia will be correlated with the regime values of the surrounding states.¹¹

Reign of King Aleksandar Karađorđević

The political life and development of the Kingdom were under the crucial impact of King Aleksandar whose character was mostly shaped by his education and active military service. Since he was seventeen his education was continued within the Tzarist military school of Saint Petersburg.¹² During his early twenties he took part in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and after was engaged in the First World War (hereafter WWI) 1914-1918. That engagement made him a solid reputation both within the army and the Serbian people. The years of comradeship and living with soldiers made a future impact on Aleksandar to consider the Serbian army as his ultimate root and support.

His military career wasn't such a curiosity, since in the Kingdom of Serbia army service was considered even more important the diplomatic one.¹³ The military coup element was imminent within Serbia since 1868 (and the assas-

¹⁰ From 1929 to 1935 was the period of King Aleksandar Karađorđević's personal dictatorship. Then all political parties, the parliament and the constitution were abolished (until 1931).

¹¹ The Polity Project was initiated by Robert Gurr in 1972. Based on equal criteria, the aim was to obtain comparative results on the character of state regimes worldwide for analytical purposes. The analysis provided comparative quantitative data on the characteristics of political regimes and their changes from 1800 to 2010. Until now four upgrades of the original project have been made, while the created database has become the most frequently quoted source in researching social regimes. In this paper I am using the latest version of data called Polity IV from 2010. (www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm, access gained in August 2013)

¹² Aleksandar joined the military service at the age of fifteen when he became a soldier in the 1st brigade 3rd battalion 6th Infantry Regiment (Branislav Gligorijević, *Kralj Aleksandar I. Karađorđević* (Belgrade, 1996), pp. 26-27).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

sination of Mihailo Obrenović) but especially since 1903 when a group of Court army officers violently dethroned the Obrenović dynasty by killing King Aleksandar and Queen Draga. By introducing military persons into the political arena the fear of death ruled the relations between the governing and people of swords.¹⁴ The Salonica Trial in 1917 when the leader of the 1903 military coup officers Dragutin Dimitrijević Apis was facing death because of the alleged conspiracy against Regent Aleksandar Karađorđević made Aleksandar even more bound to his closest officers.¹⁵

This wasn't a reality in the Croatian territories within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The political climate was much calmer and the politicians fought their battles through dialogue (although it truly was more like a noise of monologues). These differences, including the general absence of Croatian statehood, were the reasons why Serbian institutions expanded their influence over Croatian ones so successfully.¹⁶ Of course, one of the reasons for such a development was that Serbia was a state long before 1918 with all its insignia and Croatia (Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia) was a part of a multinational monarchy in which its own statehood was quite suppressed.¹⁷

The bond between King Aleksandar and his army wasn't disjointed when the new state was formed. However, during the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia a monarchial reign and a role of the military marked its existence. This reality of Yugoslav society was described by Svetozar Pribičević, an old king's supporter but still a political prisoner from 1929, who in his memoirs wrote: "King keeps

¹⁴ "(...) one must choose between killing or being killed" was an assessment of a Serbian lawyer and historian Slobodan Jovanović (1869-1958.) when describing Serbian political life before 1918 (Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, NY, 1988), p. 113).

¹⁵ For more about the Salonica Process see: Milan Ž. Živanović, *Pukovnik Apis-hiljadu devesto sedamnaeste* (Belgrade, 1955), Vasa Kazimirović, *Crna ruka*, (Kragujevac, 1997).

¹⁶ Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, p. 142.

¹⁷ Ibid., 113. Because of the reasons mentioned, there is an opinion in the literature that the unification of the State of SHS with the Kingdom of Serbia in 1918 led to an overlap of two worlds, or rather the clash of two cultures, the Austro-Hungarian and the Balkan ones. In 1988, Branko Petranović named those reasons as a significant factor and cause of problems in the interwar Yugoslavia. (Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1914.-1988.*, vol. I (Belgrade, s.a.), pp. 53-56). Later in the book *Jugoslovensko iskustvo srpske nacionalne integracije* (Belgrade, 1993), p. 16 Branko Petranović claimed that exactly limited parliamentarism between 1921 and 1929 was "the greatest value" of the interwar Yugoslavia. (Mira Radojević, "On the problem of Democracy and Parliamentarism in Yugoslavia between the Two World Wars", *Istorijski zapisi. Organ Istorijskog instituta i Društva istoričara Crne Gore*, LXXXV, No. 3-4 (2012): 99-110, 108). In recent Serbian historiography one can notice different opinions. Ivana Dobrivojević puts the idea of the overlapping of the two worlds into "demagogic slogans". (I. Dobrivojević, *Državna represija u doba diktature*, p. 343). Mira Radojević refutes the theses stating that it was exactly in Serbia where democracy and the related worldview had been present from as early as 1913, which cannot be claimed for the former Austro-Hungarian territories. (M. Radojević, "On the problem of Democracy and Parliamentarism in Yugoslavia between the Two World Wars", p. 100).

in his hands the whole power and governs the state politics; only his will is happening and behind him nothing can happen".¹⁸ It was visible that an authoritarian rule was Aleksandar's first choice. However, in the end this path was more likely the normal behavior of his contemporary monarch colleagues.¹⁹

His tendency to authoritarian governance was visible even from the first days of the Kingdom when in the beginning of December 1918 Aleksandar refused to sign the nomination of the first Yugoslav government only because the proposed president was Nikola Pašić.²⁰ By this act it was clear that the regent and future king would not hesitate to put his personal interests before the state ones.²¹ His vision of governance was introducing his personal rule without so many intermediaries. This tendency was becoming more visible after he took the crown in 1921. The idea was turned into a reality in the beginning of January 1929 after which a harsh period of the King's dictatorship and authoritarian regime began and lasted for almost six years when he was assassinated. Introducing dictatorship wasn't a product of the moment but the King had thought about it long before 1929.

The King controlled and directed the work of the government from the first days and even had an instrument inside the government for such a position. The key was the Minister of the Army and the Navy, an all King's man who was the one and only minister appointed directly by him. Throughout the existence of the Kingdom the position of the Minister of the Army and Navy was held by military officers. The king's willingness for a dictatorship (before 1929) was the most vivid during 1924 when the government of Ljubomir Davidović (Democratic Party, July 28, 1924 – November 6, 1924.) fell because of the Minister of Army and Navy General Hadžić's resignation.²² General

¹⁸ Svetozar Pribičević, *Diktatura kralja Aleksandra*, (Zagreb, 1990), p. 82.

¹⁹ Zogu, the King of Albania, Karol II, the King of Romania and Boris III, the emperor of Bulgaria had a similar education with an ingrained loyalty towards the army and the authoritarian behavior (characteristic for the 19th century) (*Balkanski diktatori. Diktatori i autoritarni vladari jugoistočne Europe* (Bernd J. Fišer ed.), (Belgrade, 2009).

²⁰ There is an opinion in literature that Nikola Pašić was removed from leadership position because he advocated the idea of unification on the idea of "Great Serbia", as opposed to Regent Aleksandar's idea of equal unification of the Kingdom of Serbia with the State of SHS: (See Gordana Krivokapić – Jović, "Nikola Pašić 1918-1926: Kraj jedne karijere", *Tokovi istorije* (2011), No. 1: 37, 32-45). However, according to the testimony of Svetozar Pribičević, the reason was of a personal nature. The Regent couldn't accept Nikola Pašić because "Pašić told the leaders of the Serbian opposition that the government couldn't accept the Geneva Pact because he, the Regent, was against." (S. Pribičević, *Diktatura*, p. 91.).

²¹ The negotiations on the members of the first government of the Kingdom of SHS began on 27 November 1918 between the representatives of the National Council of the State of SHS and the Serbian political parties. The negotiations were presided over by Nikola Pašić.

²² On the political crisis in 1924 see in: Branislav Gligorijević, "Uloga vojnih krugova u "rešavanju" političke krize u Jugoslaviji 1924. godine", *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, 23 (1972), No. 1: 161-186.

Hadžić's resignation was clearly a result of the king's command and was delivered to him before the President of the Government knew about it. After this the King's pressure on Davidović to resign was enforced by a group of military officers who threatened even by coup d'Etat in order to bring Radical Nikola Pašić in power. After few months of keeping his position Ljubomir Davidović finally withdrew on October 15, 1924 with significant words "Whereas Your Majesty gave his voice to me to resign in a matter of expanding the base of our policy of peace, order, law, fight against corruption and final agreement between Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, I feel free to give You a resignation of my Cabinet".²³ The Government of Nikola Pašić (Peoples Radical Party, November 6, 1924-April 8, 1925) took power just like the king wanted after all.

The King's intentions of introducing dictatorship were seen by foreign diplomats in the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia, too. In that way an interesting fact is that in October 1927 a staff member of the Greek Legation in the Kingdom told the U.S. Legate John Dyneley Prince that "the Yugoslavs are living under a very thinly veiled autocracy".²⁴ On the other hand, thinking that dictatorship could be welcomed by the Yugoslav people was common among domestic notability. During one reception at General Milivoj Zečević's house in Skopje (Macedonia) in October 1927 the General and Head of the Serbian Orthodox Church Metropolitan Varnava (Petar Rosić) said to J. D. Prince that what Yugoslavia really needs is one benevolent dictatorship. What's more, the U.S. Legate informed the U.S. Secretary of State that general opinion at the reception was that "only salvation of the country must come from a military fascism, strictly but benevolently applied (...)".²⁵ It was clear that the support of the King and his army was mutual. According to J. D. Prince that kind of dictatorship would really have been welcomed by the majority of the Yugoslav population.²⁶

King Aleksandar finally fulfilled his wish for dictatorship in the beginning of 1929. The King officially explained the reasons for his decision in an address named "To my people". In order to make an even greater impact on the people the King promised suppression of corruption and economic revival. Instead, the Parliament was dismissed, political parties were banned and the Constitution was suppressed. Above all a military person, general Petar Živković

²³ Ibid., 181.

²⁴ Report of the U.S. Legate in Belgrade J. D. Prince to the Secretary of the State in Washington, D.C. from October 26, 1927, National Archives Microfilm Publication, Microfilm Publication M 358, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Yugoslavia 1910-1929, Decimal File 860h, Roll 4, Document No. 860h.00/331 (hereafter: NARA, M 358, Roll No., Document No.). J. D. Prince was U.S. Legate to the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia from 1926 to 1933. Before that was a Minister Plenipotentiary to Denmark. By profession he was a linguist.

²⁵ Report of J. D. Prince to the Secretary of State from October 21, 1927, NARA, M 358, Roll 4, 860h.00/329.

²⁶ Report of J. D. Prince to the Secretary of State from October 26, 1927, NARA, M 358, Roll 4, document No. 860h.00/331.

became the President of the Cabinet and the Minister of the Interior.²⁷ Simultaneously, new laws were introduced with the aim only to ensure the King's unlimited power. The most important of these was "The Law of King's reign and the supreme state administration" which confirmed the king's exclusive position as the Yugoslavian superior. This law especially defined that "king holds all the governing authority in the country. The King is delivering and pronouncing the laws, he appoints the state servants and gives the ranks to military persons (Article 2) (...) the King gives amnesty for every offence (...) the King gives pardons. He can forgive, shorten or ease the condemned penalties (Article 3) (...) King's person is sacrosanct. The King could not be held personally liable for or accused of anything (Article 6)."²⁸

Unlike that of the regime that was introduced at home it was important to King Aleksandar to establish a brighter show of his behavior to the allies abroad. That could be the reason for his trip to Paris just before introducing the dictatorship. By understanding the traditional repulsion of the western style democracies (mostly France and Czechoslovakia) to the authoritarian regimes and being aware of the need for their financial support in the same time King Aleksandar promised that his dictatorship would last only for a year. According to the Czechoslovak Legation in Tirana, Leon Vokač, Czechoslovakian Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Edward Beneš told him personally that, "King Alexander promised him (to Edward Beneš, author's comment) that it would be maintained for one year only. I understand that France also knew about this promise."²⁹ Facing one of the "Little Entant" members with dictatorship was in no way wasn't acceptable to him.³⁰ During the same conversation Leon Vokač told to the U.S. Legate in Tirana, Herman Bernstein, that "the methods employed by the Yugoslav Government in dealing with the opposition are ruthless. Most of the leaders of the opposition have been removed either by assassination or by imprisonment. Such things are not done in civilized states. I have told them in Belgrade on several occasions, but they answered that dangerous people must be kept where they could do no harm."³¹

Opposite to his promises abroad King Aleksandar made the state repressive system sharper and even more solid at home. He became satisfied with the

²⁷ "Mome dragom narodu. Svima Srbima, Hrvatima i Slovencima", *Politika* (Beograd), January 6, 1929, No. 7430, p. 1.

²⁸ "Zakon o kraljevskoj vlasti i vrhovnoj državnoj upravi", *Službene novine Kraljevine SHS*, 11 January 1929

²⁹ Report of the U.S. Legate in Tirana Herman Bernstein to the Secretary of State from April 22, 1931, NARA, M 1203, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Yugoslavia 1930-1944, Roll 1, Document No. 860.00h/480.

³⁰ (Ibid.). The Little Entente was a military alliance between the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia, the Republic of Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Romania between 1920 and 1928. It was formed in order to prevent a possible Austrian or Hungarian attempt to restore the former Austro-Hungarian territories.

³¹ Ibid.

repressive apparatus only during the dictatorship. He confirmed that in one of his audiences with U.S. Legate J. D. Prince in the beginning of March 1930 when he stated: “the internal situation remains just as it has been since the beginning of my dictatorship. While there is some discontent in Croatia, it is so successfully hidden that even my own secret service finds it difficult to locate it but as long as it is there, it may be a source of danger to the peace of the community and, therefore, we have to be constantly on guard.”³²

J. D. Prince reported to the State Department that in every single one of his conversations with King Aleksandar the King would underscore the point that he would never abdicate centralization. This led J. D. Prince to the conclusion that all about federalization of the state and liberalization of politics was in vain.³³ During these talks the King never liked hearing the names Croat, Dalmatian, Montenegrin or Slovene. According to J. D. Prince the King’s “idea now is quite patently that the whole place must become a “Greater Serbia” and he is quite prepared to risk even his Crown and perhaps his life in order to attain this.”³⁴ Due to this, in one of his last reports on the position of the U.S. Legate in Belgrade J. D. Prince concluded about the King: “He is far from being a bad man, nor is he naturally cruel. He has only one idea in mind – the preservation of the integrity of his state so that he may hand it over to his successors when his days are over in as nearly as possible the same condition territorially as it is now. He therefore closes his eyes deliberately to a thousand injustices which are almost daily being enacted upon the opposition. His idea of opposition is to kill it, not to temporize with it. In this, of course, he is thoroughly Serb, for which one cannot blame him, as all his blood and traditions are Serb. There can be no doubt that he is a great ruler and that he is personally a most charming man. His fault is – naturally Serbian one – that he is perfectly indifferent, like all his fellow tribesmen, to the opinion of any outsider. No Serb really cares what any foreigner, even a Frenchman, thinks of his personality, his life and his methods (...)”³⁵

After eight years of service in the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia during 1933, in one of his last reports to the Secretary of State J. D. Prince wrote a confidential study about race characteristics of Yugoslav people. It was deprived of certain historical fundamentals but, on the other hand was enriched with his personal experience of the state, which represented no special interest to his homeland. His frankness and lack of political sensitivity makes this report interesting for analysis, commentary, and extensive quoting. In this report J. D.

³² Report of J. D. Prince to the Secretary of State from March 8, 1930, NARA, M 1203, Roll 1, Document No. 860h.00/437.

³³ Report of J. D. Prince to the Secretary of State from February 1, 1933, NARA, M 1203, Roll 1, Document No. 860h.00/610.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Report of J. D. Prince to the Secretary of State from August 25, 1933, NARA, M 1203, Roll 2, Document No. 860h.00/651.

Prince connected the personality of King Aleksandar with the faith in a unified Yugoslavia and also expressed his opinion that the creation of a unique Yugoslavia simply wasn't possible.³⁶ The reasons for him were that the Croats, Serbs and Slovenes were in fact very different. He considered Croats the purest Slavs and compared them with Poles. Slovenes were Germanized Slavs who accepted German mentality and habits. On Serbs he wrote – "I have no hesitation that in my opinion the Serb is not of Slavic origin at all, except of course in language, nor has he been for the last six hundred years. In fact, the non-Slavic temperament of the Serb, who desires and is at present acquiring domination over his Croat, Dalmatian and Slovene nationalists, is the fundamental, in my opinion, for the lack of the success with which the Belgrade Serb Government has met in its endeavor to unify the present heterogeneous Yugoslavia (...) The Serb has been governed by force, and successfully so far as his former rules are concerned, and he is going to continue governing his supposed fellow nationals in the same way, reducing them to his will and to his will only (...) The Serb is dull-witted and, like most dull-witted people, excessively obstinate, which quality carries with it an inevitable arrogance. He cannot think that any other tribe that his own is worthy of much consideration. He looks down on his Croat neighbors as "flighty and idealists"; upon his Slovene nationalists as un-Slavonic "cattle", and upon all other surrounding people as highly inferior to himself in every way. He ignores the Anglo-Saxons as completely as if they were being of another world."³⁷ The leader of the integral Yugoslav idea, King Aleksandar was seen as "a Serb of the Serbs, who wishes to bring about a united Kingdom; but, when he thinks of Yugoslavia, he is bound by his training and the narrowness of his horizon to think only of an extended Serbia (...) His idea of government he got in old Russia, where he spent several years at school at the Court, and he has never been able, owing to his Serbian temperament, to depart very far from the horizon of his childhood."³⁸

The Civil Freedoms and the Constitutional Promises

In theory, the willingness of the state to respect civil freedoms can be seen within the Constitution's text. That fundamental law shapes the polity of a state and subsequently has incorporated articles dealing with people's rights. However, these articles could be obeyed or be harshly violated by the state authorities. Whatsoever, mentioning of specific human rights in the body of the Constitution can mean two things. The first is that state authorities are sensitive to them in name only and will intentionally break them. The second interpretation holds that these values are considered fundamental and that the state will

³⁶ Report of J. D. Prince to the Secretary of State from March 8, 1933, M 1203, Roll 10, Document No. 860h 4016/37.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

do everything in power to cherish them. Parallel to these theories there exists a third one, which considers Constitutional promises as a minor element in understanding the polity of a state.³⁹

I argue that the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia fits the first hypothesis. The Kingdom of SHS received its first Constitution only in 1921, after two and a half years of governing by state decrees and acts.⁴⁰ This Constitution was basically a copy of the old Constitution of the Kingdom of Serbia from 1903. Like that one, the new Yugoslavian Constitution had also incorporated articles of basic freedoms of democracy and cherished such values. According to accessible sources and research it is impossible to demonstrate any empirical data on the breaking constitutional promises of human rights.⁴¹ Consequently, I will demonstrate the breaking of constitutional promises of the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia with a number of “real-life” examples.

Constitutional articles on human rights were precise and concise. It was clearly written that all citizens are equal by the law and that all are protected by the state (Article 4) enjoying their personal freedom (Article 5). It was promised that no one can be tried by a non-competent court (Article 6) and that no one could be sentenced without a hearing or a proper opportunity for defending themselves (Article 7). One could be sentenced just for felonies proscribed by the law (Article 8), the death penalty couldn't be pronounced over political felony (Article 9).⁴² The Constitution promised all citizens freedom of internation, i.e. forced transfer or deportation only for those who are not sentenced to such (Article 10). Inviolability of households was also promised and authorities were not allowed to do an inquest without a proper warrant.⁴³

³⁹ Christian A. Davenport, “Constitutional promises“ and Repressive Reality: A Cross National Time-Series Investigation of Why Political and Civil Liberties are Supressed“, *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 58, No. 3 (Aug., 1996), 627 – 654, 630-633.

⁴⁰ The constitution was adopted on 28 June 1921 on the Orthodox Church festival called St. Vitus Day (Vidovdan), hence it is known in historiography as the Vidovdan Constitution.

⁴¹ The empirical research of the constitutionally promised freedoms and their implementation for gaining comparative data on the levels of “negative sanctions” (censorship and political restrictions) uses the handbook by Charles Taylor and David Joyce (*World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators III*, (New Heaven, 1983) which covers the data of the states only between 1948 and 1982, for which reason it cannot be used in this paper.

⁴² The exceptions were the assassins of the royal family members and other perpetrators who, besides political, committed another crime for which civil or military laws prescribed death penalty. (*Ustav Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (Belgrade, 1921), Article 9).

⁴³ *Ibid*, article 11. The home search was described in detail in the Constitution. It could have been conducted only in the presence of two witnesses. In case of a night search preferably a municipal leader should have been present. Prior to the search the citizen received the written decision of the investigating body. He had the right to appeal, which did not delay the search. After the search the citizen was given the list of items confiscated for the purpose of investigation. A night search could be conducted only in dire need.

The Constitution promised equality for all acknowledged religions but religious belief could not be used as a reason for avoiding civil or military duties. Attending mass in churches was not compulsory except on state holidays. Freedom of the press was promised with the addition that no measures were allowed that could inhibit publishing, selling or distributing of newspapers (Article 13). By the Constitution, censorship could be established only in two cases, during war and mobilization. Citizens had the right to unite and gather although the Constitution pronounced that strict conditions of this right would be defined by another law (Article 14). Also, citizens had the right of writing to every government instance (Article 15). Privacy of letters, phone conversations and telegrams were guaranteed excluding the case of war, mobilization or official investigation (Article 17).

The text of the Constitution also made clear what the state would not tolerate. These were insults of the Throne or the Royal family members, insulting foreign heads of states or Parliament and calling for a change of Constitution and laws by force.⁴⁴ The Constitution existed for eight years. By introducing the dictatorship it was abolished and the Kingdom faced an unconstitutional vacuum during which one of the worst repressions of the state occurred. Under intense pressure from abroad the King re-imposed constitutional rule two years later. This new Constitution differed from the old one only in the articles relating to civil rights. This fact supports the hypothesis authorities more easily violate certain basic rights when they are never mentioned constitutionally.

Under the new Constitution all citizens were equal. This was warranted by Article 5. Unlike the Vidovdan Constitution, the new one had a vividly shorter text where civil liberties were described. It was guaranteed that no one could be deprived of their freedom but with exception of the cases arranged by law. Included in this new constitution was an article stating that no one could be tried by an unauthorized court was. There still existed determinations about not being sentenced without proper defense, of being tried only for legally-described offences. The Constitution of 1931 still contained an article about integrity of the living space (Article 10). However the Article's text was much shorter than in 1921 and simply guaranteed that the authorities could perform searches only in cases arranged by law. Article 11 concerning the equality of religions was the same with addition of the assertion that during religious gathering no political agitation was allowed.⁴⁵ This additional sentence reveals the great sensitivity of the state towards political opposition at the time.

As opposed to the Constitution of 1921 the freedom of the press, interestingly wasn't guaranteed. Instead, the Constitution of 1931 camouflaged this

⁴⁴ In the case of such temporary ban the authorities had to submit the case to the court within 24 hours. The court had 24 hours to either enforce or cancel it. In case the decision wasn't made within 48 hours the ban was deemed cancelled.

⁴⁵ *Ustav Kraljevine Jugoslavije (Constitution of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia)*, (Belgrade, 1931), Article 11.

guarantee by saying that everyone is allowed to express their opinion, but only within the legal boundaries (Article 12).⁴⁶ This radical change of the polity was vividly showed in the Article 12 considering rights for alliances. The Article regulated that everyone is allowed to mutual affiliate but in legally arranged cases only. Simultaneously, it was forbidden by the same article for anyone to affiliate on the basis of religion, rationality or nationality.⁴⁷ It's interesting that the article about the privacy of letters and phone conversations survived.⁴⁸ The last piece of the dictatorship puzzle was made by introducing the army to the political arena. With Article 112 the Constitutional right for asking the military support was given to the executive civilian authorities which basically promoted the army to police forces.⁴⁹

The Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia had the Constitution(s), but in certain articles considering the civil liberties it was clearly shown that those rights could be violated by another law. According to that intention it's more likely that the mentioning of citizen rights in the Constitution was much more a "Constitution at threat" than a "Constitutional promise". Besides Constitutional guarantees the violation of those was common in interwar Yugoslavia. Citizens were constantly jailed without trials, interned, or they experienced unconstitutional searches. A law which can be described as a supraconstitution law was the Law of defending public security and the system of the state. Passed in 1921 this law proscribed the death penalty for a political offence even though the Constitution banned such a sentence. Under pretence of protecting the national security human rights were violated because of political reasons. An example of a police investigation common to a dictatorship period was described in the Parliament in 1932 by Mirko Komnenović, a Minister for Social Politics and Public Health as follows:

"Methods of investigation can be divided in three levels. First, the suspect is brought in a state of psychosis by intimidation. About ten people, mostly after midnight, intrude the suspect's living place, often through windows, with their revolvers drawn. They chain the suspect and start harassing him on the way to the police station. From the moment he enters its doorstep (...) his life is completely in the hands of the police. The first words to the stiff suspect are commonly a curse accompanied by harsh kicks of the fists and legs (...)."⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Article 12.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 13.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Article 17.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Article 112.

⁵⁰ The Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade (hereafter: AJ), Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova (Fund Ministry of the Interior) (14), Report "Kako je policija postupala sa uhapšenim studentima" in addition to interpellation of M. Komnenović to the Minister of the Physical Health and presented to Dr. Milan Stojadinović, President of the Ministerial Council, 24– 294.

When arguing the freedom of the press in the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia much becomes clearer in light of the fact that the Ministry of the Interior from 1920 had a special department for monitoring all domestic newspapers, the Presbiro. In 1929 Presbiro became Centralni Presbiro (Central Pressburo, hereafter CPB) and monitored also newspapers abroad, which made the CPB an Intelligence Service department. In addition, department(s) had a mission to supervise and monitor coverings of the radio at home and abroad. Also, CPB was used by the state to impose additional pressure over newspaper or radio editorials to write on their behalf. CPB had agents and correspondent offices across the Kingdom and in most important European and World metropolises. In cases when authorities were dissatisfied with what was written, a meeting between state local representatives, police and CPB correspondents would be held. The goal of these meetings were how to discipline the media and order them to “improve” their writing.

The Banus of the Primorska Banovina, Dr. Josip Jablanović, reported to the President of the government Milan Stojadinović about one such meeting on April 7, 1938. The Banus explained to Stojadinović that he held a conference with the state attorney, chief of police and CPB correspondents to “discipline the local press” and concluded that the result of their measures could already be seen.⁵¹ Above this, additional pressure on every opposition newspapers was eminent. The editorials were under surveillance, distribution was obstructed, issues were banned, and all in the service of guarding a centralistic unitaristic regime of power. During the dictatorship censorship became so sharp that some events managed to stay secret even to the people living nearby.⁵²

The Constitution of 1921 strengthened the centralistic polity of the Kingdom as well as the position of the king. All mentioned civil rights were soon after bespread by the *Law of protection of public safety and organization in the state*. In reality this law became important as the fundamental law. Proof that the Constitution in reality meant very little was given in 1929 when the King abolished it. It could be said that the role of the Constitution in the Kingdom was simply of decoration need.⁵³ The above mentioned examples of violations of the Constitution represented the people’s everyday living. For the people who were outside the protected regime’s loyal class, that living was filled with constant fear, violence and suppression. Society, which was oppressed with a number of problems, from economical to nationalist ones, found itself dug into a hollow of two kinds. These two consisted of those with the Belgrade regime of centralistic tendency and those who were against it. In this collision what most marked the everyday life of the Kingdom SHS/Yugoslavia 1918-1941 undoubtedly were varieties of the state repression.

⁵¹ AJ 37, Zbirka Milana Stojadinovića (Milan Stojadinović Collection), 49-447.

⁵² Report of U.S. Consul in Zagreb Egmont C. von Tresckov to J. D. Prince from August 11, 1932, NARA, M 1203, Roll 1, Document No. 860h.00/582.

⁵³ I. Dobrivojević, *Državna represija u doba diktature*, p. 60.

Repression in Political Life of the Kingdom SHS/Yugoslavia

In 1933 when U.S. Legate J. D. Prince was explaining why Yugoslavia still held, he concluded: "Yugoslavia is held by a double fear: first, of "all the King's horses and all the King's men", and second, of what might happen at present if an internal scission were to take place."⁵⁴ Throughout the existence of the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia two battles were fought, one for centralism and one for the anticentralistic polity. King Aleksandar Karađorđević was the key role in keeping the authoritarian polity in power, which lasted throughout his life. Ultimate authoritarianism and autocracy lasted from 1929 till 1937 when under the government of Milan Stojadinović and the regentship, led by Prince Pavle Karađorđević, some traces of democratization could be seen.

An insuperable barrier to more democratic development of the Kingdom was set already at the beginning of new state and was indicated by the supremacy of the Serbian prefix. It was a result of the widely spread opinion at the time that Serbian statehood must not be drowned in the new state.⁵⁵ This idea was not changed even when the king completely turned his devotion to making an integral Yugoslav people. During one conversation with U.S. Legate J. D. Prince in 1931 former Legate of the Kingdom of SHS in Washington, D.C. (1918-1922) Slavko Grujić told an interesting statement of King Aleksandar and his present regime: "I am opposed to all this Yugoslav nonsense. The country MUST be Greater Serbia and the Serb alone must dominate. That was the intention of having Karageorgevich as King."⁵⁶

A leading part in polity making, besides the king there were two major political parties of Serbian auspice: Radicals (Peoples Radical Party) and their opponents Democrats (Democratic Party). Among Radicals two fractions existed, one around Nikola Pašić and the other of Stojan Protić. Nikola Pašić advocated the autocratic Russian polity making while Stojan Protić was much for more restrained centralism along a British model.⁵⁷ Eventually Stojan Protić became a party dissident after realizing how harsh was the developing centralism. As well as seeing what hard repression was doing to Serbian democratic ideas.⁵⁸

The Democratic Party also wasn't immune to factionism. For example, Svetozar Pribičević left the Democrats and organized a new party, The Inde-

⁵⁴ Report of John D. Prince to the State Secretary from August 25, 1933. NARA, M 1203, Roll 2, Document No. 860H.00/651.

⁵⁵ I. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, pp. 162-163; Pieter Troch, "Yugoslavism Between Two World Wars: indecisive Nation building", *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 38 (2010), No. 2: 227-244, 228.

⁵⁶ Report of J. D. Prince to the Secretary of State from July 14, 1931. NARA, M 1203, Roll 1, Document No. 860h.00/498.

⁵⁷ I. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, p. 168.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 136.

pendent Democratic Party (Samostalna demokratska stranka). His main goal was an eager fight for a unitaristic state organization.⁵⁹ Intolerance to everyone who were not behind the IDP program IDP was expressed in a furiously. IDP had authoritarian characteristics of which the proof was the organizing of its combat squads, the Organization of the Yugoslav Nationalists (ORJUNA). ORJUNA had a mission to bowl over every one proclaimed by them as state enemy. These squads founded in 1921 immediately became a helping force to the gendarmerie and police. During this time Svetozar Pribičević, the leader of IDP held the office of the Minister of Interior.⁶⁰ Beside these units IDP disposed of some other forces with paramilitary characteristics. For example, in a juxtaposition to the Stjepan Radić's influence in Banovina, Svetozar Pribičević's brother Milan Pribičević organized some 15 000 Serbian people there.⁶¹ Besides the organized units of ORJUNA and its great influence among Croatian Serbs, IDP had pretention to the people from the army. This fact pushed the Party into additional conflict with the Radical Party, which had the same intention. The problem burst when IDP entered the traditionally Radical base, among the Salonica volunteers and Chetniks who both enjoyed privileged position in the new state. This quiet war smoldered for years and most visible traces of it was their mutual fight for the influence over the Ministry of Interior during which members of the Chetnik organization also were helping force into being a state repressive apparatus.

By 1929 the Kingdom of SHS had twenty-four governments. During this period the position of the Minister of Interior served fourteen people through eighteen mandates. The position was held the most (seven times) by Božidar Maksimović known also as the Stock (Radical Party). Four times the position was held by Svetozar Pribičević (Democratic Party), three times by Milorad Drašković (Democratic Party) while Milorad Vujičić (DP), Milan Srškić (RP) and Anton Korošec (Slovenian Peoples Party) were ministers for two times each. However, only one man remained in the office for more than two and a half years, Svetozar Pribičević who also was the first in the position of the Minister of Interior.

The U.S. Legate to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia J. D. Prince once wrote to the Secretary of the state that two things are keeping the Kingdom of Yugoslavia alive. First was the fear of the king's troopers and the second one was fear of Italian pretensions.⁶² Certainly, autocratic and totalitarian regimes are much relying

⁵⁹ More on the beginnings of Democratic Party see in: Branislav Gligorijević, *Istorija Demokratske stranke: 1919-1928*, (Belgrade, 2009).

⁶⁰ More on ORJUNA see in: B. Gligorijević, "Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista (Orjuna)", *Istorija XX veka*. Zbornik radova V, Beograd 1963, 315.-396, Stevo Đurašković, "Ideologija Organizacije jugoslavenskih nacionalista (ORJUNA)", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 43 (2011), No. 1: 225-249.

⁶¹ I. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, p. 187.

⁶² Report of John D. Prince to the State Secreatry from August 25, 1933. NARA, M 1203, Roll 2, Document No. 860H.00/651.

on the power of the state repressive system and such was the case with the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Most of the budget was allocated for the Ministry of the Army and Navy and the Ministry of Interior. This statement is confirmed by the number of state officials and employees. For example, in 1931 out of all state officials there was 17, 82 % of those working for the Ministry of Interior. Only a year later their portion increased to 20, 44 %, while the percentage of the active officers and soldiers was a total of 28,05 %. These indicators continued in the years that followed, so that the number of uniforms (both from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Army and Navy) made around half of complete state employees.

Data of the state budget from the era of dictatorship reveals how the regime survived for such a long time. It reposed on three pillars, Ministry of the Army and the Navy, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Education. By comparing the budgets of these three ministries it is visible that almost half of the state budget went for their sake. Such amounts became a standard for the whole period of the dictatorship, and was even increased. For example, during budget year 1930/1931 for the named three ministries went 47, 9 % of the budget totals.⁶³ A year later it increased to 50 %, during fiscal year 1932/1933 it was 52,1 % in order to the last year of the King Aleksandar regime 1934 this amount was just a bit smaller, of 51,3 %.⁶⁴

It is important to say that these years were significantly difficult to live through because of the global economic crisis's influence on a weak agricultural Yugoslavia. It hit the Kingdom so much that in the year 1931 export was 33 % and import around 31 % lesser than the year before.⁶⁵ Cash was constantly lacking. Whatsoever, even in those circumstances the majority of the budget went for making the Integral Yugoslav men and for keeping the army and the police within the regime. Comparing the elements within the repressive apparatus it is visible that the army was the base of the regime while police and gendarmerie played a less important role. During the dictatorship this slightly changed, also. Investments in the Ministry of the Interior increased especially between 1932 and 1934 when around 13 % of the total budget was gone for the ministry named.⁶⁶ Comparing with around 8 % from the year before this represented significant increases.⁶⁷ During the same time funding to the army decreased by about 10 %. During this time army was receiving around 30 % of the total budget. In such an environment it was surprising that between 1932 and 1934 (in the years when the police system was strengthened) the army was given just 18 % state budget's.

⁶³ *Statistički godišnjak 1930*, vol. II, (Belgrade, 1933), p. 457.

⁶⁴ *Statistički godišnjak 1931*, vol. III, (Belgrade, 1934), p. 457., *Statistički godišnjak 1932*, vol. IV, (Belgrade, 1934), p. 466., *Statistički godišnjak 1933*, vol. V, (Belgrade, 1935), p. 450.

⁶⁵ F. Tuđman, *Hrvatska u monarhističkoj Jugoslaviji*, Vol. 2, p. 61.

⁶⁶ *Statistički godišnjak 1932*, p. 466., *Statistički godišnjak 1933*, p. 450.

⁶⁷ *Statistički godišnjak 1930*, p. 457.

The budget of the Ministry of Education also increased during the King's Aleksandar dictatorship. Instead of the 11 % of the budget, which normally was given to this Ministry, between 1932 and 1934 it was increased to around 20 % of total budget.⁶⁸ After the assassination of King Aleksandar and relation towards repressive apparatus was changed. It seemed that exterior processes (beginning of the Second World War) defined the flow of money within the budget. The Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Education were no longer departments of great interest. The Ministry of Traffic and Ministry of the Army and Navy in the light of the preparations for the expected war became the most invested in ministries.⁶⁹

Polity Character

One of the definitions of the amount of democracy is achieved if three of interconnected elements are existing simultaneously: 1) Presence of the institutions and procedures through which citizens are capable of depriving their approval of the opposition politics and leaders, 2) presence of the mechanisms of controlling and suppressing authoritarian regime, 3) guarantee of civil rights to all of the citizens without exception.⁷⁰ By correlating these values a quantitative amount of democracy can be viewed.

The process of choosing the executive power can be distinguished into three forms, which are subordinate the way an authority arranged its devolution. In literature one can distinguish: 1) unregulated, 2) transitional 3) regulated.⁷¹ Evaluating only written forms and laws the Kingdom of SHS (1918-1921) had regulated ways of changing of chief executives. Regularity was determined by transition of the chief executives either by hereditary (king) or by competitive elections (government).

When evaluating democracy an important part represents the process of the competitiveness of the executive recruitment. This idea measures the possibility of the subordinates of becoming the superordinates. The named can be done by measuring three categories: 1) Selection 2) Transitional 3) how elections are arranged. The Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia had a selective way of competitiveness of its executive supraordinates. Selective way describes a category in which a chief executive was determined either by hereditary or by designation or by a

⁶⁸ *Statistički godišnjak 1932*, p. 466., *Statistički godišnjak 1933*, p. 450.

⁶⁹ *Statistički godišnjak 1936*, vol. VII, (Belgrade, 1937), p. 519., *Statistički godišnjak 1937*, vol. VIII, (Belgrade, 1938), p. 399, *Statistički godišnjak 1938-1939*, vol. IX, (Belgrade, 1939), p. 484., *Statistički godišnjak 1940.*, vol. X, (Belgrade, 1941), p. 465.

⁷⁰ Monty Marshall, Ted Robert Gurr, Keith Jagers, *Polity IV Project. Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2009. Dataset Users' Manual*, (e-book, Center for Systemic Peace, 2010), p. 14.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

combination of those. What this means is that the king (or the court). The king's central position in polity making was strengthened even more after the proclamation of the Vidovdan constitution in 1921. What had to increase parliamentarism in the state, even the democracy was bounded by it, because of the authorizing of the king's possibility of being supraordinate to the law.⁷²

Third category of measurement the democracy is Openness of the Executive Recruitment, i.e. in electoral process every subject had equal opportunity to achieve the chief executive power.⁷³ This category can be labeled as open only and just in the case that every citizen, without exception can enter the supraordinate sphere with equal opportunity.

According to Polity IV Project database the Kingdom of SHS up to 1929 was a state that had institutionalized recruitment of the chief executives (the government). During that period the way of entering the supraordinate sphere was a selective one, and openness of the executive recruitment dual (transitional) which was a kind of symbiosis of hereditary and designation of the chief executives. The king was chosen by heredity and was personally involved in the executive power by designation of the President of the government. The executive recruitment was done by selection and appointed one were only those loyal to the regime. The king's exclusive right to choose executive power was warranted by the Constitution. All these elements indicate that royal Yugoslav parliamentarism was characterized by authoritarian regime.⁷⁴

Under these conditions democracy in the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia never was really achieved. Expressed in quantitative values (from 0 to 10) the highest level of democracy (5) was achieved only during government of Dragiša Cvetković (known as the government Cvetković-Maček) from 1939-1941. The above mentioned value of 5 mean that during this period a kind of controlling of the executives existed either through legislative or the institutions of parliamentarism. The appearance of democracy was interconnected with the solving of the Croatian question by establishing the Banovina of Croatia. For most of the rest of the period the king had exclusive power in deciding executive poli-

⁷² F. Tuđman, *Hrvatska u monarhističkoj Jugoslaviji*, Vol. 1, p. 342.

⁷³ In the Polity Project it is called XROPEN. There are four different forms of the process: closed, dual executive – designation, dual executive-election and open. The closed type means the executive power is selected /determined through hereditary succession. The dual executive-designation type describes the society where the hereditary takeover of power exists, and the president of the government is appointed by the hereditary power bearer (of the court or other executive power body). The dual executive-election type is the situation when the leadership position is assumed hereditary with an appointment and electoral selection of the president of the government (executive power chief). The open type means that executive power bearer is chosen through elections, transitional arrangement between hereditary and appointed power or through parliamentary appointment.

⁷⁴ The term autocracy here means any social regime having a number of the stated political characteristics which determine it.

tics. A difference was made after the King Aleksandar assassination and during the last period of the government of Milan Stojadinović 1937-1939. Furthermore, the king's will or decision could not be suspended by any of the law based argument and using acts and decrees in governing was common.

Since the implementation of the dictatorship in 1929 up to 1937 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had a restrictive system of participation in the executive government. The basic characteristic of this category was excluding of the major political groups and their replacement by a pseudo-political one. That was the case with creation of the uniformed state parties with authoritarian origins, the Yugoslav National Party (Jugoslavenska nacionalna stranka – JNS) and later the Yugoslav Radical Union (Jugoslavenska radikalna zajednica - JRZ). In addition, through these years the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was in a state of a repressed political competitiveness, i.e. every sign of political opposition was immediately suppressed and, except the government one, no political party was allowed. According to the Polity IV Manual when a state being in a repressed polity category, as the Kingdom Yugoslavia was at the time, mean that it stands for a “totalitarian party systems, authoritarian military dictatorships, and despotic monarchies”.⁷⁵

By entering the government in 1935 Milan Stojadinović made slight changes in losing the regime. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia entered a suppressed competitiveness of participation. This meant that some political opposition was allowed, i.e. was existing and outside government. However, that still meant that the government kept surveillance over opposition groups by enforcement of the repressive system. In reality HSS was allowed to act and exist but was banned from the political arena. Keeping the opposition out was enabled through oppression, like massive arrests, censorship of the press and even political murders. Considering this category improvement was reached only under the Cvetković and Vladko Maček government after 1939. During their administration the Kingdom of Yugoslavia entered the competitive category of participation in political life. This state meant that relative stable political groups of different profiliation existed side by side and regularly fought for the people's affection.

By every characteristics of the regime the Kingdom SHS/Yugoslavia can be put in the traditional form of autocracy which was characterized by the sharp suspension of the competitive political opposition. These sorts of regimes, just like the regime of the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia recruited executives out of their own political elite.⁷⁶ Every of the above mentioned category can be measured, and by the Polity IV Project was put in the quantitative and what's more important a comparative world polity database. Mutual relations of the named

⁷⁵ M. Marshall, T. R. Gurr, K. Jagers, *Polity IV Project*, p. 26.

⁷⁶ See: Sonja Dujmović, “Prilog pitanju centralizma: učešće Srba u upravnim tijelima Bosne i Hercegovine 1918.-1941.”, *Prilozi* (Sarajevo), 37 (2008): 75-93.

categories of the achieved democracy or autocracy give a certain grade denoted as Polity.⁷⁷ If the Polity of the society has a negative value (-) then it is considered as mostly authoritarian regime. When the Polity grade is represented by a positive value (+) a society is considered a democratic one. Gradation is dispersed from -10 to +10 values. Relationship of the authority and democracy in the Kingdom SHS/Yugoslavia and surrounding countries are described in the following charts.

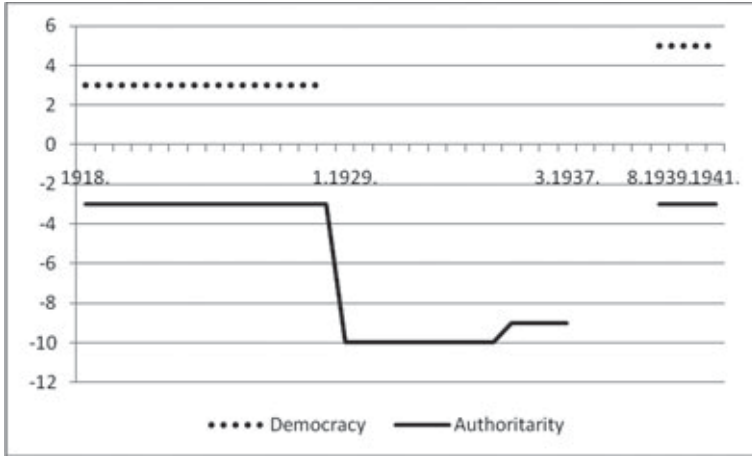


Chart 1- Levels of democracy and authority in the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia (Source: Polity IV Annual Time-Series 1800-2012 database)⁷⁸

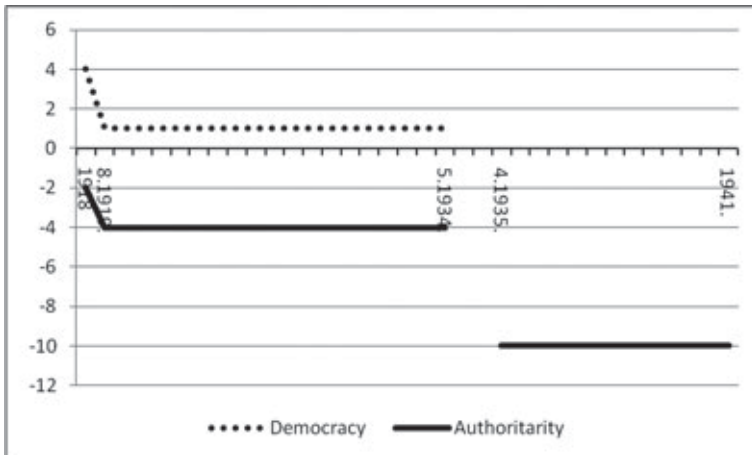


Chart 2 - Levels of democracy and authority in the Kingdom of Bulgaria (Source: Polity IV Annual Time-Series 1800-2012 database)

⁷⁷ Ecklestein and Gurr described this term as “subsets of the class of authority patens...”

⁷⁸ Polity IV Annual time-series 1800-2012 and Polity Ivd Polity case-format 1800-2012 database accessed at <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/inscr.htm> (August, 2013).

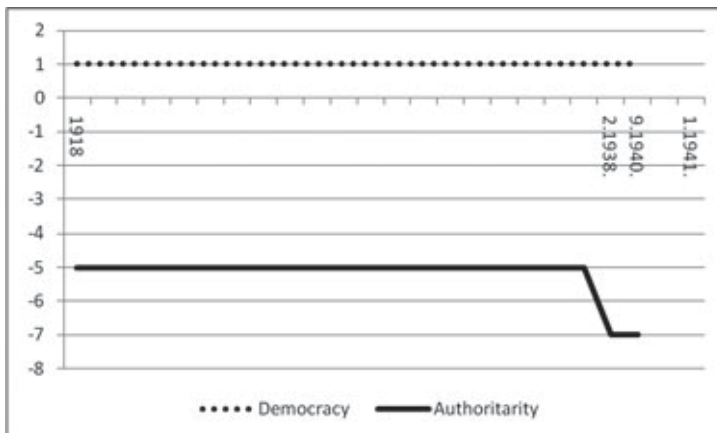


Chart 3 - Levels of democracy and authority in the Kingdom of Romania (Source: Polity IV Annual Time-Series 1800-2012 database)

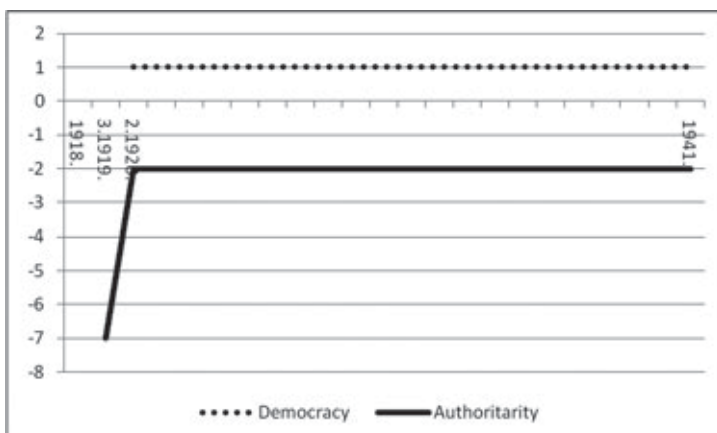


Chart 4 - Levels of democracy and authority in Kingdom of Hungary (Source: Polity IV Annual Time-Series 1800-2012 database)

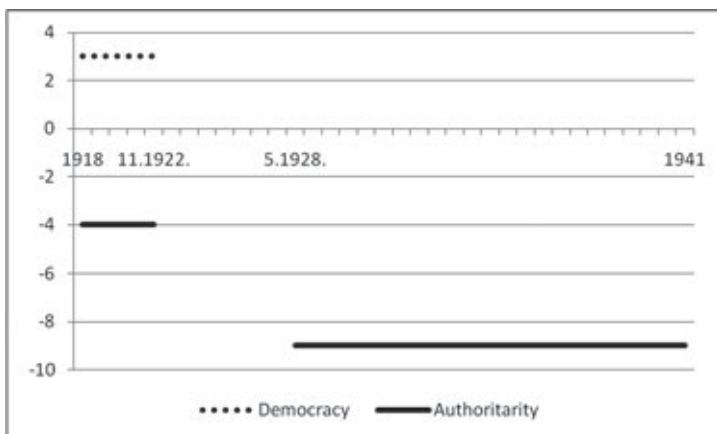


Chart 5 - Levels of democracy and authority in the Kingdom of Italy (Source: Polity IV Annual Time-Series 1800-2012 database)

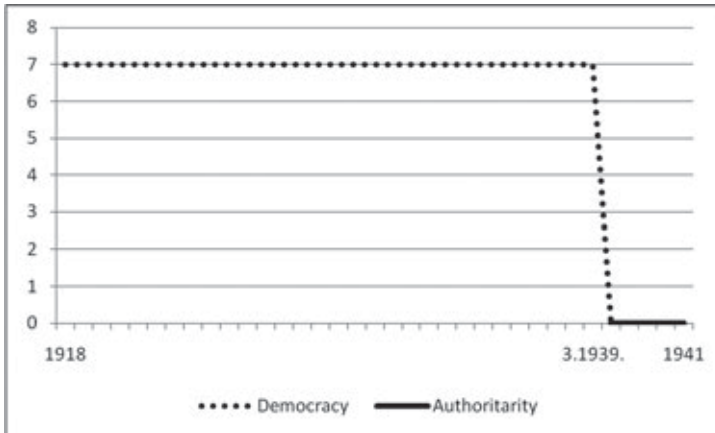


Chart 6 - Levels of democracy and authority in Czechoslovakia Republic
(Source: Polity IV Annual Time-Series 1800-2012 database)

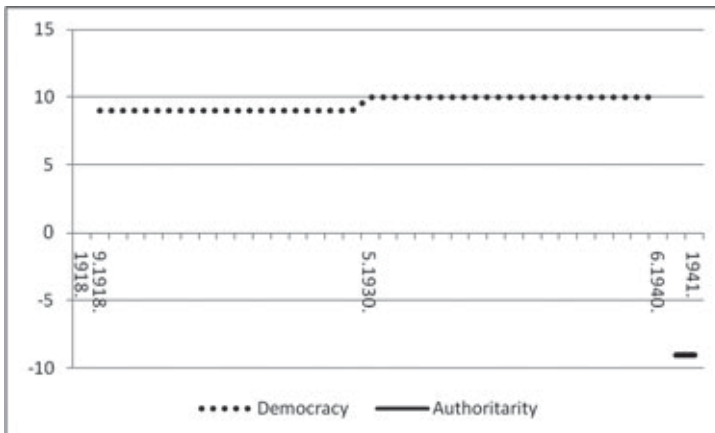


Chart 7 - Levels of democracy and authority in France Republic
(Source: Polity IV Annual Time-Series 1800-2012 database).

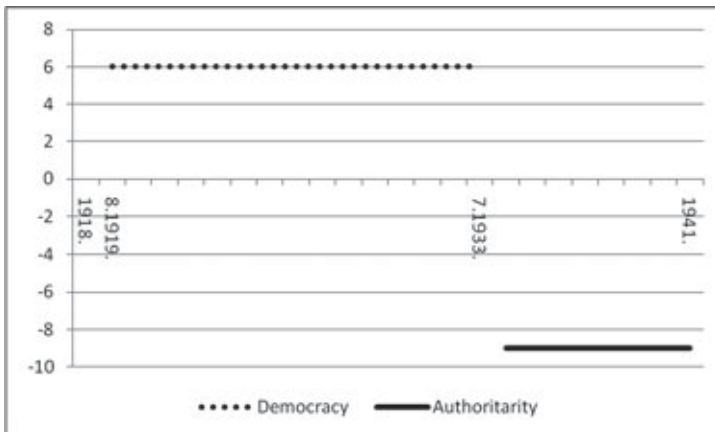


Chart 8 - Levels of democracy and authority in German Reich
(Source: Polity IV Annual Time-Series 1800-2012 database)

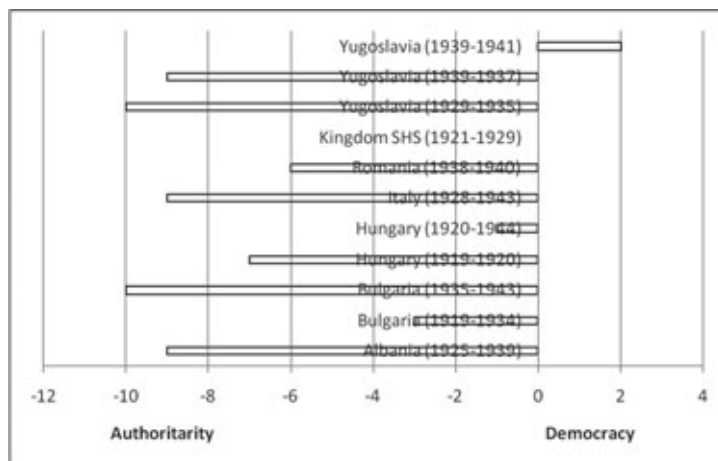


Chart 9 – Polity case formats of the Kingdom SHS/Yugoslavia and the surrounding states 1918 - 1941 (Source: Polity IVd Polity-Case Format 1800 - 2012 database)

The charts above show that authoritarian regime of the king Aleksandar Karađorđević was not a surprise considering its surrounding neighbors. Royal Yugoslavia was surrounded by almost equally authoritarian regimes. From these Yugoslavia sometimes learned, and sometimes it tutored its authoritarian knowledge. After WWI out of 29 European countries in only 3 of them an undemocratic regime existed. In less than twenty years later the number of the authoritarian/totalitarian regimes was seventeen.⁷⁹ Over all in Southeastern Europe the dictators were in power. Power of parliaments in these countries was equal to nothing, and constitutions were outlawed. In such a manner Albania under King Ahmed Zogu experienced an authoritarian regime by 1928. Yugoslavian King Aleksandar took personal control over the state from 1929. Bulgarian King Boris copied his regime in 1934. Romanian King Karol suppressed parliamentarism in 1938, and Greece underwent authoritarianism between 1936 and 1940 under Colonel Ioannis Metaxas.⁸⁰

In Italy a totalitarian Fascism was developed from the early 1920s. Austria terminated with democracy in the beginning of the 1930s under the governments of Dr. Engelbert Dolfuss (1932-1934) and of Kurt Schuschnigg (1934-1938).⁸¹ Waves of authoritarianism wasn't resisted in Hungarian society either, which experienced it under Miklós Horthy (1920-1944).⁸² Authoritarian regime in the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia can't be researched as a case study only, and this is not surprising. The Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia was surely a state, which experienced the regime, which eventually took control of more than half a continent.

⁷⁹ Stephen J. Lee, *European Dictatorships: 1918-1945*, 3rd ed. (New York, 2008), pp. I-II.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. I-II.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 307-308.

Conclusion

- The Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia was created by unification of the nations that, by that moment, existed independently in different political surroundings. In addition, what kept the interconnection of the nations away was the fact that the Kingdom of Serbia represented the victorious and the State of SHS stood for the defeated one.
- Formally, the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia represented a parliamentary monarchy with given Constitution(s) (with exception 1929-1931). However, during the whole period of existence the polity of the state was under intensive authoritarian regime.
- The basic form of autocratic regimes is that one is relying on the repressive system. The Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia was not an exception and within the system included the whole state administrative apparatus by encouraging wide denunciation and spying.
- By comparison of the Kingdom SHS/Yugoslavia with its surrounding states it is notable that similarities of the regimes can be perceived. In this way similar regimes existed in Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Italy and Albania.
- Considering the value of the polity four periods can be defined in the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia. The first period lasted from the moment of creation until introducing the dictatorship. A constant characteristic of this period was fight between centralistic and anticaltristic political forces. Under the surface this fight deprived the collision of the Serbian and Croatian national policies. Using the repressive system over anticaltristic efforts of major Croatian auspice made the situation of latent violence of Serbian repression on Croatian people as the main characteristic of this polity interval.
- The second period lasted during the king's dictatorship (1929-1934) introduced a strict authoritarian regime. According the Polity IV Project database the Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Bolshevik Russia had slightly lenient authoritarian/totalitarian regimes.
- The third period lasted from the assassination of the King Aleksandar in 1934 until the fall of the Milan Stojadinović's Cabinet in February of 1939. Authoritarian regime was in power but with some changes in the sense of the intensity of the repression. Under the regency of the Prince Pavle Karađorđević the regime used a slightly milder repression on its opponents with introducing of certain democratic categories in the polity.
- The fourth period lasted from the moment of the Dragiša Cvetković's Cabinet in February 1939 until the Military coup d'état under General Dušan Simović on March 27, 1941. During this period the solving of the Croatian question began and the Banovina of Croatia was established as a result of the Serbo – Croatian talks. Parallely, the democratic characteristics of the Kingdom polity for the first time overcame its authoritarian categories.

In der Gesellschaft von Delinquenten aus der Nachbarschaft. Politisches Regime im Königreich der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen/Jugoslawien 1918-1941

Zusammenfassung

Königreich der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen (weiter im Text: Königreich SHS) bzw. Königreich Jugoslawien existierte drei und zwanzig Jahre, von 1918 bis 1941. Dieser Staat wurde in der genannten Periode von ständigen politischen Krisen und starker politischer Repression gekennzeichnet. Eben der Herrschaftsmodus politischer Eliten war die Hauptursache sämtlicher Unstabilität des Königreichs SHS/Jugoslawien. Deswegen ist die Darstellung der Merkmale des politischen Regimes wichtig fürs Verstehen der Genese seiner Krise und Unstabilität.

Die Gesellschaft des Königreichs SHS/Jugoslawien war in sehr hohem Maß autoritativ. Im Beitrag wurden die Resultate des Projektes Polity IV berücksichtigt, das vergleichende Angaben über Merkmale von politischen Regimes in der Welt und über ihre Veränderungen zwischen den Jahren 1800 und 2010 liefert. Nach den im Rahmen dieses Projektes gesammelten Angaben überstieg das Niveau der Demokratie im Königreich der SHS/Jugoslawien einigermaßen das Niveau der autoritären Verwaltung erst in den letzten zwei Jahren seines Bestehens, also von 1939 bis 1941.

Aus dem Vergleich der politischen Verwaltung des Königreichs SHS/Jugoslawien mit den Nachbarstaaten ergibt sich, dass sie nicht außerordentlich ist, das heißt, dass autoritäre Herrschaftsweise von Aleksandar Karađorđević weder erstaunlich noch unerwartet in diesem Teil Europas war. Die politische Einrichtung des Königreichs SHS/Jugoslawien zeigt die damalige kennzeichnende Richtung europäischer sozial-politischer Bewegungen, als sich unmittelbar vor dem Beginn des Zweiten Weltkrieges mehr als die Hälfte des Kontinents in totalitären oder autoritären Regimes befand.