CROATIA'S PEASANT MARTYR

The death of Stefan Raditch, idolized leader of the Peasants party in Jugoslavia, has set up a parliament at Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, in opposition to the national parliament (Skupshtina) of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes at Belgrade, revives the fear of a breakdown of this composite post-war State, if not war again in the troubled Balkans. Raditch was wounded during a session of the Skupshtina when five other deputies were shot, two of them fatally. His death some two months later brought out extraordinary scenes of mourning set for a period of three weeks, during which, however, demonstrations were forbidden. King Alexander's government offered an official funeral, but the Croatians refused. Then the Skupshtina, in the absence of practically all Opposition members, took occasion to formally ratify the Nettuno treaty with Italy, against which Raditch's party is bitterly opposed, and therewith was prorogued. The Nettuno pact gives Italy colonization privileges of land ownership within thirty miles of the coast of the Adriatic. These lands are a part of the ancient Croatian Kingdom, and the Cleveland Plain Dealer reminds us that "of all the Yugoslav peoples, the Croats have been most bitterly anti-Italian." This sharpens the question of Serbian domination under which the Raditch party insist that other constituent members of the kingdom are being sacrificed, and stand out for larger home rule.

British correspondents visualize the situation for us as another Sinn Fein-Ireland in the Balkans. According to the London Morning Post, the death of Raditch, the Peasants party leader, is of "incalculable consequence, not only to Jugoslavia, but to the whole edifice of European peace." The shot which wounded Raditch brought the Balkan volcano to the verge of eruption." The London correspondent of the New York Herald Tribune writes:

"The political issue is no longer between the Government and the Opposition, but between Belgrade and the united political parties electively representing the whole Croatian people and the Serbian minorities inhabiting the Croatian, Slavonian, and Dalmatian frontiers—the historically independent Croatian Kingdom, with traditions going back 1,000 years.

The Croats now have organized a parliament of their own in rebuilding the old National Assembly, the Zabor, and thereby announced to the world that the proceedings of the 'rump' parliament in Belgrade were illegal and demanded a fundamental change in the constitution of the kingdom.

"The defiance of the Zabor at Zagreb is already being met by Belgrade by the threat of armed forces to enforce the centralized constitution adopted in 1921. With the scales hanging perilously poised between repression and negotiation, it remains to be seen whether the Anglo-Irish crisis will be restaged in Jugoslavia."

Raditch was, perhaps, the most extraordinary person in Balkan politics, writes Dorothy Thompson, one of the New York Evening Post's foreign correspondents:

"A peasant with the face, the manners, the mind, and the methods of a peasant, Raditch spoke for the peasant. All his life he championed the cause of the peasant, fearless, unscrupulously, adored by his followers and hated passionately by his opponents.

"Before the war Raditch maintained a running battle with the Austro-Hungarian Government in favor of the Croatians. He agitated for full suffrage for them, warred against property qualifications, and demanded local autonomy. Arrested six times, he was thrown into prison on no fewer than seventeen separate occasions.

"When, in November, 1918, the Croatian National Council voted for union with Serbia, Raditch cast his vote in favor of the creation of a South Slav State. He entered the Opposition immediately after the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croatia, and Slovenes became a reality.

"As Raditch agitated ceaselessly in favor of Croatia's breaking away from Serbia as an independent republic, or at least as an autonomous Federal State, his party rapidly gained strength.

"For five years Raditch matched his strength against that of Pashitch, the 'grand old man' of Serbia. The political life of Jugoslavia was dominated by the duel between Pashitch, the boss of the Serbs, and Raditch, the boss of the Croats. Neither was burdened overmuch by scruples; each fought a 'struggle'—to the bitter end. Finally, in 1924, Raditch threw caution to the winds and went to Moscow to bid for Bolshevist support against the Serbs.

"The Government answered by abolishing the Croatian Peasant party and arresting Raditch on high treason charges. Freed by court, he was rearrested and reacquitted by the Supreme Court. During the course of the proceedings he had been held in prison for more than eight months.

"Suddenly changing his tactics, Raditch, in November, 1925, decided to cooperate with his enemies and accepted the portfolio of education in the Jugoslav Cabinet. But the peace was short-lived, the Croatian leader leaving the Cabinet the following April after a serious break between the Croats and the Serbs.

"So bitter did the feeling finally become that an attempt was made on Raditch's life."

"In June, 1926, Raditch veered again, and there was another short period of cooperation between the two factions. In the latter part of the year, however, open war was declared again and this time the breach was not healed."

The Skupshtina, before prorogation, voted to withdraw parliamentary immunity from two deputies under arrest for complicity in the "assassinations," and the "firm but conciliatory attitude" of the Government toward the Separatist Peasants party, set forth in the recent speech from the throne, is summarized by Henry W. Dunn in the Washington Star as follows:

"The dissidents were reminded that Jugoslavia, being a parliamentary State, the Skupshtina was the only body by which national issues could be decided. The Opposition would be welcomed back whenever they should see fit to return. Meanwhile, however, government and Skupshtina would carry on, using 'whatever means might be necessary to maintain the constitution.' In particular, the necessary decisions respecting international relations would be taken. (In other words, the Nettuno conventions would be ratified.) To base (as the Opposition were doing) a demand for new general elections upon the unfortunate affair of June 20 (when a fanatical deputy shot down several Croatian Peasant party deputies at a meeting of the Skupshtina) was sheer nonsense; that act was in no sense representative.

"The Government contemplated important decentralization of administration; but this decision should not be interpreted as weak yielding to pressure from the Opposition."
LABOR'S NEUTRAL STRATEGY

Neutral with a string to it, the non-partisan political policy announced by the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor in the Presidential campaign, is called "wise," "logical," "sensible," "legitimate," "useful," and "commendable" by a multitude of press commentators. This pronouncement followed similar action by executives of the unaffiliated railroad brotherhoods. While deciding not to endorse any Presidential candidate, the chiefs of the railroad organizations left the constituent bodies free to take individually whatever action they may deem fit, but the Labor-Follette-Progressive Republican ticket in Wisconsin and nine Senatorial candidates were specifically endorsed. The executive council of the American Federation of Labor, announcing continued adherence to a non-partisan policy, declared that the political committee would submit all information regarding platforms, candidates, and their record to Federation members, and would "await with very great interest" the expressions of each of the Presidential candidates in their speeches of acceptance, "reserving to ourselves a final decision regarding our future policy during the remainder of the campaign."

The labor correspondent of the Consolidated Press Association, Chester M. Wright, reports that:

"Proponents of an Al Smith endorsement fought hard for their proposal, and were defeated, not by friends of Herbert Hoover, but by friends of Smith. It is that fact that makes a certain the conclusion that the day of openly going to the support of one ticket against another is over. . . . Emphasis is lent to this determination when it is known that at least a clear majority of the council members are friends of the New York Governor, and probably will vote for him.

The friends of Mr. Hoover at no time sought an endorsement, holding out for a return to absolute non-partisanship, under which the records of candidates and the contents of platforms, in the light of labor's demands, are put before the voters for their own verdict. . . . With what is virtually a 'hands-off' policy in the Presidential fight, the labor campaign will become hottest in the congressional fights."

"There is no question that Governor Smith's labor record is entirely satisfactory on all points," writes John J. Lesary, Jr., labor correspondent of the New York World. "So also is Mr. Hoover's less extensive record," he adds, for Hoover "has befriended the miners; he went on record years ago as favoring the union as a public necessity, and the railroad groups remember his attempts to induce the Railway Executives Association to make a reasonable settlement of the shopmen's strike of 1922." Alto John J. Raaboh, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, is on record as an advocate of the five-day week, "beavering to line them up in behalf of either would simply react against the Federation. It is clear that the Federation learned its lesson four years ago when it supported Mr. La Follette." The Boston Herald points out that—

"The Gompers theory doubtless is right—that for labor to become merely another political party would weaken vastly the power labor possesses by virtue of its time-honored practice of standing out. Labor has probably gained far more by staying unorganized as a political party than would have been possible by the European method. Often it has been said that the labor leaders really are never able to deliver the labor vote, which no doubt is true—and a good thing, too—but it remains true, nevertheless, that men in elective office have always before them the necessity of duly considering 'the labor vote' in every campaign year, and the influence of organized labor has prevailed to obtain the passage of a vast mass of labor legislation in the State capitals and at Washington."

"The Lord knows that these labor leaders can find support enough" for deciding on neutrality, "in the lack of difference between the parties so far as their officially avowed plans and policies are concerned," remarks the New York Journal of Commerce. "But probably the La Follette 'fiasco' was the determining factor, according to that journal, which advises other organizations and individuals to take a leaf from the Federation notebook, for they simply can not deliver the votes."