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AN APPEAL
TO THE
PRESIDENT AND THE PEOPLE
OF THE
UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA
IN BEHALF OF
JUGOSLAV NATION

Supplementary Issue of
THE JUGOSLAV REVIEW
Official Organ of the Yugoslav Republican Alliance
3639 W. 26th Street, Chicago, Ill.
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To Woodrow Wilson,
The President of the United States,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

Mr. President:—

The undersigned duly authorized representatives of national organizations with a membership of over 300,000 Americans of Serb, Croat and Slovene origin, have this day assembled in Washington to express to you jointly their gratitude and confidence, at the same time voicing the sentiments of 500,000 more of their fellow men of like extraction not officially represented.

Just as deeply grateful as we are, just as highly confident are we that you are determined to let your lofty ideals and just principles be the controlling factors of the ultimate settlement of the Adriatic question.

The attached memoriam, respectfully submitted, voices our sentiments and convictions, based upon a thorough knowledge of the territories involved and the inhabitants therein and our desire to be as just and fair towards others as we want others to be toward us.

Only upon such basis can a lasting peace be established. That is the kind of peace of which you, honored Sir, have been the most potent and sincere advocate.

With the assurance of our gratitude and confidence we combine our sincere desire for your complete and speedy recovery and our pledge of unswerving allegiance and support.

Your most obedient servants,

THE JUGOSLAV REPUBLICAN ALLIANCE, Chicago.

(Jugoslovansko Republičansko Združenje)

By Etbin Kristan, Director and Chairman of Delegation.

By A. H. Skubic, Asst. Secretary and Secretary of Delegation.

THE JUGOSLAV SOCIALIST FEDERATION, Chicago

(Jugoslovanska Soc. Zveza)

By Matt Petrovčič, Representing,

SLOVENIC NATIONAL BENEFIT SOCIETY, Chicago

(Slovenska Narodna Podporna Jednota)

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(Jugoslovanska Podp. Zveza "Sloga")

By John J. Grgurevich, Representing.

SLOVENIC PROGRESSIVE BENEFIT SOCIETY, Chicago

(Slovenska Svobodom. Podporna Zveza)

By A. H. Skubic, Representing.

NATIONAL CROATIAN SOCIETY of Pittsburgh, Pa.

(Narodna Hrvatska Zajednica)

By Jos. Marohnić, President.

CROATIAN LEAGUE OF ILLINOIS, Chicago.

(Hrvatska Zajednica Illinois)

By Peter Badovinac, Treasurer.

CROATIAN FALCON SOCIETY "TOMISLAV",

By John J. Grgurevich, Representing.

SERB FEDERATION "SLOGA", New York,

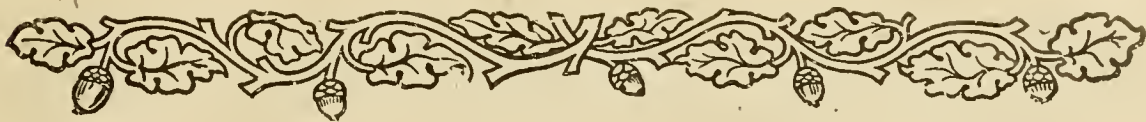
(Saves Sjedinenih Srba "Sloga")

By M. I. Pupin, President.

Washington, D. C. March 9th, 1920.

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THE problem of the Adriatic provinces, which affects the vital interests of the Yugoslavs and their young State, is evidently approaching some sort of a final solution. Under these circumstances Americans of Yugoslav birth, associated in the several Organizations, the names of which are signed to this Appeal, consider it their duty to call again to the attention of the President and the People of the United States, the territorial necessities of the nation from which they sprang and in whose welfare they are naturally deeply interested.

At the very outset we desire to state as emphatically as we can that the attitude of the Yugoslavs in reference to the disputed territories is not dictated by any ambition for national expansion or aggrandizement, but solely by sincere and unshakable belief in the justice and fairness of the territorial demands of Jugoslavia.

We also call the attention to the fact that the Adriatic question of today, as well as the other (so-called) Balkan questions of the past, which have disturbed the peace of the world during the last century, have been, and are the outgrowth, not so much of local conditions, as of interference and desire of conquest on the part of outside nations.

To be sure, there have been numerous controversies and disagreements among the various nationalities inhabiting the Balkans, but most of them could have been settled without difficulty, and none of them would have been dangerous to the peace of the world, had it not been for the intrigues of autocratic powers which were gazing with eager eyes upon the Balkans and trying to create disputes as a pretext for interference and annexation.

The history of these intrigues and their consequences is too well known to need repetition. They finally culminated in, and were the direct cause of the great war which resulted in sacrifices of life and treasure such as the world never witnessed before.

Would it not be reasonable to suppose that in view of the lessons of this war, further attempts at arbitrary annexation of Balkan territory by outside nations should be discouraged, alike in justice to the Balkan nations themselves, and in the interest of world peace?

The Yugoslav nation will not, and never can rest content and be satisfied with an arrangement under which a large part of it will be compelled to live under a foreign yoke. For centuries they opposed such conditions tenaciously, clung to their nationality and language, and maintained them against the ruthless domination of the Hapsburg dynasty. When the opportunity came to break away from the yoke of the oppressor, they enthusiastically embraced it, helped to disorganize the Austrian army and navy, and finally, rose in open revolt the very moment when it became apparent that there was chance of success. In the well known conference at Rome in the summer of 1917, the representatives of the Yugoslavs promised this aid to the Italians, and the Yugoslavs made their promise good. They expect the Italians to live up to their promise made at the same conference. Instead of that the Italians demand that a large portion of the Yugoslav nation be again subjected to a foreign yoke at the very moment, when, as the fruit of victory, liberty and self-determination should be the reward of the Yugoslavs.

We have nothing but sympathy for Italy's claims to that part of the Austrian monarchy, which was populated by Italians and which was torn from Italy by conquest, but we emphatically protest against Italy committing the same wrong against Jugoslavia which she so greatly and justly resented when it was committed by Austria against her.

The territory in dispute between Italy and Jugoslavia is overwhelmingly inhabited by Yugoslavs. To be sure, there are some cities included in this territory in which the Italians predominate. But, is it not likewise true that in the territory, which until this war, formed part of Italy and the annexation of which by Italy is not disputed by Jugoslavia, there are located many cities and districts in which Yugoslavs constitute a great majority?

Italy claims the provinces now in dispute by right of the London agreement, a secret compact which attempted to deal with the Yugoslavs and their territory on the old basis of conquest which had no consideration for the rights of the inhabitants of the conquered territory. As between Italy

and her allies on the one hand, and the central empires on the other hand, there might have been nothing wrong in an insistence upon the terms of this compact. But when the Jugoslavs rose in rebellion against the Austrian oppressor and the Austrian empire collapsed as a result of this rebellion then the Jugoslavs are eminently entitled to make a claim that the principle of self-determination be applied to them in the partition of the former Austrian empire. Besides, the call had gone forth to all the world that the great war against the central powers was a war for liberty and for the self-determination of oppressed nations. Jugoslavia had a right to suppose that this call was made honestly, and that those who issued the call, and became parties to it, would be bound by the principles announced in it. How then can Italy now revert to any supposed rights under the secret London agreement, the terms of which are contrary to the avowed aims of the world war on which Jugoslavia relied in joining forces with Italy and her allies for the overthrow of the Austrian and German monarchies.

The sacrifices offered by Jugoslavia for liberty and unity were out-right enormous in Serbia, whose martyrdom is known the world over. They were hardly less in the other territories inhabited by Jugoslavs. But the Yugoslav people never wavered in their determination. Before their eyes shone the bright light of liberty, and in their ears rang the glad gospel of democracy and self-determination of nations of which President Wilson had become the foremost apostle. These principles embodied the very fundamental political ideals for fulfillment of which the Jugoslavs had struggled for generations before the great war, as well as during the war, as much as it was possible under the hard conditions then prevailing, in the face of persecution, cruel internment of "suspects", martial law and innumerable executions for disaffection to the oppressor. Italy was more benefited by these sacrifices on the part of the Jugoslavs than any other nation engaged in the struggles against the central empires. What monstrous mockery of justice and principle would it be to permit now, Italy to perpetrate upon Jugoslavia the same kind of an outrage that she complained of against her late enemy, the Austrian empire?

Italy is the last nation on earth that could claim ignorance in respect to the conditions of the Austrian monarchy and concerning the fact that the Jugoslavs constituted a subjugated nation, yearning for liberty. The national struggles in the grotesque dual monarchy were too intense to escape observation by all the world. A voluminous literature about them was a matter of comment, and it would be an insult to Italian intelligence to suppose that Italy was ignorant of the national aspirations of the Jugoslavs. In fact, so much so was Italy aware of the desires of Jugoslavia to become independent that during the first month of the war the Italian press devoted special attention to the probability of a Yugoslav rebellion. Why then should Italy feign surprise at the stand which Jugoslavia took, after the war, for national unity, self-determination and liberty?

While Jugoslavia stands firmly in the defense of her rights against the infringements thereof by Italy, it should be understood that this stand does not in any way involve any enmity against Italy or against the Italians.

It was always as clear as day that the Jugoslavs and the Italians would become neighbors, who in many respects would have to depend one upon the other, and that both would derive great advantages from the elimination of antagonism. Not only that, but it was clear that under any fair adjustment of boundaries between these nations, there would remain certain fractions of nationals of each in the territory of the other. Consideration for these nationals, and the general advantages to be derived from friendly intercourse and commerce, constitute a bond of mutual friendship which is strengthened by many sympathies and ancient traditions.

But friendship between nations can not endure against deliberate aggression and manifest wrong, and nothing less is involved in the present attitude of Italy, in view of the overwhelming preponderance of Jugoslavs in the population of the disputed territory, which even Italy does no longer deny. This preponderance has been absolutely established by the oft repeated Austrian census, which in each instance was manipulated so as to show the least possible number of Jugoslavs, but nevertheless demonstrated each time their overwhelming preponderance, as it was well known to every expert of the Paris Peace Conference.

Now indeed, it has been claimed by the apologists for Italian aggression that whatever the nationality of the inhabitants of the disputed territory may be, they prefer to become subjects of Italy rather than to be embodied into the Yugoslav State. In support of this contention these apologists aver that the Jugoslavs by no means are a homogeneous people, but are divided by differences in language, customs and sympathy, so great, that really little affinity exists between the inhabitants of the disputed territory and the remainder of Jugoslavia.

As to this contention it may be conceded that for centuries Jugoslavia was politically divided by foreign rule into several distinct units. That these units were again subdivided into minor fractions; that all sorts of artificial barriers were set up for the purpose of estranging the various elements

of the nation from each other; that to a certain extent these schemes were successful, and have resulted in local linguistic differences, literature, customs and sympathy which will in a large extent persist even after national political unity has been attained.

Thus for instance, the Slovenes who occupy chiefly the western part of Jugoslavia, are now separated from the Croats and Serbs by local linguistic and literary differences which are the result of age-long division. But it by no means hinders the Slovenes from being enthusiastic supporters of Yugoslav political unity. In fact, it is precisely the Slovenes who are the most bitter antagonists of the proposed annexation of the disputed territory to Italy; this, for the reason that the vast majority of the Yugoslavs in this territory are Slovenes, and its annexation to Italy would involve the political separation of about thirty per cent of all Slovenes from Jugoslavia.

Italy herself knows this well, and for that reason has steadfastly rejected every proposition for a plebiscite, to be conducted under international supervision, by which any doubt of outsiders concerning the wishes of the inhabitants of the disputed territory, as to future political allegiance, could readily be removed.

Now, as to concrete consequences which are at stake for Jugoslavia in the proposed annexation of the disputed territory to Italy.

For the Slovenes it would involve the political severance of a population of about four hundred thousand from their total number of only about one and one-half millions,—enough to deal a crushing blow to the whole cultural and literary life of that unit of the Yugoslavs, which on account of its limited number, was always at a great disadvantage in the matter of literary production, but nevertheless attained an honorable position among cultured nations in arts, literature and general culture,—contrary to the false legends about the primitive condition of the Yugoslavs through which a malicious propaganda has endeavored to discredit them politically.

It should not be forgotten that for a long time to come the Slovenes will have to use the literary apparatus which they now possess, and that to cut off from these people, numbering now only a total of one and one-half million, almost one-third of their number, means to deal them a most cruel cultural blow and to reduce the chances for their cultural progress to a minimum.

While this blow would primarily be felt by the Slovenes, it would nevertheless re-act upon the whole cultural life of Jugoslavia. Furthermore, the political separation of so large a portion of the Yugoslav nation from its body, would involve a constant irritation of the whole nation, and would deflect a very large portion of its mental energies from their normal tasks to the maintenance of a perpetual agitation for the reunion of the lost provinces to the body of the nation.

Everybody in Europe knows how deeply such movements affected the whole mental life of France and Italy; and yet the number of Frenchmen and Italians who were politically separated from France and Italy by forcible annexations on the part of Germany and Austria, was proportionately much smaller than the number of Yugoslavs which would be separated from their own nation by the proposed forcible annexation of the disputed territory to Italy.

The direct economic consequences of the annexation of the disputed territory to Italy will be even more disastrous to Jugoslavia than its cultural effects. The interests involved are in fact, so large that it is quite evident that the desire of Italy for the annexation of this territory is founded chiefly on economic considerations.

The possession of the disputed territory involves in the first place the control and direct exploitation of large natural resources of the territory itself.

There are large deposits of coal and iron ore in the disputed territory which have been to some extent developed, but are susceptible of much greater development.

Large forests of excellent timber are also contained in the disputed territory, and the agricultural and pastoral wealth of the territory is very considerable.

After all, the most important economic consequences for Jugoslavia involved in the annexation of the disputed territory to Italy pertain to transportation and commerce. The proposed annexation does not only deprive Jugoslavia of the control of the railroads which have their terminals at Trieste, but also takes away from the new State the control of the major portion of the great double-track railway from Ljubljana (Laibach) to Rijeka (Fiume), and deprives it likewise of the sea terminal of the other great double-track railroad which leads from Zagreb (Agram) to Rijeka (Fiume).

Furthermore, the harbors at Trieste and Fiume are the only good harbors on the whole Eastern Adriatic coast, which are provided, and can be provided with first class railroad connections. Their possession involves not only a grip on the transportation system and commerce of Jugoslavia, but on that of the whole country beyond, in so far as an outlet to the Adriatic is concerned.

Considering the fact that Italy had nothing to do with the development of the means of the transportation of Yugoslavia and the country beyond; that free and untrammelled access to the sea is the first condition necessary for the sound economic development of any nation; that important questions will be involved between Yugoslavia and the country beyond in reference to transportation to the Adriatic; and that in respect to these Yugoslavia should not be hampered by interference of a third power, it is impossible to exaggerate the economic consequences involved for Yugoslavia in the control, by Italy, of her most important natural outlets and terminals.

Italy indeed is willing to concede to Yugoslavia a few southern seaports, which have poor railroad connections with the commercial and industrial centers of Yugoslavia.

To establish Yugoslavia as a nation and at the same time take away from her the full control of her principal means of communication would be a tragic irony. Under present day economic conditions, control of railroad terminals, and free access to the sea are among the most essential factors of sound economic life.

Italy has tried and is trying, to excuse her occupation of the disputed territory, her appropriation of its resources, and her incidental strangling hold on the commercial outlets to the Mediterranean, of Yugoslavia and of the immense territory beyond, by strategical considerations, on the ground that the occupation of this territory by Italy is necessary in order to secure the safety of her Northeastern boundary, and her control of the Adriatic. These excuses have no sound basis in actual conditions.

First of all, the former Austria, who was a menace to all her neighbors, is no more. Yugoslavia is a comparatively small state with no ambitions for territory beyond that in which her own nationals constitute a great majority. The possession of the territory now in dispute would satisfy her as far as her western boundaries are concerned. There would then be no reason why the future relations between Yugoslavia and Italy should not be most amicable and harmonious. Italy being so much stronger, in population, wealth and resources, than Yugoslavia it would be practically out of the question that Yugoslavia should ever attack Italy without the most flagrant provocation. Any such action would involve only the greatest failure for Yugoslavia. As to any attack from beyond the borders of Yugoslavia, Italy would be much better protected by a contended and friendly Yugoslavia than by the possession of a mere few additional mountain tops and deep rivers. The experiences of the last war in particular have demonstrated that in war, manpower, morale, training, technical knowledge and equipment are of infinitely greater importance than strategical position.

Again, this strategical argument ought to work both ways. If powerful Italy, in order to protect herself, immediately after the conclusion of a great war for liberty and justice, has to rob a weaker, friendly nation who joined with her in her struggle against the rapacious Hapsburgs, of part of her heritage, are not strategical advantages required for that weaker nation against such a neighbor?

Is control of the railroad from Laibach to Fiume, and the country to the west, dominating it more essential to the security of Italy from Yugoslavia, or to the security of Yugoslavia from Italy? Is the possession of the heights a few miles west from Upper Laibach, within gun range of Laibach, the capital of Slovenia, more essential to the security of Italy than that of Yugoslavia? These questions answer themselves. Many more might be asked of the same import, and to the same effect. It is plain as day that what is claimed as necessary for the safety of Italy, would be in fact a most serious and constant threat against Yugoslavia, amounting to military domination over the whole northwestern part of the country.

As to the Adriatic, Italy has announced the peculiar doctrine that she must control and dominate it. Upon what just foundation can any such claim be based? Are not the nations to the North and East as much entitled to share in free and untrammelled access to, and control of their side of the Adriatic as Italy? Did Italy dig the Adriatic Sea, or was it provided by Providence? Are the harbors and islands on the East coast of the Adriatic more essential to Italy than to Yugoslavia? Are they not in justice and equity, part and parcel of the Country of which they form a part and which they adjoin, and of the people which live in them?

By what right can Italy presume to project herself between Yugoslavia and the outside world, and seek to control the communications of Yugoslavia, and the countries to the North and East of her, and shut them off from untrammelled intercourse with friendly nations beyond the seas.

We resent such attitude and presumption not only on behalf of the land of our birth, but particularly also as citizens of these great United States, whose interests are vitally affected whenever any power attempts to interfere with their free and untrammelled communication, commercial or otherwise, with other nations.

It is to be rightfully assumed that the people of Yugoslavia will never voluntarily acknowledge the present unjust pretensions on the part of Italy, and that if their government should be forced to

abide by them for the time being, or to become a party to a pact by which they are recognized, the Yugoslav people will in all probability never consider such a pact as morally binding upon them. A Yugoslav Irredenta will unquestionably spring into existence, and the sentiment of outraged right, permeating the Yugoslav nation, will make a fertile ground for incitement too dangerous adventure.

Let there be no mistake about the fact that a just and proper settlement of the controversy between Italy and Jugoslavia is of the utmost importance, not only for the welfare of Jugoslavia, but also for the welfare of Italy and for the peace of Europe, and, further, that if the Italian rule is established in the dominating part of the Balkans, the seed of the disagreement is sown among the world powers, which at present may seem disinterested, but will sooner or later show the sign of interest, if Italy should happen to have a special position, constantly provoking imperialistic tendencies. Italy's demands on the eastern shores of the Adriatic is a serious question, but of greater importance is the question of what will she be forced to demand as soon as her foot is planted on the Balkan soil. Her first step can not be the last, even though her present rulers may have no farther reaching aims. Italy's demands point with clarity to her ambitions for a complete and undeniable control of the Adriatic, and should she succeed in this, economic interests will force her to get and keep the control of the hinterland, without which she could not have much benefit from the control of the sea.

It is for this reason that we consider it our solemn duty to give again expression to the foregoing considerations before the pending controversy is finally disposed of. It is our most sincere desire that a strong foundation be laid for future amicable relations between nations, especially between Jugoslavia and Italy. We are firm in our conviction that we are asking for nothing but what is fair and right. If the irrefutably just demands of the Yugoslavs are granted they will be completely satisfied and will eagerly concentrate all their powers on the urgent work of political, economic, technical and cultural reconstruction at home which will furnish an ample field for the employment of all their powers. But only from a basis of justice, real friendship and mutual trust can such a condition be evolved, and only on such a basis can the glorious ideals be realized for which humanity has bled and died.

Washington, D. C. March 9th, 1920.

THE JUGOSLAV REPUBLICAN ALLIANCE:

By ETBIN KRISTAN,

Director and Chairman of Delegation.

By A. H. SKUBIC,

Asst. Sec'y and Secretary of Del.

THE JUGOSLAV SOCIALIST FEDERATION:

By MATT. PETROVČIČ,

Representing.

SLOVENIC NATIONAL BENEFIT SOCIETY:

By VINCENT CAINKAR,

Supreme President.

By MATT. PETROVČIČ,

President Board of Trustees.

SOUTH SLAVONIC CATHOLIC UNION:

By GEO. L. BROZICH,

Supreme Treasurer.

SLAVONIC WORKINGMEN'S BENEFIT UNION:

By WILLIAM SITTEK,

Member Supreme Committee.

SOUTH SLAVONIC BENEFIT UNION "SLOGA":
By JOHN J. GRGUREVICH,
Representing.

SLOVENIC PROGRESSIVE BENEFIT SOCIETY:
By A. H. SKUBIC,
Representing.

NATIONAL CROATIAN SOCIETY:
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Supreme President.

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By PETER BADOVINAC,
Treasurer.

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By JOHN J. GRGUREVICH,
Representing.

SERB FEDERATION SLOGA:
By M. I. PUPIN,
Supreme President.



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