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The Russian Secret Service and King Alexander Obrenović of Serbia (1900–1903)

Abstract: The period of 1900–1903 saw three phases of cooperation between the Russian Secret Service (Okhrana) and King Alexander Obrenović of Serbia. It is safe to say that the Secret Service operated in Serbia as an extended arm of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, i.e. of its diplomatic mission in Belgrade. Its goal was to fortify the position of Russia in Serbia after King Alexander's wedding and the departure of his father, ex-King Milan (who abdicated in 1889 in favour of his minor son), from the country. The Serbian King, however, benefitted little from the cooperation, because he did not receive assistance from the Secret Service when he needed it most. Thus, the issue of conspiracy against his life was lightly treated throughout 1902 until his assassination in 1903. In the third and last period of cooperation, from the beginning of 1902 until the King's assassination on 11 June 1903,¹ the Russian ministries of Internal and Foreign Affairs forbade the agents to receive money from the Serbian King and relieved them of any duty regarding the protection of his life.

Keywords: King Alexander Obrenović, Serbia, Russia, Russian Secret Service, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Germany's interest in King Alexander Obrenović's marriage arrangements in 1900 precipitated not only the King's decision to marry Draga Mašin, a former lady-in-waiting to his mother, but also Russia's decision to forestall the consequences of King's prospective marriage to a German princess. The issue of the King's wedding with Princess Alexandra of the German House of Schaumburg-Lippe, in the summer of 1900, was almost settled. A preferred choice of the King's father, Princess Alexandra had the advantage of being related to both the German and the Habsburg Court.² This marriage would have raised the question of a long-term German influence in Serbia and the Balkans. It would have also strengthened the position of former King Milan, which would have certainly been an unwelcome outcome for Russia. Therefore, Russia kept a watchful eye on the course

¹ New Style dates are used in the text body, unless otherwise specified.

² Urgings from Berlin and Vienna that the young King got married became more and more frequent in early 1900. The King claimed that marriage arrangements were nearly completed and that his father would finalize them during his visit to Vienna that summer. V. Djordjević, *Kraj jedne dinastije*, 3 vols. (Belgrade: Štamparija D. Dimitrijevića, 1905–1906), vol. 3 (1906), 457–464, 560, correspondence between Djordjević and Milan Bogičević dated April and May 1900; Arhiv Srbije [Archives of Serbia, hereafter AS], V. J. Marambo Papers, f. 78, Č. Mijatović to V. Djordjević, 04/16 January 1900.

of events and stepped in at a decisive moment. Without Russian support, the King would have hardly been able to carry through his intention to marry Draga Mašin. Namely, this marriage, widely deemed controversial and inappropriate, was not unlikely to throw the country into international isolation.³

During former King Milan's stay in Serbia, from October 1897 to July 1900, it could be inferred from Russia's conduct that no agreement on the division of the Balkans into spheres of influence between Russia and Austria-Hungary had been reached. Milan was the cause of friction between the two great powers, all the more so as Russia believed him to be an Austrian agent. This made it extremely difficult for the King to conduct foreign affairs, since his foreign policy relied upon both great powers and their agreement of 1897 on joint activity in the Balkans.⁴ The ministers of foreign affairs of the two great powers spoke of the former King as an obstacle to their mutual relations, but neither of them abandoned his own viewpoint.⁵ Russia used various forms of pressure on Serbia, but failed to "drive" the King's father out of the country.⁶ St. Petersburg did not con-

³ Draga Mašin, neé Lunjevica (1866–1903), was a widow and had no children from her previous marriage. From 1892 to 1897 she served as a lady-in-waiting to Queen Natalie, King Alexander's mother.

⁴ The agreement rested on the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Balkans. In case of change, a special agreement was to be concluded on the basis of the following principles: Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Sanjak of Novi Pazar would be annexed to Austria-Hungary; the creation of a new state of Albania, as an obstacle to Italy's territorial aspirations towards the Adriatic Coast; the rest of the Balkans would be divided among Balkan countries by a special agreement. Peace in the Balkans and a consensual approach to the region were considered as guiding principles by both parties. With this agreement, Russia was given free rein to pursue its imperialistic policy in the Far East, while Austria-Hungary protected itself against Italy's aspirations and Serbia's tendency to expand at the expense of the Ottoman Empire and achieve a dominant position in the Peninsula. Still, the lack of more precise provisions concerning the Balkans caused the signatories to distrust one another. The Agreement is published in M. Stojković, ed. *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi*, vol. I (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1998), 219–220.

⁵ *Die grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette*, Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1924–1927, XIII, 194, 212; XIV, 232.

⁶ One of the first forms of pressure was the so-called diplomatic strike, i.e. the recall of the diplomatic representative Iswolsky and the military agent Taube from Belgrade in 1897. It was followed by Russia's demand for immediate repayment of Serbia's debt of 5.5 million francs; moreover, in agreement with its ally, France, Russia was preventing Serbia from obtaining a loan on favourable terms on European financial markets, which it needed for building the railways and for procuring military equipment. Russia's dissatisfaction with former King Milan's presence in Serbia was reflected in the absence of its support for Serbian national interests at the Ottoman Porte, on the one hand,

ceal dissatisfaction over Vienna's carrying on intrigues with the former King, claiming that the example of Serbia best demonstrated Austria-Hungary's failure to honour its agreement with Russia. In the late summer of 1900, European diplomatic circles expected the breakdown of the alliance between the two great powers, allegedly postponed due to the Paris World Exposition.⁷ A change in Russia's favour in Serbia's policy took place at the last moment. When Emperor Nicholas II endorsed the King's marriage with Draga Mašin, Alexander realized his intention with breathtaking speed.

King Alexander had sought to establish contact with the Russian court as early as late 1899 and early 1900. In March 1899, Russia recalled its Belgrade-based diplomat Valery Vsevoldovich Zadovsky on account of his use of crude methods "unworthy" of a Russian diplomat,⁸ and appointed Pavel Mansurov as acting official.⁹ In one of his first reports, Mansurov wrote: "I can tell you that the whole country is waiting to see how relations between the imperial government and the Serbian court, where King Milan also resides, will be established." Mansurov reported that King Alexander was willing to improve relations with Russia, and warned that estrangement

and its marked support for Bulgarian aspirations towards the Ottoman European territories, notably Macedonia. There is no evidence for Russia's involvement in the failed assassination of King Milan on 6 July 1899, but there are some indications that the dissatisfaction caused by his stay in the country was deliberately stirred. For more detail, see S. Rajić, *Vladan Djordjević. Biografija pouzdanog obrenovićevca* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2007), 167–227.

⁷ *Die grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette XVIII*, 105. This finds corroboration in the sources of Russian provenance, cf. A. Radenić, *Progoni političkih protivnika u režimu Aleksandra Obrenovića 1893–1903* (Belgrade: Istorijski arhiv Beograda, 1973), 803, 807. British Prime Minister informed the Serbian diplomatic representative that the 1897 agreement between Vienna and St. Petersburg had faded away to the point that its former colours could hardly be recognized, and added that, three years later, it became obvious that the agreement was untenable, since the two parties schemed against each other, and used every means to acquire prestige in solving Balkan issues. Britain denied to both powers the right to make decisions regarding the Balkans on their own "because in the East other powers are interested as well", AS, V. J. Marambo Papers, f. 78, London report of 17/29 August 1900.

⁸ Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii [State Archives of the Russian Federation, hereafter GARF], V. Lambsdorf Personal Fonds, f. 568, op. 1, d. 60, l. 21.

⁹ Pavel Borisovich Mansurov (1860–1932) was the son of the distinguished Russian statesman, senator and member of the State Council, Boris Pavlovich Mansurov. He was close to members of the so-called Moscow Circle (*Kružbok moskvičei*), such as Samarin, Khomiakov, Stepanov and others. Due to his father's high office, he was well-respected at the imperial court.

between Serbia and Russia was inevitable should St. Petersburg keep up its pressure on Serbia.¹⁰

Towards the end of 1899, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Muravyov¹¹ stated that it was important for Russia to have better and more orderly relations with Serbia. He proposed that a new diplomatic representative be urgently appointed from among the Ministry's "best diplomatic officials", and that his diplomatic skills should be utilized to improve relations with Serbia. Muravyov justified his proposal by the fact that Austria-Hungary was taking advantage of the poor state of Serbian-Russian relations to strengthen its position in Serbia. Muravyov's first choice for the post was Nikolai Valeryevich Tcharykow,¹² on account of the fact that he had already proved his agility and capability in the process of improving relations with Bulgaria in 1896.¹³ From 1900, King Alexander's foreign policy became increasingly and more clearly orientated towards St. Petersburg.

In January 1900, the King tried, through an intermediary (Alimpije Vasiljević), to find out what the Russian Court would make of his marrying an Orthodox Christian bride.¹⁴ The renewed possibility of the King's marriage with a Russian princess perhaps served as an excuse for him to marry Draga Mašin: if he could not have an Orthodox Russian princess, he would choose a fiancée of Orthodox faith from Serbia. In this way, he would satisfy Russia and secure its support for his intention. Therefore, he entrusted

¹⁰ Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiskoi Imperii [Archives of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire, hereafter AVPRI], Politarkhiv [Politarchive], f. 151, op. 482, d. 485, 1899, l. 131-132, 159-162; AS, Ministarstvo inostranih dela, Političko odeljenje [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Political Department; hereafter MID, PO], 1899, A21, f. 1, d. 6, 7.

¹¹ Mikhail Nikolayevich Muravyov (1845-1900), Russian statesman, diplomat in Paris, Berlin and Copenhagen, Minister of Foreign Affairs (1897-1900).

¹² Nikolai Valeryevich Tcharykow (1855-1930), Russian diplomat, State Councillor, Senator, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Russian ambassador to Turkey, renowned philosopher, historian and member of the Russian Historical Society.

¹³ AVPRI, Sekretnyi arkhiv ministra [Secret Archive of the Minister], f. 138, op. 467, d. 179a, 1899, l. 14-18.

¹⁴ A presbyter from St. Petersburg close to the Tsar's uncle, Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich, initiated a conversation with him about the contents of Vasiljević's letter. Duke Vladimir said that he shared the hope of the Serbian people that King Alexander would marry an Orthodox wife and that it would be to their mutual advantage if the future queen were a Russian. Still, the presbyter remained vague as to whether Duke Vladimir and his wife found it acceptable for their daughter, Grand Duchess Elena Vladimirovna, to marry the Serbian King. Grand Duke only intimated to his interlocutor that the time for negotiations was not really favourable, referring to the troubled relationship between the King's parents. See AS, Pokloni i otkupi [Gifts and Purchases, hereafter PO], box 102, doc. 154.

General Jovan Belimarković with the task to re-establish contacts with the Russian diplomatic mission, which had been virtually severed after the attempted assassination of the former King Milan on 6 July 1899 (St John the Baptist's Day and therefore known as the *Ivandan* assassination attempt), and to relay his ideas to the Russian diplomat without the Prime Minister's and ex-King Milan's knowledge. The King offered to please Russia and reduce prison time for those found guilty of the assassination attempt, even to grant amnesty to some. He justified his decision by the need for a shift in foreign policy, in the light of the fact that all political parties and prominent military officials favoured good relations with Russia. Russia did not want to miss the opportunity to achieve what it had been trying to achieve since 1893 — the year Alexander overthrew the regency and accessed the throne as sole ruler — to restore and strengthen its influence in Serbia and thus block out not only the influence of Austria-Hungary, which had been intriguing with Milan and ignoring its agreement of 1897, but also of Germany, which had set foot in Serbia in financial terms. The majority of state bonds were pledged in the German market as security for the raised loans, and Serbia was purchasing German rifles for its army because of the joint French and Russian boycott.¹⁵

From February 1900, Russia embarked upon a more moderate policy towards Serbia. After a conversation he had with the new Austro-Hungarian diplomatic representative in Serbia, Baron Heidler, Pavel Mansurov concluded that Austria-Hungary did not consider it useful to harmonize its activity in Serbia with Russia, that it highly valued its friendly relations with Milan Obrenović, and that its new diplomatic representative, in his address to King Alexander, stated that he would strictly respect Serbia's independence and support the King's policy.¹⁶ This was understood by St. Petersburg as a signal to act in Serbia unrestricted. Mansurov was probably aware of the King's marriage plans as early as March 1900, and the Emperor was acquainted with the intended turn in the King's foreign policy. The King had been preparing the ground for that turn: he kept insisting that he could no longer pursue a foreign policy that no one in the country supported, and that he, being born and bred in Serbia, perfectly understood what

¹⁵ *Progoni političkih protivnika*, 824–828. Baron Heidler, the Austro-Hungarian diplomatic representative, tried to convince Mansurov that Serbia was of secondary importance to Russia, in contrast to the Habsburg Monarchy, for which Serbia was a matter of “life and death” (ibid. 820). Germany's penetration into the Balkans and further, into Asia Minor, was the cause of great concern in Russia. The arming of the Bulgarian and Ottoman armies posed a serious threat to Serbian interests. See M. Vojvodić, *Srbija u međunarodnim odnosima krajem XIX i početkom XX veka* (Belgrade: SANU, 1988), 257.

¹⁶ *Progoni političkih protivnika*, 817–818, 820 and 826.

the nation needed, and intended to act accordingly. "I found myself faced with the alternative: either *Papa* or Russia," the King used to say after his engagement, justifying his rapprochement with Russia by the well-proven fact that, without the support of that great power, Serbia was unable to solve even as minor a question as the appointment of a metropolitan bishop in the Ottoman Empire, let alone substantial issues inevitably lying in store for the country.¹⁷

Intent on marrying Draga Mašin, King Alexander waited for a convenient opportunity — for his father to leave the country. Milan left for Vienna on 18 June 1900 to finalise negotiations about the marriage proposal to Princess Alexandra, and the Prime Minister, Vladan Djordjević, followed him shortly afterwards.¹⁸ On 20 July, however, the King announced his engagement to Draga Mašin, and the next day the engagement announcement appeared in *Srpske novine* [*Serbian Newspaper*].¹⁹

* * *

The rift between father and son caused by this marriage was a perfect opportunity for the latter to finally become independent of the former, and for Russia to present itself as his protector in the process. In his reports, Pavel Mansurov expressed his opinion that, for Russia, the King's non-political marriage with a Serbian woman was much more opportune than his political marriage with a German princess. The Emperor concurred with this opinion, as evidenced by his hand-written comment added to Mansurov's report. It was also endorsed by the newly-appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Vladimir Nikolaevich Lambsdorf,²⁰ who had already argued that Russia should use the issue of the King's marriage to improve relations

¹⁷ AS, Stojan Novaković Personal Fonds [hereafter SN], 2.126. After the demission of Vladan Djordjević's cabinet, the King blamed his father for poor relations with Russia. He argued that he had no other way of defying him but to let foreign policy be reduced to absurdity, cf. *Progoni političkih protivnika*, 827–828; D. K. Maršićanin, *Tajne dvora Obrenović. Upraviteljeve beleške (od veridbe do smrti kralja Aleksandra)* (Belgrade: Štamparija D. Dimitrijevića, 1907), vol. 1, 38–40.

¹⁸ Djordjević, *Kraj jedne dinastije* 3, 457–464, 560.

¹⁹ A. S. Jovanović, *Ministarstvo Alekse S. Jovanovića. Podatci o političkim događajima u Srbiji od 8. jula do 21. marta 1901. godine* (Belgrade: Štamparija Todora K. Naumovića, 1906), 126; *Srpske novine* no. 150, 9/21 July 1900.

²⁰ Vladimir Nikolaevich Lambsdorf (1844–1907), Russian statesman, minister of foreign affairs 1900–1906. He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1866 after graduating from the Corps of Pages and St. Petersburg's School of Law. He served as assistant minister to ministers de Giers, Lobanov-Rostovsky and Muravyov, and after Muravyov's death became minister of foreign affairs himself (1900). The exhaustive diary Lambsdorf left behind has been almost entirely published.

with Serbia. After all, Mansurov could have hardly been able to express his view to the Tsar without Lambsdorf's knowledge and approval. The King promised to grant amnesty to the Radicals involved in the *Ivandan* assassination, and to prevent his father from returning to the country. St. Petersburg accepted his offer and promised "the Emperor's forbearing attitude" towards the occurrences in Serbia, if the King kept his word.²¹

The Emperor ordered that Mansurov represent him in the capacity of best man at the King's wedding with "gracious lady Draga, née Lunjevica". Alexander Obrenović immediately broke the news to the deputations of his countrymen arriving to express congratulations. Mansurov reported that the news had put an end to all public doubts and dilemmas, and added that the Tsar's gesture to act as best man was seen in Serbia as an extraordinary expression of Russia's favour and regard. At the wedding dinner, the King stated that Serbian foreign policy should be guided by the traditional feelings and needs of the Serbian people, apparently alluding to the maintenance of friendly relations with Russia. An official communiqué to that effect was published in the *Srpske novine*.²²

On 25 July 1900, five days after the engagement was announced, the Russian Chargé d'affaires Pavel Mansurov was the first to congratulate the King on behalf of the Emperor. Yet, Russia took care not to publicize its attitude towards the King's marriage too overtly, even though it had backed and approved it. The Emperor's personal congratulations card did not arrive until 25 August, but it was published in the official newspapers, whereby claims that the Tsar merely wished the King happiness in life rather than properly congratulated him were repudiated. At the wedding, the King and Queen were presented with a sumptuous imperial gift.²³ The official news-

²¹ AVPRI, Politarchive, f. 151, op. 482, d. 2 861, 1900, l. 2, 10, 11 and 15.

²² Ibid. l. 34, 46 and 51; AS, PO, box 110, doc. 6; *Srpske novine* no. 156, 15/27 July 1900. On 17/29 July 1900, Mansurov told the King that Russian Emperor Nicholas II accepted to be his best man. See *Srpske novine* no. 166, 26 July/7 Aug. 1900.

²³ The Tsar's greeting card reads as follows: "Dear Sire and my Brother, I received with great satisfaction the letter whereby Your Majesty was kind to inform me of his wedding with Lady Draga, the daughter of the late Panta Lunjevica and granddaughter of Duke Nikola Lunjevica. Due to the ties of friendship and spiritual kinship between Your Majesty and myself, I have taken active part in this happy event and I hasten to offer you my sincere congratulations on your marriage. Adding to this my wishes for the happiness of Your Majesty, as well as for the happiness of Her Majesty the Queen, I kindly ask of you to let me assure you once more of my high esteem with which, my dear Sire and Brother, I remain Your Majesty's good brother Nicholas. Peterhof, 13 August 1900", *Srpske novine* no. 192, 26 Aug./7 Sept. 1900; S. Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića*, 2 vols. (Belgrade: BIGZ, Jugoslavijapublik & SKZ, 1990), vol. II, 175. Apart from the Tsar, congratulations were offered by the Austro-Hungarian Heir

papers stressed that the Emperor's congratulations to the Serbian royal couple meant that the lack of "certain" conventionalities in the King's choice of fiancée did not have any consequences for the reputation of the royal house and the international position of the country.²⁴

This moment signalled a new era in Serbian-Russian relations. Count Lambsdorf praised King Alexander's "considerateness" and ascribed him the credit for the significant turn in foreign policy, a turn that would make it possible for Serbia to face, side by side with Russia, all dangers, "however substantial they may be and wherever they may come from". Quite tactful and cautious, Lambsdorf expressed his doubts about the power of diplomacy to maintain peace, given that the Balkans was "vulcanised", relations in the Far East extremely strained, and the interests of great powers conflicting. He believed that a "great war" lay ahead, if not at the door, and assuring the King that his change of course would bring immediate and favourable results for Serbia, he proposed the conclusion of a military alliance between Russia and Serbia to "consecrate" the new era in the relations between the two countries. The King's response to this message was the mission of a special envoy, General Jovan Mišković, on 14 August 1900. Mišković had both oral and written instructions which show that the King had in mind important state reasons for improving relations with Russia, and that therefore the claims that he was motivated by private interest alone are not tenable. Once the foundations for Serbian-Russian relations were successfully laid, the King requested that Russia raise the rank of its diplomatic representative in Belgrade to ministerial level, and Lambsdorf granted the request.²⁵

Presumptive Franz Ferdinand, Montenegrin Prince Nikola and Sultan Abdul Hamid II. See AS, PO, box 110, doc. 6.

²⁴ AVPRI, Politarchive, f. 151, op. 482, d. 2861, 1900, l. 15; Arhiv Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti [Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts], No. 7242, "Beležnica Jovana Miškovića" [hereafter "Beležnica"], notebook 34, 7/19 Aug. 1900; *Srpske novine* no. 155, 14/26 July 1900, and no. 156, 15/27 July 1900.

²⁵ "Beležnica", nb. 34, 2/14-16/28 Aug. 1900. According to the report from the Serbian Chargé d'affaires in St. Petersburg, Lj. Hristić, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Lambsdorf, did not conceal his satisfaction at the fact "that such significant political turn was made in relations between Serbia and Russia", and at the very beginning of his term. When informed by Hristić that the King would send a special envoy to Russia, "Count Lambsdorf jumped to his feet, took my hands, looked me straight in the eye, and said: 'I hope that the established bond between Serbia and Russia will be a permanent bond', and how worthwhile for both countries it is, time will tell us soon, the serious days that lay ahead, the days which we perhaps do not expect, and cannot even predict despite everything". See AS, V.J. Marambo, f. 78, Report from St. Petersburg of 26 July/7 Aug. 1900.

Almost half a year elapsed before the Russian diplomatic representative arrived in Serbia, which suggests that the Tsar was not completely convinced that the King's turn towards Russia was a heartfelt one.²⁶ However, an increasing rapprochement between the two countries after the King's wedding was reflected in the cordial reception with which Serbia's newly-appointed diplomatic representative was met in St. Petersburg. The King appointed the "best Serbian statesman", Stojan Novaković, which demonstrated the importance he attached to the strengthening of Serbian-Russian relations. Indeed, King Alexander and Serbia featured ever more frequently in Lambsdorf's reports to the Tsar.²⁷

King Milan's accusations against Draga Mašin that she was a Russian agent were exaggerated. Her ten-year companionship with Russo-phile Queen Natalie was quite enough for her to become pro-Russian herself. In fact, Serbian public opinion was prevailingly sympathetic for Russia. Her visits to Russia in her capacity as the Queen's attendant — on one occasion, in Livadia, she was even introduced to the imperial couple — could only have fortified her leanings. During the 1890s, Queen Natalie maintained close relations with the Russian diplomatic mission in Belgrade, in particular with the military agent Taube. Her lady-in-waiting must have known about these contacts and connections. There are records which suggest that Draga was instructed by Queen Natalie herself to lobby distinguished politicians against the ex-King's return to Serbia in 1897, and the Russian diplomatic representative Izvolsky's²⁸ involvement in the matter.²⁹ After Queen Natalie's departure from Serbia, Draga ap-

²⁶ M. Vojvodić, *Srbija u međunarodnim odnosima*, 311; A. Stolić, *Kraljica Draga* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2000), 83.

²⁷ GARF, f. 568, V. N. Lambsdorf, op. 1, d. 62, l. 1–3, 13, 14, 36, 41, 49; AVPRI, Politarchive, f. 151, op. 482, d. 2861, l. 2, 10–11; and op. 482, d. 497, 1902, l. 499, 500; AS, SN, 2126; Simo Popović, *Memoari*, eds. J. R. Bojović and N. Rakočević (Cetinje: Izdavački centar Cetinje, Podgorica: CID, 1995), 383; Mihailo Vojvodić, *Petrogradske godine Stojana Novakovića (1900–1905)* (Belgrade: Istorijski institut, 2009), 16.

²⁸ Alexander Petrovich Izvolsky (1856–1919), Russian statesman, ambassador in *Vatican, Belgrade, Munich, Tokyo* (from 1899), and Copenhagen (from 1903), Minister of Foreign Affairs (1906–1910), and then as Russian ambassador to France.

²⁹ At the request of Queen Natalie, Draga Mašin paid a visit to the Radical politician P. Mihailović and his wife, and spoke of ex-King Milan and the inability of ex-Queen Natalie and King Alexander to prevent him from returning to the country. For that reason, it was suggested to the Radical government to find a way to do that. According to Mihailović, the Radicals were backed by the Russian diplomatic mission, and made an agreement with Izvolsky by which he committed himself to support and assist them. See P. Mihailović, *Dnevници*, ed. J. Milanović (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2010), 121–122.

parently continued to maintain close contact with the Russian diplomatic personnel; moreover, she had the King involved as well. This is confirmed by the conversation that Izvolsky had with the King and Queen in Meran in 1899. After the King's marriage, Mansurov's reports praised the Queen for her intelligence and perceptiveness, spoke of the influence she had with the King, and above all of her pro-Russian orientation. In doing so, he gradually thawed out St. Petersburg's reservations. In Russian reports, Queen Draga was portrayed as a person favourably disposed towards Russian interests.³⁰

It is true that Mansurov had not immediately drawn the attention of his government to the age-gap between the King and his fiancée, or to Draga Mašin's unusual past, potentially an obstacle to her becoming a queen. This information reached the Emperor belatedly. The Queen Mother claimed that she had been informed from reliable sources that the Tsar had intended to decline the role of best man, but that Mansurov warned him that the rejection would leave a bad impression in Serbia. Suggestions that certain hesitation on the part of Russia after the King's wedding was caused by Queen Draga's "unsavoury past" should be re-examined.³¹ The Tsar's tendency to treat King Alexander with reserve had a lot to do with former King Milan's residing in Vienna, since the summer of 1900. Mansurov, however, sent very convincing daily reports that reconciliation between father and

³⁰ AVPRI, Politarchive, f. 151, op. 482, d. 2861, 1900, l. 15; d. 489, 1900, l. 240; *Progoni političkih protivnika*, 828–831; Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića II*, 144 (based on Djordjević, *Kraj jedne dinastije* 2, 567) observed that ex-King Milan's accusation against Draga for being a Russian agent was possible because Milan claimed to have in his possession the letters exchanged between Draga and Taube; Jovanović believed that it could not be inferred from this correspondence that Taube encouraged Draga to resort to the assassination of the ex-King, but he thought it likely that she had been advised to put pressure on the King to have his father removed from the country. These assumptions were based on an analogy with the developments in Serbia between the *Ivandan* assassination attempt in 1899 and the King's wedding in 1900. Another piece of evidence of Draga's involvement in the assassination was mentioned by Jovan Žujović, who allegedly was about to present it, but it remains unknown if he did. Cf. AS, Jovan Žujović Personal Fonds, 55; P. Todorović, *Ogledalo: zrake iz prošlosti*, ed. Latinka Perović (Belgrade: Medicinska knjiga, 1997), 86. Todorović (ibid. 628–629) also claimed that on the occasion of his last meeting with the former King Milan in Vienna, after Alexander's wedding, he had held in his hands a "short, but precious" letter which, according to Milan, was the best piece of evidence of what "Russian honour" was like. Milan was adamant that the papers in his possession showed beyond any doubt that the murderous knife intended for the Obrenović dynasty was held by "the northern brother" rather than by King Alexander.

³¹ AS, SN, 1891; Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića II*, 173–175.

son was impossible and that the King believed the success of his marriage depended exclusively on his father's absence from the country.³²

That St. Petersburg looked at the new situation in Serbia with caution is evidenced by the instructions the new Russian diplomatic representative in Serbia, Nikolai Valerievich Tcharykow, received on 29 January 1901. The last of the three surviving drafts of the instructions betrays much greater restraint than the previous two: the Emperor crossed out all lines in which mention was made of Queen Draga's sympathetic attitude towards Russia, of King Milan and his attitude towards Russia in the past, of the weakening of Austria-Hungary's political and economic influence in Serbia, and of the 1897 agreement between the two empires. On 20 January, the Tsar wrote down his approval of the version that placed the strongest emphasis on "strict non-interference in the internal affairs of the Balkan states", of which Russia expected to pursue the policy of "national independence", free from foreign influences and underpinned by common interests of the Balkan peoples. During Tcharykow's first audience with the King, on 28 February, the Tsar's greetings he relayed orally were much more cordial than those which he had been given in writing.³³

Vienna's reaction to the improvement in Serbian-Russian relations was not sympathetic. Particularly upsetting was the news that the Tsar had stood as best man by proxy at the wedding. The German ambassador in Vienna reported to the Chancellor that the marriage of King Alexander caused dissatisfaction among all politicians in Austria-Hungary because it undermined the Monarchy's "dictatorial" position in the Balkans. The situation appeared even worse because the change took place at the moment when Austrian statesmen self-confidently believed that they were holding the "reins of East Europe" in their hands. They admitted defeat in the political field, but intended to exert pressure on Serbia in the economic field, and perhaps even start an economic war. The German reigning houses found the withdrawal from the nearly completed negotiations on the King's marriage insulting, and Serbia was openly described in Vienna as a state ship drifting on the political high seas without a compass.³⁴

Vienna did not put up with its loss of influence in Serbia. The anti-dynastic campaign against King Alexander orchestrated on Austria-Hun-

³² AVPRI, f. 151, Politarchive, op. 482, 1900, d. 489, l. 61, 64; and d. 2 861, l. 85.

³³ Ibid. d. 2839, 1901, l. 1-8 (first draft of the instructions to Tcharykow); l. 9-15 (second draft); l. 16-19 (third draft).

³⁴ AS, V. J. Marambo Papers, f. 78, Berlin report, 27 July/8 Aug. 1900; Vienna Report, 16/28 Aug. 1900; *Documents diplomatiques français* [hereafter DDF], ser. 2, vol. I, 94; *Die grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette XVIII*, 115-116; 140, 173-174; Vojvodić, *Srbija u međunarodnim odnosima*, 315.

gary's soil was ignored, and the Viennese press scathingly wrote about the situation in Serbia with a view to making it difficult for Serbia to negotiate a new loan and settle its finances. In the summer of 1901, the export of livestock cattle into the Habsburg Monarchy had to be suspended, and the King, anxious to protect himself against dangers, was falling deeper and deeper into Russia's embrace. He entrusted his own safety and that of the Queen to the Russian Secret Police (Okhrana).

The head of the Russian Secret Service for the Balkans, Colonel Alexander Budzilovich alias Grabo, met with the King in Smederevo in early September 1900, and offered his services to help arrange the King's meeting with the Emperor. The King accepted the proposal, actually an idea of the *Chargé d'affaires* Mansurov, who was praised by the King for the "favours done to Serbia" and to him personally. The praise indicates close ties of this member of the Russian diplomatic mission both with the Serbian ruler and with the head of the Russian Secret Service for the Balkans. In the first decade of October 1900, the King's trip was postponed until next year, purportedly because the Tsar and Tsarina would not return from their own journey until mid-November. In early November, the Serbian ruler tried through Mansurov to set another date, but Mansurov was unable to do anything, although he had warned his superiors that the King might turn to Austria-Hungary if he felt he was being kept at a distance by Russia. In mid-November 1900, Mansurov received vague information on the visit of the royal couple. The Russian diplomatic mission remained unclear on what it was that the Foreign Ministry wanted. The Foreign Minister Lambsdorf wrote that the Emperor was still favourably disposed towards the Serbian royal couple and willing to receive them, but that he was not in a hurry to do so. Mansurov reported, from "reliable sources", that it was believed in Serbia that the dynasty lacked Russia's support and should therefore be deposed. He suggested that the royal couple's visit to the Tsar would be the most effective way to put an end to such rumours and preserve peace in the country. Mansurov concluded that a negative reply from St. Petersburg would spell the end of the Obrenović dynasty.³⁵

At the abovementioned meeting between Colonel Budzilovich and the King in Smederevo in early September 1900, the King asked if the Russian Secret Service would take on the protection of his and the Queen's safety. Grabo assured him of a positive answer, but nothing concrete was ar-

³⁵ Maršičanin, *Upraviteljeve beleške I*, 67; *Progoni političkih protivnika*, 836. Mansurov's letter to Count Lambsdorf of 20 Oct./2 Nov. 1900 shows that Grabo was backed by Mansurov, who wrote for him letters of recommendation to the highest official circles in St. Petersburg so that a visit of the Serbian royal couple could be prepared and realised.

ranged. On 29 September 1900, the Colonel received the King's invitation to visit him at his Belgrade residence. It took more than a month before the Russian authorities and the Tsar gave their consent to the meeting, which was a clear indication of St. Petersburg's reluctance. Mansurov assured the authorities that the King had definitively severed all ties with his father. He urged that a security service for the protection of the King be established, which would reinforce the ties between Serbia and Russia. In October, Alexander Vaisman, a Secret Service agent, was sent to Serbia to examine the situation. The King expressed his fears for the safety of his wife, and concerns that his father might take steps to prepare his return to Serbia. It seems that Mansurov and Grabo purposely fomented the King's distrust of his father, despite his information to the contrary. Aleksandar Katardži, a close relative of the Obrenovićs, intended to come to Belgrade in order to mediate between father and son to bring about reconciliation. He claimed that the King's father had no intention of undertaking any action against his son. The King obviously did not believe Katardži's claims, because, on 2 December 1900, Grabo received another request for a meeting "regarding arrangements about a special favour concerning His Majesty King Milan". A week later, the King's request was forwarded to the Tsar, who was staying in Yalta. On his superiors' orders, Grabo declined the request on the pretext of not having enough men for organising a Russian Secret Police branch as it existed in Romania and Bulgaria, but he put two agents at the King's disposal — Alexander Vaisman and Mikhail Vasilevich Jurkevich, and a few of their aids. For that purpose, the King allocated 80,000 francs for the period from 1 January 1901 to 1 January 1902.³⁶ That was the beginning, i.e. the first phase of cooperation between King Alexander and the Russian Secret Service. It lasted briefly, until the death of the King's father early in 1901.

The question of the King's visit to Russia was quite urgent for as long as the ex-King was alive, and Count Lambsdorf promised that he would go out of his way to make it happen as soon as possible. Milan's sudden death on 11 February 1901, however, lowered the level of its urgency. In April, due to the changed circumstances, the King was offered services at a lower cost: 300 francs a month to each agent, four months in advance, as of 1 May 1901. However, the services were not defined as personal protection of the royal couple. Grabo expressly said that his assignment was over with

³⁶ GARF, f. 505, Zaveduiushchii agenturoi Departamenta politzii na Balkanskom poluostrove [Head of the Police Department Agency in the Balkans; hereafter Zaveduiushchii agenturoi], op. 1, d. 127, l. 11; AVPRI, f. 151, Politarchive, op. 482, d. 489, 1900, l. 251, 332–336; AS, King Alexander Papers, Report from Bucharest of 15/27 Oct. 1900, on the arrival of A. Katardži in Belgrade; Maršičanin, *Upraviteljeve beleške* 1, 66–71.

Milan's death, which suggests that the original assignment of the Secret Service was to protect the son and his wife from the father, former King Milan.³⁷ After his father's death, the King requested that the Secret Service focus on monitoring anti-dynastic activities whose source was in Austria-Hungary. Thus, the Russian Secret Service assumed the role of the King's intelligence service, because such a service had not yet been instituted in Serbia.³⁸ However, now the personal protection of the King and Queen was outside its area of competence and, for that reason, the cost for its operation was much lower. Mansurov advised Grabo to accept the King's proposal with the proviso that it should not include spying on the King's subjects in the country. An agreement was reached along these lines. Russian agents operated independently and without cooperation with the Serbian police. The Austrian Intelligence Service put a tail on the Russian agents. Activities of the Russian Secret Service as described above lasted until the end of 1901. On his superiors' instructions, the Russian diplomatic representative Tcharykow supported such engagement of the Russian Secret Service as very useful for Russia. Besides Tcharykow and Mansurov, the Russian diplomatic representative in Sofia, Yuri Petrovich Bahmetev, and the Russian military agent Leontovich were also familiar with the activities of the Russian Secret Service in Serbia.³⁹

* * *

Before it became known, in May 1901, that the Queen's Draga pregnancy was a false one, the Russian Secret Service had discovered that Austria-Hungary had no intention of recognising the child as the King's rightful heir on account of the Queen's suspected premarital pregnancy. The King assured the Russian diplomatic representative that such suspicions were absurd, but the Russians were concerned that the request for the Tsar's godfatherhood might put the Emperor in a disagreeable situation. Yet, in the autumn of 1900, Grabo, as instructed by Lambsdorf, informed King Alex-

³⁷ GARF, f. 505, Zaveduiushchii agenturoi, op. 1, d. 127, l. 14, 20–21, 34.

³⁸ In 1900, a special department (Fifth) of the Directorate of the City of Belgrade – under the authority of the Ministry of Interior – was established for the purpose of curbing anti-dynastic activities and protecting the King and members of the royal house. It was supposed to be a classical secret police (such as the Minister of Interior, Genčić, had tried, and failed, to establish in 1899), the aim of which was to strengthen and institutionalise a network of professional agents. Although the Department operated until the Coup of 1903, the King, fearing that it might add to his unpopularity, never made its work legal and professional. See V. Jovanović, "Pravila o tajnoj policiji u Beogradu 1900. godine", *Miscellanea* XXIX (2008), 141–152.

³⁹ GARF, f. 505, op. 1, d. 76, l. 3, undated; d. 127, l. 20–21.

ander that the Tsar accepted to be the godfather of the future heir to the Serbian throne, and that the Russian government would always support the Obrenović dynasty.⁴⁰

The happy event was due to occur in early May 1901. In early April, the Russian physicians Snegirev and Gubarov arrived in Belgrade. The latter was believed to be a member of the Russian Secret Police, and his arrival was thought to be related to the possible request to the Tsar to be the godfather to the “changeling”, as Queen Mother had been quick to warn the relevant persons in St. Petersburg. After it had become known that there would be no child, the Queen’s already tarnished reputation was further undermined. The King’s efforts, made through Grabo, to arrange an urgent audience at the Russian court soon became the main task of the Russian Secret Service. The King and Queen had not made a single official visit abroad since their wedding, which provided the political opposition in the country with an argument to challenge their legitimacy. It was believed that the King’s best man could help the royal couple to break their isolation. However, the news that there would be no heir made Russia reconsider its stance.

The representatives of all major powers in Belgrade were aware of St. Petersburg’s unenthusiastic attitude towards the Obrenović royal couple, but they were not quite sure what to make of it. Mansurov confided to his French colleague that the King’s visit to Russia had been discussed immediately after the wedding, and that he had been under impression that the idea met resistance from some members of the imperial family, the Grand Duchesses in particular. He did not mention their names, but his contemporaries named the daughters of Prince Nikola Petrović of Montenegro, Milica, married to the Grand Duke Peter Nikolaievich, a grandson of Nicholas I, and Anastasija (Stana), as staunch opponents to Alexander and Draga’s visit to Russia. The King learned from his diplomatic representative in Russia, Novaković, that

⁴⁰ Ibid. d. 127, l. 14–17, 25. Shortly before the childbirth was due, Austro-Hungarian authorities got in touch with the former mistress of King Milan, Artemiza Hristić, and offered her to permanently settle in the Monarchy with her son; to sell, for the price of half a million francs, the photographs of Milan’s letters in which he recognised his illegitimate son Djordje; offered her the title of Countess and financial means for the education of her son whom, once he came of age, Austria-Hungary would nominate as candidate for the Serbian throne. Grabo advised King Alexander to buy the aforesaid letters from Mrs Hristić, and suggested that Djordje should be enrolled in the Russian Page Corps in order to become lastingly tied to Russia. Unwilling to compromise himself, the King rejected this idea. The Serbian diplomatic representative in Constantinople, Sava Grujić, knew that Artemiza had tried, in vain, to arouse Russia’s interest in her son as potential heir to the throne. Grujić believed that Austria-Hungary seized the opportunity and enrolled Djordje in Theresianum in order to have one more “bogy” for Serbia at hand. Information about Djordje’s scholarship for Theresianum has not been documented. See Mihailović, *Dnevnici*, 329–330.

there was in St. Petersburg a “revolt” against his and the Queen’s visit. He began to doubt if the visit would take place at all, for word to that effect was reaching him from Berlin, Vienna and Rome. A Serbian diplomat accredited to Italy learnt that German pressure was channelled through the Russian Tsarina, who vigorously opposed the visit. The adverse attitude was shared by Prince Nikola Petrović’s daughters, including the Italian Queen, Jelena. At long last, on 13 June 1901, the Tsar’s office released the official announcement of the royal couple’s visit, but not even then was the exact date set. In order to forestall further political intrigues, Tcharykow, Mansurov and Lambsdorf gave the green light to the publication in the semi-official *Dnevnik* [Daily Chronicle] of the official letter of visit approval. Agent Jurkevich reported that the news of the royal couple’s trip to Russia put an end to the agitation against the government and the Queen, and in a flash appeared in the press throughout Europe.⁴¹

The King demanded from his diplomatic representative in St. Petersburg to find a way to neutralize the Austro-German influence on the Emperor. After Tcharykow returned from his leave of absence in late November 1901, the King visited him and, enquiring about the exact date of his journey, tried to explain the reasons for his suspicions, but he was given repeated assurances as to the Tsar’s good will. The King did not doubt that Russian diplomacy was in earnest about his visit, but felt that there was “some hurdle” that diplomats were cognisant of but unwilling to talk about, and that it was in order to prevent the “Russian side” from reneging that they had publicized the news about the visit. A semi-official newspaper had repeatedly to deny rumours that the trip would never take place.⁴²

While Russia prolonged the uncertainty about the King’s audience with the Tsar, a plot against the royal couple was taking shape in Serbia. The reports of the Russian Secret Service, however, contained no information about it. What kind of information did the King receive from the agents? A typical example was reports on the anti-Obrenović activities of Serbs living in the Habsburg Monarchy. The physicians Jovan Grujić and Miša Mihailović from Novi Sad, Stevan Popović Vacki, Stevan Pavlović, the editor of *Naše doba* [Our Times], the lawyer Djordje Krasojević, and a group of Radicals gathered around Jaša Tomić and the newspaper *Zastava* [Flag]

⁴¹ GARF, f. 505, Zaveduiushchii agenturoi Departamenta politicii na Balkanskom poluostrove, op. 1, d. 127, l. 34; *Dnevnik* no. 36, 7/20 June 1901; no. 46, 17/30 June 1901; no. 115, 25 Aug./7 Sept. 1901.

⁴² DDF, vol. I, ser. 2, doc. 336, 497, 451, 601, 653, 654; AS, SN, 172, 1135, 1242–1244; Vojvodić, *Petrogradske godine*, 22. Novaković’s comments on the delay of the royal visit to Russia suggest that he was unaware of the intrigues set in motion to thwart its realisation.

were earmarked as ringleaders of a campaign against the King and Queen. It should be noted that even the British diplomatic representative suggested, though quite vaguely, that the “Austrian element” was strong enough to stir “possible trouble” in Serbia. According to the Russian Secret Service’s reports, it was publicly spoken in cafes of Novi Sad that King Alexander would have to cede the throne to a Karadjordjević since he was alone and the Karadjordjevićs were many, an entire family. It was also reported about the efforts of Austria-Hungary to establish contact with King Milan’s illegitimate son with a view to using him as a lever against King Alexander.⁴³ The reports also informed about the activity of the Social-Democratic Club based at 20 Queen Natalie Street, monitored its contacts with Bulgarian socialists, and the movements of Serbian anarchists who were not permanent residents of Serbia but allegedly forged plots against the King’s life. Faced with increasingly frequent reports on threats to his life, the King expressed his profound dissatisfaction with the fact that the date of his audience in Russia had not yet been set, and reproached the Secret Service for having brushed this question aside.⁴⁴

Grappling with a growing sense of insecurity, the King was prepared to do whatever it takes to get his audience with the Tsar, and so he asked Grabo to go to St. Petersburg in person. The King believed that Grabo would more effectively counter intrigues against him through unofficial channels and “behind the scenes”. On 6 November 1901, Grabo, supplied with the King’s detailed instructions and Mansurov’s letters of recommendation, informed Rataev, Director of the Police Department, that he was about to go to St. Petersburg to relay a message from the Serbian King to Count Lambsdorf. Before his departure, however, Grabo intimated to the King that the reply to his request would quite likely be negative. He drew the King’s attention to reports from his agents that the Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary, Goluhovsky, was prepared, in case the royal couple was granted audience at the Russian imperial court, to disclose compromising documents about the Queen. He warned of the Austrian police operations against the Queen, carried out not only in Austria, but also in Germany, Italy and Bulgaria. A brochure published in 1901 in Switzerland and translated into Bulgarian later that year, dubbed *Draga* an “evil spirit” of Serbia, and called all well-wishers of Serbia to fight against her influence. The King’s message that Grabo was to relay to the Foreign Minister Lambsdorf was

⁴³ GARF, f. 505, Zaveduiushchii agenturoi, op. 1, d. 127, l. 23–25; AVPRI, Politarchive, f. 151, op. 482, 1901, d. 492, part I, l. 109; Lj. P. Ristić, “Velika Britanija i Srbija (1889–1903)” (PhD thesis, University of Belgrade, 2007), 488.

⁴⁴ GARF, V. Lambsdorf’s Fonds, f. 586, op. 1, d. 845, l. 52–53, 54, 56; GARF, f. 505, op. 1, d. 127, l. 29–30, 42–43.

that he was perfectly aware of his dynasty's difficult position and of the fact that his only way out of the predicament would be to present a solid proof of Russia's support for the dynasty to his people. If the Emperor did not grant him an audience, the King expected a revolution and his dethronement.⁴⁵

However, Grabo's mission was cut short by his sudden death in December 1901. His death marked the end of the second phase of the King's cooperation with the Russian Secret Service, which lasted from May to December 1901. The King's position in 1902 was growing weaker, and for this reason Russian authorities acted reservedly and evaded granting the King's principal request for continuing cooperation and preparing the ground for his audience with the Tsar. The question of the King's visit to Russia had to be opened anew.⁴⁶

From the beginning of 1902 King Alexander was trying to get in touch with the new head of the Secret Service, Vladimir Valerianovich Trzeciak, in order to ensure the continuation of their cooperation on the basis of the previous agreement. He did this through Jovan Djaja, a Radical politician and Serbia's diplomatic agent in Sofia who, with the King's knowledge, worked for the Russian Secret Service.⁴⁷

When Trzeciak reported to Tcharykow upon his arrival in Belgrade, he learnt that the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had already informed its mission in Belgrade that the Okhrana's engagement in the Serbian King's service had been terminated on 1 January 1902, and that Russia could not take the risk and re-assume responsibility for his safety. This was the beginning of the third period in relations between the Serbian ruler and the Rus-

⁴⁵ GARF, f. 505, op. 1, d. 127, l. 40, 41: according to Grabo's findings, a brochure entitled *Draga i njeno delovanje u Srbiji* was printed in Sofia in 1901. It was a translation from German of *Draga und ihre Umtriebe in Serbien* (Zürich 1901) and signed by "a Serbian man of the state". In addition to a portrayal of the King and Queen in the worst possible light, it also accused the Russian diplomat Mansurov and the interpreter of the Russian diplomatic mission in Belgrade Mamulov of purposely ignoring the irrefutable proof of the Queen's barrenness, of which both German and French diplomats were aware; it was Russia alone that feigned ignorance, using Draga to get Milan removed from Serbia forever in order to reinforce its influence there (l. 43a-143e).

⁴⁶ AS, SN, 1.245.

⁴⁷ The ties between the Russian Secret Service and Jovan Djaja do not seem to have been insignificant. As a rabid Radical, he was recruited by the Russian Secret Service on Trzeciak's recommendation. Being the King's trusted person, he was familiar with his every move, and reported it to the Russian Secret Service. According to Secret Service reports, the King recalled him from Sofia in May 1902 and appointed him head of his Privy Council. Djaja suggested that the King, if he turned to Austria-Hungary again, should be dethroned and replaced by a person loyal to Russia. See GARF, f. 505, Zaveduiushchii agenturoi, op. 1, d. 75, l. 11-12; d. 76, l. 1, 5-6; d. 127, l. 34.

sian Secret Service, which lasted until the King's assassination. Accordingly, Trzeciak told the King that he had no authority to decide on the matter, and that the King's request should be addressed to the Russian government. The King expressed hope that his request would not be misunderstood, and Trzeciak promised to refer it to his superiors. The audience ended on that note. This meeting took place at a time when members of the conspiracy against the King consolidated their ranks, established contact with the rivaling Karadjordjević dynasty, and sounded out diplomats in Belgrade and Vienna about the possible reaction of the great powers in case of a dynastic change in Serbia. At the same time, in February 1902, Franz Ferdinand, heir presumptive to the throne of Austria-Hungary, left for St. Petersburg. The King needed the services of the Russian Secret Police more than ever before.⁴⁸

During 1902 warnings about the King's life being in danger were coming from all quarters, including Serbia's diplomatic missions.⁴⁹ Danger seemed to lurk around every corner and the King was unable to put his finger on its source. Some claimed that it was the Army, some pointed at supporters of the Karadjordjevićs, and others suspected Austria-Hungary. The King sought protection from the Russian Service anew, but Russia kept a distance due to discouraging news about the King's position in the country. On Tcharykow's suggestions, Russia was careful not to bring discredit on itself by supplying its own men for the King's protection. Prior to his meeting with the King, Tcharykow was instructed by Trzeciakov to present himself as a person officially charged with curbing revolutionary-anarchistic movements in the Balkans. Trzeciak shared Tcharykow's view that any further involvement of Russian agents in the King's protection would discredit Russia, and that the King's request should be delicately declined. The King, on the other hand, wanted to keep Tcharykow in the dark as to his negotiations with Trzeciak, since he had learnt that Tcharykow was opposed to his request. On 27 February 1902, Trzeciak was received in audience. The King enquired about Grabo's sudden death and the results of his mission to Lambsdorf and the Tsar, and then brought up the question of his personal security. Trzeciak stated that he was neither sufficiently informed nor authorized to decide about such a serious matter. The Russian ministries of Foreign and Internal Affairs had agreed that the reputation of the Secret Service might be seriously damaged should it kept receiving money from the Serbian King. Trzeciak reported to his superiors that a Russian network of agents for monitoring anarchists and revolutionaries could be organised in Serbia, as it had been in Bulgaria, at a cost of about

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* d. 127, l. 50, 52–53, 60; AVPRI, Politarchive, f. 151, op. 482, d. 497, 1902, l. 20.

⁴⁹ AS, MID, PO, 1902, P1, D. VI, F. VIII; and 1903, A7, B I, F I.

60,000 francs, and claimed that it would be quite useful for the operation of the Secret Service in the Balkans.⁵⁰ His proposal was not accepted, on account that it would further irritate Austrian intelligence agents, who kept a watchful eye on their Russian counterparts. On 4 May 1902, as ordered by the Police Director, Trzeciak told the King that the Secret Service could not take on responsibility for the security of a person of such a high rank, but added that he was ordered to “take all measures to avert dangers to the King commensurate with the forces and resources of the Secret Service”. This, to all intents and purposes, was a No. The King’s request was declined, while the Secret Service agents still benefited from his permission to move freely across Serbia, and they even were well-received and assisted by local police authorities.⁵¹

Still hoping that his trip to Russia would take place, the King continued to shower Russian agents with presents and honours. In mid-April 1902, he rewarded members of the Russian Secret Police with 7,000 francs, and decorated the head of the special section of the Police Department with the Order of St. Sava First Class.⁵²

From March to October 1902, the King, having completed all preparations for the trip to Russia, waited for the exact date to be set. As he let it be known that he wished to pay visits to the Sultan and the Romanian King on his journey home from Russia, both courts began to enquire about the date of his arrival. August came to a close, and the deadline for announcing the date and itinerary of his journey was fast-approaching.⁵³

The King had acquiesced in being received in audience in St. Petersburg together with Bulgarian Prince Ferdinand. However, the Bulgarian Prince was received by the Emperor in June 1902, as well as Prince Nikola of Montenegro, in late 1901. The Serbian King was the only one who was still waiting to be granted audience. The fact that Bulgaria once more came before Serbia on the list of Russian priorities in the Balkans, and the cordial

⁵⁰ GARF, f. 505, Zaveduiushchii agenturoi, op. 1, d. 127, l. 47–48; d. 76, l. 1, 3; and d. 81, l. 1–2.

⁵¹ Ibid. op. 1, d. 127, l. 61–64; Trzeciak’s report of 18/31 May 1902 (ibid. op. 1, d. 75, l. 11) reads: “Despite the fact that the Police Department did not allocate resources to the Secret Service in Serbia, it continues to be met with very broad cooperation on the part of authorities.”

⁵² GARF, f. 505, Zaveduiushchii agenturoi, op. 1, d. 127, l. 54–55. The list of more prominent persons who were given money included Trzeciak, the Vaisman brothers, Alexander and Simon, Yuriy Petrovich Bahmetev, Mikhail Jurkevich, Jovan Djaja, and two others who received smaller sums (ibid. op. 1, d. 75, l. 10).

⁵³ GARF, V. Lambsdorf’s Fonds, f. 586, op. 1, d. 63, l. 23, 27, 38–40; AVPRI, Sekretnyi arkhiv, f. 138, op. 467, d. 209/210, 1902, l. 27–28.

reception of Prince Ferdinand in St. Petersburg, gave the King another serious cause for concern. He told the Russian military agent that, had he gone to St. Petersburg, he would have persuaded the Russian government to give preference to the Serbs instead of treating them as an abstract number.⁵⁴

In June 1902, Tcharykow asked his superiors for some information about the Serbian King's prospective visit. When reporting to the Tsar on 23 June, Lambsdorf wrote on the piece of paper with Tcharykow's question concerning the date of the visit: "This autumn in the Crimea." No sooner had Tcharykow reported back that all preparations for the trip had been made in Serbia than Lambsdorf informed him, in a telegram of 14 September, and a letter of 17 September, that due to Tsarina's poor health there would be no audiences for foreign royalty in Livadia, but he added that it did not mean that the Tsar's sentiments towards the Serbian royal couple had changed in any way.⁵⁵

The King was kept in the dark for almost a month. It was not until 10 October that he learnt that his visit had been called off. It is interesting to note that the Serbian diplomatic representative to Russia, Novaković, did not relay Lambsdorf's formal note of 17 September that the visit would not take place in 1902 to the King. The telegram that the King received almost a month later, on 10 October, did not contain Lambsdorf's message which essentially said that the visit was postponed. Lambsdorf deemed Novaković's report to be "tactless". The King was devastated by the news, and Tcharykow thought that the sharp and tactless tone of Novaković's telegram made it sound even worse. Tcharykow reported that during his audience with the King, Alexander had seemed discouraged and distraught. To make things worse, the unpleasant news spread throughout the country like wildfire. The King was outraged when he found out that Tcharykow had kept him in suspense for almost a month. The cancellation of the visit caused sensation and turmoil on the domestic political scene, but the Russian Foreign Ministry kept up with its lulling tactics, dangling the prospect of a visit upon the Tsarina's recovery. From Yalta, the Emperor authorised Lambsdorf to instruct the Russian diplomatic representative to pass on the expressions of his favour to the King for he had abided by Russian counsel in both internal and foreign policy. The Tsar said he was not able to set the date of the King's visit yet, which implied it was delayed rather than cancelled altogether.⁵⁶ From that mo-

⁵⁴ DDF, vol. II, ser. 2, 381.

⁵⁵ GARF, f. 586, op. 1, d. 63, l. 23; AVPRI, Politarchive, f. 151, op. 482, d. 497, 1902, l. 562.

⁵⁶ AVPRI, Politarchive, f. 151, op. 482, d. 495, part II, 1902, l. 220–221; d. 496, 1902, l. 193–196, 217, 229; AVPRI, Sekretnyi arkhiv, f. 138, op. 467, d. 209/210, year 1902,

ment on, the Secret Service kept a watchful eye on the King's moves in order to assess if Russia should still rely on him in her Balkan plans, and tried to found out Austria-Hungary's secret plans in the region.⁵⁷

The "terrible" impression that the whole affair had made in Serbia prompted Tcharykow to ask for detailed instructions with the view to repairing the damage it caused to the Russian influence in Serbia. Acting on the instructions received on 21 October 1902, Tcharykow said to the King that St. Petersburg had been supporting him for almost three years and would continue to do so; should the King, however, take a non-national course — which, in fact, meant a pro-Austrian one — Russia would be forced to get involved.⁵⁸

Of the Secret Service agents from Grabo's times only Vaisman and Jurkevich were left, but the former was subordinate to Tcharykow, while the latter withdrew in 1902 over a disagreement with Vaisman. Russian agents were on the move from Bucharest, Sofia, Constantinople and Belgrade to Vienna, mostly monitoring the movements of Macedonian Committee members (advocating the autonomy of Macedonia in the Ottoman Empire) and the activities of Austrian intelligence agents. This situation continued into 1903 as well. In his report of 23 April 1903 Trzeciak stated again that the provision of security services to the Serbian King had terminated with Budzilovich's death, but that Russian agents often stayed in Belgrade for the purpose of monitoring the distribution of nihilistic literature in Serbia.⁵⁹

After the King's coup d'état of 6 April 1903, Russian agents informed their superiors about rumours of an organisation in southern Macedonia planning the assassination of the King and Queen. In late April 1903, they reported that the Service had established the existence of a conspiracy against the King in Belgrade and that Tcharykow had been informed about it, unlike the King, from whom the information was withheld for one whole month.⁶⁰

The first serious warning about the conspiracy that reached the King came from his aunt, Queen Natalie's sister who lived in Romania. The

l. 20–21; Lamsdorf instructed Tcharykow to carefully break to the King the news that the visit of the royal couple had to be postponed because of the Tsarina's sudden weakness, but that it did not mean that the Tsar's sentiments towards the royal couple changed. See AVPRI, Politarchive, f. 151, op. 482, d. 497, 1902, l. 562.

⁵⁷ GARF, f. 505, op. 1, d. 76, l. 10.

⁵⁸ AVPRI, Sekretnyi arkhiv, f. 138, op. 467, d. 209/210, 1902, l. 30–31; Politarchive, f. 151, op. 482, d. 495, part II, 1902, l. 1–2; d. 496, 1902, l. 217.

⁵⁹ GARF, f. 505, Zaveduiushchii agenturoi, op. 1, d. 76, l. 14–15

⁶⁰ Ibid. d. 75, l. 6–7; and op. 1, d. 76, l. 12–13; AVPRI, Politarchive, f. 151, op. 482, d. 498, 1903, l. 185.

warning was given at the explicit order of King Carol of Romania, who had learnt of it from a representative of the Viennese government.⁶¹ The Russian Secret Service did not send Vaisman to inform the King about the conspiracy until 7 June 1903, only three days before his assassination. At that point the King had already known what was going on, as he had been warned by Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria as well. The Prince heard of it from his secretary, who, in turn, had received information from none other than the Russian Secret Service. On the same day, 7 June, at the order of the Police Department, Trzeciak withdrew all his men from Serbia, and Vaisman left for Sofia. On 10 June, however, he was sent back to Belgrade, allegedly on some police business. Thus, on 11 June 1903, at four o'clock in the morning, an hour after the murder of the King and Queen, the agent of the Russian Police arrived in the Serbian capital and, summoned by Tcharykow, proceeded urgently to the Russian mission.⁶²

A day later, 12 June, Tcharykow sent a confidential telegram to the Russian Police Department requesting that agent Vaisman be allowed to stay in Belgrade to ensure liaison between the Russian mission and the provisional Avakumović government until the official establishment of bilateral relations between Russia and Serbia, that is, until the Russian Emperor recognised the change on the Serbian throne and the new King, Peter Karadjordjević. On 15 June, Serbian Parliament proclaimed Peter Karadjordjević king, who had already been acclaimed king by the Army. The Tsar was the first head of a great power to recognise the new situation in Serbia as soon as the next day. Tcharykow then introduced the freshly-arrived Trzeciak to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Ljubomir Kaljević, presenting him as a "representative of the Russian foreign revolutionary secret service". Tcharykow proposed that, on the arrival of Peter Karadjordjević in Belgrade, Trzeciak be introduced to the new King as well, and that talks be initiated about the establishment of a Secret Service branch in Serbia. His proposal was postponed until September 1903, when it was brought up again on the strict understanding that services provided to King Peter would be confined to antirevolutionary activities without encroaching upon the political sphere.⁶³

⁶¹ V. Kazimirović, *Nikola Pašić i njegovo doba*, 2 vols. (Belgrade: Nova Evropa, 1990), vol. I, 611.

⁶² GARF, f. 505, Zaveduiushchii agenturoi, op. 1, d. 76, l. 37, 39.

⁶³ *Ibid.* l. 30, 38, 39, 49, 50.

Conclusion

Between 1900 and 1903 there were three phases of cooperation between the Russian Secret Service and King Alexander of Serbia. In the first phase, from December 1900 to February 1901, the King paid substantial sums for the services that involved the protection of his and the Queen's life. After ex-King Milan's death in February 1901, more precisely from May, the second phase of cooperation began during which the Secret Service was relieved of the duty of providing security for the King and instead gathered intelligence for him, at a much lower price, and endeavoured to prepare the ground for the visit of the Serbian royal couple to the Russian court. Until the end of 1901, the Secret Service supplied the King with intelligence that mainly concerned anti-dynastic activities on Austro-Hungarian soil, and lobbied in Russian official and semi-official circles for the King's audience with the Tsar. During the third period of cooperation, from the beginning of 1902 until the King's assassination on 11 June 1903, Russian agents were forbidden, by the joint decision of the Russian ministries of Internal and Foreign Affairs, to receive money from the Serbian King and were relieved of any duty regarding the protection of his life. The Russian Secret Service promised to provide assistance to the King "commensurate with the forces and resources of the Secret Service", and made it clear that its task in the Balkans was to counteract revolutionary-anarchistic movements. Correspondence between all officials involved in the matter, including the Russian diplomatic representative in Belgrade Tcharykow, shows that consensus was reached in Russia that the Secret Service should not discredit itself by having its agents on a foreign sovereign's payroll. Such a decision was influenced not only by the pessimistic prognoses about the survival of the last Obrenović on the throne, but also by the agreed upon programme of reforms in the Ottoman Empire whose realisation Russia and Austria-Hungary were to ensure. In order not to undermine its agreement with Austria-Hungary, Russia kept a passive attitude towards the developments in Serbia. The Secret Service withdrew all personnel from Serbia just three days before the King's assassination; when it finally warned the King about the conspiracy, he had already been informed from other sources.

It seems safe to say that the Secret Service in Serbia operated as an extended arm of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, i.e. its diplomatic mission in Belgrade. Its task was to fortify Russia's position in Serbia after King Alexander's wedding and ex-King Milan's departure from the country. The person who acted as a liaison between the King and the Secret Service was the Russian Chargé d'affaires, Pavel Mansurov, who was close to Slavophile circles in Russia. The success of the Secret Service operations in Serbia in the long run should not be underestimated. Russian agents were able to be

more efficient in their work because they enjoyed the confidence of the Serbian King, as they frequently noted themselves. The cooperation, however, was not life-saving for the Serbian King as he was not provided with the services of Russian agents when he needed them most. A conspiracy against him went on unhampered throughout 1902 and the first half of 1903.

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