
Friendship and Non-Aggression Treaty Between the USSR and Yugoslavia

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Abstract:

The article deals with the Soviet-Yugoslav relations on the eve of World War II, developed in adverse conditions. This was primarily due to the fact that the Yugoslav government headed by Cvetkovic had rapprochement to the Axis Powers. His trips together with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Berchtesgaden, and later to Vienna led to Belgrade's accession to the Tripartite Pact. Rumors about the imminent catastrophe were spread immediately. Seeing that it is impossible to save the monarchical dictatorship, a group of Yugoslav generals and officers connected with the opposition bourgeois parties and the British Intelligence service decided to pre-empt the developments and eliminate the unpopular government. They staged a coup on March 27.

The Regency Council headed by Prince Paul and pro-German cabinet of Cvetkovic-Macek was overthrown. The commander of the Yugoslav Air Force General Simovic headed the new government. It ran to signing of the Treaty of friendship and non-aggression with the Soviet Union, which has not entered into force as a result of German aggression against Yugoslavia.

Keywords: *Cvetkovic, Macek, Simovic, Gavrilovic, Vyshinsky.*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Brief description of events on the basis of documents

General Simovic and his inner circle for several months were preparing the uprising (British and Foreign State Papers, 1948). His headquarters became a secret center of resistance to the German penetration in the Balkans (Churchill, 2008). A coup staged by him was met with great satisfaction, and caused an outburst of people's enthusiasm. The new government has not rejected the protocol of accession of Yugoslavia to the Tripartite Pact, but has not ratified it either. Berlin regarded it as an anti-Germany campaign. Hitler began preparations for the defeat of Yugoslavia and its destruction as a state to protect its Balkan flank before the attack on the USSR (Liddel, 1970). Simovic and his associates were looking for allies. One of them was the Soviet Union. Moscow supported the policy of the new Yugoslav government (Orlov, 1991). It also could mean that the USSR regarded it as a chance to strengthen its position in the Balkans. On March, 31 the Soviet Ambassador to Yugoslavia on behalf of the Soviet government offered to send a delegation to Moscow for negotiations on the conclusion of the Treaty. Molotov's instructions to him specified its urgency («every hour counts») (Orlov, 1991).

2. Research Methodology

We used methods of reconstruction of historical events on the basis of published documents, historical-genetic and comparative historical methods, methods of analysis and synthesis.

3. Results and Discussion

M. Gavrilovic, a minister without portfolio in the new government, arrived in Moscow the next day and met with A. Vyshinsky, Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs. According to the latter from the recording of his conversation Gavrilovic said about fixed determination of Yugoslavia not to join the Tripartite Pact. «During the conversation Gavrilovic highlighted the position of the Yugoslav Army. The Yugoslav government has not only failed to demobilize the army, but carries out additional conscription. The army is well equipped. But there is a lack of aircraft and anti-tank guns that Yugoslavia expects to receive from the USSR.» Vyshinsky expressed his approval of the position of the Yugoslav government, considering it correct (Getselevich, 1998).

The next day there was the next Gavrilovic-Vyshinsky meeting where they talked about the forthcoming negotiations and the arrival in Moscow of a delegation from Belgrade. «Gavrilovic was confident that we would quickly come to terms and that the delegates in a day or two would be able to return to Belgrade». Vyshinsky also expressed his confidence in the rapid and successful progress of the negotiations (Getselevich, 1998). On their arrival in the USSR, representatives of Simovic - Simic and Savic together with Gavrilovich had meeting with Vyshinsky. Yugoslav

delegation proposed to conclude a treaty of mutual assistance. «But the Soviets, fearing such a demonstrative anti-Germany step, did not come to an agreement related to military obligations and offered to sign a treaty of friendship and non-aggression. Military material assistance could not be ruled out» (Narochitsky, 1989).

During the talks, says Vyshinsky, Gavrilovic said that his government «strongly desired and expected the alliance with the Soviet Union.» Simic added, «Simovic instructed me to convey to the Soviet government that Yugoslavia was entirely on the side of the USSR. Simovic asked to assure specifically the Soviet government that Yugoslavia would have no contracts either with England or with any other state without the consent of the USSR.» Vyshinsky promised to report all this to his government, and asked about the materials Yugoslavia would like to receive. Simic said in Russian: «Everything that can be delivered by plane.» When he was asked to specify it, Savic said (in Serbian, Gavrilovic then translated it) that the next day they would be able to say more details» (Darzinskaite, 1989).

The talks resumed on April, 4. They were held in three stages. On the first stage Vyshinsky said that «the Soviet government is in accordance with an agreement in the form of a treaty of friendship and non-aggression between the USSR and Yugoslavia.» Moreover, he explained why the Soviet Union could not sign a treaty of mutual assistance. By reading the Soviet project Gavrilovic and Savic said that they accepted the project and were ready to sign it immediately. They asked to designate the time and set the order of signing it (Darzinskaite, 1989).

The second meeting of Gavrilovic and Savic with Vyshinsky took place in an hour. The latter told them, «that signing the treaty is expected at 10 p.m. Comrade Molotove wil do it on our side. And I asked who would sign it from the Yugoslav side. Gavrilovic and Savic said that all three of them: Gavrilovic, Simic and Savich are authorized to do it. We agreed that this issue would be discussed later and it would be translated into Serbo-Croatian language by the mission; the texts would be agreed upon in the legal department of the People's Commissariat for foreign affairs by comrade Pavlov A.P.» (Darzinskaite, 1989). «At 4.30 p.m, writes A. Vyshinsky, - I had received Gavrilovic for the third time on the amendments in the draft treaty. I explained him that the government introduced two amendments to the text proposed by me. I informed him about the amendments and introduced the text with the amendments in the Articles 1 and 2, namely in Article 1, the following words were added: «to desist from any attack on each other» and in Article 2 the last sentence was amended, «to comply with a policy of neutrality and friendship.» Gavrilovic agreed to these changes, although he noted on the Article 2 that the previous wording was better. But as the Soviet government considers it necessary to make these corrections, he would not complicate the matter and agrees upon them. At 6 p.m. Gavrilovic called the Protocol Department and asked me to receive him immediately. At 6.30 p.m. I had received Gavrilovic for the fourth time. Gavrilovic said that the military insisted on the previous wording. He, Gavrilovic, once more looked through the powers of the delegation and found out that the delegation had been sent for the conclusion of a

military-political alliance. Now it is a question of something else. Gavrilovic asks to postpone the signing of the contract until tomorrow, since he can not take responsibility for the final decision and decided to ask his government. Gavrilovic eventually said that he personally totally agreed with the Soviet project, but nevertheless asked to postpone the signing because of the circumstances outlined above. On the eve of the signing of the treaty Wyszynski was visited by Simic, the member of the governmental delegation of Yugoslavia. The latter also tried to convince him that they should sign a document with the Yugoslav interpretation (Darzinskaite, 1989).

The signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression between the USSR and Yugoslavia was held on April 5, 1941 (the *Izvestiya*, 1941). It contains five articles and provides mutual obligations «to desist from any attack on each other, and to respect the independence, sovereign rights and territorial integrity of the USSR and Yugoslavia (Article I). If one of the Parties, according to Article 2 «is attacked by a third State, the other Contracting Party is to observe a policy of friendly relations toward it.» The treaty is valid for 5 years. «If one of the Contracting Parties does not considers it necessary to denounce this treaty one year before the expiration of the term of this treaty, it will automatically continue to have effect for the next five years (Article III)».

The Treaty entered into force upon signature. He was subject to «ratification as soon as possible». The exchange of letters of ratification was planned to be in Belgrade (Article IV). The treaty was drawn up in two originals in the Russian and Serbo-Croatian languages, both texts have equal force (Article V). The contract was signed by V. Molotov authorized to do it by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from the Soviet part and by M. Gavrilovic, B. Simic and D. Savic authorized by His Majesty the King of Yugoslavia from Yugoslav part (The *Izvestiya*, 1941). After signing the treaty, Churchill wrote, one Gavrilovic had stayed until morning, discussing with Stalin the question of military procurement (Churchill, 2008).

4. Conclusion

As the ink on the contract just signed was not yet dry, as on April 6, German troops invaded Yugoslavia. In the first day of the aggression the German Embassy in Moscow sent a message to Molotov, with justification of its actions (Orlov, 1991). The forces were unequal. On April 15 the Yugoslav government capitulated.

5. Summary

The coup in Yugoslavia and the signing of the Treaty with the Soviet Union changed the date of the German attack on the USSR - from mid-May to the second half of June 1941. There were several weeks of delay. «However, these factors, as well as the early onset of winter contributed to the fact that Hitler had lost his chance of victory in Russia» (Swain, 2010).

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