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**POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEATH  
AND THE CONCEPT OF THE KING’S TWO BODIES:  
THE FUNERAL OF KING  
ALEKSANDAR KARADORĐEVIĆ I IN 1934**

*Abstract:* The assassination of King Aleksandar shook the European public at the dawn of WWII. It had even more pronounced effects in the compound South Slavic state. In such a tense moment, it was necessary to preserve state unity and fill the legal and symbolic vacuum caused by the King’s murder. Thus, the elites employed the old medieval concept of the king’s two bodies. According to this principle, the funeral of King Aleksandar assumed the features of a mass performance wherein the death of the ruler turned into the symbol of state unity.

*Keywords:* King Aleksandar Karadorđević, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, assassination, funeral ceremony, the king’s two bodies, body politic, body natural, mass media, ephemeral spectacle.

**Апстракт:** Убиство краља Александра уздрмало је европску јавност пред почетак Другог светског рата. Имало је још већи одјек у комплексној јужнословенској држави. У таквом напетом тренутку, било је важно очувати државно јединство и испунити правни и симболички вакуум узрокован краљевим убиством. Елите су стога употребиле стари средњовековни концепт два краљева тела. Сходно томе, сахрана краља Александра добила је обележја масовног спектакла у коме је смрт краља постала симбол државног јединства.

**Кључне речи:** краљ Александар Карађорђевић, Краљевина Југославија, убиство, погребна церемонија, краљева два тела, политичко тело, природно тело, масовни медији, ефемерни спектакл.

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*Historical circumstances  
of the death of King Aleksandar Karađorđević I*

The assassination of King Aleksandar Karađorđević in Marseille in 1934 echoed throughout Europe, bringing the Kingdom of Yugoslavia into a state of extreme political instability.<sup>1</sup> The internal problems of the country culminated in the terrorist act in Marseille.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, this act was also a consequence of broader political turmoil in Europe. The complex foreign policy of the Yugoslav state featured Fascist Italy's territorial claims to some parts of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the rise of Nazism in Germany, and upholding of the Kingdom's alliance with France, which all contributed to the internal destabilisation of the country. The gradual distancing of the Yugoslav state from France, its faithful ally in the Great War, and the ongoing turn towards Germany led further to the destabilisation of the country's internal peace and made the position of the Yugoslav King and central government more difficult. The assassinator was Velichko Dimitrov Kerin who, upon order of the IMRO (the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) and the Ustasha structures, murdered King Aleksandar and Louis Barthou, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France. The core of these illegal organisations was the doctrine on the disintegration of the Yugoslav state. After the assassination, the composite state of Yugoslavia faced a religious, national, and political crisis.

In the days following the assassination of the monarch, Budapest and Rome were marked as primary suspects as the international centres involved in the plot of the King's murder.<sup>3</sup>

The assassination of the Yugoslav ruler had a political background. The Karađorđević dynasty regained the Serbian throne after the assassination of Serbian King Aleksandar Obrenović in 1903. The murder of the last Obrenović<sup>4</sup> also marked the biological end of the longest-reigning Serbian dynasty in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The ascension to the throne of King Petar Karađorđević<sup>5</sup>, the father of late King Aleksandar, announced the decades-long rule of the Karađorđević dynasty in Serbia/Yugoslavia. Having participated actively in the Great War, King Petar and Crown Prince Aleksandar, being the

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account on the assassination of King Aleksandar, see: В. Милићевић, *Убиство краља у Марсељу: позадина једног злочина*, Београд 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Б. Петрановић, *Историја Југославије 1918–1978*, Београд 1980, 29–111.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, 291.

<sup>4</sup> А. Столић, *Краљица Драга Обреновић*, Београд 2009, 191–202.

<sup>5</sup> For more information about King Petar Karađorđević, see: Д. Р. Живојиновић, *Краљ Петар I Карађорђевић*, I–III, Београд 2003.

rulers of the Kingdom of Serbia, laid the foundations of the ruling House of Karađorđevićs.<sup>6</sup> The concept of folk origin and military spirit secured the position of the Karađorđević family. The significant contribution the Kingdom of Serbia made to the victory of the Allies in the Great War, as well as favourable political circumstances in Europe, went on hand in hand with the foundation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918.<sup>7</sup> Crowned by the aura of the victorious force in the Great War, Serbia under the rule of the Karađorđević dynasty paved the foundations and course of the newly formed political community of the South Slavs. Thus ended the long process of South Slavic cultural and political unification in the Western Balkans and Central Europe. The cultural process that started in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century rested upon the Romantic idea of Slavophilism, as well as on the unfavourable political<sup>8</sup> and cultural circumstances the South Slavs were experiencing in Austria-Hungary.<sup>9</sup> The rise of the Serbian Principality to the status of Kingdom in 1882 established Serbia as a vital stakeholder among the South Slavs in the process of their unification. Finally, the victorious Serbian army in the Great War led by the Karađorđević dynasty became the guarantor of the new state union of the South Slavs. It was on the burnt remnants of the Habsburg Monarchy that the long process of unification of the South Slavic people into a single political entity ended.<sup>10</sup> The need of the Serbian elite to expand the market of the Kingdom of Serbia, as well as the requirements of the South Slavic elites in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy for liberation from the *non-Slavic* powers, facilitated the internal agreement among Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

After the death of King Petar the Liberator in 1921, King Aleksandar Karađorđević, the then regent Crown Prince, took over the leadership of the composite state. The utopian thought on the cohabitation of South Slavs in a single country did not last long. Shortly after unification, there occurred religious, national, ideological, and class hostilities. The peak of national intolerance happened at the National Assembly in Belgrade, on June 20, 1928. It was when Puniša Račić, a representative of the People's Radical Party, killed and wounded several deputies from the ruling Croatian Peasant-Democratic Coalition.<sup>11</sup> This event prompted King Aleksandar Karađorđević to suspend the Parliament and proclaim the absolutist government, the so-called 6 January Dictatorship.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Б. Глигоријевић, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић*, књ. I, Београд 2002, 107–306.

<sup>7</sup> Б. Петрановић, *op. cit.*, 15–28.

<sup>8</sup> Сф. Д. Микавица и др., *Срби у Хабзбуршкој монархији*, књ. I, Нови Сад 2016.

<sup>9</sup> М. Екмечић, *Стварање Југославије*, књ. I, Београд 1989, 345–484.

<sup>10</sup> Сф. Д. Микавица и др., *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Б. Петрановић, *op. cit.*, 94.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, 95–111.

King Aleksandar sought to overcome the growing religious and national tensions. It was in disintegrative *Parliamentarism* that he saw the cause of ethnic and all other divisions in the country. Contrary to the existing centripetal powers, he understood himself as an integrative person above tribal and religious diversities. He established the old concept of dynastic patriotism based on loyalty to the ruler as the central emblem of state unity within the composite country.<sup>13</sup> Thus, a law on royal authority and the supreme state government was passed, proclaiming the country a hereditary monarchy. It was on the King's personality that the entire power of the nation rested. The King declared himself the military commander and the exclusive holder of legislative power. In September 1929, the state union was renamed into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The state was subdivided into nine administrative and territorial units called *banovinas* with their borders intentionally drawn so that they would not correspond to ethnic maps.<sup>14</sup> At the head of banovinas were the so-called *bans* (governors of banovinas), directly appointed by the King, which further highlighted the centralised government of the state. Over the years, King Aleksandar increasingly insisted on state unitarism and personal loyalty of subjects. All forms of expressions and emblems of particular ethnic groups were forbidden, and the process of creating a unique Yugoslav identity began.<sup>15</sup> After the 6 January Dictatorship in 1929, the concept of *integral Yugoslavism* was invented as part of the ideological course of state policy and the new paradigm of cultural policy.<sup>16</sup> The King became a full holder of state sovereignty with which subjects could communicate only directly. There were no more any mediators between the monarch and the subjects.

In spite of King's occasional let-ups such as the proclamation of the Octroic Constitution in 1931, the situation in the country did not calm down. Political turmoil, national intolerances, and growing economic troubles kept continually eroding the proclaimed ideas of unitarism, centralism and integral Yugoslavism.

### **The concept of the King's two bodies**

The concept of the king's two bodies was introduced into modern science by Ernst Kantorowicz, an influential German-American intellectual. In his

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. В. Симић, *За љубав отаџбине. Патриоти и патриотизми у српској култури XVIII века у Хабзбуршкој монархији*, Нови Сад 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Б. Петрановић, *op. cit.*, 101

<sup>15</sup> А. Игњатовић, *Jugoslovenstvo u arhitekturi 1904–1941*, Beograd 2007, 18–42.

<sup>16</sup> Љ. Димић, *Културна политика Краљевине Југославије 1918–1941*, књ. I, Београд 1996, 247.

famous book *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* from 1957, he codified the legal system of English and French medieval jurists.<sup>17</sup> He transferred the system of medieval *corpus politicum*<sup>18</sup> into a contemporary narrative leaving behind the groundbreaking work about the connections among political theology, monarchy, and symbolic-legal structure of the king's personality.

The purest formulation of the concept is contained in the ideas of the 16<sup>th</sup> century English jurists. They understood the king as both a mortal individual and an institution which transcends time. There is *the body natural* that is a transient and perishable earthly body and, in contrast, there is *the body politic* which is an everlasting and indestructible political-mystical body. This duality of the king's body is neither essential nor symbolic. It is ontological: the king's body is unique, and it cannot be divided. The roots of the concept of the king's indivisible entity are evident; they stem from the theological doctrine of the dual nature of Christ: human and divine.

The idea of political theology in the Middle Ages rested on the immortality of official bodies in the political and legal domain. The medieval concept of *corpus politicum* was based on the idea of the everlasting dignity and charisma of the king's authority. The organicist theory of power in the Middle Ages concerned the notion of adjusting the subjects to the king's immortal and impeccable body (*corpus politicum*).<sup>19</sup>

The concept of the king's two bodies is re-actualised within the contemporary art historian researches. The use of political iconography seems particularly relevant within the study of the king's two bodies.<sup>20</sup> This methodology approach involves an overall analysis of visual artworks used in political staging.<sup>21</sup> Collectively speaking, this visual world *entrusted paintings an active role within the space of politics*.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the goal is to figure out the links between the recipient and the sender of the message and to understand the correlation with the world of the presented images. The political iconography aims to enter the space between the wishes of the sender and the expectations of the addressee. It is in this space where *an invented world of values* is created, which via the engaging power of persuasion acts as a proven reality.

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<sup>17</sup> E. H. Kantorovic, *Dva vladareva tela. Studije o srednjovekovnoj političkoj teologiji*, Beograd 2012.

<sup>18</sup> С. Марјановић-Душанић, *Свето и пропадљиво: тело у српској хагиографској књижевности*, Београд 2017, 26.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, 25.

<sup>20</sup> U. Pfisterer, *Zwei Körper des Königs*, Handbuch der Politischen Ikonographie, Band II, Imperator bis Zwerg, ed. Uwe Fleckner, Martin Warnke, Hendrik Ziegler, München 2011, 559–566.

<sup>21</sup> M. Warnke, *Politischen Ikonographie. Bildindex zur Politischen Ikonographie*, Hamburg 2001.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

Understood this way, the concept of the king's two bodies and the effects of its propaganda are at the core of political iconography researches. The mass mobilisation by the use of political propaganda is taken as the primary intention of the analysis of the phenomena inserted in the world of political iconography. So, we found the answer to the question of why the concept of the king's two bodies with a particular emphasis on the ruler's death is so widespread in the studies of political iconography.

The nucleus of the narrative of the king's two bodies is in dynastic continuity. The fiction about the earthly king's body being eternal came from the historical process shaped in the period from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> At the moment of the ruler's death, the issue arises about the continuity of power and the ruling family. Often without a blood heir, or with a juvenile pretender to the throne, monarchies could find themselves in a political crisis. In the political and legal vacuum after the death of the monarch, a fiction of the everlasting king's body was created. Hence the following maxim was produced: "The King is dead! Long live the King!". Despite the above-stated motto implying the unquestionable dynastic continuity by natural and divine law, it had to be symbolically confirmed as well.<sup>24</sup>

After death, the king's body would be replaced with his image (portrait).<sup>25</sup> Artificial images are defined as separate entities, and so the body in the form of a portrait of the late ruler becomes an independent subject forming the king's third body.<sup>26</sup> The carved wooden sculpture or stuffed doll were used as a substitute for the king's natural body. The rulers' portraits acted legally and symbolically on behalf of the physically absent ruler<sup>27</sup>, thus conveying a message of his continuous presence. Besides their political and sacral status, these images also gained legal significance, becoming legitimate substitutes of a particular sovereign.

The materialisation of the body of the deceased ruler gained particular importance at funeral ceremonies. The concept of the king's two bodies was employed during funeral processions and transfer of the ruler's remains to the gravesite. The coffin housed the King's mortal body. The ceremonial car held the king's stuffed and ideally shaped image. It involved the ruler's representation in a ceremonial vestment with royal insignia displaying the

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<sup>23</sup> U. Pfisterer, *op. cit.*, 56.

<sup>24</sup> M. Warnke, *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> P. Zitzlsperger, *Tod des Herrschers*, Handbuch der Politischen Ikonographie, Band II, Imperator bis Zwerg, ed. Uwe Fleckner, Martin Warnke, Hendrik Ziegler, München 2011, 440–447.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. L. Marin, *Portrait of the King*, Basingstoke 1988.

<sup>27</sup> M. Warnke, *Politischen Ikonographie*; T. Hauenfels, *Visualisierung von Herrschaftsanspruch. Die Habsburger und Habsburg-Lothringer in Bildern*, Wien 2005, 36.

ruler's dignity. The final materialisation was in the form of a *gisant* at the gravesite. The artificial doubler represented the real ruler in eternity. The king's ideal body represented in marble, stone, etc. at the best historical moment materialised the everlasting dignity of the person and the monarchy as an eternal category.<sup>28</sup>

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the monarchs and leaders of the imperial republics continued to apply the concept of the king's two bodies. This practice was also known to the organisers of the funeral of King Petar Karađorđević in Belgrade in 1921. On this occasion, an ephemeral rotunda was created on Terazije Square with a bust of the late King in its centre.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the aged monarch was immortalised in the form of a statue as a metaphor for his other body. (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1

### **The funeral of King Aleksandar Karađorđević I**

The continuity of European dynasties of the modern era depended on the prospective impact of public ceremonies having the ruler's image in their

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<sup>28</sup> С. Марјановић-Душанић, *op. cit.*, 28.

<sup>29</sup> Т. Борић, *Теразије – урбанистички и архитектонски развој*, Београд 2004, 81.

essence. This period brought an increasing influence of the masses and overall acceleration of the media communication that further highlighted the importance of the public.<sup>30</sup> The funeral of King Aleksandar I comprised an elaborate multimedia spectacle in which the masses had an active part and needed to pay homage to the King's body. The previous experience in preparations of King Petar Karađorđević's pompous funeral<sup>31</sup> certainly helped the organisers of King Aleksandar's funeral to make the necessary preparations for such a complex ceremony in a short period.

From the moment of the assassination of King Aleksandar I, the process of producing the second King's body begins. Its core was in the burial ceremony (King's funeral).<sup>32</sup> King Aleksandar Karađorđević was assassinated in Marseille on October 9, 1934. The King paid a return visit to Marseille to Louis Barthou, the French Foreign Minister who had previously visited the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, a member country of the Little Entente.<sup>33</sup> Inadequate security measures by both the French and Yugoslav sides allowed the killer to assassinate King Aleksandar I and Louis Barthou quite easily. Bogoljub Jevtić, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, conveyed the news that the last King's words were *Preserve Yugoslavia!*<sup>34</sup> Soon, the semi-official French daily newspapers *Le Temps* added something more to the alleged King's last words, stating they were: *Preserve Yugoslavia and the friendship with France!*<sup>35</sup> Due to the apparent length of the alleged phrase spoken by the mortally wounded King, the later addition about the friendship with France was omitted over time. However, the pledge statement *Preserve Yugoslavia!* remained. It became part of King Aleksandar's fictitious testament, and in the years after his death, it became an essential fragment within the invention of King Aleksandar's cult. Since according to medical reports the King died immediately on the spot, it is clear that the King's last words, allegedly spoken, were intended to be used to maintain the national unity of the country.

The process of producing the King's immortal body began from the very moment of his assassination.

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<sup>30</sup> M. Warnke, *Der Anteil der Öffentlichkeit am neuzeitlichen Herrscherbild*, Iconic Worlds, Neue Bilderwelten und Wissenräume, ed. Von Christa Maar, Hubert Burda, Köln 2005, 147–164.

<sup>31</sup> Д. Р. Живојиновић, *Краљ Петар I Карађорђевић*, књ. III, 297–308.

<sup>32</sup> About King Aleksandar's funeral: Н. Милошевић, *Од Марсеља до Опленца (пренос тела и сахрана краља Александра Карађорђевића 1934)*, Годишњак за друштвену историју 1–3 (2003) 141–169.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, 145.

<sup>34</sup> Б. Петрановић, *op. cit.*, 283–284.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, 284.



There was an interesting description of the first moments after the monarch's passing when his body was lying at the police station. The following account was published by *Ilustrowana Republika*, based on French sources:

*As soon as the doctors pronounced the King dead, his corpse was laid on a couch and covered with a tri-colour banner. The King's hands are folded on his chest. His face is calm but completely devoid of blood. All electric lights are turned off, leaving only two lighted candles. A guard of honour is standing on both sides. The carpet in front of the corpse is covered with flowers. The sobbing of the old royal butler can be heard from next door. This man dedicated his life to the education of young Prince Aleksandar and suffered his fate with him during the Great War. In the adjacent room are Serbian journalists who were greeting the King enthusiastically just one hour prior. Everyone has tears in their eyes.*

The corpse of the King was soon publicly displayed at the Salon of the Prefecture in Marseille. Dressed in Admiral's uniform with the Legion of Honor across his chest, the King was presented in the official vestments, marking the beginning of formal constitution of his state body. The Yugoslav flag partially covering the King's body further highlighted this process.<sup>36</sup>

Upon the arrival of Queen Marija, the King's wife, after she paid tribute to her late husband, the King's body was temporarily embalmed.<sup>37</sup> Then the cast of the head and the monarch's right hand were taken. (Fig. 2) The making of a reproduction of the face of the deceased was an inevitable part of a ruler's

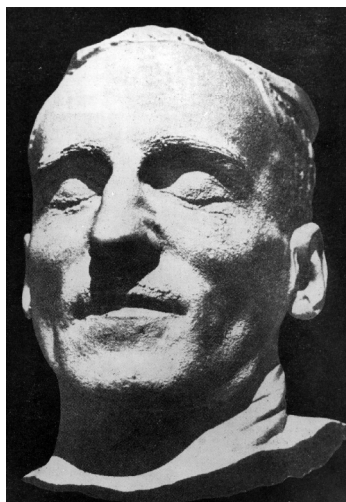


Fig. 2

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<sup>36</sup> Н. Милошевић, *op. cit.*, 145.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, 146.

funeral ritual. It has its roots in ancient times. The Romans made wax imprints to create masks of their deceased ancestors, which they then publicly displayed during various official ceremonies.<sup>38</sup> These images which faithfully reproduced the figure of the dead grew over time into sacred symbols of family memory. The effigies were also used in the system of representation of Roman emperors. In the late Middle Ages, the effigies again became part of the funeral rituals and processions.<sup>39</sup> This practice continued during the period of absolutism, especially within the system of representation of the French Monarchy.<sup>40</sup>

Making death masks was a well-known tradition within the presentation of the rulers of modern Serbia. Their magical, sacral and political representation was part of the culture of memory within the representative spaces in the current Serbian state. For instance, in 1860, the death mask of late Prince Miloš was made.<sup>41</sup> It is the first evidence of adopting the common European practice of doubling the image of the deceased ruler. Over time, the death masks became sacred cultural and commemorative objects that played an active role in collective public memory.

The custom of making death masks was also accepted within the media program of the Karađorđević dynasty. The mask of Petar Karađorđević was made immediately after his death in 1921.<sup>42</sup>

Shortly after taking the imprint for the death mask of King Aleksandar, his uniform was changed. Queen Marija demanded that the King should be dressed in a military uniform, confirming thereby the military pathos of the King and the entire Karađorđević dynasty. Then the King's body was laid on a catafalque in the dimmed salon of the Prefecture. Afterwards, the body was placed in a coffin. This particular moment is described by an unnamed Serbian officer of a military colony in Paris: *We are approaching the King's body and remove it from the catafalque with a lot of awkwardness. I'm holding His right leg that is limp in spite of postmortem rigidity, with a sense of desecration of the saint ... We are placing the body in a coffin. The King is looking so tiny and thinner than in a lifetime. Generally, He has an exhausted and painful appearance and, looking from above, He has neither serene nor mild face expression.*<sup>43</sup> This description could not be issued in public. The population had to see the

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<sup>38</sup> T. Macho, S. Gäste. *Vom Totenkult zum Theater, Quel Corps? Eine Frage der Repräsentation*, ed. H. Belting, D. Kamper, M. Schulz, München 2002, 60.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, 62.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, 61.

<sup>41</sup> И. Борозан, *Репрезентативна култура и политичка пропаганда: Споменик кнезу Милошу у Неготину*, Београд 2006, 60.

<sup>42</sup> The death mask was made by Đorđe Jovanović, a renowned Serbian sculptor. Д. Р. Живојиновић, *op. cit.*, 297.

indestructible body of the Yugoslav King, and therefore the process of representing his official and immortal body began. The coffin with the remains of King Aleksandar was transferred to the ship Dubrovnik which accompanied the French Navy ships, headed for Split.

In the meantime, the crisis in the homeland calmed down. The Act of Succession was put into effect. It was a will which the King drew up and signed on January 5, 1934, after a failed assassination attempt. According to this Act, the King should have been succeeded by the then minor Crown Prince Petar II. Until Petar's legal age, a temporary government was established – a council of regents chaired by Prince Paul (King Aleksandar's cousin). The King stated that his funeral should be a modest commemoration.<sup>44</sup> Obviously, that idea was abandoned. At moments of such high tension and feverish anticipation, a modest funeral was out of the question. The funeral and presentation of the second King's body were needed to symbolically fill the vacuum and overcome the fact that the heir to the throne was a minor. A State Funeral Committee was set up to decide that the state budget should cover funeral expenses.<sup>45</sup> At the proposal of the Committee, six-month mourning was declared in the state, ending on November 21, 1934. The Committee also recommended that during this period the officials should wear black. Meanwhile, Belgrade was transformed into a space predominantly interweaved in black. State jurisdictions, as well as numerous other houses, were marked with black flags that highlighted the deep mourning over the great deceased.

The King's body arrived in the port of Split on October 14, 1934. A large number of people gathered to honour the King's body. The mortal remains of the King were laid on a large ephemeral catafalque with a royal crown on top. (Fig. 3) At the terrace of the dock, a royal effigy was set. (Fig. 4) Following its norm and form, the bust of the late King expressed the apotheosis of the immortal person. At the same time, it substituted the deceased ruler. Below, the slogan *Preserve Yugoslavia* was inscribed, which propagated the King's alleged last words.

The King's body was then transferred to Zagreb by train. A vast mass of people waited to pay homage to the King's body at the platform of the Zagreb railway station. Like Belgrade, Zagreb was all covered in black flags. Almost every shop window in Zagreb was marked with a bust or an image of the late King, decorated with a black ribbon or a black flag.<sup>46</sup> The statues and pictures

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<sup>43</sup> Б. Глигоријевић, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић*, књ. I, 310.

<sup>44</sup> Н. Милошевић, *op. cit.*, 149.

<sup>45</sup> The high dignitaries were members of the committee. *Ibidem*, 149.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, 156.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

of the rulers in public spaces of the city manifested the power of the visual language in the process of creation of King's immortal body, but they were also the confirmation of the legitimacy and legality of the Karađorđević dynasty.

The time of overall insecurity across the country required stabilisation of power and image of the dynasty. The transfer of the King's body to Belgrade was planned as a great propaganda spectacle in the function of homogenisation of all regions. On the one hand, the body of the great ruler was used as an active agent for homogenising the nation. At the same time, a huge welcoming ceremony for young King Petar II was organised in Belgrade. Petar II was *promoted* into the public space as a guarantor and pledge for the survival of the dynasty and the state. On October 12, the representatives of the National Assembly took their oath to the new ruler.<sup>47</sup> The regents and deputies then shouted *Long live the King*, emphasising their commitment to the young ruler, and affirming dynastic and state continuity. At the same assembly session, the deceased King was named Knight King Aleksandar I, the Unifier. The works of visual culture additionally highlighted the transfer of power. In the centre of the hall, there was a representative portrait of the young King, a work of Kristijan Kreković. On his right was an even larger portrait of King Aleksandar partially covered with black cloth, a work of Geodetic Captain Mr Ulik.<sup>48</sup>

The visualisation of the late King and the creation of his pseudo-hagiographical cult confirms the cover page of Serbian daily newspaper *Politika* from October 15.<sup>49</sup> The images of the King's death mask and his right arm further powered the people's empathy for the great deceased.

In anticipation of the King's body, the capital was featured with his immortal body. *Politika* published a photo of a Belgrade shop window with the image of the late King.<sup>50</sup> In the shop windows, there were several types of images of the King: *in the trenches, after the peace, thoughtful, smiling*, etc. Newspaper reports state that, in front of many of the King's photographs, a candle was burning, and people were praying in front of them. Thus, in front of the National Theatre, a large portrait of the late King was placed with the incense burner next to it.<sup>51</sup> We witness an obvious sacralization of the ruler's image, further boosted by his martyrdom. At the same time, the multiplication of King's image in the photographic medium reveals its mass consumption.

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<sup>47</sup> Аноним, *Намесници краљевске власти положили су пред народним представништвом заклетву на верност краљу Петру II*, Политика, бр. 9484 (12. 10. 1934) 2.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>49</sup> Политика, бр. 9487 (15. 10. 1934) 1.

<sup>50</sup> At the bottom of the National Theatre, there was a large painting of the late monarch placed near an inflated incense burner. *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>51</sup> Аноним, *Београд у црнини*, Политика, бр. 9486 (14. 10. 1934) 7.

The reporter of *Politika* points to the massive purchase of King's photos, as well as to the situations where they were shared for free. Some took them as their *favourite amulets*,<sup>52</sup> keeping them as movable relics.

The concept of presenting the ruler at the optimum historical moment was applied to the façade of the Fund Management headquarters in Belgrade. (Fig. 5) The photo taken during the days of the funeral ceremony in Belgrade shows a representative full-figure standing portrait of King Aleksandar dressed in an ermine cape and his right hand resting on a sword hilt. The mighty image of King Aleksandar conveys the idea of a powerful and immortal ruler. This image is probably a copy, or variation on the theme of the King's canonical portrait, a work of notable painter Paja Jovanović from 1927.



Fig. 5

<sup>52</sup> Аноним, *Тужна успомена*, Политика, бр. 9483 (11. 10. 1934) 8.

Finally, on October 14, 1934, the King's body arrived at the central railway station in Belgrade. Many thousands of weeping and desolate citizens lined the route along which the King's body was transferred to the Old Palace in downtown Belgrade by a specially redesigned car. Nikolai Krasnov,<sup>53</sup> a leading multimedia artist of the period, made sketches for the hearse, as well as for all necessary accessories needed to transform the Dance Hall of the Old Palace into a funerary chapel (curtains, catafalque, wreath with the King's insignia). Krasnov, a Russian immigrant, the leading state artist and designer of the interior of the Royal Palace in Dedinje (the King's residence), proposed a suitable sepulchral accessory to honour the monarch corresponding with the rules of decorum.

The King's body was publicly displayed in the Old Palace on October 16 and 17. The catafalque covered with the national flag, with the royal coat-of-arms envisioned as the focal and symbolic centre of the state. The royal regalia were presented under the cross of the catafalque. (Fig. 6) The Royal Crown, the Scepter and the Orb that King Petar I, King Aleksandar I's father, wore at the coronation ceremony in 1904, represented the King's body. The royal regalia was presented to prove that the dignity never dies and that the monarchy lives in eternity.



Fig. 6

<sup>53</sup> Д. Ацовић, В. Камилић, *Двор југословенског краља кроз стваралаштво архитекте Краснова*, каталог изложбе одржане у Краљевском двору, 30. септембар – 14. октобар, Београд 2012, 11, 20.

Finally, after the public display, the King's body went to the final journey. The road led from the Old Palace to the Cathedral Church in Belgrade. The crowd followed the path of the King's body. There is a vivid description of doubling the King's image in the then periodicals: *The poles of the electric lamps are wrapped from the bottom to the top in black fabrics. At the top, on all four sides of them, on white glass is a black letter A, and in the middle panel on a black field is a round white figure of the blissfully resting King.*<sup>54</sup>

The commemoration service took place in the Cathedral Church that was also specially redesigned in black for this occasion by Nikolai Krasnov. After the service, first by train through the city of Mladenovac, then by a specially redesigned car, the King's body finally arrived in Oplenac, at the Mausoleum of the Karađorđević dynasty. The dynastic mausoleum began by King Petar I was completed by King Aleksandar I just a few years earlier, in 1930. The monumental burial church of the Karađorđević family dedicated to St. George became the last habitat of King Aleksandar's natural body. The tomb of the martyr King in the crypt of the church was to become a place of remembrance, and a topos of pilgrimage.

The culmination of the funeral and multi-day long funeral ceremonies took place in front of the church in Oplenac. *Politika* published a dramatic photo showing the moment when little King Petar left the church and came among the people.<sup>55</sup> (Fig. 7) The mortal body of the great King was buried, but his energy and his power were transferred to the heir to the throne. The transfer of bodily energy confirmed the eternal (immortal body) of the monarch. The mortal body of the monarchy entered the church, while a timeless body of the dynasty and state emerged from the church.

The media also supported this concept in the days following the King's death. After the death of the ruler, Kristijan Kreković painted an idealised portrait of young King Petar II in front of his father's bust. (Fig. 8) On the base in front of the statue, the artist presented the royal regalia of the Karađorđević dynasty, explicitly expressing the eternity of the Serbian monarchy. Thus ended the political economy of King Aleksandar's body. Political propaganda of the state leadership used King Aleksandar's funeral to strengthen and maintain the stability of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The media exploitation of the body of the late ruler and the new sovereign in a variety of the media (portraits, photographs, sculptures, illustrated magazines, etc.) confirmed the continuation of the well-known concept of the king's two bodies.

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<sup>54</sup> Н. Милошевић, *op. cit.*, 159.

<sup>55</sup> Политика, бр. 9491 (19.10.1934) 14.



**Поред својих славних предака, почива сада  
на Опленцу и Витешки Краљ Ујединитељ**



Наз мраморне ступнице великогштенога храма сликан Младог Краља међу Свој народ

Томога, 18 октобра  
Томога је на погони. И не само  
Томога већ с њоме заједно и његова  
околина Шумадија. Дружина су ву  
ни селска. Један у правиниој ру  
ру, јер га поведу, други у истра  
ним гуљенима. Сви бивају разне о  
ко руке носе црна флора. Но први  
на им медаље. Црним исприма  
вмучене негде са дна живота, ор  
доње са изградњи штитавима,  
махом црвеним. За које су се гав  
не губило, за које су се кошта се  
јело по дугу и по сенцу, на све  
четири стране света.

Мало по мало овај тај свет Кутле  
се тргнуло, образују се поворе.  
Пред двана на чело ступају за  
ставници с црним барјацима, пред  
другима носе се поштанине, ливе  
не од ромбел ногла, ваљане нево  
вном руком, иржави, али носите,  
добале да их носе једна носе.

Бав Дунавски Бановини г. Ди  
брини Матковић, од дуге је и сва  
на дружи. Он негда потресе да из

даје никаква наређења. Довољно  
му је да придателски посматрају  
свакима, где да ступи, шта да  
раде и колико то војнички из  
вршну.

**СЕЛВАНИ ШАЛГИР, ДУГ ПРЕКО  
ЧЕТРИ КИЛОМЕТРА**

Улице Томога у прво су зашито  
не. На сваком пролазу лежица се  
црним застана, свако стабло узлит  
ног диврела свилеко је црним аз  
степом. Дуж македонског пута  
на крои Томога, све до старе Ка  
рађорђево дрвце с обе стране ре  
ђају се селска, наослиштва. На  
тај начин формира се рван нево  
роватан, ширде невоједн селвани  
шалгир дуг прво четири киломе  
тра.

На свама лицима исарен бољ,  
истина учучен. Сви ти аули  
немогу марши. Али се с црвени  
на време рукав мрскога гуња дико  
и брине руке које теку шик из  
бољавано, као перова кора рава  
нице.



Г. Љ. Давидовић и г. др. Корошевић

Равномерио, свакога сата, с обоју  
армава сва знона носе по чет ми  
црта. Зноне на скарпау. Тако од  
сет вајутра.

У старој презенту окупљени су  
свештеници на близак и даље осе  
дике. Облаче се. Спремају се. Они  
је у поворни кренути на Опленца  
пре осталих. Пред њима су топа  
ске прво Курман и Борковић.

Порта старе цркве сва је за  
стрпа црним. У њој су се окупи  
ли селсани, поштом Карађорђево  
Знаме, којима је додељена част  
да свога Витешког Краља на рука  
ма однесу у ветру суну. Немају су  
од њих, у знак највише жалости,  
заменили првену траку својих  
ратних крстова црним. Оно пи  
на сваки научни прописно, али је  
бесстрајно дирљиво.

Двадесет и четирица између  
пала одвојила су се вод храма. Ти  
су двадесет и четирица који су  
чисти сребре да во рата носеу че  
тање и ногу и руке. Некако лу  
гари, унакажени, инвалиди, звезде  
им више него некад. Једни коме  
је припојено узглобо оба ова чело

би да учествује у преносу Краља  
ног тела. Истичу другари, да за  
но им како било, морају да га от  
стрже. И теше га:  
— Не желиш ти, чове, паћена  
А он пути главом по које два у  
гањена ова селско гледају негде у  
далјину, као да се нечега себају,  
Ослепио се. Остану је место лу  
сима.

**ВОЈСКА И ЧЕТИНИ**

На узаме под Томогај одредом  
набави артиљерија Краљеве гарде  
Мрши који навидаје као од наде  
тошине у каре муниције уа Опле  
нца.

За њима гардиска фанфара ш  
бесни колони.  
Четини пати кољачки нук гарде  
а светлим алтима.

Генерал Максимовић, помоћник  
команданта гарде, распоређује је  
данице.

Уа Опленца нашлао четинци с  
блатним пуцама, с укирненим ре  
колоница. После тога кољачко,  
најбог ход у сванима, исчујан  
је некако поредом.

На снет зноница. Пропони се  
гардиска пуцавица застана. Про  
сто с побоженошћу пред њом се  
себају капе.

Тако пролазе часоци. У мисли  
ма сви присутни крсто носива  
стични испримај који је Београд  
природно својом Краљу.

Једна ступај етимој првог пу  
ца који се коле на Опленцај пре  
приносен је народом. Има ту зна  
да селскачко шмолско дево с кита  
ма трпавог млаког шавка у ру  
чицима, има четинца на одрело,  
има ратарн који дају класка чита  
ним окупима, има старина који су  
живи, нимаи сведоци историја.

Десет страна је иренишна вој  
ском. Немаши, кољачки, тобоји,  
они ролони су заступљени. Стоје  
слушани, мачичи, учучени.

**СВЕШТЕНИЦИ НА КОЛПИНИ**

Дело, кад мале цркве, понавња  
су распоређени. Једна група се



Со црном заставом и вештачницом



...девојке су вичале и плавале



Fig. 8

***Postscript: the effect of the King's immortal body or its disappearance***

Milan Stojadinović, the Minister of Finance of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, wrote in his memoirs that it was the excessive zeal in the visible expression of grief for the late King that sparked a revolt among the people.<sup>56</sup> Controlled by the police, the days of genuine and widespread mourning over the monarch turned into the resentment of citizens.

Visual artefacts had a significant impact on the process of shaping the cult of the late King. A perfect example is a medal with the image of King Aleksandar on the deathbed, dressed in military uniform with a sword in his folded hands, the work of sculptor Marin Studin from 1934. Three little orphans hug the feet of an angel crowning the everlasting King with the wreath of eternity. Orphans symbolise three constituent Yugoslav peoples: Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Hugged in a single bundle, they represent the pledge of integral Yugoslavism and the confirmation to fulfil the King's political will: *Preserve Yugoslavia*.

The concept of integral Yugoslavism and its aggressive application in the years after the death of King Aleksandar continued as a valid ideological discourse.<sup>57</sup> However, the wheel of history could not be stopped. Disintegrating *tribal nationalisms*<sup>58</sup>, as well as unfavourable political circumstances in the world, caused the collapse of the country in 1941, and the Yugoslav Kingdom ceased to exist.

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<sup>56</sup> M. M. Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt, Jugoslavija između dva rata*, Rijeka 1970, 292.

<sup>57</sup> Љ. Димић, *Културна политика*, књ. I, 329.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, 331.

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**ПОЛИТИЧКА ЕКОНОМИЈА СМРТИ И КОНЦЕПТ КРАЉЕВА ДВА ТЕЛА:  
САХРАНА КРАЉА АЛЕКСАНДРА КАРАЂОРЂЕВИЋА I 1934. ГОДИНЕ**

**Резиме**

Убиство југословенског краља Александра у Марсеју 9. октобра 1934. године потресло је европску јавност у време растућих тензија пред почетак Другог светског рата. Крхко јединство Краљевине Југославије, засновано на краљевој јакој и ауторитативној личности, налазило се у великој опасности. У таквом напетом тренутку, било је потребно сачувати државно јединство и испунити правни и симболички вакуум узрокован краљевим убиством. Чињеница да је престолонаследник Петар II био малолетан могла је увести земљу у стање сталне кризе. Политичке и културне елите морале су да премосте тај симболички и правни вакуум и да пред народом створе утисак државног и династичког континуитета. Стога, да би озбедиле миран пренос власти на новог владара и одржале политичку стабилност, употребиле су стари средњовековни концепт два краљева тела. Сходно томе, сахрана краља Александра представљала је масовни спектакл у коме је краљево смртно тело постало симбол његовог мучеништва, док су бројни визуелни амблеми и слогани створили утисак присуства његовог вечног тела. Нарочито је низ фотографија са те детаљно осмишљене сахране био у служби званичне пропаганде.

Чланак примљен: 07. 04. 2020.

Чланак коначно прихваћен за објављивање: 17. 07. 2020.