

London Journal

For King-in-Waiting, It's a Long Way to Belgrade

By CRAIG R. WHITNEY
Special to The New York Times

LONDON — Have crown, will travel is the message from Crown Prince Alexander of Yugoslavia, who hopes his disintegrating country will come to its senses and bring him back as a stabilizing symbol of national unity.

The only piece of his country this direct descendant of Queen Victoria of Britain has ever seen is Room 212 of Claridge's Hotel, briefly declared Yugoslav territory when he was born on July 17, 1945, so that when the day came he could legally succeed his father, King Peter II.

But the day never did come, and the Communists under Tito proclaimed a republic instead in 1946. Crown Prince Alexander became a businessman instead of a king, after attending schools like Culver Military Academy in Indiana and Gordonstoun in Scotland and serving seven years in the 1615th Queen's Royal Lancers.

But things are looking up in the monarchy business in Eastern Europe, and for the last year and a half Prince Alexander's trade has been selling himself, from an office

ly. "This is why the monarchy is a solution."

"Here is this force of unity which understands democracy, has lived in democracy for a long time," continues the sales pitch, which Prince Alexander said he was now being invited to make "daily, absolutely daily," to the increasingly interested Yugoslav press.

"They either comment daily or carry major interviews with me daily," said the Crown Prince, a dark-haired, friendly man with an American accent acquired during years at the re-insurance business in New York City in the 1970's. He speaks Serbo-Croatian fluently, according to friends, who say that he sometimes has to spend a moment searching for the right word but otherwise can say what's on his mind.

"I'm telling everybody that we have to get on with each other, we have to respect each other's nationality, background, religion, customs, the way we write, and reminding people that Europe is coming together into a single market," he said. "We would do ourselves a lot of damage if we continue tearing each other apart."

A 'Tremendous' Response

That is what his country seems to be doing, though Prince Alexander said that now many politicians in Yugoslavia are willing to talk with him, including, through third parties, the uncompromising President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia and, directly by telephone, his rival, President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia.

"Politicians are politicians, but the response from the people has been absolutely tremendous," he said.

People who follow these things closely are guarded about his chances. His cousin King Michael of Romania went home last December, but was forced to leave again after 12 hours. King Constantine II of Greece, another cousin as well as a close friend, is also sitting in London down the street waiting in vain for his people to ask him back.

"We are two different cases," Prince Alexander said.

The exiled King Simeon II of Bulgaria may have a slightly better chance, if a referendum on whether that country should continue as a republic set for July 6 turns out his way, said Harold B. Brooks-Baker, publishing director of Burke's Peerage.

The Example of Juan Carlos

"If Simeon is successful, then Alexander is likely to follow," Mr. Brooks-Baker said. "It would represent an entirely new approach to king-drafting, though."

Alexander takes heart from his cousin Juan Carlos I, King of Spain,



Jonathan Player for The New York Times

Crown Prince Alexander of Yugoslavia, who became a businessman instead of a king when the Communists declared his country a republic six months after he was born, is now trying to sell himself and monarchy to Yugoslavia. He is working out of an office in London where a portrait of his father, King Peter II, hangs on the wall.

precisely the kind of democratic constitutional monarch he said he would like to be.

Besides, he believes that logic is on his side. Taking out a map of Yugoslavia from his desk, beneath a majestic oil portrait of his late father, he pointed out how difficult it would be to take his country apart.

"Where do you draw the borders?" he said. "Anyway, the thing now is to get on with each other. The United States is a multicultural society, and still there are problems there, but it's working, in the sense that people are

getting on with each other. Yugoslavia can do the same thing."

"The future only lies in democracy, dialogue, fully respecting human rights, religion, and customs and language," he said. "It's very important that we respect all these values, or else the whole of Yugoslavia will lose time, and in the end the people will continue to suffer the most."

Asked when he thought he would be able to return, he thought a moment and said, "I don't think it's too far away. It can't be too far away."

Alexander yearns for a throne. Will Yugoslavia call?

grandly called the Chancellery, tucked behind a pair of empty storefronts near the London Hilton on fashionable Park Lane.

'This Force of Unity'

"I have never been to Yugoslavia, which is sad but in a sense is positive, because I am not tainted by any of the political arguments," he said hopefully.

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