

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS BULLETIN

April - June, 1941

(A) PARLIAMENT

1. HOSTILITIES IN THE BALKANS, STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER, APRIL 7, 1941.

Over the week-end, as members are aware, the war entered on a new phase. At dawn yesterday, the German army and air force launched an attack on both Yugoslavia and Greece. Reports from the fronts are meagre as yet. They are sufficient, however, to make clear that attacks against both countries have been of the ruthless and barbarous character witnessed during the invasion of Poland at the beginning of the war and repeated again against Norway, the low countries, and France during the course of the spring campaign of 1940. They mark, in fact, the launching in deadly earnest of the 1941 military campaign. The attack on Yugoslavia was made by German divisions operating from southern Austria, from Roumania and from Bulgaria toward the Varder valley; that on Greece, by a combined German and Bulgarian onslaught down the Struma valley, directed at the capture of the Greek seaport of Salonika.

It appeared as recently as the 26th of March, that nazi Germany, by a process of intimidation, was about to add Yugoslavia to her already extended list of victims, thereby achieving through deceptive diplomacy and overwhelming intimidation, another bloodless victory. On the previous day at Vienna, the government of Yugoslavia in desperation had adhered to the tripartite pact, signed at Berlin on September 27, last year, by Germany, Italy and Japan, and agreed that Germany might make use of Yugoslav roads and railways in its projected attack on Greece. The pact, however, was never ratified. The mere announcement of its terms provoked widespread resentment in Yugoslavia. Popular opinion made itself so strongly felt that the council of regents, responsible for the country's betrayal, took refuge in flight. The young king, Peter II, assumed the throne, and a new government was formed which soon gained the support of every section of the Yugoslav people. It made clear the determination of the country to maintain its independence.