

**FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA**

**FEDERAL ASSEMBLY**

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**EXCERPTS FROM THE MINUTES  
OF THE DEBATE AT THE SESSION OF THE CHAMBER OF CITIZENS AND THE  
CHAMBER OF REPUBLICS OF THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY  
ON 26<sup>TH</sup> AND 27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2001**

**IN CONNECTION WITH  
THE BILL ON RESTORING CITIZENSHIP AND CONFISCATED PROPERTY  
TO THE KARADJORDJEVIC FAMILY**

**AND**

**THE ABOLITION OF THE DECREE ON STRIPPING  
THE KARADJORDJEVIC FAMILY  
OF CITIZENSHIP AND PROPERTY**

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Belgrade, February 2001

NB: The minutes from the debate we are sending you are unedited and unauthorized.

HEAD OF THE MINUTES DEPARTMENT

Slavica Kostadinovic

(Excerpts from the minutes of the Chamber of Citizens session of 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> February 2001):

SPEAKER Prof Dr DRAGOLJUB MICUNOVIC:

We are moving onto item 3 on the agenda:

**THE BILL ON RESTORING CITIZENSHIP  
AND CONFISCATED PROPERTY TO THE KARADJORDJEVIC FAMILY**

The following documents have been submitted to us:

The bill and reports of the Justice and Federal Administration Committees and of the Legislative and Legal Commission.

The government failed to declare itself on the bill, but it submitted its own proposal which deals with the same issue and which is our next item on the agenda.

I declare the debate on the bill in principle open.

VG 54/1 SZ/SR

The promoter of the bill is not present.

Does a representative of the federal government wish to speak: (No)

The government does not accept it since it has its own proposal.

Does deputy Soklovacki, as rapporteur of the Justice and Federal Administration Committee wish to speak? (Absent)

Does the deputy who is the rapporteur of the Legislative and Legal Commission wish to speak? (Absent)

Dr VOJISLAV SESELJ:

(Rises)

I wish to speak.

SPEAKER DRAGOLJUB MICUNOVIC:

The promoters are absent.

Dr VOJISLAV SESELJ:

(Rises)

I don't care about the promoter being absent. I wish to speak not because of the promoters, but because of the bill.

SPEAKER DRAGOLJUB MICUNOVIC:

The law on SPO.

Please proceed.

Dr VOJISLAV SESELJ:

First, Mr Speaker, you cannot undermine the promoter in this fashion. The fact that the promoter does not have any deputies in this chamber means nothing, for he has deputies in the Chamber of Republics. The bill is in regular procedure. It is important to have a serious discussion on the bill as in many ways it is linked with the next legal project which is passed by the federal government, only the first project gives priority to the restoration of property, while the second legal project, if only temporary, is based on the restoration of citizenship, leaving the settlement of the property issue for a later date.

VG 54/2

However, neither bill can be passed from the aspect of our legal system. The bill would mean the abolition of the decree in question. This decree has not been valid for some time. It comes under the category of so-called historic legal documents. It was passed way back during a revolutionary period. It is as if someone now tries to abolish a Sultan's edict or laws from the time of the Obrenovic, Karadjordjevic dynasties, or similar. That's what's nonsensical.

Since I also intend to speak in connection with the second bill, I will now only concentrate on the issue of the restoration of property.

The new authorities have an extremely frivolous approach in this respect. You cannot return something that was confiscated half a century ago. First, it is impossible to establish what was confiscated from whom and much greater injustice is done if property is returned to some and not to others. Second, the ownership was changed in a legal way a long time ago. Perhaps it was not a legitimate way, perhaps it was unjust, dishonourable, dishonest, but it was legal. The authorities that had confiscated the property were recognized by the whole world as legal authorities.

As far as the Karadjordjevic family is concerned, the question arises straight away as to when and where they acquired all this property. Some daily papers have been carrying reports in instalments listing the property of the Karadjordjevic family: palaces, buildings, farmland, forests, hunting grounds, mines, factories, shares in many firms, etc. How did the Karadjordjevic family acquire it?

I agree we must seek ways of taxing the newly rich, and that in some way the state gets back what rightfully belongs to it. The state has been short-changed by various murky deals. But don't tell me that the Karadjordjevic family in a legal and honest way acquired their property, when they did not.

VG 54/3

In 1903, when King Petar arrived in Serbia as Crown Prince, he was – what people would say – poor as a church mouse. He had nothing. What he did get from the civil list, e.g. from the royal palace, from various benefactors, helpers, donors as you call them nowadays, he put into Oplenac. His son Aleksandar became a multimillionaire in the period from 1918 to 1934. How? From his civil list? He couldn't have done. The king kept complaining all the time that he received little money from the state, that the amount set aside for him from the budget was too small. The king received commission for work with various foreign firms. Abusing his position, the king used to find donors, creditors, just like many are doing nowadays. Over 15 years, the king accumulated wealth that does not measure up to that of Tsar Haile Selassie, but it's not far behind.

For this reason, it is not fair for the property to be returned. It was not legally or honestly acquired. It was acquired through the abuse of the royal status and cannot be returned, especially not when this would mean taking the land from those who once had none, or taking flats from those who had none, etc. There is a whole series of buildings which are listed as state property, including the White Palace, which the king registered in his name, but did not finance the construction out of his own pocket. It was the state that financed it, partly from the budget, partly from various donations by powerful firms at the time. For this reason we must not act in this way.

As for the citizenship, the Karadjordjevic family and all the other Serbs who were stripped of their citizenship by the communist regime ought to show they are interested in the citizenship being restored to them by submitting a signed request to the interior minister on a small piece of paper, and the minister would then, magnanimously, approve the re-registration of their citizenship, the Karadjordjevic family included. It's not a case of something falling under the statute of limitations, or a specific case of the statute of limitations, as in some administrative cases. It is a bill of historic importance.

VG 54/4 & VG 54/5

In a similar way, Tito gambled with law and justice when, after the WW2, he organized a re-trial of Dragutin Dimitrijevic Apis and declared him innocent. Neither was Apis innocent, nor was King Aleksandar right to have him executed by a firing squad. But something like this cannot be re-examined after 30 years.

This is why I think the bill cannot be accepted. I will dwell on the legal aspect of the citizenship issue when the next legal project is put on the agenda.

SPEAKER DRAGOLJUB MICUNOVIC:

Does anyone else want to speak?

Stanko Gigovic.

STANKO GIGOVIC:

Esteemed Presidency, esteemed Gentlemen Deputies, on the subject of the bill on the confiscation of citizenship and property from the Karadjordjevic family, may I say straight away, as member of the Socialist People's Party of Montenegro, that I will be voting for the citizenship to be restored to the

Karadjordjevic family. Ultimately, I will also vote for the property to be restored to the Karadjordjevic family, if this will help redress the injustice.

Likewise, Ladies and Gentlemen, and Gentlemen Deputies, we know that all tsars and all kings acquired their property not always in a way that was appropriate to their own work and efforts. We are all aware of that. But let's ignore this fact for the time being, for the sake of the Karadjordjevic family. However, we must recall that the Republic of Yugoslavia and the Federative People's Republic and the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia passed the laws, either at the level of federation or at the level of republics, taking the property and assets from other citizens in this country, on the basis of nationalisation, expropriation, confiscation and other regulations. If this property was taken for the sake of public or state interests, I am convinced these citizens, although their property was taken from them unwillingly, did not create such problems, i.e. if the aim was to increase the country's national wealth.

VG 55/1 zz/lj 1

However, we have reached the stage when we abandoned this system. We have moved on to the stage of privatization. Today the property is going into the hands of the newly rich both in my native Montenegro and here in Serbia, and in every corner of our country. The newly rich are once again becoming rich at the expense of the poor.

Mister Speaker, I appeal to both the federal government and of course the republican governments, that we should not work on restitution at all levels in our country. If we redress one injustice but not the other, I fear we shall disrupt interpersonal and social relations, and this is not and must not be the aim of this parliament. Instead, parliament should redress mistakes, applying the same criterion for all.

The Karadjordjevic family is not the only one affected. I repeat, however, we shall vote in favour of the bill.

SPEAKER DRAGOLJUB MICUNOVIC:

Thank you.

Anyone else wishes to speak?

Vladan Batic.

Dr VLADAN BATIC:

I asked to speak on behalf of the DOS parliamentary floor group, only so that the public will not be confused.

So, to those who are not acquainted with the texts of the proposals, this sounds identical. However, there are two proposals, and the DOS floor group will vote for the second proposal which concerns the redressing of historic injustice, and which in practical terms concerns stripping the Karadjordjevic family of citizenship and property.

VG 55/2

The fact that some deputies belong to the parties whose programmes contain a slogan: For God, King and Fatherland, and then seek a king among international crooks, is the right of these parties.

SPEAKER DRAGOLJUB MICUNOVIC:

Thank you.

Since no one else wishes to speak, I put the bill in principle to vote.

Who is in favour? (One deputy)

Who is against?

I confirm that the Chamber adopted the bill in principle.

I call on the service to determine whether there is quorum, so that we can continue our work. (73 deputies)

We move onto point four:

**THE BILL ON ABOLITION OF THE DECREE STRIPPING  
THE KARADJORDJEVIC FAMILY OF CITIZENSHIP AND PROPERTY**

You have received the proposals and reports of the Justice and Federal Administration Committee and of the Legislative and Legal Commission.

I declare the debate on the bill in principle open.

The promoter's representative.

MIROLJUB LABUS:

Mr Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen, this is a bill proposed by the government and it reads: "The bill on abolition of the decree stripping the Karadjordjevic family of citizenship and property".

VG 55/3

This is one of the bills dealing with the past, i.e. it is one of the bills through which we ought to redress the mistakes made in the past.

On 8<sup>th</sup> March 1947 the three-member Presidium of the Presidency of the People's Assembly passed a decree stripping the Karadjordjevic family of citizenship and at the same time confiscating its property. This was an illegal act.

The confiscation of property is a criminal punishment. Only the court is authorized to make a ruling on criminal punishment, on the basis of an appropriate court procedure. The court procedure was not carried out, still, the decision on punishment was made. We have waited many years since then to redress the injustice.

There has been talk of passing a special act on this, or else passing a bill on abolishing the decree. The government chose the second option. It had a very clear reason why it made such a decision. In this way the decree is not repealed, but annulled. From the legal aspect, the difference is enormous. If a legal document is annulled, then there can be no legal consequences ever. However, if a legal document is abolished with immediate effect, this means it will have some consequences in the future. In this way we are restoring citizenship to the Karadjordjevic family. At the same time, we are putting the issue of property aside. Which property was state property and which their private property – we shall resolve this through a special act. We shall resolve it within the framework of other property issues, since this was not the only case of confiscation. There were other cases of confiscation, forced repurchase, people were destroyed because they had been sent to Goli Otok, and a series of other things which will have to be cleared up in an appropriate way.

Consequently, there is no fear at all that we are resolving the property issue partially. The property issue will be resolved at a later date, within the framework of the entire issue of de-nationalisation and observance of property rights.

It means that we are dealing with a bill which abolishes the decree. The bill affects the future, while the property issues will be resolved subsequently.

VG 55/4

We believe the bill has a great symbolic meaning. I don't need to remind you, without any pathos, that the Karadjordjevic family is the most famous Serbian family. Sadly, some of them do not speak a fluent Serbian, but it is to our shame, to the shame of this country that the most famous and best-known

family has been in exile for such a long time. This bill forms a basis for the Karadjordjevic family to return to its country and resume its normal activities.

I propose to the honourable Chamber to adopt the bill.

Thank you very much.

SPEAKER DRAGOLJUB MICUNOVIC:

Does the Committee's rapporteur, Deputy Soklovacki, wish to have a word? (Absent)

Does Deputy Vojinovic wish to have a word? (Absent)

Do any of the deputies wish to have a word?

Mr Seselj.

VG 56/1 dm/bt

DR VOJISLAV SESELJ:

Ladies and Gentlemen Federal Deputies, the new DOS authority renounced the continuity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia [FRY] in an anticonstitutional way. The president of the republic, Vojislav Kostunica, renounced it.

On the basis of the renouncement of its continuity, the FRY has been admitted, as a newly formed state, to the United Nations and to many other international organizations. If our state, i.e. the authority in our state renounced continuity, how can you abolish historic laws, what have you to do with the former state? Nothing. Why haven't Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia abolished these decrees. They have no continuity either, neither have we. No one can abolish historic laws. It makes no sense for you to do it. Had we had continuity, had we preserved it, then we could have had discussions, but then this issue would have been problematic.

I said earlier that the decree was a document to be abolished. The collective head of state passed the decree. The Presidency of the Presidium of the People's Assembly was the head of state. If the document is to be abolished, then a certain procedure needs to be conducted. A procedure for abolishing legal documents is regulated by the constitution and law. It is not within the jurisdiction of the present federal assembly to do so, and it cannot do something that is not within its jurisdiction. Had this not been a historic moment, the Constitutional Court, for instance, would have been in charge. Or a regular civil court. There could have been a regular civil procedure with regard to this case. And there has been no such procedure involving the head of state or the collective head of state. All the deadlines have expired.

Mr Labus says it is not an annulment but an abolition. If it is a case of annulment, then there would have been an upheaval, after such a long time, since a legal document – from the moment it is abolished – stops having any further legal effect. However, when it is annulled, then all its legal consequences from the very beginning are null and void. It is not possible to do this. In this particular case, I think only three people on the list are still alive. You are restoring citizenship to dead people. How can you do that? To a certain extent, the state can have regrets that this had been done, and then erect a monument to those who are no longer alive and inscribe the words: a communist regime expelled them and left them with nothing. This is a form of regret, repentance, which would be human, and which, I think, everyone in this assembly would accept. How can you restore citizenship to a dead person? Are there any lawyers in the federal government?

VG 56/2

Mr Grubac, are you a lawyer? Is this possible?

Of course, dead people have certain rights with regard to inheritance or protection of copyright. For instance, you cannot defend the honour and reputation of a dead person by intervening every time

someone violates the honour and reputation. As for the subject of citizenship that was taken away from someone, I think there is no precedent in legal history of someone who has been dead for a long time having his citizenship restored.

In any case, as far as I know, Prince Tomislav Karadjordjevic regained his FRY citizenship and had our passport. He died our citizen, with our passport. Those who had been in the federal government at the time know it better, and now you are restoring citizenship to him, so he will have dual citizenship. Perhaps it's not such a bad thing. The first time he had the citizenship of the FRY which maintained the continuity of the previous Yugoslav state, and now, posthumously, he will be granted citizenship of a new FRY which parted company with continuity.

You know, all this could look tragi-comic were it not for the people made of flesh and blood, some dead and some alive. I do not wish in any way to undermine the royal family. I think history will judge every member of the family. The judgement is never absolutely positive or absolutely negative. What we have here is a gamble with the legal system in order to score cheap political points.

What can you achieve by this?

You yourself know what a serious problem it is to restore property after half a century. More than half a century, 54 years have passed, it will be the turn of the Turkish beys, for their property to be restored. If there is no time limit, we then go deep into the past, to the time of the Nemanjic family. You know, the Bulgarian empire stretched to Srem. This is very dangerous. If there is no time limit, we are left with historic and archaeological research.

VG 56/3

In a civilized world, the limit is 20 years. Of course, some want to exceed the limit for specific interests, but then they are confronting us with a whole series of insoluble problems. It is possible that we shall be confronted with numerous other precedents which we will not be able to resolve in any way. The former head of state passed the decree. He can proclaim that this decree is no longer valid, that members of the [royal] family can have their citizenship restored. You are now restoring citizenship to some, and you don't even know whether they want their citizenship to be restored.

Those who are alive have been foreign nationals for a long time.

Prince Aleksandar Karadjordjevic is a citizen of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. He is an officer of the United Kingdom and I think he would hardly risk losing his British citizenship for the love of Yugoslav citizenship, unless this means he will return to the throne. Are you not, in some way, prejudging the form of our state organization? Why haven't you embarked on changing the constitution straight away?

What does it mean?

To pass the bill with very little explanation is not very serious. Clearly, legal experts had nothing to do with this project. The project was tackled legally by some half-politicians who do not think about the consequences. You must bear it in mind that every legal document parliament passes can have far-reaching consequences for decades ahead.

Don't be impatient, there is no limit concerning this point on the agenda, Mr Micunovic, I am not departing from the agenda.

SPEAKER DRAGOLJUB MICUNOVIC:

It's not that. We do not have a quorum, and I fear that...

VG 56/4

DR VOJISLAV SESELJ:

I don't need a quorum to speak, Mr Micunovic.

Let me conclude.

I think the federal government should withdraw the bill, draw up new amendments on the Law on Citizenship so that we can have this project before us, and that the Law on Citizenship – through general provisions - should regulate the issue of citizenship for all Serbs and for all former citizens of our country who for various reasons lost their citizenship at some stage. In other words, the communists did not strip just the royal family of their citizenship. Some were granted citizenship by foreign countries and some are stateless. I met hundreds of those who are stateless, who did not want to have foreign passports even though they fulfilled all conditions, hoping that one day they would return to their own country.

This legal project, the legal project on citizenship, must be liberalized further. We must allow everyone who had been affected in this way to regain citizenship in a summary procedure.

VG 57/1

The interior minister could organize a small reception every time, to encourage others, like he did in honour of a sportswoman, a tennis player, who brought fame to our country, at international level. Isn't that right? It can be done for all the others, but through serious legal norms, general provisions, the federal assembly should not have to deal with decrees.

Do you know how many such decrees were passed in Tito's time? Along the same principles all these other decrees could be submitted [to parliament] for abolition. At the time, Tito was not even officially head of state. It was the collective Presidency of the Presidium of the People's Assembly, the Presidency of the Presidency, since the Presidium was a kind of presidency. From the legal aspect, you have managed to make a real hash of things, and the only way for you to get out of it, seriously, is for the federal government to withdraw this legal project.

SPEAKER DRAGOLJUB MICUNOVIC:

I think we do not have a quorum.

Perhaps the justice minister would like to say a few words, since we cannot vote anyway.

MOMCILO GRUBAC:

Only in order to reply to the above.

The arguments we heard are incorrect.

First, this is not a case of restoring citizenship. This is a bill which abolishes a regulation passed way back in 1947. Consequently, we are not restoring citizenship to dead people, we are just abolishing an illegal, illegitimate regulation which, from today's perspective, is still a valid legal regulation in our legal system. The fact that it is still valid is confirmed by the fact that the Karadjordjevic family does not have [Yugoslav] citizenship and the fact that members of the family cannot under any circumstances enter any part of their former and illegally and unlawfully confiscated property. The regulation which, someone said earlier, is an abnormality in our system, must be eliminated from the legal system. We can no longer tolerate it in the new circumstances in which we are starting to develop a law-governed state. We must rid ourselves of this and similar regulations.

VG 57/2

Neither is it true that we cannot intervene in this case by passing a bill, and that it does not fall under the jurisdiction of parliament.

The decree in question, cannot be abolished by another decree which we have in our legal system today, and which is under the jurisdiction of the president. According to our current constitution, the president of the republic can intervene with a decree only when he is appointing ambassadors or passing laws and on no other occasion. He cannot abolish the decrees of this kind with another decree. Likewise, the intervention of the Constitutional Court is not reliable, because there is a big question mark over the legal nature of this document – whether it is a general or individual act. In 1947, the

Presidency of the Presidium of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was a kind of a legislative and executive body. It was modelled on a Russian organization of authority. Hence it cannot be compared to either the present assembly or present government. It had the competencies of an executive body, but at the same time it had some competencies of an legislative body transferred from the assembly to this body.

The only way for redressing the injustice, this monster of a legal regulation, is to abolish it by a special act. It was the argument of the federal government to propose to the assembly the passing of such a bill. There is no dilemma in this respect.

The issue of compensation is not dealt with by this bill. We said we would pass a special act for this purpose. This demands democratic principles which do not tolerate any favours in relation to passing other laws. When we assess the compensation for all the others who are in a similar situation, we will resolve the whole situation with one special act. It is a complex task and that's why we are not tackling it today. All countries in transition have raised the issue of compensation. We cannot face the past unless we raise this issue.

As to the amount of compensation, how it will be realized, in what way, under what conditions, what the deadlines of this difficult task are – it is the job to be resolved at the time this special act is passed.

VOJISLAV SESELJ:

A reply.

Ladies and Gentlemen, a question arises as to why the federal justice minister did not come up with a legal project which would abolish the decisions of the second AVNOJ session, which would make much more sense. Why haven't you done it?

VG 57/3

Because it is a question of a historic legal act, a quasi-legal act, an abnormal act as you said, but it has not been in legal circulation for a long time. Neither has the decree on stripping the Karadjordjevic family of citizenship and property – although it had its legal consequences, extremely rigid legal consequences – been in circulation for a long time. In 1992, when the FRY Constitution was adopted, and today this is the only valid Constitution by which we must abide, a Constitutional Law was passed regulating in specific terms which laws from the previous period would still be valid and by what deadline they would have to be adapted to the new constitutional provisions, if they are not. Isn't that so? Once we even postponed these deadlines, extended them, etc. And he does not even mention this bill. The decree you are talking about does not exist as far as this Constitution is concerned. The decree you want to abolish in parliament today is relevant exclusively for history and historians. It is not relevant for lawyers. It had its consequences. Whether you abolish it or not, the consequences cannot be reversed.

Hence it makes no sense for this bill to be passed today. If your wish is to alleviate a very bad impression in the public about the law on amnesty which you have just passed by restoring citizenship to the Karadjordjevic family and thus pulling wool over their eyes – though this has no fundamental effect – then the federal government is not serious.

Withdraw the bill and prepare additional amendments to the Law on Citizenship which will be on the agenda tomorrow, which we wanted to vote in any case with some additional amendments. It would be even fairer. It would not be limited to the Karadjordjevic family, but would concern all our former citizens whose citizenship had been taken away by the communist regime.

SPEAKER DRAGOLJUB MICUNOVIC:

I think that this interesting legal discussion - at the time when we do not have a quorum – can be stopped.

Since we do not have a quorum, we cannot vote. The session will resume at 1100 hours tomorrow.  
(Session suspended at 1953 hours)

VG 58/1 SLj/KV

CONTINUATION OF THE SESSION OF THE CHAMBER OF CITIZENS  
OF THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY  
ON 27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2001, STARTING AT 1127 HOURS

The session was opened and chaired by Milutin Ojdanic, deputy Speaker of the Chamber of Citizens of the Federal Assembly.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Esteemed Federal Deputies, conditions have been met for us to resume the session.

Before I give the floor to the first speaker, let me tell you that Prof Micunovic will not attend the session today because of a death in the family.

Second, I would like to tell you that deputies Bala Lajos and Milorad Savicevic reported that they would be absent today.

We can resume our regular proceedings.

Let me remind you, we are debating only item 4 on the agenda:

THE BILL ON ABOLITION OF THE DECREE ON STRIPPING  
THE KARADJORDJEVIC FAMILY OF CITIZENSHIP AND PROPERTY

We started the debate yesterday.

Who wants to speak?

Deputy Joksimovic, you may speak.

OBREN JOKSIMOVIC:

Ladies and Gentlemen Federal Deputies, when we talk about such a legal project as the bill which should redress one in a series of historic injustices, then we are faced with numerous different dilemmas. Perhaps some of the deputies who have already spoken are partially right, since we must know what and who we are dealing with.

We are dealing with the most important and most famous Serbian family. These are Karadjordjevic's descendants. These are the people who, like many others, have been stripped of their basic right, the right to homeland, by a clumsy, inhuman policy, and anti-social acts and decrees.

VG 58/2

[Joksimovic, contd] Just imagine, the Karadjordjevic descendants, a dynasty, the only one that has survived, stripped of its right to homeland. And this parliament should now pass a bill to annul the decree.

The communists came to power by force, in contravention of all laws, in contravention of all human norms. They did not come to power – as the story goes – thanks to the victory of the national uprising. They came to power on Stalin's tanks, by force, the force which occupied Serbia and kept it 50 years or perhaps longer in submission, banning all basic human rights, such as the right to one's homeland. We cannot be led by the fact that some other families have not yet been granted citizenship. Of course we shall pass new laws, we will work on ensuring that everyone who had been stripped of their rights has their rights restored. However, I think there are priorities in our everyday life.

We must take the lead in something at least. We must respect our own values, our own historic values at least. If we have no respect for those who continue the line of one of the fathers of Serbian freedom, if we forget Sretenje in 1804 (First Serbian Uprising under Karadjorđe), we shall also forget all the wars we have waged throughout history, all the victories we have won and all the battles we have lost, and we shall also forget our roots.

We must not, we truly must not be in a dilemma as to whether such a bill should or should not be adopted. A bill in itself can have its flaws which can or cannot be corrected. But it should be passed so that we can show to ourselves and to others that we are capable, truly capable of realizing what is right and what is not right, what is valuable and what is not valuable.

If the most important and the best known family fails to take its rightful historic place through the process of redressing a historic injustice, then we as a nation must ask ourselves: what are we doing? What are our values, if we do not even have the strength to redress such an ugly historic injustice?

I think that it is within this context that we should look at the bill which we should adopt today, and within this context we should consider the issue of their inheritance and the inheritance of others who have been stripped of their dignity and their right to homeland and property by similar bills and decrees. Thank you.

VG 58/3

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you, Deputy Joksimovic.

Deputy Gavrilovic.

SLOBODAN GAVRILOVIC:

Esteemed fellow Deputies, I feel it is my duty to say a few words – more for the sake of truth and history.

When Crown Prince Aleksandar first came to Yugoslavia in 1991, I had the honour to be in the organization committee to welcome him and I know, I recall many a conversation we had with him at the time and afterwards. His enormous desire was to return to this country, but on condition that when he is granted [Yugoslav] citizenship and he regains his property, the same should be made possible for all the other citizens and under the same conditions. Then I saw that this was a man who does not think just about himself, not even just about his family, but above all he places his role and his family within the context of all citizens in Serbia along the principle of total equality.

Hence it seems to me that in parliament today we should make a joint effort to render meaningless something that had been done in the past, regardless of ideological, political or any other differences between us, and demonstrate that exile, since ancient Greece, has been the most severe form of punishment ever to be applied to anyone. We should never ever apply such a punishment, as people and as deputies in any system of power, especially not in the one we wish to build on the basis of a law-governed state, and on the basis of a democratic system in which we can all enjoy all the benefits, and share them equally at least with regard to basic citizens' rights and liberties - citizenship and property.

VG 59/1

Hence I see this bill as an introduction to what should be done, which is perhaps a more serious thing, a more difficult one, and which will perhaps have a long-term effect, and it relates to property. This bill requires that the issue be resolved by a separate act. I know there will be big problems, but it is very important for us to show that if the state cannot ensure full compensation for the time being, let us leave it for a later date, but we must accept that we cannot enter into a new ownership transformation, we cannot privatize something that is already in private hands.

For this reason I call on you, as fellow deputies, to approach the bill together and responsibly, as people's deputies and not as deputies of individual political groups.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you, Deputy Gavrilovic.

Deputy Vojinovic.

SLAVISA VOJINOVIC:

Esteemed Chairman, esteemed fellow Federal Deputies, in the century that is behind us, the Serbian people have been the victims of a specific political ideology. Since the middle of last century, unfortunately, we, and our ancestors, have been witnesses to the circumstances in which one ideology, imposed on the Serbian people, brought them to destruction, so to speak, brought the Serbian people into a situation where – at the end of last century - they have to question many basic issues of statehood and existence.

VG 59/2

The imposed ideology had many negative consequences and many negative effects on our national integrity and our nation in general.

Today, bearing in mind the draft law we are discussing, we are redressing only part of the injustice done to the Serbian people as a whole, this time represented by the Karadjordjevic family and dynasty.

The dilemma is about whether we shall resolve this problem, which is weighing upon us and upon our national conscience, through the court institutions, through the Constitutional Court, or in some other way.

Aware of the situation that this parliament represents our national and political will, we believe that it is the most appropriate place for saying a few words about the injustice, and that this body and institution should redress the historic injustice, one of many. And of course, we have respected the will and interests of the living members of the Karadjordjevic family, the ones who, sadly, are not with us today, but somewhere abroad, and I hope they will return soon, that the injustice will be redressed gradually and such a way as to place them among citizens with equal rights in another respect – in respect of the property and material things. This is the right way to do it. Guided by the goal and desire to redress the injustice, we have proposed this bill, which is debated today.

Consequently, for the sake of a symbol and for the sake of the historic responsibility we bear as members of parliament and as representatives of a nation it is necessary to [redress] an ugly act, which was absolutely unlawful and a sign of the time in which it was passed, a time of crude force, a time of continued attempts by the Communist Party, a friend of the International, to introduce a system which in many ways brought us in the current situation. It was one of those important and ugly periods in the life of our country, when such an act was passed and which is now the subject of the abolition.

VG 59/3

In this way we shall redress part of the injustice, but I hope that the assembly will be able to continue to redress many other injustices and that in the period ahead we, as a state, society and nation, shall have something to be proud of, that we shall work in the interest of our people, and not in the interest of any ideological, international, intercontinental or, how shall I call them, ideologies which have brought upon us a great deal of evil.

I call on you to accept the draft law, to vote in favour of it, to do a small step for us, for the sake of our dignity, and to catch up with the time we lost – since nineteen forty something. I believe you believe in the same thing.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you, Deputy Vojinovic.

Ljiljana Colic.

LJILJANA COLIC:

Everyone knows that the Karadjordjevic dynasty is a Yugoslav state-building [drzavotvorna] dynasty, that it is our people's dynasty and while we had our people's dynasty, we had a stable St Sava national church, a stable people's army and we needed no laws on amnesty.

Today, when we are once again laying foundations for our state, when we are trying to build a stable democratic system, I think it is only right that we should return the flow of our statehood into its natural banks. This is a perfectly logical and natural thing, without which we cannot continue the further democratization of our society and state.

VG 60/1 jm/bt

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you, Deputy Colic.

Federal Deputy Ivica Dacic.

IVICA DACIC:

Ladies and Gentlemen, I hope this is not a subject about which we shall fight, since it is a historic subject. I certainly would not like to fight with Maja.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the bill we are discussing today definitely comes under the category of historic laws, as someone pointed out already. Let's not argue about whether it is necessary to adopt a bill abolishing a decree, etc. I would like to say a few words about the story that has been circulating here.

First, the citizenship of the Karadjordjevic family - I think it is an issue no-one in the SPS has disputed in the past 10 years. There is no dispute about it. In any case, Tomislav Karadjordjevic died on his own former property here in Serbia, while Slobodan Milosevic was in power.

Second, as far as the property is concerned, I would support the stand I read in the papers - and this is proof that I personally, and I hope deputies of my party, support the same stand as DOS, which is fair and logical. Mr Sabic, I don't know to which party he belongs, I think the Social Democracy, the Deputy Speaker of the Serbian Assembly, has said the issue of the Karadjordjevic property is debatable. Why?

He said Aleksandar Karadjordjevic "had an income from the civil list which was higher than that of the US president". I therefore propose the issue of property be resolved in an honest way. It cannot be that you contest the property of some officials today, while the property of some officials of 50 or 100 years ago is accepted as a fait accompli.

VG 60/2 and VG 60/3

Consequently, the issue of citizenship and property must be resolved along the principle of equality for all. There are many Yugoslav citizens, I think, who were stripped of or denied their citizenship in this way after the WW2, and I hope and wish the property issue will be resolved in the same way for everyone.

I would like to offer you some of my thoughts on the subject.

It's really cute that DOS representatives, whether royalists or republicans, are admiring the Karadjordjevic family. However, in the past 10 years I have not heard anyone saying our country

should adopt the Karadjordjevic-style foreign and domestic policies. On the contrary, everyone spoke about the great wisdom of Milos Obrenovic.

Ladies and Gentlemen, where is now the second largest royal family in Serbia – the Obrenovic family? Whose fault is it? Sadly, it's all to do with the well-known Serbian discord. Once again today, several centuries later, we are in a situation where power struggle is a struggle for life and death.

I would like to remind you of one other thing.

In 1941, when Hitler attacked Yugoslavia, Petar Karadjordjevic fled the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This is not in keeping with the policy and conduct of his ancestors. This fact, it seems to me, should not be overlooked here.

As for the issue of monarchy versus republic, the SPS is a republican party and we are for republic, of course. We are for an elected king, an elected monarch. If you ask me today: Kostunica or Aleksandar Karadjordjevic, I'd always say Kostunica. But I'd like to say something else, not for the sake of us sitting here, but of those who perhaps one day will read the minutes of these sessions, unless these, too, are burnt at some stage.

The greatest damage to the Serbian people in 20<sup>th</sup> century – and I don't know whether my colleagues in the SPS agree with me, but it is my right to think this way, and I speak as I think – was done by the ideology of brotherhood, and later on Tito's unity with those who we have never been our brothers. That Yugoslavia, Ladies and Gentlemen, was created in 1918 by the Karadjordjevic family. Instead of creating a kingdom of Serbia and Montenegro, as the forces who had won WW1, we created the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in which we failed to set boundaries for the Serbian and Montenegrin national territory, we failed to enter into a marriage in such a way as to ensure that we can get a proper divorce. Hence it was normal that in 1990 and 1992, when the marriage was collapsing, the Serbs did not know what they had brought into the marriage, since that was how both the Karadjordjevics and Josip Broz Tito, and also Serbian communists after WW2 behaved.

I beg of you, Ladies and Gentlemen, let's not talk about the Karadjordjevic ideology in 20<sup>th</sup> century. Together with those who continued that same ideology, it caused an enormous damage to the Serbian people. Let's take an example: King Aleksandar, just like Josip Broz Tito, was a godfather to every ninth Albanian child. Let's look at the names of the children of the Serbian King – you have them in the draft law. That is the ideology of brotherhood and unity. They are called Petar, Tomislav and Andrej.

VG 61/1 mb/33

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Those political brotherhoods and unities with the people who have never been our brothers caused the greatest damage to the Serbian and Montenegrin people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ladies and Gentlemen. We cannot overlook this fact and it does not matter whether they are kings, communists or something else. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you, Deputy Dacic.

Minister Zoran Zivkovic.

ZORAN ZIVKOVIC:

Ladies and Gentlemen, I ask to speak for the second time, with modest intentions, for I could not let the words of the previous speaker pass without comment. I checked with my colleagues in the DSS and Social Democracy, in the New Serbia and in other parties, they will not admit you into any of these parties if you keep selling yourself in this way.

Second, as for the citizenship of the Karadjordjevic family, it is not true they had the citizenship until now. They do not have it. Likewise, it is no true that no-one ever called it in question. They did. And

you, as far as I remember, were a deputy here over several terms, and from that position, or some other, you could have done something to ensure the citizenship was restored to this family.

As for the property, and the bill clearly states it, it is really ridiculous that I should be explaining to you what the bill states. The property is not the subject of this bill. It is clearly stated that the property issue will be dealt with by other bills.

On the subject of the Obrenovic family, the Karadjordjevs did not strip them of their citizenship when they came to power, hence the subject is not on the agenda at the moment. And don't hide from your legacy, don't hide from your legacy, the legacy of the League of Communists, or the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, and don't settle accounts with Josip Broz and with Serbian communists now, 50 years later.

VG 61/2

You are both natural and official heirs of the KPJ and of the League of Communists of Serbia and Yugoslavia. You would have never said this, had it not been true. You can ask your older colleagues who think it to this day, and don't try to save your future now. Like I said yesterday, there will be room for everyone, even for you, in a democratic Serbia and in a democratic Yugoslavia. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you.

Deputy Joksimovic.

OBREN JOKSIMOVIC:

I had the impression, but correct me if I am wrong, Ladies and Gentlemen, that part of Mr Dacic's expose also referred to mine. That's why I asked to speak. Mr Dacic, you cannot draw any parallels between the Karadjordjevic family and the Broz dynasty. You cleverly tried to conceal it here. No more no less, but the Karadjordjevic dynasty is to blame for the phenomenon of Josip Broz. It is a very dangerous parallel.

The Karadjordjevic family is the best-known Serbian family. It has living descendants. The Obrenovic family, as one of the best-known Serbian families, has no living descendants and it cannot have its citizenship restored. Furthermore, their citizenship and right to homeland had not been stripped of them by a decree. As for your right to lament about Josip Broz, I shall now tell you the following: Josip Broz came to this country by Stalin's methods and deeds and on his steel tanks. And he put the yoke on the Serbian people. You wholeheartedly supported this ideology until today, and you fiercely opposed our wishes to change our [national] holidays. You celebrated the holiday of the Jajce republic, which Josip Broz brought to this country. You told all of us here that you were the true heirs of his party, and now you are attacking him having undergone a strange metamorphosis.

VG 61/3 and VG 61/4

It is your right to change your political opinion, of course, and to change your opinion in general, but you cannot convince us that the Karadjordjevs are to blame for Josip Broz and his policy here. It is truly a disgrace for the Serbian people that Josip Broz was once a role model for the Serbian people, and it is also a disgrace for the Serbian people that their best-known family has no right to its fatherland. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you.

Ivica Dacic wishes to reply.

IVICA DACIC:

Ladies and Gentlemen, it was not my intention to encourage a response to any part of my discussion. I was only presenting my stand. I know that even members of my own party perhaps disagree with my stand, but I know that the majority of our people agree with me, not because I have something against the Karadjordjevics or against Josip Broz. It is ridiculous that you should accuse me of it. I was born, I don't know how many years after the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, I was born 48 years after it and 21 years after Tito's coming to power in the SFRY, or whatever was its name, I no longer remember.

I am only saying this from a historic aspect – that the idea of creating Yugoslavia was wrong, since it was not based on the union of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, with the clearly defined territories. Tito only continued it. With help from the Serbian communists in 1945, the boundaries and all the rest have been set. And so, the Serbs remained to live outside their motherland, and I'd also recall that at the time of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia the Serbs were divided into several regional units [banovine], whereas Croatia represented only one such unit. I would not like to encourage any replies concerning the legacy of the former Communist Party. I fully support what you said last time when passing the bill on property – that we are not the only legal heirs of the League of Communists. Ladies and Gentlemen, you are all its heirs.

VG 62/1 MSh/KV

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

A reply from Joksimovic.

OBREN JOKSIMOVIC:

Mr Dacic, you are trying to explain something that could have been explained in a different connotation and perhaps with different arguments. But you don't want to do that.

If everything you are saying is like that, and if this is your opinion, can you explain one simple thing to me? Why have I been expelled for the past 10 years? Why was my family hostage to your regime and why did you keep Josip Broz's ideology as your own and defend it with arms? On several occasions we were confronted with your arms defenceless. We entered the assembly against your arms.

Explain to me now – if this is not so – and if your ideology is such as it is, and if you really speak what you think, why did you have to defend your ideology, the ideology of Broz, with arms? This, of course, also can be said of your party's leadership.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you.

Ivica Dacic.

IVICA DACIC:

Ladies and Gentlemen, This is what the assembly is for – for arguments and not for slapping each other on the face, even if we think differently. I would just like to say that there is no TV coverage. I did not want to speak because of the TV coverage, so that we score political points. What I say here, I say everywhere. I think there is no need to discuss it any further. We did not defend Tito's Yugoslavia for 10 years. For 10 years we fought against the consequences of the first and second Yugoslavia, that of the Karadjordjevics and that of Tito. In order to try and protect the Serbian people who stayed outside the borders of Serbia and Montenegro and because of another Yugoslavia.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Deputy Toplica.

TOPLICA DJORDJEVIC:

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen Deputies, I wish to speak because I am very pleased that finally we have come to redress a great historic injustice – the injustice which, above all, was done to the Serbian people and citizens living in Serbia, and the injustice which was done to the most famous Serbian family which still has descendants.

Today, unlike many other days in the past 10 years, we are living a truly historic moment. I see there is a necessary majority in parliament for the bill to be adopted. This will put an end to any arguments of this kind in which some of my friends participated. Today we finally shall correct the most important mistake against our people in the past – when we broke the continuity of what is called Serbian tradition and Serbian history. This was the most important continuity which we should have never allowed to be broken, nor should we ever let it happen in the future. Any other continuity is secondary.

It is most important that we should return to our tradition, our history, and that everything that is worth in our history be put on a pedestal for those who will preserve our national conscience and who will protect our statehood.

I am very pleased about that. I think today is the day we shall make a historic one.

Hence I call on all deputies, even those who until now perhaps thought differently, to vote unanimously for the bill restoring citizenship, i.e. abolishing the decree which stripped them [royal family] of their citizenship, as a symbol and message to all our Serbs and other citizens of Serbia living abroad, as a Diaspora, so they can freely return to their country and so that all misfortunes they suffered so far, [changes thought] so that we can show them in a certain way that the regime which had persecuted them truly does not deserve any better but to be wiped off the historic scene.

VG 62/3

In this way we shall set aside doubts about whether Josip Broz and his followers caused damage to our people and to the Serbian nation in general, and establish what our true tradition is.

That's why I call on you once again to unanimously pass the bill.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you, Deputy Toplica.

Mirko Bajic.

MIRKO BAJIC:

Ladies and Gentlemen Federal Deputies, looking from the historic aspect, many injustices have been done to the Serbian and other peoples living here. Some of these injustices, and I believe many will be redressed. However, there probably will be many others which, sadly, cannot be redressed. Fortunately, something has happened which has allowed us to redress injustices. We are doing it right here, by voting on the draft law today. Changes are happening. Some should have happened much earlier. Some may not be implemented, but fortunately, they are taking place. Some are natural changes, they follow a certain logic. There are also unnatural ones which are not logical, if you look at them any closer. One of those is a metamorphosis, mentioned by Mr Dacic who has started to think like DOS. I don't believe Mr Dacic started thinking like DOS. I wouldn't like to equate the two things since that would cast a shadow on many things DOS is doing.

I think it is too late for such changes, of the kind Mr Dacic hinted, or tried to convince us, since such changes are not natural.

I wanted to speak because I wanted to comment precisely on these circumstances and on what Mr Dacic said earlier on – that a historic injustice was done when Yugoslavia was created in 1918, and also in 1945, I suppose that's what he meant.

I ask Mr Dacic and you who are on the left side – which Yugoslavia have you been defending for the past 10 years? You have been convincing citizens of Serbia and all of us – as Serbian citizens –

VG 62/4 and VG 63/1 SLj/Lj/1

that you were defending Yugoslavia and that you are claiming the same thing today. I remember when it all started a long time ago, when the then President of the Presidency of former Yugoslavia once said on TV, I remember the words exactly, it was in a news bulletin: “Let the Slovenes go, they are of no interest to us, we are defending Yugoslavia.” That’s when I asked myself for the first time – which Yugoslavia were you defending? Which Yugoslavia did you defend afterwards, when it was much smaller, and then smaller still, and smaller yet again? Perhaps you would defend it right down to [the size of] Dedinje, the famous estate which you would surround and perhaps call Yugoslavia. You have never defended any Yugoslavia. You defended your own power. You defended your own privileges. Even today, you are speaking here because you want to preserve your privileges, and because you live in a false belief that you will preserve and restore your power.

And that’s precisely the point and that’s the truth. Luckily, we are discussing other things today, we are discussing how to redress a historic injustice. And the bill we shall pass will take care of that. Perhaps we shouldn’t be talking so much about this bill, since passing such a bill is a natural change, a natural thing and the redressing of the injustice, and there shouldn’t have been any need to discuss it in detail had it not been for the insinuations and statements of the kind we have heard a moment ago.

I support the need for this bill and, of course, I don’t want to equate the passing of this bill with the bills which will follow, i.e. the bill which will redress another injustice – the restoration of property.

And just one more thing before I end. To equate the issue of the Karadjordjevic property and other injustices done at that time with the issues concerning our officials today – as we heard today - is really unbelievable. I hope, I am convinced and I expect today’s officials will have to be held accountable on the subject of the acquisition of their property, and that they should not hold it in the way they had acquired it, for they have no right to do so.

Many thanks.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you, Deputy Bajic.

Federal Deputy Batic.

VG 63/2

VLADAN BATIC:

Ladies and Gentlemen People’s Deputies, this parliament, just like the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, unfortunately, has to deal with redressing various historic injustices left behind by the previous regime, by ideological ancestors, the people who served the previous regime and who now – we hear it for the first time – are renouncing their ideological ancestors, just like some whose motto was “For God, King and Fatherland” and who are now renouncing the king, as I said yesterday.

The ideological descendants of Josip Broz are renouncing Josip Broz. That’s why the change of authority has happened, because you no longer believe in those whose ideology was incorporated in your party programmes, and that’s why the people made the decision they did.

In order to redress all historic injustices committed by the previous regimes, we ought to be in permanent session. This is one of the bills which redresses one of the greatest injustices – stripping of citizenship the people whose ancestors laid foundations for the state in which we live today.

Yesterday we heard that the whole thing could be regulated in an administrative procedure before the Constitutional Court. This view was advocated by some former professors of the Law Faculty, and thank God they are former, since even those who sometimes passed by the Law Faculty know better.

This is an elementary thing, a bill to restore citizenship to those who were stripped of it by an illegal decree. And the citizenship will be restored. I think any arguments about it are superfluous.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you.

Please proceed.

VG 63/3

VUKIC VUKOSAVLJEVIC:

Ladies and Gentlemen Deputies, I wasn't thinking of speaking on this issue, but I was forced to do so by the situation and the developments in this house.

I was forced because you kept saying that we were obstructing the work of parliament and stalling the adoption of some bills. Now you can see for yourself who is doing the obstructing and who engages in such activities.

What is happening? All the time, knowing you do not have a sufficient number of votes to pass this bill, by adding up, counting and recounting, you are trying to gain time with your rhetoric so that you bring in more deputies in order to pass the bill. That's all I wanted to say – that we do see what is happening.

At the same time, I suggest it would be more honest if you call for a recess until you get a sufficient number of votes, so that we can resume work, and we don't have to listen to your idle talk and superficial explanations in order for you to gain time.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you.

Deputy Raicevic.

DRAGUTIN RAICEVIC:

Esteemed Ladies and Gentlemen Deputies, Esteemed Chairman, I asked to speak on behalf of the Socialist People's Party [Socijalisticka narodna partija]. I just want to say a few words, not with the intention to obstruct the work of parliament, but only so that we can agree on several principled matters.

VG 63/4

Some past injustices definitely should be redressed, but here we have a legitimate question, which Mr Seselj raised yesterday.

First, we should redress the injustice from which period? Is it from 1941, 1905 or 1918? I do not say this without reason. Do we have a mandate of the people to redress here today all the injustices done by the previous authorities? I say this because of the fact you are all familiar with – the second well-known Serbian dynasty – and I underline "Serbian" on purpose – is the Petrovic dynasty. They are the true Serbian dynasty and the state-building dynasty which created the second Serbian state here: Montenegro. Let's put aside the fact that the newly created Duklja Academy denies they are a Serbian dynasty. Still, for those of us present here, this is an undeniable fact.

You know very well what happened to this dynasty. Sadly, it has only one living descendant: Prince Nikola Petrovic Njegos, I think his name is. He lives in Paris and, unfortunately, he is a Catholic, not an Orthodox. However, the separatist authority in Montenegro always takes advantage of him when it

wants to get something done, and he goes to Montenegro very often. And you all know very well for what purpose, you all know it well. However, you also know very well that the Petrovic dynasty has a great deal of property: the most valuable cultural and historic heritage of Montenegro.

Will parliament also raise the issue of restoring the property to this dynasty? It would be very problematic. In any case, the Karadjordjevic family has a very valuable property in Montenegro. No doubt you have all been in Milocer. It is the prettiest part of the coast, perhaps even in Europe, it's a natural pearl, and the Karadjordjevic family owns it. That's why we have to decide here, esteemed colleagues Deputies, which problems and injustices, i.e. from which period, we should be solving and redressing.

VG 63/5

It is certain that we should rehabilitate and restore the citizenship of all those who had been persecuted on the political basis. However, I fear that we will not do well if we deal with injustices individually.

That's all. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you, Deputy Raicevic.

Who is next?

Please proceed.

DUSAN PETROVIC:

Honourable Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen Deputies, of course time is precious, but the subject of this bill is something that deeply concerns the very essence of our state and our nation. Not everyone perhaps sees it like that, but anyone who ponders about the ways of our nation over the last two centuries, cannot help reaching this conclusion.

The entire dispute about the bill contains in itself two important things.

One is state building, and it genuinely concerns the issue of our nation's being, even from the philosophical aspect, and the other is legal.

This fundamental part in fact means that with this bill we as a nation and as a state are restoring an amputated part of our body, we are restoring that which made Serbia a state, which made Serbia become a bigger state when historic circumstances allowed it. We are restoring the true and historic importance to Karadjordje and to Prince Petar, i.e. to Aleksandar Karadjordjevic, King Petar and all members of the Karadjordjevic dynasty.

VG 64/1 md/bt

The second is the legal issue. A great lawyer who drew up a code for King Nikola said this: "What is born defective, time cannot make good." However, I am referring to the decree which stripped the Karadjordjevic dynasty of its property and citizenship. What was born defective then, time shall make good, so that its offshoots can be healthy and develop into a state and national creation which will not end up in the way things were going in the past several decades.

I see that the issue of citizenship is not disputed, so there is no need to waste our words on it. As for the property, I think that Mr Dacic has initiated another aspect of the discussion. It is about how the officials who ran this state acquired their property over the last 10 years. Let's not go back to the issue of the property of the Karadjordjevic dynasty, above all that of King Aleksandar and his immediate descendants. For here we would immediately have another crucial argument.

King Aleksandar created a big state. At the time of King Aleksandar and his father Kosmet and Macedonia were annexed to this state and a big country was created without a precedent in the

Balkans. In this case we are right to ask: should we return the property to the descendants of those kings who had created the mightiest states since this nation has existed? Unlike them, we have reached the end of the century with a reduced state territory, with defeats and humiliation. These are the reasons, among others, human, moral and political reasons, why it is vital to re-examine how this enormous property had been acquired by everyone who contributed to it, in which period our state and our nation have reached rock bottom in the past two centuries. Thank you.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Who wants to speak next?

(Murmur in the room)

Please proceed.

VG 64/2

IVICA DACIC:

Ladies and Gentlemen, without any intention to reopen the polemics, you can look up in the minutes what I said today - unless these were burnt. At least on two or three other occasions since 1992, since I have been a deputy, I spoke in this parliament about the consequences of the creation of Yugoslavia and its harmful effect on Serbian national interests, since the Yugoslavia which was created did not have a well-defined Serbian territorial body within the unitary monarchy, which was the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. That's all.

As for the property of the officials, I don't know whether you understood me, I am in favour of investigating how the property was acquired, including that of the Karadjordjevics. In this I back the DOS stand, if that is the DOS stand, which was presented by Mr Sabic.

CHAIRMAN MILUTIN OJDANIC:

Thank you.

Since no one else has asked to speak, I close the debate and proceed with the voting on the bill in principle.

Those in favour, please raise your hands. (73 federal deputies)

(Applause)

Who is against? (Four federal deputies)

Abstentions? (None)

I declare that the Chamber adopted the bill in principle.

I open a debate on details of the bill.

Who wants to speak?

I close the debate on the details.

I put the bill as a whole to vote.

Who is in favour? (73 federal deputies)

Who is against? (Four federal deputies)

Who abstained? (No one)

I declare that the Chamber adopted in full the bill on the abolition of the decree on stripping the Karadjordjevic family of property and citizenship.

(Applause)

NB: The minutes from the debate we are sending you are unedited and unauthorized.

Slavica Kostadinovic

HEAD OF THE MINUTES DEPARTMENT

(Excerpts from the minutes of the Chamber of Republics session of 26<sup>th</sup> February 2001):

SPEAKER SRDJA BOZOVIC:

We move onto the next item on the agenda:

THE BILL ON RESTORING CITIZENSHIP AND CONFISCATED PROPERTY  
TO THE KARADJORDJEVIC FAMILY

The bill was proposed by a deputy in the Chamber of Republics, Spasoje Kronic.

Perhaps it would be useful, if you agree, given that the government has a similar bill, to merge the two debates, but to vote on the bill separately.

We could do it if those who proposed the bills agree.

As I can see, the government representative has agreed to the proposal. Do you agree?

BP 21/5

PROF DR SPASOJE KRUNIC:

[Rises] I would have a few words to say.

SPEAKER SRDJA BOZOVIC:

First things first.

Item 2 (on the agenda) is the bill restoring citizenship and confiscated property to the Karadjordjevic family.

Federal Deputy in the Chamber of Republics Spasoje Kronic proposed the bill.

The Legislative and Legal Commission of the Federal Assembly and the Committee for Justice and Federal Administration of the Chamber have examined the bill.

Does a representative of the promoter wish to speak before the debate is opened?

Federal Deputy Spasoje Kronic wishes to speak.

May I ask Federal Deputies to follow the proceedings and not to leave the room, since the continuation of the session can be called into question!

PROF DR SPASOJE KRUNIC:

Since it is not possible to do otherwise, I agree that we should join the proceedings and the debate concerning the bill on the abolition of the decree.

Are we dealing with this bill? (Yes)

If this is so, there is no need to discuss the proposals separately.

I wish to recall that back in 1993 we, the Serbian Renewal Movement [SPO], submitted - via our deputies - such a proposal to parliament, and only now it is on the agenda. It won't be long now - since 8 March 1947 or 55 years later - before this evil and shame are resolved.

VR 21/6

The Justice and Federal Administration Committee did not support the proposal. In fact, it was in favour of abolition, but not of restoration of property. Since it was the federal government which proposed the bill, it will be put on the agenda, it is in the pipeline. Our aim was not to single out anyone in any way, but to start with the Karadjordjevic family, from the most famous Serbian family, and it would not have been such a bad thing had the federal government managed to formulate it in clear terms. I fear many Serbs will not live to see the implementation of the second bill - the restoration of property and citizenship. I don't know why a special act was not passed!? I don't need any interpretation today. I see it all clearly. I also understand the problems we have today, since we were all born in Orasje in 1804, and originally we all come from Kosovo, and today we have been debating amnesty for rebels.

VR 22/1

By abolishing the illegal and shameful decree of 1947, timidly, if you will forgive me for this, timidly to return to the question of citizenship and property, and of course with some reservations and warnings that it would all be done in keeping with the law [sentence as received]. All this could have been resolved today, but to no avail, we have to live all our hardships four times over. In any case, I am grateful since, Mr Kasa [addressing him], it is certain that we are all equal and that we have to wait for the bill, and for Kronic, Kasa and Kovac - as we reached the letter K. But, as we reached the letter K, then the Karadjordjevics are a completely different issue. Thank you very much.

SPEAKER SRDJA BOZOVIC:

Thank you Mr Kronic.

Anyone else?

Deputy Speaker Mirosljub Labus.

Dr MIROLJUB LABUS:

Mr Speaker, Gentlemen Deputies,

The government fully agrees with the idea put forward here by Mr Kronic that both citizenship and property should be returned to the Karadjordjevic family. The only question is how to do it and our opinions on it differ, that's why we proposed the bill.

The first dilemma was whether to pass a special legal act, i.e. a special bill. The government thinks the Decree of the Presidency of the People's Assembly Presidium should be abolished. Let me remind you, it was not even the whole Presidium that was in session back in 1947. It was three members of the Presidium, chaired by Dr Ribar, who passed the Decree annulling the citizenship and confiscating the property. In itself, the act was illegal, since the confiscation of property is a criminal punishment. Criminal punishments cannot be ruled without appropriate court proceedings. There were no such court proceedings.

VR 22/2

The Presidium of the Presidency simply ruled a criminal punishment, completely outside its jurisdiction. So purely from the legal point of view, and from the moral point of view or whatever you want to call it, the Decree should be abolished.

The government proposes the abolition of the Decree. By abolishing the Decree all legal consequences are being declared null and void. Consequently, the confiscation of property is annulled, but it is a complex issue and certain changes occurred concerning parts of property in the meantime, and a number of lawsuits are under way.

Second, the issue is linked with privatization [denacionalizacija]. We wanted to examine the whole case, above all in consultations with the Karadjordjevic family, and to resolve the issue.

As far as I know and as far as the government knows, the Karadjordjevic family agree to this solution. We shall be able to make an additional effort relatively quickly and resolve the property issue in a satisfactory way.

Hence it is important that we should free one of the oldest and most prestigious families from this punishment and show we are once again a law-governed state and we care about our history. This is one of the ways for us to show we care about our good traditions.

Likewise, it will be a sign that – alongside the process of privatization – we are respecting property rights. It will be a sign for all those who want to come and invest in this country and acquire property here that the government and parliament respect property rights. In accordance with this, we shall propose and pass a specific act on how to resolve the issue of the Karadjordjevic family.

In this respect, the government believes that the second bill should be adopted, and I fully agree with the essence of the bill which Mr Krunic presented.

**SPEAKER SRDJA BOZOVIC:**

Thank you Mr Labus.

Anyone else?

Radoje Prica.

VR 22/3

**RADOJE PRICA:**

Ladies and Gentlemen, I share your respect, or the respect shown by the previous speaker, for the Karadjordjevic family. They are no doubt the most important, most famous and the oldest Serbian family, and I agree with the proposal that their citizenship and property should be restored.

However, it seems to me that Article 2 prejudices certain things, and I would suggest that the promoter amends it to a certain degree.

It states: “Conditions for the restoration [povracaj] of confiscated property.”

I would suggest the text to be worded in the following way: “The method and conditions for restoring [the property], and the compensation for confiscated property, defined in Article 1 of this bill, shall be regulated by a separate act.”

I have not submitted an amendment, but I suggest that the promoter adopts the change, since Article 2 – such as it is at present – prejudices the solution of the issue and states “Restoration”.

However, in order to equate all those whose property shall be restored, be it confiscation, privatization or illegal seizure of property with no legal basis, and it is certain that the confiscated property cannot be returned to everyone in its original form, it should be said, and I repeat: “The method and conditions for restoring [the property], and the compensation for confiscated property, contained in Article 1 of this law, shall be regulated by a separate act.”

Thank you.

SPEAKER SRDJA BOZOVIC:

Thank you.

I just wish to inform the deputies that we have reached a procedural agreement to conduct a separate debate and in this way to vote on the bill tabled by Mr Krunic, and after that to conduct a debate on the bill tabled by the federal government. Thus there are no obstacles. In practice, the debate on this item on the agenda has furnished us with the opportunity to move onto the next item.

VR 22/4

Who wants to speak?

Bozidar Bojovic.

DR BOZIDAR BOJOVIC:

Mr Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen, Nearly four years ago, I was invited for talks to the White Palace [Beli Dvor] by the then FRY President Mr Milosevic.

I replied that representatives of the Serbian People's Party [Srpska narodna stranka, SNS] could only go to the White Palace if they are invited by its legitimate owners, the Karadjordjevic family.

It seems to me that many representatives of different parties, and the parties flaunting themselves as royalist, were in breach of this moral rule.

The SNS, as the true follower of the People's Party [Narodna stranka] of 1907, even in 1990 feels deeply about the injustice of the kind when someone is stripped of his basic human rights, such as the right to life, homeland, work, property.

We feel deeply about the fatal consequences of one ideology which stripped people of their civic rights in the interest of imaginary ideals.

Likewise, we have always drawn attention to the fatal consequences brought about by the fact that those who came to power 10 years ago did not have sufficient strength to redress such a big injustice, although there were in a position to do so. Had privatization been carried out then and had the property confiscated in 1945 been returned, we would have had far fewer problems in Kosovo-Metohija, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republic of Serb Krajina.

The inalienable owners in those territories were and would have been those to whom the land belonged and who created and integrated the Serb ethnic territory there, and not the ones who fought against that ethnic territory, and who are destroying our country.

Don't forget, Ladies and Gentlemen, that the Serbian Orthodox Church [SPC] owned a large part of Metohija, that the SPC also owned a considerable property in Montenegro, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Likewise, the Karadjordjevic dynasty – as a result of honest work – owns numerous properties, since in their time there was no other way of acquiring property. This wealth was acquired in regions inhabited by ethnic Serbs.

The present authorities must not repeat the mistakes made by the previous ones. In a way, it will be the first test of a democratic, truly democratic attitude towards the democratic values and important problems. Irrespective of how difficult it is, Ladies and Gentlemen, especially in conditions which our country is currently facing, it is the right and the duty of the present authorities to ensure all the unlawfully seized confiscated property is returned or fairly compensated.

Not only is this important so that some injustices are redressed, or because we shall not gain membership of international organizations unless we carry out the privatization. It is also very important to do it as speedily as possible because we are currently witnessing the theft of the property which belongs to Serbian dynasties and other owners, and which is proceeding under the guise of

privatization, especially in Montenegro. This opens up a possibility of redressing the injustice which, if not redressed now, will be impossible to redress later on.

VR 23/2

Don't forget that the Karadjordjevic dynasty owns numerous buildings and properties in Montenegro: Sveti Stefan, Milocer, not to mention others.

Don't forget that a sect, under the aegis of the current authority in Montenegro, is robbing the property of the Diocese of Montenegro and the Littoral, of the SPC. If we delay matters and seek legal excuses, tomorrow will be too late, like in Kosovo-Metohija and elsewhere.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we need to annul a great injustice today - the revocation of citizenship from members of the Karadjordjevic family. At the same time, we are witnessing the fact that the current regime in Montenegro is stripping its citizens of this right today, denying them their right to vote on the status of Montenegro in a referendum.

Do we need a better proof of a kind of a regime we are dealing with? Ladies and Gentlemen, it is the same ideology which 55 years ago stripped the Karadjordjevic family of their rights and confiscated the property of the SPC and of all the others who acquired it through honest work.

This is the last relic of the communist dictatorship in Europe, the last regime which threatens the basic human rights to religion, homeland, freedom and property.

There can be no stable Balkans until that regime moves over to the opposition.

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, you'd have to be blind not to see that everything that was done and is being done in Montenegro on confiscating the property is aimed at fragmenting the single Serbian ethnic territory in a physical sense, to prevent the creation of a stable community of states, i.e. to prevent the creation of a stable joint state.

VR 23/3

In Montenegro, they are breaking up the land, which for 800 years has been intertwined with the Serbian ethnic territory. That's why the SNS has decided on this act of repentance, and it cannot be called anything but an act of repentance. Whilst it is an offer of apology to members of the Karadjordjevic dynasty, it is also a warning and a lesson.

On behalf of the SNS, I especially wish to thank those who tabled the proposal, and as far as the government is concerned, this is a matter for the current government and also its duty.

Thank you very much.

SPEAKER SRDJA BOZOVIC:

Thank you, Dr Bojovic.

Dragan Todorovic.

DRAGAN TODOROVIC:

Ladies and Gentlemen federal deputies, in fact there are only Gentlemen here since Gorica [Gajevic of SPS] is not here. I have the impression that Tito is turning in his grave now, in the wake of all these outbursts of courage, honesty and a desire to redress an injustice. Only I don't know where you have all been, you who have been implementing this policy, to redress this injustice in time. Our people say: "You don't put salt on the tail of a dead wolf," and that's exactly what you are doing.

As for the Serbian Radical Party, we [the SRS] have nothing against it. We, too, think the injustice should be redressed, that members of the Karadjordjevic family should have their citizenship restored,

and all the others who so wish. I suggest that you translate this into English, since many descendants, sadly, do not speak Serbian, as you saw when one of them came here for the first time.

However, on the subject of the property, the SRS is against returning the property to the Karadjordjevic family. I don't know why only to the Karadjordjevic family.

VR 23/4

There have been injustices before. You at least should know that. One of the Karadjordjevic descendants – Aleksandar Karadjordjevic – was to blame for one. He took away the land belonging to beys, to monasteries, to the church. At least that much you should know. And you should redress these injustices here today.

I think this bill conceals something else. This is a precedent for some other moves. The revolutionaries who used to confiscate property, annul citizenship, also confiscated the property of many legal companies. Don't think they have forgotten all that. If you return property to the Karadjordjevics, you'll get all the others who owned mines, factories and all the valuable assets in this country wanting it all back.

In any case, Ladies and Gentlemen, some things are timeless, like war crimes. They cannot fall under the statute of limitations. According to our legislature, all the other cases expire after 20 years save war crimes. You are now doing exactly what many amongst you, or your ancestors that you are defending, did in 1941. You are doing injustice to many who are not guilty, and who will suffer the consequences because of it all.

This, Ladies and Gentlemen, you must take into consideration today. You must bear in mind that this bill is not in the least naïve, and that it can have truly serious consequences for this country.

Once again, I must express my surprise about one of the parties in this parliament, and about the kind of U-turns it is capable of doing. I expect its name soon to be a socialist royalist party, and perhaps it will keep some other adjectives in reserve for the time when some other bill needs to be adopted. But Gentlemen, a short while ago you were Communists, then you were Socialists, and now you are divided Socialists.

VR 24/1

I don't know how long you will continue to change, i.e. accept all that is demanded of you here. Really, it will be a pleasure to find out what your threshold of endurance is, i.e. how long you can endure.

**SPEAKER SRDJA BOZOVIC:**

Thank you.

Are there any deputies or other participants in the debate who wish to speak?

I understand there is no one.

Since no one has asked to speak, I close the debate in principle and put the bill in principle to vote.

Who is in favour? Please can you raise your hand. (Two federal deputies)

Who is against? Please can you raise your hand. (Three federal deputies)

Abstentions? (Nineteen federal deputies)

I conclude that the Chamber did not endorse the bill in principle.

I declare the debate on details open.

I beg your pardon, the bill was not endorsed, we shall move onto the next item on the agenda:

THE KARADJORDJEVIC FAMILY OF CITIZENSHIP AND PROPERTY /AS – 37/  
THE BILL ON THE ABOLITION OF THE DECREE ON STRIPPING

The bill was examined by the Legislative and Legal Commission of the Federal Assembly and by the Chamber's Commission for Justice and Administration.

Does the promoter wish to speak before the debate? (No)

I declare the debate in principle open.

Who wants to speak?

We can take it that Mr Prica has already spoken on the bill.

Anyone else? (No)

Since no one has asked to speak, I close the debate in principle and put the bill in principle to vote.

VR 24/2

Those in favour, please raise your hand. (26 federal deputies)

Against? (No one)

Abstentions? (One federal deputy)

I conclude that the Chamber endorsed the bill in principle.

I open the debate on details.

Who wants to speak? (No one)

Since there are no speakers, I close the debate on details.

Since no amendments to the bill were proposed, I put the bill as a whole to vote.

Those in favour, please raise your hand. (25 federal deputies)

Who is against? (No one)

Abstentions? (One federal deputy)

I conclude that the Chamber adopted the bill in its proposed form.