

# THE CONSTANTIAN

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HIS MAJESTY KING VICTOR EMMANUEL III OF ITALY

(Photograph by Gracious Permission  
of

His Majesty King Umberto II)

G O V E R N O R ' S M E S S A G E

The most startling event of 1976 for monarchists came on December 4th, when President Bokassa of the Central African Republic, described as an admirer of Napoléon, declared himself Emperor, and the CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE came into being.

The Central African Empire is, of course, in Central Africa; it is bordered by Zaire, Congo, Cameroon, Chad, and Sudan. It is a little smaller than Texas, and has a population of about 2.2 million.

What was the colony of Oubangui-Chari (Ubangi-Shari) in French Equatorial Africa became an autonomous republic (the Central African Republic) within the newly established French Community on December 1st, 1958. A constitution was adopted in 1959, and independence was granted in 1960.

The first president was Barthélemy Boganda, who died in an airplane crash in 1959, before full independence was achieved. He was succeeded by his cousin, David Dacko, who was himself re-elected in 1964 to a 7-year term, by a 99.4% majority.

A swift and almost bloodless coup d'état occurred on January 1st, 1966, when Colonel Jean-Bédel Bokassa, then Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, overthrew Dacko, his nephew. Bokassa announced that he had acted to eliminate waste and corruption, to halt the country's drift into economic stagnation, and to end the influence of the Chinese Communists, who were charged with threatening the freedom and independence of the CAR. He immediately broke diplomatic relations with Peking, but took some other actions, too: he abolished the 1959 constitution, dissolved the National Assembly, and, by decree, placed all legislative and executive power in the hands of the president (himself).

Bokassa, now 55 years old, served some 23 years in the French Army, which he left in 1962 to organize the CAR Army, of which he became commander in chief in 1963. He is apparently an ardent admirer of both Napoléon Bonaparte and Charles De Gaulle.

In March of 1972, President Bokassa was made president for life. He has frequently shuffled the Cabinet, assigning more and more of the portfolios to himself, and claimed the titles President for Life of the Republic, President of the Government, President for Life and Secretary-General of MESAN (the country's only political party), Keeper of the Seals, Minister of Defense, of Civil Service and Social Security, of the Interior, of Telecommunications, etc., and, incidentally, Field Marshal.

President Bokassa is described kindly as "eccentric," more bluntly as a "despot." His brand of despotism is described as malign by Time magazine, which once quoted an African diplomat as saying about the CAR, "Compared to this place, Russia is a roaring democracy" (for example, tourists are warned not to display or use cameras without express permission of the Ministry of Information (Bokassa himself may be Minister); no photos are to be taken of government personnel or ceremonies or roads and houses having an unsatisfactory appearance). Many horror stories and anecdotes are told of the Chief Executive, which need not be repeated here (Human Events says: "Idi Amin, the crazed president of Uganda, gets all the headlines, but Salah Bokassa (at some point, Jean-Bédel Bokassa changed his name to Salah Eddine Ahmed Bokassa) tries harder").

At this point, we do not view the advent of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Bokassa I as a step forward for Monarchy. (Will a trend begin? King Jean-Claude Duvalier? Emperor Idi Amin? Both are already presidents for life.) Our raised eyebrow probably will not bother Bokassa, though; his model, Napoléon, was not much daunted by the less than enthusiastic reaction to his assumption of Imperial dignity. Further, it has been suggested that there may be some good that will come of this apparent tragi-comic opera: the Empire will be a constitutional monarchy, which should mean the resumption of an elected legislative assembly, which has not existed for ten years; a constitution will give the CAE a legal framework for government activities. Let us hope that Monarchy may indeed bring stability, and new respect for human and civil rights, to this corner of Central Africa.

KING VICTOR EMMANUEL III AND BENITO MUSSOLINI  
1922 - 1943

by Ulick Loring, M.A.

King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy, who reigned from 1900 to 1946, has received a bad "press" on account of his apparent subservience and acquiescence to his Prime Minister, Benito Mussolini the leader of the Fascist Party. However, to criticise the King from the vantage point of thirty years of Western democratic security is all very well, but to appreciate the King's position, it is necessary to understand the circumstances in Europe during the period when Mussolini was Prime Minister.

First, one must recall that in 1922 Italy was a comparatively young state and that she was only finally unified in 1870. The focus of loyalty in the struggle for Italian unification was the House of Savoy, and in the years following unification the dynasty was whole-heartedly behind the attempts of successive governments to turn Italy into a great power like France or Britain. However, until 1915, Italy made comparatively slow progress. This was primarily because she lacked the military and administrative infrastructure of her rivals, who had developed theirs' over many decades. She entered the colonial race late, and was thus unable to make many gains and suffered an humiliating setback at the battle of Adowa in Ethiopia in 1895. At the time of the outbreak of the First World War, Italy was technically in alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary, but she finally joined the Allies as a result of the Treaty of London of 26th April 1915, since they were able to offer more in the way of territorial expansion than the Central Powers. As in all European countries at the outbreak of the war, the vast majority of people were behind the government's policy. This included Benito Mussolini, who had been a prominent socialist.

Italy suffered greatly in manpower and national effort generally during the War, and these losses were exacerbated by her failure to obtain all those territorial gains, which she believed were her due under the Treaty of London. At the same time, social unrest caused by the War and the rise of Communism following the Russian Revolution produced a situation in Italy more akin to that of a defeated than a victorious power. Conservative forces, including the Monarchy and the armed forces, reacted strongly to these developments, but when the traditional political parties proved unable to form durable administrations, the King (with the strong backing of Queen Elena and the Army) found himself obliged to look outside the political establishment for a solution to Italy's turbulence.

The Fascists had only 35 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and their leader came from a decidedly anti-royalist background. However, in a speech of 13th September 1922 at Udine, Mussolini formally accepted the Monarchy. When he prepared the so-called "March on Rome," the Facta administration tried to call out the Army, but this the King vetoed, and although Mussolini refused to join any administration unless he headed it, on 28th October he was appointed Prime Minister by the King. In appointing a prime minister from a minority party, the King was not merely employing a desperate measure for a desperate situation, he was also acting in accordance with certain significant conservative thought, which advocated that the King should be free to appoint his own ministers. The most outstanding exponent of this view was Sidney Sonnino, who in 1897 had argued this in a famous article entitled "Torniamo allo Statuto."

Although in some respects Mussolini's administration gave the King cause for concern, until the late thirties there was no serious friction between the two. For the King there was in truth no alternative to Mussolini except a military dictatorship, and since the Army in this early period favoured Mussolini, it would have been difficult to dismiss him without reverting to the situation before October 1922. Thus, despite Mussolini's implication in the murder of Matteoti, his encroachment into the King's constitutional powers, and the more crude manifestations of Fascism, Victor Emmanuel had little choice in practice but to keep Mussolini in office.

Yet if there was an element of sufferance in the King's support of Mussolini, there was also an element of genuine approval. This approval reflected a widespread feeling amongst the European Right that democracy had failed. After the First World War, monarchs either took power into their own hands, like Alexander of Yugoslavia in 1929, or leaned towards politicians who would maintain stability. Victor Emmanuel belongs to the latter category. Much

conservative opinion during the twenties saw Mussolini as a safeguard against revolution, and a guarantor of economic and political stability generally. During the first fifteen years of Mussolini's administration there was little serious opposition to him. Some democratic parties collaborated with him, and others went underground, while Church opinion was conciliated by the Lateran Treaty of 1929.

When Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, Mussolini was foremost amongst the Western powers in attacking him, and his comment about Hitler when the latter came to Venice in 1934 is remarkably similar to that attributed to the King during the visit of 1938. When the Western powers showed that they were not prepared to stand up to Hitler, Mussolini lost whatever sympathy he had for them, and when in 1935 they opposed the invasion of Ethiopia, he began to turn towards Germany. The Western democracies did not appear to realise that the Ethiopian campaign had the whole-hearted support of the nation. This included the Royal Family, who contributed to the war effort.

Relations between the King and Mussolini began to deteriorate with the emergence of a close relationship between the latter and Hitler, a development which coincided with increasing instances of delusions of grandeur by Mussolini. This was reflected by a hankering after military glory. However, the King, like most sovereigns of the time, took a professional interest in military affairs, and he was always sensitive to military realities. He was aware of various serious weaknesses in the armed forces, and that they could compete equally alongside those of Germany. While supporting the Ethiopian war, the King felt that Italian success had been to some extent fortunate. He was unhappy over the extended involvement in the Spanish Civil War, since this drained Italian military strength.

The King not only loathed Hitler and his followers, but as a result of Italian experiences during the First World War was generally Germanophobic. As Mussolini and Hitler drew closer and closer, so Mussolini and the King drew further and further apart. Mussolini became increasingly antipathetic towards the Monarchy. The visit of Hitler to Italy in 1938 pointed up the situation, as he was obliged by courtesy to stay with the King at the Quirinal. Hitler was angered by this, since he saw Monarchy as a threat to totalitarianism, viewing the King (quite rightly) as a potential rival to Mussolini. For his part the King, in private conversation, described Hitler as "some kind of psycho-physiological degenerate." The Germans advised Mussolini to get rid of the Monarchy, but if he railed against the King in private, Mussolini showed no appetite for direct action. In his heart of hearts, he may well have feared that if he attempted a coup d'état the Army would back the King, and Mussolini would lose.

From 1936 Mussolini's foreign minister was his son-in-law, Count Ciano, who, though he had few talents as a diplomat or politician, kept from 1937 to 1943 a candid and informative diary, which amply illustrates the King's relationship with Mussolini. The hostility of the Royal Family towards the anti-Jewish laws, the Germans, and to Mussolini's attempts to take absolute control of the Army are faithfully recorded. Ciano himself, although at first a fervent Fascist, became increasingly distrustful of Mussolini's foreign policy, and Germanophobic. Indeed, his views came almost to mirror those of the King, with whom he was in regular contact. In September 1939 Ciano and the King both sought to prevent Italy from going to war on Germany's side. The King and Crown Prince Umberto were in close touch with the Army and knew its deficiencies. Although Mussolini ranted against the Monarchy, and speculated at the ease of getting rid of it, Ciano noted at this time that in Genoa (not a royalist stronghold), the King was given "a warm reception." However, in 1940 the King was less successful at maintaining Italian neutrality than in 1939. Although at one stage it seemed that the palace was contemplating some decisive intervention, Ciano doubted whether the King could do anything.

After the outbreak of war the tendency of all conservative groups was to rally round the nation, and thus rumblings of discontent died down. In this the King was no exception. While he may have been opposed to the Axis, he was also a patriot and a nationalist. He welcomed the extension of Italian influence and the personal aggrandisement it brought himself and the dynasty. Furthermore, he had no love for France; his low opinion of the French may have helped him believe that Germany would win the war. Although his view of

the outcome of the War changed along with the fortunes of War, it was not until the Allies had landed in Italy that any serious planning began to be rid of Mussolini.

His dismissal of Mussolini on 26th July 1943, and the events surrounding it, have been described in detail in a number of works, and this brief survey is not the place to repeat them. Mussolini's downfall showed that in the final analysis he was the King's appointee and not his own master. As Elizabeth Wiskemann has pointed out, the weakness of Fascism was that it was a diarchy of King and Duce. Unlike Hitler in Germany, Mussolini was never head of state, and the Fascist militia never took precedence over the Army, which, together with the civil service, remained loyal to the Crown.

Speculation about the dismissal of Mussolini remains undiminished. However, this is not the place to examine it in depth, although some factors are worth considering. What were the King's motives for acting when he did? If he had acted earlier how would he have dealt with the Germans? Should he have stayed in Rome? Should he have abdicated in favour of Crown Prince Umberto earlier? How important are considerations of the King's character in examining the question? Although the King was responsible for overthrowing Fascism, and thus bringing democracy back to Italy, he received no gratitude from the politicians whom Mussolini had excluded from public life. Yet he suffered as much as any of his fellow countrymen. His daughter Princess Mafalda of Hesse died in a concentration camp. One of his sons-in-law, King Boris III of Bulgaria, died under mysterious circumstances, while his cousin, the Duke of Aosta, died as a British prisoner-of-war in Kenya. However, as King Constantine of the Hellenes discovered, monarchs can expect no gratitude from men whose profession in life is the pursuit of power, and who are denied this activity.

#### NEWS OF THE CONSTANTIAN SOCIETY

We are pleased to welcome the following new members of the Society: Walter W. Woschnagg; Jovan Weismiller-MacGregor; Mrs. Lillian Kumansky; Bryan R. Knudsen; Charles L. T. Pichel; and James A. Arensen.



We are immensely grateful to the following for their kind contributions to our PRINTING FUND: the late George S. Clark; Harry Wright Newman; Mrs. Susan Tenzer; James L. Kirby, Jr.; Gary Fellman; Mrs. Esther Kellogg; David Evans; and Charles Gresham. Costs are ever on the rise, and any donations are very much appreciated.

We are sad to report the death on 4th September in New York City of the Most Reverend NIKON, Vice President of the Ruling Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, Archbishop of Washington, D.C. and Florida, and ruling Archbishop of the Eastern American Archdiocese. The Archbishop was 84, and a valued friend of the Society. Archbishop Nikon (Nicholas P. Rklitsky) was born in the village of Borke, Russia, in 1892. He received a degree in law from the University of Kiev, and served in the Imperial Russian Army and the White Army. He was a journalist in Yugoslavia afterward, and became a monk in 1941, and then a priest. He came to the USA in 1948.

The first issue of THE CONSTANTIAN next year will begin a series of articles and photos on current heirs to thrones. We believe that this series will be of great interest, and hope to publish the collection of photos in a separate booklet when it is completed.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir:

On November 6th, I was privileged to meet with Austrian monarchist Dr. Erik Ritter von Kuehnelt-Leddihn when he was staying with friends in Wilmette, a suburb of Chicago. Kuehnelt-Leddihn, the author of Liberty or Equality, The Menace of the Herd, and Leftism, and a contributor to National Review, was on a day's stopover here during his annual lecture tour of America. We talked for just over an hour on various topics, and his comments on monarchy would be of interest to the members of the Society.

Prior to his comments on monarchy, Kuehnelt-Leddihn recalled the words of Andrew Jackson, who once said that "the duties of all public offices are... so simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance." He added that Jackson was wrong, both then and now, pointing out that society is becoming increasingly complex, and that this complexity calls for one who will act as arbiter between the various interest groups.

Kuehnelt-Leddihn gave a brief outline of his ideal of a monarchical state. Such a state would reduce the influence of political parties, not a surprising stand, considering the damage done by the party struggle in Europe in the interwar years. Representation in the legislature would be on an occupational, rather than geographical, basis. It would be corporative in the European sense, not the American. The duties of the legislature would be limited to the legislative function, in other words, he does not favour a Westminster-style parliament.

Concerning the "popular will," he feels that the government should take the people's desires seriously into consideration, but added that there are times when these must take a back seat to the views of the experts. It is the monarch, a functional monarch, who will act as arbiter between the views of the corporative legislature and the experts.

Commenting on America's political future, Kuehnelt-Leddihn said that America will eventually become a monarchy - which he noted upsets his American audiences no end when he tells them so. He feels that the transition to a monarchy will resemble the transformation of the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire under Augustus... he thinks that our dynasty will be American, rather than British.

- Daniel MacGregor

BOOK REVIEWS

THE CROWN IN CANADA, Frank MacKinnon. Glenbow-Alberta Institute and McClelland and Stewart-West, Calgary, 1976. \$4.95 paperbound. This book deals with the crown as a Canadian institution. The author deals not only with the function of Queen Elizabeth II as head of state and the associated pageantry, but also with the behind the scenes functions of the Crown. While some may feel the Crown to be undemocratic, this book proves that the Crown actually protects democracy; while many republics, without the benefit of a device like the Crown, have actually become non-democratic. The author begins with the functions and organization of the Crown, and goes on to deal with its representatives, the Queen, the Governor General, and the Lieutenant-Governors. The author uses ample illustrations of the points he wishes to make, drawing solely on Canadian examples. THE CROWN IN CANADA is a must for anyone interested in the Crown and Monarchy as Canadian institutions. (Review by Stephen Raven.)

FLEUR DE LYS: THE KINGS AND QUEENS OF FRANCE, Joy Law. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1976. \$19.95. This is an entertaining and interesting book about the Kings and Queens of France, from Hugh Capet (987-996) to Louis XVI (1774-1793). It is essentially a collection of anecdotes, excerpts from letters, and other contemporary descriptions. The illustrations - well over a hundred portraits, effigies, and seals - are a splendid complement to the text. Rulers are grouped dynastically - the Capets, the Valois, and the Bourbons - and each King is treated individually. Genealogical charts are included. This interesting collection of royal sketches is recommended.

AN UNUSUAL ROYAL VISIT

The 3200-year old mummy of Pharaoh Rameses II was sent this fall from the Cairo Museum to Paris, where it is being examined at the Musée de l'Homme for possible parasites. The Pharaoh was received at Le Bourget airport with full military honours and ceremonial, perhaps demonstrating once more the "plus royaliste que le Roi" fascination of some republicans for royalty -- even for a King dead for 32 centuries.

AMERICAN MONARCHIST ARCHIVE



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