

Ideology and Politics of Dimitrije Ljotić and the ZBOR movement

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Declaration of Originality

I, Christian Kurzydowski of Goldsmiths, University of London, being a candidate for Doctor of Philosophy, hereby declare that this thesis and the research presented in it are my own work.

Signed

Date

Abstract

The main focus of this thesis focuses on deconstructing and analysing the evolution of the different aspects of Dimitrije Ljotić's ideological formation to show its relationship to his ZBOR movement and its development until his death in 1945. Ljotić's ideological development and expression would show a marked syncretic and contradictory nature. This contradiction and incoherence stymies any definitive classification and categorisation of his politics. This creates difficulties in attempting to place ZBOR as a specific mono-ideological movement. This problem of categorisation will be reinforced through identifying and deconstructing the ideology of Ljotić and his ZBOR movement. It also will look at pre-existing ideological discourses that contributed to Ljotić's ideas, including those of a wider European context of existing anti-democratic, anti-modernist, monarchist, and nationalist currents. The ideological and intellectual course of Ljotić, personified through the existence of ZBOR will be discussed in order to analyse the evolution of his ideology, and to understand the different influences contributing to his ideology as a basis for evaluating ZBOR as a movement. This analysis raises a number of questions. What contextual trends, if any, does the man, his philosophy, and movement represent, and how did they impact political life in interwar Yugoslavia? Where was ZBOR in relation to similar radical right, and fascist movements throughout interwar Europe, and to what extent are they parallel with each other? What was the nature of ZBOR's ideology and what were its major influences?

A more thorough approach to answer these questions, and indeed to ZBOR, is needed (a) because the subject has not been particularly well-explored among historians (especially in English language historiography) and (b) because of the rise of nationalist ideology and rhetoric in post-socialist Serbia. Through this thesis, the gap in literature regarding the evolution of Ljotić's ideology, in relation to both the non-fascist radical right and the various definitions of fascism will be explored. This will show that Ljotić's ideological and intellectual base, while possessing similarities to fascism, also showed differences, allowing for greater ambiguity in interpretation, as evidenced through among others, the terminology of 'generic fascism', as defined by Roger Griffin and Stanley Payne. The main contribution of this study to literature is the detailed deconstruction and analysis of the evolution of Ljotić's ideology and its relevance or relationship to his ZBOR movement. ZBOR will be shown as syncretic, incoherent, and at times contradictory. This thesis provides in-depth discussion of both the political development of Ljotić as a personality, and the development of ZBOR as a movement in relation to Ljotić's ideology and European trends. Thus, providing an analysis on the ideology of Ljotić and ZBOR with the use of the elements of both political biography and intellectual historical analysis, as represented by Ljotić and ZBOR. The study will show that Ljotić's ideologies and ZBOR are inevitably interrelated with each other, and linked with a wider pre-fascist ideological and intellectual current. While focusing on Ljotić and ZBOR, this thesis places him and his movement in the wider context of interwar Yugoslavia and interwar Europe with discussions of a wider context of relevant theories. In contrast to other studies that included ZBOR and/or Ljotić, this thesis is different in the sense that the ideological evolution of Ljotić is discussed and analysed, with a focus on the interwar life of ZBOR, rather than relying on ZBOR's collaborationist stance during the Second World War, as a means of explaining its ideological evolution.

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Introduction

Dimitrije Ljotić has been labelled ‘fascist’ and ‘saviour’, ‘hero’ and ‘villain’. His uncompromising anti-communism, outspoken nationalism, and collaboration with the Nazis has earned him, according to a large portion of Yugoslav historiography and contemporary Serbian historiography, a place in the ‘fascist’ camp.¹ Amongst contemporaries in interwar Yugoslavia he was, as will be shown, decried as a fascist from opponents on both the left and the right. However, some of those who held the opinion of Ljotić as a fascist also admired what they perceived to be his honesty and patriotism.² The legal codification of Ljotić as a fascist and collaborator according to the decrees of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia’s 5th Party Congress in early 1948, defined collaboration as any help rendered to the occupier. This definition was based on the newly constituted Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia’s official Marxist interpretation of history, and condemned Ljotić as a traitor.³ This view on treason and collaboration was countered in France, where a dichotomy arose between a *collaborateur* (collaborator), and *collaborationniste* (collaborationist), voluntary, ideological, and involuntary. A collaborator was one who, whether out of necessity, opportunity, or force, accommodated the Germans. A collaborationist was one who wholeheartedly believed in a Nazi victory, and worked towards that end.⁴ Based on the evaluation of his life and the evolution of his ideologies, there are some things certain about Ljotić: He was highly nationalistic and devotedly religious.

Ljotić was seen as a fervent anti-Semite. He can be said to have promoted the removal of Jewish ‘influence’ from public and social life even before the outbreak of the Second World War. In his speeches, he mentioned that there was a ‘Great Director’ who was behind all the

¹ With the exception of Mladen Stefanović’s *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, published in 1984, which presupposes ZBOR’s National Socialist character by its anti-communism and supposed adherence to capitalism, neither Ljotić nor ZBOR have been the subject of a thorough monograph or study. Dragan Subotić’s *Zatomljena misao. O političkim idejama Dimitrija Ljotića*, published in 1994, attempts to place Ljotić’s thought in the context of 19th century conservative and nationalist thought, yet offers no analysis or source criticism.

² See especially the opinions of Anton Korošec, Dragoljub Jovanović, and Milan Jovanović-Stoimirović (also written as Stojimirović), in Milan Jovanović Stoimirović, *Dnevnik 1936-1941* (Matica Srpska, 2000).

³ See ‘V Kongres KPJ’, Branko Petranović and Momčilo Zečević, eds., *Jugoslavija 1918-1988: tematska zbirka dokumenata*, 2. izm. i dop. izd, Biblioteka Svedočanstva (Belgrade: Izdavačka radna organizacija “Rad,” 1988), 936–945. The ‘collaborators’ were those who helped the ‘capitalists’ in their war of enslavement of Yugoslavia. According to Petranović and Zečević, the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia is notable for it was the first since the end of the Second World War, and sought the ‘construction of Socialism’, using the party as the mechanism of change and construction toward a new Yugoslavia.

⁴ Jean-Pierre Azéma, Olivier Wievorka, *Vichy 1940-1944* (Tempus Perrin, 2004), 84-86.

world's problems.⁵ In public, he was very vocal about his hatred of Jews and the ideologies that supposedly originated from Jewish teachings, such as Freemasonry and Communism. In his writings, Ljotić would portray the Jews as being responsible for the advent of liberal democracy, Freemasonry, and Communism. He further stated his belief in a Jewish conspiracy, directed against Christians in Europe because of the Jewish betrayal of God's will. According to Ljotić, this alleged Jewish conspiracy could be traced back to the French Revolution. From the French Revolution on, this conspiracy was involved in every significant historical event all over the world, with a focus the 1917 Russian Revolution. His virulent anti-Semitism has been, not surprisingly, a strong factor of correlation in linking Ljotić to the totalitarianism Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

Nevertheless, Ljotić's anti-Semitism largely, at least up to 1941, was mostly devoid of a Nazi type racist base, largely due to its incongruity with his sincere Christian belief. Most of Ljotić's claims for his anti-Semitic beliefs, up to 1941, are based on more on religion than racial discrimination, which differentiates him from the Nazis. Moreover, Ljotić would argue, even in 1940, against any physical measures against Jews, arguing only for action against the 'work of the Jews'⁶. He would refer to the Jews as a collective personality, as a social group that had no land, and no language.⁷ Ljotić's anti-Semitism, like much of the rest of his political ideals, will be shown to be contradictory, despite its virulence. Based on the later decisions and actions of Ljotić, it can be said that though he despised the Jews, he did not dehumanise them, thus, as will be shown with the example of the Jews in Smederevo in 1941 under his direct purview, must be deserving of some extent of resources to sustain their existence, though not to the same extent as non-Jews. This may be seen as an illustration of how his anti-Semitic ways are more parallel to European right-wing anti-Semites and clerical anti-Semites rather than the traditions of the extreme racial Nazi anti-Semites.

Ljotić also believed in divine intervention that had destined the Serbian people to play a significant role in the world: this was a prominent theme in his writings. Ljotić was a highly nationalistic (both Serb and Yugoslav, to be expanded on), and deeply religious man who dedicated himself to supporting and upholding the reigning Karadjordjević dynasty as a believer in monarchism, and authoritarianism, as the best protector of Yugoslavia's integrity.

⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Drama Savremenog Čovečanstva* (Belgrade: Makarija, 1940), 8-11.

⁶ Ibid. 94

⁷ Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: state-building and legitimation, 1918-2005* (Indiana University Press, 2006), 133.

Former followers however, praised Ljotić's idiosyncratic, and contradictory characteristics. These followers were mostly writing from abroad, heralded Ljotić as a prophet and saviour. He was attributed with a willingness to sacrifice everything for the good of the nation.⁸ Not surprisingly given the polemics surrounding the man, and the ZBOR movement, the historical narrative in both former Yugoslav and contemporary Serbian historiography concerning ZBOR has afforded it a historical position of hindsight out of proportion to the influence Ljotić or ZBOR.

This apparent paradox raises a number of issues. How important are Ljotić and ZBOR to the study and understanding of interwar Yugoslavia and to the study of the extreme right in interwar Europe? What contextual trends, if any, does the man, his philosophy, or movement represent, and how did they impact on political life in interwar Yugoslavia? Where was ZBOR in relation to similar so-called 'fascist', and actual fascist movements throughout interwar Europe, and to what extent are they parallel with each other? What was the nature of ZBOR's ideology, and what were its major influences?

Reviewing his life and political thought, Ljotić can be seen to have had a rigid and authoritarian worldview with strong traces of anti-Semitic, anti-democratic, and anti-parliamentary beliefs. However, the main focus of this thesis is analysing the development of the different aspects of Ljotić's political thought, to show his inclination toward a multi-faceted and highly syncretistic ideology, with aspects of fascism, authoritarianism, and monarchism. Ljotić was not strictly speaking, categorically fascist, nor categorically an extreme monarchist, and extreme conservative nationalist. Because of the many facets in his ideologies, Ljotić seems to be self-contradicting and conflicted in his beliefs and ideas. In fact, as this thesis will argue, the pronounced contradictions, incoherencies, means that both man and movement defy strict categorisation, and 'labelling'. In fact, they hinder any real attempt at fully deconstructing and analysing his ideology. He can be said to have been an ideological personification of a precursor to fascism, or perhaps a proto-fascist, but as will be shown, there were marked differences between core fascist ideals and his own, which would place him more in an amorphous 'grey zone', straddling fascism and an extreme, almost radical conservatism. Despite issues surrounding ideological categorisation, what will

⁸ On Ljotić's supposed 'selfless martyrdom', see Boško Kostić, *Za istoriju naših dana*, (Lille, 1949); Hrvoje Magazinović, *Kroz jedno mučno stoljeće*, (Valjevo, 2009); Milutin Propadović, *D.V. Ljotić i Komunistička Partija Jugoslavije 1935-1945. Prilozi na istinu o JNP ZBOR*, (Iskra, 1990).

become clear are that Ljotić's ideological extremes and rigidity would primarily be in reaction to world events, largely dictated by Nazi Germany, and the Second World War, which was then incorporated into Ljotić's and ZBOR's worldview. One, which would remain unchanging, and even more pronounced, even into the latter part of the war when it became clear that Germany could not prevail militarily. Moreover, His ideologically amorphous 'grey zone' is also reflected in ZBOR, especially in its early years. Because he was the founder and leading personality of ZBOR, during its existence, his personal beliefs have been unsurprisingly, influential in defining ZBOR. Hence, in a sense, Ljotić as an individual cannot be treated entirely different from ZBOR. This is despite the fact that there were inconsistencies, and contrasts, in ideas and beliefs between ZBOR leaders and its members.

Exploring and analysing the evolution and bases of Ljotić's ideology, the thesis will explore what distinctions are relevant or essential in exploring, and evaluating a movement such as ZBOR. Identifying the connection and distinction between Ljotić and the concepts of fascism, anti-democracy, and Christianity, will be helpful in deconstructing ZBOR as a movement based on its own unique purpose and identifying mark during its existence. Despite the prevalent historiographical trend in the Former Yugoslavia, and the slightly more contested opinion in contemporary Serbia, categorising Ljotić and ZBOR as fascist, establishing the limitations of a fascist/non-fascist dichotomy is relevant. It is relevant because it is an attempt to disassociate Ljotić's thought from the narrow paradigm of fascism, while concurrently deconstructing and analysing his beliefs on their own merits. Through this, ZBOR may be seen as not just a mere by-product of fascism, but a movement in itself, with its own ideology and more importantly, its own worldview and end goal.

Moreover, especially during the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia from 1941-1944, Ljotić will be shown to be a representative of a highly idiosyncratic worldview that was to an extent a reinforcement of the thinking and motivations of the Serbian collaborationist administration. Therefore, exploring the life and the ideology of Ljotić can help gain a better comprehension of the motives and dilemmas that drove the collaborators. Third, a better understanding of ZBOR and Ljotić are necessary because of their position of adulation, legitimacy, and relevance among elements of the contemporary Serbian far right.

Ljotić, like most ideologues, can be said to have developed his ideology from his experiences and relationships, generating emotional responses and opinions within him strong enough to

mould his character, beliefs, and behaviour. The exploration and analysis of Ljotić's life can provide an understanding of his true rationale in establishing ZBOR, and what he hoped to achieve through it. Through a study of Ljotić's life, it can be surmised that ZBOR can be seen not just as simply a fascistic movement or a movement that was formed from fascist intentions and ideas; the thesis will highlight the uniqueness of the movement and its founder in relation to the political life of interwar Yugoslavia and interwar Europe. Therefore this study will be as much a study of ideological, hence, intellectual history, as it is a political history of ZBOR, and political biography of Ljotić. To clarify, 'ideology', will be used as an encompassing word to describe those ideas held by individuals, or movements, whether rational or irrational, calling either for change, or for the maintenance of the status quo. As a result of this analysis, ZBOR and Ljotić may be seen in a different context from much of the existing historiography due to the amount of detail given into discussing the ideological and political trajectory of ZBOR. Through an exploration and analysis of differing historical sub-strands and politics, this thesis will attempt to explain the existence of Ljotić and ZBOR in relation to their contemporaries and influences, and make justifications for the exploration of its evolution through its own several intertwining 'strands'.

Firstly, it will attempt to chronologically trace Ljotić's life, the development of his thought, the ideology of ZBOR, and concurrently, of the distinct concept of Yugoslav nationalism as understood by Ljotić. It will also examine Yugoslav political life as represented and perceived by him from the interwar period until the end of the Second World War. This gives rise to questions of whether ZBOR was solely the ideological domain of Ljotić, and if a study of ZBOR is inevitably a political biography of Dimitrije Ljotić. While heavily indebted to Ljotić's ideological evolution and its application, ZBOR would also show a marked degree of heterogeneity in regard to its ideological formation and definition.

This strand, which will be discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, will be buttressed by the use of, among others, Ljotić's publications, notably his *Sabrana dela*⁹ (Collected Works), his autobiography *Iz moga života*¹⁰ (From my life), *Dimitrije Ljotić u revoluciju i ratu*¹¹

⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Sabrana dela* (Belgrade: Nova Iskra, 2003); Dimitrije Ljotić, *Sabrana dela* (Belgrade: Nova Iskra, 2003). The 2003 version of Ljotić's collected works published by Nova Iskra is more detailed, especially as it relates to the latter stages of the Second World War.

¹⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Iz moga života* (Munich: Logos, 1952).

¹¹ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Dimitrije Ljotić u revoluciju i ratu* (Munich: Iskra, 1961).

(Dimitrije Ljotić in Revolution and War), and various archival sources.¹² Ljotić also wrote extensively in numerous ZBOR publications such as *Bilten* (Bulletin), *Naša borba* (Our Struggle), and *Otađbina* (Fatherland), which provide excellent insight into his political evolution and thinking. Through a careful analysis of Ljotić's life, his writings and the evolution of his ideological thought, with that of the ZBOR movement, this strand will show that Ljotić, during his youth and formative years, expressed an ideology likened to a pan-Slavic conservative, monarchic, and anti-democratic political discourse, though later influenced by fascism, especially after the outbreak of the Second World War. On a wider, macro level, the focus of chapter 2, this discourse shares broad similarities with the discourse of 'counter-enlightenment', and 'counter-revolution', that has been identified with the Action Française (hereafter also referred to as the AF).¹³ This 'proto--fascist'¹⁴ period of ZBOR will not be considered as strictly fascist or National Socialist, but rather will seek to place ZBOR's genesis in a European context of pre-existing anti-democratic, monarchist, and nationalist currents, elements of which Fascism and National Socialism would later draw inspiration from.

The second strand, comprising chapters 3 and 4 of this paper, will demonstrate the 'proto-fascist' ideology of ZBOR, its actions, and political manifestation, during the interwar era. ZBOR's ideological and political life within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1935 to 1940 has not been properly examined. This strand will analyse ZBOR's politics within the context of Yugoslav political life, and which would climax with its actions during the Second World War. By rejecting the assumption of ZBOR as merely a poor imitator of the German National Socialist Party, the thesis therefore will fill a historical gap, which entails a detailed analysis and deconstruction of Ljotić's interwar ideology and his political life, in relation to ZBOR. In this part, the thesis differs from the existing historiography in it explores and gives high

¹² Archival sources from *Arhiv Jugoslavije*, specifically Fond 37 Milan Stojadinović, Fond 38 Central Press Bureau of the Presidency of the Ministerial Council of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Fond 102 Stanislav Krakov, and Fond 115 Dimitrije Ljotić; the *Digitalna Narodna Biblioteka Srbije*; *Arhiv Srbije*; see gradja Bezbednosno-Informativne agencija; *Istorijski Arhiv Smederevo*; see Fond Izvanredni komesarijat za obnovu Smedereva; *Istorijski Arhiv u Čačku*; see Fond Kraljevska banska uprava Drinske Banovine, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR.

¹³ Counter-revolutionary thought will be taken to mean an ideological and philosophical thought pattern that disagrees with and negates the achievements of the legacy of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Principles of equality, rule of democracy, and human rights are therefore seen as 'modern', as opposed to 'traditional', hierarchy, and social order.

¹⁴ Though the author of this work contends that ZBOR occupied a grey zone between fascism and the radical non-fascist right, during the Second World War the movement would show a marked trend amongst its younger members and youth group the White Eagles, to permutate into a more clearly delineated National Socialist type organisation, which emphasised mass organisation, and a closer identification with Nazi goals. This will be the focus of Chapter 5.

priority to ZBOR's interwar Yugoslav political life, both chronological and analytical. It will show that Ljotić and ZBOR had a distinct worldview, one based on the notion of a conservative and traditionalist agrarian Pan-Slavic utopia. While ZBOR would incorporate the rhetoric of spiritual and national renewal, it would however differ significantly from the more fascist like 'palingenetic' call for renewal.¹⁵ Yet the movement would glorify the Nazi's, and take great interest in and inspiration from its anti-communism and anti-Semitism. Ljotić's influence was decisive in defining ZBOR in ideological matters, but his lack of interest, and indeed of capability, in organisational and administrative matters would further hamper ZBOR's organisational development. He would revel in theory and ideas, yet as a leader, he would prove to be a poor tactician, unable of transmitting his thought, as opposed to his more clearly defined end goal. His was an idea of ends, without realising the means. He would be content to work within and under the personal dictatorship of the ruling Karadjordjević dynasty¹⁶. Wishing to re-mould the dictatorship from within, rather than lead a dynamic movement calling for a total national socio-economic and political reconstruction based on totalitarian models.

The third strand, evident in chapter 5, consists of a micro and macro study of ZBOR under German occupation from 1941-1944, and analysis of the phenomenon of collaboration. This will show that ZBOR's collaboration was not a case of simple identification with Fascist and National Socialist ideas, but rather with specific, if not nuanced non-fascist features of ZBOR's pre-war ideology combined with opportunism and a mixture of fear and respect for German military might. ZBOR's apocalyptic interpretation of Christianity, and rabid anti-communism typified these features. This apocalyptic Christianity and extreme anti-communism would act as a base and 'legitimiser' for ZBOR's collaboration. As Yugoslavia was dismantled, ZBOR's rationale changed from a Yugoslav context of national unity to that of protecting the Serbian people and what it saw as Serbian traditions from anarchy and

¹⁵ 'Palingenetic' emphasises the rebirth of the national spirit, culture, and society. Associated mostly with Fascism and National Socialism, it nevertheless spanned the entire political spectrum and was fundamental to many different forms of nationalism. In ZBOR's case, while evident, it was alluded to more metaphorically, and in reference to allegory. For more see Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 5.

¹⁶ The personal rule of King Alexander, proclaimed on 6 January, 1929, has also been referred to in Serbian and Croatian as the *Šestojanuarska diktatura* (6th of January Dictatorship). It was hoped that by taking direct control over Yugoslav political life, the monarchy would be able to end corruption, and political impasse, primarily between those who saw Yugoslavia as a centralised and unitary state, and those, (though not only, Croats) who wanted Yugoslavia as a federalised constitutional monarchy. For more see Dejan Djokić, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst & Company, 2007), 67-72; Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije, knjiga I Kraljevina Jugoslavija* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1988), 190.

communism. Incidentally, Ljotić would not feel the need to ‘save’ the Serbs from Fascism and National Socialism. While accepting the new territorial delineations, ZBOR’s pre-war Pan Slavic worldview did not totally accommodate itself to the Nazi ‘New Order’,¹⁷ until the January 1943 German defeat at Stalingrad, and the subsequent Soviet advance into central and south eastern Europe, which would see Ljotić’s tone harden as the Axis began to be forced on the defensive.

Furthermore, through a careful re-analysis of ZBOR’s actions and evolution under the Nazi occupation, ZBOR, as an organisation was in effect, consumed by the German occupation and Serbian collaborationist apparatus, even though it was legalised during this period. ZBOR, at Ljotić’s behest, would enter into collaboration with Germany, with an inflated belief in its own importance and bargaining position. This also, however, opened a fissure within ZBOR. Younger members, most notably from ZBOR’s youth wing the White Eagles (*Beli Orlovi*) more influenced and radicalised by National Socialism, and the instability, brutality, and violence of resistance and collaboration, would agitate for ZBOR to follow a more clearly defined National Socialist model. This model would also be typified by ZBOR’s general secretary from 1937-1941, and during the Second World War, Milorad Mojić. This would then result in a temporary soft break between Ljotić and younger ZBOR members, exacerbated by the September 1941 creation of the collaborationist Serbian Volunteer Corps, but more evident by 1945.¹⁸ In the final part of the thesis, there is analysis of ZBOR outside of Ljotić’s direct rule, in the case of the Čačak, where local members were primarily concerned with their local agenda and survival. A lack of organisational structure, membership, resistance, and centralisation of the ZBOR movement in Occupied Serbia proved to be a challenge that may have been detrimental to ZBOR as a unified and sustainable movement.

¹⁷ The *Neuordnung Europas* (New Order) was a theoretical Nazi political order and conception to be implemented in occupied Europe. While conceived as an integrated economic community, in essence it amounted to little more than the complete plundering and destruction of European economies under Nazi control. See William J. Duiker and Jackson J. Spielvogel, *World History. Volume II. Since 1500* (Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2010), 750; Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 8,103, 260-262.

¹⁸ The *Srpski Dobrovoljački Korpus* (Serbian Volunteer Corps, hereafter SVC) was created in September 1941 on the initiative of ZBOR member and Minister for the Economy in the collaborationist Government of National Salvation, Mihailo Olčan. By 1942 it had 172 officers and 3,513 men under arms. It was used as an auxiliary force under German command and developed a reputation for a strident anti-communist position. Highly ideological, it contained its own ‘political commissioners’, as well as chaplains. It would fight the Partisans until April 1945, when it would be officially disbanded and destroyed. For more see Borivoje Karapandžić, *Srpski Dobrovoljci 1941-1981* (Cleveland, 1981).

Based on the combination of these strands, the author will illustrate how Ljotić, as well as ZBOR, are interconnected and combined into a historical context, especially within the socio-economic and political life of interwar Yugoslav, that shows both as important examples of the wide and syncretic variety of anti-democratic and anti-modern currents active within interwar Europe and during the Second World War. It was incidentally, the Second World War, and the nature of Serbian collaboration allowed in the context of German occupation that would destroy the last vestiges of ZBOR, rather than the Partisans or the Soviet advance. ZBOR's activity and energy would be largely reduced to the actions of the Serbian Volunteer Corps, who under German command were Nazi auxiliaries whose core ZBOR support could not sustain the casualties taken and reinforcements needed. On another level, this will show that during the Second World War, ZBOR was sustained primarily by its radicalised youth.

ZBOR is historically relevant, as a product of the myriad of wider pan-European ideas, among them anti-democracy and anti-Semitism, applied in a local context. Regardless of its small size and mass unpopularity during its existence, ZBOR needs to be considered on its own terms. Though having displayed a marked degree of heterogeneity Ljotić and ZBOR were largely dismissed as a manifestation of a variance of fascism. Moreover, through this thesis, Ljotić's political thought, and its relation to fascism will be explored further to show his ideological underpinnings which, though similar to fascism, also differed in respect to core fascist ideals, as will be shown through the literature review. Moreover, the gap in literature regarding Ljotić's political thought, and its relation to fascism will be explored further to illustrate to readers that he had his own ideology, whose core ideas predated and differed in certain respects from fascism, making any real classification of categorisation difficult.

Literature Review

ZBOR's categorisation and classification as fascist has been at the forefront of any attempt to interpret and analyse its ideology, and place it in historical context. That said, with the exception of Mladen Stefanović's work,¹⁹ ZBOR has not been subject of any monograph and critical analysis (e.g., analysis of its totality). This, however, has not precluded the debate surrounding ZBOR's fascist characteristics or lack thereof. Unsurprisingly, ZBOR's

¹⁹ Mladen Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945* (Belgrade: Narodna Knjiga, 1984).

presumed and presupposed fascist characteristics are used as buttresses to existing arguments regarding the myriad definitions of fascism. These distinctions are provided in an attempt to show how ZBOR is not simply an expression of Ljotić's personal ideology. Moreover, any classification of ZBOR as a fascist movement has, to some extent, implications pertaining to the understanding of fascism. Additionally, the discussion of ZBOR in relation to a prominent social and political label, such as fascism, shows the role and perception of the movement in society during its existence. This then provides a clearer picture of how ZBOR may have had affected politics, however minimal, during the interwar period. Therefore, discussing ZBOR and fascism adds to the main focus of the study, which is to explore and analyse the evolution of ZBOR as a movement. A movement that Ljotić founded, but that wasn't initially a direct extension of his ideology.

Stefanović presupposes ZBOR's fascism as a movement that 'used fascist methods', and accuses it of 'imitating the Nazis'.²⁰ Writing in 1984, in the former Socialist Yugoslavia, Stefanović's argument would have been influenced by official ideological considerations that clearly defined fascism. What becomes clear is that any discussion or analysis surrounding ZBOR and other similarly deemed fascist, pro-fascist, or proto-fascist groups cannot take place outside an attempt at defining fascism. This then begs the question as the exact nature of fascism, and how it has been theorised and explained? And more importantly, does, a study of ZBOR inherently imply, or is helped by a discussion on fascism?

Any real consensus on fascism therefore has been 'limited' in both scope and nature. This can, and indeed has, lead to causal questions and assumptions of fascism. Is fascism a social system? Or is it a distinctive political and social movement? What methods then, can be utilised to form a hypothetical categorisation and classification? Furthermore, when can supposedly fascist ideas be said to have originated and what were fascists preoccupied with? Using a reductionist argument can fascism be simply watered down to a single so-called 'generic phenomenon? That would seem inaccurate with the development of Italian Fascism and German National Socialism. Roger Griffin is of the opinion that the application of fascism as a term outside of Italy is to change the term to a 'generic' status.²¹ Also, using a more nominalist approach that insists solely on the distinctiveness and uniqueness of nationalist and fascist movements negates similarities that these movements shared. The

²⁰ Ibid, 22, 27.

²¹ Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), 1.

problem is further compounded by Stanley Payne's statement that fascism is vague because it 'carries no explicit political reference'.²² Ideological considerations surrounding variations of fascism's interpretation may no longer be a relevant factor on a national level, but in the case of the Marxist approach to fascism, still holds currency within certain sectors.

In terms of how ZBOR has been classified by the myriad of definitions surrounding fascism, it is perhaps beneficial to outline the genesis of such definitions chronologically, as well as thematically, to emphasise the evolution of 'fascist studies'.

Marxist ideology and fascism

The Marxist definition of fascism was among the first, contemporary attempts to explain the rise of Fascism in Italy and to dissect its popularity. The Soviet Union, as the carrier of Marxist ideology, was created on 29 December, 1922 coming into existence in the aftermath of the 1917 Russian Revolution and subsequent Russian Civil War, which lasted until 1921. This coincided with the Fascist March on Rome from 22 to 29 October, 1922, which saw the rise of Benito Mussolini. That the Black-shirted paramilitary formations of the Fascist Party were initially formed in August 1920 with the explicit aim to break the 1920 general strike, while soon being turned into a tool of repression against anarcho-syndicalism and socialist movements, was not lost on the Soviets.²³ It was within this context, of both the establishment of the Fascist and Soviet regimes that the first Marxist interpretation of fascism originated. The Comintern (abbreviated form of Communist International) response emphasised that Fascism was 'a weapon in the hands of the large landowners'. However, the Comintern seemed confident in Fascism's inevitable demise stating that 'Fascism, which has no programme and no ideas, no firm and uniform class basis, will very soon create a movement of public indignation against itself'.²⁴ Even before this official response from the Comintern, in its self-appointed role as the harbinger of a global socialist revolution, Italian

²² Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 3.

²³ Alexander J. De Grand, *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The "Fascist" Style of Rule* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 17.

²⁴ "Extracts from a manifesto to the Italian Workers passed at the opening session of the Fourth Comintern Congress", in Jane. Degras and Internationale (3), *The Communist International 1919-1943: Documents* (London [etc.]: Oxford University Press etc., 1956), 376–378.

Marxists, most notably Antonio Gramsci,²⁵ grappled with defining Fascism and its inexorable rise.

For Gramsci, writing in 1921, the rise of Fascism was a corollary and symptom of ‘the decomposition of Italian society’.²⁶ Gramsci’s prescient and insightful analysis would show both an evolution of, and deviation from official Comintern decrees. According to Gramsci, Fascism could not be understood simply in class terms, for it was tied with the disintegration of Italian civil and political unity in Italy. Furthermore, as Gramsci stresses, ‘Fascism is a form of ‘international reaction’, and both a ‘criminal conspiracy’, as well as a ‘broad social movement’. It is, continues Gramsci, ‘essentially an urban phenomenon’, yet one that seeks contradictorily to ‘subordinate the towns to the countryside’.²⁷ Gramsci’s approach is also indicative of the aforementioned terms pertaining to the ‘vulgar’, and ‘sophisticated’ Marxist approaches to interpreting fascism. According to Griffin, the ‘vulgar’ approach dictates that fascism was directly spawned by capitalism and is directly identified with the interests of capital. The ‘sophisticated’ variant, initially exemplified by Gramsci, sees fascism as an ‘autonomous dynamic’, but one that has been ‘hijacked by capitalists’ for their own ends.²⁸

The evolution of the Marxist approach’s theoretical maturity has naturally allowed for a degree of evolution and sophistication, especially post-1945 with the realisation, horrors, and consequences of Nazism and Fascism. This is the view taken by Geoff Eley, a historian of modern Germany. Fascism, according to Eley, followed four salient features. The first was the immediate conjecture of violence, empire, and revolution in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. Secondly, fascism required a severe crisis of the state, in that it prospered when the state’s capacity was impaired. Eley cites the example of Germany circa

²⁵ Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). Read literature and linguistics at the University of Turin, before poor health forced him to end his studies in 1915. A member of the Italian Socialist Party from 1913, by 1914 he was writing numerous articles for *Il Grido del Popolo* (The Cry of the People), before becoming co-editor of *Avanti!* (Forward!), the same paper Mussolini edited up until his ousting. In 1919 he was involved with *L’Ordine Nuovo* (New Order), considered by Lenin to be closest amongst all Italian publications to the Bolsheviks. Present at the 1921 founding of the Italian Communist Party, by 1922 he would travel to Russia as its representative. A noted theoretician, we would become a prominent Marxist intellectual, criticising Marxist economic determinism as well as the theory of cultural hegemony, by which the elites manipulate perceptions, and values, that dominates ideology. Imprisoned on his return to Italy in 1926, he would die in 1937. For more see Antonio Gramsci, *Per la verita’. Scritti 1913-1926* (Editore Riunati, 1974).

²⁶ James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci. Intellectual and Political Context. Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 2002), 356.

²⁷ David Beetham, ed., *Marxists in Face of Fascism: Writings by Marxists on Fascism from the Inter-War Period* (Totowa, N.J: Barnes & Noble Books, 1984), 5.

²⁸ Roger Griffin, ed., *International Fascism: Theories, Causes and the New Consensus*, *Arnold Readers in History* (London ; New York: Arnold : Oxford University Press, 1998), 4.

1930-1933, when political paralysis encompassed the ‘entire institutional machinery of politics’.²⁹ Thirdly, Eley notes, it was vital to ‘reinstate the importance of fascist ideology’.³⁰ Eley sees the political left in Germany as being unable to counter the populist appeal of the right. The final element, he concludes, was the recourse to violence that fascists willingly adopt. Eley’s ‘salient features’ seem more contextual, than as a more thoroughly orthodox Marxist reductionist argument of a capitalistic state crisis, showing an evolution from Gramsci’s thought. This elucidates a symbiosis that could conceivably exist within a Marxist debate on fascism.

Non-Marxist Approaches to Fascism and a ‘limited consensus’

The Marxist approach to fascism held sway throughout much of Yugoslav historiography, until largely discredited globally with the collapse of the Soviet system. This does not however, mean that there were no post-war attempts outside of Marxist ideological prisms to explain fascism. By the beginning of the Second World War, there was already a trend, outside of Marxist thought, to interpret the two regime types of Fascism and National Socialism as ‘Nazi-fascism’, implying a singular unity.³¹ By the 1960s, a new wave of interest in the study of fascism developed with the publishing of German historian Ernst Nolte’s *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche* (Fascism in its Epoch) in 1963.³² For Griffin, Nolte’s work was a breakthrough in that he began with the assumption that fascism was a ‘generic concept’.³³ Nolte did this through what he called the ‘phenomenological method’.³⁴ The phenomenological method was, according to Nolte, a method by which select movements were allowed to ‘speak for themselves’. What it did offer, however, was a real interpretative attempt at defining fascism beyond Marxism. Nolte did see certain limitations of his method though. Placing Fascism and National Socialism on equal footing and as comparative bases, Nolte states, does not deny importance to any other fascism, but allows for further understanding.³⁵ This, however, can be interpreted, as Ian Kershaw does, as little

²⁹ Geoff Eley, *Nazism as Fascism: Violence, Ideology, and the Ground of Consent in Germany 1930-1945* (London: Routledge, 2013), 198.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ James A. Gregor., *Mussolini’s Intellectuals. Fascist Social and Political Thought* (Princeton University Press, 2005), 2.

³² This book has been translated into English as Ernst. Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Francaise, Italian Fascism, National Socialism*. ([S.l.]: New American Library New Eng. Lib., 1970).

³³ Griffin, *International Fascism*, 6.

³⁴ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 22.

³⁵ Ibid.

more than the regurgitation of fascist writings throughout Europe with no interpretation.³⁶ Nolte did not deny the ubiquity of fascism, stating that even to Mussolini, ‘fascism was a neologism’.³⁷ Despite the bluntness of Mussolini’s definition, fascism remains disturbingly perplexing. Its central tenets have yet to be disclosed or fully explored. The notion of typology itself, while implying a degree of congruence or agreement, does not go far enough in explaining fascism outside of what fascists have written. Nevertheless, the base of this comparison, based on a ‘minimum’, was anti-Marxism as a common denominator to fascist movements.

This minimum, a negative aspect of fascism, its negation of Marxism, formed the base of what has been called the ‘fascist minimum’. Nolte saw in Marxism a related ideology to fascism, and fascism’s attempt to destroy Marxism utilised nearly identical methods, though within a framework of ‘national assertion’.³⁸ This signified in Nolte’s assertion that fascism was a ‘negative phenomenon’. This minimum is also part of Nolte’s typology, which he called taxonomy. Taxonomy consisted of four points of pre-fascism, early fascism, normal fascism, and radical fascism.³⁹

Nolte’s interpretation of fascism seems to rest on the assumption that fascism is ‘metaphysical’, in that it is a ‘violent resistance to transcendence’.⁴⁰ Nolte saw this transcendence as both practical and theoretical, in that humanity was pressing forward with technological advances, acquiring powers previously attributed to the supernatural, as a form of the practical, combined with a theoretical ‘broadening of horizons’, the freedom from confines, allowing for a ‘full experience’.⁴¹ In layman’s terms, Nolte evidently saw the world, especially Europe, as embracing new cultural modes that permeated society allowing for new avenues of thought and interpretation.

Where Nolte’s study was also viewed as a breakthrough, though contested by Marxist scholars, was in fascism’s supposed historical origins. Nolte stressed that irrespective of

³⁶ Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, 4th ed (London : New York: Arnold ; Co-published in the USA by Oxford University Press, 2000), 30.

³⁷ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 20–21.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 459.

⁴⁰ Griffin, *International Fascism*, 47.

⁴¹ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 430, 433.

Hitler or Mussolini, fascism would have found political space in the aftermath of the First World War. It was the war itself, contends Nolte that would allow the political space for fascism to emerge.⁴² Nolte's analysis and interpretation of fascism in the context of ideas rather than class opened a new course for research in fascist studies, that of 'generic fascism'. Simultaneously, his neglect of, or rather negation, of the socio-economic factors affecting fascism's development, and the motivations of individual fascists, should not be overlooked. His belief that such factors were inadequate negates an important political factor in post-First World War Europe.

Generic Fascism and the beginnings of consensus of Fascism

There are said to be four accepted marks or tenets of the Fascist spirit: nationalism and racism, a cult of violence and war, irrationalism, and revolutionary presumption. Although these marks or tenets are not exhaustive, according to George L. Mosse, they help us to understand the appeal of fascism during the first half of the twentieth century. Particularly where democratic institutions were weak, and resentment bred by the First World War festered.⁴³ While Nolte's interpretation of fascism as primarily metaphysical is largely based on historical reference, his reference to a 'fascist minimum' has formed a base for analysing 'generic fascism'. Fascism began from the 1960s to emerge gradually as coherent and distinct, rooted in wider intellectual currents of its historical context.⁴⁴ Eley contends that by the 1960s, historians entered into fascist studies, in a field previously dominated by social scientists.⁴⁵ However, he continues by stating that if 'generic fascism' can be theorised as comparative, a working definition from an 'empirical study of classic European interwar movements', needs to be found.⁴⁶ 'Generic fascism' has also seen the rise of at least a limited consensus in the 1990s, in the belief that it is possible to identify a radical fascist ideology. This approach among others came to be typified by among others Roger Griffin and Stanley Payne. Even so, as Stanley Payne alludes to 'generic fascism' as never having 'existed in pure empirical form', but rather 'serves as a conceptual device, clarifying analysis of individual political phenomena'.

⁴² Ibid. 5.

⁴³ George L. Mosse, "Toward a General Theory of Fascism", in Griffin and Feldman, *Fascism*, 142.

⁴⁴ António Costa Pinto and Aristotle A. Kallis, eds., *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 13.

⁴⁵ Eley, *Nazism as Fascism*, 200.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 4.

This, Payne finds through a methodology of what he calls ‘descriptive typology’, which emphasises the similarity of fascist movements, as well as negations. Fascist similarities, or common goals, according to Payne include the creation of a new authoritarian and nationalist state, not based on existing traditional models and empire, and a positive reaction and interpretation of violence. Fascist negations according to Payne include anti-liberalism, anti-conservatism, and anti-communism.⁴⁷

Payne’s descriptive typological model has been praised by, among others, Griffin. Griffin praises Payne’s typological definition as being an ‘ideal type’, a ‘deliberately schematised and simplified model, which identifies what fascisms have in common’, rather than highlighting their ‘complexity and uniqueness’.⁴⁸ Griffin also states that to apply ‘fascism’ as a term denoting a phenomenon outside of Italy is to change its status to a generic one.⁴⁹ Payne’s ‘descriptive typology, however, was not an interpretation of fascism. It does though help to weed out the myriad of authoritarian radical right groups and movements proliferating throughout Europe, but which were not necessarily fascist. It is therefore an itemised list of characteristics identifying fascism. It is also a blueprint for what is called the ‘new consensus’. The ‘new consensus’, as a definitional core, adopts a less reductionist approach, accepting fascism as revolutionary in its own right, yet also adopts George L Mosse’s ‘culturalist approach’, to form a consensus on fascism as a quest for national rejuvenation, would around a palingenetic myth.⁵⁰ This definitional core of fascism, as Griffin argues, has led to a ‘new consensus’ within ‘Anglophonic fascist studies’, as a base for the expansion of ‘comparative fascist studies’.⁵¹ The ‘new consensus’, postulates that fascism as a worldwide phenomenon originating in nineteenth century Europe. Its three core elements, according to Griffin are ultra-nationalism, revolution, and rebirth.⁵²

⁴⁷ Ibid. 7.

⁴⁸ Griffin, *International Fascism*, 11.

⁴⁹ Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 1.

⁵⁰ David D. Roberts et al., “Comments on Roger Griffin, The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 2 (April, 2002), 259.

⁵¹ Roger Griffin, Werner Loh, and Andreas Umland, eds., *Fascism Past and Present, West and East. An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right* (Stuttgart: Verlag, 2006), 29.

⁵² Cyprian Blamires and Paul Jackson, eds., *World Fascism. A Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 1* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 1–3.

The ‘new consensus’ definition of fascism shares obvious similarities with Griffin’s, one that Payne seems to be in broad agreement with. Griffin, interpreting fascism through the paradigm of ‘generic fascism’, defines fascism as a ‘genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism’.⁵³ Griffin surmised therefore that fascism is a utopian ideology, at whose heart is a ‘political revolution’, though one that is prolific in the ‘sheer number of manifestations it can assume’.⁵⁴ Payne interprets Griffin’s definition as ‘epochal’, and not subject to a particular social class, but produced by specific ‘historical, political, social, and cultural conditions’, which arose from the crisis of the *fin de siècle*.⁵⁵

Both ‘generic fascism’ and the ‘new consensus’ however, face empirical criticism. These criticisms and disagreements have focused on how far the concept could be applied, and what inevitably would have to be discarded. Aristotle Kallis contends that only Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were able to emancipate themselves institutionally from their initial political sponsors, and exercise power autonomously, consolidating their power virtually unopposed by ‘other domestic actors’.⁵⁶ If Kallis’ criteria are to be applied, then logically, only Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy could therefore conceivably be considered as examples of ‘generic fascism’, thus negating other mimetic fascist movements and regimes throughout Europe. Also, how similarly ‘fascistic’ were the Italian Fascist Regime and National Socialist Germany? Kershaw’s objections to ‘generic fascism’ starts from what he views as its ‘extended inflationary fashion’, inclusive of movements of ‘wholly disparate character and significance’.⁵⁷ Renzo De Felice, writing that Italian Fascism and German National Socialism are ‘two different worlds’, echoes this view.⁵⁸ De Felice continues by stating that the ‘fascist negatives’, of anti-liberalism, and anti-communism, are similar to German National Socialism, but that ‘fascist positives’ show marked differences.⁵⁹ Griffin disagrees with De Felice, stating that Nazism was indeed a form of ‘generic fascism’, but indeed its most

⁵³ Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 26.

⁵⁴ Griffin and Feldman, *Fascism*, 6.

⁵⁵ Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 460.

⁵⁶ Pinto and Kallis, *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, 14.

⁵⁷ Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, 40.

⁵⁸ Renzo De Felice, *Fascism. An Informal Introduction to Its Theory and Practice* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 40.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 95.

important representative because of the ‘horrifying extent’ to which its revolutionary goals were pursued.⁶⁰

George L. Mosse, while not denying or ‘negating the possibility of a general theory of fascism’, states that ‘every country developed a fascism appropriate to its nationalism’, saw fascism as an ‘attempt to capture and direct bourgeois dissatisfaction with existing industrial and political reality’.⁶¹ He continues by stating that Nazism was anti-modernist in the sense that it repudiated ‘Germany’s European heritage’ of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.⁶² What separated the ‘German revolution’ in Mosse’s words, was that it was too ‘restricted’ and narrow in its mystical Germanic ideology based on an ‘anti-Jewish revolution’.⁶³ This obsession, along with the subordination of the ideal of fascist revolution to racial mysticism, differentiated German National Socialisms from all other fascisms. Mosse looked more to Nazism in particular as being part of German intellectual tradition, disseminated through *Völkisch* ideology.⁶⁴ He also did not view National Socialism as a break with the German past, or as a unique response to defeat in the First World War, or the Great Depression. What Mosse emphasised, outside of ‘generic fascism’, was fascism as a new form of Cultural Revolution. In this sense, National Socialism was a crystallisation of a specificity of German tradition.

The concept of ‘immunity thesis’ refers to the impossibility of misidentification when self-ascribing attributes and thoughts that are gathered introspectively.⁶⁵ In this manner, when an individual claims that he is fascist based on personal assessment of his actions, intentions, and beliefs, the claim will always be true and valid.⁶⁶ Committing a mistake by wrongly identifying the attribute of oneself based on internal mental processing is not possible. In a similar manner, this thesis will not merely focus on identifying whether Ljotić was a fascist

⁶⁰ Griffin and Feldman, *Fascism*, 7.

⁶¹ George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology. Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 312.

⁶² *Ibid.* 316.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 314.

⁶⁴ *Völkisch* derives from the German Volk (corresponds to people), with connotations corresponding to ‘folkloric’. It had its roots in the romantic nationalism of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and combined a sentimental interest in German folklore, combined with ‘organic’, pastoral, and anti-urban undertones. In the aftermath of the First World War, the term Volk came to be increasingly politicised as a form of ethnic nationalism. For more see George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology. Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981).

⁶⁵ Brian Jenkins. "The six fevrier 1934 and the ‘Survival’ of the French Republic". *French History* 20, no. 3 (2006), 333-351.

⁶⁶ Jenkins, 2006, 338

or not, but it will go beyond that and explore how such distinction from fascism, if any, can explain the creation, values, and development of the ZBOR movement.

Within the theoretical framework of 'generic fascism', and the growing influence of non-Marxist interpretations of fascism in Anglophone studies, ZBOR's status in terms of 'fascist' or 'non-fascist' was fairly static. In Payne's estimation, ZBOR falls into the category of a 'radical right' group, a halfway point between authoritarian conservative nationalism and fascism. Culturally and philosophically, the 'radical right' according to Payne, took inspiration from both conservative nationalism and fascism, depending on localised socio-economic and political conditions, as well as history.⁶⁷ Moreover, the 'radical right', while wishing to destroy a liberal political system, was usually hesitant to embrace radical forms of authoritarianism, preferring rather a re-organised monarchy, or a neo-Catholic type of corporatism.

In the work of David Carroll, he attempted to describe fascism as an alternative to western democracy.⁶⁸ Carroll claimed that fascism is a logical consequence to aestheticism and the cultural ideals of a nation.⁶⁹ Carroll focused on the interplay between literature, culture, and politics, within the context of literary fascism. Through this literary approach, Carroll provided an analysis of essays, newspapers articles, and novels to show how fascism has been rooted on cultural institutions and practices has been seen as "soft" and deficient in ways of defending or condemning the French literary fascism based on ideology and moral value.⁷⁰ Such an explanation of fascism shows a different tone to the usual strong-willed and powerful claims of other known fascist. In relation to Ljotić, Carroll's focus on culture and aesthetics is an aspect of fascism that would not feature prominently in the ideology of Ljotić or ZBOR. There would be no pomposity, little attempt (as will be shown) at mass appeal and mass mobilisation. In this manner, a distinction between the philosophies of the two movements is again highlighted.

⁶⁷ Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 15–16.

⁶⁸ David Carroll, *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and the Ideology of Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 89.

⁶⁹ Steven Ungar. "Reflections on David Carroll's 'French Literary Fascism': Two Views." *South Central Review* 14, no. 3/4 (1997), 73.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 75.

In a different light, fascism was highlighted in a positive aspect through the writings of Susan Sontag.⁷¹ In the article, *Fascinating Fascism*, Sontag claimed that fascism is more than just the image of brutishness and terror that it has to several societies. Instead, fascism places importance of positive values of life, art, culture, and community, which are all persistent in today's society.⁷² More interestingly, Sontag showed that the negative aspect of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany are resurfacing in the sense that these two movements are both being popularised more for their negative connotation than for their positive implications. In her writing, Sontag called for a change in the perceptions of Italian fascism as a play between master and slave and other negative images, which is how most of the individuals and societies perceive it to be. Such call for a change in fascisms image is different from how historians relate fascism to Ljotić or ZBOR. In most cases, Ljotić has been identified as a fascist for his strict nationalism, collaboration, and strident anti-Semitism.

Geoff Eley, however, is of the opinion that the radical nationalists in Germany were in effect the ideological precursors to the Nazis, through a joint nationalist-elite 'populist' campaign to inspire confidence in the people.⁷³ In Payne's opinion however, ZBOR was 'essentially a right-radical movement that propounded a general Yugoslav nationalism'.⁷⁴ Payne also is of the opinion that ZBOR was for the maintenance of the status quo. This would be correct, if the implication is applied solely to the 6th of January regime and its dictatorial character, which ZBOR supported as a defensive mechanism against liberal democracy and communism. Griffin meanwhile refers to ZBOR as 'fascist candidates' in that, while adopting a number of fascist features (corporativist theory, anti-Semitism, anti-communism, cult of the leader), and blending Christianity with ultra-nationalism, it was nevertheless proto-fascist.⁷⁵ Griffin qualifies his 'proto-fascist' classification of ZBOR because according to him, ZBOR lacks a 'palingenetic myth', focusing on a 'regenerated Yugoslav national community'.⁷⁶ ZBOR's classification as either 'radical right' or 'proto-fascist' by both Payne and Griffin raises interesting questions not just about the heuristic analytical devices used to quantify such conclusions, but also about whether in Yugoslavia, or indeed the Balkan peninsula, there was anything close to what could have been deemed 'generic fascism'.

⁷¹ Susan Sontag, "Fascinating fascism." *Under the sign of Saturn* (Vintage Books, New York, 1980), 105.

⁷² Ibid. 105

⁷³ Geoff Eley, "What Produces Fascism: Preindustrial Traditions or a Crisis of a Capitalist State," *Politics & Society* 12, no. 2 (1983), 70.

⁷⁴ Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 325.

⁷⁵ Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 120.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Fascism in Yugoslavia, Yugoslav Fascism, or Fascism in the Balkans?

Based on the former official Yugoslav historiographical precepts, ZBOR and Ljotić were considered fascist, justifiably for their collaboration with the Nazis and struggle against the Communist-led Partisan resistance movement. Stefanović stated that ZBOR were ‘traitors’, and of being complicit in terror activities in the service of the Nazis.⁷⁷ Branko Petranović also describes Ljotić as ‘wishing for the inner rebirth of the Serbs upon fascist principles’. Writing in 1992, Petranović maintains that Ljotić was a ‘national socialist’, and a ‘propagator of Hitler’.⁷⁸ Ljotić’s open admiration of Hitler, as will be shown, certainly influenced and marked ZBOR. But Petranović’s assertion of Ljotić personally as being a National Socialist is contentious. Ljotić’s core ideological nexus would not be drawn from fascist beliefs, even if elements of what he saw as the mainstays of his ideology, Christianity, anti-communism, and the peasant as the ‘carrier of tradition’, were co-opted by fascists. Branislav Gligorijević, writing nearly twenty years before Petranović, agrees, stating that the 1929 ‘world crisis saw the formation of political movements based on new bourgeois theories’. These theories, ‘during a deep crisis of capitalism’, preached national renewal,⁷⁹ in broad reference to the post-1929 Yugoslav political climate. Gligorijević adds that ZBOR followed a hierarchic principle and showed its fascist character through its corporatism.⁸⁰ Stefanović goes further and states that Hitler and Mussolini primarily influenced Ljotić.⁸¹

Stefanović’s work widened the documentary basis of scholarly investigation, being the only full and in-depth study of ZBOR, but it fails to overcome, understandably, the ideological limitations imposed by official government sanctioning of Marxist historiography and the Marxist approach to fascism. As the trend in fascist studies moves away from Marxist interpretations of fascism, both Griffin and Payne deny ZBOR’s categorisation as fascist. Moreover, Stefanović’s study offers little in the way of source criticism, and there is no real analysis of ZBOR’s ideology apart from how it relates to Marxist interpretation of fascism. This is especially evident in that the majority of the book deals with ZBOR’s actions during

⁷⁷ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 127–131.

⁷⁸ Branko Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939-1945* (Belgrade: VINC, 1992), 68.

⁷⁹ Branislav Gligorijević, “Politički pokreti i grupe s nacionalsocijalističkom ideologijom i njihova fuzija u Ljotićevom zboru,” *Istorijski Glasnik* 4 (1965), 35.

⁸⁰ Branislav Gligorijević, “Napad Ljotićevaca na studente tehničkog fakulteta u Beogradu u oktobru 1940. i rasturanje Ljotićevog Zbora,” *Istorijski Glasnik* 2 (1963), 52.

⁸¹ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 21.

the Second World War, taking its collaboration as a given because of its supposed National Socialist character. This work differs from those of Gligorijević, and especially of Stefanović in that it does not presuppose a fascist character for Ljotić and ZBOR. It will analyse Ljotić's writings on a more in-depth level, and in relation to European trends, as evidenced through the example of the Action Française, and scrutinise the main tenets of ZBOR's ideology, thus filling a gap on the origins of, and main points of, ZBOR's politics.

Gligorijević's work pertaining to the formation of ZBOR is detailed in its analysis. While it deals only with the formative phase of ZBOR's development, Gligorijević accurately shows how the Yugoslav Action (*Jugoslovenska Akcija*, hereafter JA), and the Slovenian-based Association of Combatants of Yugoslavia (*Združenje borcev Jugoslavije*), frequently referred to by the acronym BOJ, overcame (for a time) minor ideological issues in order to create ZBOR, with Ljotić as its elected head. Well researched, Gligorijević's central premise is again tied in to the supposed fascist nature of ZBOR. In this case however, it was not so much ZBOR, or rather Ljotić that was a fascist, as the JA, who Gligorijević claimed to have a clear National Socialist character. Like Petranović, a real analysis of ZBOR's ideology is not their aim, but rather those instances where ZBOR's ideology overlaps with fascism that serves as a buttress to their premise of ZBOR as inherently fascist.

ZBOR's status, as referred to at the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, was both collaborationist and traitorous.⁸² It is certainly true that Ljotić and ZBOR were collaborators, and as a consequence, traitors, inasmuch as they were working on the behalf of their nation's occupiers. However, the nexus of Ljotić's thought, and ZBOR's ideology predated fascism, and the Marxist approach's reductionist argument of fascism as being a crisis in the capitalist does not account for ZBOR's formation. Its formation based as it was on external events, the 1934 assassination of King Alexander, as its main catalyst. Works written under the Marxist historiographical framework dictated by the politics of the day tended to emphasise ZBOR's links with Fascism and National Socialism, implying mimesis and synthesis. One work that of Todor Kuljić, gives a religious veneer to ZBOR's supposed fascism by stating that the 'Orthodox ethos' of ZBOR was a fascist trapping.⁸³ Ljotić's personal religiosity was certainly imparted onto ZBOR. It was both austere and extreme. Ljotić however was no theologian, and apart from Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović (to be

⁸² See note 2.

⁸³ Todor Kuljić, "Srpski fašizam i sociologija," *Sociologija* 16, no. 2 (1974), 237–268.

discussed in Chapter 1), he had no real support amongst the Church hierarchy. Kuljić continues by stating that ZBOR intended to but failed to ‘implement a fascist programme’.⁸⁴ That ZBOR was quantified as fascist, through its collaboration and anti-Marxist rhetoric, was a given, and understandable in the political changes of post-war Yugoslavia. However, it was not the only, nor the most extreme version of extreme-right wing politics in both Yugoslavia, and the Balkan Peninsula. For both Croatia, both as a part of Yugoslavia and during its brief 1941-1945 independence, and Romania, spawned movements that would eclipse ZBOR in rhetoric and action.

The Balkan Peninsula, according to Constantin Iordachi, exhibited most of the social factors that generally facilitated the emergence of fascism. The most important of these, Iordachi continues, are ‘structural, regional, and ethno-political’ cleavages related to a specific stage of the nation-building process.⁸⁵ Due to these existing cleavages, a plethora of radical political movements arose in the interwar Balkans, plagued with ideological fluidity and organisational instability. Their instability and obscurity has created difficulties on an empirical level of separating fascist parties from more radical right but non-fascist parties. The most significant radical right and fascist movements in the Balkans were the Legion of the Archangel Michael (*Legiunea ‘Arhanghelului Mihail*), also referred to as the Iron Guard (*Garda de Fier*), in Romania, and the Croatian Revolutionary Movement Ustaša (*Hrvatski Revolucionarni Pokret – Ustaša*), in Yugoslavia. Though there were ideological convergences, these groups would go farther than ZBOR in their call for palingenetic renewal, revolutionary aims, their utilisation of violence, level of organisation, and their party structure greatly surpassed ZBOR. Iordachi states that ZBOR could conceivably be thought of within fascist studies as an intermediary taxonomical classification as a hybrid between the radical right and fascism, under the general taxonomical classification of ‘generic fascism’.⁸⁶ This perhaps is the closest to any real categorisation of ZBOR. It was not a fully fascistic movement, not at least from its legal 1935-1940 existence. That said, its rhetoric, and especially its actions in the Second World War with the collaborationist Serbian Volunteer Corps shows that fascist influence was gradually, but continuously gaining currency amongst ZBOR members, if not Ljotić personally.

⁸⁴ Stein Ugelvik Larsen and Bernt Hagtvat, eds., *Modern Europe after Fascism, 1943-1980s* (Boulder : New York: Social Science Monographs ; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1998), 833.

⁸⁵ Rumen Daskalov and Diana Mishkova, eds., *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, Balkan Studies Library (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2013), 357.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 358.

That the Legion of the Archangel Michael, and the Ustaša movement were considered the most significant examples of fascism in the Balkans is not hard to fathom. Empirically, these groups, also as regime types, came closest to ‘generic fascism’, by dint of their strong paramilitary units, notions of national rebirth, and the capability to implement their political visions. This would be contrasted with the situation of ZBOR, who as will be shown in Chapter 5, even under Nazi occupation, would only in Smederevo, under Ljotić’s personal (albeit detached) rule, be able to even contemplate any implementation of ZBOR’s ideology. Ljotić’s case in Smederevo therefore should not be used as a microcosm of ZBOR activity throughout Occupied Serbia, as the situation in Čačak will show.

The Iron Guard was epitomised by its leader and founder, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu.⁸⁷ In this sense, groups such as the Iron Guard were noted for, and defined by, the charisma of their individual leaders as much as by their ideology. This can be said to be the case of ZBOR, though Ljotić’s charisma came more from his personal and familial connections than to any real personality traits. The Legion was founded on 24 June, 1927, when Codreanu and some followers resigned from the National Christian Defence League, led by Alexandru Cuza.⁸⁸ Payne argues that the Legion would develop the Romanian variant of fascism, becoming the ‘most unique of the entire genus’, except for the German Nazis.⁸⁹ Mann agrees with Payne, stating that the Legion was essentially home grown, but that it borrowed from both the German Nazis and Italian Fascists.⁹⁰ The Iron Guard, founded as a sort of party militia, was formed in 1930, yet due to government repression and banning, the Iron Guard would become synonymous in the vernacular with The Legion of the Archangel Michael.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (1899-1938). Born as Corneliu Zelinski, his family name denotes a Slavic paternal background. As a law student in 1919, he came to identify communism as an enemy. Studying in Germany in 1922, he welcomed Mussolini’s March on Rome. Co-founder of the National Christian Defence League, he founded the Legion of the Archangel Michael as a youth group, which he envisioned as part of the National Christian Defence League. His charisma, mysticism, and racialist anti-Semitism would define the Legion’s ideology until his murder in police custody in 1938. For more see Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others. A History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania* (Stanford University Press, 1970).; Zigu Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1995).; Francisco Veigo, *La mística del ultranacionalismo. Historia de la Guardia de Hierro (Rumanía, 1919-1941)* (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1989).

⁸⁸ Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust*, ed. Kevin P. Spicer (Bloomington : Washington, D.C: Indiana University Press ; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2007), 142.

⁸⁹ Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 136.

⁹⁰ Mann, *Fascists*, 265.

⁹¹ Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 282.

The Iron Guard's supposed specificity and uniqueness lay in its quasi-religious nationalist mysticism, which manifested itself in a hybrid of racial and religious anti-Semitism, combined with total identity and devotion to the Romanian Orthodox Church, especially its use of symbolism. The blending of nationalist and religious mysticism would see violence and murder become sacralised as necessary for the redemption of the nation. This sacralisation of violence would result in the 1933 assassination of Prime Minister Ion Duca, blamed for the outlawing of the Iron Guard.⁹² The Iron Guard would assassinate another Prime Minister, Armand Călinescu, in September 1939, ostensibly for his actions against the group.⁹³ Ljotić referred to Călinescu's assassination as a potential coup, but more for geopolitical reasons stating it had a 'clear anti-Slavic and pro-German character'.⁹⁴ Amidst its violence, the Iron Guard defined itself as a 'movement', that was both anti-parliamentary and anti-establishment, extremely anti-Semitic, and embraced youthful 'action' and peasant populism.⁹⁵ Parliament was to be replaced by a corporate assembly, but the Legion put more emphasis on the creation of a new spirit, the *omul nou* (new man), rather than a concrete political programme.⁹⁶

This would change however from 1932, when The Legion realised that in order to expand, it would have to 'diversify' its propaganda and appeal, began focusing more on economic matters, adopting a corporatist economic policy, under a former minister and governor of the National Bank, Mihail Manoilescu.⁹⁷ However the violence perpetrated by the Iron Guard, as well as its ambiguous relationship to the monarchy, meant that political repression became an everyday reality, provoking active and violent responses on behalf of the Iron Guard resulting in further government repression.

In Codreanu, Ljotić saw aspects of himself, especially as a man who 'fought against corruption'. He felt that the judicial and political processes against Codreanu were indicative that the 'problems facing Romania have not been solved', because if they were, Codreanu

⁹² Jonathan C. Friedman, ed., *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, The Routledge Histories (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2011), 278.

⁹³ I. C. Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust: Romania and Its Jews*, Contributions to the Study of World History, no. 31 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 64.

⁹⁴ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Rumunija," *Bilten*, 24 September, 1939, No.16, 12.

⁹⁵ Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust*, 142.

⁹⁶ Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 281.

⁹⁷ Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, *The European Right: A Historical Profile* (Berkeley, CA [etc.]: University of California Press, 1965), 546.

‘would not be viewed as a threat to the regime’.⁹⁸ To Ljotić, the Iron Guard was a ‘reaction to the corruption in Romanian society as well as a reaction against the Jews’. In this regard, the Iron Guard was, as far as Ljotić was concerned, parallel to ZBOR. However, Ljotić also felt that by turning to terrorism, the violence of Codreanu and his followers ‘was a tragedy’, and that ‘he who lives by the sword dies by the sword’.⁹⁹ He made only vague mention of the Iron Guard, and then only in relation to Romania’s geopolitical orientation, nor would he attempt to emulate the violent actions and rhetoric that brought a degree of success and popularity to The Legion. But his admiration for both The Legion and Codreanu, especially his religiosity, was both open and sincere. He would however, show no level of affinity with or sympathy for, the Ustaša movement, and its leader, Ante Pavelić.¹⁰⁰

Ante Pavelić created the Croatian Revolutionary movement, known as the Ustaša, in 1929. Initially made up mostly of members from the Croatian Party of Rights, the Ustaša movement would initially reflect its ideology. In November 1932, Ustaša members in the Velebit area of Croatia attacked gendarmerie posts in the hope of sparking a Croatian revolt. In 1934, Eugen Kvaternik, an Ustaša member, organised the 9 October 1934 assassination of King Alexander in Marseille. A noticeable tilt towards totalitarianism and fascist influence was noted from 1936, coinciding with Pavelić’s Italian exile. On the 10th of April, 1941, the Ustaša movement was given command by the Germans of the newly created Independent State of Croatia, with the movement being the sole legal political movement until its dissolution and banning in 1945.¹⁰¹

The Ustaša reflected the antithesis of ZBOR’s political perceptions. Whether or not the Ustaša can be considered a fascist movement or not is one of conjecture. Its small size and

⁹⁸ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Prilike U Rumuniji,” *Novi Put*, 8 May, 1938, 2nd Year, No.2, 1–2.

⁹⁹ Ljotić, “Rumunija.” 12

¹⁰⁰ Ante Pavelić (1889-1959). Born in Bosnia, he was a member of the Croatian Party of Rights, qualifying as a lawyer in 1915. Elected as a city official for Zagreb in 1921, he continued his Croatian nationalist activities, and was arrested in the same year on the pretext of having links with Croat nationalist extremists based in Hungary. He founded the Ustaša movement in 1929, in the aftermath of the 6th of January regime. After a limited terrorist campaign throughout 1929, he was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death in absentia on 17th August, 1929. Fleeing to Italy, his ideological evolution would show a marked tilt towards the German and Italian totalitarian models, culminating in the October 1934 assassination of King Alexander, and the April 1941 establishment of the Independent State of Croatia, notorious for its numerous massacres of anti-fascist Croats, ethnic Serbs, Jews, and Romani’s. Fleeing in 1945, he would settle in Spain where he would eventually die, in 1959. For more see Ante Pavelić, *Doživljaji* (Madrid: Domovina, 1968). See also Bogdan Krizman, *Ante Pavelić i ustaše* (Zagreb: Globus, 1978) ; Rory Yeomans, *Visions of annihilation: the Ustasha regime and cultural politics of fascism, 1941-1945* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013).

¹⁰¹For more on the Ustaša movement see Mario Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret: od nastanku do travnja 1941. godine* (Zagreb: Školska knj, 2006). ; Bogdan Krizman, *Ustaše i Treći Reich* (Zagreb: Globus, 1983).

relative unpopularity was perhaps more so than ZBOR's! Whereas ZBOR stood for the unity of the Yugoslav state, before it was divided in the Second World War, even when still under the Karadjordjević dynasty, the Ustaša dreamed of an independent Croatian state. Where ZBOR, as will be shown, however superficially, stood for 'Yugoslavism', though during the Second World War it had no problem re-inventing itself as a purely Serbian movement, the Ustaša would reject the Serbs as a foreign and parasitic element to be removed from an independent Croatia. The Ustaša self-proclaimed justification for independence was developed as part of the *Ustava Ustaša, hrvatske revolucionarne organizacije* (Constitution of the Croatian revolutionary organisation Ustaša), published in 1932.¹⁰² This was followed up with the 1933 publication of the *Načela hrvatskog Ustaškog pokreta* (Principles of the Croatian Ustaša movement).¹⁰³ The Principles, in essence, was the early political formula of the Ustaša movement. Its premise and justification for Croatian independence was presented in the first Principle that asserted the Croatian people as 'an independent ethnic and national unit', with a unique ethnic and national character.¹⁰⁴ In this regard, the 1918 creation of Yugoslavia was, for the Ustaša, the 'ultimate denial' of Croatian national integrity in 'all the history of the Croatian nation'. Moreover, argued the Ustaša, this was because the Croats were non-Slavic, in fact they were superimposed on the Slavs, and gave the 'spirit of freedom' to the Slavs.¹⁰⁵ Yugoslavia, to the Ustaša, had interrupted the supposed historical continuity of the Croatian state, giving the Croats, according to Principle 8, a 'legitimate right' to seek a return to this continuity by 'any means necessary'.¹⁰⁶

There were allusions to religion, though this was through the use of messianic language, as opposed to a distinct focus on Catholicism. This becomes evident in Principle 11, whereby the Ustaša stated that 'only a peasant can fulfil the organic connection between the people and the land'.¹⁰⁷ Such use of the term 'organic', taken to denote a Romantic nationalist form by which a state derives its legitimacy as a consequence of those who were born in a particular 'culture', was also heavily utilised by ZBOR.¹⁰⁸ Though obviously diverging in their end goals, both the Ustaša and ZBOR would show signs of convergence, especially in

¹⁰² *Ustava Ustaše, hrvatske revolucionarne organizacije* (Tisak naklada glavnog ustaškog stana, 1932).

¹⁰³ Danijel Crljen, *Načela hrvatskog Ustaškog pokreta* (Zagreb: Tiskara matice hrvatskih akademičara, 1942).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 15.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 33.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 34.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 69.

¹⁰⁸ See Dimitrije Ljotić, "Osnovi Zakon Otadžbine," *Otađbina*, 26 February, 1934, No.1, 1. ; Dimitrije Ljotić, "Uskrsnja razmišljanja," *Otađbina*, 7 April, 1934, No.7, 1.; Dimitrije Ljotić, "Jugoslovenskog drama," *Vihor*, 6 February, 1937, Year 1, No.3, 1.

regard to what they deemed as the ‘core’ of their organic thought, the peasantry. For the Ustaša, this was more the influence of Croat nationalist intellectuals in the 1930s, who began taking more of an interest in peasant life, as the ‘real’ Croatia, both anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois, seeing the countryside, according to Rory Yeomans, as the ‘repository of national regeneration’.¹⁰⁹

Yet the Ustaša would also show itself to be much more anti-bourgeois and ‘revolutionary’ in rhetoric than ZBOR, going so far as to argue during the Second World War for a distinct form of ‘Croatian Socialism’, based on Fascist corporatism, as an instrument of social control.¹¹⁰ This extreme anti-establishment rhetoric highlights the fact that the Ustaša, unlike ZBOR, represented the frustrations of a ‘minority nationalism’ amongst elements of the Croat elite who resented the fact that the ‘Croat nation’ was part of a larger political entity.

Many scholars argue that Ustaša ideology was either incoherent, or contradictory.¹¹¹ Payne describes Ustaša ideology as a ‘proto-fascist’ movement that only moved toward Fascism and nationalism in 1936 and 1937.¹¹² Griffin states that while the Ustaša showed a high level of violence, they lacked a ‘palingenetic mission of mass mobilisation for the post-destructive phase’, concurring with Payne that it would remain a ‘proto-fascist’ movement because of this deficiency.¹¹³ Recently, scholars such as Nevenko Bartulin have been focusing on Ustaša racial ideas, in the context of the movement’s ideology. During the Second World War, Bartulin argues, the Independent State of Croatia was Nazi Germany’s closest ally in regard to racial ideology, and policies towards racial and ethnic minorities.¹¹⁴ Alexander Korb, in his work argues that the Ustaša did not have the ‘cultural’ and ‘racist motivations’, which usually serve as the ‘reason for genocide’.¹¹⁵ Korb’s study, based on his doctoral dissertation,

¹⁰⁹ Rory Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation: The Ustasha Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism, 1941-1945*, Pitt Series in Russian and East European Studies (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 183.

¹¹⁰ See Aleksandar Seitz, *Put do Hrvatskog Socijalizma* (Zagreb: Hrvatske Državne Tiskare, 1943). ; Nada, Kisić Kolanović, “Komunizam u percepciji hrvatske nacionalističke inteligencije 1938-1945,” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 43, no. 1 (2011), 110.

¹¹¹ See Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation*, 2. Yeomans saw Ustaša ideology as inherently contradictory. ; Stanley Payne, “The NDH in Comparative Perspective”, in Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Independent State of Croatia, 1941-1945* (London, New York: Routledge, 2007), 12. Payne argues that the Ustaša showed less theoretical sophistication than did many fascist movements.

¹¹² Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 326..

¹¹³ Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 120.

¹¹⁴ Nevenko Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia: Origins and Theory*, Central and Eastern Europe Regional Perspectives in Global Context, VOLUME 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1.

¹¹⁵ Alexander Korb, *Im Schatten des Weltkriegs. Massengewalt der Ustaša gegen Serben, Juden, und Roma in Kroatien 1941-1945* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2013), 444.

is thought provoking in regard to this premise concerning the contradictions of Ustaša terror, challenging the belief of the Ustaša movement as mere imitators and puppets of the Germans, by highlighting their own conceptualised interests.

As much as being influenced by Fascism and National Socialism, the Ustaša would also claim ideological influence from, and claim to be the inheritors of, Ante Starčević. Starčević's ideas would go furthest in formulating Ustaša racial concepts, especially concerning the Serbs. This was done through the appropriation of what Starčević deemed to be 'Slavoserbs'. 'Slavoserb' as a means of classification did not, in Starčević's perception, have a distinct ethnic or racial differentiation. Starčević divided the 'Slavoserbs' into five distinct categories, based on personal characteristics deemed detrimental to the Croatian nation.¹¹⁶ The term was, however, used periodically by Starčević to denigrate the Serbs, and it was this denigration that was appropriated by the Ustaša to justify their own racial theories regarding the 'corrupted nature' of the Serbs.¹¹⁷ It should be noted, however, that Starčević's own thinking did not specifically call for persecution against the Serbs, believing that the Serbs could be assimilated into Croats through intermarriage.¹¹⁸ He would also view race through the lens of 'master' and 'slave' nations, within the context of the Habsburg Empire, centring on 'historic', and 'non-historic', nations and nationalisms.¹¹⁹ He would, however, deny the Serbs the status as a people, and a nation, which would then be expanded on through misappropriation by the Ustaša. It would culminate in the mass persecution and genocide visited upon Serbs, Jews and Romani peoples living in the territory of the Independent State of Croatia during the Second World War.

The Five Stages of Fascism

In relation to the different developments in the history of fascism and fascist society, Robert Paxton has developed the *Five Stages of Fascism*.¹²⁰ In his writings, Paxton claimed that because of the complexity of fascism as a political phenomenon, it could not be defined by

¹¹⁶ Mirjana Gross, *Izvorno pravaštvo. Ideologija, agitacija, pokret* (Zagreb, Biblioteka Hrvatske političke ideologije, 2000), 249–250. These characteristics were an 'impure breed', those Croats and intelligentsia who sold out their country for money, and those who simply followed.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 342–343. The Serbs were regarded as a 'pasmina' a breed, but not a distinct people or nation, due to their supposed nomadic lifestyle bereft of spiritual values, exposed to the corrupt and inferior 'Greek spirit'.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 348.

¹¹⁹ Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia*, 138.

¹²⁰ Robert O. Paxton. "The Five Stages of Fascism." *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 1 (1998), 1-23.

using its ideology alone. Instead, Paxton focused on the political context of fascism as well as its functional development to identify five stages that occurs for each fascist movement. It is important to note that Paxton stated that only Nazi Germany and the Fascist Italy have completed and reached the fifth stage of the development.

According to Paxton, the first stage of fascism is intellectual exploration, which is the initial precondition to any fascist movement.¹²¹ This is the phase in the development of fascism where there is disillusionment with democracy, and liberalism, as viable forms of governance. The distinct characteristic of these initial explorations and opposition to the current dominant ideals is the proposition that a new and fresh idea is better than the dominant one and ever better than the existing alternatives.¹²² In the case of Ljotić, he claimed that the ZBOR movement developed primarily from the socio-political troubles and challenges facing its members.¹²³ Moreover, just as stated in Paxton's first stage of fascist development, the critical thinker of the group, who happens to be Ljotić for ZBOR, proposed a new movement rather than proposing that an existing alternative is available to address the troubles they experienced. Therefore, based on the first stage of fascism development, Ljotić and ZBOR satisfy the criteria for this categorisation. Nevertheless, Paxton also claimed that almost all movements that have similarities to fascism undergo this phase.¹²⁴

According to Paxton, the second phase of stage of fascist movement development is rooting, wherein a movement becomes a party that has active participation in the political scene.¹²⁵ It is certainly true ZBOR played an active part in the political scene in Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, based on the description of the second phase of fascist movements, Ljotić and ZBOR again fulfil the criteria for this categorisation. However, according to Paxton, most fascist leaders, during this second phase of the development, tend to form alliances with conservative groups to facilitate their rise to power at the expense of losing some of the hardline support during its militant purpose of the first phase.¹²⁶ However, with the decision to participate in elections in 1935 and 1938, ZBOR showed itself as weak, evident in their lack of popular support. This is a clear distinction of Ljotić and ZBOR to Paxton's second state of fascism. These will be further discussed in the latter part of this thesis.

¹²¹ Ibid. 11.

¹²² Paxton, *Five Stages*, 11.

¹²³ Ljotić, *Rumunija*, 3.

¹²⁴ Paxton, *Five Stages*, 12

¹²⁵ Ibid. 13

¹²⁶ Ibid. 13

The third phase of fascism is the arrival in power.¹²⁷ In this phase, conservatives, who are aiming to control the fascists as they increase in strength and power, invite the movement to share in an even greater power. In this manner, fascists see that in order to obtain power, they must cooperate with conservatives. Paxton showed that neither Hitler nor Mussolini came to power by force. Even with a high degree of violence that both known leaders tolerated and encouraged in the early 1920s, they were able to take office through peaceful invitation of their respective heads of government, and which they willingly obliged through the process of cooperation.¹²⁸ Paxton highlighted that in most cases, fascist movements fail to reach the third phase because of their failure to cooperate with conservative elites.¹²⁹ Some resorted to the use of a coup d'état, which led to a dictatorship rather than fascism. For the case of ZBOR, they were not able to achieve the third phase largely because the movement was too small, too disorganised, and faced an acute shortage of members. This may be one of the distinguishing factors that make Ljotić's ideas different from fascism. Moreover, Ljotić did not see ZBOR as a movement that was to last indefinitely, which was contrary to the vision and goals of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. They were to be lasting, and revolutionary regimes. For Ljotić, once the goal of ZBOR has been realised, he believed that the movement would no longer be needed, which is the opposite aim of successful fascist movements.¹³⁰ It is this belief and value that may have led to the demise of the ZBOR movement, despite failing to fully realise its purpose in the end.

The fourth and fifth phases of fascism development are exercise of power and radicalisation or entropy. In the fourth phase, the movement and its leader get to control the state while balancing their status by coordinating and cooperating core institutions of the state, such as the police, religious leaders, and business magnates.¹³¹ The key in this phase is balance. Balance between employing party ideology and the values of core institutions. The fifth phase, on the other hand, which is radicalisation or entropy, refers to the two possible states

¹²⁷ Ibid. 16

¹²⁸ Ibid. 17

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ljotić in his publication "What we are fighting for" mentioned that: Fascism and Hitlerism have a need to last. In their concept of a country they consider that the state even after it becomes structured as they see it still needs them. They consider that for the country to last in needs to keeps Hitlerism and Fascism, and when they disappear the country will fall.

Unlike that our movement considers itself passable. It should help the state and people and when certain problems are solved it should fade away.

¹³¹ Paxton, *Five Stages*, 19

that a fascist movement may lead to in the long run. This means that in order to survive, the movement has to turn to more radical methods; otherwise it will inevitably dwindle and gradually decline. Therefore, Ljotić and ZBOR did not manage to reach these last two stages of development, regarding the path of fascism. Furthermore, they were already comprised amongst the wider Yugoslav public for their obvious pro-German sentiment and as will be shown, their supposed intrigues with Nazi Germany. Second, ZBOR was exposed by its inability to cooperate with leading institutions, such as the traditional elites of the society (e.g., head of state, clergy leaders, and business executives), which, with their overall unpopularity, quickened the beginning of their eventual demise.

Summary

ZBOR would have no distinct racial theory, and thus a further point of divergence from the Ustaša, Fascist Italy (post-1938), and Nazi Germany emerges. Part of this may be due to the fact that while the concept of Yugoslavism argued for the unity of all South Slavs, it stressed a core component of Serbian-Dinaric stock.¹³² ZBOR, as a majority Serbian organisation, would then, theoretically, have no need to formulate a separate racial theory since Yugoslavism, under a Serbian monarchic dynasty, would preclude this. Ljotić himself seemed to dismiss the idea of ethnic purity stating that ‘the Balkans are home to many different nationalities and faiths’, so that we (in reference to Balkan countries), ‘are mixed in each in Balkan country’.¹³³ This was then contrasted with the anti-Yugoslavist, Croatian particularist viewpoint of the Ustaša. But it was not only the Ustaša who utilised racial anthropology as a means of differentiating Serbs and Croats. By the 1930s, elements of Croatian nationalist and non-Ustaša intelligentsia, Filip Lukas, Ivo Pilar, and Ćiro Truhelka, made use of anti-Yugoslav and racial anthropological arguments and attempted to popularise and legitimise them outside of Ustaša discourse.¹³⁴

What can therefore be surmised is that unlike ZBOR, where the personal ideology and figure of Ljotić added much to the movement, Pavelić seems to have been less of an ideologue than

¹³² See Nevenko Bartulin, “Intellectual Discourse on Race and Culture in Croatia 1900-1945,” *Review of Croatian History* 8, no. 1 (2012), 185–205.

¹³³ “Sad je Balkan došao odlučan čas – ili će Balkan biti čekić ili nakovanj”, in *Novi Put*, 29 October, 1939, No. 33.

¹³⁴ See Ćiro Truhelka, *Studije o podrijetlu. Etnološka razmatranja iz Bosne i Hercegovine* (Matica Hrvatska, 1941). This work point to the ‘outsider’ nature of the Serbs, as being incompatible with Croats and Croatia.

Ljotić, even though he was hailed as *Poglavnik* (Leader) by his followers, exalted more than Ljotić ever would be. However, in order to understand and deconstruct ZBOR's ideology, outlining key ideological crystallisations and evolution in Ljotić's thought is essential. In the writings of Pavelić, it is clear that he was influenced primarily by Fascist Italy throughout his career.¹³⁵ However, the only difference between his ideology and that of Fascist Italy was his intense anti-Semitism. Pavelić's rhetoric towards the Jews was cruder than that of Ljotić's. Italian Fascism, although by 1938 had become influenced by Nazi anti-Semitism, did not have the extermination of Jewish influence as a goal. Ljotić, while an outspoken anti-Semite, and speaking on the dangers of Jewish influence throughout the world, did not formulate any plan or expressed any desire to deal with the 'Jewish influence' outside of warning the general public.

In fact, Mussolini met with many prominent Zionists before the start of the war. This however was short-lived, as he viewed Zionism as an instrument of British imperial policy, and detrimental to his own efforts to foster anti-British sentiment amongst Arabs.¹³⁶ He also praised Italian Jews for their success and ability to integrate into Catholic Italy. Hence, it may be seen that in the latter life of Ljotić, he was more similar to Italian fascism (Mussolini) as compared to Pavelić, in that he did not express any extreme intention to remove Jews from his land.

Fascism has evolved together with a set of different assumptions regarding the past, present, and future of our world. As Raymond Aron noted during the latter years of the 1930s, fascism was a 'secular religion', which has a complete vision of life that brooked no pluralist opposition. Political style was substituted for ideology in the name of a new nation, which looked to the future without the burdens of the past. This substitution was crucial to the fascist style, though Futurism, in alliance with fascism pursued its own cause and created its particular propaganda, which was not always identical with that of fascism. Nevertheless, unlike that of the ideologies of Marxism, fascism has crossed social class divisions. In a similar manner, Mosse described that fascism brought a 'sacralisation of politics' that made it demonic but allowed it to sink its hooks deep into the soul.

¹³⁵ See Paul N Hehn, "Serbia, Croatia, and Germany 1941-1945: Civil War and Revolution in the Balkans", *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol.13, Iss.4 (1971), 344-373.

¹³⁶ Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue & Survival* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1996), 32.

Ljotić considered fascism the only form of resistance to future global Jewish control.¹³⁷ He applauded and praised Hitler for exposing the conspiracy that was masterminded by the Jews and dubbed him the saviour of Europe.¹³⁸ His praise and admiration of Germany may have partly been influenced by his fascination with the country's military power and his fear of its political ambitions. Although Ljotić's ideology shared several parallel aspects with other European fascist movements, he often emphasized ZBOR's difference from the fascist movements in Germany and Italy. Most authors describe Ljotić as a fascist, but the Croat historian Jozo Tomasevich writes that this view is 'too one-sided a characterization'.¹³⁹

In recapping his life and ideology, Ljotić shows himself to have certain pro-fascist views, among them anti-Semitic, anti-democratic, and anti-parliamentary beliefs. However, this does not necessarily entail total fascist encapsulation. The main focus of this thesis is to analyse the different aspects of Ljotić's ideology to show that, despite having aspects of fascism in his ideology and beliefs, Ljotić's core ideological nexus predated fascism, nor was it totally in sync with it. This therefore belies any real or strict paradigms for categorisation. Through this thesis, the detailed review of the life of Ljotić and his ideology in relation to the foundation and ideology of his ZBOR movement will show that, though similar to fascism, there are important distinctions that will support existing literature by providing justification as to why both Ljotić and his ZBOR movement are not entirely congruent with numerous definitions of fascism.

This thesis will also show that more than its similarities to fascism, Ljotić is an advocate of a synthesis of monarchism, Pan-Slavism, and Christianity, and through this syncretistic ideology, he may have similarities to fascism, but it is also the reason for distinction. This study will also illustrate how Ljotić and his ZBOR movement, even with these specific distinctions, cannot be treated as entirely discriminate from each other, because he, as the founder and leader of ZBOR, with his personal beliefs, were influential in the development and functioning of ZBOR. Hence, this study will illustrate that in a sense, Ljotić as a person, with personal beliefs and ideology, cannot be treated entirely different from ZBOR and its organisational ideology, despite the fact that there may have been inconsistencies in the ideology between and among ZBOR leaders and its members.

¹³⁷ Ramet, 2006, 101.

¹³⁸ Raphael Israeli, *The Death Camps of Croatia: Visions and Revisions, 1941-1945* (Transaction Publishers, 2013), 14.

¹³⁹ Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, 187.

However, the main and most significant contribution of this thesis to the existing relevant literature is that, aside from discussing the stand of the author, the ideology of Ljotić and ZBOR are beyond the boundaries imposed by definitions of fascism. This thesis will add to existing literature by providing not just the political development of Ljotić as a person, but also the development of ZBOR as a movement in relation to Ljotić's ideology and to Yugoslav political and social life in the interwar era. Hence, this study will provide an analysis on the ideology of both Ljotić and ZBOR, and provide elements of both political biography and an analysis of the ideology developed by Ljotić and some of his collaborators within ZBOR. Furthermore, another important contribution of this study to existing literature is to provide detailed and in-depth exploration, explanation, and analysis of why and how Ljotić and his ZBOR movement are situated within a wider context of their era, both within Yugoslavia and interwar and Second World War Europe.

Chapter 1. Outline of Ljotić's life and ideological development

Introduction

In order to comprehend ZBOR, and Ljotić's ideological development, it is imperative to point out key chronological events that helped to shape these ideological crystallisations, as well as key historiographical themes later associated with ZBOR. Such an undertaking is necessarily narrative, and descriptive, yet the signs are there for a clear coalescing and gelling of certain ideological trends, which will be expanded on in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, with added explanation related to their application in a wider European and local Yugoslav political context. In relation to fascism, it is important to determine similarities and distinction between Ljotić's beliefs and ideology to that of fascism in order to properly evaluate the progress and development of ZBOR as a movement based on its unique characteristics and values.

In order to understand the evolution of Ljotić's ideological thought, analysing his early writings is of crucial importance. This however is not simply a linear process, especially with the debates surrounding Ljotić and ZBOR focusing on their similarity and affiliation with Fascism and National Socialism. However, more than identifying similarities and distinction between Ljotić or ZBOR and fascism, the identification of the uniqueness that makes Ljotić's ideas distinct from fascism is the key to furthering a deeper understanding of ZBOR. By accentuating the differences of Ljotić with fascism, readers will hopefully begin to understand the rationale for the development, and ultimately the demise, of ZBOR as a movement in the latter stages of the Second World War. Understanding ZBOR during its short existence may just provide a different perspective and narrative to Dimitrije Ljotić.

Scholars and historians (as the previous chapter as shown) have often used Ljotić's formative political development as a buttress for the wider polemical fascist/non-fascist argument. At the expense of being interpreted in its own right as part of a wider right wing, anti-democratic, monarchic, and conservative European thought pattern. Unfortunately, reliable information on Ljotić's early life is scarce. Scholars, among them Mladen Stefanović and

Jovan Byford, have made use of Ljotić's autobiography *Iz moga života*¹ (From my Life). This autobiographical work gives us the essential (albeit circumspect) primary literature of his ideological formation. This work will be no different, but will also look to make use of the chronicle of the Ljotić family, written by Ljubica Ljotić, Dimitrije's mother.² Ljubica's memoirs read almost like a hagiography, and deals primarily with the coming and establishment of the Ljotić family to the Smederevo region from what is today's Republic of Macedonia. Though there is scant documentation of Ljotić's early life, there has been little attempt at analysis and interpretation of the evidence he presents in his autobiography, and as a consequence, little secondary literature focusing on Ljotić's early ideological formation, (i.e., a more in-depth analysis of his early ideological influences).

The early ideological influences of Ljotić included a wide range of eclecticism and a degree of synthesis of various strands of political thought, ranging chronologically from the so-called 'Christian Anarchism' of Leo Tolstoy,³ to the 19th century Slavophile⁴ movement in Russia. He was influenced by elements of Christian socialism, Nikolai Berdyaev's philosophy on the relationship between God and Love, to the Action Française and the writings of Georges Valois,⁵ and Blaise Pascal,⁶ just to name a few. This eclectic synthesis would later be fused in what Ljotić perceived as existing indigenous national and religious Serbian traditions, in part postulated by Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović⁷ in the 1930s as part of

¹ Ljotić, *Iz moga života*.

² See Ljubica Ljotić, *Memoari* (Munich, 1973). A typed version of this work is also found in AJ 115 Dimitrije Ljotić. Both were consulted.

³ Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910). His Christian beliefs centred on the Sermon of the Mount, which he used as justification for pacifism. For further reading see Rosamund Bartlett, *Tolstoy: A Russian Life*. (London: Profile Books, 2011).

⁴ Slavophilism was a 19th century intellectual movement centred on personalities such as Aleksei Khomiakov, and Ivan and Pyotr Kireevsky who were concerned with Russia's increasing Westernisation, and whether the country had its own specific national mission to follow. For further reading see Laura Engelstein, *Slavophile Empire: Imperial Russia's Illiberal Path* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).; Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles: A Study of Romantic Ideology*. (Harvard University Press, 1952).; Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1979).

⁵ Born as Alfred-Georges Gressent (1878-1945), a French syndicalist who for a time was a member of the *Action Française*. His creation of the *Faisceau* movement in 1925 was the first fascist movement outside Italy, though by 1928 he had founded the Republican Syndicalist Party and had returned to the extreme left. For further reading see Allen Douglas, *From Fascism to Libertarian Communism: Georges Valois against the Third Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

⁶ Blaise Pascal (1623-1662). A French mathematician, inventor, and Catholic philosopher. Inventor of the mechanical calculator, he was active in writing treatises on geometry, in particular projective geometry, as opposed to existing Euclidean geometric models and space. Ljotić in particular was influenced by Pascal's *Pensées* (Thoughts).

⁷ Nikolaj Velimirović (1881-1956). Studied in Russia, was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Divinity by the University of Cambridge in 1916. By the 1930s he had undergone a transformation by which he repudiated his earlier ecumenical sentiments, and claimed to be a leading influence of the ZBOR movement. Immigrated to

his *Svetosavlje*⁸ theory. Ljotić clearly identifies the effects of certain ideological currents on particular stages of his life in his autobiography *Iz moga života*, as well as in *Videlo u Tami* (Translated in English as *Light of Truth*).⁹ For thematic purposes, it is both beneficial and logical to follow the chronology of Ljotić's thought evolution as outlined in the aforementioned works, temporarily in respect to his early youth to the Balkan Wars, his experience in Paris, and the First World War and its aftermath. Such an approach will necessarily focus on highlighting and analysing specific ideological similarities, and particularities of pre-existing European Christian, monarchic, anti-democratic, and nationalist thought.

These early influences may be said to end by 1920, by which time Ljotić had entered mainstream politics as a member of the *Narodna Radikalna Stranka*¹⁰ (People's Radical Party). This of course did not preclude his later evolution in the face of authoritarianism, dictatorship and fascism, rather it served as a basis for his early ideological and thought crystallisation.

Ljotić's early ideological formation: Christianity and the Army

Russian Philosophy, Slavophiles, and Christianity

Dimitrije Ljotić was born on 12 August, 1891, in Belgrade, but would regard the nearby Danube town of Smederevo as home. His family, settled in Smederevo, was wealthy,

the United States after WWII, he died in 1956; the Serbian Orthodox Church on May 19th, 2003, canonized him. See Radmila Radić, "Džepna istorija Srpska pravoslavne crkve," *Peščanik FM* 3 (2005), 173–200.

⁸ *Svetosavlje* was a term coined by Church circles close to Bishop Velimirović in the 1930s, as a reaction to perceived, cultural, ideological, and political threats faced by the Serbian Orthodox Church. These perceived threats, were expressed through the fusing of religious thought and a secularly based nationalism as a means of conceptualising the relationship between the nation-state and nation, and between religion and religious communities. For more on its theoretical aspects, see Maria Falina, "Svetosavlje. A Case Study in the Nationalization of Religion," *SZRKG* 101 (2007), 505–527.; John T. S. Madeley and Zsolt Enyedi, eds., *Church and State in Contemporary Europe: The Chimera of Neutrality* (London ; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003).

⁹ For an English translation see Dimitrije Ljotić, *Light of Truth: Philosophical, Moral, and Political Ideas of Dimitrije Ljotić* (Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1984).

¹⁰ The People's Radical Party was founded on 8 January, 1881. Led and dominated by the personality of Nikola Pašić, initially the Radicals called for more local self-government, constitutional and educational reform in the Kingdom of Serbia, and were inspired by French radicalism. After the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918, the Radical Party provided prime ministers for eight of the ten years of parliamentary life until being dissolved with the proclamation of royal dictatorship on 6 January, 1929. For more see Milan St. Protić, "Sources of the Ideology of the Serbian Radical Movement 1881-1903", in *Balkanica: Annual of the Institute of Balkan Studies*, Volume 37, 2007, 125-143 ; Dejan Djokić, *Pašić and Trumbić: The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes* (Haus Publishing Ltd, London, 2010).

prominent, and close to the Karadjordjević dynasty, with his grandfather serving as secretary to Prince Alexander.¹¹ The close association of the Ljotić family to the Karadjordjević dynasty, founded under Djordje Petrović, stems from the Ljotić family's participation in the 1804-1813 First Serbian Uprising, part of the larger Serbian Revolution, against the Ottoman Empire.¹² Dimitrije's father, Vladimir, spent many years abroad in Europe, was reputedly one of the first to translate Marx's *Communist Manifesto* into Serbian.¹³ In 1858, the Obrenović dynasty, which was the rival of the Karadjordjević dynasty, had seized power in Serbia; thus, forcing Prince Alexander Karadjordjević into exile. Following the Obrenović takeover, in 1868, Ljotić's father was forced out of the country after being implicated in a conspiracy against the Obrenović dynasty and Prince Milan, the dynastic representative. After Prince Milan stepped down in 1889, Ljotić's father returned to Serbia. Vladimir was also close to the then future King Peter's maternal great-grandfather, Knez (Prince) Stanoje, who was an outlaw who was killed by the Turks in January 1804. Given this familial background of Ljotić, it can therefore be surmised that his family has been ardently loyal to Serbia and its rulers. This may have conceivably influenced the nationalism that Dimitrije Ljotić himself manifested throughout his lifetime and ideology.

Ljotić stated in his writings that from his early youth he was religious, yet he was unable to identify from whence this early religiosity stemmed. From an early age he writes that he was attracted to the Church, attending Divine Liturgy, memorising the Liturgy in its entirety, without grasping its true meaning.¹⁴ In fact, Ljotić's first ambition was to become a priest.¹⁵ Christianity would play a central role in both his early and later ideological formation. Moreover, Christianity was, and would remain, the mainstay and bedrock of his *weltanschauung* (worldview). It was with Christ, Ljotić contends, that the world saw both truth and love. Ljotić elaborates by stating that in search for the truth, man inevitably turns to prayer, through which Christ, as personification and messenger of truth, can be perceived in its entirety.¹⁶ Love, as described by Ljotić is not something that can be attained without man first being free. The concept of freedom, and of love, would be constant themes in Ljotić's writing, though as later chapters will show, his conception and definition of freedom and of love was to undergo alterations, leaving us with a rather contradictory and incoherent set of

¹¹ Nebojša Popov, "Populizam Dimitrija Ljotića", in *Filozofija i društvo*, Vol.4, 1993, 82

¹² Ljotić, *Memoari*, 56-57.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Dimitrije Ljotić *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga* (Munich, 1981), 272.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ljotić, *Light of Truth*, 22.

ideas. This freedom involves first and foremost the detachment of all prejudices relating to the person and the personality, which Ljotić describes as the ‘freedom from self-love.’¹⁷

Ljotić’s writings on Christianity, as being the foundation of truth and love, and of the Church, as a defence of tradition as much as souls, shares broad similarities with the Russian Slavophile movement, of which Ljotić would have undoubtedly been aware, even if he did not acknowledge its influence in his early writings. His writing also shows a somewhat more tenuous link with the philosophy of Nikolai Berdyaev.¹⁸ These similarities can be summarised as Ljotić’s attempt to adapt the essentials of the Slavophiles’ ‘Russian-Orthodox orientation’, as well as the supposed ‘world mission’ of Russia, while attempting to navigate through the somewhat contradictory lack of Slavophilia amongst the Slavophiles. Attempting to highlight similarities between Berdyaev and Ljotić is a somewhat more complex undertaking, though the argument can be anticipated in view of, Berdyaev’s concept of freedom.

Berdyaev’s philosophy can be said to begin at freedom. According to him, freedom is the basis of all else. He continues by stating that ‘Freedom is the ultimate: it cannot be derived from anything. Freedom is the baseless foundation of being: it is deeper than all being’.¹⁹ However, this freedom that Berdyaev so highly extolled was also one of self-isolation, and to be turned inwards. Speaking on the development of Russian thought, Berdyaev is of the opinion that original, free, and creative thought only appeared in Russia in the 19th century.²⁰ It attempted to answer the on-going dilemma of Russia’s special mission, what God intended for Russia. Berdyaev’s spiritual evolution began with an early enthusiasm for Marxism, where he adopted a transcendental ideal along with the Marxist social programme.²¹ Berdyaev ultimately however, rejected Marxism. When Marxism officially began entering the realm of religion, Berdyaev was of the idea that a Christian could reject all in Marxism

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948). A Russian political and religious thinker, who was a Marxist in his early youth and strongly identified with the concept of ‘Christian universalism’, by which all souls lost through sin, will eventually be reconciled with God through love and divine mercy. Unwilling to support Bolshevik rule in Russia, he was exiled in 1922, traveling first to Berlin, then to Paris, where he died in 1948. For further reading see Nikolai Berdyaev, *Self-Knowledge: An Essay in Autobiography*, trans. Katherine Lampert, Reprint ed (San Rafael: Semantron Press, 2009).

¹⁹ Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, trans. Joakim, Boris, Reprint ed (San Rafael: Semantron Press, 2009), 145.

²⁰ Nikolai Berdyaev, “O Kharaktere Russkoi Religioznoi Mysli XIX-do Veka,” *Sovremennye zapiski*, no. 42 (1930), 309–343.

²¹ VV Zhenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy Volume 2* (Routledge, 2003), 760.

that is false, while embracing that which is true. Berdyaev in his autobiography states that he received no religious ‘training’ at home, and by the time he had returned to Christianity, it was more philosophy rather than the Bible, which aided him in his decision.²² Based on his ideas of Christianity, Ljotić stated that God ‘created the world and Man as an expression of His love’.²³

Berdyaev states that God desired an ‘other’ and a reciprocal answer to His love, and hence created the world.²⁴ That being said, Berdyaev’s unique and somewhat convoluted writing style meant that his ideas, no matter how seemingly basic, were often presented in fragmentary fashion, thus somewhat negating a logical flow of thoughts. Berdyaev’s own contribution to this development of thought can be defined as ‘uncreated thought’ and ‘God-man’.

It is with the ‘God-man’ that Ljotić would have conceivably, yet speculatively, been influenced by. Berdyaev’s ‘God-man’, which stipulates that in order to achieve the fully divine life, personal and existential cooperation between God and man is essential.²⁵ God, according to Berdyaev’s analysis possesses characteristics and capabilities similar to man. In order to prove this theory, Berdyaev analyses the experiences which frequently act as carriers of such emotions and phenomenon such as love, pain, and suffering.²⁶ Ultimately, the ‘God-man’ is seen as a rebirth, a renewal of man, linking him with the idea of the ‘New Adam’. By this, God became man in order to raise him to divinity. Though in Berdyaev’s analysis, this did not mean that through divinisation, that redemption of morality would take place.²⁷

Such expression of thought has seen Berdyaev labelled as a ‘Christian existentialist’,²⁸ though Berdyaev’s eclecticism moves him away from a total association with the term. For Ljotić, without love, there can be no truth. Love, according to Ljotić, was both ‘many-eyed and well hidden’, and that it can ‘see farther than hatred’, that only ‘opens up vision to

²² Ibid. 772.

²³ Ljotić, *Light of Truth*, 19.

²⁴ Nikolai Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit* (C Scribner’s Sons, 1935), 30.

²⁵ Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed., *Analecta Husserliana. Volume CIV. Phenomenology and Existentialism in the Twentieth Century Book 2* (Springer: Fruition-Cross-Pollination-Dissemination, 2010), 217.

²⁶ Ibid, 220.

²⁷ David Bonner Richardson, *Berdyaev’s Philosophy of History. An Existential Theory of Social Creativity and Eschatology*. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), 51.

²⁸ Christian existentialism was a nineteenth century philosophical approach to Christianity primarily based on the works of Søren Kierkegaard. This entailed a call to a more ‘genuine’ Christianity, and Kierkegaard’s conception of God and love. Thus, according to Kierkegaard, the act of loving in itself bestows divinity.

darkness', like the 'haunted owl'.²⁹ Speaking about God, the relationship between God and man, and the attainment of salvation, Ljotić writes that 'we cannot come into contact with the broadcasting station that God is on, because we do not know the waves on which it works on'.³⁰ However, Ljotić believed, like Berdyaev, that cooperation between God and man is essential, with his 1945 pamphlet *Svetlo Istine*³¹ (Light of Truth) providing his own terms for such a relationship. God, according to Ljotić is love. In order to be filled with God's love according to Ljotić, we must 'throw out all hatred from our hearts, and it is place, God's love, for God is love and we are hate'.³² Ljotić's second condition is that God is truth. God's truth must fill our entire being for God's truth and we are lies.³³ The third condition is that God is purity. Ljotić continues that 'we must become pure, as pure as the One that God sent to us as a model of purity'.³⁴ Once these conditions are met, man may then enter into contact with God through what Ljotić describes as *Podvizavanje*.³⁵ When this occurs, according to Ljotić, man will be able to feel Christ within us, and then, and only then would man be able to begin to comprehend the full measure of the Fullness of Christ.

Ljotić never mentions any influence from Berdyaev; indeed, any evidence of argument is speculative at best. However, that does not negate the genius of Berdyaev, especially regarding his role in the permeation of ideas in Russian philosophy, and insights into the early Soviet Union, as well as thoughts on aspects of Russian philosophy. Among the disparate representatives of Russian philosophy were the ideas of the Slavophiles, which could have conceivably been adopted by Ljotić in his own search for originality and answers.

Ljotić and the Slavophiles

In essence, the Slavophile movement began as a literary movement, being primarily active in poetry, and concerning itself with the position of Russia, and a re-acquaintance with its

²⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Od Mojkovca do Kajmakčalana*, (Cetinje, Štampa Štamparije Zetske banovine "Obod", 1940), 6.

³⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Govori i članci Sveska 6* (Munich, 1975), 34.

³¹ *Svetlo Istine* is considered to be one of Ljotić's last publications, written in March 1945, a month before his death resulting from a car accident on 23 April, 1945. His death in Ajdovščina (Slovenia), was part of a last ditch attempt at forming an anti-Communist front amongst elements of primarily Serbian, but also elements of Slovene, and even Croat nationalist forces.

³² Ljotić, *Govori i članci Sveska 6*, 34.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Podvizavanje*, is not an original term used by Ljotić. It refers to a spiritual praxis, akin to asceticism that one must undertake in order to move closer to God.

culture, in the face of increased westernisation. In this sense the Slavophiles sought to redefine their understanding of Russia, against the templates they had constructed of the West.³⁶ As a result of such inward thinking, the Slavophiles claimed to have rediscovered Russian Orthodoxy, as a foundation of Russian culture, and as a new way to lead Russia to her national destiny. Therefore ‘Slavophilism’ in this case denotes a cultivation of Russia’s past, through the symbolism of its Slavonic element, as opposed to a real feeling of solidarity with other Slavs. Of the disparate Slavophile movement, one personality stands out as being its central, albeit indirectly, ideologue. This was Aleksei Khomiakov.³⁷

There is no direct evidence indicating that Ljotić acknowledged the Slavophile movement in his writings. However, through such broad similarities, primarily relating to issues of social hierarchy and social structure, along with Khomiakov’s interpretation of history, it is not entirely speculative to assume that Ljotić’s own thought, and theory on social re-organisation would have been influenced by those of Khomiakov and of the Slavophiles as a whole.

Khomiakov believed that the Russian commune, as a community (*obshcinnost*), was a perfect cultural form of communal life, buttressed by a feeling of love, and not a sense of profit or security.³⁸ Ljotić’s writings on his utopian ideal of society reflect Khomiakov’s sense of community through the South Slavic concept of the *zadruga*.³⁹ Ljotić describes the *zadruga* as being a part of the ‘third way’, between communism and capitalism, and that it this is an essential part of the ‘organic state’.⁴⁰ To further emphasise this point, Ljotić writes that the individual as a rule does not live outside the community. As a result, the individual needs the community for his/her own good. Rather than focus on the egocentrism of personal desires, the focus should be on the betterment of the community as a whole.⁴¹ Thus, the collective

³⁶ William J. Leatherbarrow and Derek Offord, eds., *A History of Russian Thought* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10.

³⁷ Aleksei Khomiakov (1804-1860). A Russian religious poet and thinker who was one of the main influences and personalities of the Slavophile movement. He viewed the Russian commune as the perfect form of Russian life and social organisation. For further reading see Vladimir Tsurikov, *A.S. Khomiakov. Poet, Philosopher, Theologian* (Holy Trinity Seminary Press, 2004).; Leatherbarrow and Offord, *A History of Russian Thought*.

³⁸ A. S. Khomiakov and Ivan Vasil’evich Kireevskii, *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader*, trans. Boris Jakim and Robert Bird, Esalen-Lindisfarne Library of Russian Philosophy (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1998), 14.

³⁹ This word has a dual meaning in the Slavic languages of the former Yugoslavia. It refers to both extended familial groups under patriarchal control, and in economic significance, a co-operative of sorts for the production and distribution of goods

⁴⁰ “Zašto samo dva izlaza”, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Videlo u tami* (Munich: Iskra, 1976), 102. See also Dimitrije Ljotić, “Zašto Samo Dva Izlaza,” *Otadžbina*, 18, August 1935, No.76, 1.

⁴¹ Ljotić, *Videlo u tami*, 33.

will of a society will be put forward for the betterment of its people. However, if one deviates from the collective will, through individualist action, it harms the community. This bond however, according to Ljotić can only be felt on a subconscious level. It is not enough simply to be a part of an ethnic, linguistic, or national community. That by itself does not denote collective will. Instead, what Ljotić stresses is an unconscious bond, which draws and binds individuals together.

While not explicit as to what this unconscious bond refers to, the sentiment shares similarities with Khomiakov's thought, of the Church, and the commune, as the pillars of Russian culture. Working symbiotically for the good of Russia, the commune reflected the universal sense of love and freedom, illuminated by Christ and the Holy Spirit. However, it was realised through the Church, as a free and open Eucharistic community, permeated by the trust that springs from a shared faith.⁴² Russian society therefore, according to Khomiakov, was like the Russian church in the sense that it was a 'unity in the face of God', that would 'submit willingly to grace'.⁴³ Seeing the Church as all encompassing, and working in harmony with the commune, the Slavophile utopian ideal began to emerge.

However, the Slavophiles were hardly enamoured with government. While recognising the necessity of government, they considered all forms of the state as evil. Thus autocracy, as limiting the burden of power to a few, was the way forward. The Slavophiles insisted that government should not encroach on the free life and spirit of the people. Its main aim was to provide defence, and the necessary elements of formalism and compulsion.⁴⁴ On an economic level, through periodic land distribution, a proper and permanent adjustment between man and labour could be created. This gives credence to Khomiakov's assertion that every human society, including the state, must be based on moral principles, in particular Christianity. For Khomiakov, the state exists for the individual, not vice versa, and cannot be deified because of the principles of change and relativity that predominates within it.⁴⁵ This synthesis has been christened as the abstract noun *sobornost*, from the Slavic *sobor* (which has the triple meaning of cathedral, council, and gathering). Its supposed nature is organic,

⁴² Khomiakov and Kireevskī, *On Spiritual Unity*, 14.

⁴³ William Leatherbarrow, "Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I", in Leatherbarrow and Offord, *A History of Russian Thought*, 110.

⁴⁴ Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles: A Study of Romantic Ideology*, 149–151.

⁴⁵ Serge Bolshakoff, *The Doctrine of the Unity of the Church in the Works of Khomyakov and Moehler*. (London: Society for promoting Christian knowledge, 1946), 72.

consisting of the multiplicity and unity in the Orthodox Church, involving the fact that the Church is based on the principle of councils.⁴⁶

The Slavophiles saw themselves as defenders of the supposed national bases of Russian traditional life, the commune and a resurgent and ascendant Orthodoxy, which were supposedly under attack from reforms.⁴⁷ What they were in effect however, was a manifestation of the evolution of Romantic nationalist ideology. From a historical perspective, Slavophile ideology shares affinities with German Romantic thinkers. Both Russia, and the numerous German-speaking states that would unite to form Germany were economically under-developed and faced the need to modernise. The need for modernisation would result in new political and social systems, provoking a reaction. This, according to Andrzej Walicki, made it easier for criticism, giving conservative thinkers a wider perspective making it easier to ‘idealise patriarchal traditions’, and ‘archaic social structures’.⁴⁸

In his autobiography Ljotić makes no reference to Slavophiles, but does indirectly hint at the notion of his Slavophile influence by stating that ‘Marxist thought does not speak for the Russian soul’. Neither does atheism, materialism, or class struggle. These are the thoughts of others’, he explains, but does not give any indication as to who the ‘others’ are. In its native thought, Ljotić writes, ‘Russia has neither atheism, materialism, nor class struggle’.⁴⁹ Vidkun Quisling, future leader of the National Socialist oriented Norwegian *Nasjonal Samling* (National Union) party, who, between 1922 and 1929, worked and travelled extensively throughout the Soviet Union agrees, though it is unlikely that he and Ljotić were ever in contact. According to Quisling, ‘Marxism’ was attempting to ‘capture the masses and the Russian national spirit’, in order to create a new proletarian or new Socialist culture’.⁵⁰ Berdyaev counters this opinion stating that while Russia’s vastness negated any real organic

⁴⁶ Riasanovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles*, 162.

⁴⁷ The reforms mentioned by the Slavophiles pertain particularly to the reforms of Peter the Great, which led to an increased centralisation of the former Muscovite state. One of the most galling reforms according to the Slavophiles was Church reform, which saw the Church being placed into a governing synod of bishops and bureaucrats chosen by Peter. For more on Peter’s Church reform see James Carcraft, *The Church Reforms of Peter the Great* (Stanford University Press, 1971).

⁴⁸ Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*, 107.

⁴⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Svetska Revolucija*, 1949, 119.

⁵⁰ Vidkun Quisling, *Russia and Ourselves* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931), 127.

unity, it was Russian history, which determined the limits of Russian communism and shaped its character.⁵¹

In his early adolescence (during the first few years of the 1900s) Ljotić began to doubt his religious beliefs. This happened when he was studying at the Serbian school in Salonika (modern Thessaloniki) where his father was consul. It was here that Ljotić entertained thoughts of applying for the Foreign Service, being attracted to its cosmopolitan lifestyle and nature.⁵² It was only when he returned to Belgrade to undertake his studies at the Faculty of Law at Belgrade University that his religious beliefs were rekindled. This occurred in 1909 when he discovered one of his first outlets for political and moral expression.

Ljotić and Tolstoy's interpretation of Christianity

During this time, Ljotić fell under the influence of Tolstoy's interpretation of Christianity.⁵³ Tolstoy, in *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, outlines what he believes to be the failure of 'Church doctrine', in emulating the doctrine of Christ, specifically Christ's commandment of non-resistance to evil by force.⁵⁴ *The Kingdom of God is Within You* is considered a culmination of 30 years of Tolstoy's thoughts not just on Christianity, but also of the application of a literal Christian interpretation to state and society centred on Christ's Sermon on the Mount, found in the 5th to the 7th chapters of the Gospel of Matthew: Sermon on the Mount: righteousness of the Kingdom (5:1 – 7:29).⁵⁵ Tolstoy took the Sermon on the Mount as a literal justification for what he described as 'non-resistance to evil', being himself influenced by correspondence from American Quakers who had proved that the duty to the 'non-resistance to evil' exposed the Church's error in allowing war and capital punishment.⁵⁶

Acceptance of Tolstoy's interpretation of Christianity came during a period when Ljotić's early religiosity had cooled, but had returned by 1909, when Ljotić was enrolled in the Law

⁵¹ Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Origins of Russian Communism*. (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948).

⁵² "Iz moga života" in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 274.

⁵³ Tolstoy's interpretation of Christianity has been likened to a 'Christian Anarchism', by which Christians are answerable only to God, as the sole source of authority. This identification was a result of the Tolstoyan movement founded by Vladimir Chertkov, though Tolstoy himself remained opposed to a doctrine that was created specifically after him, preferring that individuals listened to their conscience.

⁵⁴ Leo Tolstoy and Constance Garnett, *The kingdom of God is within you: Christianity not as a mystic religion but as a new theory of life* ([Seaside, Or.]: Watchmaker, 2010). Preface.

⁵⁵ St. Athanasius Orthodox Academy, *The Orthodox Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 1272–1279.

⁵⁶ Tolstoy and Garnett, *The kingdom of God is within you*, 9.

Faculty at Belgrade University.⁵⁷ By his own admission, Ljotić, became a ‘vegetarian’, abstained from eating meat, and became devoted himself to what he said was the ‘virgin soul of Christ’. Tolstoy’s interpretation of Christianity was not just simply a religious or moral ideal for Ljotić. In fact, it worked into Ljotić’s early conceptions of the state, and society, whose enforced links Ljotić opposed, considering the state as a ‘creator of all-evil’.⁵⁸ Through such statements, Ljotić asserted his identification as a ‘Tolstoyan Christian Anarchist’, claiming that if he were to be conscripted into the army, he would rather go to jail for his beliefs than take up a gun.⁵⁹ It was also under said influence that Ljotić greeted the arrival of the First Balkan War in 1912. Although conscripted before the war, he refused to swear an oath, and in the end, was not called up. Instead, he travelled to Bulgaria with the intention of becoming a war correspondent, though he does not state for which publication.⁶⁰ He was refused accreditation, but managed to attach himself to the retinue of Bennet Burleigh, the official war correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph*.⁶¹

Upon arriving in Bulgaria, and having his correspondent status refused, Ljotić asserts that he was immediately arrested in Svishtov, which he claims was due to his pacifistic outlook, and his ‘Tolstoyan sermons’, which were not well received.⁶² After his release from prison, thus being denied the status of a war correspondent, Ljotić returned to Serbia where he volunteered to serve in the medical corps stating that while he ‘could not go where there is killing’,⁶³ he felt the need to do something. He spent the remainder of the First Balkan War in the medical corps, and would remain devoted to Tolstoy’s interpretation of Christianity. This personal and early liking for Christianity was an influential and foundational factor to the development of Ljotić’s religiosity. Under the spectre of fascism and anti-Semitism, such loyalism to religion can justify an exclusive, unwelcoming view and perspective toward other religions, such as the Jews.

⁵⁷ Dragan Djukić, “Pedagoško-Andragoška Misao i Rad Dimitrija Ljotića (2),” *Iskra: Ljudi Traže Slobodu, a Sloboda Ljude*, 1 September, 1993, No.988, 20.

⁵⁸ “Iz moga života”, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 275.

⁵⁹ Ljotić, *Light of Truth*, 127.

⁶⁰ “Iz moga života”, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 277.

⁶¹ Bennet Burleigh (1840-1914). Born in Glasgow, he would have a coloured career as a Confederate spy during the American Civil War (1861-1865), before embarking on a journalistic career in 1881. He covered the war in Sudan on behalf of the Daily Telegraph, and was the first to report on the failure of General Charles Gordon’s relief expedition to Khartoum.

⁶² “Iz moga života”, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 278.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

However, there were signs of a fissure between Ljotić's devotion to Tolstoy and events in his life, namely the death of his father, Vladimir, in 1912. Ljotić was extremely close to his father, and believed that he shared a 'closeness of soul' with his Vladimir and found that Tolstoy's interpretation of Christianity was unable to comfort him in the wake of his father's death.⁶⁴ While still committed to Tolstoy's Christianity, Ljotić, in 1913, would find that his belief in Tolstoy would be shaken, due to world events, which, whose effects on Ljotić, given the strength of his convictions, could not have been foreseen.

The Second Balkan War

No sooner had the First Balkan War ended, in May 1913, with the Ottomans losing most of their European territory to the Balkan League (made up of Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia), then had the Second Balkan War began. This time amongst the former allies of the Balkan League, with Bulgaria being unsatisfied with its territorial gains, especially in regard to Macedonia (or lack thereof), attacking its former allies, Greece and Serbia on 29 June, 1913. The Ottoman Empire and Romania, who were also engaged in territorial disputes with Bulgaria, joined the anti-Bulgarian 'league'. With the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest, on 10 August, 1913, the war was officially over, and Bulgaria was forced to give up Southern Dobrudja to Romania, and a large part of Eastern Thrace, but managed to retain an Aegean port at Alexandroupoli. Territories it had conquered during the First Balkan War. Having finished his legal studies in the summer of 1913, Ljotić decided on serving in a military hospital. His reasoning, was that 'under the mask of Tolstoy', he was avoiding all risks and hazards.⁶⁵ Hence his decision, and eventual successful application to the cholera ward as an orderly. On 13 July, 1913, he arrived at the cholera ward at the field hospital of the 3rd Dunav (Danubian) Division in Kumanovo.⁶⁶

Ljotić's service in Kumanovo had a profound effect on him. He claims that from 1 July until 14 August, 927 people died, not just from cholera, but also from 'yellow fever', with 600⁶⁷ of those deaths coming at a time when he was present. Working as an orderly, it is unsurprising that Ljotić describes these scenes as hell, especially in the case of the 'yellow fever', during

⁶⁴ Ibid, 277.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 278.

⁶⁶ Dragan Djukić, "Pedagoško-andragoška misao i rad Dimitrija Ljotića (2)," 20.

⁶⁷ "Iz moga života", in Dimitrije Ljotić. *Odabrana dela. 1 Knjiga*, 279.

which he was administering ‘yellow medicine’ (opium and cognac) every two hours. This, coupled with the fact that he was working in a contagious, and therefore extremely dangerous environment, being exposed to death and suffering daily, must have surely made a lasting emotional and psychological impact. It was surely with memories of death and suffering that would influence Ljotić to favour demobilisation and peace in his future thought. Moreover, it ultimately led him to break away from Tolstoy’s ways. As discussed previously, his idolisation and praise of Tolstoy’s teachings became the foundation for his development of religiousness and religious loyalty. However, his eventual breaking away from the teachings of Tolstoy shows that Ljotić was more than just a imitator. Instead, he was more of a critical thinker, with his own personal ideology. Though influenced by other people or similar ideologies, his ideas were ultimately based on his own interpretations, perceptions and beliefs. He did not blindly follow others—he may have been strongly influenced by other people or ideology, but he would not hesitate to go against the natural teachings of the said influential person or ideology to stick to his own preferences and beliefs. This may then justify why his ideology, though likened to fascism, are claimed in this study to be not entirely fascist in nature, but instead were brought about in part through his nationalism and religiosity.

France: Ljotić, Pascal

After demobilisation and the threat of war behind him (for the time being), Ljotić began his studies in Paris under the orders of King Peter. Ljotić writes that he was not keen on going to Paris, because it was against his father’s dying wishes that he go to another country, i.e., to learn its customs, history, laws, and soul, without first knowing those of his homeland.⁶⁸ Only after seeing the personal notes made by King Peter in a copy of the programme of study, did Ljotić agree to take up studies in Paris in the fall of 1913, feeling a sense of love and devotion to the king.⁶⁹ Ljotić’s ten months in Paris had a profound impact on him, which would manifest itself more clearly in his political ideology during the 1930s. Part of Ljotić’s reasoning for accepting a scholarship to study in Paris was to acquaint himself with the study of ‘exact sciences’ and the art of reasoning, as they were ‘lying in his way for complete faith in Christ.’ He had a feeling that there was an incompleteness of Christ’s person in Tolstoy’s

⁶⁸ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 281.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 282.

interpretation of Christianity.⁷⁰ This again shows how Ljotić was not the type to simply follow existing structures, ideology, and beliefs, but developed and built on his own beliefs to simply a crude imitation of fascism.

Ljotić's search for a complete Christ in his journey to Paris—in a nominally Catholic country—as a devout Orthodox Christian, raises certain interesting points. The question is whether Ljotić viewed himself as Christian, encompassing all of Christianity's denominations, or more narrowly, as Orthodox, just as he viewed himself as not a follower or imitator of fascism, but a unique person with his own ideology and belief. However he ultimately never seemed to have answered this internal struggle. Yet it was manifested onto ZBOR, which would claim to be a moral, and Christian movement, but one in which Muslims were allowed to join. To Ljotić, the Qur'an reputedly was a 'divine book', and that he stated that there were 'ethical and moral' people outside of Christianity.⁷¹ Ljotić's internal struggles with Tolstoy's influence notwithstanding, in Paris he was exposed to a vault of new knowledge and influence. These made their greatest impression upon him in the form of churches, libraries, and museums'.⁷² It was in the libraries that Ljotić's thought formation would be impacted the most. He was a voracious reader, and anything that he could lay his hands on, he read with gusto. As such, Ljotić, at this stage may be viewed as an individual who, while being religious, was not narrowly restricted to any religion, idol, or prominent influence. Instead, he may be viewed as someone who looked into options and determined which were amenable to him and which he would embody in his daily life and ideology. In short, he was a seeker.

As a result, after Tolstoy, Ljotić's next lasting influence in keeping with a Christian philosophy was Blaise Pascal. Ljotić mostly credits Pascal's influence in regard to his 'Christian life', which was to mark Ljotić's later thought. In Pascal, Ljotić saw a soul with a 'shining light', a 'teacher of proper thought', whose Christian life, though not filled with much peace, showed that even a miserable life, can, when filled with the peace and joy of Christ, be rich and filled with light.⁷³ Tellingly, Ljotić did not fully embrace all the ideologies

⁷⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Videlo u tami*, 111.

⁷¹ Hrvoje Magazinović, *Kroz jedno mučno stoljeće* (Valjevo, 2009), 96. Magazinović was a Croatian ZBOR member. He recalls that Ljotić, speaking to ZBOR youth members (he does not mention place or date), insisted that each ZBOR member should read the Qu'ran.

⁷² Ljotić, *Videlo u tami*, 112.

⁷³ "Iz moga života", in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 285.

of Pascal down to their specifics. Instead, he seemingly took only Pascal's Christianity and explanations of Christian life as signs of his greatness. Pascal's methods of investigation, especially in regards to what was deemed superficial, had a lasting impact on Ljotić's own search for truth. Ljotić credits Pascal with showing him how to seek the 'truth with love', a concept which would mark his later writings. He also credits Pascal with showing him how to master the art of reasoning.

At this point, certain specificities about Ljotić's thought began to crystallise. Certainly he was a devout and religious man. His early religiosity, Tolstoyan influence, and time spent in the Churches of Paris left him an admirer of Catholic missionary and social work, he also thought highly of its theological education and the preparedness of its priests. Ljotić criticised the Serbian Orthodox Church for abandoning its 'internal mission', deriding those who wished to lead it in such a direction as atheists or Protestants.⁷⁴ Ljotić found the influence of Pascal in the libraries, which, coupled with frequent visits to museums, would lead him to his next major influence.

This influence resulted in Ljotić's reinterpretation of history in general. After frequent visits to Paris' museums Ljotić stated that he 'started to reject the interpretation of history as progress',⁷⁵ and began to form a negative opinion about the then accepted mainstream interpretation of the French Revolution. Ljotić would later write about the effects of the French Revolution, one of which being the concept of individualism. The birth of individualism was not only a detriment to 'organic thought', but also a means of engaging in materialism, democracy, and capitalism; thus resulting in the current materialist-democratic-capitalistic society.⁷⁶ Speaking in relation to his 'experience as a lawyer' from the early 1920s, Ljotić would begin to form a negative opinion of those who 'defended for money', for whom in general, the accumulation of money and wealth was a 'soul-stealer'.⁷⁷

Marxism, which according to Ljotić, is born from its twin, capitalism, is taken as a clear example of individualist thought. Philosophy also suffered as a result of the French Revolution in Ljotić's mind. Where once there was unitary thought and purpose, individualism, brought by the Revolution supplanted those qualities and installed atheism

⁷⁴ Ibid. 283.

⁷⁵ Djukić, "Pedagoško-andragoška misao i rad Dimitrija Ljotića (2)," 21.

⁷⁶ Ljotić, *Dimitrije Ljotić u revoluciju i ratu*, 52.

⁷⁷ "Iz moga života", in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 358.

and materialism.⁷⁸ Ljotić also rejected the onset of ‘human reason’ brought by the French Revolution, and argued against its supposed freedom by stating that ‘there is no danger of freedom, but when people are equal and in brotherhood, why then are they not free’?⁷⁹

According to Ernst Nolte, the rejection of the French Revolution and its supposed values was seen as an intellectual or cultural precursor to fascism.⁸⁰ Certainly, interwar fascist politicians were conscious of the effects (perceived or otherwise) of the French Revolution. However, the argument here is whether they viewed it through a polemical, or historical context. Some fascist movements, notably those who were not anti-modernising, saw aspects of the French Revolution as beneficial in the formation of a ‘new spirit’.⁸¹ This same principle, however, can be applied to the overlap between fascist/radical right, and how radical conservatives viewed the French Revolution. For many radical conservatives and nationalists, Ljotić among them, who were highly nationalistic, the French Revolution upset the social order, instituting a rule of democracy, liberalism, and capitalism.

To Ljotić, the French Revolution overthrew all the customs, faith, thought, and institutions of the French.⁸² Though not entirely uncritical of the Catholic Church in France, and of the monarchy at the time, for Ljotić, the victory of ‘individualism’ over the ‘organic’ was anathema, and he put his efforts into rectifying this ill, which he believed gave rise to the societal malaise of his day. Culturally as well, individualism was making itself felt. This was especially the case, as Ljotić believed, in the study of history, which to his mind, glorified the French Revolution as a vessel of humanity and progress, a depiction he found all too prevalent in the museums of Paris.

For the study of history, Ljotić surmises that it must be scrutinised three-dimensionally: in length, width, and breadth. Only then would one be able to solve the puzzle of historical happenings.⁸³ History was essential to Ljotić. It was essential for the establishment of any national community. On one hand it is directed towards the future, and on the other, it is connected with the past, especially tradition. Of course, at the same time it links them. This

⁷⁸ Ibid. 24.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 19.

⁸⁰ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 25–26.

⁸¹ George L. Mosse., “Fascism and the French Revolution,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 1 (1989), 5–26.

⁸² “Jednika i Zajednica”, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Videlo u tami*, 17.

⁸³ “Pogled u dužinu i širinu” in Ibid, 43.

linkage between the future and past, through the medium of tradition would guide Ljotić's ideological evolution as both a point of continuity, but also of legitimacy and social relations. It was also in the museums, seeing evidence and history of the revolutions of 1789, 1848, and in the case of France and the Paris commune, 1871, that Ljotić began to ponder the nature of freedom. Ljotić saw that, for him, freedom had two meanings. A real or 'true' freedom, which could only be attained by the 'right' kind of person, and the freedom of the 'human animal', by which man was simply deceived into believing he was free, while in reality he was lead around with the mentality of a herd animal. It was only this 'right' man who would be able to attain freedom, for no matter what happened to him, he would be free.⁸⁴ It would be these questions that Ljotić posed. It was the rejecting of the interpretation of history, freedom, and the French Revolution as progress that saw him become enamoured with the thoughts and ideals of Charles Maurras and the Action Française.

Ljotić, Maurras, and the Action Française

The Action Française (hereafter also referred to as the AF) came to life in the aftermath of the Dreyfus affair of 1894,⁸⁵ and was originally a journal concerned with literature and art. Stewart C. Doty characterised the AF as fascist because of its link to one of its first founders, Maurras, who had been synonymous to the AF in the later years of his life and even beyond.⁸⁶ Through Charles Maurras' sermonising on 'style', as simplicity, the perception of simplicity, essentiality, and the total subordination to its central theme, this 'style' soon was applied to politics.⁸⁷ Though it never generated mass popular support, it became the most enduring organisation on the radical right in France and amongst Francophones in North America. During the active years of Maurras, there was an increase in attraction among the Franco-American elite to fascism.⁸⁸ Maurras did not fail where Ljotić had: in attracting the elite (or perhaps more precisely, elements of it) to his own ideas and gaining their support

⁸⁴ "Iz moga života", in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 285.

⁸⁵ A political scandal that polarised France in the 1890s, it focused on one Alfred Dreyfus, a French officer of Jewish origin, who was tried and convicted of treason. In 1896, evidence came to light exonerating Dreyfus and pointing to a French officer of Hungarian descent as the culprit. It radicalised both left and right, on the need to protect the 'honour of the French army' and on the need to protect basic 'human rights'.

⁸⁶ Stewart C. Doty, 'Monsieur Maurras est ici': French Fascism in Franco-American New England', in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Oct., 1997), 527.

⁸⁷ Eugen Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France* (Stanford University Press, 1962), 10.

⁸⁸ Doty, *Monsieur Maurras*, 527

somewhere in the middle of the reign of AF.⁸⁹ At that time, Maurras was determined to overthrow of France's republican parliamentary regime through the establishment of a determining climate of opinion. It made, according to Leon Roudiez, its 'resounding voice ring daily between 1908 and 1944' through Maurras' official paper.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Maurras showed how easily he could shift views depending on the benefits to be gained from each partnership, or alliance with traditional elites. Maurras went through the task of attending mass for as long as it was in compliance with his political convenience; however, he did not think twice about calling the Pope pro-German, when the Vatican condemned the AF.⁹¹ Due to the high literary and cultural content of the AF, it established a secure elite position from which to propagate. Its core principles consisted of legitimist monarchism, and corporatist representation under a neo-traditionalist state.⁹² Its uniqueness, according to Stanley Payne was that it forged a synthesis of 19th century traditionalism and combining them with radical nationalism.⁹³ With this seemingly unnatural synthesis, a new type of nationalism, that of 'integral nationalism', began to make itself known in nationalist discourse. For Ljotić, the AF, but in particular Maurras, helped to form his later considerations on democracy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the thought that 'man yearns for justice', but that 'justice is difficult to approach if you look at man'.⁹⁴

One of the aspects for which Maurras has been criticised was his thought of action as driven by words instead of deeds.⁹⁵ The problem was that the AF attracted many individuals as followers who are eager for direct political action.⁹⁶ But being led by a man who perceived a role that is likened 'action' as an abstract theoretical, this is where confusion can occur. Some of Maurras' followers may have wanted for their leader to play an overtly active role in their counter-revolution, and install them in positions of power. On the other hand, Maurras, as leader, focused on developing a climate of opinion that would encourage someone to seize power and pave the way for a newly re-established monarchy.

⁸⁹ Leon Roudiez, "Maurras and the Action Française in Historical Perspective", *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol.49, No. 7 (Nov, 1965), 443-446

⁹⁰ Ibid, 443

⁹¹ Herman Schnurer, 'The Intellectual Sources of French Fascism', in *The Antioch Review*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (Spring 1941), 37.

⁹² Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 47.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Dragan Djukić, "Pedagoško-andragoška misao i rad Dimitrija Ljotića (2)," 21.

⁹⁵ Roudiez, *Maurras*, 445.

⁹⁶ William R. Tucker, "Politics and Aesthetics: The Fascism of Robert Brasillach." *The Western Political Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1962), 607.

Ljotić's search for 'truth with love' evidenced by his admiration of Pascal, attests to his genuine and positive sense of religiosity. Under the influence of Maurras and the AF, we begin to see a greater emphasis on detail being placed in the social and political sphere of Ljotić's thought, which up to a point, contrasted with his existing positive religiosity (his Tolstoyan influence of the state as all evil non-withstanding). For Maurras, applying his criticism of art and literature to society, he came to the conclusion that not all 'traditions' whether in culture or society are equal, thus this principle, when applied to nations, proves a nation's superiority over others. We can see a clear example of Ljotić later adapting this view in *Za izgradnju nacionalne kulture* (For the evolution of national cultures). In it Ljotić writes that the best conditions for the evolvement of culture are to be found in the Christian spirit, and national traditions. Only through the realisation of the spiritual potential will national potential be able to bloom, and that national traditions symbolise experience (conceivably a metaphor for culture).⁹⁷ For Maurras, success in every sphere of life was dependent on man being reasoned, cultivated, and above all disciplined, and the decadence that was found in existing art and culture was mirrored by the decadence found in society.⁹⁸

Maurras, just like Ljotić, viewed the Jews negatively and outside of the national community. As a result of his extreme nationalism, Maurras has been an anti-Semite throughout his existence in the mainstream political scene.⁹⁹ As seen in his preferences in the form of leadership and government, Maurras saw that an anti-parliamentary regime requires a ruler based of bloodlines and heredity, which means there is enough continuity in the form of leadership to avoid instability in the government and the nation.¹⁰⁰ Maurras' anti-Semitic mores and beliefs may have added to Ljotić's anti-Semitism. Ljotić was influenced greatly by Maurras' nationalist ideologies, which reinforced his deep patriotic character; hence, the existence of similarities between the AF and ZBOR. However, Maurras and Ljotić are different in the sense that Ljotić was highly also influenced by his sincere Christian beliefs, while Maurras despised and discontinued his practice of Christianity despite being born into a Catholic family.¹⁰¹ This distinctive trait that differentiate Ljotić from Maurras will be evident in the latter years of Ljotić and the development of his ideology.

⁹⁷ "Za izgradnju nacionalne kulture", in "Uskršna razmišljanja", in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Videlo u tami*, 38–39.

⁹⁸ Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France*, 13.

⁹⁹ Balfour, 1930, 185.

¹⁰⁰ Balfour, 185.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 182-183.

Above all, Maurras was a monarchist, and society was to be restructured around it. According to Maurras a monarch was necessary not only for society's structure, but also for tradition, and the maintenance of patriotism. An eventual monarchic restoration was a pillar of what Maurras believed would lead to an eventual French recovery from the defeat of the 1870-1871 Franco-Prussian War.¹⁰² For Maurras, the monarchy, like the Church, were state structures, pillars of society. In the eyes of Maurras and the AF, the monarch, in a position of unchallenged authority, would not only serve as a guarantor of patriotism, but also for maintenance of tradition and law and order. In his *L'Enquête sur la monarchie* (Survey of the Monarchy), Maurras writes of the hereditary nature of the monarchy, rhetorically asking whether it being anti-parliamentary and decentralised is not a societal good. Ljotić's later writings on the monarchy would not always follow a strict Maurrassian line, though it would not be beyond the realm of speculation to surmise that Ljotić by this point (1913-1914) would already have been a committed monarchist. While Maurras argued for a decentralised monarchy, Ljotić would later argue for a seemingly more central role of and acceptance for the King with the entire soul, as he is divine through God's grace as the standard bearer of freedom and the shield of God's work: faith and the Church, unity and family, people and the Fatherland and all every freedom and justice'.¹⁰³

On the whole, Ljotić's later writing, would retain similarities to the Maurrassian formula for the monarchy as outlined in the *Gazette de France* from 6 May, 1899 in which Maurras in his manifesto *Dictateur et Roi* (Dictator and King) states that 'to the hereditary institution of the family, and the prominent ruling entities of the commune and the province, and the professional stabilising institution of political authority'.¹⁰⁴ Following this formula, Ljotić would try to adapt elements of it to the socio-economic conditions in post-World War One Yugoslavia, and attached great importance to this as a means of 'educating' the nation and people.

¹⁰² Franco-Prussian War (19 July, 1870 – 10 May, 1871). Popularly known as the 1870 War in France, was the result of a Hohenzollern (Prussian Royal House) candidate for the vacant Spanish throne, which would see France surrounded, though it was the release of the 'Ems Dispatch', which would lead France to declare war, and ultimately be defeated. For further reading see Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France, 1870-1871* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁰³ "Kralj – vid nacije", in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Videlo u tami*, 53.

¹⁰⁴ "Dictateur et Roi", in Charles Maurras, *Petit Manuel de l'enquête sur la monarchie* (Paris: Nouvelle librairie nationale, 1928), 203–204.

The reorganisation of society was a high priority of Maurras and the AF. Both called for class co-operation as opposed to the Marxist call for class warfare, in the hope of reconciling employers and workers, which would result in the integration of the workers, both morally and socially in the national whole. By doing so, class co-operation would then prove to the workers that their natural interests would lay in the prosperity of their trade, of which the welfare of employer and employee was one.¹⁰⁵ The corporatism of the AF was not coherently clarified until 1922, and then it was George Valois, rather than Maurras, which gave the organisation its structure of corporatism. What it would show was the difference in both opinion and ideology of Maurras and Valois, with Maurras especially, relegating economic matters. Valois however, partly due to his previous leftist background, was much more economically sophisticated, and began a campaign for an *États-Généraux* (Estate General) as a precursor to a neo-monarchic corporatism. This Estate General would fuse together modes of French production, by bringing together industrial and union leaders together in a movement representing social and economic realities that the nation must bring under control.¹⁰⁶ It would further represent the realities of French society, by bringing together the family, the province, corporations, public servants, and the Church in order to co-ordinate the national focus.¹⁰⁷

Much of Ljotić's writing would reveal a commitment to what he would refer to as *domaćinstvo*.¹⁰⁸ In Ljotić's vision of Yugoslavia, God, King, and *domaćin* were to be mainstays of the new social order. According to Ljotić, the *domaćin* were to form an unofficial council of local leaders, who in cooperation with similar councils would create a spirit of understanding and readiness to help, anywhere in the nation. This equation could then also be applied to the ideal kingdom. In Ljotić's view, the 'supreme ruler' of the *domaćinstvo* was also the supreme ruler of the universe, God. The temporal ruler, according to Ljotić, can only derive his 'guiding principles' from the teachings of the Christian Church.

¹⁰⁵ Weber, *Action Française : Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France*, 68.

¹⁰⁶ Georges Valois, "Pourquoi Nous Rattachons Travaux À L'esprit Proudhonien," *Cahiers Du Cercle Proudhon* 1, no. 1 (January 1912), 31–49.

¹⁰⁷ Weber, *Action Française : Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France*, 207.

¹⁰⁸ There is no adequate translation of this word (*domaćinstvo*) into English. Ljotić seems to have used the word in regards to connotations of power, authority, and moral virtue. Seen in this light, *domaćinstvo* then could be said to resemble a family, in keeping with Ljotić's later themes on the 'organic' and 'co-operative' state, with certain social and moral obligations. For more, see Jovan Byford. "Willing Bystanders: Dimitrije Ljotić, 'Shield Collaboration', and the destruction of Serbia's Jews", in Rebecca Haynes and Martyn C. Rady, eds., *In the Shadow of Hitler: Personalities of the Right in Central and Eastern Europe*, 2011, 295–312.; Miloš Martić, "Dimitrije Ljotić and the Yugoslav National Movement ZBOR, 1935-1945," *East European Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1980), 219–239.

This same formula would apply to the *domaćin* in its relation to organising the life of the family.¹⁰⁹ God invests the King in majestic lustre and royal prerogatives, and which far surpasses ordinary human logic.¹¹⁰ In his role of protector of those things that are Godly, he becomes the King-*domaćin*, second after God, and the embodiment of the nation. Without the *domaćin*, Ljotić argues, there would be no accomplishments. All work, no matter how laborious, does not count, without the *domaćin*. Ljotić describes toil as the blossom, and the accomplishment as fruit. Therefore, the people (Yugoslav) rejoice in accomplishment.¹¹¹

This concept of *domaćinstvo* would be unique only in its appearance in a Yugoslav domestic concept. While there were others, especially the Croat philosopher and ethno-psychologist Vladimir Dvorniković, who, as a strong proponent of ‘integral Yugoslavism’, wanted to mix the best elements of the Serbian and Croatian character, especially the image of the ‘heroic bandits’, the *hajduks*. The *hajduks* would serve as an ideal type for his Dinaric patriarchal culture, which was to form the basis of the Yugoslav entity.¹¹² Yet Dvorniković would not envision a social order based on *domaćinstvo*, nor would he refer to anything similar in his writings.

Ljotić assumes that ‘Yugoslavs’ are somehow naturally inclined to the *domaćin* system, and those who attempt to seduce the people from their natural paths, Marxists, are simply the manifestation of society’s malaise brought upon through individualism. Arguing for the reorganisation of the nation into *staleži* (estates), Ljotić claims that the ‘state lives off class estates’, and that they are linked with ‘humanity’s natural society’, and that they will remain inside, outside, or despite the state’.¹¹³ As a utopian vision, Ljotić presupposes that the establishment of the *domaćinstvo* system would immediately result in the cessation of any conflict, whether they are cultural, economic, political, or social. On the other side of this supposed formula for harmony, there is the argument that replacing economic liberalism with a co-operative order (corporatism), based on guilds, could in theory, take the power away from the workers. This rejection of democracy and parliamentary in favour of a new societal hierarchy, and economic system could just as likely to be seen as having elitist implications as having utopian ones. As a result of his exposure to the ideas of Maurras, Ljotić’s ideas and

¹⁰⁹ Miloš Martić, “Dimitrije Ljotić and the Yugoslav National Movement ZBOR, 1935-1945”, 230.

¹¹⁰ “Potvrda Iskustva” in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Videlo u tami*, 55.

¹¹¹ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Light of Truth: Philosophical, Moral, and Political Ideas of Dimitrije Ljotić*, 56.

¹¹² Vladimir Dvorniković, *Karakterologija Jugoslovena* (Belgrade: Kosmos, 1939), 548-553.

¹¹³ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Govori i članci Sveska 3* (Munich, 1954), 41.

nature of the state and of authority began to shift away from the anarchical and Tolstoyan variation of the state as the creator of evil to a more nuanced view of the necessity of authority, but an authority that not everyone was entitled to. The event though, which caused a radical change in elements of Ljotić's thinking was as yet unforeseen, but drawing ever closer.

Ljotić and the First World War

The assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June, 1914 in Sarajevo, occurred at a time when Ljotić was in Serbia on vacation. The assassin, Gavrilo Princip, was a member of *Mlada Bosna* (Young Bosnia), which called for the union of Bosnia and Herzegovina with Serbia, and of all South Slavs into a unitary state.¹¹⁴ As a consequence of the assassination, the First World War (1914-1918) broke out when Austria-Hungary subsequently issued an ultimatum to the Kingdom of Serbia, which was partially rejected, thus, provoking Austria-Hungary to declare war. By November 10, 1914, Ljotić was with his unit, the 3rd platoon, 4th battalion, 5th infantry regiment near the Kolubara river¹¹⁵ (in western Serbia). Less than a week later, his regiment was on the defensive from an Austro-Hungarian offensive culminating in the Serbian victory at the Battle of Kolubara from, 3 December to 9 December, 1914. In the midst of war, Ljotić describes his experiences in the army. His first experience, which he takes pains to point out, is freedom. This freedom according to Ljotić came as a part of his duty. This first appeared in the aftermath of the Battle of Kajmakčalan,¹¹⁶ in 1916, which saw the Serbian Army finally manage to dislodge the Bulgarians from the peaks of Kajmakčalan, and forced them on the defensive. During this time Ljotić's duties primarily consisted of writing battle and evaluation reports that he describes as both 'sharp and sarcastic', and of operations and higher officers.¹¹⁷

Ljotić recalls that he did not find the army 'difficult' and that he undertook his duty with dedication and with free will. Ljotić goes further by stating that between the ages of twenty-

¹¹⁴ *Mlada Bosna* (Young Bosnia). A secret revolutionary society dedicated to the overthrow of the Habsburg Monarchy. Founded in Sarajevo in the early 20th century, it became especially active after the latter's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908. Made up of Catholic, Muslim, and Orthodox adherents, its main impetus was to unite Bosnia with the independent Serbian Principality, either as part of a wider Pan-Slavic federation, or a narrower Serbian nationalism. Most noted for the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June, 1914. For more see Veselin Masleša, *Mlada Bosna* (Belgrade, Izdanje kulture, 1945).

¹¹⁵ "Iz moga života" in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 289.

¹¹⁶ Dragan Djukić, "Pedagoško-andragoška misao i rad Dimitrija Ljotića (2)," 22.

¹¹⁷ "Iz moga života", in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 293.

three to twenty-nine, his six years in the army was the best period of his life.¹¹⁸ By dint of his participation in active combat duty, as opposed to his previous war experiences as a medical orderly, Ljotić turned his back on Tolstoy's interpretation of Christianity. He states that at this time he wasn't entirely within the 'reach of the Church', but he was steadily moving in that direction. He felt shame that he was seemingly 'hiding away' while others were risking their lives, and felt compelled by honour (and paradoxically, love) to do his duty. His wartime experience was marked not only by personal courage, but also by the witnessing of immense suffering, of which affected Ljotić greatly.

It was while at the front that Ljotić became acquainted with the basic political philosophy of Georges Valois, through Valois' *L'Homme qui vient: Philosophie de l'autorité*¹¹⁹ (The Coming Man: Philosophy of Authority). Given that he was under the stress and danger of combat, thinking of one's own existence, mortality, and for what it is being risked for, Ljotić can perhaps be forgiven for not having a clear perspective of what he would later perceive to be authority, at this point. *L'Homme qui vient* was to influence Ljotić greatly. Valois and Ljotić shared similar wartime experiences, so it is perhaps unsurprising that he would turn to Valois as a means to understand what was going on around him. It was this work, which lead Ljotić to conclusions about the nature and relationship of authority to the state.

Ljotić, Valois, the path of least resistance, and the nature of authority

Valois had previously been attracted to a form of anarcho-syndicalism, before becoming a member of the AF. In *L'Homme qui vient*, Valois outlines his social and economic doctrines that would later serve as the basis for his later thought and action. Much of this thought was based around a synthesis of what Valois described as a scientific law, and a historical myth. Valois' scientific law, which he called the 'law of least effort', argues that 'human energy follows the path of least resistance', by which humankind tends to avoid pains, though Valois stresses that 'any prolonged effort creates fatigue, and eventually pain'.¹²⁰ Valois refers to historical myth as 'following the law of least effort' in that humanity does nothing, and that after having their fill, simply lay down. It would be among this mass, that one man,

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 294.

¹¹⁹ Georges Valois, *L'Homme qui vient. Philosophie de l'autorité* (Paris: Nouvelle librairie nationale, 1923).

¹²⁰ Douglas, *From Fascism to Libertarian Communism*, 11. See also Georges Valois, *L'Homme qui vient. Philosophie de l'autorité*.

stronger or more ambitious, would impose his will, to force others to produce for him.¹²¹ It should be noted that for Valois, as is evidenced in the nuanced way in which he approaches it, social Darwinism is a continuous theme. Valois contends that in nature, brute force and slavery is necessary in order to oblige men to work, and that the only constants in life are strength and struggle.¹²² As a result, the best form of government would be the person with the greatest interest in the continued prosperity of the state. Valois found the answer to this question by postulating for the return of a hereditary monarch, even if he would need prodding to accept such a position.¹²³

Ljotić was extremely interested in questions pertaining to man's inclination, and to the nature of man's relationship not just with God, but also with himself. He picked up on Valois' observation on man's inclinations, stating that 'all nature, animate and inanimate' like man, pursues the same goal, that of least resistance.¹²⁴ It is only the saintly and the brave who manage to overcome their self-inertia in order to work. The heroic character, and of will, as defined by Valois was also taken by Ljotić. To Ljotić, the foremost characteristic of bravery is that of sacrifice. This sacrifice would not simply take the form of a physical self-sacrifice, but the willingness to sacrifice for others, and for higher ideals.¹²⁵ As veterans of the First World War, Valois and Ljotić had the same, shared front-line experience, which in this case would coalesce around the issue of the 'will' and of the nature of authority.

As man was by nature inclined to idleness and the path of least resistance in the minds of Ljotić and Valois, it was the 'will' of an individual, which made them act, and made them brave. Ljotić credits his firmness and his 'will' on the army, and on war.¹²⁶ This firmness was evidenced not only by a strong individual will, but also of the appearance of having strong willpower in the eyes of others. This thinking of the will was also tied to freedom. For, Ljotić, the will, or an ideal, can only be attained at the costs of effort, pain, and sacrifice. Ljotić tied a sense of will to the mastery of one's self, the completion of 'whole man', or 'whole woman' would come after one first attained a spiritual mastery over their inclinations

¹²¹ Valois, *L'Homme qui vient. Philosophie de l'autorité*, 47.

¹²² Ibid. 50.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ljotić, *Light of Truth*, 33

¹²⁵ "Merilo kojim se ne meri" in Ljotić, *Videlo u tami*, 28.

¹²⁶ "Iz moga života", in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 294.

and desires.¹²⁷ Personal cleansing, especially in times of great suffering and strife was a sign of not just will, but of bravery, and the desire for freedom.

Ljotić was theorising and pondering during a time, between 1915 and 1916 of great upheaval not just for himself, but also for the entire Serbian army, and for Serbia itself. In 1915, Ljotić, along with the majority of the army, retreated from Serbia into Albania, in the eventual hope of reaching Allied lines. This hardship, termed the Great Serbian Retreat,¹²⁸ saw Ljotić as a direct witness to the deprivations of disease, starvation, lack of logistics, and constant harassing attacks from all sides. It is therefore not surprising that a ‘strong will’ or ‘firmness’ was necessary in order to keep one’s self together. It was at this time that Ljotić saw his wartime observations coming to light. While passing through Kosovo, Ljotić recognised what he deemed to be the ‘Serbian mission’. Serbs likened the Serbian retreat through Kosovo as ‘Christ on the cross’.¹²⁹

Ljotić saw the trials and ordeals of the Serbian military as providential not just for the army, but for Serbia as a whole. There was a real chance, in Ljotić’s mind, of attaining ‘freedom’, and real ‘will’, through trials and tribulations in order to build the perfect man, and the ideal state, with God at its head. However, at this time, and under the influence of Valois, Ljotić, using what he saw in the army as a microcosm for his later writings on societal organisation, and for society in general, began seriously pondering the relationship of the state to authority. As a result, he would, based on his ‘conclusions’ of his wartime experience, break from his earlier mode of thinking of the state, and society, as being detached from authority.

Ljotić’s first ‘conclusion’ was on the direct relationship of authority to society. He writes that after careful consideration and observation (from the frontlines), that authority is closely linked with human society, as an organic and inseparable authority.¹³⁰ Ljotić was also concerned with, and critical of, those who power is vested in. Again, using his war time experiences (his aforementioned freedom), as a basis for his later thinking, he saw a far greater role being placed on training, and on supposed qualifications, rather than personal

¹²⁷ Ljotić, *Light of Truth*, 50.

¹²⁸ A result of Serbia’s encirclement and invasion by the forces of Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Germany. Soldiers and civilians alike joined in the general retreat, and were subject to poor transport, lack of medical supplies, and constant threat and attack from all sides.

¹²⁹ “Iz moga života”, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 319.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 296.

character. Here, as with bravery being a foremost characteristic, so, according to Ljotić was honesty. For without honesty, Ljotić surmised, there can be no trust, and without trust, no action, or work. The actions of certain officers at the front, in Ljotić's mind, directly correlated to the link between honesty, bravery, and real power.¹³¹ Therefore, Ljotić's third 'conclusion' was tied in with his second 'conclusion'. Basing his observations on the actions of higher officers, he came to the decision that in times of dangerous situations, such as war, a 'heroic higher staff' was needed, in terms of bravery, honesty, will, and sacrifice. Fourthly, Ljotić saw that society, in his eyes, could not be built without struggle.

He continues by saying that human society cannot be expected from 'peace, joy, and a state of happiness'.¹³² This is likened to his earlier belief in the providential mission of the Serbian nation, which he began writing on in the aftermath of the Serbian 1915 retreat. Ljotić also recognises providence in regard to his own person. While being wounded twice, Ljotić concedes that without God's protection, he truly is weak, and also freely admits to his own weakness. He welcomed the creation of Yugoslavia on 1 December, 1918, and in that he saw it as providential. He would later lament however, that South Slavic unity was not complete without the Bulgarians, and that Yugoslavia, but the enthusiasm welcoming the new state was a great force.¹³³ At this stage, Ljotić's early formal influence can be said to end. He would of course, continue to be influenced by domestic and foreign events in the future, but a crystallisation of thought and ideology were starting to take form.

Conclusion

There is nothing inherently outlandish about Ljotić's ideological progression. For him, atheism was anathema to human perfection, to the collective will, and to society. Ljotić's writings attest to his religiosity, with the theme of God, and God as love, God as purity, and God as truth, being evident early on. His religious belief also showed itself in his approach to social organisation and hierarchy. His strong Christian values, based on his perception of faith may be a possible predictor of his anti-Semitism. These will be further discussed in the succeeding sections of this thesis. Moreover, the early experiences of Ljotić, especially pertaining to his wartime experiences have been essential to the formation of his ideas, and

¹³¹ Ibid. 303.

¹³² Ibid. 309.

¹³³ Dragan Djukić, "Pedagoško-andragoška misao i rad Dimitrija Ljotića (2)," 22.

of the tribulations and challenges that would arise because of it. The strong grounding in faith and in God, and sincere nationalism certainly informed his opinion of the importance of being of service to others, especially for people belonging to his nation, through his actions. According to Paxton, the beginning of fascism development is the desire to deconstruct the existing system because of its flaws and create a new system for the betterment of society. It was (partly as will be shown) through this drive that Ljotić created ZBOR as a means of freeing society from the unfairness of the dominant philosophies and as a means of collectively addressing the common troubles of people within his nation. His determination to create his own movement, as a solution to his perceived crisis or problem, is a trait that may liken him to fascist. But this however, is just the initial stage of fascism, which may be considered a superficial basis for claiming comparability between the two entities: Ljotić and fascism. As will be shown, Ljotić's call for a new system would be able to find, for a time, tolerance under a dictatorial monarchic regime.

Using the concepts of *zadruga*, and the *domaćin*, Ljotić, under the influence of the Russian Slavophiles and the AF, calls for a harmonious union and organisation of society, based, not unlike the Estates General of pre-Revolution France. This 'organic union'¹³⁴ was to have God at its head, though the King is to be vested with God's grace and act benevolently to his subjects, who are in turn organised within their industry, community, and family, along similar lines as outlined in Ljotić's *domaćinstvo*.

Atheism, according to Ljotić was a part of a much larger malaise that had afflicted Europe since the French Revolution. This malaise was the Revolution itself, with Ljotić identifying it as the harbinger of the modern ills of individualism, capitalism, atheism, materialism, and Marxism. Marxism, a topic on which Ljotić wrote extensively, and its negation was to be a major influence on his worldview, viewed through a religious and nationalist lens. Ljotić feared a Communist revolution for the bloodshed and anarchy, which he felt would surely arise from such an endeavour, which in part explain his vision of the state.

¹³⁴ Organic nationalism, shaped and formed through elements of romanticist thought, hold that the world has always consisted of natural nations, and that these nations are bedrocks of history. These differing nations can be easily ascertained by pointing out cultural differences. This assumption of primordialist nations and nationalism, was utilised by Maurras and Ljotić, borrowing from de Maistre, to legitimise and justify their conception of social hierarchy and order. For more see; Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1998).

The state, in Ljotić's early thinking underwent radical changes. In his early years, under the influence of Leo Tolstoy, Ljotić gravitated to a so-called Christian Anarchism, and accepted Tolstoy's interpretation of the state as the creator of all that is evil. He would later come to completely reject this view, though it is worth pointing out that to the Slavophiles, though they were autocrats, were in their own way, anarchists as well. Nicholas Riasanovsky makes this point by stating that the Slavophiles were 'anarchists of a peculiar kind'. They regarded every form of the state as evil, but were convinced that the state was also a reality that couldn't be avoided.¹³⁵ Ljotić's conception of the state underwent changes as a result of his war experience. Basing his views on society in part through the hierarchy he was subject to in the military, in addition to a religiously based corporativism, he saw that the state and authority were inevitably linked, or else anarchy would reign. By that token, there was the question of the 'will'. Qualifications, or position alone were not enough to denote or rather to command respect.

What were needed in Ljotić's opinion were bravery, honesty, and a willingness to sacrifice. A strong will was needed, and based on Valois' law of least resistance, in order to lead, because it was only with a strong will that man would overcome his natural inertia and be inclined to effort. Above all, based on his experiences, Ljotić believed that life was a struggle, a constant conflict. This enlightened him to his purpose of addressing this conflict; hence his future creation of the ZBOR movement. In his mind one should not expect to achieve a harmonious society without struggle, just like one has to struggle against one's own personal interests and inclinations in order to achieve spiritual regeneration, and perfection. One form of struggle that Ljotić envisioned was the need for the creation of a new society through his ZBOR movement in order to address the troubles of his time. His personal struggles became his driving force (but not catalyst, as will be shown) toward envisioning the creation of ZBOR that is needed to end unfairness in society. The perception of the need for a radical change may also be similar to fascist ideals, but Ljotić's methods were different from Fascist Italy and other known fascists, as will be seen in the succeeding sections of this thesis. Establishing these distinctions is essential to understanding ZBOR and its progress through its lifetime, as what will be discussed in the succeeding sections of this thesis.

¹³⁵ Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles: A Study of Romantic Ideology*, 149.

Another constant in Ljotić's early formation, and one not previously thoroughly covered, is the wider European context from which he drew his influences. In this European context, Ljotić viewed everything negative as stemming from what he viewed as values installed by the Enlightenment¹³⁶(as a historically specific conception), and embodied in the French Revolution. This rejection of supposed 'Enlightenment values' was a mainstay of earlier conservative philosophers who viewed the revolution in France with disdain for the suffering it caused. Among these philosophers was Joseph de Maistre,¹³⁷ who appealed to what he perceived to be empirical facts of history, and human behaviour, to discredit the political and social changes of the French Revolution. He preached sacredness of the past, and the virtue of subjugation to monarchies, whether temporal or spiritual, as counterweight to the incurable and corrupt nature of man. This was in direct contrast to the top-down 'civil religion', by which elements of popular, or folk religion are incorporated into the glorification of either nation or political culture.

Maurras, and later Ljotić, not only adapted elements of de Maistre's social hierarchy, they also continued his tradition of anti-modernism, especially in regards to nations and nationalism, as constant 'organic entities', which, in the twentieth century, would be an attempt to render modernist discourse as superfluous and irrelevant. What this shows, is that far from originality of thought, Ljotić, was immersed in currents of pre-existing heterogeneous political and philosophical thought. What would add to Ljotić's 'originality' was this application, based on his personal interpretation of such ideas, into what he perceived to be as Yugoslav, and later a narrower Serbian sense of 'tradition', and the domestic situation in the new Yugoslav state. This interpretation would change again, with the occupation of Yugoslavia by Nazi Germany, whose ideological influences would begin to assert itself in Ljotić's synthesis of his syncretistic ideology.

¹³⁶ The trans-national term 'Enlightenment' has become interchangeable to the point of confusion. For a narrower focus, the 'enlightenment' had its social centre in France, as such that the tenets of its beliefs were most widely disseminated there. As the term itself is not clear, 'enlightenment' as a generic concept will be taken to mean the replacing of darkness with light, which, taken metaphorically can be applied to the replacing of ignorance with wisdom.

¹³⁷ Joseph de Maistre, known as Joseph-Marie, Comte de Maistre (1753-1821) was a defender of hierarchical order and monarchism in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution. Viewing the Revolution as providential for the monarchy's promotion in France of the atheism of the 'philosophes', de Maistre viewed rationalism as a cover for chaos and violence, and is considered to be a leading proponent of a European conservatism, though of a more authoritarian strand of 'throne and altar', which can be transliterated into support for monarchic autocracy. His writings would leave a lasting impression on Charles Maurras. For more see Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France. Suivi de Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques*. (Editions complexe, 2006). ; Joseph de Maistre, *Oeuvres*, ed. Glaudes, Pierre (Robert Laffont, 2007).

The early ideology of Ljotić can be seen to be composed from a sense of nationalism, partly from familial experience, but also from his understanding of history. Moreover, his devotion to his family and familial ties further strengthened his nationalism and loyalty to the monarchy. These initial set of ideology that developed in his early years as a young adult served as a significant aspect of the foundation of his development. Through an analysis of Ljotić's ideological precursors, and a crystallisation among themes such as monarchism, anti-democratic, and anti-modernist thought, a particular trend begins to emerge, which would lead to its expression in the early decades of the twentieth century through the politically extreme radical right.

What is also evident, especially in the case of Ljotić, is the deep complexity and heterogeneity of not only his individual ideological development and formation, but that of the radical right as well, as distinct from fascism, or from a more moderate yet 'traditionalist' mainstream conservative thought. This amorphous 'grey area' also leads to numerous problems in attempting to label Ljotić and the ZBOR movement. While initially authoritarian, neither Ljotić nor ZBOR were clearly delineated as fascist outside of the Marxist camp of interpretation. This is contrasted with the turmoil and instability of Nazi occupation where ZBOR, and Ljotić personally, would exhibit signs of Nazification while attempting to maintain what he felt was his original and traditional thought and ideology.

This then poses the question as to where does ZBOR fit in a European context, and where, if we take ZBOR as an organisational manifestation of Ljotić's ideological evolution, does it fit into the political milieu of early twentieth century Europe?

Chapter 2: Ljotić's thought in a wider European context

Ljotić frequently praised Charles Maurras and the AF. Hence the question that arises is whether Ljotić wanted to impart and implant elements of Maurras' thought into a Yugoslav context. If so, then was it to be a full imposition or one sensitive and flexible in adapting to local conditions? This chapter will highlight Ljotić's ideological development within an already existing European monarchist and nationalist current, as exemplified by Charles Maurras and the AF. Maurras and the AF exerted the greatest influence over the formation of both Ljotić and ZBOR in regard to ideology and social policy, under the tripartite slogan of 'God, Monarchy, and Province', (in ZBOR's case province would be substituted by *domaćin*).¹ This is not to downplay the importance of Slavophile and pan-Slavic mystical thought in Ljotić's evolution. However, on an organised political level, the AF would exert much more influence than the more romantic and abstract thinking of the Slavophiles who never managed to organise themselves into a cohesive movement. These policies, with slight alteration would be adopted by Ljotić and applied, albeit abstractly and arbitrarily into the political life of interwar Yugoslavia. It would be perceived by ZBOR as an attempt at a 'third way' between capitalism and communism, striving for national, political, and social harmony and unity. The emphasis on 'abstract', as will be shown in later chapters, will refer to the supposed superficiality of ZBOR's ideology, which was often little expounded upon by Ljotić, or was couched in semi-mystical nuances and metaphors rendering it largely incomprehensible and incoherent to even potential supporters.

This was in contrast to the writings of Maurras, and the political activities of the AF, who seemingly had a well-defined and clear political program, namely, the return of the monarchy by any means.² As this chapter will show, Ljotić and ZBOR would define its ideological core

¹ The term applies both to 'host', and 'household', and is intending to portray a sense of order and harmony within ZBOR's social hierarchy, based on as will be shown, on the socio-political and socio-economic formula of 'God, King, Nation'.

² Much has been published in both English and French historiographies in regard to the AF, both from an ideological-political, to a more cultural-literary approach. For more see Victor Nguyen, *Aux origines de l'Action*

through various radical-right and authoritarian strands present within the AF, the foremost being monarchism, nationalism, and the AF's corporatism, though not always as a direct imitation. ZBOR's ideological formation would show more similarities in the interwar era to the model of the AF than Fascism or National Socialism (to be expounded on in the next chapter), when viewed through an authoritarian radical right wing, and monarchist prism, which would incorporate fascist elements, as opposed to a strictly narrow or imitative fascist paradigm. This would be in contrast, on a domestic Yugoslav level, with the more fascist like the Croatian *Ustaša* movement, which espoused a virulent Croatian nationalism, and like ZBOR, would collaborate with the Axis powers during the Second World War, but emphasised a more strident revolutionary and racist aspect to its ideology.³

Secondly, in a wider European context of interwar nationalism and monarchism, the appearance of the AF saw a modern dimension to the discourse-surrounding counter-revolutionary thought. The AF's ideological framework and template would become a sort of brand name for numerous organisations, chiefly for the *Integralismo Lusitano* (Lusitanian Integralism) in Portugal, and to a lesser degree, for the *Associazione Nazionalista Italiana* (Italian Nationalist Association) in Italy, and the literary *Acción Española* (Spanish Action), in Spain. Thus a breakdown and analysis of the AF's key ideological tenets, is critical to understanding ZBOR's ideological antecedents within a pre-fascist, nationalist, monarchist, and traditionalist context of 'counter-revolutionary' discourse and thought.

Furthermore, even though ZBOR's appearance on the political scene in 1935 coincided with the formation of numerous imitative fascist movements and parties throughout Europe, its formation would not be inspired on the whole by fascism. This chapter, therefore, will contribute to a better understanding not only of the ZBOR movement, its ideological antecedents, and its ideological and organisational application in a local Yugoslav context. It will also however contribute to the debate surrounding the non-static phenomenon of extreme right movements as a whole and their adaptation to mass politics and local political cultures throughout Europe, specifically their later partial appropriation by Fascism and National Socialism. This will add further nuances to the complex picture of Ljotić and the ZBOR

Française: intelligence et politique vers 1900 (Paris: Fayard, 1991).; François. Huguenin, *L'Action française: une histoire intellectuelle* (Paris: Perrin, 2011).; Jacques. Prévotat, *L'action française* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2004).; Weber, *Action Française : Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France*. Maurras' ideas were most clearly defined in Charles Maurras, *Mes Idées Politiques. Les grandes études politiques et sociales* (Paris: A. Fayard, 1937).

³ For more on the Ustaša see introduction.

movement, and contribute to the understanding of ZBOR as a movement primarily of the mainstream European interwar radical and authoritarian right.

The Action Française: Origins and Thought Development

The AF has long been perceived as the ideological and intellectual depository of Charles Maurras. While no doubt true, the structural origins of what would later become the AF were formed without Maurras. The founding of what would later be the AF, an abstract theoretical and esthetical concept began in 1898, with the founding of the journal of *L'Action Française* in April of that year. Under the initial leadership of Henri Vaugeois, and Maurice Pujo, *L'Action Française* soon evolved into a more organised political movement, the *Comité de l'Action Française* (French Action Committee), officially proclaimed at a conference on 20 June, 1899.⁴ The founding of a literary review, the *Revue de l'Action Française* on 10 July, 1899, followed this act.⁵ What the founding of the AF would show, would be a markedly different initial and formative stage from that of ZBOR, with Maurras' initial political aims and thought, as will be shown, being markedly different from Ljotić's.

In its initial phase, Maurras, as previously stated, had no involvement with the founding of the French Action Committee, which attempted to portray itself as a non-party movement, similar to a pressure group, whose interest it was to influence elections towards a nationalism based on national unity. In fact, neither Pujo, nor Vaugeois were monarchists (initially), and the committee espoused republican, conservative, nationalist, and traditionalist ideals, similar to that of Maurice Barrès.⁶ Maurras at this time was embarking on his journalist career, turned to political polemics in the aftermath of the Dreyfus affair.⁷

⁴ Henri Vaugeois, *L'Action française, conférence du 20 juin 1899*, Paris, Bureaux de l'Action française, 1899.

⁵ Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France*, 20.

⁶ Maurice Barrès (1862-1923). A French journalist and politician, best known for his trilogy 'The Cult of the Self' between 1888-1891. A romanticist and individualist, and anti-Dreyfusard, he founded a short-lived literary review 'La Cocarde' from 1894-1895, which attempted to bridge the gap between extreme left and extreme right, of which Maurras was an occasional contributor to. Close to the AF and Maurras, he was anti-monarchist, and along with Maurras, conceived the nation in terms of 'ethnicity'. His virulent anti-Semitism differed from Maurras' in its base in pseudo-scientific racial theories, as well as his stringent anti-monarchism. For more see Michael Curtis, *Three against the Third Republic: Sorel, Barrès, and Maurras* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010).; Robert Soucy, "Barrès and Fascism," *French Historical Studies* 5, no. 1 (1967), 67-97.; Zeev Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français* (Brussels: Complexe, 1985).

⁷ The Dreyfus Affair was a political scandal that divided and radicalised France from 1894 until 1896. Seen as a gross case of injustice, the scandal centred on the case of Alfred Dreyfus, on trial for treason. In the context of German annexation of Alsace, after the traumatic French defeat of the 1870-1871 Franco-Prussian War, Dreyfus' Jewish origin would also see an increase in nationalism and anti-Semitism. The Affair resulted in a

To Maurras, the Dreyfus Affair clearly showed that the French Third Republic was powerless to resolve state affairs.⁸ His political journalism started with his articles in *Le Soleil* (The Sun) in May 1895, which he claimed to have agreed to do by reading the Philippic of Demosthenes.⁹ By 1899, he had set up his own literary review, the AF, as an offshoot of the existing journal of Pujo and Vaugeois, which began publication on 1 August, 1899.¹⁰ It was through this journal, which Maurras attempted to turn the existing French Action Committees of Pujo and Vaugeois into a more thoroughly monarchist oriented movement, based on his political ideals.

What then, were Maurras' ideas? How did he decide on monarchism as the best form of government in which to unify, and protect, and regenerate and reorganise France? What were the ideological antecedents of his thinking and how did they fit into the political thinking of the early twentieth century, and why did they become an ideological beacon for a European nationalist political mobilisation?

Charles Maurras: Art and Politics as Aesthetics

Maurras' early biographical chronology shows his being raised in a partially monarchist and Catholic environment on his maternal side. In the aftermath of the 1871 French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the societal slide to Republicanism, with even many monarchists accepting this as inevitable.¹¹ In his early youth, Maurras, under the influence of noted Provençal poet Frédéric Mistral, became a disciple of the regionalist and federalist *Félibrige*

deep political cleavage between the Republicans and nationalists, as well as accentuating anti-Semitism in France in all social strata.

⁸ The French Third Republic was a Republican form of government in France from 1870 until 1940. Its shape was codified by the French Constitutional Law of 1875, which saw the creation of a Chamber of Deputies and Senate to serve as legislature, with executive power in the presidency. With the Radical-Socialist coalition victory in the 1936 elections, sweeping reforms, based on trade union wishes were introduced thus exacerbating existing polarisation. It fell with the Nazi invasion of France in 1940. For more see Philippe Bernard and Henri Dubief, *The Decline of the Third Republic 1919-1939* (Cambridge University Press, 1988).; Pierre Miquel, *La Troisième République* (Fayard, 1989). For a monarchist and AF view of the Third Republic see Jacques Bainville, *La Troisième République* (Arthème Fayard, 1935).

⁹ Curtis, *Three against the Third Republic*, 59.

¹⁰ Ibid. 96.

¹¹ Within the last twenty years, Maurras has been the subject of numerous political and intellectual biographies, thus cementing interest in him amongst certain academic circles within France. See particularly Olivier Dard, *Charles Maurras. Le maître et l'action* (Amand Colin, 2013). ; Stéphane Giocanti, *Maurras: le chaos et l'ordre* (Paris: Flammarion, 2008). ; Toby Kunter, *Charles Maurras. La Contre-Révolution pour héritage* (Nouvelles Editions Latines, 2009).

movement.¹² Maurras fostered a deep love for his native region, and it would seem logical then that he would then later argue for a decentralised monarchy, which would theoretically protect the local rights and customs of the various regions that made up what he considered to be the French state. His championing of Provençal linguistic and cultural particularity would evolve into a wider ‘French’ emphasis on cultural collectivity as opposed to individuality. Indeed, Maurras’ primary influences were artistic, and not political. He considered order within art and literature as tantamount and indeed a precursor to art in society. Maurras’ artistic aesthetics were such that he argued for an artistic reformation based on a renewal of style, and of order and movement, which Maurras took to the organisation of one’s thoughts.¹³

Maurras’ origins and early influences show a marked change from Ljotić. Ljotić’s thinking would be largely abstract, based primarily on his usage of religious metaphors and mysticism. As a result, his conception of culture, as will be shown, and indeed of civilisation would be based on a sincere Christian belief. This could not be said of Maurras, who championed a sort of artistic reformation and claimed he is a champion of France’s Greco-Roman civilisational past. Ljotić would not invoke any memory of Greco-Roman civilisation, as civilisation for him, as will be shown, was given and enhanced through Christianity, and local customs. The source cultural inspiration of both men would be reflected in the histories of their respective countries.

The essence of this artistic reformation according to Maurras was to achieve simplicity, to perceive what is essential, which could be found in tradition, though tradition, like nations, were not equal, which in Maurras’ mind, reflected the superiority of man, or of nation, over another. Maurras believed himself to be the champion of classicism, linking aesthetics and politics in his indictments and accusations against the French Third Republic. This classicism, especially the Athenian *polis* of Socrates, for Maurras represented the pinnacle of human society, and that the nature and degree of man’s dependence on a social and political

¹² The *Félibrige* movement, from the Provençal word *Félibre* (follower), was the creation of the noted poet Frédéric Mistral in 1854. Its original function was to promote, and indeed to protect, the Occitan language, and its various dialects through literature, music, theatre, and art. Organised into sections from 1862, based on the regions making up Occitania (Aquitaine, Auvergne, Catalonia Gascony-Haut-Languedoc, Languedoc, Limousin, and Provence), each section was headed by a board composed of a trustee, vice-trustees, secretary, and treasurer. Charles Maurras dedicated an article to the movement. See Charles Maurras, “Les Félibres. Barbares et Romains,” *Le Plume*, no. 53 (1891), 213–237. Written in memory of the death of Joseph Roumanille, who was a member.

¹³ Weber, *Action Française : Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France*, 10.

community that determined the quality of his life, both ethical and material.¹⁴ Classicism, in Maurras' thinking, was the essence of France's inheritance of civilisations best aspects. In Maurras' mind, this classicism, representing reason, discipline and order, was being replaced in both art and politics by romanticism, which symbolised anarchy, and the passions. It was classicism, which made France unique, as classicism was the pinnacle of human civilisation, so to was France, as an inheritor and guardian of such a civilisation.

It was Maurras' opinion of classicism, which would form the basis of his later political ideals much like the idea of the Slavic commune and pan-Slavism would for Ljotić. Maurras' classicism was as much literary as political, and would act as a cornerstone of his later politics. His travels to Florence and Athens, ostensibly to view the Olympics, were published in 1901 as *Anthinéa*.¹⁵ This interesting and stylistically verbose work in part political expression and in part travelogue, reads as a personal pilgrimage, where the nature, landscapes, and heritage of Greece are compared to Maurras' beloved Provence. Politically, it helped shape Maurras' later views on democracy. His arrival in Greece saw him reject everything that he viewed as un-Greek, or rather un-Attic.¹⁶ It is an easy step to substitute 'Greek' for 'French' in Maurras' thought process, and his entire trip, leading back to Provence, is characterised as 'linking that which hold us together', which in Maurras mind, is a classical, Latin, and Mediterranean culture, of which France was a leading light. France, and France's classical tradition were under threat to be replaced in aesthetic terms by romanticism, and in more concrete political terms by the rise of liberty and anarchy, which were associated with democracy and individualism. A France, where such social diseases such as democracy had not tainted the classical tradition, was a main premise of Maurras' later politics, under the guise of the regenerative and restorative monarchic institution.

Ljotić would not share Maurras' views and predilection towards ancient Greece and Rome. Or at the very least he never publicly disclosed them. His public views and writings on

¹⁴Michael Sutton, *Nationalism, Positivism, and Catholicism: The Politics of Charles Maurras and French Catholics, 1890-1914*, Cambridge Studies in the History and Theory of Politics (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 29.

¹⁵ Charles Maurras, *Anthinéa; d'Athènes à Florence* (Paris: Félix Juven, 1901).

¹⁶ It is here that Maurras introduces the term *métèque*, from the Greek *métoikos*, which refers to those who have literally 'changed location' as a reference to those elements, which he deemed harmful to France's unity. Maurras had earlier used the term in an article for *La Cocarde*, in 1894, and was accepted by the Academie Française in 1927.

culture, as will be shown, would be largely based on and shaped by Romanticism, though he applied it in a highly reductionist manner.

Democracy as an evil

Democracy to Maurras was the natural state or recourse of primitive societies and states fallen into barbarism.¹⁷ Maurras attacked democracy as the harbinger of individualism and decadence.¹⁸ Ljotić would later follow Maurras' counter-revolutionary anti-democratic thought from its inception, but would differ in application. In his own words, Maurras states that he took his views on democracy 'from Renan, who took them from de Maistre and Bonald, who took them from the great traditions of the human mind'.¹⁹ At its core, Maurras argued, democracy was 'unnatural' and 'inorganic', society was a fact of nature, as opposed to the democratic 'contract of wills'.²⁰ Democracy was supposed to signify a decadent 'regime of profit and immediate pleasures', which would forget the past and neglect the future.²¹ For France, the results of democracy were clear. According to Maurras, 'democracy is evil, democracy is death'.²² In Maurras' thinking, democracy and individualism were intrinsically linked. Maurras' attack on democracy, and indeed on the existing French parliamentary regime was based on the idea that democracy was individualist, decadent, and deadly, which would undermine the natural and organic unity of society. Those whom democracy was supposed to benefit, the 'people', were viewed by Maurras as inorganic collectives, who were unable to think with reason.²³

Maurras viewed liberty, linked with democracy, as unrealistic due to its being built on the 'ignoble lie' of popular sovereignty,²⁴ where interests that were detrimental to the state took precedence. To this end, Maurras propagated what he called *nationalisme intégral*²⁵ (Integral Nationalism), as a practical means with which to combat democracy. This integral

¹⁷ Charles Maurras, "Autorité et Souveraineté," *L'Action française*, 15 August, 1915, Year 8, No.226, 1.

¹⁸ See chapter 1 for more of Maurras' attacks on democracy.

¹⁹ Charles Maurras, *Les Princes des Nuées* (Paris: Jules Tallandier, 1928), 59. The ideas of de Maistre and Bonald will be expanded on later in this chapter.

²⁰ Curtis, *Three against the Third Republic*, 68.

²¹ Charles Maurras, *L'Allée des Philosophes* (Paris: Editions Crès, 1924), 28

²² Charles Maurras, *L'Enquête sur la monarchie 1900-1909* (Paris: Nouvelle librairie nationale, 1925), 121.

²³ Charles Maurras, *La Contre-révolution spontanée: La recherche, la discussion, l'émeute, 1899-1939* (Lyon: Henri Lardenchet, 1943), 112.

²⁴ Charles Maurras, "Pour Calvin," *L'Action française*, 4 November, 1909, Year 2 No.308, 1.

²⁵ See Charles Maurras, "Le Nationalisme Intégral," *L'Action française*, March 21, 1908, No.1, 1.

nationalism, the union of patriotism and a hereditary monarchy, using French national interest as a starting point, would reinvigorate and regenerate France, as well as institute a break between the political and social. However, it would only be achievable through the return of the monarchy.

The AF's first official refutation of individualism and democracy came in the form of the Declaration of 15 November, 1899. In this declaration, the AF set out themes for society's survival: unity and discipline. The rule of an impartial arbiter, devoted to the general interest, would reconcile and unite the country. Democracy, or rather rulers who take democracy as their source of legitimacy, lacked the authority to make government truly effective. Kings, above all interests, were associated with the general interest of the realm and its subjects.²⁶ The aim of this declaration was to prove that society, built on the existing liberal order, was less free than the proposed monarchic solution. What was needed in the interim was authority. This authority would be a product of organic certainty. This certainty was to be found in the institution of the monarchy, one that was supposed to be the guarantee of France's future rise to its former glory.

What was becoming salient in Maurras' ideological evolution was that submission to authority was in itself a form of freedom, of stability, and continuity. This was buttressed with his idea that the individual owed more to a natural social order, than the reverse. This certainty was to be built along the lines of what Maurras called *politique naturelle*²⁷ (natural politics), which focused on a natural inequality in life. Inequality to Maurras was the basis of human society, which coalesced around a supposed 'organic' hierarchy as opposed to the democratic lie, which was at 'odds with nature'.²⁸ Democracy, by giving the rule to the masses, whom Maurras viewed with contempt, was unable to make competent 'political' decisions. It was with Maurras' influence, that Ljotić would formulate his views on democracy, though by no means, could he be regarded simply as a sycophant. As will be shown, Ljotić would use the AF's template for his own. However, he was operating in a political climate that was both monarchic and after 1929, authoritarian, he was already, in theory, working from a position of relative advantage. The monarchy would not have to be

²⁶ Weber, *Action Française : Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France*, 28–29.

²⁷ See Charles Maurras, *Trois idées politiques : Chateaubriand, Michelet, Sainte-Beuve* (Paris: Honore et Edouard Champion, 1912). Preface.

²⁸ Charles Maurras, *Nos raisons contre la république, pour la monarchie* (Paris: Edition de l'Action Française, 1936).

restored, but the perceived threats of the nation, its path to national unification, and the structure and make up of its socio-economic component, would differ vastly from the conditions faced by Maurras in France.

Ljotić on democracy

Ljotić saw democracy through a similarly narrow prism, which would be based on Maurras' critique of democracy. Ljotić, viewing democracy and individualism as results of the influence of the French Revolution, saw the effects of democracy as divisive. Also, as Ljotić would constantly question, in whose interests did democracy really lie? For Ljotić, the peasantry and artisan class were the mainstays of society. Democracy, in the interests of the banking, or business class, did not therefore always agree with the interests of the peasantry or artisan class.²⁹ Such opposition to democracy may be a superficial similarity between fascism and Ljotić's beliefs. However, the reason why Ljotić viewed democracy as unnecessary and unworthy to be used is that the concept of democracy favours just the majority, which usually builds one class, which has opposite or disagreeing values and needs compared to other groups. Ljotić continues by stating that if 'democracy means 'fair management and the rewarding of hard work, then all parties, even those against democracy, are democratic'.³⁰ While democracy, in Ljotić's opinion cannot create because it is built on a 'colourful lie', it is only through 'hard work' that it can create, and build for society.³¹

Democracy, therefore according to Ljotić is an illusion that constantly boasts of its slogan of 'working for the people', when in reality, it is in the interests only of a small plutocratic ruling elite, who in Ljotić's opinion, enrich themselves at the expense of the people. What Ljotić wanted was inclusive and radical change that will be felt by all and not just the majority. In essence, this concept of looking at a society as a collective group of individuals may not be a fascist way of perceiving things. Fascists tend to look into an individual independently that is why they tend to focus on the internal reconstruction of a nation based on individual improvement instead of focusing on both the social and national aspect of occurrences, which is more descriptive of Ljotić's beliefs and ideals.

²⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Jadna Demokratijo," *Novi Put*, 5 June, 1938, No.20, 1.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Moreover, Ljotić later claimed that Jews were responsible for the advent of liberal democracy, as well as Freemasonry and Communism, which makes them enemies of both ZBOR and the Yugoslav state.

Ljotić's criticism of democracy, like that of Maurras would be steeped in terms of economic freedom and liberation from capitalist atomisation and individualism, which decays national unity. Ljotić goes further by stating that there is no freedom in those who are forced to sell their labour just to maintain themselves at a minimum sustenance, at the expense of capitalism.³² A democratic system could not be maintained not only because of its supposed irresponsible and disorderly nature, but also because of the threat it posed to social order. He considered democracy and parliamentary closely linked to liberal capitalism.³³

He did however make an exception for the United States, which was liberal, yet not parliamentary, it was nonetheless a result of 'un-organic' methods.³⁴ Great Britain on the other hand, was ruining its own great traditions with the attempts of British conservatives to maintain global capitalist production.³⁵ ZBOR called for a break with democracy, for it was an 'empty shell', and called for the creation of a social order, based on the old Slavonic concept of *zadrugarstvo*,³⁶ which would protect the 'vital interests of the people'.

This break was necessary in Ljotić's thinking because of his opinion of communism as the logical outcome of the chaos of liberal democracy.³⁷ The concept of 'work' as an antithesis to democracy, while not clearly defined, was tied in with the concept of 'order', and 'discipline'. Maurras as well, referred to the 'order of work', by which the way to worsen the condition of national unity was to stop working. Work, was not the only prism through which democracy was scrutinised. The belief that democracy was inevitably tied in with modernisation, industrialisation, and social and economic factors, was at the forefront of both men's analysis of democracy.

³² Dimitrije Ljotić, "Ka ekonomskoj demokratiji," *Otadžbina*, 23 June, 1935, No.68, 1.

³³ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Branicima demokratije," *Otadžbina*, 11 August, 1935, No.75, 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Svetislav Stefanović, "Apsurdni i paradoksi demokratije," *Otadžbina*, 11 December, 1936, No.143, 1.

³⁶ *Zadrugarstvo*, from *zadruga* in the South Slavic languages refers primarily to extended familial groups, though it can also be taken to mean cooperatives. For more on Ljotić's use of this concept see Dimitrije Ljotić, "Ideološke osnove organske ekomonije," *Zbor*, March 1935, No.8.

³⁷ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Dve Revolucije," *Otadžbina*, 1 September, 1935, No.78, 2. Ljotić saw communism and liberal democracy/capitalism as the result of the fruits of individualism.

Both Ljotić and Maurras therefore, focused on tying democracy with liberal economics. Their focus on economics was given more prominence in the aftermath of the 1929 Great Depression, though Ljotić could not be said to be prolific in economic matters. Maurras however, was equally abstract and uninformed in his writing on economics, and both men tied their criticisms of modern capitalism and economics in with the effect both had on their conception and perception of traditional peasant life, and the plight of the superfluous ‘little man’. Maurras however, went further than Ljotić in terms of his willingness to pay lip service to the concerns of the industrial urban working class. Maurras found it natural (briefly) for nationalism and socialism to align in opposition to the ‘revolutionary bloc’, and argued for a socialist resolution to the working class problem (again vaguely defined), posed by industrialisation.³⁸

Nevertheless, for Maurras, the peasantry represented the ‘real France’, and was perceived by him to be naturally monarchic, socially conservative, and obedient to both hierarchy and authority. Maurras in particular, paid scant attention to economic matters, especially with regard to the effect that economics had on politics. Rather, he focused on the effect that politics had on economics, though he would never develop or fully explain his thought in this regard. Ljotić’s economic writings (to be expanded on later) would reveal a base understanding of economic fundamentals, but his view was restricted to what he perceived to be of economic importance for the ‘peasantry’ and agricultural workers.

Maurras would criticise the machinations of capitalism, and of individual capitalists, but would fall short of attacking capitalism itself, partly out of a lack of economic understanding, and partly out of fear of angering his base conservative and upper class support. For Maurras, man, a ‘social animal’, and the atomisation of industrialisation thus strip the ‘social’ away from man. It was in the peasantry, or within the artisan class, where the specific talent and service to society, act as the best safeguard against the machinations of finance and capitalism.³⁹ It also provided a sense of freedom and independence. Capitalism, according to Maurras, was the greatest bane of contemporary intelligence in that intellect was geared towards the search for an economic commodity.⁴⁰ For Maurras however, in linking politics and art, capitalism was not only a political threat, but also one, which devalued and

³⁸ Charles Maurras, “La Politique,” *L’Action française*, 19 April, 1916, Year 8 No.110, 1.

³⁹ “L’Industrie”, in Charles Maurras, *Principes* (Paris: A la Cité des Livres, 1931).

⁴⁰ Charles Maurras, *L’Avenir de Intelligence* (Paris: Flammarion, 1922), 70.

devalourised literature. Maurras lamented that as the social order was increasingly threatened by capitalism and industrialisation, so too was literature, and intelligence as a whole, which were in direct competition with industry, to the detriment of the former.⁴¹ In Maurras' thinking, intellect, or rather intellectual production as a commodity, was a result of increased capitalism and industrialisation.

Anti-capitalism to both men meant political freedom. Ljotić was certainly of this opinion. He stated that he too wants an economic liberation from the games of private and un-organic economic interests who have the people's sweat and tears at their mercy.⁴² Freedom, which would be found through discipline, order, and hierarchy, would ideally be achieved through a hereditary monarchy, which, like society, was organic and harmonious.

Maurras' Classicism notwithstanding, towards the end of the nineteenth century, his political aesthetics were becoming more salient in his thinking, as the theme of decadence, mirrored in art through society, was coming to the forefront. Decadence was the emphasis of what Maurras deemed 'foreign elements', which would rot France from within. It was at its most apparent and evident, when civilisation in Maurras' perception was under threat. It was the triumph of Classicism that would rectify this malaise. Maurras sought to counter this decadence to regenerate and renew France along his lines, and in accordance with his vision of 'classical tradition'. It was here that the AF and Maurras had their greatest effect on Ljotić. Though it must be again stressed, specific local and political conditions within Yugoslavia shaped the nature and structure of Ljotić's adaptation of the AF's theories, Ljotić, like Maurras, would look to monarchism for national growth and unity. However, the opinions of both men towards the institution of the monarchy would show marked differences.

Maurras' Monarchism

With the beginning of his political journalism in 1895, Maurras immersed himself in politics, publishing one of his first overt political pieces, in favour of decentralisation. He wrote that 'decentralisation was an economic, and not a national issue', pointing to the decentralised politics of 'monarchies and republics such as Switzerland, Prussia, Austria, and Belgium',

⁴¹ Ibid. 66.

⁴² Dimitrije Ljotić, "Naši Putevi," *Otadžbina*, 13 January, 1935, No.48, 1.

and the ‘lack of local liberties in France’.⁴³ This was followed two years later by his 1898 publishing of *L'idée de décentralisation* (The idea of decentralisation), where he argued for the subjugation of the nationalist idea to decentralisation as a means of national and local regeneration, with the federated provinces united under the monarchy.⁴⁴ For Maurras, centralisation was akin to a form of slavery as conceivably witnessed under Bonaparte’s rule. His emphasis on decentralisation worried the *Félibrige* movement so much that he was expelled from the movement in 1898 for fear of it being thought as secessionist.⁴⁵

In essence, Maurras’ decentralisation, as a form of federalism, predated his monarchism. It was at this point that we begin to see a distinct change in Maurras’ politics. His focus on decentralisation, based partly on his exposure to his monarchist mother and maternal grandmother, and his attachment to Provence’s local cultural specificities would be overshadowed by his own unique synthesis of a modern conception of French ethnic nationalism (the French of course, not being a race), combined with an existing yet stagnant monarchism that he aimed to re-vitalise. It was with this combination that Maurras began to find an audience, not only through his writing, but also through his personality. It was the method of its monarchism of Maurras, which gave the AF its distinctive flavour. Far from being passive, Maurras would look to a revolutionary monarchism that would not hesitate to use any means necessary to bring itself to power.

Maurras’ monarchism however, was not one based on a providential religious metaphysical conception like that of Ljotić. His monarchism was that of a systematic search for an institutional form of government that would best protect the nation’s national interest. This search would turn into an analytical attempt to solve France’s decline. Maurras takes as his monarchist credentials from his 6 May, 1899, article in *La Gazette de France*, in which he writes that ‘to the hereditary institution of the family, add the permanent ruling entities of the commune, and the province, and the professional stabilising institution of political authority’,⁴⁶ which would thus complete the perfect monarchic formula. Realising however, that the monarchic ideal amongst the majority of the French populace was non-existent,

⁴³ Charles Maurras, “Les Partis politiques et la Décentralisation,” *La Nouvelle Revue*, 1896, 168–170.

⁴⁴ Charles Maurras, “L’idée de décentralisation,” *Revue Encyclopédique*, no. 8 (1898).

⁴⁵ Lawrence D. Krizman, Brian J. Reilly, and M. B. DeBevoise, eds., *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 613.

⁴⁶ See Chapter 1.

Maurras, in *L'Enquête sur la monarchie*⁴⁷ (Survey of the Monarchy), a series of testimonials and reflections, but in effect a sales pitch of monarchism, asks whether a traditional monarchy, decentralised, hereditary and anti-parliamentary, will lead to a public salvation. A monarch, Maurras argues, is necessary from the point of view that he is the best guarantor and protector of patriotism, and for the maintenance of tradition and social order. The establishment of the monarchy according to Maurras is the real objective of the AF, to affect a royalist and monarchic change in France.⁴⁸ The monarch, in a position of unchallenged authority, would not only serve as a guarantor of France, and of instilling patriotism, but being supposedly rulers by their authority alone, monarchs would not interfere with the private lives of citizens and of representative bodies.

In effect, it was through publication of *L'Enquête sur la monarchie*, which solidified Maurras' budding monarchism. Maurras poses the question as to what patriotic Frenchmen must do if they are truly patriotic. The answer for Maurras is simple. If 'you have resolved to be a patriot, you are obliged to be a royalist', since that is 'what reason wants'.⁴⁹ The monarchy for Maurras would be the best stabiliser and support for the establishment of a harmonious order and discipline. To this end, Maurras advocated the establishment of a personal, hereditary, and traditional monarchy. The establishment of such a monarchy in Maurras' thinking, which would see the centralisation of political power in the person of the king and ruling dynasty, would therefore avoid divisive political and electoral struggles. Maurras writes that 'in order to spare ourselves fruitless and dangerous electoral contests', 'power must be entrusted to a family'.⁵⁰

By giving the reins of power to a king or dynasty, Maurras based his opinion on the premise that the king, or indeed the ruling dynasty's wellbeing and survival, is linked with the maintenance and promotion of national unity. Above all, with the return of the monarchy, Maurras was convinced that power would be firmly in French hands again, as opposed to what he deemed to be the 'anti-national forces'.

⁴⁷ Charles Maurras, *L'Enquête sur la monarchie 1900-1909*.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 176.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 203-204.

⁵⁰ Charles Maurras, "Dictator and the King" in J.S. McClelland, *The French Right from de Maistre to Maurras* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 236.

The 'Foreigner' in Maurras' conception of Monarchy and Social Order.

Placing Maurras' thinking regarding the monarchy, social order, and identity in proper context is an important component of understanding not only counter-revolutionary theory, but also how local conditions shaped the evolution of counter-revolutionary thought. While the AF and ZBOR would share superficial external similarities, socio-economic, cultural, and political differences between their respective countries would lead to a divergence of self-interest, in the context of local conditions. Maurras was preoccupied with the idea that foreigners ruled France and that the monarchy was the best protection against further foreign influence, which weakened the French core through the introduction of foreign ideas such as democracy, parliamentary, and the onset of decadence. Republican rule in France according to Maurras was in effect foreign rule. Maurras' theory rested on what he considered to be a conspiracy of foreigners to destroy French values through social institutions, as well as through the abuse French resources and materials. A good government therefore, would protect the national interest instead of forcing the individual to act as a protective barrier in defence of the common interest and French industry. To Maurras, the real rulers of France were those forces, which held power through money, and oligarchy, to the leaders of the socialist movement.⁵¹ Contrary to this vague condemnation of France's internal enemies, Maurras had a clearly delineated and outlined theory of who the foreigners were. They were delegated by Maurras to be the *Etats Confédérés* (Confederated States), made up of Freemasons, Protestants, Jews, and the *Métèques*.⁵²

Ljotić had nothing comparable to Maurras' classification of 'foreigners'. While there is overlap with Maurras in his views on Jews and Freemasons (to be expanded on later), there would be no system of categorisation of Jews and Freemasons in separate 'confederated states' as foreigners, as is evident with Maurras. For Ljotić and ZBOR, 'foreigners' were usually taken to mean 'non-Slavonic'. But they were not seen as necessarily inherently hostile, except with the Jews, as will be shown, to Yugoslavia's national security. This does not however, negate the fact that Ljotić considered Yugoslavia under foreign domination, and that the myriad of perceived internal threats had to be neutralised. However, there was no systematic scheme or ranking system based on perceived threats such as the case with the AF.

⁵¹ Achille Ségard, *Charles Maurras et les idées royalistes* (Paris: A. Fayard, 1919), 47.

⁵² On the *métèque* see note 17 of this chapter.

The Freemasons, according to Maurras brought cosmopolitanism to France, and were servile to the ruling decadent and corrupt republican elite. Maurras considered Freemasonry the only oligarchy capable of actually achieving victory, continues Maurras, due to the number of masons in political life.⁵³ Owing their allegiance to an outside force, which hindered the organic and unified society of which the monarchy was to usher in. Protestants were deemed as Swiss, English, and above all, German. The ‘spirit of Protestantism’ according to Maurras threatens the ‘French spirit’. The prosperity of certain nations confessing Protestantism argues Maurras is misleading, in that the intellectual basis of Protestantism is a ‘perfect individualism’, which Maurras describes as ‘anarchy, which dissolves society’.⁵⁴

On an aesthetic level, Maurras condemns ‘Protestant iconoclasm of having ruined the arts’.⁵⁵ The German spirit had disrupted the continuum of European religious unity, and more gravely, ‘Greco-Roman heritage’.⁵⁶ Worse still, Romanticism had entered politics and the arts through Johann Gottlieb Fichte. For Maurras, Romanticism, as a prophet of the Ego, was typically German in that its anarchic tendencies, which could be traced, back to Luther.⁵⁷ Romanticism, like Classicism, acquired for Maurras the status of a half symbol, half analytical tool. To ZBOR, criticism of Romanticism, or indeed of the aesthetics of art and literature was negligible. ZBOR’s ideas were simply not on the same intellectual level as the AF, nor would they ever permeate into society to the degree of the AF. The AF criticism of Freemasonry, and Protestantism, through a seemingly theological lens, should not be taken as evidence of Maurras as a believing Catholic. Indeed, his view on Catholicism was more for the cultural continuity associated with the papal institution, which aided in the goal of ‘organic unity’. However, it was Maurras’ attacks on the Jews, which would hold the most vitriolic venom.

For Maurras, the Jew was a member of the ruling body. Like the Freemasons and protestants, they were carriers of individualism, and revolutionary ideas, unwanted and inassimilable elements harmful to France’s national integrity and unity. His anti-Semitism, as he argues, was not a religious issue, but rather one of national defence. As a foreign element, the Jews in Maurras’ thinking were a ‘unified state’ within France, joined with Jews in other European

⁵³ Charles Maurras, *L'Enquête sur la monarchie 1900-1909*, 255.

⁵⁴ Charles Maurras, “La Guerre Religieuse,” *La Gazette de France*, 23 March, 1898.

⁵⁵ Charles Maurras, *Réflexions sur l'ordre en France 1916, 1917* (Paris: Au Pigeonnier, 1927), 26.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 25.

⁵⁷ Kenneth Asher, *T.S. Eliot and Ideology* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 21.

states.⁵⁸ That Jews in France and abroad were somehow unified in Maurras' mind meant that they represented a mortal danger to France. It was not the Jews as a racial group which threatened France, inasmuch as it was their 'nonlinear history', and their potential as an inseparable anti-nation, anti-Church, and anti-royalist principle of revolution to him, was nothing less than the evil incarnate of Satan himself.⁵⁹ The AF's anti-Semitism would be mirrored, as will be shown, by Ljotić's personal anti-Semitism.

Maurras' publication of ideological polemic began with the anti-Semitism surrounding the Dreyfus Affair. The AF, and especially Maurras, never let the memory of the Dreyfus Affair die, as it served as a reminder of the decadence of the republican regime in power. It was not so much Dreyfus, but rather his supporters upon whom the AF spewed their polemic. Maurras, perhaps providing the clearest insight into his thoughts on the guilt or innocence of Dreyfus sums it up as 'I don't want to go into the debate on innocence or guilt', Maurras writes. His 'first and last opinion on this was that if by chance Dreyfus was innocent he should be named *Maréchal* (Marshal) of France, but we should execute a dozen of his principal defenders for the triple harm they caused France, peace, and reason'.⁶⁰

Dreyfus therefore, must be sacrificed for the greater good of France's national interest, regardless of his innocence or guilt. Maurras' opinion on Dreyfus personally however was not always so moderate, if the term could be applied. Writing on 29 January, 1912, Maurras states that the 'Jewish traitor' Dreyfus will pay for the crime of betraying France.⁶¹ The Jews however, like all foreign elements were to be removed from public life and from the French body politic and nation. The method of removal however, was never fully elaborated on by Maurras, and would never be realised. However, through his indefatigable xenophobic polemic against the enemies of France, and through the physical action of his followers against them, under the monarchy and integral nationalism, there is no reason to doubt that serious persecution and abuses would take place in the name of reclaiming and 'cleansing' France.

⁵⁸ Curtis, *Three against the Third Republic*, 215.

⁵⁹ Carroll, 1998, 89.

⁶⁰ Charles Maurras, *Au signe de Flore: Souvenirs de vie politique. L'Affaire Dreyfus. La Fondation de l'Action française, 1898-1900* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1939), 55.

⁶¹ Charles Maurras, "L'Action Française Aura Raison," *L'Action française*, 29 January, 1912, Year 5 No.29, 1.

The 9 October, 1934 assassination of King Alexander was a galvanising catalyst for ZBOR's creation, in a similar fashion to the Dreyfus Affair and the AF. However, ZBOR would not be an organisation that was fighting to install a monarchy, but one, which agitated for an increased presence of the person of the monarch. It wanted to maintain and strengthen the status quo, but on its own terms. In this context, it would be inevitable that ZBOR's monarchism would focus more on the supposed semi-divine and mystical qualities of the monarch. This was indeed the case, however it was only through Ljotić that ZBOR's monarchism would find any degree of political expression, based largely on his own syncretic ideals of how the monarchy should be, and its interaction with its subjects.

Ljotić's concept of the Monarchy

To Ljotić, there was no question as to the validity of monarchism from an ideological point of view. His belief in the divine status of the monarchic institution as gifted by the 'Grace of God' was indeed both heartfelt and sincere. While not alluding directly to his early monarchism, given his family background, and his coming from a tradition of monarchic support for the Karadjordjević dynasty, the argument that Ljotić's attachment to monarchism as being genuine has greater substance. In his *Prvo Pismo Kralja Aleksandra Karadjordjevića* (First letter to King Alexander Karadjordjević), Ljotić professes his sincere (and there is no reason to doubt it) loyalty and love for the monarch, stating that the public good depends on the monarch.⁶² For Ljotić, the monarchy offered a God given shield and protector of national unity, who with the 'will of the people' would represent leads.⁶³ To Ljotić, the monarchy was the state, and without a monarchy, a nation was condemned to slavery. Speaking of the Serbian experience under Ottoman rule, Ljotić asserts that it was the historical memory of past monarchs, and the belief in a coming monarchic saviour, which helped to sustain Serbian national identity.⁶⁴

As Ljotić saw it, government is just, when it is given according to God's law. Such a government could only be established as a monarchy.⁶⁵ In his role of protector of those things that are Godly, the king becomes the King-*domaćin*, second after God, and the embodiment

⁶² "Prvo pismo Kralju Aleksandru Karadjordjeviću," in Ljotić, *Sabrana dela*, 238–243.

⁶³ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Mi smo za Kralja," *Otadžbina*, 1 April, 1934, No.6, 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Naše zborniško veruju," *Otadžbina*, 13 June, 1937, No. 163, 1.

of the nation. Without the *domaćin*, Ljotić argues, there would be no accomplishments. All work, no matter how laborious, does not count, without the *domaćin*.⁶⁶ Ljotić describes toil as the ‘blossom’, and the accomplishment as ‘fruit’. Nationalism, in Ljotić’s view, was part and parcel of monarchism, just like it was for Maurras. The difference here lies in that for Ljotić, it was a result of the supposed divinity of the monarchy which led him to nationalism, while for Maurras, it was nationalism, or rather the conception of French national interests, which led him and the AF towards monarchism.

In Ljotić’s opinion, the monarchy was divine. The king was made divine through God’s grace as the standard bearer of freedom and the shield of God’s work: faith the church, unity the family, people, the fatherland, and freedom and justice.⁶⁷ The king therefore, in Ljotić’s conception must remain, since the monarchy would feel each minute a need to protect the nation against a slide into anarchy. Ljotić warmly greeted the monarchic dictatorship established on 6 January, 1929, which he viewed as a positive gesture from the king, one that would bring his divine personification to the political, social, and economic forefront. During the Second World War, Ljotić would remind King Peter II⁶⁸ (Alexander’s son), of his and his family’s ‘one hundred and forty-year loyalty to the dynasty’, while at the same time chastising the king for not adhering to his ideas as a safeguard against Nazi invasion.⁶⁹ The monarchy, for the AF, was stripped of its sacral meaning, where loyalty lay with the institution itself, not, like in ZBOR’s case, where it lay in the person of the monarch himself. Maurras likens the monarchy, in a rationalistic manner, to geometry, stating that ‘like a geometrical position, the monarchy defends and develops the state in which it is incarnated’.⁷⁰

This peculiar view can be best understood through a summary of Maurras’ political conception of the ‘natural order of things’ or the *raison d’État*. This natural order saw the public interest placed before the interest of either parties or individuals. Coupled with

⁶⁶ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Light of Truth: Philosophical, Moral, and Political Ideas of Dimitrije Ljotić*, 56.

⁶⁷ “Kralj – vid nacije”, in Ljotić, Dimitrije, *Videlo u tami*, 53.

⁶⁸ Peter Karadjordjević. (1923-1970). The eldest son of King Alexander and Queen Maria, he succeeded his father after Alexander’s October 1934 assassination in Marseille, with a regency established until he would come of age, in September 1941. Fleeing Yugoslavia as a result of the German invasion, he was deposed by the Constituent Assembly of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on 29 November, 1945. For more see Branislav Gligorijević, *Kralj Petar II Karadjordjević 1923-1970: život ispunjen ujedinjavanju srba u dijaspori* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2011).

⁶⁹ Ljotić, *Sabrana Dela*, 181–194.

⁷⁰ Charles Maurras, *L’Enquête sur la monarchie 1900-1909*, 22.

Maurras' core idea that the national interest transcends ethical concepts such as morality, justice, and religion. This transcendence coalesced around Maurras' assertion that the politics of the monarchy overrides the providence of it.⁷¹ The king, using his personal power, would thus guarantee that the natural order would not be subverted by the machinations of party politics. For any hope of social, economic, or moral order to be instituted in France, a monarchy must first be installed. For Maurras, the slogan *la politique d'abord* (politics above all), sums up his approach to not just the monarchy, but also to how he conceived of his 'natural order'.

Societal (Re)- Organisation

Social hierarchy and societal re-organisation was given a high priority by both Maurras and Ljotić. Both men viewed society as organic, and natural, with the monarchy being the most logical choice of government because it was at its base the most 'organic' and natural to humanity. However, as will be seen in the case of the AF, the search for a societal order, which would preserve national unity, was to undergo fissures and schisms before a theoretical solution could be found. ZBOR would show more solidity regarding its ideas on social organisation, though this can partly be explained through gross political naivety and largely abstract political expression. For all of Maurras' talk of monarchism, and the need to preserve and regenerate France, the social policy that would be agreed upon by the AF; however, was never fully defined. This was partly due to the internal fissures within the movement between a paternal corporatism, and a more active attempt at directly courting potential working class supporters through revolutionary syndicalist language and action. The AF, unlike ZBOR, would never fully articulate even a semi-coherent social policy. Similar to ZBOR however, neither would have any resonance in the changing industrialising and modernising world in which each inhabited.

This fissure occurred first and foremost due to Maurras' personal indifference to the social question, which would lead sectors of younger AF supporters, who saw that in order to widen a potential base for mass popular support to compete with the existing political parties, a clear social policy would have to be put forward. These young supporters were both seeking

⁷¹ Charles Maurras, *Dictionnaire politique et critique. Volume 1* (Paris: A la Cité des livres, 1931), 459.

solutions abroad, and losing patience with Maurras' perceived conservatism.⁷² Writing in the aftermath of the 1940 French defeat, Lucien Rebatet, a French author and intellectual, who contributed articles to *L'Action française*, criticised Maurras as being out of touch with reality, and being content with 'mere opposition', whose royalism amounted to nothing.⁷³ Rebatet's animus was such that he adroitly christened the AF as the 'Inaction française'.⁷⁴ Because of his preoccupation with politics alone, Maurras however, did have a reference point for a vision of what society should be and along what lines it should be organised.

This organisation was based upon a return to a medieval corporative like guild system, which according to Maurras, and as will be shown Ljotić (in a Yugoslav context), represented French society at its zenith. Maurras looked to 'old France', which referred to France pre-1789, though his concept of 'old France' was vague, based, on a highly selective view of history, in that he used only what supported his claims, and honed its expression through his rhetoric. Due to the vagueness of his theory on 'old France', there is no definitive starting point, with Maurras instead preferring to accentuate an impression of the past, which held true to the supposed virtues of an earlier time. Maurras' notion of the ideal was pre-revolutionary France, in which the French state was 'monarchic, hierarchical, socialist, and community-minded. This 'Old France' had 'its own constitutions born of the races and territories that composed her', and which 'professed traditional Catholicism'.⁷⁵

In a geopolitical context, the French Republican system necessitated Maurras' tactics of *politique d'abord*, in that any conceivable method to overthrow the Republican system was to be utilised. In Yugoslavia, Ljotić would be perfectly happy working within the confines of monarchism, provided that it was not parliamentary (in a democratic, not corporative sense), and that power was vested primarily in the King.

Ljotić's concept of corporatism and social organisation

In Ljotić's vision of Yugoslavia, God, King, and *domaćin* were to be mainstays of the new

⁷² Paul Mazgaj, *Imagining Fascism: The Cultural Politics of the French Young Right, 1930-1945* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 156.

⁷³ Lucien Rebatet, *Les Décombres* (Denoël, 1942), 121.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 111.

⁷⁵ Charles Maurras, *Trois idées politiques : Chateaubriand, Michelet, Sainte-Beuve*, 9–10.

social order. Speaking about the *domaćin*⁷⁶ Ljotić states that they were to form an unofficial council of local leaders, who in cooperation with similar councils would create a spirit of understanding and readiness to help, anywhere in the nation. This was broadly similar to Maurras' version of a return to a medieval like corporatism. There was however, no question of compromising one's principles, like in the case of the AF, and Maurras in particular. Working towards a better society when the preferred system of government already in power, certainly would help expedite matters. To Ljotić, subordinating society to a medieval like guild system meant that 'a variety of occupations and professions would be joined in a professional association for their mutual benefit'.⁷⁷ Ljotić however, criticises this type of social organisation, stating that ZBOR neither wants nor desires such *staleži* (estates),⁷⁸ much less a professional association. To Ljotić, basing his premise around the 'spiritual development' of Yugoslavs, what was needed was a different social organism based on the 'Yugoslav' national development through history.⁷⁹ The natural system of the Yugoslavs arose from the *zadruga*,⁸⁰ which Ljotić laments has been forgotten in favour of 'land reforms' brought under the aegis of the liberal capitalist system, and other foreign ideas that could never understand the ephemeral 'Slavic soul'.⁸¹ Under this patriarchal system, the *domaćin*, as head of the household was not just the main source of material income, but also a fount of spirituality.

To Ljotić, the *zadruga* formed not just the basis of South-Slavonic (read Yugoslav) hierarchical organisation, but also the basic formation of its economic mode of production. This collectivism bears more similarity to the Slavophile *obshcinnost* of Aleksei Khomiakov,⁸² which was motivated and buttressed by a feeling of love and community, as opposed to any sense of profit or security. The organic building of Yugoslavia's new social order was to be, according to Ljotić, dictated by the needs of the *zadruga*. This would see social organisation along the 'social, economic, and social-cooperative needs' of the *zadruga*.⁸³ While criticising the western guild like style organisation of professions, Ljotić in

⁷⁶ See Chapter One.

⁷⁷ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Staleži i Zbor," *Otadžbina*, 29 December, 1935, No.94, 2.

⁷⁸ An estate is perhaps the best translation, and is the most applicable and appropriate in a socio-economic and socio-political context, in reference to a corporate like organisation of society. See Maurice Freedman, *Social Organization. Essay Presented to Raymond Firth* (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1967), 5–10.

⁷⁹ Ljotić, "Staleži i Zbor," 2.

⁸⁰ On the *zadruga* see Chapter One.

⁸¹ Ljotić, "Staleži i Zbor," 2.

⁸² See Chapter One.

⁸³ Ljotić, "Staleži i zbor," 3.

fact argues the very point stating that ‘trades and professions must be organised in estate like groups’.⁸⁴ Each separate ‘estate’ was to have its own function, and special features, such as transportation, and agriculture, which would then make up and develop the social, economic, and spiritual needs of the organic national body.

Ljotić’s attempt at differentiation from Maurras’ vision of ‘Old France’, or Valois’ ‘social monarchy’, based on a highly mystical Slavophile notion of the ‘Slavic spirit, fails to mark his form of corporatism as any different from what would be propagated by Maurras and other counter-revolutionary theorists. Ljotić laments however, the lack of understanding of the true essence of the *zadruga*, stating that too many times has it ‘wandered into communism’,⁸⁵ based on its collective identity and structure. It was with the peasantry that Ljotić’s ideal vision would be geared towards, not solely because he viewed it as the most ‘untainted’ by foreign influences, but also because of the ‘peasant character’ of Yugoslavia, who exhibit a greater degree of ‘estate’ consciousness than the more class conscious proletariat of more highly industrialised nations.⁸⁶

Ljotić’s insistence on the lack of classes in Yugoslavia, pointing to the *staleži* as the only organised social groups reflects his negation of the reality of class conflict. This was based on a presupposition of popular acceptance and the need for, a pastoral idyllic and highly selective interpretation of history. Liberal democracy and parliamentary were also deemed to be enemies of Ljotić’s social vision by dint of its supposed ‘political and economic slavery’, which under Ljotić’s vision, would result in economic, political, and spiritual freedom. Ljotić however was forced to backtrack on this view and acknowledge the existence of classes, but argued that it was solely a Marxist concept that undermined national and organic unity, and that his vision was the best guarantee of individual and collective rights under the security of the ‘solidarity of interests’.⁸⁷

Much of Ljotić’s vision would, theoretically at least, remain vague beyond calls to a mystical, morally pure, and pious peasant as head of an individual *domaćin*, organised into a *zadruga*, which make up one body in the national polity. As will be shown in later chapters, Ljotić’s only position under the puppet regime of General Milan Nedić, as the ‘Associate Commissar

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Staleži i klase,” *Otadžbina*, 4 June, 1936, No.116, 2.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. Knjiga II* (Munich, 1990), 241–243.

for the Renewal of Smederevo', would see his vision put to practice on a specific local level, along with his vision of who was included and who wasn't in his social order.

While both Maurras and Ljotić, while prolific writers, they were neither original in their thoughts on the monarchy or social organisation, nor in their criticisms of democracy and the French Revolution. Where Maurras was original however, was it his application to mass politics and mass society, from which Ljotić benefitted. What both men would reveal is that their views were manifestly unpopular, and due to the vagueness of their rhetoric, (more so in the case of Ljotić) not easily understood. While adapting such criticisms and ideas to fit their specific local conditions, their rhetoric had been outlined during the 19th century political philosophers who took their starting point as the rejection of the interpretation of perceived values of the French Revolution.

Conclusion

Counter-revolutionary thought, which Ljotić and Maurras represented, were two different elements of a larger whole. This whole coalesced to form a wider radical right wing counter-revolutionary theory. Yet as has been shown through the aforementioned organisational examples, typology in regard to counter-revolutionary theory remains complex, since it was ambiguous, superfluous, and spanned a wide spectrum of political thought.

For all its later similarities with fascism, which will be shown to be a significant overlap, ideological differences remained. The concept of collective or combined thoughts and belief is a central theme in the ideology of Ljotić, in such a way that he highlights the subordination of man to society, instead of the glorification of man as the central and most important aspect of a community or a nation. Ljotić pushed for a cohesive and united nation wherein every individual values the society as much as his self, because he believes that society is not just the mathematical or simple sum of each of its individual members. Pursuing an individual's personal goal will not be enough for a society to prosper. Instead, there is a need for a common goal of society prospering in order for the individual to prosper. Understanding this goal of Ljotić and his ZBOR movement is something that even contemporary society could conceivably learn from.

As differing strands represented counter-revolutionary theory, so do the differing stands of the authoritarian and radical right. The key, according to Martin Blinkhorn is to analyse the correspondence, or lack thereof, between the ‘subjective distinction and objective reality’.⁸⁸ As Blinkhorn sees it, elements of counter-revolutionary theory were indeed co-opted by Fascism and National Socialism. However, it would be incorrect to state that fascism in its mission was based solely upon a more conservative, monarchic, and traditionalist base, even if it shared the same ideological genus.

That being said, on an empirical level at least, the discrepancies and incongruences of counter-revolutionary theory’s application are glaring, at least in ZBOR’s example. The phenomena of the AF in France, the *Associazione Nazionalista Italiana* (Italian Nationalist Association hereafter ANI) in Italy, the *Integralismo Lusitano* (Lusitanian Integralism hereafter IL) in Portugal and the *Acción Española* (Spanish Action hereafter AE) in Spain as relevant agents of counter-revolutionary theory, based on the anti-modern idyllic past, and anti-democratic and anti-liberal sentiments, had massive socio-economic, cultural, and socio-religious change at their core. Interwar Yugoslavia was no exception in this regard, being a newly constituted state as of 1918 and had numerous ethnic and political cleavages and fissures.

The key difference however may be the position and influence of religious institutions in said countries. France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, apart from being majority Catholic, at least nominally, also, at different points throughout their modern histories had, issues with the regulation and position of the Church in their respective societies in relation to the Vatican.⁸⁹ The polarisation of this issue within each country gave rise to a ‘reaction’ of amalgamated groups coalescing around ‘tradition’, in order to ‘restore’ or ‘create’ a new past present and future.

The French Revolution is a logical starting point for the counter-revolution. As much as it defined counter-revolutionary theory, the French Revolution played a more ambiguous role in fascist thought. It was not, in the whole, considered an event, which influenced it, and if fascists bothered to think about the Revolution, it was to oppose it as a symbol of materialism and liberalism. It did however provide an important influence to the fascist conception of

⁸⁸ Martin Blinkhorn, ed., *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth-Century Europe* (London ; Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 1.

⁸⁹ France saw the separation of Church and State codified in a 1905 law, while Portugal and Spain saw a highly hostile separation of Church and State in their respective republican constitutions of 1911 and 1931.

politics, whereby it created a civil religion. This civil religion would be buttressed through modern nationalism.⁹⁰

Where groups such as the AF, IL, and ZBOR differed in this regard was in their vision of the future. These groups looked to an idealised past, which they hoped would be instituted once again, as opposed to fascist and ANI visions of future revolutions. Neither the AF nor ZBOR represented a singular homogenous strand. The AF declared itself as an intellectual heir to Joseph de Maistre, yet went beyond him and counter-revolutionary theory in his calls to violence and as a result of his royal condemnation over his violent tactics and rhetoric. On 8 January, 1927, the Pretender to the French crown, the Duc de Guise, stated that the AF ‘acted under its own responsibility’, and that there was ‘no identity between royalists and the AF’.⁹¹

For all of Maurras’ efforts at garnering support from actual monarchic candidates themselves, they remained decidedly aloof from the AF’s advances, stressing their own traditionalism in the face of Maurras’ radicalism. In a sense, the ‘integral nationalism’ of the AF and like-minded groups was an intellectual ideological experiment, radically opposed to political modernisation that gave it a degree of legitimacy, coherence, and radicalisation. Maurras’ increasing radicalism in lieu of his monarchic dream shows that ‘radicalism’ as a political term, had ceased to be the preserve of the left. The ‘right’, which had formerly stood for a conservative maintenance or established rights and a balance between different class and societal interests, began reclaiming the rhetoric of nationhood. This led to a split in the right wing which saw the establishment of an authoritarian and radical right wing, emphasising an anti-parliamentary and authoritarian political order, not necessarily monarchic, but strictly anti-democratic.

The other strand, which would become more suspect to fascist influence, emphasised the nation as being subject to a total rebirth and regeneration, with the emphasis on nationalism that would further emphasise a social, and even biological revolution.⁹² As Sternhell states, this was the meshing of integral nationalism with a new ‘revolutionary’ right, along with Sorelian revolutionary revisionism that, saw France as a true birthplace of fascism.⁹³ Tribal

⁹⁰ George L. Mosse, “Fascism and the French Revolution,” 5.

⁹¹ Charles Maurras, “Monsieur Le Duc de Guise,” *L’Action française*, 12 January, 1927, Year 20, No.12, 1.

⁹² Haynes and Rady, *In the Shadow of Hitler*, 3.

⁹³ Zeev Sternhell, Mario Sznajder, and Maia Ashéri, *The birth of fascist ideology: from cultural rebellion to political revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 4.

nationalism evident in much of these groups was also combined with a social and biological Darwinism. This was more evident in the case of the ANI, with Enrico Corradini's notion of proletarian nationalism, and elements within the AE, clamouring for an all-encompassing right-wing unity incorporating monarchists and the more radical secular nationalist right. Corradini and the ANI represent an interesting case. Where the ANI deviated from counter-revolutionary thought was in its appropriation of Marxist and syndicalist language and propaganda for nationalist ends. This became what was termed proletarian nationalism. To Corradini, nationalism, syndicalism, and imperialism represented the 'rebirth of the valour of collective experience'.⁹⁴ It could also not be tied specifically to the conservatives, because according to Corradini nationalism was 'only tied to the nation', and that the ANI would do nothing in the event of the 'proletariat rising against the bourgeoisie'.⁹⁵ The living conditions of a nation, according to Corradini, was based and determined on the living conditions of another nation which can then result in the 'economic and moral subjugation' of the dependent country, even if politically independent.⁹⁶ Struggle therefore, according to Corradini was not class versus class, but nation versus nation, using Marxist terminology applied to social Darwinism and nations. In this scenario, Italy, as a resource and land deficient nation was dependent, and subjugated to the whims of Great Britain, France, and Germany.

The AE represented an umbrella grouping of anti-democratic monarchists and rightists under a cultural association and a literary journal. Its most well known intellectual personality was Ramiro de Maeztu, who gave the movement a clear cultural and ideological perspective.⁹⁷ This perspective would be summarised as *Hispanidad* (Spanishness). To de Maeztu, the concept of Spanishness was universal, though tinged with a deep sense of colonial superiority. In his mind, the 'civilising' and 'evangelising' mission undertaken by Imperial Spain, was akin to virtue itself, coming almost as instruments of God.⁹⁸ While Spain was no

⁹⁴ "Sindicalismo, nazionalismo, imperialismo", in Enrico Corradini, *Discorsi Politici 1901-1923* (Florence, Editore Vallecchi, 1924), 168.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ "La nazione proletarie e il nazionalismo", in Ibid, 109.

⁹⁷ Marqués de Quintanar, "Homenaje a Nuestro Director," *Acción Española*, 1 May, 1932, No.10, 421. Ramiro de Maeztu y Whitney (1875-1936). Born of a Basque father and English mother, he was a Spanish political theorist and journalist. An early socialist, he rejected his socialist beliefs in the aftermath of World War One, arguing for tradition, and strong authority of the Catholic Church, for a cure to social problems. Republican soldiers near Madrid would kill him on 29 October, 1936, as a suspected Francoist. For more see Pedro González Cuevas, *Maeztu. Biografía de un Nacionalista Español* (Marcial Pons Historia, 2003).

⁹⁸ Ramiro de Maeztu, "La Hispanidad," *Acción Española*, December 15, 1931, No.1, 8-16. See also Ramiro de Maeztu, *Defensa de la Hispanidad* (Madrid: Gráficas Universal, 1935).

longer a major colonial power, what it lacked in prestige it made up for in spiritual power. Spiritual power in de Maeztu's thinking would be almost identical to Ljotić's in that both men saw this focus on a metaphysical spirit, as salvation against atheism and modernity. The work of de Maeztu, like that of Ljotić, seemingly harked back to an idealised pre-modern utopia, where the supposed law of God ruled supreme. The ills of the modern world, both men argued, were the root causes for their respective nations going astray from their respective paths. The Enlightenment to de Maeztu meant a turning away from Spain's historic mission, which subsequently resulted in decadence and decay.

The IL, similar to ZBOR, during the interwar era, would represent a more strictly authoritarian nationalist stand, viewing the nation as a cultural community, with shared traditions, especially in the Yugoslav case. Under the leadership of António Sardinha and Luís de Almeida Braga, the IL argued for the originality of its ideology in the tradition of 19th century counter-revolutionary thought, combined with Portuguese cultural traditions. Outlined as an extra parliamentary movement from 1914, the IL envisioned the return of a 'conservative and absolutist ethos' of the supporters of King Miguel I, a supporter of absolutist government.⁹⁹ This revision of Portuguese traditionalism was, according to Sardinha, to be 'popularised with the doctrines of the AF', whom Sardinha claimed was totally unknown in Portugal, in order to 'teach counter-revolutionary theory'.¹⁰⁰ While both groups stressed the need for a 'revolution', and in the IL's case, the *Monarquia do Norte* (Monarchy of the North) cemented its willingness to use force, both the IL and ZBOR emphasised revolution in its spiritual element, the struggle not just to purify one's self, but also the a new conception of politics as 'moral and pure', and the introduction of morality, and the consolidation of 'national spirit, faith, and traditions'.¹⁰¹ Romanticism, long derided by Maurras, was both championed by the IL and ZBOR as being in keeping with their national traditions, and in their conceptions of monarchy and monarchic government.

Maurras' monarchic vision was authoritarian without being totalitarian in its inception, but given the specific conditions in France, the rise and strength of revolutionary syndicalism and social democracy, his preference, briefly, was to try to co-opt the more 'nationally' minded syndicalist in the naïve belief that they could be won over to the monarchist cause.

⁹⁹ "O Que Nós Queremos. Monarquia Orgânica, Tradicionalista, Anti-Parlamentar. Program Integralista," *Nação Portuguesa*, 8 April, 1914, No.1, 4.

¹⁰⁰ Luís de Almeida Braga, *Sob o pendão real* (Lisbon, 1942), 423–424.

¹⁰¹ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Smisao naše borbe," *Zbor*, 8 March, 1935, No.8, 2–3.

This caught the AF in the dilemma of being a radical political group who either compromises its political rigidity and principles for the sake of influence, or continues on its singular course. This failed alliance, nevertheless, gave rise to the accusation of a more total revolution and beginnings of fascism on the part of the AF, which has long divided historians in France.¹⁰² While the overlap between the radical right and fascism is indeed significant, both sharing the same opponents, and forming tactical alliances Ljotić was happy, for a time, working under the confines of the 6th of January dictatorship and the personal rule of the king, and Maurras, for all his opposition to the Republic, never went beyond, what Rebatet has claimed, to be ‘mere opposition’, which resulted in the generational fissure and the proliferation of more clearly fascist like organisations in France.

But what was the catalyst for Ljotić’s political participation? And how did this cataclysmic event correspond to ZBOR’s later ideology?

¹⁰² This debate has not only centred on the existence of a French fascism, but also as to the constitution of fascist ideology as a left wing or right wing phenomena. The numerous nationalist ‘leagues’ of the 1930s, as opposed to the veterans ‘leagues’ of the 1920s, adopted certain fascist trappings such as militarism, and an expansionist hyper-nationalism. In the case of Georges Valois and his ‘*Le Faisceau*’ movement, it was borne out of Valois’ earlier collaboration with the AF. For more on this debate see: Philippe Burrin, *La dérive fasciste. Doriot, Déat, Bergery 1933-1945* (Paris: La Seuil, 1986).; Pierre Milza, *Les fascismes* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1985). ; Pierre Milza, *Fascisme français, passé et présent* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000). ; Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*. ; Robert Soucy, *Le Fascisme français, 1924-1933* (Paris: PUF, 1992).; Zeev Sternhell, *La droite révolutionnaire (1885-1914). Les origines françaises du fascisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1976). ; Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996).

Chapter 3: Ljotić's formation of ZBOR and the development of its ideology

ZBOR's creation would come at a time of political crisis: the assassination of King Alexander in Marseille on 9 October, 1934. It perceived itself as a bulwark of defence for the monarchy and of national unity. Elements of counter-revolutionary theory, specifically anti-democratic thinking, combined with an aggressive anti-communism were needed, as ZBOR as saw it, to restore national unity. However, Ljotić's political trajectory did not always give the impression of the course he would follow. Following his demobilisation on 20 June, 1920, he talked about the difficulty of readjusting to civilian life, filled as he was with the 'ethos of war and heroism'.¹ Originally not wanting a career in politics or public service because its spirit did not appeal to him, and because of his anti-parliamentary view, Ljotić intended to return to Smederevo as a lawyer.² It was through his legal practice, but not because of it, that Ljotić states he entered political life. While stating that he was satisfied with his legal practice, his family, and the tools for the 'religious-moral education and enlightenment of his immediate environment and co-operatives',³ Ljotić seems not to have resisted a temptation for political participation. Indeed, while stating no particular party preference, Ljotić claims that the Radicals considered him one of their own, by dint of his father's association with them, and thought it unthinkable that he would not join them.⁴

Even though he claimed to be against entering into politics due to his anti-parliamentary stance, evidently he considered himself capable enough to force a change of thought and ideology within the Radical Party, more than his own assertion of following 'duty and

¹ "Iz moga života", in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 357.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. 360.

⁴ Ibid. 362. Vladimir Ljotić, Dimitrije's father, was a former Serbian consul in Salonika, as well as head of the Smederevo municipality for a time. He was among the founding members of the Radical Party in the 1880s. For more see chapter 1.

tradition'.⁵ Even so, Ljotić stressed his opposition to the democratic, parliamentary, and national sovereignty principles of the Radical Party, and opposed its 'partisanship'.⁶ However, elements of what the Radical Party claimed to stand for, Ljotić would later incorporate into ZBOR, despite his claim of opposition to the principles of the Radical Party. Chief among these was the advocacy of the development of Serbian material, mental, and moral strength, and the belief that Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were 'one' indivisible nation, with similarities emphasised through the peasantry.⁷

If Ljotić's political actions, in his own words, started in 1920, his ideological work would not begin until after he had abandoned mainstream politics (the first time). As a diligent and loyal member of the Radical Party youth organisation in Smederevo, Ljotić was to remain a loyal Radical member until 1926, when he began having doubts not just about the mission of the Radical Party, but about party structures and party participation within the constitutional monarchy of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Ljotić asserts his idealisation of political life, hence his later disillusion with party politics as a whole, through the microcosm of his experience in the Radical Party.

For Ljotić, entering politics with a plan to 'turning the party onto the road I wanted to follow', he soon found that the Radical Party, while welcoming him, 'was confident of bending me to its own terms'.⁸ This internal opposition however did not stop Ljotić from twice being nominated as a candidate for district deputy on the Radical Party's list.⁹ While as a self-proclaimed 'dissident' operating on the fringe of the Radical Party, Ljotić's political development was greatly affected by the King's proclamation of 6 January, 1929,¹⁰ by which political parties were outlawed, and all power was vested in the person of the king.

⁵ Ibid. 361.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ljubodrag Dimić, *Kulturna Politika Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1918-1941. Knjiga 1* (Belgrade: Stubovi Kulture, 1996), 193–195.

⁸ "Iz moga života", in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 362.

⁹ "Rekonstrukcija Vlade," *Politika*, February 17, 1931, No.8183, 1.

¹⁰ The *Šestojanuarska diktatura* (Royal dictatorship of 6th January, 1929) was the outcome of political instability and incompetence, which culminated in the assassination of the Croatian Peasant Party leader Stjepan Radić in late June, 1928, by Puniša Račić, a Radical Party member. With the ongoing political crisis as a result of the assassination, King Alexander abolished the 1921 Constitution, dissolved parliament, and declared a royal dictatorship. For more see; Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization, 1904-1928* (University of Toronto Press, 2000).; Ferdo Čulinović, *Jugoslavija između dva rata* (Zagreb: Jugoslovenske akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1961). ; Djokić, *Elusive Compromise*. ; Petranović and Zečević, *Jugoslavija 1918-1988*.; Mira Radojević, "On the Problem of Democracy and Parliamentarism in Yugoslavia between the Two World Wars," *Istorijski Zapisi* 85, no. 3–4 (2012), 99–110. ;

As Ljotić saw it, the proclamation of the king in 1929, was a pleasant surprise. Especially, as he claimed, that King Alexander intended to ‘attack partisanship and parliamentarism’, and increase state regulation, which, in his opinion, would allow for the ‘harmonious development of all national powers’.¹¹ Ljotić’s surprise notwithstanding, his personal relationship to King Alexander, stemmed from 1922, with Ljotić writing to the king twice, in October and December, warning him of the dangers facing the new state. In his first letter, Ljotić points out that the ‘monarchy is in grave danger’, and that this danger ‘does not come from foreign sources’.¹² This danger according to Ljotić stems from how the king supposedly reacts to the troubles facing his person and that of the state.¹³

The king to Ljotić, here showing similarities with AF monarchism, was necessary, and the people should feel the monarch in all aspects of their lives. The evident ease and comfort Ljotić had when addressing the king, going as far as to tell the king what must be done, shows the beginning of what would later become a rigid ideological inflexibility,¹⁴ as well as a seeming personal ‘need’ to take matters upon himself to speak the ‘truth’ of the current state of affairs. Though such writing with a ‘hard heart’ would always be followed by a ‘pure devotion’.¹⁵ With the proscribing of all existing political parties as a result of the dictatorship, Ljotić returned to his legal practice in Smederevo, and would from time to time engage in local municipal politics.¹⁶ His official status within the Radical Party, proscribed in 1929, elements of which either joined the new government, or continued under Aleksa (Aca) Stanojević called for an end to dictatorship and return to localised rule, was not resolved until 1934.¹⁷

¹¹ “Iz moga života”, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 370.

¹² “Prvo pismo Kralju Aleksandru Karadjordjeviću,” *Nova Iskra*, March 1996, 28, 27–29.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ NA FO 371/20435 R 142/42/92. “Leading Personalities in Yugoslavia. R. Campbell. 9 January, 1936”. Minister Plenipotentiary Ronald Campbell’s report states that while Ljotić is honest, he is extremely uncompromising in his views.

¹⁵ “Prvo pismo Kralju Aleksandru Karadjordjeviću,” 27–29.

¹⁶ Nebojša Jovanović, *Smederevo je bilo Dobro Obnovljeno. Dimitrije Ljotić i delatnost Izvanrednog Komesarijata 1941-1944* (Smederevo: NIGP, Radojković, 2001), 16.

¹⁷ NA FO/371/33496 R 3046/3046/92 “Mr. Rendel, Foreign Office. Yugoslav Personalities. Referring to the dispatch of 12 July, 1939”. Ljotić claimed in his autobiography that had the royal dictatorship not happened, he would have left the Radical Party much earlier. In his letter to the Foreign Office however. Mr. Rendel, in his capacity as Minister Plenipotentiary to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia maintains that Ljotić had indeed, by 1934, officially left the Radical Party in order to found ZBOR.

The main aim of the royal dictatorship was the resolution of the ongoing political stalemate, and a reconciliation of the constituent peoples to the new state. In the wake of the popular disillusionment with politics and politicians, it was assumed that with the king taking direct control, the national interest would be put above individual and party interests. To this effect, King Alexander on 3 October, 1929, changed the name of the country to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, with the country being re-organised into *banovinas* (provinces), based more on geographic than ethnic criteria.¹⁸ In essence, this move, as King Alexander hoped, would solve the on-going ethnic debates and issues by imposing the moniker of ‘*Yugoslavs*’ on Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. It was hoped that it would also contribute to the weakening of traditional and regional loyalties in favour of a homogenous Yugoslav identity. This was to be combined with the king’s personal and authoritarian rule, as the mainstay of uniting the country.

Ljotić greeted the imposition of the royal dictatorship as a welcome sign. He was certainly not unusual in that regard, as Vladko Maček, head of the Croatian Peasant Party, initially supported the king’s proclamation as a means to attaining Croatian autonomy.¹⁹ Ljotić zealously attests to the fact that he became certain that the ‘carriers of the government were not spreading the mission of the dictatorship’. Ljotić’s supposed opposition had nothing to do with the king’s authoritarian rule, but rather with the founding of the *Privilegovana Agrarna Banka* (Chartered Agrarian Bank). The founding of this bank was part of the king’s restructuring attempts of the financial sector, which was based on an earlier attempt at restructuring by the central bank to have several large state owned banks with branches throughout the country. The dictatorship continued on this trend towards increasing state intervention in the financial sector, with state capital being provided for the founding of the Agrarian Bank.²⁰

For Ljotić, the founding of the Agrarian Bank gave undue privilege to individual credit, at the expense of cooperative credit, which would make it easier to take out a line of credit at the state owned banks as opposed to the local cooperative. This to him represented a ‘rise in

¹⁸ Djokić, *Elusive Compromise*, 72.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 70.

²⁰ Ivo Bićanić, Željko Ivanović, “Croatian Banking during the 1926-1936 Depression”, in Edwin Green, John Lampe, and Franjo Štiblar, eds., *Exploring the History and Archives of Banking at Times of Political and Social Stress* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 69.

individualism'.²¹ However, despite his opposition, in reference to his accession to the post of Minister of Justice in 1931, *Politika* reported that Ljotić, while being the president of both the local savings bank and the local plum growers cooperative, was also a board member of the Agrarian Bank.²² Thus Ljotić's involvement in local agricultural and economic life meant that his personal and financial interests were as much an issue in his opposition to the Agrarian Bank, as was the individualism he claimed to see arise from its credit policy, and that which would suit a later ideological position.

Already by December 1930, Ljotić writes that he began hearing the rumours of him being touted as a future minister of justice, though he claims not to have believed it.²³ Nonetheless, the king's proclamation did give Ljotić avenues for advancement, such as his becoming regional deputy of the Smederevo district, and elected to the council of the Danube *banovina*.²⁴ These 'rumours' however came to fruition with the existing minister of justice, Dr. Milan Srškić, was appointed as the Prime Minister by the King, and Ljotić acceded to the post of minister of justice on 17 February 1931,²⁵ in the government of General Petar Živković. The choice of Živković as prime minister was not coincidental. He was an active participant in the coup to overthrow the Obrenović dynasty, to be replaced by the Karadjordjević dynasty. As a leader of the *Bela ruka* (White Hand) organisation, who was appointed as head of the palace guard in 1921, Živković was again among the main orchestrators of the 6th of January dictatorship.²⁶ Through Živković, the King was able to take a more active role in political decision-making, without actually being seen as involved in politics, thus giving the illusion of being above politics.

Ljotić as Minister of Justice

In his memoirs, Ljotić writes that upon taking up the post of minister of justice, he set a certain code of conduct for himself, which he claimed would guide him during his tenure. Among these were that 'service was to be first', that the 'Ministry of Justice was to be order

²¹ "Iz moga života", in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 374.

²² "Rekonstrukcija Vlade," February 17, 1931, 1.

²³ "Iz moga života", in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 383.

²⁴ Miloš Martić, "Dimitrije Ljotić and the Yugoslav National Movement ZBOR, 1935-1945," 220.

²⁵ Živko Avramovski, *Britanci o kraljevini Jugoslaviji: godišnji izveštaji Britanskog poslanstva u Beogradu 1921-1938. Knjiga II* (Belgrade: Arhiv Jugoslavije, 1986), 44. See also "Rekonstrukcija Vlade," February 17, 1931, 1.

²⁶ Todor Stojkov, *Opozicija u vreme šestojanuarske diktature 1929-1935* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1969), 73-76.

itself’, the ‘judiciary must be free in the dispensation of the law’, and that he himself must ‘know each and every organ before giving personal endorsement’.²⁷ It was in that vein that Ljotić’s brief ministerial career would have liked to be seen by him. Unfortunately, little is written about how his brief ministerial reign was seen by others. Though his ever-evident personal inflexibility and uncompromising stands was certain to cause a degree of unpopularity. One of his first acts was authorising the transfer of future Partisan leader Josip Broz (Tito), from Lepoglava prison to Maribor. This move was a result of Broz and other communists being seen as ‘dangers to order and peace’²⁸ while within prison. Certainly, apart from lending Ljotić a certain amount of credibility as a minister, his tenure, lasted until he offered his resignation on 28 June, 1931.

The reasons for his resignation lie in the King’s refusal to accept Ljotić’s draft for a new constitution based on what he deemed to be an ‘organic’ constitution.²⁹ This constitution would see a hereditary monarchy, of the Karadjordjević dynasty, both non-democratic and non-parliamentary, with society organised on a corporate model of economic, cultural, and charitable associations. The King, as head of government, would also accept a certain level of decentralisation.³⁰ Given that the current trend of the 6th of January regime, towards state centralisation and unitarism, it is not surprising that the king, who would have undoubtedly felt that Ljotić’s constitutional plan would be unworkable, rejected the proposal. His choosing to present the king his proposal on 28 June, had a double symbolism. Not only was it sacralised in Serbian national mythology as the day of the Serbian Kingdom’s loss of independence to the Ottomans, but it was also the date on which the *Vidovdanski Ustav* (St. Vitus’s Day Constitution) was proclaimed in 1921. This Constitution saw the centralisation of the state as a constitutional hereditary monarchy, and parliamentary.³¹ The rejection of his

²⁷ “Iz moga života”, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 387–388. The other points included the right of employees to hold any political opinion, as long as it did not interfere with the decisions of the court or ministry. That the Ministry of Justice is duty bound to keep records of court cases and of the functioning of the courts and the ministry. The Ministry will have no more employees than is absolutely necessary, and that laws are to be passed only after careful consideration for the consequences.

²⁸ Josip Broz, Tito, *Sabrana Djela. Tom Treći. Mart 1935-Novembar 1937* (Belgrade: Izdavački Centar “Komunist,” 1982), 180. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes outlawed the Communist Party of Yugoslavia formed in 1919, on 29 December, 1920. See “Obznana Kraljevske Vlade,” *Politika*, December 30, 1920, No.4559.

²⁹ According to former ZBOR member Milutin Popradović, Ljotić was encouraged by the King to propose a new constitution. See Milutin Popradović, *D.V. Ljotić i Komunistička Partija Jugoslavije 1935-1945. Prilozi na istinu o JNP ZBOR* (Iskra, 1990), 19.

³⁰ “Iz moga života”, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 397. An emphasis on decentralisation would disappear by 1935, with Ljotić being vehemently against any sort of decentralised rule, which he likened to a weakening of the state.

³¹ The St. Vitus’s Day Constitution was divided into 14 sections totaling 142 points.

proposal however lead Ljotić to resign from his ministerial office on the same day, which was formally announced on 3 September, 1931.³²

The new Constitution, in place of the dissolved 1921 Constitution was also proclaimed on the same day, reaffirming the state as a constitutional and hereditary monarchy, with national and state unity symbolised in the image of the king. Political parties remained outlawed, proscribed under the provision that there could be no ‘associations of an ethnic, religious, or regional basis’.³³ However, a degree of moderation was noticeable in the fact that there was a semblance of constitutional rule and political pluralism. This pluralism was channelled into the establishment of a ‘peasant democracy’ through the Yugoslav Radical Peasants’ Democracy.³⁴

The king not heeding his warning, regarding the reorganisation of both society and the constitution along his line of thought, led Ljotić to resign and a return to private life. However, in his memoirs, the future Serbian Orthodox Patriarch Gavriilo recalls that Ljotić came to him in August 1931 wanting to resign his position. Gavriilo writes that ‘he (Ljotić) said that he could no longer associate with his colleagues, whom he accused of corruption’, adding that ‘they kept lists on who was Democrat and Radical’, and tried to get him to transfer judges throughout Yugoslavia based on this sole criterion.³⁵

The semblance of constitutionalism, and the blueprint for the future establishment of the Yugoslav Radical Peasants’ Democracy, meant that Ljotić no longer viewed the regime as moving into the direction which he thought best, and that any compromise to parliamentarism or constitutionality was a sign that the regime was being run by interest groups, and not the

³² “Rekonstrukcija Vlade,” *Politika*, 3 September, 1931, No.8375, 4.

³³ *Ibid.* 1-3.

³⁴ The *Jugoslovenska Radikalna Seljačka Demokratija* (Yugoslav Radical Peasants’ Democracy) was founded in May 1932 as the party of the regime. It was made up of disparate and dissident elements of former political parties such as the Radical Party, the Democratic Party, as well as nationalist organisations such as the *Organizacija Jugoslovenskih Nacionalista* (Organisation of Yugoslav Nationalists). In May 1933, it was renamed as the *Jugoslovenska Narodna Stranka*. Its aim was to promote a distinct yet homogenous Yugoslav identity amongst Yugoslavia’s constituent peoples, while championing the Karadjordjević dynasty. For more see; Aleksandar Rastović, “Program Jugoslovenske Narodne Stranke,” *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju*, no. 74 (2006), 125–132.

³⁵ *Memoari Patrijarha srpskog Gavriila* (Belgrade: SFAIROS, 1990), 78.

national interest. For Ljotić, there could only be ‘one political expression’,³⁶ which he believed could only be found outside of the existing political system.

Towards the foundation of ZBOR

Ljotić’s initial mainstream political *life* ended with his resignation from Živković’s government in 1931. His political *work* however, would begin shortly after, in the beginning of 1932 when he formed the *Otadžbina* (Fatherland) group, which would hold weekly discussions.³⁷ This group would begin publishing a journal by the same name in 1934, and would become the first publication associated with the ZBOR movement. The king allowed the formation of *Otadžbina*, when most ‘political’ groups were proscribed.³⁸ *Otadžbina*, and by essence Ljotić, stated that it ‘did not want power, only for the healing and health of national life’.³⁹ The 6th of January regime did not scare *Otadžbina*, but what did scare them were ‘political parties, now and before the Royal proclamation are unable to heal national life and to create a new moral foundation’.⁴⁰ The king knew that Ljotić was a monarchist, and that he could conceivably use the group as a further buttress for his regime. In this sense, by working outside of the system, yet in support of it (being relegated to the margins of organised activity by its insignificance), *Otadžbina* was viewed as no danger to the stability of the regime. Among the earliest collaborators in the *Otadžbina* was Dr. Stevan Ivanić, who would later join ZBOR and be a prominent commissar in the Serbian collaborationist administration in 1941.⁴¹

It would be through his participation in *Otadžbina* that saw the creation of the nucleus of what would later be ZBOR. By 1934, Ljotić began using the journal to propound his political

³⁶ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Dve revolucije,” 2. In this article Ljotić accuses the 6th of January regime, but not the King, of not doing enough to stifle party coteries and partisanship, which exist through the JNS and the JRSD.

³⁷ “Iz moga života”, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 419.

³⁸ Jovan Byford, “Willing Bystanders: Dimitrije Ljotić, ‘Shield Collaboration’ and the destruction of Serbia’s Jews”, in Haynes and Rady, *In the Shadow of Hitler*, 297.

³⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Ko smo i šta hoćemo,” *Otadžbina*, June 10, 1934, No.16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Stevan Z. Ivanić (1884-1948). Graduated in Medicine from Vienna, and finished his specialisation in Vienna, Hamburg, and Warsaw. An active participant in the Balkan Wars and World War One, he was active on the Salonika Front against the malaria outbreak (where Ljotić also participated). After the war he became administrator of the Smederevo hospital, before becoming docent at the Medical Faculty of Belgrade in 1933. A founding member of ZBOR, he would serve as Commissar for Social Politics and People’s Health in the Aćimović administration from 30 April, 1941, until 29 August, 1941. He would die in Germany in 1948. For more see Simo C. Ćirković, *Ko je Ko u Nedićevoj Srbiji 1941-1944. Leksikon ličnosti slika jedna zabranjene epohe* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 2009), 207.

ideals for the first time to a wider (though still limited) audience.⁴² *Otadžbina* however, was not the only non-party buttress for the regime. King Alexander encouraged the proliferation of such groups, which either attracted or recruited elements of nationally minded ‘Yugoslav’ youth.⁴³ Amongst such groups was the *Jugoslovenska Akcija* (Yugoslav Action), which was formed in Belgrade on 7 January, 1930. Originally, the *Jugoslovenska Akcija* (hereafter known as JA) was founded as a national association, with its goal of ‘gathering enlightened youth’ for the ‘strengthening of Yugoslav national awareness’, and ‘solidifying national unity’.⁴⁴ Despite being formed in 1930, the JA’s existence was guarded until its first congress on 22 May, 1932 in Zagreb, due in part to its lack of a codified program and numerous fissures.⁴⁵

The JA was in effect an actor and element of consolidation for the regime, and functioned as a defence against every revolutionary, national, and social movement deemed a threat to national unity. Much of the impetus behind the JA was in part due to the injection of former members of the *Organizacija Jugoslovenskih Nacionalista* (Organisation of Yugoslav Nationalists), commonly referred to by its acronym ORJUNA. ORJUNA was initially founded as the *Jugoslavenska napredna nacionalistička omladina* (Advanced Yugoslav Nationalist Youth) on 23 March 1921 by young activists of the Democratic Party.⁴⁶

Founded in Split, ORJUNA was initially under the aegis of the Democratic Party, and especially its leader, Svetozar Pribićević.⁴⁷ It took justification and legitimisation from

⁴² The journal *Otadžbina* began publication on 26 February, 1934. Ljotić states that while his articles were indeed censored, none were banned until the 29th issue, when after a re-reading of ‘Lanac odgovornosti’, the censor decided that while the journal was published with the knowledge of the King, said article would not be approved by him. See “Iz moga života”, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 420.; Dimitrije Ljotić, *Kako nastaju revolucije* (Petrograd: Biblioteka Otadžbine, 1936), 10–14.

⁴³ Branislav Gligorijević, “Politički pokreti i grupe s nacionalsocijalističkom ideologijom i njihova fuzija u Ljotićevom zboru,” 35.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 36.

⁴⁵ *Jugoslovenska akcija: stenografske beleške sa prvog šireg sastanka delegata Jugoslovenske akcije u Zagrebu* (Belgrade: Jugoslovenska zemlja, 1932). On the fissures within the JA, see Branislav Gligorijević, “Politički pokreti i grupe s nacionalsocijalističkom ideologijom i njihova fuzija u Ljotićevom zboru,” 37. The JA coalesced around two differing factions, one, which intended it to be a strictly intellectual enterprise, and another that agitated for wider political participation.

⁴⁶ Jovo Bakić, “Fašizam u Jugoslaviji 1918-1941,” *Nova srpska politička misao* 11, no. 1–4 (2006), 27.

⁴⁷ The JNNO, later ORJUNA, was never an independent organisation in its own right, with most of the founding JNNO members being from the Democratic Party, especially from amongst the elements closest to Svetozar Pribićević. ORJUNA’s ideology consisted primarily of a strident and aggressive Yugoslav unitarist nationalism, anti-communism, and the maintenance of state and national integrity. Banned by the 6th of January regime in 1929, its members drifted into numerous pro-regime associations or organisations such as the JA, and the Yugoslav National Party. For more on ORJUNA see Niko Bartulović, *Od Revolucionarne do Orjune. Istorijat jugoslovenskog omladinskog pokreta* (Split: Izdanje Direktorijuma Orjune, 1925).; Mladen Djordjević,

proclaiming itself as an inheritor of the pre-war South Slav youth movement.⁴⁸ Founded in the context of the turmoil of the Treaty of Versailles and the rise of communism in the face of national consolidation of newly created states, ORJUNA worked towards the ‘nationalisation of the masses’.⁴⁹ This nationalisation took on an added importance in the face of Italian irredentism. ORJUNA can be seen in part as a violent manifestation and reaction to Italian territorial demands against Yugoslavia. Its strident and aggressive nationalism, which led to it sporadically attacking non-‘Yugoslav’ and Slavonic minorities, earned it notoriety in its stated defence of ‘anti-separatism’ and ‘anti-centralist’ tendencies.⁵⁰

Most historians on Yugoslav events have made levelled accusations about ORJUNA as a fascist organisation, especially as it has been described as a ‘terrorist organisation’ utilising ‘fascist methods against the working class’.⁵¹ Niko Bartulović, a pro-Yugoslav Croat writer and journalist, also a leading ORJUNA ideologist described ORJUNA as ‘pure idealism’. Bartulović rejected the notion that ORJUNA was ‘organised along party lines’.⁵² ORJUNA according to Bartulović was meant to help ‘advance all moral, intellectual’ ideas, and in the event of antagonism the, ‘physical strength of their members’, in the service of the defence of ‘culture and politics’, would form the ‘base unity of the Yugoslav people’.⁵³ Part of this help included close links with the militantly nationalist *Narodna Odbrana* (National Defence) organisation, who periodically sent ORJUNA arms, and helped drill its Action Squads in military fashion.⁵⁴ These uniformed Action Squads, reminiscent of earlier Fascist squadristi, are indicative of ORJUNA’s fascistic influence. It valorised and glorified the direct action undertaken by the Action Squads attacks against communist groups primarily, but also against those they deemed as separatist. Italian interests, and supposed separatism, were

“Organizacija Jugoslovenskih Nacionalista (ORJUNA), Istorijat-Ideologija-Uticaji,” *Nova Srpska Politička Misao* 12, no. 1–4 (2005), 187–219. ; Stevo Djurašković, “Ideologija Organizacije jugoslovenskih nacionalista (ORJUNA),” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 43, no. 1 (2011), 225–247.; Branislav Gligorijević, “Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista (ORJUNA),” *Istorija XX veka: zbornik radova* 5 (1963), 315–393.

⁴⁸ John Paul Newman, “The Origins, Attributes, and Legacies of Paramilitary Violence in the Balkans”, in Robert Gerwath, and John Horne, eds., *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 158.

⁴⁹ Stevo Djurašković, “Ideologija Organizacije jugoslovenskih nacionalista (ORJUNA),” 231.

⁵⁰ For instances of ORJUNA attacks, see “Savez ORJUNA-HANAO (izveštaj Politici),” *Politika*, March 4, 1924, No.5698, 5. The particular attack in mention is of an anti-Semitic nature in a café in Split, and of an anti-Semitic attack against a Jewish man seen with a Croatian woman.

⁵¹ Ivan J. Bošković, “Splitski orjunaški list Pobjeda i Stjepan Radić,” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 39, no. 1 (2007), 117. Bošković gives the example of Branislav Gligorijević’s 1963 article as one of the most detailed account of ORJUNA.

⁵² Bartulović, *Od Revolucionarne do Orjune. Istorijat jugoslovenskog omladinskog pokreta*, 5.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 95.

⁵⁴ Bošković, “Splitski orjunaški list Pobjeda i Stjepan Radić,” 121.

constant targets of ORJUNA in their quest internal security and unity based on their interpretation of integral Yugoslavism.

As a sign of further fascistic influence, ORJUNA advocated a ‘national revolution’, attacking both bolshevism and ‘degenerate parliamentarianism’. It called for a break with party politics and for the introduction of a non-party dictatorship with the king at its head. Once installed, this dictatorship would then pave the way for what ORJUNA deemed a ‘corporative democratic movement’.⁵⁵ On a wider geo-political level, ORJUNA displayed elements of Pan-Slavism, believing Bulgaria an integral part of Yugoslavia, while advocating for the future joining of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and even Russia, to ensure the ‘primacy of the Slavonic race’.⁵⁶ Anti-Semitism also had its place in ORJUNA ideology, though this depended on regional conditions, with it being more pronounced in Croatia, where ORJUNA’s Zagreb branch called for an open struggle against ‘Jewish capital’.⁵⁷

As ORJUNA spread from its Dalmatian powerbase, it became active throughout Croatia, Slovenia, and Vojvodina in Serbia. In Vojvodina at least, according to Milan Koljanin, ORJUNA’s growth was the attempt by the ‘Serbian bourgeoisie’ to ‘displace the leading economic role of the German minority, Jews, and Hungarians’.⁵⁸ To this end, writes Koljanin, it organised terrorist attacks on German and Hungarian publishing houses, especially in Novi Sad and Subotica.⁵⁹ By 1923, ORJUNA was active throughout Serbia, with its Belgrade branch being established in March 1922. The movement was most active in Slovenia, though it was helped in Serbia by the Četnik association,⁶⁰ under Kosta Pećanac, and Ilija Trifunović-Birčanin.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Branislav Gligorijević, “Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista (ORJUNA),” 342–344. ORJUNA unfortunately did not define what a ‘corporative democratic movement’ meant, but perhaps it alluded to a more Fascist style corporatism.

⁵⁶ Milan Koljanin, *Jevreji i antisemitizam u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1918-1941* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2008), 197.

⁵⁷ Gligorijević, “Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista (ORJUNA),” 367.

⁵⁸ Koljanin, *Jevreji i antisemitizam u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1918-1941*, 197.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ The *Udruženje Četnika za slobodu i čast Otadžbine* (Četnik Association for Freedom and Honour of the Fatherland), was organised in 1921 by Četnik veterans of the First World War. Ostensibly as a support group for disabled Četnik veterans and the widows of its fallen members, it actively worked to spread its patriotic ideals throughout the country. Initially under the influence of the Democratic Party, this would change, as the Radicals became the dominant influence. For more see Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945: The Chetniks* (Stanford University Press, 1975), 118-119.

⁶¹ Mladen Djordjević, “Organizacija Jugoslovenskih Nacionalista (ORJUNA): Istorijat-Ideologija-Uticaji,” 193.

As it was closely associated with Svetozar Pribićević, after the 8 February, 1925, Parliamentary Elections, Pribićević's breakaway *Samostalna demokratska stranka* (Independent Democratic Party) garnered 4.8% of the vote.⁶² Pribićević's political marginalisation also affected ORJUNA, who from 1925 would increasingly lose influence as well as organisational infrastructure.⁶³ In 1927, the movement moved its headquarters to Belgrade, mostly as a result of its loss of influence in its former powerbase of Split and Dalmatia. Stevo Djurašković identifies three chronological stages of ORJUNA's development. First there was the period from its 1921 founding until 1922, where ORJUNA, in the face of political and internal instability, was at its most radical and violent. From 1922 to 1925, ORJUNA was dominated by increased ideological clarification, and organisational development. After the 1925 elections, ORJUNA entered what Djurašković describes as a 'political crisis'. With the loss of Pribićević's support, ORJUNA would not be able to sustain itself.⁶⁴

ORJUNA's Pan-Slavism, integral Yugoslavism, and call for a palingenetic cultural renovation would find resonance with ZBOR after 1935, though many of those ORJUNA members who would later gravitate to ZBOR first went through the medium of the JA.

The JA would have more of an influence on the future ZBOR organisation, and after the royal proclamation of 1929, many ORJUNA members gravitated to the JA. During its first congress in 1932, it elected Velibor Jonić as general-secretary, who would later, for a time, become ZBOR's general-secretary as well as a minister of education in the collaborationist regime during the Second World War.⁶⁵ The JA, like most of the small nationalist and pro-regime pressure groups, did not receive official backing from the king. Given that the JA had no real leadership and organisation, leading naturally to internal disputes, it could hardly be

⁶² Nebojša Popović, "Srpske parlamentarne stranke u Kraljevini SHS 1918-1929," *Istorija 20. veka* 26, no. 2 (2008), 100.

⁶³ Djurašković, "Ideologija Organizacije jugoslovenskih nacionalista (ORJUNA)," 233.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Velibor Jonić (1892-1946). Graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at Belgrade University, and spent some time at Oxford. A volunteer during the First World War, by 1924 he was a professor at the Military Academy as well as the editor of '*Narodna Odbrana*'. Served until 1937 as general secretary of ZBOR, he would later be named Commissar and head of the Ministry of Education in the collaborationist governments during the Second World War, as well as editing the publication '*Srpski narod*'. He was arrested by the Communists in 1945, and sentenced to death and executed in 1946. For more see Simo C. Ćirković, *Ko je Ko u Nedićevoj Srbiji 1941-1944. Leksikon ličnosti slika jedna zabranjene epohe*, 249.

considered an influential or beneficial for the king.⁶⁶ That being said, it was one of the most clearly defined and ideologically coherent of the myriad pro-regime groups. It described itself as ‘nationalist youth free from tribal considerations’, putting ‘Yugoslavia above all’; it was a youth group that advocated for ‘generational change’ in order to promote ‘real Yugoslavism’, anti-federalist, anti-clericalist, and advocated a re-organisation of society along corporatist lines.⁶⁷ The AF was aware of the JA, announcing in its press that the JA was a group made up of young intellectuals, looking to break the ‘malaise of partisanship present in the government and opposition’. The remedy therefore, was the ‘accession to power of the energetic youth’ of the JA.⁶⁸

Like *Otadžbina*, similar groups were closely monitored, and in the case of ORJUNA and the JA, proscribed when deemed unnecessary by the regime. These groups would have most likely remained what they were, small marginalised groups with hardly any influence outside of their own circles, had not King Alexander been assassinated on 9 October, 1934, in Marseille,⁶⁹ which would be the main catalyst for ZBOR’s creation and appearance on the political scene.

ZBOR

In the aftermath of the assassination, amidst fears of further political and ethnic tensions, elements of these disparate groups and associations held meetings to try to decide on unification into a larger political bloc. With the exception of the JA, most of these other groups, like *Otadžbina* were without any semblance of organisational form, and any appeals were done through their respective journals. The assassination quickened the pace at which

⁶⁶ These internal issues were mainly focused on relations with the official regime party, the *Jugoslovenska Narodna Stranka* (Yugoslav National Party), with the JA pressuring the JNS, while being expected to join it. That, and calls from elements of the organisation to ban liberal democracy saw the JA outlawed in 1934. For more see Ljubinka Škodrić, *Ministarstvo prosvete i vera u Srbiji 1941-1944 : sudbina institucije pod okupacijom* (Belgrade: Arhiv Srbije, 2009), 24.

⁶⁷ “Zbor jugoslovenskog akcija u Beogradu,” *Politika*, 30 January, 1933, 8879, 4.

⁶⁸ “Une reunion de l’Action yougoslave”, in *L’Action Française*, Year 26, No.30, 30 January, 1933, 3.

⁶⁹ The assassination, referred to as the *Marseljski atentat* (Marseille assassination), was carried out by a member of the *Внатрешна македонска револуционерна организација* (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation - IMRO). The assassination was planned and executed with the aid of the *Ustaša – Hrvatska revolucionarna organizacija* (Ustaša – Croatian Revolutionary Organisation), and also took the life of the French foreign minister Louis Barthou. Both the IMRO and the Ustaša movement were seen as ‘terrorist’ and ‘anti-Yugoslav’, which they were, agitating as it was for the independence of both Macedonia (though elements wanted incorporation into Bulgaria), and Croatia. For more see Milorad Pavlović Krpa, *Kralj Aleksandar I Karadjordjević* (Belgrade: Narodna Knjiga, 1991).; *Politika*. No. 53002, 10 October, 1934.

talks of unity proceeded, for before his death, the king was hinting at a unified regime propagating movement. Such was the case with the ZBOR (referred to as ‘small ZBOR’) movement in Hercegovina of Ratko Parežanin, which did seek out *Otadžbina*, for such a purpose.⁷⁰ It would appear that during this process of unification, it would be Parežanin’s ZBOR group, along with elements of the JA, and a small Slovenian veteran’s group, *Združene borcev Jugoslavije – BOJ* (Associated Combatants of Yugoslavia - BOJ), which was a promoter of the regime in Slovenia,⁷¹ that sought out *Otadžbina*. Ljotić at this time most likely had good reason to be cautious about any sort of unification agreement, especially with the JA, given its on-going friction with the official regime party, the *Jugoslovenska Narodna Stranka* (Yugoslav National Party).⁷² Also, given his caution, it was likely that he would mull over any proposal given to him, including the proposed role of *Otadžbina* by Parežanin.⁷³

Two informal meetings did take place, the first, in Belgrade on 6 October, 1934, three days before the king’s assassination, and the second, in Zagreb, on 14 December, 1934, which gave Ljotić and *Otadžbina* a leading position in the negotiations.⁷⁴ For both BOJ and the JA, these negotiations were of a more pragmatic than ideological character. BOJ, embroiled as it was in internal dissent, saw a minority element move towards ZBOR, while for the JA’s problems with the JNS were putting it under increased scrutiny and calls to be banned.⁷⁵ In order to legitimise its own political existence, a merger with ZBOR, through which it could conceivably control it, seemed logical and feasible for the JNS.

⁷⁰ Ratko Parežanin, *Drugi svetski rat i Dimitrije Ljotić* (Munich: Iskra, 1971), 53.

⁷¹ Gligorijević, “Politički pokreti i grupe s nacionalsocijalističkom ideologijom i njihova fuzija u Ljotićevom zboru,” 59. According to Gligorijević, BOJ was divided between a pro-regime Slovene type nationalism, and a current that wanted a mass movement, diluting its military character and opening it up to anti-regime elements.

⁷² See earlier in chapter 3.

⁷³ Ratko Parežanin (1896-1971). A journalist, he worked as press attaché for the Central Press Bureau of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in Vienna. Was a founder in 1934 of the Balkan Institute (Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences today). During the occupation, he became editor of the Ljotićevite journal *Naša borba* (Our struggle), and chief ideological officer of the collaborationist *Srpski Dobrovoljački Korpus* (Serbian Volunteer Corps) initially made up of ZBOR members and formed in 1941. For more see Simo C. Ćirković, *Ko je Ko u Nedićevoj Srbiji 1941-1944. Leksikon ličnosti slika jedna zabranjene epohe*, 393.; Parežanin, *Drugi svetski rat i Dimitrije Ljotić*.

⁷⁴ Gligorijević, “Politički pokreti i grupe s nacionalsocijalističkom ideologijom i njihova fuzija u Ljotićevom zboru,” 65. In his autobiography, Ljotić refers only to the first meeting on 13 October. Perhaps this was to make it appear as if he was not given any position of prominence? See “Iz moga života”, in Ljotić, Dimitrije, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 427.

⁷⁵ Its internal problems non-withstanding, the JA’s central committee only voted to unify with ZBOR on 17 February, 1935, causing yet more friction between the central committee and the JA’s editor of its organ, *Jugoslovenska reč*, Luka Kostrenčić who wanted the JA to remain independent.

The reasons for Ljotić's rise to prominence in these negotiations are not hard to fathom. As a former minister, Ljotić's name lent a certain degree of respectability. His personal relationship to the deceased king, plus his family's reputation, made him stand out amongst the other potential candidates (among who were Jonić and Parežanin). It was thought that if the new movement were to have any wider popular appeal, it would be because of the aforementioned qualities and personal characteristics surrounding Ljotić. These negotiations would culminate in the announcement of ZBOR as a political movement on 6 January, 1935, on the sixth anniversary of the 6th of January regime. It would be the personality and royal connections of Ljotić that ensured him the position of president of the newly reconstructed ZBOR.⁷⁶

ZBOR – Beginnings of an organisation

ZBOR, which translates to 'rally' in Serbo-Croatian, was itself an acronym. According to Parežanin, the founder and leader of the small Hercegovinian localised 'small ZBOR', ZBOR was an acronym for *Zadružena Borbena Organizacija Rada* (loosely translated as United Fighting Labour Organisation). Parežanin states that it was united in the sense that the movement stood for a 'united and co-operative life', fighting, because 'without struggle, we cannot achieve what we want', organisation, because 'we are for organisation, for work, for a plan', and labour, because 'we value true labour, while crushing the idlers'.⁷⁷ As its heraldry, ZBOR chose a shield with a piece of wheat chaff intersected by a sword. This was explained as heroic, and signified ZBOR's return to the heroic spirit and past of its ancestors.⁷⁸ In order to broaden its wider appeal, the movement decided on the prefix of *Jugoslovenski Narodni Pokret* (Yugoslav National Movement), to ZBOR, to make the full name of the movement the *Jugoslovenski Narodni Pokret ZBOR* (or JNP ZBOR). Unlike the AF, where Maurras joined an already existing movement and converted it into his ideological laboratory, Ljotić was one of many existing candidates for the role of the head of a united amalgamation of disparate groups, who would later implant a personal ideology into this new amalgamated movement. This imposition of ideology would be seen in the publication of ZBOR's *Osnova načela i*

⁷⁶ With Ljotić unanimously elected as president, the two vice-presidents were Dr. Juraj Korenić, and Dr. Franc Kandare. Velibor Jonić was elected as general secretary. Only Ljotić was elected unanimously. That Korenić was a Croat and Kandare a Slovene, was supposed to be a sign of ZBOR's integral Yugoslavism and its nation wide appeal. See Parežanin, *Drugi svetski rat i Dimitrije Ljotić*, 63.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 32.

⁷⁸ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 28.

smernice (Basic principles and guidelines) in 1935.⁷⁹ It was this publication, presented on the day of ZBOR's foundation that would initially set and define the movement's ideology and political life.

The Ideology of ZBOR in the context of Yugoslavist thought

ZBOR's basic guidelines and principles were its first attempt at political clarification and orientation. Its guidelines rested on the inevitability of the unification of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and on the state acting as the defender of 'Yugoslav' moral, spirit, and culture. The king, representing a sort of divine will, was above reproach. Rural life and the village would act as the criterion, or the norm, of state social policy. The mainstay of the economy would be agriculture. Private property and capital were to be subordinated to the needs of the whole.⁸⁰ The guidelines, were supposed to 'answer the pressing questions of the day', included clauses concerning Ljotić's wish for a 'free judiciary' and the 'impeccable personal correctness' of all civil servants, and that 'real government' under the administration of the state, would solve all administrative issues.⁸¹ Focusing primarily on issues of governance, the guidelines stated that ZBOR was for 'government need not exceeding national economic strength', and that the village, as the 'racial-biological source of the people', should not only have its 'culture protected, but its organic health', and should be incorporated into all aspects of political life.⁸² The state was to act as a mediator between capital and labour, in order to maintain social harmony.⁸³

Despite the publication of its *Osnova načela i smernice*, ZBOR's ideology, as will be shown, was rife with inconsistencies, contradiction, simplicity, lack of pragmatism, and incompleteness. The movement claimed to be arguing for a 'new conception of politics' to show people that politics was not just a morass. Part of this problem of translating its thought stemmed from ZBOR's short legal political life, giving it little time to structurally organise. But ZBOR's own ideological rigidity, simplicity, lack of appeal, and later accusations of fascism would hamper any real development. Moreover, Ljotić could not seem to decide if

⁷⁹ *Program jugoslovenskog narodna pokreta zbor. Osnova načela i smernice* (Belgrade, 1935).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* ZBOR's principles represented a more integralist and unitarist Yugoslavism, based on the historical destiny of the South Slavs to unite. The Bulgarians were outside of this unification, though ZBOR would, in its rhetoric at least, proclaim Yugoslavia incomplete without the Bulgarians.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

his movement should remain outside of the political mainstream. He also did not know when participating, what form it should take and to what end. As will be shown, he also focused his attention on ideological matters, thus leaving ZBOR as an organisational entity extremely weak and basic.

However, there was a clear crystallisation amongst certain linked themes and layers in ZBOR's ideology from 1935-1940. Among them were nationalism/monarchism, Yugoslavism, anti-communism, anti-democracy, anti-Semitism, anti-capitalism, and a corporatist type of social organisation and policy. While some of these themes were part of Ljotić's earlier ideological crystallisation, it is important to put them into the political and ideological context of ZBOR. These themes would remain constant, and would form a cornerstone on which ZBOR hoped to build its ideology and support base.

Ljotić's monarchist sentiments went hand in hand with his nationalism. His slogan of 'God, King, and Domaćin' was echoed by Maurras in the cry for 'God, King, and Fatherland'. This also shared in its synonymous meaning with the 'Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality' slogan of Russia under Tsar Nicholas I.⁸⁴ In ZBOR's *Osnova načela i smernice*, the king was to be absolute, and above reproach, embodying state unity and totality. He was also the safeguard of 'faith, Church, unity, family, the people, the Fatherland, and all laws and freedoms'.⁸⁵ In the specific case of Yugoslavia, the issue of nationality saw an imposition of identity from above, justified through an 'organic' concept of South Slavonic unity. Ljotić saw his nationalism as part and parcel of his monarchism, and vice versa. The king was supposedly a gift of God's mercy, and acted as a 'beacon of liberty, and the protector of our unity'.⁸⁶ Ljotić's monarchism and nationalism were part of an earlier ideological formation before the founding of ZBOR, which has been shown earlier. But a new corollary was added to this monarchist/nationalist dimension. This corollary was that of Yugoslavism.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ David Saunders, "The political and social order", in Leatherbarrow and Offord, *A History of Russian Thought*, 28. For more on Ljotić's monarchism, see chapter 1.

⁸⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Mi smo za Kralja."

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ The concept of Yugoslavism was developed as a corollary to the national awakening fomented by the French Revolution. The concept was first conceived by the Illyrian Movement though it was coined by two Croatian Catholic bishops, Josip Juraj Strossmayer, and Franjo Rački. It sought the unification of the South Slavs (Bulgarians, Croats, Serbians, and Slovenes) in a single state. In the political context of interwar Yugoslavia, it can be simplified to a division between those who argued for a single 'Yugoslav' nationality, and a centralised state. This was opposed by a faction arguing for decentralisation, a federative state, and the continued acknowledgement of existing ethnic and cultural differences while promoting unity. For more see Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, and Politics* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University

Ljotić's Yugoslavism put a strong emphasis on the unity of the Yugoslav 'tribes'. There was, as will be shown, a high level of ambiguity regarding his personal conception of Yugoslavism, which would be disseminated through ZBOR publications. Initially, given that Yugoslavism was seen by elements within Yugoslavia as akin to state centralisation, Ljotić's concept of Yugoslavism rested on the assumption that Yugoslavism was 'organic' in the sense that Yugoslavia was a historical inevitability. In ZBOR's conception of Yugoslavism, it would remain incomplete so long as the Bulgarians were not incorporated into Yugoslavia. Bulgaria, according to Ljotić, was 'part of the national body',⁸⁸ and therefore could not remain outside of any South Slav unification. Within his form of Yugoslavism however, there was a clear hierarchical demarcation. This was evidenced by Ljotić's claim of the Serbian 'active' element, and the Croatian 'complementary' element,⁸⁹ within Yugoslavism, which were supposed to work in tandem and harmony. This harmony was due in part to Yugoslavia's supposed inevitability. Ljotić explained his Yugoslavism in that 'there can be no Bulgarian, Croatian, Serbian, or Slovenian tribe without a unified state', for when these tribes 'form independent states, they are doomed to fall'.⁹⁰

Much of Ljotić's writing on Yugoslavism was within the paradigm of the 'national question'. This would not only open ZBOR up to accusations of being Serbian dominated (which it would be), but more insidiously, of using Yugoslavism as a cover for Serbian nationalism.⁹¹

Yugoslavism, as ZBOR perhaps inadvertently portrayed it, was deeply intertwined with the question of centralisation or federalism. This intermeshing of state administrative issues with ethnic debates gave rise to the 'national question', and the closely linked 'Croatian question'.⁹² Rather than Parežanin's stated opinion that 'Yugoslav thought' permeated

Press, 1984); Dejan Djokić, ed., *Yugoslavism. Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918-1992* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).

⁸⁸ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Šta jača međunarodnoj položaj," *Otadžbina*, 18 March, 1934, No.4, 1-2.

⁸⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Osnovni nesporazum," *Budjenje*, 10 February, 1935, No.6, 1-2.

⁹⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Jugoslovenskog drama," 1.

⁹¹ Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001), 188. Tomasevich is of the opinion that Ljotić's Yugoslavism was a sham and cloaked an intransigent Serbian nationalism and had ZBOR been able to continue functioning legally, this would have become clear.

⁹² The Croatian question was a byproduct of the national question. The Croatian question arose from the 6th of January regime's redefining Yugoslavia's regions along geographical, rather than ethnic lines. At the heart of the Croatian question lay the issue of Croatia's position within Yugoslavia, and its defined internal borders. These borders, as well as Croatia's position in Yugoslavia was tied into the debate of a centralised government, associated with Serbian national myths and hegemony, or a federalised republic, which was favoured by a

Ljotić's mind, Ljotić's 'Yugoslav thought' went only so far as to reinforcing state integrity and state unity. His way of doing this was to hark to the 'spirit' of Yugoslavia's people, as proof that they were indeed one and the same.⁹³

The Yugoslav national idea had by the end of the interwar era become associated with conservatism, and centralism, for many non-Serbs. Ljotić's Yugoslavism would have been no exception to a majority of non-Serbs (and perhaps Serbs as well), as it was in essence little more than that centralisation view of the Radical Party. It is here where ambiguity arises, for while the Radical Party initially opposed any open declaration to 'unitarism',⁹⁴ Ljotić at first subscribed to it. However, his Yugoslavism would be predicated by the same dictates of the Radical Party, in that the policy of Serbian hegemony presupposed a centralist state organisation. Therefore, Ljotić, like the Radicals, was forced to accept elements of 'unitarism' in order to keep its ideology Serbian centred. The national problem however, was not ended with the 6th of January regime. To Ljotić, the 'problem of the tribes' remained, as did the 'religious problem', by which there was a 'cleavage in Christ's Church, which our country has the unfortunate accident of bisecting',⁹⁵ becoming ever more hostile. To ZBOR, the 'national question', was greatly exacerbated by the Croatian question because the Croatian question was framed as a problem of 'spirit', and of tradition, against which the Croats were accused of turning.

More so than the national question, it was the Croatian question that ZBOR saw as problematic as it viewed it through a strictly mystical and one-dimensional paradigm, that of national and state unity. In essence, the national question, in ZBOR's view morphed into the Croatian question, and the movement presented it in an uncompromising and venomous light. For ZBOR, the Croatian question was not one that could be solved by the signing of any treaty or agreement. For Ljotić, the Croatian population could be divided into two groups. The first group consisted of 'those who are for repairing the socio-economic and moral-political life of the nation'.⁹⁶ The second part was made up of 'Frankists' who hold 'hatred for Yugoslavia and any community with the Serbs'.⁹⁷ It was the Frankists,⁹⁸ and their

majority of Croatian politicians and elites. For more see Djokić, *Elusive Compromise*. ; Pieter Troch, "Yugoslavism between the Wars: Indecisive Nation Building" 38, no. 2 (2010), 227–244.

⁹³ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Dva Greha," *Naš Put*, 28 June, 1939, No.16, 3.

⁹⁴ Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, and Politics*, 160.

⁹⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Nerešeni problemi," *Otadžbina*, 12 June, 1937, No.162, 1.

⁹⁶ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Nesporazum kod sporazuma," *Otadžbina*, 19 June, 1937, No.163, 1.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

disassociation of any idea of unity, to which Ljotić greatly objected. Not only being content with an independent Croatian state, Ljotić accused Croatian separatists of wanting a personal union with Hungary (a belief ascribed perhaps only to a small number of diehard Habsburg supporters), which would result in the Hungarians having their maritime border.⁹⁹

For Ljotić, the Frankists were unable to ‘conceive Yugoslavia as their homeland due to their ‘small heads’, and ‘small souls’, by which he meant that Yugoslavia was simply ‘too big and too broad’ for their comprehension. As they did ‘nothing to create it’, destroying Yugoslavia was to be no issue for the Frankists.¹⁰⁰ As for a solution to the Croatian question Ljotić felt that the onus of responsibility lay with the Croats. He harangued the leader of the most popular political party in Croatia the Croatian Peasant Party (*Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka* – hereafter HSS), and its leader Vladko Maček.¹⁰¹ Ljotić went so far as to accuse Maček of trivialising the struggle against Communism as a simple ‘fear of the reactionaries’, as a sign of government inactivity against Communism.¹⁰²

Maček, in Ljotić’s view, as representative of the Croatian people, was key to pushing Croatia towards independence with insistence on the *Sporazum* (Agreement) of 26 August, 1939, which created an autonomous Croatian banovina that was largely self-governing, except in defence. The *Sporazum* was made possible under royal encouragement for negotiations between the government and Maček. This supposed drive towards Croatian independence

⁹⁸ Frankist was a derogatory moniker for extreme Croat nationalists. Its roots come from Josip Frank, a Croat nationalist and member of the nationalist *Hrvatska Stranka Prava* (Croatian Party of Rights, hereafter HSP). He was instrumental in the writing of the HSP program in 1894. In the context of both interwar Yugoslav political life and the Croat nationalist milieu, the term was adopted to any Croatian group advocating anti-Yugoslav sentiment (see here the Ustaša movement). See also Dimitrije Ljotić, “Opet o nemogućnosti sporazuma,” *Otađbina*, 3 July, 1937, No.165, 1.

⁹⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Naš položaj,” *Bilten*, 21 May, 1939, No.13, 9–10.

¹⁰⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Frankovci,” *Bilten*, 21 September, 1940, No.55, 13–14.

¹⁰¹ Vladko Maček (1879-1964). Joined the HSS at its founding in 1904, was a contemporary of Stjepan Radić. He served in the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War, and was arrested by the Royal Yugoslav Authorities in 1925 and elected to the National Assembly while in jail. He assumed leadership of the HSS after Radić’s assassination, and was arrested and convicted of treason in 1933, though released following King Alexander’s assassination. He negotiated the semi-autonomous status of a Croatian province within Yugoslavia known as the Cvetković-Maček agreement. Refusing a role in the Nazi created Independent State of Croatia, he fled the Communist takeover of Yugoslavia and settled in the United States. For more see Mirko Glojnarčić, ed., *Vodja govori: Ličnost, izjave, govori i politički rad vodje Hrvata Dra. Vladka Mačka* (Zagreb, 1936).; Vladko Maček, *In the Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1957).

¹⁰² AJ 115-8676/7. Ljotić to unnamed recipient on 27 December, 1939. Here Ljotić perhaps also makes indirect references to Stalin’s speech to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, in 1925, where the Soviet leader stressed the rights of nations to self-determination in Yugoslavia. The national question in Yugoslavia would occur as a Soviet revolution, by dint of Yugoslavia’s subjugation by imperialist groups. See I.V. Stalin. “K nacionalnomu voprosu v Jugoslavii: Reč na jugoslavskoi komissii IKKI 30 marta 1925”, in I.V. Stalin, *Sočineniya. Tom 7, 1925* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo političeskoi literaturi, 1952), 74.

saw Ljotić conceive of two possible outcomes. Either the Croatian masses would turn more radical and fully support the Frankist cause, or they would reject it and turn towards Stalin.¹⁰³

Yet, Ljotić recognised that Yugoslavism was created in Croatia, by what he called the ‘finest sons of Croatia’.¹⁰⁴ Yugoslavism started with the creation of the Illyrian movement and based its views on South Slavonic national identity upon the ideal of the national awakening of the French Revolution. What Ljotić resented the most however was what he deemed to be the tragedy and betrayal of ‘Zagreb entering into conflict with its past’.¹⁰⁵ Yet he also blamed the Serbs for not ‘taking Yugoslavia into their souls’,¹⁰⁶ and claimed that the Croatian question would remain until this is resolved. However, Ljotić also saw this as a sign to increase his influence amongst the disaffected Serbs in Croatian majority provinces, especially in the aftermath of the Cvetković-Maček agreement, which gave Croatia autonomy within Yugoslavia.

At the expense of his stated Yugoslavism, he began taking interest in the Serbian Cultural Club (*Srpski Kulturni Klub* –hereafter SKK¹⁰⁷). He seems to have reached out in late 1939, meeting with a favourable response, asking for his presence at conferences and meetings to ‘express the true conditions in the country’, as a means of strengthening the SKK.¹⁰⁸ He also seems to have made an impression, at least initially, on the SKK leadership, especially through his eloquence as a public speaker.¹⁰⁹

On a wider scale, his involvement in the SKK saw the proliferation of the ‘Serbian question’ as a corollary to Croatian autonomy. Numerous Serb intellectuals and organisations began questioning the role of the Serbs within Yugoslavia, and a low-level conflict arose between

¹⁰³ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Drugo pismo,” *Naša borba*, 7 September, 1941, No.1, 3.

¹⁰⁴ “Osnovi savremene jugoslavije” in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 84.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Ljotić, “Dva greha,” 3.

¹⁰⁷ Djokić, *Elusive Compromise*, 249–254. The SKK was founded in early 1937 by the eminent historian and jurist Slobodan Jovanović. Acting as a sort of think-tank, it was perhaps the best indicator of Serbian intellectual thought, which claimed to represent a wider pan-Serb agenda. Increasingly nationalist, it did not reject Yugoslavia as a state, but argued that a strong Yugoslavia could only be attained through a strong and united Serb element.

¹⁰⁸ AJ 115-8674. “Srpski Kulturni Klub”. Nikola Stojanović to Dimitrije Ljotić. 1 December, 1939. Stojanović writes that the SKK would have failed in its Serbian duty if it did not respond to the invitation sent to us (in reference to Ljotić).

¹⁰⁹ AJ 115-8675 “Srpski Kulturni Klub”. Slobodan Jovanović to Dimitrije Ljotić. 6 December, 1939. Jovanović makes reference to Ljotić’s eloquence, and notes that Ljotić made a strong impression upon him with his speech on ‘quality over quantity’, which was also well received by the audience.

emergent Serb nationalism and the state.¹¹⁰ In effect, the continued existence of the Croatian question was to ZBOR a sign that the government did not intend to solve the problem, and ZBOR blamed it for its continued existence. Thus it forced the Serbs' hand (in Ljotić's view) in rectifying the situation.

What also becomes clear is the level and attachment of Ljotić to Yugoslavism. He certainly considered the Serbs as the primary element in Yugoslav thought, even though historically it had been conceptualised in Croatia almost a century previously. More importantly however, it shows how ZBOR's Yugoslavism became a cloak for Serbian nationalism, inasmuch as Ljotić evidently agreed with the SKK on the need for a strong Serbian element as integral to Yugoslav national and state unity. As the Yugoslav state was primarily built upon the pre-existing institutions of the Kingdom of Serbia, this is perhaps understandable. But as the Serbs were a plurality in the Yugoslav state, as well as possessing independent prewar institutions, under a Serbian monarchy, it is easy to see the conflagration, between 'Serb' and 'Yugoslav'.

It was also a sign of the conflagration between centralism and federalism. State unity was a prime value for ZBOR, because the 'state is the most important element of human society', and 'without the state, there can be nothing'.¹¹¹ However, in a seeming contradiction, ZBOR argued for centralisation as the driving element for state unity. At the same time there was a tendency towards 'organic decentralisation', as opposed to what was deemed 'bureaucratic decentralisation'.¹¹² This obvious contradiction could be construed as a screen for the government handling of the national and Croatian question and for ZBOR's core belief that its root causes were of a deeper moral malaise, coupled with political incompetence.

The end of Yugoslavia as a constitutional monarchy came in January 1929, with the country being invaded and dismembered in April 1941. For Ljotić's Yugoslavism, in the context of collaboration, occupation, and the Second World War as will be shown; he would go no further than Serbia. At the same time, he would appeal to 'Slavdom', though making scant mention of any reconstituted Yugoslavia. What was tantamount was the salvation and

¹¹⁰ Djokić, *Elusive Compromise*, 226–227.; Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder: The Second World War in Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst & Company, 2008), 8.

¹¹¹ "Osnovi savremene jugoslavije" in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 60.

¹¹² *Ibid.* 88.

continued existence of the Serbian people; ‘with the only help that we can expect besides ourselves is that from Germany’.¹¹³

ZBOR and democracy

Social democracy of the time made the fatal mistake of assuming that those who had been crippled by thousands of years of patriarchal power were capable of democracy without any further preliminaries and was capable of governing themselves. Just as Christianity and anarchy did, social democracy lived on the compromise of the masses between happiness and irresponsibility.¹¹⁴ Officially, it rejected the rigorous scientific efforts (e.g., those of Freud) to comprehend the complicated nature of human beings. Hence, it was forced to assume dictatorial forms within its own ranks and to make compromises outside of them.

The theme of anti-democratic rhetoric and thought was prominent to both Ljotić and ZBOR. Like Yugoslavism, it was interlinked with numerous other issues, which then coalesced into a wider ‘anti-democratic’ thought that had its basis within anti-modernism. Among them would be criticisms of capitalism, and parliamentary, as corollaries to his anti-democratic thought. Ljotić’s criticism of democracy predated ZBOR.¹¹⁵ However, given the unfortunate lack of documents, it is difficult to put ZBOR’s anti-democratic stance within a more specific socio-political Yugoslav context. Nonetheless, as will be shown later, anti-democratic thought in Yugoslavia did find a degree of fermentation within universities, and amongst elements of the middle class. Among the most glaring contradictions are, that while Ljotić and ZBOR agitated for an end to democratic rule (if it existed in interwar Yugoslavia), and all it entailed, the organisation was openly (for a time) able to operate and function within it. Ljotić’s time as a member of the Radical Party left him in doubtless as to what he perceived to be as the artificial nature of both democracy and political parties. Neither of them, according to Ljotić, is ‘organic’, and that liberal democracy, which is founded on political parties, will ‘ultimately lead to destruction of both state and society’.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 123.

¹¹⁴ Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York, Orgone Institute Press, 1946), 196-198.

¹¹⁵ For more on Ljotić’s earlier anti-democratic ideals, see chapter 1 of this work. See also; “Veliki zbor g. Dimitrija Ljotića u Vršcu,” *Otadžbina*, 15 September, 1935, No.80. ; Dimitrije Ljotić, “Učenje Zbora i teoretičari demokratije,” *Otadžbina*, 24 September, 1936, No.132.

¹¹⁶ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Osnovi savremene jugoslavije,” *Otadžbina*, 17 November, 1935, No.89, 2.

Self-interest, as opposed to the collective interest was another assumed symptom of democracy, especially ‘through the ballot box’, where ‘voters care mostly about themselves, and have been led astray by those who are supposed to speak on their behalf’.¹¹⁷ Those that spoke on their behalf, the national representatives, were not convincing according to Ljotić, even if they were well meaning citing a ‘difference of mentality’.¹¹⁸ A democratic system, wrote ZBOR member Milosav Vasiljević, was ‘not conducive to any sort of free choice’,¹¹⁹ as a buttress to Ljotić’s critique of democrats as out of touch with society. If, according to Ljotić, a candidate with 1000 votes that beat the candidate with 999 votes, it was not the candidate with 1000 votes that won, but rather that one voter who tipped the balance.¹²⁰ Here Ljotić’s criticism of democracy shares similarities with that of German radical conservative philosopher Oswald Spengler, in that both viewed democracy, especially its supposed self-interest, as a battleground of party cliques and the ‘ready intervention of money’.¹²¹ Spengler’s writings are of relevance in that he saw the decline of European civilisation as a result of the French Revolution, and saw the ‘West’ in particular, as being ruled by materialism and money; hence, he believed it was doomed.

Vasiljević, in writing about democracy’s supposed inherent weakness, is of the opinion that ‘once a democratic system is imposed, citizens lose the right to choose another system’, when democracy claims that ‘it brings freedom’.¹²² To both Ljotić and Spengler then, democracy signified a declining civilisation, in a kind of transitional state between civilisation and decay. Though unlike the Marxist model of historical development, Ljotić’s view was more philosophical than material. Rather than Marx’s belief in capitalism’s inevitable demise resulting from ‘bourgeois’ or a capitalist class rule, Ljotić would never show much beyond a rudimentary knowledge as to democracy’s application.

As previously stated, democracy’s dissemination throughout Europe was, in Ljotić’s opinion, due to the French Revolution’s ideas, with Ljotić writing, that liberal democracy was allowed

¹¹⁷ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Priče sa radija,” *Vihor*, 22 May, 1937, No.10, 1.

¹¹⁸ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Poznaćete ih po plodovima,” *Otađbina*, 3 March, 1934, No.2, 1.; Dimitrije Ljotić, “Ko je za,” *Otađbina*, 18 April, 1936, No.110, 1.

¹¹⁹ Milosav Vasiljević, *Kriza demokratije i budući oblik vladavine* (Smederevo: Štamparija Marinković, 1938), 15.

¹²⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Naš Put* (Split: Trgovačka Tiskara, 1938), 10.

¹²¹ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West. Form and Actuality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), 458.

¹²² Milosav Vasiljević, *Kriza demokratije i budući oblik vladavine*, 16.

‘free reign on the European continent’.¹²³ The paradigm through which democracy advanced under the aegis of the French Revolution was deeply ingrained in many critics of the French Revolution, from whom Ljotić took inspiration.¹²⁴ It was later adopted and elaborated on by radical conservative intellectuals within Weimar Germany.¹²⁵ Amongst them was the cultural historian Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, who wrote in 1923 that ‘German revolutionaries of 1918 made the German Revolution a Western-parliamentary one, on the English and French models of 1688 and 1789’. In the meantime, it was claimed that the ‘West has accustomed itself to Liberalism’ (read democracy), and that it has taught the West to ‘turn its principles into tactics to deceive the people.’¹²⁶

This idea of 1918 as the springboard for democracy in Germany made a deep impression on the emerging Nazi ideology. In one of his first speeches, from 1 February, 1933, Adolf Hitler proclaimed that democracy and liberalism inevitably led to social democracy and communism, with the effects of the degeneracy of Weimar showing its depth.¹²⁷ The result of democracy’s spread was a proliferation of political parties, urbanisation, social mobility, and eventually electoral franchise. This would result, according to ZBOR, in the ruination of culture, and an increase in industrialisation, which would destroy not only urban life, but the ‘keeper of both rural and urban tradition’, the village.¹²⁸ Though Ljotić was careful not to publicly disparage ‘the masses’, his only real experience with large crowds or groups of individuals was through the semi-feudalistic and paternalistic appeals to agricultural workers and peasants, primarily as a result of his work in agricultural co-operatives.

¹²³ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Neppravdana radost,” *Otadžbina*, 14 July, 1935, 71, 1.

¹²⁴ See Ch. 1. Criticism of the French Revolution was appropriated by the extreme right as a point of reference for criticising modernism. It went beyond Fascism and National Socialism, as being associated with the malaise of democracy. Amongst many future collaborators throughout Europe, the Nazi ‘New Order’ was set to rectify this. See Vidkun Quisling’s 1941 speech in *Fritt Folk* (Free Folk), where he decried the ‘destructive principles of the French Revolution’, such as ‘dialogue, representation, and parliamentary rule’, in Hans Fredrik Dahl, *Vidkun Quisling. En fører for fall*. (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1992), 209.

¹²⁵ The ‘Conservative Revolution’ in Germany was a post-WWI intellectual movement that echoed many pre-war nationalist ideas. What the conservative intellectuals were aware of however was there would be no return to the failed monarchic principle of the past. Appalled by German defeat in the First World War, and by the subsequent social democratic led ‘November Revolution’, they argued for the redirection of the ‘revolutionary spirit into conservative and nationalist channels. Its aim was to end Germany’s subservience to ‘Western values’, and create a German form of socialism based on the solidarity of the German *Volk* (people or race). Its nationalist leanings notwithstanding, it would share an ambivalent relationship with the emergence of National Socialism. For more see Martin Travers, *Critics of Modernity. The Literature of the Conservative Revolution in Germany, 1890-1923* (Peter Lang, 2001). ; Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1996).

¹²⁶ Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, *Germany’s Third Empire* (London: George Allen & Unwin Limited, 1934), 37.

¹²⁷ Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction. The Making & Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London & New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 99.

¹²⁸ Svetislav Stefanović, “Apsurdni i paradoksi demokratije,” 1.

Where ZBOR made statements on ‘the masses’, it was usually in regard to the contradictions of democracy, that they have ‘lost the interest and motivation to vote for ideological reasons’.¹²⁹ Where Ljotić was disparaging of the people however, was in believing that the people had no individual or collective will. This lack of will was due, Ljotić believed, to the idea that voting, as a hallmark of democracy, brings about a contrary result to the peoples will, thus sapping it. It is only the opinion of political parties, who believe that a vote is in the general interest.¹³⁰ The concept of ‘will’, which was also superfluous with Ljotić’s concept of ‘spirit’, in that Ljotić maintained that ‘democracy goes against the spirit of Yugoslavs. Spirit, taken to mean a feeling of collective identity, was described as heroic, a concept in the creation and defence of Yugoslavia, all the way back to the first Croatian, and Serbian principalities and kingdoms.’¹³¹

Ljotić considered democracy as a perceived ‘collection of equal individuals’. Yet, the ‘spirit’, or ‘will’, would be expressed through the varying functions, working in mutual harmony for the maintenance of the multiple units of the national whole.¹³² Through the conduit of democracy’s implied equality, freedom and justice become mainstays of public and societal discourse. Ljotić, however, viewed such strengths of democracy as weaknesses that bring chaos above which ‘one can never rise’. He was never able to view democracy as anything other than through his perception of ‘individualism’. However, one time ZBOR youth leader Danilo Gregorić formulated an idea undoubtedly close to that of Ljotić that the ‘sociological beginnings of individualism proceeds from materialism, as a means of solving human societal events, those concerning the individual and his personal well-being’. Its appearance was created through the development of Western thought, and which postulated that ‘nature is made up of indivisible atoms, moving mechanically according to eternal natural law, behind which there are no ethics or deities’.¹³³

Ljotić, viewing democracy as a sort anarchy, wherein personal interests took precedence over the collective, saw discipline and order as the necessary correctives. That is why, Ljotić

¹²⁹ Vasiljević, *Kriza demokratije i budući oblik vladavine*, 10.

¹³⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Zbor i partije,” *Nova Iskra*, October 1996, No.35, 26–27.

¹³¹ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Ljubljana,” *Novi Put*, 3 April, 1938, Year 2, No.2, 2–3.

¹³² Dimitrije Ljotić, “Van demokratije nema spasa,” *Naš put*, 7 January, 1940, Year 2, No.1–2, 3–4.

¹³³ Danilo Gregorić, *Ekonomska i socijalna politika nacionalnoga socijalizma i njene doktrinarne osnove: doktorska rasprava*. (Belgrade: Dura Jakšić, 1936), 15–16.

argues, hierarchy, in the form of an absolute monarchy is preferable, for it posits discipline, as a means of achieving freedom, in tandem with the ‘Christian spirit’. This freedom was to be further found through God, and would be granted on earth through the king.¹³⁴

Parliamentarism, synonymous with democracy, removes deputies from the issues facing the nation, and entrenches corruption.¹³⁵ To Ljotić, parliamentarism was the ‘crown of democracy’, only allowed to exist in countries with established political parties, where the government was made up of undisputed leaders, ‘dictators’,¹³⁶ according to ZBOR. Moreover, parliamentarism¹³⁷ signifies the confusion of government with disorder and irresponsibility. To that end, ZBOR proclaimed itself to be against parliamentarism because ‘parliament comes from parties’.¹³⁸

What Ljotić and ZBOR argued for instead was a National Assembly. This National Assembly, as will be shown later in this chapter, would be based on Ljotić’s view of societal organisation, amongst differing *staleži* (estates/corporations), who would elect their representatives. It would be the Assembly that would make and pass laws, leaving the government the courts free to administer justice.¹³⁹ This system of a semi-parliamentary nature, would also act as the best check and defence mechanism against corruption.

Corruption, as a by-product of democracy and parliamentarism, was taken by Ljotić as a real sign of democracy’s moral degeneracy and decay. ‘The people’, wrote Ljotić, who know ‘the material damage that corruption does to them, do not know the damage it causes the state’.¹⁴⁰ The main damage of corruption, according to Ljotić, is that ‘corruption regards the state as a tool serving individual interests, not the general interest’. Many people talk about ending corruption, Ljotić wrote, but ‘they talk through their mouths, and not through their hearts’.¹⁴¹ For Ljotić, corruption, more than being a sign of the civilisational degradation brought by democracy, was an attack on the body politic, on the living organism of the state, as the primordial embodiment of the Yugoslav peoples.

¹³⁴ Ljotić, “Van demokratije nema spasa,” 4.

¹³⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Naš Stav,” *Otadžbina*, 26 August, 1934, No.27, 1.

¹³⁶ Ljotić, “Braniocima demokratije,” 1.

¹³⁷ The term parliamentarism here will be described superficially as ‘government by discussion’.

¹³⁸ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Slučaj lista Napred,” *Bilten*, 14 January, 1940, No.37, 17.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 18.

¹⁴⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, “O korupciji,” *Otadžbina*, 22 October, 1936, No.136, 1.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

ZBOR's anti-democratic thought was fraught with incoherence. While Ljotić's argument followed a line of thought not unlike the mainstream European radical right, in expressing fear of democracy as an element of modernisation, there was never any real analysis apart from slogans demonising democracy as a symptom of the degeneracy of modernisation. The superficiality of ZBOR's criticism of democracy is unsurprising. Among the most important factors for sustaining a constitutional and democratic system were those of economic development and modernisation, along with a resolution of various religious and regional issues. These of course, when taken on their-own were not enough to preserve a constitutional government, but taken as a whole, they can be said to account for the major differences.¹⁴² Yugoslavia unfortunately, was lacking in economic modernisation, subject to dictatorship, and suffering numerous regional and religious issues. One of the most enduring of ZBOR's slogans however involved anti-capitalism. As will be shown, ZBOR linked free-market capitalism to liberal democracy, as a type of cultural and economic degradation and oppression. This allowed for the idea that within a Yugoslav national context, only a corporative social hierarchy could save the nation from further degeneracy.

In essence, ZBOR was instinctively anti-democratic and anti-parliamentary. However, Ljotić claimed that the movement, though anti-parliamentary, is not against parliament. In fact, ZBOR claimed support the involvement of those who are chosen by the people in their country's laws and supervision of the government. ZBOR emphasised true governance and accountability; as long as a government, specifically a true parliament, is able to govern the nation properly without confusion and irresponsibility, then ZBOR favours it. This view of a government (i.e., parliament) goes a way to showing ZBOR's ambiguity in relation to a characterisation of fascism, especially since fascism is not open to supporting an institution, such as a government, that will put their rule under scrutiny.

ZBOR: Anti-capitalism and corporative social organisation

Like many of its ideological ideas, ZBOR's criticism of capitalism can be seen through an anti-modernist lens. If we take anti-modernist to mean the erosion of traditional sources of meaning and belonging, combined with mass industrialisation, which caused social

¹⁴² Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 129.

disruption, as an affront to national unity, a paradigm is formed. Through this paradigm, we can begin to put ZBOR and Ljotić's anti-capitalism into context; this will also be done in tandem with Ljotić's views on social organisation. In this vein, capitalism was taken as representing individualism, materialism, profit making, and the brute force of the market, as both anti-social and un-Christian. Industrialisation and modernisation, the spawns of capitalism, were parasites on the moral values of healthy agrarian societies.¹⁴³ Capitalism underwent a certain demonisation amongst elements of religious believers and European public opinion in the interwar era. This was not just the identification of economic liberalism as a cover for capitalism. Capitalism became a scapegoat for the cause of the disastrous economic and social realities of millions of Europeans. It was also blamed for the stagnation and laxity of moral and spiritual values, as well as for the worship of money.

Criticism of capitalism was among the first of ZBOR's ideological tenets. Its attack on capitalism went deeper than economic malaise. For Ljotić there was no doubt of capitalism being tied in with democracy. In practice, anti-capitalism for ZBOR became a corollary for a wider anti-democratic sentiment, which in itself was part of a wider criticism of modernism. Ljotić admitted as much by declaring that 'we are against liberal democracy because we are against the injustices of liberal capitalism, as the expression of liberal democracy'.¹⁴⁴ Speaking in Petrovgrad (today's Zrenjanin) in September 1935, Ljotić talked about replacing the existing capitalist system with a planned economy. This, in association with various co-operatives, would limit private interest, and subjugate, but not destroy, private property.¹⁴⁵

However, capitalism, as an idea, and as a theoretical application, was not to be done away with, just subordinated to what ZBOR viewed as the general interest. If, as ZBOR claimed, 'capitalism has for too long put itself at the service of one estate only, its solution was to propose heavy state intervention in the economy and the reorganisation of society along a corporative model'.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Paul Misner, *Social Catholicism in Europe. From the Onset of Industrialisation to the First World War* (London: Dartman, Longman and Todd, 2005), 279.

¹⁴⁴ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Naš zadatak," *Otadžbina*, 29 September, 1935, No.82, 1.

¹⁴⁵ "Veliki zbor druga Dimitrija Ljotića u Petrovgradu," *Otadžbina*, 1 September, 1935, No.78, 2. ; *Program jugoslovenskog narodna pokreta zbor. Osnova načela i smernice*.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 2.

Capitalism therefore, had to return to the services of society, the state, and the general interest, rather than a single class or 'estate', and in doing so it, would cease to exist. Ljotić however recognised and admitted the positive aspects of what capitalism had brought. Capitalism 'facilitated the ease of the exchange of goods, improved technology, and raised industries'. However, whatever good it had brought was overshadowed by the misery with which the very wealth that it brought had created. This wealth was then exploited by what Ljotić called the 'capitalist class', who, taking advantage of technological advances, threw out '40 million workers with their over 200 million family members', causing a decrease in production, as there were fewer people to produce for'. This then caused an economic crisis as business moved backwards'.¹⁴⁷ It is therefore the responsibility of the state, in ZBOR's conception to act as a 'giant co-operative', where jobs were 'calculated to give prosperity to all, and not just its individual members'.¹⁴⁸

Clearly Ljotić's and ZBOR's opinion on 'liberal capitalism' as a lack of state intervention, and the greed and avarice of individuals, could never form a sustained economic policy. Indeed, the movement never formulated anything close to resembling an actual economic policy with real solutions. However, there was an actual socio-economic element to ZBOR's anti-capitalism that was centred on the conditions of the peasantry. In its 1935 program, one of ZBOR's main principles was the assertion that the entire Yugoslav economy was 'interdependent on its agricultural foundation'. At the same time, it romanticised the concept of the 'village', which was deemed to be the 'racial-biological, spiritual, and economic life force of the Yugoslav people'.¹⁴⁹

The 'village' was to be preserved for two reasons. Firstly, the 'village' and the peasantry served as a basis for society. Secondly, it served as the healthy guardian of culture. More than a socio-economic class entity, the peasantry was a 'moral defence' force. Its collapse would lead to decay.¹⁵⁰ But this decay was not to be just cultural and spiritual. The thought that 'money' would lead to ruin was prevalent in ZBOR's ideology. The 'village', and specifically the peasantry, was to be the main sources of cultural, economic, moral, spiritual, and national renewal. 'Wealth, accumulated in the towns, and the degeneration of modern

¹⁴⁷ "Drugi Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića u Užicu," *Zbor*, October 9, 1935, No.1, 2. Ljotić never elaborated on where he got his figures. See also Dimitrije Ljotić, *Savremene političke osnove Jugoslavije* (Belgrade, 1936).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 3.

¹⁴⁹ *Program jugoslovenskog narodna pokreta zbor. Osnova načela i smernice*, Belgrade, 1935.

¹⁵⁰ "Zemljoradnik je temelj države," *Otadžbina*, 24 February, 1934, No.1, 2.

nations', wrote one time ZBOR member and intellectual Svetislav Stefanović. Stefanović continues by claiming that 'the latifundia destroys the modern state, and big cities destroys our race, exhausting its life energy, when the village has more than enough life reserves in which to fill the cities'.¹⁵¹

Such thinking on the degeneracy of urban life was prominent amongst radical right anti-modernist thinkers. Oswald Spengler described the city as the 'Megalopolis', the 'daemonic creation', which ruined the 'ecology' of the village through uprooting its inhabitants, a process he likens to 'racial suicide'.¹⁵² The peasant, as the embodiment of Yugoslav spirit as the guardian of culture, was assigned combative characteristics, being 'steadfast, and tough, in his relation to the land', and of 'not mixing his blood with the foreigners who wanted to keep him in slavery'.¹⁵³ The peasant was also said to be free of the contagious influence of Jews, for to ZBOR, agriculture was the one socio-economic activity that was still in 'Christian hands'.¹⁵⁴ To this end, state economic policies were to be formulated based on peasant and rural considerations.

As a result, ZBOR's economic policies were dictated by the perceived needs of the peasantry. As a head of an agricultural commune, Ljotić tied his own economic interests with those of the peasantry.¹⁵⁵ Capitalism and capitalist nations, according to Ljotić dictated prices on Yugoslav peasants through the 'purchasing of our nation's produce at the so-called international price, and sold industrial products at so-called national prices'. The 'national price', argued Ljotić, based on foreign capital, and in 'whose hands the majority of our industry lies', was determined by high tariffs. By buying 'our agricultural produce cheaply and selling industrial produce at inflated prices, our people are looted twice'¹⁵⁶ rages Ljotić.

¹⁵¹ Svetislav Stefanović, "Značaj srednjeg i seljačkog staleža i njihova zaštita kao aktuelni problem politike, ekonomije, i kulture," *Otadžbina*, 11 February, 1937, No.149, 2.

¹⁵² Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West. Form and Actuality*, 98–101. See also Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1921).

¹⁵³ Danilo Gregorić, "Naš privredni sistem. Osnovni zahtev seljačke politike: Oslobodjenje seljaka," *Otadžbina*, 20 October, 1935, No.85, 4. ; See also Danilo Gregorić, "Naš privredni sistem: zemlja i seljak," *Otadžbina*, 29 September, 1935, No.82, 4.

¹⁵⁴ "Opasnost od jevreja", in Ljotić, *Sabrana dela*, 172.

¹⁵⁵ Ljotić was head of both a Sugar beet Cooperative and a Wheat Cooperative in Smederevo. See 'Dimitrije Ljotić kao zadrugar', *Vihor*, 20 February, 1937, No.4, 2.

¹⁵⁶ AJ 38-353-501. "Vodj zбора g. Dimitrije Ljotić o riješenju našeg nacionalnim i državnog problema: Za stravanje socijalnog i nacionalnog fronta", in *Jugoslovenskog pošta*. 11 February, 1937.

Thus the peasant farmer became a debtor as opposed to creditor, which caused widespread impoverishment.¹⁵⁷

Increasing demands on the peasantry, to reach certain levels of productivity, were also, according to ZBOR, leading to peasant deprivation. Increasing needs of ‘development’, and ‘production’, according to Ljotić, lead to an increase in the peasant need for agricultural credit, to buy agricultural goods, while most of the produce is sent to the market, leaving the producer with less.¹⁵⁸ What it also meant, in ZBOR’s view, was the exploitation of the peasantry by both the ‘small trader’, and the ‘artisans’, along with the result of ‘capitalists’ who would both profit for themselves at the expense of the peasants and the national whole. This view that supports the peasantry and opposes capitalism is an important aspect of ZBOR in that shows its reflexive nationalism, wherein any abuse of the locals is viewed as intolerable.

Ljotić’s seemingly anti-capitalist position was hardened by his own personal stake and ambitions amongst the peasantry. As the president of a fruit growers’ co-operative, it was easy for him to mask his own economic and personal ambitions within a wider rhetoric of the capitalist exploitation of ‘the little man’. Yugoslav agriculture, like much of East-Central Europe of the interwar era, suffered from an increasing rural population, which resulted in an increasing scarcity of land. Modernisation and industrialisation threatened rural labourers with unemployment, and most peasant smallholdings yielded a low harvest capacity.¹⁵⁹ There is also the element of paternalism evident in ZBOR’s ideology and in Ljotić’s conception of interpersonal relationships. As Jozo Tomasevich writes, despite being the most numerous social group in interwar Yugoslavia, the peasantry, especially in Serbia, found political expression difficult. That is why, as Tomasevich writes, it needed ‘allies from the city in order to help it organise politically’. Those who did help the peasantry were labelled as

¹⁵⁷ Ljotić was writing this in 1937, yet already by 1936, with the Stojadinović government’s regulation of the peasant debt in September, agricultural prices began to stabilise. See Branko Nadoveza, “Agrarna politika Milana Stojadinovića,” *Istorija 20. veka* 22, no. 2 (2004), 157.

¹⁵⁸ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Mihailo Avramović”, in *Spomenica Mihaila Avramovića* (Belgrade: Savez nabavljačkih zadruga državnih službenika, 1934), 38.

¹⁵⁹ Doreen Warriner, *Economics of Peasant Farming*, Second Edition (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1964), 19.

‘honest’, in that the city was viewed through a prism of differing social and cultural norms from that of the countryside.¹⁶⁰

Ljotić’s activities in agricultural co-operatives would conceivably fit into this paradigm. ZBOR seemingly had enough knowledge of peasant and rural grievances to re-orient itself as a contradictory movement of traditionalism, change, and protest. It would also help in part, to explain his pro-German stance, as while Ljotić bought agricultural products directly from its producers at an above market price, most of these products were later exported to Germany.¹⁶¹

Indeed, by 1936, Germany was the main purchaser of Yugoslav products, at 25.4%, with Great Britain falling into eleventh position at 11.4%.¹⁶² This was part of a wider and concentrated German attempt to cultivate links with producers in Southeast Europe as substitutes for raw materials and foodstuffs that were no longer available from the British and American markets. To this end, a German-Yugoslav commercial trade treaty was concluded, on favourable terms for Yugoslavia, giving the country a large market for its agricultural produce, in exchange for a stipulated amount of German manufactured and semi-manufactured products.¹⁶³ Such a deal would in the end be disastrous for Yugoslavia, for such manufactured goods would hamper many Yugoslav domestic industries in favour of German imports.

Given that the actual German products were exchanged without the use of convertible currencies, in Ljotić’s case, both he and the respective co-operatives would ostensibly profit through such transactions. German military re-armament, (though he admired the country’s political development as will be shown in the next chapter), the encroachment of German economic influence would have no doubt been seen as a sign of German might by Ljotić. Yet he failed, or refused to see the threat to which such German policy held for Yugoslavia, and indeed for the wider Balkan region.

¹⁶⁰ Jozo Tomasevich, *Peasants, Politics, and Economic Change in Yugoslavia* (Stanford University Press, 1955), 250.

¹⁶¹ Aleksandar Stojanović, “Srpski civilni/kulturni plan. Geneza i proučavanju,” *Istorija XX veka* 30, no. 1 (2012), 89–90.

¹⁶² Arnold J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs: 1936* (London, 1937), 531.

¹⁶³ Paul N. Hehn, *A Low Dishonest Decade: The Great Powers, Eastern Europe, and the Economic Origins of World War II* (London & New York: Continuum, 2002), 104.

What it led to in effect was to Yugoslav economic dependence on Germany, opening the country up to German diplomatic and political pressure. It was part of a more far-sighted and sinister German plan to make its economy indispensable to the nations of South-east Europe.¹⁶⁴ A British cabinet report from November 1938 accuses the Germans of ‘swallowing Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia economically’, so that it would be able to dominate them politically.¹⁶⁵ The report stressed that the Germans were paying at above market prices, and paying in cleared marks, which could only be used by its recipients for the purchase of certain German exports. However, as the memorandum states, it would be difficult for Britain to increase imports from Yugoslavia, as ‘in the present situation, it is hardly favourable to the granting of credits’, so another means of ‘showing friendly interest’ was to be found.¹⁶⁶

Watching the widening of German economic, military, and political influence throughout Europe, Ljotić, like many of his contemporaries, would have been undoubtedly filled with the duality of fear and admiration. Yet, as will be shown, given Ljotić and ZBOR’s worldview, part of German economic and moral renewal could be explained through a corporative re-organisation of society, something for in Yugoslavia. However, much like its anti-capitalism, ZBOR’s conception of ‘renewal’ would remain metaphorical and limited, in that it was to be subjugated to an already existing order. ZBOR’s capitalism was to be subsumed without being destroyed. There was to be no land redistribution to the benefit of the peasantry. ZBOR’s capitalism represented Ljotić’s own social milieu and position of landowner and local notable who in increased industrialisation, modernisation, and competition from foreign markets saw his own economic position as head of an agricultural cooperative under threat. This is perhaps why for him the issue of ‘foreign capital’ was ‘the loss of economic independence and death of traditional economy, and that Yugoslavia was the nation suffering most from foreign capital.’¹⁶⁷ ZBOR’s anti-capitalism was therefore, in essence, as much a

¹⁶⁴ The German term was *Ergänzungswirtschaft* (supplementary economy), the intention to turn South-East Europe into an economic dependency of the Third Reich. Up to the outbreak of the Second World War, its imperialist ambitions were masked through persuasion and propaganda. For more see Andrej Mitrović. “Ergänzungswirtschaft: The theory of an integrated economic area of the Third Reich and Southeast Europe (1933-1941)”, in Pero Morača, ed., *The Third Reich and Yugoslavia 1933-1945* (Belgrade: Institute for Contemporary History, 1977), 7–46.

¹⁶⁵ NA CAB/24/280. “Memorandum by Viscount Halifax. 10 November, 1938”. Central and Southeastern Europe. Some political implications of the ‘Anschluss’ and the recent German incorporation of the Sudeten districts of Czechoslovakia, with the particular reference to the interim report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Economic Assistance to Central and South-Eastern Europe.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ See Dimitrije Ljotić, “Naši privrednici i strani kapital”, *Otadžbina*, 30 July, 1936, No.124.

critique of capitalist civilisation through a utopian and conservative romantic nationalism as much as it was from personal stake and ambition.

ZBOR's Corporatism and social organisation

ZBOR's corporatism reflects a mixture of ill-defined economic paternalism and romanticised notions on the peasantry as carriers of tradition, which would ensure social harmony. Combined with a superficial criticism of capitalism, corporatism was to help bring around a national renewal that the degenerate twinning of modernism and democracy had brought. Corporatism in ZBOR's conception was in keeping with much of European right wing and religious thought. It was conceived as the socio-political organisation of society based on major interest groups (the differing corporations).¹⁶⁸ The expression of corporatist theory in political philosophy has its elements within early Christian thought. Biblical conceptions of corporatism show this, citing Paul's letter to Christians at Corinth (I Corinthians 12:12-31). In the letter Paul suggests the fusing of society of politics to create an organic, and harmonised whole, 'just as the parts of the human body are interrelated'.¹⁶⁹

Modern corporatism stems from the early nineteenth century in reaction to individualism, social atomisation, and new forms of central state power arising from the French Revolution and modern liberalism.¹⁷⁰ Its definition, superfluous as it is, shows similarity to its Biblical antecedents. Philippe Schmitter provided perhaps the most succinct definition of corporatism, describing it as a system of 'interest representation in which the constituent units are organised into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories'.¹⁷¹ In this arrangement, it would be the state that would give licence to the existing corporative associations.

In the context of interwar Europe, corporatism became associated with a 'new' way, and a 'new' conception of economics. Here it was postulated as an alternative economic and social system to both capitalism and socialism. The main incentive being that this type of social and

¹⁶⁸ Howard J. Wiarda, *Corporatism and Comparative Politics. The Other Great "Ism"* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 23–24.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 28.

¹⁷⁰ Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 38.

¹⁷¹ Philippe Schmitter. "Still the Century of Corporatism?", in Frederick B. Pike, and Thomas Stritch, eds., *The New Corporatism: Socio-Political Structure in the Iberian World* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), 85–131.

economic organisation would best embody the needs of the general interest through the harmonisation of all social and economic components. The newly harmonised elements would then be overseen by the state, acting as regulator and mediator. Commonly associated with the economic policies of fascism, social democratic governments supported tripartism, a type of corporatism based on the tripartite contracts between business, labour, and state, within the economy, in Norway and Sweden.¹⁷²

Corporatism was never a unified theory in itself, showing the cross-political application and acceptance. Throughout the interwar era however, right wing exponents of corporatism would look more to state centred corporatism, rather than a social corporatism.¹⁷³

In the context of interwar Yugoslavia and ZBOR's ideology, Ljotić considered corporatism as enabling all people, of any social rank, to undertake positive work. A corporate system, argues Ljotić is for fair taxation, the replacement of an unordered and anarchic economy with a planned and organised economy, the socialisation of large companies and concerns to serve general needs, and the introduction of order into public finances to solve all social and economic problems.¹⁷⁴ Amidst the incoherence and shallowness of ZBOR's rhetoric, this statement from Ljotić gives a grain of coherence to his usually ideologically mangled expression. It also stands out as an actual attempt to define corporatism and how it would benefit the country from an economic and, surely in Ljotić's mind, practical point of view.

Corporatism in ZBOR's ideology was often framed through the paradigm of the *zadruga*.¹⁷⁵ The *zadruga* meanwhile, was in itself, a paradigm within existing counter-revolutionary thought focusing on a romanticised notion of peasant life. Both the *zadruga* and the *stalež* were often used interchangeably by ZBOR, though the *zadruga* can be seen as the end result of society's organisation into *staleži*, with each separate *stalež* collectively forming the state imposed *zadruga*. Both were also viewed as primordial, as opposed to the artificiality of a

¹⁷² Wiarda, *Corporatism and Comparative Politics. The Other Great "Ism,"* 22. In Norway, corporatism was primarily associated with Vidkun Quisling and his extreme right party, *Nasjonal Samling* (National Union) Quisling collaborated with the Nazis from 1940-1945. He studied both Soviet workers' councils, and Fascist corporatism in an attempt to introduce a corporative National Assembly. Dahl, *Vidkun Quisling. En fører for fall*, 104–105.

¹⁷³ Social corporatism is akin to tripartism in that it is a 'social partnership', though social corporatism involves capital and labour interest groups, as well as the market economy and state intervention, as a compromise to regulate conflict, which would be mediated by the government.

¹⁷⁴ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Ideološke osnove organske ekonomije," 3.

¹⁷⁵ See chapter 1. The *zadruga* had the dual meaning of an extended family kinship, as well as a form of socio-economic collective.

class system theorised by Marxism. Although, wrote Ljotić in 1937, the *staleži* were subverted by ‘individualist philosophy that pits one *stalež* against another’. Furthermore, it is not only the *stalež*, which wars against itself, but social classes warring against each other, with families pitted against their own members’.¹⁷⁶

ZBOR’s idea of a large collectivist society and social harmonious state, rested on assumptions of pre-industrial myth and reality. Yet ZBOR claimed that it rejected a medieval ‘guild-style’ corporatism. Its corporatism was claimed to be that of the nuclear family, which was denoted as a ‘Slavonic ideal’. It went deeper than a sense of family community in that the nuclear family in itself was a co-operative wherein the senior (father-figure) would be not only the material, but also the spiritual leader.¹⁷⁷

This however was not an original concept of Ljotić’, or ZBOR’s. Svetozar Marković, the eminent 19th century Serbian socialist, literary critic, and philosopher saw both the *zadruga* and family in Serbia as inextricably linked.¹⁷⁸ Marković also idealised the *zadruga*, advocating for its implementation. However, he differed from Ljotić in that he saw the *zadruga* as an element of democratic federalism, as opposed to a more state centralised monarchic version of Ljotić’s ideal. As part of Ljotić’s ideal, the formation and organisation of the *staleži* were to be determined by the social, economic, and political needs of the *zadruga* (taken here as the organic whole, or nation). This would then pave the way for a smooth transition to a corporative system. In the context of interwar Yugoslavia, ZBOR closely followed the agrarian theories of Smederevo native, and the founder of the first agricultural co-operative in Serbia, Mihailo Avramović.¹⁷⁹

Avramović saw cooperatives as the first social process of humanity to produce or barter for food, construct shelters, and acquire new territorial space. Therefore, to Avramović,

¹⁷⁶ “Saradnja staleža”, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. Knjiga II*, 241–243.

¹⁷⁷ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Staleži i Zbor,” 2.

¹⁷⁸ Radomir Lukić, *Svetozar Marković. Celokupna dela Knjiga VIII* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 1995), 15. Marković saw the divisions of Serbian history and society not as a result of religious differences, but of class differences. The *zadruga* as a family kinship structure, in Marković’s opinion offered full equality amongst all its members, regardless of age or gender.

¹⁷⁹ Mihailo Avramović (1864-1945). Considered to be the ‘father’ of Serbian corporatism, Avramović taught corporatist theories at the agricultural faculty at the University of Belgrade. A founder of the Union of Serbian agricultural co-operatives, he would become a leading theoretician on corporatism in interwar Yugoslavia. For more see Mihailo Avramović, *Socijalne funkcije zadrugarstva* (Zemun: Rotacija, 1938).

corporatism was also a result of a ‘complex process’.¹⁸⁰ Cooperatives, according to Avramović, were the ‘expression of each nation’. Therefore, they were an essential component of society. In a Yugoslav context, Avramović highlighted three main points of cooperatives. These involved, firstly the restructuring of cooperatives to fit current societal needs, secondly, a better understanding of the functions of cooperatives, based on social and environmental studies, and thirdly, a ‘cleansing’ of the cooperative apparatus, to emphasise ‘natural’, and ‘ethical’ cooperatives.¹⁸¹ Avramović’s focus on a ‘natural’, and ‘ethical’ form of corporatism was to be picked up on by Ljotić. In his opinion, Avramović, like Maurras, was a ‘shining light’. Avramović knew, says Ljotić that ‘only the personal responsibility of those in charge’, can provide the ‘necessary stability’ in order for both society, and cooperatives to function.¹⁸²

Once installed, ZBOR’s corporatism envisioned the creation of a National Assembly. This assembly would consist of permanent delegates and would act as a *stalež* in its own right, and would decide on laws and certain other administrative acts.¹⁸³ The National Assembly envisioned by ZBOR would act in more of an advisory and mediatory role, whose main function was to solve disputes amongst the existing *staleži*. Unfortunately, the idea of this assembly was never elaborated on by ZBOR. Ljotić took pains however to differentiate what he viewed as corporatism by stating that National Socialism had neglected its corporations. By giving them more functions, it subtracted from their effectiveness, thus rendering them useless.¹⁸⁴ Fascism has destroyed its corporations as well, because they were not allowed freedom of action within a state organised corporative system.¹⁸⁵

Given that Ljotić never fully defined his corporatism, it could never be fully applied. Yet it was conceptualised, however theoretically, as an almost utopian ideal of paternalistic feudalism, couched in terms of romanticisation of the very element on which it based itself, the peasantry.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. 3.

¹⁸¹ *Spomenica Mihaila Avramovića*, 7–8.

¹⁸² Dimitrije Ljotić, “Mihailo Avramović”, in Ibid. 40.

¹⁸³ “Staleški parlament”, in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. Knjiga II*, 236–240..

¹⁸⁴ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Zadugarstvo U Staleškoj Državi,” *Otađbina*, 23 February, 1936, No.102, 1.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

The entire corporative organised society was to be predicated on the needs and demands of the peasantry as the basis and backbone of Yugoslav culture, tradition, society, and economics. Yet, as Ljotić admitted, a peasant based corporative organisation could not survive on its own.¹⁸⁶ It needed doctors and engineers. In short, it needed an elite. This however would still leave the majority of people unaccounted for and undefined within a corporative system: chiefly the urban workers/ proletariat,¹⁸⁷ women, and youth.

Apart from its glorification and romanticisation of the peasantry, it was perhaps the only social and economic group with which Ljotić had practical experience, his legal practice notwithstanding. Urban life, viewed through the lens of anti-modernism, as the destroyer of rural and national life and traditions, bringer of atheism and communism, highlighted part of ZBOR's contradiction and incoherence. Though unfortunately little is written on peasant opinions in interwar Yugoslavia, there are clear congruencies in ZBOR's appeal to the peasants, and its anti-urban polemics. If, as Tomasevich writes, the city was viewed by the peasantry as a form of government bureaucracy, through the collection of taxes or of conscription, it was also the market, where peasants sold their produce cheaply, and bought for inflated prices. It was also the source of much peasant and rural credit, which was sustainable at rates bordering on usury'. If taken into consideration ZBOR's appeals to the peasantry can be seen less through honourable intentions and more through a simplified attempt at exposing what it viewed as modernist degeneracy. For the sake of national unity and growth however, the city and countryside needed each other, and it was only ZBOR, that could bridge that divide and ensure national survival.¹⁸⁸ Though ZBOR viewed the peasantry as a means of national renewal and strength, the urban worker would feature much less in ZBOR's ideology.

¹⁸⁶ "Saradnja staleža", in Dimitrije Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. Knjiga II*, 243.

¹⁸⁷ Proletariat here is taken to mean the worker who is employed by 'wage labour', selling his labour under an employment contract. Typically, it has been viewed as a form of downward social mobility in Marxism.

¹⁸⁸ ZBOR's Čačak leader, Radenko Lazović speaking to agricultural workers. "Konferencija JNP ZBOR u Goričanima, 6. Decembar 1939", in Goran Davidović, and Miloš Timotijević, eds., *Osvetljavanje istine. Dokumenta za političku i vojnu istoriju Čačka 1938-1941. Knjiga prva* (Čačak: Narodni muzej Čačak, Istorijski arhiv Čačak, 2006), 94–96.

Urban industrial workers

ZBOR attempted to appeal to the proletariat through the assumption that the interests of the Yugoslav worker were tied with the interests of the state. While speaking in Kragujevac in 1940, Ljotić claims to have been asked by a ‘worker’, about his party’s stance on workers’ rights. Ljotić, expansively yet cryptically answered that ZBOR ‘does not think about the rights of just one class, since to think about just one class would cause harm to the others, so that in general we do not think about rights’.¹⁸⁹ Rather, as Ljotić continued, the talk about rights should be substituted by ‘duty’, through which there will be ‘enough rights left over to spare’.¹⁹⁰ Such remarks show the dearth of knowledge that ZBOR had towards the urban workers. It also shows a degree of contradiction in that while appealing specifically to peasants, almost as a separate class, or certainly as a distinct status within ZBOR’s social hierarchy, the idyllic village life, and the urban industrial workers were to be simply juxtaposed into the movement’s agrarian utopia. Being ‘urban’, they were already theoretically outside ZBOR’s narrow and fantastical understanding of what constituted a real basis for national renewal, being associated with that which was degenerating and corrupting the country and people.¹⁹¹

Ljotić however did not blame his ideological shortcomings and naivety for ZBOR’s lack of appeal amongst urban workers. That was the fault of capitalism. Capitalism, according to Ljotić, resulted in the workers’ exclusion for the national community. Its technique for doing this was the concentration of workers in cities, for as Ljotić argued, ‘where industry was created, so were cities’.¹⁹² As a result, the city provided the worker with a view to a life that well exceeded his own, and in doing so, stoked the envy of the worker.¹⁹³ As a result, it was easy for socialist ‘agitators’ to play on the envy of workers, thus precipitating class warfare,

¹⁸⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Sablazan,” *Bilten*, 2 April, 1940, No.42, 22.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ The reverse is also true, as in its initial congresses, the *Komunistička partija Jugoslavije* (Communist Party of Yugoslavia), was unsure as to how to proceed with the peasantry. The party was divided into two currents. One, agitating for immediate revolution wanted to include and make use of the peasantry for revolutionary purposes, while the other, primarily syndicates, wanted to keep the ‘pure proletarian character’ of the Party, and not include ‘unenlightened peasants. See *Akcionni Program Komunističke Partije Jugoslavije: Referat Živka Topalovića na II. kongresu partiju Vukovaru* (Belgrade: Štamparija “Mirotočivi,” 1920), 23.

¹⁹² Dimitrije Ljotić, *Svetska Revolucija*, 25.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

cementing the worker's exclusion from the national community. What capitalism had started, in Ljotić's thinking, communism had finished in regard to the workers.

That ZBOR's economic policy rested on a romanticised agrarian ideal, where urban workers were outside of its scope, was not taken as a weakness of ideology. The bulk of its extremely limited appeal was centred in Serbia, whereas the major industrial areas in Yugoslavia at the time were to be found primarily in Croatia and Slovenia; this was where ZBOR's influence would be even more marginal than in Serbia. ZBOR did however, recognise that most urban workers were lost to them, in the sense that the movement saw them as communist sympathisers, and yet urged them towards ZBOR by constantly trying to conjure up examples of 'communist treachery'.¹⁹⁴

At the same time, ZBOR appealed to the 'heroes' of both city and countryside by lionising the value of their 'work', in contributing to the national whole. It also utilised elements of Communist rhetoric, especially in its appeals to non-intervention in an 'imperialist war', as not in the interests of a 'working nation'. This rhetoric can also be seen in the slogans of, the 'right to strike', 'free doctors', and the slogan that ZBOR would never be 'a party of bankers'.¹⁹⁵ This attempt, however, should not be taken, as a sign of a wider ZBOR attempt to court the working classes, for indeed it wasn't.

The movement simply did not understand, or in many cases care, for the needs of the urban workers. On a wider national level, elements of ZBOR's calls for the protection of the 'little man' would be echoed by the regime. The JRZ founded a workers union, *Jugoslovenski Rudnicki savez* (Yugoslav Workers Union), or JUGORAS, headed by future prime minister Drags Cvetković, who criticised legislation concerning the workers as 'creating such a bureaucracy that even a most bourgeois society could not envision'.¹⁹⁶ JUGORAS was Stojadinović's attempt to 'create a strong national movement that would encompass all

¹⁹⁴ 'Plakat pokreta ZBOR ' ko ima uši da čuje neka čuje', in Davidović, and Timotijević, *Osvetljavanje istine. Dokumenta za političku i vojnu istoriju Čačka 1938-1941. Knjiga prva*, 163–165. In this poster, as part of a wider ZBOR campaign in Čačak during September 1940, attempted to portray Lenin as regarding the peasantry as the 'most reactionary, most religious, and most superstitious' social element.

¹⁹⁵ "Plakat o zakazivanju Zboru u Čačku za 10. Decembar 1939, radi stvaranja 'Stranke radnog naroda' ", Ibid. 95-97.

¹⁹⁶ AJ 38-94-226. "Izveštaj dopisnika CPB-a sa zбора Radničke sekcije JRZ u Kragujevcu. 11 September, 1936". The JUGORAS arose from a JRZ congress on creating a nationwide nationalist movement, on 22 March, 1936. JUGORAS was an attempt by the ruling JRZ to legitimise and broaden its support base. Its head was Cvetković, then serving as minister of social policies and national health. For more see *Prvi Zemaljski kongres Jugorasa* (Belgrade, 1938).

national and productive elements of the nation, for service in the state'.¹⁹⁷ In ZBOR's case though, with the acute sense of an acute rural-urban dichotomy, coupled with its anti-modernist rhetoric, the movement simply did not understand how to approach urban workers. This was contrasted to the superlatives heaped upon the peasantry. Yet for all its crassness, the movement did manage to gain, initially and without any real intent, a pre-war following of youth, from which the party began to build, and who were most likely attracted to ZBOR for its extremist ideology and solutions. Ironically, it was also one segment of the national demographic from which ZBOR did not initially actively seek adherents.

Youth

ZBOR's popularity which was subjectively based on perspectives of youth, was odd and unexpected, given that Ljotić did not conceive ZBOR as a movement for such a demographic or age group. Indeed, speaking in Banja Luka on 10 April, 1938, Ljotić concedes that 'none of us went into a secondary school to preach the message of ZBOR'. Initially, Ljotić viewed youth disdainfully, admitting that he considered a political movement with many youthful members a sign of weakness.¹⁹⁸ Yet a week later, on 17 April, Ljotić was attesting to the fact that 'ZBOR is becoming a youth movement', which was attributed to ZBOR's 'spirit'.¹⁹⁹

Ljotić's followers, and ZBOR members responded to the Cvetković-Maček Agreement with anger and violence. They clashed with the youth wing of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ). These incidents reputedly attracted as many as 5,000 new members to ZBOR who belonged to the youth sector; thus, leading to the formation of a ZBOR student wing known as the White Eagles.²⁰⁰

ZBOR's increasing profile amongst elements of Yugoslav youth was primarily the result of one-time ZBOR youth leader Danilo Gregorić. It was Gregorić who convinced Ljotić of the importance of reaching out to youth, perhaps attempting to adopt a more fascist cult of youth rhetoric in the process. Gregorić called for youth involvement in ZBOR, youth who

¹⁹⁷ AJ 37-2-9/321-328 "Govor M. Stojadinovića na kongresu JUGORAS-a. 25 April, 1936". See also *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁹⁸ Ljotić, *Dimitrije Ljotić u revoluciju i ratu*, 61.

¹⁹⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Zbor i mladost," *Novi Put*, 17 April, 1938, Year 2, No.13, 1.

²⁰⁰ Byford, "Willing Bystanders: Dimitrije Ljotić, 'Shield Collaboration', and the destruction of Serbia's Jews", in Haynes and Rady, *In the Shadow of Hitler*,. 300-301.

would become ‘uncompromising fighters for ZBOR’s eventual victory’.²⁰¹ There was also a spirit of sacrifice and duty, that according to Ljotić, the youth must first embrace and embody before being considered ZBOR members.²⁰²

ZBOR’s eventual youth organisation would feature prominently in later years, especially during the Second World War. However even in 1935, the trend towards increasing youth involvement in ZBOR was being noticed. In his report to the Foreign Office on the political situation in Yugoslavia from February 1935, Minister Plenipotentiary to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Neville Henderson wrote that Ljotić, apart from being characterised as independent, could ‘also be seen as representing the youth’.²⁰³ On 23 October 1940, the White Eagles gathered outside the campus of the University of Belgrade.²⁰⁴ The president of the University of Belgrade at the time of the riots was Petar Mičić, who happened to be a sympathiser of ZBOR. The Belgrade police, who were alleged to have had foreknowledge of the riots, withdrew from the area before violence erupted.²⁰⁵ The White Eagles then threatened the members of the entire university community, including the faculty and students, with the use of pistols and knives. Some White Eagle members reputedly stabbed some of these teachers and students while hailing Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini as their heroes as they all shouted ‘Down with the Jews!’ Members of *Slovenski Jug* (Slavic South), a Serbian nationalist movement, also participated in the riots, which were blamed on Ljotić, who supposedly hoped that violence would provoke martial law and thus bring about a more centralised system of control in the university. The Serbian public responded to the riots with outrage. On 24 October, the Yugoslav government revoked ZBOR’s legal status.

After its 1940 banning, it was youthful ZBOR supporters or sympathisers, who actively distributed ZBOR pamphlets and leaflets.²⁰⁶ Because of these riots, on 2 November, the Ministry of Interior sent a list of identified ZBOR members, mostly amongst the White

²⁰¹ Danilo Gregorić, “Danas i Sutra – Putevi i Čiljevi Omladine,” *Otađbina*, 11 June, 1936, No.141, 3.

²⁰² Ljotić, “Zbor i mladost,” 1.

²⁰³ NA FO 371/19575 R949/219/92. “Political Situation in Yugoslavia. 7-12 February, 1935”. Neville Henderson to the Foreign Office. See also NA FO 371 19575 R 2796/219/92. “Political Situation in Yugoslavia. 24-29 April, 1935. Mr. Balfour to Sir John Simon”. Balfour describes ZBOR not so much as representing youth, but ‘claiming to represent youth’.

²⁰⁴ Israeli, *The Death Camps of Croatia*, 13.

²⁰⁵ Cohen, 1996, 20.

²⁰⁶ “Izvod iz izveštaja Dravskog Žandarmerijskog puka od 27 novembra 1940, Komandanta Drinskog Žandarmerijskog puka o političkoj situaciji”, in Dušan Gvozdenović, ed., *Aprilski Rat 1941. Zbornik Dokumentata, Knjiga 2* (Belgrade: Vojnoistorijski Institut, 1987), 948–952. This police report from the *Dravska Banovina* states that in its banovina, ZBOR, while illegal, is showing a marked activism, mostly among youth. Its members are mostly made up of youth, but most are passive due to the banning.

Eagles, to all municipal administrators in Serbia for them to be tracked down and arrested. The government cracked down on ZBOR by detaining some 100 members. This government crackdown forced Ljotić into hiding. The exhibition of violence that may well have been the start of the end for ZBOR as a solid movement showed how Ljotić's lack of control over his supporters led to an uncontrollable and unfavourable fate not just for these radical young members of ZBOR, but to Ljotić and the movement itself. Such lack of a central control over the movement and its counterparts throughout the country will again prove to be a role in the state of ZBOR during the era of Occupied Serbia as shown in the succeeding discussions of Čačak in the latter part of this thesis.

During his time in hiding, Ljotić stayed with friends in Belgrade while remaining in constant communication with Nedić and Velimirović. Although the government was undergoing an investigation that would result in ZBOR being found guilty of treason, on the (contested) basis of accepting German funds, the authorities were careful not to arrest Ljotić in order to not provoke the Germans. Ljotić was placed under government surveillance, but authorities quickly lost track of him while in hiding.

However, it cannot be assumed that ZBOR held a large percentage of votes amongst youth and students. Moreover, it is unfortunate that, little information on youth involvement in ZBOR is readily available. Nevertheless, it does seem that within ZBOR, youth were an active element.²⁰⁷ This element however, would most likely have been drawn from those young people, primarily males, of a conservative, nationalist, and religious milieu.

Youth was also an important social element that was worth 'protecting', from the supposed damaging moral and political influence of communism, especially at schools and universities.²⁰⁸ By exposing them to ZBOR ideology, the movement recognised and attempted to gain a broader appeal through youth.

²⁰⁷ Istorijski Arhiv Čačak (hereafter IAČ) Drinska Banovina (hereafter DB), K-7, br. 22. "Izveštaj Žandarmerije o rasturanju letka 'Ne pada sneg', 12 januar 1941". This police report states that even though ZBOR has been disbanded, the Čačak student section of the Yugoslav nationalist youth movement has been active in disseminating pamphlets and other materials. The report states that despite its banning, youth throughout the region are disseminating ZBOR propaganda.

²⁰⁸ IAČ DB, K-7 br. 22. "Suboki srednjoškolaca komunista i zboraša Izveštaj sreskog načelnika u Preljini, 21. Mart 1941. Načelstvo sreza Trnavskog". This report states that in the area, there are no ZBOR members, since the banning of the movement, so the distribution of ZBOR pamphlets must have come from the 'very active' ZBOR students from Čačak who routinely engage in confrontations with the communists. There are also accusations of ZBOR youth acting as police agents against communists in secondary schools and universities.

Women

ZBOR would not attempt to use the same rhetoric it did in relation to peasants or industrial workers, in its views of women. Contextually, most extreme-right organisations during the interwar era saw women as reproducers of the nation and preservers of national culture and tradition. This essentialist argument, that women were viewed only through the lens of certain characteristics, defined women's roles and as separate to men. Conforming to such existing gender roles was seen among anti-modernists as true 'women's behaviour'.

Women in Yugoslavia had participated in interwar civil society. Yet that was framed and shaped within a specific political and historical context that for the most part was patriarchal and subordinated women.²⁰⁹ In this sense, most women felt that politics was outside of their realm, rendering their political opinions for the most part invisible.²¹⁰ Inheritance also, based on the *zadruga* as a familial pillar, usually bypassed women completely, thus encoding their inferior status.²¹¹ Ljotić and ZBOR, operating within this paternalist and patriarchal context did not make any grand statements on the roles of women, which they felt, were already clearly defined.

Feminism was then, according to Ljotić simply part of the modernist degeneracy formulated in the aftermath of the French Revolution. It was coupled with the increasing urbanisation, technological advances, and social mobility, which were seen as a threat to the existing traditional-patriarchal order.²¹²

Speaking on the concept of the modern woman, Ljotić talks on his 'anti-feminist stance'. This stance was borne out of what he describes as a 'totally different point of view to that of the feminists', as opposed to 'thinking that women are less than men'. Women and men were said to complement each other. The 'arguments of the feminists, according to Ljotić, did not

See Gligorijević, "Napad Ljotićevaca na studente tehničkog fakulteta u Beogradu u oktobru 1940. i rasturanje Ljotićevog Zbora," 57.

²⁰⁹ Carol S. Lilly and Melissa Bokovoy, "Serbia, Croatia, Yugoslavia", in Kevin Passmore, ed., *Women, Gender, and Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945* (Manchester University Press, 2003), 92.

²¹⁰ Jovanka Kecman, *Žene u radničkom pokretu i ženskim organizacijama 1918-1941* (Belgrade: Narodna Knjiga, 1978), 169.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* 56.

²¹² Ivana Artonović, "Društveni položaj žena u Srbiji u doba Kraljevine Jugoslavije," *Baština*, no. 27 (2009), 240.

have a rational basis'.²¹³ Speaking to the National Socialist Women's Organisation in 1934, Hitler stated that 'women's emancipation is a creation of the Jewish intellect', and that then Germans were living a 'good life', 'German women never had any need for emancipation'.²¹⁴ Ljotić would have most likely agreed with Hitler's viewpoint, in that as long as women played their 'natural' roles in society, there would be no conflict between the sexes, and no mention of 'emancipation'. Women too, like youth, were to be 'protected', to ensure their purity and innocence. They were warned, in one ZBOR December 1939 leaflet to 'protect their Slavonic familial morals', against the influence of female Jewish communists.²¹⁵

Women, as much as the peasantry, were romanticised as innocent and pure, willing and ready to do their duty, just as men were. Women seemed to be almost helpless in ZBOR's ideology, unless within the household, where the matriarch was venerated. The main duty of women however was to 'prepare themselves to become mothers of our race'.²¹⁶ In this, ZBOR's male chauvinism reflected a large segment of social and cultural milieu not only of interwar Yugoslavia, but also of much of interwar Europe, especially in nations where women were not given electoral franchise. What it resulted in was the subordination, or the negation of any specific issues relating to women. The lack of ZBOR documents or materials pertaining to any specific women's issues, apart from superficial denunciations showed the lack of importance that ZBOR attached to it.

For all its rhetoric, ZBOR's ideology has been difficult to quantify due to its unimportance on the Yugoslav political scene, its small membership base, its lack of any real organisational structure, and its lack of a concrete and coherent political platform. Yet despite its unimportance, the movement was considered vociferous and strident in both its anti-communism, and anti-Semitism, which was evidence to many, of the movement's supposedly clear Nazi character.

²¹³ Dimitrije Ljotić. 'Povodom ženskom pitanja', in *Otadžbina*. No. 86, 27 October, 1935, 1.

²¹⁴ Adolf Hitler, "Speech to the Meeting of the National Socialist Women's Organisation", in Anson Rabinach and Sander L. Gilman, eds., *The Third Reich Sourcebook* (University of California Press, 2013), 311.

²¹⁵ AJ 102 7-19 "Majke! Žene! Devojke! Studentkinje 'ZBORA'. Decembar. 1939". In this leaflet from the Belgrade ZBOR female student section, mothers were warned to protect their daughters from the moral destruction wrought by Jewish communists (female). Daughters were warned to preserve their pure hearts against the invasion of Jewish-communist thought

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Anti-communism and anti-Semitism? The makings of a Nazi movement?

Despite ZBOR's total unimportance on the political scene, the strength and polemical nature of the movement, along with its anti-communism and anti-Semitism brought ZBOR a notoriety and publicity hugely disproportionate to its size and influence.²¹⁷ ZBOR would see communism and perceived 'Jewish influence' as the main factors for the persecution it felt that it faced. Like much of ZBOR's ideology, both its anti-communism and anti-Semitism were linked. There was a great deal of overlap in both ZBOR's portrayal and condemnation of Jews, as well as its anti-communism. The image of Jews, as will be shown, as the force behind both capitalism, and communism would feature prominently in ZBOR's political discourse.

Anti-communism featured prominently in interwar Yugoslav political life. It was part of official government policy, evidenced by the fact that Yugoslavia was one of the last nations to officially recognise the Soviet Union, finally establishing diplomatic relations on 24 June, 1940.²¹⁸ The KPJ, though it was outlawed by the *Obzana* (announcement) of 29 December, 1920, did participate in the Constitutional Assembly elections in November 1920, obtaining 198,736 votes, corresponding to 12% of the popular vote.²¹⁹ The reasons for its banning, was the result of the conspiracies of Radical Party leader Nikola Pašić, and interior minister Milorad Drašković (a Radical Party member), who saw the KPJ accused of inciting violence and attempting to destroy Yugoslavia, in the pay of foreign agents, and inciting violence.²²⁰

The narrative of communism as a 'destroyer of the nation', and of being subordinate to a foreign power was prominent in the anti-communist discourse within interwar Yugoslavia.

²¹⁷ NA FO 371/33496 R 3046/3046/92 "Yugoslav Personalities. Mr. Rendel to Mr. Eden. 03 May, 1942-11 May, 1942". Mr. Rendel cites the earlier opinion of former Minister Plenipotentiary Ronald Campbell who described Ljotić as 'noisy, but unimportant'.

²¹⁸ Yugoslavia's recognition of the Soviet Union was less a sign of ideology than of the worsening geopolitical situation of Yugoslavia and the Balkans, especially in the aftermath of the Fall of France. See Lajčo Klajn, *The Past in Present Times: The Yugoslav Saga* (University of America Press, 2007), 15.

²¹⁹ Kosta Nikolić, *Komunisti u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji. Od socijal-demokratije do staljinizma* (Belgrade: Lio, 2000), 32.

²²⁰ Petranović and Zečević, *Jugoslavija 1918-1988*, 157. For his part in the *Obzana*, Drašković would be assassinated by Alija Alijagić, a member of *Crvena Pravda* (Red Justice), a group made up from KPJ members in response to repression against the communists. For more see "Drašković ubijen," *Politika*, 21 July, 1921, No.4755, 3.

The subordination to a foreign power was deemed to be the Soviet Union. In this the KPJ did not help its cause by proclaiming that the Soviet Union was ‘the true motherland’, and that the Soviet Constitution was the only ‘real constitution’.²²¹

Where ZBOR differed was, in the allowing of anti-Semitism to enter this anti-communist narrative. Jews became, by the 1930s, whether generalised as capitalist, liberal democrat, or Marxist, the ‘destroyer of the nation’, the ‘foreign agent’ subverting the nation, or the prime mover and actor of destructive social change.²²²

Separating Ljotić’s anti-Semitism from his anti-communism would prove no easy task due to the degree of overlap between them. Ljotić’s personal religiosity, and that of many ZBOR members, certainly influenced the paradigm that shaped their views on both Jews and communism. Christianity was to be a central aspect of the renewal of Yugoslavia, and later, more specifically, of the Serbian nation. Combined with the trauma and deep cleavages following the abdication of the Tsar, the Russian Revolution and the imposition of Bolshevism upon Russia, Ljotić’s anti-communism would begin to develop more anti-Semitic overtones and mask a more sinister undercurrent of his anti-modernist discourse.²²³

This discourse involving the meshing of anti-communism with anti-Semitism would, in ZBOR’s ideology, become identified with the concept of ‘Jewish communism’, a corollary to a wider anti-Semitic conspiracy of Jewish world domination. The identification of Jews with both communism and the emergent Soviet Union proved to be a potent weapon in interwar anti-Semitism, and would form a strong basis for Hitler’s worldview. This myth was based on two popular sentiments, that of anti-communism and anti-Semitism.²²⁴ For the Nazis, its brand of anti-communism bore little relation to actual criticism of Marx’s philosophy. What it

²²¹ Kosta Nikolić, *Komunisti u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji. Od socijal-demokratije do staljinizma*, 33.

²²² Up to the 1930s, anti-Semitism in Yugoslavia was largely an unimportant and peripheral phenomenon, but one which found increasing expression as Yugoslavia re-oriented itself towards a ‘modus vivendi’ with National Socialist Germany, and the importance of the ‘Jewish question’ in Germany. See Milan Koljanin, “Srpska Pravoslavna Crkva i Jevrejsko Pitanje,” *Istorija 20. veka* 28, no. 1 (2010), 25.

²²³ William I. Brustein, *Roots of Hate. Anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 35. According to Brustein, ‘the process of modernisation embodied the emergence of liberalism and capitalism, which among other things, led to the political, social, and economic emancipation of Jews. Jewish social mobility and Jewish competition reinforced many existing anti-Semitic prejudices’.

²²⁴ André Gerrits, *The Myth of Jewish Communism. A Historical Interpretation* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009), 9–10.

found noxious was its championing of internationalism, pacifism, and democracy, which made it susceptible to Jewish manipulation.²²⁵

Ljotić undoubtedly believed such, myths, considering the Jews to ‘hold the keys of the world’s coffers: every bank and channel through which money is circulated is in their hands’, as are ‘all markets’, and ‘all industries’.²²⁶ Jewish economic theory, according to Ljotić, was based ‘on the theory of money’.²²⁷ Money, in Ljotić’s thinking, drove both capitalism and communism, thus emphasising ‘Jewish duplicity’, and complicity. It would be the Russian Revolution of 1917 however, and the pre-1917 anti-Jewish policies of the Tsarist regime that saw Jewish myths and stereotypes reoriented to the notion of Jews as malevolent revolutionaries who were ready to punish guilty Russia.²²⁸

The ease of the spread of anti-Semitic stereotypes was partly due to the manipulation of the idea of the Jews, as an enemy, of being guilty by association. This is true for ZBOR’s case.

That being said, Ljotić, however superficially, was able to conceive Marxism as divorced from anti-Semitism.²²⁹ Marxism was just a by-product of individualist thought according to Ljotić. To Marxists, writes Ljotić, the individual is everything, and any form of human organisation is the sum of its individuals.²³⁰ Therefore, there could be no community, interest, or society outside of this sum. Ljotić even went so far as to praise Marx, when he claimed that capitalist society, left to its own development, would lead to the fall of capitalism.²³¹

Regarding Marx as a ‘Jewish genius’, Ljotić however criticises him for failing to see the strength of the national community, as opposed to the existence of an oppressed class of

²²⁵ Lorna Waddington, *Hitler’s Crusade: Bolshevism and the Myth of the International Jewish Conspiracy* (London & New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007), 17.

²²⁶ “Opasnost od jevreja”, in Ljotić, *Sabrana dela*, 172.

²²⁷ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Drama Savremenog Čovečanstva* (Belgrade: Makarija, 1940), 23.

²²⁸ André Gerrits, *The Myth of Jewish Communism. A Historical Interpretation*, 18.

²²⁹ ZBOR’s anti-Communist jargon would be masked as ‘anti-Marxist’, ‘anti-Communism’, or ‘Anti-Bolshevism’, used interchangeably. The movement would not make reference to ‘anti-Socialism’. An interesting extreme right critique of Communism and its semantics would be made by future Norwegian collaborator Vidkun Quisling. Living in Russia in the aftermath of the Bolshevik takeover, Quisling observed first hand the development of the Bolshevik system of governance. He defined the differences between socialism, communism, and bolshevism. Socialism was seen as a transition zone between capitalism and communism, whereas Bolshevism was a schismatic movement within the Party, yet committed to a Marxist-Leninist ‘revolutionary violence’. For more see Quisling, *Russia and Ourselves*, 20.

²³⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Svetska Revolucija*, 20.

²³¹ *Ibid.* 27.

labourers.²³² The very concept of ‘class’, was rejected by Ljotić and ZBOR, for ‘class’ was not an ‘organic phenomenon’, but a ‘mechanical’ one. ‘Class’, in Ljotić’s view is intertwined with assets, and property, as matters of chance. For circumstances of chance change, and ‘one person could be in one class one day, and in another the next’.²³³

Marxism’s first goal, according to Ljotić was atheism. Its second goal was materialism, by which the soul and spirit are characterised as psychological manifestations of material things. The third goal of Marxism, according to Ljotić is class warfare, by which the nation is made up of enemies divided into two classes and engaged in constant struggle.²³⁴ Its appearance due to the inequalities of capitalism, yet both are spawns of individualism, as are atheism, Bolshevism, and Marxism.²³⁵ Yet Ljotić credits communists with being acute enough to see the significance of unfolding events. ‘We both conclude that a deep societal crisis has arisen, mainly due to the crisis of the liberal capitalist system’. However, the solutions for this crisis, as Ljotić points out are fundamentally different. ‘Communists’, says Ljotić, ‘want a mechanical solution, while want to introduce an organic solution’. ‘Communists want to abolish private property’, Ljotić continues, ‘abolish private initiative, the family, and the proclamation of the dictatorship of one class over another’.

ZBOR, on the other hand, was to stand for ‘the primordial crystals of human existence, and the limitation of the omnipotence of individual interest in economic, political, and social relations’.²³⁶ Communists therefore stood against the *domaćin*.²³⁷ Not only against the *domaćin* with three hundred hectares, but also against the *domaćin* with three hectares, writes Ljotić.²³⁸ Ljotić also accuses the communists of not fighting against the ‘Jewish capitalists’, stating that the communists are themselves ‘mercenaries of Jewish capitalism’.²³⁹

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid. 68.

²³⁴ Ljotić, *Drama Savremenog Čovečanstva*, 60.

²³⁵ “Ideali savremene omladine”, in Ljotić, *Sabrana dela, Knjiga IV*, 61–62.

²³⁶ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Dva Izlaza,” *Otadžbina*, 18 August, 1935, No.76, 1.

²³⁷ Explained in Chapter 1. The *domaćin* refers to the ‘host’, or ‘household’, though used most often as a ‘family or household head’ in ZBOR’s ideology, in the slogan ‘God, King, and *domaćin*’, as a basis for ZBOR’s social hierarchy.

²³⁸ Ljotić, *Svetska Revolucija*, 20.

²³⁹ AJ 37-21-86 “Starešinstvo ZBOR”. In this undated ZBOR internal circular, the government, leading the fight against ZBOR, wants to lead Yugoslavia into war in defence of English interests and its world Jewish-Masonic bourgeois exploitation.

For ZBOR, communism was the main enemy.²⁴⁰ The myth of communism's influence and the Jew as its harbinger would shape ZBOR's later stances on foreign issues. Soviet state organisation, according to ZBOR, was done through, and as a result of 'Jewish-Masonic thinking' resulting in all Christian nations being under the communist-Jewish yoke, part of the 'Jewish master plan'.²⁴¹ Soviet Russia was not Russia. The 'spirit' of Russia, monarchic, peasant, and Orthodox had been weakened by a parasite. That parasite was the Soviet Union. The Soviets, according to Ljotić were 'expecting world revolution as a saviour, gives only blood, slavery, and starvation'.²⁴² Marxism in general, according to ZBOR, was able to evolve its tactics and policies, but doctrinally, it would always remain rigid because Marxist doctrine was a 'closed system, whose components are logically linked to one another'.²⁴³

The question that remains to be asked is whether anti-Semitism was a corollary to ZBOR's anti-communism or the other way around? Bearing in mind the circular reasoning of ZBOR's anti-communism and anti-Semitism, a consensus remains elusive. Yugoslavia's political system in the aftermath of 6 January, 1929, left no political space except for those quasi-official associations and organisations 'tolerated', or encouraged by the government. Thus anti-Semitic expression would have to be channelled through existing forces. ZBOR was one of the movements with an aggressive policy towards the communists, bordering on irrationality. The myth of 'Jewish communism', gained currency amongst those conservative, nationalist, and religious anti-communist elements willing to listen, few in number though they were.

Ljotić's personal religiosity, which he brought into ZBOR, was expounded on in the previous chapter. It certainly shaped his anti-Semitic attitudes, but there was also a more pragmatic and political character to his anti-Semitism.²⁴⁴ The continuous and seemingly

²⁴⁰ AJ 66 -109-348. "S.O.O.Z. Banja Luka. Uslove za prelaženje u više grupe 29 August, 1938". In this ZBOR internal memo, the movement outlines its enemies in order. (1) Communism (2) Fascism (3) Democracy (4) Jews-Freemasons.

²⁴¹ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Jevrejski trud da sovjetiji spasu lice," *Bilten*, 14 January, 1940, No.37, 8.

²⁴² Dimitrije Ljotić, "Povodom Dogodjaja u Austriji," *Novi Put*, 20 March, 1938, Year 2, No.9, 2.

²⁴³ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Svetska Revolucija*, 69. Here Ljotić criticises the Soviet New Economic Plan of 1921, as a return to economic liberalism, as unsustainable because of the growing discrepancy between Soviet tactics, and the demands and rigidity of Marxist doctrine.

²⁴⁴ The term 'anti-Semitism' was first popularised by Wilhem Marr in 1873. Marr considered that Jewish emancipation, as a byproduct of German liberalism had allowed Jewish control over German finance and industry. The struggle, as Marr saw it, was in part, due to the supposed differing natures between the German and the Jew, and could only be resolved by total victory resulting in the death of the other. Thus Marr's argument began to utilise an ultimately racial argument. Gavin I Longmuir, *Towards a Definition of Antisemitism* (University of California Press, 1996), 311.

irreversible German advances in the Second World War would also harden, or rather radicalise the language of anti-Semitism used by ZBOR, which will be elaborated on in chapter 5.

Ljotić consistently denied any accusations of anti-Semitism, while paradoxically justifying his prejudices towards the Jews. ‘I am not an anti-Semite, but I am wary of the Jews and I find my distrust to be fair’, Ljotić wrote in 1935. Ljotić characterises the Jews as a ‘racial-biological, social, and religious wonder’, which he finds himself admiring. The paradox continues in that Ljotić praises the supposed religiosity of the Jews, for maintaining their ‘purity’, while bemoaning that the ‘majority of proponents of atheism and materialism are Jews’.²⁴⁵ Ljotić’s anti-Semitism was masked as a form of ‘self-protection’, in politics, economics, and morals. It was the ‘Jewish spirit’ that was an obstacle however, because it both ‘uses and defends capitalism, democracy, individualism, materialism, and atheism’.²⁴⁶ ZBOR was also the only legally organised movement in which anti-Semites were given a platform. Between 1933 and 1940, of the fourteen officially banned anti-Semitic tracts in Yugoslavia, almost half were associated with ZBOR.²⁴⁷

However, ZBOR’s views and expressions of anti-Semitism were not equal among its members. While Ljotić, ZBOR’s founder tended to shy away from making direct statements on racial anti-Semitism using the Nazi’s manner of declaration, the same cannot be said for a personality who embodied a more strident Nazi style racial anti-Semitism, Milorad Mojić.²⁴⁸ Mojić was much more vociferous and viral in his denunciation of Jews than Ljotić. As ZBOR’s general secretary from December 1937, Mojić added an aggressively and prominently racial type of anti-Semitism to ZBOR, which Ljotić did nothing to countermand. Mojić’s anti-Semitism was so virulent that the authorities censored his articles and the state

²⁴⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Dijalog za jevrejinom,” *Otadžbina*, 13 October, 1935, No.84, 2–3. See also Ljotić, *Drama Savremenog Čovečanstva*, 12–13. Here Ljotić likens the Jews to the angel Penueel, wrestling with God in the form of man, referencing Genesis 35:1-7, to assert his claim that the Jews are the only nation who have ‘fought against God’.

²⁴⁶ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Odgovor Malhut Izrael-u,” *Otadžbina*, 13 August, 1936, No.126, 2.

²⁴⁷ AJ 66-109-348. “Spisak zabranjenih knjiga i brošura. 20 April, 1939”. Six of the fourteen banned tracts were published by ZBOR.

²⁴⁸ Milorad Mojić (1895-1944). A journalist actively operating in Petrovgrad (Zrenjanin), Mojić was ZBOR’s general secretary from December 1937, replacing Velibor Jonić. Extremely anti-Semitic, he was the author of two racially anti-Semitic texts, *Zakon i dela Jevreja* (Jewish Laws and works), and *Srpski narod u kandžama Jevreja* (The Serbian nation in Jewish claws). Active in the ZBOR dominated collaborationist Serbian Volunteer Corps unit he was killed in December 1944 by the Ustaše. For more see Milorad Mojić. *Srpski narod u kandžama Jevreja*. Štamparija Luč, Belgrade, 1941.

prosecutor in Petrovgrad brought him to charges on account of his anti-Semitism.²⁴⁹ Ljotić did not attempt to censor Mojić, and his silence on the matter shows a marked trend toward Nazi influence, or at least acquiescence in that while Ljotić's own anti-Semitism was primarily religious, it was not immune to an increasing racialised discourse of anti-Semitism.

Mojić based his anti-Semitism on a pseudo-intellectual criticism of the Talmud (i.e. the collection of Jewish laws and texts). He believed that the Talmud shaped the character and genetic marker of the Jews so that they could not escape what they were. His method of attack was showcasing the 'anti-Gentile' nature of the Talmud, likening non-Jews to animals, and non-Jewish women as prostitutes.²⁵⁰ Jews were said to be able to mask their true feelings, almost giving Jews a hypnotical or supernatural ability to deceive, and to manipulate.

Like Ljotić, Mojić emphasised an element of self-preservation as a form of his anti-Semitism. The fact that the Jews were said by Mojić to be able to mask their true intentions so well somehow justified anti-Semitism and distrust. This would all culminate in a grand 'Satanic Jewish plan', which, according to Mojić was world domination. Again, Mojić cites the Talmud as his example, by which the Jews were to establish a worldwide 'Jewish Kingdom', through communism and freemasonry.²⁵¹ Communism then, along with capitalism was a weapon of the Jews through which they would establish their world kingdom. This, according to Mojić, was not only part of their religious obligation, but also because of their genetic code.

Furthermore, Ljotić's and ZBOR's polemic and vitriol would become more pronounced and extreme in parallel with increasing Nazi influence throughout Europe. But ZBOR was not alone in this. The Belgrade daily *Vreme* (Time, or Epoch) had by the start of the Second World War devoted more attention to the position of Jews in Europe, and the 'Jewish Question'. While not strictly anti-Semitic, debates over the supposed 'racial' qualities and origins of the Jews were noticeable from late 1939.²⁵² In ZBOR's case however, what can be

²⁴⁹ AJ-38-84-209. Milorad Mojić, "Jevreji u Jugoslaviji, njihova uloga i moć," *Novi Put*, 13 January, 1938, No.2, 2. AJ 38-84-209. "Državno Tužništvo u Petrovgradu – Centralnom presbirou". Br. Kns. 985/1938. 10 June, 1938.

²⁵⁰ Milorad Mojić, *Srpski narod u kandžama Jevreja* (Belgrade: Štamparija Luč, 1941), 8,15.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.* 39.

²⁵² See in particular Branimir Maleš, "Jevreji kao rasa," *Vreme*, 13 November, 1939, No.6734, 6.

deduced is that its anti-Semitism was not simply expedient. It could not just be turned off once turned on, for it became part of ZBOR's political existence. The 'Jewish question' soon occupied a central position in ZBOR's propaganda and ideology. This became obvious from the start of the Second World War. Ljotić undertook a lecture tour entitled *Drama Savremenog Čovečanstva* (Drama of Contemporary Humanity), which was later turned into a book, that was largely was a regurgitation of ZBOR's anti-Semitism, with themes of Jewish world domination, through capitalism, democracy, atheism, and communism.²⁵³ ZBOR member Milosav Vasiljević declared in November 1939 that ZBOR's task was to bring the 'Serbian people back to the spiritual path', rejecting the spread of the 'Jewish fallacies of communism and democracy'.²⁵⁴ Communism and democracy, according to Vasiljević, were the 'levers of the Jews', who used them to become 'masters of the world'.²⁵⁵ Speaking on the 'Dangers of the Jews', from 1938, in the aftermath of the German *Anschluß*²⁵⁶ (Connection) with Austria, Ljotić concludes that 'it is the Jews who are the biggest racists', when asked about his thoughts on the 'Jewish question'. The 'exclusive racism' of the Jews, Ljotić says, has allowed them to keep their 'purity as a race', in a way that 'maintained their spiritual origin, linked with their religion that forbade mixing with non-Jews'.²⁵⁷ Jews represented a danger to Ljotić for two reasons. Firstly, they were a 'foreign element', appearing as a 'destructive acid for every national system. Ljotić saw the Jews 'as the acid that destroys the living spirit of a people'. Jews were the 'destroyer of faith, economics, and morals'.²⁵⁸

The second reason was the pace in which Jews were increasingly gaining influence, in order to 'become masters of the world'.²⁵⁹ The Jews were the perennial outsiders, says Ljotić, not only would they 'mask their true feelings', but that the 'very nature of their souls changed' because they were always living in another's homeland.²⁶⁰ Despite this, ZBOR, and specifically Ljotić, consistently, and incorrectly, maintained that ZBOR was not an anti-Semitic movement. Ljotić attempted to mollify the authorities in an attempt to modify his position in relation to the Jews by stating that he 'was only against world Jews', not 'our

²⁵³ See "Gospodin Ljotić je održao predavanje u Kragujevcu," *Politika*, 13 November, 1939, No.11298, 6. Ljotić had started his tour from 25 October, 1939, in Belgrade.

²⁵⁴ Milosav Vasiljević, *Zboraški sociološki trebnik* (Belgrade, 1940), 128–142.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ The *Anschluß* (connection) was the occupation and annexation of Austria into Nazi Germany. The first German troops marched into Austria on 12 March, 1938.

²⁵⁷ "Opasnost od jevreja", in Ljotić, *Sabrana dela, Knjiga III*, 170.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 171.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 172.

²⁶⁰ Ljotić, *Drama Savremenog Čovečanstva*, 10.

Jews'. Ljotić claimed not to be against Jews as a religious or national minority, but because they are 'tentacles of a large Jewish spider that is enveloping the world'.²⁶¹ Ljotić however would apply generalisations to all Jews, specifically accusing them of creating the conditions for war, labelling them as 'directors', who 'organise the game'. It is the Jews, asserts Ljotić, who are the only ones 'who know the meaning of the events taking place'.²⁶² These people, in reference to the Jews, were 'scattered like chaffs of wheat throughout other people's lands', who have 'forgotten their ancestral language', yet speak 'the world's languages'.²⁶³

The ideological forces of Judaism and communism, according to ZBOR, were pushing for war. Speaking on the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936, Ljotić likened Spain to a garden, where the 'satanic thought of communism' was planted and eventually bloomed.²⁶⁴ Communism, as a Jewish creation, writes Ljotić, was a 'punishment for Hitler's anti-Jewish position'. On the other hand, Ljotić claims, a world war will see Jewish power increase, at the expense of European Christian civilisation.²⁶⁵ As a result, it would not be Hitler, but rather the Jews, through the prism of communism, who wished for a world war in which Christianity and all national states would be destroyed. Within this paradigm, Ljotić's apocalyptic end of times scenario would be played out. It shared broad similarities with the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, especially in its views of Jewish 'power', and 'capital' as a form of Jewish despotism over the world, under the guise of 'economic war'.²⁶⁶ Not only did the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* do much to publicise the conspiracy myth surrounding 'Jewish power', its influence played into Ljotić's increasingly millennial apocalyptic views, especially in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution. These views, as will be shown, would express themselves fully during the Second World War.

²⁶¹ AJ 102-7-19-18 "Upravi grada Beograda". Ljotić to unnamed recipient. 01 August, 1938. In this memo to the Belgrade city authorities, Ljotić admonishes the police for a raid on ZBOR headquarters, in lieu of verdict 15644-38, and the arrest of Milorad Mojić. Mojić was accused of publishing ZBOR leaflets stating that ZBOR is 'against Jews', which Ljotić attempted to downplay to the authorities.

²⁶² Ljotić, *Drama Savremenog Čovečanstva*, 8.

²⁶³ *Ibid.* 9.

²⁶⁴ Dimitrije Ljotić, "O Spaniji," *Otadžbina*, 22 October, 1936, No.136, 5.

²⁶⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Pregovori Sovjetsko-Engleski," *Bilten*, 29 May, 1939, No.14, 3.

²⁶⁶ Victor E. Marsden, *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, Reprint edition (Liberty Bell Publishing, 1990), 11,15. See also the Russian version Sergius Nilus, *Protokoli Sioniskih Mudrecov. Vsemirnii Gaiinii Zagorov.* (Berlin: Presse, 1922), 11–14.

Conclusion

ZBOR was much clearer and concise regarding what it was against than what it stood for. The movement called for change, yet only so much as to conform to the 6th of January regime, and the king's personal rule. It could offer, at least in aspects of its corporatism, slivers of actual substance. It would be able to present eloquently its anti-communism and anti-Semitism, as a type of self-protection from the world, but it would never gain any tangible results. Ljotić and Mojić attempted to introduce anti-Semitism into a political and social context that would find little resonance. While an uncompromising anti-communist, anti-modern, and anti-Semitic worldview would shape ZBOR, it would only highlight and isolate the movement from wider society as a whole. ZBOR's ideological rigidity, even in its incoherence, would be mirrored by its actual miniscule and inconsequential political life, internal structure, and organisation. For a movement deeming itself countrywide, as will be shown, its members and sympathisers were to be few and far between.

In terms of policies, ZBOR spanned an eclectic ideological spectrum. While glorifying the peasantry and rural values, as a form of agrarianism, its avocations of a planned economy, ostensibly to help relieve peasant debt, and heavy state intervention was more akin to a type of agrarian socialism, which was also culturally conservative, rather than a dynamic and revolutionary totalitarian movement. Ljotić attempted to work out a specific niche for his ideas within a Yugoslav context, but ideological incoherence and vagueness, coupled with a strident and almost racially based Nazi style anti-Semitism, would make the movement much more susceptible to the label of 'fascist', as it was understood by Yugoslav public opinion, as an oppressive and totalitarian ideology. However, disregarding the politicised evaluation of ZBOR its 'fascist status' can be disputed. Partly, this can be attributed to its lack of emphasis on a strong national rebirth.²⁶⁷ Moreover, Ljotić's nationalistic views were also said to be vague and misaligned, as they were drawn from so many different sources during his lifetime.²⁶⁸ This is evident in his varied references to the interchangeability of the 'Yugoslav' and Serbian nation in his writing. It could also go toward explaining how during the Second

²⁶⁷ Maria Falina. "Between 'Clerical Fascism' and Political Orthodoxy: Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Interwar Serbia." *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8.2 (2007), 249.

²⁶⁸ Ibid. 249

World War, ZBOR would seamlessly morph into a Serbian national movement as opposed to a wider Yugoslav movement.

Incoherence and vagueness would also afflict ZBOR's organisational structure, with Ljotić, focusing more on ideological matters than administrative, would prove to be a weak organiser, hampering ZBOR's already miniscule membership and appeal even further. His weakness as a leader would best be highlighted in the relation of ZBOR to the electoral process and public opinion regarding him and his movement from 1935 until 1940.

Chapter 4: ZBOR: organisation and activity in political life. 1935-1940

The external image of ZBOR is one that is anti-communist, anti-Semitic, and anti-democratic. To some, this was the equivalent of fascism. However, its internal structure was disjointed with the presence of differences of some of opinion amongst its prominent members. The so-called 'movement', was at odds on how to decide on a semantic nomenclature to define itself, let alone organise a workable internal structure. Part of this stemmed from its marginal existence on the periphery of interwar Yugoslav life. Another reason would be the internal struggle within ZBOR regarding to participation in parliamentary elections. In choosing to participate in elections, ZBOR would haphazardly look for candidates in areas where no base of support existed, or where ZBOR was a total unknown entity. A larger part stemmed from its political difficulties namely in government repression along with accusations of fascism and German funding.

While such actions would dent an already limited and narrow appeal, ZBOR's participation in the 1935 and 1938 parliamentary elections would bring the reality of its unpopularity and rejection by the electorate. ZBOR was politically insignificant during its 1935-1940 existence, including the 1935 and 1938 parliamentary elections. Its insignificance would transfer itself into a party organisation that as will be shown, displayed greater rigidity and control than its ideology, but was severely dampened by a paucity of members. This reinforced a severe organisational weakness and inefficiency at all levels. The movement would begin and end with its founder and leader, Dimitrije Ljotić, who would be more interested in and show more aptitude for, ideological development, rather than political organisation, thus negating the perception of Ljotić as possessing political acumen and tactical knowledge.

Participation in elections, in a political system that the movement viewed with disdain, was a glaring contradiction. The public's accusations of ZBOR as fascist would severely damage any legitimacy the movement might have had in public perception. Whatever the reasons, such examples of ZBOR's unpopularity would tie into a larger theme, that of perceived repression. Repression brought from either the Stojadinović government (1935-1939), or its

eventual banning under the Cvetković government (1939-41),¹ was taken by ZBOR as a sign of its popularity and government fear. This would fuel ZBOR's propaganda of Jewish-communist and government collusion against its alternative 'truth'. This would lead to a large discrepancy between the volume of ZBOR's propaganda, and its lack of translation into any tangible results and successes.

ZBOR's organisational structure and membership

For a party that, as will be shown, had a very limited popular appeal, ZBOR would portray a certain level of central organisation that went well beyond its actual popularity and level of support. That being said, the movement would never achieve much more than a basic practical organisational form, and its growth would be hampered by government interference, repression, and riven with internal dissent and animosity. It would also, suffer from an inability to explain and translate its ideology and goals to the wider populace. Neither would it exhibit any organisational competence, dynamism, or efficiency. Nevertheless, it was able to impart at least a skeletal organisational structure throughout interwar Yugoslavia, though by no means was it, as will be shown, always able to sustain itself independently, nor even to exist in all areas of the country.

As early as 1935, ZBOR had already theorised a party structure that it would attempt to implement. Initially however, such theories were primarily abstract. In its legalisation letter to the Ministry of Interior, ZBOR accepted, and used for its own framework, the law stipulating that political movements organised in regional councils must have a minimum of thirty members. These would be further organised into half the total number of districts in the nine *banovinas*.² Apart from its launching and headquarters in Belgrade, by 1935 there were ZBOR branches appearing, primarily in Serbian majority populated areas.³ Unfortunately due

¹ Milan Stojadinović was appointed Prime Minister on 24 June, 1935, before being removed by Prince Regent Paul on 5 February, 1939. Dragiša Cvetković served as Prime Minister from 5 February, 1939, until 27 March, 1941.

² AJ 102-7-19. "Uputstvo za organizovanje JNP ZBOR. 08 November, 1935". The submittal for legalisation was 2 September, 1935. See also Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 35.

³ ZBOR spread to Niš in 1935, with a merchant, Petar Vuković, at its head. Zoran Vuković, son of Petar, headed the local ZBOR youth organisation. See Nebojša Randjelović, and Vladimir Vučković, "Jugoslovenski pokret Zbor u Nišu," *Peščanik Istorijски arhiv grada Niša*, no. 2 (2004), 239–249. ; Gligorijević, "Napad Ljotićevaca na studente tehničkog fakulteta u Beogradu u oktobru 1940. i rasturanje Ljotićevog Zbora," 72. Gligorijević, provides evidence for ZBOR's existence in Bosnia, with local ZBOR sections in Bijeljina and Rogatica from 1936, as well as a skeletal Sarajevo section from 1935. There is also evidence of ZBOR's founding in Užice,

to a lack of available documents, membership and the existence of ZBOR as a local political phenomenon are difficult to quantify.⁴ The one detailed list of a local organisation found by the author was for Belgrade during the occupation, listing ninety-nine of its members.⁵ However, there is evidence to support that ZBOR's membership was marked by a degree of fluidity, in that there were instances of ZBOR members also holding membership in other organisations, primarily the *Jugoslovenska Narodna Stranka* (Yugoslav National Party). In a report to the Foreign Office, John Balfour, a British diplomat, claims that 'ZBOR is intent on co-operation with the Yugoslav National Party'.⁶

This was particularly noticeable in Niš, where ZBOR and the JNS were in close co-operation with each other, with evidence of membership fluidity between the two groups.⁷ This can be explained due to the relative unpopularity of both movements, which shared broad ideological similarities. Perhaps both groups, wishing to increase membership and influence saw an opportunity to cooperate with the other, while maintaining their independence. Alternatively, it can be taken as a sign of ZBOR's lack of a strong central organisational base, small membership, and even smaller appeal that it relied initially on co-operation with more established organisations for political expression and survival. As will be shown later, when ZBOR did stand on independently, the result was disastrous, as it failed to win a single seat in the 1935 and 1938 elections.

from March 1936, with Milija Davidović, a lawyer, at its head. Gligorijević's findings are also reproduced in Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 89–93.

⁴ Most membership lists, if existing, were destroyed during the Second World War, most likely by the Partisans. However, Gligorijević shows that in the case of Rogatica, most of those who acknowledged their membership cited low levels of activity, as well as membership in other parties. See Gligorijević, "Napad Ljotićevaca na studente tehničkog fakulteta u Beogradu u oktobru 1940. i rasturanje Ljotićevog Zbora," 73.

⁵ Arhiv Srbije (Hereafter AS) – Bezbedno Informativna Agencija (Hereafter BIA), II-69. "Dosije br 1-A-9. Mesna Organizacija N.P. 'Zbor' Beograd. Spisak Članova Mesne Organizacije Beograd". This undated list, though most likely relating to the 1941-1944 period, because of its reference to ZBOR as a 'national movement', as opposed to 'Yugoslav' movement contains the names, address, and occupations of ninety-nine ZBOR Belgrade members, as well as identifying which members were also members of the collaborationist apparatus.

⁶ See NA FO 371/20434 R/4022/42/92/ "Political Situation in Yugoslavia. Mr. Balfour". 9 July, 1936.

⁷ AJ 37-21-60. "Ministarstvu Unutrašnjih Poslova Kraljevine Jugoslavije – odeljenja za državu zaštitu". 18th July, 1938. Increased ZBOR activity against Stojadinović's regime. Highlights the case of Niš lawyer and local ZBOR secretary Mirko Nešić, who was heavily involved in attacking Stojadinović on a personal level. Shows that Nešić belonged both to ZBOR (from 1937) and the JNS, and that both parties were showing increasing signs of co-operation. See also: AS BIA, II-69-21-4-4. 30 April, 1952. Denunciation by a Nikola M. Ivanović, in relation to an Aleksandar Lazarević from Arandjelovac, who fled abroad. Ivanović states that Lazarević was chosen as a national representative in 1938 as a JNS member, before joining ZBOR in 1939, while retaining his JNS membership, and later active in the collaborationist military apparatus.

Though founded in 1935, it was not until March 1937 that an attempt was made by Ljotić to organise ZBOR into a solid organisational structure. This attempt was codified through special ordinances that re-organised ZBOR internally in a top-down fashion. Accordingly, ZBOR's executive organisational structure was to be headed by the decisions made by the 'Supreme Committee'. It was within the president's purview to dissolve any internal ZBOR body except the 'Supreme Committee'. The 'Supreme Committee', made up of 120 members, was elected by ZBOR's 'advisory board' made up from the 'Supreme Committee', and was supposed to meet on the first Sunday of each month.⁸ Membership in the 'Supreme Committee' was open to senior members of ZBOR's 'General Secretariat', ZBOR provincial leaders, and heads of organisational areas.⁹ Within the 'Supreme Committee', there was a special fifteen-person subsection called a 'Parliament', chosen from amongst the 'Supreme Committee'.¹⁰ The 'Supreme Committee' gave ZBOR its ideological, tactical, and organisational guidelines. Its decisions would then be debated amongst ZBOR's 'parliament', and only if passed would they be given to the president.

ZBOR's organisational structure type would share, mostly superficial, similarities with other authoritarian and fascist movements throughout Europe. This was evident especially in its hierarchical structure under a single leader, as opposed to a bureaucratic democratic structure, akin to Mussolini's National Fascist Party. ZBOR was largely dependent on Ljotić's personality, and his initiative for any real development. While Mussolini would be able to turn a loose organisational National Fascist Party structure into a party subject to his authority,¹¹ ZBOR's lack of members and clear ideological and organisational dependence on Ljotić meant that if he didn't take over or create an organisational structure, ZBOR might have remained an obscure and unorganised group that would have existed contently under the 6th of January dictatorship. However, other aspects of ZBOR, at least in how the movement wished to be viewed, were not totally aligned with fascism, since (up to the outbreak of the Second World War) Ljotić took pains to stress that ZBOR does not deify the state and treat it as the ultimate and only priority, which fascism is centred on.¹² Looking at a concept or an entity as a deity may be seen as taking an atheistic and non-Christian worldview, which to

⁸ AJ 102-7-19. "Pravilnik o Organizovanju Savetodavnog Odbora Jugoslovenskog Narodnog Pokreta ZBOR. Dimitrije Ljotić". 12 March, 1937.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Dante L. Germino, *The Italian Fascist Party in Power: A Study in Totalitarian Rule*, 14.

¹² Dimitrije Ljotić, "Ni fašizam ni Hitlerizam," *Otadžbina*, 3 March, 1935, No.48, 2.

Ljotić was anathema, and therefore against ZBOR principles, which held religion as one of its central tenets for change. Deification of the state is not something that ZBOR, as Ljotić conceived it, stood for. Instead, the King, invested by God, was the closest approximation of deification. Also, since ZBOR to some extent supported the existence of parliament, provided that it is a true parliament based on their preferences,¹³ it differs from fascist thought in such a way that fascism does not support any entity, such as the government, which may scrutinise and overpower their own party institution.

This hierarchic principle, prevalent in the organisational structure of many interwar European radical right wing and fascist parties would be in contrast, at least initially, to the *Falange de las JONS* in Spain, officially under the leadership of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, but this in effect was subject to a triumvirate consisting of himself, Ramiro Ledesma, and Julio Ruiz de Alda. This was due to the fact that the Falange de las JONS was a fusion of two separate parties, the *Falange Española* (Spanish Phalanx, hereafter FE) of José Antonio, and the *Juntos de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista* (Unions for the National Syndicalist Offensive, hereafter JONS), of Ramiro Ledesma, and Onésimo Redondo, in early February 1934.¹⁴

What this convoluted merger saw was the *Consejo Nacional* (National Council) of the JONS, representing the nine local JONS groups in existence,¹⁵ meet in Madrid to vote on a merger with the FE. The Falange de las JONS lead by a *Junta de Manto* (Command Council), was composed of four Falangists (José Antonio and Ruiz de Alda among them) and two JONS members (Ledesma and Redondo), with the daily administration and leadership in the hands of a *Triunvirato Ejecutivo Central* (Triumvirate Central Executive), composed of José Antonio, Ruiz de Alda, and Ledesma.¹⁶ This organised yet convoluted organisational structure was meant to be a compromise toward the differing personalities, and ideological tendencies within the Spanish authoritarian and nationalist radical right. This can be compared to how Ljotić's personality and former political experience, along with his burgeoning ideology gave him a position of primacy. In Spain, two differing strands of radical-authoritarian nationalism, later fused into a hybrid Spanish type of National

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Stanley Payne, *Fascism in Spain 1923-1977* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 99.

¹⁵ The nine existing local JONS groups were in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Bilbao, Zaragoza, Valladolid, Granada, Santiago de Compostela, and Zafra. For more see Ramiro Ledesma Ramos, *Escritos Politicos. JONS, 1933-1934* (Madrid: E Trinidad, 1999). ; Ramiro Ledesma Ramos, *Escritos Politicos 1935-1936* (Madrid: Encuandernación editorial, 1988).

¹⁶ Payne, *Fascism in Spain 1923-1977*, 99.

Syndicalism,¹⁷ and fascism, would, in the pre-1936 Civil War days, find political existence and co-habitation increasingly difficult.

As ZBOR perceived itself as Yugoslav, efforts were made at the theoretical level at least, to formulate a blueprint for ZBOR sections throughout the country. Following ZBOR's hierarchic principle, by which the president and the Supreme Committee were at the top, this was to be followed in order of the decreasing authority of the provincial committees, organisational areas, council assemblies, and local assemblies. The provincial councils were composed of members of the Supreme Committee, leading members of certain organisational areas, and provincial representatives of ZBOR for the corresponding *banovina*.¹⁸

ZBOR's provincial organisation was its highest form of local organisation. It was made up of provincial parliaments and provincial councils and committees. Members of the Supreme Committee and senior leaders of the organisational areas were entitled to enter into provincial councils, but not the provincial parliaments.¹⁹ These provincial councils elected their own provincial leader, his assistant, and five members for an executive council. The provincial council, in agreement with the General Secretariat, appointed the provincial secretary.²⁰

The individual organisational areas delineated and outlined by Ljotić, to include areas of potential support was spread throughout the country. Ljotić appointed its senior members, on the advice of the provincial councils. All local ZBOR sections came under the supervision of the senior members of the organisational areas. Ljotić, as president, had the right to determine the organisational areas and appoint their individual secretaries. In practice, organisational areas would co-operate with the provincial councils, as well as with the General Secretariat. In Serbia alone, there were thirty-five organisational areas.²¹ Others among them were the regions surrounding Ljubljana in the *Dravska Banovina*, Split, Sušak, and Šibenik in the

¹⁷ National Syndicalism, was the result of an attempted adaptation of syndicalism to integralist nationalism. Founded in France as a result of the brief political encounter between Maurras and Sorel, through the *Cercle Proudhon*, it would find more fruitful political expression in the Iberian peninsula, by Ramiro Ledesma, who used it in an attempt to win Spanish syndicalists and anarchists to the 'cause of the nation' in the *Falange de las JONS*. For more see Ramiro Ledesma Ramos, "Nuestro manifiesto político," *La Conquista del Estado*, 14 March, 1931, No.1, 1–2. ; Ramiro Ledesma Ramos, "Las juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista," *La Conquista del Estado*, 10 October, 1931, No.21,1. ; Sternhell, Sznajder, and Ashéri, *The birth of fascist ideology*.

¹⁸ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 37.

¹⁹ AS BIA, II-69. "Dosije br. 1-A-II. Lokalna politička organizacija". Security report on the local organisational structure and development of ZBOR from its inception to 1945.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid. Unfortunately, the thirty-five organisational areas are not individually listed.

Primorska Banovina, Osijek, and Zagreb, in the *Savska Banovina*, Foča, and Užice in the *Drinska Banovina*, Apatin, Kragujevac, Petrovgrad, and Požarevac in the *Dunavska Banovina*, and Kruševac, Niš, and the Pirot regions in the *Moravska Banovina*.²² These organisational areas were thought to be able to organise least skeletal ZBOR member cells, and were supposed to act as nuclei for future organisational, recruitment, and consolidation drives.

Given ZBOR's weaknesses (small membership, lack of activity, little public exposure), stagnation, and unpopularity, there was little impetus, and even ability, to change existing organisational structures. However, on 20 May, 1943, ZBOR's provincial bodies, as well as the organisational areas were abolished. These were later re-organised into 'District areas', under the command of delegates specifically chosen by Ljotić. The remaining internal organisational structure of the former provincial and organisational areas remained, with the district secretary being chosen by the General Secretariat, in agreement with Ljotić.²³ As will be shown in chapter 5, this re-organisation was due to the chaos of occupation and resistance in the Serbian rump entity.

With ZBOR being a visible reminder of collaboration and subservience, it presented a target for retribution, while engaging in retribution of its own. In lieu of law and authority, and because of Ljotić's continued withdrawal from organisational matters, ZBOR's organisational structure would begin to disintegrate with increased government repression and scrutiny, leading members to be less likely to acknowledge their membership. There were also factional struggles within ZBOR, which would further compromise the movement.

The General Secretariat

In an attempt to maximise its efficiency, and administrative work, members of the 'Supreme Committee' created a General Secretariat. As a result, the General Secretariat was divided into eight different organisational and administrative sections, which would deal with ZBOR's everyday activities.²⁴ Section leaders would be chosen by the president of the

²² Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 38.

²³ AS BIA, II-69. "Dosije br. 1-A-II. 'Lokalna politička organizacija'".

²⁴ AJ 102-7-19. "Pravilnik o organizaciji – Glavnog Tajništva Jugoslovenskog Narodnog Pokreta ZBOR. Dimitrije Ljotić". 12 March, 1937. The sections were: organisational, propaganda, press, protection, intelligence, ideology building, finance, and a special section for the German minority. Along with Velibor

movement, and would implement the directives as laid down by the movement's president. Section leaders were allowed to choose their own assistants from amongst their sectional members, as well as technical and support staff, all subject to confirmation by the General Secretariat.²⁵

The responsibility for coordinating the activities of all the sections fell to the general secretary. In fact, the general secretary took on almost all daily tasks of the movement, with Ljotić increasingly taking himself out of the daily administrative and organisational tasks, instead focusing on ideological and political work. ZBOR's two general secretaries, Velibor Jonić, from 1935 until 1937, and Milorad Mojić, from 1938-41, and again from 1941 until 1944, were highly idealistic anti-communists, Germanophiles, and in Mojić's case, outspokenly anti-Semitic. Both men, in their personal convictions and position within ZBOR, added much to the movement's synergetic ideology.²⁶ Ultimately however, it was Ljotić who had final say over all matters, and in doing so, could not escape blame or responsibility for more extreme ideological elements entering into ZBOR.

ZBOR's organisational sub-divisions

Reliable information on ZBOR's organisational sub-divisions unfortunately, has been lacking. ZBOR's propaganda section, initially headed by Danilo Gregorić, would also incorporate ZBOR's press section, and technical and financial affairs section in its area of responsibility.²⁷ However, there is little supporting evidence on the actual operation of this section. ZBOR's section for the German minority for instance, while codified in 1937, can be said to have been in existence from at least 1936, mostly through the efforts of Milorad Mojić. As editor of the ZBOR publication *Budjenje* (Awakening), Mojić, by July 1936, had also begun publishing *Budjenje* in German, translated as *Erwache*, in an attempt to expand

Jonić as general secretary, Djordje Perić was head of the press section, and Danilo Gregorić was head of ZBOR youth, and of the propaganda section as well

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Jonić especially, would be accused of bringing a fascistic element into ZBOR, developed during his time within the *Jugoslovenska Akcija* (Yugoslav Action) movement, especially in his calls for a 'party shirt' and paramilitary like structure of organisational areas. See Ratko Parežanin, "Sećanja na Dimitrija V. Ljotića", in Borivoje Karapandžić, *Srpski Dobrovoljci 1941-1981* (Cleveland, 1981), 29. See also Parežanin, *Drugi svetski rat i Dimitrije Ljotić*, 144–146.

²⁷ AJ 102-7-19. "Predlog za stvaranje odseka za propagandu JNP Zbor". 14 January, 1937. The decision to create a propaganda section, was theoretically the first ZBOR section, thus showing ZBOR's priorities and uncertainly as to its own identity and levels of organisation.

the publication's influence amongst ethnic Germans living in the Banat and Vojvodina.²⁸ The inflammatory anti-Semitic nature of *Erwache*, led to its banning in April 1937. Undeterred, Mojić was also the editor of two more short-lived anti-Semitic German language publications, *Sturm* (Storm), from May 1937, and later *Angriff* (Onslaught), from January 1938 until April 1938.²⁹ The banning of such publications by the Yugoslav government reveals not only how much of a marginal phenomenon anti-Semitism was in interwar Yugoslavia, being confined to the even more marginal extreme right, but also on a wider scale, the attitude of the Yugoslav government and geopolitics. Yugoslavia did not wish to open itself up to any scrutiny or influence that could later be used to undermine its sovereignty, especially in regard to anti-Semitism, and as will be shown, the position of the German minority in Yugoslavia and Nazi ideology.

Ljotić made no mention of any German members, or sympathisers of the movement until 12 March, 1937 when he mentioned fifteen former members of the *Erneuerungsbewegung* (Renewal) movement under Dr. Jakob Awender, from Pančevo, who attended a ZBOR rally in Belgrade.³⁰ Incidentally, the same day that he acknowledged the need for codifying an organisational structure for ZBOR.

This began a brief association of a small and radicalised dissident movement within the larger German *Kulturbund*³¹ (Cultural Association) movement in Yugoslavia. At its core, the *Erneuer* (Renewers), were an anti-liberal, and anti-Semitic, German nationalist, and indeed, a National Socialist type of organisation.³² Expelled from the larger *Kulturbund* movement³³ as

²⁸ Koljanin, *Jevreji i antisemitizam u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1918-1941*, 273.

²⁹ Ibid. Mojić would combine his role as editor of *Angriff* in particular, with his role of general secretary of ZBOR from December 1937.

³⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Njihovi napadi čije nam čast i radost," *Otažbina*, 13 March, 1937, No.152, 1.

³¹ The *Schwäbisch-Deutscher Kulturbund* (Swabian German Cultural Association) was founded in Novi Sad in 1920 as its name suggests, a non-political cultural association of the Swabian German minority in the Banat and Vojvodina, though it later spread throughout Yugoslavia and was instrumental in maintaining and developing German language and culture in interwar Yugoslavia. With the advent of National Socialism in Germany in 1933, the *Kulturbund* became increasingly political as it began to be used as a means with which to effect policy and relations with Yugoslavia. With the invasion of Yugoslavia on 6 April, 1941, the movement would officially cease to exist, though many of its members supported, and even enlisted in the German Army. For more see Branko Bešlin, *Vesnik Tragedije. Nemačke štampa u Vojvodini (1933-1941)* (Novi Sad: Platoneum, 2001). ; Zoran Janjetović, *Nemci u Vojvodini* (Belgrade: Institut za novu istoriju Srbije, 2009). ; Branko Pavlica, "Sudbina Nemaca u Jugoslaviji," *Anali* 53, no. 2 (2005), 196–236. ; Hans Rasimus, *Als Fremde im Vaterland. Der schwäbisch-deutsche Kulturbund u. die ehemalige deutsche Volksgruppe in Jugoslawien München* (Donauschwäbisches Archiv, 1989).

³² Philip W. Lyon, "After Empire: Ethnic Germans and Minority Nationalism in Interwar Yugoslavia." (University of Maryland, 2008), 427.

a result of their radicalism, its very existence became threatened because it did not have any legal permission to function as an independent organisation in its own right. It therefore sought legalisation and autonomy through an existing movement. ZBOR offered such expedient cover. The supposed Nazi like structure and ideology of ZBOR was a common theme in Mojić's appeal to the German minority. This was combined with loyalty to the Yugoslav state and monarchy, and its supposed revolutionary nature, was aimed at showing ZBOR was a true friend of Nazi Germany.³⁴

Mojić was the visible architect of strengthening ZBOR's influence amongst the German minority. However, it would seem unlikely that Ljotić would have had no knowledge of Mojić's overtures, certainly as they, pertained to the potential 'Nazification' of ZBOR in order to appeal to a wider cross-section of the German minority. Most likely, in an attempt to increase ZBOR's profile and membership, and due to his personal growing conviction of Hitler's mission, he would have conceivably welcomed the move. Yet it also shows how far actual events within ZBOR had passed Ljotić by to the effect that it was not he who offered any real organisational solutions, leaving it to ZBOR's general secretariat or individual members to try to affect an initiative on their own accords.

While such an alliance might have benefitted both movements in the short term, for the *Erneuer* it turned out to be a disaster. Both the *Kulturbund*, and the German Embassy, as representatives of the Reich's government, wanted, as part of maintaining good relations with Yugoslavia, to have German organisations and voters within the Stojadinović government JRZ party.³⁵ The *Erneuerungsbewegung* movement therefore became a thorn in the side of both the German and Yugoslav governments. Stojadinović personally regarded the German minority as a barometer for relations between Germany and Yugoslavia, and took it as an affront, supposing that 'various elements within the Reich' would countenance aiding a movement that was against his rule.³⁶ In any case, by October 1938, the association of the *Erneuer* with ZBOR had finished, as its main spokesman, Dr. Jakob Awender, publicly

³³ See NA FO 371/30218 R 4977/162/92. "German Activities in Yugoslavia. 14 February, 1941. Mr. Campbell". Ronald Campbell, as plenipotentiary to Yugoslavia, claims that throughout 1940 and 1941, the *Kulturbund* had become almost totally Nazi, and that there was evidence of the SA and SS recruiting amongst Yugoslavia's Germans.

³⁴ Lyon, "After Empire: Ethnic Germans and Minority Nationalism in Interwar Yugoslavia.," 430.

³⁵ AJ 37-58-371/344. "Novosadski Nemci stupaju u JRZ", in *Samouprava*, 14 May, No.70, 1936.

³⁶ NA German Foreign Ministry (Hereafter GFM) 33/53. Deutsche Gesandtschaft G. 57/37 G 1 03 March, 1937. Belastung der deutsch-jugoslavischen Beziehungen durch die Tätigkeit unverantwortlicher deutscher Stellen. Stojadinović speaking to German Envoy Viktor von Heeren.

acknowledged that the *Erneuerungsbewegung* would enter into the JRZ, thus separating itself from ZBOR.³⁷ He did so because he faced pressure from the German Embassy in Belgrade, who wished to maintain good relations with Yugoslavia through Stojadinović. On 23 October, 1938, Awender agreed to take the *Erneuerungsbewegung* into the JRZ,³⁸ thus ending association with ZBOR, and forcing a further reshuffling of its organisational structure with the demise of the section handling relations with the German minority.

In addition to the German minority, Yugoslavia was also home to a fluctuating Russian population that by 1941 was estimated at around 30,000, down from around 42,500 in 1924.³⁹ As the majority of Yugoslavia's Russian population were made up of political refugees fleeing the Civil War, and the repression of the Bolsheviks, many of the emigrants would have shared experiences of the violence, atheism, materialism, and anti-nationalism of the communism against which ZBOR warned against. The issue of émigré Russian involvement in ZBOR is an interesting one. Conceivably, there would have been convergence between the myriad of émigré anti-Bolshevik organisations formed in Yugoslavia and ZBOR. According to Russian historian Aleksei Timofeev, there was a 'close relationship between Russian emigrants and ZBOR'.⁴⁰ Unfortunately little data exists on the nature and extent of émigré Russian involvement with ZBOR, and Timofeev gives no references to his earlier claim. If there were Russian members of ZBOR, they were not organised into a separate organisational sub-section such as German members were. Certainly Ljotić's pan-Slavic and Russophile tendencies, as well as his personal anti-communism and religiosity, would have been looked favourably upon. However, ZBOR did not make any mention of Russian members in its publications, nor did it seemingly publish materials in Russian, nor actively try to 'proselytise' amongst the Russian population as it did amongst the German minority.

³⁷ AJ 37-62-378. Awender to Stojadinović. Already by June 1938, Awender was ready to take his group into the JRZ, citing to Stojadinović dissatisfaction amongst the German community due to harassment and fines because of association with ZBOR.

³⁸ Dragan Tešić, *Jugoslovenska radikalna zajednica u Srbiji 1935-1939* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1997), 294.

³⁹ Aleksei Timofeev, *Raskolotii Veter. Russkie i Vtoraya mirovaya voina v Iugoslavii* (Moscow: Modest Kolerov, 2013), 29.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 64.

Organisational model

ZBOR's organisational model in itself was not original. The government party from 1935, the *Jugoslovenska radikalna savez* (Yugoslav Radical Union), was structured in a similar, albeit much larger model.⁴¹ The JRZ consisted of provincial assemblies, a main committee, regional committees and assemblies, and county and municipal councils. The main committee of the JRZ consisted of seventy-five members, twenty-five of whom were members of the provincial assembly.⁴² Where it differed however was in its executive authority. Far from being subject to an individual decision maker, the JRZ, representing the diverse and nationwide base of its support, had at its administrative head, the Council of Delegates. This Council of Delegates was made up of seventy-five members, who were responsible for all administrative tasks, as well as ideological and political action.⁴³ Where the JRZ differed obviously, was that being the fusion of parties, particularly the Slovene People's Party, and the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation, which had strong electoral bases (albeit primarily ethno-religious), the JRZ was more easily able to synthesise its separate existing party structures into a nationwide whole.

Membership

That ZBOR's limited size theoretically would not hamper the level of party organisation meant that many areas throughout the country had no local ZBOR cell, and were covered by the largest existing cell within their district, or region.⁴⁴ At the basic level, that of membership, it is unfortunately extremely difficult to ascertain any specifics of localised socio-economic, ethnic, or religious variations. Establishing an approximate number of members therefore proves elusive. That being said, estimates at 'no more than 5000 to 6000'

⁴¹ The *Jugoslovenska Radikalna Zajednica* (JRZ) was created as a government party in the aftermath of the 5th May, 1935 elections, formed by Milan Stojadinović on 24 June, 1935, with representatives from three pre-dictatorship parties, the *Slovenske Ljudske Stranke* (Slovenian People's Party), the *Narodne Radikalne Stranke* (National Radical Party), and the *Jugoslovenske Muslimanske Organizacije* (Yugoslav Muslim Organisation), as well as members of the JNS. For more see Bojan Simić, *Propaganda Milana Stojadinovića* (Belgrade: Institut za novu istoriju Srbije, 2007). ; Tešić, *Jugoslovenska radikalna zajednica u Srbiji 1935-1939*.

⁴² AJ 37-12-16/22. 'Program Jugoslovenske radikalne zajednice'.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ AJ 102-7-19. "Uputstvo za organizovanje JNP ZBOR". 08 November, 1935.

members have been bandied about.⁴⁵ Though the Plenipotentiary to Yugoslavia Ronald Campbell gives an estimate of up to '50,000 ZBOR voters',⁴⁶ which most likely denotes sympathisers throughout the country. The aforementioned ZBOR Belgrade wartime membership list notwithstanding, ZBOR's membership has been difficult to establish. However, a very crude and superficial inference can be made from ZBOR's electoral lists from the 1935 and 1938 parliamentary elections. These electoral lists, published in a leading national daily, *Politika*, printed names of every candidate from the running parties, including their occupations. In ZBOR's case, it gives a rudimentary base for inference on a socio-economic membership base.⁴⁷ ZBOR's 1935 electoral candidates displayed a wide range of socio-economic statuses, from the unemployed to industrialists. Throughout most electoral lists, there seems to be two common socio-economic groups; peasants, and/or merchants/tradesmen (shopkeepers, cobblers, tailors etc.). Any inference at ethnic composition, based on name alone, is of course, highly subjective. In Slovene majority Dravska Banovina, most of the candidates listed bear Slovenian names. In the Croatian majority Primorska Banovina, most ZBOR candidates were seemingly Croats. In the Drinska, Dunavska, Moravska, and Zeta Banovinas, Serbian candidates seemingly predominated. The Vrbaska Banovina, correlating largely to Bosnia and Hercegovina, and parts of Croatia, unsurprisingly, showed the greatest ethnic mix, with perhaps a plurality of Serbian candidates, but also a number of Croatian and Muslim candidates. What is evident, at least in the case of the Vrbaska Banovina is that non-Muslims made up an overwhelming majority of ZBOR candidates. This base however, cannot account for the inconsistency and paradoxical nature of human political involvement. It cannot for instance, ascertain whether those candidates standing were committed ZBOR members, or even members of ZBOR. It cannot make any definitive statements on the ethnic composition of candidates in ZBOR's electoral lists, based solely on names and places of candidacy.

⁴⁵ See Martić, "Dimitrije Ljotić and the Yugoslav National Movement ZBOR, 1935-1945," 220–221. Parežanin states that 150 members from 'small' ZBOR, fused into what would be ZBOR, in 1935, with groups in Belgrade, Sarajevo, Novi Sad, Subotica, and the Banat. See Parežanin, *Drugi svetski rat i Dimitrije Ljotić*, 45. ; Byford, "The willing bystanders: Dimitrije Ljotić, 'Shield collaboration and the destruction of Serbia's Jews'", in Haynes and Rady, *In the Shadow of Hitler*, 297. Byford gives no numbers, but estimates that ZBOR's membership was primarily Serbian with a 'diminishing number of Croats and Slovenes'. Holm Sandhussen, *Gesichte Serbiens 19.-21. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Böhlner, 2007), 288. Sandhussen estimates between 5000-6000 ZBOR members.

⁴⁶ NA FO 371/20434 R 3104/42/92. "Situation in Yugoslavia – Ideal of an Integral Yugoslavia. Mr. Campbell to Foreign Office". 28 May, 1936.

⁴⁷ The two electoral lists in question are "Zemaljska lista g. Dimitrija Ljotića," *Politika*, 22 April, 1935, 9673, 5.; "Zemaljska kandidaciona lista Jugoslovenskog narodnog pokreta 'Zbor' koju je potvrdio Kasacioni sud," *Politika*, 26 November, 1938, 10955, 9-11.

As an example as how the base works, within the Dravska Banovina, out of the two electoral districts, in the first district, ZBOR ran fourteen, and twelve candidates in the 1935 and 1938 parliamentary elections respectively. Within the second electoral district, ZBOR ran eleven and twelve candidates in the 1935 and 1938 elections respectively. Taking the listed occupations of the candidates, and their area of residence, an inference can begin to be made as to the possibility of an existing ZBOR cell in Ljubljana in this instance.⁴⁸ To further deconstruct the base, out of the twelve candidates in the first electoral region of the 1935 elections, seven were classified as merchants, one as a doctor, one journalist, one clerk, and one auditor.⁴⁹ This base can then be applied to all candidates running in the individual 35 electoral districts. It cannot however, be taken for more than what it actually is, a very basic and superficial inference. In light of the absence of available ZBOR membership lists however, it is at least a start.

Such a base however, is not the only medium by which inference or deduction of ZBOR's membership can be utilised in the absence of official documents. The recollections of one time Split ZBOR member Hrvoje Magazinović,⁵⁰ who by 1939 had become ZBOR's district secretary of the *Vrba Banovina*, in Banja Luka, under the leadership of Mirko Novković, also based in Banja Luka, are of particular relevance. Magazinović offers interesting insight into ZBOR's localised activities in his memoir.⁵¹ He claims that even though ZBOR fielded candidates in Split during the 5 May, 1935 parliamentary elections, there was no organised ZBOR Split section. However, he maintains that sometime in the winter of 1935, at a meeting of ZBOR voters in Split (there were only thirty votes cast for ZBOR) lead to a creation of a ZBOR section under Krešimir Samodol and Dr. Marin Bego, a lawyer from Split.⁵² Among

⁴⁸ Using this base, of the total number of candidates within the two electoral districts of the *Savska Banovina*, out of the eighteen candidates who ran in the 1935 parliamentary elections, seven returned to run in the 1938 elections. They are Dr. Fran Kandare (2nd ZBOR vice-president), Vladislav Fabijančić, Julij Hmelak, Franjo Zupančić, Ferdo Sander, Rudolf Simnovec, and (ZBOR district leader) Artur Šturm. Furthermore, out of the 18 candidates from the 1935 parliamentary elections, 13 were listed as being from Ljubljana.

⁴⁹ "Zemaljska lista g. Dimitrija Ljotića," 5.

⁵⁰ Hrvoje F. Magazinović. (1913). Born in Zadar. Trained as a lawyer, as well as being a provincial advisor. Joined ZBOR as a student in 1935, he would, by 1939, be both ZBOR's district secretary for the *Vrba Banovina*, as well as an official functionary of the *Banovina*. He held both positions until the 6th April, 1941 Axis invasion. He spent the occupation in Belgrade, where he joined the Serbian Volunteer Corps in 1941. He fled to Italy after the war, where he was arrested in 1949 and returned to Yugoslavia where he was sentenced to twenty years in jail, but was released in 1959. For more see Hrvoje Magazinović, *Kroz jedno mučno stoljeće* (Valjevo, 2009). ; Ćirković, *Ko je Ko u Nedićevoj Srbiji 1941-1944. Leksikon ličnosti slika jedna zabranjena epohe*, 302.

⁵¹ Magazinović, *Kroz jedno mučno stoljeće*.

⁵² *Ibid.* 80.

others present were Dr. Ante Cettineo (academic), Dr. Ivo Carić (lawyer), Kuzma Gamulin (engineer), Marin Jožević (hotelier), Ante Lakoš (civil servant), Bartul Grgić, Milan Jakasa, and Darko Ilić, all students.⁵³ While Magazinović's recollections may not always seem accurate, there is no reason to doubt his being a ZBOR member, and his recollections of that time. His account is interesting because it focuses on daily problems surrounding ZBOR in Split, which could conceivably be applied to numerous provincial ZBOR sections throughout Yugoslavia. Among these are the problems of funding.⁵⁴ A certain credibility is lent to Magazinović's account however, because in both the 1935 and 1938 elections, Marin Bego, and Kuzma Gamulin were listed as ZBOR's Split regional candidates, with Gamulin also running on the Adriatic islands of Brač in 1935, and Hvar in 1938.⁵⁵ Carić meanwhile was listed only as the regional Split ZBOR candidate for the 1938 elections.⁵⁶

The base of its appeal compounds the difficulty of establishing criteria and definitive answers for ZBOR's socio-economic, and ethno-religious membership. Taking into account that ZBOR made itself out to be a national movement, given its ideology, as espoused by Ljotić, and through its publications, to who would have ZBOR appealed to? Unfortunately, no reliable data exists. However, through deduction of its ideology and policies, certain inferences can be made as to ZBOR's potential support base. ZBOR's Yugoslavism, monarchism, nationalism, and anti-communism, might have made it attractive to a wider

Marin Bego (1881-1960). A lawyer and writer from Split. He studied law in both Vienna and Zagreb, matriculating in 1909, working first in Rovinj until setting up his own practice in Split in 1915. He was also a director of the Split Theatrical Society from 1928 until 1934. He was closely associated with Josip Smolaka and the Croatian Democratic Party, founded in 1905, until he left in 1933. He ran for ZBOR in Split in both the 1935 and 1938 parliamentary elections, though he left the movement in 1939 after a personal conflict with Ljotić. During the Second World War, he was working as a clerk for both the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the Ustaše regime. For more see Marin Bego, *Vječna varka* (Zagreb, 1928). There is evidence to suggest that Bego was also active in the JA, as he was one of the members of its Advisory Board that voted for full fusion of the JA with ZBOR, on 17 May, 1935. Among others were Velibor Jonić, Juraj Korenić, Djordje Perić, Vlado Kraljeta, Dragutin Morderčin, and Fran Kandare. See AS BIA-II-69. Dosije br. I-A-II- 6d.1

⁵³ Magazinović, *Kroz jedno mučno stoljeće*, 80. Though Magazinović quotes them as being present, there is no mention of Cettineo in particular, of having joined ZBOR.

Ante Cettineo (1898-1956). Born in Trebinje, Cettineo studied classical philology in Prague and South Slavic philology in Belgrade. He worked in both Belgrade and Split as a teacher. He also wrote poetry, focusing on Mediterranean motifs, especially regarding Dalmatia. For more see Ante Cettineo, *Laste nad ulavom* (Split: Kobarija, 1935).

⁵⁴ Magazinović recalls the dire financial situation of ZBOR's Split section, with appeals for members' donations made in every issue of *Vihor*, ZBOR's local Split publication. He also recollects the problems of electioneering and campaigning, citing the lack of an active ZBOR campaign on 'not being able to afford to hire a car', as to ferry candidates into the hinterland around Split, to hold rallies. He also states the problems the local section had with the price of paper, citing it as the reason for the lack of ZBOR posters, or electoral materials in Split.

⁵⁵ See "Zemaljska lista g. Dimitrija Ljotića," 5.; "Zemaljska kandidaciona lista Jugoslovenskog narodnog pokreta 'Zbor' koju je potvrdio Kasacioni sud.", 10.

⁵⁶ "Zemaljska kandidaciona lista Jugoslovenskog narodnog pokreta 'Zbor' koju je potvrdio Kasacioni sud", 10.

cross section of society, as those were principles on which the 6th of January Dictatorship's was based. Even so, ZBOR's supporters have been frequently reduced to the status of 'disoriented youth', or categorised as the 'sons of priests and policemen', 'rich peasants, and mid-level clerks'.⁵⁷ In addition, some contemporary observers tended to view ZBOR's members as 'adventurous speculators', and 'clever rogues'.⁵⁸ On the other hand, its supporters have also been characterised as 'mostly conservative, pro-authoritarian intellectuals, militant anti-communist students, and especially outside Serbia, young people of an integral Yugoslav orientation'.⁵⁹ Therefore based on these two differing accounts of ZBOR's ideological appeal, it would be safe to assume, given its ideology, that it would attract a certain following from amongst those citizens who were proponents of Yugoslavism, monarchism, a specific Yugoslav nationalism, and anti-communism.

However, this was also a very similar ideological base to that of Stojadinović and his JRZ. The question then is, how did ZBOR differ from the political mainstream in Yugoslavia? Stojadinović's 1938 electoral slogan of *jedan kralj, jedan narod, jedna država*⁶⁰ (One king, one people, one state), was not dissimilar to Ljotić's *Bog, kralj, domaćin* mantra. Unlike the amalgamated JRZ, ZBOR would be forced to develop an ideological, and organisational model from scratch, in a climate that was not conducive to any real political development outside of what was officially sanctioned, and furthermore, in direct competition with a government backed party. On an ideological level, ZBOR's open anti-Semitism, in a country where anti-Semitism was not a major political or socio-economic issue, certainly distinguished it as outside the political mainstream. The constant appeals for a 'planned economy' based on a totalitarian model, an elusive and abstract 'corporatism', the total re-orientation of Yugoslavia's foreign policy to suit Germany's needs, and the identification and rhetoric of Nazism's anti-communism as being akin to a religious 'crusade' and 'holy war', went far beyond anything seen in Yugoslavia's political mainstream. ZBOR's extreme and apocalyptic ideology limited its appeal amongst Yugoslavs, yet the movement would show a degree of activity and support amongst youth, who from ZBOR's inception, were never seriously targeted as potential sources of support.

⁵⁷ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 38.

⁵⁸ Jovanović, *Ljudi Ljudi. Medaljoni 46 umrlih savremenika*, 1975, 156.

⁵⁹ Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 187.

⁶⁰ See Milan Stojadinović, *Jedan kralj, jedan narod, jedna država* (Belgrade: Izdanje sekcije za unutrašnju propagandu JRZ, 1939).

Youth would feature in ZBOR's membership, with the youth section under Danilo Gregorić operational from July 1936.⁶¹ How prominently is difficult to ascertain, but as the last chapter showed, elements of ZBOR youth would form the nucleus of a militant anti-communist collaborationist auxiliary force used for the maintenance of stability in Nazi occupied Serbia.⁶² The matter however, was much clearer to the outlawed KPJ, which claimed that ZBOR was the 'enemy of youth', and 'paid German agents', while 'preparing the way for a medieval form of slavery'⁶³ This then gives rise to the not too unreasonable assumption, that the activity of elements of ZBOR youth would become increasingly radical, and under the occupation, would attempt to affect a mutation of ZBOR into a paramilitary structure more closely resembling the Italian Fascist and National Socialist models. This is the focus of the next chapter.

The problem of ZBOR's appeal, was compounded however by the fact that its potential political space was already occupied by the personal monarchic regime set up by the 6th of January Dictatorship. There was little space for ZBOR to navigate. As was shown in the last chapter, the political life of interwar Yugoslavia, especially after 1929, was marked by the proscription of political parties, only to be loosened by the 1931 Constitution. This would immediately put ZBOR in a subordinate position in regard to the state, and also the 1931 Constitution, as only certain parties would be allowed, based on the decrees of the regime. In this sense, ZBOR, like the JA and ORJUNA before it, was thought of as nothing more than a buttress of the regime, attempting to give it a veneer of political legitimacy. In effect, even if it wanted to, it could not be anything more.

It was within this limited space that ZBOR inserted itself into mainstream political life. Existing in limbo in a state where no political parties were allowed, even though certain political groupings, like the JA, were tolerated, with the exception of the KPJ. This contradictory aspect of interwar Yugoslav political life would be played out in a microcosm of ZBOR's attitude and participation in elections.

⁶¹ See Hrvoje Matković, "Djelovanje i sukobi građanskih stranaka u Šibeniku između dva svjetska rata," *Radovi zadova za hrvatsku povijest* 2, no. 1 (1972), 278. Matković states that there were almost no ZBOR members or activists in Šibenik, save for middle school and high school students.

⁶² See Hrvoje Magazinović, "Zadaci omladine," *Otažbina*, November 27, 1936, No.141, 6. Magazinović heavily references speeches made by ZBOR youth leader Danilo Gregorić, especially on his dissertation, published as '*Ekonomska i socijalna politika nacionalnog socijalizma i njene doktrinarne osnove*', as basis for Gregorić's admiration of Nazi Germany.

⁶³ "SKOJ na novom putu", in Josip Broz Tito, *Sabrana Djela. Tom Treći. Mart 1935-Novembar 1937*, 81–82.

ZBOR and the electoral process

Throughout its five-year legal existence, ZBOR would take part in two parliamentary elections, as well as local provincial elections in the Moravska Banovina in 1936.⁶⁴ Yet the movement seemed fraught with contradiction regarding its participation in the electoral and democratic process. ZBOR's January 1935 creation meant that it had little time for any real concerted electoral effort for the 5 May, 1935 elections.

Among the important resolutions for ZBOR was the resolution to participate in the elections, and determine whether any tangible benefit could be gained. ZBOR's anti-democratic stance has been analysed in the previous chapter, yet, according to Ljotić, ZBOR's participation in elections was necessary, in order to bring around a 'new spirit', based on 'traditional moral values', and the belief that 'politics is a painful struggle, that is neither fun, nor a generator of wealth'.⁶⁵ Even so, Ljotić's electoral sincerity can be questioned, exposing the beginnings of cleavages within the movement. Many former members of the Slovenian *Združenje borcev Jugoslavije* ('Association of Yugoslav Combatants', hereafter as BOJ) who gravitated into ZBOR were radicalised veterans, who under the leadership of Stane Vidmar opposed ZBOR's participation in parliamentary elections.⁶⁶ Vidmar feared that BOJ would become subject to partisan, rather than national interests and values, becoming in effect, an auxiliary force to a political party.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ AJ 37-8-46//368-372, "izveštaj Pov. br. 596 dopisnika CPB-a iz Niša od 23 September, 1936"; "Resultati opštinskih izbora u Moravskoj banovini," *Politika*, 29 September, 1936, 10189, 5–8. Out of 1853 electoral lists in 759 municipalities, ZBOR had two.

⁶⁵ See Dimitrije Ljotić, "Naš izborni proglas – Smisao naše borbe," *Otadžbina*, 17 March, 1935, No.54, 1–2. ; Ljotić, "Smisao naše borbe," 2–3. ; "Izborna proglas Jugoslovenskog narodnog pokreta ZBOR," *Politika*, March 18, 1935, No.9638, 4.

⁶⁶ Vidmar was a former *Sokol* (South Slavic cultural association) member who deserted from the Italian military in 1915 and found himself amongst the Yugoslav Legion. After the war he left *Sokol* before joining with BOJ and later ZBOR. For more see Ljudevit Pivko, *Proti Avstriji. Rame ob Ramenu*. (Maribor: Klub dobrovoljcev v Mariboru, 1925), 98.

⁶⁷ John Paul Newman. "Allied Yugoslavia: Serbian Great War Veterans and their internationalist ties", in Julia Eichenberg and John Paul Newman, eds., *The Great War and Veterans' Internationalism* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 113.

Vidmar's association with ZBOR however would begin to suffer from 1936, and this was due to his being sentenced for slander of Dr. Albert Kramer, a Slovene member and parliamentary deputy of the JNS, of being a freemason.⁶⁸ Yet there was another faction from within the former BOJ movement in conjunction with former leading JA members, that moved for an electoral campaign and participation in ZBOR, and that ultimately persuaded Ljotić to acquiesce.⁶⁹ ZBOR's two vice-presidents as of 1935, Jonić and Kandare, came from, the same background, the JA. Hence creating an 'electoral action committee' within ZBOR, may have favoured whatever decision the majority of members wanted. Therefore, it is plausible for Ljotić to have just agreed to accept an electoral campaign, where he could simply ride the current of support amongst the leadership for electoral participation.

Even so, ZBOR's semi-legal status would conceivably act as a hindrance to any potential electoral action. It was not until 8 November, 1935, that ZBOR's status as an organisational entity was legalised thus giving it recognition and legitimacy to organise itself, under the law.⁷⁰ That ZBOR was legally recognised is in itself not surprising, as Ljotić, from 1935 at least, was publicly a strong supporter of the king and his personal dictatorship. Indeed, ZBOR saw the acceptance of its electoral list as a victory in and of itself. The process of submission and acceptance was taken lionised as a 'struggle', with 'peasants, workers, and the intelligentsia moving like an avalanche', in order to secure ZBOR's aims. However, this electoral acceptance was 'fraught with danger', and could, supposedly, 'at any moment be cancelled'.⁷¹

Yet during the 1938 elections, ZBOR displayed a modicum of political acumen, in the sense that it sent out feelers, and was in itself sounded out, as to possibilities of electoral alliances, primarily amongst opposition parties and coalitions, among them the *Blok narodne sloge*⁷² (Bloc of national concord) in order to bring down the JRZ and Stojadinović. This means that at least by 1938, ZBOR's leadership was more committed to fielding electoral candidates,

⁶⁸ "Vodja bivših bojennikov Stane Vidmar obsojen," *Nova Doba*, 21 February, 1936, No.8, 1.

⁶⁹ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 41.

⁷⁰ Velibor Jonić submitted ZBOR's statute on 16 September, 1935. See "Jugoslovenski narodni pokret-Zbor podneo prijavu Ministarstvu unutrašnjih dela za odobrenje stranke," *Politika*, 16 September, 1935, No.9814, 4.

⁷¹ "Pobedismo – Stvorismo našu zemaljsku listu," *Otadžbina*, 21 April, 1935, No.59, 1.

⁷² The *Bloc narodne sloge* was a broad coalition made up of the Croatian Peasant Party, the Montenegrin Federalist Party, the Independent Democratic Party, the Democratic Party, and the Agrarian Party. As the largest party, Vladko Maček of the Croatian Peasant Party was at its head, much as he was head of the United Opposition Bloc for the 1935 parliamentary elections.

and was obviously seen as such by other parties.⁷³ ZBOR played up such potential links for its own gain, highlighting the ‘third path’ of its slogan, in rejecting any electoral pacts, signalling ZBOR’s honour in remaining aloof from ‘cliques and coteries’.⁷⁴

Personal relations however also played a part, at least in Ljotić’s decision to refuse any political coalitions. As head of the Croatian Peasant Party, Ljotić viewed Maček with suspicion, unless he ‘first declared Yugoslavia his homeland’.⁷⁵ Yet at the same time, Ljotić did admit to a certain respect for certain members within the *Udružena Opozicija* (United Opposition), primarily senior Agrarian leader Milan Gavrilović.⁷⁶ Gavrilović was viewed as ‘someone with whom we have sympathy and respect for’, yet ‘his political association prevents us from agreeing more often’.⁷⁷

In the attack on Maček, ZBOR could play on its defence of state borders and national integrity in the face of the supposed separatism of the Croatian Peasant Party. ZBOR, aiming to be a force of the ‘third way’, never seriously considered tactical electoral alliances or coalitions for the simple reasons that most of its members were politically naïve, and ZBOR’s confusing amalgam of political incoherence, yet inflexibility, meant that it was unclear as to what the movement actually stood for.

The question is then, why the participation? Most likely, ZBOR was looking to capitalise on existing popular discontent with the regime, as well as making its existence known amongst the electorate, at least in 1935. Certainly, ZBOR was looking to rise on a wave of disaffection and protest, appealing in 1935 to the ‘social and economic freedom of the little man’.⁷⁸ This bombastic populism deemed by contemporary Serbian sociologist Nebojša Popov as

⁷³ Ljubo Boban, *Sporazum Cvetković-Maček* (Odeljenje za istorijske nauke, 1965), 47–48. : “Sve grupe bloka sporazuma saglasile su se da nosilac zemaljske kandidatske liste bude g. Dr. Vladko Maček”, *Politika*, 13 October, 1938, No.10911, 1. Confirmation that the Opposition Bloc for the 1938 elections was open to a broad electoral front with not just ZBOR, but also the JNS.

⁷⁴ “Grupa g. Ljotića neće se vezivati sa listu g. Dr. Mačeka,” *Politika*, 19 October, 1938, 10917, 4.

⁷⁵ For more on Ljotić’s personal view on Maček see chapter 3. See also AJ 115-8767/7. In this December 1939 letter to an unnamed recipient, Ljotić accuses Maček of not only trivialising the struggle against communism, but also accuses him of separatism.

⁷⁶ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Udružena Opozicija i mi,” *Bilten*, 3 May, 1939, No.11, 16–17. Gavrilović, from 1939 until 1941, headed the *Savez zemljoradnika*, an agrarian party, as well as the first ambassador of Yugoslavia to the Soviet Union from 1940.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 16.

⁷⁸ Gligorijević, “Politički pokreti i grupe s nacionalsocijalističkom ideologijom i njihova fuzija u Ljotićevom zboru,” 77.

‘marginal populism’, would fail to harness any existing disaffection with the regime.⁷⁹ Furthermore, ZBOR’s initial claims for entering the political process was to ‘correct certain wrongs’ of the last sixteen years of Yugoslavia’s existence. Identifying democracy as one of these wrongs, ZBOR claimed that in order for the democratic process to be defeated, its members ‘must first understand the disease, then find and apply the cure’.⁸⁰

It can be deduced, therefore, that ZBOR’s belief that participation in elections would not only open the public’s eyes to the dangers of a liberal parliamentary system, but also to offer an alternative in ZBOR, fighting for national values and politics. However, Ljotić, at least, seemed to be under no illusion as to ZBOR’s appeal in 1935. He maintained that ZBOR was participating in the elections not for mandates, but to change the ‘existing conception of politics’.⁸¹ Yet not all ZBOR members shared his pessimism, as Ratko Parežanin notes, that many members felt ‘the time was right to spread ZBOR’s message’. It was in this vein that ZBOR’s electoral slogan calling for the ‘freedom of the little man’ was conceived. A national politic, in tandem with national values, would therefore free the ‘little man’ from the contempt of being immature minors in the eyes of the state, to taking their economic and social freedom into their own hands through ‘the value of their jobs’.⁸²

Yet there was, as will be shown, a discrepancy between ZBOR’s appeals to the ‘little man’, invoking the paternal authority of not just Ljotić personally, but of his family, in 1935, and its electoral appeals in 1938. ZBOR’s 1938 electoral campaign had a broader and more sophisticated appeal than a simple ‘little man’ populist slogan. This showed a modicum of organisation and ideological solidity belying its weakness. Its electoral platform for 1938 revealed more depth, yet even such depth was in itself vague and incoherent, focusing solely on rural and artisan concerns. While ZBOR called for the entry of two hundred peasants and seventy artisans into the National Assembly, it also called for an end to government appropriation of farm revenues and produce, combined with what it deemed to be a ‘proper allocation of taxes’, inasmuch to ease peasant and agricultural grievances. Capital, especially

⁷⁹ Nebojša Popov, “Srpski populizam od marginalne do dominantne pojave,” *Vreme*, 22 May, 1993, No.153.

⁸⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Zašto smo listu istaknuli,” *Otadžbina*, 3 March, 1935, No.52, 1.

⁸¹ Ljotić, “Smisao naše borbe,” 1.

⁸² *Ibid.* 2.

foreign capital was to be limited, and in doing so was to be brought back ‘into the hands of the people’.⁸³

However, much of ZBOR’s 1938 electioneering and populism was determined by the arrest of Ljotić on 26 October, 1938. The justification for his arrest came from the Belgrade city authorities, which deemed ZBOR to have organised illegal meetings. Ljotić was more sanguine, commenting that his arrest, in the context of the elections, was due to those ‘who hated the truth’, and took it as a sign of ZBOR’s increasing popularity.⁸⁴

While incarcerated, Ljotić’s cell at Belgrade’s Glavnjača prison would be adjacent to Dragoljub Jovanović, a Sorbonne graduate law professor at Belgrade University. Jovanović was also a parliamentary representative and a vocal voice in opposition to Fascism and National Socialism, who was arrested on 1 October, 1938, presumably on the pretext of not participating in the December 1938 elections, thus eliminating Stojadinović’s opposition. According to his political memoirs, Jovanović states that while incarcerated, he and Ljotić mostly talked about religion, with Jovanović attacking the role of priests in Yugoslavia’s political life, and Ljotić defending it.⁸⁵ Jovanović was also left in no doubt that Ljotić wanted to be ‘our Hitler’, in reference to Yugoslavia, but that he also witnessed Ljotić ‘giving bread to communist prisoners’.⁸⁶

For Ljotić, his arrest and incarceration not only added to the supposed increased profile of ZBOR, but also slandered the government due to the ‘Jewish-Marxist lies’ that ‘are ruining our country’.⁸⁷ While the populism of ZBOR evolved somewhat, its ‘target audience’ did not. In both electoral campaigns, the main thrust of ZBOR’s message was centred, as much of its ideology was, on what it perceived the needs and grievances of the peasantry to be, combined with a strident anti-communism.

⁸³ IAČ, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR. Letak ‘Čestiti narode’ 10 December, 1938. Other points included the transfer of payment of 518 ministerial pensions from the public, that those who damaged any state property would face prosecution, and to provide for the need of each and every farmer and peasant. See also AJ 37 152-21-81

⁸⁴ See Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 53. ; “Iz moga života”, in Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 269.

⁸⁵ Dragoljub Jovanović, *Medaljoni. Knjiga III* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2008), 377.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ AJ 37-21-83. “Poruka iza rešetki”. Undated ZBOR pamphlet, though most likely from late 1938 as it deals with the upcoming December 1938 elections and Ljotić’s arrest.

ZBOR's electoral results

Ljotić's constant claims of ZBOR not seeking or wanting votes and mandates might have ironically, perhaps saved the movement embarrassment, as the electorate overwhelmingly rejected it. ZBOR's participation in both elections would end in a complete shamble, and drive home the unpopularity and utter unimportance of ZBOR as an organised political body. ZBOR's attempt to forge a new 'third way' path in Yugoslav political life would be thwarted by voters whom Ljotić characterised as either voting for Stojadinović because of their fear of Maček, or conversely, voting for Maček because of their hatred of the regime and Stojadinović.⁸⁸ What therefore became evidently clear was that ZBOR could never achieve any tangible electoral results when it remained a small, loosely organised, non-influential movement with ambiguous electoral leanings and pronouncements. In short, it posed no structural or ideological threat to the regime.

While ZBOR could at least be forgiven its 1935 results due to its semi-legal status, and the fact that as a newly created movement, it was, at that time, still relatively unknown, its rejection by the populace would be total and far reaching. Working under the electoral law reform of 24 March, 1933, which gave the winning party three-fifths of parliamentary seats, plus a percentage of the remaining two-fifths, ZBOR's position was hopeless.⁸⁹ This electoral reform, based on an earlier law of 10 September, 1931, stated that a political party in order to qualify, had to present a list of candidates in every district, approved by two hundred registered voters of the district and by the head of the 'county list of candidates'.⁹⁰ ZBOR was thus forced to enter candidate lists throughout the country in districts where for the most part, there was no sign of any ZBOR presence.

Nevertheless, ZBOR did comply with the law and managed to field candidates in every electoral district of the country for both the 1935 and 1938 parliamentary elections.⁹¹ ZBOR's results, in both elections never polled more two per cent of the popular vote. However, as the results show, there were areas of the country that in 1935 contained pockets of ZBOR support. Ljotić's home district, around Smederevo, in Smederevska Palanka, saw

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Wayne S. Vucinich and Jozo Tomasevich, eds., *Contemporary Yugoslavia ; Twenty Years of Socialist Experiment*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 53.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 20.

⁹¹ The two electoral lists in question are "Zemaljska lista g. Dimitrija Ljotića," *Politika*, 5. ; "Zemaljska kandidaciona lista Jugoslovenskog narodnog pokreta 'Zbor' koju je potvrdio Kasacioni sud", *Politika*, 9-11.

ZBOR's candidate, Milan Colić, receive 23.48 per cent of the vote. While ZBOR finished third in Jasenica, part of the Smederevska Palanka district, Colić received the second highest number of votes of all candidates.⁹² In the Podunavski district, incorporating Smederevo itself, ZBOR, under Života Todorović received a plurality of the votes, polling 47.54 per cent.⁹³ Outside of Ljotić's powerbase of Smederevo, ZBOR, in 1935, failed to make any inroads, with the sole exception being Brežice, in the *Dravska Banovina*, with ZBOR, under France Škrbec, polling 19.11 per cent of the vote, finishing in fourth place.⁹⁴ Thus in 1935, ZBOR, failing to get any candidate elected, gained 25,705 votes, totalling 0.89 per cent of the popular vote. The loss in the election for ZBOR may be an illustration of its decentralised form of operation. Focusing only on Ljotić's area of jurisdiction and hometown. Had the operations been centralised, ZBOR would have also made their machineries reach other area to gain significant percentage in the polls to attain an elected seat in the elections.

ZBOR's 1938 election results would show minimal increase in votes. While continuing to fare relatively well in Smederevo and its immediate environs, ZBOR was unable to mount any serious challenge anywhere else in the country. As in 1935, the 1938 elections saw ZBOR's 'successes' limited to a plurality of votes in the Podunavski district (within the *Podunavska Banovina*) at 36.53 per cent, especially in and around Smederevo, with Života Todorović polling 5,819 votes.⁹⁵ This time though, ZBOR won a relative majority in Jasenica with Kosta Majstorović receiving 4,747 votes.⁹⁶ ZBOR's 'power base' in and around Smederevo, relatively speaking, also saw the movement act more aggressively towards other parties, particularly the JRZ. The JRZ candidate for the Podunavski district, Milan Jovanović-Stoimirović (alternatively as Stojimirović) recalls that ZBOR's campaign in Smederevo was violent and unscrupulous, however nearly 'two thousand residents of Smederevo worship Mita like God', 'especially amongst the peasantry'.⁹⁷ Overall, ZBOR's share of votes rose slightly to 30,310, with its overall vote percentage also rising slightly to almost a per cent, at 0.98.⁹⁸

⁹² *Statistika Izboru Narodnih Poslanika za Narodnu Skupštinu Kraljevine Jugoslavije. Izvršenih 5 Maja 1935 godine* (Štampa Državne Štamparije Kraljevine Jugoslavije, 1938).

⁹³ *Ibid*, 150.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 8.

⁹⁵ "Rezultati izbora na Narodnu Skupštinu," *Politika*, 1 December, 1938, No.10972, 3.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*. 3; See also AJ 37-6-40/473-476. "Za koga je glasila Šumadija". Undated poster and table, though most likely late 1938 to early 1939 in the aftermath of the December 1938 elections.

⁹⁷ Milan Jovanović Stoimirović, *Dnevnik 1936-1941* (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 2000), 197-198. 'Mita' is a diminutive of Dimitrije.

⁹⁸ "Ukupni rezultati," *Politika*, 13, December 1938, No.10972, 1.

Perhaps predictably, ZBOR maintained that instances of tampering and illegality were prime factors of its dismal showing. Voter fraud, and violence brought against it were among the reasons ZBOR gave for its poor electoral showing. Parežanin claims that in the 1935 elections, instances of electoral fraud left ZBOR over '50,000 votes short', indicating that ZBOR would have received close to 80,000 votes nationwide.⁹⁹ More sinisterly, ZBOR, and primarily Ljotić would hint at government repression and collusion in order to deny ZBOR a voice, for which the blame was to be assigned to Stojadinović. Such accusations, and a growing personal acrimony between Ljotić and Stojadinović would mark ZBOR from 1937 until its 1940 banning.

ZBOR: Repression and accusations of Fascism

The personal acrimony that Ljotić felt towards Stojadinović became a hallmark of ZBOR's opposition to the regime. It also highlighted that ZBOR was in effect Ljotić's personal ideological extension. He was the main ideologue, its sole leader with any real authority, and as evidenced by election results in Smederevo, the only one within ZBOR who could claim to have even a semblance of a following or any level of support. But to what extent was this acrimony based on actual events? Certainly, Ljotić's dislike of Stojadinović¹⁰⁰ personally translated to a criticism of his government, but how what degree was it based on actual fact? From June 1935 there is little to suggest any open hostility between the two, indeed, Ljotić was hesitant to talk ill of Stojadinović and his first government, in that 'we will have to see how they act and what they do'.¹⁰¹

However, already by September 1935, Ljotić was agitating against the government, highlighting the threat it faced to ZBOR and the nation as a representative of the 'old parties', full of selfishness and corruption, and accusing the 6th of January regime of not doing enough

⁹⁹ Parežanin, *Drugi svetski rat i Dimitrije Ljotić*, 64. He does not however, provide any evidence to back up his allegation.

¹⁰⁰ Milan Stojadinović. (1881-1961). Born in Čačak but raised in Belgrade. Stojadinović was sent to Austria to learn German in 1906, by 1912 he had completed his law degree at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Law, specialising in economics and finance. He became Finance Minister in 1922, returning to the position again in October 1934. He was appointed Prime Minister on 24 June, 1935, a position he held, along with Foreign Minister, until his removal on 5th February, 1939 by Prince Paul. He spent the war in exile on Mauritius, before emigrating to Argentina, where he died in 1961. For more see Milan Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt. Jugoslavija između dva rata* (Buenos Aires: Empresa Editorial S.R.L., 1963).

¹⁰¹ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Promena vlade," *Otadžbina*, 30 June, 1935, No.69, 1.

to stamp these vices out.¹⁰² Evidently Ljotić took seriously his self-proclaimed title of ‘opposition’, and ‘third way’, in that he constantly harangued the government for not acceding to his prophecies (especially in regard to a planned economy), and ZBOR’s political ideals. Such agitation, which was expressed solely through ZBOR’s publications, must have not made much of an impact on Stojadinović, seeing as ZBOR was a marginal movement in political life. Also, the attempted expansion of the new government party, the JRZ, into a nationwide force would have undoubtedly filled Ljotić with both envy and trepidation of the resources at its disposal.¹⁰³

ZBOR and the ‘Technical Affair’

What brought this more one-sided rivalry to a head were events in early 1937, namely the so-called ‘Technical Affair’, and the banning of ZBOR meetings and rallies throughout the year. What became known as the ‘Technical Affair’ had its roots in German economic designs on Southeast Europe as part of its wider foreign policy. By 1936, Germany was purchasing more than a quarter of Yugoslav exports, part of a concentrated effort by the Germans at securing substitutes, since the closure of American and British markets, for raw materials and foodstuffs by cultivating good relations with individual producers in Southeast Europe.¹⁰⁴ The ‘Technical Affair’ grew out of such a German initiative, to incorporate accusations of German funding, subversion, and fascism towards ZBOR. Mladen Stefanović, states that from 1935, Ljotić had travelled to Switzerland in order to meet with representatives of the German Reich, among them Walter Malletke, a Nazi Party foreign specialist on Southeast Europe. Ljotić, through the intermediary activities of ZBOR member and retired judge from Vukovar, Dragutin Morderčin, supposedly arranged for funding from the Nazis.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, Stefanović gives no sources to back up his claim, and within Yugoslavia, the issue of Nazi funding was never proven.

By June 1936 however, Ljotić was again accused of being in the pay of a ‘foreign power’, this time by national deputy and JRZ member Života Milanović. Milanović’s accusation, flimsy though it was, was from an auditor’s supposed statement from Ljotić’s co-operative in

¹⁰² Dimitrije Ljotić, “Naš zadatak,” 1. ; Dimitrije Ljotić, “Dve Revolucije,” 2.

¹⁰³ “Organizovanje JRZ u narodu,” *Politika*, 1 September, 1935, No.9799, 2.

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter 3.

¹⁰⁵ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 66.

Smederevo, stating that there were ‘untold thousands of Deutschmarks from a foreign state’.¹⁰⁶ Milanović, an elected representative and member of the JRZ, also headed an agricultural co-operative in his hometown of Osijek.¹⁰⁷ In a response against Milanović’s accusations, Jonić, on behalf of ZBOR began a smear campaign against him alleging that ‘Milanović lived off the public’s expense to the tune of 6 to 7 thousand dinars a month’, and amazed that ‘someone who has only finished fourth grade of primary school could ever advance’.¹⁰⁸

What the nature of the relationship between Ljotić and Milanović is uncertain. Was Milanović simply a proxy by which to start agitation against ZBOR? That seems unlikely given that ZBOR was a virtual non-entity. Perhaps the real reason lay more that ZBOR and Ljotić could perhaps be brought to heel, regardless of whether or not accusations of German funding could be proven, to drive home the fact that the movement would never become a significant force.

It was against this backdrop of highly circumstantial evidence that a campaign began in the press against Ljotić that came to the fore in February 1937, with the accusation that the Technical Union, described by Ljotić as ‘a permanent organisation that would help in the facilitation of trade goods between nations’,¹⁰⁹ was guilty of receiving funds and subsidies from Germany. Ljotić admitted to having contact with German officials, but insisted this contact was of a purely ‘economic nature’, in that it was solely for the supposed facilitation of agricultural goods.¹¹⁰ Though he himself had nothing to do with the Technical Union from December 1936,¹¹¹ and that any ZBOR members who engaged with the Technical Union did so as private citizens and not as ZBOR members.

In essence, the nature of the accusations lay in part due to Germany’s need for increased agricultural products, which meant that they directly began buying from Yugoslav producers at inflated market prices. This happened with Yugoslavia’s output of plums, which was

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 69.

¹⁰⁷ See *Stenografske Beleške. Narodne Skupštine Kraljevine Jugoslavije. Knjiga 1* (Belgrade: 1939), 4.

¹⁰⁸ Velibor Jonić, “Odgovor ‘Zbora’ narodnom poslaniku g. Životi Milanoviću,” *Politika*, 1 March, 1937, No.10334, 6.

¹⁰⁹ “Kako je Danić-Diamantštajn nameravao da obmane nemačke nacionaliste i Zbor g. Ljotića,” *Pravda*, 17 February, 1937, 7. ; “Izjava g. Dimitrija Ljotića, predsednika Zbora,” *Politika*, 16 February, 1937, No.10321, 6.

¹¹⁰ “Kako je Danić-Diamantštajn nameravao da obmane nemačke nacionaliste i Zbor g. Ljotića”, 7.

¹¹¹ NA GFM 33/1445 424/H 55/T.U. IV 916 Heeren 16 February, 1937.

valued at 1.40 dinars per kilogram, but which was bought by the Germans for 2.70 per kilogram. The difference between the German and market price would then supposedly be remitted to ZBOR.¹¹² The main office of the Technical Union in Yugoslavia was founded by ZBOR's Zagreb district chief, Dr. Juraj Korenić.¹¹³

Both the main facilitator and intermediary between the Technical Union and the Germans was Milan Danić (born Alfred Diamantstein). Danić's origins under normal circumstances would not have been an issue, but seeing as ZBOR was itself a stridently anti-Semitic organisation, and that Danić was supposedly a previous communist who took part in the Hungarian Revolution of 1919, questions began to be raised as to his ideological affinities.¹¹⁴ It was Danić, who, as part of the Peasant Fruit Growers Alliance, and not ZBOR, who was sent to Germany on a fact-finding mission and to test any potential trade opportunities. Ljotić's own involvement in co-operatives, which he aggressively asserted was not in any way tied to ZBOR, was involved in the Peasant Fruit Growers Alliance. Once 'facts' about Danić's life began to circulate, it appears that Ljotić ordered Korenić to resign his position in ZBOR if he wanted to continue in the Technical Union, so as not to further implement ZBOR in any further scandal.¹¹⁵

In his defence, Ljotić accused the campaign against ZBOR being led by communists, accusing them in turn of being the ones 'who without organisational or material help would not be able to survive', in reference to foreign funds. He also accused 'malicious politicians and the well-meaning admirers of democracy', and then finally 'agents of international capital', scared of ZBOR's 'ideas of economic autonomy'.¹¹⁶

The Technical Union, according to Ljotić, 'was not a monopoly', and was open to 'investors from all countries'. He defended the Technical Union by arguing that 'Germany gives the best rates for our agricultural produce', and he was convinced that there was 'a media

¹¹² Jacob B. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis, 1934-1941* (Columbia University Press, 1962), 103.

¹¹³ "Kako je Danić-Diamantštajn nameravao da obmane nemačke nacionaliste i Zbor g. Ljotića", 7.

¹¹⁴ "U svojoj ispravci Danić tvrdi da je bio član 'Zbora' i da je, kad je postao 'zastupnik za inostrane poslove' Voćarskog saveza, iz 'Zbora' istupio po nalogu g. Ljotića," *Politika*, 17 February, 1937, No.10322, 6. Danić responds to and refutes any claim that he was a ZBOR member, a Zionist, or a communist sympathiser.

¹¹⁵ "Izjava g. Dimitrija Ljotića, predsednika Zbora," 6. Korenić was also at this time, a secondary vice-president of ZBOR and head of its Zagreb section.

¹¹⁶ "Izjava g. Dimitrija Ljotića Pravdi: g. Dimitrije Ljotić o odnosu Zbora i Tehničke Unije i o motivama povedanje kampanje," *Pravda*, 19 February, 1937, No.11613, 5-6.

campaign against the Technical Union'.¹¹⁷ For his part, Stojadinović did seem convinced of 'credible evidence' damning ZBOR, and he let it be known to German envoy to Yugoslavia, Viktor von Heeren. Stojadinović seemed certain that 'various elements within the Reich were engaging with ZBOR', and that this was now 'becoming known to the Yugoslav public'.¹¹⁸ The issues surrounding the founding of the Technical Union, and the (brief) fusion of the *Erneuerungsbewegung* movement into ZBOR was a clear sign to Stojadinović of German 'economic and financial support'.¹¹⁹ Evidently Stojadinović feared that the Germans might try to undermine his regime though backing ZBOR, and he warned the Germans that 'no one with my level of trust can be found anywhere in the country'.¹²⁰

As to the Germans, von Heeren seemed unaware as to any funding pertaining to ZBOR, trying to assuage Stojadinović that any economic or financial links if existing, were not on the basis of supporting any opposition movement to Stojadinović.¹²¹ Van Heeren sought further clarification from the German Foreign Ministry on the matter, though confusingly, in an earlier memo to the Foreign Ministry, he denied that the Technical Union was funding ZBOR, and that it was 'that communist and Jew Danić', who had 'manipulated both the Nazi Party and ZBOR', for his own aims.¹²² To the Germans, Danić was 'attempting to use ZBOR to swindle the Nazi Party', and that the crux of the Technical Affair was 'that Danić was born Diamantstein, a Jew'.¹²³

Nothing of alleged German funding would ever be proven. In fact, most of the allegations made against ZBOR in this instance could not be substantiated.¹²⁴ Official Reich policy, according to Martin Broszat and Ladislaus Hory, was to repudiate any links with ZBOR, though conceded that there were those within the Reich Foreign Ministry who were 'sympathetic' to ZBOR.¹²⁵ Perhaps that wasn't the point. But then establishing who brought the issue of the Technical Union to the fore in the first place, and for what reason, cannot as

¹¹⁷ "Sukob g. Ljotićevog 'Zbora' i antifašističke omladina u Beogradu," *Politika*, 1 March, 1937, No.10334, 5. Ljotić speaking in Belgrade on 28 February, 1937, concentrating mostly on the Technical Union, as well as his involvement in obtaining the best prices for peasant co-operatives.

¹¹⁸ NA GFM 33/353 "Deutsche Gesandtschaft G. 57/37 G 1 03 March, 1937. Belastung der deutsch-jugoslavischen Beziehungen durch die Tätigkeit unverantwortlicher deutscher Stellen".

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² NA GFM 33/1445 424/H 55/T.U. IV 916 Heeren 16 February, 1937.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Škodrić, *Ministarstvo prosvete i vera u Srbiji 1941-1944 : sudbina institucije pod okupacijom*, 34.

¹²⁵ Martin Broszat, Ladislaus Hory, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat, 1941-1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt GmbH, 1964), 30.

of yet, be established. Nevertheless, the political fallout over the ‘Technical Affair’ saw the opening of major cleavages within ZBOR that would be exploited by Stojadinović’s regime. In public opinion, ZBOR became compromised as an agent in the pay of Germany, hardening existing opinion that ZBOR was fascist. It also resulted in a hardening of Stojadinović’s personal stance towards ZBOR. From feeling that it was a nuisance, Stojadinović increasingly worried that the Germans might attempt to undermine his position through ZBOR, even while publicly and through his party press, he deliberately left out attacks on ZBOR to highlight the movement’s weakness and unimportance, unworthy of any mention.¹²⁶

The issue of Nazi funding was also a cause for King Carol in Romania to initiate a crackdown on the Iron Guard. Carol’s premise, according to Rebecca Haynes, was that by eliminating the Iron Guard, all German contacts would be conducted solely through the monarchy, thereby ensuring complete control Romanian foreign policy.¹²⁷ Parallel to ZBOR, the issue of German funding for the Iron Guard could never be proven. The German Foreign Ministry preferred a policy of gradual rapprochement with Carol, founded on an economic basis. Thus they took little notice, according to Haynes, of the Iron Guard.¹²⁸ The Iron Guard maintained closer links with the German Propaganda Ministry, though again, there is no concrete evidence of financial assistance.¹²⁹

ZBOR: Repression and Violence

The aftermath of the ‘Technical Affair’ saw the government’s stance against ZBOR harden, as did, as will be shown, its perception within public opinion as a fascist organisation. Up to the point of the ‘Technical Affair’, Stojadinović and his government had no reason to be worried about criticism from such an inconsequential and minute movement such as ZBOR. But as ZBOR’s radicalism, fear of German funding, criticism of and accusations over Stojadinović increased, so too did government surveillance, and in some instances, repression. ZBOR’s radical rhetoric and accusations of government collusion with communists had its catalyst in the aftermath of a ZBOR rally in Belgrade on 28 February,

¹²⁶ Simić, *Propaganda Milana Stojadinovića*, 186.

¹²⁷ Rebecca Haynes, *Romanian policy towards Germany, 1936-1940* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke and London, 2000), 49.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 50

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

1937. Meeting at *Triglav* theatre in Belgrade, ZBOR members were attacked by ‘anti-fascist youth’. In the build up to the meeting, *Politika* reported that numerous posters from an organisation calling itself ‘democratic youth’ were found calling for Ljotić not to be given a platform, as he was a ‘paid German agent’.¹³⁰

Certain ZBOR members had formed a ‘flying column’, acting as a personal bodyguard for Ljotić, carried wooden sticks in order to menace the protesters. Yet the conflict began even before Ljotić arrived, when rocks were thrown at ZBOR members leaving the theatre, and were then attacked by the ‘Flying Column’, even though heavily outnumbered.¹³¹ Even though the police arrested dozens of protesters, Ljotić, in a letter to Minister of Interior Dr. Anton Korošec, accused Korošec personally, and the government of ‘complicity with communism’, through the supposed inaction of the police, against ZBOR.¹³²

This theme of supposed use of communists by proxy was utilised again, first after a ZBOR rally in Preljina, in the Čačak district where on 21 August, 1938, protesters again pelted ZBOR members with rocks, hitting Ljotić, with ‘only a revolver being fired in the air’, presumably from a ZBOR member, dispersing them.¹³³ Earlier that year, in Šibenik, on 12 February, 1938, Ljotić accused not just the police, but also the government of fomenting a joint ‘communist-Frankist’ attack against ZBOR.¹³⁴

ZBOR’s meetings and rallies were frequently interrupted, though in most cases, not violently. Much of the agitation was verbal, with cries of ‘down with Fascism’, ‘down with Ljotić’, and ‘long live democracy’ being the most common slogans.¹³⁵ Not all of it was organised opposition to ZBOR, there was little need for that, as ZBOR had proven itself to be an unpopular movement not just because of its supposed links with German funding, but because of its radicalism, anti-Semitism, and in most cases, incoherent and contradictory ideas. Ljotić’s ideological solidity was not always successfully transplanted onto ZBOR,

¹³⁰ “Sukob g. Ljotićevog ‘Zbora’ i antifašističke omladina u Beogradu,” 5–6.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 5.

¹³² AJ 102-7-19. “Otvoreno pismo Dimitrija Ljotića ministru unutrašnjih dela Dr. Anton Korošcu”. 11 May, 1937. Ljotić accuses the government, through the police, of using the communists to attack his meeting at the *Triglav* theatre in Belgrade on 28 February, 1937.

¹³³ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Istina o događaju u Selevcu* (Smederevo: Štamparija Marinković, 1938), 2. ; “Na konferenciji g. Ljotića u Preljini došlo je do tuče,” *Politika*, 22 August, 1938, No.10859, 4.

¹³⁴ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Dva pisma Monsignor Dr. A Korošcu, ministru unutrašnjih poslova* (Smederevo, 1938), 4.; “Demonstracije protiv Ljotića i fašizma u Šibeniku,” *Vreme*, 14 February, 1938, No.5775, 4.

¹³⁵ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 72–84. Stefanović cites examples of interrupted ZBOR meetings in Užice on 15 September, 1935, in Leskovac on 19 July, 1936, and in Kraljevo on 5 December, 1936.

which suffered an inordinate amount of initial ideological fluidity even on such ‘core’ ideas such as national unity, social organisation, and a planned and corporative style of economics.

With the supposed communist-police collusion, ZBOR, especially, Ljotić did not shy away from attacking the government, especially Stojadinović on a personal level. Ljotić went so far as to accuse Stojadinović, of conspiring to kill King Alexander in 1933 and 1934.¹³⁶ During the Concordat crisis of 1937, by which Yugoslavia demarked its relationship with the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia and the Vatican, ZBOR continuously attacked Stojadinović, accusing him of giving into ‘separatist demands’. ZBOR also hinted that the sudden illness, resulting in the death of Patriarch Varnava of the Orthodox Church, to be God’s judgment on the Concordat as a ‘threat to national sovereignty’.¹³⁷ This was supposedly due to Stojadinović’s ratification of the Concordat. Speaking on the disturbances around the signing of the Concordat, which would later lead to Stojadinović’s excommunication, Ljotić warned the Prime Minister not to ‘make the Serbs hate Yugoslavia’, with his actions.¹³⁸

Stojadinović was also accused, through the Ministry of Interior, of not allowing ZBOR to hold rallies and organise meetings. Out of 212 supposed meetings through June and July of 1937, only 2, according to Ljotić were allowed to take place.¹³⁹ Those two that did take place, one, being planned in Smederevo on 16 May, 1937, as a direct protest against an earlier meeting that was banned by the authorities.¹⁴⁰

Stojadinović fights back

Throughout these attacks on his integrity, Stojadinović was not idle. While at least until mid-1938, he left ZBOR to its own devices, after ZBOR’s headquarters was raided on 1 August, 1938,¹⁴¹ there were more instances of actual government repression visited upon ZBOR.

¹³⁶ See Dimitrije Ljotić, *Naši dani* (Smederevo, 1938).; Ljotić, *Istina o događaju u Selevcu*, 2.

¹³⁷ *Jugoslovenski Narodni Pokret ZBOR: Gradjanima Jugoslavije*. Summer 1937 (Leaflet from author’s personal collection). The Concordat was ratified on the night of 23 July, 1937. See “Narodna Skupština usvojila je sinoć Konkordat sa 167 prema 129 glasova,” *Politika*, 24 July, 1937, 10474, 5–6.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Poruka Fašističkom Šegrtru*, Drugo Propavljeno Izdanje (Belgrade, 1939), 4.

¹⁴⁰ AJ 102-7-19. “Otvoreno pismo Dimitrija Ljotića ministru unutrašnjih dela Dr. Anton Korošcu”. 11 May, 1937. Ljotić states his intent to call on ZBOR members from throughout Yugoslavia to come to Smederevo for a show of force against repression.

¹⁴¹ AJ 102-7-19-18. “Upravi grada Beograda”. Ljotić to unnamed recipient. 01 August, 1938. ZBOR headquarters raided on pretext of an illegal gathering.

However, Stojadinović was, in December 1937 able to inflict a harsh blow to ZBOR when Ljotić received information of allegations of senior ZBOR members entering into contact with government representatives. Certainty, as to which side initiated the contacts remain sketchy, however, it appears that many former members of the JA who voted for fusion with ZBOR, were also accused of holding talks with Stojadinović's government. Ratko Parežanin puts the blame on Danilo Gregorić, for initiating contact with the government, and of receiving money for doing so.¹⁴²

The most likely reason and explanation for this is that certain JA members who gravitated to ZBOR and were given leadership positions (Gregorić, Jonić, Perić, and Vulović), agitated for greater involvement of ZBOR within the political process, and for more collusion with the government. To ZBOR however, and especially Ljotić, this was tantamount to treason against the movement, and he undertook a purging of those members deemed guilty of colluding with Stojadinović. This resulted in a massive shake up of ZBOR's general secretariat, and leadership in its organisational sub-divisions, with general secretary Velibor Jonić, head of propaganda and youth leader Danilo Gregorić, and press section chief Djordje Perić, expelled from the movement.¹⁴³ Ljotić, who feared that this group of discontents was looking to steal the leadership away from him, labelled the dissenters and excluded members as 'short-sighted', and 'impatient', in their attempt to force political participation.¹⁴⁴ To Ratko Parežanin, Perić's replacement as press section chief, Stojadinović's aims was to 'make his cabinet more fascist-like'.¹⁴⁵ Thus implying or rather conveniently deflecting any base of accusations of fascism strictly on those members now excluded

Velibor Jonić, in his written defence to Ljotić was more damning. Jonić blamed Ljotić for inactivity and apathy, stating that ZBOR was almost totally inactive 'organising no meetings, no rallies', and also accusing Ljotić of not leading, stating that 'neither the general secretariat, nor the Supreme Council work, orders are not given when they are supposed to, and do not get to their intended recipients if at all sent'. 'Who then', concludes Jonić 'is guilty for this dormancy'?¹⁴⁶ Obviously, to the dissenters, it was Ljotić who was to blame for the supposed

¹⁴² Ratko Parežanin. *Drugi svetski rat i Dimitrije Ljotić* (Iskra, Munich, 1971), p.143.

¹⁴³ AJ-38-353-501. "Izjava pretsjednika Ljotića povodom isključenja nekih članova iz Zbora", in *Jugoslovenska pošta*, 9 December, 1937; see also "Izjava pretsjednika Ljotića povodom isključenja nekih članova iz Zbora," *Vihor*, 11 December, 1937, No.24, 4.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Parežanin, *Drugi svetski rat i Dimitrije Ljotić*, 142.

¹⁴⁶ AJ 102-7-19 "Odgovor Jonića Ljotiću". December 1937.

inactivity and lethargy of ZBOR, giving rise to Parežanin's earlier accusation of the JA 'importing fascism' into ZBOR, by dint of Jonić's active participation. Conversely, these expulsions could also be used as a convenient explanation for the loss of such a number of senior leaders. However, Jonić, noted for his energetic involvement in ZBOR also perhaps represented a more practical current than Ljotić, who placed more importance on ideology than real political involvement. Jonić evidently had a clearer picture of the political path that he wanted ZBOR to follow, and this was picked up on by the Stojadinović government who then turned it around as a means to weaken Ljotić's position.

Apart from replacing Djordje Perić with Ratko Parežanin as press section chief, Milorad Mojić took Jonić's place as general secretary, and Stanislav Krakov took over from Danilo Gregorić as ZBOR propaganda chief.¹⁴⁷ Those expelled from ZBOR soon found themselves well compensated for their resignations. Gregorić was installed as editor of the Belgrade daily *Vreme*, Vulović was appointed to a ministerial post, and Perić was given control of the press agency 'Avala'.¹⁴⁸ The exclusion of so many former JA members also saw the JA's Central Council convene in Zagreb on 9 January, 1938, under Dr. Juraj Korenić, serving as second secretary (undersecretary) in ZBOR, and as president of the JA at the same time. Korenić decided not only to back those members expelled by Ljotić, but also voted to remove the JA from ZBOR, claiming that 'Ljotić deviated from the ideological practice that was the basis of the fusion between the JA and ZBOR'. Furthermore, as Korenić theorised the JA as a 'national-socialist organisation, it is leaving ZBOR because it does not see the guarantee of its programme and ideology'.¹⁴⁹

Thus Stojadinović was able directly, through his indirect action, to clip ZBOR's wings by fomenting internal dissent and confusion. Though ZBOR should not be taken as an exceptional case in this regard, as the Stojadinović government was culpable in the infiltration of opposition parties. Even though Ljotić asserted that Stojadinović 'does not have

¹⁴⁷ Stanislav Krakov. (1895-1968). Born in Kragujevac of a Polish father, he was a Serbian journalist, writer, and film critic. Serving in WWI, he was awarded a gold medal for bravery. He also directed two films, in 1930 and 1931 *Za čast otadžbine i požar na Balkanu* and *Golgota Srbije*. General Milan Nedić being his maternal uncle, during the war Krakov was given the editorship of collaborationist publications such as *Novo Vreme*, but most prominently of *Obnova*. For more see Stanislav Krakov, *Život čoveka na Balkanu* (Naš dom-Age d'Homme, 2002).

¹⁴⁸ Philip J. Cohen and David Riesman, *Serbia's Secret War: Propaganda and the Deceit of History* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1996), 17.

¹⁴⁹ AJ 37-20. "Rezolucija Jugoslovenske Akcije", 9 January, 1938.

ZBOR in his hands, no matter how many short sighted individuals come to him'.¹⁵⁰ He was also, as has been shown earlier in the chapter, managed to have Ljotić arrested, on any pretext deemed necessary. However, and what unfortunately remains unanswered is to what extent any of these former JA members, or the JA at all, was able to influence the JRZ, or Stojadinović, most likely none, given Stojadinović's strength of conviction. In any case, the JA would remain, as it had done, proscribed, and in effect, a pressure group for both monarchy and regime. For Ljotić, meddling in ZBOR affairs was just another sign that the Stojadinović regime, had failed the 6th of January Dictatorship, for it was simply a continuation of the climate of partisan politics and corruption that ZBOR was committed to rooting out.

Repression and accusations of fascism linked?

The theme of repression and of fascism, as it relates to ZBOR are heavily intertwined. In themselves, they are further compartmentalised as corollaries to the wider growing personal animosity between Ljotić and Stojadinović, and between ZBOR and the rest of the political establishment. Accusation however, came before any real or perceived repression. Already in March 1935, just two months after its creation, Ljotić felt the need to clarify ZBOR's position in relation to Fascism and Nazism. Predictably, he 'categorically refused any accusations that is a copy of fascist and Hitlerist ideology'. Where the association with fascism comes from, claimed Ljotić, was in 'its similar thoughts on the corporative system, liberal democracy, and parliamentary'.¹⁵¹ What differentiated ZBOR, according to Ljotić, from Fascism and Nazism, was that while 'fascism deified the state', and 'Nazism deified the race', and therefore 'see themselves as infallible'.¹⁵² Ljotić rejected the fascist moniker for ZBOR because 'as Christians and Slavs', we cannot follow their lead', because the 'state and race are absolute ways in a relative world, with no conviction'.¹⁵³

Interestingly, ZBOR's rejection of the moniker of fascism shares broad similarities with that of the AF. In its publication, on 30 March, 1933, Thierry Maulnier stated that the 'primacy of

¹⁵⁰ Ljotić, *Poruka Fašističkom Šegrtu*, 5.

¹⁵¹ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Ni fašizam ni Hitlerizam," *Otadžbina*, 3 March, 1935, No.48, 2.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* 3.

race', or the 'primacy' of state', can only result in 'imperfect societies'.¹⁵⁴ The AF's critique of Fascism seems to be taken largely from Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* (We do not need) delivered 29 June, 1931, criticising Mussolini's government for its actions against the Vatican sponsored organisation of lay Catholics, Catholic Action. Seemingly, ZBOR took the AF's denunciation of Fascism and National Socialism, and applied it to its own conditions, pointing out its 'Christian', and 'Slavic' nature, as being inherently opposed to Fascism and National Socialism. Conversely, it could be seen as a sign of the ideological convergence between ZBOR and the AF. In 1935 at least, Ljotić would define his movement in relation to Fascism and Nazism based on the AF. What makes this convergence more interesting is that it is not solely limited to ZBOR. In Belgium, the *Rexiste* (Rexist) Party, founded by the Catholic authoritarian nationalist Léon Degrelle in 1935, also denounced Fascism and National Socialism in the same terms.¹⁵⁵ This form of criticism could easily be dismissed as a weak attempt by the aforementioned groups, largely inconsequential in their respective countries, as not trying to appear fascist. On a national level however, Papal criticism and condemnation of Fascism would be utilised by António de Oliveira Salazar, who served as Prime Minister (in reality however a dictator), of Portugal from 1932-1968. Salazar, a devout Catholic, while considering Mussolini to be a 'great man', stresses that 'it is not for nothing that he is a child of the country of the Caesars and Machiavelli'. Salazar continues by criticising Fascist totalitarianism calling it 'pagan Cesearism', implying that the state 'recognised no limitations of legal or moral order'.¹⁵⁶ What this emphasises is that movements like the AF, Rex, and ZBOR, moved in a fluid and syncretistic current combining authoritarian, nationalist, and religious thought. In the context of Yugoslav politics however, given the odious and toxic connotation of Fascism and National Socialism after Mussolini and Hitler's rise to power, plus the perception of fascism amongst public opinion,¹⁵⁷ it was convenient, and indeed essential for Ljotić to play down any potential similarities with fascism.

Yet accusations of fascism were also levelled at Stojadinović, who flirted with fascist trappings briefly during his rule. Italian Foreign Minister Count Galeazzo Ciano records in his memoirs that Stojadinović is taken with the 'idea of fascism more and more', during the

¹⁵⁴ See Thierry Maulnier, *L'Action Française*, 30 March, 1933, Year 26, No.89.

¹⁵⁵ See Jean Denis, *Principes Rexistes* (Brussels: Editions Rex, 1936), 18.

¹⁵⁶ António Ferro, Salazar; Portugal and her Leader (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1939), 177-178

¹⁵⁷ For media and public perception to Fascism and Nazism, see Olivera Milosavljević, *Savremenici fašizma: Percepcija fašizma u beogradskoj javnosti 1933-1941* (Helsinki Odbor za Ljudska Prava u Srbiji, 2010).

latter's visit to Italy on 5 December, 1937.¹⁵⁸ As Djokić notes however, Stojadinović's flirtation with the external trappings of fascism should be taken into a Yugoslav context of internal unity, and the perceived need to preserve the nation in the face of separatist threat.¹⁵⁹ Stojadinović however never seriously considered adopting any real fascist policies, whether economic or social. He seemed to admire the aesthetics of fascist order and discipline, without wanting, or able to implement them in Yugoslavia. This was not the case with Ljotić. While open in his admiration of fascist order and discipline, along with calls for a fascist like planned economy (couched in terms of a non-fascist peasant corporatism), and his open pro-German stance, leaves himself much more open and exposed to accusations of wanting to import the Fascist and National Socialist models into Yugoslavia. He made only vague references to his own (limited) understanding of fascist ideology, leading to the question of whether Ljotić was seen as a real fascist, or as someone who could further fascist interests within Yugoslavia. This question would be somewhat answered during the Second World War, whereas will be shown, the Germans were not entirely convinced of Ljotić's commitment to the New Order in Europe, yet at the same time, saw ZBOR as most closely representing their ideology in Serbia.

ZBOR and accusations of Fascism

While Ljotić attempted to downplay any similarities to fascism, there were those movements and parties in Europe, among them the British Union of Fascists, who saw fascism as 'being adaptable to local conditions and factors',¹⁶⁰ and happily adopted the moniker of fascist. In truth, analysis of his life and ideological evolution shows defiance to labels, which turned his ideologies into a multi-faceted one, where in currents of different concepts and movements may be found. Nevertheless, each current in his ideologies has roots to his history and experiences as a person throughout his lifetime.

The Dutch *Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland* (National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands), from 1931 until 1935, showed a marked difference from German National

¹⁵⁸ Galeazzo Ciano, *Ciano's Diary 1937-1943* (London: Phoenix Press Publishing, 2002), 33.

¹⁵⁹ Djokić, *Elusive Compromise*, 175.

¹⁶⁰ Oswald Mosley, *The Greater Britain* (London: Greater Britain Publications, 1932), 13–14.

Socialism in regard to its Jewish population and anti-Semitism.¹⁶¹ In some cases, especially in regard to the 1930 party programme of the *Danmarks Nationalsocialistiske Arbejderparti* (National Socialist Workers' Party of Denmark), it was largely copied from the German National Socialist Workers' Party's 1920 twenty-five point programme,¹⁶² to be superimposed on Danish political life. In ZBOR's case, downplaying of any supposed links with Fascism and Nazism was countered with Ljotić's admiration of Hitler, with no seeming contradiction between the two. But this admiration was, first and foremost, in regard to the strength of Nazi anti-communism and the action that the Nazis took against socialists and communists in Germany. In this vein Ljotić praised the Nazis, seeing Nazi conceptions of organicist thought, anti-Semitism, and the strength of national unity were corollaries to a wider all-encompassing anti-communism.

As has been emphasised throughout the thesis, communism was the *bête noire* of ZBOR's ideology. In this paradigm Ljotić conceded that both ZBOR and the Nazis were idealists and not materialists that in itself meant that they both viewed revolution as necessary in order to destroy communism, as the 'denier of human values'.¹⁶³ Yet there were others in ZBOR who were more vocal in their pro-Nazi sentiments than Ljotić. In voicing these sentiments through various ZBOR publications, the movement inevitably opened itself up to accusations of fascism. ZBOR's one-time general secretary and youth leader Danilo Gregorić was much more open in his praise of Nazism, attempting to link Nazi ideology, albeit indirectly, with common ZBOR themes in his doctoral thesis.¹⁶⁴ To Gregorić, Nazism was 'not the finished product', and that in order to 'fulfil its political duty of fighting communism and liberalism', a 'strong word amongst the people was needed'.¹⁶⁵ This was in reference to the propaganda machine of Nazi Germany, keeping the perceived threat level of communism and Jews at a maximum in order to achieve national unity. Gregorić saw Nazism as the future, a leader in

¹⁶¹ See 'Hoe staat de N.S.B. tegenover de Joden?', in *Antwoord van het Nederlandsche Naational-Socialisme (Fascisme) op een tiental Nederlandsche vragen* (Utrecht, 1935), 26.

¹⁶² Especially economic points relating to the Nazi 'Breaking of interest slavery'. See Cay Lembcke, *D.N.S.A.P. Partiets Formål, Program, Love og første Angrebsplan* (Copenhagen, 1930). See also Gottfried Feder, *Das programm der NSDAP und seine weltanschaulichen* (Munich: Grundedanken. Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher Nachd, 1926).

¹⁶³ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Da li smo fašisti?," *Otadžbina*, 5 November, 1936, No.138, 1.

¹⁶⁴ Gregorić, *Ekonomska i socijalna politika nacionalnoga socijalizma i njene doktrinarne osnove: doktorska rasprava*. Gregorić thesis, as the published title reads, was a study of the origins of National Socialist economic and social policy.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 4.

the fight against communism, liberalism, and in the stagnation in which Europe had supposedly fallen into.¹⁶⁶

For Ljotić, such considerations, with the exception of the battle against communism, were of secondary importance. As the strength and influence of the Nazi regime grew, so did Ljotić's estimation and fear of Hitler. Especially in the aftermath of the *Anschluss*, Ljotić became more open in his praise of Hitler. Showing knowledge of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Ljotić argued that the annexation of Austria was nothing more 'than what Hitler had written about', and whether or not the annexation was a good idea, or if there was a 'danger of Germanisation', then 'it is a delusion of the so-called great democracies and the Soviets'.¹⁶⁷ Seemingly, Ljotić was much more interested and in awe of Hitler as a personality, than in Hitler as a Nazi ideologue, if the two can be separated. Perhaps this could best be summarised by stating that Ljotić was in awe of Hitler and Germany less because of the intricacies of Nazi ideology, then with how unfolding events in Europe, centred on Germany, fit into Ljotić's worldview of rigid anti-communism and emerging apocalyptic Christianity. Germany, and Hitler especially, would play a leading role in this regard.

What Hitler brought to Germany, according to Ljotić, was a 'change of spirit', a change of which was 'necessary in Yugoslavia'.¹⁶⁸ Their way to achieve this spirit was to return to a 'natural and organic spiritual basis'.¹⁶⁹ Hitler therefore 'was a man of great occurrence', and 'deeply thoughtful and ingenious, an organiser, a hero and apostle. He really fascinates his people. He has no flaws'.¹⁷⁰

Yet for all his and ZBOR's praise of Hitler, Ljotić revealingly proclaimed his and ZBOR's wider geopolitical goal. ZBOR's basis on Yugoslav unity had its roots in earlier mystical Pan-Slavic thought.¹⁷¹ It was this mysticism and Pan-Slavism, which would guide ZBOR on a geopolitical level. Slavdom was, as Ljotić writes, 'the basis of our national policy', which is something that cannot be forgotten, even though ZBOR was 'great friends of the German

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 321-333.

¹⁶⁷ Ljotić, "Povodom Dogodjaja u Austriji," 2.

¹⁶⁸ Ljotić, "Ljubljana," 2.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 3.

¹⁷⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Naš Nacionalizam," *Novi Put*, September 4, 1938, Year 2, No.31 edition, 1-2. See also

"Jedan govor i jedan gest," *Novi Put*, 18 September, 1938, Year 2, No.33, 1-2.

¹⁷¹ See Chapter 1 for Slavophile and Pan-Slavic influence on Ljotić.

nation.¹⁷² This wider Pan-Slavic geopolitical policy seeing Hitler, as the ‘instrument of God’s providence’, would, ‘through the path of least resistance’, bring down the Soviet regime, in doing so bringing back the monarchy, resulting in the ‘buds blossoming on the Slavic tree’, as a metaphor for an imminent Pan-Slavic unity.¹⁷³

Such gross naivety would further isolate ZBOR from the wider public, as well as creating an almost parallel reality amongst ZBOR members based on the strength of their convictions, and Hitler’s ‘honourable intentions’. As will be shown in the next chapter, the strength of their convictions, along with this belief in Hitler restoring the Russian monarchy, would coalesce and mutate into a more radical and violent manifestation with terrible consequences. Ljotić would seem to interject and manifest his personal roots and experiences to the ideology of Hitler and transform it into his own belief and goals that he will pursue through his movement. Specifically, the need for German living space in the East (*Lebensraum*), and later in practice, how to deal with its Slavic majority inhabitants, are some of the aspects of Hitler’s intentions that Ljotić interpreted through the lenses of his own experiences and transformed them to have different meaning for himself.

Ljotić would also, through ZBOR, accuse Stojadinović himself and the JRZ, as being fascist. Speaking on Stojadinović’s state visits to Paris, London, Rome, and Berlin, from October 1937 to January 1938, Ljotić states that ‘we are not fascists, nor our mission fascism’. If, Ljotić writes, ‘Stojadinović goes to Rome to copy Fascism, or to Berlin to copy Hitlerism’, then he does not ‘take our thought’, but rather ‘that of Mussolini and Hitler’.¹⁷⁴ In ZBOR’s early 1938 brochure *Poruka fašističkom šegrtu* (Message to a Fascist Apprentice), Ljotić accuses Stojadinović of attempting to import German and Italian authoritarian and totalitarian models into Yugoslavia. The irony appears to be lost on Ljotić, in that publicly praising Hitler and aspects of National Socialist ideology, he accuses Stojadinović of being a fascist. He continues by stating that neither Salazar in Portugal, nor Kemal Atatürk (in reference to Mustafa Kemal) in Turkey went to either Berlin or Rome to copy their methods, but instead looked within their respective nations and traditions to ‘do their best for their people’.¹⁷⁵ Though a highly nationalistic Christian, Ljotić nevertheless was evidently impressed by

¹⁷² Dimitrije Ljotić, “Iza tmastih oblaka sija zlatno božije sunce,” *Naš put*, 26 March, 1939, No.4, 1–2.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* 2.

¹⁷⁴ AJ 37-21-152. “Poruka Fašističkom Šegrtu”, 3; see also Dimitrije Ljotić, *Poruka Fašističkom Šegrtu*, 4. Both were consulted.

¹⁷⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Poruka Fašističkom Šegrtu*, 3.

Kemal Atatürk, who he saw as strong.¹⁷⁶ Message to a Fascist Apprentice would be banned almost immediately after its publication, on 26 January, 1938.¹⁷⁷ Stojadinović would also be accused by ZBOR of complicity of the March 1939 dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, being in tandem with ‘Fascist Germany’, in the pay of ‘capitalist Britain’, and be accused of ‘betraying Slavdom’.¹⁷⁸ It would be a case of reflecting the accusations of fascism onto Stojadinović in an attempt to deflect further accusations of fascism at ZBOR, picking up on the mood of the majority of Yugoslav citizens, who were vehemently anti-Nazi. In regard to Czechoslovakia, Ljotić acknowledged the Pan-Slavic feelings of ZBOR members in regard to the Sudetenland. He agreed that no country in the world could have a foreign policy based on one-fifths of its population. But he would ultimately urge the Czechoslovaks to cede the Sudetenland to Germany, lest the ‘entire state organism is destroyed’.¹⁷⁹ That the Nazis dismantled the Czechoslovak state, proved Ljotić right on the consequences. The dangers of constant appeasement to the Nazis though, could no longer be ignored.

In his quest to appear non-fascist, he seemingly managed to convince official British diplomatic opinion, which viewed him as the leader of an ‘independent conservative faction’.¹⁸⁰ The opinion of Ljotić personally amongst certain diplomats and Foreign Office members, seemed to span from Ljotić as ‘independent’, to the opinion of Ljotić as ‘honourable’, and having a ‘good reputation’.¹⁸¹ Certainly, up to 1936, Foreign Office officials, through information supplied by its diplomats in Yugoslavia, did not view ZBOR as a fascist organisation, which is a view, as will be shown in the next chapter, continued to persist even during the Second World War. Whether Ljotić was aware of British opinion is unknown. For him, Great Britain, at least up to the outbreak of the Second World War, was hypocritical in that while it at one time ‘preached disarmament’, while at the same time through its ‘imperialist policies it wants to bend half the world’.¹⁸² It was also ‘eroded by the

¹⁷⁶ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Balkanska konferencija u Beogradu”, *Bilten*, 21 February, 1940, No. 39, 9.

¹⁷⁷ See AJ, 38-82-207. The State Prosecutor banned the publication on 26 January, 1938.

¹⁷⁸ AJ 38-86-211. “Državno Tužništvo u Zagrebu. Kn. 2283/38. 3 October, 1938”. An untitled ZBOR produced brochure also calling for Slavic unity against the ‘Germanic and Latin invasions’.

¹⁷⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Naš stav u Čehoslovačkom pitanju”, *Novi Put*, 11 September, 1938, Second Year, No.11, 2.

¹⁸⁰ NA FO 371/20434 R 4022/42/92 “Political Situation in Yugoslavia. Mr. Balfour. 9 July, 1936”.

¹⁸¹ See NA FO 371/19575. R 949/219/92. ‘Political Situation in Yugoslavia. 12 February, 1935. Neville Henderson’. Henderson describes Ljotić as ‘quite independent’; NA FO 371/19576. R 5916/219/92. “Political Situation in Yugoslavia. 30 September-3 October, 1935. Mr. Balfour. Comments on parties with right to legal existence and their aims”. Mr. Balfour describes Ljotić as both ‘honourable’, and enjoying a ‘good reputation’.

¹⁸² Ljotić, “Povodom Dogodjaja u Austriji,” 2.

Jewish spirit of internationalism', it 'wants to rule and exploit the world, yet peacefully, while at the same time disarming nations both materially and morally'.¹⁸³

Whatever the case, Ljotić's positivity and open admiration of Hitler meant that he could not escape any comparisons with fascism, despite his attempts to differentiate his ideology from fascism. There were numerous ZBOR members, as the example of Gregorić shows, who also spoke positively not just about Hitler but also of the doctrine of National Socialism. No other political party or movement in interwar Yugoslavia spoke so favourably about Fascism and Nazism as did ZBOR. In that regard, it was perfectly justifiable why in public opinion, ZBOR was linked as 'pro-fascist'. Simply put, ZBOR, and certainly Ljotić, were pro-fascist at the very least. Yet the question, or rather accusation of fascism itself, was rather more contentious, with Ljotić being much more guarded about being called a fascist as opposed to 'just' an admirer of Hitler.

Whether or not ZBOR wanted to liken itself to fascism, or develop a Yugoslav kind of fascism, Ljotić's own conception of fascism remained somewhat vague. This made his ideologies and the syncretistic currents of ZBOR self-contradicting as a combination of different concepts from different ideologies. ZBOR's overall ideological conclusions seemed to coalesce around an authoritarian if not radical nationalism, harmonised with traditionalism and religion (primarily Orthodoxy in this case, reflecting Ljotić's own religiosity). ZBOR's economic and social programs, beyond calling for a planned economy, was based primarily on a paternalistic and feudalistic pre-industrial utopian thought, interjected with Pan-Slavism and the concept of the *zadruga*, wherein a morally pure peasantry would work for the betterment of the nation. Socially, ZBOR looked to an idyllic past for its supposed utopia, labelling any movement or program that was 'modern', as 'decadent', and frivolous. Ljotić would admire fascism as a regime, and a state type. But he had his own end goal of a Pan-Slavic monarchic ideal, and would certainly not see fascism as a role model for social organisation and relations, irrespective of fascist corporatism. These negations however, especially amongst the youthful members of the White Eagles, would be interpreted as a sign that direct action was needed in order to save the nation and national integrity from further degradation and indeed disintegration.

¹⁸³ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Našim levičarima," *Novi Put*, 10 April, 1938, Year 2, No.12, 1.

ZBOR's banning and concluding remarks

The linked themes of repression, and accusation of fascism would come to a head in late October 1940, which precipitated the end of ZBOR's legal political existence. The catalyst for ZBOR's banning would be a pitched battle between members of ZBOR's youth group, the White Eagles, and communist and anti-fascist students at the Technical Faculty at Belgrade University on 22 October, 1940. While the fracas is described as starting at a meeting within the auditorium of the Technical Faculty, attended by student members of both ZBOR and an assortment of left-wing student organisations, it appeared that ZBOR students, in particular a Mladen Babić, were the main instigators, calling for students to unite in the founding of a 'national spirit', thus 'rejecting Jewish internationalism'.¹⁸⁴ What it led to was a pitched battle involving weapons, resulting in several injuries and numerous arrests and material damage. The ferocity of the violence unleashed by the White Eagles, was described in ZBOR's press as only responding to 'numerous communist attacks against students'.¹⁸⁵

This attack by the White Eagles was the perfect pretext for the government, citing the violent and radical nature of the assault, for the banning of ZBOR. The government, under the leadership of Dragiša Cvetković,¹⁸⁶ was less openly pro-German in orientation than Stojadinović, with Cvetković being accused by Patriarch Gavrilo of being a 'creature of Prince Paul'.¹⁸⁷ In this regard, it was also contemplating a banning of ZBOR as German influence and military victories brought Germany closer towards Yugoslavia.¹⁸⁸ The stated reason however, was that the government felt that ZBOR was party to a right-wing militaristic conspiracy against the regime.¹⁸⁹ These violent acts are in contrast to Paxton's third phase of fascism development, wherein the fascist-type movement has to form alliances with traditional elites. These elites, include the heads of the government, in order to pursue the goal of gaining power for the movement, and ultimately sustaining and increasing the

¹⁸⁴ "Neredi na beogradskom univerzitetu," *Bilten*, 31 October, 1940, No.58, 13.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 14

¹⁸⁶ Dragiša Cvetković (1893-1969). Born in Niš, he participated in the Balkan Wars as well as World War One. A noted reformer he won three mandates as mayor of Niš, as well as finishing a law degree. He served briefly as Minister for Religious Affairs in 1928, and again in the Stojadinović as Minister for Social Policy and National Health. He also headed the government formed workers syndicate JUGORAS from 1936. Installed by Prince Paul as Prime Minister on 5 February, 1939, he was instrumental in both the signing of the *Sporazum* in August 1939 and the Tripartite Pact of March 1941. He fled in 1944, living in France until his death in 1969. For more see Dragiša Cvetković, and Časlav Nikitović, *Razgovori o Berhtesgadenu* (Paris, 1956).

¹⁸⁷ *Memoari Patrijarha srpskog Gavrila*, 166.

¹⁸⁸ Gligorijević, "Napad Ljotičevaca na studente tehničkog fakulteta u Beogradu u oktobru 1940. i rasturanje Ljotičevog Zbora," 67.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 77.

power that the party holds. This power is needed to take steps to incorporate the party into the state's system. These violent acts may be a distinctive attribute of the ZBOR movement, which makes it unique from fascism, in the sense that it does not have the strategies or game-based schemes of fascism, wherein the goal is to win over the current powerful institution (e.g., the government), but instead focuses on the central purpose of the group, which is to eradicate unfair practices for the original peoples of the same nation. Nevertheless, it may also be this distinct trait that led ZBOR to its end.

Nothing again would be proven, but it nevertheless sufficed to have ZBOR eliminated as a political threat. For ZBOR, the banning was yet another sign of illegal government repression. On 3 November, 1940, the Belgrade civil authorities closed ZBOR's headquarters, and between the night of 4 November and 5 November, Ljotić asserts that the Ministry of Interior sent letters to ZBOR members throughout the country asking them to prove whether they were in fact ZBOR members or not.¹⁹⁰ This was coupled with Belgrade University's decision to close from 6 November, due to the violence between what the university identified solely as 'two groups'.¹⁹¹ This was coupled with widespread arrests of ZBOR members, with 160 being arrested in Belgrade alone, among them Ratko Živadinović (senior youth leader), Vladimir Lenac (senior leader of the White Eagles), and Velja Danilović (ZBOR Belgrade section head).¹⁹²

To ZBOR's leadership, this repression was yet another sign of nefarious Jewish influence over domestic Yugoslav affairs. In this instance, the perceived Jewish influence not only had the movement banned, but would also want to 'take the regime into war on behalf of British interests', and that ZBOR was banned because it had fought against this 'unholy alliance'.¹⁹³ Only one public personality came out in support of Ljotić in the aftermath of ZBOR's banning. Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović. Velimirović knew Ljotić from the latter's time as a representative of the Braničevo diocese at the Patriarchal Council of the Serbian Orthodox

¹⁹⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Sad je vaš čas i oblast tame. Ko i zašto goni Zbor* (Belgrade, 1940).

¹⁹¹ "Studentima Beogradskog univerziteta," *Vreme*, 6 November, 1940, No.6748 edition, 6.

¹⁹² Gligorijević, "Napad Ljotićevaca na studente tehničkog fakulteta u Beogradu u oktobru 1940. i rasturanje Ljotićevog Zbora," 68.

¹⁹³ AJ-37-152-27-86. "Starešinstvo Zbora. Dragi druže". 11 November, 1940. Internal ZBOR circular calling for 'unity in spirit and action' for ZBOR, and outlining the reasons for ZBOR's banning.

Church. Velimirović wrote a letter to Cvetković praising Ljotić's 'good character' and 'faith in God'.¹⁹⁴

Yet there were those within the JRZ who argued that repression was counterproductive and that the best way to destroy ZBOR was to ask to bring it either into the government, or through socio-economic means.¹⁹⁵ This was the view of Smederevo JRZ candidate Milan Jovanović-Stoimirović, who argued that by bringing ZBOR into government, its own ineptitude and incoherence would ruin the movement, as it would be incapable of any sort of leadership. Alternatively, he continues, ZBOR could be destroyed by more thorough engagement with the peasantry, the bulk of Ljotić's meagre support, especially around Smederevo, to show that Ljotić had his own aggrandisement at heart, as opposed to the needs of the peasantry.

The aftermath of the official banning saw ZBOR disappear as a political entity in Yugoslavia. Admittedly however, while active, the movement would not go beyond voicing harsh and stringent opposition to the government and the communists, and yet fail in any meaningful way to transplant its ideas and policies onto Yugoslav political life. Ljotić's reputation as a 'prophet', 'visionary', and 'ideologue' was in stark contrast to what was needed in order to make ZBOR, however small and inconsequential, into at least a competently organised movement.

Ljotić as a personality perfectly encapsulated someone who wanted control, was loath to delegate it, but would be content to do little with it. In this regard it is difficult to argue with Dragoljub Jovanović's opinion of Ljotić as someone who managed to convince himself of his own strength and greatness, and yet lied to his followers because he did not know what he wanted.¹⁹⁶ What he showed to ZBOR and to Yugoslavia was an extreme ideological inflexibility, bordering on the almost comical, coupled with an almost total lack of interest in any administration and organisational matters. But perhaps this is too one sided a characterisation of Ljotić. There is little doubt that he was an intelligent man. Brave and convinced enough to actually attempt at making a difference, regardless of how it was perceived by those whom he was trying to help and influence.

¹⁹⁴ Jovan Byford, *Denial and Repression of Antisemitism: Post-Communist Remembrance of the Serbian Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović* (Budapest ; New York: Central European University Press, 2008), 50–51.

¹⁹⁵ Jovanović Stoimirović, *Dnevnik 1936-1941*, 403.

¹⁹⁶ Jovanović, *Medaljoni. Knjiga III*, 375.

What little organisational and active impetus within ZBOR remained was evident within the White Eagles and other ZBOR youth organisations. The fact that most ZBOR members throughout Yugoslavia were not arrested, but simply melted away shows that much of ZBOR's ideological radicalism was not imparted to any large degree on a large part of its membership. This is in contrast to its radicalised members, mostly youth, who as the attack on the Technical Faculty show were able to organise in numbers and engage in violent attacks.

As the Second World War wore on, and defeat and occupation would become an everyday reality, ZBOR would undergo further ideological radicalisation and polarisation that would push it over the brink and into the chasm of collaboration, retribution, and violence.

Chapter 5. Ljotić, ZBOR, Collaboration and the Second World War

ZBOR would turn full circle under the German occupation. Far from being a simple case of pro-German sentiments and accusations of National Socialism, ZBOR as a political movement would show regression, mutation, and incoherence under the brutal occupation regime of the Germans. Its worldview, seemingly justified with the coming of the Second World War, would result in youthful elements primarily from the White Eagles being radicalised to the point of militarisation, organisational and territorial weakness, compounded by a severely fractured chain of command due to German repressive tactics and in an unstable and violent environment of occupation. This would be combined with Ljotić's increasing focus on ideological and philosophical work, evidenced by his increased activity in ZBOR's wartime publication *Naša borba* (Our struggle), and radio addresses on the threat of 'international communism' at the expense of the maintenance of ZBOR's efficiency and organisational structure, as will be evidenced by the situation of ZBOR's local Čačak section.

ZBOR and the build-up to war

The outbreak of the Second World War on 1 September, 1939 initially involved only Germany and Poland, with the British (and the Commonwealth), and French declaring war on Germany on 3 September, though not on the USSR in their 17 September invasion and subsequent carve-up of Poland in tandem with Germany. The Yugoslav government hoped to keep its territory intact, and in doing so ward off any potential threats, however it was caught between sympathy for the Allied powers and an acute fear of the Axis.¹ The country lacked financial means, and technical knowledge to improve its armed forces and defences. Germany's economic interests regulated its neutrality, with Hitler's successes deepening the country's economic dependence and isolation. Yugoslavia, as a result of the subsequent German *Anschluss* of Austria, and

¹ Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 8. See also Djokić, *Elusive Compromise*, 265–273. ; Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis, 1934-1941*.

later military victories in Europe, found itself increasingly unable to move away from what seemed to be economic dependence on Germany, as part of the *Ergänzungswirtschaft* (Supplementary economy)² theory. As a result of the 27 March, 1941 coup, which rejected Yugoslavia's Tripartite Pact accession on 25 March, 1941, the Nazi leadership capitalised on his 'legitimate interest' for the protection of Germany's flank and economic interests, by invading Yugoslavia, which began on 6 April, 1941, in tandem with Italy and Hungary.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, Ljotić supported Yugoslavia's policy of neutrality in the conflict, while promoting his stand that Yugoslav diplomacy should focus on relations with Berlin.³ He vehemently opposed the August 1939 Cvetković-Maček Agreement and repeatedly wrote letters to Prince Paul urging him to annul it.⁴ In these letters, he advocated an immediate re-organisation of the government according to ZBOR ideology, the abolishment of Croatian autonomy, the division of the Royal Yugoslav Army into contingents of ethnic Serbs and some Croat and Slovene volunteers, who would be armed, and contingents of most Croats and Slovenes in the armed forces, who would serve as labour units and would be unarmed. Effectively, the purpose of all these points was to reduce non-Serbs in Yugoslavia to the status of second-class citizens. In 1940, the Royal Yugoslav Army purged its pro-German elements and Ljotić lost much of the influence he held over the armed forces.⁵

27 March, 1941 looms large in the history of the first Yugoslavia, having been perceived as the clearest and most visible sign of the 'anti-Nazi' stance of the Yugoslavs. Serbian historian Branko Petranović claims the day as one of the most important dates in the history of free peoples,⁶ showcasing an overwhelmingly majority taking matters in their own hands to force a change in policy. In truth, the

² *Ergänzungswirtschaft* in its theoretical aspect, dealt with a wider 'Greater Economic Area' and a specific geographic region, by which each area could be a source of raw materials, minerals, or agricultural products, as well as an outlet for German industry. For more see Andrej Mitrović, "Ergänzungswirtschaft: The theory of an integrated Economic Area of the Third Reich and Southeast Europe (1933-1945)", in Pero Morača, *The Third Reich and Yugoslavia 1933-1945*, 7-46.

³ Tomasevich, 2001, 187.

⁴ Cohen, 1996, 21.

⁵ Byford, "Willing Bystanders: Dimitrije Ljotić, 'Shield Collaboration', and the Destruction of Serbia's Jews", in Haynes and Rady, *In the Shadow of Hitler*, 300.

⁶ Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939-1945*, 84.

coup of 27 March was not solely a spontaneous anti-Tripartite Pact or anti-Nazi manifestation but rather as Tomasevich describes, ‘had been discussed for some months, though the final phases seemed to have been hastily prepared, with the knowledge and assistance of British representatives in Belgrade’.⁷ British plenipotentiary (full title: Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), Sir Ronald Ian Campbell was advised by the War Secretary Anthony Eden that he was ‘authorised to make use of any means at his disposal to make public opinion and leaders understand the realities of the moment, and to take any measures, even a coup d’état, to change the government’.⁸ Pavlowitch states that the British did indeed encourage a pro-Western group within the *Zemljoradnička stranka* (Agrarian Party), which itself was in the government, but in doing so, merely, according to Pavlowitch, was ‘pushing an open door’.⁹

With indirect and tacit British support, the coup leaders, primarily reserve officers, though the coup’s main instigators, were serving Air Force General Dušan Simović, and Air Force Brigadier General Borivoje Mirković, proclaimed their willingness to defend with their lives the ‘independence, sovereignty, and frontiers of Yugoslavia’, while keeping ‘faithful to the King and Fatherland’.¹⁰ Yet the main impetus for the coup was what Pavlowitch describes, and contradicting Tomasevich, was a ‘pent-up dislike of Prince Paul’s regime and of its overall policy’ and that the coup itself was more ‘spontaneous than planned’, and ‘carried out by officers wanting to save the honour of not just Serbia, but as Yugoslavia as they perceived it’. Pavlowitch states that the motives for the coup were mixed, with a ‘general dissatisfaction of the position of the Serbs in Yugoslavia, the humiliation by Germany and Italy, a wish to stick to the Western powers for ideological and traditional reasons, and the belief that the Axis would encourage the break-up of Yugoslavia’.¹¹

Clearly then, certain issues surrounding the coup are open to interpretation, namely the motives given for the coup, and just as importantly, the actual degree of British

⁷ Jozo Tomasevich, *The Chetniks: War And Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945* (Stanford University Press, 1975), 43.

⁸ Sir Anthony Eden, *The Eden Memoirs. Facing the Dictators*. (London: Cassel & Co., 1962), 62.

⁹ Pavlowitch, *Hitler’s New Disorder*, 16.

¹⁰ NA FO 371/20225 R 2865/297/92. “Resolution passed by the Society of Yugoslav Reserve Officers – Mr. R. Campbell in Belgrade. 22 -23 March, 1941”.

¹¹ Pavlowitch, *Hitler’s New Disorder*, 14.

support for the coup. Certainly, as Heather Williams attests to, there was a concerted effort on behalf of the Special Operations Executive (hereafter SOE), to cultivate links with leading Yugoslav personalities as to ‘dissuade Prince Paul from signing the Tripartite Pact’, and if not, ‘whether a coup could be fomented’ to overthrow Paul’s government.¹² However the coup itself, regardless of British encouragement, was the result of the signing of the Tripartite Pact,¹³ which went against the wishes of the majority of Yugoslavia’s citizens. British and SOE efforts to dissuade Prince Paul from signing the Tripartite Pact were ultimately unsuccessful, with Prince Paul being fully aware of the dangerous predicament he faced if he refused signing. Once signed however, the Tripartite Pact initiated the downfall of Paul’s government, and led to his overthrow. In this regard, British and SOE efforts could be viewed as a success, especially in regard to propaganda, and cultivating pro-British opinion amongst Yugoslav politicians. But the coup itself had deeper significance than the signing of the Tripartite Pact itself, which was simply the catalyst in a long list of grievances at Paul’s government and Yugoslavia’s internal situation.

While no doubt welcomed by the Allies, with Churchill famously proclaiming that ‘Yugoslavia had found its soul’,¹⁴ the gravity of the situation was not lost on British plenipotentiary Sir Ronald Campbell in Belgrade, who was both dismissive and pessimistic of the government’s capabilities, probably in regard to a pending German attack. According to Campbell, the new government, having a ‘provisionary character’, points out the rivalries amongst the new ministers, stating that most are ‘party hacks’, who ‘have been out of office for years’.¹⁵ This is perhaps too harsh towards the new provisional government, and somewhat odd given Campbell’s position and knowledge of Yugoslav political personalities. Vladko Maček, leader of the HSS, while seeing the coup as a Serbian affair, entered the provisional government as a sign of support and national unity. Srdjan Budisavljević as former minister for social affairs tendered his resignation on 24 March, as a sign of dissent against the signing of Yugoslavia’s accession to the Tripartite Pact. He was later

¹² Heather Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans. The Special Operations Executive and Yugoslavia, 1941-1945* (London: Hurst & Company, 2003), 27.

¹³ *Ibid.* 32.

¹⁴ John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 202.

¹⁵ NA FO 371/20225. “Formation of New Yugoslav Government”. Mr. R. Campbell. 27 -28 March, 1941; NA FO 371/20225. New Yugoslav Government. Mr. Campbell. 28 March, 1941.

given the position of Interior Minister in the new provisional government having previously also headed the *Samostalna demokratska stranka* (Independent Democratic Party), from 1936.¹⁶ Whatever the problems facing the new provisional government, and there were many, the inclusion of men such as Maček (albeit in a limited capacity), and especially of Budisavljević, show that there were capable and adroit political personalities within it.

Ljotić was of a similar opinion to Campbell as regard to the coup and the new government. Writing during the occupation, in late 1941, and describing the events of March 1941 while under house arrest, he compared the coup to a loss of sanity. More sinisterly, Ljotić hinted at a Jewish conspiracy in order to bring Yugoslavia into the war and bring about the country's destruction. He accused London of 'looking through the eyes of the Jews', instead of its own eyes, which is 'why they have lead an imperialist policy that will result in the weakening of their empire'.¹⁷ Sensing the popular mood however, in opposition to the signing of the Tripartite Pact, he saw it as a sign of weakness (no doubt due to his own pro-German tendency), to give in to public opinion, and he saw the coup as the joining of 'café and street strategy'.¹⁸

Public opinion, as it related to ZBOR's perception of the 27 March coup, was more evidence of international Jewry's plot of destroying Christian nations.¹⁹ Just a day before the coup, Ljotić wrote to the Serbian Patriarch Gavriilo, asking him to pressure the Prince Regent in forming a strong government, and to help reassure the public that 'freedom and independence has been preserved'.²⁰ In Ljotić's opinion, writing from his house arrest, the coup represented the beginning of the ruination of the country, whose members must be replaced by people in whom the populace has confidence.²¹

His position on the composition of the new provisional government notwithstanding, there is evidence to support that the new provisional government, thinking such a

¹⁶ Branko Petranović, *Istorije Jugoslavije. Knjige II* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1988), 94. Budisavljević, while no communist, he advocated for the destruction of the records of the Yugoslav Communist Party, lest they fall into the hands of the Germans.

¹⁷ Dimitrije Ljotić, "London i Beograd," *Naša borba*, 1 February, 1942, No.22, 1.

¹⁸ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Ulična strategija," *Naša borba*, 14 June, 1942, No.41, 1.

¹⁹ Dj. Č. Marjanović, "Javno mnjenje i Jevrejstvo," *Naša borba*, September 7, 1941, No.1, 8.

²⁰ Ljotić, *Odabrana dela. I Knjiga*, 237.

²¹ *Memoari Patrijarha srpskog Gavriila*, 268.

move a means of placating Germany, were willing to negotiate his possible entry into government. The approach, made through General Bogoljub Ilić, was to see Ljotić enter the government as a minister without portfolio, while having him condemn the pact.²² Ljotić refused, and instead demanded that the new government adhere to the Tripartite Pact and set about the normalisation of relations between Germany and Yugoslavia.²³ Yet there was no talk of legalising the banned ZBOR movement, on behalf of the provisional government, nor was ZBOR, whether in clandestine capacity or not, active in any anti-coup activity or propaganda. In approaching Ljotić, it would conceivably more for his experience as a former Minister of Justice, no matter how short lived, and his supposed links to the Germans, perhaps as a means of placating the Germans.

In essence, the coup saw the materialisation of Ljotić's and ZBOR's worst fears. The abandonment of a pro-German policy, which ZBOR unrealistically felt would keep Yugoslavia neutral, thus saving the country from destruction, was overturned. It was Germany, ZBOR thought, that was the one factor that caused and conducted events in the Balkans, and thus an accord would have to be reached.²⁴ Ever since mid-1939, ZBOR publications, primarily through *Bilten*, began focusing more on military and foreign events, as a catalyst for a coming world war. To this end, ZBOR advocated a stringent internal unity, military preparedness in the hope of offsetting any German-Italian attack, as well as dismissing all reserve officers from a 'non-Slavic background', and the creation of labour battalions made up of non-Slavic Yugoslav citizens.²⁵ In an unfinished June 1940 letter to General Milan Nedić,²⁶ later to be head of the quisling Serbian Government of National Salvation. Ljotić warns Nedić of the

²² Djoko Slijepčević, *Jugoslavija uoči i za vreme Drugog Svetskog rata* (Munich: Iskra, 1978), 224. See also Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939-1945*, 87.; Petranović states that it was Simović personally who invited Ljotić to enter the government. See also Cohen and Riesman, *Serbia's Secret War*, 26.

²³ Slijepčević, *Jugoslavija uoči i za vreme Drugog Svetskog rata*, 224.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 188.

²⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Unutrašnji pregled," *Bilten*, 12 April, 1939, No.8, 3–6.

²⁶ Milan Nedić (1878-1946). Born in Belgrade, he entered the Military Academy in Belgrade in 1895. Promoted to Major in 1910. By 1915 he was the youngest Colonel at 38, in the Serbian General Staff during World War One. Promoted to General in 1930, by 1934 he was appointed head of the General Staff. On 13 August, 1939 he was appointed as Minister of the Army and Navy. Prince Paul dismissed him on 6 November, 1940, for opposing any armed conflict potential with Germany. He acquiesced to form a government on 29 August, 1941, and would remain its head until 4 October, 1944. For more see Stanislav Krakov, *General Milan Nedić. Na oštrici noža. Knjiga I* (Munich: Iskra, 1963). ; Stanislav Krakov, *Milan Nedić. Prepuna čaša čemera. Knjiga II* (Munich: Iskra, 1963).

potential treachery from the non-Serbian elements within the army, with its insidious influence potentially harming Serbian units.²⁷

Ljotić's motives for writing to Nedić were part of a ZBOR campaign, evident from 1939 of increasing its support within the Yugoslav military. Nedić, Minister of War from 1939 until 6 November, 1940, was seen as crucial in this matter. While not a ZBOR member, he helped ZBOR in its publishing *Bilten* through his ministerial press, and shared ZBOR's pro-German orientation and appraisal of Yugoslavia's military and political position in relation to German military advances.²⁸ Links were further solidified and strengthened because Nedić's cabinet chief, Colonel Miloš Masalović, a ZBOR member, facilitated contact between Ljotić and Nedić.²⁹

In addition to this, ZBOR consistently from 1935 emphasised the importance of a Bulgarian-Yugoslav union as a balance to any 'foreign influence',³⁰ as a cornerstone of its regional policy as a means of strengthening Yugoslavia's position within Europe. Furthermore, Ljotić sought a Balkan bloc to counter 'Anglo-French and German influence'.³¹ Why, argued Ljotić, 'must we give our lands to the Anglo-French and Germans to fight on', and 'with what results'? Those results, according to him would be a 'cultural and material destruction', with 'hundreds of thousands of dead', and 'millions of invalids and cripples'.³² To this end he advocated the Romanian return of Dobrudja to Bulgaria in the spirit of co-operation. Despite his prolific writings on geopolitics from 1939 on, Ljotić's calls for a Balkan bloc would be unrealistic, as his belief that Romania would willingly cede a portion of its territory. He had no way of convincing the government of accepting his plan, and especially in the case of Bulgaria, Bulgarian geopolitical interests aimed at regaining its own lost territories, would lead Ljotić to lament that the 'Bulgarians are just as blind as we are!'"³³

²⁷ AJ 115-1. "Pismo Milan Nediću". 25 June, 1940. Ljotić to Nedić.

²⁸ Milan Borković, *Kontra Revolucija u Srbiji: Kvislinška Uprava 1941-1944. Knjiga Prva (1941-1942)* (Belgrade: Sloboda, 1979), 88–89.

²⁹ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 57.

³⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Spoljnoj položaj," *Bilten*, 3 May, 1939, No.11, 1.

³¹ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Balkanska nužnost", *Bilten*, 1 November, 1939, No.31, 10.

³² Ibid. 11

³³ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Bugarska", *Bilten*, Ibid. 9.

His preoccupation with geopolitical interests was evidence of his growing belief in a coming war. This was clear from early 1939, when Ljotić had identified six ‘major players’, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, and the United States, who, according to Ljotić, for their own ‘imperialist-capitalist motives, do not want to be thrown into a war’.³⁴ These powers were however, being pushed into a coming war whether they wanted it or not. It was two ‘ideological forces’, identified by ZBOR as ‘communism and Judaism’³⁵ that were interested in fomenting war. Judaism, contented Ljotić, wants war because of ‘Hitler’s anti-Jewish position’, and also because the ‘Jews know that every war within the last one hundred and fifty years has seen a rise towards Jewish world dominance’. Communism, Ljotić asserts, ‘wants war because of world revolution’, which, according to Ljotić, is ‘vital both as a doctrinal goal, and as a means of salvation for the Soviets themselves’.³⁶ Yet for all his rhetoric regarding supposed Jewish war aims, Ljotić thought that Yugoslav neutrality depended on the Italians. Claiming that ZBOR had ‘constantly defended Mussolini from attacks by leftists and communists’, he felt uneasy about Italian ambitions in the Adriatic, and on Yugoslavia, especially Dalmatia.³⁷

With the German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, ZBOR publications became more fearful, if less openly pro-German than before. With the outbreak of war in September 1939, Ljotić doubted that England or France would undertake any operations in defence of Poland, and considered Germany’s plan would be to negotiate a ceasefire after a German victory.³⁸ Since 1938, Ljotić had sought a specific policy which would avoid anything that might come between Yugoslavia and ‘the war between the Germans and the Anglo-French’.³⁹ He was supportive of the German annexation of Austria, calling it a logical consequence of ‘people of the same blood’. Ljotić had, on 22 February, 1940, written his *Prvo Pismo Knezu Pavlu* (First letter to Prince Paul), advising the Prince Regent not to change Yugoslavia’s orientation towards Germany, and that the ‘enormous military might of the Germans would be like an avalanche for the fragmented Balkans’.⁴⁰ Though primarily

³⁴ Ljotić, Dimitrije, “Pregovori Sovjetsko-Engleski,” 2.

³⁵ Ibid. 4.

³⁶ Ibid. 4; see also Dimitrije Ljotić, “Povodom Dogodjaja u Austriji,” 2.

³⁷ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Italija i mi”, *Bilten*, 20 August, 1939, No.24, 8-10.

³⁸ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Rat,” *Bilten*, 4 September, 1939, No.26, 1.

³⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Medjunarodni položaj,” *Novi Put*, 29 May, 1938, No.19, 1.

⁴⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Prvo Pismo Knezu Pavlu,” *Naša borba*, 14 September, 1941, No.2, 3.

concerned with internal matters, Ljotić's First Letter to Prince Paul also highlights where Ljotić's neutrality, stemmed from. It was primarily a mixture of fear, and admiration (part ideological, part military) of the Germans, as well as a deep distrust of British intentions, and of democracy.

For all his admiration of the Germans' military might, and at least until the war broke out, of Hitler's 'genius', and 'vision', Ljotić was scared of German intentions towards the Balkans, and a possible German invasion. He was however, by no means convinced by British calls for Yugoslavia to reject signing the Tripartite Pact. Ljotić reasoned that allying with Britain and France would be suicide, for both had reached the depths of degeneracy.⁴¹ This 'degeneracy', as seen by Ljotić would most likely be in reference to Britain's democracy, and 'plutocratic capitalism', which would then lead to what he deemed to be 'Jewish influence' over domestic and foreign policy. By referring to Hitler as the 'unwitting tool of communism', Ljotić feared that the real victor of the war would be the Soviet Union, which was heightened after Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations on 24 June, 1940, which Ljotić feared would increase communist agitation and influence in Yugoslavia.

Speaking on the outbreak of the war itself in September 1939, Ljotić considered it a moment 'when the patient could see how the disease arrived'. This disease, according to Ljotić, sprang 'from the deep spiritual areas, with which individualistic and materialistic Europe successfully administered for the last 150 years'. In this vein, he actively attacked Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin, for Europe's current malaise and misfortune, and for their lack of moral and spiritual foundations. Mussolini was characterised as a pagan who 'makes use of Christianity for political purposes'. Hitler, while 'Believing in God', does not 'believe in God's views, or Christian views', and a 'pagan who worships race', and believing that 'God's will and laws are revealed through purity of blood'.⁴²

Yet it was for Stalin, for whom the most damning verdict was reserved. Stalin, contends Ljotić, was 'born into the Orthodox faith', and 'studied theology', only to be 'seduced by the theology of Marxism', causing him to become a 'fighter against

⁴¹ Martić, "Dimitrije Ljotić and the Yugoslav National Movement ZBOR, 1935-1945," 223.

⁴² Dimitrije Ljotić, "Kazna Evropi," *Vihor*, September 20, 1939, No.15-16, 1.

God'. In this, Ljotić contends, the 'leading personalities of the 19th and 20th centuries have certain similarities', primarily their anti-Christian positions, and in Hitler's case, a selfish belief that only 'Germans and Aryans' can be saved.⁴³

War from a ZBOR perspective

Summing up the invasion of Poland, and of the coming globalised conflict, Ljotić considered Hitler to be the 'unconscious agent of the Soviet midwife, who needs a strong and long war'.⁴⁴ Sympathising with Poland, who was viewed by ZBOR not only as a 'Slavic brother', but also acting in accordance with the 'self-respect of a great nation who fights against threats to its unity and freedom'.⁴⁵ Up to the invasion of Poland, wrote Ljotić, Hitler 'was the master of events in Europe', but since 1 September, 1939, he had turned into an unwitting agent of the 'Soviets and Judaism'.⁴⁶ Since the signing of the 23 August, 1939, Nazi-Soviet protocol and anti-aggression Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the coming of war has in itself been the 'rotten fruit of the pact'.⁴⁷

Ljotić's criticism of Germany here can be seen in lieu of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which ZBOR never attempted to justify in its press. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, not only saw the carve-up of a brotherly Slavic state, but in the words of ZBOR member Ratko Živadinović, meant that 'Yugoslavia lost its neutrality', in that it pushed the country towards Britain and France. It was the Jews, Živadinović continues, who 'wanted this state of events'.⁴⁸ As the war dragged on, ZBOR identified 'British imperialism and plutocracy', as being 'aligned with Jewish imperialism', and that both 'Anglo-Saxon plutocracy and Soviet bolshevism are pawns to Jewish internationalism'.⁴⁹ In tandem with the belief in a 'Judeo-Bolshevik' myth, ZBOR also attributed a metaphysical aspect to the coup of 27 March, by stating that it was 'the work of Satan'.⁵⁰

⁴³ Ibid. 1.

⁴⁴ Ljotić, "Rat," 2.

⁴⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Tragedija Poljske," *Bilten*, September 11, 1939, No.27, 1.

⁴⁶ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Pogrešan račun g. Hitlera," *Bilten*, 24 September, 1939, No.29, 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 3.

⁴⁸ Ratko Živadinović, "Nismo više neutralni," *Novi Put*, 1 November, 1940, 5.

⁴⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Budjenje Evrope," *Obnova*, 1 December, 1941, No.128, 3.

⁵⁰ "Od nas zavisi da li će srpskom narodu biti svetlije ili crnje," *Novo Vreme*, 20 July, 1941, No.64, 1,3.

Yet any real political manifestation of ZBOR against the war was muted, relegated mostly to leaflets and pamphlets, blaming the communists and Jews for seemingly goading Germany into war. ZBOR's weakness and unpopularity, combined with popular support for the Allies, and ZBOR's banning, dented any potential anti-war campaign. Occupation only exacerbated this. An example of this thinking comes from the local ZBOR youth section in Čačak. In an early 1941 leaflet, from the ZBOR affiliated *Čačanska srednjoškolska Jugoslovenska Omladina* (roughly translates as the Čačak Yugoslav Student Youth) accused the Soviets of duping Germany into attacking both Poland and France, and in the case of Poland, 'stabbing our brother in the back', and then 'prostituting themselves in German service', while simultaneously 'speaking against them'.⁵¹ Such clandestine actions were all that most local ZBOR sections, under banning order, were capable of. Youthful members of ZBOR, some of whom, as will be shown, would play an increasingly sinister role during the occupation, undertook most of them.

The war was seen as the fruition of ZBOR prophecies. Communism became to be seen as a 'fifth column' within Yugoslavia, with no politician, with the exception of Ljotić, according to ZBOR, speaking out against communist attempts to draw Yugoslavia into war.⁵² Though given ZBOR's outspoken pro-German standpoint and its increasing militarism, it seemed a better fit for any potential fifth column activity. Speaking on Hitler, Ljotić writes that 'many times we have paid tribute to Hitler's genius, his apostolic zeal and purity, his heroic will'. Yet it became apparent even to Ljotić, that Hitler could not be trusted. He admitted as much in the aftermath of the annexation and breakup of Czechoslovakia. Poland, who, in joining Germany in dismembering Czechoslovakia in 1938, also opened itself up to German demands on its own territory.⁵³ By annexing and dismembering Czechoslovakia, Germany, Ljotić warned 'was following a dangerous path'.⁵⁴

⁵¹ IAČ, DB, K-7, br. 22. "Čačanska srednjoškolska Jugoslovenska Omladina – Letak - Ne pada sneg da pomori svet već da svaka životinja pokaže svoj trag". 08 -09 January, 1941.

⁵² IAČ, DB, K-6, br. 66. "Komunistički teror u Čačku" – letak pokreta 'ZBOR' 25 May, 1940.

⁵³ Ljotić, "Tragedija Poljske," 3.

⁵⁴ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Nemačke i Poljske," *Bilten*, 3 May, 1939, No.11, 2.

This rather glaring contradiction of pro-German sentiment, mixed with a fear of German encroachment, annexation, and invasion, as in the cases of Czechoslovakia and Poland, Slavic majority states, would mark Ljotić's thinking up to 1941. He would revel in what he saw as the Nazi's crushing of communist influence in Germany, as a model for Yugoslavia. Yet as Nazi expansionism and imperialism grew bolder, eventually precipitating war, Ljotić's fear of German expansion seems to have begun to outweigh his admiration for elements of Nazi praxis. Neither he nor ZBOR however, condemned the war for what it was, refusing to see the Germans as aggressors but rather as victims of a wider 'Judeo-Soviet' plot. It was this thought pattern that would shape Ljotić's response to occupation and collaboration, coupled with a mixture of admiration and fear of the Germans.

Ljotić's fear of the Germans would prove well-founded, as on 6 April, 1941, using the anti-Tripartite Pact coup as justification, Germany, with support from Italy and Hungary, launched a joint attack on Greece and Yugoslavia, thus drawing Yugoslavia into the war. Hitler saw the coup as a direct attack on German strategic interests, especially as it meant that he would have to secure Yugoslavia and Greece simultaneously. At the same time, a Nazi propaganda campaign was launched against Yugoslavia calling it an 'inorganic construct', and fabricating Serbian crimes against the German minority, in a move reminiscent of the build up to the invasion of Poland.⁵⁵ Calling the operation *Unternehmen Strafgericht* (Operation Retribution), Hitler meant to punish the Yugoslavs for what he saw as their supposed treachery, and to 'destroy the country without pity'.⁵⁶

Invasion of Yugoslavia: ZBOR and Ljotić

The subsequent war was a disaster for Yugoslavia not only militarily, but also politically, and socially. Called the April War its declaration coincided with the *Luftwaffe* bombing Belgrade in the early hours of 6 April, beginning at 06:15.⁵⁷ Patriarch Gavriilo in Belgrade, witnessed the bombing, noted that in almost no time, 'Belgrade was laid to waste'. The city, claims Patriarch Gavriilo, was 'covered and

⁵⁵ Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 16.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Memoari Patrijarha srpskog Gavriila*, 276.

shrouded totally in smoke’, with ‘devastation and immense pain at every step’.⁵⁸ This brutal attack resulted in up to 17,500 casualties, yet even that number is disputed as too low.⁵⁹ The bombing and subsequent ground invasion resulted in numerous refugees fleeing the fighting, further hampering the defensive efforts and capabilities of the Yugoslav forces. Given his status as a former serving officer moved into the active reserve, Ljotić was mobilised as a command officer in a regiment in the Srem Division.⁶⁰ Ljotić notes, in an official military report, on 13 April, 1941, of the apathy of a large portion of the troops, and warns that the soldiers ‘are beginning to grumble’.⁶¹

Being informed of the fall of Belgrade on 12 April, Ljotić wrote to Yugoslav military headquarters that he would be prepared to take the most ‘vigorous and energetic measures’ to ensure that retreating troops do not spread defeatism amongst the regiment, and that the regiment should be moved due to its exposed position, which would result in significant loss of life if attacked.⁶² Mladen Stefanović makes the claim that both the ‘Ustaše and Zbor unreservedly helped the Germans’, from the late 1930s until 1945.⁶³ While this would be more true for the case of the Ustaše, who had a vested interest in destroying Yugoslavia, ZBOR’s repeated calls for national unity and integrity hardly give it to wanting Yugoslavia’s destruction. Stefanović’s thinking is not alone in that, as the prevailing opinion was that ZBOR was avowedly ‘fifth columnist’ in helping the Germans to destroy Yugoslavia.⁶⁴ This claim however, does not stand up to what scant evidence of Ljotić’s service is available.⁶⁵ ZBOR at the time had no legal political existence, with many of its members in prison. Ljotić’s existing report to divisional command would tend to support his actively resisting the Germans, and given his nationalism and military experience as an officer, there is no reason to doubt that he would have fulfilled his duty and fought.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 277.

⁵⁹ Hermann Knell, *To Destroy a City. Strategic Bombing and Its Human Consequences in World War 2* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: De Capo Press, 2009), 194.

⁶⁰ Martić, “Dimitrije Ljotić and the Yugoslav National Movement ZBOR, 1935-1945,” 223.

⁶¹ Dušan Gvozdenović, *Aprilski Rat 1941. Zbornik Dokumentata, Knjiga 2*, 643.

⁶² Ibid. 644.

⁶³ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 97.

⁶⁴ Such opinions amongst historians survived into the post-communist era as well. See Branislav Božović, *Beograd pod Komesarskom upravu 1941* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1998), 83.

⁶⁵ The divisional report was the only reference to Ljotić found by this author pertaining to his role in the April War.

There is evidence to support that ZBOR members, even if their units were not directly involved in the actual fighting, answered their call-up orders, and were imprisoned by the Germans after the surrender as prisoners of war. In May 1941, ZBOR's youth section in Čačak prepared a list of 19 individuals, two of them, Radenko Lazović, and Žika Tomašević, were active ZBOR members in Čačak. The remaining interned were according to the report 'convinced nationalists', and in the case of Dr. Mehmed Hodžić from Sarajevo, even contained a non-local, and clearly non-Serbian name.⁶⁶ The aim, in writing to ZBOR's central headquarters in Belgrade, was to bargain or negotiate for the release of the aforementioned individuals, in the belief that Ljotić, in a personal capacity, would be able to intervene. As will be shown, it was an attitude that many ZBOR members during the war would display. This attitude was of Ljotić as a patrician, a venerated patriarchal figure to whom all could turn to.

In many ways, as will be shown Ljotić enjoyed his role as patrician, and facilitator. This would allow for a certain distance and aloofness that would characterise Ljotić's dealings with ZBOR, its members, his position as party leader, and within the collaborationist apparatus. His role as head of ZBOR during 1935-1940 would suggest, based on his lack of interest in the everyday administrative and organisational details of ZBOR, that this attitude had been cultivated from an earlier stage in his life and political development.

The Axis campaign in Yugoslavia, starting on 6 April, with the bombing of Belgrade, was effectively over by 18 April, General Simović, commander in chief of the Yugoslav forces, had already by 13 April, transferred command to General Danilo Kalafatović, with the intention of signing an armistice.⁶⁷ The armistice was signed 17 April, 1941, with General Radivoje Janković, and former foreign minister Alexander Cincar-Marković being designated by General Kalafatović to sign an unconditional surrender.⁶⁸ The speed and ease with which the Germans conquered Yugoslavia, they might have been forgiven for being drawn into a sense of complacency. Numerous internal fissures, especially in relation to Croatia, where an independent state was

⁶⁶ IAC, Arhivalije Jugoslovenskog narodnog pokreta ZBOR. K-1, reg. br. 51 – "Omladinska organizacija ZBORA Čačak". 13 May, 1941.

⁶⁷ Mile Bjelalac, *Generali i admirali Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1918-1941* (Belgrade: Institut za novu istoriju Srbije, 2004), 179.

⁶⁸ Odredbe o izvršenju primirija između Nemačke i Jugoslovenske oružane sile, 17. April 1941', in Ferdo Čulinović, *Dokumenti o Jugoslaviji* (Zagreb, 1968), 374–376.

proclaimed as early as 10 April, heightened Yugoslav military and economic preparatory weakness.⁶⁹

What it would lead to would be the total dismemberment of Yugoslavia as a political entity, to be replaced with a puppet regime, in Croatia, direct annexation into the Reich, and division into Bulgarian, German, Hungarian, and Italian spheres of influence and occupation. The division of the country between Bulgarian, German, Hungarian, and Italian zones of occupation saw a substantial territorial re-organisation of the country.⁷⁰ Slovenia had three-fourths of its pre-war territory annexed by Germany, with German being proclaimed the only official language.⁷¹ The remaining portion of former Slovene territory, organised into the province of Ljubljana, was occupied by Italy.

Socially and politically, the country was torn apart, with the puppet status of the newly formed *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* (Independent State of Croatia),⁷² and of the reduction of a rump Serbia to German military control, being governed by various Serbian civilian administrations under strict German supervision. While Dalmatia was torn away from Croatia to become annexed by Italy, it was Serbia that saw the greatest administrative and territorial changes.

In the process of national disintegration following the start of Axis occupation, Serbia was left with 4.5 million inhabitants, around 28 per cent of the total population of Yugoslavia.⁷³ A rump and truncated Serbia, subject to German military occupation, also saw the Banat, a part of the former *Dunavska Banovina*, with a substantial

⁶⁹ Croatian independence, of the newly inaugurated *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* (Independent State of Croatia), was proclaimed by Slavko Kvaternik, in conjunction with a member of the German diplomatic staff in Zagreb, SS Brigadeführer Edmund Veessenmayer, on 10 April, 1941. For more see *Documents on German Foreign Policy. Series D (1937-1945). Volume XII. The War Years. February 1 - June 22 1941* (United States Government Printing Office, 1962). ; Marko Grčić, et al., eds., *Tko je tko u NDH* (Zagreb: Minerva, 1997), 226.

⁷⁰ For more on the territorial re-organization of Yugoslavia, see Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*. See especially Chapter 2 'The Partition of Yugoslavia', 47-83.

⁷¹ Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe. Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*. (Clark, New Jersey: The Lawbook Exchange, 2004), 243.

⁷² The proclamation of 10 April, 1941, by Slavko Kvaternik, saw the 'founding' of the Independent State of Croatia. For more see Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret.*; Fikreta Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941-1945* (Zagreb: Skolska Knjiga, 1977). ; Ramet, *The Independent State of Croatia, 1941-45*.

⁷³ Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe. Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, 247.

German population, organised as a special administrative area.⁷⁴ From January 1942, Bulgarian troops were also used to occupy parts of Serbian territory under the supervision of the German military governor.⁷⁵ Hungary, looking to regain territory part of the pre-1920 Kingdom of Hungary, also participated in the dismemberment of Yugoslavia, reclaiming the Bačka and Baranja regions from the former *Dunavska Banovina*, Prekmurje from the former *Dravska Banovina*, and Medjmurje from the former Croatian Banovina.⁷⁶

This convoluted situation was exacerbated by the emergence of various armed formations, whether as organs of the imposed civilian and military authorities or fighting against them, and which were largely delineated by ethnic as well as ideological cleavages. It was within this highly complex and unstable environment that Ljotić, and the ZBOR movement, would be operating in, albeit under different circumstances from the pre-war era, which resulted in a further synthesis of ideological evolution as both man and movement adapted to the situation and circumstances at hand. It would also display the extent to which ZBOR members idolised Ljotić, and yet highlight the movement's organisational weakness, and increased hostility against ZBOR as being too closely identified with the Germans.

Ljotić: The Beginnings and Justification of Collaboration

In the wake of the devastating military defeat and the beginning of enemy occupation, Ljotić, like many others, would have been filled with anxiety, apprehension, fear, and a feeling of uncertainty. After the capitulation, and demobilisation of the majority of the Yugoslav Armed Forces, Ljotić returned to Smederevo, and like the majority of Yugoslavia's inhabitants, simply waited for what was to come next. He was fearful of being arrested, as he participated in the April War as an officer, though his pro-German stance made the Germans sympathetic, and they issued him with a discharge

⁷⁴ Ibid. 251.

⁷⁵ Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 64.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 171.

order,⁷⁷ freeing him from his military duties, and thus his status as a potential prisoner of war.

In the aftermath of the Yugoslav surrender, after having fulfilled his military duties, he was, according to his wartime personal secretary Boško Kostić, to be found in Belgrade, after a brief sojourn in Smederevo.⁷⁸ Serbia was the only area of dismembered Yugoslavia in which an outright German military government was established on 20 April, 1941, by the order of Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch, chief of the Army High Command.⁷⁹ Serbia was considered a vital transportation crossroad, its railways, and its Danube links, connected Central Europe to Bulgaria, to Greece, and ultimately to North Africa.⁸⁰ Therefore it necessitated direct military rule in order to safeguard its strategic importance. Serbia also had a rich supply of strategically important nonferrous metals, which Germany needed for its war effort. Maintaining law and order, to protect such valuable resources was of prime importance.

In doing so, the Germans also wished to expend the least expense, so the idea of having a Serbian puppet government began to be formed.⁸¹ As an added bonus to this, there were certain Serbian politicians, Ljotić among them, who were willing to put themselves at the disposal of the Germans for just such a task. Kostić claims, that at the end of April, he was present at a meeting at Ljotić's flat, along with Milan Aćimović, Risto Jojić, Dušan Letica, and Laza Kostić. It was at this meeting, claims Kostić that Ljotić, with the acquiescence of those present, decided on terms with which to present to the German authorities for the formation of a civilian administration.⁸² Among those conditions were that the Germans respect international law, the entire Yugoslav judiciary and criminal code be left untouched, that the Serbian Orthodox Church's work was to be unimpeded, and that the name of the Patriarch and of King Peter were to be honoured, and celebrated in religious

⁷⁷ AJ 115-8691-19. "Otpusna Lista – Entlassungsschein". The discharge order was issued and dated 4 May, 1941, in Smederevo.

⁷⁸ Boško Kostić, *Za istoriju naših dana* (Lille, 1949), 18.

⁷⁹ Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 65.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 95.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Kostić, *Za istoriju naših dana*, 18.

services.⁸³ It seemed that Ljotić was under the assumption that the creation of a Serbian civilian government was *essential*, rather than *preferable*, to the Germans, and would enter into negotiations with that power structure relationship in mind.

For their part, meeting with Ljotić and Kostić at the end of April, the Germans, according to Kostić, especially the head of the German military administration in Serbia SS commander Dr. Harald Turner, wanted Ljotić to assume the duties as a commissioner for economic affairs.⁸⁴ According to some sources (German sources consulted however make no mention of this), Ljotić refused the offer to enter into any civilian administration under German auspices, yet would seemingly be content to wield influence from the background.⁸⁵ No doubt, his reputation in Yugoslavia at the time would work against his entering into any administration under German control. He could hardly escape any accusation of collaboration given his vociferous pre-war pro-German orientation. Certainly, Ljotić was aware of this fact, adding that the ‘communists would look to do me harm through harming the administration’.⁸⁶ However, Ljotić did admit to being able to wield more influence over any new Serbian administration being outside of it. Thereby acting in his own self-interest, but admitting that he was both ‘in it’, meaning the new administration, and that its ‘duties would be extremely difficult’.⁸⁷

According to Branko Petranović, the Germans viewed Ljotić as more of an ideologue as opposed to a politician or tactician. More than that, the Germans were aware of ZBOR’s compromised status, and accusations of it being financed by Germany, as well as Ljotić’s personal unpopularity.⁸⁸ It was for this reason that they chose Milan Aćimović, a one-time interior minister in Stojadinović’s second government, and Belgrade chief of police from 1938 until 1940, as head of what was termed the

⁸³ Ibid. 19.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 20 ; see also Božović, *Beograd pod Komesarskom upravu 1941*, 82. Božović gives the date as 22 April, 1941, with General Förster, German military governor in occupied Serbia, wanting Ljotić to accede to the post.

⁸⁵ See Byford, “Willing Bystanders: Dimitrije Ljotić, ‘Shield Collaboration’, and the Destruction of Serbia’s Jews”, in Haynes and Rady, *In the Shadow of Hitler*, 301.

⁸⁶ Kostić, *Za istoriju naših dana*, 22. Borković, *Kontra Revolucija u Srbiji: Kvislinška Uprava 1941-1944. Knjiga Prva (1941-1942)*, 29. Borković maintains that Ljotić wanted first to convince the populace that the ‘Germans are their friends’.

⁸⁷ Jovanović Stoimirović, *Dnevnik 1936-1941*, 518.

⁸⁸ Borković, *Kontra Revolucija u Srbiji: Kvislinška Uprava 1941-1944. Knjiga Prva (1941-1942)*, 28.

Komesarska Uprava (Commissioners Administration).⁸⁹ The choice was practical from the Germans' point of view. Aćimović⁹⁰ was not as compromised in the eyes of many Serbs as Ljotić was. Also, Aćimović's past as minister of interior and police chief gave the Germans more assurance about keeping peace and order in occupied Serbia than the politically idealistic Ljotić.⁹¹ Perhaps more tellingly was the fact that the Germans chose Aćimović because he would be better able to assume at least an assurance of peace, as opposed to the deeply unpopular Ljotić who would only enflame tensions even more.

With the announcement of the *Komesarska uprava* (Commissioners Administration, hereafter also referred as CA) on 30 April, 1941, the first phase of Yugoslav, and specifically Serbian political collaboration with the Germans began. Yet it would take another two weeks before the public became aware of the new civilian administration, and it was formed under much different circumstances than Ljotić initially envisioned.⁹² Ljotić, working in the background, attempted to have ZBOR legalised, when all political movements and parties banned by the Germans on 9 May, 1941.⁹³ Recognising the dismembered state of Yugoslavia, Ljotić asks for permission for ZBOR to operate solely in the Serbian occupied territory, and was willing to provide a copy of ZBOR's principles in order to facilitate a favourable response.⁹⁴ This act was significant in itself as it would lead to ZBOR taking the aesthetic step of dropping the 'Yugoslav', moniker from its official name, becoming just the 'National Movement

⁸⁹ Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939-1945*, 134.

⁹⁰ Milan Aćimović (1898-1945). Born in Belgrade, he received a law degree from Belgrade university in 1923. He began working for the police, receiving specialised training in Germany in the 1930s, where is said to have come under German influence and developed contacts with German agents. A supporter of Stojadinović, he was interior minister from 21 August, 1938 until Stojadinović's fall on 5 February, 1939. He was called upon to form a government, the Commissioners Administration, in May 1941 until its replacement on 29 August, 1941. For more see Branislav Božović, and Mladen Stefanović, *Milan Aćimović. Dragi Jovanović. Dimitrije Ljotić* (Zagreb: Centar za informacije i publicitet, 1985).

⁹¹ Škodrić, *Ministarstvo prosvete i vera u Srbiji 1941-1944 : sudbina institucije pod okupacijom*, 63.

⁹² For the announcement of the formation of the Commissioners Administration see ; "Izjava komesara za unutrašnju upravu u Srbiji," *Novo Vreme*, 16 May, 1941, No.1, 1. ; "Naimenovanje komesara," *Novo Vreme*, 16 May, 1941, No.1, 1. The Commissioners administration was finalised through Dr. Harald Turner, German military governor in occupied Serbia General Helmuth Förster, and plenipotentiary for economic affairs in the territory of the military commander in Serbia, Franz Neuhausen.

⁹³ Borković, *Kontra Revolucija u Srbiji: Kvislinška Uprava 1941-1944. Knjiga Prva (1941-1942)*, 163. Permission was granted 25 May, 1941.

⁹⁴ Ljotić, *Sabrana dela, Knjiga VIII*, 22.

ZBOR',⁹⁵ operating only in occupied Serbia, and de facto, a party for Serbs. Though seemingly tacit, in that no ZBOR document or order specifically mentioned the change, it can be seen as a sign of ZBOR's acknowledgement and acceptance of the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and of ZBOR as a Serbian movement. Though perhaps it's tacit approval was a sign that the movement did hold at least a faint hope for a reconstructed Yugoslavia (based on its own ideas and policies no doubt), and that it did see itself in some ways as a 'Yugoslav' movement.

This point, the regularisation of ZBOR's status in occupied Serbia gives rise to the question and nature of collaboration. This issue, in both socialist, and the successor states of the former Yugoslavia has proved to be a contentious point. What is important here is to place the actions of ZBOR and Ljotić in their proper historical context, without relying primarily on historical hindsight. This will be achieved through highlighting the contemporary perceptions of the historical actors involved, emphasising what they believed, whether they felt that a *choice* or not in relation to collaboration, and finally through historical hindsight as to what we *know* now, decades after the fact. It is too easy to look back with hindsight over contemporary events and how they moulded and shaped actions and perceptions, especially in regard to such a trauma as occupation and collaboration.

Collaboration is a multi-faceted term that has taken on various forms in a European context of the Second World War.⁹⁶ Peter Davies identifies four strands of collaboration in Europe during the Second World War. These are 'shield collaboration', an attempt to try to 'protect the country from the worst', a halfway point between collaboration and resistance called 'conditional collaboration', a 'tactical collaboration', aimed at outwitting the Germans, and a 'submission to a superior force', a direct acknowledgement of superior military and political might.⁹⁷ In this vein ZBOR's collaboration can begin to be explained in a seemingly reductionist yet highly nuanced and superfluous strand of a fear of 'Judeo-Soviet' communism, and a desire, however suspect, to 'shield the nation', from the worst

⁹⁵ This trend became evident, in ZBOR's Čačak section from September 1941 in documents and correspondence sent to the General Secretariat in Belgrade.

⁹⁶ Gregor Joseph Kranjc, *To Walk with the Devil: Slovene Collaboration and Axis Occupation, 1941-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 10.

⁹⁷ Peter Davies, *Dangerous Liaisons. Collaboration and World War Two* (Pearson Education, 2004), 24–26.

excesses of the war and occupation, in order to protect the Serbian people and nation. Ljotić went to pains to showing his collaboration as pragmatic, as opposed to ideological reasons. There is perhaps a point in his favour in regard to pragmatism. Ljotić's collaboration, like that of other collaborators can be seen as an attempt of making sense of both defeat and of German brutality, and as a nationalist, of reconciling patriotism with the reality of defeat.

Yet this strand, that of a fear of communism was all the justification needed for ZBOR in order to enter into collaboration with the Germans. In this sense, and using Davies' varieties of collaboration, ZBOR could conceivably be situated between a 'heart and soul' ideological closeness with National Socialism amongst some of its members, to Ljotić's more nuanced 'shield collaboration'. This seemingly implied the wish to spare the country the worst excesses of German occupation, yet believing fully in a German victory as salvation for Yugoslavia. More cynically, or perhaps more accurately, it was also a chance for ZBOR ideas and policies to be implemented, which if Yugoslavia's political continuity had not been ruptured, would not have happened.

Ljotić based his belief in salvation through a German victory on his opinion that Yugoslavia, and specifically the Serbs, destroyed themselves, and that 'method of destruction is the one that the Germans are fighting against'. Only with 'soul', could true salvation arise.⁹⁸ Seeing the conflict as apocalyptic, Ljotić described the war as a 'fight to the death', and that 'every nation that awakes, will return to itself'⁹⁹ as a means of salvation. The first duty therefore, was to 'smash the communists', for they are 'manifestations of a foreign ideal on one side', and of 'inflamed selfishness of ourselves'.¹⁰⁰ This was a result of what was called 'spiritual confusion and infirmity', which took on many different forms and manifestations, and would form a base of Ljotić's wartime writing.

⁹⁸ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Put ka Slobodu. Tri govora Dimitrija Ljotića* (Belgrade, 1941), 3–14.

⁹⁹ Dimitrije Najdanović, "Kako će srpski narod izići iz današnjih teškoća," *Naša borba*, 7 September, 1941, No.1, 2. This article is a write up of an interview between Ljotić and Najdanović.

¹⁰⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Svom snagom do krajnje i potpune pobjede," *Naša borba*, 4 January, 1942, No.18–19, 3.

The nation was suffering from ‘four infirmities of a spiritual nature’, resulting from ‘spiritual disorientation, spiritual disunity, spiritual immaturity’, and ‘absence of social awareness’.¹⁰¹ Every true patriot, Ljotić asserts, he that ‘loves his country more than Red Moscow or Masonic-plutocratic London’, therefore must ‘follow the path of reason’.¹⁰² Reason, was not to follow into a path of ‘resistance, which will bring us social destruction and anarchy’, but rather to concentrate on finding ‘soul, and our national path’.¹⁰³ In attempting to justify their own collaboration, ZBOR sought to undermine the appeal to resistance, and to turn the population against communism by showcasing supposed Soviet opinions of Serbs as ‘hegemonistic’ and ‘exploiters’ elements in Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁴ What the communists really are after, claimed Ljotić, was that they want ‘national destruction’,¹⁰⁵ and that only a concerted moral and spiritual effort can counter communist destructiveness. Addressing the strong Russophile tendency amongst many Serbs, Ljotić warns not to expect salvation from Russia, because Russia is now the Soviet Union, and ‘is neither Russian nor Slavic in orientation’.¹⁰⁶

The focus on salvation was to look inward, not abroad ‘to those listening to radio broadcasts from London’. It only through the ‘return to our traditions, our spiritual path’, and only then will renewal occur in ‘every facet of our national life and national path’.¹⁰⁷ Certainly, Ljotić and ZBOR felt it had no choice but to collaborate. Communism seemed on the advance everywhere, through the guise of what ZBOR saw as ‘Jewish internationalism’, and ‘British plutocracy’. ZBOR saw the conflict as an apocalyptic struggle of Good versus Evil, and of Light versus Darkness. There was to be no middle ground, and no half measures. Behind it all, was the hand of the Jews, yet Ljotić lamented that ‘few people see Jews are such a decisive and powerful force on humanity’.¹⁰⁸ Salvation was to be found in returning to what was deemed to be national, in short, to the past and a romanticised notion of Serbian history and

¹⁰¹ Djoko Slijepčević, “Naši osnovni nedostaci,” *Naša borba*, 14 September, 1941, No.2, 2.

¹⁰² Dimitrije Najdanović, “Kako će srpski narod izići iz današnjih teškoća,” 1.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ D.T., “Akademija CCCP o Srbima kao ‘hegemonistika’ i ‘eksploatatorima,’” *Naša borba*, 14 September, 1941, No.2, 4.

¹⁰⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Ni vrući ni hladni,” *Naša borba*, 19 October, 1941, No.7, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Dimitrije Ljotić, *Put ka Slobodu. Tri govora Dimitrija Ljotića*, 14.

¹⁰⁷ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Vrhovni zahtevi života. Smisao naše nacionalne obnove,” *Obnova*, 6 July, 1941, No.1, 3.

¹⁰⁸ Georgije Pavlović, *Pod šestokratom zvezdom. Judaizm i slobodno-židarstvo u prošlosti i sadašnjosti* (Belgrade, 1943). Introduction written by Ljotić.

customs. This salvation however, would be best achieved under the guise of the Germans, as a guarantor of anti-communist politics.

The concept of the ‘national path’, would find its expression in collaboration, in order to extirpate communism from occupied Serbia, as a basis for a national renovation and renaissance based on the ephemeral ‘soul’. It would also, unsurprisingly, be based on ZBOR’s vague political ideas from the 1930s put into practice. But salvation was not just to be political or spiritual, but also economic.¹⁰⁹ This economic renewal was to be found through the reorganisation of society around ZBOR’s corporatism, and in the ‘traditional’ Serbian concept of the *zadruga*.¹¹⁰ The defeat of Yugoslavia in 1941 marked the ‘end of an inglorious period’ for the country, signifying a return to a ‘Serbian national path’, and the ‘defeat of communism’.¹¹¹ Yet this definition of reason, and the concept of a ‘national path’ would also see increased political collaboration on behalf of a newly re-legalised ZBOR movement, and more sinisterly, an active and idealistic military collaboration, with ZBOR members at its core.

Ljotić and ZBOR: Collaboration and the balancing of relations

Ljotić entered into talks of collaboration with the false expectation of a semblance of equality between a dismembered Yugoslavia and the Germans. Yet for all the conditions that he set out, not one was followed. As a former Justice minister, a free judiciary was a sign of sovereignty, and one that Ljotić made a condition of forming a collaborationist government. However, this was after the already implemented application of German criminal law on occupied Yugoslav territories, stating that ‘anyone who commits an act punishable by German law shall be subject to German criminal law’.¹¹² Yet Ljotić seemed to sincerely believe in the good intentions of the Germans toward Serbia, while being totally blind as to the exact nature of the occupation. His collaboration is made even more pathetic by the fact that he attempted to convince himself and others that his conditions, especially in regard to

¹⁰⁹ “Naša privredna obnova,” *Naša borba*, 7 September, 1941, No.1, 2.

¹¹⁰ Stevan Ivanić, “Osnove zadrugarstva u srpskom narodu,” *Obnova*, 22 May, 1943, No.575, 4.

¹¹¹ “Govor Dimitrija Ljotića omladinicima,” *Obnova*, 27 April, 1942, No.248, 11.

¹¹² Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe. Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (The Lawbook Exchange, Clark, New Jersey, 2004), 598.

‘justice’, had been met.¹¹³ He used ‘international military justice’, as a standard, ignoring that legal decisions were to be made in the name of the German Military Command of Serbia, and not of Yugoslavia. When confronted with the fact that courts were handing out sentences in the name of the German military command, Ljotić countered that ‘occupation of our country leaves justice intact’.¹¹⁴ In short, his fear of the perceived threat of communism, combined with the potential for social disorder grew to an almost paranoid level, in that he would countenance anything, if it meant that communism would be destroyed, and the Serbian people protected from it.

The Commissioners Administration however was in an extremely difficult position from its inception. It lacked any semblance of power and was in effect nothing more than a tool of the German occupation regime. German propaganda made it out to seem like the Commissioners Administration was a continuation of domestic power and government in Serbia, when in effect it merely carried out orders set for it by the German military command in Serbia. At the heart of it, the Germans did not trust the Serbs,¹¹⁵ but as their economic and political interests dictated, they needed people who could ensure local control. Moreover, as a personality, Aćimović was said to be totally under German influence.¹¹⁶ He was totally convinced that working in ‘friendly association’ with Germany was the best political option.¹¹⁷ Aćimović developed close ties with Dr. Harald Turner guaranteeing his pliability as far as the Germans were concerned, but showed that he was in effect the weakness of his government. Ljotić remained outside of the government, but designated two close ZBOR members Dr. Stevan Ivanić, and Milosav Vasiljević as Commissioners for Social Policy and Economics respectively.¹¹⁸ It was within the Commissioners Administration that the first stage of ZBOR’s institutional collaboration began, on a political level.

¹¹³ “Pismo Milanu Aćimoviću šefu komesarske uprave i komesaru ministarstva unutrašnjih poslova. 22 May, 1941,” *Iskra: Ljudi Traže Slobodu, a Sloboda Ljude*, 1 July, 1998, No.1046, 13.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Božović, *Beograd pod Komesarskom upravu 1941*, 99.

¹¹⁶ NA FO 371/33496 R 6583/3046/92. “Mr. Hubert Howard, Ministry of Information to Mr. Dixon”. 2 October, 1942-5 October, 1942. Memo states that Aćimović was completely in German hands and convinced of a German victory.

¹¹⁷ “Prijateljska saradnja sa Nemačkom bila je i ostaje za naš narod najbolja i jedina politika,” *Novo Vreme*, 26 May, 1941, No.11, 1. Write up of Aćimović’s radio speech of 25 May, 1941.

¹¹⁸ Borković, *Kontra Revolucija u Srbiji: Kvislinška Uprava 1941-1944. Knjiga Prva (1941-1942)*, 34.

The German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June, 1941, would add a different dimension to the institutional political collaboration of Ljotić and ZBOR. The ramifications and consequences for German occupied Serbia, and indeed for occupied Europe would be manifest. Organised communist cadres, many of which had experience in organising and clandestine affairs turned to active armed resistance against the Germans throughout occupied Europe. Yugoslavia was no exception, with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia appealing for all Yugoslavs to rise up against the ‘German fascist-capitalist bandits’,¹¹⁹ on 25 June. In specific reference to Serbia, the Serbian Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia sent out an appeal to the Serbian populace to stand with ‘our Russian brothers at whose head is Stalin, the Russian son’, and not to listen to those who ‘talk against our brotherly Croatian people’, and to stand against the ‘traitorous agents of Ljotić and Stojadinović’.¹²⁰

The identification of the Commissioners Administration as ‘Ljotić’s agents’ was not far off the mark. Yet there was also a clear dichotomy between the Ljotić and Stojadinović groups within the Commissioners Administration. Though Stojadinović, while having Ljotić imprisoned, would later be interned himself in April 1940 until March 1941 on grounds of ‘possible collaboration with the Germans’.¹²¹ Ljotić viewed Aćimović, as a staunch Stojadinović supporter, with suspicion falling especially on Aćimović’s time as Belgrade’s chief of police, and his ineffectual rule as commissioner of the interior.¹²² Aćimović meanwhile, was totally opposed to granting Ljotić any sort of influence. Aćimović also, according to ZBOR General Secretary Milorad Mojić, tried to convince the Germans that ZBOR supporters were planning on ‘assassinating all Stojadinović supporters in the government’.¹²³ Increasing personal tensions between Ljotić, his commissioners in the government,

¹¹⁹ *Zbornik Dokumenta i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda Jugoslavija. Tom XII Knjiga I. Dokumenti jedinica, komandi, i ustanova Nemačkog Rajha 1941* (Belgrade: Vojno Istorijske Institut, 1949), 11-17.

¹²⁰ Srpski narode! Radnici, seljaci, gradjani! Srpske majke i sestre! Srpska Omladino! Komunistička Partija Jugoslavije. 5 July, 1941. (Author’s personal collection). On the Communist Party of Yugoslavia’s classification of all ‘bourgeois elements’ collaborating with the occupiers as traitors, in May 1941 see Tomislav Badinovac, *Zagreb i Hrvatska u Titovom doba* (Zagreb: Savez društava Josip Broz Tito, 2004), 42.

¹²¹ Dejan Djokić, “Leader of Devil?” Milan Stojadinović, Prime Minister of Yugoslavia (1935-1939), and his ideology”, in Haynes and Rady, *In the Shadow of Hitler*, 165.

¹²² Borković, *Kontra Revolucija u Srbiji: Kvislinška Uprava 1941-1944. Knjiga Prva (1941-1942)*, 79.

¹²³ AS BIA, II-69. “Mišljenje SS trupa o Zboru izveštava”. 24 December, 1941. Mojić to Ljotić.

and Aćimović would be accentuated by the disorder brought by the uprising in Serbia in the summer of 1941, and Ljotić's direct attack on the validity and capability of the government to resist.

The communist inspired revolt in Serbia would precipitate the downfall of the Commissioners Administration.¹²⁴ Ljotić aided its downfall by publicly denouncing its inefficiency and recused Ivanić and Vasiljević from it. He accused the Commissioners Administration of inaction and inefficiency in face of the communist threat, and accuses the Germans of not doing enough to combat communism, and for outlawing all propaganda activity that could be used to counter the communist threat.¹²⁵ What it highlighted was the evident power struggle between Aćimović and Ljotić, resulting in a real crisis of leadership. Aćimović was titular head, yet Ljotić was behind the scenes, in an unscrupulous struggle with Aćimović for favour and influence amongst the Germans. Evidently the Germans thought enough of Ljotić to not have him persecuted for his condemnation of German action, and inaction. In writing his memorandum denouncing Aćimović and the Commissioners Administration, Ljotić had his own choice as replacement in mind, in concurrence with the Germans, his close associate, General Milan Nedić.

That Ljotić criticised the Germans in such a manner without repercussions is not surprising. Ljotić enjoyed a certain reputation amongst the Germans, who viewed him as a 'visionary', yet not practical and a 'poor tactician'. They characterised him as 'an ideologue, not a leader'.¹²⁶ Though recognising his commitment to fighting against communism, the Germans were seemingly not totally convinced of Ljotić's commitment to a new National Socialist Europe. In a December 1941 memorandum to Ljotić, ZBOR General Secretary Milorad Mojić, urges Ljotić to identify more closely with National Socialism. According to Mojić, the Germans saw Ljotić as

¹²⁴ The *Ustanak u Srbiji* (Uprising in Serbia) was a manifestation and result of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia's *Majsko Savetovanje* (May Council) on 4 May, 1941. It decided on nationwide resistance to the Germans and to domestic collaborators. Its starting point was to be when the Germans attacked the Soviet Union. It was proclaimed on 7 July, 1941, in Bela Crkva, and would later involve non-communist, and anti-communist support for a time. It was brutally suppressed by the Germans by the autumn of 1941. For more see *Ustanak Narode Jugoslavije. Zbornik. Knjige I-VII* (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački zavod JNA Vojno delo, 1964).

¹²⁵ Kostić, *Za istoriju naših dana*, 34. Ljotić sent his memorandum privately, to General Heinrich Danckelmann on 20 August, 1941.

¹²⁶ Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 428.

‘not guaranteeing security’, and as ‘an old style politician with new ideas but not energetic enough’.¹²⁷ It was the youth, attests Mojić in which the future of ZBOR must be placed. Moreover, as Mojić states, the Germans feared that ZBOR’s hatred of former Stojadinović supporters would precipitate a civil war amongst the civilian nationalist groups.¹²⁸ In foreign policy, Mojić states that the Germans are not fully convinced of ZBOR’s commitment to a ‘unified Europe under National Socialism’, being too ‘Greater Serbian chauvinistic’, and criticising ZBOR’s paper, *Naša borba* (Our struggle), as being ‘too focused on Serbian issues and not enough on the war’.¹²⁹

By 1943 however, with the Germans on the defensive, their opinion on ZBOR, especially in relation to the youth, and the formation of the collaborationist Serbian Volunteer corps (to be expanded on later), changed. In a March 1943 report from the German South-eastern Command, ZBOR was identified as having a ‘National Socialist base’, made up of mostly of ‘youths’, and ‘students’, who ‘energetically fought the communists’. It was also the ‘youth’ amongst the Serbian Volunteer Corps, according to the report, rather than Ljotić himself, who was advocating greater integration of Serbian anti-communist forces into the German military apparatus, and closer co-operation between Germany and Serbia.¹³⁰ This German reappraisal of ZBOR raises some poignant questions. Who really headed ZBOR during the occupation? Ljotić or Mojić? On an administrative level, it was clearly Mojić, who signed and decreed orders, but was this done primarily without Ljotić’s knowledge? Mojić had a clear idea of ZBOR mutating into a total National Socialist movement, whereas Ljotić was more concerned with a metaphysical and mystical cosmic struggle. Mojić acting independently of Ljotić is feasible not but not probable. Certainly however, it fits the narrative of Ljotić as a detached leader, one who seemingly did not seek a public profile, thus masking, but not eliminating, his self-interest and ambitions.

¹²⁷ AS BIA, II-69. “Mišljenje SS trupa o Zboru izveštava”. 24 December, 1941. Mojić recalls a conversation with Einsatzgruppe Serbien commander SS *Oberführer* Wilhelm Fuchs, and a Dr. Gode.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ “Izveštaj komandujućeg generala i komandata u Srbiji od 7. Marta 1943. Komandantu Jugoistoka o formiranju i delatnosti Srpskog dobrovoljačkog korpusa”, in *Zbornik Dokumentata i podataka narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda Jugoslavije. Tom XII Knjiga 3. Dokumenti Nemačkog Rajha 1943* (Vojno Istorijske Institut, 1979), 146-151.

Nevertheless, German criticism as far as *Naša borba* was concerned, was largely true. While much of the collaborationist press during the occupation, primarily the dailies *Novo Vreme* (New Times), and *Obnova* (Renewal), regularly featured front page headlines concerning the German war effort, *Naša borba*, as ZBOR's official occupation publication, focused primarily on the idea of Serbian spiritual and national renewal. To the Germans, a focus on ZBOR's ideology and the need for a total renewal of Serbian values and morals was not enough evidence of Ljotić's commitment to a New Order in Europe.

Whether or not Ljotić was affected by this report, or whether or not Mojić's account is indisputably factual, there was no doubting that for Ljotić, the Germans were fighting the same enemy. 'Those Germans', said Ljotić, are 'truly heroic and lovers of humanity', as opposed to 'our people who laugh and make merry during our national catastrophe', thus 'earning the contempt of the Germans'.¹³¹ Yet to the British, at least to elements within the Ministry of Information, by 1942, it appeared that the Germans had lost their confidence in Ljotić, with the Ministry adding their belief that Ljotić was a 'good patriot of strange behaviour'.¹³² The July 1941 communist inspired uprising in Serbia convinced Ljotić of the need to take the strictest measures against the communists and that the Germans, being preoccupied elsewhere, would not be able to save the Serbs from communism if first the Serbs do not save themselves. In order to achieve this, any means were deemed acceptable.

Regardless, there were signs of disconnect between Ljotić and younger ZBOR members, as evidenced by the South-eastern Command report. This can also be interpreted as the beginning of a slight rift between Ljotić and Mojić, who largely oversaw the daily administrative tasks of ZBOR. The growing number of younger members eager to fight communism, to loot, or joining as adventurers, was at growing odds with Ljotić's metaphysical calls for renewal. This rift would be best represented with the creation of the Serbian Volunteer Corps, which as will be shown later in this chapter, would come to be perceived as ZBOR's armed militia, with Ljotić obsessing over its spiritual and moral duty rather than armed action. Armed action though was

¹³¹ "Od kakve je važnosti ishod Nemačko-Sovjetske borbe za Srbe i Srbiju?," *Novo Vreme*, 6 July, 1941, No.50, 1. Write up of Ljotić's 5 July, radio address.

¹³² NA FO 371/33496 R 6583/3046/92. Mr. Hubert Howard, Ministry of Information to Mr Dixon. 02 October, 1942 to 05 October, 1942.

what the corps was created for, and was utilised in this capacity by the man chosen to head a new collaborationist government, General Milan Nedić.

Ljotić and Nedić

Ljotić's personal relationship with Nedić would be much warmer, and would facilitate a smoother relationship and integration of ZBOR's ideas into a new government, called the *Vlada narodnog spasa* (Government of National Salvation), formed 29 August 1941.¹³³ Ljotić felt that he could be able to influence Nedić due to their close relationship.¹³⁴ Yet even with the newly formed Nedić government, the same power struggles within differing cliques would remain. This time however, a new dimension would be added, those followers of Nedić's authority who were loyal to him. These included former ZBOR member Velibor Jonić, Ognjen Kuzmanović, and Djura Dokić. Jonić especially, agitated for Nedić to be a type of 'Serbian governor', while at the same time, attempting to secure his own position.¹³⁵ Both Stojadinović supporters and Ljotić supporters struggled for greater influence and power amongst those who were personally loyal to Nedić. Mihailo Olćan, a ZBOR member, wanted Ljotić as a head of government, while Aćimović believed that once England had sued for peace, Stojadinović would return.¹³⁶ Olćan, as Minister of Economy in Nedić's cabinet, was also very hostile to Aćimović, and would offer a resignation in December 1941 because he felt that the government had 'failed the people'.¹³⁷ These petty power struggles within the government helped further to undermine a regime already lacking in legitimacy and power and goes toward highlighting the personal ambition and selfishness and unscrupulousness that is inevitably heightened in an unstable situation.

¹³³ *Zbornik Dokumenta i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda Jugoslavija. Tom XII Knjiga I. Dokumenti jedinica, komandi, i ustanova Nemačkog Rajha 1941*, 333-334. "Obrazovanja je nova srpska vlada," *Novo Vreme*, 30 August, 1941, No.101, 1.

¹³⁴ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 134. Apart from being distantly related, Nedić also helped to publish *Bilten* in military printing houses when it was banned.

¹³⁵ Borković, *Kontra Revolucija u Srbiji: Kvislinška Uprava 1941-1944. Knjiga Prva (1941-1942)*, 376.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* 377.

¹³⁷ NA FO 371/33496 R 3046/3046/92. "Yugoslav Personalities". From Mr. Rendel. 03 May, 1942 to 11 May, 1942.

Nedić's government would be given no more authority than that of the Commissioners Administration. Through Nedić, the Germans hoped that his presence would prove to be a strengthening factor.¹³⁸ Ljotić was initially, at least, a huge support base for Nedić, and helped him consolidate his authority amongst the differing strands of collaborationists. To the British, Ljotić's influence on Nedić was evident, and they were under the assumption that it was Ljotić who persuaded Nedić to accede as head of government.¹³⁹ Ljotić certainly helped to pave the way by signing, and encouraging ZBOR members to sign the *Apel srpskom narodu* (Appeal to the Serbian people), calling for national resistance to the July 1941 uprising and communism.¹⁴⁰ However it was German strong-arm tactics of totally dismembering Serbia that saw Nedić accede to his new post. Ljotić's personal intervention however, facilitated the entry of Četnik leader Kosta Milovanović Pećanac¹⁴¹ into the service of Nedić's regime. Pećanac's entry can be partly explained due to the strained relationship between the Pećanac and the leader of the other main group of Četniks, those of General Dragoljub 'Draža' Mihailović. Mihailović was the first Yugoslav leader of a popular uprising against the German invasion in 1941 and was quickly promoted to the rank of general and minister of war by the royal government in exile in London.¹⁴² On 12 August, 1941, Ljotić, at his own initiative sent Zoran Vuković (ZBOR youth leader in Niš, whose father Petar was the local ZBOR leader) to meet with Pećanac hoping that he 'saw the danger the Serbian people are in', and hoped that he 'would eventually support the incoming government'.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Škodrić, *Ministarstvo prosvete i vera u Srbiji 1941-1944 : sudbina institucije pod okupacijom*, 66.

¹³⁹ NA FO 371/33496 R 3046/3046/92. "Yugoslav Personalities". From Mr. Rendel. 03 May, 1942 to 11 May, 1942.

¹⁴⁰ NA FO 371/20221 R 10232/162/92. Report by Dr. Sekulić.

¹⁴¹ Born Konstantin Milovanović (1879-1944). Orphaned at an early age due to Albanians killing his parents during an attack on the Visoki Dečani Monastery in 1883. He joined the Četnik groups fighting against Ottoman rule in Macedonia and was awarded the honorary title *Vojvoda* (similar to warlord). He served in both Balkan Wars and in World War One, and would lead the interwar Četnik veterans' association, as well as an ORJUNA brigade. He joined the Nedić government to fight against the communists in 1941, but was killed by Četnik troops who were loyal to General Dragoljub 'Draža' Mihailović in 1944. For more see Momčilo Pavlović and Božica Mladenović, *Kosta Milovanović Pećanac. Biografija* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2006).

¹⁴² Marija Ristic & Milekic. Sven. Serbia Rehabilitates WWII Chetnik Leader Mihailovic. Balkan Transitional Justice. May 15, 2015. <http://www.balkaninsight.com>

¹⁴³ Pavlović and Mladenović, *Kosta Milovanović Pećanac*, 198. Pećanac agreed, though at one point while traveling, he was caught by a German patrol and was on the verge of being shot as a 'terrorist' before a German officer, once knowing who he was, was able to intervene.

In Nedić, Ljotić presumably saw an opportunity to implement his ideological agenda, without taking the blame for any unpopular actions and consequences. This was evident in ZBOR's call for a creation of the *radna zajednica* (Working Community, literally) in 1942, based on the German Labour Front, and with a suggestion for Milosav Vasiljević, as opposed to himself, to head it.¹⁴⁴ Earlier, the Nedić regime had already called for mandatory labour service for the renewal of Serbia,¹⁴⁵ but evidently ZBOR felt that the German example would lead to greater efficiency. To this end ZBOR wholeheartedly backed the Nedić regime, going so far as to criticise the Church for failing to endorse Nedić and for failing to denounce communism and the Partisans. Ljotić lamented that the 'Church talks of peace and love', yet 'Nedić does not cause destruction as he leads the living Serbian nation', and that the Church does 'not say which path is better, Nedić's or the Communists'.¹⁴⁶

There was a certain degree of overlap between ZBOR's ideology and Nedić's regime. Nedić's regime and propaganda tended to idealise the peasantry as the most 'pure Serbs', and ever unchanging, and always traditional.¹⁴⁷ The city, according to Nedić's propaganda, brought spiritual decay, and godlessness from 'schools in the city'.¹⁴⁸ The peasant, as the 'fount of nationalism and patriotism', because of his 'connection to the land', is the best guarantee of Serbian culture and tradition.¹⁴⁹ This rhetoric was reminiscent of ZBOR, and former British plenipotentiary to Yugoslavia Sir Ronald Campbell also echoed the ideal of the peasantry as the most conservative element.¹⁵⁰ Nedić himself saw his regime, as the beginning of a Serbian 'peasant state', and that this new state should be built on 'national co-operative socialism'.¹⁵¹ This idealism about the purity and timelessness of the peasant as a guardian of Serbian culture was akin to ZBOR's conception, but it was not an original thought conceived by ZBOR. Therefore, it would be wrong however to view Nedić simply as being pliable to

¹⁴⁴ 'Pismo Milanu Nediću. 24 February, 1942', in Ljotić, *Sabrana dela, Knjiga VIII*, 113–115. Ljotić calls for the *radna zajednica* to have the same goal as the German Labour Front, and to learn the value and love of work from the German example.

¹⁴⁵ Djura Kotur, "Nacionalna služba za obnovu Srbije," *Novo Vreme*, 16 December, 1941, No.194, 1.

¹⁴⁶ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Ni vrući ni hladni," *Naša borba*, 19 October, 1941, No.7, 1.

¹⁴⁷ Stevo Kuljić, "Seljak," *Zemlja i rad*, February 1943, No.3, 5.

¹⁴⁸ Velibor Jonić, "Grad i selo," *Zemlja i rad*, February 1943, No.3, 7.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ NA 371/30226 R8799/297/92. "General Neditch and new government in Serbia" – Ronald Campbell to Mr. Howard. 18 September, 1941. Campbell describes Nedić as attempting to mobilise the 'conservative forces' in Serbia proper around himself, and of having links with Ljotić.

¹⁵¹ "Bolševici će izgubiti", in *Novo Vreme*. No. 408. 30 August, 1942. p.7; "Jedinstvo države i naroda," *Novo Vreme*, 13 December, 1942, No.498, 3.

ZBOR's influence. Nedić's propagandists envisioned a 'Serbian civil and cultural plan', planned from the end of 1942 in the Ministry of Education.¹⁵²

This concept rested on three basic elements, de-politicisation, continuity, and nationalism.¹⁵³ It was, according to its chief architect, Vladimir Velmar-Janković, to compose of four sections, biological, economic, spiritual, and technical.¹⁵⁴ Nedić saw his task as attempting to protect the Serbian people from the worst excesses of occupation, though like Ljotić, he believed in a German victory, and that communism was a destructive force on the Serbian people. To this end, he attempted to organise anti-communist currents within Serbian society to use as a counterweight to communist resistance. He also, in conjunction with Ljotić, was instrumental in an attempt to build up credibility as a 'patriotic force'. To this end the Nedić regime set up the *Zavod za prinudno vaspitanje omladine u Smederevskoj Palanci* (Department of compulsory youth education in Smederevska Palanka) in 1942.¹⁵⁵ In actuality, the Department of compulsory youth education was a re-education centre for communist, or communist inspired youths who were captured by either the Germans, or the collaborationist forces. It was Ljotić who suggested to Nedić the founding of a 're-education' department as a means of 'saving the youth', in January 1942.¹⁵⁶ It was officially founded 15 July, 1942. With both Ljotić and Nedić viewing communism as a 'mental disease', it was however, according to Ana Antic, not degenerative, and therefore, capable of being cured.¹⁵⁷ While the head of the Department of compulsory youth education was Milovan Popović, head of the Anti-Communist League in Belgrade, the Department's overall command was under the purview of the Ministry of Education, headed by former ZBOR member Velibor Jonić, who devised its curriculum.¹⁵⁸ While again, Ljotić had no official role in the founding of the Department of compulsory youth education, it is obvious that he took an active interest in its affairs. He was in frequent contact with Popović as to the Department's curriculum.¹⁵⁹ On one occasion, according to Parežanin, Ljotić spoke at the

¹⁵² Aleksandar Stojanović, "Srpski civilni/kulturni plan. Geneza i proučavanju.", 89-107.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 93.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 93-103.

¹⁵⁵ Ana Antic, *Psychiatry at War: Psychiatric Culture and Political Ideology in Yugoslavia under the Nazi Occupation* (New York, Columbia University, 2012), 256.

¹⁵⁶ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 197. See also Kostić, *Za istoriju naših dana*, 94.

¹⁵⁷ Antic, *Psychiatry at War*, 258.

¹⁵⁸ Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 199.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 204.

Department on the dangers of communism and on the general political situation.¹⁶⁰ In this regard Ljotić helped, mobilising ZBOR to serve Nedić's regime, however he faced a potential rival, in the Četnik organisation and personality of Dragoljub 'Draža' Mihailović.¹⁶¹

Ljotić and ZBOR: Increased fascist mutation and Mihailović

Prior to the war, Ljotić and Mihailović did not seemingly have any contact. That changed in the wake of Yugoslavia's surrender in 1941 and Mihailović turning to resistance against the Germans. By May 1941 however, with Mihailović sending feelers out to possible allies, one of the officers present on the Ravna Gora plateau with him was Vladimir Lenac, a pre-war ZBOR youth leader at Zagreb University.¹⁶² Lenac was sent by Mihailović to Belgrade to meet with Ljotić to ask him for the names of prominent Belgrade citizens who could offer financial support to the Četniks.¹⁶³ Ljotić was even kept abreast of the organisational progress of the Četniks, and evidently felt assured (briefly) that they would not risk Serbian lives in attacking the Germans.¹⁶⁴ Former journalist, Partisan, and academic, Vladimir Dedijer recalls a meeting in Toponica with a Stepan Pavičević, who claimed that Ljotić sent a delegate in the hope of 'organising Četnik bands', who would not rise until a pre-arranged signal.¹⁶⁵ This does not sound as improbable as it seems, as Mihailović had sent an agent to Ljotić in the hope of helping to procure funding. Ljotić's relationship with Mihailović, unlike with Nedić, would be adversarial. This stemmed primarily from Mihailović's short-lived alliance with the communist led Partisans, his adherence to

¹⁶⁰ Parežanin, *Drugi svetski rat i Dimitrije Ljotić*, 514-515.

¹⁶¹ Dragoljub Mihailović (1893-1946). Entered the Serbian Military Academy in 1910. Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1930, by the war's start he was an assistant to the General Chief of Staff of the Second Army stationed in Northern Bosnia. Refusing to surrender after the 17 April capitulation, he established himself on Ravna Gora where he formed the nucleus of his Četnik organisation that was also known as the *Jugoslovenska vojska u otadžbini* (Yugoslav Army in the Homeland). Engaging both in resistance and collaboration, the Četniks of Mihailović were never a centralised force. He would be arrested, tried, and executed by the communist authorities in 1946. For more on Mihailović see Bojan Dimitrijević, *Djeneral Mihailović. Biografija. Tom I-II* (Belgrade: A.L.X., 1996). ; Kosta Nikolić, and Milan Vesović, *Ujedinjene srpske zemlje. Ravnogorski Nacionalni Program* (Belgrade: Vreme Knjige, 1996).

¹⁶² Kostić, *Za istoriju naših dana*, 32,34.

¹⁶³ Matteo J. Milazzo, *The Chetnik Movement and the Yugoslav Resistance* (John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London, 1975), 16.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Vladimir Dedijer, *The War Diaries of Vladimir Dedijer Volume 1: From April 16, 1941 to November 27, 1942* (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1990), 17.

the Yugoslav Government in Exile, and belief in Allied victory. While there would be a convergence of opinion due to exigency and convenience in the latter stages of the war as will be shown, Ljotić and Mihailović, both royalists and nationalists, were unable to agree on the best course for Serbia and Yugoslavia during the war, even if there was overlap.¹⁶⁶ What overlap existed however, was overshadowed by the deep political cleavages and differences between them. Mihailović did not recognise the Yugoslav capitulation and moved to open rebellion (for a time) against the Germans, while Ljotić saw the best chance for survival and ‘renovation’ under the aegis of the Germans.

While the Nedić government was able to persuade a fraction of Mihailović’s force to put itself at the disposal of the regime to fight communism,¹⁶⁷ Mihailović managed to maintain his operational independence, though tenuously, and with great ambiguity. Ljotić writes that this ‘neutrality’, on the part of Mihailović ‘plays right into the hands of the communists’. Mihailović, contends Ljotić, was not a problem until ‘after 22 June, 1941’, when he ‘took to the woods’, with the communists, when before, ‘Mihailović’s men would visit their families in Belgrade regularly’.¹⁶⁸ Here perhaps Ljotić alludes to what he feels to be an acceptable form of resistance that could conceivably be controlled or infiltrated. By not acting against the communists when they were weak, in June 1941 Ljotić argues, Mihailović allowed the Partisan movement to fester, instead of destroying it. Ljotić also laments that he repeatedly tried to warn Mihailović of the danger, but that Mihailović took Ljotić’s warning to mean that ‘he is on the right path’.¹⁶⁹ Perhaps Mihailović’s biggest sin in Ljotić’s eyes was that he saw ‘salvation in London’, in ‘alliance with the communists’, and not in the message of Nedić, whom Mihailović characterised as a traitor.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ See NA FO 371/37582 R 2655/2/92. “General Mihailović”. Mr. Pearson to Mr. Howard. 24 March, 1943. Pearson states that there is little difference between Mihailović and the collaborators, believing that Ljotić and Nedić would also save face when Allied troops would be at hand and attack the Axis.

¹⁶⁷ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks: War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945*, 110. Tomasevich states that most of those who came over from Mihailović’s command did so in 1942.

¹⁶⁸ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Draža Mihailović i komunisti – prvi deo,” *Naša borba*, 23 November, 1941, No.12, 2.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Draža Mihailović i komunisti,” *Naša borba*, 30 November, 1941, No.13, 3.

Mihailović retaliated in 1942, calling on Ljotić to be declared a traitor by both the Yugoslav Government in Exile and the British.¹⁷¹

In mid-1942, the BBC became involved unwittingly in transmitting a ‘hit list’, compiled by Mihailović’s men, who listed Ljotić, Nedić, and their associates as legitimate targets for assassination.¹⁷² The list, known as ‘Z’ was known both as *zaklati* (to slaughter), and *zastrašiti* (to frighten), would result in the deaths of Kosta Pećanac, and Miloš Masalović, Nedić’s chief of cabinet and ZBOR member, in 1944.¹⁷³ Among ZBOR’s losses due to letter ‘Z’, was its Čačak leader, Father Dragutin Bulić, on 30 July, 1942.¹⁷⁴ To Ljotić, ‘it wasn’t the ‘physical death of Father Bulić the martyr that killed him’, but rather ‘the slander’.¹⁷⁵

Rather than placing the blame on the Četniks, who carried out the actual assassination, Ljotić blamed ‘London’, and referred to those whom killed Bulić as Communists.¹⁷⁶ Individual Četniks were viewed as patriotic Serbs, yet misguided in their following of Mihailović, who as ZBOR portrayed, was guilty of following the orders of London, who was in turn a pawn of the ‘Judeo-Bolshevik’ world plot. Nedić’s Order No. 2, appealed to the Serbian people not to support nor obey Mihailović, while calling for the destruction of the Četniks¹⁷⁷ would ensure that personal relations between Ljotić, Nedić, and Mihailović would be bitter until the end of the war.

Additionally, Mihailović had to content with the ZBOR initiated and saturated *Srpski Dobrovoljački Korpus* (Serbian Volunteer Corps hereafter SVC), formed in September 1941 as an anti-Partisan force, but would come into conflict with

¹⁷¹ NA FO 898/157. Political Warfare Executive and Foreign Office, Political Intelligence Department. “Yugoslav Aide-Memoire answering the Soviet note of 3 August, 1942”.

¹⁷² NA FO 371/30223 R 1377/121/92. ‘Propaganda to Yugoslav Traitors’. Memo of D. Howard. 11 February, 1943.

¹⁷³ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks: War And Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945*, 260.

¹⁷⁴ IAČ, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1 reg. br. 110.

¹⁷⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Kockari,” *Naša borba*, 9 August, 1942, No.49, 1. Bulić had been targeted by the Partisans from 1941, and had on 7 July, 1942, just three weeks before his death, been subject to a Partisan assassination attempt.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 2.

¹⁷⁷ NA FO 371/37582. “General Mihailović”. Sir G. Rendel to Mr. Howard. 22 March to 24 March, 1943.

Mihailović's men as well.¹⁷⁸ Added to this was that in the summer of 1942, the Germans made the decision to disarm both Pećanac's and Mihailović's Četniks and transfer those men deemed reliable enough to the SVC.¹⁷⁹

The SVC is usually taken as the most clearest sign of ZBOR mutating into a more clearly defined fascist movement, by considering the SVC to be ZBOR's party militia, emphasising therapeutic violence, and organisation of youth.¹⁸⁰ Its aim was according to its initiator and ZBOR member Mihailo Olćan, a chance for the 'Serbian people to take salvation into their own hands'.¹⁸¹ By October 1943, a year after his exclusion from Nedić's cabinet, Olćan became, at German insistence, a sort of political commissar for the SVC, and had the full trust of the Germans.¹⁸² Ljotić's own language in relation to youth had become more pronounced and more radical during the occupation. Speaking to a youth labour battalion helping to rebuild Smederevo, before the creation of the SVC, he emphasised youth to 'struggle for Serbia' and that it is 'time to beat down this wave of anarchy', that has destroyed Smederevo.¹⁸³ While Ljotić had no command over the SVC, its initial members were drawn mainly from ZBOR, and primarily from amongst its youth.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, Ljotić was a clear inspiration to the corps, giving them ideology, legitimacy, and support. To Ljotić, the volunteers were 'not fighting for themselves, and not fighting for evil' because they 'firmly believe in the Faith of Christ of their ancestors, the Orthodox faith'.¹⁸⁵

The SVC was in effect the consequence and manifestation of the radicalism of ZBOR's youth section the White Eagles. More than a simple auxiliary unit for the Germans, the SVC offered young ZBOR members a chance for action and the opportunity to fight Communism in defence of Serbia, under the pretence of ZBOR's

¹⁷⁸ See note 11 in the introduction.

¹⁷⁹ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks: War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945*, 111.

¹⁸⁰ Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 428.

¹⁸¹ Bojan B. Dimitrijević, *Vojska Nedićeve Srbije: oružane snage srpske vlade, 1941-1945*, 1. izd, Biblioteka Studije i monografije / Institut za savremenu istoriju, knj. 73 (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2011), 63.

¹⁸² Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 190.

¹⁸³ M.B., "Defile dobrovoljačkog djačkog odreda," *Novo Vreme*, 11 September, 1941, No.111, 3.

Ljotić speech in Smederevo.

¹⁸⁴ IAČ, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1 reg.br.59. Dragutin Bulić to ZBOR General Secretariat. 4 December, 1941. Bulić, ZBOR's Čačak chief writes that the SVC is infused with ZBOR ideology and that he personally did much to help recruit youth into the SVC.

¹⁸⁵ Ljotić, *Dimitrije Ljotić u revoluciju i ratu*, 347.

influence. In this regard, the SVC both absorbed and drained ZBOR's power and energy, and in many ways would completely subsume the entire movement into the collaborationist and German military apparatus. In a way, ZBOR as a political movement was kept relevant only through the SVC, especially as it was perceived as ZBOR's armed wing. Once the SVC began to grow however, the percentage of ZBOR members within its ranks inevitably dwindled, down to ten per cent, according to its commander, General Kosta Mušicki, also a one-time ZBOR member.¹⁸⁶ Nor were relations between the SVC and ZBOR always positive. On installing himself in Čačak in late 1941, Mušicki faced criticism for his conduct from the ZBOR youth in Čačak.¹⁸⁷

Local Čačak ZBOR leader Dragutin Bulić also criticised both Mušicki, for being an 'officer of the old guard', and for the conduct of SVC troops, who were carrying out forced requisitions that amounted to looting and plundering.¹⁸⁸ Ljotić, who proclaimed that the SVC was 'to be Christ's', and 'not the Antichrist's', also criticised the conduct of the SVC on occasion.¹⁸⁹ He condemned the drunkenness, sexual licentiousness, and gambling among elements of the SVC, claiming that the SVC was to act like a 'heavenly seed', and an element of 'good will among people'.¹⁹⁰ In revolutions, continues Ljotić, the winner is 'not one who conquers villages', but one who 'conquers hearts'.¹⁹¹ The SVC therefore was to be an instrument of Christ's love, in the face of retaliation, not one of vengeance or immorality. This gross idealisation on the SVC by Ljotić seems to underline an escape from reality, in that ZBOR's ideology, war, occupation, resistance, and lack of command and discipline, were to blame for the brutalisation of and de-humanisation of the SVC's 'enemies'.

But it must be remembered that the SVC obeyed commands issued by the Germans, not Ljotić, nor Nedić, who was the de facto commander in chief. In this regard, while

¹⁸⁶ Dimitrijević, *Vojska Nedićeve Srbije*, 83.

¹⁸⁷ IAČ, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1 reg. br. 60. "Omladina organizacija ZBOR-a u Čačak". 12 January, 1942. A leaflet published by ZBOR youth, it criticised Mušicki for discounting the services and advice of ZBOR in the town, and for arbitrarily sacking officials.

¹⁸⁸ IAČ, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1 reg. br. 59. Letter of Dragutin Bulić to ZBOR General Secretariat. 04 December, 1941.

¹⁸⁹ Ljotić, *Dimitrije Ljotić u revoluciju i ratu*, 351.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 354.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

those ZBOR members did not cease being ZBOR members, they were in effect, not acting under ZBOR's guise. However, given the considerable ideological overlap of anti-Communism amongst National Socialism and Ljotić's thinking, there are numerous ambiguous shades of grey. Though one should perhaps not look too deeply at the SVC being under German command as any potential source of friction. Ljotić, as titular commander of the SVC, was subject, in theory, to Nedić's authority, which was subject to German commands. Neither raised any point of contention to the SVC being under German command, and therefore, it would be safe to assume that both men were in agreement with the actions taken by the SVC under German control. German control included participation in retaliatory actions against Serbian civilians, uninvolved in resistance activity. The massacre of 2,778 civilians at Kragujevac between 20 and 21 October 1941 is a notable example.¹⁹² The SVC at Kragujevac, under the command of Marisav Petrović, was complicit, along with the gendarmerie, in the taking of, and execution of hostages.¹⁹³ Another of these noxious actions was the active involvement of the SVC in German service to facilitate the Final Solution.

ZBOR, the SVC and the Holocaust

While ZBOR's, and especially Ljotić's anti-Semitism may not have been based primarily on pseudo-scientific racial theory, it was insidious nevertheless, and during the occupation, would manifest itself in the service of National Socialist anti-Semitism. In the immediate aftermath of the German invasion, Yugoslavia's Jews were subjected to the standard Nazi anti-Semitic measures, among which were the economic ruination of Jews through exclusion and robbery, and genocide as a method of the physical destruction of the Jews.¹⁹⁴ German treatment of Jews in occupied Serbia was outlined on 14 May, 1941. The ten points outlining and regulating the status and treatment of Jews in Serbia stated that all Jews must be registered, and wear a yellow Star of David as a sign of identification, and that all Jews were to be

¹⁹² Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 62.

¹⁹³ Ana Antić, "Police force under occupation: Serbian State Guard and Volunteers' Corps in the Holocaust", in Sara R. Horowitz, ed., *Lessons and Legacies X: Back to the Sources: Reexamining Perpetrators, Victims, and Bystanders* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 18.

¹⁹⁴ Jaša Romano, *Jevreji u Jugoslavije 1941-1945. Žrtve genocida i učesnici Narodnooslobodilačkog rata* (Savez jevrejskih opština Jugoslavije, 1980), 61.

removed from any public institution.¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, Jewish property was to be appropriated, all able-bodied Jewish men and women were to be organised into forced labour brigades, and the strict regulation of when Jews were allowed to enter into markets and stores, and when riding trams, to be in a specifically designated Jewish section of the rear car.¹⁹⁶

Such harsh regulations severely curtailing Jewish economic and social life would no doubt have been welcomed by ZBOR. In the German military order of 29 April, 1941, it was the responsibility of the Serbian civilian administration to register Jews, and indeed to implement all German orders and decrees.¹⁹⁷ Jews were forced to give up all radios and refrigerators, and were not to receive any regular salaries.¹⁹⁸ Starting from the summer of 1941, ZBOR's administrative section in Belgrade was involved in the informing of and round-up actions of Belgrade's Jewish population.¹⁹⁹

That most of Belgrade's Jewish population was forcibly recruited into labour brigades, ZBOR's informing on and persecution of doubly vulnerable very young and elderly Jews makes this action all the more odious. It also wanted to stop the adoption of 'Serbian names' by Jews, as a sign of the non-assimilability and incompatibility of Jews in the New Serbia.²⁰⁰ This was in conjunction with the Wehrmacht's setting up of a military propaganda section, Section 'S', which actively sought ZBOR's support in disseminating Nazi propaganda through cinema, publications, and radio.²⁰¹ That they achieved some success amongst ZBOR members can be explained through its extensive use of anti-Semitic and anti-Masonic propaganda. It also showed there were ZBOR members and sympathisers who were susceptible to a more racially based National Socialist anti-Semitism. This was evidenced from the ideal of the nation as a racial community and entity, in addition to being seen as a cultural or linguistic community.²⁰²

¹⁹⁵ Valter Manošek, *Holokaust u Srbiji. Vojna okupaciona politika i uništavanje Jevreja 1941-1942*. (Belgrade: Službeni List, 2007), 45.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 46.

¹⁹⁷ Branislav Božović, *Stradanja Jevreja u okupiranom Beogradu 1941-1944* (Belgrade: Školska Knjiga, 2004), 282.

¹⁹⁸ "Objava," *Novo Vreme*, 24 May, 1941, No.9, 2.

¹⁹⁹ Božović, *Stradanja Jevreja u okupiranom Beogradu 1941-1944*, 112.

²⁰⁰ "Jevreji i naša imena," *Naša borba*, 14 September, 1941, No.2, 6.

²⁰¹ Manošek, *Holokaust u Srbiji. Vojna okupaciona politika i uništavanje Jevreja 1941-1942*, 51-52.

²⁰² M.B., "Nacionalističko shvatanje naroda kao rase," *Naša borba*, 14 September, 1941, No.2, 4.

In this sense, ZBOR led an anti-Semitic press campaign aimed at both removing the supposed influence of the Jews and at legitimising its own collaboration. It tried, as part of a wider ideal of a New Serbia, to foster a new collective identity that would isolate and exclude ‘foreign elements’ such as the Jews. The Nedić regime codified anti-Semitism in lieu of National Socialist anti-Semitism, and created the Serbian State Propaganda apparatus, with Djordje Perić, a one-time ZBOR member, at its head.²⁰³ Its crude anti-Semitism was initially patterned on ZBOR’s anti-Semitism, in that it was largely devoid of the racial Nazi style anti-Semitism, yet *Naša borba* carried almost daily anti-Semitic articles, with little coaxing needed from the Germans. Lazar Prokić, another member of the propaganda apparatus, and ZBOR member declared that the Serbs should ‘have no compassion for the Jews’, and the Jews ‘were to blame for the bombing of 6 April’, while stating that ‘Serbian anti-Semitism’ is domestic’, with ‘no connection to the German occupier’.²⁰⁴ ZBOR member and Minister for the National Economy Mihailo Olćan went so far as to say that the Jews ‘got what they deserved’, and that the Serbs should be grateful that the ‘sledgehammer of the Germans’ came down ‘on the Jews and not the Serbs’.²⁰⁵

ZBOR’s *Naša borba* was filled with anti-Semitic content, ranging from Ljotić’s more quasi-Christian and economic based anti-Semitism to the racially based anti-Semitism of ZBOR general secretary Milorad Mojić.²⁰⁶ In addition to the usual litany of Jewish misdeeds, Jews were accused of running and exploiting trade in gold, and precious metals, but also of ‘white slavery’.²⁰⁷ ZBOR’s pre-war anti-Semitism, focusing on the image and figure of the ‘Jewish Capitalist’, was again evident in *Naša borba*. The ‘Jew’ as an economic exploiter, as the main source of peasant dissatisfaction and anger, ‘brought all economic wealth under its control’, but ‘were not content with that’, and therefore ‘bought up the land that our peasants strive for’.²⁰⁸ The influence

²⁰³ Milan Koljanin, “Antisemitski stereotipi i propaganda u Srbiji 1941-1942,” *Istorija XX veka* 21, no. 1 (2003), 91.

²⁰⁴ Cohen and Riesman, *Serbia’s Secret War*, 78.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 80-81.

²⁰⁶ Milorad Mojić, “Duh jevrejstva,” *Naša borba*, 12 October, 1941, No.6, 8. Mojić accuses the Jews of working towards the destruction of all non-Jews, because it is allowed in the Torah and Talmud, as is ‘every other vice and wickedness’, ‘infecting the Jews’. See also Milorad Mojić, “Naši seljaci i radnici – robovi jevrejski,” *Obnova*, 20 October, 1941, 3.

²⁰⁷ M.B., “Jevreji kod nas i okolo nas,” *Naša borba*, 14 September, 1941, No.2, 2.

²⁰⁸ “Kako su jevreji kupovali srpske njive,” *Naša borba*, 2 November, 1941, No.9, 10.

of the ‘Capitalist Jew’ was said to have come with the appearance of ‘foreign capital’, after 1918, with Yugoslavia being an ‘El Dorado of speculation with foreign capital’.²⁰⁹

Furthermore, the Jews were said to ‘value money and profit above life’, knew only one task, the ‘work’, for ‘domination’.²¹⁰ The theme of Jewish capitalist exploitation, was linked to the wider theme of the Jews as exploiters of the Serbian people and nation,²¹¹ with Jews being subservient to the Ottomans in exploiting Serbia, thus justifying the harsh Nazi measures against them.

Naša borba also took to publishing excerpts from Henry Ford’s the ‘International Jew’,²¹² in order to emphasise international solidarity on the theme of the Jew as the ‘capitalist exploiter’. However, it would be the 22 June, 1941, German invasion of the Soviet Union and the July 1941 Serbian Uprising that would accentuate ZBOR’s anti-Semitism, with the communist led Partisans being the very embodiment of the ‘Judeo-Bolshevik’ menace. The ‘Jewish-communist’ bands had descended on the Serbs in their ‘greatest national misfortune and misery’, with ‘Jewish-communist cellars full of food’, while the rest of the ‘population starves’, and that the ‘Jews are laughing at the Christians, while murdering unsuspecting peasants’.²¹³

The ‘Jewish-communist’ conflagration given to the Serbian Uprising was utilised by the Germans, in that brutal repressive retaliatory tactics brought against the innocent Serbian population was deemed to be because of ‘communists and Jews’. Reprisal killings quickly escalated to indiscriminate killings of Serbs, rounded up at Partisan ambush sites and executed for ‘not warning the Germans in advance of an impending attack’.²¹⁴ This was evident from 28 June, even before the uprising began, when the first order for the mass execution of Jews was issued, in which communist prisoners and hostages were shot as well.²¹⁵ By September 1941, with the security situation in

²⁰⁹ I. Miodragović, “Inostrani kapital pod kontrolom jevreja,” *Naša borba*, 12 October, 1941, No.6, 9.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ “Jevreji u doba Karadjordja i Kneza Miloša,” *Naša borba*, 23 November, 1941, No.12, 9.

²¹² Henry Ford, “International Jew,” *Naša borba*, 26 October, 1941, No.8, 11. Reprint of Ford’s work.

²¹³ R.B., “Jevreji-komunistički izveštaji,” *Naša borba*, 21 September, 1941, No.3, 2.

²¹⁴ Christopher R. Browning, “Sajmiste as a European Site of Holocaust Remembrance,” *Filozofija i društvo* 23, no. 4 (2012), 100.

²¹⁵ Manošek, *Holokaust u Srbiji. Vojna okupaciona politika i uništavanje Jevreja 1941-1942.*, 52.

Serbia becoming increasingly dire, the Germans decided on a three-pronged approach to dealing with the uprising. Firstly, it involved the roundup of all Jews and Roma and their internment in camps in Belgrade and Šabac. Secondly, the Nedić regime was ordered to rally and organise Serb anti-communist forces, and thirdly, that German front-line troops were to be redeployed to Serbia, with the use of brutal terror tactics.²¹⁶ This resulted in certain SVC units being responsible for the persecution of Jews under the guise of anti-communism, where those arrested as ‘communists’, even if not Jewish, were ‘tainted with Judaic traits’.²¹⁷

By the end of 1941 however, with the uprising in Serbia extinguished, the anti-Semitic campaign lessened. This was because the majority of Serbia’s male Jewish population had been shot between July and November 1941,²¹⁸ with the majority of Jewish women and children being interned in various camps around Belgrade, most notably Banjica and Sajmište. This would be the fate of a majority of Smederevo’s Jews. By February 1942 the majority of Smederevo’s Jewish women and children, were forcibly transported by the Germans to Sajmište. The camp was at the time holding 6,300 inmates, who three months later, would be all killed.²¹⁹

The collaborationist anti-Semitic propaganda campaign tried to establish a link of Jews as exploiters, communists, Freemasons, and destroyers of Christian nations. Jews were not seen as citizens but rather as parasites, whether economic, ideological, or social. It also led to Serbian collaborationist formations, notably the SVC, in physically assaulting and arresting Jews for transport to the Banjica and Sajmište camps in Belgrade. Out of the nearly 24,000 people who were interned at Banjica during its four-year existence, the SVC was responsible for the incarceration of 1,096 of the inmates, having arrested them and turned them over to the Germans.²²⁰

²¹⁶ Browning, “Sajmiste as a European Site of Holocaust Remembrance,” 100.

²¹⁷ M.M., “U Nišu je otkrivena jedna grupa bandita koji su obrazovali crveni revolucionarni štab,” *Obnova*, 3 February, 1942, No.173, 2.

²¹⁸ Byford, “Willing Bystanders: Dimitrije Ljotić, ‘Shield Collaboration’, and the destruction of Serbia’s Jews”, in Haynes and Rady, *In the Shadow of Hitler*, 304.

²¹⁹ Cohen and Riesman, *Serbia’s Secret War*, 63.

²²⁰ Venceslav Glišić, *Teror i Zločini Nacističke Nemačke u Srbiji 1941-1945*. (Belgrade: Institut za istoriju radničkog pokreta Srbije, 1970), 134.

What question can be raised from the Serbian collaborators, and in particular of Ljotić, is the extent to which he personally, and consciously agreed with the implementation of Final Solution in Serbia, and whether the Jews should be ‘sacrificed’ for the ‘renewal and rebirth of Serbia’. That however is difficult to quantify and establish. But the Final Solution’s implementation in Serbia, ZBOR’s anti-Semitism, and that of Ljotić personally, saw the implication of their beliefs. Boško Kostić, in his capacity as Ljotić’s personal secretary during the war recalls an autumn 1941 meeting between himself as translator, Ljotić, and Dr. Harald Turner, the then commander of the military administration in Serbia. Kostić states that Ljotić was ‘against the murder of the Jews’, but doesn’t want the ‘Jews to economically run’ his country.²²¹ Yet during the same meeting, as Kostić alludes to, Ljotić asked for a ‘few hundred hostages’ to be released, all Serbian, and arrested on charges of Freemasonry. Ljotić, as Kostić states, attested to the nationalism and loyalty of the Serbian hostages,²²² while never asking for the same clemency for Jewish hostages. While it might be easy to deduce that the trauma and uncertainty of war and occupation meant that ZBOR encouraged the Serbs to look into themselves for their salvation, it, along with the SVC seemed willing and able to participate in and justify the persecution of the Jews if it meant that measures against the Serbs were lessened as a result of it. This however would also negate the image of ZBOR, and Ljotić personally as being little more than innocent bystanders unable to protest Nazi policy. It is clear in whatever form he was able to wield influence, Ljotić was not averse to having the Jews removed from Yugoslavia, regardless of the inevitable method, whether or not he agreed with Nazi anti-Semitic and racial ideology.

As with his role in the SVC, the Commissioners Administration, and the Government of National Salvation Ljotić would officially remain outside of any government. He did however delegate two ZBOR members, Čedomir Marjanović, as Justice Minister, and Mihailo Olčan, as Minister for National Economy under Nedić’s government.²²³ Olčan, by August 1943, was also given an unofficial position like Ljotić, that of *Izvanredni komesar vlade za okrug Kruševački* (Associate government commissioner

²²¹ Kostić, *Za istoriju naših dana*, 64.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ “Obrazovanja je nova srpska vlada,” 1.

for the Kruševac region).²²⁴ Unofficially however, Ljotić, like Olćan, was invested with an official position in an unofficial capacity, that of *Izvanredni komesar za obnovu Smedereva*²²⁵ (Associate Commissioner for the Renewal of Smederevo), from 11 July, 1941, a position he would hold until forced to flee in October 1944

Ljotić and ZBOR: Regional cleavages: Smederevo and Čačak

Ljotić's position was developed because of the explosion that took place in Smederevo on 5 June, 1941.²²⁶ Speaking in 1942, Ljotić describes the situation leading to his appointment as Associate Commissioner for the Renewal of Smederevo by the Commissioners Administration in July 1941. According to Ljotić, immediately after the explosion, both the Germans and the Serbian Red Cross organised help for Smederevo, while Aćimović, Ivanić, and Vasiljević sent a delegation to Smederevo to assess the damage. He continues by stating that the 'Germans fed the inhabitants at no cost for the first few days' after the explosion.²²⁷ The State Commissariat set aside 13 million dinars for the renewal of Smederevo, while the Central Committee for fundraising campaign for Smederevo collected another 2 million dinars.²²⁸ On his own accord, Ljotić called for volunteers amongst the youth to help with the reconstruction. Primarily ZBOR youth groups answered this call. By September, there were two main groups of organised ZBOR volunteer groups. Around 120 were in Smederevo helping with the reconstruction, under Budimir Nikić. This group would be later moved to Belgrade where it helped the Belgrade Police in his role of identifying Communist sympathisers and more ominously, Jews.²²⁹ Furthermore, a

²²⁴ See *Saopštenje o uvodjenju opsadnog stanja*. 7 August, 1943. Poster from the author's personal collection.

²²⁵ "Uredba o izvanrednim ovlašćenjima za obnovu Smedereva," *Obnova*, 11 July, 1941, No.6, 3. The Associate Commissioner for the Renewal of Smederevo was a re-working of an earlier law from 16 September, 1939. It was a subordinate organ, made up of delegates from the ministries of finance, construction, national health, and social policy and food.

²²⁶ The cause of the explosion has never been determined. Smederevo fortress, where the explosion took place, was stocked with confiscated Yugoslav Army gas, munitions, and weapons that were to be transported to Germany to use for the coming war against the Soviet Union.

²²⁷ "Godina dana rada na obnovi Smedereva. Resultati jedne plodosne aktivnosti. Izjava izvanrednog komesara Dimitrija Ljotića," *Obnova*, 15 June, 1942, No.288, 3.

²²⁸ *Ibid*

²²⁹ Dimitrijević, *Vojska Nedićeve Srbije*, 64.

second group of ZBOR youth, under the command of Senior Youth leader Vladimir Lenac, of 350 descended on Smederevo to help with the reconstruction.²³⁰

The rebuilding of Smederevo was, to Ljotić, symbolic to the rebuilding of Serbia. That Smederevo was one of the last Danube fortresses to fall to the Ottoman Turks in 1459 may not have been lost on Ljotić, though he never made any statement during the occupation to this regard. The reason for his silence on Smederevo's symbolism may be because the invaders this time were his political and ideological allies. The 'reality of Smederevo', said Ljotić, would be the 'reality of Serbia', and 'by rebuilding Smederevo', we 'will rebuild ourselves',²³¹ for a Serbian future. Adding a metaphysical dimension to the reconstruction process, the explosion of 5 June, 1941, was akin to the destruction of the nation after 18 April, 1941, and part of a larger battle 'between the seen and unseen', and a 'divine punishment'.²³² To achieve this renewal, Ljotić embarked on a total simultaneous architectural, moral, and societal reconstruction of Smederevo, as his own personal fiefdom and idealised vision. Architectural reconstruction especially, was to be done in a traditional Serbian style, symbolising the return to tradition and customs. He also wanted it done in the quickest manner, ordering that all reconstruction projects begun on 11 June, 1941, be finished by 1 September, 1941.²³³ To help facilitate this he set up guidelines for the general conditions of construction sites, among whose thirteen points included a decree for daily salaries, between 8 to 12 dinars daily for skilled workers, and 5 to 6 dinars daily for unskilled workers. Any contractor wishing to undertake a project, must first be approved by the Associate Commissariat, will be liable for any shortcomings in material or building quality, and must provide for his employees.²³⁴

Taking up office in the Smederevo city council, the Office of the Associate Commissariat from September 1941 took to maximise its efficiency by announcing its working hours as four days a week (it was closed Tuesdays).²³⁵ Yet it was clear that the resources at his disposal would not allow for any sort of strict timetable, with

²³⁰ Nemanja Dević, "Smederevski okrug u proleće 1941," *Istorija XX veka* 29, no. 1 (2011), 135.

²³¹ "Zavetna misao grada Smedereva," *Obnova*, 6 June, 1943, No. 586, 3.

²³² Dimitrije Najdanović, "Simbol obnovljene domovine," *Naša borba*, 14 June, 1942, No.41, 3.

²³³ Arhiv Smedereva (Hereafter ASmed). Izvanredni komesarijat (Hereafter IK) 8327/41. Odluka o završetku radova izvanredni komesar. 21 August, 1941.

²³⁴ ASmed-IK 06/07/1941.

²³⁵ ASmed-IK 9853/41.

many streets well into late 1941 still left with debris on them.²³⁶ While Ljotić did indeed work diligently in the immediate aftermath of his appointment, it would be his personal secretary in Smederevo, Vladan Vujović, who would take over most of the running of the Associate Commissariat, along with one of Ljotić's assistants, Andrija Ljolja. The uprising in Serbia, the struggle against Communism, and the problems arising from the Commissioners Administration, and later the Nedić government, would occupy most of Ljotić's time and meant that he spent most of his time in Belgrade. The Smederevo district at this time, like most of the rest of Serbia, was teeming with a brewing ideological civil war between Serbs. Partisan activity was noted from July 1941, as were the activities of Četniks loyal to Kosta Pećanac, under the joint command locally of Timotije Bijanić and Vlatko Vlahović.²³⁷ The Partisans were also active, in both Smederevo and the neighbouring town of Požarevac, though it was not until 12 August, 1941, that units in the two towns were given operational autonomy from the Novi Sad regional section.²³⁸

Smederevo, like the rest of Serbia was caught up in the tumult caused by a breakout of resistance in parts of occupied Yugoslavia, in this case in Serbia, where armed resistance was strongest in autumn 1941, but was almost completely crushed by the end of the year. The Smederevo Partisans themselves were described by ZBOR as immoral and greedy people who were easily misled and deceived due to their lack of intelligence.²³⁹ Partisan activity within Smederevo proper however, was negligible, with most activity concentrated in rural regions. Nevertheless, in order to counter such threats, and to spread propaganda about the dangers of communism, Ljotić would spend most of his time in Belgrade, acting almost as a benevolent, but constantly absent landowner in regard to Smederevo. He would be content to let his office staff in Smederevo run the mundane daily administrative affairs. What this inevitably resulted in was that Ljotić's ideological energy would be concentrated in Belgrade, and one of his only ideological acts, let alone public political acts in

²³⁶ ASmed-IK 2015/41. A report of the Smederevo police notes that most of Smederevo's streets are in horrible condition, and that homeowners are forced to take measures to traverse the debris.

²³⁷ Dević, "Smederevski okrug u proleće 1941," 136.

²³⁸ Marijana Mraović, "Rad Vlade narodnog spasa u suzbijanju komunističkog aktivnosti u Požarevačkom okrugu u drugoj polovini 1941 godine," *Zapisi. Godišnjak Istorijska Arhiva Požarevac*, no. 1 (2012), 149.

²³⁹ Ratko Parežanin, "Medju Smederevskim Partizanima," *Naša Borba*, 30 November, 1941, No.13, 6.

Smederevo was a rally for the oath taking of volunteers for the SVC in which he spoke.²⁴⁰

When in Smederevo, Ljotić's personal popularity in Smederevo, and that of his family, meant that perhaps understandably, in his role of Commissioner, the citizens looked him on as a sort of patrician. He seems to have taken this role seriously, as there are numerous records of citizens of Smederevo writing directly to him in order to ask for aid, mainly financial, but also for jobs. The case of Nataljija Smiljković is a telling example. An unemployed worker who could not also pay her rent, she wrote to the Associate Commissioner for help with financial aid and a job. In this rare case, Ljotić responded with his own hand, ordering that Smiljković be given a job as well as a 'gift' of 780 dinars monthly.²⁴¹ The case of Dragutin Stoilković is another example. A surveyor, he asks Ljotić for a job at the Associate Commissariat's technical section. Ljotić acquiesces while stating that Stoilković, who asks for 120 dinars, to be given 100 monthly.²⁴²

Such benevolence, and care for Smederevo and its inhabitants seems at odds with the actions of ZBOR during the Second World War but it appears that Ljotić did genuinely care for the wellbeing of both his hometown and its inhabitants. This is unsurprising given that Smederevo was to be at the heart of the new Serbian 'renewal'. His devotion to Smederevo is also evidenced by his plan to have a new sewage system for the town from 1941.²⁴³ He also donated books from his own personal library to bookstores around Smederevo at no cost, totalling to almost a thousand books.²⁴⁴ Smederevo was to be the core of a new revitalised and reborn Serbia, one that as Ljotić had it, would spread throughout Serbia. This of course, was predicated on a continued German presence and the defeat of the ideological and guerrilla campaign waged by the Partisans.

²⁴⁰ "Zakletva srpskih dobrovoljaca u Smederevu," *Novo Vreme*, October 9, 1941, No.135, 4. Ljotić stresses the point that the volunteers are fighting for 'law and order', against 'destruction'.

²⁴¹ ASmed-IK 1770/41.

²⁴² ASmed-IK 2021/41.

²⁴³ ASmed-IK 1300/41.

²⁴⁴ ASmed-IK 1108/44.

Inevitably given his rigid worldview, in his idealised new Smederevo, there were certain elements that would be outside its scope. This group certainly included communist sympathisers, but also Jews. From July 1941, there were 567 registered Jews in Smederevo, registered under Ljotić's orders, in accordance with existing German rules. Jews were to be organised into their own work brigades, and be given a salary of 11.62 dinars daily.²⁴⁵ This in itself is both interesting and revealing. From the order of the Associate Commissariat of 6 July, Jews were to be paid in the same daily wage bracket as skilled workers on construction sites. There was inevitably, a catch. Jews were not allowed to 'hoard money', and any money deemed greater than the need of its members to buy food was to be returned to the Commissariat. The work brigades were also to make note of any and all payment, with receipt, which were to be delivered every three days to the Commissariat.²⁴⁶ While Ljotić would be given no command over the fate of the Jews in Smederevo, his anti-Semitism, in tightly controlling the finances and expenses of the Jewish work brigades, seems harsh given that no similar measures were taken against any other resident in Smederevo. It would be as if Ljotić feared that if the Jewish community in Smederevo began saving money, their influence would grow, to the detriment of the Christian inhabitants, which would be in keeping with his own views on Jews and anti-Semitism.

Smederevo was noted for a lack of ZBOR political activity, as opposed to Ljotić's own personal rule. Indeed, in the face of Ljotić's personal rule, there seemed little need for any real ZBOR activity, as everything was done under Ljotić's personal aegis. Where ZBOR can be said to be active is in the strength of the SVC in the Smederevo region, and ZBOR's pre-war electoral support. This meant that Ljotić, and ZBOR could galvanise and mobilise support, even if it meant acting under German command. Vladimir Dedijer however notes that the Partisans had successes in mobilising peasant support in Ljotić's 'Danube heartland'.²⁴⁷ The town was noted for its relative political stability as well, a sign of the reputation of the Ljotić family, and again, of ZBOR's pre-war electoral support in the area. The same cannot be said for

²⁴⁵ ASmed-IK br. 867/41. Rešenje Izvanrednog komesara. 3 July, 1941.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Dedijer, *The War Diaries of Vladimir Dedijer*, 117.

Čačak, in the heartland of Serbia, where the violence and uncertainty of collaboration, occupation, and resistance, would be visited on the town.

Čačak

Located in western Serbia, Čačak, unlike Smederevo, would not be bombed during the April War, and no Germans would enter the town until the official Yugoslav surrender in April 1941, and only then only to announce its signing before withdrawing.²⁴⁸ In this thesis, Čačak is discussed as a case study that shows how ZBOR has been initially formed as networks of local branches that focused on local issues and agenda. In this manner, ZBOR in Čačak showed how the movement in one local area has been operational without a clearly defined centralised structure. This lack of a central body that monitors and control the movement as it develops in different local areas of the country.

Čačak had a small but at least in the pre-war era a relatively active ZBOR section, formed in 1935, under the influence and leadership of the energetic priest Father Dragutin Bulić.²⁴⁹ Less than a month after the April 1941 surrender, ZBOR in Čačak, was writing to Ljotić asking him to send arms to the town so that ZBOR can defend itself and the town from the ‘increasing activity and influence of the Communists’, and to give the people a boost of morale.²⁵⁰ Yet it would seem that inside the town, ZBOR had a reputation, as being fifth columnist, and that there was a feeling that Ljotić personally was responsible for the invasion and occupation.²⁵¹ This was a view evidently echoed throughout much of the Čačak district.²⁵² Most of the time and energy of ZBOR in Čačak would be towards countering the supposed Communist

²⁴⁸ *Čačanski kraj u narodnooslobodilačkoj borbi 1941-1944. Hronologija Događaja* (Čačak: Istorijski Arhiv Čačak, 1968), 27.

²⁴⁹ For a brief biography on Bulić’s life, see Dimitrije Ljotić, “Sveštenik Dragutin Bulić,” *Naša borba*, 2 August, 1942, No.4, 1. See also IAC, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1, reg. br. 96.

²⁵⁰ IAC, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1, reg. br.1. Sredoje Mitrović to Dimitrije Ljotić. 16 May, 1941. Mitrović states that only Ljotić’s honour, wisdom, and morality can save the nation during this time. Strict measures were to be taken against the Communists. The Partisans would kill Mitrović in November 1941.

²⁵¹ IAC, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1, reg. br. 16. Dragutin Bulić to Dimitrije Ljotić. 06 June, 1941.

²⁵² IAC, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1, reg. br.29. Isidor Dramlić to Dragutin Bulić. 02 August, 1941. Guča. Dramlić, a ZBOR commissioner in Dragačevo in response to Bulić’s request for an information update.

threat. This would be especially true after the 22 June, 1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union.

Bulić notes the type of ‘psychosis that has overtaken the Serbian people’, especially the priests, in regard to the German invasion of the Soviet Union, in that most of the priests of the *Žička eparhija* (Žička Eparchy), under whose ecclesiastical jurisdiction Čačak falls under were vehemently anti-Nazi. Bulić notes that ‘most priests would rather Stalin win than Hitler’, and asks Ljotić to bring this issue up with the Church hierarchy so it does not happen again, since the ‘Soviet Union is not Russian, nor is Stalin a Russian, or has any links to Slavdom’.²⁵³ ZBOR’s situation in Čačak would be made considerably worse in the immediate aftermath of the German invasion of the Soviet Union. As with the outbreak of the uprising in Serbia, Čačak would find itself, briefly in the autumn of 1941 under the control of the liberating so-called *Užička Republika* (The Republic of Užice).²⁵⁴ From the Summer of 1941 however, ZBOR in Čačak would notice a definite worsening of the situation, with ‘most orders from the Commissioners Administration not being enforced’, and ZBOR noting that both the ‘municipal authorities and the police are incompetent’.²⁵⁵ During the autumn of 1941, the situation had worsened, with the ‘impression of civil war being present’.²⁵⁶ By this time ZBOR in Čačak had begun collaborating actively with the Germans, in an attempt to destroy Communist influence in the town, by supplying the Germans with lists of suspected Communists. But were also, at times, critical of the Germans who were described as ‘poor quality’, and were constantly ‘drunk, rude, and aggressive towards the inhabitants’.²⁵⁷ ZBOR losses increasingly mounted, due to losses in the SVC, and assassinations carried out by the Partisans, adding to the worsening situation in the town, and the precarious situation of ZBOR.²⁵⁸ By late 1941, more than a dozen ZBOR members had been killed in targeted assassinations by the Partisans.²⁵⁹

²⁵³ IAČ, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1, reg. br. 23. Directive from Dragutin Bulić. 21 July, 1941.

²⁵⁴ The Užice Republic was established with its head in Užice, under the guise of the Communists, it would from 24 September, until 29 November, 1941, be the first liberated territory in occupied Europe. For more see *Užička Republika. Zapis i Sećanja* (Užice: Narodni Muzej Užice, 1981).

²⁵⁵ IAČ, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1, reg. br.27. “Izveštaj od 25 jula 1941”. Čačak’.

²⁵⁶ IAČ, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1, reg. br.28. “Izveštaj o političkom stanju u krajevima: Čačanskom i Užičkom”.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ IAČ, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1, reg. br. 39. “Izveštaj iz Čačka”. 1 September, 1941.

²⁵⁹ IAČ, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1, reg. br. 67.

Throughout this period, despite Bulić's repeated pleas, there was no help from ZBOR headquarters, nor was there any response from Ljotić, who left most organisational matters to Milorad Mojić, the general secretary. With the situation worsening, and with no guidance from ZBOR headquarters, Bulić offered his resignation on 22 September, 1941, criticising the leadership for being too involved 'in other matters'.²⁶⁰ Bulić does not list these 'other matters', but it would seem plausible that Ljotić's increasing ideological work, and focus on an apocalyptic world struggle, at the expense of his position of ZBOR's head, would conceivably be at the core of Bulić's complaint. The creation and arrival of the SVC in the Čačak region did little to improve ZBOR's reputation, as in Gornji Milanovac, ZBOR and the SVC were seen as 'Hitler's mercenaries', and fifth-columnists, and that the 'inhabitants would rather see a German soldier than a volunteer'. While Ljotić personally, in contrast to Čačak, was viewed as 'competent and honest', though ZBOR was seen as little more than 'Germanophiles', who were simple 'yes men'.²⁶¹

As a political movement, ZBOR in Čačak was hampered by the suspension of its activities by the uprising in Serbia, and it was not until early 1942 that the movement was able to hold meetings. Even then it would only meet twice.²⁶² The death of Bulić at the hands of the Četniks would take what little impetus there remained in the movement so that by the end of 1942, ZBOR's organisational activity in Čačak dwindled to almost non-existence.

A Different ZBOR

By the end of 1942, ZBOR as a movement, throughout Occupied Serbia had not ceased to exist, but had ceased to function as an active cohesive movement. Ljotić's

²⁶⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Budjenje Evrope," 3. ; IAČ, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1, reg. br.52. "Glavnom Tajništvu Narodnom Pokreta ZBOR". 22 September, 1941.

²⁶¹ IAČ, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1, reg. br.82. April 1942.

²⁶² IAČ, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1, reg. br. 101. "Zapisnik prve sednice NP ZBOR u Čačku održane 18 January, 1942". Report by Dragutin Bulić from 21 May, 1942; Zapisnik. Druge sednice mesnog organizacija Narodnog Pokreta ZBOR održana danas 21 July, 1942. Apart from choosing new district chiefs and discussing ways of fundraising for the party, including a special tax to be paid by members, little more was discussed apart from the war.

statements to the movement, and official acts, would grow infrequent after 1942.²⁶³ The general worsening of the war situation, both within Occupied Serbia and throughout Yugoslavia meant that much of what could be deemed ZBOR activity was confined to the actions of the SVC. This was evidenced in the changing nature of ZBOR's propaganda, and increasingly of Ljotić's speeches. The bulk of Ljotić's writings from 1943 on reflect a much more sombre tone, especially in regard to the increasing threat not just to Serbia but to 'Christian civilisation', and 'Europe', as the Germans began to be pushed back by the Soviets. However, it was Christians, in particular the Serbs, who were to blame for the impending disaster. Ljotić likened the Serbs to prisoners, with the Germans as the jailors. The Germans however, as jailors, only ever implemented the will of the 'dungeon master', the unforeseen but ever present ruler. This ruler, according to Ljotić, was God.²⁶⁴ The 'prisoners', Ljotić writes, only ever 'come into contact with the jailors', is only 'implementing the master's will'.²⁶⁵

According to Ljotić, Hitler was just a 'truncheon in the hands of God', and that it was God, and not Hitler, who were 'beating the Serbs for their wickedness'.²⁶⁶ Yet 'God's justice' visited on the Serbs could have been avoided if the Serbs had heeded the 'thousands of voices warning them not to go down that path',²⁶⁷ in regard to the 27 March coup. Germany's fate then, concluded Ljotić, determined the fate of Europe.

As the Germans steadily began to lose ground, Ljotić, by December 1943 began appealing to the Germans for a change of policy in regard to the treatment of Russian civilians. Yet he did not seem to argue for any change in German policy in regard to its occupation policies in Serbia. This could partly be explained through Ljotić's pre-war geopolitical thinking that gave a monarchic Russia primacy in a Pan-Slavic federation. This federation, now reoriented, would be formed under German auspices until the threat of communism was eradicated and Russia would supposedly regain

²⁶³ IAC, Arhivalije JNP ZBOR u Čačku, K-1, reg. br. 84. "Glavno Tajništvo". Milorad Mojić. 11 April, 1942. An official act declaring that all able bodied ZBOR members between the ages of 17-30 undertake mandatory voluntary service for the rebuilding and renewal of Serbia. This would be one of ZBOR's last official decrees.

²⁶⁴ 'Srpski narod u tamnici', in Ljotić, *Sabrana dela*, 253–260.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. 253.

²⁶⁶ Ibid. 256.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

her position of prominence. Furthermore, he criticised the Germans for failing to see the ‘type of war’ being waged by the Soviets, and that the Germans have ‘only themselves to blame’ because their actions led to the Russian becoming their enemies in 1941.²⁶⁸

It was Ljotić however, who failed to see the type of war being waged by the Germans, seemingly believing that the ideological and racial war for *Lebensraum* (Living Space) in the East would not preclude a monarchic Russian government, autonomous, yet under German over lordship. That being said, he criticised the Germans for allowing Stalin to co-opt Russian nationalism for the ‘sake of Bolshevism’, in its fight against Germany and National Socialism.²⁶⁹ Ljotić was correct at least, in this regard. Stalin was able to mobilise popular support and action against the Germans by appropriating Russian historical and military figures of the maligned, ‘non-Soviet past’, for what has been termed as the ‘Great Patriotic War’.

To this end, Ljotić argues, a ‘change of policy is necessary’, and a Russian ‘government’, with a Russian army, under the Russian flag, must be created as a sign to the Russian people of Hitler’s good intentions, which would also have the effect of weakening Stalin.²⁷⁰ This new Russian government, by joining with the Axis was also to have a double effect as it would lead to Britain, in the ‘face of a real Russian government with a real Russian heart’, to see Bolshevism for ‘what it really was’.²⁷¹

Tellingly, Ljotić made no mention of the boundaries of this Russian puppet state, preferring to leave the question until after the war was finished, assuming, incorrectly and naively, that the Germans intended to deal with the Russians on a basis of respect and reciprocity. Serbia’s own military and political situation therefore, hinged on a German victory. By 1944 he was haranguing the British and French for declaring war on Germany in 1939 when it was ‘clear that Germany wanted to racially and biologically destroy communism’.²⁷²

²⁶⁸ ‘Memoar Dimitrija Ljotića upućen vojnog zapovedniku u Srbiji’, in Ljotić, *Sabrana dela, Knjiga VIII*, 291.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid. 297.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Dimitrije Ljotić, *Pozadina rata i njen Gospodar* (Belgrade, 1944).

The Jews, according to Ljotić, who needed this war in order to complete ‘world domination’, were controlling the entire war indeed the entire world.²⁷³ With the situation continuously worsening throughout 1943 into 1944, by October of that year, with Soviet forces crossing into Yugoslavia, Ljotić, Mihailović, and Nedić were forced to flee with the retreating German forces.²⁷⁴ The severity of the situation brought around a temporary alliance of all anti-communist forces, in delaying rear guard actions against the advancing Partisans.

In the case Ljotić and Nedić, this came as official German orders for withdrawal, in their positions as commanders of the SVC. In October 1944, 4,000 SVC troops were transported to Slovenia under German protection, for use against Partisan bands in the area, but more so as safeguards against enemy encroachment surrounding the railways between the Isonzo River, and Rijeka.²⁷⁵ Most collaborators, or those deemed to have collaborated however, were not so lucky. In Belgrade, on 27 November, 1944, *Politika* published the names of 105 ‘political and class enemies’ who were executed in the immediate aftermath of Belgrade’s liberation. Among those executed, ZBOR members made up 4 per cent of those executed, who were arrested on the basis of pre-prepared lists and reports.²⁷⁶ In the town of Valjevo in Western Serbia, in the aftermath of the Partisan entry on 18 September, 1941, sixty-one SVC members were executed outright. Documents belonging to the newly created *Odeljenje za zaštitu naroda* (Department for National Security) show more than six hundred executed in Valjevo alone from September 1944.²⁷⁷ The worsening military situation of the Germans and of the collaborationist forces would see Ljotić attempt a concentration of Yugoslav (primarily Serbian) anti-communist forces in the Julian area of Slovenia. Ljotić made overtures to Mihailović to join him in Slovenia, but failed due to Mihailović’s mistrust of Ljotić. His was not the first attempt to try to unite the anti-communist and collaborationist Serbian forces. From 1943, Hermann Neubacher,

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Srdjan Cvetković, “Ko su 105 (104) streljanih? Prilog istraživanju ‘divljeg čišćenja’ u Beogradu 1944’,” *Istorija XX veka* 24, no. 1 (2006), 81. Ljotić had left Belgrade on 12 October, while Nedić and most of his functionaries had left by 6 October.

²⁷⁵ Pavlowitch, *Hitler’s New Disorder*, 256.

²⁷⁶ Cvetković, “Ko su 105 (104) streljanih? Prilog istraživanju ‘divljeg čišćenja’ u Beogradu 1944’,” 101.

²⁷⁷ Milorad D. Belić, “Teror ratnih pobednika u Valjevu 1944-1945,” *Glasnik Istorijski Arhiv Valjevo*, no. 44 (2010), 68.

Special Plenipotentiary of the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, had tried to unite, unsuccessfully, the forces of Ljotić, Mihailović, and Nedić.²⁷⁸ That both attempts failed is hardly surprising, especially given the acrimony that existed between Mihailović and both Ljotić and Nedić, and the fact that both the SVC and Mihailović's Četniks were constantly engaging in attacking the other.

Kostić however tends to paint a contrary picture of the nature of the communication between Ljotić and Mihailović in late 1944 and 1945, claiming that Četnik and SVC representatives met in Belgrade in early September 1944 in order to agree on a common nationalist front against Communism.²⁷⁹ In the spring of 1944, the *Crnogorski dobrovoljački korpus* (Montenegrin Volunteer Corps) was established as a formation of the SVC under the auspices of the Germans, and to be under the command of former Mihailović subordinate Pavle Djurišić.²⁸⁰ Djurišić was appointed by Mihailović head of all Četnik forces in central and eastern Montenegro in October 1941, and from January 1942, was concluding non-aggression pacts with local Italian occupation troops, giving him and his troops freedom of movement against the Partisans.²⁸¹ From November 1943, Djurišić was in Belgrade meeting with Nedić, who introduced him to both Ljotić and Mušicki. Nedić obtained enough munitions from the Germans to allow for the creation of a 5,000 strong force.²⁸² The severity of the situation however necessitated a temporary alliance of all anti-communist forces, in delaying rear guard actions against the advancing Partisans. However, there would be no grand anti-communist Yugoslav united force. Nevertheless, there was a limited agreement to place all armed formations of the Nedić government under Mihailović's control by the summer of 1944. Mihailović reportedly assured Nedić that he still had contact with the Anglo-American forces, and was convinced that a joint Anglo-American force would land on the Adriatic Coast.²⁸³

²⁷⁸ Marko Attila Hoare, *The Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War: A History* (London: Hurst & Company, 2013), 110.

²⁷⁹ Kostić, *Za istoriju naših dana*, 166. Kostić claims that Mihailović met with SVC commander Kosta Mušicki in Belgrade.

²⁸⁰ Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 441.

²⁸¹ Radoje Pajović, *Pavle Djurišić* (Zagreb: Centar za informacije i publicitet, 1987), 30–31.

²⁸² Radoje Pajović, *Kontrarevolucija u Crnoj Gori. Četnički i Federalistički pokret 1941-1945* (Cetinje: Obod, 1977), 470–471.

²⁸³ Stephen Dorril, *MI6. Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service*, Second Edition (New York: Touchstone, 2002), 335.

By 1945, the soft break between the White Eagles, the SVC and Ljotić had become evident. Writing a public open letter to the SVC in January 1945, Ljotić criticises both the White Eagles and the SVC for never really understanding him. During this time, Ljotić and Mihailović had come to a limited agreement that would see Četnik General Miodrag Damjanović take overall command in the Slovene Littoral, from 27, March, 1945.²⁸⁴ The main difference between the White Eagles and himself, according to Ljotić, was that he was constantly working on the ‘spiritual side’, as opposed to the ‘organisational side’.²⁸⁵ Ljotić alludes to the fact that the White Eagles under the ‘organisational route’, favoured quantity, over quality of ZBOR recruits. For Ljotić, a ‘spiritual route’ as the visible side of the ‘organic’ would in itself form the ‘organisational’ and ‘intellectual’ route.

The ‘organisational route’ can be found without God, Ljotić states, and he upbraids the White Eagles for not having undergone sufficient ‘education and constitution’ of its members.²⁸⁶ Whether by this point Ljotić actually showed a degree of regret, or just acceptance of his situation is difficult to deduce. His ideology and thought was both rigid and sincere. He firmly believed that the war could have been avoided, and ultimately, won, had his ‘warnings’ been heeded. His religiosity only heightened his ideological rigidity, seeing the war as a ‘divine retribution’ for the actions and sins of the Serbs. Unfortunately, he never had the opportunity to properly explain these questions, as on 23 April, 1945, he was killed when the car he was traveling in veered off a bridge in Slovenia. His death in a car accident, ironically, and tragically, probably saved him from arrest, trial, and eventual execution at the hands of the government of the new Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, or a life in exile. Delivering the eulogy at his funeral, Bishop Velimirović lionised Ljotić as a ‘politician carrying a cross’, whose importance ‘transcends the boundaries of Serbian politics’.²⁸⁷ Given that Ljotić and Velimirović had a falling out over the issue of Hitler and of collaboration, by 1945, it is clear that both men were totally convinced that only a German victory could save Serbia and Europe from communism. Ljotić and ZBOR, mired in controversy, would see their physical ideological battles move into the realm of historical memory and mutual historiographical and hagiographical

²⁸⁴ *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 191.

²⁸⁵ “Iz pisma Miloju Marinkovića”, in Ljotić, *Dimitrije Ljotić u revoluciju i ratu*, 371.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 377.

²⁸⁷ Byford, *Denial and Repression of Antisemitism*, 51

accusations of ‘fascism’, and ‘treason’ in a new Socialist Yugoslavia, and amongst Ljotić’s supporters and sympathisers who emigrated throughout Europe, North and South America, and Australia.

In early May 1945, Damjanović led most of the troops under his command into north-western Italy where they surrendered to the British and were placed in detention camps. Many would be later extradited to Yugoslavia, where between 1,500 and 3,100 were executed as traitors and enemies of the nation, and buried in mass graves at the Kočevski Rog plateau in Slovenia.²⁸⁸ Others found refuge in Australia, Western Europe, and the Americas, where they established émigré organisations intended to promote ZBOR’s political agenda. Many of Ljotić’s supporters settled in Munich, where they ran their own publishing house and printed a paper called *Iskra* (Spark). On 8 July, 1974, the agents of the Yugoslav State Security Service (Uprava država bezbednosti, UDBA), assassinated Jakov Ljotić, Dimitrije’s brother.²⁸⁹ Jakov Ljotić was active in publishing *Iskra* in Munich. Ljotić in his role of collaborator and traitor was perhaps surprisingly, not regularly portrayed in post-war Socialist Yugoslav film and media. One exception being Dušan Makavejev’s 1968 film *Nevinost bez zaštite* (Innocence Unprotected), where Ljotić was portrayed attending the funeral of a SDK member.

²⁸⁸ Kosta Nikolić, “Obračun Titova režima s jugoslavenskim monarhističkim protukomunističkim snagama kraju Drugog svjetskog rata”, in *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, Vol.44, No.3, 2012, 631-650.

²⁸⁹ Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2003), 119.

Conclusion

This thesis had a threefold aim. The first was to identify the ideological origins, and influences of the ZBOR movement through analysing the political development and evolution of its founder, Dimitrije Ljotić, and through locating it in a wider European context. This has shown that Ljotić's ideological influences were highly fluid syncretistic in that he drew from among the Russian Slavophiles, the AF, and from the anti-modern, religious, and monarchist thought that evolved as a rejection of the ideals of the Enlightenment and French Revolution. However, this syncretism was largely confined within the same narrative. That narrative was the negation of modern advances in society, technology, and the economy, as being against God, tradition, and the monarchy.

ZBOR was as much a phenomenon of a local Yugoslav context as it was of existing European interwar anti-democratic and anti-modernist currents. It sought to impose its idea of rural life on society, in a mostly agrarian country. This rural life could best be protected under a monarch who would ensure what ZBOR perceived as a God given mandate. That these currents coalesced into a vaguely defined 'counter-revolutionary' narrative helps to place ZBOR into a European context of pre-1914 right-wing radicalism, one which pre-dated fascism, but would in part, become later co-opted by it. The emergence of fascist ideology, elements of which came from the same ideological and intellectual precursors, would later blur the lines of distinction between movements like ZBOR, and Fascism and National Socialism.

ZBOR's ideological precursors looked to past eras as being pure and uncorrupted. Though ZBOR would never specify a period in Serbian history as a 'golden age'. Operating in a predominantly agricultural and rural country, the romanticised notion of the peasant as a safeguard of culture and tradition against the decadent modernising city was evident in the rhetoric of the AE, AF, and the IL. With the ANI, operating in an Italy that had not fully consolidated itself, the peasant was an important feature of its rhetoric, however the focus was on expansionism and modernisation as a means to improve Italy and the creation of a better future. With the exception of the ANI, counter-revolutionary movements were simply unable, or unwilling to, adapt to

changing cultural, political, and socio-economic landscapes, as they decried their contemporary state as decadent and, argued for a return to tradition, and ‘order’.

Because most members of the AE, AF, and the IL were mostly middle to upper class, including a number of landowners, the effects of industrialisation, modernisation, and urbanisation, combined with the perceived ills of democratic and economic liberalism, would drive anti-modernist rhetoric. Ljotić’s participation in agricultural cooperatives can certainly be seen in this light. ZBOR’s members, as evidenced by its list of candidates, spanned the socio-economic spectrum. However, the two more common features show peasants, and shopkeepers/tradesmen. This indicates a social base of a more middle to lower middle class base, but this deduction is highly subjective and more work needs to be done in establishing ZBOR’s (albeit meagre) supporter base. As it stands, as little is known of ZBOR’s membership, even less about their reasons for joining, or voting for ZBOR. It is probable that most were nationalistic, idealistic, and primarily conservative. Youth responses to ZBOR and Ljotić are even more surprising, given that the movement did not actively see itself as a ‘youth movement’. As the case with the White Eagles show, many younger ZBOR members saw the movement in a much more revolutionary and fascist light, as a real means of affecting change. The brutality and uncertainty of the Second World War added a new dimension to the complex and contradictory social psychological phenomenon known as human nature.

The AF was the standard ideological model used by counter-revolutionary and anti-modernist movements throughout Europe. However, these movements were also both highly adaptable, and highly syncretic, utilising only those elements of the AF that would further specific domestic ends. ZBOR is no exception to this.

On a personal level, Ljotić’s religiosity was contrasted with Maurras’ utilitarian view of religion and the church as an institution. His religiosity would bear hallmarks to Codreanu, and to William Dudley Pelley, founder of the Silver Legion of America.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ William Dudley Pelley (1890-1965). Trained as a journalist, Pelley worked as a foreign correspondent in the Russian Far East during the Russian Civil War, where his experiences left him a committed anti-communist and anti-Semite. While working as a screenwriter in Hollywood, Pelley had a near death experience in 1928, claiming to have seen God and Christ, who instructed him to spiritually transform the United States. He founded the Silver Legion of America on 31 January, 1933.

Pelley's religiosity and profusion of metaphysical writings and Ljotić's religiosity and religious metaphors would show marked similarities in their metaphysical and mystical anti-communism, though Pelley was more influenced by National Socialist aesthetics than Ljotić would be. Ljotić was aware of, and praised Codreanu for his resistance 'against the Jews'. However he criticised the violence of the Iron Guard, believing that it would backfire, which it did, with the November 1938 murder of Codreanu.

It would be erroneous to assume that traditionalism, or monarchism, was politicised only in Europe. Or that fascist, or fascist-like ideology was only politically expressed in Europe, North America, or Australia. Those whose political trajectories, ideological idiosyncrasies, or evolutions mirroring that of Ljotić, can be found globally. One such example is the Japanese ideologue Kita Terujirō, otherwise known as Ikki Kita (in Japanese the correct order is surname first, therefore it would read as Kita Ikki).²⁹¹ Kita was like Ljotić, very much a product of his environment, but more importantly, displayed a superficial similarity in terms of an end goal, incoherence, and idiosyncrasy. Kita was as much an ideological idiosyncratic as Ljotić. Kita would argue for Japanese expansion, but rejected the notion of a pure Japanese race, stating that Japanese are a 'mixture of Chinese, Korean, and aboriginal elements'.²⁹² Like Ljotić was a monarchist, but he rejected the monarch as divine, characterising him rather as 'the people's emperor', a 'representative of the people'.²⁹³

Kita's ideology and trajectory, is of course, not anything more than superficially similar to that of Ljotić. Yet his perception as misunderstood, incoherent, and ultimately categorisation as fascist shares broad similarities with that of Ljotić.

The Legion was modeled on the Nazi brown-shirted SA. Pelley ran for president in 1936, he would be charged with high treason and sedition in 1942, being released in 1950. He is credited with the Soulcraft religious system, based on his metaphysical writings. For more see Scott Beekman, *William Dudley Pelley: A Life in Right-Wing Extremism and the Occult* (Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 2005); William Dudley Pelley, *Door to Revelation* (Pelley Publishers, 1939).

²⁹¹ Kita Ikki (1883-1937). A Japanese author turned political philosopher. Initially drawn to socialism, by 1906 he had begun developing a type of socialism compatible with his perception of Japanese historical development. Equally drawn to nationalism, he would look to fuse the two into a nationalistic socialism but in reality was an eclectic mix of nationalism, socialism, and spirituality. His works were deemed responsible for the military coup of 1936, which saw him arrested, tried, and executed. For more see Brij Tankha, *Kita Ikki and the Making of Modern Japan: A Vision of Empire* (University of Hawaii Press/University of Delhi Press, 2006).

²⁹² Ibid. 264

²⁹³ Ibid. 214.

The second aim was to deconstruct ZBOR's ideology and political existence in Yugoslavia and Serbia, highlighting the similarities it shared with Fascism and National Socialism, but arguing that these similarities did not in themselves amount to a total identification with this totalitarianism, as ZBOR's own worldview was based largely on a pre-modern, anti-industrialist, anti-urbanism, romantic agrarianism and pastoralism, coupled with a modern form of nationalism. ZBOR, through Ljotić would be more influenced by the AF, and elements of Catholic social thought than either Hitler or Mussolini, at least up to 1941. ZBOR would be much more active through its publications than in any actual physical manifestations. There were no grand rallies displaying a modicum of Fascist and Nazi aesthetics, praising rebirth and regeneration, or honouring a cult of heroism or martyrdom in war.

The question as to whether ZBOR showed any real organisational activity is linked with the movement's size and scope. From 1937 there was an active government campaign against ZBOR that resulted in the banning of meetings, due to 'security risks'. Certainly, left-wing and wider anti-fascist opinion were active in restricting ZBOR's political voice, and probably acted, as in the case of government repression, as barriers to potential recruits and sympathisers. Nevertheless, ZBOR's inability to transmute its ideas was as much a result of its own incoherence as the existing 6th of January regime that banned most political parties. ZBOR had to contend with the JRZ, a battle that it had no chance of winning. Ljotić was a prodigious and prolific writer in support of Nazi anti-communist action, but he would take no physical steps to model ZBOR along Nazi or Fascist lines. ZBOR's 'renewal' and 'revolution', was primarily spiritual, in that it necessitated a 'state of mind', and was to be found through God. But how precisely this was to be achieved, and what was to be done once such a state of mind had been attained, was left unanswered. This could only have had a detrimental effect on potential supporters who may have wished for concrete action as opposed to printed metaphors. After its 1940 banning, there was little outcry, even among ZBOR members. Imprisonment of over 100 members, many who held leadership positions, had left the movement incapacitated. It also showed that ZBOR's support, with the exception of those imprisoned, had not been imparted. Residual signs of ZBOR remained up to April 1941 through various pamphlets and

graffiti, but its supporters seemed to have largely disassociated themselves completely from the movement.

The accusation and association of ZBOR with fascism has coloured its historical analysis from 1935-1940. This has resulted in what ZBOR said, or how it manifested itself being largely overlooked, used only to highlight its similarities with fascism. That it has been overlooked during this timeframe is unsurprising. As a political movement it was a complete failure in interwar Yugoslavia, garnering no more than a percent of the vote in two elections. While ZBOR has been retrospectively characterised as the political application of Ljotić, the reality is not as clear-cut. That the political history of ZBOR was also in many ways a biography of Ljotić however, attests to his importance to ZBOR. Yet he was by no means the sole ideological representative of what ZBOR would claim to be, as the movement was made up of two distinct entities, the Slovenian BOJ movement, and the JA.

Even within ZBOR, Jonić would challenge Ljotić over ideology and organisation, resulting in Jonić's expulsion. Ljotić was however, the only personality within ZBOR who was known to the public in any capacity, thus conflating ZBOR as an ideological extension of Ljotić.²⁹⁴ Ljotić viewed ZBOR's ideology as interrelated, each strand or idea being a component to the next. He was however unable to make his thought understood, or to have his political vision grasped by many ZBOR members, with the exception of the ideas of anti-Semitism and to a lesser extent, those of a corporate state and social organisation. It is highly likely that Ljotić himself had not totally worked out his thought, seeing only the end goal, without the means to achieve it.

Nevertheless, despite its incoherence, ZBOR contested two parliamentary elections in 1935 and 1938. The issue of political participation caused dissent in ZBOR's ranks, which was skilfully exploited by Stojadinović at the end of 1937. Participation in elections would be a betrayal of the anti-democratic movement's ideals. Yet as was the case with the AF, ZBOR would seemingly be happy to use the existence of parliamentary for its own anti-parliamentary goals. While both elections would highlight the total exclusion of ZBOR from political opinion, in the 1938 electoral

²⁹⁴ Velibor Jonić was also politically active, starting in the youth ranks of the Radical party before joining the JA. However he was no ideologue. See Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, 13.

campaign, ZBOR did show, periodically, that it had a degree of political acumen. This was largely due to the political manoeuvring between itself and the Bloc of National Concord.

Through ZBOR, Ljotić could not have done much to harm Stojadinović politically it certainly was a nuisance to the Prime Minister. Much of the animosity stemmed from the issue of Nazi funding, with Stojadinović evidently believing that ZBOR was Nazi funded.²⁹⁵ While the issue of specific Nazi funding has not been proven, ZBOR certainly did receive money and remittances from the German founded Technical Union. Whether this was an attempt by the German Foreign Ministry to fund a movement deemed suitable outside of its borders, or whether it was a strictly economic undertaking, is unknown. The resulting fallout and scandal however would further tarnish ZBOR with the fascist label. The promotion of Mojić, a staunch proponent of Nazi Germany to General Secretary can also be seen as an increased Nazification of the movement. Mojić's extreme anti-Semitism went beyond Ljotić's in its vitriol, yet this was the man entrusted with the administrative tasks of the movement at the same time that Ljotić was consistently attempting to downplay his anti-Semitism as only against 'foreign' Jews. The degree to which Ljotić sympathised with Mojić's extremism is unclear, but in not taking any actions to countermand him, Ljotić cannot escape accusations, especially in regard to Mojić's anti-Semitism, of ZBOR being a copy of Fascism and National Socialism.

The third aim was to put ZBOR's collaboration into the context of its own ideological development and geopolitical views. ZBOR was one of the only openly pro-German movements operating legally within Yugoslav political discourse, the Ustaša movement being never being legal. ZBOR's collaboration, initially at least, was driven less by Nazi ideology than in its own apocalyptic view of Christianity and tradition against communism. Nonetheless a distinct tilt towards Nazification are clearly evident. The experience of the communist and the Mihailović-led resistance in occupied Serbia, the creation of the SVC, and the turmoil of war and resistance hardened many within the ranks of the SVC. This saw a mutation of the White Eagles (many of whom joined the SVC) into a more strident Nazi like organisation, inspired

²⁹⁵ See pages 187-191.

by Ljotić's anti-communism, but increasingly more from National Socialism as a totalitarian state model.

After 1941, Ljotić readjusted his Pan-Slavic goal to accommodate itself to the Nazi New Order. His reason for doing so was because he saw not just Serbia's, but Europe's salvation with a German victory. This salvation stemmed from his extreme anti-communism, one, which, in Ljotić's thinking, was to be fought by any means necessary. As mentioned in the last chapter, Ljotić saw the Germans as God's tools and instruments of retribution for the mistakes and sins of Yugoslavia, and the Serbs. His own sincere religious belief defined communism as atheistic, materialistic, and above all, Jewish. Thus for him the battle against communism was a clear-cut issue of Good versus Evil. If the Nazis were against communism, then Ljotić would support them. He thought in absolutes. This was the basis for his support for the Nazis. His unwavering support however leads to him overlooking Nazi crimes against certain Slavonic groups, and the Jews. His anti-Semitic views notwithstanding, he believed that God had sent the Nazis to punish the sins of not just Serbia, but of Europe. In this battle he not only inflated his own importance to that struggle, but also the role Serbia was to have under Nazi rule.

In the context of the Second World War, ZBOR's collaboration, while seemingly straightforward as a case of total identification with National Socialism, was in reality a manifestation of the highly complex ideological pattern created by ZBOR. In this context, while ZBOR's collaboration is seen as a logical outcome of its political existence and ideas from 1935-1940, its reasons for collaboration were not always in synchronisation with the Nazi New Order but rather emanated from within its own mystical Pan-Slavic and Christian apocalyptic thinking, and anti-communism. This was combined with a gross naivety as to the exact nature of Nazi intentions towards occupied Yugoslavia.

That it collaborated wholeheartedly with the Germans can be explained through its aforementioned worldview. As ZBOR saw communism as the greatest threat, the movement saw salvation and renewal possible under the Nazi aegis. However, ZBOR, and Ljotić in particular were remarkably unaware or wilfully ignorant of actual Nazi intent for Yugoslavia from April and May 1941. Or, following Ljotić's own

ideological rigidity, they accepted the situation as a means to an end, the destruction of communism, and a chance for obtaining power and influence. Ljotić also overestimated his importance, and the importance of civilian and later military collaborationist units to the Germans. Ljotić seems to have entered into collaboration thinking that he was more important to the Germans than was actually the case.

ZBOR's actions during the Second World War however seem at odds with its prewar lack of activity. It also undoubtedly displayed more overt absorption and displays of Nazi influence. The transformation of the White Eagles is probably the clearest example of ZBOR's permutation into a more clearly defined National Socialist organisation. That elements of the White Eagles were at the core of the SVC is not a mere coincidence. Radicalisation had been evident from Mojić's promotion in 1937. Their motivations for joining however cannot be said to be as a result solely of ZBOR's ideology. The SVC while highly ideological, had a definite initial military purpose in mind, that of securing Serbia against the communist threat. By doing so, a secured Serbia, and its valuable resources, could continue to be at the disposal for Nazi economic, and military needs. The Corps was, officially, not acting under ZBOR's orders. There is however, no doubting Ljotić's ideological influence. Whether or not he agreed with the conduct and actions of the SVC, and for the most part, he most likely did, he actively encouraged it, hoping to mould it into an armed 'Christian' force battling against the evils of Jewish communism. But he viewed the war that the SVC was fighting as much about 'hearts and minds' as actual physical combat. On both counts, the SVC would fail, and by 1945, Ljotić would openly criticise the SVC for failing to see, and understand, his vision.

Ljotić was both impressed and fearful of the Germans, and of Hitler, who for a time, he saw the 'instrument of God', who would destroy communism and restore a Holy Russia. Hitler as God's instrument, according to Ljotić had less to do with the ideology of National Socialism apart from its anti-communism, but rather the destruction of 'global Jewish power', and the methods and success he had in implementing them. This thesis, furthermore, has aimed to show the highly complex, ambiguous, and contradictory ideology of a party whose contemporary reputation and instance of collaboration during the Second World War far outweighed any real influence it actually wielded.

There is no doubt that ZBOR was collaborationist, and that the SVC were fully indoctrinated with the ethos of anti-communism and a belief that a Nazi victory would lead to Serbian renewal and salvation. Within the collaborationist apparatus, Ljotić was the leading ideological personality, though he eschewed (publicly at least) any official office. Ideas common to ZBOR, such as corporatism, anti-Semitism, and the championing of the countryside as a source of purity became hallmarks of the Nedić regime. These ideas also became integral to the Nedić government's attempt at renewal and rebuilding. ZBOR's collaboration doomed the movement as much as Ljotić's rigidity and naivety. ZBOR became, through the SVC, an auxiliary force of the Germans, being used in repressive actions against its own citizens, magnifying its collaborationist status in post-war historiography and public memory. In this regard, it is perfectly understandable why the movement is not subject to as much revisionist debate as either Mihailović or Nedić. There is no seeming ambiguity concerning ZBOR. It was not misunderstood because it put itself voluntarily at the service of the occupiers. It, like other collaborationist movements throughout Europe was diametrically opposed to the narrative of heroic resistance. While true, its reasons for collaborating were less to do initially with National Socialist ideology, but more to do ZBOR's own geopolitical worldview, which as the war continued, was even harder to justify.

After 1941 ZBOR's Yugoslavism had however, been replaced by a stress on its Serbian core. It fought against any agreement with Croatia that would lead to autonomous self-regions, arguing that it would lead to the destruction of Yugoslavia. After 1941, ZBOR, unlike Mihailović's movement, did not make any appeals or calls to a wider Yugoslav nation, being focused as it was, on Serbia.

Had the occupation not occurred, ZBOR might not have been legalised following its 1940 banning. Its status as the only political movement allowed under German occupation proved to be its undoing. The actions of the SVC in the cauldron of the ethnic and ideological micro-wars raging within Yugoslavia would see the movement devolve and disintegrate into a simple auxiliary corollary of the German occupation forces.

As has been shown, Ljotić's ideological development marked ZBOR, though his thought pattern would be largely incoherent, inflexible, and ultimately, rendered largely irrelevant. Restating this point is important. He was clear in regard to anti-Semitism and monarchism, but his method of expressing what he wanted would be lost in metaphor and superficiality. His personal ideological, and tactical failings would also mark ZBOR, combined with his detached style of leadership. This meant that while he was looked on as a sort of prophet by many of his followers, it resulted in the detriment of any attempt to build up ZBOR as a properly organised political movement. Ljotić and his movement seemed to be viewed in such a manner by contemporaries. Dragoljub Jovanović considered Ljotić to be contradictory, controversial, incomprehensible, and unreasonable.²⁹⁶

Ljotić was a prodigious writer in ZBOR's press, but there was very little substance in his writing. Even those subjects that he considered important; anti-Semitism, anti-capitalism, and nationalism, there would be little real analysis. His anti-capitalist discourse would show more substance, but even here it was tied in to his own interests. It was in his interest to be anti-capitalist because as he saw it capitalism would bring increased foreign competition, and drive down export prices. As a head of a fruit grower's cooperative, foreign competition directly threatened him. Protectionism therefore, seemed natural to him. He would show a degree of knowledge on world events, and his geopolitical thinking and predictions were not always as far off the mark. He was an appeaser. He could see the problems of the Sudetenland, and wrote that Czechoslovakia should give up the region to save itself from destruction. He saw the consequences of German expansionism towards Czechoslovakia, yet here his Pan-Slavic rhetoric and sympathy was largely absent. He advocated for Poland to tread cautiously in regard to the Danzig Corridor, though he sided and sympathised with the country against German aggression. He would repeat the mistake towards 1941 and German intentions toward Yugoslavia.

Where ZBOR did have a semblance of ideological cohesion, namely in relation to social organisation, its style of corporatism was reminiscent of a non-specified bygone era, based on Catholic corporatism, which was not, strictly speaking, part of

²⁹⁶ Jovanović, *Ljudi Ljudi. Medaljoni 46 umrlih savremenika*, 156.

Serbian historical development. The *millet* system of Ottoman social administration, imposed on Serbia, placed all Orthodox Christians, regardless of ethnicity into one 'nation'. The social form of organisation that Ljotić advocated, based on guild like corporatism, was not common. ZBOR however tried to pass of Ljotić's appropriation of Slavophile and AF social thought as 'natural' in a Yugoslav context. Jovanović also makes the claim that Ljotić 'lied to himself' and to 'his followers'.²⁹⁷ Ljotić, for example, never openly declared himself as a fascist. For Jovanović the matter is much clearer. ZBOR was fascist, and in not openly admitting it, Ljotić was lying to both himself and ZBOR members. However, this is based on Jovanović's contentious assumption that ZBOR members were only drawn to the movement because it was inherently fascist, and that they saw in Ljotić, a future fascist leader. Jovanović also does not elucidate on what he understood as 'fascism'. It is highly plausible, indeed probably true, that ZBOR members, to varying degrees did join ZBOR because of perceived similarities with Fascism and National Socialism, and saw Ljotić in a similar vein to Hitler and Mussolini. While Ljotić did inspire an almost prophetic persona amongst his followers, and even amongst many ordinary people in Smederevo, to imply that his total support base, however small, was solely 'fascist', would seem to be incorrect. Due to a lack of available sources, this thesis has not contributed to a better understanding of the motives of ZBOR members, their reason for supporting the movement, and indeed any real information as to the size of the organisation. This highly interesting question awaits further study.

ZBOR's ideology represented Ljotić's thinking on a micro, local level, while representing a pre-existing interwar anti-democratic right-wing current, encompassing elements of fascism, nationalism, and traditionalism on a macro, regional European level. This thesis has elucidated ZBOR's ideology, which apart from Mladen Stefanović's work, has not been the subject of significant study. This has been done in conjunction with an analysis of the pre-existing anti-democratic and anti-modernist European current personified by Maurras and the AF. This analysis of ZBOR's ideology, rather than being merely a buttress of a preconceived notion of ZBOR as 'fascist', attempts to place the movement in a historical context of the anti-democratic right-wing trend of pre-1914 and interwar European thought, one which with the

²⁹⁷ Ibid. 157.

appearance of fascism, could almost be placed at the nexus of the overlap between the radical right and fascism. ZBOR's ideological antecedents however, predate that of fascism, and much of its meagre political activity (pre-1941) cannot be said to be on the same aesthetic nor mobilisatory level as Fascism or National Socialism. Nevertheless, in a local interwar Yugoslav context, ZBOR was certainly the closest approximation to both Fascism and National Socialism, especially as it fused elements from previously fascist-like organisations such as ORJUNA and the JA.

ZBOR's ideology would also show similarities with functionalism. As a structural theory, the organisation of society is of greater importance than the individual in functionalist thinking. Ljotić alludes to society as being a tree, with roots, trunk, branches, and buds each representing interconnected parts making up a greater whole, which symbolises all the contributions to the maintenance and harmonisation of society. In as much as ZBOR saw itself as both organic and non-mechanical, if we take Émile Durkheim's sociological concept of social solidarity, ZBOR would fit more as an example of a mechanically solidarist movement. Durkheim argues in *De la Division du Travail Social* ('The Division of Labour in Society') that mechanical solidarity, as a sign and symptom of a 'primitive' society, denotes a common conscience and a collective will of society working together.²⁹⁸ ZBOR's thinking, and certainly that of Ljotić would correspond to the view of social order maintained through the harmonisation of the collective will. However, interwar Yugoslav society was not 'primitive' even if it was not a fully advanced, industrialist, and capitalist society. Durkheim's concept of organic solidarity, as a sign of the development towards an advanced industrial society, saw economic regulation as important as moral and social regulation.²⁹⁹ ZBOR's corporatist form of societal organisation and its insistence on a planned and controlled economy encapsulate the movement's complexities and incongruences. Using Durkheim's theories as a template, ZBOR utilised the political methods of its contemporary more advanced society, in order to regress society back to a more primitive state.

ZBOR's societal model, that of the *zadruga*, can be reduced to a continuation and re-orientation of Svetozar Marković's socialist and federalist thinking towards a

²⁹⁸ Émile Durkheim, *De la Division du Travail Social*, 1–11.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

nationalist end.³⁰⁰ This does not negate Slavophile thinking concerning what its theorists regarded as its *obshcinnost* (community).³⁰¹ Agrarianism as theory, in opposition to ZBOR's agrarian utopia, does not necessarily correlate to any pre-existing philosophy or set of writings. Instead, according to Johan Eelland, agrarianism should be viewed as a pragmatic ideology that arose and developed in response to concrete social situations and problems in agrarian society.³⁰² It shared an acceptance of democracy and the Western liberal ideal of the freedom of the individual in relation to the state.³⁰³ Where ZBOR's utopian type gelled naturally with agrarianism was in its opposition to economic liberalism. Elements of agrarianism were utilised by ZBOR to fulfil authoritarian aims cloaked in populist, nationalist, and traditionalist rhetoric. The supposed purity and moral character of the peasant, as uncorrupted and the guardian of national culture was the clearest example of ZBOR's populist rhetoric. This was tied in with criticism of the effects of the modernisation of agriculture, and the effects it had on peasant life as a result of economic liberalism.

Further deconstruction of ZBOR's ideology also opens avenues for research as to the nature of ethnic nationalism and particularism within Yugoslavia and how it related to Yugoslavist thought. Was having a mostly ethnic identification as opposed to Yugoslav identification inherently implying anti-democratic or anti-modern tendencies? The 6th of January regime was intended to be a 'break from the past'.³⁰⁴ This was why on 3 October, 1929, King Alexander introduced the Law on the Name and Division of the Kingdom into Administrative Regions, creating the banovina system.³⁰⁵ According to Axboe Nielsen, this step was taken as an attempt to 'rationalise' Yugoslavia's economy and administration, as well as erasing 'tribal labels', through decentralisation.³⁰⁶ It also poses the question as to whether political leaders personify political theory. Certainly in the case of Ljotić, like that of Hitler,

³⁰⁰ See note 178 on p.142.

³⁰¹ See note 38 on p.51.

³⁰² Johan Eelland, "Agrarianism and Modernization in Inter-War Eastern Europe", in Piotr Wawrzeniuk, ed., *Societal Change and Ideological Formation among the Rural Population of the Baltic Area 1880-1939*, Studia Baltica 2 (Södertörns högskola, 2008), 36.

³⁰³ Ibid. 52.

³⁰⁴ Christian Axboe Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar's Yugoslavia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 80. This has also been reiterated in chapters 1 and 3.

³⁰⁵ Ibid. 100.

³⁰⁶ Ibid. 102.

Mussolini, Lenin, and Stalin, this can be said to be true. They came to embody Fascism, National Socialism, and Communism (Leninist and Stalinist). Though Ljotić was not always thought of as a leader (except by ZBOR supporters), he was identified, as has been shown, by many within Yugoslavia, not always unjustly, as being a leading 'fascist'. This brings up another interesting point. Both Payne and Griffin state that ZBOR was not a 'categorically' fascist movement. In Yugoslav political life, from 1935 until 1941, ZBOR was the closest manifestation of fascism, albeit in a localised fashion. Does that then make them fascist as a consequence? In the context of Yugoslav political life, this is very plausible. On a wider level, this thesis argues that any rigid delineation of fascist or non-fascist in relation to analysing ZBOR's ideology is not helpful as the movement was in a constant stage of ideological and geopolitical flux. Its limitations forced it to be a reactive, rather than an active movement.

During its initial and formative stage from 1935 until 1940, it was only in 1937 that ZBOR developed a codified structure and stated political ideals, with the king as the embodiment of the values of the nation. During this stage ZBOR was happy trying to influence the monarchy into adopting its corporative socio-economic mode of organisation and production without calling for revolution, extreme reform, or violent regeneration. From 1941 until 1945 it was the only legalised movement, and exhibited increased fascist traits. This period also saw Ljotić focus increasingly on the dangers of communism to the point that his ideological work left ZBOR's administration in the hands of Mojić and the increasingly radicalised White Eagles.

Neither Ljotić nor ZBOR can be unambiguously categorised as entirely fascist, even if fascist elements were clearly present. Neither however, especially in the context of the Second World War, can they be deemed innocent, even if almost grotesquely naive. This naivety however can perhaps be explained by a strong sense of conviction and rigidity. Ljotić certainly had an unshakeable belief in the validity of his ideas, yet he would be unable to convey his message to his supporters and the wider Yugoslav public. His focus on the end goal, while eschewing any real discussion as to the means, meant that he offered little in the way of a practical means to his solution. Had he recognised this, perhaps he would have been able to influence and inspire more people. This allowed for individuals such as Jonić and Mojić, who being more

practical, attempted to mould ZBOR as an efficient organisational, and ideological entity. However ZBOR's small membership and supporter base would present problems.

This is especially true in regard to the behaviour of many ZBOR members under occupation, who saw in total identification with Nazi Germany the realisation of ideological goals, personal advancement, self-preservation, greed, or most likely, a combination of all the above. Ljotić's own political journey starting from mainstream liberal conservatism to outright collaboration with Nazi Germany is not outlandish, given that in many countries they occupied, the German authorities preferred working with notable elites. The case of the Occupied Netherlands, and Occupied Norway, where Anton Mussert and Vidkun Quisling, as perceived imitators of fascism, were denied leadership positions in favour of professional politicians who could guarantee stability are examples.

Opinion in Serbia today, with the exception of various far-right organisations such as the now banned *Obraz*, 1389, *Nacionalni Stroj* (National Alignment), *Srbska Akcija* (Serbian Action) and the *Demohrišćanska Stranka Srbije* (Christian Democrat Party of Serbia or DHSS) sees Ljotić and ZBOR in a negative light. Within the heterogeneous and highly syncretic contemporary Serbian extreme right, Ljotić is seen as a major influence, as well as a legitimiser. This is particularly evident within the currently banned *Obraz* movement, a self-proclaimed Serbian 'traditionalist' and 'patriotic' organisation. The miniscule *Srpski Narodni Pokret ZBOR* (Serbian National Movement ZBOR) describes itself as the continuation of the 1930s ZBOR movement. Within elements of the modern Serbian extreme right, Ljotić, ZBOR, and General Nedić, are heralded as 'saviours' of the Serbian nation. According to *Obraz*, which may well be considered the first post-Socialist promoters of neo-Ljotićite ideas, the Serbian people are threatened now; hence they urged a national state for a society of sensible Serbs, comprising an economically rich and strong Serbia, as a means of advancing Serbia and Serbian interests. Apart from these modern-day extreme right groups, there have been minimal traces of any desire or attempt to rehabilitate Ljotić or his followers. His collaboration goes against the narrative of the heroic resistance, from both a communist and anti-communist viewpoint.

In 2002, local councillors in Smederevo campaigned to have the town's largest square named after Ljotić, is one such attempt at resurrecting Ljotić's memory. Despite the ensuing controversy, the councillors defended Ljotić's wartime record and justified the initiative of honouring him by stating that collaboration is what the biological survival of the Serbian people demanded during the Second World War.³⁰⁷ Later, the Serbian magazine *Pogledi* (Viewpoints) published a series of articles attempting to exonerate Ljotić. In 1996, future Yugoslav President Vojislav Koštunica praised Ljotić in a public statement. Seeking to promote a romantic and nationalist image of anti-Communism, the Democratic Party of Serbia actively campaigned to rehabilitate Ljotić together with Nedić, after the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević and his socialist government in October 2000.³⁰⁸ The attempts to rehabilitate Ljotić have received mixed emotions from spectators.³⁰⁹

In the case of General Nedić, his image of a 'saviour' has been propagated by mainstream elements within the Serbian Orthodox Church, with former Serbian Patriarch Pavle, in 1994, declaring Nedić as a 'saviour of the Serbian people'.³¹⁰ Twenty years later, in 2014, the Serbian appeals court ruled that the High Court was wrong to throw out a request by Aleksandar Nedić, grandson of General Milan Nedić, who filed a motion to have his grandfather's name cleared.³¹¹ This however has been a corollary to a much wider debate within Serbian historiography of the dichotomy of remembrance between the communist struggle on behalf of the 'working people', to the nationalist struggle of the 'Serbian people'.³¹² This debate, summarised crudely here as the 'Partisan-Četnik' cleavage, or 'red-black' cleavage, has mirrored the problems of transition, and remembrance in Serbian society.³¹³ In recent Serbian reports, Zoran Živanović, the legal representative of Nedić's family including those who filed Nedić's rehabilitation request, stated that they expect that Nedić will be

³⁰⁷ Byford, 2011, 296

³⁰⁸ Klaus Buchenau, "Orthodox Values and Modern Necessities: Serbian Orthodox Clergy and Laypeople on Democracy, Human Rights, Transition, and Globalization", in Ola Listhaug, Sabrina P. Ramet, Dragana Dulić, eds., *Serbia in the Post-Milošević Era* (Budapest, Central European University, 2014).

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Byford, *Denial and Repression of Antisemitism*, 3.

³¹¹ D.D. "Ponovo postupak za rehabilitaciju Milana Nedića", in *Danas*. 7 August, 2014.

³¹² Jelena Subotic, "The Mythologizing of Communist Violence", in Lavinia Stan, and Nadya Nedelsky eds., *Post-Communist Transitional Justice. Lessons from Twenty-Five Years of Experience* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 199.

³¹³ As of 11 May, 2012, Mihailović's rehabilitation suit had made it to the High Court in Belgrade, with the latest hearing on 22 June, 2012.

rehabilitated because he did not have a trial, there was only a decision by the Communist post-war commission that he was a war criminal.³¹⁴ This remained their belief even after the higher court had thrown out requests to clear Nedić's name twice in the past. In fact, in February 2014, the high court rejected the rehabilitation plea based on a technicality, saying that the plaintiffs failed to submit documents proving they are legally registered organisations that are allowed to submit such a request.³¹⁵ Nevertheless, in the latest appeal this July 2015, Belgrade's appeals court made a final and binding ruling that ordered the rehabilitation process to begin.³¹⁶

For the case of Mihailović, by late 1942, he became convinced that communism posed a greater long-term threat to Yugoslavia than the Axis occupation, and he sought to conserve his forces for a showdown with Josip Broz Tito's Partisan forces. He was later convicted of treason and was sentenced to death. His recent (14 May, 2015) rehabilitation by the Serbian appellate court has perhaps ended his ongoing historical perception and one aspect of the 'red-black cleavage'. In this appeal that restored his civil rights, Judge Aleksandar Trešnjev granted the rehabilitation request, annulling a ruling of July 15, 1946 whereby Mihailović was sentenced to death and shot by firing squad two days later.³¹⁷ The initial appeal for rehabilitation of Mihailović was filed in 2006, when rehabilitation was finalised as a law in Serbia to allow rehabilitation of former Četniks.

More recently, in July 2016, the controversial Croatian cardinal, Alojzije Stepinac, was rehabilitated. In the Court ruling, the decision annulled a 1946 verdict against Stepinac, a Catholic cardinal convicted by the former communist authorities of collaborating with the pro-Nazi puppet regime during the Second World War. Croatian public opinion for the most part sees Stepinac as a hero, for his resistance to

³¹⁴ Ivana Nikolic. Serbia's Nazi-Backed WWII Leader Awaits Rehabilitation. Balkan Transitional Justice. July 27, 2015. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en>

³¹⁵ Gordana Andric. Serbia to Mull Rehabilitation of Nazi-Backed WWII Leader. Balkan Transitional Justice. August 8, 2014. <http://www.balkaninsight.com>

³¹⁶ Ivana Nikolic. 2015

³¹⁷ In Serbia with Agencies, "Draza Mihailovic Rehabilitated." In News, May 14, 2015, <http://www.balkaninsight.com>.

communism and his fight against the separation of the Croatian church from the Vatican; hence, public opinion in Croatia was largely positive to his rehabilitation.

In the case of Ljotić, there has not been any similar rehabilitation process. His memory, and that of ZBOR is too closely tied to collaboration with Nazi Germany, against the patriotic resistance and heroic narrative. On a local level however, Stevo Kotur, of the DHSS, suggested renaming Smederevo's Republic Square to Ljotić Square.³¹⁸ Public outcry however was muted, largely because the DHSS was largely irrelevant. Nevertheless, the DHSS was reasonably influential as part of the anti-Milošević DOS coalition in 2000, and in the subsequent years, when its late leader Vladan Batić became a government minister. It had, however, become almost completely irrelevant by 2012. Even so, the motion was not passed, but in Smederevo at least, there are those who seemingly view Ljotić's legacy, or his family's historical memory, as somewhat favourable.

In summary, this thesis has shown that Ljotić admiration for, and influence of Fascism and National Socialism, while evident, was in fact a corollary to his own abstract metaphysical thinking. National Socialism's anti-communist component appealed to Ljotić. So did its anti-Semitism, in that it linked communism to Judaism, as a threat to all non-Jews. Therefore it was an attractive ideology for recognising the same dangers that ZBOR did. During the Second World War, Ljotić was convinced of Germany's victory as a victory for Christian civilisation. What is key here, however, is whether Ljotić was so enamoured with National Socialism that he saw it as a utopian state model, or whether, in his apocalyptic Christian thought, the Nazis were, as he put it, 'God's truncheons'. Ljotić's world was black and white as far as his ideology was concerned. National Socialism and Fascism were 'good' inasmuch as they fought against 'Judeo-communism'. In that fight he would do anything to make sure that what he perceived as 'good', would win, regardless of cost. Ljotić praised Hitler because he saw in the actions of the Nazi war machine (at least up to 1943) as a chance for the realisation of ZBOR's geopolitical end, that of a resurrected Russian monarchic state that Slavic nations would be somehow incorporated into.

³¹⁸ Dragana Matović, "Smederevce nije briga", *NIN*, 28 November, 2002, No.2709.

Ljotić's criticism of Stojadinović as a 'fascist apprentice' shows that he wanted a name for his own. It also shows his hypocrisy. Ljotić strove for his own ideas. The reality however, was that most of his ideas and concepts, were already based on aspects of other ideologies. He never worked out a viable political system, or a coherent set of ideas. This also prevented him from being categorised as fascist, or simply a radical rightist. What is more certain is that he was a social and religious conservative who saw life as an apocalyptic and millennial struggle between good and evil. In a similar manner, this lack of one distinct idea was also manifested in ZBOR, BOJ, the JA, and before that, elements of the Narodna Odbrana and the ORJUNA, who found a home and voice in ZBOR.

For all his admiration of Hitler, Ljotić did criticise National Socialist ideology. His criticism, far from being original, was a replica of the AF's and Salazar's earlier criticism, based on Pius XI's encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*. Whether or not he really believed in this distinction is debateable, but he did go out of his way to stress ZBOR's supposed ideological uniqueness. It is entirely true that in some ways, as reflected in his anti-Semitism, anti-democratic, and anti-parliamentary views, he was masquerading as a fascist. However, in other ways, such as the criticism of National Socialism as racial deification, and Fascism as state deification, he was against ideas that drove and were central to National Socialism and Fascism, as being incompatible with his religious belief. From 1935 to 1940 ZBOR was not militarised, nor did Ljotić seemingly intend that. He was no expansionist, nor was he militarist or imperialist. He sought a Yugoslavia that included Bulgaria, and a wider Pan-Slavic union, but believed this was to somehow occur organically due to the unitary cultural and racial stock of the Slavs. He stressed the quality of potential members over quantity. He had little inclination, nor indeed the organisational or logistic skill to turn ZBOR into a mass organisation. He was an ideologue, a thinker. His strength lay in the breadth of his ideology and in the way it was presented as a struggle. Yet even here, his rigidity would only appeal to those who were of a similar mindset. He was unable to transmute his thought and appeal to those who were politically apathetic, or indeed hostile to him. He was no organiser nor does he seem to have concerned himself much with administrative tasks. As far as Ljotić was concerned, the battle was of minds, of ideas. Mundane administrative tasks were below him unless it served to highlight his ideological superiority. He was a dogged defender of Yugoslavia's

territorial integrity, especially in the face of Italian irredentism. These fluid and sometimes-conflicted views of Ljotić were also reflected in ZBOR's leadership, who apparently, especially in the case of Velibor Jonić, had differences in views concerning the extent of fascism in ZBOR. This then resulted in internal conflicts and issues regarding the manner of how the organisation would pursue its goals.

Finally, despite being an anti-Semite, Ljotić showed, during his rule as commissar in Smederevo, that his rule, while discriminatory towards the town's Jewish inhabitants, did not entail their physical elimination. Jews were to be paid comparable salaries to non-Jewish workers, however any money not directly used for daily sustenance, was to be returned. Yet he voiced no opposition to Smederevo's Jewish population being transported to their deaths. This of course does not justify Ljotić's anti-Semitism, but as Kostić alluded to, he was seemingly against their murder. However even when he had a chance, an example being the Kragujevac massacre, to intervene, he did so only for Serbian hostages, leaving Jewish hostages a certain death.

Ljotić's desire to be unique and "label-less" in comparison to his contemporaries and ideological allies have shown that he failed to develop a strong ideology, and more importantly, his niche within Yugoslav political life. He failed to impart his ideological thought in a sustained fashion. He had an end goal in sight that of a strong centralised monarchy based on pre modern forms of social organisation. But the process of working toward this end goal was never fully elaborated on, most likely because Ljotić had not finished nor given undue thought to, the actual process of fulfilling his goals. His rigid belief in an apocalyptic struggle between good and evil, evident during ZBOR's legal existence, and later applied in the context of the Second World War took precedence over any attempt at mass mobilisation. However, the masses, in any case, overwhelmingly rejected Ljotić and ZBOR.

This thesis has illustrated how Ljotić, his ideology, and ZBOR as a movement are interrelated with each other in a wider interwar European context of anti-democratic, anti-parliamentary, and monarchist thought that overlapped with fascism. Hence, this study provides an analysis on the development of the ideology of both Ljotić and ZBOR, and provides elements of both political biography and an analysis of an

ideology, which was developed by Ljotić and some of his collaborators within ZBOR. These are among the more significant contributions of this study to literature.

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La Gazette de France (France)
Nação Portuguesa (Portugal)
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Obnova (Serbia)
Otadžbina (Yugoslavia/Serbia)
Politika (Yugoslavia)
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