

RADICAL NATIONALISM AND FASCIST ELEMENTS IN POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN SLOVENIA BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

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Introduction

After the Second World War, European historians of fascist phenomena mainly focused on Italian Fascism and German Nazism, and justly so. In the last two decades, however, an increasing number of studies have been dedicated to various manifestations of fascism in Eastern European countries. These have only occasionally included the territory of the former Yugoslavia. It was mainly due to the Croatian Ustaša movement that Yugoslavia received notice. To date, several monographs have appeared on the Ustaša. They have also covered various aspects of the so-called Independent State of Croatia. Interest in fascism and radical nationalism on Yugoslav territory grew after the inter-ethnic wars of the 1990s (Hory and Broszat 1964, Scotti 1976, MacDonald 2002). In the collection on fascism in Europe edited by S. J. Wolf in 1968, Yugoslavia was not mentioned at all, whereas P. F. Sugar's collection three years later contained two papers on fascism in Yugoslavia (Wolf 1968, Sugar 1971). While some studies of fascism mention only the Ustaša movement, the most recent one by Sabrina P. Ramet, briefly present the emergence of fascist movements in other Yugoslav nations, cursorily treating the Slovenes as well (2006: 35–111). A number of otherwise excellent recent studies on Yugoslavia or the Balkans after 1930 (Cox 2007, Tomasevich 2001) concentrate on the Ustaša movement or its leader, Ante Pavelić. This holds true as well for the collection of scholarly papers about the Independent State of Croatia edited by Sabrina Ramet (2007).

The fact that, with the exception of the Ustaša movement, pre-WW II fascism on Yugoslav territory generated so little interest suggests that it was insignificant, exerting no major influence on the political and social processes in pre-war Yugoslavia. Due to the size of the country, perhaps, Slovene fascism or fascism in Slovenia have received scant notice. In this article I will attempt to fill the gap I am alluding to by providing an overview of political movements with certain fascist characteristics. This article is based primarily on published scholarship and recorded reminiscences, and only partly on archival resources. The latter—at least those found in the Slovene and Belgrade archives—have been consulted in the aforementioned studies. However, historians have yet to carry out an in-depth exploration of this issue and examine the resources from the archives of the police and administrative bodies of that time in Belgrade as well as in Rome.

On entering the new Yugoslav state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the Slovenes, and especially its political elite, found themselves in a completely new cultural and political environment. Slovene politicians were compelled to seek different approaches, operational tactics, and new associations. The new European context, resulting from the Peace of Versailles and, above all, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, presented radical challenges and posed many strategic political and ideological issues. While the situation of the Slovenes, at least those living in the Yugoslav state, had improved in many ways since before the First World War,¹ it did not inspire much optimism strategically: disenchantment with the Yugoslav centralist system made aspirations for territorial, political, and even cultural autonomy the main topic in Slovene politics over the subsequent two decades. As a result of the post-war border demarcation, a significant proportion of the already small Slovene nation was living in neighboring states, especially Italy, where it was subjected to accelerated assimilation under the emerging fascist regime. Considering the worsening social situation, the recurring workers' protests, and the suppression of the revolutionary Communist Party, it comes as no surprise that Slovene politics were marked by constant tension and dissatisfaction. The Catholic-oriented Slovene People's Party retained political dominance in the new state, winning the majority of votes—usually absolute—in all elections. The liberal and socialist camps started seeking new ways of operating, giving rise to and also witnessing the demise of new parties and political movements. There were also some individual initiatives. While the Slovene People's Party essentially stood for limited autonomy for Slovenia, the liberal groups, in their defiance of clericalism, advocated centralism and even so-called integral Yugoslavism, thus calling into question the very existence of the Slovene people by claiming they were just part of a greater Yugoslav nation. In this tactical game that lasted throughout the first Yugoslavia, the liberals entered into various associations with Belgrade, where Serbian political parties held power at the time.

Meeting Hitler

An interesting phenomenon in the context of this discussion is the emergence of the Slovene National Socialist Party, which evolved from a liberal trade union movement in 1919 and was founded by dissidents from the Liberal and the Social Democratic Parties. Its program promoted the idea of “an original Yugoslav socialist system in which wealth would be the

¹ Meaning especially the fact that the Slovenes were relieved of German-Austrian nationalist pressure, and thus further Germanization in Lower Styria was prevented. In the new state, Slovenes could, among other things, fully develop their culture and scholarship, which also manifested itself symbolically in the establishment of the Slovene University in Ljubljana.

property of all who created it” (Perovšek 1994: 166). Despite an overtly socialist rhetoric, the party that had won two mandates in the first Yugoslav parliamentary elections returned to the liberal camp and, in 1928, merged with the Slovene faction of the Independent Democratic Party. Its name was a matter of some intrigue due to its similarity with the German National Socialist Workers’ Party. This led some contemporaries and subsequent historiographers to draw uncritical comparisons and unjustly attach “Nazi” attributes to this Slovene party (Mikuž 1965: 108–12).

What must have contributed to this view was an interesting episode from 1921, when Branimir Kozinc, one of the leaders of the Slovene National Socialist Party, attended an international congress of socialist parties in Salzburg. Hitler’s party wanted to attend the congress, too, but was not admitted. After the congress, Kozinc made a visit to Munich where he noticed placards for a rally in a tavern, with Adolf Hitler as a speaker, and decided it was worth seeing. In the crowded tavern, he was immediately struck by Hitler’s choleric and fanatical delivery. Afterwards, one of the organizers who had learned that Kozinc was a delegate of a Yugoslav political party and had just attended the congress in Salzburg, invited him to meet with Hitler. The future *führer* gave him a warm welcome and proposed the establishment of closer links between their two parties. Kozinc responded that, unfortunately, this was impossible. When asked for the reason, he explained: “You accept money from capitalists, even from the Jewish ones, against whom you speak. What kind of socialist party is yours then?” (Perovšek 1997: 270). Hitler justified this attitude by saying that there was no room for morals in politics. Kozinc disagreed. This was followed by some polite phrases, with Hitler praising the natural beauty of Yugoslavia, and Kozinc inviting him to see it for himself. Before parting, they wished success to their respective parties. This chance meeting in no way influenced the future of either party. The paths of these two men were as different as their “successes.” Nevertheless, this meeting is recorded as one of the very few, if not the only, personal meetings of a Slovene with Hitler.

ORJUNA

The early 1920s saw the emergence of ORJUNA (Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists). At the time it was the only organization with some attributes of a fascist movement. Founded in March 1921 in the Dalmatian city of Split as the Yugoslav Progressive Nationalist Youth, it continued the tradition of similar associations from before the First World War, which fought against the Austro-Hungarian regime. The fact that the organization was founded in Dalmatia, near the Italian border, was no mere coincidence, given that its first members included many émigrés from Italian occupied territory. Therefore, the first objective of its founders was the struggle

against the Italian occupation of Slovene and Croat lands and their eventual liberation. Over the following two years, the majority of ORJUNA members who were émigrés primarily engaged in operations against the Italian regime, on both Yugoslav and Italian territories.

Before 1928, ORJUNA members, individually or in groups, often engaged in sabotage and armed attacks against the Italian fascist institutions, military strongholds, and Slovene collaborators on the Italian side of the border. Italian and Yugoslav authorities recorded scores of such violent operations along the border carried out by armed ORJUNA members, many of whom were later tried in one country or the other (Melik 1989). During demarcation negotiations between Italy and Yugoslavia, ORJUNA organized demonstrations in front of the Italian consulate in Ljubljana. In 1923, it staged an armed occupation of the peak of Triglav, the highest Slovene mountain and a national emblem, symbolically claiming it for Yugoslavia in defiance of Italian plans to shift the border onto the strategically important point (Kacin-Wohinz 1990: 49–51). However, by the end of the 1920s in Italy, ORJUNA had lost its leading role in the struggle against the Italian occupation. This was in part due to its excessively violent methods and, above all, the change in attitude towards the organization in Yugoslavia. Although the organization called TIGR (after Trieste, Istria, Gorizia, and Rijeka) replaced ORJUNA as leader of the resistance movement, the Italian consulate in Ljubljana continued closely to monitor members of the by then dissolved and clandestine ORJUNA (Archivio Centrale).

Because it opposed Italian fascism for patriotic reasons, it could be concluded that ORJUNA had nothing in common with it. This impression changes, however, when ORJUNA operations in Slovenia and Yugoslavia are closely examined. According to some observers, fascist groups in Italy inspired the founding of ORJUNA. This was supposedly evident from its methods of operation, and, even more, its statutes. Particularly revealing in this respect was article 2, which stipulated that the organization's program was to be implemented not only through moral and intellectual force but, "if necessary, also through the physical force by its members" (*Statut in program* 1923: 3; Perovšek 1998: 49–51). The program further envisioned drastic action against anyone threatening the unity of the Yugoslav nation or state, opposition to all forms of separatism, whether tribal or religious, and participation in the "building of a unique Yugoslav racial type and a distinctive Yugoslav nation." In view of the provision justifying the use of violence, the authorities in Slovenia were reluctant to register the organization officially. Although ORJUNA's statutes were soon approved in other parts of Yugoslavia, Ivan Hribar, the provincial governor of Slovenia, saw a similarity between ORJUNA and Mussolini's movement and refused to follow suit. He eventually had to yield under the pressure

from high-ranking state officials and physical threats from ORJUNA members (Hribar 1928: 510–13).

ORJUNA was directed by a central committee located in Split. Within this committee, there was a narrower directorate that handled the actual leadership of the organization and public relations. It was headed by Dr. Ljubo Leontić. ORJUNA was represented in individual regions by provincial (*oblast*) committees and, in the areas with a larger membership, town committees. Occasional provincial assemblies were also important institutions. ORJUNA was strongest in Dalmatia and gradually spread to other Yugoslav provinces, seemingly finding the most fertile ground in Slovenia, where its first homonymous bulletin began to be issued at the beginning of 1923. Before long, ORJUNA committees were set up in some twenty Slovene urban centers, allowing for a provincial assembly at the end of March 1923 (Bartulović 1925: 80–126). On that occasion, Marko Kranjec (1885–1973) was elected president of Slovene ORJUNA. Kranjec was, by all measures, a curious personality. During the First World War, while on the Tyrolean front, he defected from the Austro-Hungarian army to join the ranks of Yugoslav volunteers fighting against Austria. After the occupation of the Slovene littoral by the Italians, he emigrated to Yugoslavia. Being a fervent supporter of integral Yugoslav nationalism, one of his first moves there was to convert from Roman Catholicism to Orthodoxy and change his name from Ferdo to Marko. This was an obvious allusion to Prince Marko, a medieval Serbian hero. He was also imprisoned for his ORJUNA activities and after the organization's decline moved, or rather was deported to Skopje in Macedonia.

ORJUNA placed great emphasis on discipline. At its first congress, in Split, it adopted a proposal to “introduce army-like iron discipline,” which was to be implemented, together with uniformity, “to the extreme” throughout the organization. Its members were formed in a belligerent spirit bordering on fanaticism and were expected to give their lives for their ideas. Far from renouncing violence, the organization supported the use of violent means. For a more effective execution of operations, so-called action detachments were formed, which were armed when required. Initially, these detachments were directed by Ilija Trifunović-Birčanin, a Chetnik duke, whom Kranjec later replaced (Gligorijević 1975).

ORJUNA enjoyed strong support from the centrist-oriented Independent Democratic Party and in particular from its leader, Svetozar Pribičević. Because of that, some contemporaries believed that he was actually ORJUNA's founder, which was not the case, at least not formally (Matković 1972: 127–35). ORJUNA, in turn, made no attempt to hide its sympathies for the party, supporting it in all elections. In spite of suggestions that ORJUNA should declare itself an independent political force, a political party, the organization was not entirely independent and

therefore not quite comparable with other fascist movements in Europe. It fanatically promoted the concept of integral nationalism (i.e., the idea of a single Yugoslav nation), employing revolutionary phraseology in the process, declaring that a revolution would be carried out in the country, followed by a dictatorship by the nationalists. Such rhetoric was diametrically opposite to that of the communists, whom it branded as its primary adversaries and enemies of the state.

Apart from the émigrés, the majority of ORJUNA members, who called themselves “brothers,” had come from gymnastic societies, such as Sokol (Falcon). By profession, they were craftsmen, lower-ranking bureaucrats, and also the so-called lumpenproletariat. Among the members were some prominent public figures, most notably Vladimir Levstik. Sympathizers included Alojz Gradnik, a writer, and Fran Šuklje, an old Slovene politician, who also showed some interest in Italian fascism. Some people also associated Vladimir Bartol with ORJUNA. Bartol described a version of totalitarian society in his famous novel, *Alamut*, set in Persia (Šuklje 1933: 259–61; Legiša 1976: 244). The organization had a number of sympathizers among the students of Ljubljana University, who founded the ORJUNA Academic Club in early 1924. However, due to their violent behavior toward other groups, ORJUNA students failed to secure much support among their fellows (Kremenšek 1972: 98). Some attempts were also made to found a workers’ ORJUNA, with the aim of restraining the influence of communists and socialists among the proletariat. ORJUNA received, and sometimes forced, financial support from liberally oriented capitalists. In order to secure financial independence, the organization even attempted to receive credit from a commercial and industrial cooperative, using the name Economic ORJUNA, though this never materialized (Šuštar 1990: 144–46).

Apart from communists, the Slovene ORJUNA declared clericalists, ethnic minorities, and also Jews as enemies of Yugoslav unity. While anti-Semitism was certainly present in its ideology, it remained propaganda; its members never physically attacked Jews. This was not so when it came to other adversaries. As a result, the Slovene public soon perceived ORJUNA as a terrorist organization. Its members, for example, attacked German minority cultural institutions and public gatherings in the north-eastern towns of Slovenia (Šuštar 1990). ORJUNA organized various demonstrations, such as banner-raising, using provocative slogans and verbally abusing the people. They demolished a Catholic printing works in Maribor, and in Ljubljana they attempted to disrupt a rally organized by Anton Korošec, the leader of the Slovene People’s Party (Friš 2004). One year later, in Ljubljana, there was an armed clash between ORJUNA members and the police, who would not let them march through to the city center. The most notorious instance of violence was their confrontation with workers in the mining town of Trbovlje on 1 June 1924. The town was a

communist stronghold, and ORJUNA members wanted to display their banner conspicuously. However, upon entering the town they were attacked by armed Proletarian Action Detachments the communists had deployed. Shooting ensued, leaving several dead on both sides. With the help of the police, ORJUNA members succeeded in entering the town, where they killed one of the captured workers. After their return to Ljubljana, they arranged a monumental funeral for those who had fallen in Trbovlje. Among the speakers was the writer Levstik, who began his panegyric, "O heroes! Silently and proudly you lie here before us as the first of the Slovene ORJUNAS who received the sacrament of chivalric death while defending our banner, for the glory and prosperity of our nation and the victory of our immortal idea." To this, he added "Your blood, o brothers, cries to heaven!" (Grdina 1995: 280–81). Because of this and other, similar incidents, ORJUNA started losing its influence and reputation. It was abolished in Slovenia two years later and disarmed in other parts of Yugoslavia (Perovšek 1996: 255–58; Klopčič 1977: 409–18; Marinko 1971: 44–52; Klavara 1966: 321). In 1929, ORJUNA was outlawed, along with all political parties and organizations, after the proclamation of King Alexander's personal dictatorship. Several attempts to revive ORJUNA were made after 1931, by Kranjec in particular; however, they were to no avail. By that time the political arena had come to be dominated by other such organizations (Gligorijević 1963: 389–91; Čop 2006).

Slovenes in Italy

After the disintegration of Austria-Hungary, Italy occupied the Slovene littoral and Istria, claiming the reward promised in the 1915 Treaty of London for having entered the war on the side of the Entente forces. The region was densely populated with Slovenes and Croats. As a result, several hundred thousand Slovenes from the hinterland of Trieste and Gorizia came under Italy and were subjected to forced Italianization even before fascism had been officially established. In the beginning, the Italian authorities used refined and less violent methods to win over the non-Italian population. These included the setting up of the so-called *fascios* in the Slovene countryside. The idea was that by joining locals would publicly show their loyalty to Italy and its regime and draw closer to its culture, including psychologically. The Italian regime's goal was to break the unity of the Slovene political parties and deprive them of their argument that they represented the Slovene population (Kacin-Wohinz 1977: 258–59). In some areas, especially those bordering the Italian settlements, Slovene membership in these *fascios* increased, mostly on account of opportunist motives. In November 1922, the Italian authorities in Gorizia founded the Slovene Governmental Party, which stood for the merging of the Slovene and Italian populations, with the Slovenes preserving their language. Although the party published the bulletin *Nova doba* (The new age), it

completely failed in the elections. The party essentially served for the disruption of the Slovene and communist electoral rallies (Svoljšak 1997: 278). As time passed, the fascist regime allowed fewer possibilities for the expression of Slovene identity. This led to the abolition of the Slovene Governmental Party in 1925, with its most fervent members joining the Italian Fascist Party (Sedmak 1979).

Royal Dictatorship and the Regime of Milan Stojadinović

The unresolved national question in Yugoslavia was a growing problem and a source of dispute, especially between the Serbian and Croatian political elites. Cultural and religious differences between individual nations and provinces were substantial. King Alexander Karadjordjević, who had even considered severing non-Serbian areas from Yugoslavia, was enraged by the killing of Croatian leader Stjepan Radić in the National Assembly. He carried out a coup d'état soon afterwards, dissolved the parliament, and renamed the country the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which was to be populated by a single Yugoslav nation. All political parties were abolished or banned. Two years later, after imposing his own constitution, only pan-Yugoslav parties were allowed, and no ethnic or tribal parties, as he termed them. After his assassination by the Ustaša in Marseilles in 1934, the situation in Yugoslavia changed radically.²

The 1935 and 1938 elections failed to resolve the country's fundamental problems. Alexander's prime minister, General Petar Živković, and his successor, Milan Stojadinović, both ruled by combining populism and a hard line approach. Authoritarianism and the exaltation of the masses became fashionable in mainstream politics, with politicians dedicating particular attention to them in public. Intentionally or unintentionally, fascist models were adopted at political rallies in Yugoslavia, which became increasingly ideological and rich in iconography, including military insignia. Uniformed militia members trooped in straight lines under grandstands where sat politicians, and at rallies organized by Stojadinović exclamations like "Leader, leader!" were heard. Paramilitary formations of village and city guards—or the so-called Slovene Boys, dressed in green or blue shirts—were a common occurrence around the country (Stojadinović 1970: 533). Political opponents naturally did not miss an opportunity to brand this as fascism. Marxist writers easily labelled bourgeois politicians as fascists. They viewed Alexander's dictatorship as monarchic fascism, the regime of General Živković as Yugoslav fascism, and the dominance of the Slovene People's Party under the leadership of Anton Korošec as clerical fascism. However, a realistic comparison with the regimes and the situation in fascist Italy and Nazi Germany shows that this was pure exaggeration.

² For more information about King Alexander, see Farley (2007: 51–86).

New Movements

Although the dictatorship outlawed regular political party activity, it was still possible to express political views in newspapers and journals. In the early 1930s, like-minded groups established several publications that gradually grew into political quasi-movements. Some of them were fully independent, while others were influenced by well-established, initially underground political groups. The majority of these movements supported the royal dictator and his idea of a single Yugoslav nation. In some ideological respects they came close to fascism.

The first movement had developed from the former League of Combatants (*Zveza bojevnikov*), which was an association of WW I veterans, Chetniks and reserve officers. In 1934, the league was reformed as the Association of the Combatants of Yugoslavia or Boj (Battle). Its bulletin was symbolically named *Prelom* (The break). The association defined itself as a “non-partisan movement for the spiritual and physical preparation of national and state defense and for the promotion of the universal progress of our entire nation,” adding that its members were “soldiers in civilian clothes, standing by their king, on the basis of his Sixth of January Manifesto” (Mikuž 1965: 428). Boj fanatically upheld the king’s dictatorship, presenting it as a herald of a new era, a new Yugoslavia, national renaissance, and of order, justice, and uprightness. Consequently, it stressed the importance of morality, the ethnic and spiritual congeniality of the Yugoslav community, and strove for a planned economy and a corporatist social order. The association organized mass rallies throughout Slovenia, which were guarded by uniformed stewards. Because of this, its opponents soon designated the movement as fascist. One part of its leadership resented the designation, arguing that in order to deal with difficult economic and social issues, corresponding methods had to be applied (Gligorijević 1965: 59–61). When, at a certain point, the movement became relatively popular, mainstream political considerations started to enter, which weakened it. Infighting slowly eroded the movement and it split in 1935. One part returned to the old League of Combatants and started cooperating with the left wing, while the majority, led by Avgust Kuster, joined the newly founded pan-Yugoslav movement called Zbor (Gathering). According to former Communist Party activists’ memoirs, communist infiltration played a part in this (Kreft 1954: 38–40; Mlakar 1982: 158–59).

A similar movement was founded in Maribor, around the bulletin *Borba* (Struggle), without, however, achieving the same kind of response as Boj enjoyed. The bulletin promoted such ideas as the transformation of the capitalist economy into a national-socialist economy, and wage relationships into co-ownership. Its readers and opponents were shocked when, in an article about the relationship between Yugoslavia and

Hitlerism, they read that from a domestic viewpoint what went on in Germany was irrelevant, and that what mattered was that Hitlerism had triumphed over communism and hurt the clericalists. The bulletin also claimed that the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak borders were safe because the Nazis ruled in Germany. It further expressed admiration for economic development in Germany.

In the Yugoslav framework, *Borba* joined Yugoslav Action, which was founded in 1932 in Zagreb. According to its program, no political parties were needed in Yugoslavia, nor was a Hitler, Mussolini, or Stalin necessary, since the country already had Alexander. *Borba* promoted Marko Kranjc, the former ORJUNA leader, who was even elected to the central committee of Yugoslav Action. As early as mid-1935, however, *Borba* closed and the movement died away (Mikuž 1965: 426–27). In those years, another bulletin, *Pohod* (March), appeared. A small but extremely nationalistic movement developed around it. The group joined the better known pan-Yugoslav movement, Narodna odbrana (National defense). Its aim was the development of uniform Yugoslav politics under the slogans “with the nation for the nation” and “for Greater Yugoslavia, from Triglav to the Black Sea.” *Pohod* and the Narodna odbrana were both abolished by the authorities at the end of 1937 (Borak, Čepič, and Fischer 2005: 351).

Zbor

At the same time, in the mid-1930s, another fascist leaning movement emerged in Slovenia—namely, the Yugoslav National Movement Zbor, whose ideology and activities were closely associated with the name of its founder and leader Dimitrije Ljotić. Zbor was founded between the end of 1934 and the beginning of 1935 in a merger of several movements and associations, among them Yugoslav Action and a part of the Slovene Boj movement. Ljotić was a Serbian lawyer who, during his studies in France, was attracted to Charles Maurras’s rejection of the French revolution, democracy, and individualism (Cohen 1996: 13–15). After returning to Serbia, he entered politics and promoted increasingly conservative ideas. Referencing religious beliefs, he emphasized the importance of cooperatives as a genuine Slavic mode of production and expressed disgust with parliamentary democracy and democracy in general. He attacked the Jews, who, in his view, “were served by the anti-national systems of capitalism, democracy, individualism, and atheism.” While acknowledging certain similarities between his ideology and fascism, he also stressed the differences, such as the fact that Zbor’s ideology was not based on race or state, although Ljotić stood for a planned economy and the building of a corporative state.

There were also Slovenes among the Zbor members; for instance, Fran Kandare, who was part of the top leadership, and the well-known

Danilo Gregorič, who lived in Belgrade and was fully accustomed to the Serbian environment. The latter became the Zbor youth leader as well as head of its propaganda department. His moment of glory came during the war with his book *Samoubistvo Jugoslavije* (The suicide of Yugoslavia), published in Belgrade and subsequently reprinted several times, including in Nazi Germany (Gregorič 1943). In Slovenia, a provincial committee of Zbor was founded under the leadership of Artur Šturm. In 1936, the Slovene Zbor began publishing a bulletin by the same name. The movement's central bulletin, published in Belgrade, was called *Otadžbina* (Fatherland). Zbor started promoting its ideas through numerous lectures given by Slovene sympathizers, who included many intellectuals. Its members and sympathizers were mostly workers, peasants, and bureaucrats. Occasionally Ljotić himself held rallies in Slovenia, giving anti-communist and anti-liberal speeches colored with his own mysticism. Very typical was his rhetorical question: "Do you know, comrades, why we are against liberal democracy and parliamentarism? Simply, because they contain the seeds of disorder and irresponsibility" (Ljotić 1938: 30). Zbor enjoyed some support among the academic youth. An academic sub-committee was founded and student sympathizers gathered in the club Edinstvo (Unity) (Miklavčič 1994: 234–42). Zbor's influence reached into high schools as well, including the Celje gymnasium. The movement's leader in Celje was Izidor Cergol, who revived the *Zbor* bulletin in 1939, although it was soon after banned again.

Even though he had personal relations with all of them and was considered part of the Serbian political establishment, Ljotić often had serious disagreements with leading Yugoslav politicians due to his extremist views. Although the authorities would not let him transform his movement into a political party, he was allowed to run with his list in the 1935 and 1938 parliamentary elections; however, he had no success. In the first elections, his list won 2,503 votes in the Drava Province and, in the second, as few as 1,132, far below the mark required for a seat in parliament (1984: 41–47). In the Yugoslav political arena, Ljotić became increasingly notorious for his open displays of sympathy for Nazi Germany, especially after the discovery that he received Nazi funding. This was revealed in the so-called Technical Union affair (Mlakar 1982: 157). In addition, his followers practiced violence, sometimes in a fascist-like manner. When, in October 1940, the Zbor members physically attacked the students of the Technical Faculty in Belgrade, the government finally outlawed the organization, which it had contemplated doing for some time (Gligorijević 1963). This, however, did not put a stop to the activities of members and sympathizers of Zbor, who continued operating underground, some of them in an organization called *Beli orli* (White Eagles). They later re-emerged as collaborators with the Nazi occupiers of Yugoslavia.

Here the question logically arises as to what degree such phenomena and personalities influenced developments in occupied Slovenia during the Second World War? It is usually thought that the fascist movements—even though there were exceptions in Eastern Europe—were the ideological foundation and source of cadres for wartime collaboration. To a certain degree that was indeed the case in Slovenia. Considering the fact that the communists dominated the resistance movement's leadership, anti-communism was the main motive for some members of the movements under consideration to turn against the resistance and collaborate with the occupiers. Such was the case of *Straža v viharju* (Sentinel in the Storm), whose members became the leaders of the so-called White Guard, as well as of extreme Yugoslav nationalists, who joined the ranks of the Chetniks. Later, in 1944, during the German occupation of the Ljubljana Province, this was especially true of the Slovene members of Zbor, who played a significant role in the regime of General Leon Rupnik. Some of them, with Izidor Cergol at the helm, became ideologists and propagandists of the Slovene Home Guard, at least outwardly supporting and praising Nazi Germany and its struggle for a so-called New Europe. However, the vast majority of the Home Guard members remained politically and ideologically loyal to the positions of the Catholic Slovene People's Party (Mlakar 2003: 21–35, 398–414).

Conclusions

In Yugoslavia of the 1930s, as in other European countries, there were political attempts to respond to emerging totalitarian ideologies, such as fascism, Nazism, and communism. Liberal democracy was clearly in a serious crisis. Extremist movements, mostly with a right-wing orientation and some with obvious fascist characteristics, emerged throughout Europe, including in Yugoslavia and in Slovenia. However, these movements, with the possible exception of Zbor, could hardly be described as genuinely fascist.

Problems arise when trying to define fascism and list its basic characteristics; scholars disagree on the definition (Goldberg 2007: 2–3). Ernst Nolte and Juan Linz have suggested basic criteria. Nolte emphasizes elements like anti-communism, anti-liberalism, anti-conservatism, party-military relations, and the aims of totalitarianism. Linz focuses on ideology, goals, style, and organization of fascist movements or states. He lists the following: the establishment of a new nationalist authoritarian state, national trade unions and corporative economy, imperial expansion in relation to other nations, voluntarist “faith,” modernization and a new secular culture, external emphasis on rallies and the mobilization of the masses, organization of party militia, use of violence, enforcement of the male principle, praise of youth and the young, as well as tendencies to

follow a charismatic leader (Payne 1980: 14–21). Based on these descriptors, it seems accurate to describe King Alexandar and the Slovene People's Party as “monarcho-fascist” or “clerical fascist.”

The categorization of other movements reviewed in this article is questionable. The fact that some scholars even doubt the fascist character of the Croatian Ustaša movement, or describe it as pre-fascist or semi-fascist, shows how great a dilemma this is. Some have termed such cases “abortive fascisms” (Griffin 1995: 169–241; Vago 1976); another refers to “bogus, false fascisms” (Ambri 1980). In any case, the ideological and practical political elements linking these movements to fascism must be established. All of them were anti-capitalist and even more vehemently anti-communist; some were even anti-parliamentary. Although anti-Semitism was present in all of them, it was more a matter of principle and propaganda, with the exception of Zbor. The use of violence was justified and practiced only by ORJUNA and, to some extent, by Zbor. However, these political postures were not fully developed; nor did they culminate in serious threats to the existing social system and established political parties. Although the *führer* principle existed in Zbor, it proved more of a hindrance than a help to Ljotić in his political struggle.

There are, though, two elements that were clearly present in all the movements—namely, radical nationalism and corporatism. However, problems arise here, too. Our review has shown that the movements in Slovenia also displayed an integral Yugoslav nationalism, which perceived Slovene individuality or even nationalism as a threat to the state and hence an ideological danger. This was one of the main reasons why these movements remained politically marginalized. After the Austro-Hungarian period ended, the Slovenes had only just begun the process of emancipation and political formation as a nation. It was unthinkable that they would renounce their nationality. For this reason there was no friction between the right-wing movements (or within them) that might have resulted in pan-Yugoslav fascism vs. Slovene fascism. These movements all held that there was only one Yugoslav nation. Therefore, one cannot speak of Slovene fascism but only, perhaps, of (para)fascist movements (with Yugoslav pedigrees) in the Slovene territory.

The Slovene People's Party, which had consistently defended Slovene individuality and strove for its autonomy within the Yugoslav state, fully capitalized on this fact. On the other hand, a new extremist group, *Straža v viharju*, emerged within the Catholic camp in the 1930s. Apart from Catholic integralism based on the papal encyclicals, it also defended extreme Slovene nationalism and an independent Slovene state. In this sense, the movement was a singular exception. Although the group enjoyed support among the student population and Catholic intelligentsia (Miklavčič 2001: 22–23; Žebot 1939), it remained without a wider following. Along

with all the other groups I have reviewed, it supported corporatism and the corporatist state system, for which it was associated with fascism. Given that, in the 1930s, the concept of corporatism was widely accepted in Slovenia and elsewhere, this cannot be used as a decisive criterion for categorizing a movement or political group as fascist. Even liberals strove for a certain type of corporatism. Those who opposed the corporative system were, naturally, communists and Marxists, who used this idea to designate their majority opponents as clerical fascists. This is how Edvard Kardelj, for example, branded Andrej Gosar, a Christian sociologist, who strove for some kind of “harmony between work and capital” (Kardelj 1989: 276; Kostanjevec 1934). Ironically, Kardelj himself, as Yugoslavia’s chief communist ideologist, tried to implement a new type of corporatism after the Second World War, through socialist self-management.³

With regards to the geo-strategic position of Slovenia in the 1930s, it should also be noted that its sizeable German minority became increasingly Nazified in the 1930s, and especially after the *Anschluss* of Austria. This provoked tensions among the Slovenes, who felt threatened by the Nazi campaign, and added to the problems of their political leadership, which had to exercise care in its relations with Nazi Germany (Vodopivec 2006: 235–37; Biber 1966: 211–67; Cvirn 1998). Nazification was especially explicit in the minority umbrella organization *Schwäbisch-deutscher Kulturbund*. The members of the minority were raised in the Nazi spirit. At the same time they were involved in intelligence operations for Nazi institutions in Austria. This involved not only military information, but also information about Slovene civilian institutions and the most prominent Slovenes. These activities were methodically carried out with a coming occupation in mind. The German minority supported the German invasion and occupation of Yugoslavia in April 1941. It then for the most part cooperated with the Nazi occupation forces and actively supported Germanization and other forms of violence perpetrated against the Slovene population in the Lower Styria and Upper Carniola regions (Ferenc 1968: 62–173).

In summary, in the period between the two World Wars there was no real fascist movement in Slovenia, at least not one that displayed the main characteristics of fascism. There were political groups whose individual features resembled those of fascism, but they were not fascist in their essence. While displaying some fascist elements, these movements were nevertheless only a peripheral phenomenon in Yugoslav and Slovene societies at the time.

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³ At least, that is how Igor Lukšič describes self-management, although he is not the only one to do so (1992).

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POVZETEK

RADIKALNI NACIONALIZEM TER ELEMENTI FAŠIZMA V GIBANJIH NA SLOVENSKEM V OBDOBJU MED OBEMA VOJNAMA

Avtor v uvodu poudarja dejstvo, da se sodobno zgodovinopisje le redko dotika pojava fašizma na prostoru bivše Jugoslavije, če pa že, pa se njegova obravnava ponavadi konča pri hrvaškem ustaštvu. Še toliko bolj je v literaturi v tem pogledu spregledana Slovenija in s tem tamkajšnji politični pojavi, ki jih pred drugo svetovno vojno na tak ali drugačen način lahko povezujemo s fašizmom. Ob tem je uvodoma predstavljen položaj slovenskega naroda po prvi svetovni vojni, ki ga je pomembno zaznamovalo dejstvo, da je bil razdeljen med več držav, pri čemer pa tudi v matični Jugoslaviji večina prebivalstva, ki je sicer sledila katoliški Slovenski ljudski stranki, sploh ni bila zadovoljna s svojim položajem.

Sledi podrobnejša obravnava posameznih političnih gibanj. Začetna omemba Narodne socialistične stranke je predvsem zanimivost, saj

je po svojem imenu že med sodobniki vzbujala asociacije na nacistično stranko v Nemčiji, predvsem pa tu izstopa morbidno dejstvo, da se je eden od voditeljev stranke leta 1921 osebno srečal s Hitlerjem, sicer pa med njunima strankam ni bilo nobenih stičnih točk. Osrednji del razprave je nato posvečen pojavu in delovanju Orjune, to je Organizaciji jugoslovanskih nacionalistov. Le-ta je nastala v Dalmaciji in se razširila tudi v Sloveniji, imela pa je, zanimivo, močan protitalijanski oziroma protifašistični naboj. Je pa po svojih metodah, predvsem z uporabo fizičnega nasilja spominjala na fašizem in tako so jo ocenjevali sodobniki. Po nekaterih nasilnih akcijah je bila Orjuna v Sloveniji kmalu razpuščena, drugod po Jugoslaviji pa razorožena. V istem razdobju, to je v prvi polovici 20. let, so tudi italijanske fašistične oblasti na priključenem Primorskem skušale organizirati slovensko fašistično stranko, a brez vidnega uspeha.

Diktatura kralja Aleksandra in zatem njegova nasilna smrt ter spreminjajoči se evropski kontekst so tudi v tem pogledu v Jugoslaviji in Sloveniji privedli do novih pojavov, in sicer v obliki raznih nacionalističnih gibanj, ki so se večkrat oblikovala okrog svojih glasil ali pa okrog močne osebnosti. Takšna gibanja so bila npr. Združenje borcev Jugoslavije – Boj, Borba in Pohod, ki so se povezovala s širšimi sorodnimi organizacijami drugod po Jugoslaviji. Drugačna je bila pot Jugoslovanskega ljudskega gibanja Zbor, ki se je iz Srbije razširilo drugam, med drugim je našlo kar močan odmev tudi v Sloveniji. Ustanovil in do svoje smrti ga je vodil srbski politik Dimitrije Ljotić. V Sloveniji je Zbor imel kar nekaj pristašev med intelektualci in študenti. Za razliko od ostalih gibanj, se je preizkusil tudi na volitvah, vendar je leta 1935 dobil v Dravski banovini 2503 glasove, leta 1938 pa le še 1132, kar pa je bilo seveda daleč premalo za dosego poslanskega mandata. Za Zbor je bil značilen izrazit antisemitizem in je izražal poudarjen odpor do demokracije. Pristaši Zbora so med drugo svetovno vojno v veliki meri kolaborirali z nacističnim okupatorjem.

Vsa omenjena gibanja so ostala obrobneža značaja in niso mogla upati na važnejšo vlogo v političnem življenju, kaj šele, da bi lahko mislila na prevzem oblasti. Poglavitni vzrok je bil v tem, da so sicer bila skrajno nacionalistična, vendar ne v slovenskem, temveč v jugoslovanskem smislu. Zastopala so stališče o samo enem in enotnem jugoslovanskem narodu in bila proti vsakršnemu separatizmu, ki so ga razumela zelo na široko. Socialna in kulturno-politična baza za takšna stališča pa je bila na Slovenskem zelo omejena. S fašizmom jih je sicer povezovalo zavzemanje za uporabo fizične sile, protikapitalistična in protikomunistična naravnost, propagiranje korporativne ureditve družbe in države, deloma tudi antisemitizem in antiparlamentarizem. V seštevku gre torej za sicer mučno, a vendarle prehodno in malo pomembno etapo v razvoju slovenskega političnega življenja.