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**THE YUGOSLAV NATIONAL FRONT:
ATTEMPT(S) TO UNIFY THE
YUGONTEGRALISTS EXTREME RIGHT-WING
1935–1939
(Translation *In Extenso*)**

Abstract

This paper aims to reconstruct the history of attempts by Yugoslav integrationist political organizations – namely, the Yugoslav National Party, the Yugoslav People's Party, and the Yugoslav National Movement Zbor – to establish mutual cooperation and form the Yugoslav National Front coalition during the late 1930s. Their objective was to more effectively counter the informal process of federalizing the Yugoslav state initiated by the government of the Yugoslav Radical Union. The central focus of this study is the course of negotiations between these integrationist organizations, as well as the stance of Milan Stojadinović's regime toward the idea of uniting supporters of national and state unitarism. A more detailed examination of the Yugoslav National Front concept would shed light on the background and context of several key political events – such as the Arnaudović assassination attempt on Stojadinović and the Technical Union affair – that significantly influenced the political landscape of the first Yugoslav state.

Keywords: Yugoslav integrations, Yugoslav National Front, Yugoslav Radical Peasant Democracy, Bogoljub Jevtić, Yugoslav National Party, Petar Živković, Yugoslav People's Party, Svetislav Hođera, Yugoslav People's Movement Choir, Dimitrije Ljotić

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The idea of integral Yugoslavism – a political theory according to which Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes represent “tribes” of a single Yugoslav nation – emerged on the eve of World War I in circles of radicalized youth gathered around the Serbian-Croatian Coalition. After the war, this theory was further elaborated by the ideologues of the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (ORJUNA). Using historical constructions, the leaders of ORJUNA imagined the history of a single Yugoslav nation inhabiting the lands between the Adriatic and Black Seas, the bearer of progress and the fighter against anachronistic political, social, and economic forms. According to their interpretation, the Yugoslav people, after centuries of struggle, completed their national-social revolution in 1918 by overthrowing the Ottoman and Habsburg empires, exponents of autocracy, religious fundamentalism, and feudalism, and for the first time found themselves united and free in their state (Dragosavljević 2018, 64–74; 109–125). By this premise, ORJUNA perceived all advocates of federalism and political organizations based on ethnic, regional, and religious identities as anachronistic forces that threatened the freedom of the Yugoslav people. Guided by the maxim “Into battle for the Yugoslav nation! Whoever is not with us is against us! Whoever is against us is against the State!” ORJUNA formed its militia (Action Squads), which targeted all opponents of national and state Unitarianism. Although the aggressive propaganda and terror of ORJUNA activists on several occasions threatened public order, ORJUNA, and its ideology dwelled on the margins of the political life of the Yugoslav state (Dragosavljević 2020, 172–206). Conceptualized in circles of highly educated urban intelligentsia, the theory of integral Yugoslavism was an abstract construct that had difficulty penetrating the ranks of the rural population, which remained loyal to political organizations based on ethnic, regional, and religious identities.

The dramatic turning point in the fate of this political theory was the assassination of Croatian deputies in the National Assembly in 1928. After months of negotiations with representatives of political parties, King Alexander, on January 6, 1929, issued the 6th January Manifesto – a proclamation in which he declared that parliamentarism had led to ethnic conflicts that threatened the further survival of the state. The king emphasized the need to find new ways to achieve unity, equality, and the equal rights of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Dimić 1996, 247). The monarch’s idea was to overcome the accumulated problems of Yugoslav society through a policy of national Unitarianism,

i.e., levelling on the Yugoslav level, whose ideological expression was the theory of integral Yugoslavism (Petranović 1991, 243). The king entrusted the implementation of this political program to the government headed by General Petar Živković. In the period 1929-1931, the 6th January regime was joined by a large number of prominent ORJUNA members such as Budimir-Grga Andjelić, Dobrosav Jevđević, Juraj Demetrović, Jovan Banjanin, and Albert Kramer, who would establish the organizational and ideological backbone of the regime's party – the Yugoslav Radical Peasant Democracy (*JRSD*)¹ (Stojkov 1969, 101–103). By presenting Yugoslav nationalism as a “divine right” and elevating national unity to the rank of a “law of the cosmos,” the ORJUNA members, through state institutions, continued to propagate uncompromising national and state Unitarianism (Dimić 1996, 279). The policy of integral Yugoslavism met with resistance and further exacerbated existing national conflicts (Petranović 1988, 197; 203). The inconsistent policy of the monarch, who, neglecting all criticism leveled at the pre-January 6th parties, tried to attract the NRS, SLS, and JMO into the orbit of the regime, led to a split within the regime's corps (Petranović 1988, 199). In December 1931, during the constitution of the regime's JRSD, a group of younger deputies (91 of them) led by Nikola Kešeljević opposed the name of the newly formed party, which, according to them, represented an unacceptable concession to pre-January 6th political organizations (Bodrožić 1964, 47–48). At the beginning of 1932, this group gathered around Kešeljević and Svetislav Hodjera, separated from the parliamentary club of the JRSD. It formed the Yugoslav National Club, accusing the rest of the JRSD of betraying the idea of January 6th. In May 1932, the club was transformed into the Yugoslav National Party (JNS, better known as Borbaši), which launched a fierce campaign against the leadership of the JRSD, which, in their opinion, had capitulated to tribal-separatist forces embodied in the pre-January 6th parties (Petranović 1988, 263). In addition to Borbaši, several political organizations were formed that, from the positions of uncompromising defense of the 6th January Manifesto, criticized the leadership of the JRSD. The oldest

¹ In 1933, the JRSD changed its name to the Yugoslav National Party. Due to the identical acronym with Svetislav Hodjera's Yugoslav National Party, in this paper we will continue to use the abbreviation JRSD even after 1932.

among them – the Veterans' Organization of Yugoslavia (*VOJ*) – was founded in 1929 as an attempt by ORJUNA members from the Drava Banovina to continue their political work through the defense of the rights of veterans and the struggle for their more active involvement in political life (Dragosavljević 2019a, 234–255). At the same time, the Yugoslav Action was formed, which brought together former members of ORJUNA from the Sava and Primorska Banovinas and a political circle formed around the Belgrade newspaper “Political Voice” (*Politički Glasnik*) (Dragosavljević 2019b, 367–390). The mosaic of political organizations of dissidents of the 6th January regime was also made up of a political group gathered around the newspaper “Fatherland” (*Otadžbina*) under the leadership of Dimitrije Ljotić, a group of radical leaders from Banat Milorad Mojić, and the so-called “Small Council” (*Mali Zbor*) of Ratko Parežanin. These organizations, with minor variations, inherited the foundations of ORJUNA's ideology – the theory of integral Yugoslavism, monarchism, advocacy of the concept of a centralized state, and plans for radical change of the political order. Their leadership unanimously criticized the corruption and ideological confusion within the ranks of the JRSD and showed intense animosity towards political parties formed on ethnic, regional, and religious identities. After the assassination in Marseille (09.10.1934), the membership of these organizations merged into a single Yugoslav National Movement Council (*Zbor*) under the leadership of Dimitrije Ljotić (Prežanin 2001, 22–25; 34–41; 51–54).

Prince Pavle Karađorđević, who took power at the head of the Regency, was determined to reject the policy of the 6th January Manifesto. Bogoljub Jevtić was mandated to form a new government, which announced a break with the JRSD regime and the restoration of a multi-party parliamentary life. Jevtić's government *de facto* (although not *de jure*) allowed the resumption of the work of pre-January 6th political parties and invited some of them (NRS, SLS, and JMO) to take over specific ministerial portfolios. Contrary to Jevtić's expectations, all opposition parties refused to cooperate with his government (Stojkov 1969, 278–279). Faced with the refusal of cooperation, Jevtić called elections for May 5, 1935 (Tešić 1997, 17–19). By distancing himself from the JRSD, Jevtić opened the possibility of the fall of the 6th January system. Part of the JRSD presidency wanted to help B. Jevtić's list, while part demanded that the party run with its list. Ultimately, the GO JRSD abandoned the idea of setting up an

independent list and recommended to its supporters to support lists that stood on the principle of national and state Unitarianism (Bodrožić 1987, 259–261). The JNS managed to set up an election list only to have it illegally annulled by the regime, which calculated that it would secure votes for the Yugoslav integralists (Bodrožić 1987, 275–276). Revolted by Jevtić's actions, Hodjera directed his supporters to vote for the opposition list, thereby causing further confusion among the supporters of Unitarianism. The JNP Zbor also set up an independent list. However, its leadership knew it could not expect a significant result since the movement was in the initial stages of formation. The campaign of the government list was accompanied by repression and intimidation of political dissidents (Petranović 1988, 211). In the Sava and Primorska Banovinas, opposition supporters used “terror from below” methods to intimidate candidates and voters of the government list (Dimić 1996, 331–332). Thanks to repression and falsification, the government list won a landslide victory in the elections (Stojkov 1969, 311). The government of B. Jevtić relied on dissidents from the JRSD, the cooperative movement, and individuals from the ranks of the extreme right-wing Yugoslav integralist movements. A precedent was the entry into the government of a prominent member of the disbanded NRS, Milan Stojadinović, as Minister of Finance (Stojkov 1985, 8–9; 19). Compromised in the public and the eyes of Prince Pavle by the repressive methods by which it won the election, viewed with distrust by Yugoslav integralist circles (due to the presence of M. Stojadinović), the government of B. Jevtić fell a month after winning the election (Tešić 1997, 21–24).

Milan Stojadinović, representing the NRS, was mandated to form a new government. He approached Anton Korošec and Mehmed Spaho, leaders of the SLS and JMO, seeking cooperation. Representatives of the three parties formed a new political organization called the Yugoslav Radical Community (JRZ), which, relying on the party apparatus of the three parties, was supposed to provide the government with the appearance of popular support and, at the same time minimize the influence of the Croatian national movement on the political scene of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. According to an internal agreement, these three parties divided spheres of interest on an ethnic principle (Pavlović 2008, 310–311; 340). This conceived regime represented an introduction to the federalization of the state, i.e., it foreshadowed the abandonment of the centralized state order envisaged by the Octroyed Constitution (Janjetović 2007, 106). An

additional challenge to the constitutional order was the passive attitude of the government towards the situation in the Sava and Primorska Banovinas, which, after the May 5 elections, found themselves under the political dominance of the HSS, which pursued a determined policy of liquidating the political legacy of the monarchical dictatorship as the main obstacle to the establishment of a Croatian federal unit within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Supporters of the JRSD and other Yugoslav integralist elements were removed from all state services and subjected to terror by the so-called Peasant Protection – the party militia of the HSS. Encouraged by the passive attitude of the Government, extremist elements within the HSS directed terror even at members of the ruling party who, in vain, sought protection from state organs (Stojkov 1985, 83–85).

Radical changes in state policy led to organizational turmoil within the Yugoslav integralist forces. The JRSD, paralyzed by internal conflicts, was a silent observer of events. The JNS, which supported the opposition list, lost much of its credibility among Yugoslav integralists, and the JNP Zbor achieved a negligible election result. Under pressure from the Crown, the deputies elected to Jevtić's list en masse crossed over to the regime's parliamentary club. Among the ranks of Yugoslav integralists, the rejection of the policy of the 6th January Manifesto and the renewal of the work of political parties based on national, regional, and confessional identities were interpreted as political suicide for the Yugoslav state and a prelude to its disintegration. As a reaction among Yugoslav integralists, the idea of gathering all supporters of national and state Unitarianism into a coalition aiming to return to the policy of the 6th January Manifesto emerged. During August and September 1935, a group of JRSD senators – Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes from the borderlands who remained faithful to the politics of uncompromising national and state Unitarianism, held a series of meetings, the result of which was the so-called Pohorska Resolution. It condemned the government's departure from national and state unity policy. It appealed to all supporters of Unitarianism to unite in the Yugoslav National Front (JNF), which would overthrow the government of M. Stojadinović and return the state course to the positions of the 6th January Manifesto. The prominent activists of this group (the so-called Pohorci) were senators B. G. Andjelić, A.

Kramer, J. Banjanin, Petar Zec, and Svetislav Popović (AJ, 38–94). Jevtić also issued a circular letter in which he called on the deputies elected to his list to refuse to cooperate with the government of M. Stojadinović and to direct their work towards uniting all supporters of national and state Unitarianism in the JNF, which would continue to implement the 6th January policy (AJ, 37–19). In September 1935, twelve deputies led by Milan Božić (an associate of P. Živković) separated from Jevtić's club and formed the Yugoslav Independent National Club. Members of Božić's club supported the Pohorci and appealed to all supporters of Unitarianism to unite in the JNF, which would "continue the policy of the Knightly King" (AJ, 38–94). In September 1935, at a public gathering, the leader of the JNP Zbor, Dimitrije Ljotić, supported the idea of gathering all supporters of Yugoslav integralism. The JNS took a reserved position towards the concept of the JNF and, in November 1935, denied cooperating with the Pohorci. Contrary to the official position of the party, part of the membership led by the party's general secretary, Miloš Dragović, maintained close ties with the Pohorci and Jevtić's political group and supported the idea of the JNF (*Borba* 1936a; *Borba* 1936b; *Borba* 1936c). In February 1936, a conference of the JRSD was held in Belgrade at which the party president Uzuunović called on all supporters of Yugoslav integralism to unite to "break all tribal and religious fronts" and secure the victory of the "great idea of the Uniting King" (AJ, 37–19).

Further work on the formation of the JNF was interrupted by Damjan Arnaudović's attempt to assassinate M. Stojadinović in the National Assembly in March 1936.² This event represented the culmination of several months of clashes in parliament between the deputies of the regime party and members of Jevtić's parliamentary club to which the assassin belonged. Investigative documents clearly show that Arnaudović committed his act in a state of severe intoxication³. This event did not prevent M. Stojadinović from using the entire case to morally degrade Jevtić's group and politically liquidate P. Živković,

² For more information on the Arnaudović assassination, see: Simić 2020, 163–174.

³ According to his own statement, Arnaudović mixed 6 drinks during the evening (jenever, plum brandy, vodka, whiskey, wine, and cognac), i.e., he drank about a liter of spirits and an unidentified amount of wine.

who, as Minister of War, represented the last stronghold of the 6th January system within the government. The JRZ regime tried to use Arnautović's assassination also to compromise the JNS. Among those suspected of complicity in the assassination was Miloš Dragović, the leading advocate of the JNF idea from among the Borbaš. Supporting the involvement of the JNS leadership in Arnautović's assassination is a letter dated March 9, 1936, received by Stojadinović's chief of staff, which warns that on February 12, 1936, Hodjera stated that a regime change would soon occur and that the dictatorship of P. Živković would be re-established (AJ, 37–19). The regime's efforts to link the JNS to the assassination resulted in the Borbaš distancing themselves from the idea of the JNF. Dragović and all other supporters of the JNF were expelled from the party, and a resolution was adopted stating that the JNS would under no circumstances cooperate with the JRSD, the Pohorci, and Jevtić's political group (*Borba* 1936d). Dragović launched a public debate in which he accused Hodjera of having placed himself in the service of the regime in exchange for material means received from M. Stojadinović (Hrabak 2008, 77; Lompar 2022, 256). According to his claims, the leader of the JNS was given a task by the regime to sabotage the process of forming the JNF by attacking P. Živković (AJ, 307–2). Dragović claimed that after Arnautović's assassination, negotiations to create the JNF were renewed but failed due to a conflict between Hodjera and Živković. According to Dragović, only the leader of the JNP Zbor showed a willingness to support the idea of unification without setting any conditions (Hrabak 2008, 78). His claims are confirmed by a letter from the Central Press Bureau informing the Prime Minister about forming a coalition of unitary forces that would include the JRSD, JNS, and JNP Zbor (AJ, 38–94). A ruthless anti-opposition campaign in the regime's media, violations of the law (disregarding the immunity of assembly members), and police torture of those accused of the assassination resulted (contrary to M. Stojadinović's expectations) in the unification of the previously mutually conflicting factions of the JRSD. At the end of June, the Banovina administration in Niš reported that the JRSD leadership was preparing a congress at which General Živković would be elected party president (AJ, 37–19). To this news, the regime's Samouprava responded with a series of articles

in which the JRSD was denounced as a political organization that had no base among the people and was trying to impose itself by monopolizing patriotism and using terrorist methods (*Samouprava* 1936a; *Samouprava* 1936b; *Samouprava* 1936c). At a congress held on June 28, 1936, in Belgrade, in the presence of 700 delegates, P. Živković was elected president of the party, which caused great concern among the ranks of the JRZ (Stojimirović 2000, 65).

Živković initiated the process of reintegrating Jevtić's group into the party, which culminated in the merger of the parliamentary groups of M. Božić and B. Jevtić into a single parliamentary club of the JRSD (Tešić 1997, 90). A smaller group of Jevtić's deputies continued to act independently as the Yugoslav Independent Club under the leadership of J. Baričević (AJ, 37–19). Živković continued negotiations with this group and simultaneously sent an invitation to cooperate with the JNP Zbor and the Borba. The leader of the Zbor rejected this invitation to collaborate, recalling the long history of conflicts and disagreements that the Zbor had with the politics and personalities of this party. According to his assessment, the leadership of the JRSD was making a mistake in the politics of the JNF by emphasizing the struggle for national and state unitarianism and neglecting socio-economic issues, which were the main driving force behind separatist forces (Ljotić 1936). Živković received a similar response from the JNS (Hrabak 2008, 77). Despite the rejection of the leadership of the JNP Zbor and JNS to accept Živković's offer, negotiations continued in an informal form. This is evidenced by articles in the regime's *Samouprava* and the opposition's *Hrvatski Dnevnik*. *Samouprava* reported in January 1937 about creating a "right-wing cartel," including the JRSD, JNS, and JNP Zbor (*Samouprava* 1937a). In January 1937, *Hrvatski Dnevnik* published news that a "cartel of the right" was being formed, i.e., that the JNP Zbor, JRSD, and JNS would soon merge. According to the claims of the regime press, a meeting was held at which it was concluded that the JRSD, Borba's, and Jevtić's group would adopt the program of the JNP Zbor and then unite into a party under the leadership of D. Ljotić (AJ, 102-7). In February 1937, Ljotić denied these claims, stating that there were no concrete negotiations on creating a "right-wing cartel" but that this idea was present among the ranks of unitarians (Jugoslovenska pošta

1937). The Zagreb-based *Obzor* disputed Ljotić's claims, stating that a "right-wing cartel" had already been formed in Vojvodina, embodied in the cooperation of cadres of the JNP Zbor and JNS who had jointly launched an active campaign among the German population (*Obzor* 1937). In February 1937, *Samouprava* again spoke on the topic of the JNF, stating that the JRSD, JNS, and JNP Zbor were anachronistic political organizations, "bloodless phantoms of reaction" that were "struggling in the last gasp" (*Samouprava* 1937b). A similar tone was taken in the article "One Math Formula" (*Jedna matematička formula*), whose author concluded with the sarcastic remark, "Since the first have no one in the people, the second has nothing, and the third has nothing, the sum of all those mathematical magnitudes would represent more of nothing than when each is considered as nothing" (*Samouprava* 1937c).

The regime's attempts to prevent the formation of the JNF did not stop at merely publishing humorous articles. Before the local elections of 1936, the Prime Minister offered Ljotić to merge his movement into the JRZ in exchange for the position of Minister of Agriculture, leadership of the Main Association of Serbian Agricultural Cooperatives, and the position of Ban of the Danube Banovina (AS, BIA II–69). After Ljotić rejected this offer in early February 1937, a series of articles appeared in newspapers suggesting that the JNP Zbor was receiving subsidies from Nazi Germany through the Yugoslav-German company Technical Union.⁴ The so-called "Technical Union affair" seriously questioned the political credibility of the Zbor (Lompar 2020, 94; 96; 97). The leadership of the JNP Zbor responded to these insinuations with a series of lawsuits in which the editorial boards of the newspapers *Politika*, *Vreme*, and *Samouprava* were accused of defamation. In May 1937, the court sentenced the editor of

⁴ It is interesting to note that the intermediary between Ljotić and the company Technical Union was Milan Danić. Danić's real name was Alfred Diamantstein. This converted Jew – an optant for Hungarian citizenship – was a collaborator of the Bolshevik government of Béla Kun and a well-known Comintern agent who was arrested several times in Yugoslavia during the 1920s for subversive activities (including the organization of a communist uprising in Zagreb in 1919). See: Gligorijević 2002, 92. It would be very interesting to investigate how a converted Jew and Comintern agent found himself in the role of an intermediary between Ljotić and German capital.

Vreme to ten days in prison and the payment of court costs, with the obligation to publish a public correction and apology in his newspaper (AJ, 38–353). The leadership of the JRSD supported the JNP Zbor. It condemned the unscrupulous methods of the regime in attempting to discredit the Yugoslav integralist forces (AB, kutija 6). The unity of the Yugoslav integralists was also manifested at a political gathering held by the JNP Zbor in Smederevo on May 16, 1937. In addition to D. Ljotić, the gathering was addressed by Janko Baričević, who stated that all Yugoslav nationalists must unite in the JNF and save the state from the destructive policies of the regime (AB, kutija 7). In his statement for the newspaper *Vreme* (May 18, 1937), Baričević stated that the Yugoslav Independent Club had been advocating for the formation of the JNF since its inception, that negotiations on its creation were underway, and that close cooperation between Yugoslav integralist organizations had already been established on the ground for a long time (AJ, 102–7). The Zagreb-based *Obzor* interpreted Baričević's speech at the JNP Zbor rally as a continuation of the action to establish the JNF, which, in addition to the Zbor and Baričević's parliamentary club, would include the JRSD and JNS. The author of the article reminded the public that in addition to the ideology of integral Yugoslavism, these political organizations were linked by cooperation in the apparatus of the monarchical dictatorship; Ljotić was a minister in the government of P. Živković, Hodjera was his secretary, and Baričević was one of the main confidants of B. Jevtić. Emphasizing Baričević's statement that the JNF would be directed against both the regime and the United Opposition and the Peasant-Democratic Coalition, the author of the article warned the Croatian public that the unification of Yugoslav integralist forces represented the greatest danger to the Croatian people (AJ, 102–7). The creation of the Bloc of National Accord coalition, following a successful agreement between the Serbian and Croatian opposition in Farkašić in October 1937, led to a radical shift in M. Stojadinović's policy towards Yugoslav integralist forces. The newly formed bloc stated its goals as removing the JRZ government and suspending the Vidovdan Constitution. While the agreement did not prejudice a federalist state structure, it included a sharp criticism of the state and national unity on which the Vidovdan Constitution was based (Radojević 1994, 176–179). Faced with an opposition coalition united

around a federalist platform, Stojadinović was forced to return to the positions of defending national and state unitaryism (Pavlović 2008, 265–266). The first signs of this shift are visible in articles in regime newspapers that assessed the agreement in Farkašić (published on October 9, the anniversary of the Marseilles assassination) as an attack on the political work of King Alexander (Radojević 1994, 179). At the end of 1937, Stojadinović began intensive negotiations on a joint election campaign with JRSD, JNS, and JNP Zbor representatives. As a result of these negotiations, a change in the political course of the JNS is observed. The leadership of the Borba's continued with vehement criticism of the regime in terms of corruption and indecisive stance towards Croatian separatism, but at the same time, began to advocate the idea of forming a concentration government composed of representatives of all parties (*Borba* 1937a; *Borba* 1937b). Hodjera announced a radical change in the Borba's political course in his speech in December 1937, stating that the JNS policy in the upcoming elections would be designed to get as many Borba candidates into the assembly as possible, which represented an informal announcement of the future coalition with the ruling JRZ (*Borba* 1937c). Stojadinović's offer caused great internal controversy and division within the JRSD. Representatives from the Sava, Primorska, and Danube Banovinas board strongly demanded that the offer be accepted. In contrast, representatives of the boards from the Drava Banovina rejected the possibility of a coalition with the JRZ. They demanded a joint electoral appearance with the Bloc of National Accord. Senators B. G. Anđelinović and J. Banjanin spoke out against cooperation with the JRZ and the Bloc of National Accord. They proposed continuing the JNF policy (AJ, 37–19 "Godišnja sednica GO JNS"). In October 1938, Živković decided that the JRSD would appear on the Bloc of National Accord list. The leadership of the JRSD tried to explain to its membership the decision to appear on the list together with the separatist-oriented HSS as a necessary precondition for overthrowing the JRZ government, assuring them that its loyalty to the principles of the Sixth of January Manifesto was not in question (AJ, 14–22). A large number of officials and members disobeyed Živković and joined the JRZ candidate list (Bodrožić 1987, 398). Stojadinović's offer had a similar effect on the ranks of the JNP Zbor. Contrary to Ljotić, who believed that the JNP Zbor should run independently in the upcoming elections, a group of officials led by the general secretary Velibor

Jonić, Danilo Gregorić, Đorđe Perić, Danilo Vulović, and Dimitrije Subotić advocated for a joint electoral appearance with the JRZ. Since Ljotić refused to give up his position, this group tried to remove him from the head of the party, justifying their actions by interpreting that the electoral coalition with the JRZ represented the final realization of the JNF policy (AJ, 102–7). In the Zbor's press, this attempted coup was characterized as a direct consequence of the moves by the head of the JRZ, who, with the help of money and promises of high state functions, tried to turn the JNP Zbor into a regime branch. Revolted by the failure, Stojadinović carried out a series of repressive measures to obstruct the JNP Zbor's election campaign. After trying to overthrow the Zbor list, M. Stojadinović eventually arrested its bearer, D. Ljotić, who spent the campaign's final months in prison (Parežanin 2001, 196–202). In parallel with his efforts to draw the unitarian forces into the orbit of the regime, Stojadinović continued to conduct a campaign against the JRSD and JNP Zbor in public. The regime's *Samouprava* published articles claiming that the idea of the JNF had failed because the leadership of the JRSD and JNP Zbor, by cooperating with the Bloc of National Accord, had abandoned the defense of the principles of state and national unitarism and that its membership was massively leaving and joining the JRZ as the last defender of the unity of the state (Samouprava 1937d).

The leader of the JRZ continued his work on uniting Yugoslav integralist forces by co-opting the leader of the Borba, S. Hodjera, into his government as a minister without portfolio in October 1938 (Tešić 1997, 227). Hodjera justified his entry into the government and the formation of a pre-election coalition with the JRZ, which he had vehemently criticized for two years, by arguing that under the guise of the People's Accord Bloc, an alliance of federalist forces had been formed, whose victory would pose a danger to the survival of the Yugoslav state, so the Borba's entered into a coalition with the regime party to defend the "sanctity" of national and state unity (AJ, 307–2; AJ, 37–21). Local boards of the JRZ sent M. Stojadinović several reports that the leaders of the JNS sharply criticized the government's work at pre-election rallies, insulted M. Stojadinović, and said that they had entered the government only to control the "theft" of the JRZ (AJ, 37–21).

The presence of many Borbas and renegades from the JRSD and JNP Zbor on the JRZ election list resulted in a radical change in the rhetoric and iconography of the regime party's pre-election campaign.

The campaign's main slogans, such as "His policy is an indivisible Yugoslavia" and "One king – one nation – one state," had a distinctly Yugoslav integralist character. In their public appearances, the regime candidates denounced the People's Accord Bloc as advocates of separatism (Simić 2007, 245; 250; 258). At pre-election rallies, squads of uniformed JRZ youth appeared, indicating the militarization of the regime party, modeled on the ORUJNA Action Squads and the Borba Blue Shirts (Dragosavljević 2021a, 15–30). Using numerous abuses, the JRZ won a victory over the People's Accord Bloc list in December 1938. Inhibited by the arrest of Ljotić and several high-ranking officials of the JNP Zbor movement, the movement achieved a minor result of only thirty thousand votes in the elections. On the other hand, despite internal divisions and the negative campaign of the regime press, the JRSD won a respectable 122,755 votes, which testified to the prevalence of the Yugoslav integralist idea among the electorate (Radojević 1994, 125).

Stojadinović's electoral triumph, achieved on a Yugoslav integralist platform, proved to be a Pyrrhic victory. Confident in the stability of his position, M. Stojadinović failed to fulfill the promises made to the members of Borba and renegades from the JRSD and JNP Zbor who had run on his list. To sanction the disloyal behavior of the Borba members during the election campaign, Stojadinović denied Hodjera the promised ministerial position (Rastović 2006, 132). Revolted by such treatment, Hodjera broke the coalition agreement with the JRZ (AJ, 307–1). A similar scenario was repeated in the case of defectors from the JRSD and a group of Zbor renegades who were rewarded by the regime with lucrative but politically insignificant positions (Dragosavljević 2021b, 272–274; 305–306). Paradoxically, Stojadinović's electoral success was a prelude to his downfall. After the Munich Agreement, the ruling circles of Great Britain abandoned the policy of appeasement towards Germany and began preparations for the inevitable conflict with the Axis powers. As part of these preparations, they counted on the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as a serious ally in Southeast Europe (Petranović 1993, 44–45). The British demanded that the prince carry out internal consolidation of the state, which primarily implied a solution to the Croatian question, which threatened the Yugoslav army's combat effectiveness and the Yugoslav state's very survival (Petranović 1991, 244). Stojadinović's Yugoslav integralist platform, on which he ran in the 1938 elections,

prevented the leader of the JRZ from reaching an agreement with the HSS, which resulted in the fall of his government in February 1939. Compromised by cooperation with the regime and the federalist bloc, the JRSD and JNS failed to capitalize on Stojadinović's fall. Their membership began to increasingly shift to the ranks of the JNP Zbor, which, through the election campaign, had established itself as the last advocate of uncompromising national and state Unitarianism. According to the head of propaganda for the regime's JRZ, "Only the Ljotić's men are still fighting for the nationalist ideal of integral Yugoslavism; everyone else has abdicated, given in, and caved in!" (Stojimirović 2000, 327–329; 390). The leadership of the Zbor condemned the Cvetković–Maček agreement as a capitulation of the state leadership to separatist forces, denouncing all leading political forces – the Slovenian People's Party, the Croatian Peasant Party, and the Serbian Cultural Club – as "tribal separatists" and traitors, and calling on all supporters of Yugoslav integralism to defend the Yugoslav state decisively. The uncompromising defense of the concept of state and national Unitarianism, which led Zbor activists into political extremism and armed conflicts with security forces and separatist paramilitary formations, eventually became a struggle for an idealistic utopia.

The idea of forming the JNF was a reaction by supporters of national and state Unitarianism to the gradual federalization of the first Yugoslav state initiated by the JRZ government. This concept originated among the ranks of the JRSD's senatorial club and was eventually adopted by other Yugoslav integralist political organizations – the JNS and JNP Zbor. Contrary to the thesis put forward by socialist historiography that the cause of the failure of the JNF concept was the struggle for primacy among the leaders of Yugoslav integralist parties, a detailed analysis shows that the failure was due to the continuous work of the JRZ to prevent the unification of supporters of integral Yugoslavism. The radical methods used by the regime to achieve this goal (corruption, police repression, negative media campaigns, and the construction of false affairs) testify to the political potential of the idea of gathering all supporters of Unitarianism, i.e., the danger that its realization posed to the Stojadinović government. A kind of paradox is the fact that the JNF concept was ultimately realized

precisely by Stojadinović – the person against whose policy the idea itself was directed and who devoted most of the time he spent at the head of the Yugoslav government precisely to the struggle against the unification of Yugoslav integralist forces. At the same time, this paradox (in addition to the elasticity of Stojadinović's political principles) reflects the role of the theory of integral Yugoslavism as the last line of defense of the integrity of the Yugoslav state in times of crisis.

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