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**VIOLENCE AS THE WEAPON OF POLITICAL PARTIES.
THE OPERATION OF *ORJUNA* AND *SRNAO*
IN VOJVODINA (1922 – 1924)**

Abstract: This paper deals with the ideology, terror and operations of the ORJUNA (Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists) and the SRNAO (Serbian National Youth) in Vojvodina. These organizations had an important and determining role in the political life of the Kingdom of SHS (Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes).

The foundation and operation of the ORJUNA and the SRNAO had a great impact on political and everyday life in Vojvodina and determined the lives of minorities (Hungarians, Germans and Jews) living in this new South Slavic state. In spite of the fact that influential movements greatly influenced the internal affairs of the Kingdom of SHS in the first decade of its existence (1918-1929), the literature on the ORJUNA and the SRNAO is incomplete to this day.

Therefore, in addition to the relevant literature, this paper introduces and analyses the activity of the ORJUNA and the SRNAO concerning the minorities in Vojvodina by focusing on the period between the two elections from 18 March 1923 to 8 January 1925 using sources such as the liberal Bácsmegyei Napló in Subotica, the Hungarian Party's Hírlap, the 1922-1925 issue of Torontál in Zrenjanin and the Catholic Délbácska in Novi Sad.

The unfamiliarity, lack of analysis and importance of this topic require further research in the relevant archives.

Keywords: ORJUNA, SRNAO, Democratic Party, Radical Party, violence, terror, minorities.

1. Ideological Differences between the Radicals and the Democrats

Although the two Serbian political parties, the Democratic and the Radical, seemed unified in the question of centralization, there were serious and unsolvable ideological differences from the beginning. The Radical Party was founded in 1881 as the Serbian National Radical Party and it was primarily supported by the peasant masses. Even though its voters stayed the same in the first half of the 20th century, the party became the political party of the elite and the middle

classes and as the propagator of the Great Serbian program it became one of the trustees of the centralized monarchy.¹

The Democratic Party was characterised by a substantially different attitude. The party was founded in 1919 with the fusion of three parties: a wing of the Radical Party that seceded through Ljuba Davidović, the Serbian Progressive Party and the Democratic Party (formed from the Liberal Party), which was supported by the so-called *prečani*, Serbs living in the former Monarchy on the territory beyond the Danube and the Sava. Although Ljuba Davidović² became the president of the party, its creation and ideology was primarily connected to Svetozar Pribićević.³

The Democratic Party, or as its official name – Yugoslav Democratic Party – implied, had an even more centralized approach to the state than the Radical Party. Contrary to the Radicals it did not focus on the classical version of the Great Serbian ideology, but rather on integrative Yugoslavism, the unification of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Notwithstanding the fact that the Democratic Party was essentially Serbian it refused any historical, religious and cultural differences in terms of the unification of the three nationalities. While the radicals deemed a certain degree of administrative autonomy conceivable, the democrats stood against it consistently.⁴

Although the two parties mostly governed in cooperation with each other during the turbulent political period after the formation of the Kingdom of SHS, the ideological differences between them often resulted in severe political confrontations and street attacks.

This resulted in the ORJUNA falling under the influence of the Democratic Party. The ORJUNA was a union newly formed in Split (Dalmatia) in 1912, which had its roots in the ideology of integrative Yugoslavism of 1910. The paradox of the ORJUNA's animosity towards the frequently changing governments led by the Radicals can be traced back here as well.⁵

¹ Čulinović 1961: 281-283. More on the Radical Party's politics and operations in Vojvodina: Bjelica 2004.

² Ljubomir Davidović (Vlaško Polje, 24 December 1863 – 19 February 1940, Belgrade) He continued his university studies in Belgrade, after that he worked as a secondary school teacher and taught Crown Prince Aleksandar Karađorđević. He joined the political scene in 1901, in 1904 he became the Minister of Education, in 1909 he was the president of the Serbian Chamber of Deputies. Between 1919 and 1920 he was the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of SHS and then for a short time in 1924 he filled the post of Prime Minister once again. In 1919 he entered the Radical Party and he was elected president of the Serbian Democratic Party that was formed by merging multiple Serbian parties.

³ Svetozar Pribićević (Hrvatska Kostajnica, 26 October 1875 – 15 September 1936, Prague) He finished his studies in Zagreb, where he got a degree in mathematics and physics. He was already an advocate of integrative Yugoslavism during his college years. In 1902 he joined the political scene. On 29 October 1918 he initiated Croatia's separation from the Monarchy. Between 1918 and 1920 he was the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Kingdom of SHS and the Minister of Education between 1920 and 1922 and 1924 and 1925. He was a major advocate of integrative Yugoslavism and centralism. In 1924 he separated from Ljuba Davidović and formed the Independent Democratic Party. In 1927 he started opposing his previous political views and he started criticizing the great Serbian hegemonic aspirations strongly, demanding the federalization of the country. Following the 1929 introduction of the dictatorship he was arrested and interned. He emigrated to Paris and Prague, where he criticized the government of Yugoslavia sharply.

⁴ Čulinović 1961: 278-281.

⁵ Gligorijević 1963: 361.

After Pribičević recognized the power in the ORJUNA, which he could use unrelentingly against his putative and real enemies, in addition to the financial support he gave them weapons as well.⁶

Pribičević went so far that he stated publicly that he considers the existence of the ORJUNA as one of the guarantees of the constitutional protection of the state.⁷

The Democratic Party considered the union as their military force from the beginning, which they would use to secure and sustain the centralist structure of the state.

Playing off the Italians' awareness of danger and the Dalmatian masses who were dissatisfied with the borders, the forming movement found support in a great number of non-Serbian nationalities. Shortly after its formation the movement attacked parts of Croatia which supported the federalization of the country and stood against centralism and the ideology of integrative Yugoslavism. The Slovenian ORJUNA led by Gregor Žerjav⁸ also sympathised with those dissatisfied with the Italian-Slovenian (Yugoslav) and Austro-Slovenian (Yugoslav) borders. The ones who suffered the most were the native Germans in Slovenia.⁹

The new organization¹⁰ emerging on Serbian territories – except for a limited group at the University of Belgrade – could not take root. This territory was the heartland of the Serbian Radical Party and therefore the population did not support the ideology of integrative Yugoslavism, which was hard to grasp and interpret by the wider masses. This area was ethnically homogenous, i.e. Serbian, with no potential enemies.

The ORJUNA, as the advocate of the nationalism spread by integrative Yugoslavism, declared itself the trustee of the ideology preceding the First World War. The definition of its ideology focused on the unified Yugoslav nation without compromise, it declared war on all who threatened the existence of the nation and the state. According to the ORJUNA the unified Yugoslav nation consisted of the three nationalities (Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian) and all measures had to be taken to overcome the differences between them and everything had to be done to exterminate all elements in the society that hindered the existence of national unity and the state.¹¹

However, the transposition of these ideals into reality resulted in immediate and serious tensions and clashes with each ethnic group living in the country and every political party. As an answer to the ORJUNA's terror the Croatians rallying around Stjepan Radić¹²

⁶ Đurašković 2007: 34.

⁷ Gligorijević 1963: 361.

⁸ Gregor Žerjav (Lož, 14 November 1882 – 27 June 1929, Poljče) He studied at the University of Vienna. In 1906 he got a law degree. During World War II he was active in the underground movement of the Yugoslav unification in Slovenia. In 1920, 1925 and 1927 he was a Member of the Parliament for the Democratic Party (later the Independent Democratic Party). From 1924 to 1925 he was the Minister of Forestry and Mining.

⁹ Čop 2006: 62-68, 70-72.

¹⁰ For more on the ORJUNA see also: Đurašković 2011: 225-247; Bjelica 2015: 7-18; Bajić 2005: 166-169.

¹¹ Dévavári 2014: 160.

¹² Stjepan Radić (Trabajevo Desna, 11 May 1871 – 8 August 1928, Zagreb) He was a Croatian politician and the first president of the Croatian Peasant Party. He graduated in Karlovac. He began his university studies at the Faculty of Law in Zagreb and then continued his studies in Prague and Vienna. In 1893 and 1895 he was sentenced to prison since he criticized Karl Khuen-Hedervary Ban's policies and because he burned the Hungarian flag in the centre of Zagreb. He founded The Croatian People's Peasant Party (Hrvatska pučka

created the HANAO (Croatian National Youth)¹³ and the advocates of the Great Serbian ideology, the Radical Party created the SRNAO (Serbian National Youth).¹⁴ This was the time when the MUNAO (Muslim National Youth) was founded, which brought together the Muslims in the country, the Slovenian SLONAO (Slovenian National Youth) emerged, the Bunjevac community living in Bačka created the ORBUNA (Bunjevac Nationalist's Organization) and the Catholic Youth Organization, whose backgrounds were unidentifiable, created the ORKAN (Catholic Nationalists' Organization).¹⁵

Terror was answered with terror and as it can be seen in the Vojvodinian examples below, Slovenia, Croatia and certain areas of Bosnia and Vojvodina experienced armed clashes daily which sometimes led directly to bloodshed on the streets.

As already mentioned above, in spite of the vision of a centralised state a serious tension existed between the Democrats and the Radicals. While the Democrats planned to execute the centralisation according to the ideology of integrative Yugoslavism, the Radicals focused on the Great Serbian idea.

In the case of Vojvodina, the ORJUNA's ideology discussed the Serbian aspect of the former Hungarian territories (Vojvodina). In addition, the ORJUNA declared war on decadent "Serbian separatism". This development and the goal declared by the ORJUNA to exterminate "radical corruption" caused a further aggravation of relations between the two parties.

Therefore, it is not surprising that, faced with the ORJUNA's growing terror, the police in Vojvodina, except one or two extreme cases, reacted strongly in 1923. However, the Democrats' participation in the government already made arresting people impossible. A real criminal trial was out of the question, because in most cases, the Democratic Ministers simply overwrote the actions of the local authorities straight from Belgrade. All this led to the elections in March 1923, after which the Radical Party gave a green light to the formation of the SRNAO in Vojvodina, their own organization.¹⁶

The SRNAO, which is directly linked to the Radical Party, was established on 13 December 1922 in Belgrade¹⁷ on the initiative of the editor-in-chief of the Balkan newspaper Svetolik Savić.¹⁸

While Pribićević was one of the main supporters of the ORJUNA, Nikola Pašić was the head of the SRNAO. This is also confirmed by the fact that the radical Prime Minister supported the establishment of SRNAO with 4,000 dinars.¹⁹

seljačka stranka) in 1904 with his brother Antun, which changed its name in 1920 to the Croatian Republican Peasant Party (Hrvatska republikanska seljačka stranka). In the 1920s, he was the Serbian centralist party's main opponent. Although in 1925 he made a compromise with Belgrade, a long-term reconciliation did not take place. In 1928 he was assassinated in the parliament in Belgrade.

¹³ For more on HANAO see also: Karaula 2008: 289-322.

¹⁴ For more on SRNAO see also: Banac 1964: 3-38.; Bajić 2005: 165-179.

¹⁵ Gligorijević 1963: 346.

¹⁶ Dévavári 2014: 162-163.

¹⁷ Bajić 2005: 170.

¹⁸ Svetolik Savić (Šabac, 1875 ? – Belgrade 1944 ?). As a cyclist, he achieved great success at an international level. His public appearance was mainly due to the editing of the Belgrade Balkan newspaper.

¹⁹ Bajić 2005: 174.

The SRNAO rejected the Yugoslav ideology represented by the Democratic Party and the ORJUNA and the view of the united Yugoslavia consisting of three nations (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes). The SRNAO considered the new South Slav state as the extension of the pre-war Serbia, even as the Great Serbia. On this basis, it was stated that Yugoslavia was nothing more than a creation of Austria, which was formed in order to destroy the Serbian nation and the Orthodox religion.²⁰

The primary role of the SRNAO was to destroy the ideology of the ORJUNA and to secure the presence of Serbian population in Vojvodina.²¹ Although the SRNAO started its local organizations in Vojvodina in the summer of 1923, the final program was not finished until October. In the beginning this program was acceptable for the minorities as well.

According to the October Manifesto published in Belgrade, the SRNAO had to keep up with state politics based on the Vidovdan Constitution. The organization offered the authorities to maintain order and internal consolidation. They also declared that the independent court was the sole competent forum for every injustice and violation of the law. The manifesto focused on virtue, abstinence from alcohol and the foundation of reading circles, libraries, music and sports associations. The program also emphasized that the country's youth was responsible for guarding against the anti-state elements: against the machinations of Republicans and Communists, who threatened the existence of the state, undermined its unity and rebelled against the ruling family.²²

However, it did not have a significant effect on changing the situation of the Hungarian, German and Jewish communities. Contemporary newspaper articles clearly show that the Radicals as well as the Democrats had a hostile approach towards these communities all along. Therefore, in the second half of 1923 the two enemy organizations quickly agreed concerning the issues of these minorities.

2. The Years of Violence: The ORJUNA and the SRNAO in Vojvodina

Based on the available literature, the first Vojvodinian branch of the ORJUNA was founded in 1922 in Subotica. (However, traces of this information have not been found in the archives in Subotica.) Novi Sad became the centre of the organization in the end led by Dobroslav Jevđević²³ and this is also where their printed sheet the *Vidovdan* was published.²⁴

²⁰ Bajić 2005: 165-166.

²¹ Gligorijević 1963: 346; Bajić 2005:165-171, 174-176.

²² A szerb nacionalista ifjúság programja (The Serbian Nationalist Youth Program), *Torontál*, October 4, 1923, 2.

²³ Dobroslav Jevđević (Miloševac, ? 1895 – 2 October 1962, Rome). In 1908 he was a member of the Young Bosnia organization. He took part in the failed assassination of Pojorek. He also played a role in the assassination of Ferenc Ferdinand in 1914. Subsequently he was arrested, so he spent the First World War in jail. He was the head of the Vojvodinian department of the ORJUNA between the two world wars and he launched several attacks against the Hungarian and German minorities. He was also the editor in chief of the Vidovdan newspaper published in Novi Sad. As the commander of Chetniks (Voivod), he participated in the Second World War. After the war he was captured by the Allies and lived in exile until his death in Rome.

²⁴ Gligorijević 1963: 329. For more information about Vidovdan and the press related to the ORJUNA: Popov 1983: 235-243. As well as: Bjelica 2015: 10-11.

Novi Sad did not accidentally become the ORJUNA's centre in Vojvodina. After the change of the empire, the city had a particularly important role because national politics made it the centre for nationalization of the territories north of the Danube and the Sava inhabited by large numbers of minorities.²⁵

Jevđević, who was born in Bosnia, had an important role in the takeover of the city administration by Serbians in 1918 and he also criticized Jaša Tomić, demanding more vigorous and resolute actions in those chaotic days.²⁶ In 1919 he issued the *Dan* and in 1921 the *Istina* magazines to become the editor-in-chief of the *Vidovdan*, which was the main propaganda tool of the ORJUNA in 1922.²⁷

Jevđević, the leader of the Novi Sad organization and the editor of *Vidovdan*, played an important role in the evolution of ORJUNA's ideology as well. It may also be added that Jevđević, as Pribičević's most faithful follower in his turn-over-rich political career – was one of the first to formulate the need for the autonomy of Vojvodina in the *Vidovdan* at the end of the 1920s.²⁸

Let's add that the ORJUNA attempted to win over the wider labour force in Vojvodina with its social program, but unsuccessfully. After the failure, street clashes with communists became more and more common.²⁹

The ORJUNA applied double standards for minorities in Vojvodina. While considering Hungarians and Germans collectively as enemies of the new state, Slovaks were treated differently. The *Vidovdan* published long articles on the lives of the members of the loyal Slovakian national community and even in the ranks of the ORJUNA there were persons of Slovak origin.³⁰

According to the research so far in 1922, in the early stages of the organization, the ORJUNA did not give effect to mass attacks in Vojvodina yet. Their first action took place on 17 September 1922 during the foundation of the Hungarian Party in Senta. Although the event itself was free of violence, assaults occurred in several places in the evening. People associated with the ORJUNA provoked a brawl at a restaurant and then assaulted passers-by in the city centre.³¹

In 1923 their terror strengthened. Based on the remaining records it is feasible that the situation was the worst in Novi Sad, Sombor and Senta. There were six assaults in cities along the Tisa river in January.³² In addition to the coffeehouse provocations and attacks, the ORJUNA also assaulted Chief Judge Slobodan Đorđević in Senta on 13 January 1923.³³

²⁵ Bjelica 2015: 7

²⁶ Bjelica 2015: 7-8.

²⁷ Bjelica 2015: 8.

²⁸ For more information on Dobroslav Jevđević's stay in Novi Sad and his political involvement see: Bjelica 2015: 7-18.

²⁹ Bjelica 2015: 9.

³⁰ Bjelica 2015: 10.

³¹ Tömeges verekedések voltak Sentán (Mass Brawls in Senta,) *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 19 September 1922, 3.

³² A sentai felelőtlenek a jogrend ellen (The Senta" irresponsibles" Against the Law), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 18 January 1923, 4.

³³ *Ibid.*

In March they destroyed 18 Hungarian signboards on the day of the inauguration of the new city mayor.³⁴

The destruction of signboards was a common phenomenon in this era. So, the ORJUNA wrecked 120 signs written in Hungarian and German during their first action on 15 January 1923.³⁵

Five days later they tore down the editorial office of Délbácska³⁶ in Novi Sad.³⁷ Editor in Chief Slezák Rezső was seriously wounded during the attack. This action was led by the Chairman of the Vojvodinian ORJUNA Dobroslav Jevđević personally. Based on the report of the journalists at Délbácska he was arrested two days later in The Queen Mary Coffeehouse by the Novi Sad police. The sympathizers of the ORJUNA marched to protest against the arrest of Jevđević in downtown Novi Sad, which resulted in serious clashes with the police. After the reaction of state officials an actual siege formed in the parts of Novi Sad populated by Hungarians. The members of the ORJUNA broke the windows of every house without exception after they were forced out of the city centre.³⁸ Jevđević was released the next day. Judge Balajić argued cynically that he did not find any circumstances that would justify the arrest.³⁹

A few days later the editorial office of Hírlap in Subotica was attacked as well. According to Gligorijević the destruction of the Hírlap Printing House in Subotica happened in August 1922,⁴⁰ but this information should be clarified because the attack took place on 28 January 1923 in the evening.⁴¹ The official police report stated that some of the actions did not have a political background, they were simple home invasion robberies.⁴²

The Deutsches Volksblatt⁴³ in Novi Sad, which was threatened in writing on the day of Jevđević's release, suffered a much more serious attack.⁴⁴ The editorial office was bombed on 10 March in the evening. The detonation destroyed the offices completely.⁴⁵

³⁴ Leszaggatták Sentán a magyar nyelvű táblákat. A tettesek – ismeretlenek (They Tore Down the Hungarian Signboards in Senta. Perpetrators Unknown), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 6 March 1923, 3.

³⁵ Felelőtlen elemek garázdálkodtak hétfőn este Novisadon (Irresponsible Elements Went on a Rampage in Novi Sad on Monday Night), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 16 January 1922, 4.

³⁶ The daily newspaper Délbácska, published in Novi Sad between 1920 and 1929, was a representative of the conservative value system mediated by Hungarian Catholic intellectuals. They often attacked the Liberal orientation of the Bácsmegyei Diary and its editorial policy.

³⁷ This is also mentioned by Bjelica 2015: 10.

³⁸ Letartóztatták Jevgyevics Dobroszlávot a novisadi nacionalisták vezérét – A belügyminszter telefonon rendelte el a letartóztatását (The Leader of the Novi Sad Nationalists Jevđević Dobroslav Was Arrested – The Minister of Internal Affairs Ordered the Arrest on Phone), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 22 January 1923, 1.

³⁹ Szabadlábra helyezték Jevgyevicset – a Délbácska elleni merénylet ügye a városi tanács előtt (Jevđević Was Released – The Attack on Délbácska Before the City Council), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 23 January 1923, 4.

⁴⁰ Gligorijević 1963: 329.

⁴¹ Összeromboltak egy szuboticai nyomdát (A Printing House Destroyed in Subotica), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 29 January 1923, 4.

⁴² Nem rombolók, hanem betörök jártak a Fischer és Krausz nyomdában (Not Vandals, but Burglars Were in the Fischer and Krausz Printing House), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 30 January 1923, 3.

⁴³ *The Deutsche Volksblatt*, a German-language newspaper published in 10 to 12,000 copies, gave voice to the German Kulturbund. The first issue was published on 25 October 1919 and the last one on 6 September 1944.

⁴⁴ Fenyegő levelet küldtek a Deutsches Volksbltnak (A Threatening Letter Was Sent to the Deutsches Volksblatt), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 26 January 1923, 4.

⁴⁵ Bombamerénylet a Deutsches Volksblatt ellen – A tettesek elmenekültek (A Bomb Attack Against the Deutsches Volksblatt – The Perpetrators Fled), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 11 March 1923, 5.

After the serious offence of interfering with the directories, the Hungarian Party decided to boycott the elections. The German Party, which participated in the elections, and the German minority became number one targets of the assaults. The day after the Volksblatt attack a seven-member ORJUNA taskforce disturbed the German Party's election rally in Jarek. However, the enraged German crowd armed with scythes and hoes attacked the provocateurs. The police intervened and arrested the provocateurs at the personal instruction of the District Prefect Milan Slepčević.⁴⁶ But just like in Jevđević's case the prosecution was not carried out. After the threats of the *Vidovdan*, the ORJUNA's official journal, the perpetrators were released without justification on 21 March.⁴⁷

The ORJUNA's violence was strong in Sombor as well. People connected to the organization terrified the public for months; protests were organised, German and Hungarian citizens were assaulted, windows were smashed and fights were provoked. A day before the elections they broke into the Hungarian Civic Casino armed with revolvers and boxers. The German Party's MP candidate Heinrik Jeisel was seriously wounded.⁴⁸

It should be added that the terror, which became commonplace in the weeks before the election, was not created by the ORJUNA only. A number of contemporary articles prove that the violence, especially against the German Party, can be connected to local notaries associated with the Radical Party. These notaries used the forces of the police and gendarmerie to carry out different forms of physical atrocities. In addition to the physical violence a separate category of psychological intimidation was practiced by espionage.⁴⁹

The elections on 18 March finally ended with the victory of Pašić and Radić. The former could send 108 representatives to the parliament (17 more than in 1920), the latter could send 20 more than after the last election, which made up 70. The Democratic Party, the advocate of integrative Yugoslavism struggling with internal fraction fights, lost significant ground. The number of their representatives declined from 92 to 51. In spite of the violence, the German Party did well in the elections. They were able to reach a total number of eight seats.⁵⁰

The elections were unable to solve the internal political difficulties in the country, on the contrary, the crisis perpetuated. The following weeks and months were characterised by protracted coalition negotiations and the escalation of Serbo-Croatian relations.

⁴⁶ Letartóztatott gyűlészavarók – Incidens a Német Párt járeki népgyűlésén, (The Rally Disturbers Arrested – Incident at the German Party's Election Rally in Jarek, Bácsmegyei Napló, 12 March 1923, 2. and: A revolveres honmentő ifjak rendőrkézen – A megzavart járeki népgyűlés utójátéka az ügyészség fogházában (The Revolvered Patriotic Youth Arrested by the Police – The Aftermath of the Disturbed Election Rally at the Guardhouse), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 13 March 1923, 3. Note: The name is probably misspelled in the original article. It is assumed that it was Lazar Sekulić (Crepanja, 1861 – Sremski Karlovci, 1941) who filled this position from 1918 to 1927. Sekulić was also Vice President of Matica Srpska between 1920 and 1924.)

⁴⁷ Szabadlábra helyezték a novisadi bombás ifjakat (The Novi Sad Bomber Youth Released), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 21 March 1923, 5.

⁴⁸ Letartóztatták Sombor felelőtlenjeit (The Irresponsibles of Sombor Arrested), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 22 March 1923, 3.

⁴⁹ Dévavári 2014: 131-134.

⁵⁰ Čulinović 1961: 406-411.

Immediately before the elections the government considered the possibility of the ORJUNA's dissolution.⁵¹ The elections made the decision last longer, but the issue was resolved on 18 May with a negative answer. Although Jovan Radonić, a radical representative in Subotica, assured the journalists of the Bácsmegyei Napló that the new government would take action against any unlawful acts with the utmost vigour in the future, it did not happen in reality. Radonić also stated that the ORJUNA would not be dissolved, because the organization operated on patriotic grounds and the government did not want to terminate its operations with a ban as long as they stayed in the scope of the association's rules.⁵² The Minister of Internal Affairs Marko Trifunović also placed forceful actions in the prospect of disorderly nationalists, but did not consider it necessary to ban the organization.

These "forceful actions" never happened. This type of communication from the authorities played a role in allowing Jevđević to keep stirring things up without any consequences. He assaulted Felix Kürschner in his favourite coffeehouse, the Sloboda (Freedom) in Novi Sad, with his cane because he thought that this tradesman from Zagreb, who was smoking and drinking his coffee peacefully, was a member of the HANAO.⁵³

After the elections the failure of the Hungarian Party and the arrest of Gráber László and Nagy Ödön on 26 April⁵⁴ caused a feeling of general lethargy among the leaders of the party. This led to passivity, political and public exclusion and the inner disintegration of the party. At the same time the success of the German Party in the elections made it clear that a number of minorities, in spite of the terror and intimidation they suffered, became politically important. This development could not even be ignored in Belgrade.

Therefore, the ORJUNA's attacks were aimed at the German minority in the following period. On 19 April 1923 they committed a bomb attack against Johan Dibisch, the leader of the German Party in Indija.⁵⁵ On 21 May they wrecked the celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the German Cultural Centre in Pettau, Slovenia. The event was attended by Vice President Hans Moser and Franz Schauer and Wilhelm Neuer, MPs. During the reckless attack Representative Schauer was severely wounded and suffered a serious concussion after which he was unconscious for days. The scandalous scene was watched by a great number of policemen who did not react. Moreover, the German politicians returning

⁵¹ A kormány intézkedésekre észül az Orjuna ellen (The Government's Preparing to Take Measures Against the ORJUNA), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 14 March 1923, 1.

⁵² Nem oszlatják fel az Orjunát – A kormány erélyes fellépésre szánta rá magát a törvényellenes akciókkal szemben (ORJUNA Will Not Be Dissolved – The Government is Ready to React Forcefully to Unlawful Actions), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, May 19, 1923, 4.

⁵³ A nacionalisták megverték Novisadon egy zagrebi kereskedőt – Jevgyevity Dobroszlav horvát nationalistának nézte (The Nationalists Beat Up a Tradesman from Zagreb in Novi Sad – Jevđević Dobroslav Thought He Was a Croatian Nationalist), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 14 May 1923, 2.

⁵⁴ Nagy Ödönt és Gráber Lászlót letartóztatták – Államellenes üzelmekkel vádolják őket – Nagy Ödön fogvatartását a vádtanács fentartotta – Grábert Suboticára hozzák (Nagy Ödön and Gráber László Arrested – They Were Accused of Anti-State Interventions – The Arrest of Nagy Ödön Is Still Kept Up by the Grand Jury – Gráber Will Be Brought to Subotica), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 27 April 1923, 3.

⁵⁵ Bombamerényletet követtek el az indijai Német-párt alelnöke ellen – Állítólag noviszadiak a tettesek (A Bomb Attack Against the Vice-President of the German Party in Indija – The Offenders Are Supposedly from Novi Sad), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 10 April 1923, 1.

to Belgrade were attacked at the railway station and the police failed to intervene again.⁵⁶ Stefan Kraft desired to speak up about the incident in Pettau before the official agenda in the Parliament in Belgrade. However, the Speaker of the Parliament refused to allow him to speak.⁵⁷ And, as it was common at the time, the Democratic Representatives speaking up at parliamentary debates exchanged the roles: the victims were deemed guilty in the end because the Democrats accused the minorities of the terror against the majority in the heat of the debate.

Following the parliamentary debate in June, in addition to the ORJUNA, the SRNAO, which was associated with the Serbian Radical Party and the storming-party of the Croatian Peasant Party, the HANAO also appeared in Vojvodina. As a result, the attacks against Germans subsided, but only temporarily.

Just like the democratic ORJUNA, the SRNAO, operating under the Radical Party, built up its most important network in Vojvodina.⁵⁸ Their rapid success was also due to the fact that after the SRNAO's formation a lot of the ORJUNA members in a number of Vojvodinian cities joined the new, Serbian, non-Yugoslav organization.⁵⁹

In the case of the SRNAO in Vojvodina Đeremov played the key role. He was a former close associate of the ORJUNA's leader Jevđević. Not only did the two of them have the same personality, but while the ORJUNA used the *Vidovdan*, which was edited by Jevđević, the SRNAO used the *Srbadija* newspaper, directly under the influence of Đeremov, to expose their mass propaganda.⁶⁰

The SRNAO's first organization in Vojvodina was established in Pančevo on 15 April 1923,⁶¹ followed by a division in Subotica founded on 3 June 1923 in the Prokesch Palace. Gorča Divanović was elected the leader of the organization and stressed that their aim was to disseminate nationalism without demagoguery and to fight against anti-national and anti-state elements and the ORJUNA.⁶²

The SRNAO practiced a type of double communication towards the minorities since its foundation. First, the organization proclaimed that the Hungarians and Germans, who were attacked by the members of the ORJUNA should report it to the SRNAO. The SRNAO would then – based on the principle of an eye for an eye – recompense them. At the same

⁵⁶ Neuner képviselőt az orjunisták súlyosan megsebesítették – Kőzápor a ptuji német kultur-ünnepélyen (Representative Neuner Was Seriously Injured by Orjuna Members – Stone Rain at the German Cultural Event in Ptuj), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 22 May 1923, 1. (The title of the article talks about the injury of Neuner, but throughout the text Schauer appears as the victim.)

⁵⁷ A német-párti képviselők inzultálása a nemzetgyűlés előtt – A házelnök nem engedélyezte a napirend előtti felszólalási (The Assault of German Representatives Prior to the National Assembly – The Chairman did not Allow Speech Before the Official Agenda,) *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 24 May 1923, 3.

⁵⁸ Bjelica 2004: 18-20.

⁵⁹ Bajić 2005: 170-171.

⁶⁰ Bajić 2005: 172.

⁶¹ Bajić 2005: 170.

⁶² Új nacionális szervezet alakult Szuboticán – Harc az államellenes elemek és az Orjuna ellen (New Nationalist Organization in Subotica – The Fight Against the Anti-State Elements and the ORJUNA), *Hírlap*, 5 June 1923, 1.

time, their official paper in Novi Sad, the *Srbadija*⁶³ accused the Director of the Novi Sad Post Office Jovipović of sympathizing with the Hungarians.⁶⁴

The extant sources allow a broad reconstruction of the SRNAO's foundation in cities along the Tisa. Under the leadership of dr Đorđe Đeremov,⁶⁵ who was the president of the organization in Novi Sad,⁶⁶ a local organization was founded in Ada on 26 July 1923, after the ones in Čurug, Žabalj, Temerin and Petrovo Selo.

Unlike Subotica, the creation of these organizations in Ada and Petrovo Selo did not lack any scandals. The local branch of the SRNAO in Petrovo Selo was founded in the town square just at the time of the Sunday Mass. The church bells provoked the members of the SRNAO because they thought it sought to suppress Đeremov's speech. Therefore, some of them broke into the church tower and beat up the bell-ringer. A couple of hours later they destroyed the local Hungarian signs and beat up a person named Stevo Avramov because he told the members of the SRNAO to support Yugoslavia rather than Serbia. These sources also show that the SRNAO in Senta was founded on 27 July 1923.⁶⁷

The conditions in Senta were very tense because the ORJUNA has already performed a series of provocations. All this began on 4 of July, when the local ORJUNA – the blurring of power levels, structures and violent organizations may be observed here – led by Notary Public Stevo Zagorica and Ruwurm Oscar police officer protested in front of the Radical Representative Joco Vujić's house. Vujić provoked the nationalists with a proposal to the local representative body that at the Assembly in Senta the agenda should be introduced in Hungarian as well as in Serbian. The ORJUNA pestered and attacked many passers-by during the protests.

Soon after, a certain Ozren Bordoški visited the Hungarian signboard owners and urged them to remove the signs immediately. The Hungarian craftsmen made a complaint about the case and the local police questioned fifteen local nationalists.⁶⁸

The protest against Vujić and the scandal concerning the signboards had not even ended yet, when the Ministry of Internal Affairs prohibited the sanctification of the newly built church in Senta. On this day thousands of people gathered in the town square led by the local Provost Gózon István. In addition to police forces arriving, ten ORJUNA members also lined up with Notary Public Stevo Zagorica in the lead. The police postponed the Mass

⁶³ For more information on *Srbadija* and SRNAO-related press, see Popov 1983: 243-250, and Bajić 2005: 172-173.

⁶⁴ A "magyarbarát" Szrnao a magyar tiszviselők ellen, (The "pro-Hungarian" SRNAO Against Hungarian Officials), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 20 July 1923, 3.

⁶⁵ Đorđe Đeremov (Vilovo, 17 November 1892 – ?). Đeremov was a medical doctor. His political career began in the ORJUNA and as a secretary of the ORJUNA in Novi Sad he was one of Jevđević's closest associates. Their different personalities and Jevđević's aspiration to hegemony within the organization led to an open conflict between them. In addition to ideological differences, this conflict also contributed to Đeremov joining the rival SRNAO and later becoming one of its unquestionable leaders.

⁶⁶ Bajić 2005: 170.

⁶⁷ A Szrnao zászlóbontása a Tisza-mentén – Tömeges ... (olvashatatlan) Petrovo ... (olvashatatlan) (The SRNAO's Flag Opening along the Tisa – Massive ... (illegible) Petrovo ... (illegible)), *Hírlap*, 27 July 1923, 2.

⁶⁸ A sentai orjunisták macskazenét adtak Vuics képviselőnek – Megparancsolták a magyar táblák eltávolítását (ORJUNA Members in Senta Gave a Charivari to Representative Vujić – They Ordered the Removal of Hungarian Signboards), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 5 July 1923, 2.

and the crowd started to disperse as well. A member of the ORJUNA went up to the decorated stone cross next to the bell tower and tore down the flowers.⁶⁹

A day later, on 11 July the members of the ORJUNA attacked a landowner from Banat named Schultze, because he spread his political views that were unfavourable for the Democrats. They also destroyed furrier Webel József's Serbian-Hungarian signboard in the main square.⁷⁰

A new era began when the SRNAO and the Croatian HANAO emerged. The novelty was definitely that the situation in Vojvodina was marked by the clashes of the assault troops of the three political parties from June 1923. The situation was particularly dangerous in Novi Sad⁷¹ and across the river in Petrovaradin, where the three conflicting organizations' daily skirmishes caused a state of siege.⁷²

The new nationalist organizations – the SRNAO and the HANAO – completely adopted the well-established methods of ORJUNA, but they used them against the Democratic assault troops as well.⁷³ The tension that was created by the arrival of the SRNAO reached a critical point in July when a scuffle turned into a shooting in front of the hotel named *Three Soldiers* on the Temerin Road. After the incident the SRNAO Chairman Đorđe Đeremov demanded the immediate dissolution of the ORJUNA from the lord-lieutenant of Novi Sad.⁷⁴

Due to the steady fights and shootings the Lord-Lieutenant of Novi Sad Milan Slepčević⁷⁵ and the Chief of Police Andrija Valičak⁷⁶ informed the Minister of Internal Affairs Vuičić about the state of affairs in Novi Sad during a private hearing. The leadership of Novi Sad summoned the ORJUNA officers Dobroslav Jevđević and Ljubomir Kovačević and informed them that in order to stop the violence the old files would be re-opened and those responsible would be held accountable. Of course, this was a mere threat and it did not impress Jevđević and his company, who travelled to Sremski Karlovci on the same day to disturb the inaugural event of the local SRNAO. This ultimately did not happen because the crowd was too big.

A similar scenario took place in Petrovaradin, where the HANAO held their inauguration meeting. Subsequently, the enraged Croatian nationalists destroyed some signboards, but this time they were written in Cyrillic. The news of the destruction of the

⁶⁹ A betiltott zentai nagymise – A belügminiszter rendelkezésére akadályozta meg a rendőrség a mise megtartását – Letépték a virágot a feszületről – A hatóság vezetői nincsenek Zentán (The High Mass Banned in Senta – The Police Prevented the Mass on the Command of the Interior Minister – They Tore the Flowers off the Crucifix – The Leaders of the Authorities Are Not in Senta), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 10 July 1923, 2.

⁷⁰ Orjunás ostrom egy szálodai szoba ellen – Megint dolgoznak a szentai cégtáblarombolók (ORJUNA's Siege on a Hotel Room – The Signboard Destroyers Are at Work Again in Senta), *Hírlap*, 15 July 1923, 5.

⁷¹ For more information on the political history of Novi Sad between 1918 and 1929 see: Bjelica 2008: 35-80.

⁷² Bjelica 2015: 9.

⁷³ This fact is supported not only by my own research but also by the literature. See: Bajić 2005: 171, and: Martinov – Nezić 2014: 31-32; respectively: Bjelica 2015: 9.

⁷⁴ A kormánytól kérnek segítséget a novisadi botrányok megszüntetésére – Véres verekedés az Orjuna és a Sernao között (They Are Seeking Help from the Government to Eliminate the Scandals in Novi Sad – Bloody Fight between the ORJUNA and the SRNAO), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 1 July 1923

⁷⁵ The name was probably misspelled again in the original article. It is most probably about Lazar Sekulić.

⁷⁶ Andrija Valičak's biography could not be reconstructed.

signs brought the ORJUNA members to the scene and the incident eventually became a major showdown in which a HANAO member Ivan Miličić was critically injured.⁷⁷

The confrontation of the ORJUNA and the HANAO continued on 16 July. The shooting that broke out in the restaurant called *Land* in Petrovaradin resulted in one fatal and six serious casualties. The police took strong measures in the case, they arrested several members of the ORJUNA and the entire city was supervised by mounted police.⁷⁸

The everyday street showdowns were already discussed at the August meeting in Novi Sad, where a Socialist MP made the police responsible for the prevailing conditions in the city and forcefully demanded the restoration of order.⁷⁹ Although the International Fair in Novi Sad was successful and without a major scandal, street clashes recurred again soon.

On 18 August a team of twenty SRNAO members attacked the apartment of a local ORJUNA leader. After they heard the news, ORJUNA members rushed to the scene and there was a half-hour shootout between the two groups. The police arrested eleven people. The official media declared it a simple offense and the offenders in custody were sentenced to fourteen days of imprisonment. Simultaneously, the police summoned Jevđević and Đeremov, the chairmen of the local organizations again. They were told that the conditions in the city were intolerable and that the authorities banned their uniforms – blue and red shirts – in Novi Sad and the public gatherings of the members of these nationalist organizations.⁸⁰

Regardless of the irreconcilable differences between the ORJUNA and the SRNAO the two organizations carried out a joint operation in July. Their target was the ball for Hungarian students who studied in Budapest and Szeged. Ten ORJUNA and SRNAO members took part in the coordinated action. During the attack of the celebration at the Paichert restaurant university student Bichler Béla suffered life-threatening chest injuries.⁸¹

As previously mentioned at the foundation of the SRNAO in Ada, the organizations close to the Radical Party often used similar methods against minorities as the ORJUNA.

The fierce battles of the ORJUNA and the SRNAO in Novi Sad barely ended, the residents of Obrovac, near Palanka in the South Bačka area, were devastated when the

⁷⁷ Nacionáliszták ellenes egyesületek egymás ellen – Harc az Orjuna-Srnao-Hanao közt – A kormány rendet akar teremteni (Nationalist Associations Against Each Other - Fights Between the ORJUNA, SRNAO and HANAO – The Government Wants to Restore Order), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 3 July 1923, 3.

⁷⁸ Egy halott, hat sebesült a novisadi nacionalisták vasárnapi csatájának az eredménye – Ütközet a péterváradi kocsmában (One Dead and Six Wounded in the Nationalists' Sunday Battle in Novi Sad – Clash in a Pub in Petrovaradin), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 17 July 1923, 3.

⁷⁹ Megfékezik a novisadi nacionalistákat – Novisad város közgyűlése (The Nationalists in Novi Sad Brought to a Halt – General Assembly of the City of Novi Sad), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 10 August 1923, 3.

⁸⁰ Véres barrikád-harc Novisadon – Srnaosok és orjunisták éjjeli háborúja – Ütközet az utcán – Számos sebesült – Tizenegy nationalistát letartóztattak (Bloody Barricade Battle in Novi Sad – The Night War of SRNAO and ORJUNA – Clash on the Street – Many Casualties – Eleven Nationalists Arrested), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 19 August 1923, 2.

⁸¹ Mellbe lőttek egy magyar egyetemi hallgatót az orjunások – Az Orjuna és a Srnao közös frontja – Versecen is garázdálkodnak a nacionalisták (A Hungarian University Student Shot in the Chest by ORJUNA Members – The Joint Front of ORJUNA and SRNAO – Nationalists on the Loot in Versec), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 23 July 1923, 1.

members of the German Kulturbund were attacked by 30-40 SRNAO members from Tovariševo. Many people were injured during the attack and one person suffered life-threatening injuries.⁸²

The SRNAO was irritated by the signboards written in Hungarian as much as its rival, the ORJUNA. Therefore, there were many articles in the press at the time about the members of this organization who destroyed Hungarian signs. Moreover, the SRNAO published a call on the matter in the local official paper in Kanjiža on 2 September 1923 – written in Hungarian! – which stated: “Every person who owns a signboard written in Hungarian to this day has to rewrite it in eight months’ time solely in Serbian (Cyrillic)”.⁸³

After one of the signboard destructions in Zrenjanin, which was committed by members of the SRNAO, the Hírlap published the following: “The Srnao, which started with the appealing slogans of civil peace, fraternal coexistence and understanding policy in the fight against the terrorist Orjuna, proved during its short operation that it is not willing to do anything different than the Orjuna. The only difference is that the Orjuna members wear a Democratic shirt with a blue background and the Srnao members wear a Radical one with a red background.”⁸⁴

The first official action against terror that invaded every aspect of life was the Interior Minister’s Regulation issued on 5 October 1923, which ordered a halt to nationalist organizations.⁸⁵

The Regulation that was sent to the provincial governorates and the leaders of public administrations by Interior Minister Milorad Vujičić⁸⁶ stated the following among other things:

⁸² A nacionalisták megszálltak egy vajdasági községet – Az obrováci háború – Korcsmai verekedések és fegyveres csapatok erőszakoskodásai – Megvert német kulturbundisták (Nationalists Occupied a Village in Vojvodina – War in Obrovac – Tavern Fights and the Violence of Armed Forces – Beat Up German Kulturbund Members), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 23 August 1923, 4.

⁸³ A Srnao parancsa a sztarakaniszai Hivatalos Lapban – Utasított a kereskedőket, hogy távolítsák el a magyar cégtáblákat – A Srnao becsempezett közelménye (SRNAO’s Command in the Hivatalos Lap in Stara Kanjiža – Tradesmen Ordered to Remove Hungarian Signboards– SRNAO’s Smuggled in Notice), *Hírlap*, 7 September 1923, 2.

⁸⁴ Ablakverés és cégtáblarombolás Becskereken – A Szrnao beváltotta fenyejtését (Window Breaking and Signboard Destruction in Zrenjanin –The SRNAO Have Carried Out Their Threats), *Hírlap*, 28 August 1923, 2.

⁸⁵ A belügyminiszter a terror ellen (The Interior Minister Against Terror), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 16 October 1923, 1. and: A belügyminiszter az “ismeretlen tettesek” rendszer ellen – Nem türi a felelőtlen elemek garádzdálkodását – A miniszter érvényt szerez a törvénynek (The Interior Minister Against the System of “Unknown Perpetrators” – Will Not Tolerate the Rampage of Irresponsible Elements – The Minister Enforces the Law), *Torontál*, 6 October 1923, 2.

⁸⁶ Milorad A. Vujičić (Radonja (Nova Varoš) ? 1896 – 29 April 1936, Belgrade) He was born in a clerical family, then studied in Čačak and Užice. He finished his legal studies in Belgrade. In 1909 he worked at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, took part in the Balkan wars and the First World War. As a member he represented the People’s Radical Party in parliament in 1920. Between 16 December 1922 and 27 March 1924 he was the Interior Minister of the Pašić government. Between 15 April 1926 and 24 December 1926 he was the Minister of Construction and between 24 December 1926 and 1 February 1927 he was the Minister of Religious Affairs. Subsequently, in 1928 and 1929, he led the Ministry of Justice. After the royal dictatorship was introduced in 1929, he retired from political life.

A number of cases had shown that certain members of the nationalist organisations behave provokingly and adversely towards citizens belonging to minorities. They justify these operations by stating that the mentioned citizens are not loyal or reliable. The country's constitution and laws and the international treaties provide full and equal freedom to every citizen belonging to the minorities. As a result these attacks can be regarded as nothing else than brutal violence and they can not be tolerated in any constitutional state. This method is not suitable for awakening national consciousness. If there are disloyal citizens, the legitimate state authorities are called upon to act against these within the framework of the law. The irresponsible members of nationalist organizations can not act against them under any circumstances. Therefore, I order every subordinate authority not to tolerate these attacks in any case. If they do happen, the perpetrators should be prosecuted immediately with the full rigour of the law, because the nationalist organizations' tasks may be carried out only by legal means, and under no circumstances by terror or a way not permitted by law. Excuses such as that the perpetrators can not be traced down will be regarded as a conscious failure of the official duty on behalf of the responsible authorities. Therefore, I will consider these authorities unfit to perform the appropriate police and public services and I will act against these with the full rigour of the law.⁸⁷

The antecedent of the regulation was that the Radicals, in the midst of the frequently and rapidly changing domestic politics, had to depend on the support of the German Party in parliament. The Germans, however, made it clear that the government could only count on their support if their most important demand was realised, namely, the forceful action of the authorities against the nationalist organizations. Therefore, the regulation did not cause unclouded joy to those who were familiar with the situation and the events behind the scene, because there was a possibility these measures, just like the other ones at the time, would only be a multitude of phrases written on paper that did not have an impact in real life. The Representative of the German Party Joseph Mosser warned about some other issues concerning the regulation in Bácsmegyei Napló:

No matter how gratifying the issue of these regulations is for us, I cannot keep it a secret that the second part of the decree was very alarming. The obvious purpose of these measures is to protect the minorities from the nationalist organizations and to make it rightly the duty of the authorities to perform practices against those who act against the state and its unity. However, as it is expressed in the text of the regulation the fact that these anti-state atrocities are actually happening among the minority population is not disguised at all. If this accusation relates to Vojvodina, Srem or Slovenia, it will be rejected in the strongest terms. The loyalty of these nationalities cannot be questioned. They have shown their loyalty countless times since the foundation of the state. However, the form of the regulation, even in this respect, is very flawed. It almost subsequently justifies the atrocities of the "provoked patriots" against innocents. The publication of this Ministerial Decree is only half of the results in the fight against these irresponsible actions. Tempers will not start calming down when the regulations are issued, but when we see the perpetrators of the next violent act on the hands of the authorities as they get their lawful sentence.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ A belügymiszter rendelete a terrorszervezetek ellen – A hatóságok felelősek a nemzetiségek bántalmazásáért (The Interior Minister's Order Against Terrorist Organizations – The Authorities Are Responsible for the Maltreatment of Minorities), *Hírlap*, 7 October 1923, 3.

⁸⁸ A német-párt kritikája a belügymiszter rendeletéről – Moser János képviselő nyilatkozata (The German Party's Criticism of the Interior Minister's Regulation – Moser János Representative's Statement), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 7 October 1923, 3.

The Department Chief of the BBB Aleksijević Dimitrije⁸⁹ stated categorically in the Bácsmegyei Napló that “the Ministerial Decree will be implemented strictly by the authorities. The government does not tolerate any kind of self-righteousness or violence against minorities.”⁹⁰

The appearance of problems between the Radical Party, their attack troops and the SRNAO, which was under their jurisdiction, can be seen in the article published in the Radical’s paper the *Zastava* on 26 October:

We have shown our distrust in these so-called nationalist organizations from the beginning. (...) Pribičević’s is the “glory” for the foundation of the famous ORJUNA, which disqualified itself with its accomplishments and became an ordinary weapon of the Democratic Party and tried to spread its “ideals” with bombs and daggers. They started terrorizing citizens with fascist methods at the instruction of the Democratic leaders. They provoked fights in public, they bombed the editorial offices of the opposition’s papers and all of this created an unbearable atmosphere. (...) The Serbian Nationalist Youth was founded in this atmosphere. We emphasised from the beginning that this organisation should operate in the field of culture with cultural assets. Unfortunately, the latest developments forced us to take sides against them. In Bačko Gradište they stabbed the Municipal Clerk Čedomir Čakra to death, who was a trustworthy and honest clerk, just because he protected the law. They brutally attacked the Slovak celebration in Kulpin. They broke the windows of respectable and honest citizens in Novi Sad and other places. (...) The Orjuna, Hanao, Orkan, Munao and Srnao have proven with their behaviour that their affrays cannot be tolerated anymore. A state within a state cannot be tolerated. Still, we want to make a comparison. During the Democratic regime bombs were flying towards the Hungarian and German editorial offices. The police “investigated” without any results. Therefore, we demand that an investigation be launched again concerning these matters. If we start the cleansing, let us do it in all of the nationalist organizations. (...) The ORJUNA should be seated on the dock as well, because their sins are even worse. Purge the nationalist circles, because the people cannot tolerate them this way. As for the Srnao, we will not lose hope that after certain regulations they will return to the right path.⁹¹

The movement of the official political circles in this direction resulted in the reconciliation and collaboration of the two rival organizations. On 23rd and 24th November the ORJUNA’s and the SRNAO’s joint action against the Hungarian language was reported in the Bácsmegyei Napló and the Hírlap. By this time, the Vojvodinian Boards of the organisations have negotiated for three days. The discussions focused on the unity of action against persons they consider to be against the government. It was also an important element in the negotiations that they undermine Hungarian cinema subtitling and the correspondence of companies, merchants and factories in Hungarian and German, and define the language

⁸⁹ Aleksijević Dimitrije (Žabljak, 27 September 1877 – Belgrade, 7 November 1943) He finished his legal studies in Debrecen and Budapest. Subsequently, he was a court clerk in Sombor, and a close associate of the *Zastava* newspaper in Novi Sad and of Jaša Tomić. During the First World War he was sentenced to two years imprisonment for anti-state activities. From 1919 he worked at the BBB Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and later became the head of the BBB. In 1922 he was appointed head of the Belgrade District.

⁹⁰ Szigoruan vérehajtják a nemzetiségek védelméről szóló rendeletet – A BBB ügyosztály főnöke a tulzó nacionalisták ellen – Alexievics Mita államtitkár nyilatkozata a Hírlapnak (The Regulation on the Protection of Minorities Will Be Strictly Implemented – The BBB Department Chief Against Exaggerated Nationalism – Alexievics Mita (the name was misspelled in the Hungarian articles) Secretary of State’s Statement in Hirlap), *Hirlap*, 9 October 1923, 2-3.

⁹¹ A “Zastava” a felelőtenkedők ellen, (The “Zastava” Against the Irresponsibles), *Torontál*, 26 October 1923, 2.

of contact between businesses. During the negotiations the owners of the Chat Noir and the American Bar were summoned and told that they are not allowed to play songs in Hungarian at all, but they can play one song in German in their bars. All other languages were acceptable, of course if they made sure that the state language was enforced.⁹²

The next day Dobroslav Jevđević held a press conference, which had the following essential message:

The discord between the ORJUNA and the SRNAO has harmed the national idea and hindered the implementation of the objectives set. During the disunity we neglected the observation of suspicious strangers, the censorship of the programs of minorities virtually disappeared, which was a particularly big mistake, because minorities were moving too freely lately and it is high time we curb them. The two organizations, in spite of the divide between them, had to be reconciled with each other to defend the Yugoslav national interests. The memorandum, which was transferred to the authorities, includes only the first part of our program. The second part is mainly aimed at the preservation of Yugoslav industry. Therefore, any foreign workers who huddled at the industrial enterprises in Yugoslavia and thereby deprived the Yugoslav craftsmen from emerging, will be mercilessly forced out of the country. Then, the Orjuna and the Srnao will strictly ensure the actions of the authorities against corrupted officials. Regardless of their political preference, we will proceed harshly. Otherwise, a plan emerged in Belgrade to unite the two associations into a joint block. The success of this plan is in the hands of the former Minister of Justice Lazar Marković.⁹³

A few hours later the two organizations sent an ultimatum to the Mayor of Novi Sad Žarko Stefanović,⁹⁴ which demanded the ban of Hungarian movie subtitles and the removal of Hungarian signboards as well as the ban of the use of Hungarian and German in the city streets. They also demanded the mandatory use of an interpreter in case a foreign artist performs.⁹⁵

The mayor started to stall off the matter and tried to make the Minister of Internal Affairs decide. He informed the Bácsmegyei Napló that he would talk about the matter and his intentions during his next trip to Belgrade.⁹⁶ In the end, Stefanović made a proposal to place the Hungarian and Serbian subtitles side by side.⁹⁷

⁹² Fúzióra készül a Srnao és az Orjuna a magyar nyelv ellen – A novisadi rendőrség megrendsabályozza a magyar zenét (SRNAO and ORJUNA Ready to Act Jointly Against the Hungarian Language – The Novi Sad Police Will Put Hungarian Music in Order), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 23 November 1923, 3.

⁹³ Jevgyevics expozéja – A nacionalista szervezetek alkotmányellenes tevékenysére és állami funkciók kisajátítására törekzenek (Jevđević's Exposé – The Nationalist Organizations Strive for Unconstitutional Activities and the Expropriation of Public Functions), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 25 November 1923, 3.

⁹⁴ Žarko Stefanović (Novi Sad, 6 September 1876 – 21 June 1952, Novi Sad). He graduated from high school in Novi Sad, then studied law and completed his doctorate. After the change of realm he was the Chief of the BBB department of the Ministry of Food and Renovation. He was the mayor of Novi Sad between 2 September 1922 and 29 January 1925.

⁹⁵ Kibékült az Orjuna és a Srnao – A béke díja: a magyar szó halála – Nem szabad magyarul beszélni és magyarul énekelni (The Reconciliation of ORJUNA and SRNAO – The Price of Peace: the Death of the Hungarian Word – It Is Not Allowed to Talk or Sing in Hungarian), *Hírlap*, 24 November 1923, 3.

⁹⁶ A belügyminiszter még nem döntött a magyar filmfeliratok ügyében (The Interior Minister Has Not Decided About the Matter of Hungarian Subtitles Yet), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 4 December 1923, 4.

⁹⁷ A novisadi nacionalisták mozi-memorandum a belügyminiszter előtt (The Novi Sad nationalists' Cinema-Memorandum Before the Interior Minister), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 16 December 1923, 4.

At Christmas time in 1923 it was very realistic to assume that there would be no changes in the country's public status and the terror against minorities unless an external force that was independent of the minorities intervened.

However, the authorities in early 1924 were actually determined to discourage violent organizations, at least in those cases where they attacked public officials. This was evidenced by the 1924 Novi Sad trial conducted between 6 and 8 February.

During the proceedings eleven members of the SRNAO were put on trial because of the attack on Čedomir Čakra, a municipal clerk in Bačko Gradište, on 21 October 1923. The accused admitted the crime, but tried to defend themselves by stating that this crime and all the others were committed on the command of the leadership of the organization – the members of the SRNAO were ordered by their leaders to follow every instruction blindly, otherwise they would be punished by beating.⁹⁸

As it turned out on the day after the trial, the forced removal of Hungarian signboards was a matter of discussion at one of the SRNAO's board meetings.⁹⁹ On the last day of the trial a lawyer defending one of the accused caused a stir with his pleading. His speech described the true state of things in Bačko Gradište:

The nationalist movement, said dr Sekulić, which started two years ago, is the most eclectic expression of the bad perception of today's society. The nationalists forced anarchy and chased those into oblivion who followed the instigators blindly. This movement was particularly strong in Bačko Gradište. Workers, who were engaged in serious work during the day, could not wear any insignia because of the fear of severe beatings. The minorities, Hungarians and Germans, who have always lived peacefully among Serbian citizens, had to spend their days and nights in constant fear. The situation was so unbearable in Gradište that many Hungarian families were forced to leave the village. The SRNAO members created a terrible state in the community. They broke windows, beat up people and terrorized everyone who did not follow them. (...) When the SRNAO members from Gradište beat up innocent people in Senta, Stari Bečeј and Gradište, dr Đeremov sent a letter to them on behalf of the Provincial Board in which he glorified with epic enthusiasm all those who participated in these bloody fights and represented them as if they fought for the people of the entire country and not as criminals guilty of breaking the law. (...) That is why, in fact, those who participated in the fights are not guilty. They are just the tools in the hands of those who wanted to use them for achieving their own selfish goals.¹⁰⁰

Although, the defence presented evidence that proved that the leaders of the SRNAO, especially Đeremov, were the originators behind this specific case and many similar cases, the court only condemned the direct perpetrators: Đura Petrović received five years, Gavra

⁹⁸ Sznaós verekedők a noviszadi törvényszék előtt – Azzal védekeznek, hogy a vezetőség parancsát teljesítették – Huszonöt bot az engedetlen tagoknak (SRNAO Fighters in the Novi Sad Court – They Defend Themselves by Blaming the Leadership – Beatings for the Disobedient Members), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 6 February 1924, 4.

⁹⁹ A SZRNAÓ harci különítményeinek titkai a bíróság előtt – A Bácskogradistei bünöpör tárgyalásának második napja (Secrets About SRNAO's Battle Divisions Revealed in Court – The Second Day of the Bačko Gradište Trial), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 7 February 1924, 4.

¹⁰⁰ Elítélték a Sznaós verekedőket – Öt és fél évi börtönt kapott a bácskogradistei merénylet értelmi szerzője – A főverekedőket öt évi börtönnel sújtotta a bíróság (SRNAO Fighters Condemned – Five and a Half Years in Prison for the Intellectual Author of the Assassination in Bačko Gradište – Main Fighters Condemned for Five Years by the Court), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 8 February 1924, 4.

Ruski three years, Milan Popović five and a half years and Joco Čović two and a half years prison sentence.¹⁰¹

The resources available to us suggest that after the deterrence in Novi Sad things became temporarily peaceful; the ORJUNA and the SRNAO assumed a waiting position. A March article about everyday life in Ada reported that in certain cases the minorities defended themselves violently against the “irresponsible” elements. The report’s veracity in this tense atmosphere is impossible to reconstruct from today’s perspective. Nevertheless, there are good reasons to accept these idealising and even quite naive assertions, although not entirely, but with some strong reservations, and to attribute the cease of violence in Ada entirely to the action of the central government.

“How are the irresponsible elements doing?”
“They are already sorted out!,” says laconically.

This ‘sorted out’ meant that the roistering, disputatious red and blue shirts, who wanted to hurt the Hungarians were clobbered by a few stalwart Hungarian lads. They talk about a case when:

Pista is walking down the street followed by a few red shirts. “Halt!,” they shout at him waving their beating sticks. Well Pista stopped, drew a penknife from his bootleg and said:

“Come on then!”

Well, they didn’t. They stayed. Moreover, they took to their heels. Since then, a Hungarian is hardly ever hurt in Ada by the irresponsible elements. They were ‘sorted out’ by the Hungarian lads...¹⁰²

However, peace did not last long. The rivalry and showdowns between the ORJUNA and the SRNAO started again. In Tovariševo, which is in South Bačka, a SRNAO member Isa Vasiljev started an argument with Vasa Radojčin, the local chairman of the ORJUNA. The verbal conflict escalated and in the heat of the argument Vasiljev stabbed Radojčin, who died on the scene.¹⁰³

The clashes between the two organizations in Senta struck with elemental force. On 25 May a SRNAO member Đorđe Plavšić lost his life during the brawl that erupted between the ORJUNA and the SRNAO. The trial of this case was reported in detail by the Bácsmegyei Napló. Borivoj Nešić was acquitted by the court on the grounds that he stabbed Plavšić in self-defence.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Magyarok között a Tiszamentén – Hogyan „intézték el” a felelőtlen elemeket Adán – A vándorló házak (Among Hungarians Along the Tisa river – How They “Sorted Out” the Irresponsible Elements in Ada – The Wandering Houses), *Hírlap*, 26 March 1924, 3.

¹⁰³ Az Orjuna elnökét megölte a Szrnao elnöke Tovarisevón (ORJUNA’s Chairman Killed by SRNAO’s Chairman in Tovariševo), *Hírlap*, 20 April 1924, 3.

¹⁰⁴ Fölménytették a szentai orjunás-gyilkosság tettesét. A Bíróság kimondotta, hogy Nesics Borivoj önvédelemből szúrta le Plavšics Györgyöt – Ügyész és védő a nacionalista szervezetek ellen (The Perpetrator of the ORJUNA Killing Released. The Court Stated that Borivoj Nešić Acted in Self-Defence When He Stabbed Đorđe Plavšić – Prosecutors and the Defence Against Nationalist Organizations), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 2 August 1924, 4, and:

At this trial, as well as the one in Novi Sad in February, the prosecutor and the defence lawyer brought forward an indictment against the ORJUNA and the SRNAO. Prosecutor Ilić Dragomir said directly that the so-called patriotic organizations, the ORJUNA just like the SRNAO are not only detrimental to the youth but to the entire state as well.”¹⁰⁵

The summer months were not only characterised by the clashes between the two rival organizations in the regions along the Tisa river, but there was still a strong presence of violence against minorities. In the second half of May Milorad Branovački, a local chairman of the SRNAO started shooting in the beer garden of the Kecel restaurant and then attacked a Hírlap employee Farkas Béla.¹⁰⁶

The Hungarian signboards were also targeted again. Király Károly, a lawyer from Ada, who was also the chairman of the local Hungarian Party, received a notice from the SRNAO on 9 July to destroy his Hungarian signboard and put up a Croatian one, otherwise he will have to deal with the organization’s report to the authorities.¹⁰⁷

Even more serious incidents took place in Slovenia and Croatia. On 1 June in a Slovenian village, Trbovlje, clashes broke out between members of the organization and the local miners after the ORJUNA’s inauguration ceremony of the flag. All this ended in tragedy. According to some information four people died and more than twenty were wounded seriously.¹⁰⁸ The Torontál reported seven deaths, fifteen seriously wounded and thirty-five lightly wounded victims.¹⁰⁹ The tempers did not calm down in the following days. The ORJUNA members who died in the clash were buried in Ljubljana accompanied by the Military Orchestra and in the presence of 500 ORJUNA members. They buried the deceased miners on the same day. It was a much more subdued funeral, but the crowd of six thousand people that appeared spoke for itself. It was feared that the relatively peaceful Slovenia would also reach a breaking point.¹¹⁰

The situation in Croatia became increasingly serious as well. The contemporary press kept reporting on more and more incidents happening in Croatia. Immediately after the events in Trbovlje the June 6 issue of the Hírlap reported on two such incidents. One article talked about the details of the ORJUNA’s clash with the HANAO in Osijek¹¹¹ and another

Akik Szentát rémületben tartották... Felmentették az orjuna-szernao háború gyilkosát, (Those Who Kept Senta in Terror... The Killer of the ORJUNA-SRNAO War Released), *Hírlap*, 3 August 1924, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ A szentai Szrnaó elnöke inzultálta a “Hírlap” munkatársát – Revolveres botrány a magyar néta miatt – „Idite napolje! Ja sam pucao!” (SRNAO Chairman’s assault on the Employee of “Hírlap” in Senta – Revolvered Scandal Because of Hungarian Songs – “Go outside! I shot!”), *Hírlap*, 21 May 1924, 4.

¹⁰⁷ Az adai szrnaósok és a magyar felirás (SRNAO Members from Ada and the Hungarian Signboards), *Hírlap*, 15 August 1924, 5.

¹⁰⁸ Az orjunisták véres zászlóbontása – A szlovéniai orjunisták és munkások revolverharca – Jovanovics Ljuba koncentrációs terve (The ORJUNA’s Bloody Flag Opening Ceremony – Revolver Fight Between the Slovenian ORJUNA and the Workers – Ljuba Jovanović’s Concentration Plan), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 3 June 1924, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Véres harc a trbovljei nacionalisták és a munkások között – Hét halott, tizenöt súlyos és harmincöt könnyű sebesült (Bloody Fight Between the Nationalists from Trbovlje and the Workers – Seven Dead, Fifteen Seriously and Thirty Lightly Wounded), *Torontál*, 4 June 1924, 1.

¹¹⁰ A trbovljei véres vasárnap – A pártok egymást vádolják a véres eseményekért (A Bloody Sunday in Trbovlje – The Parties Accused Each Other of the Bloodshed), *Hírlap*, 5 June 1924, 1.

¹¹¹ Orjunások és hanaoósok revolverharca – Egy súlyos sebesült a nézők sorából (ORJUNA and HANAO Revolver Shootings – A Seriously Wounded Spectator), *Hírlap*, 6 June 1924, 3.

right below it talks about the bloody clash of the communist workers and the ORJUNA in Split, where four people lost their lives.¹¹²

Due to the escalating violence in September the Radić Party strongly demanded that the government regulate the ORJUNA.¹¹³ A few days later the Radicals interpellated the Interior Minister Nastas Petrović¹¹⁴ in the parliament about how the government intended to solve the increasingly serious situation in Croatia. The Interior Minister said in response that if the ORJUNA disturbed order and peace in the future, the government would consider its dissolution.¹¹⁵

All of this did not happen in the end. The forthcoming more than a half year until the elections was marked by the showdowns between the rival organisations according to the available reports of the press. However, unlike in 1923, in the period prior to the elections in February 1925 there were not as many incidents at the expense of minorities as before.

3. Conclusion

The ORJUNA, an advocate of integrative Yugoslavism and the ideology of a centralised state, served as a paramilitary formation of the Democratic Party. After its foundation in 1922 one of its main targets were the minorities living in the new state – Hungarians, Germans and the Hungarian Jews.

As the main trustee of terror, the ORJUNA's attacks against minorities were marked not only by the psychological intimidation and pressure, but also by the economic, political and cultural undermining of these minorities. They were also determined to secure and emphasize the presence of Slavs in the newly seized territories.

The SRNAO was founded in March 1923. Their primary goal was to destroy the ORJUNA's ideology and to realise the Serbian nature of Vojvodina. Their program emphasized their desire to fight against the anti-state Republicans and Communists as well as against those who endangered the unity of the state and rebelled against the ruling family.

The summer of 1923 on the territory of Vojvodina passed by with showdowns and rivalry between the troops of the two Serbian political parties. But, with general xenophobia, distrust and suspicion in the air, which characterised the Radical Party as well, these clashes ended in a showdown against minorities in many cases.

¹¹² Kommunisták és orjunások véres összeütközése Splitben – Egy orjunást megöltek, hármat halálosan megsebesítettek (The Bloody Clash of Communists and the ORJUNA in Split – One ORJUNA Member Killed, Three Fatally Wounded), *Hírlap*, 6 June 1924, 3.

¹¹³ A Radics-párt az Orjuna megrendszerelését követeli (The Radić-Party Demands the Regulation of the ORJUNA), *Bácsmegyei Napló*, 7 September 1924, 1.

¹¹⁴ Petrović Nastas (Čačak, 5 November 1867 – 22 February 1933, Belgrade) He graduated from high school and the University of Philosophy in Belgrade. He started working as a teacher in Užice in 1892, but he was fired because of his political views. He became a Representative in parliament in 1901 for the Radical Party. After the war he had serious conflicts with Pačić concerning the Croatian question, which led to a break between them in 1924. Nastas wanted to make a serious compromise with Stjepan Radić. He was Interior Minister for the first time from 1907 to 1908 and for a short period in 1924. He was elected Representative in 1925, but his political influence kept getting weaker.

¹¹⁵ A belügyminiszter feloszlata az Orjunát, ha megzavarja a rendet és a békét (The Interior Minister Will Dissolve the ORJUNA If They Disturb the Order and Peace,) *Hírlap*, 11 September 1924, 5.

As a result, the two ideologically very different organizations stepped on the same platform in respect of the actions related to minorities. The first signs of this were already revealed in July 1923, when the members of the SRNAO and the ORJUNA jointly attacked the ball in Novi Sad for Hungarian students studying in Hungary.

In the second half of the year, despite of the ideological confrontation, negotiations began not only about the joint violent actions against minorities, but also about the possible fusion of the ORJUNA and the SRNAO. Although this did not happen in 1923, a full agreement was made on the operations of these two organisations to drive back the cultural influence of Hungarians. In this spirit, they jointly initiated the ban of Hungarian movie subtitles at the relevant ministries in Belgrade.

The rapprochement of the ORJUNA and the SRNAO was only temporary. The authorities gave a clear signal several times in early 1924 that they did not tolerate the actions of the two organizations in Vojvodina, especially the attacks on state officials. In February 1924 the members of the SRNAO were tried in Novi Sad and then the members of the ORJUNA were tried in August in Senta. In both cases the representatives of the prosecution and the lawyers protecting individuals attacked the two organizations sharply.

Although in September 1924, in light of the bloody events in Slovenia and Croatia, the possibility of banning the two organisations was raised again, it did not happen. The strength of the ORJUNA and the SRNAO was apparent because a number of state institutions made plain their aversion to their actions, but no criminal proceedings were ever started against their leaders.

Despite the fact that in the second half of 1924, with the new elections approaching, violence spread in the country once again, the ORJUNA and the SRNAO held back on the harassment and ill-treatment of members of minorities prior to the 1925 elections, unlike in 1923.

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ЗОЛТАН ДЕВАВАРИ

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НАСИЉЕ КАО ОРУЖЈЕ ПОЛИТИЧКИХ ПАРТИЈА. ОПЕРАЦИЈЕ ОРЈУНА И СРНАО У ВОЈВОДИНИ (1922-1924)

Резиме

Овај се рад бави идеологијом, терором и операцијама ОРЈУНА (Организације југословенских националиста) и СРНАО (Српске националне омладине) у Војводини. Ове организације су имале значајну и одлучујућу улогу у политичком животу Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца.

Оснивање и операције ОРЈУНА и СРНАО су имале велик утицај на политички и свакодневни живот у Војводини, те су одлучивале о животима националних мањина (Мађара, Немаца, Јевреја) који су живели у овом делу јужнословенске државе. Упркос чињеници да су ови покрети имали много утицаја на унутрашња дешавања Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца у првој деценији њеног постојања (1918-1929), литература о ОРЈУНА и СРНАО је непотпуна до данашњег дана.

Према томе, поред релевантне литературе, овај рад уводи и анализира активности ОРЈУНА и СРНАО у погледу националних мањина у Војводини тако што се фокусира на период између два избора од 18. 3. 1923. до 8. 1. 1925, користећи изворе као што су либерални *Bácsmegyei Napló* из Суботице, *Hírlap* Мађарске партије, издања *Torontálá* из периода 1922-1925 у Зрењанину, и католички *Délbácska* из Новог Сада.

Непознавање ове теме, недостатак анализе и велик значај захтевају даља истраживања у релевантним архивама.

Кључне речи: ОРЈУНА, СРНАО, Демократска странка, Радикална странка, насиље, терор, мањине.

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