THE SERBIAN RIGHT-WING
PARTIES AND INTELLECTUALS IN
THE KINGDOM OF YUGOSLAVIA, 1934–1941

Edited by
Dragan Bakić

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Extremes on the Margins: Serbian Right-Wing Parties in Interwar Europe (1934-1941)

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Types of right-wing policies in interwar Europe

In the summer of 1940, in a conversation with Prime Minister Dragiša Cvetković, Paul Karadjordjević, Prince Regent of Yugoslavia, asked: "Should we organize ourselves in the fascist fashion?"[1] A year earlier, just a few days before the German invasion of Poland in 1939, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had been restructured with the formation of the *Banovina* of Croatia as a large self-governing province, a change that hinted at the possibility of federalization.[2] The Prince Regent's question primarily conveyed the precariousness of the Yugoslav position, but it was concluded at the meeting that such a move would do little to "ingratiate [them] with anyone" because the German leadership would see it as disingenuous.[3]

The course of events that unfolded – the Anschluss, the annexation of the Sudetenland and the rest of Czechoslovakia, the occupation of most of Poland's territory and the fall of France – made Yugoslavia's neutral position essentially untenable. Also, neighboring Italy had annexed Albania. Prince Paul's query came in the weeks when the German

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[1] Mihailo Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma: dnevničke beleške 1939-1941, londonske beleške 1944-1945* (Novi Sad: Prometej, 1998), 136.

[2] On the Cvetković–Maček Agreement, see Ljubo Boban, *Sporazum Cvetković-Maček* (Beograd: Institut društvenih nauka, 1965).

[3] Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma*, 136.

troops were triumphantly marching through France: the impact of the Axis Powers' victories was strong, and Berlin was pressuring Yugoslavia to leave the League of Nations and join the Anti-Comintern Pact.[4]

Such an ideological u-turn would have meant completely breaking with the Yugoslav authorities' long-standing policy of suppressing fascism to the political fringes, while the authoritarian conservative right-wing faction was keeping itself in power by implementing "political hybridization" and taking on some "external features of fascism" and, after 1939, even partial fascistization.[5] The Third Reich's pressure even went as far as direct interference in the internal policy of the governments of Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria, which were expected to fight anti-German propaganda, ensure positive coverage of Germany in regime-controlled papers and introduce anti-Masonic and anti-Jewish measures.[6]

King Alexander I's dictatorship (1929–1934), eased by the Octroyed Constitution (1931) and constant promises about restoring parliamentary life, did not have the features of a fascist "modernist revolution."[7] Alexander's dictatorship in Yugoslavia was part of a Europe-wide trend and shared the idea of integral nationalism and the objective of regenerating the community with the neighboring monarchies in Albania, Bulgaria and Romania and different versions of European military and fascist dictatorships. In the case of Yugoslavia, the chief goal was to

[4] Fearful of Italian aggression and closely following France's defeat, Yugoslavia established ties with the Soviet Union, which had been inconceivable to the authorities in Belgrade since the October Revolution. On the country's international position, see Jacob B. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis 1934-1941* (New York and London: Columbia Univeristy Press, 1961), 170–177.

[5] For the appropriate terminology and a broader explanation of this process in Europe, see Aristotle Kallis, "The 'Fascist Effect': On the Dynamics of Political Hybridization in Inter-War Europe", in *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, ed. Antonio Costa Pinto, Aristotle Kallis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[6] Aleksandar Stojanović, *Ideje, politički projekti i praksa Vlade Milana Nedića* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2015), 49; on the importance of the situational element in East Central European fascism, see John-Paul Himka, "The Importance of the Situational Element in East Central European Fascism," *East Central Europe* 37 (2010): 353–358.

[7] Roger Griffin, "Fascism's Modernist Revolution: A New Paradigm for the Study of Right-wing Dictatorships," *Fascism* 5-2 (2011): 105–129.

preserve the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity by using authoritarian measures to ensure mass support and resolutely clamp down on anyone seen as an enemy of the Kingdom.[8]

After the king's death and a brief continuation of his political system, the government of Milan Stojadinović (1935–1939) and the policy of "real (or realistic) Yugoslavism" was an attempt to find a compromise within the authoritarian regime that sought to co-opt the members of the old and largely conservative parties. The main reason for the failure of this model was the inability to reach an understanding with the leading actors in Croatian political life: the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) and its leader Vladimir Maček. This tension in the decision-making process was the result of international pressure but also of the internal processes of political radicalization, especially after 1939 and Milan Stojadinović's fall. In a word, the described course of events was also a kind of "reluctant inclusion" of Yugoslavia and the Serbian right wing into the world of "New Europe."

Milan Stojadinović can indeed be described as the prototype of a politician from East-Central Europe in the interwar period. While he outwardly expressed sympathy for fascism, he never developed a program that would reflect such principles. He was a conservative politician with markedly anti-communist views and little faith in democracy. Finally, in part due to external pressure and in part following his own strategy, he tried to strike a deal with the Axis dictators.[9] Dragan Bakić has added to this premise with his significant contribution on

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[8] Pieter Troch, *Nationalism and Yugoslavia: Education, Yugoslavism and the Balkans before World War II* (London: IB Tauris, 2015), 26; on the authoritarian regimes in Southeast Europe, see *Autoritäre Regime in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1919–1944*, hrsg. von Erwin Oberländer, with Rolf Ahmann, Hans Lemberg, and Holm Sundhaussen (Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001); on the regime's repression, particularly in the field of freedom of the press, the ban on questioning the state and the sovereign, and the general limitation of civil rights, see Ivana Dobrivojević, *Državna represija u doba kralja Aleksandra 1929–1935* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2006).

[9] This description of Milan Stojadinović is taken from: Dejan Djokić, "'Leader' or 'Devil'? Milan Stojadinović, Prime Minister of Yugoslavia (1935-39), and his Ideology," in *In the Shadow of Hitler: Personalities of the Right in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Rebecca Haynes and Martin Rady (London: IB Tauris, 2010), 166.

Stojadinović's dabbling in fascism, which will be discussed in more detail below.[10]

That was a characteristic of Central, South and East Europe, where a network of right-wing and authoritarian regimes gradually developed in the interwar period. Very few of them referred to themselves as fascist, but they did nothing to hide their affinity for some aspects of Italian fascism or German National Socialism and "borrowed selectively from the examples they provided."[11] In interwar Europe, authoritarianism as a phenomenon had been present from the 1920s. The success of Mussolini's March on Rome in October 1922, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain (1922–1930), the takeover of the future king Zog in Albania (1924), and the military coups in Greece, Poland, Lithuania, and Portugal (1926) were followed by the dictatorship of King Alexander I in Yugoslavia (1929). Similarly, King Carol II of Romania suspended the constitution and established a royal dictatorship in 1938. Also, authoritarianism triumphed in Austria, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Bulgaria and Greece (1933–1936), culminating in General Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War (1939).[12]

Generally speaking, it can be said that, like in some other cases, Serbian nationalism and the "Serbian variant" of Yugoslav nationalism were radicalized in the interwar period, but fascism nonetheless failed

[10]   Dragan Bakić, "Mussolini of Yugoslavia? The Milan Stojadinović Regime and the Impact of Italian Fascism, 1937-1939," *Qualestoria* 49, no. 1 (2021): 243–267. On the other hand, it is important to note that the label of "Leader" was not solely applied to Stojadinović and was also used for Vlatko Maček, President of HSS. See Željko Karaula, "Naš Vodja – stvaranje kulta Vlatka Mačeka," in *110 godina Hrvatske seljačke stranke*, ed. Hrvoje Perić (Zagreb-Križevci: Matica hrvatska Zagreb – Povijesno društvo Križevci, 2015), 149–165.

[11]   Martin Blinkhorn, "Introduction: Allies, rivals, or antagonists? Fascists and conservatives in modern Europe," in *Fascists and Conservatives. The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. by Martin Blinkhorn (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 2. Philip Longworth, *The Making of Eastern Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 64–94.

[12]   James M. Lutz, "The Spread of Authoritarian Regimes in Interwar Europe, Politics," *Religions & Ideology* 18, no. 3 (2017): 252. Yugoslavia was one of the countries that saw no attempt to overthrow its dictatorship once it was installed. No other authoritarian group tried to oust the regime and seize power in the country either (unlike the unsuccessful Nazi coup in Austria). Ibid., 254–255.

to take root in the broader social context.[13] Some champions of far right-wing views – sometimes organized into groups or organizations – had been active since the 1920s. One of the common characteristics of these individuals was their tendency to frequently change their political affiliation and switch from one organization or political party to another.[14] To understand this dynamic, we must bear in mind another important aspect: the complexity of Yugoslavia's internal policy. Besides Czechoslovakia, in the post-1918 period Yugoslavia was the only country that attempted to create a new national identity; after 1929, this identity transformed from an imagined goal to be achieved in the future into a "pressing need," fundamentally changing the internal dynamics of the country's political and social life.[15]

From September 1939, the political elites of the Serbian part of the Yugoslav Radical Union (JRZ) continued their previous discourse on Yugoslav unity, but in practice, the country set out on an altogether

[13] For this conclusion regarding Yugoslavia, see Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945* (London: Routledge, 1996), 290. For a similar process and the interwar radicalization of nationalism but without the triumph of fascism, see Oula Silvennoinen, "'Home, Religion, Fatherland': Movement of Radical Right in Finland," *Fascism* 4 (2015): 134.

[14] Stojanović*, Ideje*, 54–60. One of these organizations was the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (ORJUNA). See "Influences of Italian Fascism on the Ideology and Political Practice of the Organisation of Yugoslav Nationalists (ORJUNA)," in *Serbian-Italian Relations: History and Modern Times*, eds. in chief Srdjan Rudić, Antonello Biagini, ed. Biljana Vučetić (Beograd: The Institute of History, Roma: Sapienza University of Rome, Research center CEMAS, 2015), 231–241; Vasilije Dragosavljević, *Ideje fašizma u Kraljevini SHS: Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista* (Beograd: Odbrana, 2020).

[15] Troch, *Nationalism*, 4–5. Jovo Bakić, *Ideologije jugoslovenstva izmedju srpskog i hrvatskog nacionalizma 1918–1941. Sociološko-istorijska studija* (Zrenjanin: Gradska Narodna Biblioteka "Žarko Zrenjanin," 2004). On the interaction between Yugoslavism and interwar Croatism, see Stipica Grgić, "Pantheon on a Tablecloth: Yugoslav Dictatorship and the Confrontation of National Symbols in Croatia (1929–1935)," *Nationalities Papers* 46–3 (2018): 458–470. On how the "Serbian question" was opened in post-1939 Yugoslavia and how the majority of the Serbian elites abandoned the idea of unitary Yugoslavia, see Dejan Djokić, "National Mobilization in the 1930s: The emergence of the 'Serb question' in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia," in *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia. Key Issues and Controversies*, ed. by Dejan Djokić, James Ker-Lindsay (London: Routledge, 2010).

different path. In the *Banovina* of Croatia, the Croatian nationalists were clearly dominant and implemented harsh measures against most pro-Serbian parties and organizations (primarily JRZ and the Yugoslav National Party – JNS) as well as pro-Yugoslav Croats. The remaining parts of the country set out on the same path. The Slovenian political elites aspired to achieve the same rights, and the Serbian leadership of the JRZ considered the formation of a banovina called "Serbian Lands." The Serbian province in Yugoslavia was to encompass all territories to the east of the newly established Croatian one, with the line of demarcation changed in the areas that, in their opinion, had been given to the Croatian side as an "excessive concession."[16]

Although they "experimented" with democracy, the monarchs of Southeast Europe and different representatives of the Crown were the dominant actors on the interwar political stage of Yugoslavia, Romania, Albania and Bulgaria. They gradually transformed the 1918 hopes of maintaining liberal democracy in their countries into the domination of a political orientation that ranged from authoritarian and conservative to fascist. With the exception of the success of the Italian fascists, the conservative forces remained in power in the 1920s. It was not until the Nazis seized power and the German international triumphs that the conflicts on the right intensified throughout Europe, "from Portugal to Poland, from Romania to France, as well as in most of post-Habsburg Europe."[17]

The Balkan monarchies largely belong to the category of countries described by Stanley G. Payne as follows: "… there was a tendency to replace the parliamentary government with syncretistic, semipluralist forms of right-wing dictatorship, normally without a developed single-party system and usually without a revolutionary new fascist-type component. That is, authoritarianism normally did not mean fascism,

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[16] For a discussion of these plans, see Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma*, 83. Several drafts concerning the *banovina* Serbian Lands are available in: Archives of Yugoslavia (Arhiv Jugoslavije, hereafter AJ), Mihailo Konstantinović Papers (Zbirka Mihaila Konstantinovića), 845–20; For the Slovenian *banovina*, see AJ, 845–20, Miha Krek to Mihailo Konstantinović, 11 October 1939.

[17] Marco Bresciani, "Introduction," in *Conservatives and Right Radicals in Interwar Europe*, ed. by Marco Bresciani (London: Roudledge, 2020), 11–12.

even though it became common for authoritarian regimes to imitate certain aspects of the fascist style."[18] Looking at the rest of Central and Eastern Europe, this does not seem to have been an exception. Even Czechoslovakia, commonly described as the only democratic country in the region in the 1930s, had a constitution that strengthened the unitary state and concentrated political powers in the hands of its charismatic president Tomáš Masaryk.[19]

This paper aims to outline the place of the Serbian right in the broader framework of the relationship between the "old" conservatives and the "new" right wing, an important European and global framework. To understand these processes, this theoretical approach to fascism and interwar right-wing actors draws on the ideas of Roger Griffin, Roger Eatwell and Stanley Payne, who see fascism primarily as a political ideology. A particularly important contribution is Payne's typology of the interwar authoritarian nationalist right wing, which can be divided into the fascist, radical and conservative.[20]

In a bid to understand the different branches of the right wing, I have also used the approach of António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis, who see them as fluid concepts that informed and selectively borrowed from each other, and use terms such as hybridization and, particularly pertinently to the right-wing parties in Yugoslavia, radicalization of authoritarian conservatism and its policies. This approach is especially important for an examination of the Yugoslav Radical Union, the most powerful political party that dominated the space of the Serbian right in 1935–1941.[21]

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[18] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 290.

[19] Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State That Failed* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2011), 81; Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: the Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 21.

[20] Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascisim* (London: The Printer Press, 1991); Payne, *A History of Fascisim*; Roger Eatwell, "On defining the 'Fascist Minimum': The centrality of ideology," *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 1, no. 3 (1996): 303–319. On combining these approaches, see Rastko Lompar, *Dimitrije Ljotić – učitelj ili farisej: Zbor, hrišćanstvo i verske zajednice: 1935–1945* (Beograd: Catena mundi), 52–59.

[21] *Rethinking Fascisim and Dictatorship in Europe*, eds. Antonio Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Kallis, "The Fascist Effect." For the most recent research on JRZ, see Dragan Bakić's contributions in this book.

Conservative authoritarianism in power:
between "directed democracy" and fascist trappings

Milan Stojadinović, Dragiša Cvetković and their JRZ were already mentioned in the introduction to this paper. In this section, we will take a closer look at JRZ, the leading political party in the country (1935–1941) that supported Prince Paul's regime.

Generally speaking, the studies of interwar political orientation have a consensus about the porous boundaries on the right pole of the political spectrum and their "entanglements."[22] Various forms of "multifaceted hybridization of radicalized conservatives"[23] could involve the transfer of ideas on the right wing in the field of corporatism, u-turns in foreign policy, anti-Semitic measures, a single-party policy and the cult of a charismatic leader: "the circulation of radical ideas and practices in the interwar period was widespread and supremely dynamic."[24] However, regardless of the accusations of their opponents, no fascist regime existed in Central and Eastern Europe before World War II broke out.[25] There can be no doubt, however, that the two decades from the end of the Great War and Wilson's Fourteen Points saw a series of political systems envisaged as democratic crumble before fascism, Nazism and different forms of authoritarian-conservative rule.[26]

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[22] Kallis notes that Stanley Payne's and Michael Mann's classifications of the right wing point to the same phenomenon. See Kallis, „The Fascist Effect," 16. Note the terms introduced by Roger Griffin in his *The Nature of Fascism*: "para-fascisim," "not-quite-fascist," more radical than "conventional authorianism."

[23] Martin Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe, 1919-1945* (London: Routledge, 2000), 21.

[24] Aristotle Kallis, Antonio Costa Pinto, "Conclusion: Embracing Complexity and Transnational Dynamics: The Diffusion of Fascism and the Hybridization of Dictatorships in Inter-War Europe," in *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, ed. by Antonio Costa Pinto, Aristotle Kallis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 272.

[25] Blinkhorn, *Fascism*, 82. Classifications can also be misleading. For instance, General Franco's regime, commonly described as "authoritarian-conservative," was responsible for the death of at least 100,000 people, whereas the ideology of Ioannis Metaxas in Greece, often described as closer to fascism, claimed a few hundred lives. See Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 44.

[26] Lutz, *The Spread*, 243.

Yugoslavia also found itself in the "magnetic field of fascism," but in the 1920s, the pull came from Italy, which was seen as the neighbor that was threatening the borders of the country and even its very existence. Fascism was hence unappealing even to organizations such as ORJUNA, who adopted its ideas and methods – if not its name. A far stronger pull came from Germany in the 1930s, especially in the early years of the Nazi regime (1933–1936), and it was particularly important for the spread of anti-democratic ideas in Europe.[27]

After the assassination of the Yugoslav king in Marseille, during the short period when the Yugoslav National Party was still in power (1934–1935), Alexander's methods continued to be implemented. Then JRZ softened the enforcement of the existing laws but kept the Constitution of 1931 as a form of watered-down authoritarianism. With this approach, Prince Paul limited parliamentary freedoms and any kind of social or economic reform while trying to come to an agreement with the Croatian political elite.[28] Although it was one of the countries where authoritarianism prevailed over democracy, Yugoslavia did not come close to the political systems of Germany and Italy, or even the Austrian Ständestaat, which was defined as Christian, German, federal and corporatism-based in its constitution.[29]

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[27] Kallis, "The Fascist Effect," 24–25; Arnd Bauerkamper and Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, "Introduction," in *Fascism without Borders. Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movements and Regimes in Europe, 1918–1945*, ed. by Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2019), 35. A good indicator of growing German influence on the right wing was the turn of Central and Eastern European eugenicists toward the German model of racial hygiene. See Marius Turda, Paul J. Weindling, "Eugenics, Race and Nation in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940," in *Blood and Homeland, Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940,* ed. by Marius Turda, Paul J. Weindling (Budapest and New York, 2007), 8.

[28] Mark Biondich, "The Crisis of Legitimacy and the Rise of the Radical Right in Interwar Yugoslavia (1918–1941)," in *Conservatives and Right Radicals in Interwar Europe*, 100–101.

[29] Julie Thorpe, "Austrofascism: Revisiting the 'Authoritarian State 40 Years on," *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 2 (2010): 321; Emmerich Tálos, "Zum Herrschaftssystem des Austrofaschismus: Österreich 1934–1938," in *Autoritäre Regime in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1919–1944*, 143–162.

The reputation of Stojadinović's government as a budding fascist regime began with the propaganda of his adversaries.[30] However, Dragan Bakić notes that it cannot be denied that his government displayed some "fascist trappings," which were, no doubt, part of the above mentioned dynamics between the "old conservatives" and the "new right wing."[31] In addition, JRZ did not shy away from coalitions with parties of the far or fascist right. To strengthen the Yugoslav character of his bloc, Stojadinović made a deal with the *Borbaši* (Yugoslav People's Party – Borbaši, henceforth JNSb) led by Svetislav Hodjera and was involved in unsuccessful talks with ZBOR (Yugoslav People's Movement ZBOR) about running in the elections together.[32]

An important parallel can be made between Yugoslavia and interwar Poland. Poland can be said to have borrowed from Mussolini's model, but a form of fascistization appeared only after the death of Jozef Pilsudski in 1935. The reason for this was the personality of the Polish marshal himself, who had become the most powerful figure in the country after the coup of 1926. Besides his personal views, there was also the resistance of the pro-regime elites, and Pilsudski's semi-authoritarian regime reduced the chances of a more radical opposition coming to power. At the same time, especially in the 1930s, the general climate favored the emergence of pro-fascist ideas.[33] The dictatorial regime of King Alexander (1929–1934) was in that respect not unlike that of Pilsudski insofar as it prevented any influx of fascism; some

[30] For more details, see Bakić, "Mussolini of Yugoslavia," 255. Stojadinović tried to position himself as an opponent of "Yugo-fascism," of which the government of 1934–1935 was accused. See *Stenografske beleške Narodne skupštine Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, meeting of 4 July 1935, 116; *Stenografske beleške Senata Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, sixth regular meeting held on 27 July 1935, 91–92.

[31] Another fascist feature of JRZ was that the party's youth wore uniforms, although its numbers were not even close to similar organizations at home and abroad. See Bakić, "Mussolini of Yugoslavia," 259–261.

[32] Dragan Tešić, *Jugoslovenska radikalna zajednica u Srbiji 1935–1939* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1997), 227, 232. For more details on these political parties, see the following section and the contributions of Rastko Lompar in this volume.

[33] Grzegorz Krzywiec, "Catholic Authoritarians or Fascists as Such? The Polish rightist subculture turns fascist (1919–1939)," in *Conservatives and Right Radicals in Interwar Europe*, 145.

fascist trappings can be traced in the last stage of Milan Stojadinović's government (1935–1939). The fall of the authoritarian-conservative president of JRZ paved the way for the fascistization of the regime to a greater extent.

Stojadinović came to power promising to restore democracy and civil liberties and fight against "communism, Bolshevism, fascism and Yugo-fascism."[34] However, these promises remained unfulfilled during his time in office. The legislation from the dictatorship period was not enforced, and the parties that had been banned remained officially outlawed but were allowed to operate to create an illusion of democracy.[35] The objective was to position JRZ as a party of moderate conservatives, as opposed to communism and fascism. In practice, Stojadinović used his office to strengthen his party and ensure electoral success, while privately describing his understanding of this political system as "orchestrated democracy."[36]

Ultimately, Stojadinović's regime began to take on some external features of fascism. Besides the party youth, whose members sometimes wore green shirts, it formed the Yugoslav Workers' Alliance (Jugoras), an association with clear anti-communist views and a nationalist discourse. The regime's discourse on Yugoslav and class unity began to resemble the ideas of the Italian fascists. All of this makes it clear how Prince Paul came to believe that Stojadinović's ambition was to become a second Duce. The Prince, however, was determined not to let the Karadjordjević dynasty "suffer the fate of the House of Savoy."[37] In early 1939, after the JRZ electoral list, headed by Stojadinović, won the majority in the elections, Prince Paul, colluding with several of the Prime Minister's closest associates, replaced him with Dragiša Cvetković, Minister of Social Policy and People's Health.

The new phase of the JRZ government started with similar promises to those made in the early days of the previous cabinet but, once

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[34] AJ, 38-336-484, *Narodna samouprava*, 11. 7. 1936.

[35] Bojan Simić, *Propaganda Milana Stojadinovića* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju, 2007), 38.

[36] Milan Jovanović Stoimirović, *Dnevnik 1936–1941* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2000), 161.

[37] Bakić, „Mussolini of Yugoslavia," 262–264.

again, it would not move past democratic rhetoric and authoritarian reality. Until mid-1940, Cvetković's cabinet showed no features to distinguish it from the authoritarian-conservative regimes in neighboring Balkan monarchies of the period, with a more rigid implementation of the legislation passed during the 6 January Dictatorship.

Concurrently with the military success of the Axis Powers, the influence of the supporters of the far right, who had advocated such views since the 1920s, was growing in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. There was political persecution of people with different convictions; anti-Masonic and anti-Jewish measures were adopted. The campaign was led by Danilo Gregorić, and in 1940, the dissemination of fascist ideas and the political radicalization of Yugoslavia reached their climax. The "Slovene faction" of JRZ gave a notable contribution to this general discourse. Having spent years advocating an anti-German position, their leader, Anton Korošec decided to come closer to the new neighbor. The ideological underpinnings they had in common – such as anti-communism, anti-Semitism and anti-Masonry – allowed him to pivot to a pro-German stance. This meant that an actor that had been influential in Yugoslav policy since 1918 now became an important supporter of a rapprochement with Germany.[38]

The extremes on the margins

Accusations of fascism against Stojadinović did not come only from the ranks of his predecessors in power or the democratic opposition but also from Dimitrije Ljotić, the leader of the fascist movement ZBOR, whose party had all the trappings of this ideology: "There can be no authoritarian state without authority. Milan Stojadinović, it won't help an ass to don a lion's skin. So, Milan Stojadinović, you want to be like Mussolini, Hitler, Kemal. But how? Since you're studying their systems,

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[38] For a discussion of Dragiša Cvetković's cabinet and fascistization in 1940, see Dragan Bakić, "Troubles at Home and Abroad: JRZ under Dragiša Cvetković" in this volume. On anti-Semitic measures in Yugoslavia, see Milan Koljanin, *Jevreji i antisemitizam u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1918–1941* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2008); Nenad Popović, *Jevreji u Srbiji 1918–1941* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1997).

you might do well to ask them how they became what they are now. It's going to be convenient, when you and Hitler are alone, just the two of you … That's when you'll learn … that Hitler did not become a figure of authority simply by coming to power but his authority grew and matured before that in the blazing furnace of his heroic and martyrial struggle for the good of the German people. That's when you'll learn that Hitler had been a hero during the war and, after the war, both a hero and martyr."[39]

Labeling the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia a "fascist apprentice," Dimitrije Ljotić reveals an important characteristic of the political strategy he had used almost since the inception of ZBOR (1935). On the one hand, Ljotić and his supporters rejected the fascist "label," and on the other, their leader described the Führer of the German Nazis as a "hero and martyr."

Ljotić often stressed that the Portuguese concept of *Estado Novo*, developed by Antonio Salazar, was his preferred solution for Yugoslavia, albeit not as an identical model. Privately, he claimed that Charles Maurras, the leader of the *Action Française*, had been his strongest influence, but he also spoke favorably of the Romanian Legion of the Archangel Michael, better known as the Iron Guard. Therefore, there can be no doubt that "as much as he protested against the accusations that he was a fascist, he nonetheless showed solidarity with many fascist movements throughout Europe."[40] After the leader of the Iron Guard, Corneliu Codreanu, was killed in November 1938, Ljotić described the failure of the Guard as follows: "Romania had no other path to pursue but the path of the Iron Guard … and yet it found the path

[39] Dimitrije Ljotić, *Poruka fašističkom šegrtu* (Beograd, 1937), 12.
[40] Lompar, *Dimitrije Ljotić*, 40. On the Iron Guard and Romanian fascism, see Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth. Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2015); Armin Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien: soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1986); *Inszenierte Gegenmacht von rechts: die „Legion Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien 1918–1938*, hrsg. Von A. Heinen und O. J. Schmitt, München: R. Oldenbourg, 2013); Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania* (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1990); Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Căpitan Codreanu: Aufstieg und Fall des rumänischen Faschistenführers* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 2016).

of chaos, corruption and cowardice a hundred times preferable to the pure and heroic road of Căpitan Corneliu Zelea Codreanu."[41]

The spread and selective adoption of fascist ideas and the radicalization of the right were part of a broader process: it was also evident in the introduction of dictatorships in Spain (1923) and Portugal (1926), similar processes in Italy and Greece, and finally the capitulation of conservative republicanism before corporatism in the Second Spanish Republic.[42] These regimes continued in the 1930s to model themselves one after the other and borrow some ideas and models from each other, and this was not a center-periphery relationship. For instance, Spanish Carlism followed the examples of Pilsudski, Salazar and Dollfuss rather than those of Hitler and Mussolini, although the Portuguese dictator emphasized Ioannis Metaxas, the Greek *Arkhigos*, as his role model.[43]

Throughout the interwar period in Yugoslavia, none of the far-right or fascist parties managed to come to power or enjoyed more substantial support. Writing about the ideological frameworks of movements and parties in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Stanley Payne placed both King Alexander and Milan Stojadinović on the conservative right, ORJUNA and ZBOR on the radical right, and the Croatian *Ustaše* movement among the fascists.[44] Rastko Lompar, however, defines ZBOR as a fascist party created in January 1935 through the merging of several right-wing movements that championed the concept of integral Yugoslavism. The party avoided being associated with fascism because of Italy's hostile attitude to the Yugoslav state and chose to highlight its preference of the "class system," drawing on French models.[45]

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[41] Quoted from Lompar, *Dimitrije Ljotić*, 192.

[42] Blinkhorn, "Introduction: Allies, Rivals, or Antagonists?," 7.

[43] Kallis, "The Fascist Effect," 20.

[44] Payne, *A History of Fascisim*, 120. Not including ZBOR among the fascist movements in Southeast Europe is quite common, probably due to its limited popularity. Cf. Armin Heinen, "Die Notwendigkeit einer gesamteuropäischen Perspektive auf den südosteuropäischen Faschismus," *East Central Europe* 37 (2010): 367–371.

[45] On the founding of ZBOR: Branislav Gligorijević, "Politički pokreti i grupe s nacionalsocijalističkom ideologijom i njihova fuzija u Ljotićevom 'Zboru'," *Istorijski glasnik*, 4 (1965): 36–59; Rastko Lompar, "Dimitrije Ljotić and Zbor's Corporatist

The ideal political system, the ZBOR members believed, would be a monarchy headed by the Karadjordjević dynasty, with the sovereign enjoying broad powers and being the most important political actor.[46] Thus, their ideas were monarchist, clerical and contrary to the legacy of the French Revolution, reflecting the fact that their leader, Dimitrije Ljotić, admired the *Action Française*. In time, especially after 1938, the influence of the Italian and German models grew increasingly prevalent, especially with the adoption of Nazi anti-Semitism.[47]

Ljotić's "divine" triad – "God, king and pater familias" – was to be the motto of the movement, and it was supposed to symbolize ZBOR's "Führerprinzip" on the Yugoslav political scene.[48] Rejecting the fascist label through the formula "Neither fascism nor Hitlerism" in a brochure from 1936, Ljotić identified with the same position that the ORJUNA had once championed, stressing its anti-Italian sentiments regardless of how much it tried to emulate the fascist model. ZBOR's leader had to tread the same path.[49]

Recent research suggests that two organizations stood on the far and extreme right of the political spectrum in interwar Yugoslavia. ZBOR, with the palingenetic myth at its ideological core and its insis-

Project for Interwar Yugoslavia," in *Looking for a Third Way in the Era of Fascism*, ed. Antonio Costa Pinto (London: Routledge, 2021), 123. Denying the fascist nature of the movement was not solely a feature of ZBOR (Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 262–263). On ZBOR as a fascist movement, see also Dimitrije Djordjević, "Fascism in Yugoslavia, 1918–1941," in *Native Fascism in Successor States, 1918–1945*, ed. Peter Sugar (Santa Barbara: ABC—Clio Press, 1971), 131.

[46] On the one occasion when he was part of the government, as the Minister of Justice in 1931, Ljotić suggested to King Alexander a new constitution based on class system principles, but the Yugoslav sovereign refused. See Mladen Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1984), 21.

[47] Lompar, "Dimitrije Ljotić and Zbor's Corporatist Project," 125; Vasilije Dragosavljević, *Druga Evropa i Kraljevina Jugoslavija: JNP Zbor (1934–1941)* (Novi Sad: Prometej, 2021), 231–232. On the French sources of Ljotić's views, see Stojanović, *Ideje*, 60; Vasilije Dragosavljević, "Ideološki uticaji evropskog fašizma na JNP Zbor (1934–1940)," in *Istorijska tribina: Iz istraživanja mladih saradnika INIS-a*, ed. Zoran Janjetović (Beograd: INIS, 2013), 93–110.

[48] Stojanović, *Ideje*, 60; Lompar, "Dimitrije Ljotić," 126–127.

[49] Lompar, "True Believers or Latecomers? Dimitrije Ljotić, ZBOR and the Nature of Fascism" in this volume.

tence on the need of cleansing the national organism by violent means, was a fascist party. On the other hand, the Yugoslav People's Party, known as *Borbaši*, was a far-right organization. The *Borbaši* were wedged between the conservatives and the fascists; they had no intention of changing the society, unlike the fascist movements, but they were much more inclined to resort to violence than ZBOR. Even their members had difficulty understanding some of their "ideological meanderings." Like ZBOR, the *Borbaši* were eliminated from political life by Milan Stojadinović after the elections of 1938, when he removed their leader Svetislav Hodjera from his cabinet and incorporated their two MPs into the ruling JRZ.[50]

Neither ZBOR nor the *Borbaši* managed to create a network of influence comparable to the local or regional fascist mobilization of the Iron Guard in Romania.[51] In the elections of 1935 and 1938, ZBOR barely won 1%, which makes it more reminiscent of pre-war movements such as the Norwegian Nasjonal Samling.[52] The complex system of Metaxas's regime in Greece, with its suspension of democracy, heavy-handed censorship, secret police, pronounced anti-pluralism and a mass youth movement (*Ethnikí Orgánosis Neoléas*) reminiscent of the Hitlerjugend in Germany, also had no counterpart in Yugoslavia.[53]

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[50] Lompar, "Politička biografija Svetislava Hodjere," *Studkon* 2 (2017): 37–49.

[51] For a local example of the Iron Guard's success, with the support of a local bishop, see Oliver Jens Schmitt, "Approaching the Social History of Romanian Fascism. The Legionaries of Vâlcea County in the Interwar Period," *Fascism* 3 (2014): 117–151. See also Raoul Carsorcea, "Building a Fascist Romania: Voluntary Work Camps as a Propaganda Strategy of the Legionary Movement in Interwar Romania," *Fascism* 6, no. 2 (2017): 163–195.

[52] The party of Vidkun Quisling won 2.2% at the 1933 elections in Norway and 1.8% at the elections of 1936. For more details, see Martin Kristoffer Hamre, "Norwegian Fascism in a Transnational Perspective: The Influence of German National Socialism and Italian Fascism on the Nasjonal Samling, 1933–1936," *Fascism* 8 (2019): 36–60.

[53] On Metaxas's regime, see Susanne-Sophia Spiliotis, *Transterritorialität und nationale Abgrenzung. Konstitutionsprozesse der „griechischen Gesellschaft" und Ansätze ihrer faschistoiden Transformation, 1922/24–1941* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1998); Panayiotis J. Vatikiotis, *Popular Autocracy in Greece, 1936–1941. A Political Biography of General Ioannis Metaxas* (London: Routledge, 1998); Mogens Pelt, "The Establishment and Development of the Metaxas Dictatorship in the Context of Fas-

In 1937, Milan Stojadinović probably orchestrated and created the "Technische Union" affair, claiming that Hitler's Germany was funding ZBOR. This eliminated them as a serious contender and made Stojadinović the only relevant partner of the Axis Powers in Yugoslavia.[54] Although ZBOR had such low support in the population, their activities were suppressed and ultimately banned by the Yugoslav authorities. The regime deemed this move necessary to eliminate any possibility of ZBOR coming to power with Berlin's support. This decision was not unlike the Hungarian authorities' actions against the Arrow Cross or the Romanian king's against the Iron Guard.

Why did a fascist regime fail to develop in interwar Yugoslavia? One of the reasons was certainly that ZBOR always had to contend with internal upswings and falls; another was that prominent figures left the movement; a third was Milan Stojadinović's work on breaking the movement.[55] Thus, ZBOR remained a movement of limited reach albeit with significant influence in some segments of the Yugoslav Army and the Serbian Orthodox Church.[56] In the interwar period, Yugoslavia indeed had "little democracy" and "very little genuine fascism," with its two most radical movements, ZBOR and the *Ustaše*, pushed to the fringes by the conservative-authoritarian regime, which was not uncommon in Eastern and South Europe.[57] They remained a vocal but nonetheless marginal phenomenon until 1941.[58] However, the decisive factor in their failure was not so much the solidity of other political parties but the undisputed power of the Crown.

cism and Nazism, 1936-41," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 3, no. 2 (2002): 143–172.

[54] Rastko Lompar, "Afera 'Tehnička unija' i veze JNP Zbora sa nacističkom Nemačkom 1935–1941," *Istorija 20. veka* 38 (2020): 97.

[55] AJ, 37-44-295, Milan Stojadinović to Mehmed Spaho, 30 November 1937. On the breaking up of ZBOR, see Branislav Gligorijević, „Napad Ljotićevaca na studente Tehničkog fakulteta u Beogradu, u oktobru 1940. i rasturanje Ljotićevog 'Zbora'," *Istorijski glasnik* 2 (1963): 52–81.

[56]   Lompar, "Dimitrije Ljotić," 132.

[57] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 326.

[58] Mark Biondich, "The Crisis of Legitimacy." On the evolution of the *Ustaša* movement into a developed fascist organization by the mid-1930s, see Goran Miljan, "From Obscure Beginnings to State 'Resurrection': Ideas and Practices of the Ustaša Organization," *Fascism* 5 (2016): 3–25.

Power of the Crown as the prevailing factor in Yugoslavia

"And then I told him that we have that Spanish-Romanian system (in the words of Slobodan Jovanović), in which the people follow those that the Crown appoints. – I found him unlikeable, that klutz who wants to be Prime Minister at all costs, a mandarin who would like to spring from the acts and grace of the Prince."[59]

The passage above is a quote from a conversation that took place in September 1936 between Milan Antić, Minister of the Court of Yugoslavia, and Milan Jovanović Stoimirović, then an employee of the Central Press Bureau and a close associate of Prime Minister Stojadinović and, after 1939, Dragiša Cvetković, too. The noted prevailing influence of the Crown over political actors in Yugoslavia, which Slobodan Jovanović – one of the country's leading intellectuals in the interwar period – saw as a feature shared with Romania and Spain, also characterized other countries in Southeast Europe. Looking at the relationship between the Crown and the governments of Yugoslavia, a notable fact is that Prince Paul dismissed both Bogoljub Jevtić (1935) and Milan Stojadinović (1939) as prime ministers after their respective electoral lists won the majority in the elections. The regent deemed this majority not convincing enough to leave them in charge of the government. Finally, the agreement about restructuring the country was reached in August 1939 between the representatives of the Crown and HSS, without consulting any other political actors in the Kingdom.

In Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, a very important dynamic was the relationship between the ruler and the conservative parties within royal dictatorships, which limited the potential of other – far or extreme right-wing – options.[60] On the other hand, the emergence of voluntary fascistization was characterized by the tendency of conservative political ideas to adopt some fascist ideas "from above." This pattern is evident in the cases of Hungary, Spain (the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, the alliance of General Franco and the fascist movement of the

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[59] Jovanović Stoimirović, *Dnevnik*, 72.
[60] Antonio Costa Pinto, "Corporatism and 'Organic Representation' in European Dictatorships," in *Corporatism and Fascism. The Corporatist Wave in Europe*, ed. by Antonio Costa Pinto (London: Routledge, 2017), 22.

Falange), Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania and Poland. Yugoslavia is an example of what Aristotle Kallis terms fascistization "as the last resort."[61]

In the interwar period, three Balkan monarchies – Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia – shared another notable characteristic. Their respective monarchs more or less easily retained power in their hands, keeping the fascist movements on the sidelines. This is equally true of King Zog of Albania, Alexander of Yugoslavia and Boris III of Bulgaria.[62]

Romania, however, had the Iron Guard, which challenged the king's supremacy and threatened Carol II that he would suffer the fate of the marginalized Italian king Vittorio Emanuele III. The Romanian king tried to retake control by having Codreanu killed, but then his position crumbled in the face of the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia and German pressure to cede northern Transylvania to Hungary.[63] After more than two years of royal dictatorship (10 February 1938–4 September 1940), King Carol abdicated and left the country after having appointed General Ion Antonescu as Prime Minister.[64] Antonescu took over as the Conducător (leader) of the new National Legionary State, with the Iron Guard as the only allowed party.[65]

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[61] Aristotle Kallis, "'Fascism', 'Para-fascism' and 'Fascistization': On the Similarities of Three Conceptual Categories," *European History Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2003): 240–241.

[62] For Zog's introduction of authoritarian rule, see Anila Habibi, "Das autoritäre Regime Ahmed Zogus und die Gesellschaft Albaniens 1925–1939," in *Autoritäre Regime*, 349–378; Michael Schmidt-Neke, *Entstehung und Ausbau der Königsdiktatur in Albanien (1912-1939): Regierungsbildungen, Herrschaftsweise und Machteliten in einem jungen Balkanstaat* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1987), 210–220.

[63] The king suspended the constitution and dissolved the Legion before having its leader killed. See Roland Clark, "The Romanian Right. Images of Crisis, the Press and the Rise of Fascism," in *Conservatives and Right Radicals*, 207-208; Lucian N. Leustean, "For the Glory of Romanians:" Orthodoxy and Nationalism in Greater Romania, 1918–1945, *Nationalities Papers* 35 (2007): 732.

[64] Constantin Iordachi, "A Continuum of Dictatorships: Hybrid Totalitarian Experiments in Romania, 1937-1944," in *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Interwar Europe*, eds. António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis (London: Palgrave, 2014), 243.

[65] Antonescu remained in power until August 1944 as a close collaborator of the Nazis. See Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and his Regime, Romania 1940–1944* (London: PalgraveMacmillan 2006).

Thus, the Romanian variant of the struggle between "Caesarism and fascism" resulted, first, in the king's repression of the Legion of the Archangel Michael and, then, in the triumph of fascism over the royal regime, but only after the monarch had lost credibility due to his failures in international relations.[66] It can be argued that the Yugoslav Prince Regent and the Romanian King lost power only after having made unacceptable moves in international policy and having suffered international pressure, German-Italian in the case of Yugoslavia and German-Soviet in the case of Romania.

In the 1930s, almost all monarchs in the Balkans faced challenges from the new right wing. In Bulgaria, the movement *Zveno*, which included different right-wing organizations and officers, mounted a coup and seized power on 18 May 1934. One of its members, Kimon Georgiev, became Prime Minister. Boris III of Bulgaria approved his cabinet, promptly dissolved the parliament and suspended the Constitution. Political parties were banned, and the press was placed under heavy censorship, partly rooted in fascist, corporatist and authoritarian ideas. The *Zveno* members, however, had failed to factor in the tsar's response. From January to November 1935, Boris introduced his personal regime and suppressed the putschists; in 1937 and 1938, a democratic system was legally introduced and the parliament restored. The motto was "The Tsar, People and Army – One Will, One Decision, One Act."[67] Generally, the Bulgarian right wing had very low confidence in parliamentary democracy throughout the interwar period.[68] Boris's counter-coup was a clear sign that the *Zveno* had underestimated the sovereign's power.[69] His appointment of a new and well-behaved Prime

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[66]   Iordachi, "A Continuum," 246.

[67]   Iskra Baeva, "Bugarska izmedju dva svetska rata," in *Istorija Bugarske* (Beograd: Clio, 2008), 320-323. On *Zveno*, see Voin Bozhinov, *Upravlenieto na devetnadesetomajcite 19 maj 1934 – 22 Januari 1935 godina* (Sofija: IK Apka, 2017), 70–82.

[68]   James Frusetta, "Fascism to Complete the National Project? Bulgarian Fascists' Uncertain Views on the Palingenesis of the Nation," *East Central Europe*, 37, no. 2/3 (2010): 289.

[69]   Richard Crampton, "The Balkans", in *Twisted Paths. Europe 1914–1945*, ed. by Robert Gerwarth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). On Boris's counter-coup, see Bozhinov, *Upravlenieto*, 233–244.

Minister, Georgi Kyoseivanov, and the concept of "disciplined democracy" were highly reminiscent of the "orchestrated democracy" of which Milan Stojadinović spoke.[70]

The regime of Ioannis Metaxas – the most elaborate system in Southeast Europe – in many ways had more in common with the dictatorships of Primo de Rivera, Francisco Franco and Antonio Salazar than with other Balkan strongmen.[71] What he shared with them was loyalty to the king, and his regime has been described as a "royal bureaucratic dictatorship" because, although more original than his neighbors, Metaxas remained a monarchist and was neither able nor willing to fully undermine the king's authority.[72]

Throughout the interwar period, another important dynamic in Central and Eastern Europe was the relationship between the "winners and losers" in the Great War, with the dominant role of the "nationalizing nationalisms" of Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia and the "homeland nationalisms" of countries such as Hungary and Germany. This model is also applicable to Yugoslavia, which was almost completely surrounded by revanchist countries, and the rise of the most powerful among them, Germany, had an immense impact on the internal situation in Yugoslavia.[73] In this network of international relations, the authoritarian regimes of Southeast Europe tried to create a nationally integrated society willing to fight against internal and external enemies – a task they saw as their primary concern. Unfortunately, time was running out, and the space for political maneuvering was growing tighter and tighter: ultimately, they were all obliterated in crises or wars instigated by Hitler's Germany.[74]

[70] Crampton, "The Balkans," 253.

[71] Blinkhorn, *Fascim*, 86–87.

[72] David Close, "Conservatism, Authoritarianism and Fascism in Greece, 1915–45," in *Fascists and Conservatives*, 205.

[73] Oliver Zimmer, *Nationalism in Europe, 1890–1940* (Basingstoke [etc.]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 105.

[74] Holm Sundhaussen, "Die Königsdiktaturen in Südosteuropa: Umrisse einer Synthese," in *Autoritäre Regime in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa*, 348.

Final Remarks

For the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, plagued by the rivalry between the Serbian and the Croatian political elites, exposure to fascism without the element of integral Yugoslavism could undermine the very foundations of its existence and shake the territorial integrity of the "multi-ethnic state."[75] Therefore, the success of far right or fascist organizations that aspired to seize power in the entire country – as opposed to the separatism of the Croatian *Ustaše* movement – was tied to the idea of Yugoslavism.

But Yugoslavism, in its integral form at least, was the official policy of the Kingdom for only six years (1929-1935). Organizations such as ZBOR were further marginalized. The prevalent influence of the Crown, personified in King Alexander and then Prince Regent Paul, precluded the emergence of a relationship between a leader and his political party as one of the fundamental elements of political radicalization in fascist dictatorships.[76]

The Serbian far right of the interwar period, mostly under the Yugoslav mantle, was part of the broader trends of developing ideological "autochthonist discourses," which served to show the intention of deviating from the formerly dominant idea that it was necessary to catch up with the Western model as the imagined golden standard of civilization. Paradoxically, this u-turn was part of the common European discourse about its own decline, a result of the devastation the continent had suffered during the Great War, and in fact shared some of its content with, in geographic terms, West European discourses of the period.[77]

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[75] This inference draws on the example of Switzerland. See Zimmer, *Nationalism*, 92; Oliver Zimmer, 'A Unique Fusion of the Natural and the Man-Made': The Trajectory of Swiss Nationalism, 1933-39, *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 1 (2004): 5–24.

[76] Antonio Costa-Pinto, "Elites, Single Parties and Political Decision-Making in Fascist-Era Dictatorships," *Contemporary European History* 11, no. 3 (2002): 451–452.

[77] Trencsényi, Balázs, Michal Kopeček, Luka Lisjak Gabrijelčič, Maria Falina, Mónika Baár, Maciej Janowski, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*. Volume II: *Negotiating Modernity in the 'Short Twentieth Century' and Beyond, Part I: 1918-1968* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 81. See also Zoran Milutinović, *Getting over Europe. The Construction of Europe in Serbian Culture* (Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, 2011). For a characteristic example of an interwar

As I have already stressed, champions of extreme right-wing views spent almost the entire interwar period either as isolated individuals or as members of marginal movements. The situation changed drastically after the Axis Powers dismantled the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1941. The post-1939 political radicalization and partial fascistization also heralded the role that the marginalized politicians and thinkers of the interwar period, such as ZBOR members and prominent right-wingers Velibor Jonić, Vladimir Velmar Janković, Svetislav Stefanović and Stanislav Krakov, would play as collaborators during the German occupation of Serbia in 1941–1944.[78]

interpretation of Serbian history in the spirit of right-wing ideas, see Aleksandar Stojanović, "Politička misao Vladimira Velmar-Jankovića," in *Srbi i rat u Jugoslaviji 1941* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju, 2014), 19–32.

[78] Stojanović, *Ideje*, 54; Rory Yeomans, "Of 'Yugoslav Barbarians' and Croatian Gentlemen Scholars: Nationalist Ideology and Racial Anthropology in Interwar Yugoslavia," in *Blood and Homeland;* Olivera Milosavljević, "Stare ideje za novo vreme (Svetislav Stefanović, nekad i sad)," *Sociologija* 52, no. 4 (2010): 399–420; Svetislav Stefanović, *Starim ili novim putevima: odabrani politički spisi 1899–1943* (Novi Sad: Artprint, 2006).