

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

Edited by
Dragan Bakić



INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES
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KINGDOM OF YUGOSLAVIA, 1934–1941**

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Dragan Bakić

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PART 1

**Conservative Authoritarianism: the Yugoslav
Radical Union (JRZ) and the Serbian Radical Party (SRS)**
(Dragan Bakić)

A Failed “Leader” and the Serbian Conservative Core: Milan Stojadinović and the Short-Lived Serbian Radical Party

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Probably the least known period in the life and political career of Milan Stojadinović spans from his fall from power to the moment when the Yugoslav government handed him over to the British in Greece in March 1941. This period was marked by his opposition to the Cvetković–Maček Agreement, which in time evolved into an organized political action through the founding of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), which has so far attracted very little attention in historical scholarship.¹ This paper attempts to shed light on the emergence of SRS, its short-lived activism and Stojadinović’s fate as its central figure, which reflected the fate of the party he had founded.

¹ Branko Nadoveza published a useful collection of documents titled *Srpska radikalna stranka Milana Stojadinovića* (Beograd: Srpska radikalna stranka, 2006). Unfortunately, Nadoveza’s collection does not include archive numbers of the documents and omits much of Stojadinović’s correspondence with his supporters. Some of the documents selected by Nadoveza and some new ones were recently published in Radoje Janković, *Kako je ubijana Kraljevina Jugoslavija*, ed. Danica Otašević (Novi Sad: Prometej, Čačak: Narodna biblioteka “Vladislav Petković Dis”, 2021), a selection from Radoje Janković’s personal archive, which was long unavailable for inspection and is now kept in the City Library “Vladislav Petković Dis” in his hometown of Čačak. The only brief historiographic overview can be found in Bojan Simić, “Granice Srbije u vidjenjima Srpske radikalne stranke pre i nakon Drugog svet-skog rata,” *Leskovački zbornik* LXII (2022): 301–306.

The previous chapter brings an in-depth exploration of the split between the part of JRZ controlled by Prime Minister Dragiša Cvetković and Stojadinović's faction. It is important to note here that SRS sprung from the resistance of Stojadinović's supporters within JRZ not only to Cvetković's approach to the Croatian question but also to the way in which he, using the resources he had at his disposal as a high state official, handled dissenters in the JRZ ranks. Unable to voice their views in the Parliament, Stojadinović's supporters issued a declaration to their party friends, in which they defined their stance on Cvetković's talks with Maček. Their sharp criticism stressed that the "resolution of the Croatian matter must not open the Serbian question" and that the general public was against such an agreement that "splintered and dismembered the country" and the secrecy of the talks, of which the MPs had not been informed. They also raised their voice against illegal reorganizations of the party bodies, the proposal to expel 33 MPs, including Stojadinović, the party chief, refused to allow JRZ to become "a blind tool in the hands of Mr. Korošec" (the original text included "and Spaho," but the Muslim leader's name was later crossed out, clearly for tactical reasons), and protested against "abuse of power."² Reiterating its arguments, the JRZ Main Committee, chaired by Stojadinović, added to its allegations against Korošec, stating that Cvetković was completely under his influence, branding him the "evil spirit" of JRZ, and claiming that the aim of his behind-the-scenes designs was to "weaken as much as possible the position of the Serbian part of our people, using every method and channel to prevent the formation of one authority among the Serbs. Mr. Korošec was against Nikola Pašić, later against Aca Stanojević, and now he is against Milan Stojadinović, even if he was the first to call him leader."³ It was stressed that only four members of the Small Main Committee had voted to expel Stojadinović from the party, and that more than two-thirds of the Serbs in this body remained

² Archives of Yugoslavia (Arhiv Jugoslavije, hereafter AJ), Belgrade, Milan Stojadinović Papers (Zbirka Milana Stojadinovića), collection no. 37, box 18, folder 124 (hereafter 37-18-124), Proglas članovima i prijateljima J.R.Z., Na Vidovdan 1939; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 55–58.

³ AJ, 37-18-124, Raspis br. 1/39 Svima banovinskim i sreskim odborima JRZ, 19. jula 1939; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 126–129.

faithful to the head of the party. The Main Committee took the position that he would remain the only lawful representative of the party and that the extended Main Committee formed by Cvetković, and all the decisions it had passed or affirmed, were to be considered null and void and old *banovina* and county committees were to continue to respect the authority of Stojadinović's Main Committee.

Stojadinović's supporters in the interior of the country also responded to government pressure. Senator Petar Bogavac, from Kraljevo, wrote to Stojadinović in mid-June, suggesting "immediately calling all MPs to the National Assembly and forming our caucus." Unless a separate caucus was formed, Bogavac argued, "...our MPs will feel lost because the ministers will terrorize them, and the formation of a caucus would prevent that." To continue their operations in the interior of the country, Bogavac advised Stojadinović to "write a circular with [his] signature and send it to all county committees, informing them that the caucus was formed and that the committees should not heed the new *banovina* committees and instead heed the old ones because the new ones were formed under government pressure and not by the will of the people."⁴ The caucus was then to appoint speakers for the interpellation and take a certain stand, and also to put in more effort to win over as many MPs as possible and thereby secure a majority in the caucus. This is exactly what took place in the following days, as detailed in the previous chapter. It is indicative that Bogavac had Djura Kotur personally deliver this letter, believing that it would be intercepted in the post. In his second letter, Bogavac complained that Cvetković was persecuting the officials who had voted for Stojadinović's list and authorized their opponent Vojislav Janić to organize the party in his neck of woods. He was not only convinced that action was necessary but also optimistic because "if Dragiša and Korošec refuse to recognize you [as the party chief], I do, and so do the people. The peasants are eager to see you in the heart of Šumadija."⁵

Dušan Djerić, a lawyer from Tuzla, also expressed support to Stojadinović, warning that "some kind of reorganization is underway because changes have already been made in two *banovina* committees

⁴ AJ, 37-52-322, Petar Bogavac to Milan Stojadinović, Kraljevo, 15 June 1939.

⁵ AJ, 37-52-322, Petar Bogavac to Milan Stojadinović, Kraljevo, 8 August 1939.

and in the local committee for Belgrade, and I've also heard that the same changes will be made in other *banovina* committees." "Instead of starting the reorganization from the local committees and working their way up, they started from the top down. It seems as if they want to storm the Main Committee," Djerić complained. "Now, in this situation, we mustn't stop at merely making our position known [...] and must do something to let these people know that this can't and mustn't be done if they want JRZ to stay strong."⁶ MP Dušan Živojinović recounted his conversation with MP Tihomir Šarković from Raška, who did not vote for Stojadinović's interpellation but was neither against him, noting that there were many like him, and that they had to be won over. Commenting on Stojadinović's expulsion from the JRZ Main Committee, he opined: "This new Main Committee, on paper, has the army, the municipal councils, the government, and the gendarmerie." He added that he had tried to pay a visit to Stojadinović at his house in Belgrade, but the gendarmes would not let him in.⁷

The ministers and MPs loyal to the government tried to finish off Stojadinović's reputation with allegations they thought would reflect the general mood in Serbia. Thus, Vojko Čvrkić, Minister without Portfolio and MP for the Takovo county, at a conference in Gornji Milanovac, explained to the industrialist Ivan Jovičić, who had voiced the displeasure of the industrialists and peasants because of Stojadinović's expulsion from the party, that the principal reason for this had been that "Stojadinović wanted to impose fascism on our country." However, Jovičić was unimpressed and replied that the peasants and industrialists cared little if the country had fascism, democracy or a dictatorship as long as they were well off.⁸ The JRZ Youth organization, the faction that remained loyal to the old president, sharply responded to these sorts of allegations, seeing them as a long devised and used means of preparing a showdown with Stojadinović:

⁶ AJ, 37-52-322, Dušan Djerić to Milan Stojadinović, Tuzla, 30 May 1939. Djerić thanked Stojadinović for his letter of 14 July and added: "Onwards and upwards, and then it's down to God's will and luck." (AJ, 37-52-322, Dušan Djerić to Milan Stojadinović, Tuzla, 18 July 1939).

⁷ AJ, 37-57-368, Dušan Živojinović to Milan Stojadinović, Požarevac, 10 July 1939.

⁸ AJ, 37-9-50, from the correspondent Živanović, 10 July 1939.

Dr. Korošec was the first to address the president of our party as *leader* and then the first to accuse him of supposedly intending to introduce fascism. Mr. Dragiša Cvetković, Dr. Korošec's friend and close associate, founded Jugoras, dressed [its members] in uniforms, and practiced the Roman salute. Dr. Bojan Pirc, the faithful lackey of his clericalist leader, in his capacity as the president of the OJRZ Main Committee, ordered uniforms for the members of our youth organizations to emulate his *fanti* [lads] in Slovenia. They did all of this with the devious plan to justify the betrayal they were already in the process of preparing, blaming their fascism on Milan Stojadinović.⁹

In the meantime, Stojadinović's JRZ Main Committee continued to act as the only lawful supreme forum of the party. It decided that JRZ, like other opposition parties, would not take part in the elections for the Senate called by the government (with no elections for other executive bodies) on 12 November 1939. To add insult to injury, these elections were to be held in line with the old and much criticized electoral law that stipulated public ballot because the government had implemented measures to change the electorate and ensure the success of its list.¹⁰ Local party organizations were informed of this decision as it was not published in the press.¹¹ In late 1939, the JRZ *banovina* committees (for the Vrbaska, Moravska, and Vardarska *banovina*) continued to be reorganized and, conspicuously, the name JRZ was increasingly being replaced by the phrase "Dr. Milan Stojadinović's political group."¹² Stoja-

⁹ AJ, 37-18-136, Proglas Izvršnog odbora OJRZ Beograd, 25 oktobra 1939; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 163-166.

¹⁰ AJ, 37-18-124, Raspis br. 2/39, 20 oktobra 1939., u potpisu Dušan Trifković, bivši senator i sekretar Glavnog odbora JRZ.

¹¹ AJ, 37-18-124, "Dragi prijatelju", u potpisu Dušan Trifković; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 155.

¹² AJ, 37-18-130, Bogoljub Kujundžić and Petar Kostić to Milan Stojadinović, Banja Luka, 6 November 1939; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 243; AJ, 37-18-124, Raspis Milana Stojadinovića, 23. decembra 1939; 37-18-128, Zapisnik sa sastanka u Nišu 26. novembra 1939; AJ, 37-18-124, Raspis Milana Stojadinovića, 31. decembra 1939. A characteristic example is that in the Montenegrin municipality of Bar, where the local party branch used the phrase "Local Committee of JRZ, political group of Dr. Stojadinović for the Bar municipality" as late as January 1940 (AJ, 37-18-131, Petar Djurišić and Risto Bojanić to Milan Stojadinović, 28 January 1940).

dinović's correspondence shows that starting from November, efforts were being made to organizationally consolidate the party from the county level up, including preparatory work for launching the party organ. In areas where little had been done to that end, for instance, in Montenegro, which Stojadinović paid particular attention to because it was his electoral unit ever since the 1920s, supporters were asked to revive their political activities.¹³

In terms of its program, "Dr. Milan Stojadinović's political group" formulated a clear stance on the Cvetković–Maček Agreement. It rejected the new internal structure of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as contradictory to the principles that the country had been founded on, citing the abused article of the Constitution tasked with protecting and not undermining the unity of the country; it also argued that "the door had been left wide open for tribal chauvinism and exclusivity" to the detriment of the Yugoslav idea, that Cvetković was not the legitimate representative of the Serbs and, finally, that "this was not an agreement at all, but a dictate to the Serbian people." To prove this, they claimed that the Croats "had become the only and absolute masters in the Banovina of Croatia, while still wielding one half of all power in the other parts of Yugoslavia. Today, the Serbian people have lost the sea, this necessity of life, and millions of its fine sons, now separated from Serbia, their motherland." Stojadinović's supporters concluded that, if the Croats were demanding their unification, then the Serbs must also have this right, and that the existing "situation and demarcation, to the obvious detriment of the Serbian people, cannot endure."¹⁴ It should be noted that this was a belated response, issued more than two months after the Agreement was signed, which can be explained by the almost concurrent outbreak of the war in Europe that diverted all attention to the precarious international situation and the impact it would have on Yugoslavia.

Resistance to the Agreement, which rested on ethnic division, had intensified in ethnically and religiously diverse milieus, especially among the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, even before it was formally signed. Stojadinović's two closest associates from Bosnia, Branko

¹³ AJ, 37-18-131, "Dragi prijatelju," Na Badnji dan 1940.

¹⁴ AJ, 37-18-124, Untitled statement, 1 November 1939; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 48-49; Janković, *Kako je ubijana Kraljevina Jugoslavija*, 217-219.

Kaludjerčić of Sarajevo and Bogoljub Kujundžić of Banja Luka, spoke against the Croatian aspirations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The police raided Kaludjerčić's apartment and confiscated 650 copies of a brochure because "the contents of this brochure were aimed at creating a mood to impede the government in performing its task and, in general, its activities."¹⁵ Bitterness due to the government's self-willed behavior, with no opportunity for Serbian representatives to have their say about their own fate, was all-pervasive. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, this sentiment came to the fore at a council of the delegates of all Serbian cultural and national associations in Doboj, on 31 December 1939. Three bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church also attended the council: Petar Zimonjić, Metropolitan of Dabar-Bosnia; Nektarije Krulj, Bishop of Zvornik and Tuzla; and Nikolaj Velimirović, Bishop of Žiča, and the keynote speaker was the distinguished historian originally from Herzegovina, Professor Vladimir Ćorović from Belgrade. The council passed a resolution that unequivocally rejected the Cvetković–Maček Agreement.¹⁶ Djerić informed Stojadinović that more than 2,000 people, delegates from all counties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, had met in Doboj. A memorial service was held at the ossuary in Doboj, the tomb of several thousands of Serbs that had died during the Great War. "You will see from the resolution the conclusions from that meeting, and, it should be stressed that everyone was against fragmenting and weakening the Yugoslav state, against dividing and weakening the Serbs, against resolving such matters without the participation of the Serbian people, and that everyone rejects this *fait accompli*, etc. All of it is in line with the stance we are taking."¹⁷ Stojadinović was unhappy that Kaludjerčić had not done more face-to-face propaganda and said that the brochures he had published, which were costly to produce, were written in a "furor scribendi." He also told Professor Jovan Radu-

¹⁵ AJ, 37-9-48, Branko Kaludjerčić, "Zašto smo protiv granice na Drini i protiv cepanja Bosne i Hercegovine?", Sarajevo, 28. maja 1939. g.

¹⁶ Sonja Dujmović, "Srpsko gradjanstvo Bosne i Hercegovine prema sporazumu Cvetković-Maček," *Tokovi istorije*, 1-2 (2005): 65–67; Draga Mastilović, "Srbi iz doline Neretve i sporazum Cvetković-Maček 1939. godine," *Glas CDXXVIII Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti*, knj. 18 (2018): 546–548.

¹⁷ AJ, 37-52-322, Dušan Djerić to Milan Stojadinović, Tuzla, 2 January 1940.

lović of Mostar that he was pleased that the Doboj meeting had been a success, noting that the adopted resolution was “good and clever... I also recognized some words of ours...”¹⁸

As the political activities of Stojadinović and his supporters intensified, so did the campaign against him in regime-controlled media. The Croatian press reported that he was being prosecuted for multiple criminal offenses. The Nikšić-based *Slobodna misao* denied on 17 December 1939 that there was an indictment against Stojadinović. The censors even banned an article in *Hrvatski dnevnik* (2 June 1939) that claimed that Korošec and Cvetković intended to completely remove Stojadinović from political life.¹⁹ On the other hand, the Belgrade press routinely refused to publish any views of Stojadinović’s group, and he tried to promote “our opinions, unlucky with Belgrade censorship,” in papers in other parts of the country.²⁰ There were also other forms of obstruction. The authorities banned Dobrivoje Stošović, the former Minister of Education in Stojadinović’s cabinet, from holding a conference in his hometown of Prokuplje.²¹ In addition, Stojadinović distrusted the postal service and asked his principal associates to have “friends coming here” deliver letters to him.²²

Once the turmoil about the beginning of the war calmed down a little and when it seemed that the government would call municipal and parliamentary elections despite the international situation, the revival of party activities received an additional impetus. Stojadinović believed that his main task was to gather all who were in favor of revising the Cvetković–Maček Agreement to ensure Serbian interests and, if the elections were held, establish cooperation with all opposition parties that had a similar program. However, Stojadinović warned that his group “had been right” about foreign and economic policy and the Croatian question. He noted: “Only others can come to us, not we to

¹⁸ AJ, 37-18-127, Milan Stojadinović to Jovan Radulović, 10 January 1940.

¹⁹ All of these articles are available in AJ, 37-99-535.

²⁰ See, for instance, AJ, 37-18-125, Milan Stojadinović to Branko Kaludjerčić, 18 January 1940.

²¹ AJ, 37-18-128, Dobrivoje Stošović to Radenko Stanković, Ivo Perović, Stanoje Mihaldžić and Milan Antić, 23 December 1939.

²² AJ, 37-18-125, Milan Stojadinović to Branko Kaludjerčić, 13 November 1939.

them.” In addition, he did not miss the chance to reprimand the United Opposition parties for their earlier policy in resolving the Croatian question: “In terms of both numbers and morals, we are stronger than those who made the agreement in Farkašić in 1937 and divided the country into three nations, but are now claiming to have had no part in the agreement policy.”²³ Stojadinović told his supporters to do everything in their power to avoid being caught unprepared once the elections were called.

When the government announced the new Electoral Decree, Stojadinović and his supporters stood up against the envisaged electoral geometry, calculated to substantially decrease the number of Serbian representatives in the future National Assembly, which would confirm the agreement and resolve the remaining questions to restructure the state – in other words, it was to have the role of a constitutional assembly. They listed many examples of changing the borders of preexisting electoral units to outvote the Serbs in ethnically mixed areas. Therefore, they asked whether the decisions of such an assembly could at all be considered valid and lawful for the Serbian people.²⁴ This criticism was successfully publicized in the provincial press.²⁵ Stojadinović reported that they had immediately sent their objections to the electoral law to the Regents and all cabinet members and distributed thousands of copies in Belgrade and the entire country, and believed that this had been successful because the government withdrew the draft it had al-

²³ AJ, 37-18-124, Raspis br. 3/39, “Dragi prijatelju,” 1. decembra 1939. – the address given in the document was that of Stojadinović’s home in Milovana Glišića, br. 3; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 44–47; Janković, *Kako je ubijana Kraljevina Jugoslavija*, 220–223.

²⁴ AJ, 37-18-124, Politička grupa Dr. Milana Stojadinovića o novoj izbornoj Uredbi, 17. januara 1940; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 50–52. This complaint was not unfounded, as suggested by the opinion of Srdjan Budisavljević, the leader of the Serbian Democratic Party, which was HSS’s coalition party, and a minister in the Cvetković–Maček government. He said “that the electoral laws, according to the electoral law draft, had been delineated arbitrarily, so that the Serbs had the majority in none of them.” See Mihailo Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma: Dnevničke beleške 1939–1941. London-ske beleške 1944–1945*, ed. Radomir Konstantinović (Novi Sad: Agencija “Mir”, 1998), 72.

²⁵ AJ, 37-101-537, “Primjedbe o novoj izbornoj Uredbi,” *Dubrovnik*, 3 februara 1940; a short extract is given in “Grupa Dr. Stojadinovića o novoj izbornoj uredbi,” *Slobodna misao*, 28 januara 1940.

ready decided on. “This Government, such as it is today, is certainly unable to win over with honest means the majority in the Serbian part of our people. So, it can only resort to an ambush or a trick. Therefore, we need to prepare ourselves in time,” he concluded.²⁶

Stojadinović was disappointed by the response of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) and the non-party organizations to these attempts to break apart the Yugoslav state. He sharply pointed out that the SPC and the *Sokol* movement were conspicuously trying to avoid declaring their respective positions on the situation created by the Cvetković–Maček Agreement and believed that the government had silenced them with lucrative financial arrangements. In the *Sokol* case, this was admittedly just a suspicion; in the case of SPC, however, there were facts to prove that the government had promised some funds to the bishops. “But all of this has made the venerable bishops quite tame when it comes to the Serbo-Croatian question... Or at least that’s the rumor! But regardless of the motives – and personally I don’t want to go into that – the fact of the matter is that in this all-Serbian movement, of which there was some talk, the leaders of the Serbian Orthodox Church are quiet as mice... And how they thundered during the concordat!”²⁷ All of this solidified his old conviction that “only political organizations can participate in political matters.”²⁸ And this conclusion, in turn, led to the inference about all action having to be channeled through a political party.

As it had by then become clear that the government had taken over JRZ and that the party was now associated with a policy contrary to its program, Stojadinović was becoming increasingly convinced of the need to found and promote a new party. In a letter to his party friends, Stojadinović explained that it was necessary to establish a new party in a bid to achieve electoral success and enter the National Assembly, because that was where the Cvetković–Maček Agreement would be finalized. “Non-party movements and non-party associations of the Serbs

²⁶ AJ, 37-18-127, Milan Stojadinović to Jovan Radulović, 13 February 1940.

²⁷ AJ, 37-18-127, Milan Stojadinović to Jovan Radulović, 2 January 1940. Stojadinović referred to the campaign of the SPC against the concordat with the Vatican in the summer of 1937.

²⁸ Ibid.

do not lead to this goal,” he noted, obviously alluding, above all, to the Serbian Cultural Club.²⁹ He announced a new stage in his political struggle to his associates in Montenegro: “Tell your friends when you see them that we are preparing a new program and a new party name that will correspond to the present moment in the political situation, in which the Serbian people, Serbs and Montenegrins alike, have been made second-class citizens. We will fight for the rights of those who made this country and are still its backbone, from Avala to Lovćen.”³⁰ From well-informed or Stojadinović-inspired circles, the press reported already in mid-January 1940 that a significant change was on the horizon:

It is true that among the supporters of this political group there was some disfavor and displeasure toward the leadership, but only because political action was minimal. Some supporters thought that their passive stance needed to be abandoned as soon as possible in favor of intense activity. The group’s leadership and its chief believed, until recently, that the times were not at all conducive to political struggle and that in light of many significant circumstances they needed to be patient and wait. However, very recently, they abandoned their passive stance and preparations for action are in full swing. They opened a party office [at 7 Pašićeva Street, where the young Slobodan Subotić, son of the well-known national worker, priest Dušan Subotić of Bosanska Gradiška, ran a law firm], and a member of the leadership was present every day; they also established contacts with supporters from the countryside etc. The preparatory work is almost done, and a broader initiative is to begin soon. Dr. Milan Stojadinović’s group intends to register a political party soon. To this end, a broader conference will be called in Belgrade, with all distinguished people from the interior of the country invited to attend. The conference will decide the name of the party and the main principles of its program.³¹

²⁹ AJ, 37-18-124, “Dragi prijatelju,” pismo Milana Stojadinovića, 21. marta 1940; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 227–228.

³⁰ AJ, 37-18-131, Milan Stojadinović to Pero Vukotić, 3 February 1940; Milan Stojadinović to Milosav Milatović, 3 February 1940.

³¹ AJ, 37-101-537, “G. dr. Milan Stojadinović sa svojim prijateljima osniva novu stranku,” *Političko-ekonomski Vesnik*, 18 januara 1940.

Indeed, the name and program had a crucial role in positioning the new political party in the provisional constitutional situation that Yugoslavia had found itself in as a result of the “national agreement.” However, Stojadinović’s supporters had different opinions on these questions, which essentially boiled down to the dilemma whether the party should be grounded in Serbian or Yugoslav nationalism. Shortly after the electoral law was issued, Bogavac, together with some of his friends from Kraljevo, suggested that the new party be called the Yugoslav Radical Party to attract “as many people as possible from all parts of the country.”³² Another suggestion was simply the “People’s Party,” which had the obvious advantage of sidestepping the dilemma of national labels.³³ The same rationale was behind the suggestion to name the party “National-Radical,” which was meant to highlight “the element of national unity and economic and social reforms while taking our earlier radical party as its foundation.”³⁴ In the end, they decided to name it the Serbian Radical Party, acknowledging the fact that Yugoslav nationalism remained a purely theoretical concept (with the exception of its very few proponents) and that the program and activities of the party could only be based on Serbian nationalism. Later on, this choice was justified with the following argument: “Given that Dr. Stojadinović was the head of the Yugoslav Radical Union, in which he was abruptly and suddenly abandoned by his Yugoslav associates in the government, it was only natural that the new Radical party would be launched under the name ‘Serbian Radical Party.’”³⁵ The Croatian attendees thought that, to underline Yugoslav interests, a separate branch called the Yugoslav or Croatian Radical Party could be founded with the same program.

The date when Milan Stojadinović’s group would declare itself a new party was set. “To definitively take a stance and present ourselves as an organized party, all members of the Small and Large Main Committees are invited to attend a meeting on the 22nd of this month [February] at 10 am, at 71 Vojvode Mišića Street, near the Gospodarska

³² AJ, 37-52-322, Petar Bogavac to Milan Stojadinović, Kraljevo, undated.

³³ AJ, 37-18-124, Unsigned draft, undated.

³⁴ *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 193.

³⁵ AJ, 37-18-135, article draft “Srpska radikalna stranka”. Original emphasis.

Mehana [pub].”³⁶ An invaluable record about the course of this meeting was penned by Radoje Janković, a former officer, the Black Hand member, author, diplomat, and one of Stojadinović’s closest associates in the establishment of SRS. The day before the Main Committee meeting, Janković noted his objections to the draft program he had received from Dragomir Stojadinović, Milan’s younger brother. He asked for paragraphs “that demand the formation and demarcation of the Serbian *banovina*” to be removed, arguing that the article “discussing the protection of Serbdom but within the borders of Yugoslavia” was enough.³⁷ At the meeting the following day, Janković explained his position, and Ljuba Popović and Momčilo Janković were “most decisively in favor of the Serbian *banovina* because Yugoslavia has already failed,” but the other attendees had conflicting opinions. A committee of twelve editors of the final version of the program was formed and, on the following day, continued its work at the home of Djura Janković, the former Minister of Forestry and Mining. For the representatives of the Serbs from the former territories of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Niko Novaković of Knin, Bogoljub Kujundžić of Bosanska Krajina, and Dušan Letica of Lika, another problem was “that, if the Serbian *banovina* is demarcated, since some of its (Serbian) areas have already been given to Croatia, they cannot bring themselves to face the local Serbs.” When Ljuba Popović noted that the Croats were asking for additional counties, Radoje Janković replied that they should give them even the Cathedral Church of Belgrade if it meant that Yugoslavia would continue to exist. On the third day, 24 February, again in the home of Djura Janković, a compromise was found for the contentious program articles, which did not demand the demarcation of the Serbian *banovina*, with the decisive factor being that Stojadinović sided with Radoje

³⁶ AJ, 37-18-125, Milan Stojadinović to Branko Kaludjerčić, 7 February 1940; see also 37-18-124, Circular letters sent by Stojadinović on 10, 14 and 20 February 1940.

³⁷ Janković, *Kako je ubijana Kraljevina Jugoslavija*, 29. Danica Otašević previously published some of Janković’s relevant notes in “Zabeleške o pokretanju Srpske radikalne stranke 22. februara 1940. godine,” *Hereticus: časopis za preispitivanje prošlosti*, Vol. XIX, No. 1–2 (2021): 293–298. Original emphasis. See also the initial draft of the party program in *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 205–211.

Janković.³⁸ Thus, the program of SRS, unlike its name, remained torn between Serbian and Yugoslav nationalism. Although it was noted that “the Croatian and Slovenian parts of our people almost entirely reject the idea of national unity and want a state system that would reflect that, i.e., a state union of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes” (Article 6), SRS nonetheless decided not to abandon the “state and national unity of all Yugoslavs” and, therefore, rejected the Cvetković–Maček Agreement (Article 9).³⁹ On the other hand, they asked for the unification of all Serbian areas and rejected the borders of the *Banovina* of Croatia but did not specify – certainly on account of the faction that supported Radoje Janković’s stance – the territory that the Serbian unit would encompass, although it did state that it was unacceptable for the Serbs to lose almost the entire coastline and parts of “Serbian Bosnia and Herzegovina.”⁴⁰

Now SRS only had to be formally registered with the authorities and given authorization to begin its work. On 26 February, at noon, vice presidents of the party, Svetozar Stanković and Bogoljub Kujundžić, and its secretary Djura Kotur, submitted an application for the formation of SRS to the Minister of the Interior, together with its program, statutes, and rulebook. At a session of the leadership, on 29 February, the Main Committee was formed; it was decided to launch a party bulletin called *Ujedinjenje*, with Radoje Janković as its editor, and to found a party Press Bureau, led by Dragomir Stojadinović; the party’s representatives in 70 counties were appointed to organize its operations at the local level.⁴¹ As Stojadinović later explained, the Minister of the Interior told the representatives of the newly formed SRS that he would not give them authorization to begin their work because the Law on Unrestricted Formation of Political Parties was about to be passed anyway. In view of this statement and the fact that the government did not issue a negative decision, they “took silence to mean consent and acted accordingly. Thus, we are no different than any other

³⁸ Janković, *Kako je ubijana Kraljevina Jugoslavija*, 29–33.

³⁹ *Srpska radikalna stranka*, Програм Српске радикалне странке, 30–31.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 34–36.

⁴¹ AJ, 37-18-124, Zapisnik sednice Glavnog odbora Srpske radikalne stranke od 29. februara 1940.

parties, even those that participate in the Government, but have not been issued a permit for their work from the Ministry.”⁴²

Despite censorship, the founding of SRS did not go unnoticed. Many were unsure in which direction Stojadinović would go. It seemed to the journalist Milan Jovanović Stoimirović, who remained loyal to the government, that “Stojadinović does not know what he wants. First he wanted to be Pašić’s successor and then dove into fascism and now he’s jumping from fascism to democracy and founding the Serbian Radical Party.”⁴³ Only Svetislav Hodjera, the leader of the Yugoslav People’s Party (*Borbaši*), congratulated Stojadinović for founding SRS, while also informing him that the ongoing talks on cooperation between the two parties would be continued, besides Hodjera himself, by Milan Metikoš and Vojin Puljević.⁴⁴ According to press reports, the Yugoslav National Party (JNS) also launched an initiative to come to an agreement about cooperation between the opposition parties. This source claims that Stojadinović’s group thought that cooperation with other opposition groups would be awkward due to their major ideological differences because they had not taken part in welcoming Maček in Belgrade or the Farkašić agreement or had cooperated at the elections with Maček’s list.⁴⁵ When SRS was founded, this stance was revised, and Article 14 of the program stressed that the party was not looking for “primacy or exclusivity in the defense of Serbian political interests” and that there was “full readiness” to cooperate with other parties.⁴⁶ However, the Serbian Cultural Club immediately took a hostile stance to SRS, publishing in its organ a brief note that read: “One has to be Milan Stojadinović to, after everything he has done from June 1935 to 4 February 1939, found a new party, and with the attribute ‘Serbian’ in its name, no less.”⁴⁷ Stojadinović was skeptical about cooperat-

⁴² AJ, 37-18-131, Milan Stojadinović to Pero Vukotić, 27 March 1940.

⁴³ Milan Jovanović Stoimirović, *Dnevnik* 1936–1941 (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2000), 368.

⁴⁴ AJ, 37-65-386, Svetislav Hodjera to Milan Stojadinović, 11 March 1940; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 252.

⁴⁵ AJ, 37-101-537, “J.N.S., radikali, demokrati i grupa g. dr. M Stojadinovića,” *Vesnik*, 15.2.1940.

⁴⁶ *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 32–33.

⁴⁷ AJ, 37-101-537, “‘Srpska’ stranka Milana Stojadinovića!”, *Srpski glas*, 29 februar 1940.

ing with his former colleagues from the Radical Party due to their policy: “As for our brothers from the Main Committee, they have yet to take a clear position, as you could tell from the speeches of Miloš Bobić and Dr. Laza Marković in *Politika* on the 14th of this month. It seems that Mr. Miša Trifunović would like to be a minister in the Government, and then all will be well... We don’t think so and believe that the people will condemn every Serbian politician who approves and supports the incumbent Cvetković–Maček Agreement.”⁴⁸

There is no doubt that Stojadinović had high hopes for SRS. “I think it will be even easier to work among the people now that our political group has been given its party name, program and rulebook. We have taken a clear and precise position on all matters on the agenda.”⁴⁹ In an even more optimistic tone, so characteristic of him, he encouraged his supporters by saying that the party would soon become a hub that would “gather the majority of Serbs and Yugoslav nationalists.”⁵⁰ As a tangible manifestation to inaugurate the new party and a propaganda channel, Stojadinović and his associates organized “the first evening of friendship” on 16 March 1940 at the Zanatski Dom restaurant in Belgrade.⁵¹ Radoje Janković and Stojadinović addressed the attendees, pointing out, among other things, the anomalies of the political situation created by the “national” agreement, the tendency to weaken the Serbian element, the groundlessness of previous accusations that Stojadinović had tried to fascistize the country and, in particular, the oppression of the Cvetković–Maček government contrary to its promises of democratization.⁵²

This event solidified Stojadinović in his conviction that the establishment of SRS was going very well indeed. “The party’s doing very well in Belgrade. The office is always full of people, and last Saturday

⁴⁸ AJ, 37-18-127, Milan Stojadinović to Archpriest Stevan Vlahović, 27 February 1940; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 237.

⁴⁹ AJ, 37-18-131, Milan Stojadinović to Milosav Milatović, 11 March 1940.

⁵⁰ AJ, 37-18-124, “Dragi prijatelju,” cirkularno pismo predsednika SRS, 14. marta 1940.

⁵¹ AJ, 37-18-124, Pozivnica.

⁵² *Dva sporazuma* (Beograd: Biblioteka Srpske radikalne stranke, 1940), published in *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 63–99; Otašević, “Zabeleške o pokretanju Srpske radikalne stranke,” 306–322; Janković, *Kako je ubijana Kraljevina Jugoslavija*, 191–216.



Members and supporters of the Serbian Radical Party
at the dinner held on 16 March 1940 (Courtesy of the Archives of Yugoslavia,
Photo Collection, no. 377)



Milan Stojadinović makes a speech at the dinner held on 16 March 1940
(Courtesy of the Archives of Yugoslavia, Photo Collection, no. 377)

we organized a very successful dinner. The large hall and the galleries of Zanatlijski Dom were brimming with people. [...] The enthusiasm was indescribable. I'm also receiving good reports from different parts of the country," he wrote to a friend from his hometown of Čačak.⁵³ He also pointed out the indicators of SRS's growing importance to Kaludjerčić: "You've seen in the *Jutarnji list* issue of the 10th of this month that they're already treating us more seriously. We're increasingly acquiring the right of the 'citizenry' in the daily press, and I firmly believe that, with a little work and effort, we can soon become the largest and strongest Serbian party. We just need to maintain contact with the people on the ground as much as possible."⁵⁴

Work on the organization of the party continued energetically. The Small Main Committee was divided into separate departments for financial matters, preparation for the elections, workers' rights, the youth, propaganda, party press, national minorities, foreign policy, organizing the Yugoslavs living abroad, and agrarian questions. Talks began with Hodjera's *Borbaši* as part of the electoral preparations.⁵⁵ The party organization was implemented at the local level according to a set plan. The Main Committee entrusted the organization of the party in an entire electoral county to one person, and that person would find representatives for all districts in that county. The county representatives served as presidents of county committees until a county committee could be formed through regular channels, and the district representatives temporarily served as presidents of district committees until elections for regular presidents for district committees could be held.⁵⁶ SRS also covered non-Serbian areas and, for instance, Dušan Letica, formerly the Minister of Finance in Stojadinović's cabinet, chaired a meeting in Zagreb to appoint the district representatives and representatives

⁵³ AJ, 37-18-125, Milan Stojadinović to Svetolik Stanković, 19 March 1940.

⁵⁴ AJ, 37-18-125, Milan Stojadinović to Branko Kaludjerčić, 11 April 1940.

⁵⁵ AJ, 37-18-124, Dnevni red 15. marta 1940; Milan Stojadinović to All the Main Committee members, 19 March 1940.

⁵⁶ AJ, 37-18-125, Milan Stojadinović to Svetolik Stanković, 27 March 1940; Milan Stojadinović to Dušan Djerić, 29 March 1940; Milan Stojadinović to Ilija Popović, 1 April 1940; 37-18-126, Svetozar Stanković to Milan Stojadinović, 24 January 1940; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 218–225.

for electoral counties.⁵⁷ The only part of the country from which there is no information on SRS organization is the Dravska *banovina*, present-day Slovenia, at the time headed by Korošec, suggesting that the leadership judged that any efforts there would be futile. Quite expectedly, most new members were Serbs.⁵⁸ The first issue of the party organ *Ujedinjenje*, edited by Radoje Janković, came out on 3 April 1940, but the police confiscated almost the entire print run and stopped the publication of the paper.⁵⁹ The enthusiasm of Stojadinović and his party comrades is also apparent from the fact that another dinner to be attended by SRS members and friends was registered with the police for 20 April in Belgrade, but no permit was issued even four days later.⁶⁰

With the intensification of SRS activities and probably its growing influence on public opinion, the regime increased police surveillance and pressure on the party's leadership. Momčilo Janković, Aleksa Pop Mitić and Dragomir Stojadinović were called for an interrogation at the Directorate of the City of Belgrade, and the Main Committee protested with the Minister of the Interior and informed the Minister of the Court, Milan Antić, asking him to let the Prince Regent know.⁶¹ It was certainly no coincidence that Cvetković for the first time publicly accused Stojadinović of having been against the agreement with the Croats and having fascistized the country at a meeting of JRZ and like-minded senators from other political groups held on 1 April 1940.⁶² This was done to discredit the initiative to form SRS, which was in full swing, and was obviously more of a concern to the regime than the

⁵⁷ AJ, 37-18-127, Zapisnik sastanka prijatelja S.R.S. održanog u Zagrebu 11. aprila 1940. u prostorijama Srpske privredne banke, potpisao Glavni sekretar Dušan Bogunović; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 238–241.

⁵⁸ "I can tell you that the response from all Serbian areas has been very good." (AJ, 37-18-127, Milan Stojadinović to Dušan Rašković, 16 April 1940).

⁵⁹ The only surviving copy is kept in the Archive of Radoje Janković in the City Library "Vladislav Petković Dis" in his hometown of Čačak.

⁶⁰ AJ, 37-18-127, Milan Stojadinović to Dušan Bogunović, 16 April 1940.

⁶¹ AJ, 37-18-124, Milan Stojadinović to the three above mentioned, 25 March 1940; Dj. K. [probably Djura Kotur] to Milan Antić, 25 March 1940.

⁶² AJ, 37-101-537, "Veliki govor predsednika vlade g. Cvetkovića o političkim događajima do obrazovanja njegove vlade, o sporazumu sa Hrvatima, o JRZ, okupljanju radikala, neutralnosti naše zemlje i o poslednjim poreskim reformama," *Politika*, 1 april 1940.

opposition activities of other parties. Cvetković's statement elicited an immediate and passionate response from Stojadinović who wrote a reply to the editorial board of the *Politika* daily, but it was never published due to censorship. Stojadinović contemptuously rejected all of the Prime Minister's allegations:

Can we seriously talk of any intentional fascistization of the country on my part when we know that fascistization was previously pursued by Mr. Cvetković through Jugoras – in which he, besides the blue shirts, also introduced the Fascist salute – and now, Mr. Cvetković is an honorary colonel of the Croatian fascist organization, personally attending its party in Zagreb with a hat of the Croatian Peasant Defense on his head? Can we seriously discuss the alleged intentions of my Government to establish concentration camps when we know that, in my time, no one was ever interned, whereas the Government of Mr. Cvetković is today the one introducing concentration camps and filling them with its political opponents every day? Can we seriously talk with a man who, as a cabinet member – by his own admission – went behind his boss's back to negotiate with the Croats while publicly, at rallies, labeling all Serbs that vote for Mr. Maček's list traitors?⁶³

In the same style, instead of continuing the polemic, he quoted the text of a telegram that Cvetković had sent to him while he served as Prime Minister from Geneva, which extolled the results of Stojadinović's policy, and asked the readers to compare the telegram with Cvetković's last speech. Finally, he alluded to the Romani "race" to which Cvetković allegedly belonged, using the traditional discriminatory ethnic stereotype to explain and additionally stress the falsity of his adversary's allegations.⁶⁴ The government also used other means. In April 1940, Dragiša Stojadinović, a former JNS MP and a bitter opponent of the previous Prime Minister, filed a lawsuit with the State Court for Protection of the State, accusing Milan Stojadinović that, as a republi-

⁶³ AJ, 37-101-537, Odgovor g. dr. Milana Stojadinovića Dragiši Cvetkoviću, dostavljen Uredništvu *Politike* 2-IV-1940.; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 186. Stojadinović was alluding to Cvetković's and Maček's presence at a Croatian Peasant Defence party, of which he learned from the issue of *Jugoslovenska otadžbina* of 15 December 1939 (AJ, 37-99-535).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

can, he had advocated overthrowing the Karadjordjević dynasty while in the opposition. This was a continuation of his war against Milan Stojadinović that had started as early as 1935 and was fought in a series of parliament speeches, brochures and interpellations. Dragiša Stojadinović was also convicted of having a role in the assassination attempt on Milan by one of his party colleagues in the National Assembly in March 1936.⁶⁵ Another brochure tried to portray the former Prime Minister as steeped in corruption.⁶⁶

All of this was the prelude for the arrest and internment of Stojadinović on 19 April. The most specific press report appeared in *Trgovinski glasnik*: “Numerous leaflets and other compromising material against the Agreement, Prime Minister Cvetković, Deputy Prime Minister Maček and others were found in the party offices.”⁶⁷ The following day, the same paper reported that the authorities had decided to intern Stojadinović at Rudnik and that some persons close to him were also expected to be interned.⁶⁸ In a very brief and uninformative note published a day after the internment, the *Politika* daily included a malicious caricature alluding to last year’s electoral campaign. More importantly, on 24 April, *Politika* published a démenti of the reports in some foreign press that Stojadinović had been interned due to foreign-

⁶⁵ See the published parliament speech of Dragiša Stojadinović *On the Government of Dr. Milan Stojadinović (O Vladi dr. Milana Stojadinovića)* of July 1935, to which Stojadinović’s cabinet responded with a brochure titled *The Career of a Hypocrite and Scandal-Monger (Karijera jednog licemera i aferaša)*; see also the interpellations filed by Dragiša Stojadinović alone and together with Vasilije Trbić and Tasa Dinić, and the decision to deprive Dragiša Stojadinović and his associates of their status as MPs due to a verdict of the Court for Protection of the State on account of an assassination attempt against M. Stojadinović (all of this is available AJ, 37-57-362). Cvetković’s cabinet repaid Dragiša Stojadinović by including the brochure against him on its list of banned books. (AJ, Education Ministry, 66-109-348).

⁶⁶ *Afere dr Milana Stojadinovića: kako su dr Milan Stojadinović, Dušan Letica i Milan Savić-Švarc prilikom otkupa Krojgerovih obveznica oštetili državu sa preko 70 miliona dinara* (Beograd: b. i., 1940).

⁶⁷ AJ, 37-101-537, “Policijski pretres kod g. dr. Milana Stojadinovića i drugova,” *Trgovinski Glasnik*, 19.4.1940. Police searches were also conducted in the homes of Djura Janković, Dobrivoje Stošević i Radoje Janković.

⁶⁸ AJ, 37-101-537, “Interniranje g. dr. Milana Stojadinovića,” *Trgovinski Glasnik*, 20. april 1940.

policy reasons and claimed that his detention was based on Article 12 of the Protection of Public Security and Order Act⁶⁹ to prevent him from working against the government's internal policy. It also reported that, on the same day and on the same grounds, the Directorate of the City of Belgrade had interned Milan Aćimović. The same news appeared in *Vreme* as a statement of the *Avala* news agency. Interestingly, on 25 April, *Politika* reprinted an editorial from *Hrvatski dnevnik* arguing that working against the government's internal policy was not a good enough reason for the measures taken against Stojadinović because other politicians were doing the same but had not been interned, and inferring that he must have been doing or preparing "something very big indeed." "Knowing how far he went while in power and how he exercised control, through his trusted associates, even over the quarters that had no need of that kind of control, it is not difficult to guess how far he went after he lost power," the paper wrote, probably alluding to the move against the Prince Regent.⁷⁰

Stojadinović's supporters spoke out in mid-August, almost four months after he was interned, in a declaration that included a detailed account of how his detention took place and the course of his internment up to that moment. We learn that, on 17 April, besides Stojadinović's house, the police also searched the homes of Momčilo Janković, Djura Janković, Radoje Janković, and Dragomir Stojadinović and, on the following day, Slobodan Subotić and Ljuba Popović. In all of these cases, the official records showed that no unlawful material was found, and Milan Stojadinović's entire private and political correspondence was confiscated. The lawyer Subotić was arrested because leaflets offensive to Prince Paul were reportedly found in his office and sentenced to 30 days in prison. The organs of the Directorate of the City of Belgrade, on 19 April, took the former Prime Minister to Rudnik, which

⁶⁹ Milan Stojadinović published a facsimile of the decision of the Directorate of the City of Belgrade in his memoirs *Ni rat ni pakt: Jugoslavija između dva rata* (Buenos Aires: El Economista, 1963), 674.

⁷⁰ For the reports in the local press and the writings in the foreign press on Stojadinović's internment, which reflected the interests of the warring sides, with a plethora of incredible allegations and propaganda messages intended for the Yugoslav public, see AJ, 37-101-537; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 168-187.

the daily press published the same evening; the reason for his internment was the material allegedly found in his possession that “provided evidence of his unlawful activities.” His brother Dragomir was arrested at the same time as Milan Stojadinović and sentenced to ten days in prison for having distributed “Milan Stojadinović’s reply to Dragiša Cvetković” in a bid to “stir confusion among the citizenry,” according to the verdict of the Directorate of the City of Belgrade. In addition, a few days later, Milan Aćimović was interned in Rogatica with no official explanation whatsoever; after getting ill, Aćimović was taken to a hospital in Čačak and then to Belgrade. Momčilo Janković, secretary of the Belgrade committee of SRS, was sentenced to 30 days in jail for having “disseminated upsetting news,” and three SRS youth members were also arrested and expelled from Belgrade. In early August, three more Stojadinović supporters were detained – the lawyers Franja Galijan and Slobodan Subotić (apparently for the second time) and the recently retired Toplica Pešić.⁷¹

Although this was an obvious case of the government’s violent oppression against political opponents, *Srpski glas*, the organ of the Serbian Cultural Club, gleefully reveled in “this liquidation of the political career of the most repulsive figure in our postwar political life.” Taking no interest in the drastic nature of the measures against the former Prime Minister, the author of the text took it for granted that he had committed a serious offense against public interests and had a “lack of patriotism,” and used the entire case as a platform to launch an attack against the government from whose former ranks such an affair stemmed and which could not be trusted to rise to the challenge when the moment came.⁷² The SRS leadership wrote an embittered letter to Dragiša Vasić, the editor of *Srpski glas*, protesting against this “despicable defamation.” Their bitterness arose from the paper’s claim that Stojadinović had been interned because compromising evidence had been found at his home. They stated that some leaflets “containing deplorable slanders against a person above reproach” had been planted

⁷¹ AJ, 37-18-124, Prijatelji Dr. Milana Stojadinovića, “Zašto je interniran Milan Stojadinović,” 15 avgusta 1940; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 134–137; Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt*, 669–676; Janković, *Kako je ubijana Kraljevina Jugoslavija*, 38–44, 223–230.

⁷² AJ, 37-101-537, “Žalosni vodji,” *Srpski Glas*, 3. maj 1940.

when the party premises were searched on 17 April. They called on Vasić to prove or disclaim the allegations or “else we will consider you a common slanderer and a mercenary.”⁷³

At the time of his arrest, Stojadinović wanted the party to continue its operations, but his associates could not compensate for his absence.⁷⁴ In this new situation, the only means of struggle available to Stojadinović’s supporters were flyers. They attacked Cvetković and his chief associate in Serbia, Vojko Čvrkić, recalling their “promises of broader democratization in the country. Since their promise of free press, a number of periodicals have died out under the government’s ban and around 200 printers and print shop workers have been arrested; since their promise to adhere to the Constitution, the government has been authorized to promulgate political laws, with no regard to the Constitution and to the detriment and shame of the people.”⁷⁵ Of course, criticizing the Prince Regent was out of the question but, rather suggestively, the flyer ended with an acclamation of King Peter II, Yugoslavia and Milan Stojadinović, with no reference to Prince Paul.

A particularly intriguing aspect of SRS activities during Stojadinović’s absence are their considerations of propaganda and organization matters by anonymous authors. Given their previous experiences and the situation in which the party’s activities unfolded, they recommended in-person talks as the main propaganda channel and, consequently, frequent tours of the country. To make their propaganda efforts as effective as possible, they needed to be critical of the current situation and only then, if needed, explain the constructive, positive part of the party’s program. The monarchy and the Karadjordjević dynasty were not up for debate, and their rule, along with the principles

⁷³ AJ, 37-18-124, S. Stanković, B. Kujundžić and Djura Kotur to Dragiša Vasić, 8 May 1940.

⁷⁴ Janković, *Kako je ubijana Kraljevina Jugoslavija*, 40, 44, 152, 165–166.

⁷⁵ AJ, 37-18-125, The flyer “Jedan kralj, jedan narod, jedna država, zemlju deliti ne možemo, jer za njenu celinu proliveno je more krvi, mir na granici, jačanje privrede i blagostanje u zemlji, to je politika doktora Milana Stojadinovića, koju je on za vreme svoje vladavine od tri i po godine sprovodio i čije su blagotvorno dejstvo osetili svi slojevi našega naroda a naročito seljački stalež”; see also the flyer “Narode!” which demands the release of Stojadinović and his return to government in 37-18-124, *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 53–54, 153.

of national and state unity, was the main pillar of the program. Since the propaganda activities were to cover, above all, the Serbian areas, it was interpreted that they would also include Catholic and Muslim Serbs (in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sandžak, and southern Serbia). Special attention was to be accorded to the Serbs in the *Banovina* of Croatia, highlighting their ties with the Serbs from all other parts of the country and taking into account that the Serbian people had access to the sea through the Serbs of Dalmatia. As for advocating Serbian interests, they firmly rejected any ideas about a non-party association of Serbs – a decision likely informed by the stance that the Serbian Cultural Club had taken toward SRS – or a coalition of all Serbian parties as “sabotage and watering-down of our movement and our struggle.” In practice, the first option would have meant organizing a party in all but name, leading to the marginalization of SRS; the other option would represent “a moral weakness,” in the same vein as the United Opposition with its endless conferences and no results.⁷⁶ The only option was for other, smaller parties to unconditionally join SRS, especially because the circumstances were seen as conducive to independent action since, as the events had shown, all other Serbian parties had been misguided either in their internal or external policy.

Organizational work was to follow the main guidelines already being implemented from the *banovina* to the municipal level, with the two most important party branches being those in Belgrade and Zagreb, and with four departments in the overall party apparatus: the youth, student, workers’ and agrarian departments. Given the allegations against Stojadinović for having tried to fascistize the youth, it is interesting that they paid no heed to that, envisaging the SRS youth as the “physical force” of the party capable of responding to terror with terror, primarily at party rallies. The model for this was the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) in Germany, as well as the Slovenian “Fanti” and the Croatian Peasant/Citizen Defense. “That is why there are just two parties with a serious organization in Yugoslavia: Korošec’s and Maček’s.” The workers’ department was to take positions within JUGORAS to be able

⁷⁶ AJ, 37-18-135, “Razmišljanja o pitanju propagande i organizacije u Srpskoj radikalnoj stranci,” undated [after Stojadinović’s internment] and unsigned; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 138–151.

to, at an opportune moment, take control of the entire management of JUGORAS and the Workers' Chambers under it. "In addition, the workers' department should study the entire complex of workers' concerns and the relationship between labor and capital as regulated in Germany and Italy, the organizations *Dopo lavoro* and *Kraft durch Freude* and prepare reforms in that direction, which our party will implement once it comes to power."⁷⁷ This was a typical example of espousing some elements of the fascist ideology and their hybridization with the conservative right, highly reminiscent of some suggestions concerning JRZ propaganda efforts submitted to Stojadinović while he headed the party and the government.⁷⁸ In the first case, Stojadinović did not accept these suggestions, and in the second, he might have not even known about them because he was already in detention. Anyway, such suggestions did not affect the SRS conservative constituency; the party remained attached to the principle of parliamentary democracy.

There can be no doubt that the removal of Stojadinović from the political arena was a fatal blow to SRS. However, in time, the foreign-policy context of Stojadinović's internment grew increasingly important. It is well-established in historical scholarship that Prince Paul and Cvetković were worried that the Germans and Italians could press them to again entrust the government to Stojadinović, whom they favored because of his earlier policy of friendly relations with the Axis Powers. Indeed, Stojadinović let Count Ciano know, via the Italian minister in Belgrade, that the Prince Regent was probably in the center of the plot against him, but that he had no intention of giving up and would ultimately have his revenge.⁷⁹ Ciano, however, did not believe that Stojadinović was capable of doing anything. Rome and Berlin, although displeased, calmly accepted Stojadinović's fall, aware that the objective circumstances did not allow any change in Yugoslavia's conduct of

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ See the chapter on JRZ under Stojadinović.

⁷⁹ *Ciano's Diary 1937–1943: the complete unabridged diaries of Count Galeazzo Ciano, Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1936–1943*, preface by Renzo De Felice, introduction to the original English edition by Malcolm Muggeridge (London: Phoenix Press, 2002), 186. See also Bojan Simić, "Italian Diplomacy on Milan Stojadinović after his Fall from Power," *Istraživanja/Journal of Historical Researches*, 30 (2019): 256–271.

foreign affairs. On the other hand, Prince Paul's entourage was spurring him against Stojadinović by accusing the former Prime Minister of undermining the Regent's foreign policy. Milan Antić, Minister of the Court, did so during Prince Paul's visit to Berlin in early June 1939. "I saw that, at the Prince's side, Stojadinović has two blackguards against him, Antić and Cincar-Marković, who won't let him live, i.e., return to power," Milan Jovanović Stoimirović noted as an eyewitness.⁸⁰ Cvetković also claimed later that Stojadinović had been interned due to his ties with the German and Italian legations and undermining the government's good relationship with the Axis Powers.⁸¹ Regardless, the government's principal motive at the time of the arrest seems to have been paralyzing SRS as the staunchest opponent to the situation created by the Cvetković–Maček Agreement. It was not until Germany's military triumphs against France and Britain that the focus shifted to the foreign-policy aspect of Stojadinović's internment. It was probably no coincidence that he was moved from Rudnik to the inaccessible village of Karan near Užice on 10 May, the day when the Wehrmacht began its campaign against France via the Benelux countries. He was moved once again to the Ilidža health center near Sarajevo to receive dental care at the local military hospital.⁸² Similarly, it was no accident either that another brochure surfaced in which Stojadinović was associated with Jews, Masons and the British intelligence agency in a thinly veiled attempt to discredit him in the eyes of the Germans.⁸³

After France fell and Germany established its hegemony in Europe, fear of Axis pressure concerning Stojadinović became stronger and more founded. When Stojadinović's wife and friends alerted the German and Italian legations of rumors that the government might execute its most famous internee, the response of Berlin and Rome got Cvetković worried. A close associate in the government noted his words:

⁸⁰ Jovanović Stoimirović, *Dnevnik*, 287–288.

⁸¹ Dušan Biber, "O padu Stojadinovićeve vlade," *Istorija XX veka: zbornik radova VIII* (1966): 55.

⁸² Stojadinović wrote a letter to Prince Paul thanking him for having allowed him to receive dental treatment and tried to once again assure him of his loyalty. See Jacob Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi 1934–1941* (Rijeka: Otokar Keršovani, 1972), 192.

⁸³ *Lažni vodja dr Milan Stojadinović i njegove veze sa Jevrejima, masonima i Intelidžens servisom* (b. m.: b. i., 1940).

Von Heeren went to see Cincar-Marković yesterday and told him that Ribbentrop was aware of reports that the murder of Stojadinović was being planned! Cincar-Marković told him this was nonsense and that it was out of the question. There are laws in this country! – Ciano and Von Heeren are pressuring us. The latter is under the influence of his wife, who is on friendly terms with Stojadinović. Ciano is counting on Stojadinović and [Ante] Pavelić [the leader of the Croatian Ustaša fascist movement] to dismember Yugoslavia. We won't yield to pressure. If it mounts, Dragiša says he will give Maček the presidency, and he will take Interior Affairs. Stronger pressure: Cincar-Marković – Prime Minister, Dragiša – Minister of the Interior, Maček – Deputy Prime Minister. We can go no further than that. Stojadinović is out of the question. If this were to happen, the Prince Regent would go, and Cvetković would have to get out, too.⁸⁴

Von Heeren also intervened with Prince Paul, who firmly rejected such a possibility.⁸⁵ Although he kept trying to convince himself that the Germans “had gone off Stojadinović” and that the pressure was actually coming from Italy,⁸⁶ Cvetković was facing the demand of the German consul-general, Neuhausen, not just to release Stojadinović but to appoint him the minister in Berlin or Rome, which he refused to do, just like Prince Paul.⁸⁷ It was, therefore, unsurprising that the report, perhaps intentionally delivered by a Croatian minister, that “Stojadinović was welcomed at the military hospital in Sarajevo as a man with a great future” by all officers caused a panicked reaction, and Cvetković phoned General Milan Nedić, Minister of the Army, to check the veracity of the report.⁸⁸

Concern about Stojadinović culminated in the run-up to Yugoslavia's accession to the Tripartite Pact. Cvetković proposed to Stojadinović through his wife Augusta to go to Egypt or Greece for a while together with his family, but the latter refused – he must have realized

⁸⁴ Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma*, 143. On the Axis intervention, see Biber, “O padu Stojadinovićeve vlade,” 55–56.

⁸⁵ Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma*, 144–145.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 159, 168.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 184, 203.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 186.

that this was a scheme to place him under the control of the British authorities – while Cvetković had no intention of letting him leave for Switzerland as he suggested, since the Germans could have got hold of him there.⁸⁹ When it became nearly certain that Yugoslavia would have to sign the pact with Germany, the issue became critical as after the signature it would be much more difficult to resist German demands to set Stojadinović free and, likely, to include him in the government. On 14 March 1941, Prince Paul asked his ministers to arrange for Stojadinović's departure and Cvetković decided to transfer him to Greece, where “the Greeks will look after him.”⁹⁰ In fact, the London radio would soon reveal what took place during those days: an undersecretary in the Foreign Office, Richard Austen Butler, would explain to the House of Commons that the Yugoslav government informed the British on 15 March that they intended to banish Stojadinović from the country and asked if the British government would be willing to accept him, to which an affirmative reply was given.⁹¹ On 18 March 1941, just a week before the signing of the Tripartite Pact, Prince Paul and Cvetković handed the former Prime Minister to the British military attaché in Greece in contravention of the Yugoslav constitution. Since Churchill was anxious at that time to draw Yugoslavia into the war, he saw Stojadinović as “a potential Quisling” and extended his full assistance to have him transported to the far-flung island of Mauritius, where he remained until 1948 under the watchful eye of the British colonial administration.⁹² It was a bitter irony that after the coup d'état on 27 March 1941, which overturned Yugoslavia's accession to the Tripartite

⁸⁹ Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt*, 721–722; Biber, “O padu Stojadinovićeve vlade,” 57–58.

⁹⁰ Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma*, 324–325.

⁹¹ AJ, 37-101-537; *Srpska radikalna stranka*, 188.

⁹² Dušan Biber, “Britanske ocjene Stojadinovića i njegove politike,” in *Fašizam i neofašizam* (Zagreb: Fakultet političkih nauka, 1975), 265–277. For Stojadinović's records of his time spent on Mauritius, see his diaries, *Zatočenik njegovog britanskog veličanstva* (Melburn: Srpska misao, 1976); also Bojan Simić, “U srebrnom kavezu – Milan Stojadinović na Mauricijusu (1941–1948),” *Baština* 47, (2019): 343–356. For details concerning his departure from the island, see Ljubomir Dimić, “Odlazak sa Mauricijusa. Britanci i Milan Stojadinović (1945–1948),” *Glas Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti CDXX, Odeljenje istorijskih nauka*, knj. 16 (2012): 495–518.

Pact just two days earlier, the putschists handed Prince Paul and his family to the British to be interned in Kenya, and the Prince Regent was long disparaged as having deceived his British friends.⁹³ This clearly shows the absurdity of taking for granted the not impartial official British assessments of either Stojadinović or Prince Paul.

From 1948 until his death in 1961 Stojadinović lived in Argentina, where he started the eminent *El Economista* journal, arguably his most enduring legacy.⁹⁴ Working as an economic adviser to the provincial and central government, painting and writing his memoirs, he was not politically active like so many other Serbian and Croatian exiles. Therefore, it sent shockwaves when he concluded an agreement with the most famous of them all, the *Ustaša* leader of the Nazi-puppet Independent State of Croatia during the Second World War, Ante Pavelić, responsible for the genocide committed against the Serbs, Jews and Roma, in 1954. The two exiles agreed on the formation of a Greater Serbia and a Greater Croatia on the ruins of Josip Broz Tito's communist Yugoslavia. This act had no impact on Yugoslavia whatsoever, but it was a devastating blow for Stojadinović's reputation among the Serbs. The background of that episode became known much later, although not in detail. Tito's secret service (UDBA) contacted Stojadinović from the early 1950s onwards with a view to enlisting his services against the *Ustaša* exiles in Argentina – it should be noted that Pavelić's dealing with the former Yugoslav prime minister undermined his authority over the *Ustaša* movement – using his financial strings and keeping under control the hostile attitude of the Serb exiles; in return, Stojadinović's brother Dragomir was released from prison and joined him in Buenos Aires, and life was made easier for his ill sister in Belgrade.⁹⁵

⁹³ Neil Balfour and Sally Mackey, *Paul of Yugoslavia: Britain's Maligned Friend*, 2nd ed. (Winnipeg: Canada Wide Magazines & Communications, 1996); Ivana Božović, "Knez Pavle Karadjordjević u izgnanstvu 1941–1976," *Arhiv*, 1–2 (2012): 128–140.

⁹⁴ For this part of his life, see Bojan Simić, *Stojadinović u Argentini* (Beograd: Institut za evropske studije, Novi Sad: Fondacija "Svetozar Miletić," 2022).

⁹⁵ Historical Archive of Belgrade (Istorijski arhiv Beograda), Belgrade, Security Intelligence Agency (Bezbednosno informativna agencija, BIA) files, Milan Stojadinović Dossier. This material was published in 2005 in the *Novosti* newspaper under the title "Milan Stojadinović u tajnom Arhivu UDBe," <https://www.novosti.rs/feljton/455/milan-stojadinovic-u-tajnom-arhivu-udbe>. Bogdan Krizman has given an

This episode once again demonstrates Stojadinović's pragmatism, since he had no illusions about the imminent collapse of the Tito regime, unlike many of his exiled compatriots. In a similar strain, the revival of SRS in Germany, Austria and Buenos Aires in 1955 undertaken by a handful of former members had no political relevance and Stojadinović remained rather indifferent to this project.⁹⁶

account based on the Serbian and Croatian émigré press in his *Pavelić u bjekstvu* (Zagreb: Globus, 1986), 261–288. The reconstruction given here is the most convincing one out of three explanations that have been given in Miša Djurković, “Uvod: enigma Milana Stojadinovića,” in *Milan Stojadinović: politika u vreme globalnih lomova*, ed. M. Djurković (Beograd: Službeni glasnik i Centar za konzervativne studije, 2012), 21–26; a different interpretation can be found in Bojan Simić, “O sporazumu Stojadinović-Pavelić 1954. godine (činjenice i pretpostavke),” *Zbornik radova Filozofskog fakulteta*, LII, no. 1 (2022): 233–251, and Simić, *Stojadinović u Argentini*, 37–50.

⁹⁶ Simić, *Stojadinović u Argentini*, 54.