

CHAPTER 4

National Mobilisation in the 1930s:

The Emergence of the ‘Serb Question’ in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia

Dejan Djokić

In January 1940, two important public gatherings took place in Yugoslavia. Speakers at the first event, held on 14 January – incidentally, New Year’s Day according to the Julian calendar, kept by the Serbian Orthodox Church – praised the Crown and the government and expressed their belief that the country was at last united and going in the right direction. Prince Regent Paul, Princess Olga and Prime Minister Cvetković were present and witnessed in person the support they enjoyed, at least in one part of the country. Tens of thousands supporters came to greet them, despite cold weather. Speakers at the second event, which took place twelve days later elsewhere in Yugoslavia, criticised the government for favouring certain groups at the expense of others and expressed their dissatisfaction with the way the Yugoslav state was evolving, fearing for its unity.

One might imagine that the first meeting was organised by Serbs and the second by Croats. Interwar Yugoslavia was a Serb-dominated state: constitutions were Serb-style centralist, the Serbian Karadjordjević monarchy ruled the country, all but one prime minister had been Serb, the army was Serb-dominated. The list goes on. Under these circumstances, Croats boycotted state institutions in the early 1920s and demanded an equal treatment with Serbs throughout the interwar period. Serbs, on the other hand, seemed content with Yugoslavia – or so goes the conventional wisdom, according to which the interwar period could be best understood in terms of struggle between Serb governments and Croat opposition.

However, would such a conclusion be a correct one? Was the pro-regime rally organised by Serbs? Did Croats convene the anti-government gathering? The answer to both questions would be ‘no’. The first meeting took place in Zagreb under the auspices of the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) – a *de facto* Croat national movement – on the occasion of the high delegation’s visit to the capital of the newly autonomous

Croatia. The second meeting took place in Brčko, present-day Bosnia, and was convened and attended by local Serb leaders and clergymen.

The commonly accepted interpretation of interwar Yugoslavia rests on many ‘truths’, but does not explain developments such as these. This chapter offers an analysis of the ‘Serb question’,¹ and, more broadly, challenges some perceived notions about the Yugoslav kingdom. It is important to stress that in interwar Yugoslavia non-Serbs had been subjected to Serb domination; not just Croats and Slovenes, but also, and especially, Macedonians (officially regarded as ‘Southern Serbs’), ethnic Albanians and even Montenegrins, most of whom, regardless of their political affiliation, viewed themselves as members of a wider Serbian nation.² This chapter does not attempt to argue otherwise. Instead, it suggests that divisions also existed within ethnic groups and that there were Serbs who opposed the government and non-Serbs who participated in it. Specifically, the chapter looks at the neglected issue of Serb dissatisfaction with Yugoslavia in the second half of the 1930s.

Context

In order to understand the emergence of the Serb question and, more specifically, to contextualise the two events of January 1940, it is worth revisiting earlier developments. Conflicting visions of Yugoslavia among Serb and Croat political leaderships appeared even before the country was formed in December 1918 and led to the emergence of the Croat question soon after the unification. However, the conflict between mostly-Serb centralists and mostly-Croat and other non-Serb federalists was but one aspect of the political contest. Inter-party and even intra-party rivalries and alliances – regardless of ethnic affiliation – were just as important, as were intra-ethnic conflicts, especially among Serbs. Serb-Croat conflict was one important dimension of the political dynamics of the period – this chapter acknowledges that – but was not the only one. Rather than view the period as one of a constant struggle between Serbs and Croats, interwar years might be seen instead as an era when a series of attempts towards an agreement between Serbs and Croats were made.³

Contrary to what is sometimes argued, views of leading Serb and Croat politicians had not been fixed in mutual antagonism by 1918, but had evolved during the interwar period. For instance, Stjepan Radić, leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, advocated republicanism and boycott of the Belgrade parliament in the early 1920s,

but in 1925 entered government of his chief rival Nikola Pašić, of the Radical Party, and praised King Alexander. Two years later Radić left the government to form the opposition Peasant Democratic Coalition, together with another former rival, Svetozar Pribićević, leader of the Independent Democrats. This was essentially a coalition between Croats and Croatian Serbs and it lasted longer than any other political alliance in Yugoslavia. Radić had also previously briefly collaborated with Ljuba Davidović of the Democratic Party. (Pašić, Pribićević and Davidović all had been ethnic Serbs). Following Radić's assassination in summer 1928 by a Radical Party deputy, Yugoslavia's democratic institutions entered a final crisis. On 6 January 1929 King Alexander abolished the Constitution, the parliament and political parties, and introduced a dictatorship.

In the early 1930s the regime unsuccessfully sought to reach a compromise with the Croats. Belgrade wanted Vladko Maček, Radić's successor, to publicly support the government, and, preferably, join it, before any changes within the existing order should be considered. Maček's position, on the other hand, was that a separate Croat identity must be recognised first, by granting Croatia self-rule.

As neither side was prepared to back down, a united Serb-Croat opposition began to emerge in the early 1930s, despite the regime's intimidation of the opposition and arrest of Maček and Pribićević, among others. Moreover, mistrust and disagreements, especially among the main Serbian opposition parties – the Democrats, the Radicals (Aca Stanojević's opposition faction) and the Agrarians – slowed down the formation of a common opposition front. After the assassination of King Alexander in October 1934, by Croatian and Macedonian revolutionaries, the dictatorship was relaxed by Prince Regent Paul, who ruled in the name of Alexander's minor son, King Peter II. At the (quasi democratic) elections of May 1935, the Democrats and the Agrarians presented a joint list with the Peasant Democratic Coalition and the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation – the main Bosnian Muslim party. The list was headed by Maček and, although it failed to win the elections, the opposition did better than it had been expected. This prompted Prince Paul to bring about a change of government and start negotiations with Maček. The new government included the Radicals' pro-regime faction, the Slovene Clericals (the major Slovenian party) and the Yugoslav Muslims, who would soon merge into a single party – the Yugoslav Radical Union (JRZ). However, Milan Stojadinović, the new Prime Minister, was unable and possibly unwilling to persuade the HSS to join

the new party or the government. Maček met the Prince Regent on several occasions during this period, but their clandestine talks came to nothing.

After the failure of negotiations with the regime, the Croat leader turned again to the Serbian opposition, while maintaining contacts with the Royal Court. The cooperation between the Peasant Democratic Coalition and Serbia's United Opposition would reach its peak in 1937-38: the (opposition) Bloc of National Agreement was formed in October 1937, demanding a return to democracy and a solution to the Croat question; Maček visited Belgrade in August 1938 to be greeted by some 100,000 Serbian supporters; the Serb-Croat opposition led by Maček nearly defeated the (Serb-Slovene-Muslim) government in another quasi democratic elections of December 1938. This Serb-Croat collaboration in opposition contributed to the fall of Stojadinović in February 1939, although the Yugoslav Radical Union remained the government party, now led by Dragiša Cvetković.

Eventually, Maček reached an agreement (*Sporazum*) with Prime Minister Cvetković and the Crown in August 1939, but this resulted in the end of the united democratic opposition. The agreement was based on a compromise: there was to be no return to democracy, but an autonomous Croatia was set up and the Peasant Democratic Coalition entered the government. Prince Paul was widely seen as the most responsible for Belgrade finally granting Croatia self-rule. It was no surprise that his first visit to autonomous Croatia in January 1940 provoked such excitement and public approval. 'It is thanks to your wisdom that you realised that the Kingdom of Yugoslavia could only be saved by granting the Croats their demands, and it is thanks to your courage that you acted like a real man by cutting the Gordian knot in a single blow', Maček told Paul in Zagreb, before continuing: 'It is for these reasons that the Croatian people welcomes you today with open arms and wishes you, through me, a happy stay [in Croatia]. Long live the Prince Regent, long live Princess Olga!'⁴

The visit was meant to show popular support for the Croatian Peasant Party, the government and the Crown, but there were also genuine signs that Yugoslavia faced a more stable future. Yet, a careful observer might have noticed that the main reason for the Croats' newly-found enthusiasm was undoubtedly partly due to the Croatian *banovina* (province) turning into a quasi nation-state. Maček welcomed the Prince Regent to 'the capital of Croatia and all Croats, in the name of all Croats'.⁵ Civil servants and teachers were being replaced by the new authorities – not so much because they were predominantly Serbs, often from prewar Serbia, but because they

were associated with the previous regime; their replacements were mainly Croats loyal to Maček. In the first two months of 1940 over 20 new associations had been registered on the territory of the *banovina*, most of them with the prefix 'Croatian'.⁶ At the same time, attacks on organisations and individuals closely connected with the previous regime, whether they were Serb or Croat, intensified.

By the time of Prince Paul's visit to Zagreb, many Serbs from the Croatian *banovina* had joined in what had grown into a pan-Serb 'movement', encouraged, if not organised, by the Serbian Orthodox Church, nationalist intelligentsia and most 'Serb' political parties. The movement was unofficially known as 'Serbs, rally together!'. The Brčko meeting, referred to above, was an example of the pan-Serb (re)action to the Cvetković-Maček Agreement. However, even during this period, a homogenous Serbian front failed to materialize.

It would be wrong to suggest that the Serb question emerged simply as a response to Croat autonomy. The first major conflict between Serb nationalism and the Yugoslav state took place two years earlier, during the 'Concordat crisis' of summer 1937.

Church vs. State: The Concordat Crisis

In July 1935, thirteen years after they had first started negotiations, the Yugoslav government and the Vatican signed a Concordat regulating the position of the Roman Catholic Church in Yugoslavia.⁷ The government hoped to attract Croat support at the expense of the HSS and saw the Concordat as a way of solving the Croatian question. As Prime Minister Stojadinović told the parliament in summer 1937: 'the Concordat means agreement. Who with, gentlemen? With the Holy See. Who does the Holy See represent? It represents 400 million [Roman] Catholics, 5 million of whom live in our state.'⁸ However, when the document was finally submitted to the parliament for ratification in July 1937 the government nearly fell. The Serbian Orthodox Church instantly objected that the Concordat was concluded at its expense. It argued that although there were more Orthodox than Roman Catholic believers in Yugoslavia, the latter were placed in a favourable position by the state.⁹

Street protests led by Orthodox priests broke out in Belgrade and other Serbian towns. Particularly violent was the so-called 'bloody procession' of 19 July, when a procession praying for Patriarch Varnava's health (he was seriously ill at the time) turned into anti-government demonstrations. Serbian churches displayed black flags,

church bells tolled intermittently, while crowds shouted ‘the police have killed our bishop!’, when the news spread that one of the bishops leading the procession was taken to a Belgrade hospital after a gendarme hit his metal Episcopal crown and allegedly damaged his skull.¹⁰ The bishop luckily did not die – it turned out he only received minor injuries – but other casualties were reported. The gendarmerie responded with violence, charging with bayonets and firing guns in the air. Stojadinović and Serbian members of the government were excommunicated by the Church. Shouts *djavo* (‘devil’ in Serbo-Croat, a play on ‘*vodja*’ (leader), as Stojadinović liked to be called) and *Jereza* (a nickname for the JRZ, which sounds similar to Serbo-Croat for ‘heresy’) suddenly gained additional meanings.¹¹

The Patriarch died only hours after the Concordat was ratified on 23 July. Although rumours that he had been poisoned by the regime were unsubstantiated, even traditionally good relations between the Church and the Crown were strained. A royal emissary who had enquired about the Patriarch’s health was told by Metropolitan Dositej that the Patriarch’s death was imminent, and that it was unfortunate he was dying on the same night when the Concordat was being voted in. ‘But God is just!’, Dositej added, raising his voice.¹²

The rumours, as often the case in interwar Yugoslavia, played a major role in turning the public against the government; the difference this time was that the public was predominantly Serbian. The funeral was attended by thousands of mourners, including representatives of the Crown – but not government – as well as representatives of Yugoslavia’s Muslim leaders, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and Serbian opposition parties. The authorities banned a proclamation issued by the Serbian Church on the eve of the funeral, in which the Patriarch’s death was compared to that of King Alexander: two great patriots who died for their cause, at the time they were most needed by their people.¹³

Despite the brutal police action, Stojadinović believed that in dealings with the crisis an even firmer position should be adopted. Foreign newspapers reporting on the crisis were either bought off by the government or simply returned unsold, while a long-serving Belgrade correspondent of the Reuters was no longer welcome in the country. The government allegedly also considered a clampdown on opposition leaders.¹⁴

The government was forced to back down due to public pressure, withdrawing the document from further parliamentary procedure in late July. Stojadinović

explained that by signing the Concordat the government 'sought to secure religious harmony in western regions of our country'; however, under the circumstances, 'it would not be wise to disturb religious harmony in eastern regions of the country'.¹⁵ Nevertheless, tensions remained high and clashes between the gendarmerie and opponents of the Concordat continued throughout the summer. One such incident took place on 15 August in Mladenovac, a small town south of Belgrade. When a crowd besieged the house of a local government deputy who had voted for the Concordat, the gendarmerie intervened brutally, killing two or three people (depending on the source) and wounding several.¹⁶

Seen in retrospect, the Concordat crisis was a prelude to the emergence of the Serbian question two years later. However, although the demonstrations were partly at least inspired by Serbian nationalism, many demonstrators simply wished to express their dissatisfaction with the government.¹⁷ Meanwhile, the crisis did not undermine significantly the relationship between the Croat and Serb opposition. The Serbian parties kept a relatively low profile during the crisis, careful to not antagonise their partners in Zagreb. Maček, on his behalf, sent a message to his Serbian counterparts, stating that if the opposition succeeded in forming a new government, he would propose the Concordat to be taken off the agenda. 'We Croats do not need a Concordat, nor do the Serbs', Maček stated.¹⁸ Maček was aware that Stojadinović's tactics were to win sympathies among the Croats and erode the support for the HSS. When Stojadinović mentioned, during their meeting in January 1937, that he intended to ratify the Concordat, Maček replied: 'I am not interested in that issue, but can tell you in advance: if you support the Concordat, I shall oppose it'.¹⁹ Moreover, the Croat leader did not regard the Serb-Croat conflict as a religious one, and believed that religion had no place in politics. In an earlier statement, he explained that Croats were 'a Catholic, but not a clerical nation'.²⁰

An autonomous Serbia?

After August 1939 it became clear that eventually the rest of the country would be further divided up according to ethnic criteria, reversing King Alexander-inspired internal division of October 1929 (see Map 1). The same day the Cvetković-Maček Agreement was concluded a ruling on implementing the Decree on the Formation of *banovina* of Croatia in relation to the rest of the country was also issued. It stated that the decree 'of 26 August 1939 could be extended to other *banovinas* by royal decrees.

In such a case, *banovinas* could [either] unite, or their territories could [be subject to] changes.²¹ The extent of the autonomy of future *banovinas* would equal the level of autonomy of Croatia. However, it was unclear how many new *banovinas* there would be and where their boundaries should be drawn.

The potential for disagreement in regard to the territory of the future Slovene unit was minimal, since Dravska *banovina* was a *de facto* Slovenia. Soon after the creation of the *banovina* of Croatia, Slovene leader Anton Korošec suggested that a Slovene *banovina* be proclaimed, as well, and a special working group was formed within the government to discuss the proposal.²² However, nothing came out of this initiative because Croats and Serbs regarded all other issues as secondary to the Serb-Croat question. If Dravska was turned into Slovenia, then how could the government continue to postpone the creation of a Serbian *banovina*, and would not have the rest of the country automatically become *de facto* a greater Serbia? Maček always believed that Serbs and Croats formed the main axis in Yugoslavia. Therefore, sorting out their relations was of utmost importance; all other issues could wait, including the question of Slovenia.²³ Similarly, Serb members of the government wanted to wait for an agreement on the Serbian *banovina* first, before ‘upgrading’ Dravska, possibly at the same time. Cvetković complained that Slovenes’ insistence on a Slovene *banovina* was nothing less than ‘blackmail’ and that the Slovene leaders ‘did not have a [wider] feeling for the state’. The Croats got their *banovina*, the Slovenes *de facto* have had theirs in form of Dravska since 1929, but ‘what have the Serbs got?’, Cvetković wondered.²⁴ The Slovenes, however, felt in the late 1930s that their loyalty to the state had not been rewarded properly. Slovene leaders were allegedly criticised by their voters, who complained that ‘the Croats are against this state, and still they got everything, whereas we are loyal to the state but got nothing!’²⁵

The key question was where to draw the borders of the Serbian *banovina*. Would it include the whole of Yugoslavia, minus Slovenia and Croatia? This seemed to be Cvetković’s plan, and many Serbs, though not all, argued in favour of such an outcome. On 16 December 1939 Mihailo Konstantinović, a minister without portfolio, delivered to Prince Paul a ‘project on the *banovina* of the Serbian lands’.²⁶ The entity would be created by the unification of Vrbaska, Drinska, Dunavska, Moravska, Zetska and Vardarska *banovinas* into a single province, the capital of which was to be Skopje (Belgrade would remain the capital of Yugoslavia); the former *banovinas* would enjoy a semi-autonomous status within Serbia.²⁷ The future Serbian entity would enjoy the

same level of autonomy from the central government in Belgrade as Croatia, where, however, there was to be no regional, ethnic or religious autonomy, despite large numbers of Serbs and Muslims living there. Just like Croatia, autonomous Serbia would be in charge of its finances, justice, education, social policies, while the central government would be responsible for defence, customs and foreign policy.²⁸ It remains unclear whether the authors of the document envisaged the inclusion into a future Serbian *banovina* of those territories previously parts of Vrbaska, Zetska and Dunavska which since August 1939 had formed part of the *banovina* of Croatia.

Maček repeatedly stated that the boundaries of the Croatian *banovina* were temporary and that he was looking to add more territory. He used the opportunity of Prince Paul's visit to Zagreb in January 1940 to raise this question, but it is unclear what was Paul's response.²⁹ Maček may have been under pressure from more radical elements within his party and from the Frankist opposition to try and further extend Croatia's territory. The pro-Maček press argued that the *banovina* of Croatia should incorporate Bosnia and parts of Vojvodina, although Maček was personally apparently satisfied with the terms of the 1939 Agreement.³⁰

It was the status of Bosnia-Herzegovina that posed another major problem. Up until 1929 Bosnia had been fictionally preserved within the Yugoslav 33 administrative units system, but borders of King Alexander's *banovinas* put an end to this. As the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation began to demand autonomy for Bosnia in 1939, was there going to be a fourth, Bosnian *banovina*, as the Democrats' leader Ljuba Davidović proposed in 1933, and as the government considered briefly in 1939?³¹ Most Croats and Serbs seemed to prefer a division of Bosnia among themselves. The Croats believed that the so-called 'Turkish Croatia' (most of Vrbaska) should be joined to the Croatian *banovina*. Although the area did not have a Croat majority, the Croat 'state right' argument was used to justify Croat demands, as well as economic and geographic factors. The Independent Democrats supported this view, but because they believed that a greater number of Serbs in Croatia would strengthen the position both of the Serb minority and of their main party. The Democrats, on the other hand, seemed prepared to offer autonomy to Bosnia. Davidović repeated his argument of early 1933 that a Bosnian province should act as a buffer between Serbs and Croats, possibly together with southern Dalmatia. At the same time, the Yugoslav Muslims started a campaign for a Bosnian *banovina* and the restoration of historic Bosnia.³²

Meanwhile, many Serbs argued that Bosnia should be part of a future Serbian *banovina*. The Serb Cultural Club, whose representative in Banja Luka was Stevan Moljević,³³ was most radical in this respect – according to Moljević and his colleagues, Bosnia was undoubtedly a Serbian ethnic territory. The Croatian Peasant Party demanded that parts of Vojvodina should be added to the Croatian *banovina*, on the basis both of ethnic and historic rights. Vojvodina had been another bone of contention during the negotiations between Cvetković and Maček, but because it had played an important role in Serbian nineteenth century history, and also because of a large number of Serbs living there, all Serb parties and groups regarded it as part of a future Serbian *banovina*.³⁴

Discussion about and calls for the creation of a Serb entity in the post-1939 Yugoslavia was not confined to political parties: local politicians, Orthodox clergy, ‘ordinary people’, as well as an increasingly nationalist intelligentsia joined the debate.

Pan-Serb Movement

On 11 March 1940, Zagreb authorities requested all civilian and police officials to report about the “‘Serbs, rally together” movement, that is about the movement for the secession of [predominantly] Serbian districts from the territory of the Croatian *banovina*.³⁵ The Brčko gathering, referred to at the beginning of this chapter, was organised as part of the ‘movement’, which emerged across the *banovina* soon after August 1939. Serbian Orthodox priests were often among its leaders, petitioning for the secession of predominantly-Serb areas or areas they perceived as Serb from the Croatian *banovina*. Father Zdravko Borisavljević, a priest from the village of Vinjska, was a key speaker at the Brčko rally. He claimed that in the post-agreement Yugoslavia ‘Serb freedom is forbidden, the Serb *gusle*³⁶ are forbidden, the Serbian song is forbidden, even in Belgrade, but not by Serbs. Serbs must fight against being insulted and against being a minority’, arguing also that there was an economic discrimination against Serbs, who were allegedly paid less than non-Serbs in Croatia.³⁷

Local politicians, merchants and other leading Serbs from Derventa, Brčko, Bosanski Šamac and Gradačac also spoke at the rally. Most speeches were similar in tone, although none so blatantly nationalist as Father Borisavljević’s. The opening speech by Milorad Kostić outlined the complaints and demands of those Serbs who

opposed the 1939 Agreement, as well as their position vis-à-vis Yugoslavia. Kostić explained that the main reason for the meeting was to discuss ‘the question of saving Yugoslavia’s unity and [creating] a strong Serbdom, because without a strong Serbdom there would be no [Yugoslav] state.’³⁸ Kostić argued that Prime Minister Cvetković was not the Serbs’ legitimate representative, adding that Serbs were not against an agreement with Croats, because without it Yugoslavia could not survive, but they wanted an agreement which would ensure they were equal to Croats. Therefore, they should be united in a Serbian *banovina* which would include all areas of Bosnia populated by Serbs and by Muslims, because, according to Kostić, the latter were in fact Serbs.³⁹ ‘Dr [Juraj] Krnjević [a Croat leader] called the Serbs a minority, but they cannot be that in their own state’, Kostić said, before rejecting any possibility of autonomy for Bosnia: ‘the Serbs [of Bosnia] fought for the unification with Serbia, so there cannot be an autonomous Bosnia.’⁴⁰

Where the ‘ethnic’ argument could not apply, those who called for the secession of areas they regarded as ‘Serb’ employed ‘historic’ arguments. For example, some Serbs from the municipality of Mostar called for the secession of the region and its inclusion in the Serbian *banovina* on the basis of Herzegovina’s apparent mediaeval Serbian past. ‘As the sons of the Vojvodina of St. Sava, we demand the secession of the city of Mostar from the Croatian *banovina*’, an unpublished resolution drafted by a group of Mostar Serbs stated.⁴¹

The pan-Serb movement spread beyond Bosnia-Herzegovina. For instance, Serbs from the Glina area south of Zagreb, led by two local priests and a teacher, issued in November 1939 a resolution calling for the secession of the region from Croatia. The following month they held another meeting, but this time issued a more moderate statement, demanding merely full equality with Croats.⁴² Serbs from Knin, Benkovac, Obrovac and Šibenik also petitioned for the secession of predominantly Serb areas and their unification with the Vrbaska *banovina*.⁴³

Although the movement was widespread, its supporters often had local goals. Thus, the Serbs from Vukovar had ever since the creation of autonomous Croatia demanded the transfer of their district to the jurisdiction of the Dunavska *banovina*. Their leader was Nikola Teodorović, a secondary school teacher and a leading member of the local branch of the government party.⁴⁴ However, the pan-Serb movement failed to attract a mass following in the area,⁴⁵ just like it eventually failed to attract mass support elsewhere.

In those areas where the Independent Democrats – as noted, a predominantly Serb party – had significant support there had been less opposition to the Agreement and Serb-Croat relations tended to be significantly better. This was not surprising, as the party genuinely supported a Serb-Croat agreement and had, publicly at least, always stood by the Croatian Peasants. On the day Croatia became autonomous, the Independent Democrats' leadership issued a statement praising the Agreement, describing it as the 'crowning of our efforts'.⁴⁶ In areas dominated by the Independent Democrats, even local priests, generally among the most radical advocates of the Serb cause, supported the Agreement. This was the case in the central Bosnian town of Bugojno, where, according to a contemporary account:

Relations between Croats and Serbs are very good, even cordial. The leader of the local Serbs, most of whom are supporters of the SDS [Independent Democratic Party], is a priest, Jovo Popović, who has established an honest and brotherly cooperation with [local] Croat representatives [...] so that their relationship is virtually ideal.⁴⁷

The same account noted divisions among local Muslims. Some were pressurised into joining the Croatian Peasant Party, while others, members of the Yugoslav Radical Union, simply did not know where their allegiances belonged anymore. In any case, many hoped that Bosnia would achieve some form of autonomy, perhaps even its own *banovina*.⁴⁸

After the initial wave of protests across Serb areas in *banovina* Croatia the situation calmed down. Once it became clear that the Serb movement had failed to change the situation significantly, it lost its appeal. Contemporary accounts note that after the busy autumn, by spring 1940 activities of the 'movement' decreased markedly.⁴⁹ Once the initial shock was over, many Serbs came to accept the new order. However, this did not mean that dissatisfaction among them went away – it was still there, but was not as visible as had been the case during the first few months following the Agreement.⁵⁰ One of the reasons was a more sensitive approach by the Croat authorities. Aware that the politically motivated change of civil servants and other personnel had gone too far, Croatian *ban* [governor] Ivan Šubašić sent a circular in June 1940 to all local civilian and police authorities ordering them to cease firing staff without good reason.⁵¹

The Croat leadership had done little to prevent the often indiscriminate removal of Serb personnel from the local administration, police and schools. For example, the replacement of a Serb teacher by a Croat colleague in Veliko Korenovo, a predominantly Serbian village near Bjelovar, a town east of Zagreb, was hard to justify. It caused a small rebellion among the population of the village, who occupied the school and refused to leave until their old teacher was reinstated. The villagers insisted they had nothing against the Croats in general nor against the new, Croat, teacher personally, but were only protesting ‘against those few [Croats] who wanted to get rid of [Serb teacher] Bogojević for their own, *personal* and *material* reasons’.⁵²

The official report on the incident concluded that the villagers’ protest was justified and that it was hard to understand why Bogojević was removed. The authorities were eventually able to end the protest by promising to investigate properly the whole case.⁵³ Although the Bjelovar authorities tackled the crisis with tact and fairness, Bogojević’s case caused enough damage and gave credence to the frequently heard calls for Serbs to unite in common action.

There were cases where Serbs initially did not oppose Croatian autonomy, but the new authorities’ insensitive policies created Serb resentment. ‘We accept *banovina* of Croatia, we support the agreement of 26 August 1939 and accept it as the basis of the future reorganisation of the [Yugoslav] state’, claimed Serbs from the Benkovac district. ‘We accept and welcome every word by the Croatian *ban* Dr Ivan Šubašić, but we cannot accept what the [...] HSS activists are doing on the ground.’⁵⁴

The new Croat authorities made unsuccessful attempts to re-Croatianise the language,⁵⁵ introduce a separate currency (*kuna*) and even a coat-of-arms. Not only Serbs, but moderate members of the HSS opposed such suggestions.⁵⁶ Although none of these proposals were implemented in practice, rumours that they would be led to a rise in tensions among the Serbs, already ultra sensitive following the formation of autonomous Croatia.

Economic factors contributed to the dissatisfaction of ordinary Serbs, as well as Croats, with the new authorities. In Croatia, like in the rest of the country, small landowners formed the vast majority of the land-owning peasantry. The percentage of small landowners in Croat areas was even higher than in Serb areas of the country.⁵⁷ The peasants were heavily in debt: the percentage of owners of land smaller than 10 hectares who were in debt was over 93 per cent in Savska and as high as 97 per cent in Primorska (by comparison, in Dunavska it was 83.4 per cent and in Drinska 84 per

cent). On top of the problem of debt, the price of food in Croatia rose by between 50 per cent (beef) and 100 per cent (flour, potato, beans) in the period between August 1939 and August 1940.⁵⁸

Remarkably, the new authorities did little to address this problem. Although the Croatian Peasant Party was above all concerned with the national question, functioning more like a national movement than a political party, it had also based its campaign against Belgrade and local gentry on the argument that Croatia, with its predominantly peasant population, was economically exploited. So, it was highly ironic that when a group of Croat peasants forcibly entered Maček's farm at Kupinec in August 1940 in order to cut forest trees, Maček called upon the once hated gendarmerie to get rid of intruders, his own Peasant Defence having refused to intervene against the peasants.⁵⁹ Later that year, a public rally organised by Maček's party in Podgora was disrupted by dissatisfied peasants who complained that the party had promised that, once the Croatian question was solved, they would not have to pay tax and that the number of bureaucrats would be trimmed down, but that in reality '[we] are today hungry and don't have enough bread.'⁶⁰

The economic crisis and the failure of the Croatian Peasant Party to deal with social issues unsurprisingly made people sympathetic to the Communists. Reports from the period particularly note growing 'communist action'.⁶¹ Some however went over to the other extreme, joining the *ustašas* in the case of Croats, or various Serb groups that were united under the 'Serbs, rally together' banner in the Serbian case. The regime's brutal measures against political opponents could not halt the growing dissatisfaction with the governing party in Croatia.

The situation was additionally complicated by the governing Yugoslav Radical Union's support of and even direct involvement in the Serb movement. Although the party formed the backbone of the Cvetković-Maček government, many of its Serb members worked to undermine the Croatian *banovina*. Teodorović, the aforementioned leader of the Vukovar Serbs, who campaigned for the secession of the town from Croatia, was a member of the party with close links to its senior members.⁶² The support to the Serb cause by the Yugoslav Radical Union, which often contradicted the 1939 Agreement, was not limited to local party officials. Even Cvetković himself apparently sponsored and gave editorial suggestions to a newspaper of the Croatian Serbs that openly criticised the agreement he reached with Maček.⁶³ One of the reasons for Cvetković's action could be his dissatisfaction with

the way the Croat press close to Maček reported Yugoslav politics, and the Agreement in particular, insisting that it was only a ‘first step’ – leaving it open to interpretation what the next step would be for Croatia.⁶⁴

The rivalry between ‘Serb’ parties for leadership among Serbs, which intensified after the Agreement, was not limited to those parties participating in the government. Božidar Vlajić, a leading Democrat, believed that his party was best suited to unite the Serbs. At the time of Prince Paul’s visit to Zagreb in January 1940, Vlajić conceded that gathering the Serbs in a united front was ‘outside the scope of regular party business’, but necessary under the circumstances. Vlajić suggested that the Democrats may be best suited for such a job, given their record in working toward ‘the solution to our state problem in the form of a representative government and the agreement between the Serbian people and Croatian people.’⁶⁵

The Serb Cultural Club

Serb dissatisfaction with the post-1939 order was due to several reasons, insensitive policies on behalf of new local (predominantly Croat) authorities, lack of legitimacy of the Cvetković-Maček government, and social-economic factors chief among them. As argued in the *Srpski glas (Serbian Voice)*, the organ of the Serb Cultural Club (SKK) published in Belgrade, Serb dissatisfaction was not simply invented from above. While acknowledging that there were certain Serb advocates who were not well qualified to represent Serbian interests, the author of the article argued that ‘those who think that the present mood among Serbs is an artificial product of the propaganda’ are seriously mistaken.⁶⁶ However, Serb nationalism, not only of the type propagated by the Serbian Orthodox Church, played a significant role, too. Nobody represented this nationalism better than a group of intellectuals gathered around the SKK.

The SKK was registered in Belgrade in early 1937 (six months before the Concordat crisis and two and a half years before the *Sporazum*).⁶⁷ Its members included leading Belgrade intellectuals, such as Slobodan Jovanović. Initially its activities were mostly cultural, but this changed following the Agreement, when the Club’s branches sprung-up across the Serb-populated areas of Croatia, Bosnia and Vojvodina. At this time the Club’s main, if not sole, aim was to define and defend Serbian interests in Yugoslavia. This ‘think tank’ of the Serbian intellectual and

professional élite sought to overcome party divisions among Serbs and probably came closest to representing the pan-Serb cause in the late 1930s.⁶⁸

The first issue of the *Srpski glas*, edited by the sometime left-wing writer Dragiša Vasić,⁶⁹ came out on 16 November 1939 and the last on 13 June 1940, when it was banned by the authorities, for its criticism of the Agreement.⁷⁰ While stating that it was not opposed to an agreement between Serbs and Croats, ‘which has always been necessary’, the newspaper criticised the Cvetković-Maček agreement for endangering the state unity and for being incomplete; it claimed that, unlike the Croats, the Serbs were not properly represented in the government. Moreover, the paper called on all ‘Serb’ parties to halt inter-party rivalry, for which ‘there was a place in prewar Serbia, and which may have its place in a [future] separate Serbian unit, if Yugoslavia is eventually turned into a federation, but such rivalry does not have a place at the moment when the question of Serb-Croat relations is raised.’⁷¹

The newspaper argued that just like the Croats, who approach politics from a national point of view, the Serbs should agree on a single national programme, which may be possible without all the parties uniting into a single one.⁷² This was not far from Maček’s view that the Serbs, like the Croats, should have a single party or leader who would represent their interests. While the Croat press had often in the past accused the monarchy, the army and the government of being ‘Serb’, none of them had actually represented Serbs, certainly not the same way the Croatian Peasant Party represented Croats, as Maček was well aware.

The SKK rejected King Alexander’s integral Yugoslavism, calling instead for Serb unity and a return to old ‘Serbian’ values – the same values which had apparently characterised the Serb nation before Yugoslavia had been formed. The editors of *Srpski glas* argued:

Recently, one can hear from different sides the slogan ‘Serbs, rally together’. We too believe that Serbs should rally together, but we hasten to add that merely rallying together is not going to be enough unless at the same time the old spirit does not wake up inside the Serbs, the same spirit which used to inspire their strength and greatness in the past, that same faith in the national ideals and that same manly decisiveness to sacrifice everything else for the sake of those ideals. What we need today is a moral revival. Within its limited powers, our paper will serve that revival.⁷³

Despite an increasingly Serb nationalist discourse, the SKK did not reject Yugoslavia as a state. Its members argued that Yugoslavia could only be strong if ‘Serbdom’ was strong, not weak and divided. Indeed, the motto of *Srpski glas* was ‘Strong Serbdom – strong Yugoslavia’.⁷⁴ Slobodan Jovanović, the Club’s chairman, argued in an article published in the newspaper that Serbs had a twofold role in post-1939 Yugoslavia: to defend Serbian interests, but also to make sure that the central government functioned and that Yugoslavia became stronger not weaker.⁷⁵ In the same article, he also argued that Yugoslavism was not incompatible with Serbian and Croatian nationalisms. He saw Yugoslavism as a *state* idea, whereas Serbianism and Croatianism were *national* ideas.⁷⁶ Jovanović believed that Serbs and Croats should revert to the original Yugoslavism of the Illyrians, which was a reaction against a threat from an external enemy (Hungarians). According to him, Yugoslavia should be based on the self-interest of Serbs and Croats to live in a common state, which would best protect them from their neighbours and bigger powers.⁷⁷ Again, this was not unlike Maček’s own view of Yugoslavia – a union of close, but separate peoples, not a Yugoslav nation-state.

Yet, even in the post-agreement atmosphere, when the Serbian question virtually replaced the Croatian one, the position *Srpski glas* took – another article began with ‘It is time for a pure Serbian voice to be heard’⁷⁸ – provoked strong criticism from a number of prominent Serbs. The paper started a polemic with a rival publication *Napred (Forward)*, published by a group of Serbian federalists led by Mihailo Ilić, a constitutional expert who helped draft the Decree for the Formation of the *banovina* of Croatia and a vocal proponent of federalism. Arguing that most Yugoslavs – but particularly Serbs – did not understand the real meaning and advantages of federalism, the group around Ilić compared the situation in Yugoslavia to the one in the United States in 1787, when leading thinkers debated the federation and explained its meaning to the public.⁷⁹ Aware that most Serbs probably feared that the federalisation would weaken the state unity and could even lead to disintegration, editors of *Napred* argued that,

Conscious of all political, national and cultural components [that have formed] our country and [as] defenders of their rights and aspirations, we remain supportive of a single and strong state [...] which would preserve and

encourage all different [identities]. We have always been, like the old *Federalist* once was in America, for this form [of state, i.e. federation], because it means a desire for unity of all those groups which do not want and cannot accept unitarism. Because now, as then [in 1787], ‘federalism means a true unity and leads to a more complete national harmony’, as [Alexander] Hamilton said.⁸⁰

It were not just the Serbian federalist intellectuals around the *Napred* paper that opposed the SKK. For instance, Dragoljub Jovanović, one of opposition leaders who had campaigned for an agreement with the Croats throughout the 1930s and who spent time in prison for criticising the regime, argued with his former mentor and surname-sake Slobodan Jovanović over the post-1939 developments. Slobodan believed the Serbs made a mistake by not making any concessions to Croats for so long, but then conceded too much in 1939. He also complained that Croats looked down on Serbs as inferior. Dragoljub disagreed, telling the old professor: ‘You are a great Serb, but you must not become a Greater Serb’. One of Dragoljub’s younger party colleagues, who had studied in Paris where he met Julien Benda, published a pamphlet accusing Slobodan Jovanović of ‘intellectual treason’.⁸¹

Conclusion

This chapter has offered a brief analysis of the Serb question which escalated following the creation of an autonomous Croatia in 1939, but had already emerged several years earlier. It became apparent from the mid-1930s that the Serbian Orthodox Church and nationalist intelligentsia were increasingly frustrated with developments in Yugoslavia. After the 1939 Agreement many Serbs – both those living in Croatia and those in the rest of Yugoslavia – sought to ‘rally together’ all their compatriots in an autonomous Serbian unit, while the Slovenes and Bosnian Muslims called for the creation of their own *banovinas*. By the tenth anniversary of the 1929 dictatorship, King Alexander’s integral Yugoslavism was all but abandoned, even by many Serbs, normally seen as inherently integralist.

Three factors led to the escalation of the Serbian question in the aftermath of the Cvetković-Maček agreement. First, a large number of Serbs were included within the boundaries of the *banovina* of Croatia. Secondly, what started on 26 August 1939 was most likely the federalisation of the country, which to many Serbs amounted to a

prelude to disintegration. Third, the agreement marked the *de facto* end of integral Yugoslavism. It is usually overlooked that not all Serbs embraced King Alexander's integralist ideology, not to mention the Serb parties' opposition to the royal dictatorship. However, the Serbs, as the largest and geographically the most scattered Yugoslav 'tribe', were generally happier than other Yugoslavs to live in a centralised state in which only one, Yugoslav, nation officially existed. With the abandonment of integral Yugoslavism, the question of a Serb identity within Yugoslavia arose. (It may be argued that the problem exists in present-day, post-Yugoslav Serbia).

If the solution of the Croat question led to the opening-up of the Serbian one, and put an end to the democratisation of the country, the beginning of federalisation promised to bring long-term stability. By the late 1930s a decentralised state became acceptable to many Serbs, not only to non-Serbs. When Yugoslavia re-emerged in 1945, it was as a federation, albeit a non-democratic one. The South Slav state had never been a democratic federation in some 70 years of its existence, so it will never be known whether such form of government would have led to stability and ultimately to the preservation of the common state. However, it is probable that had the Yugoslav kingdom not been formed along such strict centralist lines, the interwar period may have been less volatile. If the enthusiastic reception in Zagreb, described at the beginning of the chapter, had taken place twenty years earlier, it is possible that things would have been different. Without the Croat question, the Serb question might not have emerged either. The South Slav state might not have survived the Axis' assault in 1941 in any scenario, but with a more harmonious interwar period, the Second World War in Yugoslavia may not have been so violent.

Notes

¹ Terms such as 'Serb question' and 'Croat question' were used widely at the time, to refer to what may be described as a complex set of national and socio-economic issues and aspirations.

² Bosnian Muslims' confessional autonomy was recognised, but many Croats and Serbs regarded them as Islamized members of their own 'tribe'. The classic, still unmatched study of various national questions in early twentieth century Yugoslavia, that is particularly good on Albanians, Macedonians and Montenegrins, is I. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984). Another important work on the national question is A. Djilas, *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919-1953*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

³ See my book *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst and New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). The present work draws on chapters 5 and 6 of the book.

⁴ 'Zagreb je svečano i oduševljeno dočekaao Nj. Kr. Vis. Kneza Namesnika i Kneginju Olgu', *Politika*, 15 January 1940.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Croatian State Archives, Zagreb (hereafter HDA) XXI/87/6021, Izvještaj o poslovanju za I tromjesečje 1940. i o političkim prilikama i događajima u istom tromjesečju. Redarstveno ravnateljstvo, Zagreb, banskoj vlasti banovine Hrvatske, Odjeljenju za unutarnje poslove, Odjelku za državnu zaštitu u Zagrebu, Zagreb, 4 April 1940. New societies registered during the period included: The Croatian Football Association, The Association of Croatian Mountaineering Societies, The Croatian Table Tennis Association, The First Croatian Association of Newspaper Salesmen, The Association of Croatian Teachers' Societies, The Croatian Library Association, The Association of Croatian Dance Teachers and the Croatian Association of Restaurant-owners.

⁷ Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade (hereafter AJ) 37/25/195, 'Projekt zakona o Konkordatu između Sv. Stolice i Kraljevine Jugoslavije', Belgrade, 20 July 1937.

⁸ AJ 37/2/9-11, draft of Stojadinović's speech to parliament, [Belgrade], 23 July 1937.

⁹ For details, see *Primedbe i prigovori na projekat Konkordata između naše države i Vatikana* (Sremski Karlovci: Patrijaršiska štampa, 1936). The Concordat crisis received significant attention in Britain, where some leading members of the Anglican Church sided with the Serbian Orthodox Church. See Nugent Lincoln's [The Bishop of Lincoln] letter to the editor, *The Times*, 7 July 1937.

¹⁰ 'Black Flags in Yugoslavia: Concordat Bill Protests', *The Times*, 21 July 1937.

¹¹ See D. Djokić, "'Leader" or "Devil"? The Ideology of Milan Stojadinović, the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia (1935-39)', in R. Haynes (ed.), *In the Shadow of Hitler: Personalities of the Right in Central-East Europe* (London: I.B. Tauris, forthcoming).

¹² Bachmeteff Archives, Columbia University, New York, Papers of Prince Paul (hereafter BAR PPP), box 12, Vojislav Jovanović to Prince Paul, Belgrade, 23 July 1937.

¹³ 'Angered Church in Yugoslavia: Funeral To-Day of Patriarch', *The Times*, 29 July 1937. Some leaders of the Islamic community in Yugoslavia openly sided with the Serbian Orthodox Church over the Concordat issue.

¹⁴ Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University (hereafter HIA), Dragiša Cvetković Collection, Prince Paul folder, Stojadinović to Prince Paul, Belgrade, 18 August 1937; *The Times*: 'Church and Cabinet in Yugoslavia', 5 August 1937, 'Processions Banned in Yugoslavia: Journalist to Leave', 22 July 1937, and 'Alarmist rumours in Yugoslavia', 16 August 1937.

¹⁵ AJ 37/2/9-11, draft of Stojadinović's speech to the parliament, [Belgrade], July 1937. Stojadinović claimed that throughout the crisis he had a full support from Archbishop Bauer and Archbishop-Coadjutor Stepinac. HIA, Dragiša Cvetković Collection, Prince Paul folder, Stojadinović to Prince Paul, Bled, 26 August 1937.

¹⁶ 'Alarmist rumours in Yugoslavia', *The Times*, 16 August 1937.

¹⁷ M. Djilas, *Memoir of a Revolutionary* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 306.

¹⁸ M. Radojević, *Udružena Opozicija, 1934-39* (Belgrade: INIS, 1994), p. 176.

¹⁹ M. Stojadinović, *Ni rat, ni pakt: Jugoslavija između dva rata* (Rijeka: Otakar Keršovani, 1970), p. 517.

²⁰ V. Maček, 'Hrvati su katolički, ali ne klerikalni narod', *Vodja govori: Ličnost, izjave, govori i politički rad vodje Hrvata Dra. Vladka Mačeka* (Zagreb: Narodne Novine, 1940), pp. 243-4.

²¹ Lj. Boban, *Maček i politika Hrvatske seljačke stranke. Iz povijesti hrvatskog pitanja, 1918-1941*, 2 volumes, (Zagreb: Liber, 1974), vol. 2, p. 227.

²² Boban, *Maček i politika HSS*, vol. 2, p. 231; M. Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma. Dnevničke beleške 1939-1941; Londonske beleške 1944-1945* (Novi Sad: Mir, 1998), pp. 49-50.

²³ Lj. Boban, *Sporazum Cvetković-Maček* (Belgrade: Institut društvenih nauka – Odeljenje za istorijske nauke, 1965), p. 262.

²⁴ Konstantinović, *Politika Sporazuma*, p. 50.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 49, 51.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 83. Historian Ljubo Boban published in 1965 a virtually identical document (Boban, *Sporazum*, pp. 412-8). Boban acquired the document from Vaso Čubrilović, also a historian and the younger brother of Branko, a minister in the Cvetković-Maček government. Vaso Čubrilović claimed he was given the document by Cvetković personally in 1943.

²⁷ Skopje – or Skoplje in Serbian – was the capital of the medieval Serbian empire, designated as the future capital of the Serbian *banovina* most probably in order to emphasise the apparently Serbian character of 'south Serbia', although virtually no Serbs lived in the area.

²⁸ Boban, *Sporazum*, pp. 412-8.

²⁹ Boban, *Maček i politika HSS*, vol. 2, p. 158. Unfortunately Prince Paul's personal diary does not shed any light on this issue.

³⁰ M. Jovanović Stoimirović, *Dnevnik, 1936-1941* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2000), p. 323.

³¹ BAR PPP, box 2, Cvetković to Prince Paul, Belgrade, 2 May 1939. See also Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma*, pp. 516-8.

³² See M. Radojević, 'Bosna i Hercegovina u raspravama o državnom uredjenju Kraljevine (SHS) Jugoslavije 1918-1941. godine', *Istorija XX veka*, no. 1, 1994, pp. 7-41.

³³ During the Second World War an advisor to the *četnik* leader Mihailović.

³⁴ See M. Radojević, 'Srpsko-hrvatski spor oko Vojvodine 1918-1941', *Istorija XX veka*, no. 2, 1996, pp. 39-73.

³⁵ HDA XXI/89/6129, Naredba svim sreskim načelstvima, ispostavama, gradskim redarstvima i redarstvenim ravnateljstvima od banske vlasti banovine Hrvatske, Zagreb, 11 March 1940.

³⁶ A single-stringed instrument traditionally played by Serbs, Montenegrins, and Croats and Muslims from the Dinaric regions of the former Yugoslavia.

³⁷ HDA XXI/89/6129, Sresko načelstvo u Brčkom, banskoj vlasti banovine Hrvatske, Otsjek [sic] za državnu zaštitu, Brčko, 26 January 1940.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Kostić conveniently ignored the fact that many Bosnian – and Croatian – Serbs fought against Serbia as soldiers in the Habsburg army. The argument that Serbs could not be a minority in Yugoslavia reemerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

⁴¹ HDA XXI/89/6129, Sresko načelstvo u Mostaru, banskoj vlasti banovine Hrvatske, Odjeljak za državnu zaštitu, Predmet: Pokret 'Srbi na okup', Mostar, 16 March 1940. Herzegovina means Duchy ('Vojvodina' in Serbo-Croat). The whole region – Herzegovina – was named after a fifteenth century Duke (*Herzog* in German), who assumed the title the Duke of St. Sava. Duke Stefan Vukšić Kosača is also 'claimed' by some Croats, who call him Stjepan Vukčić Kosača. Duke in Serbo-Croat is *vojvoda*, so Vojvodina and Herzegovina both mean a duchy.

⁴² HDA XXI/89/6129, Sreski načelnik u Petrinji banskoj vlasti banovine Hrvatske, Odjeljak za državnu zaštitu, Predmet: Pokret 'Srbi na okup'[,], otepljenje i odvajanje pojedinih srezova sa područja banovine Hrvatske, Petrinja, 13 March 1940. Glina was the site of the infamous 'church massacre' of August 1941, when the *ustašas* gathered a large group of Serbs inside an Orthodox church and massacred them. The whole region around Lika and Knin witnessed some of the worst fighting in the Second World War and was also one of the areas where the Yugoslav war of the 1990s began.

⁴³ HDA XXI/85/5784, Primorski žandarmerijski puk, Komandantu žandarmerijske brigade banovine Hrvatske, Split, 12 December 1939.

⁴⁴ HDA XXI/89/6129, Sresko načelstvo u Vukovaru banskoj vlasti banovine Hrvatske, Odjelu za unutarnje poslove (Za odjeljak za državnu zaštitu) u Zagrebu, Predmet: Vukovar srez, političke prilike, Vukovar, 2 January 1940. Vukovar, with its mixed Croat-Serb population, was the site of one of the most brutal conflicts in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ I. Jelić, 'O nekim odjecima sporazuma Cvetković-Maček medju Srbima u banovini Hrvatskoj', *Historijski zbornik Slavonije*, vol. 3, 1965, p. 153.

⁴⁷ HDA XXI/87/5979, Načelstvo sreza Bugojnskog, mjesečni izvještaj o javnoj sigurnosti i političkoj situaciji za mjesec prosinac 1939. g., Bugojno, 6 January 1940.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ HDA XXI/89/6129, Predmet: Ocjepljenje [sic] i odvajanje pojedinih [sic] srezova od banovine Hrvatske u vezi sa pokretom 'Srbi na okup', Zagreb, 13 April 1940.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ HDA XXI/88/6053, Ban Šubašić Ispostavi banske vlasti Split, Redarstvenim ravnateljstvima, Zagreb, Split, svim sreskim načelstvima, etc., Zagreb, 7 June 1940.

⁵² HDA XXI/88/6048, Sresko načelstvo Bjelovar, banskoj vlasti banovine Hrvatske, Odjeljku za državnu zaštitu, Bjelovar, 2 March 1940. Emphasis added.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ HDA XXI/89/6129, Načelstvo sreza benkovačkog, banska vlast, odjeljak za državnu zaštitu, Predmet: Pokret 'Srbi na okup' [,], otepljenje i odvajanje pojedinih sreza [sic!] sa područja banovine Hrvatske, Benkovac, 16 March 1940.

⁵⁵ Or, to de-Serbianize, or de-Yugoslavize it. I am grateful to Professor Sarah Kent for making this suggestion. Professor Kent's comments, Book panel: D. Djokić, *Elusive Compromise: A History of*

Interwar Yugoslavia (2007), Association for the Study of Nationalities Convention, Columbia University, New York, 24 April 2009.

⁵⁶ Jovanović Stoimirović, *Dnevnik*, pp. 314-5; Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma*, pp. 105, 170. *Kuna* was the currency of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) during the Second World War and is Croatia's currency today. When it was re-introduced in the early 1990s (following an earlier adoption of the old Croatian chequerboard flag, used in the NDH, but also long before), by the then government of Franjo Tuđman, it led to strong Serb objections.

⁵⁷ In Savska land under 5 hectares formed 75.9 per cent of all land, while in Primorska it was as high as 86.5 per cent. By comparison, in Moravska it was 64.2 per cent and in Dunavska 62.8 per cent. Lj. Boban, 'O političkim previranjima na selu u banovini Hrvatskoj', *Istorija XX veka: Zbornik radova*, vol. 2, Belgrade, 1961, p. 227.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 227-31.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 238-9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

⁶¹ For instance HDA XXI/87/6021, Redarstveno ravnateljstvo Zagreb, banskoj vlasti banovine Hrvatske, Izvještaj o poslovanju za I tromjesečje 1940 i o političkim prilikama i događajima u istom tromjesečju, Zagreb, 4 April 1940.

⁶² HDA XXI/89/6129, Sresko načelstvo u Vukovaru banskoj vlasti banovine Hrvatske, Odjelu za unutarnje poslove (Za odjeljak za državnu zaštitu) u Zagrebu, Predmet: Vukovar srez, političke prilike, Vukovar, 2 January 1940.

⁶³ Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma*, p. 104.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁶⁵ *Politika*, 14 January 1940.

⁶⁶ S. M. D. [Slobodan M. Drašković], "'Velikospstvo'", *Srpski glas*, no. 3, 30 November 1939.

⁶⁷ For its history and activities see Lj. Dimić, *Kulturna politika Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, Belgrade: Stubovi kulture, 1996-97, 3 vols., vol. 1, pp. 507-61, and N. A. Popović, 'Srpski kulturni klub (1937-1941)', *Istorija XX veka*, vol. VII, no. 1-2, 1989, pp. 109-40.

⁶⁸ St. K. Pavlowitch, *Serbia: The History behind the Name*, London, 2002, p. 134.

⁶⁹ Like the lawyer Moljević, Vasić would eventually become a close collaborator of General Mihailović during the Second World War.

⁷⁰ M. Jovičić, 'Reč unapred', in 'Jako srpstvo-jaka Jugoslavija'. *Izbor članaka iz 'Srpskog glasa', organa Srpskog kulturnog kluba 1939-1940* (Belgrade: Naučna knjiga, 1991), p. 5.

⁷¹ Editorial, *Srpski glas*, no. 1, 16 November 1939.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Similar arguments could be heard in the 1980s, during the revival of Serbian nationalism in the last decade of socialist Yugoslavia.

⁷⁵ S. Jovanović, 'Jugoslovenska misao', *Srpski glas*, no. 8, 4 January 1940. For Jovanović's wartime political career and his views on the 1939 *Sporazum* see St. K. Pavlowitch's chapter in this volume.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* It is unclear whether Jovanović believed that state idea was possible without 'state nation' (*Staatsvolk*). I thank Dr Aleksa Djilas for pointing out to me this apparent contradiction in Jovanović's argument.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* See also A. Pavković, *Slobodan Jovanović: An Unsentimental Approach to Politics*, (Boulder, Co. and New York: East European Monographs, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 199-204.

⁷⁸ [Ed.], 'Naša reč', *Srpski glas*, no. 1, 16 November 1939.

⁷⁹ [Mihailo Ilić], 'Smisao i zadaci federacije', *Napred*, 28 October 1939.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* Hamilton, together with James Madison and John Jay, was the editor of *The Federalist*, and one of the authors of the US Constitution (the *Napred* article also refers to Madison and Jay). For more on the views of the *Napred* group see also [Mihailo Ilić], 'Federacija, nacija i nacionalizam', *Napred*, 13 December 1939.

⁸¹ For details see Djokić, *Elusive Compromise*, pp. 253-8.