

Croatian National Youth — (HANA O):¹ contribution to the study of the activity and work of croatian youth organizations in the kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes

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In this paper, the author will present the genesis, the subsequent activity, and development of two Croatian National Youth organizations (HANA O) in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The establishment of both organizations took place at the time of the concentration of Croatian parties in an opposition 'Croatian Block', i.e. after the adoption of the Vidovdan Constitution, which proclaimed a centralized system of government. During the period of their activity, each of these organizations had a different approach to the struggle against the centralized government of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Kingdom of SHS). For a certain period of time, their ideological programs, particularly in respect of the Croatian ethnic issue, were the total opposite of each other. In their activity, both HANA O organizations demonstrated indirect commitment to some of the programs of Croatian political parties that were active in the political scene of the Kingdom of SHS.

Introduction

In the historiography of the period of the Kingdom of SHS and subsequently, from 1929, of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, political youth organizations, their creation, development, and activity have not received adequate attention, with the exception of the Young Communist League of Yugoslavia (SKOJ), about which many papers

¹ Although in the majority of program documents and newspapers HANA O is named Croatian Popular Youth, the name Croatian National Youth has become ingrained in the Croatian historiography and, to avoid any misunderstanding, will therefore be used in this paper. Cf.: Ljubo Boban, *Controversies from the History of Yugoslavia*, 1 vols (Zagreb: Školska knjiga — Stvarnost, 1987), p. 349., Ivo Banac, *Ethnic Issue in Yugoslavia — the Origin, History, Politics* (Zagreb: Globus, 1988), p. 181.

have been written though many of them have not been critically reviewed.² Apart from two works by the Serbian historian Branislav Gligorgijević about the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (ORJUNA) and Serbian National Youth (SRNAO) written in the 1960s,³ other, non-Communist youth organizations in the Kingdom of SHS were not particularly studied. Although such organizations were mentioned in all historical syntheses of that period, it occurred segmentally, without any specific data and, because of the lack of research of this particular historical matter, without the possibility of providing any concrete historical conclusions about their activity. So, in his most recent work *Political Reality of Yugoslavism*, the historian Srećko Džaja had every reason to conclude that Croatian National Youth (HANA O), Muslim National Youth (MUNA O), Slovene National Youth (SLONA O), Organization of Bačka Croatian Nationalists (ORBUNA) 'in research works have remained known almost only by their respective names'.⁴ Also, in the new book by Bosiljka Janjatović about the repression of the opposition by the Government and its organizations in Croatia (1918–1935), HANA O and its activity are hardly mentioned at all.⁵

Barely known is the very fact that in the same period (1921–1925) two organizations of Croatian National Youth (HANA O) were founded, with different programs and ideological aims, connected with different party groups influencing their methods of activity. This fact also clearly indicates certain divisions of Croatian intellectual and political elite, including the youth as well, over solving the Croatian ethnic issue and the vision of the newly created Yugoslav state in the initial period of its existence. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to present the ideological structure of two HANA O organizations, particularly with regard to the Croatian ethnic issue, the reasons for their creation, and the course of their political activities in the areas of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This paper will not solve all questions regarding these organizations, but provides a basis for future research.

Due to the parallelism of the names of both organizations, in this paper the HANA O organization established at the Zagreb University in 1921 will be called Academic HANA O, while the one established in Vukovar in 1922 will be called just HANA O.



After the establishment of a new state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the question of its system of government was the core question of socio-political relations and all parties offered their respective platforms for the internal structure of the government administration. However, due to the predominance of centralist-unionist groups, Great-Serbian politics, and top-ranking military officers, the process of state centralization was accelerated and took place before the elections for the Constituent

² See Vojo Rajčević, *Revolutionary Youth Movement in Croatia 1919–1941*, 1 and 2 vols, (Zagreb: Centar društvenih djelatnosti SSOH, 1979)., Petar Kačevanda, *SKOJ and Youth in War and Revolution*, (Belgrade: Ekspres pres, 1979). Neda Marović, *SKOJ in Dalmatia 1939–1941*, (Split: Dalmacija, 1972)., Srećko Džaja, *Political Reality of Yugoslavism*, (Sarajevo-Zagreb: Svjetlo riječi, 2004), p. 47.

³ Branislav Gligorgijević, 'Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (ORJUNA)', *20th Century History*, 5 (1963), 315–396., Branislav Gligorgijević 'Serbian National Youth (SRNAO)', *Istorijski glasnik*, 2–3, (1964), 3–38.

⁴ Džaja, *idem*, p.47.

⁵ Bosiljka Janjatović, 'Political terror in Croatia 1918–1935', (Zagreb: Dom i svijet, 2002), pp. 70–72.

Assembly, which could have determined the government system of the Kingdom of SHS by a qualified majority of all members in accordance with the Corfu Declaration signed by the Yugoslav Committee and the Serbian government-in-exile in 1917. Prompted by their aspiration to ensure political and economic predominance of Serbia and Serbian people over the other nations of the new state, the Great-Serbian circles were preparing for the adoption of the *octroyed*, the so-called Temporary Constitution of the Kingdom of SHS in 1919, by which the existing Constitution of the Kingdom of Serbia would have been applied to the entire territory, but the attempt to achieve this has failed.⁶ Serbian elites could not permit the coexistence of two centers: Belgrade and Zagreb, each specialized in certain affairs — one for the politics and the other for the economy. The Vidovdan Constitution, adopted by a narrow majority on 28 June 1921, legalized the existing system of government, which rested on markedly centralistic foundations. Subsequently, the political scene of the Kingdom of SHS became radically polarized into two camps; those who defended the Vidovdan Constitution and asked for its preservation on one side and, on the other side, those who asked for its revision or did not recognize it at all. The strongest force against the situation proclaimed by the Vidovdan Constitution was the Croatian Block, established in early August 1921 as a coalition of three parties: Croatian Republican Peasant Party (HRSS), Croatian Union (HZ), and the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP). In spite of their internal differences⁷ and the absolute domination of Radić's Party (HRSS) and his tactics in the new coalition, all three parties viewed the Croatian Block as the best way to send to the Belgrade government a clear message that the Croatian people would not accept the constitution imposed against their will and the Constituent Assembly did not have the legitimacy to adopt a constitution that would apply to Croatia as well.

It should be noted that recurring political crises in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were not caused only by unresolved ethnic issues, but also by a heterogeneous structure of the state composed of nations at different levels of political, economical, and social development, though it is beyond dispute that the ethnic issue was a predominant one and that the struggle for its *fair* definition persisted unceasingly. It was just that struggle that marked the first years of the new state.⁸

The Creation and Activity of Academic Croatian National Youth (HANA O)

Under such circumstances, the academic organization of Croatian National Youth (HANA O) was founded at Zagreb University in spring, most probably in June, 1921,⁹

⁶ Branislav Gligorijević, 'On the Attempt to Impose the So Called Temporary Constitution of the Kingdom of SHS', *Jugoslavenski istorijski časopis*, 3-4 (1966), 105-119.

⁷ The most heated disputes between the parties were caused by the Croatian Party of Rights, which refused any association between Croatia and Serbia, while the other two parties (HRSS, HZ) accepted the idea of a unitary state, asking only for its reconstruction. The problem was in Radić's republicanism, which the Croatian Union, as a monarchism supporting party, could not accept.

⁸ About the first years of the new state: Mira Kolar, *Croatia in the First Yugoslavia, an Outline of its Position-Was it the Crisis of the Government or of the State*, *Collected papers on Croatian politics in 20th Century*, (2004), 191-219.

⁹ The sources do not mention the exact date when the academic HANA O was founded.

by mainly former members of the student organization Yugoslav Democratic Youth League (JDOL).¹⁰ The process of JDOL's disintegration was undoubtedly caused by the disappointment of the Croatian youth in Zagreb University with political processes in their country. In particular, there was disappointment with the forced imposition of the unitarian and centralist government system, but also with the need to close ranks in the face of such politics. This was best expressed by Milan Vukelić, the new president of HANAO, who said that 'our goals will not be easy to achieve ... this way is a hard one and ... leads towards the concentration of all Croats'.¹¹ As the founder of the academic youth organization HANAO, Milan Vukelić, former vice-president of JDOL and editor-in-chief of HANAO's organ *Nova Hrvatska* (New Croatia), became the creator and main initiator of its activity in the initial period of its existence. In its program, the newly established organization endeavoured to rehabilitate the Croatian name among university students, which had been, through the merit of intellectual circles of that time, identified with Austrophilia and Habsburgianism. With its very foundation at the University, the Academic HANAO struck a 'decisive blow against the Yugoslavism among the Croatian youth', 'joined the united Croatian wheel dance', and paved the way for the foundation of other Croatian youth organizations at the University, such as 'Kvaternik' or HRSS.¹² The activity of the Academic HANAO remained restricted to Zagreb University, to the expansion of the organization, promotion of national consciousness among the students, and campaigns against Yugoslav student clubs within the University.¹³

It was only in the last years of its existence that Academic HANAO started to spread to other Croatian towns or towns in which Croats were living. The most important Academic HANAO branch was founded in Sarajevo. A long time had elapsed from the foundation of this organization to the establishment of its practical activity. In its guidelines, HANAO identified its activity with that of 'progressive youth' from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, asserting in particular its policy of 'delicate work' in the masses. Feeling that there was no direct contact between intellectual circles and the people, HANAO saw its role as establishing such contact. Speaking about the merits of the 'progressive youth', which they considered their predecessors, HANAO, it was believed, should take the same road, particularly in 'cultural and sanitary terms' without neglecting 'economic and organizational activities' among the Croatian rural population.¹⁴ The first cultural workers were also the first political leaders; they enhanced the people's strength, endurance, and resistance in struggles, but also contributed to their national identity.¹⁵ Both in terms of political programs and ideology, HANAO as an organization was subordinated to the Croatian Union (HZ), a party of Croatian urban intellectual circles. This occurred simply because the Croatian Union's evolution in respect to the Croatian ethnic issue: its approach to the monarchism and State administration system were taken over and

¹⁰ More about the Yugoslav Democratic League: Konstantin Bastajić, 'Yugoslav Democratic League and its Predecessors', *Collection of papers of the Faculty of Law in Zagreb*, 3–4 (1962), 166–180.

¹¹ *Hrvat*, 8 November 1919, p. 3. Rajčević, *Revolutionary Youth Movement in Croatia 1919–1941*, *Idem*, p. 37.

¹² 'Post-War Movements Among Croatian Academic Youth', *Nova Hrvatska*, 15 January 1924, p. 23.

¹³ In nineteen twenties, Zagreb University had about five thousand students.

¹⁴ Milan Vukelić, 'Our Standpoint and Guidelines', *Nova Hrvatska*, 15 January 1924, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Idem*, p. 3.

incorporated in HANAO's programs. *Hrvat*, the main organ of the Croatian Union, followed attentively HANAO's activities in its reports and HANAO itself did not absolutely deny their connection, pointing out that the greatest and best part of the Croatian youth had joined the Croatian Union ranks and that even many HANAO members were 'organized in that party'. HANAO's activities are just 'wider and more versatile than those of the Croatian Union, but our activities have never been and will never be in conflict'.¹⁶

Over time, the positions of Academic HANAO with respect to the Yugoslav state were growing increasingly more hardline and started to diverge from the positions of the Croatian Union. Under the slogan 'Balkan orientation actually means no orientation', HANAO expressed its hostility towards the West, in particular to Italy and Great Britain, claiming that they were 'suffocating' the newly established Slav states. It could not forgive the great 'non-Slav' powers for the loss of 'Croatian Rijeka' and Trieste, accusing them that their intention was 'to seal mouths, to close windows and doors' to all Slav states and to keep them in a state of economic subjection, thus showing its support to the Slav orientation.¹⁷ In a state of resignation, particularly after Radić's failed West European tour seeking support, HANAO started to search for its way somewhere on the boundary of 'the East and the West [...] without falling under either eastern or western exclusive influence [...] but, as a special and specific nation [...] should actually represent a bridge between the East and the West'.¹⁸

In the last years of its activity HANAO increasingly recognized the lead of the university organization HRSS, as the Croatian Union was submitting itself to the dictate of Radić, acting in a conciliatory and cooperative manner. So, in order to avoid confrontation between Croatian youth organizations, it withdrew its candidates from the election lists. During the elections for the Yugoslav Academic Benefit Association (JAPD), which subsidized poor students, HANAO withdrew its candidates for the Committee members and, in the general interest, ceded their positions to HRSS. At its 5th Ordinary Meeting, HANAO introduced a resolution supporting its gradual merger with the university HRSS, stating that HANAO in its future activity 'will continue to put all its efforts in the idea of a Croatian state' and that it will continue to nourish 'independence', but also 'support HRSS'.¹⁹

The Foundation of Croatian National Youth (HANAO) in Vukovar

After having squared the accounts with communists and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ), which had won several local elections in Vukovar during 1920, by adopting the National Protection Act in early 1921, which legalized the prosecution and imprisonment of communists, the ruling regime pounced on the supporters of HRSS, who represented the strongest obstruction to further centralization of the state. Under the Act adopted in 1922, by which the state was subdivided into

¹⁶ Idem, p. 5.

¹⁷ Milan Vukelić, 'Pact of Rome, Rijeka and the Croats, Croatian Rijeka as a victim of non — Slav economic imperialism' *Nova Hrvatska*, 15 February 1924, pp. 15–16.

¹⁸ Milan Vukelić, 'Bridge', *Nova Hrvatska*, 15 April 1924, p. 150.

¹⁹ 'Resolution Hanao', *Hrvat*, 28 November 1924, p. 4.

thirty-three administrative districts, the towns Vukovar, Županja and Vinkovci were included in a newly created Syrmian District with Vukovar as its centre. Clearly showing their intention to Serbianize this region as efficiently as possible, the ruling parties of Great-Serbian orientation were colonizing the Counts Eltz estate in Syrmia and other Slavonic estates with Serbian families (about eight thousand colonists) and thus intentionally changing the ethnic structure of that area in favour of the Serbs. Supported by the government authorities, they established a number of nationalist Chetnik associations, all with the aim to force the Croats and other non-Serbian population either to emigrate or to assimilate. Particularly aggressive in the Vukovar area was the National Radical Party, which harassed and exerted strong pressure upon all those who did not agree with its standpoints and politics. Such politics led to the division of Croatian and Serbian populations in the Vukovar area, causing conflicts and further polarization. How electrified the situation was in Vukovar at that time is shown in an unpublished proposal by Dr Rudolf Horvat, from the presidency of HRSS, a member of HANAO's Big Five Council and a candidate of HRSS in Virovitica County, for the exchange of twenty three thousand Croats from the Eastern Syrmia for the same number of Serbs from the Western Syrmia.²⁰

The convincing victory of the Croatian Block in the elections in Vukovar on 17 February 1922 caused a new wave of repression and violence. In its endeavours to demonstrate the Croatian character of Vukovar, from 8 to 9 June 1922, on the occasion of the inauguration and consecration of the Croatian Community Centre in Vukovar, the triumphant Croatian Block staged a great celebration, which was attended by many other Croatian associations, such as Osijek, Vinkovci, Zemun, Županja, Subotica, and Zagreb. Pro-Yugoslav and Serbian associations from Vukovar imposed a boycott on this celebration and issued a written statement about their refusal to participate in the inauguration of the Croatian Community Centre. However, the response from the Croats came very quickly, because all Croatian associations from Vukovar refused to participate in the consecration of the flag of the Serbian singing club *Javor* from Vukovar, saying that 'the Serbs of Vukovar want to undermine Croatian liberty by their obtrusiveness and insults'.²¹

Shortly thereafter, the Democratic Party of S. Pribičević founded in Vukovar a branch of the Yugoslav Nationalist Organization (ORJUNA). Their members, supported by government authorities, attacked Croatian nationalists and other Croatian intellectuals and workers. Under these circumstances, the Croatian Block encouraged the foundation of the Croatian National Youth (HANAO) organization as a counter-balance to ORJUNA, and so HANAO was founded in Vukovar by a group of students from Zagreb University in August 1922. The detrimental activity of ORJUNA, which 'for Judas pay' terrorized its brother Croats in the service of Belgrade's centralism, had been discussed already at the Croatian Block meeting in March 1922. The Croatian youth was warned not to be tricked by those who wanted to isolate Dalmatia from Zagreb and Croatia.²² Stjepan Radić himself pointed out at some

²⁰ Mira Kolar-Dimitrijević, 'Proposal by the historian Rudolf Horvat for the exchange of Eastern and Western Syrmia population in 1922', *Collection of historical papers*, 49 (1996), 209–218.

²¹ 'Attention. To Croats of Vukovar on the eve of the consecration of the flag of the Serbian singing club *Javor*' *Gvozđ*, 20 September 1922, p. 2.

²² 'Have not the separation', *Slobodni dom*, 2 April 1922, pp. 4–5.

meetings that nationalists should be opposed and encouraged the Croatian youth to offer open resistance because 'should ORJUNA supporters ever come to a village, they would never go away'.²³ The foundation of HANAO was actually a response to ORJUNA's political activity and this was clearly stated in the first issue of HANAO's official paper *Gvozd*, in which it was underlined that the founding of HANAO helped the Croats 'to withstand the attack of the local fascist organization which, thanks to the support by Vukovar democratic and radical community, had a big advantage' and all Croats 'threatened by the fascists' were invited 'to react and rouse themselves as soon as they hear about the founding of a fascist organization in their community, to found a Croatian youth organization and launch their organ as soon as possible'.²⁴ The initiator of the new organization was Franjo Gruber, who was also the editor-in-chief of *Gvozd*, which was published from time to time in 1922 (six issues) and 1923 (nine issues).²⁵ In its first manifesto, the newly established organization calls for the creation of 'an unyielding Falanga' that will 'in a single battle [...] in a single fierce clash [...] repel any attack at the Croats in general' and points out that HANAO will be committed to the 'sublime mission of defending Croatianism' by all available means.²⁶

Before the transfer of the organization's seat to Zagreb, HANAO had spread very quickly over Eastern Slavonia and Syrmia, so that its first branches were established in Osijek, Vinkovci, Petrovaradin, Mitrovica, Ilok, Nijemci, and Tovarnik, followed by those in Sarajevo, Bihać, Dubrovnik, Senj, and Šibenik, among others. The creation of HANAO organizations spread in early 1923, particularly on the eve of the elections of the same year. Some of these organizations did not survive for a long time, while some others passed under the leadership of Academic HANAO like, for example, the one in Sarajevo.

Conflicts between the Croatian National Youth (HANAO) and the supporters of Yugoslav Nationalist Organization (ORJUNA) and Serbian National Youth (SRNAO)

Founded with the aim 'to defend Croatianism' from 'Great-Serbianism and false Yugoslavism', HANAO most frequently came into conflict with the supporters of ORJUNA (in Bosnia and Herzegovina mostly with SRNAO), wishing to pull out a part of Croatian youth from that organization and opposing its terror. As early as in the second half of 1922, fierce physical and armed clashes had occurred in different Croatian towns, which developed into some form of a civil war. Dominik Bubmer, a HANAO member, was seriously wounded by ORJUNA supporters in an armed clash in Šibenik in early June.²⁷ In the same month in Osijek a fierce fight took place between HANAO and ORJUNA in front of the Croatian Community Centre, in

²³ Josip Horvat, *Croatian Political History 1918–1929*, (Zagreb: Tipografija, 1938), p. 214.

²⁴ Committee Hanao, 'From Croatian National Youth', *Gvozd*, 13 September 1922, p. 3.

²⁵ The main motto, featured on the front page of the newspaper, read: 'Gvozd is an independent newspaper committed to cultural and national recognition of Croatianism. We stick to that eternal maxim of fearless warriors: Or we, as the Croats, shall live with dignity of a modern and cultural man, or we shall disappear [...] Life or grave!'

²⁶ 'Why Gvozd?', *Gvozd*, 13 September 1922, p. 1.

²⁷ 'Dominik Bumber', *Gvozd*, 14 June 1923, p. 4.

which many people were injured.²⁸ As a response of ORJUNA's attack against the members of Croatian Falcon who were on an excursion lead by Dr Rudolf Horvat, HANAO killed a young ORJUNA supporter in Gospić Milan Cervar.²⁹ A serious incident happened in Zagreb when the members of ORJUNA, lead by Berislav Anđelinović, attacked with sticks HANAO members at the Croatian Coffee House (*Hrvatska kavana*); eight persons were seriously injured and the police caught six armed ORJUNA members.³⁰ Democratic newspaper *Riječ* (The Word) reported that in a conflict between the HANAO and ORJUNA in mid March, sixty shots were fired and two policemen were injured, one 'seriously and the other lightly'.³¹ Soon thereafter, policeman Milo Galović was killed in a clash with HANAO in Zagreb.³² In a clash between ORJUNA and HANAO, near the *Corso* coffee house in Zagreb, three people were badly wounded and five lightly, some of whom were just passers-by.³³ A few months earlier, in an armed conflict between a number of HANAO and ORJUNA supporters on Jelačić Square, HANAO member Rudolf Rožić had been killed.³⁴ Government authorities used that incident to impose a 9p.m. curfew, after which all coffee bars, restaurants, and other public places were closed while reinforced gendarmerie squads that had arrived in Zagreb patrolled the streets of the town.³⁵

This, however, could not calm the activity of the Croatian nationalists and the strong and radical HANAO organization from Osijek, when an attempted assassination at the Tačković Hotel seriously wounded Boško Mašić, editor-in-chief of the ORJUNA's newspaper *Budućnost* (The Future).³⁶ In the same town, in a clash in Jelačić Square, a group of HANAO supporters with 'large calibre guns' seriously wounded ORJUNA member Šabatalj Fincl, who only just survived, and a few months later HANAO killed two ORJUNA supporters.³⁷ Many newspapers and institutions appealed for the cessation of violence in Croatia. The appeals for the cessation of violence among the youth were also promoted by *Nova Europa*, a Yugoslav newspaper with Milan Čurčin as the editor-in-chief. The newspaper accused both ORJUNA and HANAO for having adopted Mussolini's fascist idea of patriotism and politics and that HANAO, as 'a typical chauvinist organization, resurrects slogans over the Croatian kingdom which had been dead for a thousand years, while the other organization takes a bomb and a gun in its hand and destroys printing-offices and coffee bars in the name of a united people's will and state'.³⁸

²⁸ 'A Fight in Osijek', *Gvozđ*, 28 June 1923, p. 3.

²⁹ B. Gligorijević, 'Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (ORJUNA)', *Idem*, p. 325.

³⁰ 'About the ORJUNA Attack at the Croatian Youth', *Hrvatska sloga*, 4 February 1923, p. 3.

³¹ 'Riots in Zagreb', *Riječ*, 20 March 1923, p. 3. In late January in Tkalčićeva Street of Zagreb, ORJUNA leader B. Anđelović was badly wounded in a clash between ORJUNA and HANAO supporters. Two policemen were also injured. Fighter, 'Mercenary Mob Attacks', *Hrvatski borac*, 3 February 1923, p. 2.

³² V. Rajčević, *Revolutionary Youth Movement in Croatia 1919–1941*, *idem*, p. 122.

³³ 'Gun fire in the streets of Zagreb', *Novi hrvatski borac*, 17 July 1923, p. 3.

³⁴ 'Let's not forget', *Novi hrvatski borac*, 1 August 1923, p. 3.

³⁵ 'For Public Order and Security in Zagreb', *Riječ*, 13 June 1923, p. 4.

³⁶ 'Bandit assault', *Radikalna omladina*, 26. January 1923, p. 2.

³⁷ 'Bloody Fight on the Jelačić Square in Osijek', *Radikalna omladina*, 27 April 1923, p. 3., V. Rajčević, *Revolutionary Movement idem*, p. 123.

³⁸ 'New Youth', *Nova Europa*, Vol. VII, 1 May 1923, p. 407.

Ideology of the Croatian National Youth (HANA O)

The ideology of the Croatian National Youth is radical Croatian nationalism, which was a response to the terror of government authorities and ORJUNA. Under the motto 'One power drives out another', ever since its foundation, HANA O used terrorist means against the power-holders supporting integral Yugoslavism and members of ORJUNA and SRNA O. Established primarily as a response to the foundation of ORJUNA, HANA O set as its objective to be the unification of all Croatian countries, such as Banovina, Dalmatia, Herzeg-Bosnia and Slavonia, to close ranks and withstand a force which 'wants to destroy us'.³⁹ In fact, HANA O never outgrew the stage of a weakly interconnected youth organization in different Croatian towns, in spite of the 'congress of unification' held in Sarajevo. It never presented a clear and firm action plan nor worked to strengthen the organization, but only declaratively called the Croats 'to gather in strong, unbeatable Falange ranks'.⁴⁰ It served as a means for Croatian parties (the Croatian Block, in particular) for the mobilization of the electoral body, disqualification of political enemies and, in certain political situations, as a means of pressure upon the ruling regime and its people. In its public activity, using pure slogans and demagogic singling-out, HANA O called on its members to 'fight', to finally beat the enemies down 'in their own blood'.⁴¹ This resembles a dose of militarism; 'each HANA O member should be a soldier', and the calls to both *struggle* and *sacrifice* that appear in all HANA O's public appeals formed its political activity and methods, which actually boiled down to violence upon their opponents. Though it was frequently branded as a fascist organization by its opponents, HANA O never defended itself from such allegations, choosing only to respond that the fascists were on the other side. Taking into account its structure, such as the fact that HANA O had never celebrated its holidays, worn special uniforms, or consecrated its flags like ORJUNA, the similarity with fascism existed only in ideological and declarative terms. Croatian nationalists also spoke about the 'power of organization' where an individual must sacrifice his or her 'personal freedom'. The nationalists also nourished the cult of a state for which it is 'desirable to die' and held 'struggle', 'sacrifice', 'duty', 'heroism', and 'blood brotherhood', among others, as paramount values. While fascism as a system tended to be a state within the state, neglecting people's traditions was unacceptable to HANA O. Yet there were some differences within HANA O when it came to the means and methods for the achievement of the national program. A weaker and more moderate fraction was in agreement with the Serbs regarding a federation of three equal people, and responded to the regime's violence with slogans that the Croatian people 'want amputation — amputation of Tzintzars and street politics from the entire state, wants a dictatorship — the dictatorship of honest Croatian, Serbian and Slovene people. They want a Proclamation — against rich ministers [...] and those who wanted to plunge the country in bloodshed'.⁴² The more radical, militant fraction stuck to the principles of 'national revolution' and resistance 'to the end', because the Croatian people have learned 'the lesson of all revolutions', i.e. that the revolution is unavoidable.⁴³

³⁹ Joe Matošič, 'Salus Croatiae — suprema lex esto' *Hrvatski borac*, 13 January 1923, p. 1.

⁴⁰ "Letters", *Hrvatski borac*, 17 February 1923, p. 2.

⁴¹ 'Bloodshed there shall be', *Hrvatski borac*, 10 February 1923, p. 1.

⁴² Joe Matošič, 'Amputation, Dictatorship, Proclamation', *Novi hrvatski borac*, 7 April 1923, p. 1.

⁴³ Joe Matošič, 'Lesson Learned from the Bulgarian Revolution', *Novi hrvatski borac*, 7 July 1923, p. 1.

HANAO was undoubtedly inspired by the Young-Croatian and Party of Rights' ideology until 1910 by its explicit anti-Serbian positions, so that the HANAO congress was announced as a 'seed from which a new Young Croatia will pop up'.⁴⁴ In HANAO's mythology, prominent positions were reserved for the death of Petar Zrinski and Fran Krsto Frankopan, the 'red-hot crown' of Matija Gubec, where Croatian nationalists sought acceptable mythological patterns as a kind of balance for the 'way to unity' for urban and rural populations. It was pointed out that Croatian peasants had rebelled against the upper class but never 'against the Zrinski and Frankopan families [...] who had the strong support of their countrymen [...] and even Orthodox Croats and that bishop Mijakić'⁴⁵ readily died for them. Today, 350 years after Matija Gubec, the 'martyr from Marc's Square', had given his life for Croatia, the battle goes on.⁴⁶ This notwithstanding, for a part of the Croatian youth, HANAO represented an appropriate response to the government's terror. HANAO's 'sacrifice cult' and cries that 'Croats will no more be slaves', fell on fertile ground under the circumstances of state and police violence. The feeling of humiliation and conviction that a great injustice had been done to the Croatian people overcame a great part of the Croatian youth. In its ideology, HANAO of Bosnia and Herzegovina promoted the myth of the Croatian King Tomislav and his coronation in 'Duvanjsko Polje Valley', thus making it clear that Bosnia belonged to Croatian countries, because 'thousands of victorious flags were waving in the air [...] and the King swung his sword to the four corners of the world, showing that he would defend the Kingdom from any and all enemies'.⁴⁷

The following four sections are a summary of the Croatian nationalists' program, the postulates to which HANAO stuck in its actions and which determined its ideological course of action.

- 1) The newly established state, the Kingdom of SHS, became for HANAO a 'political and state disaster of 1 December 1918' in which the Croatian people 'were taken prisoner and oppressed by fraud, while its state was reduced to a "subjugated province"'.⁴⁸ All promises given to Croatian representatives and various declarations were broken with the 'cynicism of drunk "winners", with the support of great powers'.⁴⁹ The Vidovdan Constitution, referred to as a 'worthless piece of paper', was illegal, null and void for the Croats because it had been adopted without the participation of the Croatian representatives, and those Croats who voted in favour of it were just 'political Serbs'.⁵⁰
- 2) Considering that the Vidovdan Constitution was null and void, preparations should be made 'for international negotiations with Serbia'.⁵¹ The negotiations should ensure full sovereignty because Serbia, as it is, had betrayed Croatia in the Adriatic region 'by selling the Croatian territory' and by 'conferring to Mussolini a White

⁴⁴ Franjo Gruber, 'Independence Croatian people' *Gvozđ*, 13 December 1922, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Vlade Bjelovarčan 'Petar Šubić Zrinski and Fran Krsto Frankopan', *Novi hrvatski borac*, 28 April 1923, p. 1.

⁴⁶ 'Gubec Matija', *Slobodni hrvatski borac*, 24 February 1923, p. 1.

⁴⁷ 'Coronation of King Tomislav', *Hrvatska omladina*, 15 October 1922, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Joe Matošić, 'Salus Croatiae — suprema lex esto', *Hrvatski borac*, 13 January 1923, p. 1.

⁴⁹ *Idem*

⁵⁰ 'Croatian Youth', *Gvozđ*, 28 June 1923, p. 2.

⁵¹ 'People — Sovereign in the State', *Gvozđ*, 4 October 1922, p. 1.

Eagle of the 1st grade'. To achieve this, the Croatian Parliament should be re-established, which will act in compliance with the 'will of all members of the Croatian people' and the institution of *ban* should be restored as a 'symbol of national individuality'. All Croatian parties should accept this program because 'we shall present a united front in face of a power that wants to destroy us'.⁵²

- 3) To close one's eyes to the 'Croatian ethnic issue means criminal insanity'. From the moment the new state was founded, 'for Croats the throne has collapsed' and, as a consequence, all Serbian parties in the Croatian countries were doomed. The Croats will no more groan under the Byzantine yoke; instead of European politics, we have Balkan politics. 'Robbery and theft are in action' in the name of national unity and the people are extremely patient — but even the proverbial pacifistic nature of the Croatian people has its limits.⁵³
- 4) Considering that a fair and equitable agreement with Serbia is not possible, the existing state should be divided so that 'Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia make one state' while 'Croatia with Slavonia, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Slovenia' make another.⁵⁴

In itself, HANAO unified a part of the Croatian youth and there is no doubt that it contributed to their unity by organizing various assemblies, events, and celebrations in the national Croatian spirit. However, while in the beginning it tried to act peacefully, resisting the bearers of the regime and their organizations only through newspaper articles and various resolutions, in time its politics were significantly radicalised. Due to the terror of the regime and ORJUNA, HANAO began to use the same terrorist methods and it transformed into a classical forcible illegal organization, which proclaimed that it will fight until the end. However, it must be mentioned that resorting to violence was not a strategic orientation of HANAO until approximately 1925, due to its loose structure, non-monolithic leadership, and the influence of Croatian parties, particularly HRSS. It can be noticed that the resistance of HANAO towards the regime and ORJUNA was more significant in those areas where the terror of the regime was more atrocious and stronger, while resorting to violence in other areas was occasional and not constant. The city of Zagreb, where HANAO was strongest and where it had its headquarters, was a special case. There ORJUNA was literally breaking apart and facing abolition in the end of 1923 due to the terror of HANAO. In those areas HANAO also had the greatest support of the Croatian people (Osijek, for example), which felt that such a violent answer of the Croatian youth to the atrocious actions of the regime was acceptable, because only in such a way could Croatia oppose the current politics of Belgrade.

HANAO's attitude towards communism and its anti-Semitic politics

Unlike ORJUNA and SRNAO, which entered into fierce conflicts with communists and supporters of the labour movement, HANAO, at least in its initial phase,

⁵² Mate D, 'Croatian Parliament', *Novi hrvatski borac*, 24 March 1923, p. 1., Boža Nikolajević, 'Let's Restore the Ban back to the Croats', *Hrvatski borac*, 13 January 1923, p. 3.

⁵³ 'Croatian Ethnic Issue and Revision of the Constitution', *Hrvatski borac*, 13 January 1923, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Janko Hitrec, 'A Fair and Equitable Agreement with the Serbs is not Possible', *Novi hrvatski borac*, 28 April 1923, p. 2.

cooperated with communists and the Young Labour League in Vukovar and Split, mostly because both of these organizations were exposed to strong pressure from the government's terror and ORJUNA. Josip Cazi, a communist leader from Vukovar, reports 'that on several occasions HANAO and Young Labour League coordinated their actions in the struggle against some ORJUNA supporters, White Guards, and Chetniks'.⁵⁵ Their joint tactics were to beat up individuals and to avoid fighting groups, in both of which they used short sticks with a lead ball on one end. The newspaper *Gvozđ* particularly insisted on finally delivering justice to the assassins of Stjepan Supanc, the communist leader from Vukovar, who had been killed by gendarmes and the White Guard, just 'because he was a communist'. The assassins are free and 'the young idealist Supanc is decomposing on the Vukovar graveyard, waiting for justice that has not come as yet'.⁵⁶ In Senj, the town representatives Anton Antić and Ivan Belobarbić joined the local HANAO branch.⁵⁷ At a HRSS meeting in Split promoting the 'union of workers and peasants', the communists and HANAO supporters prevented a group of ORJUNA supporters in their attempt to obstruct the meeting, and they were 'beaten black and blue'.⁵⁸

However, there was soon an estrangement in their relations and at the Third KPJ Conference, HANAO was described as a fascist organization with which more and more clashes were to be expected, and particular attention should be paid to preventing the Young Labour League from joining the Croatian Nationalists' ranks in great numbers.⁵⁹

In addition to criticizing the Belgrade camarilla, HANAO in its articles and manifestoes often published anti-Semitic slogans and positions, accusing Jews of supporting Croatian enemies with their capital. Anti-Semitism was here a result of ancient prejudice of Jews and was furthered by the difficult economic and political situation in the initial years of the new state. The newspaper *Židov* (The Jew) reported that Jews were capitalists for some people and Bolsheviks for others; 'some blame us for being centralists, other consider us republicans and separatists, and some blame us for not taking any sides, for neglecting any national interests'.⁶⁰ In this spirit, the newspaper *Novi hrvatski borac* suggested to look at 'all our towns in the Civil, Dalmatian, and Herzeg-Bosnian Croatia, in Banat, Bačka and Baranya, to find out who holds the Croatian trade, handicrafts, industry, economy; who exploits in an abusive, criminal way Croatian natural resources [...] because the present Balkan regime so permits and who are the real capitalist-Jewish vampires in our own home — in our Croatian towns'.⁶¹ HANAO tortured individual Jewish merchants in Zagreb, forcing them out of Croatia.⁶²

The tendency of HANAO's withdrawal from the HRSS political line and tactic may be noted from mid-April 1923. Although maintaining its position that nobody shall obstruct the activity of HRSS, because opposing HRSS means 'opposing all

⁵⁵ Josip Cazi, *Vukovar in a Class Struggle*, (Zagreb: Savez sindikata Jugoslavije, 1955), p. 183.

⁵⁶ 'A Horrible Picture of our Present Day', *Gvozđ*, 4 January 1923, p. 3.

⁵⁷ Ante Vlahović 'A Letter from Senj', *Hrvatska omladina*, 12 November 1922, p. 3.

⁵⁸ Drago Gizdić, *Dalmatia in 1941*, (Zagreb: 27. srpanj 1957), p. 40.

⁵⁹ B. Gligorijević, *idem*, p. 379.

⁶⁰ Ivo Goldstein, *Jews in Croatia 1918–1941*, (Zagreb: Liber, 2004), pp. 133–134.

⁶¹ Pero Baković, 'Croatian Youth and the Social Issue', *Novi hrvatski borac*, 15 August 1923, p. 2–3.

⁶² B. Gligorijević, 'Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists', *idem*, p. 367.

those hundred thousand Croats who placed their confidence in HRSS', 'HANA O for the first time questioned the work and activity of HRSS, because if the HRSS fails to implement the will of the Croatian people, it will be condemned by that same people and, in such a case, there are two other parties (the Party of Rights and the Cooperative Movement) which will take their chance'.⁶³ The HRSS policy of relying only upon the peasants proved to be too narrow-minded and inefficient; HRSS is a party without the intellectual and urban component and 'should the government rely only upon one class or one party, its collapse is unavoidable'. Analyzing the reasons for the fall of the Bulgarian peasants' leader A. Stambolijski, and comparing his politics with the politics of HRSS, which 'has the people but does not have the towns', HANA O sent a message to the leaders of HRSS that Stambolijski also 'had villages but not towns, which was his fatal error. To have the whole state, and not to have its towns, means not to have the state either [...] because all revolutions are made in towns, and other places just subject themselves' to the course of events.⁶⁴ HRSS could not permit such a diversion of HANA O from the HRSS political course. *Slobodni dom*, a HRSS newspaper, soon published a communiqué that pointed out that HANA O had come under the influence of the Croatian Party of Rights (the Frankists) and of the 'Frankist upper class members who have been frequently visiting Belgrade ministers lately, held secret meetings with the youth, and spoke about Radić as a totally incompetent person [...] and therefore he and his Peasants Party should be treated in the same way as the Stambolijski and his Bulgarian Peasants Party'.⁶⁵ Dr Rudolf Horvat, a representative of HRSS, resigned from his position as president of the Supreme Council of the HANA O Five and invited all 'young Croats, who are HRSS supporters, to subject themselves, in their political activity, to the president of the relevant local HRSS organization'.⁶⁶ As a response to the HRSS communiqué, letters were sent from HANA O organizations from all parts of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, speaking about the lack of understanding of HANA O's efforts and other aspects of its activity on the part of HRSS. In a statement of the Croatian National Youth from Zagreb, the HRSS communiqué as a whole is viewed as based on misinformation which lead to wrong conclusions, pointing out that "HANA O is a fighting organization which will continue to defend the Croatian peasants, workers and citizens from attacks by terrorist organizations [...] that are supported by pro-regime parties".⁶⁷

However, after having lost the support, including financial support, of the strongest Croatian political party, HRSS, and after the HRSS members resigned their respective positions in the HANA O leadership, HANA O started to decline and lose its members, particularly in the second half of 1924. The newspaper *Nova Hrvatska* published the opinion of their president Milan Vukelić that the main reason for the dropout of the members of the Croatian National Youth (HANA O) was the 'general crisis of both the Young Croatia and Croatian National Youth movements [...] when

⁶³ Joe Matošić, 'Discipline Above All', *Novi hrvatski borac*, 14 April 1923., p. 1.

⁶⁴ Joe Matošić, 'Lesson Learned from Bulgarian Revolution', *Novi hrvatski borac*, 7 July 1923, p. 1.

⁶⁵ 'Declaration' *Slobodni dom*, 11 July 1923, p. 1.

⁶⁶ 'A Voice from the Croatian Countryside. Opinion on the HRSS communiqué', *Novi hrvatski borac*, 25 July 1923, p. 1.

⁶⁷ 'Statement by the Croatian Youth', *Novi hrvatski borac*, 25 July 1923, p. 1.

certain political parties showed a tendency to include them into their routine'.⁶⁸ Zagreb HANAO was the first to dissolve and, after the arrest of Joe Matošić, the editor-in-chief of *Novi hrvatski borac*, who had been sentenced to a five-month imprisonment, *Hrvatski borac* ceased to be published.⁶⁹ At the end of the 1920s, HANAO and its leadership reached a historical turning point. Denying any possibility of HRSS drawing closer to Belgrade, burdened with the past experience, faced with dilemmas regarding the future development, pressed by the growing crisis and, as an organization, and incapable of sudden changes, HANAO actually had no valid guidelines as to where and how to proceed. Persistent in its radical politics, just an insignificant shift was sufficient for HANAO to take sides of the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP) and commit itself to the creation of an independent Croatian state.

Some HANAO organizations in Bosnia and Dalmatia, however, subjected themselves to the leadership of the Academic HANAO in late 1924. Other HANAO organizations were taken over by the Party of Rights and in its newspaper *Starčević* all other organizations, that had not subjected themselves to the Party of Rights, Gustav Perčec calls 'the so called Croatian Youth' and underlines that such organizations do not differ from ORJUNA 'in anything else but in the fact that ORJUNA is our declared opponent' and appeals to the national youth of Sarajevo 'not to deceive the Croatian public'.⁷⁰

Conclusion

This paper tried to explain the activity of the Croatian National Youth (HANAO) in the period from 1921 to 1925, so far scarcely or never addressed in the Croatian historiography. It first examined its main mission of defending the Croatian people from terror and repression of the government authorities and their organizations; and second, it analysed HANAO's activity as a product of the interdependence of the actual political moment and the activity of Croatian political parties. There is no doubt that the appearance of two organizations of the Croatian National Youth (HANAO) on the political scene of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was a product of a stormy and complex political process that had shattered this state from its very beginning. In an accelerated process of centralization, imposed by the ruling Great Serbian elite, Croatia soon lost even the limited political autonomy that it used to have under the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (Local government in Zagreb, Croatian Parliament). Due to various legal and illegal methods, Croatian political, economical, and territorial integrity was broken and Croatia's right to its ethnic individuality was forfeited. In the new state, there were various forms of repression and terror against those who expressed their disagreement or dissatisfaction with such processes. The objective of such politics was to preserve the predominance of Serbia and Serbian people over other peoples of the new state and for that purpose, 'in the name of national unity', the gendarmerie and the army were granted free licence in their struggle with the opponents to the new system of government. Under

⁶⁸ Milan Vukelić, 'About Croatian Youth' *Nova Hrvatska*, 15 October 1924, p. 195.

⁶⁹ 'Matošić sentenced to 5 month imprisonment', *Novi hrvatski borac*, 30 June 1923, p. 1., V. Rajčević, *Revolutionary Youth Movement in Croatia 1919–194*, *idem*, p. 124.

⁷⁰ Gustav Perčec, 'They Have no Right to the Croatian Name', *Starčević*, 1 November 1926, p. 1.

such circumstances, organizations of Croatian National Youth (HANAŌ) were established in Croatia, as a direct response to the terror and violence of the regime and attempts to create a 'great Yugoslav nation'. The first organization was Academic HANAŌ, founded at Zagreb University in 1921 under the patronage of the Croatian Union (HZ), which in a short period of its activity supported the centralization program of that party. In its work, Academic HANAŌ was focused on the cultural and social aspects, insisting on the education of the people and spreading of Croatian ideas. In its actions, it was restricted to Zagreb University and very rarely tried to expand its activity to other areas. The other organization of Croatian National Youth (HANAŌ) was created in a turbulent area of Vukovar District and Syrmia County, where the repression of the regime, which viewed this area as a part of the envisaged *Great Serbia*, was more intensive and persisting. Founded under the patronage of the Croatian Block in Vukovar in 1922, HANAŌ spread quickly to other parts of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and launched its attack against the regime and its politics with its own terrorist means, sticking to the motto 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'. Viewing the establishment of the new state as a 'political and administrative disaster', HANAŌ started to attack ORJUNA and SRNAŌ supporters, civil servants and 'national traitors' with lead sticks and guns, organizing the assassinations of the editors-in-chief of their newspapers, fighting with gendarmes and the members of the Royal Army in the streets of Croatian towns.

Although it never transformed into a firm, homogeneous organization with rules, discipline, and a well-defined course of action, in a part of the Croatian youth HANAŌ developed into an adequate response to the violence of the regime, enjoying wide support in some Croatian areas. In its activity, HANAŌ manifested a strong dose of anti-Semitism, because Jews were frequently the target of its accusations of the 'economic and financial exploitation' of Croatia. HANAŌ used to call them 'the servants of Belgrade' and there were some physical clashes. Falling more and more into radicalism, HANAŌ gradually started to draw its views closer to those of the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP), which advocated the establishment of an independent Croatian state and putting an end to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Aware of the fact that it was losing its grip on HANAŌ, the Croatian Republican Peasant Party (HRSS) of Stjepan Radić, which at the time represented the Croatian interests, in its communiqué gave up this organization, suspending any further financial support and forbidding its members to come to Croatian villages, which contributed to a faster division and dissolution of HANAŌ and eventually lead to its disappearance from the political scene in late 1925.

Author Query

Journal title: SLV
Volume and issue: 20/1
Article title: Croatian National Youth — (HANA O): contribution to the study
of the activity and work of croatian youth organizations in the
kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes
Author name: Željko Karaula

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