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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Ksenija Butorac, Dijana Gracin PHENOMENOLOGY OF JUVENILE CRIME IN CROATIA	3
Ljiljana Stevković, Antonija Raspopović, Danica Vasiljević-Prodanović STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF VICTIMIZATION AND PERPETRATION OF ONLINE VIOLENCE.....	21
Miodrag N. Simović, Vladimir M. Simović INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR DAMAGE COMPENSATION FOR UNJUSTIFIED CONVICTION AND ILL-FOUNDED DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY	41
Katerina Krstevska Savovska THE RIGHT TO RESPECT FOR PRIVATE LIFE - CASE OF TRAJKOVSKI AND CHIPOVSKI V. MACEDONIA	53
Zorica Mršević LGBTI PEOPLE IN SERBIA BETWEEN HOMOPHOBIC VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION.....	65
Dragana Ćorić GLOSSA ABOUT HATRED	79
Gianina-Anemona Radu ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES: A CHALLENGE WITH SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS ON OUR WELL-BEING.....	93
Zoran Đurđević, Predrag Popović, Gojko Šetka IMPLEMENTATION OF CRIMINAL CONTROL OVER FOREIGN FIGHTERS	105
Svetlana Nikoloska FINANCIAL INVESTIGATIONS AND CONFISCATION OF PROPERTY AND OTHER CRIMINAL RELATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA	121

Gordana Damjanović, Danijela Petrović

COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGES DUE TO BREACH
OF TRADE SECRET.....137

Jozef Meteňko, Miriam Meteňková

PHOTOGRAPHY AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN CRIMINALISTICS 153

Milana Pisarić

LAWFUL HACKING – TECHNICAL ISSUES IN LAW175

Alexander Redko

LEGAL INITIATIVES IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATION SECURITY
(ON THE EXAMPLE OF RUSSIA)195

Marjan Gjurovski

IMPACTS OF ORGANISED CRIME ON CITIZENS
AND NATIONAL SECURITY209

Ivana Luknar, Ilija Životić

CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL POLICE COOPERATION221

Branko Leštanin, Željko Nikač

USE OF FORCE BY THE POLICE IN SERBIA
AND CROATIA: STATE AND TENDENCIES235

Gábor Kovács

AGAINST DIFFERENT FORMS OF CRIME - MAIN DIRECTIONS
OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION
IN THE FIELD OF LAW ENFORCEMENT IN HUNGARY 253

Radomir Zekavica, Ivana Krstić Mistridželović

THE INFLUENCE OF IDEAS OF CIVIL REVOLUTIONS
ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MODERN POLICE IN SERBIA.....265

Jovan Simijanović, Predrag Terzić

PUBLIC SECURITY IN KRALJEVO - RANKOVIĆEVO (1944-1955)279

Christian Schwöder

VIRTUAL TEAM LEADERSHIP SPECIAL CHALLENGES
FOR MANAGERS.....297

**Snežana Stojičić, Nataša Petrović, Radovan Radovanović,
Milesa Srečković, Zoran Milanović**

SOME ASPECTS OF FORENSICS IN DIGITAL FUTURE.....315

PUBLIC SECURITY IN KRALJEVO - RANKOVIĆEVO (1944-1955)

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INTRODUCTION

The expulsion of foreign occupation troops and their associates from Kraljevo and the surrounding area was not the end of all tasks for members of the Yugoslav People's Liberation Army (NOVJ), their sympathizers, as well as sympathizers and members of the Communist Party. Shortly after the liberation, the organization of new authorities began and an intensive struggle for its consolidation took place. The expulsion of the occupiers from the area of central Serbia did not mean the end of the war. The civil war thus continued between ideological opponents (Davidović, 2018: pp. 141) through the sporadic struggle of NOVJ units, on the one hand, and the remnants of JVuO units, on the other. In such circumstances, the absolute priority of the new government was to strengthen the regime and thwart even the slightest danger to the newly established order and ruling ideology.

FORMATION OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS BODIES IN KRALJEVO AT THE END OF 1944

After the liberation of Kraljevo² on November 29, 1944, all tasks in the field of security were under the jurisdiction of the garrison unit of the NOVJ (Simijanović,

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² In the period 1949-1955. Kraljevo was called Rankovićevo.

Gučanin, 2018: pp. 251-252), and on December 1, at the suggestion of the party leadership, the Command of the place in Kraljevo was established. Savo Vajić was appointed commander, Milovan Majstorović deputy, Simo Simović was appointed political commissar. The intelligence officer at the command was Raka Vukajlović. On the same day, the garrison duty was transferred from the 4th Proletarian Montenegrin Brigade to the 28th Serbian Brigade of the 47th Serbian Division. From the partisan detachment *Jovo Kursula* a crew company was formed, and then a battalion. On December 3, 1944, Blagoje Bogavac, a high-ranking party official, formed the Department for the Protection of the People (OZN) on behalf of the leadership of the Kraljevo District. Milan Djoković was appointed head, Draginja Marinović secretary and Mijat Jovanović, Ljubiša Pribaković, Raka Vukajlović, Milan Čučković and Branko Milovanović were appointed for investigative and other operational duties (Milićević & Čović, 1990: pp. 439-441; Davidović, 2018: pp. 141; Simijanovic, 2018: pp. 64-65).³

In mid-May 1944, the Security Service of the Department for the Protection of the People (OZN) was formed within the NOVJ. This organization performed intelligence tasks, at the same time performing the role of political, i.e. party police, and representing, at the same time, striking forces for the fight against ideological opponents. In August of the same year, the Yugoslav People's Defense Corps (KNOJ) was formed, which had the task of maintaining order and peace and persecuting the enemies of the newly established government, forming a kind of internal army under the command of OZN officers. In the fall of 1944, the first units of the People's Militia in Serbia were formed, which were under the control of the competent People's Committee. The People's Militia performed almost the same tasks as the KNOJ units, except that the tasks were limited to micro levels, i.e. municipal and urban environments. In the first half of 1945, the Departments of Internal Affairs were established. At the same time, the People's Militia is growing into a stronger and more organized formation. Thus, detachments remain within the county and district departments of internal affairs, and one or more police stations had been formed in the municipalities. The bodies of internal affairs functioned within the District Boards, but at the end of 1945, the Ministry of Internal Affairs put into practice the directive on the separation of internal affairs bodies from their authority. Thus, the militia was separated as an executive service. The characteristic of the then People's Militia, which was otherwise mobilized by people from the local field, was low motivation and a more tolerant attitude towards the fighters of Ravna Gora (Davidović & Timotijević, 2002: pp. 169-170; Dimitrijević, 2003: pp. 6, 10-14, 32-34, 39-40).⁴

3 Historical Archive in Kraljevo, hereinafter: IAK, Fund of the Municipal Assembly of Kraljevo, hereinafter: SOK, kut. 211, GNOO Minutes of December 10, 1944. until December 28, 1945.

4 IAK, Fund of the District Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, hereinafter: SK SKS



The OZN mandate for the Čačak district, to which the Žička district will join after the liberation, was established as early as October 17, 1944. After the liberation of the entire territory of the district, powers of attorney were created for Takovski, Ljubički, Dragačevski, Trnavski, Kačerski, Moravički, Studenički and Žiča county (Hadžipopović & Marinković, 1984: pp. 131; Davidović, 2012: pp. 209-244; Davidović, 2018: pp. 142). Thus, shortly after the liberation from German units, on December 3, 1944, the District Committee of the KPJ for the Kraljevo District established the OZN Plenipotentiary. Since this district was abolished on December 10 of the same year, the Plenipotentiary continued the activities within the Žiča district (Milićević & Čović, 1990: pp. 441; Davidović, 2018: pp. 142).

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S MILITIA IN THE DISTRICT OF ŽIČA AND THE CITY OF KRALJEVO

Based on the act of the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (NKOJ), dated December 14, 1944, the District People's Liberation Committee (ONO) in Čačak issued on December 25 of the same year an Order on the Establishment and Instruction on the Organization of the People's Militia in Žiča, as well as in other counties in the district. The instruction ordered that the People's Militia be formed as a matter of urgency with each People's Committee. The military command was entrusted with the obligation to provide assistance with regard to the organization of the People's Militia, and at each people's committee one of the councillors was given the duty to take over the administrative department, under whose jurisdiction the internal affairs were.⁵

Acting on the order, the District People's Liberation Committee (SNOO) in Kraljevo submitted a proposal for the formation of a district militia detachment on January 16, 1945. It was emphasized that only those older than 30 can participate in the militia detachment, and members of this detachment had the right to carry a

Kraljevo, kut. 74, Report of the District Committee of the County of Žička to the District Committee of the KPS in Čačak dated 30 June 1945.

5 In addition to more detailed instructions on competencies and duties, the Order also contained instructions on the attitude towards the broad masses: »The attitude of the People's Militia towards the people should be such that the masses of the people understand the duties of the People's Militia as their duties. By their attitude and proper performance of duties, the People's Militia should gain love, and then the people will show them and hand over forgers, greengrocers, traffic offenders and murderers; in a word, the People's Militia should gain the sympathy of the people to such an extent that the masses of the people become its collaborators and active executors of government decisions. » - Inter-Municipal Historical Archive of Čačak, (hereinafter MIAČ), Fund: District People's Committee of Čačak, (hereinafter ONO Čačak) kut. 1, Order of the ONOO in Čačak of 25 December 1945.



rifle in public.⁶ By March 1945, the district militia had 290 members, and a total of 161 rifles and five automatic weapons. However, the estimated number was still not filled, because another 116 police officers were missing (Davidović, 2018: pp. 151).

The city militia was established after the session of the City People's Liberation Committee (GNOO), on March 8, 1945. The building of the bishop's lodgings, across from the Church of the Holy Trinity and the building of the gymnasium (today's city museum)⁷ were designated for its accommodation. On the 19th of the same month, a building owned by the merchant Miroslav Vuković, on the banks of the Ibar, was designated to house the fire company.⁸

THE FIGHT AGAINST THE REMAINS OF JVuO UNITS IN THE ŽIČA DISTRICT

The most important and most difficult task of the newly established security services was to deal with the remnants of the ideologically opposed JVuO movement, whose not insignificant number of members and sympathizers at the end of 1944 and 1945 were in the wider area of Žiča County and the city of Kraljevo. The traumas from the just-concluded war were fresh, so that the ideological fervor was in full swing, which is confirmed by the words of the vice-president of the SNOO, Momčilo Radović: "The houses of the hideouts and the houses of the Chetnik couriers will soon be on fire because all the requests did not help. Yes, everyone knows where the dugouts are, but they are nowhere to be found."⁹ There were also proposals to take the families of inaccessible members of the Chetnik organization hostage, but the SNOO did not make an official decision on this issue,¹⁰ except that fifteen days later it adopted a general wording to take harsh measures against the families of Ravna Gora village commanders, i.e. "to make them feel a firm hand."¹¹

Although the new government firmly controlled the city, the surrounding area, and the most important traffic routes, the rural and mountainous part of the Žiča district, as well as other neighboring districts, became a refuge and field of activity for numerous groups of the Ravna Gora movement. At the end of 1944, the largest number of members of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd

6 IAK, Fund of the Assembly of the District of Kraljevo, hereinafter: SSK, inv. no. 1, Minutes from the plenary session of the SNOO of 16 January 1945.

7 IAK, SOK, kut. 211, vol. 1, Minutes of the twelfth session of the GNOO of March 8, 1945

8 IAK, SOK, kut. 211, vol. 1, Minutes of the thirteenth session of the GNOO dated 19 March 1945

9 IAK, SSK, inv. no. 1, Minutes from the plenary session of the SNOO of 16 January 1945

10 Ibid

11 IAK, SSK, inv. no. 1, Minutes from the session of the Executive Board of the SNOO of February 1, 1945.



Žiča Brigade returned to the area of their district. Some of these units returned to their homes, many of them were recruited into NOVJ units, and there were many who persisted in their ideological struggle and were outlaws of the new government years later. Their outlaw status counted on the living tradition of *hajduk*, as a form of struggle against the Ottoman Empire. At first, the outlaws lived in the belief in strong and growing support against the new “anti-traditional” ideology, which, in their opinion at the time, could not come to life in Serbian society (Davidović, 2018: pp. 146).

Aware of the fact that the remnants of the Ravna Gora movement could continue to become a threat to the new ideology and order, the party and state leadership tried to organize a sufficient number of units and members for the KNOJ units. Serbian Division, i.e. the 5th Division of KNOJ was founded on January 10, 1945, with its headquarters in Kragujevac. The total number of the division was 22,000 armed fighters. Somewhat later, in March of the same year, the 4th Brigade of this division was formed, with its headquarters in Kraljevo (Joksimović, 1985: pp. 63-64; Davidović, 2018: pp. 142).

The leadership of the 2nd and 3rd Žiča brigades of the JVuO was liquidated in January and February 1945.¹² According to the number and strength in the area of the Žiča district, two larger groups of members of the Ravna Gora movement stood out. While the first group under the command of Milorad Vasić operated in the area of the Gledić Mountains, the second was a group led by Lieutenant Hristifor “Krca” Milošević, which was located in the Podibar area. According to the estimates, in the area of Kraljevo there were a total of 199 people in the outlaw status by the end of February (Joksimović, 1985: pp. 63-64; Davidović, 2018: pp. 147, 148). For the sake of more efficient fight against outlaws, and on the initiative of the District Committee of the KPJ, at the beginning of 1945, the Auxiliary Command of the place in the village of Godačica was formed, which was assigned the Third Company of the Crew Battalion. In the next few months, this command, in cooperation with the village militia, managed to capture or liquidate about 70 members of Draža Mihailović's movement. A symbolic success was the seizure of the flag and archives of the 1st Žiča Brigade of the JVuO. In the same period, great successes were made in revealing the secret and intelligence network, and a large amount of money was seized (Milićević & Čović, 1990: pp. 444 - 445; Davidović, 2018: pp. 147 - 148).

12 The commander of the 2nd Žiča Brigade, Captain Vlastimir Antonijević, born in 1916 in Vrba, was captured in January and shot on February 19, 1945, based on the verdict of the Military Court-Chamber of the Čačak area; Captain Ljubiša Andjelković, commander of the 3rd Žiča Brigade, born in 1912 in Konarevo, was killed in January 1945 on the ground, and the internal affairs authorities managed to win over a Chetnik from his entourage, who killed him. - (Milićević & Čović 1990: pp. 445; Davidović, 2018: pp. 147).



Although the JVuO units were practically without command staff at that time, the general security situation in the wider area of the Žiča district, during the spring and summer of 1945, from the perspective of the new government, was not stable. The new county government has not established full control over all parts of the county. In the spring of 1945, it happened several times that groups of members of Mihailović's movement came to the immediate vicinity of the city. A report from May 1 states that one of the two leaders of Mihailović's movement, a certain Krcun¹³, was killed together with 11 other comrades-in-arms.¹⁴ (Other sources confirm that the killed lieutenant Hristifor "Krca" Milošević is the commander of the 3rd assault battalion of the JVuO.) Milošević was killed in a clash in early April, and some former members of Milošević's battalion surrendered voluntarily and joined the People's Militia).¹⁵

At the beginning of May, reports state that Milorad-Mile Vasić, commander of the brigade of the Ravna Gora movement, is still alive and on the periphery of the district, as well as that he often resides on the territory of the surrounding districts. It was also stated that 58 members of the Serbian State Guard, fifteen Chetniks, eight from Ljotić, three members of the Russian Corps and one member of the Gestapo left the country together with the Germans. It is estimated that there were 77 military refugees from the area of the county, that Vasić's group numbered sixteen people, as well as that there were nine equals in the northern part of the county, and fifteen in the south. At the same time, eight Chetniks surrendered and two were captured. About 350 "landlords' sons" were forcibly mobilized and sent to the Yugoslav Army (JA).¹⁶

During the summer of 1945, the remnants of Mihailović's movement, organized into four larger groups, were still hiding in the more inaccessible mountainous and wooded regions of the county. The most numerous was the group of lieutenants Vasić with a total number of about 160 fighters. This group moved and acted in the area of Gledić mountains. At the time of more intensive pursuits, Vasić's group often moved within a wide territory, which included the more inaccessible areas of the Trstenik, Gruž and Levač districts. Zivota "Keker" Todorović's group was often in cooperation and joint movement with Vasić's group. The third group with a total number of about 10-15 fighters was led by Milorad Ostojić "Gorilo". The area of

13 This is about Lieutenant Hristifor 'Krca' Milošević, commander of the 3rd Assault Battalion of the JVuO, whose headquarters in the summer of 1944 were in the village of Cukojevac. - IAK, ZRPNOB, corner. 10, book, 3, »Enemy formations - Chetniks«, Vasko Radunović, (manuscript), p. 20-21, 28, 32, 79.

14 IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 74, Report of the Žiča District Committee to the KPS District Committee in Čačak dated 1 May 1945.

15 MIAČ, ONO Čačak, kut. 1, Weekly Report of the Department of Internal Affairs of ONOO Čačak, dated 15 April 1945.

16. IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 74, Report of the Žiča District Committee to the KPS District Committee in Čačak dated 1 May 1945.



movement and activities of this group was the smallest, it included the wider area of the villages of Bukovica, Samailo, Roćević, Lasca, Mrsac and other villages in that part of the Žiča district. During the more intensive pursuits, this group moved to the Studenica and Ljubičko-Trnava districts (Davidović, 2018: pp. 153).

The district committee made estimates of the numbers of these groups, which were probably not entirely accurate. From the Report of the District Committee, the situation is seen from their perspective, data on the number of killed and dead are provided, but most often without more detailed descriptions of events and identification of victims and participants. Thus, in a report of the County Committee to the District Committee for June 1945, it is stated that "Chetnik gangs" in the area of the village of Gruža, in early June, killed seven people, two of whom were councillors in the People's Liberation Committee of Gruža. However, the report does not state their names. Furthermore, the same report states that one "bandit" was killed in the same month but neither identity nor circumstances are stated. The report also adds that due to the uncertain security situation, it was not possible to successfully organize conferences or any public gatherings in the area of the village of Gruža and its surroundings. According to the same report, the new militia was poorly armed, mostly with old, worn-out and broken Italian rifles, many of which were without extractors, and each member was given up to ten bullets while going on a mission.

Poor weapons were cited as the reason for the militia avoiding entering remote hilly and mountainous parts of the county, especially those where the remnants of the opposing movement were suspected. It was also pointed out that there was no lack of will and courage among SKOJ members and USAOS members to join the militia in "exterminating bandits", but there were simply not enough weapons to equip them. The same report then presents data that inadvertently denies the existence of unreserved enthusiasm among young people, since it goes on to say that in remote parts of the county at that time hid, according to the District Committee, about 40 deserters (persons who avoided mobilization in JA and District militia), while 14 deserters were known to be armed, but also that they were not connected with members of Mihailović's movement. In order to increase the efficiency of the district militia, reduce the possibility of desertion and assistance on the basis of family and friendly ties, the district militia was reorganized by sending militiamen from opposite parts of the district on assignments.¹⁷ By the end of June 1945, the district militia had liquidated 27 outlaws from Ravna Gora, nine had been captured, and as many outlaws had surrendered voluntarily.¹⁸ In July, three members of a family were killed in Gračac. Namely, one woman whose

17 IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 74, Report of the Žiča District Committee to the KPS District Committee in Čačak dated 30 June 1945.

18 IAK, SSK, kut. 693, List of enemies of the people who were liquidated or captured by our army, dated 18 June 1945.



identity was not known was killed and buried in a “mysterious way”. The report does not provide more detailed explanations or data.¹⁹

According to the report of the District Committee, the situation in the district militia improved by the end of July in terms of organization and number. It is stated that there were over 500 police officers in the district.²⁰ However, the number was not enough in itself, by the end of July, 300 policemen were fired, and only the “best” were kept in the service. Village guards were being formed, and the main problem in the work of the militia was still the lack of professional, managerial and command staff.²¹ Using the mentioned omissions and weaknesses, the renegade members of Draža Mihailović’s movement carried out attacks in the immediate vicinity of the city in July, and also carried out attacks on prominent city officials in the new government who lived in villages within their reach. Thus, the group under the command of Milorad Ostojić aka “Gorilo” raided the house of Ljubiša Kolarević from Mrsać, a sergeant of the City Militia in Kraljevo, on July 10, at 10 o’clock in the evening. Zvezdan Nikolajevic, president of the MNO and head of the village militia, was killed in a conflict with the group of Rafail Karavesovic “Fife” and Momcilo Radovic “Čukura”, which took place on July 12 in the hamlet of Zmajevac, Ribnica village (then a village near the town). On that occasion, policemen Stevan Savić and Slavko Lazarević were severely wounded, who later succumbed to his wounds (Davidović, 2018: pp. 155).

At the end of November 1945, the District Committee estimated that there were 86 “Chetnik bandits” in the area of the Žiča County. To this number, 56 people were added who deserted or did not respond to the mobilization, so that the other 30 were really in Mihailović’s movement. During the action of General Amnesty and Pardon, in August 1945, judging by the Report of the District Committee from November, only a dozen deserters applied, while no member of Mihailović’s movement applied.

The report also states that from October 1 to November 17, Mihailović’s movement killed Todosije Sretović, councillor of the municipality of Miločaj, Dimitrije Pedović, member of the JA, Žarko Vulićević from Samailo village. Milorad “Gorila” Ostojić’s group was suspected in the murder of Vulićević, and the same group was also suspected in the murder of the seven-member Milutinović family in Musina Reka on November 10. This group, led by “Gorilo”, was liquidated on November 29 (Drašković, 2020: 122 - 123).²² It is stated that an ambush was organized on

19 IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 74, Report of the Žiča District Committee to the KPS District Committee in Čačak dated 30 July 1945.

20 Ibid

21 IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 74, Report of the Žiča District Committee to the KPS District Committee in Čačak dated 31 August 1945.

22 IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 74, Report of the Žiča District Committee to the KPS District Committee in Cacak, there is no date, end of 1945.



the Kraljevo-Gruža road on the truck of the 42nd JA Division, in which an entire family of six died (the exact identity is not stated). On the other hand, in the same period, four members of the Ravna Gora movement were captured: Borislav Žarbenac from Samail, then: Radenko Antonijević, Sofronije Starčević, Ilija Milojević, all from Vrdil. It is also stated that eight members of the royalist movement were killed in the fighting (without giving names). The report also states that 23 families were forcibly displaced on the territory of the county at the same time.²³

In December, according to the report of the District Committee, 15 members of the JVuO and military fugitives were killed, 12 were captured and 19 surrendered. Among those who surrendered was Isidor Živković, a pre-war radical MP, major and district commander in Mihailović's movement.²⁴ Živković was then sentenced to 6 years in prison, which he served in Sremska Mitrovica, and he died in 1974 (Dražković, 2020: pp. 34).

While at the beginning of October 1945, the number of the District Militia was reduced to a total of 120 militiamen, the City Militia numbered another 40 men.²⁵ The numbers were rapidly declining, and the unpopularity and avoidance of this duty was widespread. At the very end of the year, there were only 80 members of the militia in the entire county. Most of them dropped out of this year's 500 in the meantime due to various shortcomings, omissions, unprofessionalism, corruption. For example, only in December, five members of the militia were arrested for cooperating with Mihailović's movement. At the same time, there were 25 policemen in the city, and the auxiliary militia still existed only on paper. At that time, the duty of the district and city militia brought with it great risks to life and uncertainty regarding the creation of revenge among the local population. The persecution of groups of Mihailović's movement, accustomed to hiding and guerrilla warfare, was a military task to which mobilized, untrained, unarmed and unmotivated local residents, mostly young people aged 15 to 18, were simply not up to the task.

Even among the party membership and SKOJ members, there was no excessive enthusiasm for participating in the work of the district and city militia. At that time, there were 5 party members and 65 SKOJ members in the ranks of the police. Also, another task of the People's Militia that has encountered a number of problems in practice is the organization of lookout patrols. From several reports of the District Committee, it can be seen that the population tried to avoid participating in that duty. There have been frequent cases of residents refusing to take

23 The report states surnames, place of residence and place of relocation - IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 74, Report of the Žiža District Committee to the KPS District Committee in Cacak dated 17 November 1945.

24 IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 74, Report of the Žiža District Committee to the KPS District Committee in Cacak dated 31 December 1945.

25 IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 74, Report of the Žiža District Committee to the KPS District Committee in Cacak dated 1 October 1945.



up arms and weapons. The duty of the village patrols was to organize guard duty in shifts. Due to the lack of rifles, it was the practice for several guards to share one rifle, which they would borrow from the previous one when going on patrol duty. The task of the guards was also to disarm, with the help of the police, all those who were known to have possessed weapons, and who avoided the obligation to participate in the village guard. Weapons were confiscated even from those who had properly registered hunting rifles.²⁶

At the beginning of 1946, the district police officer was Mile Luković, a former active lieutenant of the Yugoslav Royal Army, who arrived from captivity. He replaced Ilija Kaličanin, who, according to the District Committee, could not answer the task entrusted to him.²⁷ Kalicanin was then expelled from the party membership on February 23 due to, as stated, multiple mistakes, omissions, embezzlement and immoral life. This was the first conflict in the District Committee after the liberation of the city, which ended with the expulsion of one member from both the District Committee and the party membership. After being expelled, Ilija Kalicanin moved to Banatski Karlovac.²⁸

According to the report of the District Committee, at the beginning of 1946, of the remains of members of the former JVuO Draža Mihailović who were still renegade, only the group of Vasićs, numbering about 25 members, remained. During the same period, the OZNA of the 42nd Division arrested a dozen people in the city, who were accused of “acting hostilely in the city” and collecting donations for “butchers”. The report also states that during that month, three people were killed, two were captured in the area of the County, and that only five “bandits” surrendered.²⁹ At the end of July, the report mentions that 18 “bandits” remained on the territory of the district, not counting Dušan Vasović, who escaped from the District Prison.³⁰

In April 1946, in the Report on the work of the party organization in the Žiča district, the problem of prostitution was mentioned. It was noted that the sexually transmitted diseases were increasing and that one of the main reasons for the in-

26 IAK, SKS Kraljevo, kut 24, SK Working Meeting of 6 December 1945; IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 74, Report of the District Committee to the District Committee dated 31 December 1945.

27 IAK, SKS Kraljevo, kut 24, SK Working Meeting of 30 January 1946; IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 53, Report on the work of the District Party Organization for the month of January 1946, dated 30 January 1946.

28 IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, corner. 74, Report of the Zice District Committee to the KPS District Committee in Čačak on March 11, 1946; IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, corner. 74, Characteristics of the District Committee for Ilija Kaličanin dated 14 September 1945.

29 IAK, district Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia - Kraljevo (hereinafter IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo) kut. 53, Report on the work of the District Party Organization for the month of January 1946, dated 30 January 1946.

30 IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 53, Report on the work of the District Party Organization for the month of July 1946, dated July 26, 1946



crease in prostitution was the small number of police officers in the city i.e. only 10 of them³¹. By 1946, the area of the Žiča district was almost completely pacified, although some outlaws resisted arrest or liquidation until 1949.³²

THE FIGHT OF THE NEW AUTHORITIES AGAINST SUSPECTED COLLABORATORS AND IDEOLOGICAL OPPONENTS IN THE CITY OF KRALJEVO

After the end of the war there were a groups in the city of like-minded people who still wanted to preserve the legacy of democratic pluralism that existed in Serbia since the 19th century (Terzić, 2018: pp. 19-31; 54-73). As everywhere in Serbia at that time, there were still people who believed in the legal continuity of the pre-war government of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Terzić, 2022: pp. 87-89). In the area of the city itself, after the end of the war, there were smaller anti-party and anti-ideological groups whose activities were of negligible scope. In Kraljevo, at the beginning of August 1945, the OZN unit discovered an illegal group, the *Ravna Gora Youth Organization*. The main organizer of the group was Vera Petrović, the daughter of the Kraljevo industrialist Miljko Petrović Riža (Milićević, 2004: pp. 84-86; Davidović, 2018: pp. 160 - 161). Nevertheless, the possible oversizing of this group's subversiveness for the purpose of further discrediting the family of the said pre-war industrialist cannot be ruled out. The emergence of subversive groups continued later in the circle of high school and university students.³³

Along with the armed struggle against the renegade members of the former JVuO, during the winter of 1944 and the whole of 1945, an intensive investigation was conducted against all persons suspected by the then authorities of having ties to the occupying army, quisling organizations and the regime. Those who had connections, or were suspected of supporting or belonging to Draža Mihailović's movement, also suffered pressure. One of the most important forms of struggle to build a new social order was confiscation. The commission for the confiscation of the property of the people's enemies was elected on May 26, 1945. It included the director of the National Liberation Committee, a representative of the De-

31 IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 53, Report on the work of the party organization of the Žiča district for the month of April 1946, dated 26 April 1946.

32 Vladimir Žarevac, an outlaw from Ravanica, was arrested no sooner than October 5, 1949. - (Davidović, 2018: pp. 160 - 161).

33 In mid-July 1949, the illegal organization »Democratic Youth Party« was discovered in Kraljevo, whose main organizer was Dušan Jaraković, a law student. The members of this group were mostly high school graduates from Kraljevo. Many years after the war, deep in the era of inviolable power and authority of the KPJ, in June 1950, the illegal reading organization »National Committee of Yugoslavia«, organized by Desimir Todorović, was discovered. - (Davidović, 2018: pp. 161).



partment of Internal Affairs, or a member of the GNOO Plenum Assembly and a citizen, who should, if possible, be as close as possible related to the person being confiscated.³⁴ At the session on September 11, 1945, the GNOO stated that there were a considerable number of war winners in Kraljevo and that they had to report to the war gain officer as soon as possible.³⁵

The arrests and executions did not bypass Kraljevo immediately after the liberation. After the accumulated traumas, years of pain and immeasurable suffering, the members of the new authorities did not miss the opportunity to use their role as winners in order to deal with those whom they considered to be collaborators of the occupiers. They did not have a much milder attitude against ideological opponents and those who they thought could be harmful to the new order. Types of reckoning had non-violent and violent methods, depending on the case and circumstances. Emotional charge and ideological fervor were certainly important factors, and the existence of personal animosities in certain cases that led to retaliation in which innocent people were killed cannot be ruled out.

To this day, the circumstances and facts regarding the number and identity of those executed during 1944-1946 remain unclear. According to the testimony of a former member of the OZN, Miodrag Mišo Jovičić, 72 people from Kraljevo were shot at that time. The executions were carried out in a stream near the Farmers' School and on the banks of the Ibar. According to Jovicic, 27 prisoners were shot in just one round, including mayors Dušan Krstić, Momir Savic from Ribnica and Uroš Miloradović from Konarevo. Priests Dragoslav Obućina and Milan Sretenović were also shot at that time. While Obućina was sentenced for helping and complicity with the Germans during the 15-20 October 1941 shooting, Sretenović was liquidated without trial (Džomić, 1997: pp. 253-255; Simijanović, 2018: pp. 66). The prison was located in the then headquarters of the OZN for Kraljevo, in the house of Milica Knežević; later in that house was the seat of the District Committee of the KPJ, and then the municipal board of the SPS. Jovicic also testified that there was a prison in the house of Jelena Vuković on the Ibar quay (Džomić, 1997: p. 224; *Politika*, 2007, august 23; Cvetkovic, 2015: p. 224; Simijanović, 2018: pp. 67).

From April 1945, when he was appointed head of the OZN district, Ratko Dražević was directly responsible for all the activities of this organization, and he personally testified about his actions: "We shot in the winter in the Ozna basement in Kraljevo. We couldn't drag them anywhere, so we lined them up one over the other in one shelter, and due to the cold, bitter winter, their bodies froze. When we

34 IAK, SOK, kut. 211, vol. 1, Minutes of the nineteenth session of the GNOO dated 26 May 1945; IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, kut. 74, Report of the Žiça District Committee to the KPS District Committee in Čačak dated 30 June 1945.

35 IAK, SOK, kut. 211, vol. 1, Minutes of the twenty-ninth session of the GNOO of September 11, 1945.



left that shelter, we dropped bombs, so the wooden carriers would fall on everything and hand it over to oblivion forever. Today, some 500-600 people live in that building, and no one knows how many innocent people, sincere democrats, were built into its foundations, just because they were not to the taste of us communists. “ (Lopušina, 1997: pp. 137; *Novosti*, 2012, December 12).

Some of the well-known victims of the shooting were engineer Zoran Marković, who was in the organization of *Youth Protection* within the National Service, as well as Stevan Savić, reserve major, holder of numerous decorations, mayor of Raška; he helped supply the Javor Corps of JVuO, but did not directly participate in combat operations. On the eve of the Second World War, Ratko Dražević was an apprentice in Savić's shop, on whose orders Savić was shot on January 9, 1945, and his remains have not been found to this day. He was rehabilitated before the High Court in Belgrade in 2006 (Cvetković, 2014: pp. 33; Cvetković, 2015: pp. 224 - 225; Simijanović 2018: pp. 67).

The priest Antonije Dragović is also considered a victim of persecution during 1944 and 1945, who, according to eyewitnesses, was taken away by some partisans in 1945 and to this day all trace of him is lost (Džomić, 1997: pp. 189 - 194) .

In the register of victims compiled by the State Commission for Secret Tombs of Those Killed after September 12, 1944 in Serbia, 268 persons listed by name and surname refer to Kraljevo. Through subsequent verification, reducing the above number for those victims outside the territory of Kraljevo, double enrollment and after adding 104 newly discovered victims, Dragan Drašković reached the number 335, emphasizing that this number is not final (Drašković, 2020: pp. 140 - 141).

CRIME IN KRALJEVO 1950 -1955

It was not until the end of 1949 that first-class sources on public safety and general crime became more widespread. Until then, the priority security issue dealt with by the authorities was within the political confrontation with the suspected collaborators, members of the JVuO and the “reaction”, while since the summer of 1948, the focus has been on “cleaning up one's ranks”. Nevertheless, that process took place within the party organization and its organs. In that case, the militia only had an executive function.

General crime becomes more visible in the sources only after all the previously listed priorities went out of focus. Sources that provide a more detailed insight into the problem of crime became more numerous only in the early 1950s. Thus, during the year 1950, the overall crime rate rose. While in 1949 a total of 95 cases of various crimes were registered, during 1950 (until December 18) as many as 225 were registered (Simijanović, 2018: pp. 264).



Type of crime	1949	1950
Theft of public property	20	38
Theft of private property	31	77
Speculation and economic sabotage	29	52
Crimes against human life and health	5	12
Other crimes	10	44

36

In 1950, the District People's Court consisted of five judges, only one of whom was a member of the Party. Other judges and officials were characterized as reactionary so that the KP district committee was not satisfied with their attitude. The building in which the court was located was small and unconditional. The situation in the public prosecutor's office was reversed, of all the prosecutors, only one was not a member of the Party, while all other employees were members. The report of the District Committee especially praised the practice that in connection with all "stronger" problems, prosecutors first turn to the District Committee for opinion and instructions and consultations with the Secretary of the District Committee. The prosecution was also praised for prosecuting "speculators" and other criminals on the issue of Peasant Labor Cooperatives and ransom (Simijanović, 2018: pp. 265).³⁷

During 1950, 1,197 criminal charges were filed in the District Court in Rankovićevo, in the following year, in 1951 - 1,705, and in 1952 - 2,040 new cases. By far the largest number of criminal charges related to acts of insult and slander, followed by acts of inflicting light bodily injuries. Thus, in 1952 alone, 827 criminal charges for insult and defamation and 308 charges for minor bodily injuries were filed. By far the most common causes of insults, slander and light bodily injuries were quarrels and misunderstandings over private property. A significant number of these cases was created during the celebrations and festivities. The share of the city itself in these percentages is smaller compared to the rest of the county. Thus, since 1952, there had been a total of 827 criminal charges for insults and defamation, of which only 103 cases concerned city residents. Out of a total of 308 reports of minor bodily injuries, only 45 cases concerned perpetrators from the city. The mass appearance of reports of defamation and insults significantly burdened the work of the judiciary, and early public appearances began with appeals to stop the practice of "suing for trifles". In one text from *Ibarski novosti*, there is a free estimate that judges in the District Court in Rankovićevo in 1952 dedicated

36 IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, box 22, Minutes from the VI District Party Conference held on December 18, 1950. Annual Report of the District Committee of the KPS of the Žiža County for 1950, p. 17.

37 Ibid



as many as 5,000 working days to “minor criminal cases”. In 350 “petty criminal cases”, the average sentence was 1,000 dinars, while the total cost of the trial was 2,000 dinars (*Ibarske novosti*, No. 6. dated 10. 4. 1953. pp. 2).

In later years, especially since 1954, there was an increasing number of mass fights among young people, mostly high school students on the city streets. This phenomenon disturbed and preoccupied the public, and there were frequent reactions and protests on the pages of the local newspaper. The public mostly blamed the young members of the boxing club as leaders and main responsible (*Ibarske novosti*, No. 46, dated 12. 2. 1954, pp. 3).

Poaching in fishing was an increasingly common phenomenon that came to full expression in the early 1950s. The almost daily practice of fishing on the Ibar and Zapadna Morava with the help of explosives, most often dynamite, has become a special problem. This practice, in addition to being harmful to the ecosystem, also posed a threat to human safety. There had been numerous appeals to eradicate this phenomenon, but in practice suppression has been difficult (*Ibarske novosti*, No. 49, dated 5. 3. 1954, pp. 4; *Ibarske novosti*, No. 115, dated 29. 7. 1955, pp. 2)

Great attention was paid to the problem of alcoholism. Alcoholism was considered a serious social problem, which should be fought resolutely in the new socialist society. *Ibarske novosti* often published articles about the harmful effects of alcoholism. In the same way, it had often been called for the stricter application of the point of the Law on Prohibition of serving alcohol to persons in an alcoholic state within the Law on Misdemeanors against Public Order and Peace. Problems in practice most often occurred when the staff of catering facilities refused to serve customers under the pretext of applying the point of the Law on Prohibition of Drinking Alcohol to Persons in an Alcoholic State (*Ibarske novosti*, No. 36, dated 20. 11. 1953, pp. 4; *Ibarske novosti*, No. 37, dated 27. 11. 1953, pp. 5; *Ibarske novosti*, No. 38, dated 11. 12. 1953, pp. 4; *Ibarske novosti*, No. 50, dated 12. 3. 1954. pp. 5; *Ibarske novosti*, No. 82, dated 5. 11. 1954. pp. 2).

The social norms of “socialist morality” imposed moderation and exemplary habits in accordance with the norms of social acceptability. However, the norms of social acceptability were not sharply defined. When it comes to the attitude towards the phenomena of alcoholism in the party ranks, there were various examples. The very vice of alcoholism was by no means the only cause of party condemnation and exclusion, because in addition to this “weakness”, irresponsibility, poor work discipline and the like were always cited. Due to traditional, folklore social habits, the authorities sometimes had a very benevolent attitude towards alcohol consumption. In the post-war years, in many villages in the district and in the city itself, the attitude towards alcohol of domestic production “*rakija*” as a universal medicine and auxiliary means in the household was maintained.³⁸

³⁸ One report of the District Committee deals with the tradition regarding the use of alcohol: »it is



CONCLUSION

The end of combat operations at the end of the Second World War, the expulsion of foreign occupation troops and their associates from Kraljevo and the surrounding area did not mean the end of all tasks for members of the NOVJ, their sympathizers, as well as sympathizers and members of the Communist Party. Immediately after the liberation, the priority task of the Party was the establishment of new authorities that led an intensive struggle to strengthen the new social order. The civil war continued between ideological opponents in the form of the continuation of sporadic fights between the units of the NOVJ and various security units of the new victorious government against the remnants of the JVuO units. The struggle took place mainly in the form of minor clashes with smaller and smaller groups in the rural parts of the Žiča district, which was almost completely “cleansed” by mid-1946, and the last groups of JVuO members were destroyed in October 1949.

At the same time, there was a showdown with the suspected collaborators in Kraljevo itself. Known or suspected members and sympathizers of JVuO were under pressure. In the first days after the liberation of Kraljevo on November 29, 1944, a number of people were killed, disappeared or were executed, the definite number of which has not been reliably determined until today. During 1945, a trial was held, in which some people were convicted of treason and aiding the occupying forces.

It was not until 1949 that sources on peacetime crime became more numerous and illustrative. From the mentioned 1949 to 1955, the trend of increasing the number of registered criminal acts is noticeable. The most common were acts of physical confrontation, insults and slander. The increase is also visible in the area of petty crime - theft. At the beginning of the fifties of the XX century, there was a trend of fights among younger residents - high school students. In that period alcoholism was also on the rise and was clearly marked as a social problem in perspective.

SOURCES

Inter-municipal archive Čačak

Kraljevo Historical Archive

often seen (Konarevo, Ravanica, etc.) that many children from primary school are used to having a small glass of *rakija*; the parents feel that this is useful for health. There have been many cases of children being drunk.« - IAK, SK SKS Kraljevo, box 76, Assessment of the political situation of the SKS District Committee sent to the SKS Central Committee on 4 September 1953.



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