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Newspaper Discussion in *Orjuna* and *Glas svobode* before the Confrontation in Trbovlje on 1 June 1924

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About the authors

The sources below deal with the fierce debate between *Orjuna*, the newsletter of the Yugoslav nationalist paramilitary organization Orjuna (*Organizacija jugoslavenskih nacionalista*, the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists), and the

communist newspaper *Glas svobode* (The Voice of Freedom) before the clash between communist and Orjuna fighters in the mining town of Trbovlje on June 1, 1924. The selected examples of newspaper articles illustrate how political thought actively shapes discourses of violence. At the same time, they reveal how discourses of violence distort political thought, reducing it to a precursor for direct confrontations with opponents.

The Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists was founded in Split in March 1921 to counter Italian irredentism, extending its influence to Slovenia by 1923. Although claiming to be independent of party-political, religious, and class interests, it quickly aligned with the liberal Yugoslav Democratic Party (*Jugoslovanska demokratska stranka*, JDS) and later the Independent Democratic Party (*Samostojna demokratska stranka*, SDS). Orjuna became a paramilitary group advocating for a centralized Yugoslav state and suppression of the labor movement. It mainly attracted small craftsmen and lower-level civil servants.¹ In Slovenia, Orjuna emerged as early as 1922, with branches in over sixty locations by mid-1924, making Slovenia one of its strongest regions.² Slovenian emigrants from the areas annexed by Italy after the war were represented in larger numbers in the organization. While influenced by militant Yugoslavism, the Slovenian branch had an “authentic” local character. The organization adopted a fascist-like paramilitary structure and promoted a vision of Yugoslav national unity, anti-Catholicism, anti-communism, and eugenics. Violence, endorsed by its statutes, became a key strategy. Orjuna’s anti-Italian stance mirrored Italian fascism despite opposing it. The organization had significant state backing, especially after March 27, 1924, when Svetozar Pribićević, an Orjuna supporter, and his SDS entered the new government led by Nikola Pašić, known as the P-P government. In Slovenia, Orjuna’s greatest supporter was the liberal leader Gregor Žerjav.³

Historiography labels Orjuna as a proto-fascist terrorist group but offers limited analysis. Ervin Dolenc describes it as “fascist-like” for its nationalism, unitarianism, anti-communism, and violence but notes its defense of liberal democracy.⁴ Boris Mlakar, using Roger Griffin’s notion of the “fascist minimum,” argues that Orjuna sought a new Yugoslav identity rather than the rebirth (pal-ingenesis) of the Yugoslav nation.⁵ Stevo Đurašković sees it as meeting minimal

1 Jurij Perovšek, “Slovenci in Jugoslovanska Skupnost 1918–1941,” *Zgodovinski časopis* 59, no. 3–4 (2005): 452.

2 Branko Šuštar, “O razširjenosti Organizacije jugoslovanskih nacionalistov na Slovenskem do sredine leta 1924,” *Kronika* 36, no. 3 (1988): 242.

3 Jurij Perovšek, *O demokraciji in jugoslovanstvu: Slovenski liberalizem v Kraljevini SHS/Jugoslaviji*, ed. Aleš Gabrič (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2013), 166.

4 Ervin Dolenc, “Italijanski fašizem, Slovenci, slovenski fašizem,” *Zgodovina v šoli* 10, no. 1 (2001): 25.

5 Boris Mlakar, “Zaton Organizacije jugoslovanskih nacionalistov – Orjune pod budnim očesom italijanskih fašističnih oblasti,” *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 53, no. 2 (2013): 49.

fascist criteria but lacking autonomy, leadership, and revolutionary aims, serving instead as a tool of the Democratic Party.⁶

Although *Orjuna* was opposed by conservative and autonomist political groups, *Orjuna*'s greatest opponent was the officially banned Communist Party of Yugoslavia. In spring 1920, the first communist group in Slovenia established itself as part of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The background was the countrywide railway strike, which then escalated into a general strike in Slovenia. When the authorities attempted to suppress the strike by conscripting the railway workers into the army, the Slovenian communists nevertheless supported the strike activities, while the socialists called for an end to the strike.⁷ On April 24, 1920, the striking workers organized a rally in Ljubljana, which was then banned by the authorities. The workers gathered in Zaloška Street in the suburbs and tried to reach the city center. They were prevented from entering the city center by gendarmes who fired into the crowd. They killed 14 people, including women and children, and injured more than 30 people. After the incident, the authorities arrested the leaders of the strike and the leaders of the young Communist Party. The labor movement and the communist organization suffered their first blow. In the years that followed, various political actors often accused each other of being responsible for the disaster on Zaloška Street.⁸

Nevertheless, the communists became an important political force in the newly founded kingdom. In the elections to the Constituent Assembly, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (*Komunistička partija Jugoslavije*, KPJ) came fourth in Slovenia and was the third-strongest parliamentary party at national level. However, this was short-lived. The authorities dissolved the KPJ with the "Obznana" decree of December 29, 1920. On August 2, 1921, they completely excluded the party from public life with the Law on the Protection of the State. This marked the beginning of a period of underground activity for the communists until they founded the legal Independent Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (*Nezavisna radnička partija Jugoslavije*, NRPJ) in Belgrade on January 14, 1923.

In the spring of 1923, the communists founded secret paramilitary groups called Proletarian Action Forces (*Proletarske akcijske čete*, PAČ). The main task of PAČ was to protect the headquarters of workers' organizations from attacks by the *Orjuna*. They also acted as security forces at various labor events. They were

⁶ Stevo Đurašković, "Ideologija Organizacije jugoslovenskih nacionalista (*Orjuna*)," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 43, no. 1 (2011): 246.

⁷ France Klopčič, *Velika razmejitev: Študija o nastanku Komunistične stranke v Sloveniji aprila 1920 in o njeni dejavnosti od maja do septembra 1920* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1969), 54–72.

⁸ Tone Ferenc, *Kronologija naprednega delavskega gibanja na Slovenskem: (1868–1980)* (Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1981), 65.

armed with rubber truncheons, batons, pistols, and grenades.⁹ Between July 20 and September 17, 1923, there was a major strike led by the communist Miners' Union. With the support of the government, the company used strikebreakers and mass dismissals to break the strike. PAČ patrolled the factories alongside the Communist Youth League (*Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije*, SKOJ), fending off strikebreakers and opposing the anti-strike propaganda. A turning point came on August 30, 1923, when communist sabotage at the Trbovlje power plant led to the arrest of strike leaders and the dismissal of over 600 miners. Tensions between the communist workers and Orjuna were high, as some of the strikebreakers were members of Orjuna.¹⁰

In the spring of 1924, Orjuna launched a campaign to expand its influence in the working class and tried to exploit the weakened position of the communists after the failed strike. Using anti-capitalist and anti-Semitic rhetoric similar to Italian fascism, they attempted to establish a "labor Orjuna" in industrial areas. Despite its limited success, Orjuna planned a ceremonial flag-raising in Trbovlje on June 1, 1924.¹¹ The Communist Party planned armed resistance by PAČ and awaited Orjuna's arrival with weapons. Clashes broke out when a communist attempted to seize the Orjuna flag, leading to a shootout that left several dead on both sides.¹² Orjuna forces later captured and killed communist fighter Franc Fakin and set fire to the miners' hall. Three communist fighters, two bystanders, and three Orjuna leaders were killed and many others were injured. Both sides suffered the negative consequences, but the authorities mainly targeted the communists. Mass arrests followed, including the imprisonment of most Slovenian KPJ leaders. In a trial that took place in Celje from November 25 to 27, 1924, eight communists were sentenced to prison. However, the members of Orjuna accused of murdering Franc Fakin were released.¹³ Although Orjuna was under state protection, its violent actions alienated much of the Slovenian public and the conservative and autonomist Slovenian People's Party (*Slovenska ljudska stranka*, SLS) capitalized on the situation. Orjuna's influence in Slovenia ended after a failed armed demonstration in Ljubljana on June 28, 1928, whereupon it was dissolved by the Minister of the Interior.¹⁴

9 France Klopčič, *Neravnodušni državljan: razčlemble in zamisli* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1974), 153.

10 Ferenc, *Kronologija naprednega delavskega gibanja*, 86.

11 Marko Zajc, "Orjuna in PAČ na poti v Trbovlje: K zgodovini fizičnega nasilja v političnem boju," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 54, no. 2 (2014): 101–23.

12 France Klopčič, *Neravnodušni državljan: Razčlemble in zamisli* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1974), 157. Miha Marinko, *Moji spomini* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1974), 53.

13 Dušan Kermavner, ed., *Prvi junij 1924 v Trbovljah: Stenografski zapisnik kazenske razprave v Celju dne 25., 26. in 27. novembra 1924* (Ljubljana–Trbovlje: Partizanska knjiga–Revirske muzeje ljudske revolucije, 1974).

14 Perovšek, *O demokraciji in jugoslovanstvu*, 257.

The ideological struggle between *Orjuna* and communists in Slovenia took place in the publications of both groups, namely in the Yugoslav nationalist newspaper *Orjuna* (1923–1928) and the communist newspaper *Glas svobode* (1923–1924). *Glas svobode* was launched in April 1923 as the organ of the NRPJ for Slovenia and was published until May 30, 1924.¹⁵ The newspaper played a decisive role in the debate on the national question within the KPJ. An important contributor to the newspaper was Dragotin Gustinčič, the leading Slovenian communist theorist who advocated a federalist (re)arrangement of the Yugoslav state. His ideas had significant influence on the discussion of the national question within the KPJ and ultimately led to the leadership adopting federalist principles.¹⁶ The *Orjuna* newspaper, on the other hand, began publication on January 1, 1923. Initially, editorial duties were handled by Ljubomir D. Jurković, who also contributed most of the content.¹⁷ However, due to his involvement with the National Radical Party (*Narodna radikalna stranka*, NRS), Jurković had a falling out with the leadership and left the movement in October 1923.¹⁸ Although the newspaper featured contributions from Yugoslav leaders of the movement, most of its content was provided by members of the Slovenian section of *Orjuna* and their sympathizers, including the writers Vladimir Levstik¹⁹ and Ivan Lah.²⁰

Context

The newspaper debate between communists and *Orjuna* before the Trbovlje clash highlights how discourses of violence intertwined with political thought. It shows that violent discourse was central to political discussions, though each group used it differently. Both papers justified violence as a form of defense. However, we can see that they interpreted “defense” differently. For *Orjuna*, defense was central: the Yugoslav nation needed both renewal and protection from “enemies” like Italian fascism, separatists, “Jewish capitalism,” and others. This “defense” often involved attacking these enemies, making violence integral to *Orjuna*’s identity. By contrast, *Glas svobode*’s discourse on violence was more restrained. The communists viewed “defense” as protecting workers from immediate threats posed by *Orjuna*. They valued struggle, but did not glorify violence itself; rather, they saw it as a tactical method for achieving working-class goals.

15 Ferenc, *Kronologija naprednega delavskega gibanja*, 84.

16 Jurij Perovšek, *Samoodločba in federacija: Slovenski komunisti in nacionalno vprašanje 1920–1941* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2012), 72.

17 See the entry on Ljubomir Dušanov Jurković in this volume.

18 “Ljubo D. Jurkovič, Javnosti v pojasnilo,” *Orjuna*, October 21, 1923, 2.

19 Vladimir Levstik, “1389–1924, Vidovdanske misli jugoslovenskega nacionalista,” *Orjuna*, June 27, 1924, 1.

20 Ivan Lah, “Orjuna in Preporod,” *Orjuna*, January 14, 1923, 1.

Unlike Orjuna, communists had other sources of identity—like Marxist theory and strikes—using revolutionary violence only when the conditions were right. In the early 1920s, the KPJ's leadership recognized that revolutionary conditions were not yet ripe.²¹

The question of the link between political thought and the discourse/practice of violence is not only important for political history but is also one of the most pressing questions in the humanities. Michel Foucault, for example, argued that discourse is a form of power that constructs social reality, including the legitimization of violence. Hannah Arendt argued that discourses of violence often emerge when political institutions or systems lose their legitimacy and power diminishes, allowing violence to fill the void.²² For Marxists, violence is historically and structurally embedded in class relations and serves as an instrument of both oppression and liberation. Gramsci acknowledged the necessity of violent confrontation in certain contexts (war of maneuver) but argues that in complex modern states, success depends on winning the cultural and ideological battle (war of position) rather than relying solely on physical force.²³

Organized violence played a crucial role in the post-war transition in the post-Habsburg northern Adriatic, as in other contested border regions of East Central Europe. Although the Italian borders were quickly formalized by the Treaty of Rapallo (November 1920), techniques and models of fascist action developed in the northern Adriatic, as Marco Bresciani notes. After the Trieste *Narodni Dom* attack on July 13, 1920, violence escalated, targeting socialists and prominent Slovenian activists.²⁴ Orjuna can also be seen as a reaction to and a reflection of Italian fascism. Orjuna and the communists clashed at a time when the fascist regime in Italy was still consolidating its power through violence on the streets. The clash in Trbovlje on June 1, 1924, took place one day after the famous speech by the socialist Giacomo Matteotti against fascist violence in the Italian parliament, which led to his abduction and murder by members of Mussolini's secret political police ten days later.²⁵

Although there is no consensus in historiography regarding whether Orjuna was a fascist organization, an insight into the importance of violence for

21 Zajc, "Orjuna in PAČ," 17.

22 Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970).

23 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

24 Marco Bresciani, "Conservative and Radical Dynamics of Italian Fascism: An (East) European Perspective (1918–1938)," in *Conservatives and Right Radicals in Interwar Europe* (Routledge, 2020), 68.

25 Emilio Gentile, "Paramilitary Violence in Italy: The Rationale of Fascism and the Origins of Totalitarianism," in *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, ed. Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 103.

fascist movements is essential to understand Orjuna's attitude towards violence. Analyses of fascism emphasize the centrality of violence both as a practice and as an ideological cornerstone. Walter Benjamin emphasized the aesthetic dimension of fascism, claiming that it transforms politics into a sensual experience in which violence becomes a fundamental aesthetic expression, culminating in war as its ultimate form. Benjamin noted that this approach enables the mobilization of resources without destroying existing social structures, thus reinforcing the fascist ethos of domination and unity.²⁶ Daniel Woodley has contrasted fascism with liberalism by emphasizing its aestheticization of struggle and glorification of violence as an inherent political value rather than a mere instrument of politics.²⁷ Sven Reichardt has identified three main functions of fascist violence: the suppression of opposing movements, the cultivation of solidarity and the experience of struggle among supporters, and the projection of power and order. He has further argued that unlike communist violence, which is often deeply rooted in proletarian social contexts, fascist violence occurs as organized brutality superficially justified by ideology.²⁸ Robert O. Paxton added that fascist violence is characterized by collective emotionality and lacks a coherent rationale or theoretical basis.²⁹

In order to better understand the reasons for the conflict and the role of the discourse on violence, it is useful to take a closer look at Orjuna's ideology. In addition to integral Yugoslav nationalism and anti-Semitism, Orjuna was also committed to tackling the social question and reducing unemployment. They saw the solution in a ban on the employment of foreigners. In their view, the employment of highly skilled foreign labor was harmful because it left only the lower, unskilled jobs to Yugoslav workers, thus perpetuating the inequality of the domestic labor force. The communists were accused not only of serving the Soviet Union, but above all internationalism, which was seen as dangerous not only for the Yugoslav nation, but also for the situation of local workers. The communists and Orjuna were not just opponents, but also rivals in addressing the working class.³⁰

Rather than simply classifying Orjuna as either a fascist or nationalist movement, comparing it to a related and partially contemporaneous phenomenon in Czechoslovakia—the Czech fascists—provides some deeper insights. The National Fascist Community (*Národní obec fašistická*, NOF) was founded in

26 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 241.

27 Daniel Woodley, *Fascism and Political Theory: Critical Perspectives on Fascist Ideology* (London: Routledge, 2010), 241.

28 Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde: Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadrismus und in der deutschen SA* (Köln–Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2009), 71.

29 Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2007), 18.

30 "Rdečim Apostolom," *Orjuna*, April 12, 1924, 2.

March 1926, it was led from January 1927 by Radola Gajda, a prominent general and former legionnaire. Soon after its creation, the NOF emerged as the largest and most significant fascist organization in Czechoslovakia.³¹ On an ideological level, Orjuna and NOF shared not only anti-German sentiment, anti-communism, and anti-Semitism but also a commitment to Pan-Slavic ideology. However, while the Czech fascists were contemplating a Pan-Slavic alliance with Poland and Yugoslavia in order to smash communism in the Soviet Union and create an obstacle to the German advance eastwards, the ideologists of Orjuna preferred to deal with the problem of the unity of the Yugoslav nation. For Orjuna, the big problem with NOF was the fascist name and its imitation of Italian fascism. In April 1927, Orjuna recommended that the Czech fascists should leave Mussolini, fascism, and its methods behind and instead internalize true Slavic democratic and social nationalism. Fascism, Orjuna argued, means violence, imperialism, and anti-Slavism. The violent culture of the Italian fascists does not fit in with the democratic psyche of the Slavs, although, the writer admitted, sometimes a healthy temporary dictatorship is necessary.³²

In our case, the relationship between the political thought of the two sides involved and the discourse of violence is entangled. Political thought constructs the framework that justifies violence. The discourse of violence, in turn, gives political thought the “flesh” of violent political practice. In contrast to political thought, which uses general concepts, the discourse of violence tells the audience concrete details: who is “threatening us,” what we need to do to eliminate the threat, etc. In this way, political thought literally touches physical bodies through the discourse of violence, but at the same time the discourse of violence reduces political thought to mere action-orientated justifications.

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³¹ Jakub Drábik, “The History of Czech Fascism: A Reappraisal,” in *Beyond the Fascist Century: Essays in Honour of Roger Griffin*, ed. Constantin Iordachi and Aristotle Kallis (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 151.

³² Janez Poharc, “Češki fašisti. Nekaj mislo o češkem fašizmu,” *Orjuna*, April 2, 1927, 2.

“To the Red Apostles!”

***Orjuna* 2, no. 16 (April 12, 1924): 2.**

The red stateless apostles gathered around the *Glas svobode* gazette and other less bloodthirsty proletarian journals published by various highbrows cannot possibly believe that a man without any disgustingly selfish intentions could also be a friend to suffering workers. Out of the fear that we will remove them from their comfortable positions, acquired in various socialist institutions through demagogic, they constantly attack us and summon fire and brimstone upon our movement.

...

The poor Slovenian nation, counting but a handful of people—why should you, in the name of internationalism, provide bread for all who are hungry and cannot be fed by their homeland? We have shared our table with everyone, no matter where they come from, for long enough. Italian brick-layers and German and Hungarian workers have lived comfortably here with us, whether skilled or not. Meanwhile, the natives have perpetually remained toilers, day laborers, and their masters' robots. This system must end at some point. Aliens have benefitted from our country long enough, but now it is our turn. We want our people to learn professions that require higher qualifications and adorn themselves with the mantle of the skilled worker, held in such high esteem these days. We will achieve this regardless of the various views and perspectives, however sentimentally internationalist they may be. The powerful and wealthy nations may experiment with them as they wish, but we will not.

By all means, keep raging and fuming, you red apostles and advocates, but we tell you truthfully that you do not know the hour or the day when the proletariat united in the *Orjuna* labor organizations will settle the score with you.

“Against Orjuna!”

Glas svobode 2, no. 21 (May 15, 1924): 2.

Fascism is an international phenomenon in the era of capitalist collapse. Capitalism is organizing its special armed gangs everywhere, alongside the rest of the repressive apparatus. Because such gangs were first formed in Italy, where they called themselves fascists, their little brothers are now called fascists in all countries.

After its ascent to power, fascism in Italy has revealed itself as the worst enemy of the working class. That is why fascists in other countries avoid calling themselves that—because they know that the vast majority of working people are against fascism. In Germany, they are called Hakenkreuzlers and Hitlerites; in Slovenia, they are called Orjuna supporters. Orjuna followers become enraged when I call them Yugo-fascists because they know this word says it all. A fascist is a capitalist minion armed to the teeth, and workers have no choice but to smash the fascists’ heads in. As much as the members of Orjuna may reject the fascist name, people are judged by their actions, not their words.

The politics of the Orjuna organization is entirely fascist: their main slogan is a strictly centralized monarchy ruled by an iron hand—this means militarism, the gendarmerie, and Orjuna’s actions. They vocally opposed corruption in the state, but as soon as their paragon Pribičević came to power, they forgot about corruption and started singing praises to the fraternal corruption of the Radicals and Orjuna as well as the restrictive anti-popular regime. They turned all their might against the working class. Of course, they once again use words to deceive. On the one hand, they are constantly pouring their bile on the revolutionary workers’ organizations, knowing that, by destroying these, they can tear apart the workers’ ranks altogether. While they threaten the most active workers with revolvers, they address the working class in general in their gazette, claiming that Orjuna supporters are not against the working class but only against the revolutionary workers’ organizations and leaders. However, in their fascist hot-headedness, they forget that they stormed the Workers’ Centre in Ljubljana, which does not belong to Lemež³³ and his associates but to the proletariat of Ljubljana—or, we could

33 Milan Lemež (1891–1971), politician and lawyer, became a supporter of social democracy in 1912. In 1919–1920 he served as Commissioner for Social Welfare in the Provincial Government for Slovenia under Albin Prepeluh. In 1920 he was elected on the Communist Party’s list to the Constituent Assembly of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, as well as to the Ljubljana City Council.

say, to the proletariat of Slovenia. *Orjuna* members thus follow the example of the Italian fascists, who have been burning down workers' centers, killing workers' leaders, etc., while, on the other hand, attempting especially to recruit unemployed workers into their ranks to shoot at their brothers: other workers. *Orjuna* members attempted the same thing here, and as soon as unemployment increased, they wanted to use it to create a base for their criminal movement. However, the world's proletariat has learned much from the Italian experience. The proletariat stands vigilantly against fascism. And the proletariat prevented the first Yugo-fascist attempt to fish among the unemployed in our country.

Orjuna members focused on Slovenia's industrial district, Trbovlje—just as Italian fascism tried its luck in the industrial city of Milan. However, the miners broke up the *Orjuna* rally and taught the *Orjuna* pests that they should not challenge the miners. Nevertheless, *Orjuna* members still want to challenge the mining proletariat by unfurling their banners and so on. The miners will not lose their confidence: they know how to respond to a challenge despite the Law on the Protection of the State. In its gazette, *Orjuna* has opened fire on the revolutionary workers' organizations, threatening and provoking them ever more aggressively.

The working class should know its enemies and be able to repel their attacks until they are decisively crushed. The proletariat must secure its outposts from all sides, for if the enemy penetrates one flank of the front, the entire army must usually withdraw.

The proletariat must also protect itself with a united workers' defense, especially against the Yugoslav fascists: *Orjuna* members. Social-patriotic leaders do not want a united workers' defense. We must not let ourselves be distracted by this, and we must nevertheless mount a united workers' defense in the factories where the workers understand the need to stand together for their common interests. The work of the proletariat in this respect is deficient everywhere. This fault needs to be corrected. The political and professional organization must never lose sight of the fascist enemy and must be constantly prepared to fight it.

The cry "**Down with *Orjuna!***" must be taken seriously, not as a mere slogan, but as a call to the workers to organize and disable *Orjuna*—that is to say, to prevent a new deterioration of their economic and political situation.

“To Trbovlje!”

Orjuna 2, no. 23 (May 31, 1924): 1.

“Workers have no choice but to smash the fascists’ heads in!”
(*Glas svobode*, May 15)

With its purposeful actions and determined performance, Orjuna has aroused enormous envy in all its opponents. Our communists are the ones who particularly stand out, as they blame our organization for the disintegration of their party, although their leadership’s corruption and demagogic in particular have brought one worker after another to their senses. Week after week, they keep dragging our movement through the mud in their gazette. Once they realized that we ironically despise all these press attacks, they started looking for direct confrontations with our members at any cost. They wanted to create victims artificially, by any means possible, to repair their declining reputation among the workers. The May Day celebration was a provocation of Orjuna from the first word to the last, and their appearance at our public rallies entailed nothing but insults. Thanks to the sobriety of our membership, who knows all too well where to look for the real culprits, no serious confrontation took place, and Lemež’s followers were left even more shamed than before.

In their frustrated anger, they played their last card in their gazette from May 15. In the article “Against Orjuna!” they call for an outright slaughter of our membership due to the unfurling of the banner of our noble Orjuna workers’ organization in Trbovlje on June 1. The words quoted in the introduction are actually among the gentlest.

We are glad that the state judiciary did not carry out its duty and confiscate this call for public murder because it at least allows the workers to see that the communist leaders have no other aim but to take power at any cost. In their greed, they are pitting workers against Orjuna—**the only organization that has successfully stood up for the miners after the failed strike.**

We are not in the least afraid of these threats. And no matter how strongly the *Glas svobode* (The Voice of Freedom) gazette—which would more rightly be called “The Voice of the Soviet Bribe-Takers”—incites the massacre of our people, we shall celebrate the unfurling of the banner of our first Orjuna workers’ organization in Trbovlje in the most solemn manner.

However, the seducers and the seduced should know that no attack on us has gone unpunished. Whoever, in their blind passion, dares to raise a hand against one of ours should be aware that we will respond immediately in such a way that not only Trbovlje but also the red fortress on the Turjaški Square in Ljubljana³⁴ will tremble, along with the golden spectacles of the “proletarian” Dr. Lemež.

If they do not stop, we will thoroughly settle the score with people like him, Žorga, Sedej, and others. If they believe that the day of our celebration in Trbovlje is the best day for this, we are all for it.

However, when nursing their swollen heads, they should not blame others; instead, they should read what they themselves wrote in the article mentioned above.

***Glas svobode* 2, no. 23-24 (May 30, 1924): 6.**

Trbovlje. Our answer to the correspondent of the *Jutro* newspaper, who disliked the performance of the red gymnasts because there were too many of them and frowned upon their homemade white linen clothes, is that we cannot afford better ones. We are fighting against your supporters, you *Orjuna* minions. We are well aware of our rights and strive to better ourselves physically and mentally. We will also win the struggle against the Yugo-fascists, the loyal servants of the modern robber knights, the capitalists. The Yugo-fascists have not seen the Trbovlje gymnasts because they are too stupid to know them, as it is obvious from their letter in which they clench their fists and promise a beating. These simpletons should come a little closer to the workers’ fists if they want their empty heads smashed. The workers of Trbovlje will follow their own path, sweeping away everything that tries to stand in their way, including the Yugo-fascists, and they will never allow themselves to be challenged, least of all by the *Orjuna* minions.

³⁴ The Workers’ Home (*Delavski dom*) in Ljubljana operated from 1920 to 1929 in the building of today’s Scientific Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU) at Novi trg 2. During this period, the building served as the headquarters of Social Democratic and Communist professional, trade union, and cultural organizations.

