

PUNITIVE EXPEDITIONS OF THE COMMUNIST AUTHORITIES AGAINST SIROKI BRIJEG ANTI- COMMUNIST GUERRILLAS 1945-1948

Abstract

Anti-communist guerrillas are armed groups who opposed the newly established Communist regime in the post-war period. Široki Brijeg anti-communist guerrilla was one of the most numerous in West Herzegovina after the Second World War. They were organized militarily and politically in June 1946 and established the First Herzegovinian Ustasha Crusader Association under the command of Ustasha captain Božo Mandić. Political aim of the anti-communist guerrilla was destroying communism because of the crimes done by Partisans over Croats and other nations before the end of the Second World War and after its end. Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) labeled the mentioned guerrilla as a threat to the process of establishing authority. Using the repressive apparatus KPJ organized numerous punitive expeditions in order to eliminate mentioned guerrillas at the territory of West Herzegovina. Fighting for life in the post-war period, constantly suspected, betrayed and executed by the secret police of KPJ, anti-communist guerrilla committed crimes mostly against national councilors, their families and members of the Young Communist League of Yugoslavia (SKOJ). UDBA agents were not successful in eliminating the anti-communist guerrilla at the beginning. After establishment of Dubrovnik Militia and engaging spies in villages KPJ organized numerous expeditions from 1946 to 1948 in which UDBA agents killed majority of Široki Brijeg anti-communist guerrilla. Other captured members of the guerrilla were sentenced to death by firing squad or to multiannual imprisonment.

Keywords: Siroki Brijeg; anti-communist guerrilla; Božo Mandić; Benedikt Benko Penavić; Vinko Škrobo; UDBA; KNOJ