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The Failed Concept of Reconstructing the Montenegrin State under the Italian Protectorate in 1941

The article examines the failed attempt to restore the Montenegrin state under Italian protection in 1941. Following the dissolution of the Yugoslav state in the Second World War, Montenegro became incorporated into the Italian geopolitical sphere of influence situated in the Adriatic and Mediterranean Seas. This fact aligned with the desire of supporters of the former Petrović-Njegoš dynasty and the political organisations of the so-called Greens in Montenegro itself, who constituted a minority at the time. The concept ultimately proved unsuccessful for a number of reasons, including the loss of former Montenegrin territories, the failure of dynastic succession, the separation from Serbia, and the formal involvement of Italy in the war against the USSR. Following a series of preparatory measures, the restoration of the Montenegrin state was formally declared on 12 July 1941, which coincided with the Feast of St. Peter according to the Julian calendar. The collapse occurred less than 24 hours later following a mass uprising of the Montenegrin people on 13 July, when Serbian monarchists and Montenegrin communists formed a temporary coalition. The article presents the views of leading Italian personalities in Montenegro, specifically Count Serafino Mazzolini and General Alessandro Pirzio Biroli, on the underlying causes of the project's demise. Their insights are particularly revealing. Furthermore, the observations of the Italian foreign minister, Count Galeazzo Ciano, who was responsible for coordinating the efforts to implement this concept, are also noteworthy.

Introduction

Given the topic at hand and the protagonists in the events addressed herein, it is imperative to consider the original basis underlying these events which is closely associated with the concepts that will be presented and subsequently elaborated. In the analysis thereof and of related processes, two significant factors have been identified as particularly decisive in determining the outcome. The first of these is the Italian factor. Italy was one of the two principal aggressors in the invasion of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941. This resulted in the dissolution of the Kingdom as a state. Italy occupied a considerable portion of Yugoslavia under a variety of legal jurisdictions and forms of governance. The concept of

a new Montenegrin state was largely influenced by Italy, particularly within the royal family. A puppet state would have been a valuable addition to the Italian sphere of interest. Mussolini's concept of rebuilding the Roman Empire on the shores of the Mediterranean basin and along Adriatic would have been a significant achievement.[1]

The Italian occupation of parts of Yugoslavia left numerous sources in its wake, including those relating to Montenegro, the number of which increased over the course of the occupation. The most significant Italian sources for this study are undoubtedly the political analyses of the causes of the uprising on 13 July 1941, which were sent to the central government in Rome. In these analyses, the Italians examined the missteps made in Montenegro, which they attributed to the adoption of an unsuitable political strategy. Initially, the focus was on the political concept of the emerging Montenegrin state. Subsequently, attention shifted to the political entity that was to be established within Montenegro to make this concept operational. In terms of their importance, these sources are comparable to those compiled by Mussolini's son-in-law, Count Galeazzo Ciano, who held the post of Italian foreign minister at the time. Ciano's diaries are particularly valuable as they contain his personal insights on a number of significant matters pertaining to the project: the reconstruction of the Montenegrin state and the merits thereof; the border issues confronted by such a state; dynastic questions, etc.[2]

The second principal source of information was generated by the actors involved in the reconstruction of the Montenegrin state from within Montenegro itself. In the context of the dissolution of the Yugoslav state, these political groups perceived Italy as a strategic partner capable of addressing their historical aspirations, setbacks, and political frustrations. The group primarily consisted of Montenegrin royalists, often identified as "Greens", and included former Montenegrin federalists. The objective of this study is to present a comprehensive analysis of the political origins of the events that transpired in Montenegro between 17 April and 13 July, 1941. The political association in question was formed over the course of more than two decades in the interwar period. It was not the collapse of the Yugoslav state, which occurred abruptly, that led to its formation. The actors involved were able to develop their concept rapidly, modifying it in accordance with the circumstances presented to them and the interests of Italy.

The formation of the anticipated state authorities and administrative bodies did not occur due to the limited time available for their establishment. In the relatively brief period of its existence, the Italian advisory body passed through two distinct phases. Consequently, sources relating to this body are scarce. Sources on the Montenegrin Greens and the federalist movement can be divided into

[1] CACCAMO 2011: 107–108; ŠISTEK 2022: 525–529.

[2] CIANO 1948.

two primary groups. The first consists of two periodicals published during those months, in which they presented their political demands and concepts. The first was *Zeta*, which had been published in Podgorica since 1930 as the unofficial newspaper of the Montenegrin federalists. Immediately after the Italian occupation, this publication changed its editorial orientation from a federalist orientation to the promotion of anti-Yugoslavism and Montenegrin sovereignty.[3] Naturally, it had a new editor. The second periodical was *Glas Crnogorca* (*La voce del Montenegro*), which was first published in Cetinje as the bulletin of the Provisional Administrative Committee and then of the Advisory Committee, bodies created by the Montenegrin Greens and federalists under the Italian Protectorate. It was in fact a copy of the well-known Montenegrin Government Paper, which had been published in Cetinje since 1873 and ceased publication at the beginning of 1916, when Montenegro was occupied by Austro-Hungarian troops. Subsequently, under the motto of continuity a newspaper with the same name was published as the bulletin of the Montenegrin government in exile in France and Italy until 1922. In order to demonstrate the symbolism of the restoration and continuity of the Montenegrin state, the Greens and federalists re-launched a newspaper with that same name.

Some political actors in the new Montenegrin state in 1941 occasionally cooperated with the communist Partisan movement in Montenegro, especially after the capitulation of Italy in early September 1943, when it became clear that Germany was on the losing side of the war. The communists fought for a federal Yugoslavia and practically copied the pre-war programme of the Montenegrin federalists, so there was potential for collaboration. It should be mentioned that immediately after the Italians entered Montenegro, some of the pre-war Greens and Montenegrin federalists completely distanced themselves from the idea of a new Montenegrin state. That smaller group, led by former Montenegrin minister Savo Vuletić, even retreated with the Chetniks to Slovenia at the end of 1944.[4] However, with the establishment of the communist regime in Montenegro at the end of 1944, the main protagonists of the new Montenegrin state, with the exception of Sekula Drljević, either surrendered or were captured by various means by the new authorities. There are several passages within their interrogations that proved useful for the topic of this paper.[5]

The dynastic question was one of the key issues tied to the conceptualization of the new Montenegrin state. When the Yugoslav state collapsed in 1941, Prince Mihailo was the only male descendant (grandson) of King Nikola through the male line. According to Montenegrin customary law, the right to inherit the throne was

[3] RASTODER 2015a: 7–30.

[4] AJ, fond 110, fascikla 251 (Dosije Sava Vuletića, br. 11–34).

[5] See: MINIĆ 1965; MINIĆ 1972.

reserved for a male heir. He was the son of King Nikola's middle son, Prince Mirko. Mirko died of tuberculosis in a Viennese sanatorium in 1918. Mihailo, however, was a resolute Yugoslav, and until then he had been a diplomat of Yugoslavia. His refusal to participate in the project for a new Montenegrin state discredited it from the outset.[6] Mihailo died in Paris in 1986. A portion of his memoirs were published posthumously in Montenegro in 2001. In these writings, one can see discern his views on three matters: the fate of the German and Italian powers in the war, the concept of a new Montenegrin state, and the possibility that he would become the ruler of that restored state.

Montenegro in the Yugoslav State 1918–1941

The occupation of Montenegro by the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the First World War came to an end in October 1918, when Entente troops (Serbian, Italian, French, British and American) entered the country. Most of Montenegro was occupied by Serbian troops and the local population strongly favoured unification with Serbia and joining the Yugoslav state. The election of the Assembly, which was to decide Montenegro's fate, was a complex and indirect process. Those in favour of unconditional unification with Serbia, who were known as the Whites due to the colour of their propaganda materials, opposed the royalists and those who advocated conditional unification, who were referred to as the Greens, also due to the colour of their propaganda leaflets. The Assembly (officially known as the *Grand National Assembly of the Serbian People in Montenegro*), which convened in Podgorica at the end of November, voted in favour of unification with Serbia, Montenegro's accession to the Yugoslav state and the dethronement of the Petrović-Njegoš dynasty headed by King Nikola.[7]

The Montenegrin government-in-exile, under the control of King Nikola and based in the Parisian suburb of Neuilly under the patronage of the Entente, especially France, rejected this act but was unable to prevent it. In December 1918, supporters of King Nikola initiated an insurrection near Cetinje. Their endeavour to capture the city from the Whites and Serbian troops was unsuccessful. Consequently, this insurrection was designated as the "Christmas Uprising" in subsequent historical discourse. On 1 December, Montenegro formally became a constituent state in the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (KSCS).[8] The Christmas Uprising was significantly influenced by Italy.

[6] GODI 2017: 46.

[7] See: D. VUJOVIĆ 1989; BOJOVIĆ 1989. Monographs containing collections of documents which contrast the opinions of two historians about the Assembly in Podgorica: JOVIĆEVIĆ 1995: 127; ROBERTS 2007: 321–324; ŠISTEK 2022: 446–455.

[8] See: D. VUJOVIĆ 1962; JOVIĆEVIĆ 1995: 127–128; ROBERTS 2007: 324–327; ŠISTEK 2022: 455–463.

The remaining elements of the fragmented Greens regrouped in Italy, where the Montenegrin government-in-exile in Rome, with assistance from Italy, promptly launched its activities.[9] The so-called Montenegrin issue was resolved by a treaty between Italy and the Soviet Union on 12 November 1920 in Rapallo, near Genoa. The former Austro-Hungarian territories of Istria, Rijeka, Zadar and the Kvarner islands, which had previously been the focus of the KSCS's aspirations, were ultimately incorporated into the Italian state. In return, Italy agreed to the closure of the military camps in Gaeta and Formi, which had been established for the purpose of encouraging Montenegrin emigration. Furthermore, Italy pledged to refrain from providing any form of assistance to the Montenegrin government-in-exile in Rome.[10]

In the period between the two World Wars, Montenegro was subject to two distinct forms of administration. During this time, the territory in question encompassed Montenegro from 1914 (together with Metohija), Boka, and parts of Herzegovina. From 1929 to 1939, the Dubrovnik area was also included. Until 1929, Montenegro was referred to as the 'Zeta Province' (*Zetska oblast*) in the KSCS. In that year, King Aleksandar Karađorđević renamed the country the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and instituted a new political structure called integral Yugoslavia, which divided the country into nine administrative regions, including the 'Zeta Banovina'. Throughout the entire period, the administrative centre was Cetinje, the former capital of Montenegro. Similar to the time of its independence, Montenegro had no university of its own in the interwar period. Instead, the majority of Montenegrin youth pursued their studies in Belgrade or Zagreb.[11]

Until 1929, the political landscape of Montenegro was characterised by the presence of centrist parties, which had their headquarters outside of Montenegro, together with the Montenegrin Party (Montenegrin federalists) as the only local party. Following a period of relatively positive outcomes, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) faced marginalisation as a result of the regime's persecution. In its assessment of Montenegro's status during the 1920s, the Communist Party's stance oscillated between integral Yugoslavism and separatism, ultimately culminating in a proposal for the Balkan Federation of Soviet Republics. In the 1930s, it adopted a firm position that Montenegro should be a federal unit within the Yugoslav state. Consequently, interwar politics in Montenegro were largely dictated by the enduring dichotomy that emerged in 1918, with the formation of two distinct factions: the centrists, also known as the Whites, and the federalists,

[9] ŽIVOJINOVIĆ 1998: 291–321.

[10] ŽIVOJINOVIĆ 1998: 375–405; JOVANOVIĆ 1950; JOVIĆEVIĆ 1995: 133–140; ŠISTEK 2022: 472–474.

[11] ČULINOVIĆ 1961a; ČULINOVIĆ 1961b.

or Greens. Montenegro became involved in the Second World War in 1941 against this political backdrop.[12]

Differing Concepts for the Reconstruction of Montenegrin State

Historiographic and Terminological Aspects of the Concept of the Restoration of the Montenegrin State

In the historiography of post-war socialist Yugoslavia, and more specifically in Montenegro, all movements and regimes created on the territory of Yugoslavia under its various occupiers were treated as separatist. In order to gain insight into the rationale underlying this concept, it would be instructive to consider the position taken by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the partisan movement during the Second World War. Despite the dissimilarities in its internal and class structures compared to the first Yugoslavia, the second, post-war Yugoslavia perceived all movements that fostered its dissolution, whether during or after the war, as anti-state and separatist in nature.[13] The group in Montenegro that advocated for the restoration of the Montenegrin state also represented a constituent element of Montenegrin society.[14]

The dissolution of the Yugoslav socialist system and the formation of the third Yugoslavia resulted in significant disruptions to the previous coherence of Yugoslav and Montenegrin historiography. The two aforementioned groups are still categorised as such by many historians and writers in Montenegro and abroad. Nevertheless, there are also groups engaged in terminological revisionism and the formulation of accompanying explanations. It is evident that these factors are associated with the political movement for an independent Montenegro that has been ongoing since 1990. These factors are based on the premise that the Yugoslav state disintegrated, and that each of its constituent republics pursued a distinct state path, adapting to prevailing circumstances. The initial position that they adopted was wholly consistent with the arguments advanced by the proponents of Montenegro's newly-acquired statehood in 1941. The dissolution of the Versailles system logically meant the achievement of their statehood rights.

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[12] See: D. VUJOVIĆ 1981; RASTODER 1996; Đ. VUJOVIĆ 1988: 9–15; RASTODER 2015b; JOVIĆEVIĆ 1995: 191–195; KARAULA 2022: 196–220, 240–300, 334–443.

[13] The most prominent representative of this orientation in Montenegrin historiography, Radoje Pajović, explicitly uses the term "separatists" for this political group (see more: PAJOVIĆ 1977: 616). Pajović's conclusions should be considered with caution, given his status as an ideological communist historian.

[14] For more, see: VUČETIĆ (pseudonym RAJKOVIĆ) 1947: 143; KONTIĆ 1959: 26–42; ZEC 1959: 47–58. The views of the aforementioned authors should be approached with a measure of scepticism, given that they are Chetniks.

This is reflected in an article published in the newspaper *Zeta* from Podgorica. Specifically, it appeared in the final issue, which coincided with the day that the war commenced, 6 April 1941. The paper's inaugural edition, published on 24 April, represented a radical departure from its previous format and editorial stance. In one of the articles, it was explained that the peoples of Yugoslavia found themselves in a situation where they were compelled to "start saving themselves. Following the dissolution of the Yugoslav state, each constituent nation has initiated the process of rebuilding and establishing its own state apparatus, including the implementation of educational reforms. Such actions were also taken by Serbia, Croatia, and other provinces that constituted the former Yugoslav state".[15]

The designation of those who were instrumental in establishing the new Montenegrin state as "separatists" can be situated within the broader context of the concept of separatism as it was understood in Yugoslavia. In this context, any deviation from the complete unity of the Yugoslav state was perceived as a form of separatism. An alternative to this explanation may follow a different logic. The former Yugoslavia was no longer a unified state; it no longer existed as a single occupied territory of another state. Each province managed its own needs and circumstances, including Montenegro. The state had existed until its unification with Yugoslavia in 1918, and the outcomes of that unification are no longer extant. Consequently, the state reverted to its original form. The contemporary Italian historian Federico Goddi provides terminology for the aforementioned groups, including the following designations: "several Montenegrin patriots", "Montenegro patriots" and "collaborationists".[16]

The political group that sought to reinstate the Montenegrin state in 1941 was, in essence, separatist in nature. It consisted of royalists who had opposed the unification of Montenegro with Serbia and its entry into the Yugoslav state in 1918. During the interwar period, the majority of these individuals were affiliated with the Montenegrin party, which in turn consisted of (Montenegrin) federalists. Although they did not officially proclaim separatism in relation to the Yugoslav state, they actively promoted separatist tendencies and the uniqueness of Montenegro in relation to the Yugoslav state through various ways. The two principal figures involved in the reconstruction of the Montenegrin state under Italian protection, Sekula Drljević and Mihailo Ivanović, had political careers characterised by complexity and controversy. They covered a long political distance from supporters of King Nikola to his fierce opponents. In 1918, they endorsed unification and subsequently advocated for an extreme form of federalism throughout the interwar period.

[15] "Crnogorski narode, Srećna ti slobodna Crna Gora! Braćo Crnogorci!" *Zeta* (Podgorica), no. 15, 24 April 1941, 1.

[16] GODI 2017: 40, 55, 79.

The Concept of Negating the Positive Aspects of Unification and the Post-Versailles Yugoslav State

This concept was undoubtedly reinforced by the two-decade opposition to the acts of the Podgorica Assembly and the manner in which Montenegro joined the Yugoslav state. In the initial stages of the Podgorica Assembly's formation, a group of royalists initiated a revolt, criticising the preparation and convocation of the Assembly and its decision-making procedures. Additionally, King Nikola's government in France also expressed opposition to the Assembly.[17] Montenegrin federalists did this more subtly during the interwar period. The aforementioned groups did not dispute the Montenegrin people's will and desire for unification; however, they did dispute the method of unification. Nevertheless, in the years before the Second World War, there had been public criticism of unification and the Yugoslav state. In the view of Sekula Drljević and Novica Radović, this noble idea was desecrated by Serbia and the Entente powers. Furthermore, Montenegro was a victim of the crimes of the Versailles Peace Conference.[18]

Immediately following the entry of Italian troops into Montenegro, those in favour of the newly established state openly expressed criticism of the Yugoslav concept and the decisions made by the Podgorica Assembly, which they saw as precursors of the Versailles decisions.[19] In the first issue of *Zeta*, published on 24 April, it was noted that more than two decades had passed "since the Allied victory in the First World War resulted in Montenegro being treated as a vanquished nation through the implementation of the Versailles Treaty. In a manner unknown to this date in history, the Montenegrin people were subjugated by a small group of Belgrade speculators, whose actions were prioritised over the collective dignity, honour and progress of the Montenegrin people." It was alleged that the actions of the aforementioned parties in 1918 resulted in the dissolution of a brotherhood and alliance, with the consequence that King Nikola and his government were captured. These groups referred to themselves as "our crown and flag." The Montenegrin state, which had been acquired with "great effort and sacrifice," was effectively destroyed.[20]

One of the fundamental tenets of the Montenegrin state's formation in 1941 was undoubtedly its complete solidarity with the Axis powers. In the 1 May edi-

17 PAVLOWITCH 1999: 157–176; POPOVIĆ 2003: 33–38.

18 See more: DRLJEVIĆ 1926: 81; RADOVIĆ 1938: 137.

19 Archivio storico Istituto Luce – Roma, Archivio Cinematografico, Cinegiornale Luce C (1940-1945), 01/05/1941, codice filmato C0140, https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/search/result.html?startPage=0&jsonVal=%7B%22jsonVal%22%3A%7B%22query%22%3A%5B%22C0140%22%5D%2C%22fieldDate%22%3A%22dataNormal%22%2C%22_perPage%22%3A20%7D%7D, accessed 10 September 2024.

20 "Crnogorski narode, Srećna ti slobodna Crna Gora! Braćo Crnogorci!" *Zeta* (Podgorica), no. 15, 24 April 1941, 1.

tion of *Zeta*, it was stated that their victory had overturned "the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles. The Montenegrin people have thus freed themselves from the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles and expect the creation of a happy and strong Montenegrin state".[21] The following edition of this newspaper proclaimed that with the incursion of Bulgarian and German troops into Macedonia, this region was incorporated into Bulgaria. Consequently, Bulgaria had secured access to the Aegean Sea. It was asserted that in this manner Bulgaria was "freed from the captivity imposed on it by the Versailles Dictatorship" […]. A comparison was made between the fate of the Montenegrin and Bulgarian people in connection with the Versailles order with the conclusion that the Montenegrins "were as disenfranchised" as the Bulgarians. The "resurrection of Great Bulgaria" was hailed.[22] As the preparations for the Petrovdan (St. Peter's Day) Assembly, which was supposed to formally proclaim Montenegro independence, neared completion, *Glas Crnogorca* of 9 July issued a reminder that a free Montenegro would serve as tangible evidence of the sincerity of the Italian struggle, which the Duce had initiated two decades earlier with the objective of "removing the shameful fruits of Versailles".[23]

On 12 July 1941, Sekula Drljević served as the official assembly speaker at the Petrovdan Assembly. In his lengthy speech, he also expressed negative views on the Versailles decisions and the Versailles order of Europe. He asserted that the First World War reached its conclusion with the signing of the "Treaty of Versailles. As a consequence of its confusion between political and moral concepts in the initial post-war period, which was disrupted by the ascendancy of Benito Mussolini as the leader of the Italian people and the instigator of fascism" […]. Subsequently, Adolf Hitler assumed leadership of the German people, espousing the same views as Mussolini. These two "eminent European figures consistently emphasised the imperative of forging a new European identity" […]. The destruction of Versailles by the Axis powers paved the way for "the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the opportunity to rectify the injustices perpetrated against Montenegro in 1918" […].[24]

Representing Serbia as the Occupier of Montenegro in 1918 and the Negation of the Premise and Decisions of the Podgorica Assembly

In 1941, the creators of the new Montenegrin state offered a series of political concepts. The first asserted that Serbia and Montenegro were allies in the

[21] "Za srećnu i jaku Crnu Goru," *Zeta* (Podgorica), no. 17, 1 May 1941, 1.

[22] "Prisajedinjenje Makedonije Bugarskoj," *Zeta* (Podgorica), no. 18, 4 May 1941, 1.

[23] "Amanet kralja Nikole," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 8, 9 July 1941, 2.

[24] "Zasijedanje Skupštine," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 9, 13. July 1941, 3; KARAULA 2022: 503–521.

First World War. They were members of the Entente coalition. However, at the conclusion of the conflict, Serbia and several Entente member states proceeded to occupy Montenegro. The second concept was the critique and rejection of the decisions made by the Podgorica Assembly. Savić Marković-Štedimlija, a native of Podgorica, proceeded to analyse these concepts in detail. He was a respected journalist and a writer on current affairs. In the 1930s, during the interwar period, he published a series of texts and brochures in which he underscored the distinctive features of Montenegrin ethnic identity and history in relation to Serbia. He based this assertion on details from *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina* (*Barski rodoslov*) [Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea/Bar Genealogy], which claims that there were southern, or so-called Red, Croats who inhabited the area of Duklja (Dioclea) and its coast in the early Middle Ages. This document was written in the 12th century, yet the identity of its author remains unknown. The original has not been preserved. Subsequently, several versions were translated into Latin, beginning in the 16th century, which differ considerably from one another.[25] Marković resided in Zagreb from the late 1920s onward, maintaining close ties with the Croatian Peasant Party and the followers of the 19th-century Croatian nationalist-chauvinist Josip Frank (a Croat of Jewish descent). In the latter part of the 1930s, he frequently met with Sekula Drljević in Zagreb. Following the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia, he was the chairman of the Montenegrin National Committee in Zagreb and the head of the Montenegrin Office in Zagreb.[26]

Prior to the Petrovdan Assembly, Marković published a brochure on the "Montenegrin National Question," which was sponsored by the Montenegrin National Committee. The brochure revealed that attitudes in *Zeta* and *Glas Crnogorca* were identical. The following theses were advanced by the author.[27] The Marković theses were published in a series of articles in Montenegro, specifically in *Zeta* and *Glas Crnogorca*. On 17 April, the date of Yugoslavia's capitulation, Montenegro was the last of the Yugoslav provinces to be occupied by Axis troops. On that day, Italian troops launched an offensive against Montenegro, staging simultaneous attacks from multiple directions, including one against Cetinje. Two days later, the inaugural issue *of Glas Crnogorca* was released by an editorial board of supporters of the new Montenegrin state. According to this publication, the entry of Italian troops into Montenegro and Cetinje would "liberate our country from twenty years of Yugoslav domination" […]. It proclaimed that throughout this entire period, the valiant people of Montenegro had remained steadfast in their aspiration to reclaim their liberty: "The same individuals who, for a lengthy period

25 For more, see: MARKOVIĆ (ŠTEDIMLIJA) 1937a: 127; MARKOVIĆ (ŠTEDIMLIJA) 1937b: 127; MARKOVIĆ (ŠTEDIMLIJA) 1939: 118.

26 KARAULA 2011: 213–251; see: MAČEK AND ŠKRABE 1999.

27 MARKOVIĆ (ŠTEDIMLIJA) 1941: 2–3, 78.

of 20 years, threatened the stability of Europe with their self-serving actions, are now responsible for the continent's current state of conflict" […].[28]

Montenegro's life in Yugoslavia was a time of "suffering and hope," namely, the hope for the liberation and restoration of its country.[29] In the social context, the period was also perceived as being marked by Belgrade's imperialist and capitalist authority, with Montenegro struggling against what was seen "as a Belgrade-based capitalist plutocracy" [...]. A number of individuals from Montenegro were accused of serving the latter's interests: "The political elite in Belgrade is neither Yugoslav nor national in character. Rather, it represents the interests of a capitalist plutocracy that has engaged in the appropriation and exploitation of the people's property".[30]

It was evident that Montenegro was experiencing economic difficulties within the Yugoslav state, largely due to the influence of Belgrade and Serbia. This can be attributed to the claim that "the Serbian administration effectively destroyed the economic potential of Montenegro" [...]. The aforementioned administration was responsible for creating a passive and backward landscape in Montenegro and for dividing the Montenegrin population into two distinct classes. The first were intellectuals who had assumed administrative roles, while the second consisted of peasants who "languish in poverty".[31] When the Italian civil commissioner for Montenegro, Count Serafino Mazzolini, visited different regions of Montenegro on an inspection tour, the scenes were largely the same. Local dignitaries and the assembled people expressed their allegiance to Italy and gratitude for its role in liberating them from two decades of occupation by Serbia and Belgrade. This is what local dignitaries in Budva declared in a report published by *Glas Crnogorca* on 18 May: "His Excellency the Governor Mazzolini expressed that he was gratified by the liberation of sovereigntists from Serbian occupation, which he attributed to the successful military actions undertaken by Italy" [...].[32] The same edition of the newspaper also included the announcement that the Montenegrin community in Argentina had sent a telegram to Mazzolini, expressing gratitude for Italy's role in liberating Montenegro. Mazzolini's presence in Cetinje was perceived as a guarantee to the inhabitants of Montenegro who, "had been deceived by the names of their Belgrade brothers" [...].

In the same issue, the same newspaper published a comprehensive report on the celebration of St. George's Day in Cetinje, namely in the Cetinje Monastery,

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28 "Proglas Privremenog upravnog odbora crnogorskom narodu," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 1, 19 April 1941, 1; ROBERTS 2007: 344–345.

29 "Amanet kralja Nikole," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 8, 9 July 1941, 2.

30 "Jedno zasluženo priznanje," *Zeta* (Podgorica), no. 18, 4 May 1941, 1.

31 "NIKADA CRNA GORA NEĆE ZABORAVITI POMOĆ ITALIJE," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 6, 24 June 1941, 3.

32 "Praznik Đurđev-dana proslavljen prvi put poslije 22 godine na Cetinje," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 1, 18 May 1941, 4.

the baptismal feast of the Petrović-Njegoš dynasty. Moreover, Commissioner Mazzolini was present at the ceremony, as were the people and loyal sovereigntist leaders. It was claimed that this feast of the patron saint had been "forbidden by Serbian rulers for 22 years" and that it "assumed a magnificent character." The church procession became a political demonstration of allegiance and gratitude to Italy "for liberation from Serbian tyranny and Belgrade hegemony" [...].[33]

The repudiation of the concept of unification, the Podgorica Assembly and the Yugoslav state was formalised through an official act. In his address to the Petrovdan Assembly, Sekula Drljević referred to the unification and decisions of the Podgorica Assembly, characterising them as the official position of the assembly speaker.[34] The Assembly issued a declaration that may be regarded as a preliminary step toward the establishment of a constitutional framework, which ultimately did not materialise. The initial two points of the Declaration pertained to the nullification of the Podgorica Assembly's positions and resolutions, the unification of the state, and the Yugoslav state.[35]

As they themselves acknowledged, the Italians' analysis of the causes of the unrest and mass rebellion on 13 July was based on a ruse staged for them by the Montenegrin sovereigntists. Their intelligence agency had completely failed. Following the uprising's outbreak, Mazzolini was promptly removed from his post and subsequently returned to Rome, where the uprising was perceived as a significant misstep on his part. In response, Army General Alessandro Pirzio Biroli was brought from Albania to assume the role of governor of the military occupation of Montenegro. On 15 July, he forwarded a report to the Chief of the Italian General Staff, Army General Ugo Cavallero. He deemed that revolutionary action in Montenegro "should probably be sought and attributed to Montenegrin dissidents, who saw in the collapse of Yugoslavia the annihilation of all support that the Serbs provided to their brothers from Montenegro." As specified in the report, Montenegrins played a pivotal role in the recruitment of civil servants, officials, gendarmes, and police officers for Serbs in interwar Yugoslavia. He observed an "interconnection between these elements of the same race" and the contributions made to the colonization of Kosovo.[36]

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[33] "Narod crnogorski oduševljeno pozdravlja Suverena velike prijateljske Italije," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 3, 27 May 1941, 1; Archivio storico Istituto Luce – Roma, Archivio Cinematografico, Cinegiornale Luce C (1940-1945), 27/05/1941, codice filmato C0147, https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/search/result.html?query=C0147&jsonVal=&activeFilter=serieAppartenenza_autocomplete, accessed 10 September 2024; VIGNOLI 2002: 29–32.

[34] "ZASIJEDANJE SABORA," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 9, 13 July 1941, 2; KARAULA 2022: 510–520, 523–526.

[35] "DEKLARACIJA CRNOGORSKOG SABORA," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 9, 13 July 1941, 3.

[36] VAS, ANJ, IA, box 740, document number (d.b.) 12/3-1.

Mazzolini cannot be considered the originator of the idea of a new Montenegrin state. He was a high-ranking state official tasked with implementing the concept and serving as the primary contact point with the Montenegrin sovereigntists. In a report dated 25 July, he outlined two groups of rebels and the motives underlying the uprising. In fact, these were followers of the idea of unification in Montenegro since 1918, specifically Serbian monarchists and future Chetniks, who would soon cooperate closely with the Italians against the communist Partisans. He stated that during interrogation, detainees belonging to the second group asserted that "Montenegro, a country with a majority Serbian population, has a responsibility to rely on its own people".[37]

In a report dated 12 August and addressed to the Italian Army's Supreme Command, Biroli asserted that "the majority of the population was not in favour of either a monarchy or an independent state, which would burden the budget of the new state." The majority of the population would prefer to become an integral part of Italy if the Axis were to definitively separate Montenegro from Serbia, "with which Montenegro and Serbia share a common language, religion, and customs [...]." He stated that the Montenegrin people were aware of the importance of gratitude and that, when circumstances dictated "the separation of Serbia and Montenegro," they would adopt their own stance and not forget the support provided by Italy. If destiny should decree "the restoration of Serbia, the Montenegrins would be inclined to demonstrate their gratitude to Italy and to all Serbs".[38]

On 20 August, Biroli submitted a report to the Supreme Command in which he provided an analysis of the causes of the uprising. Biroli divided the population of Montenegro into two distinct groups. The second group consisted of younger individuals who "admire Serbia." Over the twenty-two-year period of the Yugoslav state, this demographic was drawn "into the sphere of Belgrade's influence" through their education. This was due to the fact that in Cetinje there was one high school for every 8,000 inhabitants, with as many as 1,200 students enrolled. Furthermore, this involved further study at the universities in Belgrade and Zagreb. The considerable number of educated individuals in the population, which was "exalted by talk and communism, found itself in a position to choose between the influence of Belgrade (which has historically been favourable to them) and Rome. Due to racial, linguistic, and religious reasons, they preferred to rely on the Serbs and to support Greater Serbian ideals [...]".[39]

The entire situation was a farce. Italy was a significant geopolitical entity with a considerable military apparatus and intelligence service. The latter had a lengthy history in Montenegro. However, on this occasion, its assessment was

[37] ACS, NAW, T.821, 356/664-678.

[38] ACS, NAW, T.821, 356/664-678.

[39] ACS, NAW, T.821, 356/652-662.

entirely erroneous. Biroli corroborated this assertion in two distinct reports. In one dated 12 August, he stated that a "relatively small number of Montenegrin personalities, with a correspondingly limited number of supporters, are in favour of independence with a monarchical government. They are calling for Italy to appoint a royal governor from the Montenegrin house" [...].[40] A similar assertion was made in the aforementioned report of 20 August, with regard to the composition of the population. The first pertained to older people "who evinced a favourable response to the reinstatement of traditional monarchical institutions and customs, who do not oppose and are delighted by a return to the old, i.e., the monarchy and old traditions; nevertheless, there is insufficient influence or personnel to form an effective management team" [...]. In response to the evidence presented, Biroli asserted that "apart from the sentimental attachment of the elderly to the former royal family, it was not feasible for individuals to form confidante groups in Cetinje, despite the presence of honest native people".[41]

The report also addressed the case of Joanikije Lipovac, the metropolitan (archbishop) of Montenegro and the Littoral. Despite his post at the Cetinje monastery, where he was present during Mazzolini's visit, and formal membership in the Petrovdan Council, Biroli stated that he was "a protégé of the Belgrade Patriarch Dožić." Patriarch Dožić was originally from Montenegro and played an active role in the coup d'état of 27 March, which overthrew the Cvetković-Maček government and resulted in Yugoslavia's accession to the Triple Alliance. He was being held in a German prison in Belgrade at the time when this report was written.

The Concept of Montenegro in the New European Order and Fascist Italy's Sphere of Interest

The concept put forth by the Greens and federalists was that the Montenegrin state had ceased to exist in 1918 as a result of betrayal by its Entente allies, primarily Serbia and France. This betrayal was formalised through the establishment of the Versailles system for organising Europe. It was therefore to be expected that they would seek to form alliances with the discontented nations within this system. Italy was the first to offer support, being Montenegro's closest neighbour. This support took the form of open logistics, and it was provided for a certain period following 1918. In the wake of the Treaty of Rapallo, Italy effectively eliminated the so-called Montenegrin issue. This development was largely overlooked by those who espoused a sovereigntist perspective. Italy's occupation of Montenegro provided an opportunity for the latter to re-establish its statehood. In this context, two aspects were linked. The first aspect pertained to entry into the Italian sphere of interest. This gave rise to the second aspect, which entailed allegiance to the

[40] ACS, NAW, T.822, 371/681-683.

[41] ACS, NAW, T.822, 371/ 692-694.

New European Order based on fascist and Nazi ideologies. In Italy, the Fascist regime was in power, while Germany was controlled by the Nazi Party. These two countries invaded Yugoslavia and formed an alliance with the pro-fascist regimes in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary.

Those in favour of a Green and federalist approach made their allegiance to the New European Order clear. Such instances are reflected in the aforementioned newspapers, which frequently exhibited a sense of deference. Expressions of loyalty to Italy can be observed even before the Second World War. Specifically, the principal political figure of the newly established Montenegrin state in 1941, Sekula Drljević, participated in the final parliamentary elections prior to the outbreak of war in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on 11 December 1938, campaigning in the districts of Cetinje and Kolašin. The headquarters of the Yugoslav Army's Second Military Zone prepared a report for December consisting of confidential dispatches on the elections in Montenegro, which was also forwarded to the Internal Affairs Ministry. The report is a multi-thematic document which, due to its complexity, warrants detailed consideration here. The report states that the election campaign of newly elected MP Drljević was not public. However, "the elected person did visit individual villages and met with individual persons, at which times he presented them with a map of Free Montenegro." As indicated in the report, the proposed configuration would encompass the then extant Zeta Banovina and a portion of the Littoral Banovina including Shkodër. Drljević presented the electorate with "a variety of evidence from the era of the Montenegrin kingdom, together with Mussolini's written approval of the proposed alterations of the country's political structure. This form of agitation appears to have been effective among the older population, who retain memories of the late King Nikola and his reign".[42]

It is evident that even prior to the war, the Montenegrin federalists were perceived as an Italian Fifth Column within Yugoslavia. The Montenegrin federalists and communists had a practically identical programme, with both advocating a federal approach to Yugoslavia's internal structure. Despite a coalition between the communists and federalists in the parliamentary and local elections in Montenegro, there were significant differences between the two parties. At its Fifth National Conference held in October 1940, the CPY adopted a resolution which in point (b), on national issues and the internal organisation of the state, declared that in Montenegro "the struggle for equality and self-determination of the Montenegrin people is ongoing. Concurrently, a dogged struggle against the federalist leadership is also occurring. This leadership, with the assistance of Italian imperialists, is attempting to impose a new yoke on the Montenegrin people".[43]

[42] VAS, Fond Vojska Kraljevine Jugoslavije, kutija 31, fascikla 17, d.b. 45/1.

[43] *Izvori za istoriju SKJ, Peta Zemaljska konferencija KPJ* 1980: 238–239, 631.

The first edition of *Glas Crnogorca*, published on 19 April 1941, asserted that "The arrival of Axis troops in Cetinje and Montenegro marked the liberation of our country from twenty years of Yugoslav domination [...]. We implored the prime minister of Italy and the fascist government to listen to our appeals for the restoration of Montenegro, a territory that had been under Italian control for centuries. It is our considered opinion that our appeal, which is also yours, will be acknowledged and favourably received." The same edition of the newspaper also contains an article stating that, "following the arrival of the Italian troops in the Montenegrin capital," the Montenegrin people have gained hope for freedom. This freedom had been under threat for the preceding twenty years due to actions by those individuals "who, through their self-serving actions, have contributed to the current state of conflict in Europe [...]." This argument clearly noted the involvement of other warring parties in the Second World War, as well as the forces responsible for the coup of 27 March in Yugoslavia. This would be confirmed in subsequent editions of *Glas Crnogorca* and *Zeta*. The telegrams sent by the "Committee for the Liberation of Montenegro" to the Italian king and to Mussolini and Hitler were also published. In these messages, the sovereigntists expressed their gratitude for the liberation of Montenegro and expressed their hope for support in the reconstruction of the Montenegrin state.[44]

The peak of deference was reached in the same issue of the newspaper in an article stating that under such ideal circumstances "the soldiers of the new fascist Italy came to Montenegro as liberators, and that they were received everywhere in the country with enthusiasm and gratitude, because the relationship between Italy and Montenegro is not one of occupiers and occupied, but rather between friends".[45] A similar assertion can be found in the first issue of *Zeta* published on 24 April following the occupation: "With the entry of the victorious Italian army into Montenegro, we Montenegrins are neither enslaved nor occupied by the enemy".[46] The next edition of this publication, dated 27 April, reported that Adolf Hitler and Count Ciano had met in Vienna on 20 April to discuss the situation in Southeast Europe. The article indicates that the Montenegrin people were following these discussions with optimism, "as they believe that the Axis Powers will reinstate the traditional order that has been repeatedly proclaimed by the Axis Leader".[47]

The baptismal patronal feast of the Petrović-Njegoš dynasty, Saint George's Day (May 6), was celebrated in the Cetinje Monastery for the first time in 22 years

[44] "Proglas Privremenog upravnog odbora crnogorskom narodu, Događaji," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 1, 19 April 1941, 1.

[45] "Proglas Privremenog upravnog odbora crnogorskom narodu, Događaji," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 1, 19 April 1941, 1.

[46] "Crnogorski narode, Srećna ti slobodna Crna Gora! Braćo Crnogorci!" *Zeta* (Podgorica), no. 15, 24 April 1941, 1.

[47] "Položaj Crne Gore u bivšoj Jugoslaviji," *Zeta* (Podgorica), no. 16, 27 April 1941, 1.

(i.e., since the establishment of the Yugoslav state) once the Italian army entered the city. As documented in *Glas Crnogorca* on 18 May, a comprehensive report on this event was presented. The service was conducted by Metropolitan Joanikije Lipovac of Montenegro and the Littoral, and it was attended by the Italian civil commissioner for Montenegro, Count Serafino Mazzolini, and a detachment of Italian officers. The report also notes that large numbers of residents filled the monastery grounds and its surrounding areas. It was further reported that when Mazzolini departed from the monastery following the service, "[t]he public expressed their approval with enthusiastic applause and exclamations of 'Long live Italy – Long live the Duce – Long live the Italian army that liberated Montenegro'. In response, His Excellency Mazzolini expressed support for Montenegro's independence, conveying his best wishes for the country's continued prosperity and progress".[48] A similar report was published by *Zeta* on 8 May.[49]

On 10 June*, Glas Crnogorca* published a speech delivered by Mussolini to the Fascist and Corporative Assembly to mark the anniversary of Italy's entry into the war. The speech was accompanied by a front-page headline reading "Montenegro regains its independence and enters the Italian sphere." The same newspaper reported on Mazzolini's inspection tour across Montenegro, during which he visited Bar. He was greeted by the Bar Archbishop Nikola Dobrečić, who "in perfectly fluent Italian" delivered a welcome speech "with touching words of devotion, expressing the loyalty of Catholic Montenegrin priests to Italy".[50]

During the Petrovdan Assembly, Sekula Drljević, serving as its official speaker, clearly and unambiguously declared the full alliance of the future Montenegro with the Axis states and Montenegro's entry into the Italian sphere of interest. He said that the Montenegrin people "are proud that the establishment of free Montenegro was combined with the immortal feats of the Duce, the genius creator of the Fascist Empire, and with the feats of the renowned and victorious Italian army." His opinion was "that the Duce fought from the beginning against the injustice done to Montenegro by the destruction of its state existence […]".[51] The parliamentary Declaration clearly reflected this tendency.[52]

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48 "Praznik Đurđev-dana proslavljen prvi put poslije 22 godine na Cetinje," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 1, 18 May 1941, 3. During the first two months of the Italian occupation of Montenegro, two versions of the first issue of *Glas Crnogorca* appeared, one dated 19 April, and the other dated 18 May. The publisher of the first version was the Provisional Montenegrin Committee. It was an issue in the form of a single-sided poster. The second version and the next editions were published in bilingual versions, Serbian-Italian, with no publisher designated.

49 "Veličanstvena svečanost i manifestacije u C. Gori i na Cetinju," *Zeta* (Podgorica), no. 19, 8 May 1941, 2; VIGNOLI 2002: 29–32.

50 "NJ.E. VISOKI KOMESAR U BARU I BUDVI," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 5, 20 June 1941, 4.

51 "CRNOGORSKI SABORE," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 9, 13 July 1941, 3.

52 "DEKLARACIJA CRNOGORSKOG SABORA," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 9, 13 July 1941, 2.

Furthermore, historiography, whether directly or indirectly addressing the organisation of the Petrovdan Council and the uprising in Montenegro on 13 July, has also identified the factors that influenced the outbreak of the uprising and the reasons why it became so extensive and violent. This question is directly tied to the subject of this article. It is notable that the cult of Russia in Montenegro was particularly well-developed. Since the beginning of the 18th century, particularly during the reign of Peter the Great, Montenegro, as an Orthodox and Slavic state, received significant material and diplomatic assistance from Russia. Italy proceeded to occupy Montenegro. It was aligned with Germany, which initiated an attack against the USSR on 22 June. The preparations for the declaration of a new Montenegrin state subsequently reached their conclusion. Italy, in its capacity as an ally of Germany, formally declared war on the USSR. An anti-Soviet policy of an ideological nature was pursued in conjunction with the Greens and federalists through *Glas Crnogorca*.

The average Montenegrin still perceived the USSR as a continuation of imperial "Mother" Russia. It is also important to consider the context of the time in which Montenegro experienced its communist movement. Although the movement was not particularly widespread or influential in terms of public opinion, its organizational capacity and commitment to its ideological principles were significant. Thus, according to the combined courts system, the attack on the USSR and Italy's complicity therein were linked to the reconstruction of the Montenegrin state and its actors. Thus, both the ideological and the broader identity factor coincided. This identity factor encompassed not only those who advocated for communism in Montenegro, but also those who adhered to the principles of unification and Serbian monarchism. The fact that Italy was at war with Britain, with which the royal Yugoslav government had already sought refuge, undoubtedly reinforces this analysis.

Mazzolini divided the rebels into two groups based on statements made by detainees. In a report dated 25 July, he informed Minister Ciano that some of the rebels had claimed "that they wanted to engage a higher number of Italian soldiers in the rebellion in order to deter them from further aggression against 'Mother' Russia".[53] This source is entirely consistent with the position expressed by the sovereigntists in *Glas Crnogorca* on 21 July. The uprising had already commenced in Montenegro. The newspaper asserted that the communist revolt resulted in the deaths of several Italian soldiers, who were ambushed "[a]t Moscow's behest, with the encouragement and financial assistance of agents based in Belgrade and London." The allegedly futile struggle of the insurgents and the actual circumstances were evaluated as follows: "The victorious armies of the Axis are at the threshold of Moscow, which has been evacuated. Could the triumph of

[53] ACS, NAW, T.821, 356/717-721.

communism be attributed to the influence of its Montenegrin supporters, leading to the demise of the Soviet Union?"[54]

The Concept of the Montenegrin Greens and Federalists within the Territory of Montenegro

The Greens and federalists initiated the project of a new Montenegrin state in 1941 with a minimalist concept of Montenegro's state territory, delineated within the borders of 1914. Montenegro's borders were based on the territories ratified by the London and Bucharest Conferences held in 1913 (after the Second Balkan War) and remained in force until the outbreak of the First World War. During the First Balkan War, Montenegro was unsuccessful in its attempt to annex Shkodër, which was under the control of the Albanian state. In June 1915, during the initial phase of the First World War, the Montenegrin army proceeded to occupy the city and its surroundings. Montenegro carried out this campaign as a standalone component of its foreign policy, without consulting with Serbia and the Entente powers. This action, in turn, provoked their rebellion, primarily because Montenegro was engaged in efforts to persuade Italy to enter the war on its side. This constituted a fundamental deviation from Montenegro's long-term foreign policy objectives and was perceived by the Entente as evidence of disloyalty among its allies and a manifestation of separate interests pursued by military means.

Since the Berlin Congress in 1878, which marked the first significant expansion of Montenegro's territory, Prince Nikola had been developing the concept of "Greater Montenegro." He based it on the historical foundations and traditions of the medieval Duklja-Zeta state ruled by the Vojislavljević and later Balšić dynasties. He did not disavow the legacy of his country in relation to the Nemanjić dynasty. He held the view that Montenegro was unjustly denied eastern Herzegovina in 1878. His vision of a so-called Greater Montenegro encompassed a vast swath of territory rooted in the concept of Old Montenegro. The territory in question extended from the mouth of the Neretva River to the Drin Valley in Albania, although northern Albania, including the Shkodër basin, was also considered. Furthermore, the territory encompassed the north-eastern region of modern-day Montenegro, including the municipalities of Mojkovac, Bijelo Polje, Berane, Plav, Gusinje, and Pljevlja. Following the First Balkan War, Montenegro was awarded these territories, along with Metohija. Nikola believed that the historical injustice of 1878 should be rectified and that eastern Herzegovina should be annexed to Montenegro, extending further south and west to the mouth of the Neretva. Ultimately, the situation in Bosnia was taken into account, with particular reference to the area along the banks of the Drina River from Čajniče to Foča, and the pocket extending from Sarajevo to Kalinovik. In order to establish a framework for the

[54] "Crnogorci," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 10, 21 July 1941, 1.

fulfilment of these requirements, Montenegro drew upon the Treaty of London concluded on 26 April 1915.[55]

In the period following the Italian invasion of Montenegro, the Montenegrin sovereigntists initiated a vigorous campaign conducted along the borders of Montenegro, which entailed both direct engagement with Mazzolini and through their newspapers *Glas Crnogorca* and *Zeta*. They were convinced that Italy would at a minimum concede the borders of 1914 to them. Thus, it was clearly stated in *Zeta* on 24 April that "[t]he aspirations of the Montenegrin people for the establishment of an independent Montenegro are constrained by the terms set forth in the Treaty of London of 1915".[56] In accordance with this account, the sovereigntists sought to be fully bound to the interests of Italy and to have the alleged injustice done to it at Versailles rectified, just as in Montenegro. This was demonstrated by a piece published in *Zeta* on 1 May.[57] In the latter half of May, a number of delegations from Herzegovina arrived in Cetinje, to meet with Mazzolini. These delegations, sent either spontaneously or in agreement with the Montenegrin sovereigntists, requested the annexation of this province to Montenegro.[58] In June, the already dire situation for Orthodox populations in Herzegovina, subjected to brutal persecution at the hands of the Independent State of Croatia, reached a critical point.

In order to create the so-called Greater Montenegro. the sovereigntists, in their folly, invoked the Kingdom of Dukla-Zeta and its territories. In an article in *Zeta* dated 1 May, the authors asserted as an established historical fact that:

> "The initial Montenegrin state, the Kingdom of Duklja, extended from the Neretva River and the Adriatic Sea to Prizren and Raška gora and Romanija a thousand years ago. It encompassed the regions of Metohija, the Sandžak of Novi Pazar and Herzegovina, which are present-day Montenegro. Throughout this period, the Montenegrin people engaged in a continuous struggle for their national territory [...]".[59]

In its 12 May edition, the same paper once again referred to the Axis powers, stating that Montenegro "would restore the old glory and greatness of the

[55] Arhiv Istorijskog instituta Crne Gore, fascikla 78, Ministar Risto Popović, *Dnevnik*, vol. II, 1915; ŽIVOJINOVIĆ 1998: 77–97, 433; on relations between Montenegro and Italy during the First World War, see: LE MOAL 2004: 63–76.

[56] "Crnogorski narode, Srećna ti slobodna Crna Gora! Braćo Crnogorci!" *Zeta* (Podgorica), no. 15, 24 April 1941, 1.

[57] "Za srećnu i jaku Crnu Goru," *Zeta* (Podgorica), no. 17, 1 May 1941, 1.

[58] "Veličanstvena svečanost i manifestacije u C. Gori i na Cetinju," *Zeta* (Podgorica), no. 19, 8 May 1941, 2.

[59] "Za srećnu i jaku Crnu Goru," *Zeta* (Podgorica), no. 17, 1 May 1941, 1.

Dukljan Kingdom of Višević and Vojislav and the Petrović dynasty's Kingdom of Montenegro".[60]

However, the actual situation was starkly different. Italy was willing to facilitate the reconstruction of the Montenegrin state, but its level of interest was minimal. The latter assessment reflected the more powerful actors and their interests in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. The population in the relevant regions consisted primarily of Croats and Albanians. The demarcation of the borders of the Independent State of Croatia in May 1941 coincided with the initial phase of the reconstruction of the Montenegrin state in general. Indeed, the Montenegrin territorial issue was less advanced than its Croatian counterpart. A particular point of contention was Metohija, along with certain regions of Montenegro with predominantly Albanian and Muslim populations (Tuzi, Ulcinj, Plav, Gusinje, Rožaje). All of these territories had been incorporated into the Yugoslav state via the Montenegrin state in 1918.[61]

On 26 April, the Italian newspaper *Il Giornale* published a lengthy article under the headline "Storia il Montenegro". The publication presented a concise history of Montenegro up to 1922, accompanied by a map of Montenegro from 1914 which also encompassed Metohija.[62] Additionally, the sovereigntists had aspirations toward Boka Kotorska, as detailed in the Treaty of London. Until 1918, Boka was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. During the interwar period, it was incorporated into the 'Zeta Province' and then the Zeta Banovina, both of which had their administrative centres in Cetinje. Indeed, the Italian government did not engage in any serious official negotiations with the Greens and federalists. Rather, contacts with the Greens and federalists were conducted by Mazzolini in Cetinje. Mazzolini transmitted their demands to Ciano, who in turn forwarded them to Mussolini.

During May and June, the Greens and federalists sought to establish themselves as the Montenegrin government. Among other activities, they provided assistance to refugees from the Independent State of Croatia and from Kosovo and Metohija. Their objective was to intercede with the Italians in order to protect the Orthodox population in Montenegro's peripheries. The Italians played a pivotal role in the formation of Montenegrin state territory. This is reflected in the fact that in June,

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60 "DIGNITE GLAVE!" *Zeta* (Podgorica), no. 20, 12 May 1941, 1.

61 On Italy's awkward position in arbitration between Montenegrin, Albanian and Croatian territorial claims, see the documents: ASMAE, SSAA, nu.78, Taccuino Minoranze, telegramo: 3123, 3177, 3604, 3606, 10992, 3605/R, 6967, 20168, 20428; ASMAE, nu.78, Gabineto Albania, Michele Scammanca; ASMAE, Affari politici 1931-1945, (1941 Iugoslavia), nu.123, telegram: 25590, 32353, 42720; ACS, Ministero Real Casa, Segretaria reale, 1941-1945, no. 65, Taccuino Montenegro, d.n.01755. See the publications: UMILTA 1947: 124–125; DOGO 1992: 321–325; MICHELETTA 2008: 115–123; PULA 2008: 574–578, 589–593; GODI 2017: 45.

62 "Storia il Montenegro," *Il Giornale* (Milano), 26 May 1941, 2.

Jovan Plamenac, former minister and subsequent prime minister in the Montenegrin émigré government until 1922, appeared in Cetinje. Upon his return from abroad in 1926, he settled in Belgrade, where he received a pension from the Yugoslav government. He played a limited role in the preparations for the Petrovdan Council, with the objective of establishing a unified territory encompassing Serbia and Montenegro, and extending further to Croatia and Montenegro. As this concept did not align with Italy's interests, Mazzolini instructed him to depart Montenegro and return to Belgrade.[63]

In the aforementioned Biroli report of 12 August, the causes of the uprising were linked to potential solutions aimed at restoring calm. He identified the territorial dismemberment of Montenegro as a principal factor contributing to the uprising. He put forth two options for suppressing the revolt. The first was for Montenegro to simply join Italy. The second entailed its expansion to encompass part of Herzegovina (Bileća, Gacko, Foča and Čajniče districts), part of the Raška region with Novi Pazar, part of Metohija, as well as Boka, which Italy had already annexed.[64]

The aspirations of the Greens and federalists regarding Boka were ultimately defeated on 20 May with the issuance of a decree by the Italian king, which was subsequently published by *Glas Crnogorca* on 25 May. The decree stipulated that the Kotor district was incorporated directly into the Italian state. This resulted in the establishment of a direct border between Italy and Montenegro, which came to be known as "Italian Kotor". It was recalled that Kotor had been part of the Republic of Venice since 1420, so that this turn of events "caused a proud elation among the citizens of Kotor, who in the purest Venetian language shouted expressions of loyalty to the Italian king".[65] Subsequently, Boka underwent systematic Italianisation and fascistisation. Italian was the official language, and there was in fact a high level of proficiency in Italian among the population.[66] The Serbo-Croatian language was still in use at the local level, but it was not a language of wider communication.

In the aftermath of Italy's invasion of Montenegro, the Greens and federalists sought to protect the country's peripheral Orthodox population. In a meeting held on 22 April, the Provisional Administrative Committee observed that, according to reports from their branch in Podgorica, conflicts with the Albanian population had already broken out. Additionally, they noted that the Kuči Montenegrins were

63 VAS, Arhiva generala Milana Nedića, kutija 1, d.b. 11/1-1. On Jovan S. Plamenac and his relationship to Italy, see: CACCAMO 2008a: 18–20; MADAFFARI 1996: 94–100, 125–127; PETRANOVIĆ 1992: 611.

64 ACS, NAW, T.821, 356/664-678.

65 "NOVA ADMINISTRATIVNA ORGANIZACIJA Zadarskog, Splitskog i Kotorskog okruga," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 2, 25 May 1941, 1.

66 "Kurs italijanskog jezika," *Glas Boke*/*Bocche di Cataro* (Kotor), no. 4, 11 August 1941, 3.

safeguarding the border with Albania from Ruja to Orahov. It was proposed that the Italians be notified of this situation.[67] On 10 May, Italian King Vittorio Emanuele made an official visit to Tirana. He subsequently proceeded to Montenegro, where he was received with great pomp in Cetinje on the following day. Count Ciano did not favour the restoration of the Montenegrin state and was concerned about the conduct of the Albanians along its border.[68]

Jovo Popović, a former minister in the Montenegrin Kingdom and one of the leaders of the Green and federalist movement, provided a detailed account of the prevailing circumstances and the movement's aspirations during an interrogation conducted by investigators from the Third Section of the Department for the Protection of the People (OZN) on 24 November 1944.[69] He stated that the Provisional Administrative Committee had addressed Mazzolini on 17 May, requesting that one of its delegations go to Rome and present Montenegro's territorial aspirations to the highest levels of the Italian state leadership. This was due to the fact "that developments were proceeding rapidly in Metohija, Sandžak and Herzegovina. The conflict between Orthodox and Muslim populations, along with attacks and murders by the Ustasha and Muslims in Sandžak and Herzegovina, resulted in a significant number of refugees from Metohija seeking safety in Montenegro."

In the same statement, he also made clear that the Greens and federalists themselves favoured the annexation of these areas. "The influx of refugees into Montenegro, together with numerous appeals from border areas in Kosovo and Metohija, Herzegovina and the Raška region, has resulted in a significant increase in pressure on the country […]." Accordingly, they resolved to make an official appeal to Mazzolini with a request that they be allowed to travel to Rome. Mazzolini departed for Rome on 18 May, but he refused to take them with him. Upon his return, he informed them that the borders then delineated were not final, but that they would be resolved after the war. He obviously lied to them. He told them that the queen was fighting for the restoration of the Montenegrin state and that, thanks to her, he had narrowly prevented Lovćen from being annexed to Italy.[70]

Additionally, Count Ciano noted Mazzolini's presence in Rome on 21 May. He asserted that he met with Mussolini after Mazzolini with the objective of resolving the Montenegrin issue, given that "it had become highly complex, primarily due to the sentimental involvement of the royal family. With regard to the question of borders, the king has indicated his preference for establishing the Montene-

67 ROSSI 2005: 99–103.

68 CIANO 1948: 243.

69 The Department for the Protection of the People (OZN-a), the original communist ideological police-intelligence agency, was formed during the war in 1944 within the communist-led Partisan movement in Yugoslavia. It was modelled after the Soviet NKVD.

70 DACG, AOP, Fond 1941-1945, fascikla 11631/d.b. VII7a-I (44); GODDI 2015: 70–72.

grin borders as they existed in 1914. Impossible. It is reasonable to suggest that Albania would be likely to revolt immediately, given the historical precedent of the indignation caused by deception on the part of allies. The historical record of Versailles provides sufficient insight into this matter".[71]

The escalation of the situation with regard to refugees arriving in Montenegro from the Independent State of Croatia and Kosovo and Metohija was acknowledged by Mazzolini himself in a report addressed to his ministry on 28 April. According to this report, a significant influx of refugees from throughout Yugoslavia had reached Montenegro. The number of refugees from Kosovo and Metohija alone was 5,000, which presented significant challenges for the administration in terms of provisioning and logistical support. These refugees came "almost without any resources and with families torn apart, seething with hatred and a desire for revenge".[72] A similarly desperate situation was described by Podgorica attorney Dušan Vučinić, one of the leaders of the Greens and federalists, during questioning conducted by the OZN's Third Section on 24 November 1944.[73] As previously indicated, Mazzolini's report to Count Ciano dated 25 July outlines the key elements of Montenegro's territorial partition.[74] The influx of refugees and the subsequent measures taken to care for them, along with the crimes perpetrated against them, led to a breakdown in expectations regarding the country's borders. The aforementioned reasons, in conjunction with the system of merged courts, contributed to the failure of the Montenegrin state's reconstruction.

However, Italy showed no intention of revising the borders with the Independent State of Croatia and the Albanians for the purpose of pacification of the uprising. Subsequently, the military governor of Montenegro, General Biroli, and the newly appointed civilian commissioner, Baron Guglielmo Rulli, convened a meeting at the end of July with a group of sovereigntist leaders who were not affiliated with Drljević's group and had not participated in the Petrovdan Parliament due to their stance on the borders. The group consisted of former Montenegrin officer Krsto Popović, Novica Radović, former Montenegrin minister Petar Plamenac and Stevan Perović. In his account given to the OZN's Third Section in Cetinje on 29 November 1944, Perović stated that the Green and federalist leaders put forth a series of recommendations aimed at pacifying the uprising. In addition to other demands, they sought the incorporation of Ulcinj and Metohija into Montenegro. Biroli agreed to everything else except this demand, explaining that it was "a political issue and a matter for the government in Rome".[75]

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71 CIANO 1948: 247.

72 VAS, ANJ, IA, kutija 740, d.b. 12/3a-2.

73 DACG, AOP, Fond 1941-1945, fascikla 11631/d.b. VII7a-1 (44).

74 VAS, ANJ, IA, kutija 740, d.b. 12/3a-1.

75 DACG, AOP, Fond 1941-1945, fascikla 11631/d.b. VII7a-I (44).

It would be reasonable to conclude that Mussolini was the final arbiter between the Albanians and Montenegrins on the question of territory. Nevertheless, the evidence indicates that a conflict of interest existed at a more junior level between Ciano and Francesco Jacomoni, the governor of Albania. Jacomoni lobbied for Albanian interests and held greater sway with Ciano than Count Mazzolini. In this regard, a series of telegrams that Jacomoni sent to Count Ciano can be examined in detail.[76] Notwithstanding the evidence indicating the influence of lobbying from a lower decision-making level to a higher one, it is evident that Mussolini ultimately concluded that the Croats and Albanians, due to their greater numbers and larger territory, held a more significant position in his strategic calculations. Conversely, this territorial dispute serves yet again to illustrate that the royal couple, despite their profound aspiration to reinstate the Montenegrin state and its expanded territory, were mere puppets in the hands of Mussolini.

The Concept of the Montenegrin Monarchy

The Principality of Montenegro was ruled by the Petrović-Njegoš dynasty for over two centuries until 1918. In 1910, Prince Nikola proclaimed himself king and established an independent monarchy. His middle son Mirko died of tuberculosis in a sanatorium in Vienna in 1918 during the First World War. He left behind a male heir. The other two, the eldest heir to the throne, Danilo, and the youngest, Petar, had no descendants. During the interwar period, they were involved in the regulation of appanages with the Yugoslav state. Danilo died in 1939, and Petar in 1932. Of the male descendants of King Nikola, only Prince Mihailo, the son of the king's middle son Mirko, survived the Second World War. Prince Mihailo was born in 1908. One of Nikola's nine daughters, Jelena, was married to Italian King Vittorio Emanuele III, and in 1941 she had been the Italian queen for decades.

The initial indication of a new monarchy in Montenegro was provided by Count Ciano. In his journal entry for 24 April, a week after the occupation of Montenegro, he recorded that he had "reached an agreement with the minister of the court Pietro Acquarone on all details of the king's visit to Albania. The king 'suggested' the possibility of reinstating the monarchy in Montenegro. Danilo, whom Mussolini referred to as 'eternally indebted Danilo,' had one son. You should be careful. Especially so that hopes of having a local dynasty would not be aroused in Albania. The Queen is a strong supporter of the Montenegrin state's restoration. In the meantime, I have dispatched Minister Mazzolini as a commissioner," Ciano wrote.[77] The error regarding the name Danilo, who was no longer alive, was made by Ciano.

[76] See: ASMAE, SSAA, through documents; JACOMONI 1965: 178–184, 280.

[77] CIANO 1948: 238.

Four days later, Ciano wrote that "the King consistently emphasises the necessity of reinstating the monarchy in Montenegro." He expressed concern that this could lead to complications with the Albanians, who may also be seeking hereditary leadership. But Mussolini agreed and did not want to be the one to spoil the matter. "The queen's nephew will become the new king of Montenegro, a young man whom the Duce calls the son of insignificant and poor parents. He lives in Germany, completely unnoticed, half-full and half-hungry […]," Ciano wrote.[78] In a letter dated 21 May, Ciano stated that Mazzolini informed him that the Greens and federalists were reluctant to inaugurate Mihailo, as "they believed he was a Serbian nationalist and would prefer Queen Jelena. However, the king opposed to this suggestion".[79] Notwithstanding Ciano's statement, it is evident that the Greens and federalists discreetly promoted the restoration of the monarchy through *Glas Crnogorca* and *Zeta*. However, Prince Mihailo was seldom proposed as a candidate for king. This was done openly only once, in the description of the St. George's Day celebration in the Cetinje monastery, which was also attended by Mazzolini. The populace offered Prince Mihailo a rousing ovation, proclaiming wishes for his long life.[80]

In his memoirs, Prince Mihailo Petrović stated that on 29 May, he was visited near Frankfurt, Germany, by the Italian consul general in that city, Marquis Sera Di Cassano. The same individual presented him with a Ciano telegram from that same day, in which it was stated that the prince was asked to declare whether he would assume the throne of his late grandfather, King Nikola. Mihailo's response was definitive and unambiguous. He noted that the marquis tactfully assured him that he was detached from reality, that Yugoslavia had ceased to exist and would not be restored. He proceeded to enumerate the victories of Italy and Germany, citing historical evidence to support his assertion that France had been conquered, Greece had been subjugated, and that Britain would be vanquished by the end of 1941. However, "all those seductive arguments" failed to convince Prince Mihailo. Having seen that he could not convince him, the marquis finally told him that Mihailo would then remain a captive in Germany until the end of the war. The prince answered him without hesitation that he would then gladly accept his fate, because "freedom and honours would not be any compensation for the shame of betraying my country." The marquis understood the essence of Mihailo's position, for as the latter observed, "looking at me straight in the eyes, he said words that cut me deeply: 'You see, Prince, that you are of your own kind'".[81]

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78 CIANO 1948: 240.

79 CIANO 1948: 247.

80 "Praznik Đurđev-dana proslavljen prvi put poslije 22 godine na Cetinje," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 1, 18 May 1941, 4.

81 PETROVIĆ 2001: 65–66; *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* 1986: 158.

The absence of this final crucial element left the sovereigntists with the challenge of determining the best course of action regarding the dynastic question. A variety of combinations were considered, including the succession of the Italian Queen Jelena to the throne and the subsequent ascension of her son. In any case, this issue was overlooked, because the sovereigntists, especially the group around Sekula Drljević, wanted to secure power at any cost, under whatever regime, regardless of the status and territorial extent of Montenegro. Despite being mentioned in two points of the Parliamentary Declaration, this dynastic question remained another unresolved and devastating element pertaining to the reconstruction of the Montenegrin state in 1941. This, in turn, led to the complete collapse of the concept, which had lasted less than 24 hours.[82]

Epilogue

The Orthodox population of Montenegro staged an uprising in the immediate aftermath of the Petrovdan Assembly. This uprising was particularly notable in Yugoslavia given its extensive scope and the territories it liberated. For a brief period, only a few major cities and communication routes between them (Cetinje, Podgorica, Nikšić, Pljevlja, Kotor, and Bar) remained under the control of Italian forces. The Montenegrin communists and Serbian monarchists participated in the uprising, representing a brief period of collaboration between these two groups. Italy's military forces were soon consolidated, and the uprising was crushed by mid-August. It was noted that only narrow cores in rural areas remained intact.[83] As early as the autumn of 1941, the Montenegrin communists attempted to transform the insurgent formations into a military force loyal to their movement, the Partisans. This initiative was resisted by the Serbian monarchists. The liquidation of individuals perceived as adversaries of the communist regime, including officers, intellectuals, teachers, clergy, and prosperous peasants, became increasingly prevalent. The Serbian monarchist movement in Montenegro, the Chetniks, experienced a resurgence in strength following the unsuccessful Partisan attack on Pljevlja in early December. The Italian *Pusteria* Division, under the command of General Giovanni Esposito, was able to successfully defend the city.[84] In the winter of 1941/1942, the Montenegrin Communist Party waged a campaign of violence and repression, known as "left terror," which resulted in the deaths of approximately 500 individuals perceived as ideological opponents.[85]

[82] UNGARI 2008: 311–321; ROBERTS 2007: 346–347.

[83] ACS, NAW, T.821, 356/717-721, 356/722-725; GODDI 2015: 71; PETRANOVIĆ 1988: 121–122; ROBERTS 2007: 347–354; ŠISTEK 2022: 530–534; KARAULA 2022: 527–532.

[84] GODI 2017: 28; Đ. VUJOVIĆ 1976: 37–183; VUKČEVIĆ 1990: 41–51.

[85] DACG, AOP, fond 1941-1945, Partizanska dokumenta, d.b. 32/II3-12/1 (41), d.b. 33/2-20 (41), d.b. 79/II4-11 (41); Đ. VUJOVIĆ 1988: 50–55; VUKČEVIĆ 1990: 57–87; ROBERTS 2007: 360–362; ŠISTEK 2022: 535–538.

The uprising of 13 July effectively rendered the concept of the Montenegrin state's reconstruction moot. The mission that Count Mazzolini had been assigned to undertake was unsuccessful, and he was recalled to Rome on 24 July.[86] General Alessandro Pirzio Biroli was proclaimed the new leader of Montenegro. Having received orders from Rome, he proceeded to establish a Military Governorate in Montenegro after several months of preparation.[87] He was adept at identifying the deficiencies within the insurgent camp of Montenegrin communists and Serbian monarchists. Subsequently, the Chetnik movement emerged in Montenegro, with Colonel (later General) Dragoljub 'Draža' Mihailović from Serbia assuming the role of supreme commander. The movement was formally called the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland and was under the patronage of the Yugoslav government-in-exile in London.[88] During the winter and spring of 1942, intense combat occurred between Montenegrin Partisans and Chetnik forces. The Chetniks were joined by Krsto Popović, a former Montenegrin officer and the leader of the Greens.[89] Thanks to General Biroli's efforts, a framework for collaboration between the Unitarist and Federalist groups was established in Montenegro.[90] With the assistance of the Italian Military Governorate, the Germans were able to expel the Partisans from Montenegro in June 1942, providing them with weapons and other essential supplies.[91] During this period, a number of local Chetnik leaders emerged in Montenegro, among whom the following individuals were particularly noteworthy: General Blažo Đukanović, Colonel Bajo Stanišić, Major Đorđije Lašić, and Captain Pavle Đurišić. The most notable aspect of Governor Biroli's collaboration with the Chetniks was his visit to the Ostrog monastery (a renowned Montenegrin sanctuary situated between Podgorica and Nikšić) on 18 October, where he was greeted by Stanišić with an assembly of several thousand Chetniks. Biroli made a second visit to Kolašin on 1 November, where he was greeted by Đurišić with a considerable number of Chetniks. The pacification of Montenegro spanned the period from June 1942 to May 1943.[92]

Following the German-Italian operations Weiss 1-2 and Schwarz, which were meant to prevent local support from the Partisans and Chetniks for a potential

[86] FATTUTA 1992: 478–479; SCOTTI AND VIAZZI 1987: 389–401.

[87] PAJOVIĆ 1977: 113–114.

[88] PETRANOVIĆ 1988: 63–66, 103–117; PETRANOVIĆ 1992: 363–375; PAJOVIĆ 1977: 159–241; TOMASEVICH 1975: 144–146.

[89] AJ, fond 110, fascikla 2566 (Dosije Krsta Popovića, br.102-120).

[90] CACCAMO 2008b: 138–143.

[91] FATTUTA 1994: 764; PETRANOVIĆ 1992: 393, 398; ŠISTEK 2022: 538–547.

[92] VAS, Četnička arhiva, kutija archival-d.b. CG-X-410; DACG, AOP, Fond 1941-1945, Četnička dokumenta, d.b. IX1a-154 (42)/IX1a-334 (42); "Posjeta Njegove Ekselencije generala Birolija Manastiru Ostrogu," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 61, 20 October 1942, 1. On cooperation between the Chetniks and the military governorship, see: GODDI 2015: 65–80; SIDOTI 2004a; SIDOTI 2004b.

landing of Anglo-American forces in the Adriatic, the Partisans gradually began to return to Montenegro.[93] General Biroli's mission concluded on 23 July, when he returned to Italy from Montenegro. He was deemed unreliable by the Germans and the Fascist leadership of Italy. His insistence on cooperation with the Chetniks was ultimately deemed an unsafe mission. Nevertheless, on 9 July, he was operationally succeeded by Curio Barbasetti di Prun.[94] He remained governor until the capitulation of Italy in early September 1943. In November 1943, German troops arrived in Montenegro, where they established a new form of collaboration with the Serbian monarchists against the Partisans. This collaboration took the form of the so-called People's Administration.[95] A contingent of Italian troops from Montenegro was integrated into the Partisan forces. Following the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, the Partisan movement in Montenegro experienced a period of growth and consolidation throughout 1944. The liberation of Montenegro from German occupation was completed during November and December 1944. In December 1944, Montenegrin and Herzegovinian Chetniks retreated through Bosnia and Croatia to Slovenia under the leadership of Pavle Đurišić, with the stated intention of joining forces with the Anglo-American allies. A significant number of them were killed in Croatia by the NDH army, while the remainder were captured by the Partisans in Kamnik, Slovenia, in May 1945. They were subsequently subjected to brutal mass executions, which may be described as a Montenegrin version of the Katyn massacre of Polish anti-communists. Based on comparative sources, it is estimated that over 5,000 Montenegrin and Herzegovinian Chetniks were killed during that period.[96] In March 1947, Krsto Popović, the leader of the Greens, was killed in the vicinity of Cetinje by the OZN, which had proclaimed him an outlaw.[97]

Conclusion

The reconstruction of the Montenegrin state in 1941 is best considered within the context of the broader division of interests between Germany and Italy as part of the New Europe. In this context, it is noteworthy that Italy laid claim to a sphere

[93] FATTUTA 1996: 129–132, 216–221; PAJOVIĆ 1977: 299–381; ŠISTEK 2022: 551–556.

[94] "Proglas Njegove Ekselencije generala Birolija," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 134, 21 July 1943, 1; "Proglas Njegove Ekselencije grofa Kurija Barbazetija," *Glas Crnogorca* (Cetinje), no. 135, 23 July 1943, 1.

[95] PAJOVIĆ 1977: 420–442.

[96] PAJOVIĆ 1977: 523–551; AANBCG, kutija 8/1945, The reports of local OZN districts to the central OZN district in Montenegro, in Cetinje, about the number of Chetniks who fled to Slovenia since July 1945; GREGOVIĆ 2009. This scholar cited 5,214 names of slain Chetniks from Montenegro in Slovenia; VUKČEVIĆ 1990: 249–252; TASIĆ 2021: 106–110; ŠISTEK 2022: 565–566; KARAULA 2022: 637–653.

[97] AANB, kutija 12/1947.

of influence over part of the eastern Mediterranean, specifically Dalmatia, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo, and Metohija. The dynastic connection between the Savoy and Petrović-Njegoš families formed the basis for Italy's involvement in the region. This Italian policy represented a repetition of the policy pursued at the end of the First World War, when Italy had numerous contacts with the Montenegrin royalist movement and provided it with assistance and financial support. Conversely, as a result, it enjoyed the support of certain royalist, federalist, and separatist structures, which represented the remnants of the global political idea of the Greens from 1918. However, more than two decades of Montenegro's existence within the Yugoslav state brought numerous economic and educational benefits to its population. From the outset, it became evident that the restoration of the Montenegrin state was a misguided concept, as it was not supported by the majority of the Montenegrin population, whose political preferences were expressed by Serbian monarchists and Montenegrin communists. The final catalyst for the Montenegrin communists was Italy's decision to align with Germany in launching an attack on their ideological capital, Moscow, and the Soviet Union. A series of political manoeuvres conducted by Italy, most notably the occupation and division of Montenegrin territories in favor of Croats and Albanians, the annexation of Boka Kotorska, the compromised dynastic question, the separation of Montenegro from Serbia, and related measures, ultimately led to the 13 July uprising. General Biroli was the individual responsible for identifying these errors. He proceeded to implement a series of corrective measures, which ultimately led to the complete pacification of Montenegro in June 1942. The success of his policy of pacifying Montenegro was the formation of an alliance between the Whites and Greens. The Whites opposed the creation of an independent Montenegro, while the Greens supported it.

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Neuspjeli koncept obnove crnogorske države pod talijanskim protektoratom 1941. godine

Članak se bavi neuspjelim konceptom obnove crnogorske države pod talijanskim protektoratom 1941. godine. Cilj je članka ukazati na faktore koji su utjecali da ovaj državni koncept opstane samo 24 sata. Razmatranje članka stavlja se u širi okvir prilika prve faze Drugog svjetskog rata i geopolitičke podjele sfera između Osovine Rim – Berlin. Po ovoj podjeli sfera Crna Gora je potpala pod geopolitički utjecaj Italije, koja je od nje željela stvoriti marionetsku državu. Međutim, Italija je bila u galimatijasu vlastitih interesa. Svakako po pitanjima teritorija i stanovništva veći hrvatski i albanski faktor za nju je bio od primarnog značaja. Da bi se u potpunosti sagledala problematika kojom se ovaj članak bavi, korišteni su talijanski, jugoslavenski i crnogorski arhivski izvori, crnogorski tisak, te relevantna talijanska, jugoslavenska i crnogorska stručna literatura. U članku je korištena historijska metoda istraživanja, s analitičko-komparativnim iznošenjem rezultata.

Ključne riječi: Crna Gora, Italija, Jugoslavija, koncept, 12. srpanj-Petrovdan, 13. srpanj
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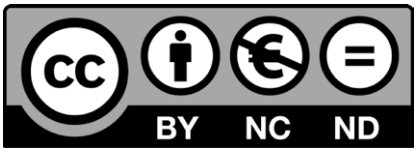
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