

“For King and Fatherland”: Collaboration and Genocide in Wartime Yugoslavia

by

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Abstract

This thesis interrogates the motives, worldviews, and culture of the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland (*Jugoslovenska vojska u otadžbini*, JVuO), popularly known as the Chetniks. I argue that the JVuO's ideological foundation was predicated on genocidal intentions which were acted upon, mostly against Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak) peoples but also against ethnic Albanians, Croats, and other non-Serbian peoples. I view the JVuO as a political entity, as well as a military one, which contradicts existing studies of the Chetniks which tend to focus almost solely on the group's military character. To do this, the thesis divides the JVuO into three constituent units: the main group centred around the Ravna Gora Movement of eastern Bosnia and western Serbia and led by General Dragoljub "Draža" Mihailović, the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachments located in Montenegro and commanded by Major Pavle Đurišić, and the Dinara Chetnik Division in the Dalmatia-Hercegovina borderland and commanded by the priest *Vojvoda* Momčilo Đujić. What emerges is the regional characteristics of each unit, each motivated by local circumstances and nuances, but remaining attuned to their own understandings of what the JVuO was and coloured by the varying degrees to which each unit collaborated with the Axis forces in their regions, either the Nazi German, Italian, or both. While the Ravna Gora Movement needed to maintain some semblance of a professional army given its prominence in the Allied imagination as an anti-Axis resistance movement, the Lim-Sandžak Chetniks could act with impunity against Bosnian Muslim and Albanian peoples. Massacres and killings in Montenegro emerged because of the Lim-Sandžak Chetniks' monopoly on violence in the region and agreements with the Italian authorities. In contrast, the Dinara Chetnik Division was in a position of relative weakness to the Italian occupation authorities, the Independent State of Croatia's (*Nezavisna država hrvatska*, NDH) forces, and the communist-led Partisan resistance. Massacres in Dalmatia and Hercegovina emerged first as reprisal killings for the NDH's own massacres against Serbs, but later escalated to include pre-emptive killings. This thesis will be of particular interest to scholars of paramilitarism, mass violence and genocide, and the cultural aspects of warring groups; however, this thesis also makes an original contribution to the scholarship by redefining the way in which a well-studied paramilitary group is understood, and indeed guerrilla warfare more generally. The JVuO were at once opportunistic and pragmatic, Serbian nationalist and Yugoslav-oriented, collaborators and Allies.

Keywords: Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland (*Jugoslovenska vojska u otadžbini*, JVuO)/Chetniks; mass violence and genocide; collaboration; Yugoslavia; Balkans; Second World War

Dedication

For Sophie:

This is for you because you were not here for the first one: every speck of archival dust, every word within these pages – and even some of what they say – flows through your veins. If there is anything you learn from these words, I hope that it is that you have agency; you can choose to follow in the steps of your ancestors, like the people within these pages, or you can make your own. Blaze your own path, sweet girl. Blaze!

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List of Acronyms

AJ	Archives of Yugoslavia (Arhiv Jugoslavije)
AOIRP- Podgorica	Archival Section for the History of the Workers' Movement (<i>Arhiv Odsjek za Istoriju radničkog pokreta – Podgorica</i>)
AVNOJ	Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (<i>Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije</i>)
BCS	Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian
CNK	Central National Committee of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (<i>Centralni Nacionalni Komitet Kraljevine Jugoslavije</i>)
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
DCD	Dinara Chetnik Division (<i>Dinarska četnička divizija</i>)
DS	Democratic Party (Demokratska stranka)
FIDAC	Inter-Allied Ex-Serviceman's Federation (<i>Fédération Interalliée des Anciens Combattants</i>)
FO	Foreign Office of the United Kingdom
HR-HDA	Croatian State Archives (<i>Hrvatska državni arhiv</i>)
HSS	Croatian Peasant Party (<i>Hrvatska seljačka stranka</i>)
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
IMRO	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation
JMO	Yugoslav Muslim Organisation (<i>Jugoslavenska muslimanska organizacija</i>)
JNS	Yugoslav National Party (<i>Jugoslovenska nacionalna stranka</i>)
JUORA	Yugoslav Organisation of Ravna Gora Women (<i>Jugoslovenska organizacija ravnagorki</i>)
JVuO	Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland (<i>Jugoslovenska vojska u otadžbinu</i>)
KSS	Circle of Serbian Sisters (<i>Kolo srpskih sestara</i>)
MVAC	Anti-Communist Volunteer Militia (<i>Milizia Volontaria Anti Comunista</i>)
ORJUNA	Organisation of Yugoslav Nationalists (<i>Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista</i>)
NDH	Independent State of Croatia (<i>Nezavisna država hrvatska</i>)
NRS	People's Radical Party (<i>Narodna radikalna stranka</i>)
SDK	Serbian Volunteer Corps (<i>Srpski dobrovoljački korpus</i>)
SDS	Independent Democratic Party (<i>Samostalna demokratska stranka</i>)
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service

SKK	Serbian Cultural Club (<i>Srpska kulturna klub</i>)
SNOP	Serbian People's Liberation Movement (<i>Srpskog narodnog oslobodilačkog pokret</i>)
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SRNAO	Serbian Nationalist Youth (<i>Srpska nacionalna omladina</i>)
ŽROS	Women's Ravna Gora Organisation of the Sanitet (<i>Ženska ravnogorska organizacija saniteta</i>)

Introduction.

This thesis argues that the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland (*Jugoslovenska vojska u otadžbini*, JVuO) was a political entity, as well as a military one. This contrasts existing studies which overlook the JVuO's politics or dismiss the politics as merely being Serb nationalist. Instead, I show the ideological depth and breadth of the JVuO's politics by going beyond the over-simplified narrative of Serb nationalism. Competing politics, worldviews, and ideologies saturated the JVuO and many seeped into its wartime policies. The policies that emerged were genocidal in nature, the JVuO's actions genocidal in effect, and both were linked to the JVuO's collaboration with the Axis. JVuO leader Dragoljub "Draža" Mihailović hoped to maintain distance from both the collaboration and the genocide that the Chetnik detachments were permitted – both tacitly and explicitly – to perpetrate. Mihailović attempted to keep his unit, the JVuO's core called the Ravna Gora Movement, a professional army while allowing other detachments to remain or become guerrilla units, or Chetniks. By professionalising the Ravna Gora Movement, Mihailović was able to claim plausible deniability at his postwar trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Ravna Gora never signed collaboration agreements, instead allowing its detachments the power of attorney, a *carte blanche* for perpetrating genocide and entering into collaboration with the Axis. The historiography has portrayed the JVuO's collaboration and genocide in isolation from one another. On the other hand, I argue that the two are intricately intertwined. Similarly, most studies have explored the JVuO either as a monolithic entity or as isolated units, but the hybrid professional-guerrilla nature of the JVuO necessitates that the JVuO is looked at on a regional basis. I show the tensions which existed both within and between three units, from the periphery to the centre and back again.

The thesis begins with a history of guerrilla warfare in the Balkans, beginning since the premodern times and into the immediate period before the outbreak of the Second World War in Yugoslavia, that is, until April 1941. From there, Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are structured in a way which investigates each unit in the order of most closely related to a professional army (Chapter 2) to the closest relation to a guerrilla unit (Chapter 4). Chapter 2 focuses on Mihailović's professionalised Ravna Gora Movement in the Serbia-Bosnia border area and investigates how the prewar ideologies later influenced wartime policies. This chapter shows how the policies from the centre made their way to the

periphery in other parts of Yugoslavia. One of the earliest adoptees of Ravna Gora's policies is the subject of Chapter 3. The Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachments operated in Montenegro and in the southern regions of Serbia. They collaborated with the Axis and instituted genocidal policies and actions in and around their territories as a result of both the policies emanating from Ravna Gora and the unique situation offered by the Montenegrin context. They were led by professional officers but populated mostly by non-professional soldiers, civilians, and peasants. The final group I examine in Chapter 4 is the Dinara Chetnik Division (DCD) located around the Dinara Mountain in the Dalmatian-Bosnia border area. The collaboration in the Dinara region began earlier than in other parts of Yugoslavia while the massacres against civilians began as reprisals and only later emerged as pre-emptive killings. The DCD most closely resembles the guerrilla units which existed in the region since premodern times. Taking a regional approach means that several occupational authorities become relevant, namely Germany, Italy, and the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna država hrvatska*, NDH). Similarly, a regional approach means that the historical nuances and contextual specificities of different parts of Yugoslavia are important to understand, as are the JVuO leaders who emerged in these areas. This contrasts with existing studies which tend to investigate either Mihailović's centre, the diplomatic relationship with the Allies, or individual units at the command level. Instead, I look at the command level down to the rank-and-file soldier. Each chapter begins by setting a scene which describes and explains the specific context, the important actors, and some of the important events leading up to the creation of each unit and as the events relate to each unit.

Besides scholars of Central, Eastern, Southeastern Europe, and the Second World War, this thesis will be of interest to those working in genocide studies, (para)military cultures, perpetrator studies, and nationalism. I show how militarised units exist within several spheres beyond armed conflict. Culture, politics, social, and economic concerns, as well as the individual lived experiences of the people who make up militarised formations are at the centre of this study. This is not strictly a military history. I want to know what motivated members of the JVuO to collaborate with the Axis forces, to perpetrate genocide and mass violence against non-Serbian civilians, and to better understand their experiences, as well as the experiences and fates of their victims. To do that, I remain attuned to all the factors mentioned while also continuing to recognise that individuals change over time; as the people who populated the JVuO

changed, so did the JVuO. I track that change. This is a history of war and peace, of people who fought to change the status quo and those who benefitted from it.

Orienting the JVuO

The JVuO has its origins in April 1941. Under the regency headed by Prince Paul Karađorđević, Yugoslavia signed on to the Tripartite Pact in March 1941, aligning the country to Hitler's Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Fascist Italy, as well as Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary. In the years immediately prior to the signing, Yugoslavia's politicians manoeuvred the country into a corner and effectively forced its hand to sign the pact, leaving no paths to any other options. Of course, the British and, to a lesser extent, the French and Americans gave little option to Yugoslavia in light of appeasement towards Hitler's and Mussolini's attempts to restructure Europe. The pact was signed on 25 March and by the 27th, a *coup d'état* occurred which overthrew Prince Paul, declared the 17-year-old crown prince of age, and named him King Peter II of Yugoslavia. Despite the new government's attempts to reassure the Axis that they would continue to adhere to the pact, Hitler's fury about the coup took precedence and the bombing of Belgrade began on 6 April. Merely eleven days later, on 17 April, the Yugoslav Army was defeated. The country was divided between Germany, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Albania and harsh occupation regimes were instituted across the country. A large portion of Yugoslavia was carved out for the NDH which included the prewar Croatian province plus Bosnia and Hercegovina, but minus Dalmatia, a point which is both imperative to this thesis and made clearer later. Concentration and internment camps were setup throughout the country, the most infamous of which was Jasenovac. The NDH instituted a policy of eliminating the Serb population on its territory, a large segment of the NDH's population, while Germany enacted severe reprisals for resistance to its occupation: 50 civilians shot for a wounded German, 100 civilians shot for a killed German.

Though the Yugoslav army was defeated, a small group of about a dozen officers who were part of the Second Army remained uncaptured and refused to surrender. Led by Colonel Dragoljub "Draža" Mihailović, the officers made their way from northern Bosnia to western Serbia. They setup camp on Mount Ravna Gora, ingratiated themselves to the locals, and sent out search parties to find likeminded officers, soldiers, and peasants to form an anti-Axis resistance. The Ravna Gora Movement, as it came to

be known, was the core of the JVuO. Word quickly spread about the resistance and reached the ears of the Royal Yugoslav Government, in exile and eventually settled in London. Contact was made and the JVuO became part of the Allied resistance. Mihailović was vaulted to heroic status, given the Minister of War posting in the government, promoted to general, graced the cover of *Time* magazine and mentioned in radio broadcasts as part of the anti-Axis resistance within occupied Europe.

Complicating the picture is the presence of another resistance movement which eventually came to be called the Partisans. While the JVuO represented continuity with Yugoslavia's prewar past, the Partisans were led by communists and dissidents. Josip Broz Tito, Moše Pijade, Milovan Đilas and others came to be part of the communist-led resistance. Though the Partisans and the JVuO attempted to cooperate, and indeed formed an effective resistance and defence in some parts of the country, the two camps were ideologically opposed which made cooperating difficult to say the least. Civil war between the two groups emerged by the fall of 1941 which pushed the JVuO to viewing the Partisans as the main threat to Yugoslavia. As a result, the JVuO collaborated with the German and Italian occupation authorities to combat the "communist threat" which ultimately sullied the JVuO's reputation leading it to be dropped by the Allies in favour of the Partisans who proved to be more effective against the Axis forces.

The JVuO killed non-Serb peoples, mainly Bosnian Muslims, Albanians, and Croats, but also other ethno-religious groups, as well as those suspected or accused of being communists and sympathisers. What emerged was a genocidal campaign predicated on collaboration with the Axis against the Partisans and against non-Serb civilians. Mihailović issued orders towards the JVuO's genocidal program, his commanders implemented them, and the soldiers on the ground enacted them. Though Mihailović himself never openly collaborated with the Axis, his commanders did, but he tacitly allowed some collaboration arrangements to exist while he endorsed others.

Historiography

Much has been written about the JVuO, and to an important degree, the historiography has become a battleground for polemics. Misunderstandings, misrepresentations, exaggerations, and obfuscation abound when discussing the JVuO and which perspective one takes has tended to correlate with the writer's political views

and goals. Still, historians of the former Yugoslavia have produced some good works, especially if one can supplement them with more rigorous studies.

The first postwar writings to emerge came from the JVuO diaspora who had escaped either during the war or in the immediate aftermath of it. Many sought to find reasons for the Allies' "betrayal" of Mihailović and the JVuO. Indeed, the title of David Martin's effort seeks to understand this dynamic and is aptly titled *Allied Betrayed*.¹ Mihailović certainly had his supporters in the west, most importantly both Constantin Fotich,² the wartime ambassador to the United States, and Slobodan Jovanović,³ the prime minister during the fateful months of 11 January 1942 to 26 June 1943, who not only attempted to "correct" Mihailović's reputation but attack socialist Yugoslavia. Besides their monographs, they and other JVuO supporters wrote opinion pieces, conducted interviews, and petitioned their new governments to both recognise Mihailović's record and to delegitimise the Titoist regime.⁴

The most comprehensive volume to include émigré writers and supporters emerged in two volumes in 1956 out of Windsor, Ontario. Titled *Knjiga o Draži (Book About Draža)*, the volumes brought together ex-politicians, Chetnik fighters, émigré supporters, and others to cover various aspects of the JVuO. Unfortunately, the two volumes do not cover a lot of information – such as reasons for collaboration and the JVuO's genocidal policies – but they are good for presenting firsthand accounts of some events which otherwise would not have been well known, such as the Ba Congress. The Ba Congress took place in January 1944 and was intended to bring together the remaining politicians in Yugoslavia with the JVuO to fashion a postwar political program. However, 1944 was already too late for the JVuO: they lost Allied support, Mihailović was removed as war minister, and Tito was on his way to wartime victory and control of

¹ David Martin, *Ally Betrayed: The Uncensored Story of Tito and Mihailovich* (Literary Publishing, 2012 [1946]).

² Constantin Fotich, *The War We Lost: Yugoslavia's Tragedy and the Failure of the West* (New York: Viking Press, 1948).

³ Slobodan Jovanović, *Jedan Prilog Za Proučavanje Srpskog Nacionalnog Karaktera* (Čačak, Beograd [Windsor, Ontario]: Gradac, 2017 [1964]); Slobodan Jovanović, *Zapisi o Problemima i Ljudima, 1941-1944* (London: Udruženje srpskih pisaca i umetnika u inostranstvu, 1976); Slobodan Jovanović, *O Totalitarizmu* (Paris: Oslobodjenje, 1952).

⁴ Special to the New York Times, "U.S. Asked to Help Refugees of East: Exiles from Behind Curtain Urge Washington to Aid Needy Ex-Political Leaders," *New York Times*, May 17, 1949.

the country. Nevertheless, *Knjiga o Draži* has its merits, especially if one is able to read it critically.

Other useful memoirs, often written many years after the fact just like the *Knjiga o Draži*, were written from diaries and journals kept during the war. Similarly, memoirs written by those who came into contact with certain JVuO commanders and units prove helpful to understand related but ultimately outside perceptions of the JVuO. Here, the Ljotićite account by Ratko Parežanin is instructive.⁵ Parežanin was sent by Dimitrije Ljotić⁶ and Milan Nedić⁷ to Montenegro to liaise with Pavle Đurišić, the commander of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment and central figure of Chapter 3. Parežanin seems to have been responsible for convincing Đurišić to escape to the Ljubljana Gap in 1945 where, ultimately, he, his units, other Chetnik leaders and units, and a few thousand refugees, were killed. Parežanin requires the historian to use his work selectively, but still gives an inside glimpse into the day-to-day workings of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment when otherwise no other accounts would exist. In a similar vein is the memoir of Boris Todorovich who was interned in a Nazi prisoner of war camp during the April War.⁸ Escaping, Todorovich made it to London where he was recruited and parachuted back into Yugoslavia and remained a member of the JVuO. Relatedly is Sergej Živanović who sought to place Mihailović and the JVuO in 1941 within the wider context of Balkan, and especially Serbian, resistance.⁹ In the Montenegrin context is Uroš Zonjić.¹⁰ As a member of Đurišić's command, Zonjić attempts to provide insights into the person behind the Montenegrin Chetniks. Zvonimir Vučković's account, for its

⁵ Ratko Parežanin, *Moja Misija u Crnoj Gori* (Munich: Iskra, 1974).

⁶ Nazi collaborator and the closest figure to fascism that interwar or wartime Yugoslavia produced. See Miloš Martić, "Dimitrije Ljotić and the Yugoslav National Movement Zbor, 1935-1945," *East European Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 219-239.

⁷ The president of the quisling Yugoslav Government of Salvation. See Sabrina P. Ramet and Sladjana Lazić, "The Collaborationist Regime of Milan Nedić," in *Serbia and the Serbs in World War Two*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet and Ola Listhaug (New York and London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 17–43.

⁸ Boris J. Todorovich, *Last Words: A Memoir of World War II and the Yugoslav Tragedy*, ed. J. Stryder and Andrew Karp (Walker, 1989).

⁹ Sergej M Živanović, *Djeneral Mihailović i Njegovo Delo: Treći Srpski Ustanak 1941*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Autora i Američkog instituta za balkanska pitanja, 1962).

¹⁰ Uroš Zonjić, *Pod Komandom Vojvode Pavla Djurišića* (Windsor, Ontario: Mišić Printing Company, 1990).

part, attempts to provide the reader with information about Ravna Gora.¹¹ Neđeljko Plećaš, meanwhile, provides some insights into his role as a liaison between Mihailović's Ravna Gora Movement and Momčilo Đujić's Dinara Chetnik Division, the subject of Chapter 4.¹² Plećaš was an interesting figure, especially during the war. Besides his role in Dalmatia, he was also responsible for the communications into and out of Belgrade for the JVuO and relayed much of the finances from Belgrade's supporters to Mihailović in western Serbia. However, his account does not provide much information to this end, instead choosing to focus on polemics and arguing for Mihailović's innocence. Plećaš further gives the impression of the Dinara Chetniks as incapable of being controlled by Mihailović, his officers, or anyone else for that matter. All these works border on hagiographies of both the JVuO and the figures they purport to cover. Regardless, they all provide some insights into the JVuO and certainly into the modes of thinking of some of the leading figures in the JVuO.¹³

Scholarly interest emerged only in the 1970s, partially because of Yugoslavia's loosening restrictions on wartime materials. Jozo Tomasevich's first volume of a planned three-volume set on wartime Yugoslavia still stands as the cornerstone study on the Chetniks.¹⁴ Tomasevich's work has aged well making it important to scholars working in both the English and in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BCS) languages. Beyond that, Tomasevich's unfettered access to documents captured by the Partisans, many of which

¹¹ Zvonimir Vučković, *Sećanja Iz Rata* (London: Biblioteka Naše Delo, 1980).

¹² Neđeljko Plećaš, *Ratne Godine, 1941-1945* (Columbus, OH: Kosovo Publishing Company, 1983).

¹³ Much less helpful is Dušan M. Lukić, *The Second Brigade: First Ličko Dinaric Četnik Division, 1941-1945*, trans. John Jovan Lukich (Self-Published: Dušan Lukić, 1991), <https://www.scribd.com/read/194648059/Second-Brigade-First-Li%C4%8Dko-Dinaric-%C4%8Cetnik-Division-1941-1945> and Veceslav Glišić, "Miloš Glišić (Biografija Jednog Četničkog Oficira)," *Vojnoistorijski Glasnik*, no. 1 (2012): 151–67. The other type of memoir of this period comes from Allied missions to Mihailović, either members of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) or the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS). For these examples, see Richard L. Felman, *Mihailovich and I* (Neven Publishers, 1964). On the other side is Axis-related memoirs. See Hermann Neubacher, *Specijalni Zadatak Balkan* (Beograd: Izdavač, 2004).

¹⁴ Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: The Chetniks* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975). This monograph is based on Jozo Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia During the Second World War," in *Contemporary Yugoslavia: Twenty Years of Socialist Experiment*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich and Jozo Tomasevich (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 59–118. Tomasevich planned three volumes, but only two were completed in his lifetime. The second volume deals with the Croatian Ustashe and the NDH: Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration*, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

have since been published as part of the *Zbornik* collection by the Military History Institute in Belgrade, discussed later, allowed for new information to emerge. Tomasevich's monograph, along with the second volume,¹⁵ remain the most thorough studies in terms of both sources consulted in sheer number and in array, ranging from Yugoslav – both Chetnik and Partisan – to German, Italian, and Allied. Historians in the west, meanwhile were previously barred from accessing the Yugoslav archives as part of the cold war environment and the hold that Tito held over questioning the official narrative. In recent years, historians in “the west,” meanwhile, have largely ignored the Chetniks and have yet to catch up to historians in the former Yugoslav republics when it comes to studying them, with most studies occurring in the BCS languages. The current thesis, then, is one attempt to correct this linguistic and geographic imbalance.

Though Tomasevich's source materials are varied, it is still heavily skewed to documents either by the Partisans or JVuO documents captured by them. One important corrective is Milazzo's monograph which brings in Italian sources to a greater extent and helps to flesh out the periphery of the JVuO, namely those areas occupied by Fascist Italy.¹⁶ If both Milazzo and Tomasevich may lean leftwards in their assessments, Lucien Karchmar leans to the right and provides another view of the JVuO in his two-volume dissertation published as a monograph.¹⁷ While all three works stand rightfully on their own and have their own limitations, read together they provide one with quite a clear picture of the JVuO especially from Mihailović's centre. All three are less helpful if one wants to understand the JVuO on the margins, with the one exception of Milazzo who does provide some of that.

Scholars working in BCS have also published widely and some have proved to be rather balanced investigations, even under Tito's totalitarianism. On one end of the spectrum is Milan Borković's attempt which puts the JVuO firmly in the “quisling” camp.¹⁸

¹⁵ Tomasevich, *Occupation and Collaboration*.

¹⁶ Matteo Milazzo, *The Chetnik Movement and the Yugoslav Resistance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975). See also the German-skewed sources in Paul N. Hehn, “Serbia, Croatia and Germany 1941–1945: Civil War and Revolution in the Balkans,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 13, no. 4 (January 1971): 344–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.1971.11091249>.

¹⁷ Lucien Karchmar, *Draža Mihailović and the Rise of the Četnik Movement, 1941-1942* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987).

¹⁸ Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji: Kvislinška Uprava 1941-1944*. (Beograd: Sloboda, 1979).

There is very little thought given to problematize the question of collaboration and instead takes it at face value. Borković represents the communist regime's attempts to narrate the wartime history. At the other end of the spectrum, one which poses a far more balanced and less politicised history, is the likes of Borivoje Karapandžić,¹⁹ Fikreta Jelić-Butić,²⁰ Nikola Milovanović,²¹ Radoje Pajović,²² and Nusret Šehić.²³ Each of these examines the JVuO or its antecedents, or some aspect of guerrilla warfare in critical ways and do not necessarily tow any party lines. While Karapandžić looks at the civil war in Serbia, Jelić-Butić's study explores the Chetniks in Croatia. Taken together, the two provide insights into how certain aspects unfolded in both theatres and within each subject matter. Milovanović and Pajović, for their parts, look at Ravna Gora and Montenegro respectively and can be considered revisionist historians because their accounts seek to situate the JVuO within the realm of "counter-revolutionary" movements: rather than seeing the JVuO as *either* collaborators *or* resisters, Pajović and Milovanović view the JVuO as fundamentally opposed to communism and the Partisans. This was an important shift in the historiography, not least because it provided another lens through which to view the JVuO. However, the slippery slope of minimising collaboration has led to more recent accounts ignoring it altogether.

The outlier of the five historians I presented in the previous paragraph is Šehić. Though he does not look at the JVuO specifically, his studies explore the ideas of guerrilla warfare, specifically the style called *četovanje*, and the interwar Chetnik associations which were created during the 1918 to 1941 period but had very little if anything to do with the wartime JVuO. This was an important shift in the historiography in its own right because it not only moved the discourse away from partisan warfare, as fought by the Partisans, and towards other modes of guerrilla warfare. Indeed, Šehić's

¹⁹ Borivoje M. Karapandžić, *Gradjanski Rat u Srbiji 1941-1945* (Cleveland, Ohio and Beograd, 1993).

²⁰ Fikreta Jelić-Butić, *Četnici u Hrvatskoj 1941-1945*. (Zagreb: Globus, 1986).

²¹ Nikola Milovanović, *Kontrarevolucionarni Pokret Draže Mihailovića*, 2 vols. (Beograd: Izdavačka radna organizacija, 1984).

²² Radoje Pajović, *Kontrarevolucija u Crnoj Gori: Četnički i Federalistički Pokret, 1941-1945*, vol. 6: Iz prošlosti Crne Gore (Cetinje: Obod, 1977).

²³ Nusret Šehić, "Četničke i Slične Nacionalističke Organizacije u Borbi Protiv Radničkog Pokreta i Komunističke Parije Jugoslavije u Razdoblju Izmedju Dva Rata," *Prilozi* 5 (1969): 27–60; Nusret Šehić, *Četništvo u Bosni i Hercegovini (1918-1941): Politička Uloga i Oblici Djelatnosti Četničkih Udruženja* (Sarajevo: Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine, 1971).

study of Bosnia up until 1941 deals with the ways in which guerrilla warfare was conducted in other parts of the South Slav lands at least as much as it discusses Bosnia itself. This has allowed a wider understanding of guerrilla warfare, specifically of the Balkan model that has come to be known as *četovanje* and will be covered in greater detail in Chapter 1.

Cold War historiography in the west has dealt most explicitly with Allied-JVuO relations. In fact, to call it the JVuO is a bit of a misnomer because they really deal with Mihailović, specifically, and his camp at Ravna Gora, generally. This branch of historiography was greatly influenced by the Cold War context and should be viewed with that in mind. Still, many studies provided some great insights into the souring of relations between Mihailović and the Allied liaison officers, especially the British Colonel William “Bill” Bailey. In this regard, we still see the trend of apologia emerge even in the late-1990s in the likes of Simon Trew,²⁴ but at least by this point the methodology is sounder than in the works of memoirs.²⁵ Trew’s major finding was to show the levels to which British relations were strained both in Yugoslavia between the liaison missions and Ravna Gora and at Downing Street with the government in exile. Walter Roberts’ study provoked much controversy in Yugoslavia after he showed Partisan-German agreements to have taken place in 1943, prompting his book to be banned in the country.²⁶ Still, the emphasis is at the diplomatic and Supreme Staff level, but such works help provide the historian with much needed context to be able to delve deeper into the micro-historical processes.

Top-down studies dominated into the 1990s when Yugoslavia again gained prominence thanks to the advent of a new war there, the last that Yugoslavia would ever see. Communism seemed to be discredited with the fall of the Berlin Wall and Yugoslavia was aflame in civil war. There was also a shift in the way that historians

²⁴ Simon Trew, *Britain, Mihailović, and the Chetniks, 1941-42* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998).

²⁵ See n. 13.

²⁶ Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies, 1941-1945* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1973). These agreements were later confirmed in Milovan Djilas, *Wartime* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977). Djilas further contextualises things in light of his being kicked out of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in Milovan Djilas, *Fall of the New Class: A History of Communism’s Self-Destruction*, ed. Vasilije Kalezić, trans. John Loud (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).

studied Yugoslavia's Second World War because many archives were finally opened as a result of such historical events. Historians began to look at topics like the role that intelligence played in the JVUO-Allies relationships.²⁷ Of these, Heather Williams' is the most balanced and thorough and shows the ways in which the relations with the British soured in light of failed supply drops, misunderstandings, and personality clashes amongst the intelligence branches in both Yugoslavia and in Britain.²⁸

Historians also began to look at the occupational practices of the different occupation regimes.²⁹ Both Pavlowitch and Prusin show the influence of Milazzo by looking at the German occupation in Yugoslavia and Serbia, respectively. Pavlowitch is the most prolific writer on Yugoslav affairs, at least in English, and his *oeuvre* spans a general history of the Balkans to more detailed studies of politicians and important individuals throughout Yugoslavia's history.³⁰ Though balanced, Pavlowitch's pro-Serb and pro-government bias does emerge at times but neither of these should reflect poorly on otherwise meticulously researched and beautifully written histories. Of particular importance to the Yugoslav wartime context is his *Hitler's New Disorder* which seeks to place Yugoslavia's experiences under Nazi rule at the centre of the narrative. In many ways the culmination of his decades of study, Pavlowitch largely omits the Italian

²⁷ John Cripps, "Mihailović or Tito? How the Codebreakers Helped Churchill Choose," in *Action This Day*, ed. Ralph Erskine and Michael Smith (London: Bantam, 2001), 237–63. Christopher Catherwood, *Churchill and Tito: SOE, Bletchley Park and Supporting the Yugoslav Communists in World War II* (South Yorkshire, U.K.: Frontline Books, 2017). Heather Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans: The Special Operations Executive and Yugoslavia, 1941-1945* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).

²⁸ An early precursor to Williams is Vojmir Kljaković, "Jugoslavenska vlada u emigraciji i Saveznici prema pitanju Hrvatske 1941 -1944.," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 3, no. 2–3 (1971): 97–138.

²⁹ Alexander Prusin, *Serbia Under the Swastika: A World War II Occupation* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017). Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder: The Second World War in Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst, 2008).

³⁰ Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *A History of the Balkans, 1804-1945* (London and New York: Addison-Wesley Longman, 1999). As only one example of an important figure in Yugoslav history, see Stevan K. Pavlowitch, "Momčilo Ninčić and the European Policy of the Yugoslav Government in Exile, 1941-1943: II," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 62, no. 4 (October 1984): 531–51. Showing Pavlowitch's influence are Nikica Barić, "Relations between the Chetniks and the Authorities of the Independent State of Croatia, 1942–1945," in *Serbia and the Serbs in World War Two*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet and Ola Listhaug (New York and London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 175–200; Sabrina P. Ramet and Ola Listhaug, eds., *Serbia and the Serbs in World War Two* (New York and London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011); Mario Jareb, "How the West Was Won: Jugoslavenska izbjeglička vlada i legenda o Draži Mihailoviću," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 2006, 1039–56..

occupation areas except for one small section, and instead focuses on the grand designs of the Nazis and relations to the Nedić regime.

To be sure, top-down histories still exist into the 21st-century. Biographies of Mihailović have emerged which attempt to paint the general in an overly positive light and ignore or justify – rather than interrogate and try to understand – the politics of collaboration. Pero Simić falls under this category.³¹ Far more balanced, though of limited value for historians given its lack of academic rigour and no notation system, is Jean-Christophe Buisson's biography of Mihailović.³² Others have also looked at the ideologues of the JVuO. Stevan Moljević, discussed more in Chapter 2, has received some biographical attention.³³ However, besides Mihailović, the other ideologue Dragiša Vasić has received the most attention.³⁴ Part of this has to do with Vasić's prewar role as a writer, cultural worker, and rather eclectic figure, even visiting the Soviet Union at a time when doing so was not only taboo but illegal in many parts of the world. The views expressed in his writing are also being rehabilitated, though Višnja Kostić is careful to suggest that Vasić's moral failures during wartime should be considered when one reads his interwar works.³⁵ Regardless, others have done good work to look at Vasić's role as an ideologue and Serbian chauvinist, as well as at his participation in interwar cultural-cum-political associations.³⁶

Mihailović's commanders have also received biographical treatments, many of which are of questionable academic quality but still helpful if supplemented by secondary scholarship. Jovo Popović, et al have looked at the commander of the Dinara Chetnik

³¹ Pero Simić, *Dražo Mihailović: Na Krstu Sudbine* (Beograd: Laguna, 2013).

³² Jean-Christophe Buisson, *Héros Trahi Par Les Alliés: Le Général Mihailović, 1893-1946* (Paris: Perrin, 1999).

³³ Yves Tomić, "Stevan Moljević et la question nationale serbe," *Balkanologie* 12, no. 1 (March 22, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.4000/balkanologie.2144>.

³⁴ Nikola Milovanović, *Dragiša Vasić: Od Gradjanskog Buntovnika Do Kontrarevolucionara* (Beograd: Nova Knjiga, 1986).

³⁵ Višnja Kostić, "Current Relevance of Dragiša Vasić's Work," *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 22, no. 2 (2008): 201–10, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ser.2008.0001>. Far more sympathetic is Kosta Nikolić, "Dragiša Vasić: Skica Za Portret Nacionalnog Revolucionara," *Istorija 20. Veka* XV, no. 1 (1997): 97–106.

³⁶ Miloš Timotijević, "Dragiša Vasić i 'Srpski Glas': Jedan Nedovršeni Nacionalni Projekat," in *Život i Delo Dragiše Vasića*, ed. Borisav Čeliković (Gornji Milanovac, Serbia: Muzej rudničko-takovskog kraja, 2008), 119–46 and Miloš Timotijević, *Dragiša Vasić i Srpska Nacionalna Ideja* (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2019).

Division, Momčilo Đujić.³⁷ They argue that close prewar ties to Italy based on the former's alleged espionage work for the latter contributed to his collaboration during the war. They provide no documentary evidence but instead use Đujić's actions as evidence. Going too far the other way, is Veljko Đurić's study of Đujić.³⁸ This biography can best be described as an account written by a Chetnik supporter and should be read with equal amounts of suspicion as Popović, et al. Just as problematic is the biography of Đujić's counterpart in Lika, Dobrosav Jevđević.³⁹ Looking at a specific time, 1944, at a specific place, near Rijeka, Roberto Žigulić gives us a brief snapshot of a fighter on his way out of a warzone. Far more balanced is the study on Đurišić's collaboration in Montenegro with the Italians.⁴⁰ This article narrates the development between two opposing and belligerent camps to show how even potential enemies can agree on certain issues, such as their mutual hatred for communism.

Histories of our century have begun to drill down to the micro-historical level as far as the military unit and the village level. There has yet to be a complete biography of a typical JVuO member, and the biographies of Mihailović and his commanders are little more than political tracts. Still, world trends in history show their influences. Max Bergholz did much to dispel many myths about "ancient hatreds" which plagued the popular imaginations of the region since the 1990s, and even earlier.⁴¹ His study looks at violence at the community level to show the ways in which it begins as low-level score settling and can be coopted by politicians and military officials with particular agendas leading to cycles of violence.

³⁷ Jovo Popović, Marko Lolić, and Branko Latas, *Pop Izdaje* (Stvarnost, 1988).

³⁸ Veljko Dj. Djurić, *Vojvoda Djujić* (Kragujevac: Pogledi, 2001).

³⁹ Roberto Žigulić, "Boravak i Zločini Jevđevićevih Četnika Na Prostorima Liburnije 1944. Godine," *Zbornik Lovranščine* 7 (2020): 57–90.

⁴⁰ Milutin Živković, "Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.," *Istorija 20. veka* 34, no. 2/2016 (August 1, 2016): 27–44, <https://doi.org/10.29362/IST20VEKA.2016.2.ZIV.27-44>.

⁴¹ Max Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force: Identity, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Community* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2016). For the existence of the "ancient hatreds" trope in the popular imaginary, see Paul Underwood, "Ancient Hatreds Mark Yugoslavia: Country a Mosaic of Blocs Alien in Many Ways," *The New York Times*, May 28, 1961. See the lasting effects of the trope in Benjamin Denison and Jasmin Mujanović, "Syria Isn't Bosnia. And No, the Problem Isn't 'Ancient Hatreds,'" *The Monkey Cage* (blog), November 17, 2015, <https://themonkeycage.org/2015/11/syria-isnt-bosnia-and-no-the-problem-isnt-ancient-hatreds/>.

Just as Bergholz looks at a small community, Rade Ristanović explores Belgrade under occupation and the role that the Ravna Gora Movement played there.⁴² He shows how Belgraders lived their day to day lives under occupation, while also highlighting the mechanisms through which the Ravna Gora Movement operated as the centre of collaboration, resistance, and diplomacy under occupation. This helps to fill in the gaps in Plećaš's memoirs cited earlier. For his part, Dejan Segić has looked at the JVuO after Italy's capitulation in 1943.⁴³ Though it covers a broader region than either Bergholz or Ristanović's studies, Segić can still be classed as micro-historical because of this study's examination of a particular and rather brief time period (1943) in an isolated geographic space (the Adriatic Coast). Besides looking into Vasić, Miloš Timotijević has also done some good work on the JVuO more broadly. His study on the finances of the JVuO in particular uncovers much needed knowledge.⁴⁴ Still, one would like to see the involvement of the Yugoslav diaspora included in such a study, something which Timotijević does not do.

Slightly broader in scope is Marko Attila Hoare's look at Bosnia-Hercegovina during occupation.⁴⁵ Hoare positions the JVuO in contradistinction to the Partisans to show the former's genocidal policies and the latter's attempts to protect civilians in this province. While his study is commendable for its quality and attention to an important theatre of the war, its biggest flaw is its ambitious scope; it tries to cover resistance, collaboration, genocide, the Partisans, and the "Chetniks" all in one volume. Nevertheless, Hoare's attempt helped to bring much needed attention to Bosnia-Hercegovina but in a different timeframe that was not the 1990s.

⁴² Rade Ristanović, *Beogradski Ravnogorci: Jugoslovenska Vojska u Otadžbini i Ravnogorski Pokret u Okupiranom Beogradu 1941-1944*. (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2020).

⁴³ Dejan Segić, "Četnici and Kapitulacija Italije 1943.," *Vojnoistorijski Glasnik* 1 (2011): 194–224. Similar to this is the study of Split during the first two years of the war in Aleksandar Jakir, "Split Od Travnja 1941. Do Rujna 1943. Godine: Mjesto Fašističke Represije i Antifašističkog Otpora," in *Split i Vladan Desnica 1918.-1945.: Umjetničko Stvaralaštvo Izmedju Kulture i Politike* (Split: Filozofski fakultet press, 2015).

⁴⁴ Miloš Timotijević, "Finansije JVuO u Srbiji 1941-1944," *Istorija 20. Veka* 37, no. 2 (2019): 137–56, <https://doi.org/10.29362/ist20veka.2019.2.tim.137-156>.

⁴⁵ Marko Attila Hoare, *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler's Bosnia: The Partisans and the Chetniks, 1941-1943* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). Similar to Hoare, is the study on Slovenia and the collaborators there in Gregor Joseph Kranjc, *To Walk with the Devil: Slovene Collaboration and Axis Occupation, 1941-1945* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

Broader in geographic scope but narrower in its topical focus is John Paul Newman's monograph which takes a meso-level approach to look at Yugoslav war veterans from the Balkan and Great Wars.⁴⁶ Newman has done much to advance our knowledge of the veterans' groups of interwar Yugoslavia as well as to position them within the wider European context. The book explores veterans more generally to show how they spanned the political spectrum, and focuses on various South Slav veterans' groups, not just the Chetniks. Nevertheless, and as will be discussed in Chapter 1, Newman shows that veterans were an integral part of the Chetnik associations of the interwar period and helped to politicise veterans' affairs, making interwar Yugoslavia more militant, volatile, and violent in the process.

Veterans were overwhelmingly male, but the gender question has only recently become a focus of inquiry. Ljubinka Škodrić is the expert on the ways in which patriarchal structures manifested themselves during the occupation. Most notably, her PhD thesis looks at women in occupied Serbia and the various ways in which they were impacted, how they maneuvered throughout, and the types of agencies they wielded in wartime.⁴⁷ She has also brought methods that historians have adopted in their studies of other wartime theatres to the Yugoslav case.⁴⁸ Milan Ristović, too, has studied women under occupation, but not in relation to the JVuO.⁴⁹ Even so, both authors have contributed much to opening wide the lenses through which we can see women's roles.

⁴⁶ John Paul Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War: Veterans and the Limits of State Building, 1903-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁴⁷ Ljubinka Škodrić, "Položaj žene u okupiranoj Srbiji 1941-1944" (PhD, Belgrade, University of Belgrade, 2015).

⁴⁸ Ljubinka Škodrić, ""Horizontalna kolaboracija": Intimne veze žena sa nemačkim okupatorom u Srbiji 1941-1944.," *Istorija 20. veka* 31, no. 1/2013 (February 1, 2013): 105–22, <https://doi.org/10.29362/ist20veka.2013.1.sko.105-122>.

⁴⁹ Milan Ristović, "Women in Ideology and the Propaganda Vernacular of the Collaborationist Regime in Serbia during the Second World War," *Südost-Forschungen* 75 (2016): 211–22. On the Partisan side, the important study by Batinić is worth mentioning: Jelena Batinić, *Women and Yugoslav Partisans: A History of World War II Resistance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Important to the women's movements from the interwar period more generally is Isidora Grubački, "The Emergence of the Yugoslav Interwar Liberal Feminist Movement and the Little Entente of Women: An Entangled History Approach (1919-1924)," *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics* 4(2), no. 27 (September 8, 2020): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.20897/femenc/8515> and Isidora Grubački, "Communism, Left Feminism, and Generations in the 1930s: The Case of Yugoslavia," in *Gender, Generations, and Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond*, ed. Anna Artwińska and Agnieszka Mrozik (New York and London: Routledge, 2021), 45–65.

Unfortunately, as it relates to gender, this is only a new area of study and the patriarchal structures have only just begun to be interrogated.⁵⁰

Many scholars have begun to explore questions of collaboration and what precisely that word means and what it looked like on the ground. This is as true for other parts of Europe as it is for Yugoslavia.⁵¹ In the Yugoslav context, scholars have rightfully questioned the roles that collaboration and collaborationists played in the overall picture, and the impacts such decisions had on the populations in occupied territory. One such study is by Vesna Drapac and Gareth Pritchard.⁵² They argue that using terms such as “resistance” and “collaboration” may be helpful insofar as they provide heuristic tools, but ultimately, using the terms do little to actually reveal anything of substance. Rather, these terms obfuscate more than they explain. Instead, the authors argue that exploring the ways in which “collaboration” and “resistance” manifested themselves helps to place both on a spectrum which shows that a single individual could effectively “collaborate” in one moment only to “resist” in another. Though this is not an argument of the current thesis, Drapac and Pritchard have done much to influence my mode of thinking about collaboration as a spectrum and to pay attention to nuance.

Still, there are other historians who attempt to revise the historical record and portray the JVuO strictly as a resistance movement, that its collaboration was part of a wider plan and only meant to be temporary. Though this is true – Mihailović’s collaboration plans were only meant to defeat the Partisans – many such studies fail to show the extent to which collaboration manifested itself on the ground, going so far as to catch innocent civilians – Serbs amongst them – because of suspected or imagined guilt by association with the Partisans. Kosta Nikolić is at the forefront of this branch of historiography. His numerous studies ignore, contort, or excuse the JVuO’s moral and operational failings. Indeed, one study refers to the JVuO as a “royalist resistance

⁵⁰ Stevan Bozanic, “Masculinity and Mobilised Folklore: The Image of the Hajduk in the Creation of the Modern Serbian Warrior” (Master’s Thesis, Victoria, British Columbia, University of Victoria, 2017).

⁵¹ For Europe, see István Deák, *Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution during World War II* (Philadelphia: Westview Press, 2015).

⁵² Vesna Drapac and Gareth Pritchard, “Beyond Resistance and Collaboration: Towards a Social History of Politics in Hitler’s Empire,” *Journal of Social History* 48, no. 4 (2015): 865–91.

movement” throughout without once mentioning either collaboration or massacres.⁵³ If one is able to read it critically and in conjunction with the likes of Tomasevich, Karchmar, and Milazzo, then Nikolić’s three volume work on the JVuO can be an adjunct, despite these issues.⁵⁴ Nikolić’s training and reputation as a historian is what makes such obfuscation dangerous: he has academic credentials as a historian, is generally well respected in Serbia as a result of his revision, and he holds a position at the University of Belgrade, all of which he wields in pursuit of his political goal.⁵⁵

Similar to Nikolić, and indeed his Belgrade colleague, is Bojan Dimitrijević. His series of works have also obfuscated several critical facts because they fail to support his viewpoint.⁵⁶ Instead, he attempts to portray Mihailović as operating within a difficult position with little recourse but to collaborate. Though this may be true, Dimitrijević fails to mention Mihailović’s willingness to negotiate with the Germans.⁵⁷ Similarly, Dimitrijević focuses on the great suffering experienced by the JVuO, specifically in the “Chetnik Golgotha,” the retreat of the Montenegrin Chetniks through Bosnia during which they ultimately met their fate at the hands of the NDH.⁵⁸ By positioning their works in such a way, both Dimitrijević and Nikolić do much to hide the facts that do not fit their narratives and instead switch focus to the suffering experienced by the JVuO. In doing so, they hope to provoke pathos from their readers. Neither historian discusses the genocide perpetrated by the JVuO.

While supporters of Mihailović tend to ignore, obfuscate, or dismiss collaboration as a necessary evil, almost all of them ignore the genocide acts committed by the JVuO.

⁵³ Kosta Nikolić and Nebojša Stambolija, “Royalist Resistance Movement in Yugoslavia During the Second World War,” *Istorija 20. Veka* 36, no. 2 (2018): 9–36.

⁵⁴ Kosta Nikolić, *Istorija Ravnogorskog Pokreta, 1941-1945*, 3 vols. (Beograd: Srpska Reč, 1999).

⁵⁵ For insight into how such revisionism plays into recent regimes’ political plans, see Jelena Đureinović, *The Politics of Memory of the Second World War in Contemporary Serbia: Collaboration, Resistance and Retribution* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, N.Y: Routledge, 2020).

⁵⁶ See, for example, Dimitrijević’s article with Nikolić in which they discuss the “hidden history” of Mihailović’s biography: Bojan Dimitrijević and Kosta Nikolić, *General Draža Mihailović Biografija: Skrivna Historija* (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2011). Ultimately, however, they bring nothing new to light except to show that they both engage in obscuring several important points.

⁵⁷ This is mentioned in Bojan Dimitrijević, “Kako Je Djeneral Video Hrvate? Dragoljub Draža Mihailović o Hrvatima i Hrvatskim Pitanju 1941-1945. Godine,” n.d., 95–112.

⁵⁸ Bojan Dimitrijević, *Golgota Četnika: Lijeve Polje, Jasenovac, Zidani Most* (Beograd: Vukotić Media, 2019).

Hoare's previously cited monograph helped to situate some of the JVuO massacres within the Bosnian context, while Tomislav Dulić's published PhD thesis explores the "local mass killing" to a greater extent.⁵⁹ Both monographs are limited to the first two years of the war and focus only on Bosnia-Herzegovina, though each does much to advance knowledge of methods, styles, and processes of killing during those years in that theatre. It is to Dulić that I owe much of my methodology on how to approach the topic of mass violence in the JVuO context.

In terms of exploring violence, and undoubtedly influenced by the Yugoslav wars of succession in the 1990s, Vladimir Petrović's studies on the use of the term "ethnic cleansing" (*etničko čišćenje*) help to contextualise various styles of violence.⁶⁰ Petrović seeks to understand the origins, uses, and understandings of the term used at various points in Serbian history. He dates the usage of "cleansing" to the 19th-century, but the "ethnic" component was only added during the Second World War. Thus, he shows the ethnicization of violence during the war, something which may have existed in earlier time periods, but which became the central lens through which the perpetrators of "cleansing" understood the violence they enacted. Though Petrović does not resort to it, one important drawback of studies which focus on "cleansing," ethnic or otherwise, is they too freely use the term without considering the consequences, such as the normalisation of perpetrator language and the impact that may have on survivors. From a methodological perspective, the works of Norman Naimark, though important to understanding the "ethnic cleansing" phenomenon and violence more generally, use such language too uncritically which can be a slippery slope without first defining and explaining the necessity of using the language of perpetrators.⁶¹ Some scholars have

⁵⁹ Tomislav Dulić, *Utopias of Nation: Local Mass Killing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1941-1942* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2005).

⁶⁰ Vladimir Petrović, *Etničko Čišćenje: Geneza Koncepta* (Belgrade: Arhipelag, 2019) and Vladimir Petrović, "Etnicizacija Čišćenja u Reci i Nedelu: Represija i Njena Naučna Legitimizacija," *Hereticus* 1 (2007): 11–36.

⁶¹ Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2001). See also Philipp Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation-States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe*, trans. Charlotte Hughes-Kreutzmuller, War and Genocide, volume 19 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014). A number of works make the case for the use of "ethnic cleansing" by relating it to genocide, Naimark and Ther included. Though I find these distinctions helpful to understand the differences and to delineate the state of study, many studies also accept the term uncritically. See Dimitris Livanios, "Beyond 'Ethnic Cleansing': Aspects of the Functioning of Violence in the Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Balkans," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 8, no. 3 (September 2008): 189–203, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683850802338395>; Panagiotis Delis, "Violence and Civilians during the

chosen to problematize “ethnic cleansing” as a necessary term to use in light of its coinage by perpetrators, its history of being used euphemistically to hide the true intentions of destruction, and that much of what is defined by “ethnic cleansing” can fall under the genocide term.⁶² This is further extrapolated in the next section.

Methodology

Politics and Ideology

It is undeniable that the JVuO saw itself and its enemies and victims through nationalist lenses.⁶³ Generally, the JVuO viewed themselves as Serbs first and foremost and Yugoslavs second, while their victims were classed as Croats, Muslims, “Turks” (used pejoratively for Bosnian Muslims and Muslims in general), Albanians, and other ethno-religious groups. A basic understanding of nation and nationalism is imperative to

Balkan Wars (1912–1913),” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 20, no. 6 (November 2, 2018): 547–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2018.1493854>. Much less helpful because of its tendency to essentialize violence is Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011).

⁶² In addition to the arguments I present here, others have also argued that genocide’s definition in international law, and the lack of a definition for “ethnic cleansing,” have meant that international actors (especially states, but the United Nations, public health officials, and other bodies, too) refuse to use “the G word” because it would mean they have to act to prevent it. See Rony Blum et al., “‘Ethnic Cleansing’ Bleaches the Atrocities of Genocide,” *European Journal of Public Health* 18, no. 2 (May 18, 2007): 204–9. This article incited some debate, with Robert Hayden taking issue with the numbers that the authors used. See Robert M. Hayden, “‘Ethnic Cleansing’ and ‘Genocide,’” *European Journal of Public Health* 17, no. 6 (2007): 546–47, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckn012>. The authors of the former article rebutted in kind in Elihu D. Richter and Gregory H. Stanton, “Response to Hayden: Comment on ‘Ethnic Cleansing’ and ‘Genocide,’” *European Journal of Public Health* 18, no. 2 (2008): 210–11, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckn012>. However, as the last article says, Hayden does not fundamentally challenge the idea put forth by the authors that “ethnic cleansing” is euphemistic and its usage by scholars should be stopped. From a legal perspective which also confronts some of what I and the others discuss, see Clotilde Pégrier, *Ethnic Cleansing: A Legal Qualification* (London & New York: Routledge, 2013). See also Martin Shaw, *What Is Genocide?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2015).

⁶³ Some important theoretical works include Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983); Miroslav Hroch, *European Nations: Explaining Their Formation* (London: Verso, 2015); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); As a counterargument to this school of thought, see Alexander Maxwell, “Multiple Nationalism: National Concepts in Nineteenth-Century Hungary and Benedict Anderson’s ‘Imagined Communities,’” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 11, no. 3 (October 2005): 385–414, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537110500255619>.

understand this dynamic.⁶⁴ However, nationalism was not the only ideological lens through which the JVuO members saw themselves. Rather, this thesis argues that the JVuO was populated by people, mostly Serb(ians),⁶⁵ who understood themselves and their world in various ways, nationalism as only one such interpretation. Over time, however, nationalism came to be the dominant narrative through which people came to view themselves, their world, and those around them, perhaps most especially non-Serbs in Yugoslavia. This was exacerbated by several factors, the most important of which was the ongoing conflict, both the wider war and, most importantly for the common soldiers, the civil wars between the Chetniks, Ustashe, and Partisans. Chapter 1 briefly discusses this in terms of the “nationalising process” that Serbian intellectuals employed, that is to say that they thought about and attempted to apply and project certain ethnic and national identities on to Balkan peoples, from as early as the 19th-century. The year 1941 brought an opportunity for nationalist intellectuals to assert such beliefs and the JVuO was the main vehicle of transmission.

Ideas of the nation and nationalism emerged on a wider scale in the 19th-century.⁶⁶ As it relates to Serbs and Serbians specifically, and to Yugoslavia and the Balkans more generally, Vuk Stefanović-Karadžić is perhaps the most important intellectual from this period to influence the JVuO and the Chetniks generally. Vuk not only codified the Serbian language, developed its dictionary, and helped to advance our knowledge of linguistics, but also aided in allowing for nationalist interpretations of South

⁶⁴ An excellent recent study is Siniša Malešević, *Grounded Nationalisms: A Sociological Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

⁶⁵ Serb tends to be the term used to identify people of the Serbian nation outside the borders of Serbia, while Serbian is used for those within the borders.

⁶⁶ See as one example, Aleksandar Bošković, Darko Gavrilović, and Vjekoslav Perica, “Myths, Political Mythologies and Nationalism,” in *Political Myths in the Former Yugoslavia and Successor States: A Shared Narrative*, ed. Darko Gavrilović and Vjekoslav Perica (Dordrecht, The Netherlands and St. Louis, MO: Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation and Republic of Letters Publishing BV, 2011), 13–19. On the “invention” of nations, see Victor Roudometof, “Invented Traditions, Symbolic Boundaries, and National Identities in Southeastern Europe: Greece and Serbia in Comparative Historical Perspective (1830-1880),” *East European Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 429–68. For the Serbian context, see Robert Viers Paxton, “Nationalism and Revolution: A Re-Examination of the Origins of the First Serbian Insurrection, 1804-1807,” *East European Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (September 1, 1972): 337–62; and Slobodan Markovich, “Patterns of National Identity Development among the Balkan Orthodox Christians during the Nineteenth Century,” *Balkanica*, no. 44 (2013): 209–54, <https://doi.org/10.2298/BALC1344209M>. An updated study for the region is John R. Lampe and Mark Mazower, eds., *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European Press, 2013).

Slav literature, namely the oral epics, and attempted to project Serbianism and Serbianhood on to all groups of South Slav peoples. Though he never said it outright, Vuk's actions suggest attempts at erasure of non-Serb(ian) South Slav peoples, most notably ethnic Croats and Muslims.⁶⁷

The period of the 19th-century is important. During this era, European states were uniting under the banner of nationalism, influenced by both the Enlightenment and Romanticism, but also the French Revolution, all of which attempted to classify entire swathes of peoples into ethnic and national categories. Though there is some debate as to the thickness of nationalism in the Balkans prior to the 19th-century, at least by the early part of the century more and more segments of the population, not just the intelligentsia, began to identify with ethno-national categories.⁶⁸ As the century progressed, levels of nationalising varied across the region. No more was this evident than in Macedonia, the region of the Balkans claimed equally by Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria, but also by local Macedonian peoples who either identified as Macedonian in a regional or in an ethnic sense. This would later lead to the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 which attempted to cut territory from Macedonia for the respective states, while groups of locals attempted to keep "Macedonia for the Macedonians," either federated with Bulgaria or constituted as its own independent state.⁶⁹ Yet, for many throughout the Balkans, but perhaps most especially in Macedonia, the idea of national belonging not only seemed foreign but also anathema to the centuries-old way of life.

⁶⁷ Robert Hudson, "Songs of Love and Hate: The Role of the Intelligentsia, Music and Poetry in Forging Serbian Ethnic National Identity," in *Historical and Cultural Perspectives (Why Europe? Problems of Culture and Identity)*, Keele University: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1996), 167–81; Stevan Bozanic, "Invented Warriors: The Legacy of the Invented Serbian Hajduk Tradition," in *Balkan Legacies: The Long Shadow of Conflict and Ideological Experiment in Southeastern Europe*, ed. John Paul Newman and Balázs Apor (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2021): 58-60.

⁶⁸ For a micro-historical example, see Tamara Scheer, "A Micro-Historical Experience in the Late Ottoman Balkans: The Case of Austria-Hungary in Sanjak Novi Pazar (1879-1908)," in *War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, and Their Sociopolitical Implications*, ed. Hakan M. Yavuz and Isa Blumi (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013), 197–229. A larger regional sweep can be found in Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992).

⁶⁹ A good overview of the wars is Mark Biondich, "The Balkan Wars: Violence and Nation-Building in the Balkans, 1912-1913," *Journal of Genocide Research* 18, no. 4 (2016): 389–404, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2016.1226019>. For a discussion on the limits of nationalism, see L.L. Farrar Jr., "Aggression versus Apathy: The Limits of Nationalism during the Balkan Wars, 1912-1913," *East European Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (September 2003): 257–80.

Print media, the increasing encroachment of the state into personal affairs, and geopolitical contests between states for territories all helped to contribute to the nationalising process in the modern Balkans.⁷⁰ During times of conflict, war, and upheaval violence begot violence, people increasingly identified as one ethnic nation or another, often rather arbitrarily and/or in response to a particular ethno-national state or group of actors committing violence against the local community.⁷¹ Over time, the ethno-national identification solidified and increased the likelihood that one would identify as one ethno-national group over another.⁷² To paraphrase Eugen Weber, it was the process of turning peasants into Serbs. Viewed this way, it seems as though identifying and especially targeting certain groups for violence seems arbitrary, and perhaps it is, but what is important is that even though the circumstances may have been invented, created, or imagined, they were *real*. Certainly, the results were real enough for the victims of ethno-national-religious-based violence as this thesis makes abundantly clear.

During the interwar period, nationalist intellectuals were attempting to understand how to fit Serb(ians) into the wider scheme of Yugoslavia, the country created in the wake of the Great War. As Chapter 1 shows, Serb nationalists wrote pamphlets and published newspapers, they fought in the cities and in the countryside, they ran for office

⁷⁰ Education is one way which historians, especially, have attempted to understand the state's role in the nationalising process. See Pieter Troch, *Nationalism and Yugoslavia: Education, Yugoslavism and the Balkans before World War II* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015). For the state's role, see John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) and Charles Jelavich and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977).

⁷¹ Dulić, *Utopias of Nation*. Marc-Olivier Cantin, "Pathways to Violence in Civil Wars: Combatant Socialization and the Drivers of Participation in Civilian Targeting," *International Studies Review*, 2021, 1–29, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viab026>; Siniša Malešević, "Wars That Make States and Wars That Make Nations: Organised Violence, Nationalism and State Formation in the Balkans," *European Journal of Sociology* 53, no. 1 (April 2012): 31–63. Violence need not be physical or even out of the ordinary, either, but "routine." See Gyanendra Pandey, *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006). See also Rok Stergar and Tamara Scheer, "Ethnic Boxes: The Unintended Consequences of Habsburg Bureaucratic Classification," *Nationalities Papers* 46, no. 4 (July 4, 2018): 575–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2018.1448374>.

⁷² Stefano Bianchini, *Liquid Nationalism and State Partitions in Europe* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786436610.00006>. This process is what Üngör called in the Ottoman context "social engineering." Ugur Ümit Üngör, "Geographies of Nationalism and Violence: Rethinking Young Turk 'Social Engineering,'" *European Journal of Turkish Studies [Online]* 7 (March 5, 2008), <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/2583>. Of course, he was not the first to suggest this. See, as one example, the euphemism of "landscaping" in Amir Weiner, ed., *Landscaping the Human Garden: Twentieth-Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

and petitioned politicians, and they continued to heighten tensions on an ethnoreligious axis. By the time 1941 arrived, and as they sought to find for themselves a place in yet another global war which overturned their lives, Serb(ian) nationalists increasingly turned to the JVuO. Desperate for fighters and supporters, the JVuO accepted them while also harbouring similar sentiments. As this thesis makes clear, Serb(ian) nationalists increasingly silenced opposition voices so that only extreme and violent nationalism remained as a viable option within the JVuO. It is also through this analytical lens that all other factors relating to the JVuO flow.

Collaboration & Resistance

Understanding the ways in which extreme ethnoreligious nationalism came to dominate the political and ideological framework of the JVuO made collaboration not only possible but desirable. Collaboration has been shown to occur at various levels and manifests in different ways.⁷³ Collaboration can include anything as seemingly innocuous as making parts in a factory that goes directly into aiding the war machine to fighting alongside an occupying army. But as Gross observed back in the 1970s, conceiving of and understanding collaboration works best in the area of politics. He contrasts “[s]omeone who acquires a business and prospers with the silent blessing of the occupiers,” such as “a profiteer or a speculator,” and “a confidant of the occupier’s police...who gives his services out of personal vengeance, for the money, or because he is blackmailed,” with “those who are prepared to grant the occupier authority.” Collaboration occurs when the occupier benefits through “the trust vested in [collaborators] by the population” or when “those who are ready to accept posts that are traditionally vested with authority in a given community” agree or seek out working with

⁷³ For the debate over collaboration and what it does and does not entail, see especially Klaus-Peter Friedrich, “Collaboration in a Land without a Quisling: Patterns of Cooperation with the Nazi German Occupation Regime in Poland during World War II,” *Slavic Review* 64, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 711–46 and John Connelly, “Why the Poles Collaborated so Little: And Why That Is No Reason for Nationalist Hubris,” *Slavic Review* 64, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 771–81. The debate is still raging, especially in Poland. See the recent libel case against Jan Grabowski and Barbara Engelking: Vanessa Gera, “Holocaust Researchers in Poland Win Libel Case on Appeal,” *Associated Press*, August 16, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/europe-poland-566a14ea3bc3dc43fe6e12aa869704eb>. Of course, the classic, and controversial, work on collaboration in Poland is Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

the occupying power(s).⁷⁴ If we extend this definition from politics to militarised formations, the JVuO can be described as collaborators. In the context of the Warsaw ghetto, the term collaboration “can only be fairly applied to people who chose to assist the occupiers in ways that could otherwise have been avoided.”⁷⁵ If one believes that cooperation with the Partisans was possible or desirable over collaborating with the Axis, then certainly the JVuO are collaborators. From the JVuO perspective, and as will be shown in the body chapters, cooperation with the Partisans was only briefly considered and put into practice before the civil war ensued. Clearly, then, the JVuO at least believed that working with the Axis occupation authorities was more desirable than with the Partisans. In their eyes, at least, there was little to no recourse. All three units examined in this thesis were led by local leaders of various prewar backgrounds – teachers, officers, priests, merchants, etc. – and thus had trust and authority from within their communities. Similarly, as leaders of an uprising, the three units occupied positions which were “traditionally vested with authority.” For example, Chapter 1 shows the emergence of authoritative figures during previous guerrilla wars, insurgencies, and uprisings who became leaders of those events, some of whom began as something approximating “collaborators,” setting precedents which developed into the 1940s. In these ways, then, the JVuO can be seen not only as collaborators but also as operating within historically established practices.

Other definitions include an ideological affinity to the occupier(s), an area in which the JVuO differed from both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany since the JVuO’s national goals superseded all other concerns.⁷⁶ And yet, as the body chapters will show, all three units sought meetings with the respective occupation authorities. The importance of narrowing the definition of collaboration in this way excludes the “collaboration” of those who lived under the occupation regime and had to survive by

⁷⁴ Jan Tomasz Gross, *Polish Society under German Occupation: The Generalgouvernement, 1939-1944* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), 118-119.

⁷⁵ Norman Davies, *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw*, A Penguin Book History (London: Penguin Books, 2005).132.

⁷⁶ Fabian Lemmes, “Collaboration in Wartime France, 1940-1944,” *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d’histoire* 15, no. 2 (April 2008): 157–77, 158.

working their regular jobs and going about their regular lives, as much as was afforded within a wartime context.⁷⁷

More recently, collaboration has been defined as

cooperating with an occupation force that clearly harms the interests of the subjugated population or state, whereas interaction with occupying authorities to preserve vital state institutions in occupied areas and shield the population from the effects of war as much as possible is normally called “cooperation.”⁷⁸

Unlike in some parts of occupied Europe, such as in Poland, the JVuO were not created by the occupying forces. For instance, the Nazis created militarised units based on ethnicity to collaborate with the authorities. All “attempts to develop private initiatives were nipped in the bud.”⁷⁹ Instead, the three JVuO units were created prior to or as a result of invasion. Only once the war was already being waged on Yugoslav territory, after the Yugoslav army’s defeat, and as a result of the presence of communists and the Partisans, did the JVuO enter into collaboration with the occupying powers. While in the Yugoslav context, the JVuO’s trajectory differs greatly from the Ljotićite and Nedićite collaborators who most closely follow the pattern established in Poland, the JVuO believed that by cooperating or collaborating with the Axis powers they were working to the betterment and preservation of the Serb(ian) nation. A similar justification was given by the likes of Ljotić and Nedić.⁸⁰

Unlike Ljotić and Nedić, however, the JVuO did not have the capacity of the state to collaborate to the same levels as the Government of National Salvation regime of

⁷⁷ Thomas Christofferson and Michael S. Christofferson, *France during World War II: From Defeat to Liberation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 84.

⁷⁸ Jochen Böhler and Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk, “Collaboration and Resistance in Wartime Poland (1939-1945): A Case of Differentiated Occupation Studies,” *JMEH* 16, no. 2 (2018): 225–46, 236.

⁷⁹ Böhler and Młynarczyk, “Collaboration and Resistance in Wartime Poland,” 238.

⁸⁰ On Nedić’s regime, see Ramet and Lazić, “The Collaborationist Regime of Milan Nedić.” For Ljotić and his movement *Zbor*, see Martić, “Dimitrije Ljotić and the Yugoslav National Movement Zbor, 1935-1945,” 219. On Ljotić’s and Nedić’s armed formations, see Ana Antić, “Police Force Under Occupation: Serbian State Guard and Volunteers’ Corps in the Holocaust,” in *Lessons and Legacies X: Back to the Sources: Reexamining Perpetrators, Victims, and Bystanders*, ed. Sara R. Horowitz (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 13–36. For the far-right and right in Yugoslavia generally, see John Paul Newman, “War Veterans, Fascism, and Para-Fascist Departures in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1918-1941,” *Fascism* 6 (2017): 42–74, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00601003>.

Serbia nor, indeed, Vichy France. Where Vichy contributed to and benefited from economic collaboration, the JVuO did not have infrastructure to offer or use towards any economic ends. Instead, any economic collaboration came by way of payments or in kind from the occupying forces to the JVuO for wages, arms, supplies, and the like. Where French companies such as Peugeot or Michelin collaborated, albeit reluctantly, the JVuO had no companies to use as leverage; without the state infrastructure behind them, they lacked the means.⁸¹ Regardless, military collaboration ensued between the JVuO on one side and the Nazis and Italians on the other throughout Yugoslavia and the bulk of their military force was directed against the communists and Partisans. This correlates to the “collaborationists” in France insofar as “struggling” against common enemies goes but differs in that the JVuO did not believe they were contributing to a “new Europe.”⁸² On one level, the JVuO insisted rhetorically that they were opposed to the Axis occupying forces, while on another they took arms, coordinated maneuvers, and offered little to no resistance against them.

Even so, the JVuO did offer some resistance at times. From the postwar perspective, “Chetnik” supporters tend to exaggerate the resistance to the Axis while the Communist supporters downplay it. Just as “collaboration” needs to be defined so, too, does resistance as it relates to the JVuO. If by resistance one means the sustained and active armed attacks against the Axis, then the JVuO cannot be considered a resistance force, not against the Axis anyway and certainly not in comparison to the Partisans. However, if one means that the overall military goal of the JVuO was, first, the defeat of the Partisans and, second, the defeat and expulsion of the occupying powers from Yugoslavia, then certainly the JVuO can be considered a resistance army, and in which case the ends justify the means. To be sure, the JVuO did put up armed resistance and staged sabotages against the Axis, even as late as 1944, but none of it was as

⁸¹ Christofferson and Christofferson, *France during World War II*, 75. Of course, these examples are in contrast to Renault which collaborated willingly: see *ibid.*, 162. For more on collaboration in the economic sector of occupied France, see Lemmes, “Collaboration in Wartime France.”

⁸² Christofferson and Christofferson, *France during World War II*, 96. Similar to both the French and JVuO examples is examples from Belarus. See, Leonid Rein, *The Kings and the Pawns: Collaboration in Byelorussia during World War II* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011). For example, contrast the Orthodox Church’s open collaboration (Chapter 5), more akin to “collaborationism” in France, to the non-ideological anti-guerrilla and anti-partisan warfare (p. 277-324), more similar to the JVuO.

sustained or ongoing throughout the war as the Partisan confrontations were.⁸³ Instead, the Partisans proved to be more consistent and effective. The Allies stopped supporting the JVuO and instead focused solely on the Partisans. Ineffectual resistance, sustained collaboration, and questions about the JVuO's policies towards non-Serbian peoples influenced this decision.

Genocide

Collaboration also made genocide possible. Genocide is the term employed throughout this thesis to describe the violent acts the JVuO committed against out-group populations. Where possible, I avoid using the term "ethnic cleansing" and, if the term is used, it will appear within quotations. There are several reasons why I reject the term "ethnic cleansing." The first reason is the euphemistic qualities attached to "ethnic cleansing." I find Benjamin Lieberman's chapter to be the most convincing argument for using the term "ethnic cleansing" and, thus, arguing against his typology will help to further my argument.⁸⁴ Lieberman explores the relationship between "ethnic cleansing" and genocide by noting that the former entered widespread usage as a result of the 1990s conflicts in Yugoslavia and that "[a]most from the start, the use of the term 'ethnic cleansing' caused controversy on the grounds that ethnic cleansing could function as a euphemism to cover up violence or to render it more harmless."⁸⁵ However, Lieberman does not bother to develop this point further, except to say that "despite its provenance and potential for misinterpretation the term ethnic cleansing soon gained widespread recognition as a major form of violence directed against groups."⁸⁶ "Ethnic cleansing" is defined as "the forced removal of an undesired group or groups" and "is seen as a form of previously defined crimes," but does not usually include killing except in extreme cases.⁸⁷ Lieberman's recognition of the term's euphemistic qualities is a rare instance in

⁸³ See Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans*, 179 where JVuO attacks were attributed to the Partisans. However, it should be said that the opposite was also true, that attacks carried out by the Partisans were often attributed to the JVuO, and that this particular attack was the first by the JVuO after several months of inactivity.

⁸⁴ Benjamin Lieberman, "'Ethnic Cleansing' Versus Genocide?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 42–60.

⁸⁵ Lieberman, "'Ethnic Cleansing' Versus Genocide?" 43.

⁸⁶ Lieberman, "'Ethnic Cleansing' Versus Genocide?" 43.

⁸⁷ Lieberman, "'Ethnic Cleansing' Versus Genocide?" 45, 46.

mass violence and genocide studies scholarship, thus it is unsurprising that he does not go further to evaluate the merits of the term on a scholarly basis. In further delineating genocide and “ethnic cleansing,” Lieberman notes that similarities between the two terms “is greatest when genocide is conceived of as Raphael Lemkin originally described the term.”⁸⁸ This puts Lemkin’s definition of genocide in contradistinction to the legal definition of the term.

Lemkin, a lawyer who coined the term genocide in 1943, wrote his seminal *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* during the Second World War and sought to refashion international criminal law. Certainly, he was influenced by his own experiences as a Polish Jew who had to flee ahead of the Nazi invasion, but he also singled out several other instances of genocide throughout human history, including the Armenian genocide, the Herero genocide, and the NDH genocide against Serbs occurring alongside the Holocaust. In other words, Lemkin was acutely aware from as early as 1933, when he first proposed the new laws of “barbarity” and “vandalism,” that contemporary war crimes laws did not go far enough.⁸⁹ Lemkin’s concept is firmly based in “group” identities, most specifically religious, ethnic, national, and racial groups. For Lemkin, genocide occurs between two ethnic, racial or national groups with one group instigating the genocide against the other by imposing conditions which are so extreme that they prevent the targeted group from living life as a member of that group up to and including murder of members of the target group.⁹⁰ Within his *Axis Rule* Lemkin describes genocide as occurring in eight fields of human society: political, social, cultural, economic, biological, physical, religious, and moral.⁹¹ The political field means that “local institutions of self-government [are] destroyed and a[nother group’s] pattern of administration is imposed”;⁹² social destruction includes “removing” the intelligentsia of a target

⁸⁸ Lieberman, “‘Ethnic Cleansing’ Versus Genocide?” 45.

⁸⁹ Raphaël Lemkin, “Genocide as a Crime Under International Law,” *The American Journal of International Law* 41, no. 1 (January 1947): 145–51.

⁹⁰ In Lemkin’s words, genocide is “the destruction of one national pattern” so that the imposition of the other’s “national pattern” can be instituted in its place. See Raphaël Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944), 79-80.

⁹¹ Lemkin, *Axis Rule*, 82-90. The book was published in 1944, but Lemkin coined the term a year earlier because of issues with the publisher. See A. Dirk Moses, “Raphael Lemkin, Culture, and the Concept of Genocide,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 19–41.

⁹² Lemkin, *Axis*), 82.

population;⁹³ cultural includes the destruction or regulation of theatres, artworks, and other symbols of an ethnic, racial or national group;⁹⁴ economic would be akin to the Nazi practice of preventing Jews from owning businesses or destroying the livelihood on which a group depends for its survival;⁹⁵ biological entails “depopulation” and affects things like the birth rate of a group and from which the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide derived the “forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” concept;⁹⁶ physical destruction is most often mass killing, but also includes rationing food to starvation levels and “endangering health”;⁹⁷ the religious field is interfering with the group’s religious practices such as occurred in the NDH with the creation of the “Croatian Eastern Orthodox Church”;⁹⁸ while moral entails ensuring that “the moral energy of the group should be concentrated upon base instincts and should be diverted from moral and national thinking.”⁹⁹ In other words, killing is only one of several components. Lemkin’s seven areas of destruction provide for a more thorough and robust definition of genocide than what has been offered by the 1948 Genocide Convention on which many genocide scholars base their studies.¹⁰⁰ Here I follow Bloxham’s lead. In showing the genocidal nature of the genocide of Ottoman Armenians in 1915, Bloxham writes

It may be said categorically that the killing [of Armenians] did constitute a genocide – every aspect of the United Nations’ definition of the crime is

⁹³ Lemkin, *Axis Rule*, 83.

⁹⁴ Lemkin, *Axis Rule*, 84-85. See the example in which the Nazis prevented the operation of cabarets and vaudeville houses in Serbia, p. 595-596.

⁹⁵ Lemkin, *Axis Rule*, 85-86.

⁹⁶ Lemkin, *Axis Rule*, 86-87. Moses, “Raphael Lemkin, Culture, and the Concept of Genocide,” 38. The convention can be accessed here “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” (UN General Assembly, December 9, 1948), https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf while the section on transferring children from one group to another can be found in Article II(e).

⁹⁷ Lemkin, *Axis Rule*, 87-89.

⁹⁸ Lemkin, *Axis Rule*, 89. Lemkin included the NDH genocide against Serbs within the book as one example of genocide. On the inclusion of the “Croatian Eastern Orthodox Church,” see p. 617-620.

⁹⁹ Lemkin, *Axis Rule*, 89-90.

¹⁰⁰ For the legal side of genocide, see the classic William A. Schabas, *Genocide in International Law: The Crime of Crimes* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

applicable – but recognizing that fact should be a by-product of the historian’s work, not its ultimate aim or underpinning.

In other words, I am less interested as a historian in the legal definition of the term genocide than I am in understanding the processes by and through which the perpetrators acted. For Lemkin, and for the purposes of this thesis, murder is not the only component which entails genocide since “mass murder does not convey the specific losses to civilisation in the form of the cultural contributions which can be made only by groups of people united through national, racial or cultural characteristics.”¹⁰¹ Thus, I use Lemkin’s understanding and definition of genocide which has culture as a foundational principle: “the destruction of cultural symbols is genocide.”¹⁰² Similarly, Lemkin’s definition of genocide includes the process of “ethnic cleansing” on top of the other elements designed to bring about a group’s destruction. Though Lieberman notes that one aspect which separates “ethnic cleansing” from genocide is that the former is more closely related to a defined geographic space: “It is a means for forced remaking of human landscape.”¹⁰³ However, this implies that genocide occurs in a vacuum, that space in genocide does not matter as much. Yet, by employing Lemkin’s working definition of genocide and by providing examples throughout this thesis, one aspect I show is that genocide and geography are intricately linked, especially in the JVuO nation-making and political programs. Despite this, I also argue that a state apparatus is not necessary in order for genocide to unfold. To be sure, having control of a state helps to facilitate genocidal destruction, whether physical or otherwise, it is not a required component for genocide to occur. All of this is to argue that “ethnic cleansing” does not fully capture the policies that the JVuO instituted, that using that term helps to normalise the euphemistic aspects of it, that using “ethnic cleansing” situates the perpetrators’ points of view above the victims’, and that using the term genocide is methodologically more thorough, morally sound, and re-positions the perspective of the victims. Indeed, Lemkin himself was a victim of genocide and using his term helps to position the points of view of the victim over the perpetrator. Calling the actions perpetrated by the JVuO what they were – genocide – takes away the power of the perpetrating group and gives it back to the victims.

¹⁰¹ Lemkin, “Genocide as a Crime Under International Law,” 147.

¹⁰² Quoted in Moses, “Raphael Lemkin, Culture, and the Concept of Genocide,” 25.

¹⁰³ Lieberman, “‘Ethnic Cleansing’ Versus Genocide?” 44.

Regionalism

A final analytical lens through which this thesis views the JVuO is regionalism. Looking at the three units in isolation helps to pull out the nuances and specificities of those units within their respective occupation regimes, local populations, and competing regional forces.¹⁰⁴ In Serbia, for example, the Germans occupied the country and installed a puppet regime under Milan Nedić. The Partisans were strong in some parts of Serbia, but not in nearly enough places and to not as great a degree as the Ravna Gora Movement was. This equates roughly to the situation in Montenegro, the territory of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment, which was under Italian occupation as a governorship and without much or any Partisan influence between the winter of 1941 and the early spring of 1944. Thus, the Lim-Sandžak Chetniks could operate virtually unimpeded against ethnic and political enemies and wasted no time in targeting Bosnian Muslims and Albanians in early 1943 as we will see in Chapter 3. This is in contrast to the Dinara region which was roughly on the border of the Italian occupation zone and within the NDH sphere of influence. The Partisan and communist influence in Dalmatia was such that the Chetniks remained a minor actor in relation to their counterparts. Similarly, the Dalmatian Serbs were direct victims of the NDH genocide, and this greatly influenced the desire to create and remain part of an armed formation. While the Montenegrin Chetniks could operate with impunity, the Dinara Chetniks had to rely on Italian support for survival and enacted reprisal killings against suspected and accused Ustasha families. The violence perpetrated by the Dinara Chetnik Division became such that the reprisals increasingly took on offensive actions; rather than target certain villages, houses, and areas, the Dinara Chetniks began to target Croatians, and to a lesser extent Muslims, generally. Thus, this thesis follows in the steps of Hoare,¹⁰⁵ Jelić-

¹⁰⁴ In the case of France, for example, “[c]ertain regions seemed to be more susceptible to the appeal of collaboration than others.” See, Christofferson and Christofferson, *France during World War II*, 85. Similarly, Straus notes the “regional variation” of genocide which emerged in Rwanda. See, Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 53.

¹⁰⁵ Hoare, *Genocide and Resistance*.

Butić,¹⁰⁶ Redžić,¹⁰⁷ Dulić,¹⁰⁸ and others¹⁰⁹ to see the phenomena of genocide and collaboration on a regional basis. Unlike those studies, however, I compare three regions, three units, against one another to show the similarities and differences of the extent of collaboration, the approach to genocide, and the influence that occupation style had on the respective units and regions. By doing so, I hope to remain more tightly focused to the JVuO while using analogous examples, both diachronic and synchronic, to show the phenomena in different theatres and contexts.

This thesis also does not view the JVuO as a monolithic entity, unlike many other studies addressed in the Historiography section. Instead, by breaking the JVuO into its constituent parts on a regional basis, we can gather a better understanding of the organisation, its leadership, members, and supporters, and even some of how its victims understood them. Yet, by approaching the JVuO in this way also requires one to maintain the focus of the organisation as a whole so that it does not fall into the same traps as studies which neglect the macro-historical implications for the micro-historical assumptions. In other words, this thesis will adjust the lens through which it views the JVuO: in some moments it may be trained on the actors who populated the units, while in another moment it may be recalibrated to account for the grander geopolitical events occurring in wartime Europe.

Primary Sources

A broad range of archival and published primary sources are used in this thesis. The nature of the postwar Yugoslav political landscape means that archives in Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia were used, while a number of the published primary sources were provided in online databases. The Archives of Yugoslavia (Belgrade, Serbia), the Croatian State Archives (Zagreb), and the *Arhivski Odsjek za istoriju radničkog pokreta – Podgorica* (AOIRP – Podgorica, Archival Section for the Workers' Movement – Podgorica) were consulted. Online published primary sources included the website

¹⁰⁶ Jelić-Butić, *Četnici u Hrvatskoj*.

¹⁰⁷ Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War*.

¹⁰⁸ Dulić, *Utopias of Nation*.

¹⁰⁹ Karapandžić, *Gradjanski Rat u Srbiji*; Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji*; Prusin, *Serbia Under the Swastika*; Pajović, *Kontrarevolucija u Crnoj Gori*; Kranjc, *To Walk with the Devil*.

znaci.net which has since disappeared, apparently as a result of not paying for the domain name.¹¹⁰ The Military History Institute in Belgrade could not be consulted; it has become notoriously difficult to gain access as a non-Serbian national. A research trip to Stanford University was planned to make up for this: the author of *The Chetniks* and the foremost expert on the JVuO, Jozo Tomasevich's personal archive is located and accessible there, but the Covid-19 pandemic prevented the trip. However, znaci.net provided the sources available in the *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o Narodnooslobodilačkom Ratu naroda jugoslavije* (Proceedings and Data on the National Liberation War of the People of Yugoslavia), a massive, multi-volume set of primary documents from Partisan but also captured German, Italian, JVuO, and other documents. The *Zbornik* has been published virtually unimpeded since the late-1940s by the Military History Institute, while the Institute for the Workers' Movement in Dalmatia published about a dozen books on the war in Dalmatia using some of the same sources as the *Zbornik* but attuned specifically to the Dalmatian context. Memoirs supplement the primary source records to help gain insights into the mindsets and details as seen through the eyes of some of the actors themselves and are recounted in this chapter under Section 0.2 "Historiography."

The Archives of Yugoslavia (*Arhiv Jugoslavije*, AJ) provide the bulk of the sources from the perspective of the Royal Yugoslav government in exile (AJ-103) and covers the entirety of the war, from 1941 to 1945. The documents here include internal memos and telegrams to various departments within the government, as well as communications to and from Yugoslavia during the war. Similarly, the consulates in Washington (AJ-371), Ottawa, Bucharest (AJ-395) and Lisbon (AJ-380) provided some of the telegrams from those departments to London and help to give a fuller picture of the Ravna Gora Movement and the government's perspectives of them.

Montenegrin archives included the AOIRP – Podgorica. These were internal archives of the Lim-Sandžak Chetniks and include memos, orders, correspondences and similar materials. The collaboration agreements between the Montenegrin Chetniks and the Italians are included, as well as internal memos between commanders discussing how to treat the collaboration agreements. They reveal that the Lim-Sandžak

¹¹⁰ <http://znaci.net/>

Chetniks were fully aware of the negative impression that collaboration would have on the wider public and discuss the necessity of keeping these agreements secret.

The bulk of the archival sources on the Dinara Chetnik Division comes from the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb (HR-HDA). Here, they are referred to as the Dinara Chetnik Area (*oblast*), the name of the division from 1944 onwards, the change coming to make a semantic case for the region falling under the Chetniks and not the Partisans. The change, however, was little more than in name only. At any rate, these documents (HR-HDA-495) relate to the division throughout the war, as well, and show the various programs that the nationalist Serb resistance issued as a response to the existential threat posed by the NDH, as well as registers of fighters, aid programs and committees established for refugee Serbs fleeing the NDH to the Italian occupation area, as well as typical military documents (orders, memos, communications, reports, etc.). The HDA also houses the captured Ustasha documents from the armed forces (HR-HDA-487), Ministry of the Interior (HR-HDA-1549-2, I-39), and Foreign Relations (HR-HDA-1549-2, I-9) and help to give the Ustashe perspective towards the rebel Serbs from the former two funds, and the relations with Italy in the latter one. HR-HDA-306 has numerous registers of victims at the town level: here I consulted and refer to the municipalities of Split, Šibenik, Korenica, Zadar, Zagreb, and Rijeka. Though these documents contain victims killed by all sides – Partisan, Chetnik, Ustashe, Italian, German, etc. – I refer only to the victims of the Chetniks where relevant.

Besides archival sources, I also consulted the *Zbornik* volumes. I found especially helpful to be “Volume 3: The War in Montenegro” (books 2, 4, and 5), “Volume 5: The war in Croatia” (books 5, June-July 1942; 11, 1943; 24, 1944), “Volume 14: Documents of the Chetnik Movement, Draža Mihailović” (book 1, 1941-1942; book 2, 1943; book 3, September 1943 to July 1944). Related to these but published separately in Dalmatia by the Institute for the History of the Workers’ Movement, Dalmatia is book 2, January to July 1942 and book 10, January to March 1944 which were also consulted. For the most part, I consulted the captured Chetnik/JVuO documents, except in some rare cases to gain a fuller picture when I consulted Partisan, Italian or Ustasha sources. These volumes help to flesh out some of the gaps left by the archival research while also allowing me access to the Military Institute documents which I was prevented from visiting in person. There are also two volumes of published primary documents which relate to the genocide against Bosnian Muslims which I consulted to supplement insights

using victim perspectives. These are the editions by Smail Čekić¹¹¹ and by Dedijer and Miletić.¹¹²

A Note About Forgeries

One document which I use to show the connection between the idea to create a homogeneous Greater Serbia and the plan being enacted by the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment has come under scrutiny as a forgery. The most compelling argument for its forgery is presented by Lucien Karchmar, and the details related to the document are recounted in Chapters 2 and 3, but both are worth reviewing at length so that I may dispel the forgery myth later in this section. Karchmar relates that the commander of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment, Pavle Đurišić, left Montenegro in early December 1941 to meet with Mihailović. He arrived at Mihailović's headquarters in Serbia towards the end of the month. On 20 December Mihailović issued an order, as well as oral instructions, directing Đurišić to carry out a program of genocide against ethnic Croats, Muslims, and communists so that a contiguous territory populated by Serbs and JVuO supporters could be created between Serbia and Montenegro.¹¹³ Karchmar argues that the meeting between the two could not have possibly taken place, gives several reasons for this in the notes, and argues that Đurišić himself wrote the order "to which he boldly signed Mihailović's name."¹¹⁴ Instead, he claims that Đurišić met with Major Rudolf Perhinek, a Slovene in the Ravna Gora Movement, who relayed information to Đurišić.

The reasons given by Karchmar for the forgery are that a) no original copy seems to have been found; b) several accounts do not have Đurišić meeting in person and the ones that do place the meeting in different locations; c) the trek that Đurišić took could not have been completed in the timeframe offered because of several factors including distance, German occupation, and Partisan presence; d) since the meeting never took place, no oral commands could have been passed from Mihailović to Đurišić;

¹¹¹ Smail Čekić, *Genocid Nad Bošnjacima u Drugom Svjetskom Ratu: Dokumenti* (Sarajevo: MAG - Udruženje Muslimana za antigenocidne aktivnosti, 1996).

¹¹² Vladimir Dedijer and Antun Miletić, *Genocid Nad Muslimanima: Zbornik Dokumenta i Svjedočenja* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1990).

¹¹³ *Zbornik Dokumenta i Podataka o Narodnooslobodilačkom Ratu Naroda Jugoslavije*, vol. III: Borba u Crnoj Gori., knjiga 4 (Beograd: Vojnoistorijski institut, 1953), doc. 185.

¹¹⁴ Karchmar, *Draža Mihailović and the Rise of the Četnik Movement*, 397.

e) the “tone and contents of the document are far more ‘Montenegrin’ than ‘Serbian,’ and in particular seem to reflect the character of Đurišić rather than that of Mihailović”; furthermore, the document goes “on and on” about actions against Muslims and “hardly mentions the Croats” but that Mihailović would have been far more concerned with the NDH; f) the document “contains some genuine Mihailović ideas” but this “is easily explained” because Perhinek “having spent several weeks at Mihailović’s headquarters, would have been conversant with the ideas expressed by the latter and by his staff, and would have communicated them to Đurišić.”¹¹⁵

Point A of Karchmar’s hypothesis is easily explained since numerous original documents get destroyed, lost, stolen, etc. Point E rests on a primordial understanding of Montenegrin and Serbian “natures” and are little more than ethnic stereotypes, while Point F is conjecture.¹¹⁶ The only important piece of information is in the second half of Point E: Mihailović’s focus in the document on the Muslims and not the Croats. However, the document refers to Croatians (or Ustashe) alongside Muslims several times. Either Karchmar missed this detail, or he ignored it in relaying his hypothesis to help strengthen his argument. Either way, this is incorrect. Points B, C, and D are harder to explain. Memory, of course, is a being onto itself; it changes and morphs, contorts, and disturbs. It is possible that some recollections are incorrect or that, indeed, the meeting between Mihailović and Đurišić did not occur. Yet, despite Point C – the trek was too difficult given the circumstances – Karchmar still accepts as fact that Đurišić met with Perhinek at Mount Golija, about 45-kilometers south of Ivanjica. Mihailović gave his commanders the power of attorney, something which allowed for collaboration to emerge amongst much else.¹¹⁷ Perhinek was a trusted individual, attaining the rank of chief of staff of several units, including the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachments, so it makes sense that he was granted power of attorney, relayed the oral commands to Đurišić and gave him

¹¹⁵ Karchmar, *Draža Mihailović and the Rise of the Četnik Movement*, 427-430.

¹¹⁶ In fairness to Karchmar, he does say that some of his postulates are conjecture but that “all indications point to its validity.” See Karchmar, *Draža Mihailović and the Rise of the Četnik Movement*, 397.

¹¹⁷ Some of these details are discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

the fateful order.¹¹⁸ In other words, and put simply, Karchmar's argumentation rests on several weak foundations that, when prodded slightly, collapse.

Besides, all of this ignores other evidence to the contrary. While Karchmar is correct that several "first-hand" accounts cannot agree on the location, there are a number which do and place the meeting at or near Ravna Gora. However, a meeting between the two men is not necessary for the order, oral instructions, and genocidal plan to be relayed as I suggest in the paragraph prior. What I am more concerned with is the document's authenticity, namely that it came from and was written by Mihailović. Karchmar does not seem to be aware of it since his thesis did not use archival sources, relying instead on memoirs and published primary documents, but the commander of the Ozren Corps in northern Bosnia makes reference to the command.¹¹⁹ His interpretation is unmistakable: the order was designed to be interpreted in just the way that Đurišić interpreted it, as outlined in Chapter 3: as a plan for genocide against Yugoslavia's Muslim, Croatian, and other minority populations. This document follows closely the order from Mihailović, though re-worded in the commander's own words. For instance, the commander uses the word "exterminate" in relation to the "Turks" within "our Serbian lands," while "the Catholics" will be "destroyed." This will be further elaborated in Chapters 2 and 3, but for now allow this to serve as one example showing the order from Mihailović to be authentic even if not received directly from the hand – and mouth – of Mihailović himself.

Furthermore, Milan Terzić has shown that other documents exist which closely align with the order from Mihailović. Terzić notes that a document, perhaps a draft, was discovered in Albania, close to the Montenegrin border, after the Partisans had captured the Albanian unit located there.¹²⁰ Clearly, then, more than one copy of Mihailović's order of 20 December existed. Terzić goes on to show how the Albanian document closely aligns with the document referenced in the *Zbornik* documents and on which this thesis relies. Though wording differs here and there, the general thrust is the same. In a similar

¹¹⁸ Pajović calls Perhinek an "envoy" (*izlasnik*) of the Supreme Staff. Pajović, *Kontrarevolucija u Crnoj Gori*, 275. Later, (p. 359, 361), Pajović calls him a "delegate." This essentially makes Perhinek an individual entrusted with several tasks, seemingly going where he is most needed.

¹¹⁹ HR-HDA-495, 127-3.

¹²⁰ Milan Terzić, "Falsifikat Ili Ne? Instrukcije Draža Mihailovića Od 20. Decembra 1941. Djordje Lašića i Pavlu Djurišiću," *Vojnoistorijski Glasnik* 1–2 (2004): 209–14.

vein, the Chetnik Youth Conference of Montenegro, Boka and Sandžak was held on 2 December 1942.¹²¹ Đurišić was present, as was Mihailović's representative, Zaharije Ostojić. The concluding program of the Chetnik Youth Conference follows quite closely along the same lines as both the Albanian document that Terzić references, the Bosnian documents I cited, and the order of 20 December 1941. All of this is to say that not only does more than one document exist, but it is referred to by other Chetnik units throughout Yugoslavia, is adopted and re-articulated by other Chetnik organs, and seems to have only been interpreted in one, genocidal way. As such, I feel more than confident in the order of 20 December 1941 standing as the crux of one of this thesis' main arguments that the JVuO not only had a plan for genocide but that its units actively carried it out. More of this will be detailed in the body chapters.

Chapter Outline and Argumentation

Chapter 1 begins by defining the parameters of guerrilla war as it relates to the JVuO. This chapter charts the history of guerrilla warfare in the Balkans, beginning first with the phenomenon of *hajdukovanje*, variably defined as brigandage, banditry, freedom fighting, or social banditry. I see the development of guerrilla warfare in the Balkans, specifically in the Serbian context, as aligning with the rise and advent of modernity in the Kingdom of Serbia. As the state modernised its warfare strategies and practices, guerrilla warfare was impacted and absorbed by the state, thus influencing the actors who operated as guerrillas – *hadjuks* – in the region. As a result of the state's involvement, Chapter 1 introduces the term *četovanje*, or Chetnik warfare, which was the style of guerrilla war conducted by the JVuO's Chetnik detachments, represented in this thesis by the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachments (Chapter 3) and the Dinara Chetnik Division (Chapter 4). It was this style of guerrilla warfare that the JVuO adopted and used throughout the 1941 to 1945 period. This chapter also shows the various strains of Chetnik warfare through the 20th-century leading up to the Second World War in Yugoslavia.

¹²¹ A similar program was concluded by the Chetnik Youth Conference of Montenegro, Boka and Sandžak on 2 December 1942 at which Đurišić was present, along with Major Zaharije Ostojić. See *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 200.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are case studies. Chapter 2 outlines the ideological program of the Ravna Gora Movement, the first and main segment of the JVuO. Led by Dragoljub “Draža” Mihailović, the Ravna Gora Movement was influenced by political actors who attempted to consolidate control of the JVuO through political programs and by influencing Mihailović. Chapter 2 shows how the genocidal program of the JVuO came about and how it was implemented on the ground. This breaks with existing scholarship by arguing that the JVuO was a political entity from the start, something which other scholars either downplay or ignore. Instead, I show how the JVuO was not just a military organisation but a political one as well. The JVuO articulated a plan of destruction of non-Serbian and non-JVuO supporting peoples, mainly ethnic Muslims and Croats, but also communists, their supporters, and those suspected or accused of being one of the latter. Chapter 3 focuses on the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment in Montenegro to show how both collaboration and genocide came about. Perhaps more than any other unit, the Lim-Sandžak Chetniks implemented the genocidal program established by the Ravna Gora Movement. Brokering deals with the Italian occupation authorities helped to facilitate the genocide that the Lim-Sandžak Chetniks perpetrated, essentially giving them free reign throughout their areas of Montenegro. Similarly, Chapter 4 focuses on the Dinara Chetnik Division in the Dalmatia-Hercegovina-Lika border area. Where the Lim-Sandžak Chetniks established themselves as a professional army who perpetrated genocide, the Dinara Chetniks first formed as defence units, a result of the NDH genocide against Serbs in those areas. The Dinara Chetniks, without much military training and led and populated by civilians, represent a closer relationship to *četovanje* than the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment does. However, both units land far more firmly on the guerrilla side of the spectrum than the Ravna Gora Movement does.

This is summarised in Chapter 5. Employing a synthetic analysis which compares the three units alongside one another, this chapter argues that there are several elements which came to represent the JVuO more generally, while dispelling some of the myths which have arisen about what the JVuO represents. Namely, I argue that the JVuO represents Serbian chauvinism, genocidal policies and actions, upholding patriarchal structures, and the exclusion of ethnic minorities, as well as those who do not adhere to the JVuO ideology, namely communists, fascists, and others. In doing so, this chapter also argues that some of the misconceptions about the JVuO, such as their fascist qualities, are incorrect at best and misleading at worst. Where the case studies

look at the division and detachment level, Chapter 5 looks at the detachments in comparison to better understand the nuances present within each of the three units to arrive at conclusions for the JVuO as a whole.

Chapter 1. “For the honourable cross and golden freedom:”¹²² Guerrilla Warfare Goes Modern

The nature of the present study, guerrilla resistance in Second World War Yugoslavia, necessitates understanding the history of resistance, collaboration, and guerrilla warfare in the Balkans generally, and the Yugoslav territories specifically. As a state, Yugoslavia incorporated lands previously belonging to the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires. The histories of resistance, collaboration, and guerrilla warfare in these two territories differed somewhat, so it is necessary to understand what these differences are, how and why they came about, and to see where each of these topics were similar. This chapter covers the influences of and reasons for resistance, collaboration and guerrilla warfare, and examines the ways in which such warfare was conducted. There are various types of guerrilla warfare, but the two most prevalent in the Balkans have been *hajdukovanje*, the act of being a *hajduk* or brigand-rebel, and *četovanje*, the act of being a *četa*, a member of a militarised unit. Though the two are related there are some important and distinct differences between them. This chapter discusses these differences and similarities to define what *četovanje* is and how it is separate from other types of guerrilla warfare. I argue that modernity and modernisation in Serbia, specifically, influenced the emergence of *četovanje*. Some *hajduks* became *četniks* in the early 20th-century, and it was through the influence of the state that the transition from *hajdukovanje* to *četovanje* occurred. Understanding this will help to better understand the JVuO, and not only the type of guerrilla warfare it waged but also *why* it waged *četovanje*, as opposed to other types of guerrilla warfare, as well as to arrive at a better appreciation for the culture which the three units under investigation were steeped in. Thus, there are several factors which explain the successes and failures of irregular warfare in the Balkans, and a number of these will be studied in turn.

¹²² This translates as *Za krst časni i slobodu zlatu*, a saying associated with both the *hajduk* epics and the various Chetnik/*četnik* associations and organisations.

Geography

Geography has long been a part of the study of civil, interstate, and intrastate conflict.¹²³ The Balkan peninsula is forested, extremely rocky, and mountainous, all factors which influence the opportunity for warfare¹²⁴ and may partially explain why insurgency has been so successful in the region.¹²⁵ The rugged landscape is bounded by the Adriatic and Black Seas. The exact extent to which the peninsula reaches is of considerable debate. For the purposes of this study, the Balkans includes territories that we now call the former Yugoslav states (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Kosovo), as well as Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, but also at the time of the Second World War, the extent of Italy on the northern Adriatic (Trieste and Fiume). However, this definition will likely differ from other definitions of the same term.¹²⁶

The mountain ranges of importance are the Dinaric which cradle the inland areas of the Adriatic, demarcating the coast from the littoral before disappearing into the Julians in the north. In the south, the Dinaric range merges into the Prokletije (Accursed) Mountains and into Albania. Like other mountainous areas, Dinara Mountain, roughly in the centre of the Dalmatian littoral, provides good defensible cover and vantage points in all directions. The same could be said for Durmitor Mountain in Montenegro. Ravna Gora mountain, for its part, sits near the Drina River and makes up the eastern mountainous spine which dominates most of the west-central Balkans. Zlatibor and

¹²³ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (February 2003): 75–90, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055403000534>; Nils B. Weidmann, "Geography as Motivation and Opportunity: Group Concentration and Ethnic Conflict," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 4 (August 2009): 526–43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002709336456>; Halvard Buhaug, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Jan Ketil Rød, "Disaggregating Ethnic Conflict: A Dyadic Model of Exclusion Theory," *International Organization* 62, no. 3 (2008): 531–51; Halvard Buhaug and Jan Ketil Rød, "Local Determinants of African Civil Wars, 1970-2001," *Political Geography* 25, no. 3 (2006): 315–35.

¹²⁴ Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War."

¹²⁵ Marion I. Newbiggin, *Geographical Aspects of Balkan Problems in Their Relation to the Great European War* (London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1915); Lionel W. Lyde and A.F. Mockler-Ferryman, *A Military Geography of the Balkan Peninsula* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1905).

¹²⁶ For other definitions of the Balkans, as geographic but also cultural, political, and social boundaries see Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Rudnik in Serbia, and Zelengora and Majevisa in Bosnia, make up the other mountains around which guerrilla insurgencies operated throughout history.

These ranges and mountaintops all reflect the areas of resistance, not only during the Second World War but throughout Balkan, Yugoslav and, especially, Serbian history. Each of these ranges and forests represent some of the most significant strongholds of bandits, brigands, revolutionaries and rebels which resisted any number of the Ottoman, Venetian, or Habsburg Empires, sometimes at the same time. Mihailović himself came from the Šumadija region of Serbia, the area famous for birthing both Karađorđe Petrović and Miloš Obrenović in the 19th-century, both of whom ruled Serbia as autonomous princes under Ottoman sovereignty.¹²⁷ Šumadija is famous for its woodlands and forests, as well as its tradition of resisting foreign rule as a result of these three leaders. Similarly, it was in Montenegro that the legend of the tiny country's unconquerability was born: the legend tells of Montenegro's resistance to the Ottomans and the incorrect conclusion that it was never conquered by the empire. Dalmatia had its fair share of resisters, namely Stojan Janković and Vuk Mandušić amongst others.¹²⁸ Culturally, Šumadija, Montenegro and Dinara, represent the three centres of Balkan resistance.

As it relates to the Second World War, the peak of Dinara Mountain acted as the base for the Dinara Chetnik Division and it was around this mountain and the regions of Dalmatia, Bosnia, Hercegovina and Lika that the division gained their support. Durmitor Mountain acted as the main base for the JVuO when Mihailović joined Pavle Đurišić and the Montenegrin Chetniks there in 1942. As the name suggests, the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment operated around the areas of the Lim River and into the Sandžak of Novi Pazar, but also operated as far west as Nevesinje and Trebinje for some actions. Really, though, the areas of Berane and Kolašin in the eastern end of Montenegro acted

¹²⁷ For more on Karađorđe, see Vladimir Stojancevic, "Karadjordje and Serbia in His Time," in *The First Serbian Uprising, 1804-1813*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich, trans. Roger V. Paxton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982). And for an sentimental contemporary view of Miloš, see Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, *Miloš Obrenović Knjaz Srbije ili Gradja za Srpsku Istoriju Našega Vremena* (Budim, Hungary: Slaveno-srbska pečatnja Kraljevskago vseučilišta vengerskago, 1828), <http://digital.bms.rs/ebiblioteka/pageFlip/reader/index.php?type=publications&id=1128&m=2#page/4/mode/2up>.

¹²⁸ Boško Desnica, *Stojan Janković I Uskočka Dalmacija*, ed. Milodrag Djurić and Gordana B. Todorović (Belgrade: Mala Biblioteka, Srpske Književne Zadruge, 1991).

as the main base for the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment, whereas Novi Pazar, Peć and Nova Varoš represent their farthest eastward extension. In other words, they operated directly within the Accursed Mountains, rarely extending outside of the range and into the valleys. The main JVuO headquarters was at Durmitor from June 1942 until just before “Case Black” (*Fall Schwarz*, Fifth Enemy Offensive/*Peta neprijateljska ofensiva/ofanziva*) in May 1943, and it was from around the mountain range that the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment gained its support. Zlatibor and Rudnik in Serbia represent the areas from which Mihailović drew his support while the two Bosnian Zelengora and Majevisa areas were crucial in the final months of JVuO’s existence. It was Zelengora that saw the last Chetnik-Partisan battle, while it was at Majevisa that the fatal decision was made by some JVuO officers and supporters, namely Đurišić and Dragiša Vasić, to leave for the Ljubljana Gap in 1945.

The Culture of Resistance, Invented and Mobilizable

The histories of guerrilla warfare and resistance in the Balkans were preserved in the oral poems and stories, most notably the epics, which were passed down from generation to generation. At least from the early modern period, bards and poets shared the stories of past glories, defeats on the battlefield and the events that allegedly occurred in them. This is how the histories of important events, such as the stories of Miloš Obilić, Kralj Lazar, Vuk Branković and the other actors in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, came to be engrained in the Serb national consciousness through oral epics. However, only in the 19th-century did the epics come to be widely read in the Balkans and beyond. In the Serbian example, Vuk Karadžić recorded them into written form, and it is from his accounts that the stories of the resistance to the Ottoman Empire was preserved, most especially the 1804 First Serbian Uprising.¹²⁹ Similarly, in Montenegro the prince-poet-bishop Petar Petrović-Njegoš wrote and disseminated stories of heroic Montenegrin resistance. His most famous work is the play *Gorski vijenac* (The Mountain Wreath) and tells the story of Orthodox Montenegrin elites discussing how to deal with Muslim converts who the elites see as apostates and traitors to the Serb nation.¹³⁰ In the

¹²⁹ For the poem about the First Serbian Uprising, see Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, “Početak Bunje Protiv Dahija,” Narodna Biblioteka Srbija, <https://www.nb.rs/collections/index.php?id=1913>.

¹³⁰ The poem can be read at the following: Petar Petrović-Njegoš, *Gorski vijenac*, <http://www.njegos.org/petrovics/gvijenac.htm>.

end, it is decided that the Muslims should be killed to atone for their sin of conversion from the one true (Orthodox) God.¹³¹ Though there is no historical record that such an event occurred, the belief in its historical accuracy has been preserved to modern times, even influencing actors in the Yugoslav wars of succession in the 1990s.¹³² In other words, the epics came to be encoded in the nationalist imaginary in the 19th-century, politicised throughout that century and into the 20th and influences events even up to the present.¹³³ This phenomenon is what Ranger and Hobsbawm called an “invented tradition.”¹³⁴

Dalmatia provides an interesting variation. While the Serbia (proper) examples tie a more grassroots resistance together, and Montenegro focuses mostly on long-standing elite families, Dalmatian epics include *hajduks*, the bandit-revolutionaries which

¹³¹ Aleksandar Pavlović, “Naming/Taming the Enemy: Balkan Oral Tradition and the Formation of ‘the Turk’ as the Political Enemy,” in *Us and Them: Symbolic Divisions in Western Balkan Societies*, ed. Predrag Cvetičanin and Ivana Spasić (Belgrade: The Centre for Empirical Cultural Studies of South-East Europe, 2013), 29-34. Đorđe Stefanovic, “Seeing the Albanians Through Serbian Eyes: The Inventors of the Tradition of Intolerance and Their Critics, 1804-1939,” *European History Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (July 1, 2005), doi:10.1177/0265691405054219, 469.

¹³² Andrew B. Wachtel, “How to Use a Classic: Petar Petrović Njegoš in the Twentieth Century,” in *Ideologies and national identities: The case of twentieth-century southeastern Europe*, ed. John R. Lampe and Mark Mazower (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), p. 145. Srdja Pavlović argues that a historical event’s truth matters far less than how it was interpreted: Srdja Pavlović, *Balkan Anschluss: The Annexation of Montenegro and the Creation of the Common South Slavic State* (Baltimore, MD: Purdue University Press, 2008), 8-10. The phenomenon of believing in something for its ethnic value is what André Gerolymatos called “ethnic truth,” something which exists at a higher plane of understanding, such as at the ethno-nationalist level. See André Gerolymatos, *The Balkan Wars: Myth, Reality, and the Eternal Conflict* (Montreal: Stoddart Publishing, 2001), 90-95.

¹³³ For the political codification of Vuk’s work, see Aleksandar Pavlović and Srdjan Atanasovski, “From Myth to Territory: Vuk Karadžić, Kosovo Epics and the Role of Nineteenth-Century Intellectuals in Establishing National Narratives,” *Hungarian Historical Review* 5, no. 2 (2016): 357–76 and Biljana Markovic, “The Popular Image of Hajduks in Serbia,” (MA Thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2014), especially Chapter 2.

¹³⁴ My master’s thesis argued that the creation of the Serbian warrior was an invented tradition. See Stevan Bozanic, “Masculinity and Mobilised Folklore: The Image of the Hajduk in the Creation of the Modern Serbian Warrior” (Master’s Thesis, Victoria, British Columbia, University of Victoria, 2017). Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, 21st ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). In developing this idea for my master’s thesis, I especially found the chapters by David Cannadine (“The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the ‘Invention of Tradition,’ c. 1820-1977”), Hobsbawm (“Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914”), and Hugh Trevor-Roper (“The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland”) helpful.

Hobsbawm called “social bandits.”¹³⁵ To be sure, the Serbian and Montenegrin (and other Balkan peoples’) stories also include *hajduks* but the Dalmatian stories seem to feature *only hajduks* and their seafaring brethren, the *uskoks*.¹³⁶ After all, it was in Dalmatia that the Venetian, Habsburg, and Ottoman empires met, and it was in Dalmatia that one could be any combination of border guard, frontiersman, and/or something resembling a mercenary.¹³⁷ While the epics glorify and memorialise the freedom-loving aspects of the *hajduks*, *uskoks* and other extralegal actors, there certainly were real historical people who took part in various bands. Into the modern period, it was the epics which motivated many rebels, resisters, and extralegal actors into *hajdukovanje*, or the practice of being a *hajduk*, and resisting the Ottoman and, later, Habsburg Empires. However, the historical record does not provide as clear-cut of a distinction between rebel and revolutionary on the one hand and brigand and bandit on the other as the epics would have one believe. Nor do the epics and historical record necessarily always align.

Resisters and Rebels

This is the case for Petar Mrkonjić, for example. Mrkonjić was born in Imotski, in the current area of Dalmatia-Hercegovina and took part in the Cretan War (1645-1669) as a member of the Venetian army. In between battles, he would pillage nearby villages and bring with him the heads of Ottoman soldiers he had taken as prizes, proof of his

¹³⁵ See both *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 3rd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972) and Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Abacus, 2001).

¹³⁶ For more on the *uskoks*, see Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015). For more on the *hajduks*, see Wendy Bracewell, “The Proud Name of the Hajduks’: Bandits as Ambiguous Heroes in Balkan Politics and Culture,” in *Yugoslavia and its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*, ed. Norman M. Naimark and Holly Case (Boston, MA, United States: Stanford University Press, 2003) and Bozanich, “Invented Warriors,” 57–70. On the phenomenon more generally, see Hobsbawm, *Bandits* and *Primitive Rebels*.

¹³⁷ For an example from Ragusa during the latter half of the 17th-century, see Vesna Miović-Perić, “Brigandage on the Ragusan Frontier during the Morean War (1684-1699),” *Dubrovnik Annals* 3 (1999): 41–54.

military prowess.¹³⁸ His life and exploits are well documented in the epics, yet there is no historical record that Petar Mrkonjić existed during the Cretan Wars.¹³⁹

Over two centuries later, Petar Mrkonjić re-appeared during the Great Eastern Crisis on the battlefields of Hercegovina, 1875-1877. Mrkonjić studied irregular warfare but approached the practice as a soldier rather than as an irregular or a *hajduk*, undoubtedly influenced by his inability to understand “unorganised peasant crowds.”¹⁴⁰ In Bosnia-Hercegovina, he led insurgents in the fight against the Ottomans this time as an ethnic Serb.¹⁴¹ Along with his legend spread the guerrilla movement across the Military Frontier (*Krajina*) and into parts of Croatia, Dalmatia and throughout Bosnia-Hercegovina.¹⁴² While the Venetian Petar Mrkonjić is likely fictional, the Mrkonjić of Bosnia-Hercegovina was the *nom de guerre* of Petar Karađorđević, the later King Peter I of Serbia.¹⁴³ Petar’s role in the Great Eastern Crisis needs to be better explored, even if some attempts have been made.¹⁴⁴ Though the two Petar Mrkonjićs represent literary fiction materialising into reality, the historical record of *hajduks* and *uskoks* remains scattered.

There are only a handful of accounts in English exploring *hajduks* and *uskoks* as historical actors. Two important works are by Karen Barkey and Wendy Bracewell.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁸ Andrija Kačić-Miošić, “Slici Pisma Od Vitezova Države Imoteske,” in *Razgovor Ugodni Naroda Slovinskoga* (Venice: Štamparija Adolfa Cezara, 1801), 224–26, <http://digital.bms.rs/ebiblioteka/pageFlip/reader/index.php?type=publications&id=3755&m=2#page/235/mode/1up>. For more activities from this time period and region, see Miović-Perić, “Brigandage on the Ragusan Frontier during the Morean War.”

¹³⁹ Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, *Srpske Narodne Pjesme*, vol. 3 (Beograd: Prosveta, 1953), 613-614.

¹⁴⁰ Milorad Ekmečić, *Ustanak u Bosni, 1875-1878* (Sarajevo: Izdavačko preduzeće “Veselin Masleša,” 1960), 149-150.

¹⁴¹ Mile Bjelajac, “King Petar I Karadjordjević,” in *Serbs and Their Leaders in the Twentieth Century.*, ed. Aleksandar Pavković and Peter Radan (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 95–112: here, 96-97.

¹⁴² Ekmečić, *Ustanak u Bosni*, 40 and 50.

¹⁴³ Petar also went by other names: Petrović, Mrkonja, Senić, Sonino, Zorić, Metković and Mažuranić. See Ekmečić, *Ustanak u Bosni*, 147.

¹⁴⁴ The most thorough account of the Great Eastern Crisis in Bosnia remains Ekmečić, *Ustanak u Bosni*. Meanwhile, the most thorough account of Petar’s role in the crisis remains, however incomplete, Dragoljub R. Živojinović, *Kralj Petar I Karadjordjević*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Beograd: Beogradski izdavačko-grafički zavod, 1988), 107-178.

¹⁴⁵ Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994) and Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy*,

Barkey's history, however, deals with Anatolia rather than the Balkans while Bracewell looks at the *uskoks*, yet both provide good parallels to similar phenomena. Ivo Žanić, for his part, has looked at the impact that the *hajduk* legends had on later actors,¹⁴⁶ while my own master's thesis traces the cultural development of Serbian warriors from *hajduks* to *četniks* and eventually to paramilitaries who perpetrated genocide in Srebrenica, Višegrad and elsewhere in the 1990s.¹⁴⁷ In other words, studying *hajduks* as historical actors remains a fragmented puzzle that has yet to be fully put together. Yet we can still conclude the what, how, and even why of *hajduks'* actions based on these handful of works.

Anatolian bandits, for example, often worked in conjunction with the state if the price was right. As hired hands, bandits crushed rebellions, taxed the citizenry (often exacting a higher price than asked for by the state to pad their own pockets), and protected certain villages from attacks by others.¹⁴⁸ Bandits often targeted peasant villages because they were relatively easy prey.¹⁴⁹ Bands also orchestrated attacks so that they could negotiate a type of premodern protection racket.¹⁵⁰ They would lead rebellions and uprisings, but more often only strikes, against the state.¹⁵¹ Co-opting the rebellions was important for the Ottoman Empire to maintain peace throughout the 17th-century and the state would work to regain the support of the bandits. Much of the 17th and even the 18th and 19th-centuries revolved around the cyclical nature of rebellion and

Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015).

¹⁴⁶ Ivo Žanić, *Flag on the Mountain: A Political Anthropology of War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1990-1995*, trans. Celia Hawkesworth and Graham McMaster (London: Saqi, 2007).

¹⁴⁷ Bozanich, "Masculinity and Mobilised Folklore." The thesis was later turned into an article. See Bozanich, "Invented Warriors: The Legacy of the Invented Serbian Hajduk Tradition."

¹⁴⁸ Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, 145.

¹⁴⁹ Dennis N. Skiotis, "From Bandit to Pasha: First Steps in the Rise to Power of Ali of Tepelen, 1750–1784," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2, no. 03 (July 1971), doi:10.1017/s0020743800001112: 232. See Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj*, 11-12.

¹⁵⁰ Kelly Hignett, "Co-Option or Criminalisation? The State, Border Communities and Crime in Early Modern Europe," *Global Crime* 9, no. 1-2 (February 2008), doi:10.1080/17440570701862736: 38.

¹⁵¹ Skiotis, "From Bandit to Pasha," 232.

co-optation by the state.¹⁵² Indeed, both the Ottoman state and the bandits were “brought together in a shared culture of violence that was central to Ottoman strategies of governance.”¹⁵³ While the Habsburg and Venetian Empires maintained peace by forging deals between peasants and aristocrats, the Ottomans prevented such relationships from materialising but both examples involved increasing centralisation by the state.¹⁵⁴

Even later, more modern examples show the fraught relations between bands and the peasantry and bands and the state. The First Serbian Uprising, 1804-1813, began as a resistance against the janissary leaders, the *dahijas*, in the Belgrade *pashalik* (district) and not a rebellion against the Ottoman Empire. Only over time did the resistance become a rebellion. The *dahijas* began to treat the Belgrade *pashalik* as their own personal fiefdoms: they administered arbitrary punishments on the peasantry and repealed reforms that were granted in the previous century which allowed the Christian Serbs to create militias, own arms, and to elect village elders and *knezes* (district heads) to collect taxes and to act as representatives to the Ottoman authorities.¹⁵⁵ From the janissaries' perspective, they took the reforms as a direct challenge to their rule.¹⁵⁶ By 1801 the *dahijas* imposed harsh taxes on the sale and trade of livestock, the livelihood of the Orthodox population, and had other taxes doubled. The *dahija* had people “thrown into prison or murdered” for the “smallest infraction,” while they attacked Serbian men “indiscriminately,” and raped women.¹⁵⁷ Direct resistance began in 1804 when the *dahijas* slaughtered 72 *knezes* as a measure to prevent Serbian insurrection. Instead, the opposite happened or, as the epic chronicle of the time put it, “the folk sprang up like grass from the ground,” took up arms and fled into the hills to join *hajduk* bands.¹⁵⁸ They

¹⁵² The state also used Albanian bands to exploit the differences amongst them and to keep them divided. See Skiotis, “From Bandit to Pasha,” 234. Similarly, *uskoks* were employed by the state to help defend shipping and trade routes. See Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj*, 36.

¹⁵³ Tolga U. Esmer, “Economies of Violence, Banditry and Governance in the Ottoman Empire around 1800,” *Past and Present* 224, no. August 2014 (n.d.): 163–99, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1093/pastj/gtu013>, 168.

¹⁵⁴ Bozanich, “Masculinity and Mobilised Folklore,” 5-6.

¹⁵⁵ Robert Zens, “Pasvanoglu Osman Pasa and the Pasalik of Belgrade, 1791-1807,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 8, no. 1–2 (2002): 89–104, 100.

¹⁵⁶ Zens, “Pasvanoglu Osman Pasa and the Pasalik of Belgrade,” 94-95.

¹⁵⁷ Stojancevic, “Karadjordje and Serbia in His Time,” 29.

¹⁵⁸ Vuk, “The Beginning of the Revolt Against the *Dahis*.”

gained the full support of Sultan Selim III (r.: 1789-1807) and resisted the rebellious *dahijas*. The *hajduk* guerrilla warfare brought quick and decisive victories for the insurrectionists.¹⁵⁹ The insurgents burned inns and the residences of Ottoman elites, and killed the *dahijas*' representatives.¹⁶⁰ Soon, however, the insurgents would lose the support of the Sublime Porte as they continued to gain momentum and territory. Areas around Belgrade in the north to Novi Pazar in the south were in Serbian hands, with only the Belgrade *pashalik* still under *dahija* control. The Serb leadership began to develop greater aspirations as they continued to win on the battlefield.¹⁶¹ Similarly, with the failure of several peace negotiations, the Porte lost faith in the Serbs' motives. The first uprising can effectively be divided into two phases: first, resistance to the *dahijas* as loyal subjects of the Sultan who were "seeking restoration of limited self-government and of the privileges that had been given them in the 1790s," and the second as open rebellion against the empire.¹⁶²

Taking part throughout these events were *hajduks*, not just the people who joined bands in response to *dahija* oppression but also those whose ways of making a living resembled those of Anatolian resisters, *uskok* pirates, and Petar Mrkonjić. Đorđe Petrović, for example, was wanted for killing his father sometime in the late-18th-century.¹⁶³ The Petrovići were originally from Montenegro, part of the Vasojević clan,¹⁶⁴ a detail which takes on significant cultural importance for the Montenegrin Chetniks between 1941 and 1945. He settled in Topola located in the forested and well-protected

¹⁵⁹ Wayne S. Vucinich, "Introductory Remarks: Genesis and Essence of the First Serbian Uprising," in *The First Serbian Uprising, 1804-1813*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.

¹⁶⁰ Stojancevic, "Karadjordje and Serbia in His Time," 31.

¹⁶¹ Roger Paxton, "Nationalism and Revolution: A Reexamination of the Origins of the First Serbian Insurrection 1804- 1807," *East European Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1972): 355.

¹⁶² Vucinich, "Introductory Remarks," 4. Paxton, "Nationalism and Revolution," 345.

¹⁶³ Duncan Wilson, *The Life and Times of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, 1787-1864: Literacy, Literature, and National Independence in Serbia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 38. Even this detail is debated and differs between historical interpretations and what has been presented in the epics. For example, the Montenegrin variant of the poem "The Beginning of the Revolt Against the *Dahije*" mentions that Karađorđe killed his father, while the more common and widespread Serbian version does not. Meanwhile, Karađorđe's contemporaries could not agree either whether he actually killed his father or whether that detail was a literary flair added after the fact. Similarly, accounts differ over whether it was his father or step-father who was killed. For this discussion, see Radoš Ljušić, *Vožd Karadjordje*, vol. 1 (Beograd: Udruženje za Srpsku povjesnicu, 2000), 25-30.

¹⁶⁴ Ljušić, *Vožd Karadjordje*, 18.

Šumadija, and supplemented his income by pig trading, a practice common amongst Orthodox subjects in the Balkans. He developed ties to Austria as a result of his business and joined the “rural middle class,” a “thin stratum” of merchants and *knezes*.¹⁶⁵ Petrović joined the Serbian *Freikorps* (*Serbisches Freikorps*) of the Habsburg army and fought against the Ottoman Empire in the Habsburg-Ottoman War of 1788-1791.¹⁶⁶ Between his experiences as a *hajduk* and as a member of the *Freikorps*, a unit notorious for its members becoming radical nationalists, Karađorđe learned both regular and irregular warfare.¹⁶⁷ He soon earned the nickname “Black” Đorđe, or Karađorđe. During the First Serbian Uprising, Karađorđe was voted as the leader of the insurgents and is often portrayed as the first leader of modern Serbia. In other words, the origins of the modern Serbian state can be traced to a *hajduk*. It was from this connection that some of the *hajduks* came to be part of the first Serbian armies, first as rebels and resisters, then later as auxiliary and professional soldiers, while others remained outside state control and continued banditry.¹⁶⁸

Even so, there were tensions between the professional officer and soldier classes and the members of the irregular units. Some of these tensions can be explained by the existing conflicts of interest between the Serbs within the Ottoman Empire and the *prečani*, that is those Serbs who live(d) outside of Serbia-proper’s borders and most especially the Habsburg Serbs. The Habsburg Serbs tended to be better educated, had more readily available access to Central and Western European culture, and were influenced by ideas of German and Italian nationalisms, especially in the 19th-century. The Serbs on the other side of the border, in contrast, tended to be less educated, more illiterate, and more concerned with local issues rather than national or

¹⁶⁵ Vucinich, “Introductory Remarks,” 7.

¹⁶⁶ Ljušić, *Vožd Karadjordje*, 31.

¹⁶⁷ Gale Stokes, “Serbian Military Doctrine and the Crisis of 1875-78,” in *Insurrections, Wars, and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870s*, ed. Bela Kiraly and Gale Stokes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 261–75, 262. Alexey Timofeev, “Serbian Chetniks: Traditions of Irregular Warfare,” in *The Wars of Yesterday: The Balkan Wars and the Emergence of Modern Military Conflict, 1912-1913*, ed. Katrin Boeckh and Sabine Rutar, eBook (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018). For the nationalising processes in the *Freikorps* in the German example, see Ofri Ilany, “Herr Zebaoth and the German Nation: Bible and Nationalism in the Anti-Napoleonic Wars,” *Global Intellectual History* 5, no. 1 (2020): 104–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23801883.2019.1586761>, 112-113.

¹⁶⁸ Social mobility was a feature throughout the Ottoman Empire and in various fields. An interesting example is Mehmed Ali Pasha of Egypt. See Khaled Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali: From Ottoman Governor to Ruler of Egypt* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009).

global ones. While the Habsburg Serbs tended to come from cities, the Ottoman Serbs tended to dwell in villages. As Pavlowitch notes, Balkan nationalisms were “first and foremost an urban phenomenon.”¹⁶⁹ It is little surprise, then, that the Habsburg Serbs, such as Dositej Obradović, and city dwelling Ottoman Serbs with regular access to the Habsburg Empire, such as Vuk Karadžić, should be the ones to bring the concept of nationalism to Ottoman Serbia. While many Habsburg Serbs saw the necessity to “free” their brethren from the “Ottoman yoke,” many Ottoman Serbs were less concerned by national and nationalising missions than with their own insular worldviews. This tension bred animosity between the two camps, with the few Ottoman Serb intellectuals seeing the Habsburg Serbs as encroaching into their intellectual and even physical domains. At any rate, it was these similar tensions which existed not just in intellectual circles, but which seeped into the militarist camps and down to the very soil that the peasants in each empire tilled.

Part of the tensions between Serb(ian) regular and irregular warriors also had to do with the nation- and state-building enterprises which would come to dominate Serbian domestic politics from the late-19th-century and into the first two decades of the 20th. Beginning first with Karađorđe’s own time, for example, *hajdukovanje* was virtually wiped out in certain areas of rebel Serbian territory by nascent Serbian armies. This earned him animosity from some *hajduk* units and rebels alike and may partially explain the rivalry between the Karađorđević and Obrenović dynasties.¹⁷⁰ Ironically, both dynasties would use the *hajduk* nationalising narratives to their advantages,¹⁷¹ although the Karađorđević dynasty more so than the Obrenović, but it does not seem that leaders of either dynasty recognised this irony. Prince Michael (Mihailo) Obrenović instituted several reforms throughout the 1860s which increasingly professionalised the army and alienated irregular formations, earning him and the dynasty animosities which would exist into the new century.¹⁷² Even so, in the middle of the century, Serbia, while still an

¹⁶⁹ Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *A History of the Balkans, 1804-1945* (London and New York: Addison-Wesley Longman, 1999), 75; Spyros Tsoutsoumpis, “‘Political Bandits’: Nation-Building, Patronage and the Making of the Greek Deep State,” *Balkanistica* 30, no. 1 (2017): 1–27, 2.

¹⁷⁰ Ljušić, *Vožd Karadjordje*, 98.

¹⁷¹ For the views of Serbia’s political parties towards the military and irregular units, see Zoran Todorović, “Programska Opredeljenja Srskih Vladajućih Političkih Stranaka (1881-1903) o Uredjenju Vojske,” *Vojnoistorijski Glasnik* 1 (2008): 9–24, p. 19.

¹⁷² For the process of Prince Michael’s reforms, see Dimitrije Djordjević, “The Role of the Military in the Balkans in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Der Berliner Kongress von 1878: Die Politik Der*

autonomous princely state under Ottoman sovereignty, attempted to foment anti-Ottoman sentiment in Bosnia and Hercegovina to the west, “Old Serbia” to the south and even in Bulgaria.¹⁷³ Under the leadership of Ilija Garašanin, Serbia employed a conspiratorial network of informants and spies to create revolution in the Ottoman provinces.¹⁷⁴ This was part of Garašanin’s well documented “*Načertanije*” or “The Outline,” a plan to create Greater Serbia.¹⁷⁵ Serbia’s knowledge of the people and the province of Bosnia was thin, and the network amounted to nothing even though it continued well after Garašanin’s final ouster from office in the 1860s.¹⁷⁶ Perhaps part of the problem was that many of the informants used the network to gain favour with the Serbian government and to secure careers for themselves and their families.¹⁷⁷ Even during the Great Eastern Crisis (1875-1878) when Serbia could have harnessed the existing networks for their irredentist goals, the state failed to even muster support for the rebels. Gale Stokes puts this failure down to Great Power involvement in Serbia’s affairs, both domestically and internationally,¹⁷⁸ while MacKenzie argues that Belgrade cut off support to the Bosnian Serbs in 1873 which meant that existing links could not be activated.¹⁷⁹ Serbia’s attempts at modernising its state, most especially in the military sphere, meant that the second half of the 19th-century was an ebb for state-irregular relations. Undoubtedly this was related to the rise of Prussian military practices

Grossmächte Und Die Probleme Der Modernisierung in Südosteuropa in Der Zweiten Hälfte Des 19. Jahrhunderts, ed. Ralph Melville and Hans-Jürgen Schröder (Wiesbaden, Germany: Franz Steiner, 1982), 317–47, here 361.

¹⁷³ David MacKenzie, “Serbian Nationalist and Military Organizations and the Piedmont Idea, 1844-1914,” *East European Quarterly* XVI, no. 3 (September 1982): 323–44, 327.

¹⁷⁴ Miloš Jagodić, “Serbian Secret Organisation in Eastern Bosnia (1849-1855),” *ISTRAŽIVANJA, Journal of Historical Researches* 27 (2016): 190–99, 191. See also MacKenzie, “Serbian Nationalist and Military Organizations and the Piedmont Idea,” 323–44.

¹⁷⁵ Philip J. Cohen, *Serbia’s Secret War: Propaganda and the Deceit of History* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 3.

¹⁷⁶ Jagodić, “Serbian Secret Organisation in Eastern Bosnia,” 192 and 196; Gale Stokes, “Serbian Military Doctrine and the Crisis of 1875-78,” in *Insurrections, Wars, and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870s*, ed. Bela Kiraly and Gale Stokes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 261–75, 264. For the later period which this chapter covers, see Milić Milićević, “Regrutni Sastav Vojske Srbije 1883-1912. Sistem Poziva i Neki Njegovi Društveni Aspekti,” *Vojnoistorijski Glasnik* 1 (2016): 9–25. As we will see, Garašanin’s conceptualisation would influence even the Second World War JVuO.

¹⁷⁷ Jagodić, “Serbian Secret Organisation in Eastern Bosnia,” 197.

¹⁷⁸ Stokes, “Serbian Military Doctrine and the Crisis of 1875-78,” 269.

¹⁷⁹ MacKenzie, “Serbian Nationalist and Military Organizations and the Piedmont Idea,” 332.

throughout Europe which saw the professionalization of the officer corps across Europe especially in the aftermath of German and Italian unification.¹⁸⁰ Eschewing irregular warfare for professionalization in this period, Serbia's interest in irregular warfare was a clandestine one if anything. While the state backed away from supporting irregulars, guerrilla leaders and their units became more independent and unruly; the more unrestrained the bandits became, the more the state looked to distance themselves from them at home and ignored them abroad.

The next phase in this cyclical process came when the Kingdom of Serbia, under Karađorđe's grandson Peter I (*nom de guerre* Mrkonjić), began using irregular formations in 1903, the so-called "old Chetniks." Serbia used the units clandestinely and the relationship was not always smooth, reflecting previous historical trends between the Venetian, Habsburg, and Ottoman Empires and their respective, and often shared, bandit scourges. At first, the Kingdom of Serbia attempted to co-opt and control the marauding bands, most especially in "Southern Serbia" (i.e., Macedonia) and Kosovo-Metohija, both of which were under Ottoman rule. Beginning in 1902, a group of "nationalist workers" attempted to model the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO)'s structure, tactics, and successes but failed. The Kingdom of Serbia helped to support the creation of the "Serbian Revolutionary Organisation," popularly known as the Chetniks, in order to prevent other individuals from attempting the same and to protect the Serbian population from reprisals by the IMRO and the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸¹ *Hajdukovanje* entered the modern age of hybrid warfare.

From Hajdukovanje to Četovanje

The turning point in Serbia's support for guerrillas came in 1903. A closely-knit group of officers in the Serbian Army conspired to oust the unpopular King Alexander

¹⁸⁰ Zoran Todorović, "Programska Opređenja Srskih Vladajućih Političkih Stranaka (1881-1903) o Uredjenju Vojske" notes that the Radicals instituted a standing army and earmarked 35% of the budget for it, p. 19.

¹⁸¹ Biljana Vučetić, "Srpska Revolucionarna Organizacija u Osmanskom Carstvu u Početku XX Veka," *Istorijski Časopis* 53 (2006): 359–74, 364. The term IMRO is a loaded one, and the organisation went through various iterations throughout its existence. Because of the prevalence in secondary sources and the simplicity of the term, I will exclusively use IMRO or its longer name, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation.

Obrenović in the May Coup. On the night between 28 and 29 April,¹⁸² the members of an officer-led conspiracy hunted down the king and his wife, Queen Draga, and shot them. To add insult to injury, the officers defenestrated their half-dead bodies into the garden below where the couple succumbed to their injuries. Peter Karađorđević, Karađorđe's grandson and "Petar Mrkonjić" of the Great Eastern Crisis, was proclaimed King Peter I of Serbia.

The conspirators had their origins in 1901.¹⁸³ Junior officers made up the corps of the group: Captain Dragutin Dimitrijević-Apis helped to mobilise support of other officers for the coup, while Major Vojislav Tankosić led the execution of the queen's brothers and palace guards, and later wrote the group's constitution when it was formally inaugurated as *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt*, known to their enemies as the Black Hand, in 1911.¹⁸⁴ The issue of foreign policy was a major concern for the conspirators who believed that the Obrenović dynasty left much to be desired in that regard.¹⁸⁵ In other words, they saw the IMRO and Bulgaria making headway in turning the people of Macedonia towards Bulgaria which they believed threatened Serbian claims to the Ottoman territories of Macedonia ("Southern Serbia") and Kosovo-Metohija ("Old Serbia"). This fear became especially acute after 1908 when Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Hercegovina from the Ottomans and thus formalised the incorporation of this Ottoman province into the Habsburg Empire that had started with the conquest of 1878.¹⁸⁶ The officers modeled the clandestine organisation on groups such as the *Carbonari* and began to organise guerrilla units already in operation in desired territories.

Initially, the guerrilla units operating in Macedonia and Kosovo-Metohija were "private enterprises" which were organised, funded, and recruited by "nationalist

¹⁸² Given the prevalence of the term "May Coup," I am using the "Old Style" calendar for this event. The correlative is 10-11 June in the "New Style."

¹⁸³ David MacKenzie, *The "Black Hand" on Trial: Salonika, 1917* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1995), 13-14.

¹⁸⁴ MacKenzie, *The "Black Hand" on Trial*, 14-16. On "Apis," see David MacKenzie, *Apis: The Congenial Conspirator: The Life of Colonel Dragutin T. Dimitrijević* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1989). Meanwhile, for Tankosić, see Milorad Belić, *Komitski Vojvoda Vojislav Tankosić* (Valjevo, Serbia: Medjuopštinski istorijski arhiv Valjevo, 2005). See also Vasa Kazimirović, *Crna Ruka* (Kragujevac and Beograd: "Prizma" and "Centar Film," 1997), 19.

¹⁸⁵ MacKenzie, *The "Black Hand" on Trial*, 13-14.

¹⁸⁶ Tetsuya Sahara, "The Making of the 'Black Hand' Reconsidered," *Istorija 20. Veka* 1 (2016): 9-29, 21.

workers” beginning on a larger scale in 1902.¹⁸⁷ Some of the “nationalist workers” had roles in other groups and societies and even within the Serbian government and/or army. The main organisers of the “Serbian Revolutionary Organisation,” as the guerrilla units came to be called, were Dr. Milorad Gođevac, Luka Čelović, Ljuba Davidović, Nikola Spasić, Ljubo Kovačević, General (Ret.) Jovan Atanacković, Živojin Rafaljović, Golub Janjić and others. Atanacković, a “leading liberal,” had a long history in various Serbian cabinets but was the Minister of Defence after the May Coup of 1903.¹⁸⁸ He was not a member of the Black Hand but was sympathetic to the cause. Atanacković’s influence was such that his verbal support for the Black Hand was enough that the group was able to recruit members based simply on this rumour.¹⁸⁹ Though it is difficult to say whether Atanacković was the link between the Black Hand and the Organisation, it was through Black Hand officers that the state came to be involved. Apis and others saw the potential that the guerrillas offered to make headway in the unredeemed territories and personally funded them but armed them from state arsenals. As the Black Hand won and lost favour with the government throughout the first decade of the 20th-century, other groups cropped up such as *Narodna Odbrana* or “People’s Defence.” MacKenzie argues that *Narodna Odbrana* increasingly became a cultural organisation, through Austria-Hungary’s insistence, which predicated the need for *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* to formalise their role in leading the Serbian Revolutionary Organisation.¹⁹⁰ Even so, other organisations emerged that either directly or indirectly aided the Organisation in their cause: the Circle of Serbian Sisters (*Kolo srpskih sestara*), the Society of St. Sava (*Društvo Sv. Save*) and others.¹⁹¹ Tankosić wrote the *Ujedinjenje* constitution in 1911, and chetniks were inaugurated as members of the conspiratorial *Ujedinjenje*.¹⁹²

Though it would seem that the main focus of the Serbian Revolutionary Organisation was freeing the people of Macedonia and Kosovo-Metohija from the Ottoman Empire and adjoining those territories to Serbia, the more immediate enemy

¹⁸⁷ Nusret Šehić, *Četništvo u Bosni i Hercegovini (1918-1941): Politička Uloga i Oblici Djelatnosti Četničkih Udruženja* (Sarajevo: Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine, 1971), 17.

¹⁸⁸ MacKenzie, *The “Black Hand” on Trial*, 13.

¹⁸⁹ MacKenzie, *The “Black Hand” on Trial*, 14.

¹⁹⁰ MacKenzie, *Apis: The Congenial Conspirator*, 66.

¹⁹¹ Jovan-Hadži Vasiljević, *Četnička Akcija u Staroj Srbiji i Mačedoniji* (Beograd: Štamparija “Sv. Sava,” 1928), 17-18.

¹⁹² MacKenzie, *The “Black Hand” on Trial*, 32-33 and 37-38.

was the IMRO and Bulgaria, with the goal of liberation only possible after the latter's defeat.¹⁹³ The Organisation members had their revolutionary roots in the IMRO and animosity towards them grew out of some fundamental disagreements between Serbian and Bulgarian members. After the IMRO's defeat during the *Ilinden* Uprising in 1903 at the hands of Ottoman military forces, the Serbian members of the IMRO broke away when the Bulgarian and Serbian members could not agree on several issues. Whereas the IMRO insisted that the Bulgarian language be spoken, the Serbs argued for more plurality; similarly, the Serbs thought that a division of the territory between Serbia and Bulgaria could help bring about a lasting peace, while the IMRO's stated goal was the territorial integrity of Macedonia.¹⁹⁴ Failing to reach a compromise, the Serbians left the IMRO and formed bands that would later become part of the Serbian Revolutionary Organisation described above. The IMRO vowed to target people who helped and/or sided with the Serbian faction after the 1903 discussions broke down. As a result, the Organisation took it upon themselves to defend Serbs and Organisation allies against IMRO attacks. Focusing on Bulgaria and the IMRO also meant having to avoid the Ottomans. In fact, the Serbian Revolutionary Organisation was ordered to avoid confrontation with "the Turks" precisely because it would harm their cause in fighting against Bulgaria. Similarly, the guerrillas were ordered not to exact revenge on Ottoman Muslim civilians "because it could hurt the Serbian tribe" in Kosovo-Metohija and Macedonia.¹⁹⁵

The first Serbian *četnik* unit was sent into Macedonia in April 1904, and all 23 volunteers were killed. Or, as the telegram sent to Rafailović, one of the organisers, said "[t]he wagon of wine you sent with 23 barrels failed. The hoops cracked and all the wine spilled."¹⁹⁶ This caused an outcry in the Serbian press which demanded that the initiative come under state authority. Soon, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took control and assigned General Nikodije Stefanović the first president of the Central Board, headquartered in Belgrade. Black Handers Tankosić, Apis, the "ardent nationalist"

¹⁹³ Vladimir Ilić, *Srpska Četnička Akcija, 1903-1912* (Beograd: Ecolibri, 2006), 19.

¹⁹⁴ However, the IMRO could not agree whether a singular Macedonian territory should be independent or attached to Bulgaria.

¹⁹⁵ Šehić, *Četništvo u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 18.

¹⁹⁶ Stanislav Krakov, *Plamen Četništva* (Beograd: KIZ "Hipnos," 1990), 164. There was actually a 24th "barrel," a volunteer who later joined in Macedonia unbeknownst to many in the Chetnik Organisation in Belgrade. See Vasiljević, *Četnička Akcija u Staroj Srbiji i Mačedoniji*, 18-19.

Ljubomir Vulović who was executed alongside Apis in 1917; the politicians Ljubomir Davidović, Ljubomir Jovanović and Jaša Prodanović; and civilians, besides those already mentioned, banker Luka Čelović, are all listed as members with various tasks ranging from members of the Central Committee, to the financial board, to being in charge of propaganda.¹⁹⁷ A careful eye will notice the overlap of “private enterprise” individuals and government and military officials. Similarly, some members existed in both the 1902 initiative and the 1903 formalisation, as well as simultaneously being members in other groups, societies, and organisations.

The order of events presented above is in contrast to what contemporary actors and chetniks said about the Organisation. In 1930, Ilija Trifunović-Birčanin, who we will later encounter in Dalmatia in the 1940s, remarked about the April 1904 failure that “[i]n place of one perished company, two others immediately sprang up, in place of two, four, and so on, until the Balkan war [of 1912].”¹⁹⁸ Birčanin’s suggestion here is that the creation of new units was a series of spontaneous events and not planned and executed by politicians and officers. Similarly, the nationalist and religious mindset of the volunteers is emphasised in the chetniks’ works. In the same account, Birčanin refers to the volunteers throughout as “Christians” to contrast them with “Muslims,” alluding to the latter’s supposed allegiance to the Ottoman Empire. Even so, Birčanin makes the distinction that the volunteers are “Christians, yes Christians, but Serbian Christians” who chose to fight against the Ottomans and the “Muslims.”¹⁹⁹ This rhetorical change further distinguishes the Chetnik volunteers not only from Muslims, but also from Turks, Bulgarians and other ethnic groups. The implication is clear: being Serbian means being Christian and, though not explicitly stated by Birčanin, Orthodox Christian and not Catholic or a member of the Bulgarian Exarchate Church. In other words, we see in the

¹⁹⁷ Vladimir Ilić, *Srpska Četnička Akcija, 1903-1912* (Beograd: Ecolibri, 2006), 21-22. Other members of the board included the Vice President Ljubo Jovanović, Golub Janjić a trader, Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Jovan Popović, Major Dušan Tufedgžić, Artillery Lieutenant Panta Radosavljević, the pharmacist Velimir Karić, Board Representative for Vranje Tomo Đorđević and Lieutenant Rista Radosavljević; lieutenants Pavle Panković and Božin Simić who participated in the May Coup; and, the civilians Milan Graovac, a tobacco inspector, and merchants Nikola Spasić and Dimitrije Čirković.

¹⁹⁸ Ilija Ž Trifunović, *Krv Četnika* (Beograd: Grafički umetnički zavod “Planeta,” 1930), 13.

¹⁹⁹ Trifunović, *Krv Četnika*, 15.

works of Birčanin and others the backwards projection of both historical trajectories and the creation of identity by the peoples who populated the region of Macedonia.²⁰⁰

Besides efforts to claim peoples, events, and symbols as their own, the creators of the modern Chetnik movement also used and modified outside sources to fashion their own identities. Just as they followed foreign influences for the secret organisation, for example, the Black Hand copied the IMRO in hopes that the successes that the organisation had would filter through to the Serbian guerrillas. They encouraged the adoption of the skull and crossbones symbol, as well as the dagger and revolver images, even copying IMRO's slogan "Freedom or Death," by changing it to "Unification or Death."²⁰¹ These slogans and symbols were added to already existing Serbian symbols, such as the tri-colour (albeit white, red and blue)²⁰² and the Serbian crown and four-Cs or firesteels to represent the phrase "Only Unity Saves Serbs" (*Samo sloga Srbina spasava*).²⁰³ Similarly, the lines of membership cut through and between the various groups, some more conspiratorial than others, making it difficult to analyse where one group's ideology ends and the other's begins. However, several groups published circulars and pamphlets from which we can gain a sense of a collective ideology. Though the Serbian Revolutionary Organisation was predicated on uniting Serb territories, it was not an exclusive Serb organisation. Indeed, the great Albanian leader of the League of Prizren, Isa Boletini, fought alongside Serbia's *Vojvoda* Vojin "Vuk" Popović.²⁰⁴ Even though some members were non-Serbs, and other members advocated for a unification of all Southern Slavs (i.e., Yugoslavs), the goal of the Organisation remained the creation of Greater Serbia.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Besides Birčanin cited above, see also Ilija Ž. Trifunović, *Trnovitim Stazama* (Beograd: Glavnog saveza srpskih zemljoradničkih zadruga, 1933); Krakov, *Plamen Četništva*; Vasiljević, *Četnička Akcija u Staroj Srbiji i Mačedoniji*; and the first-hand accounts in Timofeev, "Serbian Chetniks." See also Ipek Yasmaoglu, *Blood Ties: Religion, Violence, and the Politics of Nationhood in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878-1908* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2013).

²⁰¹ Sahara, "The Making of the 'Black Hand' Reconsidered," 20-21. On using IMRO's language, see Krakov, *Plamen Četništva*, 76.

²⁰² Vasiljević, *Četnička Akcija u Staroj Srbiji i Mačedoniji*, 10.

²⁰³ Krakov says that the Cs represent "Serbia, Famous, Alone, Free" (*Srbija, Slavan, Sama, Slobodno*). See Krakov, *Plamen Četništva*, 51-52.

²⁰⁴ For more on Boletini, see Isa Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities, 1800-1912* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

²⁰⁵ MacKenzie, *The "Black Hand" on Trial*, 38-41.

One path to winning over the population was to indoctrinate them with Serbian Orthodox teachings through “nationalising schools.” The first set of these “schools” were created on 31 July 1905. The prime movers in the schools were “national workers” who were mostly teachers some of whom also participated in the Serbian Revolutionary Organisation to varying degrees. The teachers and priests attached to the schools were put on Bulgarian “blacklists” which caused many to join the Serbian Revolutionary Organisation. This is how Jovan Stojković-Babunski came to join, for example.²⁰⁶ Babunski was the most militarily effective of the *vojvode*-teachers. He gained the support of the main mountain staff when other *vojvode* were harshly criticized and managed to gather a following both within his *čete* and even in his nationalist work.²⁰⁷ Another active teacher was the aforementioned Maj. Tankosić who oversaw the execution of Queen Draga’s brothers.²⁰⁸ One study suggests that besides teaching, Tankosić’s role in the Black Hand may have been covert operations and founding clandestine organisations such as *Narodna Odbrana* and others.²⁰⁹ The Organisation and “nationalising process” gained increasing interest from the Serbian state. In November 1906, the *Skupština* (parliament) passed a budget of 300,000 dinars to help the Organisation and to further bring the Organisation under its control. The same session also saw 1,375,000 dinars put on credit for “the people’s interests,” and a further 1,675,000 dinars for the Organisation’s use for 1907. The first guerrilla schools, meanwhile, were set up in Prokuplje and Vranje while the main Central Committee was established in Belgrade in 1911 after the Black Hand took over control of the Organisation.²¹⁰ Through *Narodna Odbrana*, the guerrilla schools were able to attract recruits from Bosnia and Hercegovina, Dalmatia, Dubrovnik, Zagreb, and other parts of the Habsburg Empire as far as Vienna and Prague.²¹¹ *Vojvoda* Vuk’s company could boast a 2nd Battalion made up of about 1000 men, all from Bosnia, for example, while Nikola Bogić-Čiča was a 45-

²⁰⁶ Ilić, *Srpska Četnička Akcija*, 70.

²⁰⁷ Ilić, *Srpska Četnička Akcija*, 51.

²⁰⁸ Šehić, *Četništvo u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 24. Kazimirović, *Crna Ruka*, 19.

²⁰⁹ Belić, *Komitski Vojvoda Vojislav Tankosić*, 24.

²¹⁰ Timofeev, “Serbian Chetniks.”

²¹¹ Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 180; MacKenzie, *The “Black Hand” on Trial: Salonika, 1917*, 41. Gavrilo Princip, the Sarajevo assassin, tried to enlist with Tankosić in 1912 at Prokuplje but was turned down with a wave of Tankosić’s hand: “You are too small and too weak.” See Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo*, 196-197.

year old recruit from Lika.²¹² Birčanin argues that "it is necessary to emphasise this fact [of recruits throughout the Balkans] in particular, because it most illustrates the high patriotism and indomitable national consciousness of the Serbs from the mountains of Bosnia and Herzegovina." Though this is likely overstated, I would argue that these points are important because they suggest not only the appeal that the Organisation presented, but also because it shows the presence of Chetnik-style guerrilla warfare in the consciousness of people throughout the peninsula and beyond.

Operationally, there was little difference between how the *hajduks* conducted themselves and how the graduates of the guerrilla schools operated. Indeed, the practice of *hajdukovanje* is itself an exercise in guerrilla warfare and differs from other styles of irregular warfare only in type rather than in kind. For instance, though both names "denote a form of population resistance organised in smaller armed groups – companies – against the centuries-old rule of the Turkish [sic] Empire," the use of the two terms was often interchangeable.²¹³ In other words, there is far more similarity between *hajdukovanje* and *četovanje* than there are differences.

But I want to suggest that the main difference rests in the *purpose* of each style of guerrilla warfare. Whereas *hajdukovanje* can more closely be related to brigandage and rebellion and the members have to survive off of plunder, *četovanje* is supported by the state, especially in the modern period, where the state's resources can best be utilised in the service of its foreign policy. For central and western Europe, this emerged in the late-18th century with "soldier-scholars" who wrote about guerrilla warfare and later emerging in the military academies.²¹⁴ With Serbia remaining autonomous but within Ottoman sovereignty, such developments necessarily came later. Šehić wrote the most thorough study on *četovanje* in Bosnia and Hercegovina to date. He made the point that despite the long history of *četovanje* in the Balkans, the first studies of the phenomenon were only translated into Serbian in 1848 by Matija Ban.²¹⁵ Šehić finds this "surprising"

²¹² Trifunović, *Krv Četnika*, 41 and 47.

²¹³ Šehić, *Četništvo u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 10.

²¹⁴ Sibylle Scheipers, "Counterinsurgency or Irregular Warfare? Historiography and the Study of 'Small Wars,'" *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 5–6 (2014): 879–99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2014.945281>: 883.

²¹⁵ Šehić, *Četništvo u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 10. See Matija Ban, *Pravila o Četničkoj Vojni* (Beograd: Knjigonečatnji kneževine Srbske, 1848). Matija Ban also collected materials from the

despite noting that the Principality of Serbia did not yet have a formal military academy and other markers of a modernised army.²¹⁶ The Serbian military only underwent modernisation in the 1860s under Prince Mihailo's second reign (1860-1868) during a series of reforms throughout the decade, over a decade after Ban's translation on *četovanje*.²¹⁷ In other words, the practice of *četovanje* predates state usage of the phenomenon in the Balkans, yet there is little to suggest that it differed much in practice from other forms of guerrilla warfare. To view the differences between the two practices, it is necessary to investigate the Serbian state's policies.

Besides modernising the military, Prince Mihailo's second reign also equates with Serbia's advancement in foreign policy under Foreign Minister Ilija Garašanin (1861-1867). Garašanin's policy was written in 1844 as the "*Načertanije*" (The Draft), but only really began to be implemented in the 1860s. Garašanin's plan sought to create "Greater Serbia," essentially an extension of Serbian territory which stretched to all regions where ethnic Serbs lived.²¹⁸ Typical of its time in terms of nationalising, unifying, and extending the nation-state's reach into various spheres of society as well as encroaching on other nation-states' territorial domains, the *Načertanije* was based on the German *Volk* nationalism policies and parts of the "French Jacobin ideology."²¹⁹ In other words, Garašanin envisioned undermining states where Serbs lived – namely Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire – by using republican, democratic, and revolutionary means within those territories, and defining "Serbs" as a nation by using common language and cultural markers.²²⁰ In this logic, anyone who spoke Serbian, regardless of dialect, and

Bosnian uprising of 1875-1878 to write a history of the event, but it never materialised. See Ekmečić, *Ustanak u Bosni*, 6.

²¹⁶ Šehić, *Četništvo u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 10.

²¹⁷ Influenced by the Enlightenment, the growth of education, the state's centralisation, and other factors, this modernising process was a phenomenon throughout Europe in the 19th-century. For an overview, see especially "Introduction" in Stefano Bianchini, *Liquid Nationalism and State Partitions in Europe* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786436610.00006>.

²¹⁸ For more on the context of this document's creation, see David MacKenzie, *Ilija Garašanin: Balkan Bismarck* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1985), 42-61.

²¹⁹ Dušan T. Bataković, "Ilija Garašanin's Načertanije: A Reassessment," *Balkanica*, no. 25 (1994): 157-83, 170-171. The final pages of this article also has an English excerpt of the *Načertanije*. See also Bianchini, *Liquid Nationalism and State Partitions in Europe*, 14-18.

²²⁰ MacKenzie, *Ilija Garašanin*, 265. It is important to note that Garašanin was willing to stoke ethnic nationalism and revolution outside of Serbia's borders but remained conservatively monarchical and anti-revolutionary at home.

who shared in certain cultural traits, such as *kolo* dancing and other traditions, was defined a Serb. Under Garašanin, Serbia was to become the “Piedmont” for Serbs throughout the Balkans,²²¹ the defining state idea to which all who identified even remotely with a Serb(ian) identity could and would want to be attached to the detriment of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires. Prince Mihailo trusted Garašanin as a friend and confidant, and so long as the latter’s opinions agreed with the former’s, Garašanin’s policies were enacted. The *Načertanije* was one such policy.²²² By the end of the decade, what resulted was a modernised military with an irredentist foreign policy.²²³ The two together meant that plans to wrest territory from the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires was possible, if not imminent, and irregulars were to become a major actor towards this goal.

Between Serbia’s revised foreign policy, modernising state, and the presence of armed extralegal actors, the goal of revising borders in the Balkans was attainable. However, Serbia did not know how to do this nor have the capacity to arm and coordinate the state and para-state entities to any extent to take advantage of modernity to its fullest. Still effectively an Ottoman vassal state, all the attempts to create revolution within the Ottoman Empire’s borders in the second half of the 19th-century failed, either because Serbia could not sufficiently take advantage of the situation or because it had no hand in it all, essentially leaving the revolutions as little more than *jacqueries*.²²⁴ In other words, Serbia was not modernised enough to be able to take advantage. As it relates to guerrilla warfare, I argue that it is precisely the modernising effects which

²²¹ Of course, Piedmont refers to the Italian unification in which the region acted as the central point from which unification emerged. There are three good overviews of Italian unification from different perspectives and for different audiences. First, a general overview for lay-audiences is Tim Chapman, *The Risorgimento: Italy, 1815-1871* (Penrith: Humanities E-Books, LLP, 2008). A more detailed discussion can be found in Derek Beales and Eugenio F. Biagini, *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (London & New York: Routledge, 2013). While a classic, interdisciplinary background remains Alberto Mario Banti, *The Nation of the Risorgimento: Kinship, Sanctity, and Honour in the Origins of the Unified Italy*, trans. Stuart Oglethorpe (London: Routledge, 2020).

²²² MacKenzie, *Ilija Garašanin*, 240-245.

²²³ Dušan T. Bataković, “French Influence in Serbia, 1835-1914: Four Generations of ‘Parisians,’” *Balkanica*, no. 41 (2010): 93–129, <https://doi.org/10.2298/BALC1041093B>, 102. Ironically, modernising the army was Mihailo’s goal while modernising other aspects of the state, such as education, was the Liberals’. See 105.

²²⁴ MacKenzie, *Ilija Garašanin*, 265. Of course, this was not for lack of trying. Garašanin established a secret “Serbian Committee” in 1862 to foment and harness revolution. See 249-250.

transmutate *hajdukovanje* into *četovanje* because of the levelling process that modernisation provides for the guerrilla armies. Even if the guerrillas resist the state, as long as they have the potential to match the state's monopoly on violence by using modern means (i.e., modern firepower, technological advancements, employing germ theory to treat wounds, etc.) the guerrillas are practicing *četovanje*. Being attached to a modern state, whether openly or clandestinely, with its ability to fund, arm and support the guerrillas is a sign of *četovanje*. These points have implications for the 1941 to 1945 period not least because the JVuO lacked the state infrastructure to transform themselves into a professionalised state military despite attempts to enact the transition. In essence, this meant that the JVuO remained a guerrilla army despite its attempts to the contrary.

As it relates to the 19th-century onwards, the Serbian military's increasing awareness of the potential that *četovanje* provided helps to illustrate my argument for modernisation. For example, evidence exists in the terminology used by the members of the guerrilla units which later became part of military jargon. Though many of the earlier "old Chetniks" came from *hajduk* backgrounds, they still began to use the terminologies associated with *četovanje*. Whereas *hajduks* most often employed the title *harambaša* to denote their leaders, *četniks* used *vojvoda*;²²⁵ *hajduks* called themselves *hajduci* or even *banditi*, while *četniks* used *četnik* or *komita*, committee man.²²⁶ Despite all of this, perhaps the main commonality in terminology is the use of the term *čete* but this word denotes a unit, a member of which is a *četnik* or unit member, and is used by *hajduks*, *četniks*, and the Serbian military alike. The distinctions I make here are evidenced by a series of keyword searches in the *Službeni vojni list*, the official paper of the Ministry of War, the archive for which can be found online.²²⁷ Searching the word *vojvoda* yields

²²⁵ Timofeev, "Serbian Chetniks."

²²⁶ This is evidenced in several works by both IMRO members and Serb *četniks*, both as autobiographical works and as treatments on the actions of others. As two examples, see Belić, *Komitski Vojvoda Vojislav Tankosić*; Jovan Babunski, *Spomenica Jovana S. Babunskog* (Belgrade: Izdanje Udruženja rezervnih oficira, 1921).

²²⁷ http://www.unilib.rs/istorijske-novine/pregled?category=INTERWAR&newspaper=UB_00001. Unfortunately, the tables of contents for the paper do not yield much information. As expected of a bureaucratic, government issued organ – and a military one at that – this means that the tables reveal the bare minimum information: orders, announcements, awards, and the like. Trawling through the issues would be unruly and time-consuming to perhaps only find hints at mentioning certain words or phrases. As such, conducting word searches was the most efficient, if partially imprecise, method.

104 hits,²²⁸ some of which refer to *četnici*,²²⁹ *vojvode* (plural) returns 701 results,²³⁰ while *harambaša* does not return anything. Searching the word “*četnik*” only brings up 35 hits throughout the paper’s history (1881-1941)²³¹ while searching “*čete*” populates 8,406 results.²³² In other words, this latter development – referring to an actor within a unit as a *četnik* – is a fairly new phenomenon in Serbian and emerges on a wider basis at the turn of the 20th-century precisely when the Serbian Revolutionary Organisation was created, when the IMRO, which used the terms *čete/četnik*, was active, and when the “Macedonian Question” came into contact with the proliferation of print media and mass communication.

The professionalization of guerrilla warfare, as exhibited by the guerrilla schools in Vranje and Prokuplje, is another factor in the modernising element of guerrilla warfare. Not only did the recruits come under bureaucratisation through state infrastructure, but they were funded, armed, and even paid by the state. Similarly, the imposition of ethno-nationalism upon not just the volunteers and conscripts but on the population, signals an advance towards modernisation.²³³ In other words, guerrilla warfare became a form of

²²⁸ [http://www.unilib.rs/istorijske-novine/napredna-pretraga?search=vojvoda&results=10&sort=score&collection=UB_00001&dateFrom=&dateTo=.](http://www.unilib.rs/istorijske-novine/napredna-pretraga?search=vojvoda&results=10&sort=score&collection=UB_00001&dateFrom=&dateTo=)

²²⁹ Note how both Babunski and Pećanac are placed alongside the officer and war hero Radomir Putnik here: http://istorijskenovine.unilib.rs/view/index.html#panel:ppjissue:UB_00001_19220316|article:pageDiv10|query:%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%98%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B0.

²³⁰ [http://www.unilib.rs/istorijske-novine/napredna-pretraga?search=vojvode&results=10&sort=score&collection=UB_00001&dateFrom=&dateTo=.](http://www.unilib.rs/istorijske-novine/napredna-pretraga?search=vojvode&results=10&sort=score&collection=UB_00001&dateFrom=&dateTo=)

²³¹ [http://www.unilib.rs/istorijske-novine/napredna-pretraga?search=%C4%8Detnik&results=10&sort=score&collection=UB_00001&dateFrom=&dateTo=.](http://www.unilib.rs/istorijske-novine/napredna-pretraga?search=%C4%8Detnik&results=10&sort=score&collection=UB_00001&dateFrom=&dateTo=) Searching the term “*četnici*” (the plural form) yields even less results, 7: [http://www.unilib.rs/istorijske-novine/napredna-pretraga?search=%C4%8Detnici&results=10&sort=score&collection=UB_00001&dateFrom=&dateTo=.](http://www.unilib.rs/istorijske-novine/napredna-pretraga?search=%C4%8Detnici&results=10&sort=score&collection=UB_00001&dateFrom=&dateTo=)

²³² [http://www.unilib.rs/istorijske-novine/napredna-pretraga?search=%C4%8Dete&results=10&sort=score&collection=UB_00001&dateFrom=&dateTo=.](http://www.unilib.rs/istorijske-novine/napredna-pretraga?search=%C4%8Dete&results=10&sort=score&collection=UB_00001&dateFrom=&dateTo=)

²³³ The role of nations and nationalism and the process of nationalising that attends them is well documented. As only a handful of examples, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983); Miroslav Hroch, *European Nations: Explaining Their Formation* (London: Verso, 2015); Siniša Malešević, “Wars That Make States and Wars That Make Nations: Organised Violence, Nationalism and State Formation in the Balkans,” *European Journal of Sociology* 53, no. 1 (April 2012): 31–63; Siniša Malešević, *Grounded Nationalisms: A Sociological Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Siniša Malešević, “Nationalism and Imperialism as Enemies

knowledge for the non-state actors and a form of statecraft for the ethno-national state. Note here that modernisation does not necessarily imply progress, a term itself loaded with (incorrect) connotations of positive (i.e., “good”) development. Instead, modernisation represents the development of certain elements of the state, society, and culture in the areas of new technologies, ideas, and mechanisms, all of which benefit or hinder society and the state in different ways. It is unknowable whether *hajdukovanje* would have entered the modern age without the aid of the state, but the fact remains that the state’s bureaucratic and centralising tendencies thrust it into modernity and the era of *četovanje*. Between the state, the Black Hand, and private support, the *četniks* were primed for success.²³⁴

On the eve of the Balkan Wars in 1912, the first major conflict to display *četnik* successes, “the ‘Black Hand’ served as a virtual organ of the Serbian Foreign Ministry.”²³⁵ The influence of the Foreign Ministry, the presence of the Black Hand, and the similar ideological structures owing to the cross-pollination of membership across groups can all partially explain the muddled understanding of the Black Hand’s role in all of the different political, military, cultural, social, legal and (semi-)illegal groups and organisations,²³⁶ while also partially confusing the ideology of the JVuO in the 1941 to 1945 period. This also partially explains the conflation between the officers’ conspiracy and *Mlada Bosna* (Young Bosnia) in the popular understanding of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 in Sarajevo.²³⁷ At any rate, Serbia’s failure to win

and Friends: Nation-State Formation and Imperial Projects in the Balkans,” in *States and Nations, Power and Civility: Hallsian Perspectives*, ed. F. Duina (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2019), 149–71.

²³⁴ For the Ottoman example of *çete*, see Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912-1923* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), especially 6 and 51.

²³⁵ MacKenzie, *The “Black Hand” on Trial*, 43.

²³⁶ Mira Radojević, “Civili i Oficiri. Iskustvo Samostalne Radikalne Stranke (1903),” *Vojnoistorijski Glasnik* 1 (2008): 25–37, 34-35.

²³⁷ See for example point 5 which describes Young Bosnia as “working in conjunction with the Black Hand” in Benjamin Welton, “10 Secret Societies That Influenced History,” *Listverse* (blog), March 14, 2015, <https://listverse.com/2015/03/14/10-secret-societies-who-influenced-history/>, while Princip and the other assassins are members of the Black Hand in Bailey Rider, “Murder for a Cause: Gavrilo Princip’s Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand,” *STMU History Media: Featuring Historical Research, Writing, and Media at St. Mary’s University* (blog), April 17, 2017, <https://stmuhistorymedia.org/murder-for-a-cause-gavrilo-princip-assassination-of-archduke-franz-ferdinand/>, and yet Young Bosnia is a “sub-group” of the Black Hand in Ian Harvey, “The

over Bosnia and Hercegovina in the 19th-century, and Austria-Hungary's subsequent annexation of the province in 1908 forced Serbia to concentrate its irredentist efforts to its south.²³⁸ Serbia would get its chance with the Balkan Wars in 1912/1913.

Serbia's Great War, 1912-1918

With the preceding details, it is remarkable that an alliance between Serbia and Bulgaria should emerge at all. This partially speaks to the diplomatic efforts by both states, as well as the collective desire of the Balkan states to rid the peninsula of the Ottomans.²³⁹ Certainly the influence and involvement of the other countries in the Balkan League – Montenegro, Greece, and eventually Romania – helped to finalise the Serbian-Bulgarian alliance. However, couched within discussions of diplomacy and geopolitical considerations is the changing role of irregular forces in all the relevant states leading up to finalising the Balkan League. During the Balkan Wars, for example, the Chetnik units were attached to the Serbian army. Each unit had its own *vojvoda* who took orders from the Supreme Command, and through him the rank and file would receive their orders. Serbia infamously refused to allow international monitors alongside their units, unlike the other members of the Balkan League, which led ultimately to the Carnegie Report on Balkan War atrocities.²⁴⁰ Despite the report's issues, Serbia's exclusion proves a difficult enterprise for the historian since information on Serbia's involvement, and the actions of

Clumsy Assassination Which Launched World War I," *The Vintage News* (blog), September 27, 2018, <https://www.thevintagenews.com/2018/09/27/assassination-of-the-archduke/>.

²³⁸ Stokes, "Serbian Military Doctrine and the Crisis of 1875-78," 269.

²³⁹ The events of the Balkan Wars have been detailed very well elsewhere and will not be revisited here except as it relates directly to the wider dissertation. The best treatments are Katrin Boeckh and Sabine Rutar, eds., *The Wars of Yesterday: The Balkan Wars and the Emergence of Modern Military Conflict, 1912-1913*, eBook (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018); Hakan M. Yavuz and Isa Blumi, eds., *War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, and Their Sociopolitical Implications* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013); Mark Biondich, "The Balkan Wars: Violence and Nation-Building in the Balkans, 1912-1913," *Journal of Genocide Research* 18, no. 4 (2016): 389–404, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2016.1226019>. I am also co-editing a volume on the Balkan Wars from the Ottoman perspective: Ercan Karakoç, Ali Serdar Mete, George Ungureanu, Danilo Šarenac, and Stevan Bozanich (eds.), *Warfare in Twentieth Century Europe: The Balkan Wars from the Ottoman Turkish Perspective*, expected 2022.

²⁴⁰ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (Washington, D.C.: The Endowment, 1914).

the Chetniks specifically, are not catalogued in the same way as they are for the other actors.

For its part, the Black Hand agitated for war with the Ottoman Empire in the runup to 1912, while undertaking reconnaissance missions in Albania and Macedonia. To gauge Albanian chieftains' views of war, Apis gathered three groups of officers, most of whom were Black Handers and infiltrated Albania. On two separate visits, in August and September 1912, they conferred with various Albanian leaders, one of whom was Isa Boletini, and surveyed the territories around Kosovska Mitrovica, Đakovica, and other areas in and around Kosovo-Metohija and Macedonia.²⁴¹ The Chetniks found that the Albanians were rather cool towards warring against the Ottoman Empire but neither ruled it out nor did they agree to help support the Serbian army. Rather, Apis and the others were left with a mixed impression and became leery of their Albanian counterparts. To try and sway Albanian support, Serbia gave weapons and arms to the Albanian irregulars, the *kaçaks*, but this came to nothing.²⁴²

The Chetniks were tasked with supporting the army on the wings to prevent being outflanked. It was also hoped that the Chetniks would help speed up the army's manoeuvres by leading attacks, softening border areas and fortifications, and eventually acting in the rear of the enemy. Indeed, Tankosić's company was the first to enter Priština and accept its surrender ahead of the regular army.²⁴³ Both attaching the Chetniks to the army and using them as a vanguard of operations was a new development in Serbian war making when compared to the uprisings in Bosnia-Herzegovina and other previous conflicts.²⁴⁴ Previously, irregulars acted alone or in

²⁴¹ MacKenzie, *Apis: The Congenial Conspirator*, 89-92. There has been recent interest in Isa Boletini (Boljetinac in Serbian). See three articles from three different perspectives, all rather balanced: Said Olgun, "Kosova Arnavutlarinin Millî Kahramanı Isa Bolatini (1864-1916)," *Tarih ve Gelecek Dergisi* 6, no. 3 (September 2020): 855-94; Vesna S. Zarković, "Delovanje Ise Boljetnica Uoči Otvaranja Ruskog Konzulata Kosovskoj Mitrovici," *Baština* 51 (2020): 427-47, <https://doi.org/10.5937/bastina30-26829>; Dritan Egro, "Kosova Dhe Isa Boletini, Sipas Gazetës Zurtare Xhorturke 'Tanin,'" *Center for Albanological Studies* 3, no. 4 (2015): 195-202.

²⁴² Uroš Šešum, "Četnici u Prvom Balkanskom Ratu 1912. Godine," *Srpske Studije* 3 (2012): 63-82, 67.

²⁴³ Šešum, "Četnici u Prvom Balkanskom Ratu 1912. godine," 71-75.

²⁴⁴ Ekmečić, *Ustanak u Bosni, 1875-1878*; Šehić, *Četništvo u Bosni i Hercegovini (1918-1941)*.

cooperation only with other irregular units but always on a guerrilla basis; by 1912, however, the Chetniks were operating as a semi-legitimate part of the army.

The order of battle for the Serbian Army and the other belligerents has been well detailed elsewhere.²⁴⁵ As it relates to the wider thesis, however, it is worth mentioning a few things. First, it was within Serbia's Great War period, that is between 1912 and 1918, that the myths, legends, and stories of the Chetniks emerged and became part of the Serbian national imagination and with which the Chetniks of the 1941 to 1945 period operated. These myths connected the 1941 to 1945 period to previous generations, linking them to traditions, real and imagined, of resistance and wars for independence, and turned Serbia and the Serbs into a warrior nation. As we will see in later chapters, not all stories were invented, however: the likes of Ilija Trifunović-Birčanin and other actors who had connections to the Great War period did indeed act within the JVuO period as well. But this fact has less of a cultural impact than the legends and invented traditions do. Coupled with the prewar creation of the Organisation, that is 1903 to 1912, the wider window impacted later generations. Not only did the Chetnik victories and exploits come to be part of the Serbian nationalist imagination, but so did the nation's collective defeat and suffering.

Kosta Milovanović-Pećanac and the Toplica Uprising of 1917

It is telling that when writing about their exploits, the Chetniks of "Serbia's golden age" tend to bracket around the Western European conception of the First World War (i.e., 1914-1918).²⁴⁶ For the Chetniks of this period, the pre- and post-First World War years, that is 1903-1914 and 1919-1941, represent the era in which the Chetniks reigned supreme.²⁴⁷ The First World War, however, represents a kind of dark age for Chetnik

²⁴⁵ Besides the previously cited works, see also Miroslav Svirčević, "The New Territories of Serbia after the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913: The Establishment of the First Local Authorities," *Balkanica* XLIV (2013): 285–306, doi:10.2298/BALC1344285S.

²⁴⁶ The "golden age" for Serbia was the beginning of the 20th-century precisely because it was able to (re-)gain territory from the Ottoman Empire, namely Kosovo-Metohija and Macedonia, expand its borders, and unite the South Slav peoples. See John Paul Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War: Veterans and the Limits of State Building, 1903-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 16-17.

²⁴⁷ Take, for example, Birčanin's excision of this period with the exception of the Battle of Cer in which Serbia defeated a much superior Austria-Hungary in 1914: here, the exploits of the Allies'

actions. The one exception is the 1917 Toplica Uprising, and even then, the event is more significant because of the cult that was later built around the supposed leaders of the uprising and the reprisals which emerged as a result of the uprising. Both the creation of the cult of personality and the massacres of Serb civilians would have important influences on the events of 1941 to 1945 as it relates to the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland.

The narrative which emerged about the Toplica Uprising during the interwar years, that is between 1919 and 1941, revolved around Kosta Milovanović-Pećanac and his role during the uprising. Pećanac was born in 1879 in Dečani, Kosovo, hence the suffix Pećanac.²⁴⁸ His family – father, mother, brother, and sister – were all killed by the time he was 12 by Albanian *kaçaks*. He somehow managed to escape to Serbia, was raised by his uncle, and he eventually became a border guard before later joining the Chetniks.²⁴⁹ He was named *vojvoda* of Skoplje Crna Gora (a mountain region near Skopje, not to be confused with Montenegro) on Easter Sunday, 30 April 1905, after the previous leader was killed and with no worthy local candidates to assume the position.²⁵⁰ All accounts of Pećanac's demeanour, behaviour, outlook, and mindset speak of his mild-mannered approach to political topics, capability as a leader, and calculated fearlessness; even the death of three of his children in Bulgarian internment was not enough to change any of this.²⁵¹ He was often seen in his black Chetnik uniform, *šubara* hat typical of the region, and often stroked his beard when thinking. Later, his well-kept uniform was adorned with medals won for his exploits during the Toplica Uprising.²⁵² He

first victory of the war are only briefly recounted in terms of the impact on nationalist sentiment before turning to the retreat through Albania and then re-visiting other Chetnik biographies. See Trifunović, *Krv Četnika*, 24.

²⁴⁸ Many of the *hajduks/četniks* were given or adopted cognomen, usually as a result of the area(s) in which they operated or from which they hailed. Pećanac came from the area around Peć, Jovan Stojković Babunski came from around the Babuna Mountain, and so forth.

²⁴⁹ DMITAR TASIĆ, "Pećanac, Kosta," in *1914-1918-Online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. Daniel Ute et al. (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2014), [DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10112](https://doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10112).

²⁵⁰ Krakov, *Plamen Četništva*, 201. Ilić, *Srpska Četnička Akcija*, 56.

²⁵¹ DMITAR TASIĆ, "Između Slave i Opužbe: Kosta Milovanović Pećanac, 1919," *Istorija 20. Veka*, no. 2 (2007): 119–25, 119. For the assessments of Pećanac's demeanour, see also Krakov, *Plamen Četništva*; Momčilo Pavlović, "Kosta Milovanović-Pećanac u Medjuratnoj Jugoslaviji 1918-1941," *Istorija 20. Veka* 2 (2000): 45–58, 45-46.

²⁵² Pavlović, "Kosta Milovanović-Pećanac u Medjuratnoj Jugoslaviji 1918-1941," 45-46.

would later use this reputation to his advantage to assume and retain control of the interwar Chetnik Association and to build up his own personal cult.

While the 1918 tribunal into the events of the Toplica Uprising found that Pećanac was not responsible for its eventual failure, it also found that he was not particularly responsible for its successes, either. Rather, the uprising was begun by locals of the Toplica area of southern Serbia which was under Bulgarian rule since 1915 after the Serbian Army and government had been routed out of the country into Albania, Corfu, and eventually Salonika. The other main actor, Kosta Vojinović-Kosovac was also cleared of fault for the uprising's failure but was given slightly more credit towards beginning the uprising. Neither Kosta was found to be a leader of the uprising, but rather as actors with military experience who tried to sway events toward their respective outlooks.²⁵³

For Kosovac, this meant actively recruiting and agitating against the Bulgarians while for Pećanac it meant trying to rein in the uprising. The tension between two opposing points of view – whether to fight or not, whether to pursue active engagement or to save resources for a later date – is an inherent part of the history of *četovanje*, something which we will see later emerge within the JVuO. At any rate, Kosovac was wounded during the fighting of the First World War and remained in Kosovska Mitrovica as a member of one of *Vojvoda* Vuk's Chetnik battalions at the time when the Serbian army began its retreat through Albania.²⁵⁴ Citing Bulgarian practices of *zulum*, oppression, as the reason for the increasing tension in the Toplica region, Kosovac experienced firsthand the oppression that the Bulgarian occupation brought and witnessed the killings and arbitrary punishment of the locals. From Pećanac's perspective, meanwhile, he was parachuted from Salonika to Kuršumlija in the heart of Toplica by both the army and government in September 1916 to organise an uprising but only at a time when the Serbian army was capable and prepared to stage an offensive. He was met by 10 men, the first of the 100 which would eventually form the core of his own Chetnik detachment.²⁵⁵ The two Kostas, then, had differing views of how, when and in which ways the uprising should be conducted. Though both Kostas tried to claim

²⁵³ See Tasić, "Između Slave i Opužbe: Kosta Milovanović Pećanac, 1919," 119–25.

²⁵⁴ Milivoje Perović, *Toplički Ustanak 1917* (Beograd: Slovo ljubve, 1971), 81.

²⁵⁵ Perović, *Toplički Ustanak 1917*, 81.

leadership of the uprising, the peasants actually took it upon themselves to stage defensive measures against the occupiers, shifting later to offensive attacks; the uprising would have begun with or without the presence of *vojvodas*.²⁵⁶ Regardless, by the summer of 1916, Kosovac had organised detachments around Leposavić, in Kosovo, which would eventually become the “Ibar-Kopaonik Committee Detachment” (*Ibarsko-Kopaonički komitski odred*).²⁵⁷

Much like the First Serbian Uprising in the previous century, the Toplica Uprising began as low-level resistance actions rather than outright revolt. In a November 1916 letter, for instance, Pećanac wrote to Kosovac to attack the “Austrians” while on a march to Raška. He suggested to attack from the direction of “Arnaut [Albanian] or Turkish villages, so that the enemy would suspect them” and not Serbs.²⁵⁸ Still, both Kostas and local leaders met in early 1917 to decide on when to stage the actual uprising. Throughout, Pećanac argued for restraint while Kosovac sided with the majority for all-out resistance which began in the first half of February.²⁵⁹ By the end of the month the insurgents would free Kopaonik, Lebane on 1 March, while Prokuplje and Blace would fall into rebel hands only days later. Within a week, everything west of the Aleksinac-Niš-Leskovac corridor to the Kosovo border was controlled by the insurgents.²⁶⁰ However, as the most authoritative figure on the topic said, “the greatest misfortune of this territory was that it never had unity and firm central leadership, neither military nor political and, therefore, no far-reaching, long-term plan, military or political.”²⁶¹ Thus, by the end of March, Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary would take the territory back and enact reprisals on the population, also paralleling the events of 1804 to 1813.

The manner and style of reprisals will not be recounted to any great extent except as some small examples to give a general impression of the types of suffering that the local population experienced.²⁶² Rather than a practice in vicarious sadism, the

²⁵⁶ Perović, *Toplički Ustanak 1917*, 75-76.

²⁵⁷ Perović, *Toplički Ustanak 1917*, 85.

²⁵⁸ Perović, *Toplički Ustanak 1917*, 88.

²⁵⁹ Perović, *Toplički Ustanak 1917*, 101.

²⁶⁰ The order of battle and events is detailed in Perović, *Toplički Ustanak 1917*, 130-155.

²⁶¹ Perović, *Toplički Ustanak 1917*, 172.

²⁶² The pioneering criminologist R. Archibald Reiss documented many of the crimes committed during the First World War against Serbs. See both R. Archibald Reiss, *Report upon the*

examples are important for events that would come to bear on the 1941 to 1945 period. Bulgarian troops entered the village of Oran, just west of Leskovac, in mid-March. They killed “all that was alive.”²⁶³ They soon controlled the area southwest of Leskovac from Sakicol to Miroševce, massacring civilians along the way. In Gajtan, Bulgarian troops threatened to capture and kill a *čete* commander’s family if he did not surrender. The commander refused. The Bulgarians captured his wife and four children, “none over the age of 10,” locked them in their home and set the building on fire. The area around Gajtan was closed off to prevent villagers from escaping, the roads were damaged, and the forests set on fire to kill any runaways: “There was no mercy for anyone.”²⁶⁴ Though the details may differ, the practice was repeated throughout Toplica and Kosovo where the Austro-Hungarian army armed Albanian and Turkish irregulars to hunt, capture and kill Serbs suspected, accused, or guilty of partaking in the uprising.²⁶⁵

Episodes such as this greatly impacted later events which played some role into Pećanac deciding to openly collaborate with the Nazis in 1941. Factoring in his age by the time of the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia (he was 62) and any ideological alignment with the Axis, Pećanac’s choice to collaborate becomes understandable. The reprisals from the Toplica Uprising were such an important event within the consciousness of the Serbian population, even beyond those from Toplica and other neighbouring areas, that the Second World War leader of the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland, Dragoljub Mihailović came to be influenced by them. As we will see, this greatly impacted his decision to, at most, passively resist the Axis and to allow and condone his subordinate officers to collaborate with the Germans and Italians in order to avoid reprisals.

As for Kosovac, the Central Powers issued a reward of 40,000 crowns. In pursuing him, the Bulgarians and Austro-Hungarians killed nearly every remaining *vojvoda* and liquidated nearly every *čete* save for a few individual members. Kosovac escaped somewhere into the mountains around Kosovo where he was eventually found

Atrocities Committed by the Austro-Hungarian Army during the First Invasion of Serbia (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1916) and R. Archibald Reiss, *The Kingdom of Serbia. Infringements of the Rules and Laws of War Committed by the Austro-Bulgaro-Germans: Letters of a Criminologist on the Serbian Macedonian Front* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1919).

²⁶³ Perović, *Toplički Ustanak 1917*, 195.

²⁶⁴ Perović, *Toplički Ustanak 1917*, 215.

²⁶⁵ Walter Laqueur, *Guerrilla Warfare: A Historical and Critical Study* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 130.

and killed, sometime in December 1917. The details and circumstances of his death are unknown.²⁶⁶ Pećanac, meanwhile, hid around the city of Kruševac, in the Rasina region which abuts Toplica. He emerged in spring 1918 with his band and attacked Bulgarian villages in and around Bosilegrad, on the border of Serbia and Bulgaria, setting them alight: “After I set fire to the head of the town, I returned and continued to set fire to the villages.”²⁶⁷ Eventually making his way back towards Novi Pazar, Pećanac hid out again and missed the news about the Allied breakthrough on the Salonika Front.²⁶⁸ Once aware, he continued attacks ahead of the arrival of the Serbian Army throughout September and October 1918. The Serbian and French armies eventually liberated Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania and Pećanac was vaulted as a war hero, a legend he would harness throughout the interwar period. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes²⁶⁹ was proclaimed on 1 December. The Chetniks’ goal of liberating and uniting lands where ethnic Serbs lived was realised.²⁷⁰

Postwar Violence, 1918-1923

The creation of Yugoslavia was not without birth pains, however. The immediate postwar years were met with considerable conflict throughout the new country. This pattern fits with much of the post-Great War period throughout Europe.²⁷¹ In

²⁶⁶ Perović, *Toplički Ustanak 1917*, 291-298.

²⁶⁷ Perović, *Toplički Ustanak 1917*, 242.

²⁶⁸ Perović, *Toplički Ustanak 1917*, 298.

²⁶⁹ Though the country was not renamed Yugoslavia until 1929, this was the popular, colloquial name and the subsequent official name. This dissertation will refer to the Kingdom of SCS as Yugoslavia.

²⁷⁰ Interest in the interwar Yugoslav state has peaked since the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s. Some key English works which discuss the country’s struggles, and which attempt re-assessments include Dejan Djokić, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Dejan Djokić and James Ker-Lindsay, eds., *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); Christian Axboe Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar’s Yugoslavia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); Pieter Troch, *Nationalism and Yugoslavia: Education, Yugoslavism and the Balkans before World War II* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015); Dejan Djokić, ed., *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918-1992* (London: Hurst & Company, 2003); Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006).

²⁷¹ See the various examples in Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, eds., *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). This scholarship has produced many subsequent studies. Indeed, my own work is a product of this scholarship.

Montenegro, as will be recounted later, groups called *zelenaši* (Greens) resisted that territory joining into union with Serbia and, eventually, being part of Yugoslavia. Armed resistance in Montenegro was only met by harsh reprisals by the Serbian Army, a point not soon forgotten by Green supporters.²⁷² In Macedonia and Kosovo, meanwhile, ethnic Albanians resisted being subsumed into a state for Southern Slavs, effectively making them an ethnic minority and without the same rights and privileges as the Slavs. Added to this was also the IMRO's actions in Macedonia which lasted into the 1920s to upset the balance, sovereignty, and state sponsored colonisation of the territory.²⁷³ In Croatia, meanwhile, some resistance to the union emerged but was far more subdued and less violent than in the southern parts of the country.²⁷⁴ In other words, despite the state's narrative of a centuries' long peaceful union of likeminded peoples, the creation of Yugoslavia prompted outrage, backlash, and armed resistance in nearly every corner of the country.

At the centre of this unrest were *čete* bands employed by the state to coopt, subdue, or otherwise erase resistance and uprising. Many of the prewar and wartime relationships and rivalries extended into the postwar period, with many of the same actors and bands involved. From 1903 until the 1920s “[a]lmost without a break, they [paramilitary bands] continued their actions, while at the same time maintaining the organisational structures and adapting to new political and ideological moments.”²⁷⁵ Much like the pre-1912 period, the IMRO was the biggest threat to the Yugoslav state. Yugoslavia again invested in counter-insurgency operations, creating the Organisation Against Bulgarian Bandits in 1923. This formation was intended to combat the IMRO in Yugoslav Macedonia. While on paper, Yugoslavia was implementing the rule of law and modernising its bureaucratic apparatuses, the reality was much different. Official Yugoslav narratives stated that local elites and “national workers,” much like those of the “old Chetnik” period, organised men into armed bands to combat the IMRO and received

²⁷² This is covered well in Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 286-289.

²⁷³ Albanian, Serbian, and Bulgarian dynamics from this period can be found in DMITAR TASIĆ, *Paramilitarism in the Balkans: Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania, 1917-1924* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

²⁷⁴ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, 260-270.

²⁷⁵ DMITAR TASIĆ, “The Institutionalization of Paramilitarism in Yugoslav Macedonia: The Case of the Organization Against the Bulgarian Bandits, 1923-1933,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 32, no. 3 (2019): 388–413, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13518046.2019.1646952>: 392.

approval, funding, and organisation from Belgrade.²⁷⁶ The simplicity of the organisation's name belied its true composition: yes, the group was meant to combat Bulgarian armed groups – bandits in the eyes of the state – but included people who had long been bandits, brigands, *četniks*, *komitadji*, and others who were both well-known former associates of the IMRO and long-time enemies of it.²⁷⁷ We see in this example, then, the centuries' old practice of states employing armed groups against others in a contested region, while ground-level identities remained fluid.

The Organisation Against Bulgarian Bandits' main focus was to combat the IMRO, but it also targeted non-Serbian civilians. This practice also had echoes stretching back to at least the Serbian Uprisings recounted above, and in synchronic contexts in 1920s Yugoslavia. The largest groups targeted in this period were Bosnian Muslims and Albanians, a trend which would later re-emerge in the 1941 to 1945 period under study. At the same time as the Organisation Against Bulgarian Bandits was fighting the IMRO, and as Serb settlers from other parts of Yugoslavia colonised “old” and “south” Serbia, ethnic Turk, Bosnian Muslim, and Albanian peoples were sent abroad, most often to Anatolia. Dehumanising propaganda was disseminated to portray the remaining Albanians as incapable of governing for themselves “and as the sort of element that ought to be exterminated, and elevated them to the standing that warranted their assimilation.”²⁷⁸ Their land was redistributed to the settlers and the territory was “Serbianised.”²⁷⁹ This only led to the fortification of Albanian bands, known as *kaçaks*, to defend Albanian and Muslim lives and interests.²⁸⁰ Bosnian Muslims left Yugoslavia as early as the state's creation in December 1918.²⁸¹ In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbian armed bands targeted villages, and not just against wealthy Muslim landowners but against all Muslims. The violence was such that Muslim leaders publicly stated that the Yugoslav political system “bore the stamp of systematic destruction of Muslims.”²⁸²

²⁷⁶ Tasić, “The Institutionalization of Paramilitarism in Yugoslav Macedonia: The Case of the Organization Against the Bulgarian Bandits, 1923-1933,” 395.

²⁷⁷ Tasić, “The Institutionalization of Paramilitarism in Yugoslav Macedonia: The Case of the Organization Against the Bulgarian Bandits, 1923-1933,” 404.

²⁷⁸ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, 283.

²⁷⁹ Tasić, *Paramilitarism in the Balkans: Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania*, 94.

²⁸⁰ Tasić, *Paramilitarism in the Balkans: Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania*, 96-97.

²⁸¹ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, 368.

²⁸² Quoted in Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, 368.

Rather than organising armed bands to combat the violence, as occurred in Macedonia and Kosovo, Muslim leaders organised politically and created the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation (*Jugoslavenska muslimanska organizacija*, JMO).²⁸³ Their intent was to run candidates wherever Muslims lived in Yugoslavia, and to change the dynamic through electoral politics. However, in the first elections of 1920, only 78 candidates ran, all of them in Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁸⁴ Violence against non-Serbs in Yugoslavia, meanwhile, continued throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Many of the actors of that period were much the same as the pre-Great War one; some of them, would even recur in the 1941 to 1945 narrative.

Interwar Chetnik Associations

On the tenth anniversary of the Toplica Uprising, in 1927, a group of Yugoslav military and state officials gathered in Prokuplje, the heart of the Toplica region and one of the bases of the Chetnik Organisation, to commemorate the event. A silent film recording was taken that day which still exists.²⁸⁵ One of the title slides introduces Kosta Pećanac as “the main organiser and hero of the uprising.” The next shot is of Pećanac looking into the camera, smiling, and commenting something to those around him. As the film suggests, in the decade after Serbia’s Great War, Pećanac used the myths and legends which were created about the Toplica Uprising to create an aura about himself and his actions during both the uprising and in the closing year of the war. This led him to not only eventually lead one of the most important veterans’ organisations in Yugoslavia, but to the status of a war hero.

Yet the 1920s and 1930s were a period of adjustment and change, of strife and struggle for Yugoslavia just as it was for many of the states – particularly those created as part of the “Versailles construct” – of central and eastern Europe.²⁸⁶ Along with the

²⁸³ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, 368-370.

²⁸⁴ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, 370.

²⁸⁵ *Proslava 10. Godišnjice Topličkog Ustanka*, 1927, <https://vimeo.com/232187343>.

²⁸⁶ Stevan Bozanich, “Post-War Turmoil and Violence (Yugoslavia),” in *1914-1918-Online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. Ute Daniel et al. (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, November 20, 2019), DOI: [10.15463/ie1418.11436](https://doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.11436). For comparisons throughout Central, Eastern and Southern Europe, see Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, eds., *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

nation's suffering, the Chetniks' history of violence was also engrained into the fabric of irregular warfare. At the centre of much of the conflict were the various Chetnik associations which attempted to maintain, propagate, and narrate the memory of veterans' sacrifices during Serbia's Great War. This brought the Chetniks into conflict with minority peoples of Yugoslavia, mostly Albanians and Muslims, but other ethnicities as well.²⁸⁷ The "culture of victory" that both liberated and united the South Slavs that the Chetniks hoped to propagate also put them at odds with other Yugoslav peoples, especially those who fought in the armies of the Austro-Hungarian Empire: Croatians and Muslims, but Serbs as well.²⁸⁸ The Chetnik associations also increasingly clashed with other veterans' groups, especially those which espoused a pacifist orientation as part of the veterans' internationalism movement. Whereas the organisations which came to be part of the *Fédération Interalliée des Anciens Combattants* (the Inter-Allied Ex-Serviceman's Federation, FIDAC) rejected violence, the Chetnik associations expressed it openly against rival groups, both veterans' associations and non-Serbian ethnic groups.²⁸⁹ The Chetniks were also divided internally. The first Chetnik association was established in 1921 as the Association of Chetniks for the Freedom and Honour of the Fatherland (*Udruženja četnika za slobodu i čast otadžbine*), but by 1924 the association split in two. All of this is to say that the Chetniks targeted, fought with, and competed against various segments of Yugoslav society, often employing violence in the process, to maintain the vaulted position that the Chetniks thought they deserved.

Until 1924, the Chetnik Association followed the Democratic Party (*Demokratska stranka*, DS) and its leader, Ljubomir Davidović, closely. But in 1924, the party split which forced the association into two camps: one which supported the newly established Independent Democratic Party (*Samostalna demokratska stranka*, SDS) of Svetozar Pribčević and the other which supported the People's Radical Party (*Narodna radikalna stranka*, NRS) of Nikola Pašić.²⁹⁰ The NRS had the support of the larger Chetnik

²⁸⁷ Tasić, "Između Slave i Opužbe: Kosta Milovanović Pećanac, 1919," 120-121.

²⁸⁸ John Paul Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War: Veterans and the Limits of State Building, 1903-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 53.

²⁸⁹ For some of these other veterans' associations, see Danilo Šarenac, "Udruženje Rezervnih Oficira i Ratnika, 1919-1941," *Istorija 20. Veka* 1 (2011): 27-38; Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*.

²⁹⁰ For the differences between the Democrats and Radicals, specifically as it relates to the early-1920s but in Vojvodina, see Zoltán Dévavári, "Violence as the Weapon of Political Parties. The

association, the Association of Serbian Chetniks Petar Mrkonjić (*Udruženje srpski četnika Petar Mrkonjić*) led by Puniša Račić, a member of parliament. The division, violent practices, and various external conflicts, just as in previous centuries, brought the Chetniks into conflict with the state. Unable to reign them in, the state increasingly marginalised them while conversely the Chetniks refused to be dictated to by a state which seemed to reject them and their narrative of a “culture of liberty and unification.”²⁹¹ Much of the violence came around times of parliamentary elections, that is the years 1923, 1925, and 1927, though certainly not exclusively. The violence they exhibited was mostly orchestrated and perpetrated by members of the Organisation of Yugoslav Nationalists (*Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista*, ORJUNA) and the Serbian Nationalist Youth (*Srpska nacionalna omladina*, SRNAO).²⁹² The state exploited the divisions amongst the Chetnik associations and political parties, and it leveraged individual animosities to the state’s favour. Meanwhile, the Chetniks and their supporters used the Crown-State rivalry to further their own causes. During the “100-day Government” of Democratic Party leader Ljubomir Davidović, for example, King Aleksandar’s “White Hand” contingent of officers “distribute[d] weapons to the Chetniks, ORJUNA, and other (Serbian) militarist groups so that they could, when the time came, help to defend the state” against what the king perceived to be a left-wing attack by the Democrats.²⁹³ In other words, the volatile situation that was interwar Europe was being exploited by various factions for their own personal gain, and the Chetniks were only one contingent of this milieu. For their part, both Pećanac and Ilija Trifunović-Birčanin, another of the “old Chetniks” who will later feature in Dalmatia, were members of the ORJUNA. Through ORJUNA, the two *vojvode* were also responsible for spreading Chetnik ideologies to areas of Dalmatia as early as 1924. While neither elder partook in the violence, they certainly did not shy away from stoking it, giving speeches during recruitment rallies in Dubrovnik and Split, for example.²⁹⁴

Operation of ORJUNA and SRNAO in Vojvodina (1922-1924),” *Istraživanja/Journal of Historical Researches* 28 (2017): 147–70, <https://doi.org/10.19090/i.2017.28.147-170>.

²⁹¹ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 59-60.

²⁹² For more on ORJUNA and one of its key members, see Nikola Žutić, “Niko Bartulović i Slovenački Jugoslaveni 1918-1935,” *Istorija 20. Veka* 32, no. 1 (2014): 51–76.

²⁹³ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 71-72.

²⁹⁴ Žutić, “Niko Bartulović i Slovenački Jugoslaveni,” 69-70.

ORJUNA was populated by young men, many of whom did not actually fight during Serbia's Great War but who, nevertheless, claimed lineage to the war generation. Like the Chetniks, the ORJUNA supported the DS and, after 1924, the SDS of Svetozar Pribčević.²⁹⁵ As the name suggests, ORJUNA advocated a Yugoslav ideology that would eventually place Serbs at the top of Yugoslavia's ethnic hierarchy. Their ideological conception can be said to be of a "Greater Yugoslavia" variety, that is a state "stretching from Trieste to Varna and from Szeged to Thessaloniki," and influenced by Italian Fascism, and employing terror typical of contemporary far-right groups.²⁹⁶ Conversely, SRNAO were Serb nationalists which advocated a Great Serb ideology, which included expanding Serbia's borders at the expense of the other provinces of the country, most notably Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. SRNAO was essentially the Radical Party's "response" to ORJUNA and the Democrats.²⁹⁷ Though both groups were ideologically opposed to one another, they helped to erode public trust in the parliamentary process of interwar Yugoslavia.²⁹⁸ Similarly, both SRNAO and ORJUNA represent the two nationalist currents amongst ethnic Serb nationalists: those who put Yugoslavism first and those who favoured Serbianism above all. In many respects, both types of nationalism would come to be represented in the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland.

At the same time, many of the Chetnik veterans shied away from politics except for a select few, most notably Puniša Račić who was a member of parliament in the 1920s as a member of NRS. As a Chetnik, and like his paramilitary counterparts both in Yugoslavia and abroad, Račić took part in the pacification efforts in the immediate postwar period in Montenegro, his home country.²⁹⁹ He supported the state's

²⁹⁵ The Independent Democrats were formed prior to Davidović's "Hundred Day Government," hence the arming of ORJUNA against the party. Clearly the "White Hand" were attempting to exploit cleavages between the two parties. Žutić, "Niko Bartulović i Slovenački Jugoslaveni," 66.

²⁹⁶ Vasilije Dragosavljević, "Association of Fighters of Yugoslavia (1929-1935): Ideology - Practice - Outcome," *Istraživanja, Journal of Historical Researches*, no. 30 (December 25, 2019): 234–55, <https://doi.org/10.19090/i.2019.30.234-255>, 235. Žutić quotes something similar: "One state from the Black Sea to the 'blue' Adriatic, from Radgona and Klagenfurt to Shkodra and Thessaloniki." See Žutić, "Niko Bartulović i Slovenački Jugoslaveni," 67.

²⁹⁷ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 155.

²⁹⁸ Bozanich, "Post-War Turmoil and Violence (Yugoslavia)."

²⁹⁹ As well as Montenegro, the Chetniks were tasked with pacifying the new territories of Macedonia, Kosovo-Metohija, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and even Croatia. Pećanac, Račić, Jovan Stojković-Babunski and other *vojvodas* engaged their men in such practices, similar to other paramilitaries in Central and Eastern Europe. See Gerwarth and Horne, eds., *War in Peace* and Tasić, "Između Slave i Opužbe: Kosta Milovanović Pećanac, 1919."

centralisation efforts and advocated a stronger Serbian identity within the first Chetnik association (i.e., 1921-1924). His Greater Serbian outlook aligned well with the NRS, hence his membership. With his and the Radicals' victory in the 1925 elections, Račić became a key figure in both the Serbian Chetniks Petar Mrkonjić and in Yugoslav politics. While the "old Chetniks" were responsible for liberating, uniting, and pacifying the south, they also brought terror and violence to Muslim and Croat villages during the interwar period. They brawled in the streets and effectively became a party militia for the NRS. They brought the violence from the countryside into the city. And, in 1928, Račić brought terror into the *Skupština*.

Račić and Radić

In November 1927 the Croatian Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka*, HSS) of Stjepan Radić entered an opposition coalition with Pribičević's SDS. This relationship was a surprise to many since the two party leaders were long-time rivals, but they managed to unite over critiques of the ruling government: corruption, increasing party bureaucracy, local self-governance, and political gerrymandering, to say nothing of the violence the NRS wielded against opponents.³⁰⁰ As a coalition, the Peasant-Democrats secured a majority in the *Skupština* but the crown refused to grant them a mandate, opting instead for the NRS. Together, they placed themselves in opposition to the ruling NRS and their centralising efforts and their foreign affairs policies.³⁰¹

The outspoken Peasant-Democrat opposition further united the Serbian nationalist wing and the NRS leading to an intense political environment. Throughout the spring of 1928, rivalries between the faction which supported Račić on the one hand and Radić on the other were brewing for weeks. Diatribes, name calling, and insults were hurled from one side of the *Skupština* to the other and even spilled onto the pages of the press. On 19 June, Radić said that things were so bad that "a psychological disposition for murder is being created here."³⁰² That same night, Radić was warned not to go to the *Skupština* in the morning after death threats were made against him. He went,

³⁰⁰ Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization, 1904-1918* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: Toronto University Press, 2000), 227-229.

³⁰¹ Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 236-238.

³⁰² Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 238.

nevertheless. The next day, on 20 June, Račić gave a provocative speech which garnered ire from the opposition. A shouting match ensued and, when HSS deputy Ivan Pernar shouted an insult, Račić pulled out a pistol and shot Radić in the abdomen. Four other deputies – Đuro Basariček, Pavle Radić, Ivan Pernar, and Ivan Granđa – were shot, too. Pavle Radić and Basariček died immediately or soon after. Radić succumbed to his injuries on 8 August 1928.³⁰³

The murder in the *Skupština* greatly affected Yugoslav politics. King Aleksandar banned all political parties and declared a dictatorship on 6 January 1929, officially renaming the country Yugoslavia in the process. ORJUNA, SRNAO, Association of Serbian Chetniks Petar Mrkonjić, and other societies, groups and organisations were also dissolved. The country embarked on a mission to create Yugoslavs out of the trinomial peoples of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and of course the Chetniks played their part in this process. Many Chetniks welcomed the shift to dictatorship, seeing the parliamentary system as fundamentally flawed and anathema to their political goals. Individual actions and the king having support of many in the country aside, as the leading historian of interwar Yugoslavia, Dejan Đokić commented,

The Serb-Croat rivalry, political conflicts irrespective of ethnic, cultural and historical divisions, the inability of the country's leaders to find a lasting compromise, and the King's autocratic tendencies, combined with democracy's retreat across Europe, were the main reasons for the tragic turn of events in 1928-9.³⁰⁴

Despite democracy's withdrawal, or perhaps because of it, Aleksandar allowed the creation of the Association of Chetniks (*Udruženja četnika*) to be created in place of the Petar Mrkonjić Chetniks.³⁰⁵ Just like *Narodna Odbrana*'s pacification during the Black Hand era, however, Aleksandar conceived of the Chetniks becoming a cultural society which focused on commemorating the war dead. In the meantime, Birčanin resurrected

³⁰³ Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 239.

³⁰⁴ Dejan Djokić, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 74.

³⁰⁵ Interestingly, it was at the behest of Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior, later Minister for the Army, Navy and Air Force, former Black Hand, and member of the Petar Mrkonjić Chetniks, Petar Živković, that King Aleksandar allowed for a restitution of a Chetnik Association. See Pavlović, "Kosta Milovanović-Pećanac u Medjuratnoj Jugoslaviji 1918-1941," 55. Consolidating groups, organisations and associations into one uniform entity was part of state policy. The same was done for the *Sokol* gymnastic/cultural groups, women's cultural groups, hunting clubs, and other social, sporting, and recreational associations.

the *Narodna Odbrana* as a political entity while Pećanac took control of the Association of Chetniks.³⁰⁶

The 1930s and the Coming War

To be sure, Birčanin was president of the Chetnik Association between 1929 and 1932 after which Pećanac took control.³⁰⁷ However, while Birčanin's leadership maintained the "staunch pro-Allied sympathies" of the wartime generation and supported Aleksandar's aim of an overpowering Yugoslav identity, even after the king's assassination in Marseille in 1934, Pećanac advocated for a Serbian identity and an ever increasing shift to the far-right.³⁰⁸ With the dictatorship relaxing after 1934 under the regency of Prince Paul, organisations, associations and political parties were again allowed to exist. Pećanac and the association followed similar trajectories as some of these other groups of the 1930s, such as Dimitrije Ljotić's Zbor.³⁰⁹ He was able to tour the country, often with military accompaniment, set up new chapters of the Chetnik Association and actively recruited new members, many of whom were too young to have experienced warfare during Serbia's Great War.³¹⁰ In opposition to this, Birčanin maintained that the Chetnik Association should be exclusively for veterans. He took more of an "activist approach" rather than what transpired in the years immediately after

³⁰⁶ Other associations and groups were re-fashioned or went underground during the 6 January Dictatorship, as it came to be called. For ORJUNA's successor, the Association of Fighters of Yugoslavia see Dragosavljević, "Association of Fighters of Yugoslavia (1929-1935): Ideology - Practice – Outcome."

³⁰⁷ Pavlović, "Kosta Milovanović-Pećanac u Medjuratnoj Jugoslaviji 1918-1941," 54.

³⁰⁸ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 215.

³⁰⁹ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 232. For more on Zbor, see Maria Falina, "Between 'Clerical Fascism' and Political Orthodoxy: Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Interwar Serbia," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 2: 'Clerical Fascism' in Interwar Europe (2007): 247–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14690760701321155>; Miloš Martić, "Dimitrije Ljotić and the Yugoslav National Movement Zbor, 1935-1945," *East European Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 219. For Zbor within its wider European context, especially in relation to Nazi racial and Italian fascist ideology, see Ana Antić, "Living in the Age of Axis Internationalism: Imagining Europe in Serbia Before and During the Second World War," *European History Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2018): 61–91. For Ljotić and Zbor during the Second World War, see Zoran Janjetović, "Dimitrije Ljotić and World War II," *Istorija 20. Veka*, no. 1 (2018): 93-118. For the various parties and organisations on the right, see John Paul Newman, "War Veterans, Fascism, and Para-Fascist Departures in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1918-1941," *Fascism* 6 (2017): 42–74, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00601003>.

³¹⁰ Pavlović, "Kosta Milovanović-Pećanac u Medjuratnoj Jugoslaviji 1918-1941," 55.

the king's death.³¹¹ The two made the break official in 1938 when Pećanac separated the Association from the Society of Old Chetniks (*Društvo starih četnika*). Because of the former's ties to the regime, the Old Chetniks sided with the opposition parties.³¹²

For its part, *Narodna Odbrana* took on the activist tones that Birčanin advocated as president of the Chetnik Association. It claimed legitimacy through and a heritage emanating from the prewar Chetniks originating in 1903 and lauded the sacrifices made during the Great War. The catastrophic 1920s were a direct result of the marginalisation of the Chetniks and those sacrifices, *Narodna Odbrana* maintained, and it was "precisely the neglect of the traditions of liberation and unification that had led the South Slavs to their present state of dis-integration [sic]."³¹³ This ideological alignment had many flaws, not the least of which was that it couched Greater Serbianism within Yugoslav ideals; it also furthered the divide between Serbs and other Yugoslavs, to say nothing of the various minorities in the country. Similarly, *Narodna Odbrana* was concerned with divisions within the Serbs themselves. They saw the ideologies of Greater Serbism and Yugoslavism amongst Serbs as one core example of such division. Overlapping membership in the various Chetnik associations of the 1920s, as well as ORJUNA, SRNAO, and the other pseudo-cultural-cum-political organisations only exacerbated the Serb-Yugoslav ideological divide. As defenders of Serbia's "golden age," *Narodna Odbrana* further lauded the prewar Serbian state, and turned much of their attention back to Kosovo, Metohija and Macedonia. Tied to all of this was the view that younger generations, knowing only a dysfunctional Yugoslavia, were disconnected and detached from the past. The Chetniks, then, had a "pedagogic role that veterans should play in the new state: teaching the new generation about the cause for which they had fought, imbibing a new generation of South Slavs with the values of liberation and unification."³¹⁴ In a word, indoctrination.

Throughout the 1930s, and especially after 1934, *Narodna Odbrana* maintained that it was the carrier of Aleksandar's Yugoslavising mission. With the imposition of Milan Stojadinović as Prime Minister in 1937 and Prince Paul as regent for the underage

³¹¹ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 216-217.

³¹² Pavlović, "Kosta Milovanović-Pećanac u Medjuratnoj Jugoslaviji 1918-1941," 55.

³¹³ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 217.

³¹⁴ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 217-219.

Crown Prince Petar, Birčanin and *Narodna Odbrana* came increasingly at odds with the regime. The Concordat crisis, at the centre of this conflict, came to a head in 1937 when Patriarch Varnava died suddenly. Vocal opponents of giving any concessions to the Holy See, mostly Serbs, accused the regime of assassinating him. Birčanin was arrested after delivering the eulogy at the patriarch's funeral in which he openly accused the regime of murder. While *Narodna Odbrana* drifted further away from the regime, Stojadinović kept a steady eye on the organisation afraid that it was planning a *coup d'état*.³¹⁵ But vocal opposition, however vitriolic, is far from action and Birčanin and *Narodna Odbrana* remained relatively passive, at least in action. It would take until March 1941, and the leadership of Dragiša Cvetković, for Birčanin and other conspirators to overthrow the government with help from Great Britain.

Guerrilla Warfare as State Policy

Yugoslavia did not plan for guerrilla warfare. There were only two handbooks issued in the entire 23-year period of the country's existence before the outbreak of the Second World War. The first was issued in 1929, confidentially as *Uput za četničko ratovanje* (Handbook on Guerrilla Warfare).³¹⁶ The handbook distinguishes between two types of guerrilla warfare. First is the "small war," literally so in Spanish, or *Kleinkrieg* in German or *mali rat* in Serbian. This type of warfare relates to an occupied territory and can occur with or without the completion of specific operations. When a much larger army attacks a much smaller army, the smaller army cannot confront the larger one head-on for any sort of success and so relies on indirect combat. "In all of these [examples], the goal is to hinder the enemy's work for as long as possible by a long-lasting and planned action, and ultimately to thwart the intended action, or at least to create opportunities under which the enemy's intention could be completely or partially removed."³¹⁷

The other type of guerrilla warfare is *četovanje*. This is understood as "enterprises of small divisions (companies) on the wings, flanks or in the rear of the

³¹⁵ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 234-236.

³¹⁶ Ministarstvo Vojske i Mornarice, "Uput Za Četničko Ratovanje" (Štamp. Radion. Ministarstva Vojske i Mornarice, 1929).

³¹⁷ Ministarstvo Vojske i Mornarice, "Uput Za Četničko Ratovanje," 1.

enemy, in connection with or independently of the operations of the operational troops.”³¹⁸ Such “enterprises” include sabotage, stoking rebellion, rear actions designed to thwart, subvert, or distract the enemy, and other similar actions. As expected, “[t]he main goal of all these companies is to inflict as much material and moral damage on the enemy as possible, with as few casualties as possible.”³¹⁹ The rest of the pamphlet outlines supplying and outfitting the guerrillas, how such units are to operate, and the organisation and command structure of the units within the larger army.³²⁰

The only other document issued during the interwar period was a special report by the Yugoslav General Staff in 1938 and dealt with modernising guerrilla warfare. This report discussed using members of the Chetnik Association in the event of invasion. However, the role that Chetniks played in Serbia’s Great War would be taken over by airborne troops.³²¹ Presumably this means actions similar to Pećanac’s role during the Toplica Uprising, that is parachuting behind enemy lines and conducting clandestine operations. In other words, “the Yugoslav army leadership did not contemplate any extended use of guerrilla warfare in the event of an invasion.”³²² Similarly, no importance was accorded to the Chetnik Association.

Even so, in war plan “R40” and its adaptation “R41,” a Chetnik Command (*Četnička komanda*) was created in April 1940 which made up six battalions and one partial battalion recruited from volunteers of the regular army.³²³ Each battalion was assigned to each command of an army, one each in Novi Sad, Sarajevo, Skopje, Karlovac, Niš, and Mostar. The head command, headed by Chief of Staff Major General Dušan Anđelković, was located first in Niš and then in Kraljevo.³²⁴ In April 1941, with the onslaught of the Axis invasion, the command withdrew to Sarajevo and surrendered with the Sarajevo Chetnik battalion on 18 April. Tomasevich importantly notes “[t]here is no

³¹⁸ Ministarstvo Vojske i Mornarice, “Uput Za Četničko Ratovanje,” 2. Brackets used in the original. The word *četa* was used, translating as “companies.”

³¹⁹ Ministarstvo Vojske i Mornarice, “Uput Za Četničko Ratovanje,” 2.

³²⁰ Ministarstvo Vojske i Mornarice, “Uput Za Četničko Ratovanje,” 19-65.

³²¹ Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: The Chetniks* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 121.

³²² Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 121.

³²³ Pavlović, “Kosta Milovanović-Pećanac u Medjuratnoj Jugoslaviji 1918-1941,” 56.

³²⁴ Pavlović, “Kosta Milovanović-Pećanac u Medjuratnoj Jugoslaviji 1918-1941,” 56.

record that any of the other Chetnik battalions was used for the purpose for which it was established or that any of them, or even portions of them, survived in an organised way or acted after the collapse of the Yugoslav army.”³²⁵

Though the army and the state attempted only a few times to create or conceptualise Chetnik warfare during the interwar period, it was never employed in any reasonable or meaningful way. Given the importance afforded to irregular warfare within the national mindset of various Yugoslav peoples, especially the Serbs, it is rather surprising that guerrilla warfare should be neglected. This certainly signals the lack of foresight on the part of Yugoslavia’s military establishment to not take into consideration the later trends which would emerge, not only in the Second World War but during the Cold War and beyond. At worst, it was negligent to not even consider the very structure of warfare which liberated, unified, and narrated the lives of Yugoslavia and its peoples.

“Better war than a pact”³²⁶

Just as in 1903, a group of officers, this time from the air force, conspired to overthrow the government. More spontaneously, perhaps, than the 1903 coup, the 1941 takeover was motivated by the government signing on to the Tripartite Pact with Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Imperial Japan, as well as the smaller countries of Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and, just a few weeks before the coup, Bulgaria on 25 March. People protested in the streets of the main Yugoslav cities, most especially in Belgrade but elsewhere as well, chanting “*Bolje rat nego pakt*” (Better war than the pact) and “*Bolje grob nego rob*” (Better the grave than a slave). In fairness to the regime, Yugoslavia was surrounded by Axis signatories, all of whom had revisionary mindsets in relation to the “Versailles construct.” Of course, Yugoslavia’s cozying up to Berlin and Rome under the Stojadinović regime in the years prior did not help in this last regard. Regardless, the officers were looking for an opportunity to overthrow the regime, specifically Prince Paul as the regent and thus gatekeeper of Yugoslavia’s leadership. Many in the officer corps were dissatisfied with Yugoslavia’s foreign policy, but there is evidence to suggest that

³²⁵ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 121.

³²⁶ This translates to “*Bolje rat nego pakt*” and was chanted by the protestors against the signing of the Tripartite Pact discussed in this chapter.

the internal politics of the country took precedence in planning the coup; the signing only provided the impetus to enact it.

Unlike in the 1903 coup, Chetniks did not feature as prominently in 1941. Rather, the involvement of Chetniks from the interwar associations extended only to Birčanin who, as a staunch Allied supporter, was in the pay of the British. Though it is unclear whether and to what extent he was involved, he certainly knew about the plan ahead of time. This limited role, however, did not stop Chetniks from including the mythology of the coup into their own nationalist narratives. Indeed, even Churchill, upon hearing of the revolt, remarked that “the Yugoslav nation found its soul.”³²⁷ Others, such as Birčanin, Petar Živković, and the brothers Radoje and Živan Knežević, joined what would become the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland led by Dragoljub “Draža” Mihailović.³²⁸ Myths and inaccuracies about Croatian and Muslim treachery and passivity during the coup and the subsequent April War became ingrained within the Serb nationalist narrative.

With Prince Paul and the Cvetković government deposed, the 17-year-old Petar Karađorđević was declared of age and named King Peter II. Like his grandfather and namesake, the younger Peter came to power through the actions of others. Air force General Dušan Simović formed the new cabinet as Prime Minister and assumed control as Chief of the General Staff of the Royal Yugoslav Army. Despite attempts to assure Germany of their adherence to the pact, Hitler was furious and ordered Directive Number 25: the invasion of Yugoslavia.³²⁹ The invasion began on 6 April and was over almost as soon as it began. The army was routed. The king, the government, much of the remaining army, and others escaped Yugoslavia, first to Athens, then Cairo, Jerusalem and ultimately London where they would stay until 1944. An armistice, which was effectively an unconditional surrender, was signed on 17 April.³³⁰ Yugoslavia was defeated.

Yugoslavia did not prepare for guerrilla warfare; indeed, they were unprepared for warfare of any sort. Yet, a group of Royal Yugoslav Army officers refused to

³²⁷ Quoted in Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 47.

³²⁸ Recall Živković’s influence over King Aleksandar in 1929 to reinstitute the Chetnik Association during the dictatorship.

³²⁹ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 64.

³³⁰ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 73.

surrender. They took to the hills from their position in north-central Bosnia and made their way for western Serbia. They both lost and found other soldiers and officers along the way, setup camp, and eventually sent out fact finding missions to try and find other likeminded soldiers and officers. Though they gathered some supporters and won the support of the local peasantry, they came to find that very few officers shared the same mindset. They were armed and, except for the goodwill of the neighbouring villages, alone on Ravna Gora Mountain. This was the beginning of what would become the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland.

Chapter 2. “From Topola to Ravna Gora”:³³¹ The Ideological Influences of the Ravna Gora Movement of Draža Mihailović

Lay of the Land

This chapter outlines the political program of the Ravna Gora Movement, that is specifically the core group of officers, politicians, and soldiers directly under the command of Draža Mihailović. Rather than trace the origins of Mihailović, his birth and family upbringing, I will instead focus on the cultural, social, and political signposts that developed along the way to both Mihailović’s emergence as a General in the Royal Yugoslav Army (7 December 1941)³³² and appointment as Minister of War (11 January 1942),³³³ and the movement of which he was in charge.³³⁴ The path will not always be

³³¹ Translation: *Od Topole pa do Ravne Gore*. This is a lyric which comes from a popular Chetnik song and seeks to connect the Ravna Gora Movement to the Serbian uprisings in previous centuries. See <https://youtu.be/OprBF1gGvOA>.

³³² Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 163 n. 136.

³³³ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 270-271.

³³⁴ The more traditional biographies of Mihailović have tended to be from the pro-Chetnik perspective. Most biographical information has come from monographs and volumes dealing with the war in Yugoslavia more generally and typically comment on Mihailović’s record as a soldier and officer with very little about him as a person. See, for example, the brief sketch on Mihailović in Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 465-470. Or, if there is information about his personality, it usually comes from pro-Chetnik writers and former Chetniks themselves who characterise Mihailović as loving, caring, gentle, etc. See, Fotich, *The War We Lost*, 144-160. More recent biographies have continued in this strain but have sought archival sources on top of the eyewitness accounts of those who met Mihailović (i.e., his officers and soldiers, politicians, British or American attachés, etc.), as well as the secondary sources of the types listed above. However, all biographies are generally favourable and refuse to see Mihailović in any negative light, however dim. For recent biographies, see Miloslav Samardžić, *General Draža Mihailović i Opšta Istorija Četničkog Pokreta* (Kragujevac: Novi pogledi, 2005); Jean-Christophe Buisson, *Héros Trahi Par Les Alliés: Le Général Mihailović, 1893-1946* (Paris: Perrin, 1999); Pero Simić, *Draža Mihailović: Na Krstu Sudbine* (Beograd: Laguna, 2013); Bojan Dimitrijević and Kosta Nikolić, *General Draža Mihailović Biografija: Skrivna Historija* (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2011). To put into perspective the quality of these recent attempts, Samardžić and Buisson are journalists who write popular history books. Samardžić can be described as a revisionist, and regularly obfuscates the historical record in order to meet that goal. Buisson, on the other hand, has won multiple awards for his history work including the Prix Auguste Gérard de l’Academie des sciences morales et politiques awarded by L’Institut de France for this biography (see Veljko Stanić, “Review: *Jean-Christophe Buisson, Mihailović (1893-1946): Héros Trahi Par Les Alliés*. Perrin, Collection Tempus, 2011, Pp. 350,” *Balkanica* XLI (n.d.): 268–71.). While Samardžić’s biography is clearly biased and obscurant, Buisson’s is far more balanced though he does certainly favour Mihailović. The title of Simić’s biography summarises his views of Mihailović and can be classified as closer to Samardžić’s view and rigour than the others. Nikolić and Dimitrijević, on the other hand, are much

chronological or linear, opting instead for thematic because of the interwoven nature of the JVuO's politics. This chapter analyses the Ravna Gora Movement's ideological ancestors, as it were, to arrive at an understanding of the movement's worldviews. I argue that both Mihailović, and thus Ravna Gora and the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland (*Jugoslovenska vojska u otadžbinu*, JVuO), were influenced by the interwar period and that the ideas of the movement developed – but did not fundamentally change – over time, even in the late stages of the war when all else seemed lost. This is outlined in the section on the Ba Congress. In other words, the Ravna Gora Movement, the JVuO, and Mihailović possessed political programs from early on. This argument is in contrast to many historians of the Chetniks who argue that the Ba Congress was an attempt to fundamentally change the character of the “Chetnik movement” from what it was previously (i.e., Serb dominated, ethnically chauvinistic, un-political, etc.). The creation “of the Yugoslav Democratic National Union was the most important outcome of the congress.” Perhaps so, but Tomasevich's reasoning is that the party's creation signals the JVuO entering the political arena. In contrast, I argue that the JVuO was political and had political goals from the outset.³³⁵

This chapter consists of several parts. Beginning with Mihailović's own development into a political and military actor, the chapter follows the other political, military, cultural and social influences on Mihailović and, eventually, the Ravna Gora Movement and the JVuO. The Serbian Cultural Club (*Srpska kulturna klub*, SKK) emerges as important in this development, as does the political parties which came to support Mihailović. Tied to both are certain ideologues – Dragiša Vasić, Stevan Moljević, Slobodan Jovanović, Mladen Žujović, Živko Topalović and others – who either populated the Ravna Gora Movement or supported it from afar. They provided the political tracts, pamphlets, and agendas for the Ravna Gora Movement which eventually informed the course by which Mihailović, his officers and soldiers would wage war. They also

closer to Buisson in terms of their balance and quality of historical rigour. However, like Buisson, they lean very obviously to being pro-Chetnik; they have also been leaders in attempts to rehabilitate Mihailović's 1946 conviction for war crimes. Mihailović, for many reasons, has not had the same academic interest outside of Serbia as some of the other Second World War figures have. An evenly balanced and critically rigorous biography has yet to be written that is not tinged by either political viewpoint (i.e., pro-Chetnik or pro-Partisan).

³³⁵ Tomasevich, for example, argues that Mihailović and the JVuO were not politically inclined and that only in Ba in 1944 did they take on political tones. See Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 399-407; quote from 403.

articulated a policy of genocide against ethnic non-Serbs, mostly Croats and Muslims, but others as well. This chapter also discusses the ideological, political, and other reasons for the Chetnik-Partisan civil war that began in late-summer and fall 1941, as well as the internal tensions present within the wider JVuO. It is this tension, both between the Partisans and JVuO and amongst the JVuO themselves, that led to a crisis of identity. Mihailović wanted to create a professional army with guerrilla detachments, while many of his subordinates insisted on maintaining guerrilla identities and practices throughout, as expressed through *četovanje*. Ultimately, the Ravna Gora Movement failed to turn the JVuO into a professional army. The latter increasingly collaborated with the Axis, targeted non-Serb civilians, and fought amongst themselves, while the Partisans moved from strength to strength and supplanted the JVuO, and the Chetniks, as the army of Yugoslavia.

Creating Mihailović

The centre of the Ravna Gora Movement is Mihailović, thus it is imperative to understand his ideological construction and worldviews immediately prior to the start of the war in Yugoslavia in April 1941. As an officer in the Royal Yugoslav Army, Mihailović was steeped in both the military education and the ideological framework of interwar Yugoslavia. As we saw in Chapter 1, the structure of interwar Yugoslav ideology changed after the 6 January 1929 dictatorship from allowing diversity amongst Yugoslavia's constituent peoples, most importantly to the present study is Serbian nationalism, to an exclusive Yugoslav nationalism. The former path was followed by Chetniks such as Kosta Milovanović-Pećanac.³³⁶ Though not a member of the Ravna Gora Movement, his status as a Chetnik leader from 1905 and war hero from 1917 onwards Pećanac took on heroic proportions. He became a wartime collaborator of the quisling Nedić regime and slipped into relative obscurity. In the Serb nationalist outlook, Yugoslavia should be controlled by Serbs at all levels of the state apparatus. Other ethnic groups could exist within such a Yugoslavia, so long as they were passive and

³³⁶ See for example, Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 233. The interwar Chetnik Association's papers under the leadership of Pećanac are in the Archives of Yugoslavia: see, Arhiv Jugoslavije-343, fascikle 1-6. In a number of documents, the hatred towards "communists, Frankists [Croat separatists], and other separatist-destructionist propagandists" is hi-lighted. See AJ-343, fa. 1, dok. 4.

subordinated to the Serbian national ideal.³³⁷ This is exemplified in Pećanac's role beginning in 1905 in which he "cleansed" non-Serb areas and attempted to undermine non-Serb authority in the region of Kosovo-Metohija, Macedonia, and Novi Pazar well into the 1930s.

Integral Yugoslav nationalism as propagated and articulated by King Aleksandar I, on the other hand, was an unevenly articulated and executed attempt to create Yugoslavs.³³⁸ That is, the reign of King Aleksandar attempted to allow for minimal nuances amongst Yugoslavia's constituent peoples – Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes – and instead attempted to fashion a Yugoslav identity, one in which differences were flattened. This is not to say that the regime did not allow for different nations, but that one's ethnic identity must be couched within an overarching Yugoslav national identity. However, one glaring hole in this logic was the emphasis on Serbia's role in unifying the Yugoslav peoples. As such, a strong Yugoslavia meant a strong Serbia.³³⁹ This path was followed by Chetniks such as Ilija Trifunović-Birčanin, the interwar leader of the Association of the Serb Chetniks for Freedom and the Fatherland (1929-1932) and a chairman of the nationalist *Narodna Odbrana* (National Defence) which sought to free South Slavs from foreign rule during the pre-First World War years and which later tried to assert the role of Chetniks as the vanguard of Serbia's legacy of independence and unification.³⁴⁰ In fact, it was this difference in perspective as represented by the two men

³³⁷ It is difficult to say because it never transpired, but it provides an interesting thought exercise to entertain the idea that non-Serb ethnicities could have become "marked citizens," that is non-Serbian ethnicities constantly having their allegiance to the dominant narrative of Serbian warriors' sacrifices for freedom and unity questioned. On "marked citizens," see Gyanendra Pandey, *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), especially chapter 6.

³³⁸ This process is very well articulated in Christian Axboe Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar's Yugoslavia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

³³⁹ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 217-219.

³⁴⁰ Of course, these are ideal types and are meant heuristically. This approach necessarily ignores the nuances of Serb nationalism from the interwar period but is sufficient for our purposes without delving too deeply into the twists and turns which would require its own study. I am thankful to John Paul Newman for pointing out that the concept of Yugoslavism followed three dynamic periods: 1921-1929, 1929-1934 and 1934-1941. I would add that, based on primary source evidence, the last period had two distinctive moments, too. From 1939 and the impact of the *Sporazum*, detailed later in this study, and from 1940 to 1941 as a result of the war in Europe and the growing concern of invasion of Yugoslavia by Germany. For a good overview of the interwar nuances of Serb and Yugoslav nationalisms, see Chapter 3 of Mark Biondich, *The Balkans: Revolution, War, and Political Violence since 1878* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

– one of couched Serbian identity within an overarching Yugoslav one or an exclusive Serb nationalism – that led to the split in the interwar Chetnik association resulting in two Chetnik organisations: one led by Trifunović-Birčanin and the other led by Pećanac.³⁴¹

It is also precisely this tension between these two strains of Serbian nationalism that not only tore the Chetnik Association in two, but which also weakened the Serbian nation during the interwar period and led opponents of the regime to perceive the Serb dominance of the interwar state as being dysfunctional, nationalistic, and hegemonic. Though integral Yugoslav nationalism and extreme Serbian nationalism were the two main nationalist ideologies of Serbs in the interwar period, they were not the only ones. Yet it is usually one of these two strains with which Mihailović is painted. Are either one accurate? Did Mihailović adhere to either of these ideologies? Or was it something else entirely? Though a complete picture cannot be ascertained because there is little archival evidence, looking to Mihailović's generational contemporaries will help to better understand Mihailović's prewar ideological make up.

What did it mean to be an officer in the Royal Yugoslav Army in the 1930s and early-1940s? For those of Mihailović's generation, and for one from Serbia, one's career trajectory would generally entail schooling at the elementary level and studying the Serbian language, "geography with history" and Serbian history.³⁴² This would provide one with a general knowledge of the country and the world, while also preparing them for a career in the trades, military, or some other technical vocation. Only in the 1920s did Yugoslavism become part of the educational canon, and by then Mihailović was already approaching 30-years old.³⁴³ Mihailović seems to have been a relatively unremarkable student, neither exemplary nor bad. Certainly, he had knowledge of Serbian folklore which included the poems, songs, kolo dances, and other elements, while also knowing some of the Serbian history, geography, and other cultural components of Serbian

³⁴¹ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 215.

³⁴² Schooling in Serbia was different than schooling in Croatia, even once the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was founded. See, Charles Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms: Textbooks and Yugoslav Union before 1914* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1990), 35. Contrast this with the, albeit more thorough, study on De Gaulle in Julian Jackson, *De Gaulle* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), especially "Part One: De Gaulle Before 'De Gaulle.'"

³⁴³ Charles Jelavich, "South Slav Education: Was There Yugoslavism?" in *Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*, ed. Norman M. Naimark and Holly Case (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003), 100. Mihailović was born in 1893.

education typical of the period in which he grew up. He would later use this knowledge in his interactions with the Serbian peasantry. Stories often circulated of “Čiča” enjoying a *kolo* at christenings or hearing the epics being recited over a campfire. Of course, these anecdotes require one to subdue any notions of romanticization, but it is crucial to understand that Mihailović was typical of his generation: neither remarkable but knowledgeable, neither wholly xenophobic nor entirely cosmopolitan.³⁴⁴

His military training at the Military Academy in Belgrade³⁴⁵ would have included knowledge on regular warfare as well as guerrilla warfare, as was stipulated by the interwar government restructuring of the Royal Yugoslav Army. Tomasevich notes that the adjustments to the guerrilla warfare training was changed in 1940, too late for it to have influenced Mihailović’s knowledge of guerrilla warfare.³⁴⁶ However, employment of the guerrilla training in the 1929 law meant that Mihailović would have been trained in guerrilla warfare through the academy.³⁴⁷ In fact, he not only came into contact with *četnik* units in Macedonia during the Balkan Wars and Great War, but also later wrote a report in 1939 which criticized the organisation and structure of the army. In this pamphlet, Mihailović argued that a more guerrilla-focused approach to defence should be part of the national defence of the country. Another important aspect of this pamphlet was Mihailović’s concept of having units based on the national elements of Yugoslavia, that is, Serb, Croat, and Slovene units. For this suggestion, he was sentenced to confinement in the barracks for 30-days.³⁴⁸ However, the most that one can say is that Mihailović knew and understood guerrilla warfare on a technical level rather than through experience, unlike Pećanac who experienced guerrilla warfare firsthand as the leader of the Chetniks in Macedonia. He was stationed to several positions: one in Bulgaria which

³⁴⁴ Ivo Žanić, *Flag on the Mountain: A Political Anthropology of War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1990-1995*, trans. Celia Hawkesworth and Graham McMaster (London: Saqi, 2007), 26-27.

³⁴⁵ Jean-Christophe Buisson, *Héros Trahi Par Les Alliés: Le Général Mihailović, 1893-1946* (Paris: Perrin, 1999), 20.

³⁴⁶ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 120-122.

³⁴⁷ Ministarstvo Vojske i Mornarice, “Uput Za Četničko Ratovanje” (Štamp. Radion. Ministarstva Vojske i Mornarice, 1929).

³⁴⁸ Simon Trew, *Britain, Mihailović, and the Chetniks, 1941-42* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 5-6; Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 131. Also see Radoje L. Knežević, ed., *Knjiga o Draži*, vol. 1: 1941-1943, 2 vols. (Windsor, Ontario: Sprska narodna odbrana, 1956), 3-4.

saw him caught up in a plot to potentially overthrow King Boris III in 1935;³⁴⁹ this led to him being dismissed and re-stationed to Czechoslovakia as an attaché between May 1936 and April 1937;³⁵⁰ later, he took up a Professorship in Tactics at Belgrade's Military Academy before being stationed in Slovenia and, on the eve of the Axis invasion in 1941, in northern Bosnia as an assistant to the chief-of-staff of the Yugoslav Second Army.³⁵¹ What all of this points to is that Mihailović's knowledge of guerrilla warfare, or *četnovanje*, was through textbook learning and not experiential.³⁵² It also could have been influenced by the heroic epics of the Balkan revolutionary tradition given the region from which he hailed.³⁵³ Even so, his opinion on guerrilla warfare was one based on his, and indeed the Kingdom of Serbia's, experiences during the Great War which saw the army essentially take on guerrilla-like defences along the Drina River valley, Šumadija's thick forests, and the mountainous regions of southern Serbia. In other words, Mihailović's experience of guerrilla warfare came from the existence of a professional army acting like a guerrilla army. This is precisely the logic he would use and apply during the Second World War in the mountains of eastern Bosnia, Central Serbia, Montenegro, and elsewhere throughout Chetnik territory.

This also points to Mihailović following a political line closer to Trifunović-Birčanin in which a Serbian national identity would have been couched within an over-arching Yugoslav one. Though Mihailović's focus would later be on the Serbian nation – for reasons explored later but which for now can be said to be influenced by the NDH genocide against Serbs, the German reprisals against Serbian civilians, and the increasingly nationalistic bent of his closest ideologues – his prewar ideology would at least be closer to the Trifunović-Birčanin strain of Serbian nationalism rather than Pećanac's exclusionary nationalism. This would only partially explain the difference in

³⁴⁹ Buisson, *Héros Trahi Par Les Alliés*, 63-65. This was part of the Zveno Affair which implicated several Bulgarian officers. Mihailović's relationship with one of the officers, Damjan Velchev, was apparently what cost him this post. See R.J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 158-161 and Radoje L. Knežević, ed., *Knjiga o Draži*, vol. 1: 1941-1943, 2 vols. (Windsor, Ontario: Sprska narodna odbrana, 1956), 3-4.

³⁵⁰ Buisson, *Héros Trahi Par Les Alliés*, 65.

³⁵¹ Trew, *Britain, Mihailović, and the Chetniks*, 5.

³⁵² The only example, as detailed in the previous chapter, was the 1929 handbook. See Ministarstvo Vojske i Mornarice, "Uput Za Četničko Ratovanje" (Štamp. Radion. Ministarstva Vojske i Mornarice, 1929).

³⁵³ See for example, Žanić, *Flag on the Mountain*, 26-27.

opinion between Mihailović and Pećanac which would emerge in 1941 under wartime conditions, but nevertheless plays a role, however minor, in the differences between the two Chetnik leaders.³⁵⁴

This outlook also explains one aspect of Mihailović's 1939 pamphlet: the division of military units into ethnic contingents. Though it cannot be said conclusively, it appears as though Mihailović's conceptualisation of the Royal Yugoslav Army being composed of separate national units was influenced by the structure of interwar Yugoslavia. One sees the Kingdom of Yugoslavia reflected in the structure of the Royal Yugoslav Army, the ethnic nations of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes form the constituent units of Mihailović's proposal: each unit would be divided amongst the three constituent nations while the army was commanded centrally by mostly Serbian officers of the Royal Yugoslav Army. Mihailović's proposal also reflects the sentiment prevalent amongst many Serb officers that Croats and Slovenes could not be trusted, stemming from interwar political developments discussed later in this chapter. Indeed, the number of wartime documents which speak of the supposed treason of Croat, especially, but also Slovene officers and soldiers during the April War is indicative of this.³⁵⁵ It is also unsurprising that Mihailović's pamphlet should be submitted in the same year as the Cvetković-Maček Agreement, or *Sporazum*, a time of heightened dialogue and discourse surrounding the restructuring of Yugoslavia along ethnic lines and increased political tensions.

The *Sporazum*, signed in the summer of 1939 between the Yugoslav Prime Minister Dragiša Cvetković and the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka*, HSS) Vladko Maček was an agreement which created the *Banovina* of Croatia, effectively a province or sub-state entity within Yugoslavia. The goal of this agreement was to answer the "Croat question" which, according to Serb politicians and as a result of increasingly heightened tensions, haunted the country since its inception in 1918. It was intended to allow the sizable ethnic Croat minority in Yugoslavia to be a governing people capable of competing with the Serb dominance, both real and perceived, in the Royal Yugoslav Government. The agreement gave the *banovina* and its people rights to industry, commerce, a separate parliamentary body, and a unified

³⁵⁴ More importantly is the charismatic nature of Chetnik leaders, Pećanac amongst them. This theme emerges in later chapters of the thesis.

³⁵⁵ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 63-64 debunks the "fifth column" myth, but also shows the other, more pressing reasons for Yugoslavia's quick collapse in April 1941. See *ibid.*, 54-64.

territory with an ethnic Croat majority. Though the intentions of the agreement were commendable, it created animosity amongst ethnic Serbs in Yugoslavia, especially those who lived within the *banovina*'s borders. Calls for equal Serbian autonomy within Yugoslavia emerged effectively replacing the "Croat question" with the "Serbian question."³⁵⁶ Signed merely two years before the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia, the *Sporazum* was still fresh in the minds of all Yugoslav peoples on the eve of war. Indeed, there is reason to believe the *coup d'état* which supplanted Prince Paul in March 1941 was as much motivated by the *Sporazum* as it was by the more immediate signing of the Tripartite Pact.³⁵⁷ Even into the war, the government in exile attempted to curb Croat control over Serbs in a postwar Yugoslavia.³⁵⁸

One loud opponent of the *Sporazum* was the Serbian Cultural Club (*Srpski Kulturni Klub*, SKK). The SKK was founded in 1937 by several leading Serb intellectuals, many of whom would go on to support Mihailović and Ravna Gora, some of whom made up the Central National Committee of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (*Centralni Nacionalni Komitet Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, CNK) of Mihailović's Ravna Gora Movement. At the centre of both organisations was Dragiša Vasić (1885-1945) who was a lawyer, writer, and co-founder of the SKK.³⁵⁹ Interrogating the SKK's beliefs from the interwar period will help shed light on the CNK's later wartime beliefs, and to help flesh out Mihailović's beliefs from the interwar period.

The Serbian Cultural Club and Its Ideological Outlook

The SKK's founding was based on fostering a Serbian national identity within a Yugoslav state. Indeed, the paper's motto was "A Strong Serbian Identity, A Strong

³⁵⁶ Dejan Đokić, "National Mobilization in the 1930s: The Emergence of the 'Serb Question' in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia," in *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies*, ed. Dejan Đokić and James Ker-Lindsay (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 62–81 explores this progression. For more on the *Sporazum* see also Dejan Đokić, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

³⁵⁷ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 41-43.

³⁵⁸ Stevan K. Pavlowitch, "Yugoslavia in Exile: The London-Based Wartime Government, 1941-1945," in *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies*, ed. Dejan Đokić and James Ker-Lindsay (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 100–116: 108.

³⁵⁹ For more on Vasić and the SKK see Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 236-239.

Yugoslavia [*Jako Srpstvo, Jaka Jugoslavija*].³⁶⁰ The intention was not to impede on Croat and Slovene national identities but rather to “preserve” Serbian culture in what they saw as an erosion of Serbian identity at the expense of other Yugoslav nations and, presumably, integral Yugoslavism as well.³⁶¹ The SKK’s platform was most expressed in its newspaper, *Srpski glas* (Serbian Voice).³⁶² In light of the *Sporazum*, nearly every edition of *Srpski glas* condemned the agreement and called for an autonomous Serbian entity to match the Croatian *banovina*. Their intent was to have the Serbs united within one contiguous territory, much like the ethnic Croats of Croatia were. To have nearly 1-million ethnic Serbs within the Croatian province’s territory was proof of the eroding nature of the Serbian identity within the Yugoslav state. Indeed, on the cover of the first edition of *Srpski glas* on 16 November 1939, the editors argued that the integrity of the Yugoslav state was even more necessary since the start of the Second World War in Europe just two months before. Internal state organisation, as the *Sporazum* had done, would only further weaken Yugoslavia. Even the creation of a matching Serb province was not enough:

we think that the gathering [*okup*] of Serbs is necessary, but we will immediately add that the gathering [*okupljanje*] will not be enough, if simultaneously the Serbs do not awaken the same spirit that made their strength and greatness in the past, the same faith in national ideals and the same masculine determination to subordinate everything else to those ideals. Within the limits of its powers, our paper also intends to prepare for that rebirth.³⁶³

Yet, it was not just opposition to the Croatian *banovina* that the SKK was organised around. Also in the very first edition of *Srpski glas*, the editors warn of the creation of a Bosnia-Herzegovinian *banovina* along the same lines as the Croatian one.³⁶⁴ Undoubtedly, this would not only further erode Serb culture in the country, but also pre-empt the Bosnian Muslims from identifying as Serbs who still remained ethnically ambiguous. Much of the SKK’s anti-Muslim sentiments stretched back to the 1920s land reforms which, in their eyes, failed to appropriately redistribute farmland from

³⁶⁰ *Srpski Glas*, November 16, 1939.

³⁶¹ Đokić, “National Mobilization in the 1930s, 75.

³⁶² *Srpski Glas*, November 16, 1939, as one example.

³⁶³ “Naša Reč,” *Srpski Glas*, November 16, 1939, 1 edition, sec. 1.

³⁶⁴ “Pregled domaće štampe,” *Srpski Glas*, November 16, 1939, 1 edition, sec. 2.

wealthy Muslim landowners to peasant Serbs, especially in Bosnia-Hercegovina.³⁶⁵ In the immediate period after the creation of Yugoslavia, many Serbs felt that a redistribution of land was necessary in order to “correct” the centuries’ long domination by Muslims under the Ottoman Empire. Though the state attempted to reform the land laws by appropriating large estates and resettling impoverished Serbs from other parts of Yugoslavia to colonise Kosovo and Macedonia, many Bosnian Serbs felt that the reforms did not go far enough and held on to these antagonisms well into the 1930s and 1940s. The *Sporazum* was just yet one more example of the anti-Serb(ian) nature of the Yugoslav state. For many, the onset of war provided an opportunity for redress and retribution. The SKK, for its part, continued to portray some Muslims as traitors. In the same issue of *Srpski glas*, a cartoon appears titled “Oh Bosnia!...,” an allusion to the province’s apparent loss to Croatia. Captioned under it is “...cried the old mother of Džafer-beg.”³⁶⁶ Džafer-beg refers to Džafer Kulenović who was the leader of the JMO political party and who opposed both the *Sporazum* and the calls of nationalist Serbs, as those represented in the SKK, to partition Bosnia amongst Serbs and Croats.³⁶⁷ The implication is clear: Muslims who support the *Sporazum* and who oppose union with Serbia betray their ancestry. Critique of the *Sporazum* and propagating anti-Muslim rhetoric were two prongs in the SKK’s plan of attack against those who opposed Serb nationalist aims of uniting Bosnia to Serbia. In the meantime, the SKK believed that the importance and exceptionality of Serbian culture was being eroded by both Croats and Muslims, those who sought to erase Serbs.

The presence of SKK figures like Vasić, not to mention Mladen Žujović and Stevan Moljević, in the CNK represents Mihailović’s vision of a postwar Yugoslavia: one in which ethnic Serbs and Croats live separate but equal lives within one state, even dominated at a federal level by Serbs.³⁶⁸ In many ways, then, two events from the early

³⁶⁵ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, 368.

³⁶⁶ “Aoj Bosno!...” *Srpski Glas*, November 16, 1939, 1 edition, sec. 8.

³⁶⁷ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, 368.

³⁶⁸ Taking a look at the contributors and donors to *Srpski glas* is also an indication of who within the Ravna Gora Movement supported the SKK. Both Mladen Žujović and Stevan Moljević were regular contributors to the paper, and both went on to form the nucleus of the Central National Committee. Žujović became a sort of war correspondent for the paper, writing in nearly every issue his views and interpretations of the conflict (see “Pogledi na šest meseci rata,” *Srpski glas*, 11 April 1940, 2 edition, no 22, sec. 8). Moljević wrote more about the history of Serbs and Serbdom. Slobodan Jovanović, too, contributed a few articles as well as having a full-page feature on his person and his views (“Slobodan Jovanović: Povodom njegove

wartime context were a confirmation of everything that Vasić and the SKK argued was happening in interwar Yugoslavia: the NDH genocide and German reprisals. Before exploring those two concurrent events, it is first necessary to understand the other influences within the Ravna Gora Movement.

Political Parties in Ravna Gora

The preceding sketch shows that Mihailović surrounded himself with those that shared his worldview. Yet, there are certain nuances which did not exist within either the SKK or CNK, but that did exist within Mihailović's thoughts and actions, and the movement itself. It must be remembered that Mihailović was a military officer and was influenced by those experiences as well, and that there were members of political parties present in the movement who were not part of the interwar SKK.

To be sure, the wartime Prime Minister Slobodan Jovanović was a member of the SKK as was Stevan Moljević, but neither adhered to any one party of interwar Yugoslavia. While Jovanović was prime minister of the government-in-exile from January 1942 to June 1943, he was there as an independent but who had strong liberal values, despite his membership in the SKK.³⁶⁹ Moljević, on the other hand, was often involved in conspiracies, most notably as a member of Young Bosnia and spent much of his life in prison as a result, despite his career as a lawyer.³⁷⁰ Perhaps the most interesting figure,

sedamdesetogodišnjice," *Srpski glas*, 7 December 1939, 1 edition, no. 4, sec. 3). Ilija Trifunović-Birčanin, Chetnik leader located in Split, see Chapter 4, wrote semi-regular biographies of "old Chetniks," those who fought in the Balkan Wars and the First World War and who, in 1903, created the first Serbian Chetnik Association as outlined in Chapter 1. It is clear from Birčanin's articles that his intention is to glorify the nation- and state-making processes of these "old Chetniks," ("Narodna odbrana u prošlosti i sadašnjosti," *Srpski glas*, 28 March 1940, 2 edition, no. 20, sec. 8). Various editions also feature articles on Serbia's previous wars and conflicts, as well as the heroes of each one ("Karađorđe," *Srpski glas*, 28 March 1940, 2 edition, no. 20, sec. 2). Besides contributing as a writer, Žujović was also a donor to the paper on at least one occasion giving 500 dinars ("Prilozi 'Srpskom glasu,'" *Srpski glas*, 8 February 1940, 2 ed., no. 13, sec. 11), while the Great War *Vojvoda* Radomir Putnik's son, Vladimir, gave 1000 dinars while a "Juliana V. Putnik," who I presume to be either Vladimir's wife or sister-in-law, also gave 1000 dinars ("Prijateljima 'Srpskog glasa,'" *Srpski glas*, 7 December 1939, 1 ed., no. 4, sec. 11).

³⁶⁹ Fotich, *The War We Lost*, 116. Interestingly, Fotich does not mention Jovanović's involvement in the SKK, despite calling him "a scholarly historian of wide reputation in Europe, he was considered by the Serbs to be a staunch defender of democracy and a true interpreter of their political ideology," *ibid.*

³⁷⁰ Miodrag Zečević, *Dokumenta Sa Suđenja Ravnogorskom Pokretu, 10. Juni - 15. Juli 1946. Godine*, vol. 1 (Beograd: Subnor Jugoslavije, 2001), 622.

however, was Vasić. Assumed to be a communist, or at least a sympathiser, Vasić visited Moscow in 1927 and worked as a lawyer to free communists from prison.³⁷¹ Other than Mihailović himself, Vasić appears to be the most eclectic figure to emerge from the CNK.³⁷² Besides this, the Ravna Gora Movement contained several members from other political parties from interwar Yugoslavia, as well. Živko Topalović, for example, was a leading figure in the Socialist Party of Yugoslavia who would later be the president of the Ba Congress of 1944.³⁷³ Aca Stanojević was a member of the People's Radical Party and loyal to the Karađorđević dynasty, if critical of King Aleksandar's dictatorial regime.³⁷⁴ By 1944, the Radicals had roughly 67 delegates at the Ba Congress.³⁷⁵ There were also several members of the Agrarian Party (*Zemljoradnička stranka*) and others. The most populace of political parties, at least by the Ba Congress, was the Democrats with "over 80" delegates.³⁷⁶ What connected these disparate political views was a rejection of communism, Nazism, Italian fascism, and other ideologies. They had at their core varying degrees of Serbian and Yugoslav nationalism, at least a respect for the monarchy if not outright devotion to it, and, perhaps above all, a desire to save Serbian lives even if it meant, at least for some, that persons of other ethnicities would be killed.

The party most connected to the Ravna Gora Movement, at least in existing scholarship, is the Agrarians. During the interwar period, the Agrarian Party shifted from a national movement to one that in principle would be an exclusively Serb national party. Though this was certainly a nationalist move, it was also in relation to the already existing Croatian Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka*, HSS) which siphoned off many Croat votes from the Agrarians.³⁷⁷ At its core, the party remained an agrarian and

³⁷¹ Nikola Milovanović, *Dragiša Vasić: Od Građanskog Buntovnika Do Kontrarevolucionara* (Beograd: Nova Knjiga, 1986), 5.

³⁷² For Vasić's eclecticism see, Miloš Timotijević, *Dragiša Vasić i Srpska Nacionalna Ideja* (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2019), 11-12 and 14.

³⁷³ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 399-407; 400. Topalović first arrived with Mihailović in January 1944 for the congress and stayed until April. See Živko Topalović, *Srbija Pod Dražom* (London: Izdanje "Budućnost," 1968), "Predgovor."

³⁷⁴ Karchmar, *Draž Mihailović and the Rise of the Četnik Movement*, 600-601.

³⁷⁵ Zečević, *Dokumenta Sa Suđenja Ravnogorskom Pokretu*, 639.

³⁷⁶ Zečević, *Dokumenta Sa Suđenja Ravnogorskom Pokretu*, 639.

³⁷⁷ Mirjana Stefanovski, "Zemljoradnička Levica Dragoljuba Jovanovića i Pitanje Državnog Preuređenja Kraljevine Jugoslavije," *Anali Pravnog Fakulteta* 1 (1987): 94–105: 95. Along with *ibid.*, the most thorough study of the Agrarians remains Branislav Gligorijević, "Zemljoradnička Stranka," *Istorija 20. Veka* 13, no. 2 (1995): 25–36; and Mira Radojević, "'Zemljoradnička Levica' i

peasant-based movement and was ideologically opposed to much of the far-right and right-wing political parties of the era and had more in common with Maček's HSS.³⁷⁸ Even so, by 1939 the Agrarians split between left- and right-wing factions with the latter led by Milan Gavrilović who would later become Ambassador to the USSR at the time of the April War and, later still, Minister of Justice in Jovanović's wartime Cabinet.³⁷⁹ Ideologically, the right Agrarians under Gavrilović were opposed to the *Sporazum* and fought to create a new agreement that would be more favourable to both Serbs and Croats. Only once that precondition was met could the concept of an integral Yugoslav identity be discussed.³⁸⁰ As mentioned, the hostility to the *Sporazum* fit with the overall outlook of the SKK as well as the CNK and perhaps acted as a strong catalyst to the right Agrarians aligning with Mihailović. There is also evidence that members of the Agrarians in Bosnia and Hercegovina united under the Chetnik banner owing to the interwar grievances between peasant Serbs and Muslim landowners over land issues. While the Royal Yugoslav government attempted to reform land rights to flatten the differences, the Agrarians did not think the reforms went far enough and joined the Chetniks because they saw in them the potential to rectify the land question one way or another.³⁸¹ In many ways, Gavrilović's presence in the government meant supporting Mihailović as a representative of the Royal Yugoslav Army was the obvious conclusion.³⁸²

Socijalno-Ekonomska Pitanje," *Tokovi* 1 (1990): 115–34. I am thankful to Dejan Zec for providing me with this information.

³⁷⁸ Radojević, "Zemljoradnička Levica' i Socijalno-Ekonomska Pitanje," 124.

³⁷⁹ Stefanovski, "Zemljoradnička Levica Dragoljuba Jovanovića i Pitanje Državnog Preuređenje Kraljevine Jugoslavije," 98.

³⁸⁰ Stefanovski, "Zemljoradnička Levica Dragoljuba Jovanovića i Pitanje Državnog Preuređenje Kraljevine Jugoslavije," 99-100. Radojević, "Zemljoradnička Levica' i Socijalno-Ekonomska Pitanje," 126.

³⁸¹ Marko Attila Hoare, *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler's Bosnia: The Partisans and the Chetniks, 1941-1943* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 97-98.

³⁸² It should also be mentioned that Gavrilović and Mihailović were friends before the war. Mihailović apparently felt comfortable enough with a mutual acquaintance of his and Gavrilović's that the former even admonished the acquaintance for talking openly about politics, evidently unleashing on the acquaintance the pent-up frustrations brought on by other politicians and party members for the same. For this example, see Neđeljko Plećaš, *Ratne Godine, 1941-1945* (Columbus, OH: Kosovo Publishing Company, 1983), 150-151.

“Homogeneous Serbia” as Response to the NDH

I argue that there were two events which influenced the ideology of the actors in the Ravna Gora Movement in the early years of the war. The first, which shall be covered here, was the genocide against ethnic Serbs by the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna država hrvatska*, NDH). The second, which will be covered later, was the reprisal killings of ethnic Serbs by the German occupation authorities in Serbia. Both events helped influence and guide the wartime political program of the Ravna Gora Movement and, most importantly, the CNK.

The CNK was first established in August 1941 soon after the first reports of killings of ethnic Serbs in the NDH emerged.³⁸³ When intellectuals and members of non-Communist political groups heard of the Ravna Gora Movement, they flocked to the movement and eventually made up the core of the CNK. These early adherents included Vasić, Žujović, Moljević, while other former-SKK members such as the Royal Yugoslav Prime Minister, in exile in London, Slobodan Jovanović supported Ravna Gora from afar.³⁸⁴ Besides having the SKK as part of their common background, most of these early adherents were ethnic Serbs, rather educated individuals up to and including the university level, but not necessarily significant intellectuals. The presence of so many SKK members in the CNK, and indeed in the Royal Yugoslav Government, meant that much of its ideology spilled over into the Ravna Gora Movement as a whole, as did the disparate views of interwar parties which complicated Ravna Gora’s politics.

Read this way, it is plausible to argue that the CNK viewed the establishment of the NDH as a logical extension of the interwar policy of Croatian politicians seeking an independent Croat state, and the subsequent genocidal campaign was proof that the SKK’s fears were indeed legitimate. The NDH genocide began in the summer of 1941 with local killings of ethnic Serbs by their Croat neighbours and escalated into state-

³⁸³ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 126.

³⁸⁴ Pavlowitch, “Yugoslavia in Exile,” 104; Đokić, “National Mobilization in the 1930s,” 75. As Đokić, *ibid.*, notes, Jovanović, and much of the SKK, viewed the Serbs and Croats as “national ideas” whereas Yugoslavia was a “state idea.” It is unclear, Đokić notes, whether Jovanović also believed that a state idea was possible without a “state nation” (*Staatsvolk*). The distinction here is important for the implications it has on conceptualisations of “Greater Serbia.” If a *Staatsvolk* concept existed amongst the SKK then the overarching presence of Serbs in the state would not only be necessary but could lead to genocidal outcomes, much like the Nazi conceptions of *Staatsvolk* or the Ustashe in the NDH or even the Iron Guard of Romania.

sponsored killings, internment, deportations, and policies of religious conversion throughout the rest of the year by the ruling Ustasha regime.³⁸⁵ The quick collapse of the Yugoslav Army and the genocide resulted in Mihailović to view some Croats as untrustworthy, a sentiment held over from the interwar period but apparently proved by the April War. Indeed, the pervasiveness of a “stabbed in the back” theory in Chetnik documents and in writings of the movement’s sympathisers is telling.³⁸⁶ The centuries old neighbourly relations were threatened, indeed the integral Yugoslavism of King Aleksandar discredited. To reconcile the two largest Yugoslav ethnic groups, Serbs and Croats, was going to be a Herculean task. What was necessary was separation within a unified state.

It was within this environment that Moljević wrote the infamous “*Homogena Srbija*” pamphlet, an ideological outline for creating an ethnically homogeneous Serbian territory at the expense of all other ethnicities.³⁸⁷ If those ethnicities did not support the Serbian program, as interpreted by the CNK, then they were deemed traitors and needed to be expelled or killed.³⁸⁸ The word “*čišćenje*,” cleansing, is used throughout this document. “Cleansing” refers specifically to the killing, expulsion, conversion, and other acts of destroying outgroup populations, as in non-Serb ethnicities.³⁸⁹ Many

³⁸⁵ For a micro-historical view of the NDH, see Max Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force: Identity, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Community* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2016). From both “above” and “below,” see Tomislav Dulić, “Ethnic Violence in Occupied Yugoslavia: Mass Killing from Above and Below,” in *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies*, ed. Dejan Đokić and James Ker-Lindsay (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 82–98; and Tomislav Dulić, *Utopias of Nation: Local Mass Killing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1941-1942* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2005). And, for a comprehensive account of the Ustasha regime, see Rory Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation: The Ustasha Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism, 1941-1945* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013).

³⁸⁶ Fotich, for example, takes the actions of “fifth columnists” and treacherous Croats as the main reason for the army’s collapse. See, Fotich, *The War We Lost*. The JVuO documents, too, talk of the same in Mihailović’s camp but also amongst the Lim-Sandžak Chetniks and the Dinara Chetniks.

³⁸⁷ *Zbornik Dokumentata i Podataka o Narodnooslobodilačkom Ratu Naroda Jugoslavije*, vol. XIV: Dokumenti četničkog pokreta Draže Mihailovića 1941-1942., knjiga 1 (Beograd: Vojnoistoriski institut, 1981), doc. no. 1, “Memorandum ‘Homogena Srbija’ Stevana Moljevića,” 30 July 1941. For more on Moljević’s Serb outlook, see Yves Tomić, “Stevan Moljević et la question nationale serbe,” *Balkanologie* 12, no. 1 (March 22, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.4000/balkanologie.2144>.

³⁸⁸ As Dulić notes, the “interpretation of ‘guilt’ was extremely wide” and cites the killings of women and children as an example. See, Dulić, “Ethnic Violence in Occupied Yugoslavia: Mass Killing from Above and Below,” 86. As we will see in chapters 3 and 4, the interpretation of “guilt” extended to various parts of non-Serb society in Dalmatia and Montenegro.

³⁸⁹ Philipp Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation-States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe*, trans. Charlotte Hughes-Kreutzmuller, War and Genocide, volume 19 (New York: Berghahn Books,

historians falsely date the use of the term to the Ravna Gora Movement or the NDH, but it actually has a history going back to at least the Second Serbian Uprisings in the mid 19th-century, if not earlier.³⁹⁰ In that period, as in much of the Second World War, “cleansing” did not necessarily mean killing. Instead, it was intended to invoke a removal of non-national “elements”: those who did not or would not accept Serbian hegemony were removed, either physically from the territory through expulsion or murder, or culturally through assimilationist tactics. Given the wartime context, “cleansing” most often meant removal, but also included on the spot killing, since assimilation was not as likely for the Chetniks given their lack of state structures to make it happen. Reprisal killings provided the cover for “cleansing actions,” as wartime often does for instances of genocide.³⁹¹

2014), 4. Dulić notes the incorrect assumption by some Yugoslav historians that “cleansing” referred to the killing of non-Serbs. He correctly shows that such assumptions overlook other aspects of the Chetnik program, namely that they began plans to physically deport Muslim civilians to Turkey, which will be shown later in this chapter. See Dulić, “Ethnic Violence in Occupied Yugoslavia,” 97, n. 27.

³⁹⁰ See Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, *Miloš Obrenović Knjaz Srbije ili Građa Za Srpsku Istoriju Našega Vremena* (Budim, Hungary: Slavensko-srpska pečatnja Kraljevskago vseučilišta vengerskago, 1828), <http://digital.bms.rs/ebiblioteka/pageFlip/reader/index.php?type=publications&id=1128&m=2#page/4/mode/2up> 4, 91, 105, 107, 112 for uses of the word “očist,” cleanse, and other derivatives.

³⁹¹ Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation-States* makes the case that “ethnic cleansing” most often occurred outside of wartime contexts in the 20th-century. Indeed, as argued in the Introduction, I am making a choice by using the term genocide over “cleansing,” ethnic or otherwise, for several reasons. First, “cleansing” uses the perpetrators’ language and signals the adoption by and normalisation for wider society of the term and, hence, can lead to the slippery slope of normalising the acts involved. This notion also fits with the shift in the way scholars of the Holocaust began using the “Final Solution” within quotations. Second, using perpetrator language takes the focus away from the victims and puts it back on the perpetrators. Instead, I believe that genocide scholars should be engaged with victim-centred scholarship. Even my own work – indeed this very thesis – intends to understand the perpetrators to ensure that perpetration is more difficult the next time that an opportunity arises. Third, the word genocide contains the meaning – both in the legal sense as adopted by the United Nations in 1948 and in Raphael Lemkin’s definition prior to this – of actions generally associated with “cleansing,” as argued by Ther and others. Though “ethnic cleansing” has not been legally defined as law, I am less concerned with that as a historian. Instead, adopting the Lemkian definition of genocide is sufficient to encompass (legally defined) genocide, “cleansing,” and much else. Fourth, “cleansing” was used euphemistically as shown here and in the primary sources. The term genocide did not exist to the extent it does today, certainly, yet the perpetrators articulated programs which today we would call genocide. “Cleansing,” as used in the documents and as shown here, is a euphemism and intended to couch the actions in militaristic thinking and terminology. Contrast the use of “cleansing” with “liquidation,” for example. Even in the Chetnik documents, “liquidation” is used to mean something similar to extrajudicial killing and can approach a genocidal act. Yet, liquidation is used most often to refer to the killing of Communists/Partisans, Muslim perpetrators, and small numbers (no more than maybe a half-dozen) of Chetnik enemies, while “cleansing” encompasses the latter *and* the removal/killing of

As uneven and scattered a process as the NDH and other genocidal groups' programs were, Ravna Gora's was more so. This highly contingent approach to perpetrating genocide fits with other cases of genocide, such as in Rwanda.³⁹² The documents on the wartime Ravna Gora Movement do not use the language typical of genocidal groups, instead applying military language towards target groups.³⁹³ However, even this should be taken with a grain of salt and should not be seen as a minimisation of the genocidal program of the Ravna Gora Movement or the JVuO. For instance, there exists evidence in other time periods or in different contexts of oral commands given to "cleanse" certain peoples from territory as occurred during the Yugoslav wars of succession, 1991-1995. If not for the "order" being caught on camera, and later testified to at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the accusations of oral commands would remain hearsay.³⁹⁴ This is also attributable to the case of the Ravna Gora Movement and Mihailović. The existence of the "Homogeneous Serbia" pamphlet alone is not sufficient to argue for the articulation of a genocidal

civilians. Though I disagree with the conclusions, Liberman does a good job of making the argument for using the term "ethnic cleansing" for scholars and practitioners of prevention. See Liberman, "'Ethnic Cleansing' Versus Genocide?" 42–60. See also Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*. For the near-necessity of wartime cover, the Indonesian genocide required the army to exacerbate tensions on the ground. See Geoffrey B. Robinson, *The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965-66* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), most especially 150-152 and 176; for Europe see Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Stalin and Hitler* (New York: Basic Books, 2010); as did the Rwandan genocide: Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

³⁹² See Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), especially Chapter 3. See also Uğur Ü. Üngör, "When Persecution Bleeds into Mass Murder: The Processive Nature of Genocide," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1, no. 2 (September 2006): 173–96, <https://doi.org/10.3138/0252-6L27-67M7-7320>.

³⁹³ Rather than using terms like "vermin" the Chetniks used words like "traitor" and "non-national" to signify target populations. There is indeed a dehumanising aspect to this language but is much more rooted in militarist thinking than in genocidal thinking and may, in fact, speak to the militaristic, instead of the political, aspect of the JVuO. Here I am contrasting the rhetoric of the Chetniks, broadly defined, and the Nazis, the Ottoman genocide of Armenians, and later genocides such as in Rwanda. Indeed, cleansing comes from military jargon, while the term "ethnic" in front is a more recent phenomenon. See Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation-States*, 4-5.

³⁹⁴ ushmmfellows, *The Mladic Files: Mladic Entering Srebrenica - July 11, 1995* (YouTube, 2011), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfInjIjNoT4Q&feature=youtu.be>. See also the war crimes trial of one Chetnik officer who claimed that collaborationist agreements with the Germans were done orally, on December 4 or 5, 1941: Venceslav Glišić, "Miloš Glišić (Biografija Jednog Četničkog Oficira)," *Vojnoistorijski Glasnik*, no. 1 (2012): 151–67: 159. Similarly, the commander of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment, Pavle Đurišić, was given oral orders on top of written commands. For more on Đurišić and the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment, see Chapter 3.

campaign at the highest level, but it does signal one of the earliest stages of genocide.³⁹⁵ Lacking a single document which says something along the lines of “kill all Muslims” means having to piece together the evidence using various primary sources, just as in the case of the Armenian genocide.³⁹⁶ As such, the actions of other Chetnik groups, namely those of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Division and the Dinara Chetnik Division, will be explored in later chapters to show a micro-level effort at a genocidal campaign. But for the Ravna Gora Movement, there also exists other documents, as well as actions, which show a dedicated intention of “cleansing.”

Beyond “Homogeneous Serbia” as a Genocidal Program

Moljević, for instance, wrote to Vasić in December 1941 to ask about his thoughts on his “Homogeneous Serbia” pamphlet. In this letter, Moljević specifically mentions what is essentially a Greater Serbia (*Velika Srbija*), that is, an explicit reference to an ethnically homogeneous Serbian state which would effectively erase the Drina River as a border between Serbia and Bosnia, unite Serbia with Montenegro, and from there create an ethnically Serb corridor into Hercegovina, Dalmatia, Lika and Kordun.³⁹⁷ Moljević’s idea was to occupy certain towns throughout Yugoslavia with a strong garrison and begin “cleansing actions” towards the countryside. “The culprits” of the NDH genocide should “be punished on the spot,” while Croats would settle in rump-Croatia and Muslims sent to Turkey or, in parentheses, Albania. In order to alleviate the strain of refugees, Moljević argues, the “cleansing” should begin immediately. “[T]he English” would help to negotiate the removal of the Muslims to Turkey in the meantime.

For his part, Vasić related his thoughts on Moljević’s letter to Mihailović only in May 1942.³⁹⁸ The idea left “a good impression” on Vasić. “All Serbs,” says Vasić, “agree

³⁹⁵ See, for example, the Rwandan genocide in which articulating a group (ethnic, racial, class, gender, political, etc.) as an enemy, in this case the Tutsi population, was one of the earliest elements leading up to the genocide there in 1994: Straus, *The Order of Genocide*, 9 and 225.

³⁹⁶ See, for example, Ugur Ümit Üngör, “The Armenian Genocide, 1915,” in *The Holocaust and Other Genocides: An Introduction*, ed. Barbara Boender and Wichert ten Have (Amsterdam: NIOD/Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 45–70 and Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

³⁹⁷ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 35.

³⁹⁸ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 85.

on” a Greater Serbian state. The “cleansing,” however, should wait until the final throes of the war:

In the first year after the last war [First World War], a good part of its [Europe’s] unwanted population could simply be exterminated [*istrebiti*] without anyone turning their heads because of [the chaos that accompanied the end of the conflict]. So, if we are smart, this issue of cleansing or relocation and change of the population will not be particularly difficult for us.³⁹⁹

The Croats would have to be relied upon to help get rid of the occupational forces in the meantime but would have to be watched carefully because they may try to take control of the leadership and, later, the credit for liberating Yugoslavia. Thus, it was important that Ravna Gora “become, as much as possible, an army.” The discipline up to this point was lacking and they were not yet “a real army.” Ravna Gora was not yet strong enough, especially in light of the communist threat which had to be dealt with first, to engage in “cleansing actions.” Thus, Moljević’s suggestion of “cleansing” the territories should be the “final act.” Vasić concludes the letter by saying that the events up to 1942 show that the creation of Yugoslavia in 1918 was an “unforgivable mistake.” In other words, implementing Moljević’s plan would be a necessary corrective while also achieving a unified Greater Serbian entity within a Greater Yugoslav state. This last sentiment also fit in with much of the argumentation of *Srpski glas* in the immediate prewar years, too. Indeed, an article appearing on 30 November 1939 titled “*Veliko Sprpstvo*” (Greater Serbdom) called the decision to create Yugoslavia “wrong.”⁴⁰⁰ The article is signed only by the initials S.M.D. leaving the author unknown.⁴⁰¹

In terms of Turkey’s role in the overall plan, several documents talk about the prospect of using it as a place to send Muslims. This, of course, had precedence in the Greek-Turkish population exchanges in the early 1920s.⁴⁰² In the JVuO example,

³⁹⁹ Note the euphemistic nature of the language used in this passage. See Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation-States*, 1-2.

⁴⁰⁰ “Veliko Sprpstvo,” *Srpski Glas*, November 30, 1939, 3 edition, sec. 3.

⁴⁰¹ Given the language and writing style of the article, however, I would tentatively conclude that it was written by Moljević, and the initials seem to support this conclusion, too. While “S.M.” is obvious (Stevan Moljević), the “D” could signal “doctor,” the term used in the Balkans for people who have earned a law degree. Hence, the article is signed “S[tevan] M[oljević] D[octor].”

⁴⁰² A good overview of this tragic event is Renée Hirschon, ed., *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003).

Mihailović tells “1003”⁴⁰³ to notify London that Muslims are taking part in attacks against Serbs in the NDH, thus it is important to open discussions with Turkey.⁴⁰⁴ In the meantime, Mihailović is “engaged” with Muslims “in Sandžak so that communists do not seize them” (i.e., win them over). Radio propaganda and aerial leaflet drops would help, says Mihailović, to convince Muslims to cooperate with Serbs, while those in Albania should be encouraged by the “Balkan union in order to attract them [Albanians] to us because they [Albanians] hate Italians.”⁴⁰⁵ Thus, we see another element develop in this telegram. The creation of a Balkan union, long discussed in the Balkans, was intended to be used as a ploy to win Muslims over to the Ravna Gora Movement and the Chetniks.⁴⁰⁶

Even as early as September 1941, Ravna Gora was sending London telegrams on its wartime and postwar plans.⁴⁰⁷ The first to be recorded states that the primary goal of the Ravna Gora Movement is “to delimit the *de facto* Serbian lands with only a Serbian population remaining in them.”⁴⁰⁸ The cities were to be “cleansed” and populated with “fresh Serbian elements.” In the countryside, “cleansing or relocation of the rural population with the aim of homogeneity for the Serbian state union” was necessary. The Movement “take[s] the issue of Muslims as a particularly difficult problem and, if possible, [we should] resolve it at this stage.” All of this was necessary to ensure

⁴⁰³ Mirko Lalatović’s telegram codename. He also went by Herman as a *nom de guerre*. Lalatović was a Montenegrin by birth, pilot at the rank of Major in the Royal Yugoslav Airforce and escaped to Cairo with the evacuation of the remaining military and government. He returned to Yugoslavia as part of the British mission to Ravna Gora with Bill Hudson and Zaharije Ostojić. The latter’s telegram codename was “1002” and (Čika) Branko. Hudson was a Captain with the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and was the main liaison between Mihailović and the British. Much has been written on the British and SOE missions, but the most thorough and balanced is Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans*.

⁴⁰⁴ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 83.

⁴⁰⁵ Italy occupied Albania as a “protectorate,” a term used euphemistically to cover up the fact that the territory was occupied.

⁴⁰⁶ A recent study on a Balkan union is Nikola Zečević, “The Russian Revolution and Its Impact on the Idea of Balkan Union (1918-1933): National vs. International,” *Trames (Tallinn)* 23, no. 3 (2019): 323–34.

⁴⁰⁷ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 6.

⁴⁰⁸ Underlining in original, italics mine for consistency with foreign words. It is not clear whether this is the same message that Fotich mentions in his memoirs. Fotich notes that the first radio contact with the Royal Yugoslav Government in exile in Cairo came on 13 September 1941 while this document is listed as the same month in *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 6. See Fotich, *The War We Lost*, 155.

a “strong and homogeneous Serbian state unit [which is] politically and economically viable” to help “serve such broader Balkan political combinations.” In other words, the Ravna Gora Movement, and by extension the Royal Yugoslav government in exile, had the plan to ethnically cleanse, re-populate, and expand Serbia’s territories from as early as autumn 1941 to help situate the country as a leader in a Balkan union of some sort.

Working as a constraining factor to implementing a widescale genocide, Ravna Gora did not have the necessary state infrastructure – unlike the NDH or even Nedić’s Serbia. With the inability to set up labour, concentration and extermination camps, without the ability to enact racial laws, and without a continuous supply of arms and other material necessary to conduct a large-scale campaign of genocide, Ravna Gora did not embark on a genocidal campaign in the style of the Third Reich or other genocidal regimes.⁴⁰⁹ Instead, JVuO perpetrations were conducted by bullet and knife, and even then, on extremely local bases, and this reflects the Nazi killing of Jews and Slavs in Eastern Europe before, and after, the implementation of gas.⁴¹⁰ Ravna Gora’s members should not be viewed as a roaming band of executioners, nor as genocidal maniacs but rather as part of what some have called a “brutalising” factor.⁴¹¹ Where comparisons could be made would be in the Armenian genocide which relied on local paramilitaries and auxiliaries perpetrating violence, rather than on widespread infrastructure being harnessed towards the same end. However, where the Ottoman

⁴⁰⁹ Indeed, contrast the JVuO campaign with the Ottoman/Turkish programs in Ugur Ümit Üngör, “Seeing Like a Nation-State: Young Turk Social Engineering in Eastern Turkey, 1913-1950,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 10, no. 1 (March 2008): 15–39.

⁴¹⁰ Dulić, “Ethnic Violence in Occupied Yugoslavia,” 82–98. See both Snyder, *Bloodlands* and Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2015) for the “Holocaust by bullets” which is an apt comparison with the JVuO. Similarly, compare the uneven process of the Holocaust in the relevant chapters, essays and articles in Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008). Undertaking a comparative genocide approach to the JVuO and other genocides, whether in Armenia, Cambodia, Rwanda, or Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s, one may find multiple similarities as well as differences, however, no such studies exist yet.

⁴¹¹ Indeed, the literature on the brutalising nature of warfare has become a subgenre of its own. For some of the better, more recent works see Max Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force: Identity, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Community* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2016); Panagiotis Delis, “Violence and Civilians during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913),” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 20, no. 6 (November 2, 2018): 547–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2018.1493854>; Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Of course, the classic on interwar brutalisation is George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). In cases of genocide, Straus notes that war desensitises. See Straus, *The Order of Genocide*.

Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) regime could rely on access to the railroad systems to help transport Armenians, Assyrians, Kurds, and other ethno-religious groups, the JVuO did not have access to such infrastructure.⁴¹² For the JVuO, as warfare raged on, as reprisals against Serbs continued, as the NDH continued its assault on Serb lives, and as Ravna Gora stoked the threat posed by the communists, the NDH and the occupation authorities, JVuO soldiers enacted the genocidal campaign. Once the first killings occurred, the next became easier, and the next dozen even easier than that. Even so, this does not absolve or excuse the killings by individual members. Rather, viewing their perpetrations in this way helps to understand the ways in which individuals arrive at the *ability* to kill someone, most often people they knew, grew up with and even befriended. With an articulated plan for genocide, Ravna Gora was a genocidal entity, and its soldiers enacted a policy of genocide. The JVuO's genocidal process will be further explicated in later chapters.

JVuO or Chetniks? Internal Tension over the Nature of Warfare

When Mihailović arrived at Ravna Gora with a couple dozen or so Royal Yugoslav Army officers, he did so with very much the same mindset as when he wrote the pamphlet criticizing the Royal Yugoslav Army structure. He retreated from his post in northern Bosnia and headed for the hills along the Drina River. He was an officer of the Royal Yugoslav Army, armed with his army-issued weapons and the textbook knowledge of guerrilla warfare. He came with the experience of the Great and Balkan Wars which saw him fight alongside the *četniks*, but not as a *četnik* himself. Part of that Great and Balkan Wars experience was the knowledge of reprisals against Serbian civilians, something which many scholars have noted and attribute to his decisions to lie in wait for an Allied invasion of the Balkan peninsula.⁴¹³ He had the knowledge of Serbian culture and history, the geography, which is of utmost importance to the guerrilla, and of course, his military training. He was a product of his upbringing and of

⁴¹² See both Ugur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide* for the Ottoman and Armenian example. Dulić does well to point out the lack of Chetnik infrastructure. See Dulić, "Ethnic Violence in Occupied Yugoslavia," 82–98.

⁴¹³ The influence of reprisals and Toplica are both discussed at length in Fotich, *The War We Lost*.

his environment, much like his compatriots who marched through Bosnia, from the Croatian border to the Serbian one. Now was the time that he could employ all that he laid out in the pamphlet: abandoning the undefendable northern borders, taking to the hills and forests, and dividing his units along national lines.

A number of those who came with Mihailović soon left.⁴¹⁴ This prompted Mihailović to divide his men into two groups: his group would remain at Ravna Gora, while the second group would head for central Serbia, the forested Šumadija region.⁴¹⁵ Here, and along the way, they were tasked with finding and liaising with other members of the army. As we saw in Chapter 1, Šumadija was an important place in the Serbian uprisings of the early 19th-century against the Ottomans, which means it made tactical, cultural, and psychological sense. Ravna Gora also made tactical sense. As a mountain, it was defensible; Mihailović had experience in the region from the Great War, and also had contacts there, namely the Great War general Živojin Mišić's family whose son, Aleksandar, would become an aide to Mihailović.⁴¹⁶ Invanjica, Mihailović's birthplace, was also within range. Both regions, then, were ideal locations to hideout until plans could be formulated. It was not obvious to Mihailović, at least in the earliest days, that he was the leader of a resistance movement. Nonetheless, the two regions were perfect to stage any defence against the Axis invasions, especially given the proximity to where Mihailović and his officers began in northern Bosnia. The movement could have staged a base anywhere in Yugoslavia that had the same defensible qualities as Ravna Gora and Šumadija, but these two areas were close to the starting point, close enough to each other to ease communications, and it provided a centralised base from which to re-group, organise, and eventually, to stage (counter)attacks.

It is not clear whether the historical importance of both Ravna Gora and Šumadija played a role in settling in these areas. However, it is obvious from postwar memoirs and even from contemporary documents throughout the war that the history of resistance in both regions became part of the resistance narrative of the movement and

⁴¹⁴ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 122.

⁴¹⁵ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 122.

⁴¹⁶ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 124, 199. A former Chetnik commander gave his assessment for settling at Ravna Gora in *ibid.*, 123 but generally agrees with what is offered here.

of Mihailović himself.⁴¹⁷ Ravna Gora, though not the centre of activity, was part of the mountainous and forested range that made up the stories surrounding both the real and fictionalised *hajduk*/bandit/freedom fighters, and which stretched westwards from Šumadija to just east of Sarajevo. Karađorđe Petrović, from Topola, Miloš Obrenović, from Požega, and several other notable participants in the 19th-century Serbian uprisings against Ottoman rule also hailed from this region. This is to say nothing of Mihailović's birthplace, at the southern end of this pocket, and the later presence of Užica in the Partisan national narratives. The movement itself came to be called the "Third Serbian Uprising" in relation to the two 19th-century uprisings against the Ottomans, in both émigré literature and contemporary documents.⁴¹⁸ And his subordinates recognised the importance, too. For instance, in 1942, Ilija Trifunović-Bričanin, the Chetnik veteran of the Balkan and Great Wars, wrote to Mihailović connecting the "*hajduci* and *uskoci*"⁴¹⁹ to "Chetniks and soldiers" of the JVuO.⁴²⁰ Mihailović, then, came to be seen as part of that continuous history of resistance leaders, the Ravna Gora Movement as successors to those resistance fighters, against occupation authorities and the threat of anti-Serbian measures. The veracity of these claims will not be dealt with here, but what is important at this juncture is to note that these myths came to be a central component of the wartime and, especially, postwar narratives about the Ravna Gora Movement. This has led to a distortion of what the Ravna Gora Movement was, and especially what Mihailović envisioned the movement to be.

⁴¹⁷ Sergej M Živanović, *Đeneral Mihailović i Njegovo Delo: Treći Srpski Ustanak 1941*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Autora i Američkog instituta za balkanska pitanja, 1962). Fotich, *The War We Lost* also connects Ravna Gora to "the center of the second Serbian insurrection against the Turks in 1815," 146.

⁴¹⁸ See for example, the title of Sergej M Živanović, *Đeneral Mihailović i Njegovo Delo: Treći Srpski Ustanak 1941*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Autora i Američkog instituta za balkanska pitanja, 1962) which connects Ravna Gora to the First and Second Serbian Uprisings. While in the contemporary sources, see HR-HDA-1549, I-39, 672: "through all the areas where Serbs live, the same spirit is felt everywhere, the organisation is carried out and the thought of the third Serbian uprising is strengthened." There are plenty of examples, some more explicit than others, but even some of the more implicit ones also link Mihailović to King Miloš Obrenović, leader of the Second Serbian Uprising, Karađorđe Petrović, leader of the First Serbian Uprising and namesake of the Karađorđević dynasty, and to King Lazar who died in 1389 during the Battle of Kosovo. See HRD-HDA-1549-39, 889 for evidence of this last point.

⁴¹⁹ The *uskoks* were essentially seaborne *hajduci*, something similar to pirates. See Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Serj: Piracy, Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015).

⁴²⁰ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 76.

With the collapse of the Royal Yugoslav Army in just a matter of weeks, the army's reputation was ruined. While the Ravna Gora resistance claimed to be a direct descendent of the army, it had to refashion itself in light of the circumstances.⁴²¹ Falling on the Serbian guerrilla and resistance tradition, *četovanje*, was an easy transition to make in many ways. For one, the tradition and its narratives were well established. Peasants, even illiterate ones, could re-tell the stories of Starina Novak or Miloš Obilić, perhaps even better than they could recite the Lord's Prayer.⁴²² Secondly, even with the anti-Ottoman resistance movements, there was a long history of soldiers moving into bandit and brigand roles and back again.⁴²³ The movement of fighters from a professional army to mercenary armies to bands was a continuous ebb and flow. Third, the Ravna Gora Movement incorporated many of the elements from Mihailović's 1939 report, one of which was concentrating forces in the interior of the country. This practice itself had a long history, from the anti-Ottoman revolts of the 19th-century to as recently as the Great War. When the Serbian Army was in full retreat from Austro-Hungarian, German, and Bulgarian forces in 1915, they followed the Drina River valley southwards before reaching the sea route to Salonika. The concentration of the Serbian Army in the centre of the country, southwards from Šumadija to Novi Pazar along the Drina River, was part of the Serbian Army's strategy and remained so into the Royal Yugoslav Army period for that portion of the army stationed in those areas.⁴²⁴ This strategy was so central to the wider Serbian geo-political, cultural, national, and economic plans that in negotiating the entry of Yugoslavia into the Tripartite Pact Hitler included the promise of access to Salonika as an incentive to signing on.⁴²⁵ In essence, the Drina River-Salonika connection was a way for Yugoslavia, and thus Serbia, to get access to the sea but also to shore up its defences. Without Salonika, Mihailović included the first phase of this plan to concentrate forces around the valley. It is clear, then, that the long historical trajectories of several factors, of which only the three main ones were named, meant

⁴²¹ I am thankful to DMITAR TASIĆ for the discussion on this point.

⁴²² ŽANIĆ, *Flag on the Mountain*, 269 and 425.

⁴²³ As two examples, see BRACEWELL, *The Uskoks of Senj*, 150-154; and BARKEY, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, 189-228.

⁴²⁴ TOMASEVICH, *The Chetniks*, 121. FOTICH, *The War We Lost*, 66.

⁴²⁵ FOTICH, *The War We Lost*, 44. This is also well documented in R.L. KNEJEVITCH, "Prince Paul, Hitler, and Salonika," *International Affairs* 27, no. 1 (January 1951): 38-44.

that the Ravna Gora Movement relied on the invented *četovanje* tradition we saw from Chapter 1 for tactical, pragmatic, and culturally relevant reasons.

Yet for all of this, the JVuO also struggled with a crisis of identity. In several documents, Mihailović, the government in exile, ambassadors and deputies, and other people through the chain of command insisted on the professional nature of Mihailović's movement.⁴²⁶ On 8 December 1942, for example, Prime Minister Jovanović telegraphed the Royal Ambassador in Kuibyshev to clarify the nature of Mihailović's army in relation to the other Serb militaries:

Nedic's troops are called volunteer detachments. Only Pecanac's [sic] people are called Chetniks. Probably because of that, there was a certain confusion between these Chetniks and the detachment of the Yugoslav army under the command of General Mihajlović [sic], which not only Serbs but also Croats and Slovenes call Chetniks. The people of Draža call the detachments Chetniks. You [should] call them detachments of the Yugoslav army.⁴²⁷

Similarly, in December the previous year, the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs Robertson in Ottawa was informed that the press should cease calling the JVuO a "guerrilla movement," nor should its campaign be called "uprisings...insurrections, nor should those who are conducting it be referred to as guerrillas, rebels, partisans, etc." Robertson responded that he

will take every opportunity to impress on the Canadian Press that the war in Yugoslavia is being conducted by thoroughly organised, disciplined forces under the command of General Mihajlovic [sic], and in conformity with orders from the Royal Yugoslav Government in London."⁴²⁸

Indeed, on more than one occasion, Mihailović refers to the Ravna Gora Movement as a professional army. His congratulations to General Alexander for the victory in the Second Battle of El Alamein, for example, is indicative. Mihailović writes "In the name of the Yugoslav Army and in my own name I wish to express our

⁴²⁶ On professionalization, see the classic Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2000), especially the Introduction.

⁴²⁷ AJ, 103-35-198, 7075.

⁴²⁸ AJ, 103-47-233, 217.

congratulations.” Later, Mihailović refers to his army as “[t]he Yugoslav Army of His Majesty King Peter II.”⁴²⁹

What this small smattering of examples show is that the Yugoslav Government, Mihailović, and various functionaries were concerned with portraying the Ravna Gora Movement as a professional military with continuity to the prewar army, air force and navy. This is also apparent in the promotion of Mihailović to general (7 December 1941)⁴³⁰ and appointment as Minister of the Army, Navy and Airforce as Supreme Commander of the Royal Yugoslav Army in January 1942.⁴³¹ Guerrilla warfare was only the means by which the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland would engage the enemy in the interim until the JVuO became strong enough. The Chetnik detachments, presumably, would remain a guerrilla-based entity while the Ravna Gora Movement could evolve into a more traditional army. The tension between Mihailović’s centre and the Chetnik periphery would remain throughout the war. Likewise, the presence and increasing importance of the Partisans would show just how the JVuO and its Chetnik detachments would remain little more than a guerrilla movement.

The Ravna Gora-Partisan Civil War

The Ravna Gora Movement from the summer of 1941 embodied the tension between professional army, as a continuation of the Royal Yugoslav Army, and the South Slav guerrilla tradition. Though members located at Ravna Gora may have understood their roles as professional soldiers by 1942, this tension would permeate throughout the various Chetnik groups in Yugoslavia who claimed allegiance to Mihailović and the Ravna Gora Movement. The nucleus, and most especially Mihailović, would see itself as a professional army while seeing the Chetnik detachments as seedlings of the same. However, as we will see in later chapters, not all Chetnik groups saw themselves as, nor strove to be a professional army. Encounters with the Partisans was an early example of Mihailović experiencing this tension outside of his own core group. The main sticking point preventing a united Chetnik-Partisan front against the

⁴²⁹ AJ, 377-40-414 and, for English, AJ, 377-40-415.

⁴³⁰ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 163 n. 136.

⁴³¹ Fotich, *The War We Lost*, 156.

common enemy was the question of leadership.⁴³² While Tito and the Partisans wanted to include Mihailović in their command structure subordinate to Tito, Mihailović saw himself as the only person capable of leading a resistance against the Axis. He was, after all, the highest-ranking officer from the Royal Yugoslav Army to continue resistance while much of the Partisan soldiers were volunteers, peasants, and workers, its leadership long-time communist agitators and subversives.⁴³³ While this disparity was not the cause of the civil war between Chetniks and Partisans, it was one of the main factors which prevented a unification of the two resistance forces.

Other contributing factors preventing Partisan and Chetnik unification included the SKK/CNK influence. Besides Mihailović being the ranking officer in dealings with the Partisans, he was also an ethnic Serb. The significance of this rests in the ideology of the SKK in which Serb domination of Yugoslavia was required to ensure the continued security and flourishing of Serbian culture and society. Though Mihailović should not be seen as a Serbian nationalist akin to Pećanac, his Serbian identity was a central component of his worldview and influenced even his dealings with the Partisans. Whether overt or implicit, Mihailović and other ethnic Serbs had the decades' long tradition of a Serbian dominated Yugoslavia behind them, and this permeated every interaction.⁴³⁴ However, he should neither be seen as a Yugoslav nationalist. Rather, instead of seeing Mihailović and others in the Ravna Gora Movement as *either* Serbian nationalists *or* Yugoslav nationalists, they should be viewed as Serbian *and* Yugoslav nationalists. On the topic of Serbian and Yugoslav nationalisms, Stevan Pavlowitch refers to Prime Minister Nikola Pašić whose Radical Party dominated interwar Yugoslavia: "The problem [with a dual Serbian and Yugoslav identity] was that he [Pašić], and many others in Serbia, did not really understand the difference between Serbia and Yugoslavia."⁴³⁵ As argued earlier, the same holds true for Mihailović: he neither knew nor understood the difference between being a Serbian and being a

⁴³² Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 145.

⁴³³ Ivo Banac, *With Stalin Against Tito: Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 65-68 notes that jail became a type of "party school" where the Communists could gather and discuss revolutionary activity and theory. More recently, see Jože Pirjevec, *Tito and His Comrades* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), 16.

⁴³⁴ For more on Serb domination and implicit bias, see Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs*.

⁴³⁵ Stevan Pavlowitch, "Serbia and Yugoslavia: The Relationship," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 4, no. 1 (2004): 96–106, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683850412331321738>, 100.

Yugoslav; the two were interchangeable, and to be one meant to be the other. It is critical to understand that combining the two identities and couching the one – Serbian – within the other – Yugoslav – was part of the worldview and ideological construction of both Mihailović and several of the key members of the Ravna Gora Movement, as evidenced by the former SKK members, but also existed amongst the rank and file. This is where the presence of an ethnic identity, Serbian, comingles with a statist identity, Yugoslav, and creates a complicated milieu of nested nationalisms. It is the strength of this duality within the individual Mihailović that contributed to the failure to negotiate agreements with the Partisans.⁴³⁶ Worth also noting is Tomasevich's point that Mihailović had the backing of the Allies by the second meeting with the Partisans in October 1941, and this contributed greatly to worsening relations.⁴³⁷ This further gave him the confidence to negotiate from a position of strength, whether he had an advantage or not. All these elements taken together – professional military rank, implicit bias, the duality of statist and ethnic nationalism, and support from the Allies – go towards explaining the failure of any lasting Chetnik-Partisan agreement from the Chetnik perspective.

To be sure, tactical concerns played a role in preventing Chetnik-Partisan agreements, and indeed these were also key questions. One of the key tactical discrepancies between the Partisans and the Chetniks was the question of the intensity of resistance. From the Partisan perspective, an all-out war should be waged against the Axis even at the cost of severe reprisals. For the Chetniks, however, a strategy of waiting for an Allied invasion and tactically planned sabotage in the meantime was the only way forward and something they maintained throughout the war. On one level it should be remembered that the orders to “wait and see” for an Allied landing in the Balkans, or until the wartime circumstances should prove viable, was given directly from London by both the government-in-exile and the British.⁴³⁸ While the government-in-exile was concerned with reprisals, just as Ravna Gora was, the British were mainly motivated

⁴³⁶ On the failures of the agreements, see Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 154.

⁴³⁷ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 140, 145.

⁴³⁸ *The Trial of Dragoljub-Dražica Mihailović: Stenographic Record and Documents from The Trial of Dragoljub-Dražica Mihailović* (Belgrade: The Union of the Journalist Association of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, 1946), 124. It was actually an order sent from Cairo along with Captain Hudson, the British attaché to Mihailović. See *ibid.*

by their inability to send the proper supplies on a continuous basis.⁴³⁹ Though they continued to promise supplies, both food and arms, Britain regularly failed to deliver enough of what was required or, often enough, even at all. Even if Mihailović wanted to stage attacks against the Axis, he was grossly under-armed, underfed, and undermanned.⁴⁴⁰

Regardless, the desire to preserve Serbian lives was motivated by several factors for Mihailović and Ravna Gora. For one, the Nazi policy of reprisals meant that for every German killed, 100-civilians would be executed; 50 for a wounded German. This curbed the attempt by the Chetniks to attack directly. Secondly, when coupled with the reprisals, this decision was motivated by the experience of the Great War which saw many thousands of Serbian soldiers and civilians killed by the Habsburg Army and ravaged by illness. Serbia lost almost a third of its population and half of its male population during the Great War, a large number of them civilians. With the knowledge and memory of the fallout from the Toplica Uprising in 1917 and seeing the reprisals firsthand influenced Mihailović's decision to not attack the Axis directly.⁴⁴¹ Third, the ongoing genocide against Serbs in the NDH meant that ethnic Serbs were dying on a continuous basis. Though the reports at the time were inflated, it should be remembered that this was the sole source of information arriving at Ravna Gora and, even if it was assumed to be somewhat exaggerated at the time, it greatly affected the decision to avoid reprisals and, thus, attacks against the Axis military forces. This further explains why the Partisan-JVuO relationship was stillborn. Relationships between Ravna Gora and various Chetnik groups may have lasted longer, but this was mostly due to the core elements of a common ideology which did not exist between the JVuO and the Partisans.

⁴³⁹ Fotich, *The War We Lost*, 202.

⁴⁴⁰ Indeed, this is the main argument in Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans*. Williams also argues that the Chetniks were dropped in favour of the Partisans not because of their lack of will to fight, that indeed they did fight the Germans, but rather that Britain was unable to satisfactorily control Mihailović. See, *ibid.*, 251.

⁴⁴¹ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 146-147. On Toplica, see Chapter 1 of this thesis.

Collaboration

Besides the multifaceted reasons for lying in wait, the civil war that emerged between the Chetniks and Partisans helped to motivate collaboration with the Italians and Germans. Detractors point to collaboration with the Germans as motivated by a shared worldview or ideology, but this is exaggerated at best or entirely inaccurate at worst. For one, there were no openly antisemitic programs in place in the Chetnik movements.⁴⁴² Antisemitic statements were apparently uttered to German occupation authorities and in pamphlets, even by Mihailović himself, but to argue that this was part of the wartime program of the Chetniks is a misrepresentation of the historical record. The Chetniks of Draža Mihailović did not participate in the “Final Solution” to the extent that other armed groups in Eastern Europe did, nor did they have the state capacity to plan, organise and execute work, concentration, and extermination camps like the NDH or even the Government of National Salvation in Milan Nedić’s Serbia, to say nothing of other groups in Eastern Europe. Instead, both the Chetniks’ genocidal process and collaboration with the Germans and Italians should be seen as a strategy in the overall wartime context; both elements will be developed throughout the course of this thesis. Even German testimonies after the war point to collaboration as an uneven process: in some cases, whole Chetnik units were part of the German command and operational plan, while others would obtain arms from the Germans only to use them against the occupiers, while others never collaborated at all. For Mihailović’s part, his collaboration was never in the open nor was he ever seen to be alongside the Germans.⁴⁴³ The same could be said of collaboration with the Italians. One document is indicative of this secrecy. The command of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment discussed the need for secrecy amongst certain commanders to ensure that collaboration with the Italians did not reach the public to maintain the reputation of the group as a resistance movement.⁴⁴⁴ Though this document is from Montenegro, it is a good example of the command being aware of the public perceptions of collaboration. Yet, the relationship between Mihailović

⁴⁴² Hoare details well the antisemitism of the Chetniks in Bosnia and Hercegovina, almost all of which was based on primary source research but fails to show a concerted anti-Semitism. See Hoare, *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler’s Bosnia*, 159-162.

⁴⁴³ There is evidentiary proof from German sources, however, of Mihailović meeting at least once with the Germans. See Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 149-150.

⁴⁴⁴ Arhiv Odsjek za Istoriju radničkog pokreta – Podgorica (AOIRP-Podgorica), 8609-1a26.

and many of his subordinate officers soured as the war went on and especially as the tide turned against them from 1943 onwards.⁴⁴⁵

Internal JVuO Dynamics

No clearer was this the case than with Mihailović's relationship with Major Pavle Đurišić, commander of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment and what many historians have called Mihailović's most capable commander.⁴⁴⁶ The details, as far as we can ascertain, have been spelled out elsewhere, and the events from Đurišić's perspective will be detailed in a later chapter.⁴⁴⁷ However, we should still arrive at an understanding of the ideological differences that developed amongst those who stayed at Ravna Gora in light of the Lim-Sandžak decision to leave.

To say that there was internal strife among the JVuO is an understatement. From September 1944, when the Partisans captured Belgrade with the aid of the Red Army, Mihailović moved from Serbia to Majevisa Mountain near Tuzla in Bosnia. When Đurišić arrived at Majevisa he came to urge Mihailović to return to Serbia, albeit at a different geographic point than before. It was discussed whether this should be in the Sandžak or elsewhere, but what is apparent is that Mihailović refused.⁴⁴⁸ He urged the Montenegrin contingent to remain at Majevisa, or at least near it, and await the expected Allied Balkan landing. Refusing to wait, Đurišić along with Vasić, Lieutenant Colonel Zahorije Ostojčić of the Hercegovina Chetniks, Major Petar Baćović of the Chetniks in eastern Bosnia and Hercegovina, and a great number of refugees – a total of roughly 10,000 people – left for the Ljubljana Gap to surrender to the Allies. They arranged a safe-conduct agreement with the NDH forces and the separatist Montenegrin forces of Sekula Drljević to get to Bihać. However, any promises that were made were not kept and virtually all of those headed to the gap were annihilated in circumstances that are not entirely clear: either in Jasenovac, in battle, or otherwise.⁴⁴⁹ Regardless, Đurišić was

⁴⁴⁵ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 424-428.

⁴⁴⁶ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 440.

⁴⁴⁷ See Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 440-441, 446-449.

⁴⁴⁸ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 429.

⁴⁴⁹ This is detailed in Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 440-449. For two sentimental accounts from the Chetnik perspective see Bojan Dimitrijević, *Golgota Četnika: Lijeve Polje, Jasenovac, Zidani*

critical of Mihailović's leadership at least from the time of the former's arrival on Majeвица.⁴⁵⁰ The great exodus represents not only the breakdown in relations between the different JVuO units but the differences in perspective of what the Allies were capable of accomplishing, the trust levels towards the NDH and other collaborationist groups, and the exact nature of one's own Chetnik unit.

On this last point, Mihailović remained committed to the idea that they were a professional army conducting an irregular war. Despite acts of collaboration with the Axis forces, the Ravna Gora Movement was, to Mihailović, a military unit whose first aim was the preservation of Serbian lives and, second, committed to an Allied victory. For Đurišić and others, they saw the military situation as untenable. Though one can perhaps understand Đurišić's and others' decisions to leave, especially given the relatively independent nature of control that the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment was given, understanding the perspectives of Vasić, a long-time supporter of Mihailović and the Ravna Gora Movement, is more difficult.

Through the course of 1943, Vasić increasingly arrived at the conclusion that collaboration with the Italian occupation authorities would tarnish the Chetnik reputation, as indeed it did.⁴⁵¹ Mihailović, on the other hand, was more concerned with the immediate outcome of collaborating with the Italians, and the fact that he was not directly involved in the collaboration meant that Ravna Gora had plausible deniability.⁴⁵² Collaboration with the Italians meant that the Chetniks could get food, arms, medicine and other supplies to fight the Partisans, the NDH and the Germans. The Chetnik units within and near the Italian occupation zone, most notably for our purposes the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Division in Montenegro and the Dinara Chetnik Division in Dalmatia-Hercegovina, helped to undermine the NDH control in Dalmatia and Hercegovina, while Montenegro was virtually free of Partisan activity until late-1944.⁴⁵³ For Mihailović, Lim-

Most (Beograd: Vukotić Media, 2019) and the first-hand Ratko Parežanin, *Moja Misija u Crnoj Gori* (Munich: Iskra, 1974).

⁴⁵⁰ This is detailed through eyewitness testimony in Dimitrijević, *Golgota Četnika*, 147-155.

⁴⁵¹ Enver Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War*, ed. Robert Donia (London and New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 159-160.

⁴⁵² See Mihailović's determination for secrecy when he met the Germans at Divci in Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 148-150 and 198-199.

⁴⁵³ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 226. In Montenegro, this was a result of "left deviation" on the part of the Partisans which meant that they massacred those they suspected of collaboration with the

Sandžak and Dinara, collaboration with Italy was seen as a necessary evil, and the lesser of many evils at that. If postwar Yugoslavia was going to be free of Partisans, then some collaboration with the occupying forces was necessary especially if the Allies were going to be landing in the Balkans to help drive out the Axis as they repeated numerous times to Ravna Gora. From Vasić's perspective, collaboration of any sort was detrimental to the prestige of the JVuO as a whole:

I am increasingly convinced that this public cooperation of our commanders with Italian and German troops is the main and basic reason for our defeats in the battles with the partisans, both on the battlefield and in the political field... But we can no longer leave the path we have set out on.⁴⁵⁴

This does not sufficiently explain his decision to leave Mihailović in 1944, however. Indeed, this decision was not arrived at lightly nor was it done foolhardily.

Cracks in Vasić's belief in the general started to show as early as 1943.⁴⁵⁵ "The Commander," Vasić's name for Mihailović, "is surrounded by swindlers and idle followers. His ideas of destroying the Partisans fell through. And, to tell you the truth, I don't know what the commander thinks now, after all this happened."⁴⁵⁶ These realisations came at a bad time: events happened quickly that would have drastic consequences for Ravna Gora. In September 1943, the Italians capitulated and handed virtually all their weapons over to the Partisans, significantly shifting the tide of the civil war against the JVuO. Emboldened, the Partisans held the second Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (*Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije*, AVNOJ) in November. At AVNOJ, the Partisans committed to a democratic, federal Yugoslavia based on six constituent republics and a public referendum on the status of King Peter II until which point, he was banned from entering. The Tehran Conference took place later in November and December where it was announced that the Partisans would be supported exclusively at the expense of the JVuO. By January

enemy, though the victims were not always guilty. It was only by force in 1944 and 1945 that the Partisans gained control of Montenegro, and even then, struggled to subdue the province many years after the war.

⁴⁵⁴ This was apparently told to Milovanović by Vasić himself. See Nikola Milovanović, *Kontrarevolucionarni Pokret Draže Mihailovića*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Beograd: Izdavačka radna organizacija, 1984), 408-409, and n. 3.

⁴⁵⁵ Milovanović, *Dragiša Vasić*, 28.

⁴⁵⁶ Milovanović, *Dragiša Vasić*, 28. This was also in conversation between Milovanović and Vasić.

1944, Mihailović felt pressure to make similar statements as those at the AVNOJ sessions. The result was the Ba Congress where some of Ravna Gora's program was concretised, but the program itself remained relatively constant. At any rate, Vasić and Moljević were sidelined at the Ba Congress and the voices of other political parties were brought in.⁴⁵⁷ Most importantly were the Socialist Party led by Živko Topalović, the Independent Democratic Party of Adam Pribičević, and Aca Stanojević and his People's Radical Party.⁴⁵⁸ Though each member was the representative of their party in occupied Yugoslavia, the main leaders of the parties were in exile in London with the rest of the government officials.⁴⁵⁹ It should also be noted that the congress included some 300-participants, a number of whom were Croats, Slovenes and at least one Bosnian Muslim.⁴⁶⁰

The Ba Congress

The purpose of the congress was to reconcile the politicians and the JVuO, to determine a path forward for Yugoslavia using the existing prewar political parties. What was agreed at the congress was the creation of a new political group of which the JVuO would be one part, the affirmation of a Yugoslav ideal, the creation of a parliamentary system, improved relations with the British, and a possible Allied-mediated reconciliation with the Partisans. A reaffirmation for the Yugoslav government-in-exile, Mihailović's leadership, and the JVuO as the national army were also agreed upon.⁴⁶¹ The resolutions asserted that Yugoslavia was to be federated into three units of Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia, and that each federal unit would organise and administer their own internal affairs, but that King Peter II would be monarch. It further states that Serbs should be contained within "one Serbian unit, which would gather the entire Serbian people on a democratic basis" but that the same principles should also apply to Croats

⁴⁵⁷ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 401 notes that Mihailović "was opposed to allowing any major role to Vasić, with whom he was increasingly at odds, and gave way only at Topalović's insistence."

⁴⁵⁸ Karchmar, *Draža Mihailović and the Rise of the Četnik Movement*, 600-601.

⁴⁵⁹ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 400.

⁴⁶⁰ See Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 399-400.

⁴⁶¹ For more details on the resolutions see Tomasevich, *Chetniks*, 401-403. For the resolutions themselves see Knežević, *Knjiga o Draži*, vol. 2, p. 10-15.

and Slovenes.⁴⁶² In order to accomplish this, the territory of prewar Serbia would have to be expanded. The second half of point 4(d) is an interesting detail to linger on for our purposes:

The distinction between Serbs and Croats made without legitimate representatives of the Serbian people, as well as all other factual situations *created before the war* or in the war, under the pressure of violence and the dictates of the occupiers, are not recognized.⁴⁶³

The mention of “distinction between Serbs and Croats...before the war” signals that the influence of the SKK and the *Sporazum* were still felt even after all that the war brought to the Yugoslav peoples. Rejecting wartime conditions and changes is one thing but point 4(d) is a specific rejection of the 1937 agreement between Maček and Cvetković. This shows the influence of the SKK even through the tides of war. Tomasevich and Hoare argue that the resolutions were a “Greater Serbia” idea in disguise of an overarching Yugoslav ideal and reminiscent of the “*Homogena Srbija*” pamphlet written by Moljević in 1941. This may be so, but what it also points to is the continuation of the wartime ideology which had its precedents in the interwar SKK tradition. Every one of these points was a point taken from various SKK articles from *Srpski glas*. In other words, for all the emphasis on democracy and reaffirming support for the Allies, little had changed ideologically for the JVuO.

Regardless, what Tomasevich and Hoare, and others who criticize the resolutions as nothing more than a Greater Serbian ideology,⁴⁶⁴ fail to connect is that the expanded Serbian territory that the resolutions call for were predicated on the destruction of Serbs by the NDH, the Nazis and others. Without the NDH genocide against Serbs, and without Nazi reprisals, the case for expanded Serbian territory would be a difficult one to make. Perhaps the congress used the genocide as a pretext to realise a Greater Serbian ideology, as Vasić’s letter to Mihailović in 1942, detailed earlier, seems to indicate.⁴⁶⁵ Or perhaps it was a result of seeing the prewar warnings of the SKK – that Serbian culture and the people were being threatened with extinction –

⁴⁶² Knežević, *Knjiga o Draži*, vol. 2, 13.

⁴⁶³ Knežević, *Knjiga o Draži*, vol. 2, 13. Italics mine.

⁴⁶⁴ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 399-407, especially 402; and Marko Attila Hoare, *The Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 191-193.

⁴⁶⁵ *Zbornik* vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 85.

come to fruition. Whatever the case, simply calling the resolution a Greater Serbian ideology misses the prewar context of the SKK. Similarly, Lucien Karchmar goes too far the other way to argue that the Ba Congress had done something of consequence by shifting the ideology of the JVuO towards democracy, liberalism, and constituting postwar Yugoslavia as a federation.⁴⁶⁶ However, this view fails to recognise the presence of the “Homogeneous Serbia” pamphlet which is conspicuously couched within the resolutions. A single Serbian political unit, for example, is not articulated to any great length in the resolutions and thus leaves open the opportunity for “cleansing actions,” the likes of which the JVuO was already engaged. In other words, both viewpoints – Tomasevich/Hoare on the one hand and Karchmar on the other – miss the historical contexts which predated the Ba Congress.

From Vasić’s perspective, the premise of the Ba Congress was an affront to him and his position of ideologue in the Ravna Gora Movement. The inclusion of the interwar political parties was also seen by Vasić as a slight, a rejection of his wartime position as the principal political intellectual behind the movement. Though Vasić and Moljević were still present at the congress, and were still part of the decision-making process, their roles as key players were greatly reduced, and strain developed between the two ideologues. There was also personal and professional conflict between Vasić and Mihailović.⁴⁶⁷ Vasić seems to have lost all impetus to fulfill his duties soon after the congress took place.⁴⁶⁸ Though it is told as a dialogue between him and Vasić, and therefore somewhat fictionalised, Topalović relates in his memoirs the sentiment that Vasić was feeling soon after the congress.⁴⁶⁹ The Ravna Gora Movement was using the ideas of other figures, no longer attributing them to Moljević and Vasić, and cleavages emerged at the highest ranks. They were now marginalised actors in a movement that no longer recognised their authority.

The only way to explain Vasić leaving Mihailović at Majeвица without proper documentary evidence is to conclude that the former lost all faith in the latter.

⁴⁶⁶ Karchmar, *Draža Mihailović and the Rise of the Četnik Movement*, 660-663.

⁴⁶⁷ Milovanović, *Dragiša Vasić*, 423.

⁴⁶⁸ Milovanović, *Dragiša Vasić*, 423-424.

⁴⁶⁹ Živko Topalović, *Srbija Pod Dražom* (London: Izdanje “Budućnost,” 1968), 15-22. Notice, too, how Vasić “speaks” of Moljević as one other example of the breakdown within the ideological structure.

Marginalised by the leadership, replaced by interwar politicians, in a movement that appeared to be losing the war and which no longer had the support of the Allies, Vasić left. Vasić must also have arrived at the conclusion that Mihailović's command had slipped so far away from Vasić's vision, that even siding with one of the biggest collaborators with the Italians – Đurišić – was the better solution. At least by 1944 the Italians were now on the side of the Allies so perhaps some sort of argument could be made in that regard. On another level, Vasić may have further concluded that leaving was the better option than sitting in Majevisa and awaiting something that may never come: if the ever-promised Allied supplies never arrived, why would the landings? Whatever the case, Vasić left and met his demise along with roughly 10,000 other people.

Summary

This chapter has looked at the ideology of the Ravna Gora Movement through the lens of its leader, its adherents, and those who made up its structure at various points since the movement's inception in 1941. The Ravna Gora Movement began and ended with Draža Mihailović, so it is only logical that such a study begins with the qualities that made him who he was. A professional soldier first and foremost, his outlook for the JVuO was one of a professional army with army-like structure and tactics, while also employing *četovanje* strategies that have long been the feature of Balkan guerrilla fighters. The movement saw itself as a continuation of the Royal Yugoslav Army, but that army had been discredited and so needed to fashion for itself a new identity while keeping the idea of a professional army in place. Mihailović's prewar views can be said to be something approximating the views of Ilija Trifunović-Birčanin and those of the Serbian Cultural Club, so it was only logical to include the members of the SKK into the movement's leadership. Stevan Moljević and Dragiša Vasić at the forefront of the ideological program meant that the SKK's foundational principles would be included and, coupled with Mihailović's interwar views for restructuring the Royal Yugoslav Army, meant that any movement with these men at its core was bound to have a Yugoslav nationalist identity with a strong Serbian nationalist undertone. To have a strong Yugoslavia was to have a strong, and dominant, Serbian nation.

The political climate of interwar Yugoslavia influenced the wartime politics of all actors, and it was the milieu of circumstances that prompted Mihailović to resort to wait-

and-see tactics and the preservation of the Serbian people, as he saw it. This greatly affected his relationships, most notably with the Allies, but also within his own command and within the structure of the JVuO. Even within the Ravna Gora Movement itself, the core of Moljević and Vasić became precarious as Mihailović tried to refashion the movement in the wake of losing Allied support, losing the government, effectively losing the war, and in many ways in light of the repudiation of his leadership and tactics. Unfortunately for Mihailović and the JVuO, the shift in program was neither different enough nor did it occur soon enough. Collaboration, genocidal acts against non-Serb ethnicities, and the tension between a professional army and guerrilla tactics tore the Chetnik “movement” apart. While some on the periphery maintained allegiance to Mihailović until well into the postwar period, others repudiated him sooner than that. While several officers left Ravna Gora in 1941, others throughout the war, and Đurišić most (in)famously in 1944, others took the cult of personality built up by the Allies and ran with it when they got to the diaspora. Chetnik associations were created all around North America, Australia, South America, Europe and even in South Africa. At the forefront of this was Momčilo Đujić, one of the commanders of the Dinara Chetnik Division in Dalmatia and western Bosnia. He, along with Dobrosav Jevđević, fostered the image of Mihailović and Ravna Gora as a resistance movement against the combined totalitarianisms of Nazism, fascism, and communism.⁴⁷⁰ Of course, this was administered by the context of the Cold War and the ardent anti-communism of the time, but also by the anti-Nazism and anti-fascism strains that held over in the aftermath of the war.

In the coming chapters, we will see the formulation of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment and the Dinara Chetnik Division from ideological perspectives. Each of these movements, like the Ravna Gora Movement, came into the Second World War

⁴⁷⁰ Đujić’s obituary provides examples of his apparent resistance to Nazism, Fascism, and Communism. See David Binder, “Momcilo Đujic, Serbian Priest and Warrior, Dies at 92,” *The New York Times*, September 13, 1999, sec. Obituaries. For attempts at and outcomes of rehabilitating Mihailović and the Chetniks, see Tomislav Dulić, “Sentenced for ‘Ideological and Political Reasons’? The Rehabilitation of Dragoljub ‘Draža’ Mihailović in Serbia,” *Sociologija* 54, no. 4 (2012): 625–48; Tea Sindbæk, “The Fall and Rise of a National Hero: Interpretations of Draža Mihailović and the Chetniks in Yugoslavia and Serbia since 1945,” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 17, no. 1 (April 2009): 47–59. For a thorough discussion of the memory of the Chetniks in Serbia and Yugoslavia since Milošević’s downfall in 2000, see Jelena Đureinović, *The Politics of Memory of the Second World War in Contemporary Serbia: Collaboration, Resistance and Retribution* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2020).

with their own preconceived notions, experiences, and worldviews. In the utter chaos and confusion that was April 1941, people floundered to find solace and, most of all, protection in the two regions of Montenegro and the Dinaric mountain range. Some vacillated between Chetniks and Partisans, while others stayed with the Chetniks from the beginning. Still others joined later. But what remains constant is that each of these Chetnik units, both of which claimed allegiance to Ravna Gora, were populated by people who believed in a certain set of core beliefs, some of which changed drastically over time. The next chapters will explore how these differences proceeded.

Chapter 3. “The Pride of Montenegro”:⁴⁷¹ The Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment

The commander closest to Mihailović, though his units were in far-off Montenegro and southern Serbia, was Major Pavle Đurišić. Like Mihailović, he was a professional soldier from the interwar period, but unlike Mihailović and the other officers at Ravna Gora, Đurišić was also a teacher before finding his place in the Royal Yugoslav Army. Đurišić’s hybrid identity of teacher and soldier resembled some of the members of the pre-First World War and interwar period Chetniks. This chapter charts the creation of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment commanded by Pavle Đurišić and follows its politics and actions throughout the war, paying particular attention to the details that make it similar to, yet also distinct from, both the Ravna Gora Movement and the Dinara Chetnik Division. Indeed, I argue that the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment straddles the ideological and operational divide that existed between Dinara and Ravna Gora. Like the latter, the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment was populated by professional officers and soldiers with smatterings of peasants and others, but its leaders were more willing and able to resort to guerrilla operations and collaboration with the Italians, much like the Dinara Division. Being able to resort to guerrilla tactics and shift back to more traditional warfare meant that the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment became masters of their domain: they rid Montenegro of the Partisans, made concessions and deals with the Italians, and did not have to worry about the threat from the NDH. This space allowed them to perpetrate genocide against Bosnian Muslims, Albanians, and other non-Serb peoples in and around their operational area along the Lim and Drina River valleys and the surrounding mountains; space that neither the Dinara Chetniks nor the Ravna Gora Movement had. This is in juxtaposition to what we will see in a later chapter: Dinara began as a response to the NDH whose killings of ethnic Croats started out as defensive tactics against attempted genocide, which (d)evolved into pre-emptive murders and, eventually, a nationalist motivated genocidal campaign of its own. In other words, the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment had all the hallmarks of the professional army that Mihailović was trying to create out of the JVuO while still maintaining the *četovanje* aspects of Dinara.

⁴⁷¹ Translation: *Ponos Crne Gore*. This phrase comes from a lyric from a popular Chetnik song about Pavle Đurišić, the “young major.” See <https://youtu.be/BkAlx10rJXA>.

This chapter uses volume 3 of the *Zbornik Dokumentata i Podataka o Narodnooslobodilačkom Ratu Naroda Jugoslavije* (Collection of Documents and Data on the People's Liberation War of the Peoples of Yugoslavia), a collection of primary source documents which focuses on the war in Montenegro from captured Italian, Chetnik, JVuO, German, and other documents, as well as the archival sources found in the *Arhivski Odsjek za istoriju radničkog pokreta – Podgorica* (AOIRP – Podgorica, Archives Section for the Workers' Movement – Podgorica), and memoirs written by members of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment and others with whom they came into contact.⁴⁷² Besides the AOIRP – Podgorica not having been accessed and used in any significant way, this chapter is the first study to look at the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment from the perspectives of collaboration and genocide. As such, this chapter provides a corrective to the mainstream historiography by investigating both phenomena in a country ignored by both genocide and military studies scholars.

The Political Lay of the Land

Montenegro was a politically divided region. Beginning in 1918, when the creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was being created, many Montenegrins, called *Zelenaši* (Greens), rejected their inclusion into the state under the terms which were presented. Rather than becoming subsumed under the national and ethnic identity of “Serbs,” the Greens insisted on their inclusion as a constituent people alongside Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and with some autonomy.⁴⁷³ The Greens were also monarchists, but for the Montenegrin monarchy under King Nikola I Petrović-Njegoš and not the Serbian Karađorđević dynasty. A public vote was held in 1918 to elect delegates who would then elect Members for the National Assembly. The National Assembly would then vote on Montenegro's inclusion into Yugoslavia, the parameters of such an inclusion, and other matters. Called the Podgorica Assembly, the members were divided

⁴⁷² The *Zbornik* was published regularly between 1948 and the 1990s, totalling nearly two dozen volumes, and edited by several historians over that time. Given this, and given that the collection underwent several name changes, not to mention that it includes volumes dedicated to specific regions, themes, and topics, this thesis uses the published title and specifies the volume number in the notes and bibliography.

⁴⁷³ An excellent account of Montenegro from about the time of the Great War is Srdja Pavlović, *Balkan Anschluss: The Annexation of Montenegro and the Creation of the Common South Slavic State* (Baltimore, MD: Purdue University Press, 2008). Unless otherwise cited, much of the information comes from this source.

into two main camps: the advocates for uniting with Serbia under the Karađorđević crown used white paper lists for their candidates and subsequently became known as the *Bjelaši* (Whites), while the Green candidates used green paper, hence the moniker.⁴⁷⁴ The result of the assembly was that Montenegro would join Serbia into a single state before entering into a common state with Croats and Slovenes (i.e., the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes); that the Montenegrin identity would become subsumed into a Serbian one; and that King Nikola I would be deposed, and the head of state would be King Peter Karađorđević. In a word, the Whites won. This result led to not only the creation of Yugoslavia, but to guerrilla resistance by the Greens. If they could not win in the polls, then they would try in the hills. Resistance lasted until 1929 at which point it was all but vanquished.⁴⁷⁵

Green ideology had some basis in historical fact, as well. Though many nationalist narratives about Montenegro's resistance to the Ottoman Empire, which often include myths about the country's ability to remain unconquered, have no basis in historical realities, Montenegro did have a history as an independent and autonomous state.⁴⁷⁶ Like Serbia, Montenegro achieved its independence in 1878 at the Treaty of Berlin, after roughly two decades of autonomy under Ottoman sovereignty. While there were close relations between Serbia and Montenegro, the two countries followed their own internal political paths and foreign policies.⁴⁷⁷ Montenegro was an instrumental actor in the creation of the Balkan League prior to the Balkan Wars and was first to declare

⁴⁷⁴ Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 285-286.

⁴⁷⁵ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, 287.

⁴⁷⁶ For a good overview of the Ottoman conquering of Montenegro, Elizabeth Roberts, *Realm of the Black Mountain: A History of Montenegro* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2007), see 103ff.

⁴⁷⁷ Much of Serbia and Montenegro's relationship rested on the fact that the two royal dynasties were linked by marriage. King Nikola I's daughter, Zorka, was King Peter I's wife. Indeed, Nikola's ability to marry five of his nine daughters off to other royals dubbed him "Europe's father-in-law" and assured his legacy as a diplomat. See Roberts, *Realm of the Black Mountain*, 262. As an example of the warm relations, see the resettling of Montenegrins in Serbia prior to the First World War in Ulf Brunnbauer, "Emigrants and Countries of Origin: The Politics of Emigration in Southeastern Europe until the First World War," in *The Balkans as Europe, 1821-1914*, ed. Timothy Snyder and Katherine Younger (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2018), 78-109, 91.

war on the Ottomans in 1912. Thus, Montenegro existed as its own independent and sovereign state until the 1918 Podgorica Assembly.

When the Second World War broke out, the Greens were revived and many of the guerrillas from the 1920s tried to take control of the situation in Montenegro. Much like the interwar period, the Greens saw Montenegro as a geographically defined area with a separate culture and its people as a unified nation separate from Serbia and the Serbs. This contrasted with the views of the leaders and members of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment who believed in a dual Montenegrin and Serbian nationalist identity. Since this chapter is interested in the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment's relationships with Italy and the massacres against non-Montenegrin peoples, the Greens are only of minor importance to the chapter but still help to contextualise some of the political landscape which existed in 1941. The Greens also represent another group against which the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment can be compared alongside the Partisans and put into perspective the Serb-centric ideology of the Lim-Sandžak Chetniks.⁴⁷⁸

Further adding to the Montenegrin milieu is the presence of Albanian and Muslim armed bands. Like the Serbian and Montenegrin *hajduks*, the Albanian *kaçaks* operated through banditry and resistance and were often seen as rebellious heroes for the Albanian nation. Indirect Italian occupation policy meant that Italy instrumentalized the presence of armed bands, they armed individuals, and encouraged the creation of other units so they could govern Montenegro through divide and rule policies.⁴⁷⁹ This ensured

⁴⁷⁸ For more on the Greens, see Marcia Christoff Kurapovna, *Shadows on the Mountain: The Allies, the Resistance, and the Rivalries That Doomed WWII Yugoslavia* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010), 62; Paul N. Hehn, "Serbia, Croatia and Germany, 1941-1945: Civil War and Revolution in the Balkans," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 13, no. 4 (Winter 1971): 355; Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, 285-286. For a wider Central and Eastern European history of the Green Cadres, see Jakub S. Beneš, "The Green Cadres and the Collapse of Austria-Hungary in 1918," *Past and Present* 236, no. 1 (May 31, 2017): 207-41. Enver Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War*, ed. Robert Donia (London and New York: Frank Cass, 2005) also mentions the Greens (p. 48), but the Montenegrin Greens should not be confused with the Muslim Green Cadres of Bosnia and the Sandžak mentioned throughout the book. The Montenegrin Greens were, of course, nationalist Montenegrins as described above while the Muslim Green Cadre had their own historical trajectories. See as well, Hoare, *The Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War* for more on the Muslim Green Cadres.

⁴⁷⁹ Franziska Anna Zaugg, "From the Milizia Fascista Albanese to the SS Division 'Skanderbeg': Between Imposing Fascist Ideology and Adapting Local Warfare," in *Fascist Warfare, 1922-1945* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), 269-93, doi: [10.1007/978-3-030-27648-5_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-27648-5_12); Franziska Anna Zaugg, "Resistance and Its Opponents in the Region of Sandžak and Kosovo," *Les Cahiers Sirice* 1, no. 22 (2019): 85-99, 96. Italy also used these tactics in other areas of their occupation zone: Kosovo, Metohija and Macedonia.

that the resistance to Italian control remained weak by having potential resistance focused on each other. The Albanian and Muslim bands feature very little, even less than the Greens, in this chapter except for their roles in enacting reprisals against the Montenegrin resistance as we will see later. But again, their presence adds to the wartime context in which the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment operated.

The Montenegrin Uprising Begins

The political circumstances in Montenegro make it a unique case study because the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment not only had to contend with the Partisans, much like in Dalmatia-Herzegovina and in the Serbia-Bosnia border area, but also had to compete with the Greens for nationalist and anti-communist Montenegrins. Similarly, the presence of large Albanian and Muslim populations meant that the ethno-religious dynamics featured more prominently than in other parts of Yugoslavia, as we will see, except maybe than in Bosnia.⁴⁸⁰ Yet, in many ways, the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment foreshadowed the trajectory of the Ravna Gora Movement. While Ravna Gora was gathering intelligence and attempting to connect with likeminded resistance movements, the men who would become the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment were coalescing into a resistance movement of their own.

With the Yugoslav army's capitulation on 17 April 1941, a provisional government nominally led by the Greens was declared by the Italian occupation authorities. When none of the remaining members of the Njegoš-Petrović dynasty agreed to accept the throne of such a state, Italy declared a regency under King Victor Emmanuel III effectively uniting Montenegro to Fascist Italy.⁴⁸¹ Long-time Green member Sekula Drljević was named president of the territory on 12 July. The uprising began the next day. The insurgency led to close cooperation between communist and nationalist elements, even including a Whites contingent.⁴⁸² Much of the leadership came from the communist elements, such as Milovan Đilas and Moša Pijade, but Pavle Đurišić soon

⁴⁸⁰ Two works remain the cornerstone for Bosnia during the war: Hoare, *The Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War* and Hoare, *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler's Bosnia*. While in BCS, see Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War*.

⁴⁸¹ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 92.

⁴⁸² Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War*, 48. The communists at this point had not yet created the Partisans, the military wing of the party.

distinguished himself, earning the reputation as a good leader and fighter in his own right. Centred around Berane in eastern Montenegro and on the banks of the Lim River, Đurišić came to lead a detachment of his own as a direct result of his record in the first weeks of the uprising.⁴⁸³

By the end of the summer, the Italians had gained control of Montenegro and enacted severe reprisals. The Italian Governorate of Montenegro was created in October under the military governor Alessandro Pirzio Biroli and divide and rule policies took effect.⁴⁸⁴ Muslim and Albanian irregulars took advantage of the environment and attacked Montenegrin villages. Đurišić ordered his insurgents to liquidate Italian prisoners of war and to destroy Albanian and Muslim villages in Montenegro and Kosovo, putting him at odds with the other leaders in the insurgency, and led to a split between Đurišić and the nationalists on one hand and the communists on the other.⁴⁸⁵ At about the same time, the communists perpetrated what came to be known as the “leftist errors,” the massacres of class enemies, putative and real. In essence, however, the “errors” targeted not just class enemies but allowed for the settling of old scores between aggrieved neighbours and led to further cycles of violence.⁴⁸⁶ Montenegro, then, represents what Bergholz calls the “generating force” of violence: the ability of acts of violence to beget more violence which devolves into further escalations and reprisals.⁴⁸⁷ As a result, the insurgency melted away and Đurišić embarked on negotiations with the Italians to cooperate against the communist, Albanian, and Muslim threats. In return, the Italians would keep the marauding Muslim and Albanian bands at bay and Đurišić’s men would get much needed food, medicine, and supplies. Collaboration had begun.

Collaboration will be covered in its own subsection, but it is first important to understand the further dynamics of the Chetnik-Partisan split. Đurišić and his men took to the mountains to defend against attack while the communist insurgents regrouped

⁴⁸³ On Đurišić and his leadership and bravery in those early weeks, see Milovan Đilas, *Wartime* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 29. The most thorough account of the “counterrevolutionary” elements in Montenegro is Radoje Pajović, *Kontrarevolucija u Crnoj Gori: Četnički i Federalistički Pokret, 1941-1945* (Cetinje: Obod, 1977).

⁴⁸⁴ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 103.

⁴⁸⁵ *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga 2, doc. 48. See also Đilas, *Wartime*, 29.

⁴⁸⁶ See Đilas for his views and some of his role in the “errors.” Đilas, *Wartime*, 155-156.

⁴⁸⁷ Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force*.

and eventually continued to fight. This signals another difference between the nationalist and communist branches of the Montenegrin insurgency and one that would mark the difference between the JVuO and the Partisans across Yugoslavia. While the Partisans insisted on taking the fight to the invaders, the Chetniks opted to wait to attack, arrive at concessions and collaboration deals, and to focus their energies on the internal enemies: Muslims, Albanians, and communists. While the “leftist errors” were ongoing, the Chetniks were able to recruit countless people from all classes, something which counters the narrative of the Chetniks as narrow sectarians. To be sure, some of the victims of the “errors” were guilty of what they were accused, but at least as many were not. More often than not, the victims of the “errors” were ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins. The “errors” undermined the Partisans in Montenegro and further strengthened the nationalist cause; Serbs were being targeted in the NDH and, along with Montenegrins, now in Montenegro as well.⁴⁸⁸ Montenegrins rejected what they saw as senseless murder by the communists and flocked to the nationalists which essentially led to the disappearance of the Partisans from the territory until late 1944 by which time the JVuO themselves were undermined by collaboration and a genocidal campaign of their own.⁴⁸⁹ We have in Montenegro, then, a series of related factors that led to the civil war, the strengthening of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment, and the weakening and eventual disappearance of the Partisans.

Chetnik-Partisan Differentiation and Civil War

In light of the Chetnik-Partisan civil war that emerged in the fall it may seem counter-intuitive that the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment and the Partisans should begin as allies in the summer of 1941. Yet, it is understandable when one considers the context of Axis invasion, armed resistance to the invasion and the general attitudes and understandings of the Balkan civilians who inhabited the Montenegro-Sandžak region. Memoirs and firsthand accounts of the events of summer 1941 show that many civilians, especially the peasantry, had little to no understanding of communism or even extreme nationalism. In some villages, peasants would be recruited to one cause, only to be co-

⁴⁸⁸ Đilas, *Wartime*, 155-156.

⁴⁸⁹ Indeed, as early as February 1942 the Partisans were complaining about the growing Chetnik presence and the disappearance of the Partisans. See, *Zbornik*, vol. III, doc. 57. See also Tomasevich, *Occupation and Collaboration*, 140-148.

opted by the other side. In several campaigns, the red star appeared alongside the skull and crossbones cockades and few, even the most “ideologically pure,” refused to bat an eyelid.⁴⁹⁰ This speaks to the general confusion of what communism and extreme nationalism were, the uncertainty of whether both resistance movements could cooperate, and to the strong desire that emerges to defend one’s homeland against invasion. Yet, even at the leadership level, as high as Mihailović and Tito in Serbia, and Đurišić and Đilas in Montenegro, cooperation was entertained and, as we saw until the fall of 1941, coordinated.

It was only as the war continued throughout the summer and into the autumn of 1941 that tensions emerged between the Chetnik side and the Partisans, most especially in Montenegro. One important factor that helped further this friction was Đurišić himself. A sort of cult of personality built up around him which led to extreme loyalty by his subordinates. This cult was not all his doing but had as much to do with his supporters as well.⁴⁹¹ Part of the reason for this was his charisma and public speaking abilities.⁴⁹² The quality of charismatic leadership existed amongst the Chetnik groups both of the interwar period and of the “old” Chetnik period of 1903 to 1912.⁴⁹³ This is a theme that also emerges in Dinara, but in the context of Montenegro it meant that Đurišić’s ability to explain complex matters in simple terms drew a coterie of extremely loyal civilians who had very little or no formal education.⁴⁹⁴ The same tactics for drawing uneducated masses were also found on the Partisan side, as Đilas notes in his various

⁴⁹⁰ Đilas, *Wartime*, 29.

⁴⁹¹ See, for example, the quote in Dimitrijević, *Golgota Četnika*, 148. While the Montenegrins were in Serbia in 1944, one of the Ravna Gora officers asks who they are when first meeting them. The reply came: “We are Pavle’s men...we have our own ‘Čiča’ [Uncle, the nickname given to Mihailović by the peasantry].” The implication here is that Đurišić commanded so much authority amongst his men that even in light of being questioned by the supposed central command, Đurišić’s authority trumps Mihailović’s.

⁴⁹² For example, see the account regarding Đurišić’s abilities to make people feel at home, even Albanian delegates to his headquarters, too long to quote here, in the Ljotićite account by Ratko Parežanin, *Moja Misija u Crnoj Gori* (Munich: Iskra, 1974), 46-47.

⁴⁹³ Tasić, “The Institutionalization of Paramilitarism in Yugoslav Macedonia: The Case of the Organization Against the Bulgarian Bandits, 1923-1933,” 396-398.

⁴⁹⁴ See, for example, the rather hagiographical account in Parežanin, *Moja Misija u Crnoj Gori* of Đurišić speaking with the peasantry, his cult of personality and charisma that unfolds in the pages, especially p. 71-73 on “his intellectuals” and the relationship fostered between Đurišić and some of his most trusted officers. Indeed, many of the few officers and followers who did escape Montenegro ahead of Đurišić write admiringly of the commander, painting portraits of a larger-than-life hero. See Dimitrijević, *Golgota Četnika*, 46.

memoirs and diaries.⁴⁹⁵ Thus, what emerges is two movements with distinct ideologies which are able to synthesise complex subject matter into understandable language. It was these abilities on either side that wrenched supporters to one cause or the other and led to the civil war that emerged between late-1941 to 1944. In many ways, the ensuing civil war in Montenegro could be seen as a power struggle between two charismatic leadership groups who found it impossible to exist alongside each other. What separates the two movements, however, is the “leftist errors” which, as explained, drew off support for the communists and directed it towards Đurišić.

An important aspect of the regional identity of the Montenegrin Chetniks, and indeed the civil war that emerged in Montenegro, is the tribal question. Without essentializing the qualities, Montenegro, like Albania, was largely divided along tribal lines.⁴⁹⁶ Đurišić and many of his supporters came from the Vasojević tribe, a long line of people who resisted imperialist, especially Venetian and Ottoman, expansion according to the oral traditions and epics.⁴⁹⁷ Yet, even tribal affiliation is not enough to explain the emerging civil war.⁴⁹⁸ The Vasojević tribe, like many of Yugoslavia’s kinship ties, was divided between Chetnik and Partisan support. It is often said anecdotally that the

⁴⁹⁵ As only one example, see his use of the oral epics in communicating with the peasantry: Đilas, *Wartime*, 166-167.

⁴⁹⁶ See, for example, the various identitarian politics that played a role in Montenegrin society, not least of which was tribal affiliation during the country’s 2006 referendum on independence from Serbia in Jelena Dzankic, “Cutting the Mists of the Black Mountain: Cleavages in Montenegro’s Divide over Statehood and Identity,” *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 3 (May 2013): 412–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2012.743514>. Troch also charts some of the tribal differences in Yugoslavia in Pieter Troch, “From ‘And’ to ‘Either/or’: Nationhood in Montenegro during the Yugoslav Twentieth Century,” *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures* 28, no. 1 (February 2014): 25–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325413502284>. See also the discussion on tribes in Albania and Montenegro in Isa Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities, 1800-1912* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 78-86. Though academic debates over the nature of and specificities of “tribes” abound, Blumi persuasively makes the case that creating, stoking, and impressing tribal “qualities” on peoples from certain regions enforced particular stereotypes in pursuit of Ottoman expansion and governance.

⁴⁹⁷ Despite what the epics would have us believe, understandings of “tribe” and “clan” shifted towards the end of the eighteenth-century. Many tribal leaders, for instance, came to increasingly realise that internal unity was necessary if they were to have any chance of resisting external enemies, namely the Ottoman Empire. See, for example, Roberts, *Realm of the Black Mountain*, 167-168. Though the question of unity began in fits and starts, it nevertheless began to take a stronger hold as the “age of nationalism” set into the region in the nineteenth century. In many ways, nationalism replaced tribal ties but did not completely extinguish them. Again, Roberts is instructive here. See Roberts, *Realm of the Black Mountain*, 183-185.

⁴⁹⁸ *Zbornik*, vol. III knjiga 4, doc. 24 attempts to convince the Chetnik Vasojevićs to denounce Đurišić and the other tribe members and to join the Partisans.

experience of Yugoslavs in the Second World War was such that it pitted brother against brother: indeed, I have heard stories from the Second World War generation of one brother fighting on one side while another fought for the other.⁴⁹⁹ Mihailović's own son, Branko, fought for the Partisans while his daughter, Gordana, denounced her father after the takeover of Belgrade by the Partisans in 1944, and yet another son, Vojislav, died at his father's side in May 1945.⁵⁰⁰ For the Chetnik Vasojevićs, the experience was much the same and could partially be explained by the cult of personality built around Pavle Đurišić: his temperament, his poise, his eloquence, youthful vibrancy and other charismatic qualities drew supporters that may otherwise have not been ideologically inclined.

Đurišić Emerges as Chetnik Leader

By October 1941, Mihailović named Đurišić First Class Infantry Captain of the Royal Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland.⁵⁰¹ Đurišić was assigned the regions of Andrijevisa, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Prijepolje, Plevlje, Kolašin, along with the Bare and Buđevska parishes, essentially all eastern Montenegro. The inclusion of Prijepolje is noteworthy. This town, located in southwestern Serbia close to the Montenegrin border, is not far from the Ravna Gora stronghold of Zlatibor. It made tactical sense, then, to include the town within Đurišić's remit so that communications between the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment and Ravna Gora could be handled more easily.⁵⁰² However, there is also an implicit ideological component at play. To include territories that abutted so closely was to suggest that Montenegro and Serbia are one contiguous territory. Whether this was a conscious or unconscious decision is not clear from this document

⁴⁹⁹ While my own familial experience is from the Great War, it is still an example of the phenomenon. One of my great-uncles fought for the Habsburg Empire while another, his brother, fought for the Kingdom of Serbia.

⁵⁰⁰ Buisson, *Héros Trahi Par Les Alliés*, 97, 227, 241-242.

⁵⁰¹ Dragoljub M. Mihailovich, "Document 1: Order of the Officer Commanding Chetnik Units of the Yugoslav Army, Str. Conf. No. 177, October 1941," in *The Treason of Mihailovitch: 81 Documents* (London: Yugoslav Embassy Information Office, 1945), 1. On the formation of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment, see Pajović, *Kontrarevolucija u Crnoj Gori*, 167-169.

⁵⁰² Dragoljub M. Mihailovic, "Document 3: Command of Cetnik Units of Yugoslav Army, Mountain Staff, Str. Conf. No. Đ. 370. Field Headquarters: To General Staff Major Đorđe Lasic, O.C. Cetnik Units, Yugoslav Army in Montenegro, and Captain Pavle Đursic, Officer Commanding the Lim Cetnik Units, Yugoslav Army. December 20, 1941," in *The Treason of Mihailovitch: 81 Documents* (London: Yugoslav Embassy Information Office, 1945), 3.

alone but becomes clearer through other orders from Mihailović which deal with the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment.

On 20 December, Mihailović issued a further order confirming Đurišić's position as captain of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment, subordinate to the Officer Commanding all Chetnik Units of the Yugoslav Army, General Staff Major Đorđe Lašić. All other irregular units in the region of the Lim River were to report to Đurišić, while officers were to be appointed by him, effectively making them part of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachments if they were not already. More interestingly, however, is the section on "Instructions."⁵⁰³ Here Mihailović details the operational and ideological plans for the Chetnik contingent in Montenegro. First, he reiterates the support for King Peter II before outlining the plan for the creation of "a Greater Yugoslavia, and in it a Greater Serbia ethnically pure within the frontiers of Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Srem, Banat and Bačka."⁵⁰⁴ The territory of "Greater Yugoslavia" is to include "all hitherto unliberated Slovene territories under the Italians and Germans," that is Trieste, Gorica, Istria and Koruška (Carinthia, Austria) "as well as Bulgaria and North Albania including Skadar." Point Four calls for the "cleansing" of "all national minorities and non-national persons," while Point Five calls for the creation of "common frontiers" between Serbia and Montenegro "and Serbia and Slovenia, by cleansing the Sandžak of its Muslim population and Bosnia of its Croat and Muslim population." Mihailović concludes his "instructions" by insisting that "[n]o co-operation is possible with the Communists or Partisans, since they are fighting against the dynasty."⁵⁰⁵ This document is a direct articulation of Stevan Moljević's plan for "Greater Serbia" which we saw in the previous chapter. Not only does the document call for the inclusion of "unredeemed" territories but also for the "cleansing" of undesirable populations and directly endorsed by the signature of Mihailović himself! Thus, while the document from October 1941 merely

⁵⁰³ *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga 4, doc. 185. For the interpretation of the "Instructions" by the commander of the Ozren Corps in northern Bosnia, see HR-HDA-495, 127-3. It is clear from this interpretation, intended for his officers, that the "Instructions" was meant to be interpreted as a genocidal plan. A similar program was concluded by the Chetnik Youth Conference of Montenegro, Boka and Sandžak on 2 December 1942 at which Đurišić was present, along with Major Zaharije Ostojić. See *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 200.

⁵⁰⁴ *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga 4, doc. 185.

⁵⁰⁵ *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga 4, doc. 185.

insinuates a union of Montenegrin and Serbian territories, the “Instructions” of December of the same year clearly articulate this political vision.

Genocide in Montenegro

Besides joining territories, the practical outcome of the “Instructions” was a genocidal campaign of destruction in Montenegro and Sandžak, as will be seen presently. Two groups of people stood in the way of creating Greater Serbia. The first was the communist threat. By September 1942, Đurišić ordered the “cleansing” of “the last remnants of the communist gang.”⁵⁰⁶ This had to be done before winter, Đurišić insisted, so that the population could enjoy the cold months in “complete order, peace and calm.”⁵⁰⁷ Any captured communists should be killed on the spot, which had precedence as early as the fall of 1941.⁵⁰⁸ Only the leadership should be brought to the headquarters for questioning.⁵⁰⁹ The same order restricted robbery of the population to “preserve and manifest the dignity and pride of the Chetnik organisation.”⁵¹⁰ Any Chetnik caught attempting robbery was to be expelled. This was followed up in December of the same year with a decree which stipulated the lawful killing of communists and their abettors.⁵¹¹

But the killing was not limited to only communists and their helpers. Bosnian Muslim and Albanian peoples also stood in the way of realising the Greater Serbian dream. Indeed, in April 1942, for example, it was reported by the Partisans that the Chetniks in the area of Bijelo Polje ordered that for every Chetnik killed 10 Muslims

⁵⁰⁶ *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga 4, doc. 225.

⁵⁰⁷ *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga 4, doc. 225.

⁵⁰⁸ *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga 2, doc. 48.

⁵⁰⁹ *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga 4, doc. 225.

⁵¹⁰ *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga 4, doc. 225. Interestingly, the order does not specify or distinguish between looting and robbery on the one hand and requisitions on the other. Perhaps there was no need to mention such a distinction because the Lim-Sandžak Chetniks were already involved in collaboration with the Italians by then, as will be detailed later in this chapter.

⁵¹¹ *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga 4, doc. 230. Interestingly, the word which I translate as “abettors” is *jatak*, which comes from the *hajduk* times and signifies the people who would house, feed, and support the *hajduks*, especially in the winter, non-campaigning months. Though it is not stated explicitly, the implication is that the communists were bandits, presumably in juxtaposition to the Chetniks who were *četnici*.

would be shot, or 50 for every officer.⁵¹² Pursuant to this, a certain Captain Obradović killed 7 Muslims in the village of Bistrice. On 29 January 1943, Đurišić issued an order for a coordinated attack on the districts of Foča, Čajniča and Bijelo Polje. The purpose of this attack was to target the “communists, Muslims and Ustashas” in retribution for their treatment of the Serbian population in these regions.⁵¹³ If there was any question over whether Mihailović’s role had any impact on the “cleansing actions,” his commanding officer directly under him, Zaharije Ostojić, sent similarly worded orders on 3 January to the Mileševa Corps, the Durmitor Brigade and the Drina Corps to “cleanse” Čajniča of “Ustasha-Muslims.”⁵¹⁴ The attack began early on 7 February and was over by the end of the day, at which point “the cleansing of the liberated territory took place.”⁵¹⁵ “Cleansing” meant Muslim villages were “completely burned,” 8,000 civilians were killed amongst which were women, children and the elderly, and the death of 12,000 fighters. Hay, cattle, food, and grain were stockpiled into reserves. “During the operations,” Đurišić reported, “the complete destruction of the Muslim population was started, regardless of sex or age.”⁵¹⁶

What we see occurring, then, is the conflation between “Communists and their helpers” and ordinary citizens, as well as the latter with “Ustasha-Muslims.” Such conflation leads to grouping together those who are fighters, those who may be guilty of crimes, and others who can be classed as legitimate enemies and fighters with civilians classed as enemies, or potential enemies. The events in early 1943 show that the blurring of lines between civilians and legitimate military targets leads to the complete and utter destruction of civilian populations. The elderly, women, children, and other innocent people are killed, alongside soldiers and officers. On one level, and avoiding morality and international criminal laws, there may be sound logic to this reasoning since

⁵¹² *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga , doc. 86.

⁵¹³ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 24.

⁵¹⁴ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 2.

⁵¹⁵ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 34.

⁵¹⁶ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 34. This was a pattern that occurred throughout the month of January and into February. Đurišić sent another dispatch to Mihailović on 6 January. See, *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 4. And another update on 10 January. See, *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 8. While Ostojić reported on the events on 1 and 3 January. See, *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 5. For Mihailović’s responses to Ostojić on both days, see *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 6.

it prevents generations in the immediate future from enlisting in the opposing forces. On another level, conflating legitimate targets with civilians leads to genocide.

Even the NDH's Ustasha Supervisory Service (*Ustaške nadzorne službe NDH*) reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the influx of "a large number" of Muslim refugees on 16 February. Interestingly, the document reports on rumours that the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment was working in conjunction with Mihailović, while the Italians took part in the burning of villages: Višegrad, Handrinsko, Bukovica, the district of Pljevlje, Glečevo, Batovo, "Međuriečje [sic],"⁵¹⁷ and the district of Čajniče all went alight. The NDH was awaiting the "fall" of Miletkovića and Zaborka "at any moment." The district militia was left "huddled" and without ammunition in the centre of Čajniče.⁵¹⁸ The Muslim population provided virtually no defence against the Lim-Sandžak offensive. In the same report to Ravna Gora dated 13 February, Đurišić instead writes that Muslim morale was "terrible," and the population exhibited an "epidemic of fear" of the Chetniks.⁵¹⁹

There also existed the dynamic of a defeated army taking out retribution on civilian populations. In the Partisan sources regarding the "Fourth Enemy Offensive," (*Četvrta neprijateljska ofenziva* or "*Fall Weiß*" in German, "Case White"), occurring between January and March 1943, the commander of the Third Battalion reported that forces of Đurišić, along with other Montenegrin Chetnik units and the Germans, enacted reprisals in Hercegovina. This included burned houses and deserted villages by the time the Third Battalion entered.⁵²⁰ By no means were these three vignettes the only examples of targeted and indiscriminate attacks against communists and civilians, but they are indicative of the patterns that the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment exhibited. Taken together, the three examples show not just the seemingly arbitrary targeting of

⁵¹⁷ I am not aware of this village and could not locate it with a simple search. However, it may refer to the village of Međurečje, Serbia which is located in the heart of the Sandžak, one of the areas targeted in the 7 February attack.

⁵¹⁸ Smail Čekić, *Genocid Nad Bošnjacima u Drugom Svjetskom Ratu: Dokumenti* (Sarajevo: MAG - Udruženje Muslimana za antigenocidne aktivnosti, 1996), doc. 93. The nature of the district militias is unclear. The term may refer to the Ustaša-created militias but more likely refers to *ad hoc* paramilitary formations created out of necessity to defend villages, districts and regions from the attacks such as witnessed in early 1943. See Hoare, *The Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War*, especially p. 43.

⁵¹⁹ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 34.

⁵²⁰ *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga 5, doc. 4.

populations as is common amongst defeated armies,⁵²¹ but the planned and coordinated attack on vulnerable populations. Indeed, one should be reminded that the Čajniče district militia was without ammunition and awaiting their fate. The loyalty of Đurišić's soldiers to their commander meant that his orders would be carried out, without question. Clearly Đurišić, specifically, and the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment, generally, operated with genocidal intent in all situations, even in defeat and retreat, especially against Muslim populations.

Mihailović's "Instructions," which were based on Moljević's plan for a "Greater Serbia within a Greater Yugoslavia," was the blueprint for the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment. Though Ravna Gora was less brazen with committing genocide against "non-national elements," the fact that the orders came from the highest authority in the country, indeed Mihailović was named a minister of the Royal Yugoslav government in January 1942, meant that the "Instructions" was a *de facto* state policy. An important sentence appears in the report from 13 February, almost as an afterthought, in which Đurišić cites that the Italian occupation authorities refused to help the Muslim victims.⁵²² Though it may seem inconsequential, the sentence relates directly to the perpetration of the violence against Muslims. The Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment, regardless of their collaboration with the Italians, were able to act in the ways they did precisely because they had no overriding concern other than the complete and utter destruction of "non-national elements." Had the Partisans been stronger, had the Italians been more willing to defend civilians than to fear for their garrisons, and had the leadership in Ravna Gora the fortitude to articulate a political program to counter Moljević's Greater Serbia, the massacres could have been checked if not prevented. Instead, Đurišić and the Montenegrin Chetniks were able to act with the impetus of nationalist extremism and

⁵²¹ See, for example, the defeat of the Russians and the ensuing expulsions, murders and pogroms against Jews in 1915, or the defeat of the Turks at Sarikamish in 1914 "acting as the essential catalyst" for the Armenian genocide in Mark Levene, "Frontiers of Genocide: Jews in the Eastern War Zones, 1914-1920 and 1941," in *Minorities in Wartime: National and Racial Groupings in Europe, North America and Australia during the Two World Wars*, ed. Panikos Panayi (Oxford & Providence: Berg, 1993), 83–117, especially 96-98. Similarly, the advent of "total war" often leads to the "totalising" effects of warfare, that is the entirety of modern warfare being greater than the sum of its parts and laying the groundwork for the possibility for genocide. On this point, see Jay Winter, "Under the Cover of War: The Armenian Genocide in the Context of Total War," in *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915*, ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 37–51, [doi: 10.1017/CBO9780511497605.004](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511497605.004).

⁵²² *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 34.

without care or worry of either reprisals or sanction from above, across or below precisely because the “Instructions” gave them permission to perpetrate genocide.

The imbalance of power that existed in Montenegro also gave Mihailović an alibi at his war crimes trial in 1946. Brought up on charges of collaborating with Italy in Montenegro, Mihailović argued that he had no knowledge of the Lim-Sandžak and Italian agreements until his arrival in Montenegro in June 1942. Though this may be true, Mihailović did nothing to stop it and instead worked to exploit the situation to obtain arms, food, medicines, and other supplies for the Montenegrin, as well as Dalmatian, Herzegovinian, and other Chetniks. If one is to take Mihailović at his word, then it appears that even the nominal head of the Chetniks could not counter the momentum of collaboration once in motion, nor the power of the cult of personality around Đurišić. At best, Mihailović gave his tacit approval for the Montenegrins to collaborate with the Italians. This argument also ignores the other agreements made with Italian and German occupational authorities which followed along the same lines as the Montenegrin agreements, and some of which preceded the Montenegrin agreements. Either way, and much like the genocide, Mihailović did nothing to stop the collaboration, nor to call out the Montenegrin Chetnik leadership for collaborating or for targeting non-Serbian civilians. The only extant examples in which Mihailović’s orders call for restraint against Muslims are before attacks directed at the Partisans with the intention to avoid Muslim populations from joining the communist-led resistance.⁵²³ At every level, then, this shows the JVuO attempting to use every facet of the war to its own advantage: tweak a collaborationist agreement here, pull on the relations with Muslims there. Though it may have worked in the short-term, the long-term outcome was a discredited movement, a series of genocides, and rivers of innocent victims.

Lim-Sandžak and Italian Collaboration

Collaboration with the Italians in Montenegro came as early as Autumn 1941.⁵²⁴ In fact, the beginning stages can be described as something close to a coincidence. As the Montenegrin nationalists, led by Đurišić, came to armed conflict with the communists the Italians were still engaging in anti-insurgent actions. This meant that the Italians were

⁵²³ See, for example, Point 4 in *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 40.

⁵²⁴ *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga 2, doc. 48.

targeting the insurgents, both the Partisans and Chetniks, while the Đurišić group was also battling the Partisans and *not* the Italians except in self-defence. What emerged was a trade of sorts between the nationalist wing of the Montenegrin insurgency and the Italian occupation authorities. Both the Italians and the Chetniks had an enemy in common and it was that common ground on which agreements were signed.

Before any agreements were signed, that is in the Fall of 1941, the Chetniks and the Italians had negotiated a truce, so that both sides could concentrate their forces independently and separately on the Partisans. Soon, this led to low-level and localised trading between the nationalists and the Italians. While the Italians would receive assurances that the Chetniks would not attack them, the Chetniks would get supplies in return. This was crucial because Montenegro has a notoriously harsh karst landscape which prevents much farming. As the winter months set in, limited opportunities for food production make difficult situations worse. Mixed with war and civil war, the Chetniks were threatened with the prospect of starvation. The communists, at least, had supply routes and support within Serbia while the Montenegrin nationalists had to fend for themselves.⁵²⁵ This can be described as one push factor prompting Đurišić to negotiate a rapprochement with the occupation authorities.

Throughout the fall and winter, the Italian-Chetnik relationship remained steady in this ebb and flow of trade-offs. The real set of negotiations began in January 1942, only three months after Đurišić had been made captain by Mihailović, in October 1941. However, the American-Yugoslav historian Karapandžić argued that Mihailović was not aware of the negotiations between Đurišić and the Italians, which Mihailović later claimed at his trial.⁵²⁶ Judging from the primary sources, there is evidence to believe this to be true, although he was aware of them by at least the end of May 1942.⁵²⁷ There was

⁵²⁵ The connection to Serbia was through the Užice Republic. There has yet to be a thorough English study on the Užice Republic. In BCS, Veceslav Glišić, *Užička Republika* (Beograd: Nolit, 1986) remains the cornerstone.

⁵²⁶ Borivoje M. Karapandžić, *Građanski Rat u Srbiji 1941-1945* (Cleveland, Ohio and Beograd, 1993), 173-188.

⁵²⁷ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 93. In this document, Major Petar Baćović reports to Mihailović that Đurišić was receiving arms, food in kind and regular pay for his men from the Italians. This report also contradicts both Mihailović's statement at his trial that he recognised the collaboration almost immediately upon arrival in Montenegro, in June 1942, and in Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies, 1941-1945* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 57-58.

also considerable effort put into keeping the negotiations and deals a secret, from both Mihailović and the wider public. In a message from “General Staff (*Đeneralštab*) – Đurišić,” for example, the Italians are referred to as “our friends” (“*naša prijateljima*”)⁵²⁸ while soon after Đurišić used his history as a national worker to fight off accusations of collaborating with the Italians.⁵²⁹ Simultaneously, the Montenegrin leadership discussed amongst themselves the requirement for secrecy at all levels from the command down to the common soldier “so that the movement will not be compromised in any way.”⁵³⁰ Even as late as August 1943, less than a month before Italy’s capitulation, Đorđe Lašić, commander in the “Old” Montenegro area (i.e., Cetinje region), warned Bajo Stanišić, commander of Zeta, to engage the Italians through a “suitable” proxy: “let everything be done through him. If you think you still need to be in touch with [the Italians], going to meetings should be top secret.” The letter also emphasises the need for secrecy because, even as late as 1943, getting food and arms from the Italians “very unfavourably affects our movement” in the eyes of the public. Only later, once the deals are done and Stanišić is certain that further contacts would not be needed, he should issue a proclamation to the public telling them what was done and why. Such secrecy, working with the Italians and maintaining good favour with the public was necessary because they are “tasks on which our survival depends.”⁵³¹ It is within this context of secrecy and public relations management that negotiations and deal-making with the Italians unfolded.

While the details of the negotiations have been recounted elsewhere,⁵³² it is worth giving a rough outline with a focus on the details that matter most to the present study. Between January and April 1942, the Italians and Đurišić met eight times, each time at the latter’s insistence. Most of the meetings were held between Đurišić and different representatives of the 19th Infantry Division “Venezia,” tasked with

⁵²⁸ Arhivski Odsjek za istoriju radničkog pokreta – Podgorica (Hereafter AOIRP-Podgorica), 2204/XI, 1a-12.

⁵²⁹ AOIRP-Podgorica, 8609, 1a26.

⁵³⁰ AOIRP-Podgorica, 8609, 1a26.

⁵³¹ AOIRP-Podgorica, 2864/IX, 1a-18 (43).

⁵³² Other than direct quotes, most of this section is based on Milutin Živković, “Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.,” *Istorija 20. veka* 34, no. 2/2016 (August 1, 2016): 27–44, <https://doi.org/10.29362/IST20VEKA.2016.2.ZIV.27-44>, unless otherwise noted.

counterinsurgency operations. The first meeting was held on 3 January 1942 with the division's chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Amadeo Simonelli in Berane.

Several things about this meeting are worth repeating. Đurišić claimed that the Partisans repeatedly asked him to join them in fighting the Italians, but since they refused to stop fighting the Italians, he declared a "war to the last man."⁵³³ As a sign of good faith, Đurišić shared with the Italians his assessments of the number of communists in different areas. He also argued that the anti-communist militia deployed by the Italians would be redundant since most anti-communist Montenegrins had joined his detachment, the people were intent on ridding Montenegro of communists without the help of the occupiers, and that several of his men had relatives amongst the Partisans. He further argued for the use of roughly 600 of his men to combat the communists. Đurišić's men would need 3,000 rifles, 110 automatic weapons, 40 light and heavy mortars and 1-2 cannons to help fight the communists. He also requested freedom over his men and the operations, and the permission to spread the fight against the communists to other parts of Montenegro. Throughout this first meeting Đurišić repeated the need for secrecy of the meetings and of any aid that the Italians might give or, likewise, that the Chetniks may give to the Italians. He also repeatedly offered that a mother, wife, and son be given as hostage to the Italians as a sign of good faith. He also reiterated his "sympathy and affection" for the Italians and noted their "loyalty, kindness, and sometimes excessiveness."⁵³⁴ His points seemed to resonate with the Italians. Simonelli concluded that Đurišić's demands "can be met, in order to openly show that the Italian authorities believe in his anti-communist movement and rely on a soldier who claims to be for the sake of the anti-communist ideal, ready to lay down his life." He further writes, "Đurišić's loyalty should not be doubted, due to the spontaneous and repeated offer to take his family members hostage."⁵³⁵

⁵³³ Quoted in Živković, "Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.," 29.

⁵³⁴ Quoted in Živković, "Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.," 30.

⁵³⁵ Quoted in Živković, "Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.," 30.

If Simonelli's reception of Đurišić was glowingly positive, "Venezia" Division's General Silvio Bonini was more reserved. Bonini saw in Đurišić's requests the space to eventually maneuver against the Italians when the time came:

Đurišić wants independence in order to subsequently turn the anti-communist movement into a Yugoslav movement, more precisely an anti-Italian one. The requested cooperation with the Italians is a means that will be used in the first place to defeat communism. Later, the struggle will be turned against us in order for the great Yugoslavia to be reborn ... The guarantees that Đurišić wants to give as proof of loyalty to us refer, in my opinion, only to his initial activity.⁵³⁶

For this reason, Bonini refused to grant Đurišić the arms and ammunition he requested. He also thought that Đurišić's feelings towards the Italians were insincere, but still believed that contacts with Lim-Sandžak should be maintained. To that end, Bonini allowed for the transfer of some arms and ammunition and granted limited actions against the communists on the territory of the "Venezia" Division. For all intents and purposes, the January meeting proved to be fruitful.

Though it was a logical step given the events of Autumn 1941, this January 1942 meeting represents the groundwork on which all future Lim-Sandžak and Italian negotiations and deals were based. Indeed, the concessions granted to Lim-Sandžak allowed for talks to resume between Ilija Trifunović-Bričanin and Dobroslav Jevđević with the Italian occupational authorities in Dalmatia, Lika and western Bosnia.⁵³⁷ As it concerns Montenegro, specifically, the January 1942 meetings led to seven other meetings between Đurišić and various representatives of the "Venezia" Division. By March, the Governor of Montenegro, General Alessandro Pirzio Biroli had sent the same collaboration terms to Đurišić that had been sent to and signed by other Chetniks in western Montenegro just a few weeks before.⁵³⁸ The culmination of the meetings was an agreement signed in July 1942 between Biroli and Brigadier General Blažo Đukanović, the political leader of the Montenegrin Chetniks and whose signature solidified his role

⁵³⁶ Quoted in Živković, "Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.," 31.

⁵³⁷ Živković, "Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.," 31.

⁵³⁸ Živković, "Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.," 38.

as the head of the Central Nationalist Committee of Montenegro, effectively uniting all nationalist forces in Montenegro.

Throughout the negotiations between Đurišić and the various representatives of the “Venezia” Division, the former stayed firm in his insistence on maintaining the independence of the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment from Italian control. This meant that he would lead the detachment without any interference or oversight from the Italians and would be free to conduct operations as he saw fit so long as the operations remained within the remit of the agreements. While Đurišić’s request to expand the scope of the conflict against the communists to other parts of Montenegro was refused in January 1942, he remained consistent to not break those terms. This led to the Italians trusting him more, and they subsequently expanded the terms of operation for the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment in March so that they could conduct wider operations and were given the arms necessary to do so.⁵³⁹ This necessarily raises questions about the nature of collaboration and resistance. Is it appropriate to call the period between Autumn 1941 – when the break between the communists and nationalists occurred, the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment was created and low-level discussions related to coordination occurred – and April 1942, when the agreement was signed between Biroli and Đukanović effectively uniting all nationalist Montenegrin groups, collaboration? Or does collaboration only start in April 1942 when the agreement was signed and Đurišić effectively lost the autonomy he sought for his unit? Similarly, and more relevant to the JVuO as a whole, can shorter-term agreements still constitute collaboration even if a group has the overall goal of destroying its partner?

Lim-Sandžak and Ravna Gora Relationship

Further complicating matters is the relationship that Đurišić had with Mihailović. From the JVuO perspective, the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment was one of the best fighting units of the entire war. They continually carried out their objectives, were consistently victorious, and represented the best of the nationally-minded Montenegrins. We even see in the documents Mihailović referring to Đurišić as “*dragi Pavle*” (dear Pavle) when talking about him to other commanders, while Đurišić uses the affectionate

⁵³⁹ Živković, “Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.,” 38.

“Čiča” (uncle) that almost all Chetniks called Mihailović, or “*Deda Đoka*” (Grandfather Đoka). Amongst the South Slavs, the terms *Čiča* and *Deda* represent signs of respect to one’s elders or those in higher positions than oneself. The Partisans even referred to Tito as *Stari* (old man), for example. However, other Chetnik commanders do not refer to Mihailović in the same way (i.e., *deda*) as Đurišić does, although Mihailović does consistently show tenderness towards some of his other commanders.⁵⁴⁰ This is to say, then, that strictly looking at the JVuO documents one arrives at the conclusion that the relationship between the young Đurišić and the more senior Mihailović was a close, almost familial one.

The Serbian historian Milutin Živković has used Italians archives to arrive at a different picture, however. In several meetings with the Italians, Đurišić denied having any long-term relationship with Mihailović and rejects being both a “greater Serb” and “greater Yugoslav” nationalist. During the meeting of 13 January, for example, the Italians question Đurišić about his cooperation with Mihailović and about his alleged anti-Italian attitude. From the outset, however, Đurišić rejected all claims as communist propaganda. The Italians seemed to let it rest until the end of the meeting when they broached the topic again. This time, Đurišić claimed that Mihailović did not command any groups in Montenegro. His first mission, Đurišić assured the Italians, was to rid Montenegro of the communists.⁵⁴¹ On 12 February, Đurišić again parried accusations of being a Serb or Yugoslav nationalist by claiming that he faced discrimination by the Serbs for being Montenegrin during his time in the Royal Yugoslav Army. The only time he was in Serbia during the war, Đurišić claimed, was in April 1941. He further denied “ever seeing or maintaining relations with” Mihailović.⁵⁴² This directly contradicts Mihailović’s order of 20 December 1941 in which he states that Đurišić was directly

⁵⁴⁰ For instance, Mihailović wrote “*Moj dragi...*” (My dear...) or “*Tvoj Đoka*” (Your Đoka) to some of his commanders in some of the more personal notes he sent them, but only with Đurišić does he show the paternal attitude discussed here. For examples of the former, see some of the telegrams sent by Mihailović in *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 6. In his time with him, Plečas says that Mihailović only used the formal “*v*” when addressing others, regardless of rank, familiarity, or context. See Plečas, *Ratne Godine*, 130-131.

⁵⁴¹ Živković, “Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.,” 32-33.

⁵⁴² Živković, “Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.,” 36.

given oral directives on top of those written in the document.⁵⁴³ To further strengthen his argument, Đurišić resorted to flattery: “Montenegro cannot exist alone, it needs to exist within Italy or Albania, never a part of Serbia or a greater Yugoslavia, which is something that Montenegro does not want.”⁵⁴⁴ Bonini seemed to be convinced by this argument:

While at the first meeting it seemed certain that his political commitment was directed towards the re-establishment of a greater Yugoslavia, today he has explicitly ceased to be a Serbophile or a Yugoslav but strives exclusively for an independent Montenegro that should live in the sphere of interests of either Albania or Italy.⁵⁴⁵

Bonini did also convey in the same report his skepticism of Đurišić’s claim of not cooperating and having contact with Mihailović but insisted that “he has qualities to become a key figure” in Montenegro.⁵⁴⁶

Đurišić on Muslims

The negotiations with “Venezia” also reveal a few aspects of Đurišić’s thoughts on the Muslims in Montenegro. In the first meeting on 3 January, Simonelli asked Đurišić his opinion on several individuals of interest to the Italians. The latter obliged and gave what appears to be his honest interpretation of particular characters if we consider his nationalist leanings. Though he mostly praised the Orthodox persons, he did note which ones belonged to the Partisans and, similarly, suggested that the mayor of Lozna, Jusuf Ćorović, and *hodža* Osman Rastoder from Petnica, both Muslims, were “good and loyal people of trust.”⁵⁴⁷ At another meeting ten days later, Đurišić appeared open to the suggestion that the Italians create an anti-communist division of Muslims from Bijelo Polje and Petnjica under his command. His reservation, however, was in relation to the communists who he alleged had used Muslims to stoke Orthodox-Muslim conflict. The Muslims would have to end their attacks on the Orthodox, submit to his command, and

⁵⁴³ *Zbornik*, vol. III, knjiga 4, doc. 185.

⁵⁴⁴ Živković, “Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.,” 36-37.

⁵⁴⁵ Živković, “Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.,” 37.

⁵⁴⁶ Živković, “Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.,” p. 37.

⁵⁴⁷ Quoted in Živković, “Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.,” 30.

that he would need full access to the Muslim territory in both localities.⁵⁴⁸ However, on 19 January Đurišić requested that the Italians do not trust Ćorović and Rastoder, the two men he described as “good and loyal people of trust” only two-weeks earlier, because he had information that they were going to target Montenegrin nationalist villages. In early February, the area around Bijelo Polje was invaded and the villages of Raduliće, Potoci, Crnča and Dubovo were burned by Muslims.⁵⁴⁹ The agreement between the Muslims and the Italians to avoid conflict with the Chetniks was eventually renewed, but Đurišić still estimated that the only way of solving the quarrel was by force of arms. The Muslims under Rastoder’s command “do not want peace with the Orthodox but a fight” and Đurišić would oblige, but only when the time was right. Instead, he urged the Italians to protect the Montenegrin villages while the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment was operating in other areas. Đurišić also claimed that the Muslims wanted to create a “greater Albania” all the way up to the Lim River valley and that Rastoder and the other Muslims were now aligned with the Albanians and not “Venezia.”⁵⁵⁰ Đurišić added that the communists were further feeding propaganda to the Muslims of the Sandžak and eastern Montenegro to the extent that if Turkey came into the war on the Allied side, the Muslims would turn on the Italians.⁵⁵¹ The genocidal events of January and February 1943 aside, the negotiations with “Venezia” provide insights into Đurišić’s thoughts on the Muslims of the Lim River valley. It also gives us a hint into the progression from thoughts of distrust to actions of destruction.

Summary

Taken together, with its genocidal actions and double game of collaboration and fealty, the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment represents a group which straddles the professional, disciplined army desired by Mihailović and the guerrilla actions of the Dinara Chetnik Division in Dalmatia, Lika and Hercegovina. We see the levels of

⁵⁴⁸ Živković, “Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.,” 32.

⁵⁴⁹ Živković, “Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.,” 34-35.

⁵⁵⁰ Živković, “Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.,” 40-41.

⁵⁵¹ Živković, “Uspostavljanje saradnje komandanta limsko-sandžačkih četničkih odreda Pavla Đurišića i italijanskih vlasti u Crnoj Gori početkom 1942.,” 41.

manipulation that Đurišić was capable of, certainly with the Italians and potentially with Mihailović. While the Italians were aware of, or at least suspected, his ties to Mihailović as early as January 1942, Mihailović did not allegedly become aware of Đurišić's dealings with the Italians until later in the year. Regardless, what emerges is the figure of someone who was playing both sides of the same coin. Not only was Đurišić taking orders from Mihailović, as evidenced by his promotion to captain of October 1941 and the genocide culminating in January and February 1943, but Đurišić was also working alongside the Italians to limit Muslim actions on nationalist Montenegrins and to eliminate communists in the region. The Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment represents an ideal case study of a group being pushed and pulled by various local, national, and international factors, and by the constantly evolving tide of war. If the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment represents the middle ground between professional army and guerrilla army, we will see in the next chapter the guerrilla extreme in the Dinara Chetnik Division.

Chapter 4. Only Unity Saves Serbs:⁵⁵² The Dinara Chetnik Division from Uprising to Collaboration, Genocide, and Internal Collapse

If the Ravna Gora Movement represents Mihailović's attempts to forge a professional army, and the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachments represent the middle ground between a professional army and a guerrilla one, then the Dinara Chetnik Division (DCD) represent the guerrilla extreme. Populated in the first few months of the uprising in Italian occupied Dalmatia by people who had no military experience, the embryonic DCD were animated by the unorganised nature that comes with civilians leading a military formation. However, as the DCD coalesced and emerged as a separate entity from the communist-led uprising, the DCD began to take on tones of a military formation but never approached the professional army level as expected by Mihailović. Part of this uneven process was the result of the emerging leadership of Momčilo Đujić and his vision for what the DCD should be, which was influenced by his experiences as a member of the prewar Chetnik Association of Kosta Milovanović Pećanac. Undoubtedly influenced by the existence of Mihailović in the "free Serbian mountains" of Ravna Gora, but also by the presence of the Italian occupation authorities and the NDH's genocidal campaign, the DCD emerged as an extreme Serbian nationalist movement. Much of this extremism was a result of Đujić's prewar experiences, became accelerated by the NDH genocide, and enabled by the Italian occupiers. Three main elements stand out in the DCD case study.

First, as in other parts of Yugoslavia, the uprising around the Dinara Mountain was an *ad hoc* phenomenon that did not differentiate between ideological factors. This initially brought people together who would later coalesce into two main camps, those who supported the Chetniks and those who would eventually fight with the Partisans. Just as in Montenegro, the Dinara experience led to a bitter civil war between two resistance movements. Throughout, the DCD remained the weaker of the two groups. The Chetnik-Partisan civil war is only one compounding variable in the DCD narrative.

⁵⁵² This translates to *samo sloga srbina spasava*. Serbian oral tradition claims that St. Sava, the first Serbian Archbishop, uttered the phrase. The slogan is often found on Serbian symbols represented by four Cyrillic Cs, or fire-steels. As with all the title headings in this thesis, the usage of this slogan is meant to be ironic.

Yet another factor in the Dinara region was the NDH genocide against Serbs. While both Ravna Gora and the Lim-Sandžak Chetniks were acutely aware of the genocide, the DCD Chetniks were victims of it. The initial resistance was against the NDH and the ongoing genocide and *not* against the Italians who controlled Dalmatia. Instead, the DCD leadership looked to Italy to help mitigate the NDH genocide; in turn, Italy used the DCD to help undermine NDH control for its own political purposes. Collaboration between the DCD and the Italians, then, came out of both shared desires and necessities of survival. Only later did the DCD's and its leadership's genocidal tendencies emerge as they sought reprisals against the Ustasha and the NDH state.

Most damning to the DCD cause, however, was the emergence of internal tensions, exacerbated by power struggles between division leaders. Since the DCD rhetorically insisted on a horizontal leadership structure, the rank and file struggled to understand from whom to take orders, while the leadership jostled for position amongst themselves. This tore the DCD apart from the inside out. It is within these compounding and competing contexts that the uprising in Dalmatia began.

Dalmatian Uprising and the NDH

The Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH) was proclaimed on 10 April 1941. Dr. Ante Pavelić was named *Poglavnik (Führer)*, and the regime was supported by the Nazis and the Fascists. Pavelić was the leader of the Ustashe, a terrorist organisation throughout the interwar period which was responsible for the assassination of King Aleksandar in 1934 and the members of which would make up the NDH leadership. The territory of the NDH included the Croatian territories (*Hrvatska Banovina*, Croatian Province) from the *Sporazum* of 1937 minus the Dalmatian coastal areas and islands but extended into Bosnia-Herzegovina right up to the Drina River.⁵⁵³ The NDH was inherently contradictory: it was neither independent nor

⁵⁵³ The territory of the NDH changed throughout 1941 and again in 1943 after Italy's capitulation. However, this description largely remained stable throughout that period, while the details of the various agreements are outside the scope of this study. For more on the NDH's territory agreements, issues with Germany and Italy, and overall functioning of the state, see Rory Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation: The Ustaša Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism, 1941-1945* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013). For the historical conceptions of Croatian statehood, see Mark Biondich, "We were defending the state': Nationalism, Myth, and Memory in Twentieth-Century Croatia," in *Ideologies and national identities: The case of*

homogeneously Croatian in terms of the population. The NDH very much existed at the whim of the Nazis, and to a lesser extent of Italy, and its population was a mixture of Croat, Serb and Bosnian Muslim with Croats as a minority in many regions.

Ideologically, the Ustashe were extreme Croat chauvinists and embarked on a campaign of genocide against Serbs, Jews, Roma, and even Croats who did not adhere to the extremism of the state. Though the NDH state and the Ustashe are often conflated, there should be a distinction made between the two. While the Ustashe was the party of the state, not all members of the NDH apparatus were Ustashe members although the inverse could not be said. In other words, the Ustashe used the power of the state to enact its policies. Extermination and concentration camps were established, most infamously Jasenovac, to help facilitate the genocide.⁵⁵⁴ Racial laws along the lines of the Nuremberg Racial Laws were established which prevented victim groups from owning property and businesses, reduced and eliminated civil and human rights, and defined what made one an ethnic Croat.⁵⁵⁵ This led to an uneven and fluid process of targeting victims to the extent that even ethnic Serbs made up some of the command and leadership roles of the NDH and the Ustashe, while some Ustashe had Jewish or Serbian wives.⁵⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Serbs were overwhelmingly the targeted population in absolute terms but Jews and Roma in relative numbers.

twentieth-century southeastern Europe, ed. John R. Lampe and Mark Mazower (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003).

⁵⁵⁴ Overall numbers and numbers of individual victims by ethnic and religious group have been difficult to ascertain. The two best studies still remain Bogoljub Kočović, *Žrtve Drugog Svetskog Rata u Jugoslaviji* (London: Biddles of Guilford for Veritas Foundation Press, 1985) and Vladimir Žerjavić, *Yugoslavia-Manipulations with the Number of Second World War Victims* (Zagreb: Croatian Information Centre, 1993).

⁵⁵⁵ There are two great resources for the Nuremberg Race Laws. One is an overview of the laws located at United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "The Nuremberg Race Laws," in *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed August 8, 2021, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-nuremberg-race-laws>. The other is a brief article which also translates the laws into English. This can be found at United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Nuremberg Race Laws," in *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed July 8, 2021, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nuremberg-laws>. For more on the connections between the Nazi and Ustasha laws, see Nevenko Bartulin, *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia: Origins and Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

⁵⁵⁶ Vladan Vukliš and Verica M Stošić, "From the Abyss They Came, into the Abyss They Were Thrown: Crime and Punishment in the WW2 Bosnian Frontier," 2017, 36. Indeed, even the Ustasha army had ethnic Serbs within its ranks.

While the series of concentration and extermination camps became the method by which the NDH killed its victims, the earliest victims were killed in or around their villages and hometowns.⁵⁵⁷ The killing began almost immediately in April 1941 and accelerated throughout the summer to abate by September. Groups of Ustashe entered villages, rounded up victims, often transporting them to the killing sites of mines and karsts, and shot them. As in other instances of genocide, the first main target populations were local leaders: priests, councilmen, politicians, teachers, and other intellectual elites – in summary, men.⁵⁵⁸ The remaining Serbian men took to the forests and hills, armed with what little weapons they had which were often only appropriate for small game hunting.⁵⁵⁹ The Ustashe then changed focus and killed mostly women, children and the elderly, those who did not or could not go into hiding. This change in target group meant that the men in hiding formed *ad hoc* resistance groups to defend villages and ambush the Ustashe.

Italian Occupation

The Italian occupation regime and the tensions between the supposed Italian and Croatian Ustashe allies further complicated the political situation. Part of the tension between the “allies” stemmed from the leadership and the demarcation of territorial boundaries. While the question of Trieste was a point of contention, the territorial divisions between Italy and the NDH exacerbated other issues. Though the NDH was proclaimed in April, it was only agreed in May 1941 that the coastal areas of Dalmatia (including the ethnic Croatian areas of Rijeka) were included into occupied Italian territory while the littoral (inland Dalmatia, Lika and Kordun) fell under NDH rule.

⁵⁵⁷ Dulić, “Ethnic Violence in Occupied Yugoslavia,” 82–98.

⁵⁵⁸ This is not to say that *only* men were victims, rather that they were the *main* target for some obvious reasons: elites are traditionally men in a patriarchal society, and better able to mobilise defence against violence and oppression given their existing leadership roles. Yet, women were targeted for sexual violence while children and the elderly fell victim because of completing the task of elimination and as incidental victims: children, elderly and disabled people without anyone to care for them starved and died or were killed outright. This process is recounted in Max Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force*.

⁵⁵⁹ This phenomenon also had parallels to other regions of Eastern Europe from around the same time. See, for example, Olaf Mertelsmann, “The Armed Anti-Soviet Resistance in Estonia after 1944,” in *Violent Resistance. From the Baltics to Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe 1944-1956.*, ed. Michael Gehler and David Schriffel (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2020), 28–51. Also, Roger D. Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Eventually, another agreement was signed between the Axis powers to create a three-zoned separation that ostensibly de-militarised the intersessional areas between the coast (Italy) and further inland (NDH). Italy saw its claims to the eastern Adriatic territories as a natural progression of its interwar policies. The NDH for its part saw the presence of Italy on “traditional” Croatian territory as an affront to its sovereignty and burgeoning statehood. Though these issues concerned upper levels of governance, the implications trickled down the chain of command.

The first sign of tension “on the ground” emerged as early as 13 July when an Ustasha officer was shot. Four days later, the Ustashe opened fire on an Italian infantry unit. Open confrontation never materialised beyond minor skirmishes such as these, but the possibility for such lingered. The NDH was also concerned about Italian meddling in its internal affairs. As it relates to the ethnic Serb minority, the NDH worried about Italian “benevolence” towards Serbs and Jews. The Italians, on the other hand, attempted on several occasions to intervene in massacres.⁵⁶⁰ Clearly neighbourly relations between the two states were strained at best.

Throughout the period the border between Italy and the NDH was fluid and easily traversable. When the NDH embarked on its eliminationist campaign, ethnic Serbs flooded the Italian zone to avoid repression, execution, and internment in camps. When they arrived in the Italian occupation zone, they found themselves confined to refugee camps which were often initially prisoner of war camps. It was within these refugee camps that the first elements of the Chetnik movement would coalesce.⁵⁶¹ Populated by women, children, and the elderly, but also by the men in the forests and Royal Yugoslav Army POW officers, the camps became an ideal environment for disseminating both communist and nationalist propaganda. Italy, for its part, saw the potential that the camps provided to undermine NDH policies and territorial claims, not to mention Ustasha rule, and allowed, or at least ignored, recruitment. The camps eventually split into two ideological factions along nationalist and communist lines, and these would become the start of the two main resistance movements, the Chetniks and the Partisans respectively. What each group resisted, however, became the main point of difference.

⁵⁶⁰ Kosta Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta, 1941-1945*, vol. 1 of 3 (Beograd: Srpska Reč, 1999), 185-186.

⁵⁶¹ Jovo Popović, Marko Lolić, and Branko Latas, *Pop Izdaje* (Stvarnost, 1988), 23-24.

Defining the Enemy and Emerging Nationalist Leadership

For the communist-leaning faction, resistance to both the NDH and the Italian occupation authorities was the natural conclusion. For the nationalists, however, resistance to the NDH was imperative to prevent the genocide from continuing. Only once the NDH and the Ustashe were defeated, could the nationalists set their sights on the Italians and Germans. This NDH-first policy fit within the overall plan of the Ravna Gora Movement, as well, and became policy for the JVuO as a whole later. For both the DCD and the JVuO, the NDH-first policy in the interim meant that cooperating or collaborating with the Italian occupational authorities was at first tolerated and later part of the overall strategy.

For the nationalist resistance, several Royal Yugoslav Army officers were housed in the refugee and prisoner of war camps. Some of the officers had existing relationships with the Italian military authorities which made fostering relationships easier. For his part, Mihailović also sent officers from Ravna Gora to the rebellious regions of the NDH to gather the insurgency under his leadership. This had the intention of not only consolidating all the resistance units under one overall leadership but would also prevent the Partisans from gaining a foothold amongst the *Prečani*, as in those Serbs who lived outside of Serbia. The existence of the officers in the camps, then, was an important element for Mihailović to consolidate the resistance: the fact that he, too, was an officer of the Royal Yugoslav Army and resisting the Axis was an important psychological component. To ensure the direct connection, Mihailović sent his own officers from Ravna Gora to make the connection and to organise the units along the Movement's structure.

The main mover of organising the resistance from Mihailović's perspective was Ilija Trifunović-Birčanin.⁵⁶² Birčanin was a veteran of the Balkan Wars, the First World War and member of several Chetnik associations as well as the nationalist organisation *Narodna Odbrana* (People's Defence).⁵⁶³ In 1934, he founded and led the Association of Old Chetniks (*Održena starih četnika*) partially as a response to Kosta Pećanac's attempts to recruit younger members. Throughout the interwar period, Birčanin participated in anti-Albanian conflicts as part of the Chetnik Association. Heather

⁵⁶² *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 52. For more on Birčanin, see Chapter 1 of this thesis.

⁵⁶³ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*.

Williams shows that by 1941 Birčanin was in the pocket of British intelligence, stretching back to before the war and carrying the codename “Daddy,” and played an active role in the 27 March coup which led to the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia.⁵⁶⁴ Birčanin had an active and sustained involvement in international, and Serbian and Yugoslav nationalist affairs for several decades before the advent of the Second World War in Yugoslavia. Though not a professional soldier, Birčanin attained the rank of *Vojvoda* of the Chetnik branch of the Serbian Army, and it was his nationalist and wartime reputation that attracted Mihailović to him.

Birčanin began the war in Montenegro, saw the events that transpired there between the nationalists and the left-leaning insurgents and moved to Split to head off what he saw as an inevitable break in the resistance.⁵⁶⁵ His goal was to pre-empt the arrival of the communists who would try to overtake the resistance. It is unclear when exactly Birčanin was tapped by Mihailović to help organise resistance under his banner, but certainly by the end of 1941 the old Chetnik was working alongside the leader of the new Chetniks.⁵⁶⁶ By October 1941, Birčanin and Dobrosav Jevđević,⁵⁶⁷ another war veteran and nationalist leader, engaged in negotiations with the Italians to work towards a united front against the NDH and against the growing communist threat. At first, Mihailović was unaware of these negotiations and, when he did find out later, he was dissatisfied that people ostensibly under his command would engage with the enemy in

⁵⁶⁴ Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans*, 31, 71. Writing much earlier, Tomasevich suspected Birčanin’s links but did not yet have all the information available to him. See Jozo Tomasevich, “Yugoslavia During the Second World War,” in *Contemporary Yugoslavia: Twenty Years of Socialist Experiment*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich and Jozo Tomasevich (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 59–118: 67. Plećaš also mentions some of Birčanin’s links to Great Britain in Plećaš, *Ratne Godine, 1941-1945*.

⁵⁶⁵ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 76.

⁵⁶⁶ An actor in the DCD, Neđeljko Plećaš, notes that links between Birčanin and Mihailović were only established once the latter arrived in Montenegro, that is in summer 1942. However, this timeline is incorrect according to several accounts, both primary and secondary sources. See, for example, the letter written by Birčanin written to Mihailović in note 644. Regardless, Plećaš provides a good account of how communications in the early days worked. Basically, the communication was few and far between Mihailović and Birčanin owing to the method of communication. There were not enough radios, so Birčanin would send messages through a courier who would take a boat from Split to Boka in Montenegro and from there the courier would work his way to Mihailović. Radio communication was only established in December 1942. See Plećaš, *Ratne Godine, 1941-1945*, 159-160 for his account of incorrect timeline, the communications through courier, and some other details of minor importance. The radio communication detail comes out on p. 186.

⁵⁶⁷ For Jevđević’s arrival to Mihailović, see *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 77.

such a way. Eventually, however, Mihailović later encouraged the relationship between the Dinara Chetniks and the Italians.⁵⁶⁸

Creating the Dinara Chetnik Division

At about the same time as Birčanin's arrival to Split, in autumn 1941, the nationalist resistance was coalescing into a movement.⁵⁶⁹ The first sign towards the creation of the DCD was the Serbian People's Liberation Movement (*Srpskog narodnog oslobodilačkog pokret*, SNOP).⁵⁷⁰ Written "in the mountains" and dated 10 September 1941, the program for the SNOP indicates that its purpose is to unite and organise all Serbs "throughout our enslaved homeland." The movement is for the protection of Serbs, including cultural, national, and economic protections, through the "removal" (*"da odstrani,"* to remove) of "communism, fascism, racism and similar intrigues." The group speaks of an "organically bound connection" with other Slavs and suggests that at a later point the group can become a "Slavonic People's Liberation Movement" but does not further elaborate how, when or under what circumstances this transition may happen. Regardless, SNOP had four main branches: culturally which the SNOP was responsible for; militarily through Chetnik detachments within the "Petar Mrkonjić" Detachment;⁵⁷¹ a youth branch; and a branch for women and girls. Only those Serbs aged 18 to 60 and who had "a clean past" could participate in the life of the SNOP, while the youth branch was reserved for children aged 7 to 18 years old. The organisation of the SNOP need not concern us except to say its hierarchy was based on the village tradition of local village elder councils and, through them, down to the local, and even familial and household, level.

Militarily, the "people's defence" (*narodna odbrana*) units were based on the Chetnik model and led by the "Petar Mrkonjić" Detachment under the command of Momčilo Đujić. Since it was a defensive measure, the members of the units were

⁵⁶⁸ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 6.

⁵⁶⁹ For a micro-historical account of Split between April 1941 to September 1943, see Aleksandar Jakir, "Split Od Travnja 1941. Do Rujna 1943. Godine: Mjesto Fašističke Represije i Antifašističkog Otpora," in *Split i Vladan Desnica 1918.-1945.: Umjetničko Stvaralaštvo Između Kulture i Politike* (Split: Filozofski fakultet press, 2015).

⁵⁷⁰ HR-HDA-495, kut. 2, 124-2.

⁵⁷¹ Recall from Chapter 1 the importance of Petar Mrkonjić within the Serb nationalist imagination.

expected to “be at home” unless actively fighting. In many respects, and reading the document in hindsight, the section on military structure resembles a less articulated version of the later Total National Defence doctrine.⁵⁷² The four main sections of the defence units came from Grahovo, Crno Luške (i.e., Dinara Mountain), Knin, and the areas around Knin. The flag representing the defence units was the Chetnik flag, the skull and crossbones. The rest of the document – 2 small paragraphs – deals with the youth branch and the women and girls’ branch. While the youth branch was to include indoctrination into nationalism, the women and girls were expected to cook and clean for the soldiers, clean the weapons, provide first aid, and other similar duties. Despite the gendered characteristics of the women’s and girls’ branch, they were permitted to become soldiers and political associates. As the local nationalist resistance leaders coalesced, they eventually formed the Dinara Chetnik Division, sometime in early 1942.

The first document to formalise the creation of the Dinara Chetnik Division was the *Elaborat* or Study of the DCD in April 1942.⁵⁷³ More detailed than the SNOP program, the *Elaborat* further articulates some of the points from the SNOP program. The role of the division “is to realise the basic idea of the Serb [people] and the creation of the Serbian national state.” The document speaks directly of the Battle of Kosovo national myth and equates the struggle of the Serbs in 1389 to the suffering of Serbs in 1942. The DCD is to “be a refuge for all national elements of Serbian character, to spread and realise the Serbian idea in parts of Lika, Northern Dalmatia, Hercegovina, Montenegro and Bosnia” with King Peter II as the monarch. The “national character [of the DCD] is distinctly Serbian.” The *Elaborat* also calls for the creation of “one Greater Serbia, which would include: Serbia, Vojvodina, Bosnia, Hercegovina, Montenegro, Dalmatia (up to Šibenik) and Lika.” Once the Greater Serbian state is created, “only then can we talk about federal states, or state alliances, or in the broadest sense of the word,

⁵⁷² For more on the later advent of TND, see A. Ross Johnson, “Yugoslav Total National Defence,” *Survival* 15, no. 2 (1973): 54–58; Tomislav Dulić and Roland Kostić, “Yugoslavs in Arms: Guerrilla Tradition, Total Defence and the Ethnic Security Dilemma,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 7 (September 2010): 1051–72; James Horncastle, “Reaping the Whirlwind: Total National Defence’s Role in Slovenia’s Bid for Secession,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 26, no. 3 (2013): 528–50; James Horncastle, “Croatia’s Bitter Harvest: Total National Defence’s Role in the Croatian War of Independence,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 26, no. 5 (2015): 744–63.

⁵⁷³ *Narodnooslobodilačka Borba u Dalmaciji 1941-1945. Zbornik Dokumentata*, Knjiga 2, siječanj-srpanj 1942. godine (Split: Institut za historiju radničkog pokreta Dalmacije, 1982), doc. 550.

a Balkan Confederation.” “Only the Orthodox population lives” in the Greater Serbian state.

The *Elaborat* also ties the DCD to Mihailović’s Chetniks, placing themselves under his direct command thus giving them common cause. Arming the DCD, spreading nationalism through propaganda, and preventing the communists from taking hold in the region are other tasks set out in the document. Militarily, part of the tasks of the DCD is “protection of the Serbian population from the terror of partisans, Ustashas and Turks [sic].”⁵⁷⁴ Connecting with other Chetnik units from Serbia, Bosnia-Hercegovina and Montenegro was necessary for the “[e]stablishment of a national corridor along the Dinara mountain [to connect] Hercegovina with northern Dalmatia and Lika,” with Nevesinje acting as a central point for connecting the corridor to Bosnia and Montenegro. In other words, military goals and national goals coincided.

The *Elaborat* also outlines relations with the various enemy actors in Dalmatia. In relation to the Italians, the DCD was to avoid confrontation at all costs to prevent further death and destruction of the Serb population. The DCD rightfully saw itself as much weaker than the Italians and as such, wanted to avoid complete destruction of the “national character” of the region. The position towards the Italians “can be defined in these few words: Do not touch me, because I do not touch you, and I do not touch you for that [same] reason, [and] you do not hinder the realisation of my national idea.”⁵⁷⁵ In other words, entering collaboration with the Italians should be seen as part of the DCD’s survival and plan for the future.

The DCD was indifferent to the Germans, since the Germans did not occupy the DCD area. But if the *Gestapo* did arrive, they “should be ruthlessly killed.” Croat nationalists were to be included and formed into Chetnik detachments along the same lines as the DCD to prevent their entering into either the Ustasha or Partisan detachments. The document equates the Ustashe with the Partisans since, according to the DCD, both groups intended to kill Serbs and the nationalist ideal. Thus, the Ustashe

⁵⁷⁴ Turk here meaning a pejorative term used for Slavic Muslims, Bosniaks/Bosnian Muslims, and other Islamic peoples.

⁵⁷⁵ *Narodnooslobodilačka Borba u Dalmaciji*, Knjiga 2, doc. 550.

should be fought “without mercy, compassion and scruples. Destroy everything that breathes in Pavelić’s spirit.”

Interestingly, the *Elaborat* also includes Muslims amongst its enemy actors list. The DCD was to essentially ignore the Muslims to prevent them from flocking to the Partisans, “to reduce the number of enemies as possible.” No plunder of property or killing was to be tolerated. But once the DCD is strong enough, and the Partisans weak enough, the Muslims should be targeted: “what Serbs experienced [...] from 16 April 1941 to the present day” should befall the Muslims.⁵⁷⁶ The blatancy of this section is obvious and the message quite clear: the complete and utter destruction of Muslims in Yugoslavia was a goal of the DCD.

In the meantime, however, the DCD had to deal with the Partisans, “the most painful issue that needs to be resolved.”⁵⁷⁷ The section on the Partisans is also clear. The document equates the Partisans with the Ustashe and the Muslims. According to the *Elaborat*, and thus the DCD, there was no distinction between the three groups because some Muslims joined the Partisans while some others joined the Ustashe, and because both the Partisans and Ustashe killed Serbs, the three groups’ aims are identical. It is obvious but worth pointing out anyway that the *Elaborat* fails to recognise the presence of Serbs in the Partisans, and even the small amount in the Ustashe, as well as the existence of indifferent Muslims or even those Muslims who directly protected Serbs. Indeed, within the Serb nationalist imagination there is no room for colours or shades of grey because the black and white thinking, exacerbated by the fog of war, overcomes everything else.

The rest of the *Elaborat* conveys the hierarchical structure, the means of propaganda, the establishment of courts martial, and other necessary measures for a working militarised organisation. The document was signed by four infantry commanders – Paja Popović (“Onisim Popović” Regiment, Kosovo), Brane Bogunović (“Gavrilo Princip” Regiment, Bosansko Grahovo), Paja Omčikus (“King Petar II” Regiment, Srb), and Mane Rokvić (“King Aleksandar” Regiment, Drvar) – as well as by the DCD

⁵⁷⁶ *Narodnooslobodilačka Borba u Dalmaciji*, Knjiga 2, doc. 550.

⁵⁷⁷ *Narodnooslobodilačka Borba u Dalmaciji*, Knjiga 2, doc. 550.

representative and commander of the “Petar Mrkonjić” Regiment (Strmica), Momčilo Đujić. These were the founding member of the Dinara Chetnik Division.

Emergence of Momčilo Đujić as Nationalist Leader

Momčilo Đujić’s experience from the interwar period played a role in normalising relations between the Serbs and the Italians, just as Birčanin and Jevđević used their prewar reputations towards the same cause. Born in 1907 and ordained as a priest in 1931, Đujić found himself dabbling in politics by the 1930s. As part of a minority group (Serbs) within a minority territory (Croatia) Đujić, like many Serbs, saw himself at a disadvantage. Not only were the ethnic minorities within Yugoslavia gaining certain privileges, but the other minorities such as Serbs in Croatia were being ignored or even losing privileges from their perspective. Far from Serbia proper, far from the decision-making centre in Belgrade, and in an isolated territory surrounded by potential enemies, the Serbs in the Krajina – the region that acted as the military frontier between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires in the 17th to 19th-centuries – were at an exponential disadvantage. The 1920s and 1930s saw low-level clashes take on religious and ethnic tones in the Krajina and frightened many Serbs, some of whom took to arming themselves. Đujić, similarly, invited the Chetnik Association of Kosta Milovanović Pećanac to Dalmatia in 1935 as an attempt to bring some semblance of organisation and clarity.⁵⁷⁸ The Pećanac Chetniks, as outlined in Chapter 1, were responsible for genocide against ethnic Albanians, Turks, Bosnian Muslims, and other non-Serbs in Kosovo, Metohija and Macedonia in the early 20th-century. The interwar period saw the Chetnik Association recruit new members, such as Đujić, who had little or no memory of the Balkan Wars (1912/1913), the Great War (1914-1918) or Chetnik actions of the 1920s.⁵⁷⁹ Đujić, then, joined “one of the most reactionary [groups] in the country, with a police-regime character for carrying out national oppression of other Yugoslav peoples and persecution of the most advanced elements.”⁵⁸⁰ Around the same time, the *Ban* (Governor) of Croatia also complained to the Stojadinović government in Belgrade that

⁵⁷⁸ Popović et al, *Pop Izdaje*, 11-13.

⁵⁷⁹ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*.

⁵⁸⁰ *Vojna enciklopedija*, 2, Beograd 1971, 261 quoted in Popović, et al, *Pop Izdaje*, 12.

Chetnik groups in Croatia, including Đujić's, were responsible for plundering private property.⁵⁸¹

Others have argued that unlike other parts of Serb-inhabited Yugoslavia, the Krajina had no historical experience of *četovanje*, guerrilla war or insurgency.⁵⁸² By arriving in the Kninska Krajina,⁵⁸³ the Chetniks exported their violence and expanded their geographic scope to new communities and against other Yugoslav peoples. However, this argument ignores the history of the *hajduci* that was charted in Chapter 1 of this thesis. To briefly reiterate, though it is correct that *četovanje* as such did not exist in the Kninska Krajina, there were elements of it present in *hajdukovanje* – the specific type of guerrilla warfare practiced by brigands and rebels who were active in the region – as well as the actions of the border guards in the Krajina military frontier, and in other para- and semi-militaristic groups. One can find the presence of figures such as Petar Mrkonjić, Stojan Janković and others in Dalmatia's oral epics. Similarly, the 1878 Hercegovina uprising attracted many rebels from Dalmatia, and the interwar Chetnik Association was active in the region, too. From the Dalmatian perspective of the Second World War, Đujić was only the most recent main mover in initiating the process of bringing the *četovanje* tradition to the Krajina.

As a priest, Đujić was an important community member and emerged quickly as a natural leader in the region. When he was first ordained, Đujić was given a parish in Strmica, a small village on the border of Lika, Dalmatia, and Bosnia-Hercegovina sometimes referred to as *Tromeđa*, the tri-counties. He was responsible for re-organising the community and stoking their interest in religion, even successfully petitioning the government to restore the church bells of a local parish which had been used as artillery shells by the Austro-Hungarians.⁵⁸⁴ He soon was given the nickname "Father Fire" by the parishioners and "priest of left democracy" by the government. The former nickname signified his reputation as an eloquent and impassioned speaker who

⁵⁸¹ Popović, et al, *Pop Izdaje*, 12.

⁵⁸² Popović, et al, *Pop Izdaje*, 11.

⁵⁸³ Kninska Krajina refers to the military borderland and is meant to differentiate it from the Bosanska or Bosnian Krajina. Kninska refers to the area around and administered by Knin in north-central Dalmatia and includes Dalmatia, Lika, Kordun and sometimes parts of Hercegovina. Knin was also the largest city within the DCD's immediate territory and much action took place in both the city and the villages surrounding it.

⁵⁸⁴ Popović, et al, *Pop Izdaje*, 11.

could motivate the masses, while the latter represented Đujić's role in joining labour strikes, petitioning for workers' rights, and general anti-regime activity. However, at least one study of the Communist Yugoslav era has argued that Đujić's presence in labour strikes and rallies was actually a result of clandestine motivations to break the strikes and to undermine the regime in return for Italian favour. It was this pre-existing relationship with Italy, the authors claim, that made the Italians see Đujić as the ideal leader for anti-NDH insurgencies.⁵⁸⁵

Regardless of the veracity of the aforementioned claims, Đujić nevertheless emerged as the leader of the Serb insurgents around Knin. As early as 5 September 1941, NDH authorities recognised that the Chetniks had a clear hierarchy.⁵⁸⁶ Still, throughout the war, Đujić and his colleague in north Dalmatia, Jevđević, refused to hand over control of the DCD to Mihailović's officers.⁵⁸⁷ At times, both men even went so far as to contradict "Mihailović's basic strategy."⁵⁸⁸ This represents one way in which the DCD operated as a guerrilla unit rather than as a professional army. Insubordination of a commanding officer was not tolerated by Mihailović, but whether it was because the DCD was so far off or because Đujić and Jevđević commanded so much authority, essentially acting as local warlords, nothing came of their defiance.

At any rate, the DCD leadership determined that fighting the NDH and the Ustashe was far more pressing a concern than fighting the occupational authorities. Thus, a campaign against the NDH began which saw the DCD take arms, ammunition, money, clothing, food, medicine, and other supplies from the Italians in exchange for

⁵⁸⁵ This is the argument presented throughout Popović, et al, *Pop Izdaje* who go on to show that it was the interwar relationship with Italy that ensured his position as leader, facilitated agreements with the Italian occupational authorities, and later allowed him safe passage to and in the prisoner of war camps in postwar Italy and eventual emigration to America. As will be shown later, there may be merits for this argument given Đujić's postwar experiences as an informer for the CIA.

⁵⁸⁶ HR-HDA-487, kut. 1, doc. 823.

⁵⁸⁷ Kosta Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta, 1941-1945*, vol. 1 of 3 (Beograd: Srpska Reč, 1999), 182. It should be noted at this point that Jevđević was also a member of the interwar Chetnik Association and a member of the Yugoslav National Party (*Jugoslovenska nacionalna stranka*, JNS), to which was attached the Organisation of Yugoslav Nationalists (*Organizacija Jugoslavenskih Nacionalista*, ORJUNA) and of which Jevđević was also a member. For more on the interwar fascist and "para-fascist" peoples and parties, see John Paul Newman, "War Veterans, Fascism, and Para-Fascist Departures in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1918-1941," *Fascism* 6 (2017): 42–74, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00601003>.

⁵⁸⁸ Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta*, vol. 1, 182.

undermining the NDH. The agreements began as oral arrangements, but by early 1942 they emerged as formal written agreements between two warring parties. The rise of the Partisans in the Krajina also contributed greatly to pushing the DCD into Italian arms, if any cajoling was actually needed, and as the Ustasha slaughter of Serbs slowed and stalled by Autumn 1941 and into 1942, the Partisans soon became enemy number one. From the Italian perspective, the Chetniks became the Anti-Communist Volunteer Militia (*Milizia Volontaria Anti Comunista*, MVAC) units which operated from Dalmatia to Montenegro and into Bosnia-Herzegovina, essentially anywhere that Italy's influence reached. Though the agreements were not signed between the Italians and the Dinara Chetniks until 1942, the arrangements began on an *ad hoc* basis in the summer of 1941.

DCD-Italian Agreements

The arrangement between the Chetniks and the Italian occupation forces in and around Dalmatia began at first as low-level cooperation against the communist elements in Dalmatia, Lika, Kordun, western Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is also evidence of Chetnik insurgents using Italian arms against the Ustasha as early as 26 August.⁵⁸⁹ Over time, these isolated acts of cooperation developed into signed agreements and understandings which saw an exchange of goods and material for mutual defence against the communists, and a tacit understanding of undermining the NDH.

The Partisans proved to be a compounding variable which altered the dynamics between the Chetniks, the Italians, and the NDH, emerging as a coherent and viable fighting force. Throughout the autumn, the NDH killing of Serbs continued but eased off by the winter of 1942 right about the same time as the Partisan threat began to gain traction in the Krajina. This shifted the focus of all parties – the Italians, the NDH and, perhaps above all, the Chetniks – to the communist threat. Undoubtedly, the killing by the NDH also helped to inflate membership in the Partisans just as it had for the Chetniks, but Chetnik ideology helped to push non-Serbs and Serbs who did not agree with the nationalistic rhetoric to the Partisans while Partisan ideology helped to pull another segment of the same populations towards them. The increasing threat, then, of

⁵⁸⁹ HR-HDA-487, kut. 1, doc. 191.

the communist ideology worried the three right-wing groups and helped to forge an alliance between them.

The first meeting between the Italians and the nationalist Serb representatives, at which Đujić and other eventual DCD members were present, took place either on 1 September or on 25 or 26 August, depending on the source, in the village of Pađeni.⁵⁹⁰ Whatever the date, the Serbs urged the Italians to strengthen their occupation of the intermediary zone, which initially came into force on 21 August,⁵⁹¹ which separated the Italian and NDH occupation zones to further protect Serb civilians. The Serbs also asked the Italians to provide schools and to ensure civil and military protections for the Serb population. In return, the Serbs would provide a military buffer against the communists, and it was agreed that the Serbs and Italians would not enter into armed conflict.⁵⁹²

To help fulfill their role, the Chetniks asked the Italians for ammunition and weapons on countless occasions. The request from the Žegar Chetniks on 21 March 1943 is a typical example. While waiting for ammunition to arrive, the Žegar captain wrote to Dinara headquarters to urgently request malaria medication, typhoid inoculations, provisions for refugees, money to pay for previously ordered rubber *opanke* (peasant shoes usually made of leather), as well as to inquire about the leather to make *opanke* which was previously requested.⁵⁹³ The Chetniks also relied on supply drops from the Allies, most usually the British. However, the Chetniks also relied heavily on requisitions from the peasantry, usually from those of communist families and villages.⁵⁹⁴ However, requisition and pillage of “Chetnik families” was not uncommon.⁵⁹⁵ What these examples show is that the Dinara Chetniks were reliant on many sources for all kinds of supplies, and that they made no distinction between Axis, Allied, Chetnik or peasant sources. The Italians were only one, albeit the largest, supplier of various materials

⁵⁹⁰ Fikreta Jelić-Butić, *Četnici u Hrvatskoj 1941-1945*. (Zagreb: Globus, 1986), 45-46. Jelić-Butić notes that the difference exists between Italian and Serb sources. The former's documents say the meeting took place in September, while Serb sources say that one meeting took place on the 25th in Otrić while another took place on 26 August in Pađena. See *ibid.*, n. 54.

⁵⁹¹ Popović, et al, *Pop Izdaje*, 43.

⁵⁹² Jelić-Butić, *Četnici u Hrvatskoj*, 45-46.

⁵⁹³ HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131-127.

⁵⁹⁴ HR-HDA-495, kut. 5, 131-384.

⁵⁹⁵ *Narodnooslobodilačka Borba u Dalmaciji 1941-1945*, Knjiga 10, doc. 75.

required to conduct *četovanje*, govern towns, villages, and regions, to protect Serb villages from destruction, and to perpetrate massacres against civilians.

For their part, the NDH was also concerned with the growing insurgency by both the Chetniks and the Partisans. They were interested in curbing the insurgency before it got out of hand, especially because the NDH regime did not have sufficient forces available to suppress the uprising and to administer its day-to-day affairs.⁵⁹⁶ Heavily reliant on a small number of Ustasha and volunteer units (*Domobranici*, Home Guards), the NDH did not have its own military nor its own gendarmes and police, essentially making each of these sectors up as it went along.⁵⁹⁷ The increasing influence and strength of the Partisans was a worrying prospect for the NDH, to say the least. Having one insurgent element under control, namely the Chetniks, was important to the stability of the NDH and its cohesion into a viable state. Thus, the Serb-Italian negotiations should be seen within this changing and dynamic environment which encompasses several mitigating, contradictory and (re)enforcing factors.

While the occupation by Italy of the intermediary second zone helped to ease the burden on the NDH, the prospects of creating an autonomous Serb zone within it was also discussed.⁵⁹⁸ Though this autonomous zone never materialised, it is indicative of the types of negotiations that the Serbs and Italians undertook and the various avenues that the parties explored to arrive at a peaceable and workable solution to the “Serb question” that the NDH genocide prompted. It is also an example of the ways in which the two parties were willing to engage with one another and attempted to arrive at conclusions in good faith.

The nature of negotiations led to signed deals of cooperation and collaboration by early 1942 with various Chetnik units within the DCD and the Italian authorities in the respective areas. In some places, cooperation was more hands-on than in others. For instance, it was ordered that one group of five Lika Chetniks join the Italians in Gračac to help prevent Serb houses there being burned. The Italians were going to teach the

⁵⁹⁶ If the continual stream of reports throughout July, August, and September by local Ustashe leaders (from between Sisak, Bihać and Gospić) is any indication, attacks by “Chetnik-Communist gangs” was increasingly a concern. See HR-HDA-487, kut. 1 for some examples.

⁵⁹⁷ This is recounted well in Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force*, 67.

⁵⁹⁸ Jelić-Butić, *Četnici u Hrvatskoj*, 62.

Serbs how to successfully protect villages against attack and how to put out largescale fires. The group of five was to have an officer in charge, plus one Italian speaker capable of translating between the two parties.⁵⁹⁹ There were also numerous examples of successfully coordinated operations with the Italians and Serbs. Between the 1 and 6 of July 1943, the Velebit Chetniks and the “Zara” Italian division warded off a Partisan raid, for example.⁶⁰⁰ Though by far not the only example, the successful collaboration between the two groups was typical of Italo-Serb relations within the DCD areas.

This is not to say that relations were always easy between the nationalist Serbs and the occupying Italians. Despite cooperation, many Chetniks did not reveal their goals, politics, and intentions to the Italian authorities.⁶⁰¹ The Chetniks were also subordinate, albeit later than the Italian negotiations, that is not until spring 1942, to the Ravna Gora Movement of Mihailović, of which the Italians were weary. It should also be remembered that the long-term goal of the JVuO, as well as a contingent of the DCD, was the removal of the occupiers – Italy, Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, Albania, – from Yugoslavia along with the destruction of the NDH. In internal memos, reports, and orders, the Italians and Germans are most often referred to as “the occupiers.” Although ousting the occupiers was a less immediate goal than protection from the existential threat presented by the NDH, creating a wedge between the NDH and the Italians was an important aspect and should not be overlooked even at the early stages of the overall conflict. The strain between Serbs and Italians existed to such an extent that the Italians refused to use the term “Chetnik” when referring to the nationalist Serbs, opting instead for the MVAC designation.⁶⁰² Although a minor point, it shows the levels of disparities between Italian and Serb goals, practices, and day-to-day functions.

The Germans and Croats even asked the Italians to disarm the Chetniks in Medak in 1943. Đujić got wind of this and vowed to never lay down his weapons because they were needed to not only protect civilians from violence, but to also combat the communists.⁶⁰³ The wording in this memorandum is interesting. Đujić makes the

⁵⁹⁹ HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131-182.

⁶⁰⁰ HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131-222. (pt.2)

⁶⁰¹ Jelić-Butić, *Četnici u Hrvatskoj*, 67.

⁶⁰² Popović, et al, *Pop Izdaje*, 48.

⁶⁰³ HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131-224.

point of distinguishing between “defending civilians from violence” and from “fighting against communists” which suggests that the two were not necessarily inclusive of one another. In other words, the arms were needed to defend Serb villages from violence by the Germans and Croats as well as to fight against the Partisans who, presumably, were less likely to commit violence on unarmed villagers. Yet, the threats by both the occupiers and the NDH was enough that Đujić was willing to fight the Italians for the right to protect his people.

Even later in the conflict, when Italy had been knocked out of the war and Germany had taken its place as occupier in the Dinara region, relations between the Chetniks and Germans were difficult. For instance, in 1944 the German commander for Gračac had ordered that all Chetnik units from Knin to Bosnia and Lika now fell under their command, including the leadership. The order further stipulated that the double-headed eagle emblem could not be worn, nor could the Serbian tricolour or flag. The Chetniks could keep the skull and crossbones symbol but that they would be “made and assign[ed]” to the Chetniks by the Germans. The Chetniks listening to the order did so “with cold blood,” not because they had new masters but because they took exception to the removal of the double-headed eagle. The next day, the German command ordered the Gračac Chetniks to undertake an operation around Klapavica, Mazin and Udbina. The commander of the Gračac Brigade, Jovo Stanisavljević, refused to move his troops until his men could be “met by stronger enemy forces.” Stanisavljević is not clear whether the two events were directly linked, but given they appear on the same report to the 1st Lika Corps and that the report was written on the same day that the operations were supposed to take place suggests that they were linked.⁶⁰⁴

Motivations of the individual members of the Chetnik battalions should also be interrogated. Of course, motivations vary across time and space and there are certainly complex and interlocking reasons for why one would sign up to fight, continue to fight and allow themselves to be subordinated to another commanding army. On one level, there is the motivation of personal enrichment, and that certainly was a factor for some.⁶⁰⁵ Nationalist motivations, revenge seeking, and thrill of adventure have also been pointed out in Bergholz’s study, and in several other studies of analogous theatres

⁶⁰⁴ HR-HDA-495, kut. 3, 131-85.

⁶⁰⁵ Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force*, 89-92.

during the same time.⁶⁰⁶ Looking at the register of the 2nd Battalion of the “Vožd Karađorđe” Brigade from Gračac reveals other potential motivations.⁶⁰⁷

There are several members who appear on both the list of “The Poor Who Need to be Given Food” and as part of the battalion’s register. For instance, Nikola Brčín registered as needing food for 13 people. The 29-year-old later appears as the commander of the 4th četa of the battalion. In the same battalion, Mile Banjenin appears on both lists, and there are countless others. This comparison also reveals potential family dynamics. For instance, Dane Bolta, member of the 5th četa, appears as requiring food for 5 people, while on the battalion list Stevan Bolta gives his father’s name as Dane. The 32-year-old Private Petar Milovanović appears on the register for requiring food for 6 members, and gives his father’s name as “Stevan,” while Stevo Milovanović appears on the roll call of the 2nd Battalion. There are several reasons that can be attributed to these overlaps. Some Partisan sources accuse the Chetniks of enlisting peasant masses through force, just as Chetnik sources accuse the Partisans. It is possible, then, that there was a “food for fighting” reciprocal relationship at play. This becomes terribly tragic when Vlade Drobac’s family is listed as deserving of aid, after he was killed fighting the Partisans on 24 October 1942, as with the family of missing in action Mićo Stanisavljević and countless others. Of course, there is the possibility that these names exist for two different people, especially given the prevalence of some names on both lists (“Jovan” as first names and “Kontić” as a last name, for example). However, it does reveal certain potential motivations for some members of the DCD. In other words, ideological alignment with the occupation authorities was not necessarily a, or at least not *the* motivating factor for enlisting.

Imagining the universe of the Second World War in Yugoslavia and the Chetniks who fought in it reveals various ideological constructions, motivations, actions, and actors. All these axes overlap, conflict, abut, and contradict to prevent the creation of a singular, or even a typical, narration of the men who populated the DCD. Nevertheless,

⁶⁰⁶ For several Baltic examples, see Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion*. For the same regions but at different times, see Vesselin Traikov, “Bulgarian Volunteers in the Serb-Turkish War of 1876,” in *Insurrections, Wars, and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870s*, ed. Bela Kiraly and Gale Stokes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 159–70. Of course, the classic example is Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, eBook (New York: HarperCollins, 2017).

⁶⁰⁷ The following information comes entirely from the folder found HR-HDA-495, kut. 1, 122-18.

we can arrive at certain sets of conclusions based on the evidence to provide a generalised picture. Certainly, protection from the NDH is a major factor in deciding to enlist as well as, it seems, needing food. Joining the Chetniks also meant precluding oneself from becoming a Partisan, at least in theory. Even so, there is ample evidence showing people moving from one “side” to the other. The DCD’s own documents show the prevalence of desertion to the Partisans, of return to the DCD and so on. Indeed, the records of the courts martial reveal executions as punishments in most cases, while in some, less serious instances only beatings or temporary confinement.⁶⁰⁸ There does not seem to be much correlation with the changing tide of war and the rising and falling fortunes of either the Chetniks or Partisans in such instances. Instead, many of the witnesses, the accused, and others interviewed in the documents reveal that familial and friendship ties motivated people to switch sides throughout the war.⁶⁰⁹ Thus, those who had family and other relationship ties to the Chetniks tended to join and stay. One must include in this that many also rejected communism as an ideology. It can also be assumed that others were part of the interwar Chetnik Association, just as Đujić was. As such, Serb nationalism is another important factor in joining and maintaining Chetnik membership. Perhaps less importantly is allegiance to King Peter II and the Karađorđević dynasty which, over time, has become part of the Chetnik mythos. Though there were certainly those loyal to the crown, as we saw in Chapter 1, there were far more Chetniks of the interwar period who were critical of and even rejected it. In other words, while the leadership was guilty of particular wrongs, and certainly the men “on the ground” were too, there were an unfathomable number of reasons for doing so. None of this is said to forgive them for their actions, but rather to understand the reasons why in the ways they did.

Aspects of Četovanje

The DCD needed to fashion a fighting force virtually from scratch. The “Chetnik training” guideline was sent to all DCD battalions and outlines the ways in which recruits

⁶⁰⁸ See several of the documents in HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131.

⁶⁰⁹ Of course, this observation does include the years 1944 and 1945 when the Partisan leadership issued amnesties for people who fought with the JVuO, thus bringing a massive influx of recruits and volunteers to the Partisan ranks.

and volunteers should be trained.⁶¹⁰ The guide includes everything from “shooting in low light and darkness” to the “imitation of various animal calls.” The guide was meant to teach new Chetniks the practicalities of *četovanje*, as well as to prepare them for what to expect. Therefore, “developing the senses of hearing and sight” and “developing camaraderie to be aware that they [new Chetniks] will live together and die for each other” are also included in the manual. Yet, training was not needed just for new recruits. Rather, soldiers and officers alike required training and retraining in *četovanje*.

The DCD also had to create the badges and symbols congruent to a fighting force (Fig.1). They stipulated the creation of badges with the proper ranks, titles, and branch of the various levels of DCD hierarchy.⁶¹¹ When looking at the designs, what becomes clear is that the DCD was not implementing traditionally pre-existing Serb nationalist tropes, except in only a few cases. Rather, they used the skull and crossbones insignias of the “old Chetniks” from Macedonia, Kosovo, and Metohija which, as we saw in Chapter 1, were copied from the IMRO and other conspiratorial groups. Only the double-headed eagle and the cross with four letter Cs – representing the phrase “Only Unity Saves Serbs” – remain the recognisable Serb nationalist images up to this point, but both symbols are also integrated into the design of the skull and crossbones, just as they were in the age of the “old Chetniks.” Badges and *četovanje* are only two ways in which the DCD introduced Chetnik traditions into the Dalmatian and Krajina areas. This example also shows the way that the DCD created for itself its own identity, independent from the Mihailović movement.

⁶¹⁰ HR-HDA-495, kut. 1, 111-67.

⁶¹¹ HR-HDA-495, kut. 1, 111-60.

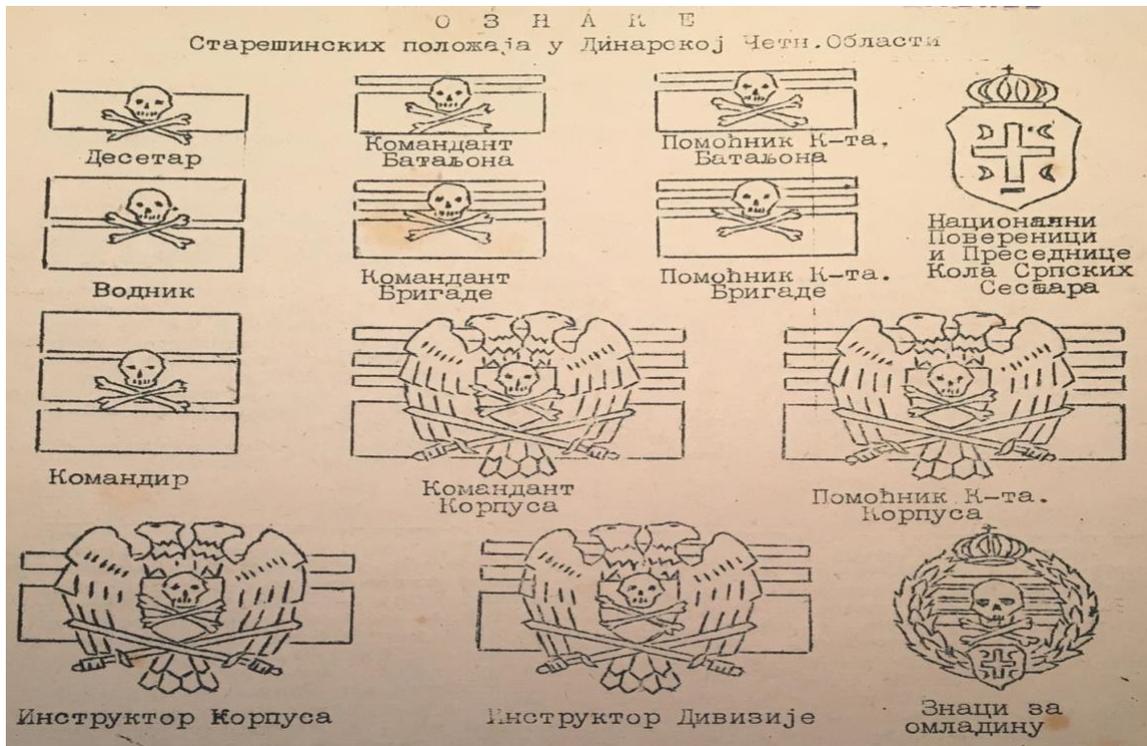


Figure 1 The badges for the different ranks and branches of the Dinara Chetnik Division, 1944.

There was also the implementation of the *troika*, something which Mihailović also employed for Ravna Gora and which had shown to be successful in previous guerrilla conflicts in the Balkans.⁶¹² The creation of the Dinara *troika* was to increase guerrilla activity in the rear areas of the enemy, i.e., the communists.⁶¹³ The *troikas* were to be made up of the “best people” who were to get paid to ensure they could survive in the territory for long stretches. They were given further training on guerrilla warfare for such a task and were deployed to several different areas congruent to the corps to which they were attached. In all, there were nine *troikas* deployed from five corps.

Like the *troika* was the later advent of the “flying brigades.” Their task was a “detailed cleansing of their terrain of communists, their sympathizers, and other destructive elements to our organisation.”⁶¹⁴ The flying brigades were also meant to

⁶¹² Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 179.

⁶¹³ HR-HDA-495, kut. 3, 131-3.

⁶¹⁴ HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131-198. The DCD “flying brigades” were created after Mihailović’s. It was noted in the latter’s creation that their purpose was “for cleansing everything and everyone as well as for waking up from the dead [i.e., for motivating the other Chetnik troops].” See *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 166.

avoid confrontation and encounters with the Italians and Germans, were to live in huts outside of inhabited places and were instructed to change locations regularly. In other words, the flying brigades were intended to be the stealthiest and most successful at precise attacks against the Partisans. In this way, the Chetniks remained a guerrilla operation, while the Partisans evolved into the national army of the new Yugoslavia.

Discipline amongst recruits was a constant issue for the DCD, and the reports, orders, and memos reflect both the internal and external struggles of discipline. Internally, the DCD struggled with maintaining secrecy.⁶¹⁵ Various correspondences were arriving to the intended recipients already opened, which led to issues of classified information making its way into the cities and towns, to say nothing of the enemies' ears. The issue got so bad that Đujić issued an order to all battalion commanders "to shut the mouths of those who spread official secrets as well as those who spread any alarming rumours about the political and war situation, either in our country or the world." How one was to "shut the mouths" of gossipers was apparently left to the commanders.

Đujić also had to remind his commanders that "we are at war" and that "at every step our enemies' ears want to hear us, and enemy eyes want to see us."⁶¹⁶ In other words, even the commanders were being reminded that talking openly about internal affairs was becoming an issue. Poor discipline through the ranks was such that even the commanders needed to be retrained in proper conduct. This was the argument made by a battalion commander from Lika later in the war. The behaviour of both soldiers and officers was such that he wrote to his superiors to request further training and reinstruction to curb the misbehaviour taking place in cities and towns.⁶¹⁷

In the countryside, Chetniks were stealing and selling livestock in the towns and cities for personal gain.⁶¹⁸ The customers for these transactions were both citizens and the occupiers. This led to the prohibition of citizens buying and Chetniks selling livestock without the commander's approval in the "Velebit" corps' territory. The Italians were still allowed, however. Alcohol also seemed to be an ongoing issue. The same order that

⁶¹⁵ HR-HDA-495, kut. 3, 131-101.

⁶¹⁶ HR-HDA-495, kut. 1, 111-22.

⁶¹⁷ HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131-223.

⁶¹⁸ HR-HDA-495, kut. 3, 131-124.

prohibited livestock transactions also stipulated that any Chetnik caught drinking alcohol was subject to a beating of 25 lashes.⁶¹⁹

In Žegar, the corps commander noticed that “a certain part of the Chetniks do not pay attention to their behavior and Chetnik dignity but get drunk and quarrel and swear on the streets and in the houses in Žegar.”⁶²⁰ Such behaviour undoubtedly “causes a heavy impression among our population who [should] see the Chetnik as a fighter and liberator, not a drunkard and a quarrelsome man who knows only about arguing and swearing.” The commander further emphasises that this type of behaviour risks the relationship with the Italians in the region.

“Order #5” from February 1944 seems to combat poor discipline and bad behaviour by instilling in the new recruits, both as officers and as soldiers, a sense of pride and nationalism.⁶²¹ The order emphasises to the recruits that they are fighting as part of the army of His Royal Highness King Peter II, and because of this “[r]espect for superiors, accurate and wholehearted execution of their [the superiors’] orders is THE MOST SACRED LAW FOR THE FATHERLAND.”⁶²² Not only that, but the order also injects Serb nationalist rhetoric, something which until this point does not appear in such sustained and blatant use in the documents. A soldier of the DCD “lives in the service of Serbdom (*Srpstva*)” and has a “love of the people (*narod*) and land (*zemlja*) above everything.” Recruits must “fill every corner of your heart with that love for your people.” The order encourages the recruits to be heroes and says that the DCD’s “goal and the greatest ideal is to create a unified front of the Serbian people in the fight against all its enemies through a single command.”

This order is the first blatant example in the documents to emphasise that the DCD is “the army” of King Peter II and to use regularly occurring Serb nationalist language. In comparison, the documents from Ravna Gora continually refer to themselves as the king’s army or in similar terms, while Serbian nationalist rhetoric to the extent exhibited in “Order #5” is muted. Rather, and as we have seen, Ravna Gora’s

⁶¹⁹ The word used is “*batine*,” which can translate in several ways. It is not clear by what method the beatings were to take place, since this is not stipulated in the order.

⁶²⁰ HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131-131.

⁶²¹ HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131-263.

⁶²² Emphasis in original.

nationalism is still Serbian nationalist but couched in Yugoslav terms. There is still occasional reference to the other South Slavs, mostly Croats and Slovenes but also occasionally Muslims (albeit with a lowercase-m signifying a religious and not ethnic identity). In contrast, the DCD documents speak exclusively in Serb nationalist rhetoric, but “Order #5” is the first to speak so openly to new recruits and volunteers by using such strong Serbs nationalist rhetoric.⁶²³ Relatedly, the DCD documents also often portray the Croatian people as a whole as traitors and murderers. Only prior to the subordination of the DCD to Mihailović’s command, that is in February 1942, do the Dinara Chetniks even attempt to address their Croat neighbours.

When Victims Become Perpetrators

Dated February 1942 and written from “somewhere in the mountains,” a memo addressed “To Our Conscious Brothers of the Slavic Tribes” confronts both Dalmatia Serbs and Croats.⁶²⁴ It was written by the Command of the Dinara Division and refers to the Ustasha perpetrators as “a seduced nephew” and is worth quoting at length. The Ustashe “shed innocent fraternal blood” as

outlaws and traitors...in the service of an insidious and common enemy, who, using the weakness of a mad brother, forces the more conscious and oppressed to sharpen himself in the service of defending his hitherto peaceful home, honour and name, defending his bare life.

In other words, the Ustasha violence forced the Serbs into defending themselves; the Serbs are innocent while the Ustashe have betrayed their brethren for the foreign

⁶²³ This fits with what others have observed of the JVuO in other parts of Yugoslavia, too. Stevan K. Pavlowitch, for example, notes that by late-1943 in NDH areas, the Serbs’ “ideological attitude...had become a negative one, anti-Yugoslav, anti-Croatian, anti-Catholic, anti-Moslem [sic], and anti-Communist...For most of them, Yugoslavia was dead; they ignored the fact that Mihailović represented a government committed to its restoration in alliance with the Soviet Union; they saw him merely as the representative of the king – the remote symbol of their Serbian nation – and of Great Britain – a remote ideal and ally.” See Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1971), 131. In relation to the interwar government, Pavlowitch also notes the ambiguous relationship between Serbian and Yugoslav identities: “The problem [with a dual Serbian and Yugoslav identity] was that he [interwar PM Pašić], and many others in Serbia, did not really understand the difference between Serbia and Yugoslavia.” However, this sentiment could apply to many Serbs throughout the Kingdom of Yugoslavia’s existence, both before and during the Second World War. See Stevan Pavlowitch, “Serbia and Yugoslavia: The Relationship,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 4, no. 1 (2004): 96–106, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683850412331321738>, 100.

⁶²⁴ HR-HDA-495, kut. 1, 121-1.

occupiers. The DCD uses a cliché as a warning that the Serbs will not allow themselves to be slaughtered again: “If you deceive me one time it’s your fault, and if you deceive me a second time, it’s my fault.”

The document also directly addresses the Serb people:

Serbs: raise your head proudly. Your conscience is clear. You did not slip on the path of justice and truth. You are firmer and more complex now than ever before. There is no chance or possibility, that you will be used again for the darkest purposes, [because of] your faith in your brother and your wide and noble heart. The flower of your kind [the Chetniks] watches over your security, formed into solid units, whose every member is determined to give his life for yours and his own good, to defend homes and honour and to win the much desired and beautiful freedom, which certainly belongs to us and the right to which no one in this world can deny us.

And the Croats:

Croats: Think what you are doing! Where are you going? Do we speak the same language? Did we grow and mature together, on the same breast and under the same sky? We regret that we have had to say this, because we know that what is called a Croat did not deserve it, but we are forced to [say it], because the dark days of the recent past give us the right to [say] this, and the current actions of – not all – but many, point us to this [conclusion]. There is still time, not everyone is to blame, come to your senses, advise the seduced brother and go on the right path, because otherwise no one will be able to prevent what many are going for, and that is certain doom.

The document then ends with “We are awake and determined!” This address is the first attempt by the DCD to confront the Serb genocide without arms. It is also the first, and only, address to the Croat people as a whole. The contrast in the messages to Serbs and Croats is quite telling, too. For instance, while the Serbs are the victims the Croats are clearly the perpetrators. However, the section addressed to the Croats is careful to mention that not all Croats are guilty of the Ustasha crimes. Rather, it is up to the innocent Croats to approach the Ustashe and the NDH on behalf of the Serbs to prevent the mass killing. This document is also a warning.

In several passages, the document suggests that the Serbs cannot be considered guilty for taking revenge against Croats. This is shown in the use of the cliché, as well as in the last line addressed to Croats: if the innocent Croats do not try to prevent the Ustashe from perpetrating genocide then “no one will be able to prevent what many are going for, and that is certain doom.” In other words, the DCD is

threatening reprisal killings against ethnic Croats regardless of guilt because they did not do enough to prevent the killing of innocent Serbs. Home and hearth were shattered by the Ustasha violence resulting in a type of Darwinian fight for survival. The document is also a sort of apologia.

In September 1941, five months before the appeal to the Croats, the Ustashe command reported on Chetnik violence against Croats:

now the Chetniks and other inhabitants of the Greek-Eastern faith⁶²⁵ are taking revenge on the Croats, and for the injustice done and the murders of their relatives, because the Croats in the area of this wing or the whole of Lika killed about 80,0000 Serbs, and in the whole of Croatia that about 300,000 were killed.⁶²⁶

Despite the inflated numbers of killings, the report is indicative of the NDH's knowledge of reprisal killings. It is also an example of the Chetniks' implementing the plan to separate Croat and Serb inhabitants of the Krajina region. Just as we saw occurring in Montenegro, this dynamic fits with what Bergholz calls "violence as a generative force" or the more traditional "security dilemma."⁶²⁷ In this last typology, the Chetniks' perceptions of the capabilities that the Croats had to eliminate Serbs motivated Chetnik actions. They had to not only contend with the strategic context, "but also the ideas and

⁶²⁵ "Greek-Eastern faith" was the euphemism used by the NDH to deny the existence of Serbs as Orthodox Christians and was later used to justify the creation of the "Croatian Orthodox Church" to replace the existence of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

⁶²⁶ HR-HDA-487, kut. 1, doc. 309, p. 4.

⁶²⁷ Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force*. The first to develop the concept of the security dilemma was Jervis. See Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30 (1978): 186–214. As expected, this has since garnered innumerable studies not all of which can be cited. Posen significantly advanced the concept in Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993): 27–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396339308442672>. For our purposes, and for an example outside of the Yugoslav theatre, see Amelia Hoover Green, "The Commander's Dilemma: Creating and Controlling Armed Group Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 5 (September 2016): 619–32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343316653645>. For Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and for the usage of "security dilemma" in relation to non-state actors, see Tomislav Dulić and Roland Kostić, "Yugoslavs in Arms: Guerrilla Tradition, Total Defence and the Ethnic Security Dilemma," *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 7 (September 2010): 1051–72. These concepts continue to gain traction in the literature. See Dmitar Tasić, "Violence as Cause and Consequence: Comparisons of Anti-Communist Armed Resistance in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria after the Second World War," *Centre for Advanced Study Sofia Working Papers*, no. 10 (2018): 3–36. Also helpful for conceptualising the "security dilemma" in relation to non-state actors is a number of the chapters in Abdel-Fatua Musah and J. 'Kayode Fayemi, eds., *Mercenaries: An African Security Dilemma* (London; Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2000).

social forces that produced the dilemma in the first place and that may reproduce it unless the interveners [i.e., the Chetniks] can neutralise them [i.e., Croats].”⁶²⁸ And the “security dilemma” can even shift away from defensive actions to offensive ones, or what Snyder and Jervis call “predation.”⁶²⁹ In other words, the Chetniks began killing Croats before the Croats could kill Serbs, which further led to a cycle of violence and killing. As only one example, when the Partisans burned down Serb houses, they said it was “for the burning of the house of our Croat brothers.”⁶³⁰ This violence escalated to the point, from the Chetnik perspective, that reprisal and revenge killings gave way to outright slaughter.

One of the signatories of the DCD founding document, Mane Rokvić, for example, “managed to conquer Drvar, and slaughtered all the people, without distinction, women and children” in the summer of 1941. Later, in Bosansko Grahovo, “the Croatian population, children and women, were put to the greatest suffering.” The victims were thrown into pits, a typical practice in this region for all sides of the conflict, and the Ustasha officials were mutilated before being “thrown alive into the fire.” In Petrovo and in Kulen Vakuf, “children and women were thrown alive into the water and into pits and tortured.”⁶³¹ Though the DCD had not been established in 1941, its actors and leaders were engaging in violent actions designed as reprisals and preventive attacks.

Just north of Strmica, Đujić’s stronghold, the small Bosnian village of Stožište was set alight and the houses and shops were looted by the DCD in 1942. The soldiers “committed everything that is not worthy and that is forbidden to one soldier.”⁶³² This event is one of the few in which violence against civilians is mentioned in the DCD documents, by Đujić himself no less, but is again an apology to Mihailović for the behaviour of troops fighting in his name. For instance, Đujić goes on to mention that the

⁶²⁸ Jack L. Snyder and Robert Jervis, “Civil War and the Security Dilemma,” in *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention*, ed. Barbara F. Walter and Jack L. Snyder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 15–35, 16.

⁶²⁹ Snyder and Jervis, “Civil War and the Security Dilemma,” 21.

⁶³⁰ HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131-288.

⁶³¹ HR-HDA-1549-2, I-9, 664.

⁶³² *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 136.

actions are especially terrible “because to this day not a single house was set on fire by [our] soldiers and fighters.” Yet, we know this to not be true.

A report from 1944 is indicative of the degeneration of violence from reprisals to offensive actions:

April 30 this year [1944] an operation was carried out in the village of Gligovo in order to expel the Partisans and prevent them from living in the village by liquidating the buildings. During the actions, a partisan company was encountered, which fled in front of us and did not accept the fight.

Enemy losses: 2 dead.

There were no losses [on the Chetnik side].

Captive livestock: sheep, hides and cattle distributed to the population.

The village was burned.⁶³³

What this and other reports indicate is that the Chetniks began to target not only people but resources, such as houses, livestock, and other goods, as well. Yet, it was not just Partisan, or even Croat, areas that were targeted. Indeed, the plunder got to such an extent that Chetniks began to target “Chetnik families” in certain areas.⁶³⁴ This may partially explain the existence of ethnic Serb names on the record of victims of Chetnik violence, while certainly the targeting of “Partisan families” can also help to explain this phenomenon.⁶³⁵ Regardless, the reprisal and pre-emptory violence described above was such that by 1944 Mladen Žujović, Mihailović’s eventual replacement for Trifunović-Birčanin, reported that “the world considered Chetniks ordinary criminals and foreign mercenaries” by the time of his arrival.⁶³⁶ These few examples aside, the absence of victims of Chetnik violence is conspicuous in the documents. One must look deeper into the DCD and JVuO documents, and certainly to other sources, to find more about the mass violence perpetrated by the Chetniks.

⁶³³ HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131-249.

⁶³⁴ *Narodnooslobodilačka Borba u Dalmaciji 1941-1945*, Knjiga 10, doc. 75.

⁶³⁵ See, for example, the files in HR-HDA-306. For the purposes of this thesis, I consulted the files under Ibid., Z-2013, Šibenik; Z-2925, Zagreb; Z-2926, Zagreb; Z-3014, Šibenik and Titovo Korenica; and Z-3010, Split.

⁶³⁶ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 186.

The word most widely used by the Chetniks to signify killing is “*čišćenje*,” cleansing. This term is problematic for several reasons, both from an academic perspective and from a practical one. The academic purposes will not concern us here, but from a practical standpoint *čišćenje* is vague enough and used in enough disparate contexts that the word straddles the barrier between euphemism and reality.⁶³⁷ Operationally, cleansing actions occurred when it was necessary to ensure that territories were clear and safe from the presence of enemy combatants, and the word appears in Chetnik, Partisan, German, Italian and NDH documents alike. However, cleansing is also used to signify the removal of undesired populations and peoples. Thus, the excision of civilian victims from DCD reports necessarily lumps them in with enemy operations rather than as victims of the genocidal actions of perpetrators. At every step, the civilian victims are euphemised to reduce the meaning and importance, indeed the very existence, of their identities, characters and, ultimately, lives. Whether the removal of victim populations from the documents was conscious or not is debatable without the relevant sources, but it not only has the effect discussed above; it also shows that the Chetniks viewed Croats as potential perpetrators. This further reinforces the argument for the security dilemma, real or perceived.

Internal DCD Relationships and with Ravna Gora

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the mass violence against civilians was not a point of contention between the DCD leadership and other Chetnik units. Indeed, Mihailović himself wrote to Prime Minister Slobodan Jovanović in 1942 that “Hercegovina is now surviving communist terror. All our regions are destined to survive this terror, after which there will be revolt and cleansing.”⁶³⁸ Rather, it was other, local events that kept the DCD and its leadership at a distance from Mihailović’s centre. Similarly, it was interpersonal relations amongst the DCD leadership that eventually led to infighting, denunciations and purges of DCD members, leaders, and families.

⁶³⁷ Vladimir Petrović is undoubtedly the expert on the origins, uses and abuses of the term *etničko čišćenje*/ethnic cleansing. See his Vladimir Petrović, *Etničko Čišćenje: Geneza Koncepta* (Belgrade: Arhipelag, 2019) and Vladimir Petrović, “Etnicizacija Čišćenja u Reci i Nedelu: Represija i Njena Naučna Legitimizacija,” *Hereticus* 1 (2007): 11–36. Also see Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁶³⁸ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc.105.

As briefly mentioned, the founding leadership of the DCD attempted to keep Mihailović's officers from taking control of the movement. Though Birčanin came at the auspices of Mihailović, the "old Chetnik" already had pre-existing relationships with some of the Dinara Chetniks and was willing to allow them free reign in the region. Though he was not a *vojvoda* before the war, Đujić appointed himself one and got permission from Birčanin ahead of time to do so. This is one, albeit small, example of the ways in which the DCD attempted to keep the central leadership at arms' length: if they could create for themselves an independent political and armed force, then they would have no need for a centralised command. The *Elaborat* cited earlier is another piece of evidence towards this argument.

The *Elaborat* reads very much like the founding charter of not only an armed and political group but one which has its sights set on becoming an independent entity either within or free from the NDH and/or Italy. Such conceit extends throughout the DCD leadership ranks. Each *vojvoda* was in charge of his area, not just his regiment. It was mandated within the *Elaborat* that members of similar rank were to refer to one another as "brother" and that there would be no centralised command. Instead, each *vojvoda* was to report to the others as an equal so that each was aware of the goings on in all areas. Ostensibly this structure was intended to democratise the hierarchy of DCD's leadership, but actually led to infighting and complaints by subordinates that they no longer knew to whom they reported.⁶³⁹ What also emerged was a fight within the DCD for a centralised leadership position which Đujić eventually won. This jostling for position, along with independence from Ravna Gora, partially explains the shift in name of the DCD from "Division" to "Dinara Chetnik Area" (*oblast*): not only was the DCD in charge of its men, but it was also responsible for the governance of its region.⁶⁴⁰

Similarly, the *Elaborat* is careful to position the DCD within Mihailović's sphere of command while maintaining its sovereignty. Though the signatories name themselves *vojvode* and commanders of their regiments, they also are careful to show that they fight for the same causes as Mihailović by paying lip service to him towards the end of the

⁶³⁹ HR-HDA-495, kut. 1, 111-30.

⁶⁴⁰ See Jelić-Butić, *Četnici u Hrvatskoj*, 199-200 which implies the governance of "Chetnik areas" by the DCD, while also shifting away from the "Dinara Division" label to "Dinara Areas." The change in name was also meant to correspond to a larger geographic area, as well. See *ibid.*, 220.

document. However, the document is simultaneously careful to mention DCD's reliance on "cooperation" with other Chetnik units and signals that this practice would continue on a regional basis. This cooperation with the units, establishment of DCD command as leaders, and subordination to Mihailović's command are carefully structured to keep as much leeway for the DCD within its own territory while also aligning with Ravna Gora's overall goals. Though the document does not dwell on details of the DCD's sovereignty, the actions of the DCD's leaders can help to illustrate how they managed to remain separate from Mihailović's main command.

From the outset of the DCD's establishment, the leadership worked to maintain their control over the division. They quickly distanced themselves from other political leaders who, on paper, should have aligned with the DCD ideologically and instead worked to agitate for greater societal prominence to garner greater support. The presence of militarised figures like Đujić at the Pađeni negotiations in August/September 1941 helped ensure the martial mentality of the resistance.⁶⁴¹ This is also why the *Elaborat* importantly mentions that the DCD is a military *and* political movement, to help sway support from a purely political operation to a military one.⁶⁴²

Even working alongside Mihailović's officers proved difficult. Relations between Đujić, Jevđević and the other leaders in the Dinara area with the various officers that Mihailović sent to liaise with the DCD were fraught.⁶⁴³ Indeed, Trifunović-Birčanin reported to Mihailović of Đujić's dissatisfaction with Petar Baćović who Mihailović sent to help liaise between Ravna Gora and the DCD.⁶⁴⁴ Much of the internal discord has been attributed to Đujić's quest for the sole leadership position in the DCD, despite the DCD's claims to be an unstratified movement in the *Elaborat*. By the end of April 1942, Đujić was able to write about his far-reaching influence: "through Zrmanja, Popina, Gračac to Metković on the one side [i.e., west into Lika and Dalmatia], across Grahovo, Drvar, Petrovac to Krupa on the other side [i.e., north of Dinara Mountain into Bosnia], and across on the third side Marinkovci, Tičevo, Preodca and Rora to Glamoč [i.e., east from

⁶⁴¹ Jelić-Butić, *Četnici u Hrvatskoj*, 45-46.

⁶⁴² *Narodnooslobodilačka Borba u Dalmaciji 1941-1945*, Knjiga 2, doc. 550.

⁶⁴³ Jelić-Butić, *Četnici u Hrvatskoj*, 85.

⁶⁴⁴ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 5.

Dinara into Bosnia].”⁶⁴⁵ Only after Trifunović-Birčanin died in February 1943 did Mihailović finally get a competent and forceful officer close to the DCD command, CNK committee member Mladen Žujović. As we have seen, Žujović took a rather dim view of the DCD leadership, its organisation, and actions up to that point in the conflict. By Žujović’s arrival, however, it was too late to effect any change let alone to take any firm control of events in the Dinara Chetnik Area.

The internal DCD relationships between commanders, officers, and soldiers suffered as a result. Perhaps it was the turning tide of the war, or perhaps it was the ongoing infighting, an event from 1944 is rather typical of the DCD internal malfunctioning. *Vojvoda* Brane Bogunović accused another officer, Perišić, of not doing enough “for the general cause.”⁶⁴⁶ Tensions escalated within the headquarters to such an extent that no less than three guns were drawn, one of which was held by *Vojvoda* Mane Rokvić. Eventually the situation relaxed, but this event points to the extent to which disagreement amongst the Chetnik leadership led to physical confrontation and threats of violence. At other points, DCD leadership accused one another of taking money from and working for the Ustaše. The toxicity within the DCD leadership also trickled down the ranks through the officer corps to the soldiers.⁶⁴⁷ Accusations of slander, poor character traits, having communist family members, and other invectives were used to describe certain figures within the DCD. Rokvić, for his part, was called “an invertebrate, a maniac without any pride and character” by one officer.⁶⁴⁸

Although the issues within the DCD cannot be pinned on one particular character, or even a handful, that is what occurred. However, the issues were rooted far deeper than just a few bad apples such as Mane Rokvić.⁶⁴⁹ The denunciations, name-calling and other bickering often led to the “liquidation” of DCD leaders, officers, and others. This was certainly the accusation that Rokvić hurled at Đujić for the death of *Vojvoda* Pajo Popović, commander for Dalmatian Kosovo, and there was evidence for

⁶⁴⁵ Quoted in Jelić-Butić, *Četnici u Hrvatskoj*, 93.

⁶⁴⁶ HR-HDA-495, kut. 3, 131-62.

⁶⁴⁷ HR-HDA-495, kut. 3, 131-77.

⁶⁴⁸ HR-HDA-495, kut. 3, 131-77.

⁶⁴⁹ On the issue of Rokvić and others being blamed for toxicity within the DCD, see HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131-290.

such actions occurring.⁶⁵⁰ Regardless, the demoralisation of the DCD certainly played as much of a role in the division's demise as had the capitulation of Italy, the strengthening of the Partisans, and the ineffectuality of the Germans in the Balkans.

Summary

The DCD was rotten from the inside out and from the top down. Its actions resulted in the deaths of countless innocent civilians guilty of little more than being perceived to be a particular ethno-religious background or a vague sense of aiding and abetting the communist-led resistance. The DCD's genocidal traits were not a result of its distance – either geographically, ideologically or through actions – from the Ravna Gora core. Rather, it was its genocidal traits that made it easier for the DCD to take on aspects of the *četovanje* tradition.

The DCD's perceptions of its enemies, both real and imagined, led to its already power-hungry leadership to view their own detachment as a threat. Of course, it is necessary for any good military unit to prepare for various outcomes and nuances of war, especially for a guerrilla army, but the DCD's internal documents read of paranoia and xenophobia. The interlocutors only reveal half-truths and inflated lies to hide the true feelings, motivations, and events on the ground from the writers' recipients, even amongst officers and leadership. By the time of Italy's capitulation and when it became apparent that Germany was all but defeated, the DCD were worried about the Partisans and Ustashe uniting in a common front against the Chetniks.⁶⁵¹

Obviously, no Partisan-Ustashe agreements were signed to that extent. Even so, such fears speak to the ostensible *raison d'être* of the DCD: to save Serb lives. At least as many if not more Serbs joined the Partisans as had been part of the DCD and surrounding Chetnik detachments, however, which begs the question whether Serb lives were actually saved at all. Rather, the presence of Serb names on the register as Chetnik victims strongly suggests that the DCD was in fact only after saving *particular* Serb lives. Necessarily, this also raises questions about the collaboration with Italy and its purpose of lifesaving: if only particular (i.e., nationalist, Chetnik-supporting) Serb lives

⁶⁵⁰ HR-HDA-495, kut. 2, 126-3.

⁶⁵¹ HR-HDA-495, kut. 1, 113-1.

were protected from Chetnik terror, then one design of collaboration with Italy was to save the same segment of Serb society. Certainly, the presence of the Partisans confounded events in the Dinara region leading to a civil war between the Chetniks and Partisans. However, the DCD – as with all JVuO detachments – made conscious decisions to prioritise certain Serb lives over others by failing to come to terms with the communists and Partisans. Of course, the Partisans bear their fair share of the blame on this last point, but this study is interested in the JVuO/Chetnik perspective. At the very least, failing to unite in a common cause to save Serb lives – all Serb lives or, indeed, all Yugoslav lives – led to as many Serbs being killed in the civil war as were killed in the Ustasha genocide.⁶⁵²

Similarly, the targeting and killing of Croats meant that the DCD escalated its reprisal policies to outright genocidal killing. Not only in intensity but in choice of targeted populations, the DCD proved itself to be a one-tracked detachment: the sheer and utter destruction of non-Serb civilians. The incomplete inarticulation of the DCD's policies towards Muslim Yugoslavs shows this single- and bloody-minded goal; just because the *Elaborat* chose to leave the Muslims for a later time does not mean that the DCD's intentions were any different. Instead, the participation of some Muslims as perpetrators in the Ustasha genocide damned them in the DCD's eyes alongside Croats. In many ways, the DCD got what they deserved: they lost the civil war, they were overrun and fled their country, and their political, war, social, cultural and other aims failed. In other ways, however, many of the DCD made it out of Yugoslavia alive and without having ever faced the not-so long arm of international law. Rather than Partisan-Ustasha deals, it was the likes of Đujić, Jevđević and other Dinara Chetnik Area

⁶⁵² Exact numbers are notoriously difficult to calculate. Žerjavić cites the total number of Serb losses to be about 530,000 people, 125,000 of which would have been as soldiers in the NDH. See Vladimir Žerjavić, *Yugoslavia: Manipulations with the Number of Second World War Victims* (Zagreb: Croatian Information Centre, 1993), <http://www.hic.hr/books/manipulations/index.htm>, especially the chapters titled "The Author's Survey of the Demographic and Human War Losses in Yugoslavia," found at <http://www.hic.hr/books/manipulations/p06.htm> and "Calculations of Serbian Losses in the Territory of the NDH and in Jasenovac-Gradina; and Croatian and Muslim Losses at Bleiburg and in the So-Called Way of the Cross (Death March)," found at http://www.hic.hr/books/manipulations/p07.htm#**. The NDH and Ustasha expert, Rory Yeomans, cites that at least 200,000 Serbs were killed by the Ustasha alone, with the number possibly reaching upwards of 500,000 people when executions, camp deaths and other methods of killing are accounted for. See Rory Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation: The Ustasha Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism, 1941-1945* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 18. Thus, even Žerjavić who, along with Kočić, is considered to have arrived at the most statically accurate numbers, is likely grossly below many scholarly estimates.

leaders who signed agreements of safe passage with the Ustashe to ensure their escape to Italy. Jevđević died in Rome in 1962, aged 66, while Đujić lived in the United States long enough to stoke the flames of hatred and violence during the Yugoslav wars of succession in the 1990s. The San Diego resident was 92 years old when he died in 1999.⁶⁵³

⁶⁵³ David Binder, "Momcilo Đujic, Serbian Priest and Warrior, Dies at 92," *The New York Times*, September 13, 1999, sec. Obituaries.

Chapter 5. The Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland (JVuO): A Synthetic Appraisal

The three previous chapters looked at the JVuO at the individual unit level: the Ravna Gora Movement, the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment, and the Dinara Chetnik Division. This chapter will look at all three units in comparison to arrive at conclusions about the JVuO as a whole. At the most basic level, we can conclude that the JVuO stood for a handful of premises: Serb(ian) nationalism, monarchism, Orthodox Christianity, Yugoslavism, the use of guerrilla warfare to achieve victory, collaboration with the Axis in the short-term, and the overall victory of the Allies in the long-term. Yet, adherence to or belief in each of these elements varied amongst the three units. This chapter will look at each of these “truisms” to arrive at an understanding of what underpins the allegiance of each of the three units to its allegiance to the JVuO. For some, such as Ravna Gora, this is easier to determine since Mihailović was the leader of both, while for the other two units this may be more difficult in some areas. Nevertheless, viewing Ravna Gora in relation to the other two units reveals that unit’s inherent contradictions while helping to mark how ideologically distant the other units were. This chapter, then, is also a comparison of the ideological nuances that existed within and between the three units. The goal of this task is to arrive at an understanding of what it meant to be a “Chetnik” or a member of the JVuO and to better understand the JVuO as a whole. This will help to further refine the JVuO’s ideology, political programming, perceptions about itself, and to better understand those who remained part of the JVuO for the duration of the war.

The motivation for pursuing this goal is to not only better understand the JVuO but to also dispel or even confirm certain conclusions and beliefs that others have made about the JVuO and its members. On a popular level, notions about the JVuO exist on a spectrum ranging from one extreme which posits the JVuO as “fascist” and the other extreme which glorifies them as “heroes.”⁶⁵⁴ Such dichotomous thinking positions the

⁶⁵⁴ The “fascist” end of the spectrum tends to equate the violence perpetrated by the “Chetniks” to fascism as an ideology. While certainly violence played (and still plays) a role in fascist ideology, the two are not synonymous. See, for example, the popular Twitter account “Bosnian History’s” tweet here: <https://twitter.com/BosnianHistory/status/1236662052082589698>. Journalists and experts of the region also resort to the fascist-Chetnik trope as, for example, seen here: <https://twitter.com/brezaleksandar/status/1237401387413254150>. While the other dichotomy presents the Chetniks as heroes and ignores the massacres, collaboration, and deeper

JVuO into either/or camps: either the Chetniks are fascist, or they are heroes. Yet, even on a deeper, scholarly level there exist a number of tropes which have emerged about the JVuO and not all of which seem to be founded in primary evidence. For example, few if any studies on “the Chetniks” problematize the notion of collaboration to show the complicated, competing, and contradictory nature of collaboration.⁶⁵⁵ This chapter, then, places the three segments of the JVuO alongside one another in a comparative fashion to sharpen the distinctions and similarities between the three units. Such a method works towards showing the deeper and defined contours which separate each unit from one another while also presenting instances of where no such differences exist. In other words, this chapter argues that the JVuO is far more complicated than even its most ardent supporters or most vocal detractors understand or, indeed, wish to recognise.

Organisation and Political Programs

Two of the units, Dinara and Ravna Gora, developed their own programs for conducting warfare on both a military and political basis. For Ravna Gora, the political program manifested in one main document: Moljević’s “Homogeneous Serbia” that informed all orders, memos, plans and ideology. As discussed, “Homogeneous Serbia” was followed through by various units, most notably the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment but also in Bosnia, Serbia, Hercegovina, and the Dinara regions. This program was aimed at oppositional elements, namely against Communists/Partisans, Muslims, and ethnic Croats.

The Dinara Chetnik Division developed its political program in the *Elaborat*. Whether and to what extent Moljević’s pamphlet directly influenced the *Elaborat* is unclear without evidentiary proof, but certainly Dinara had its own program in place, and much of it fit within the “Homogeneous Serbia” idea. The *Elaborat* defined the unit’s political goals, some of its methods to achieve those goals and the desired outcomes of the program. Similar to “Homogeneous Serbia,” the *Elaborat* was a Serb-exclusivist

ideological constructions entirely or seeks to apologise for them. See <https://twitter.com/CrimesSerbs/status/1365750794482450433> and, indeed, the modern Chetnik Association in Sydney, Australia’s tweet, only one amongst many here: <https://twitter.com/chetnik1903/status/1343847774349971456>.

⁶⁵⁵ Even the most thorough study of the JVuO fails to acknowledge the elaborate interconnectedness of collaboration throughout the JVuO’s various units and regional identities. Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*.

document that defined the Dinara Division in opposition to other Yugoslav peoples, most notably ethnic Croats and (suspected) communists. However, unlike “Homogeneous Serbia” the plan for dealing with the “Muslim question” was not as clearly articulated. The reason for this is that the Dinara area did not have as much contact and experience with Muslim peoples. This contrasts with the Ravna Gora Movement and to the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment, both of which were in constant contact with, and conflict against Muslims. Only once the Dinara area expanded to include a wider geographic area did the targeting of Muslims take place, as evidenced by the attacks in Stolac, Nevesinje, and elsewhere.⁶⁵⁶ Relatedly, Dinara was most in contact with ethnic Croats, while in Montenegro, Croats were virtually non-existent, so it is little surprise that Muslims should be the most targeted group in Montenegro and Croats in Dinara.

Perhaps surprisingly, it does not appear as though the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment articulated any sort of political program. This may partially be explained by the unit’s military subordination to Ravna Gora and the subsequent hierarchical relationship between the Montenegrin Chetniks and Ravna Gora. The Montenegrins were also divided more sharply along Chetnik-Partisan lines but also internally amongst the nationalists. Sekula Drljević and Blažo Đukanović represent the other two leading nationalist forces in Montenegro who were most responsible for developing political programs for their respective movements, thus siphoning off support from Đurišić. However, we can conclude from Lim-Sandžak’s actions that they stood for uniting Montenegro with Serbia – as opposed to Drljević who vied for an independent Montenegro or a Montenegro similar to occupied Albania⁶⁵⁷ – expelling or killing non-Serbs, and for linking the territories to a wider Serb territory along the Adriatic coast. The desire to unite Serb-inhabited lands, then, is one commonality amongst all three JVUO units. The genocidal programs related to the Greater Serbia cause will be explored in

⁶⁵⁶ It is worth noting that these operations only included Dinara Chetniks, not that they were the main units involved. Rather, it was units led by Jevđević and Baćović that planned, led, coordinated, and carried out the bulk of the anti-Muslim attacks. See Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War*, 150. See also Dedijer and Miletić, *Genocid Nad Muslimanima*, 581.

⁶⁵⁷ For different perspectives of Albania during the Second World War, see Davide Rodogno, *Fascism’s European Empire: Italian Occupation During the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and, Marian Zidaru, “SOE Operations in Albania during the Second World War,” *Technium Social Sciences Journal* 7, no. 1 (2020): 289–94, <https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v7i1.521>. The most thorough study remains Bernd Fischer, *Albania at War, 1939-1945* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1998).

greater detail within its own section, but for now it suffices to say that to achieve such a goal genocide was necessary.

Operationally, each unit employed *četovanje*. However, the length of time that guerrilla warfare was intended to be used and the guerrilla nature of each unit differed across all three units. Ravna Gora, as both the centre of the JVuO and as populated by professional soldiers and officers, intended to only use *četovanje* as a means until such a point at which traditional military confrontation could be used, perhaps when the expected Allied landing in the Balkans occurred but certainly by the time Yugoslavia could be reconstructed. Mihailović's outlook is revealed in several documents, both by him and by the Yugoslav government in exile. For both, Mihailović was a new iteration of the prewar Royal Yugoslav Army, and this is reflected in the final name that Mihailović chose for the army as a whole: the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland. Similarly, identifying the other detachments as "Chetnik Detachments of the JVuO" meant that Ravna Gora identified itself as a standardised, professionalised army which would have guerrilla components alongside it. This harkens back to the use of the "old" Chetniks during the 1912 to 1918 period when the Chetniks were attached to the Serbian army. In this comparison, Ravna Gora represents the Serbian army of that period, and the detachments are the Chetnik units alongside it.

Lim-Sandžak, on the other hand, used *četovanje* tactics more readily while Dinara was virtually an all-out *četnik* movement. Lim-Sandžak found that they could not compete with the superior Italian forces and that the Partisans were fighting them as guerrillas. Matching like for like, the Chetniks came out on top in Montenegro. Both Lim-Sandžak and Ravna Gora contrast with Dinara in that the latter was predicated on *četovanje* from the start. Much like Lim-Sandžak being unable to compete with the superior Italian army Dinara also resorted to guerrilla tactics. The rag-tag nature of the NDH and the Ustasha killings meant that Dinara could afford to be a guerrilla unit and had no pretences at being anything else. This emerges in Dinara's desire for autonomy within the JVuO and refusal to be subordinated entirely by Mihailović officers.

The personal histories of each units' commander help to clarify some of the differences in outlook and goals on the guerrilla-traditional warfare spectrum. Mihailović and Đurišić were both officers from the start of the war, though the latter also trained to be a teacher for a time. Đujić, on the other hand, was a priest who invited and adopted

the Chetnik way of life into Dalmatia to protect against the perceived Croatian violence that was expected to come in the 1930s. Dalmatia also had a history of *hajduk* irregular warfare, while Montenegro had a mixture of *hajdukovanje* and traditional warfare, and Central Serbia, Mihailović's home region, laid claim to several resistance fighters against Ottoman rule who later became professional military figures.⁶⁵⁸ Historically, and in contrast, Dalmatian Serbs existed within the Krajina military frontier as border guards, *hajduks* and mercenaries who variably fought for and against the Venetian, Habsburg, and Ottoman Empires, and this tradition emerges in the DCD. Thus, the lifelong officer, the teacher-cum-officer, and the priest developed their units in reflection of their personal experiences from the prewar period. The differences in the guerrilla-traditional army dichotomy become even more apparent when viewing the units' perspectives of and relation to collaboration.

Collaboration

As the leader of a national resistance movement, Mihailović could not be seen as dealing with the Axis. His officers, instead, were given power of attorney and dealt with negotiations and arriving at agreements with the Axis powers.⁶⁵⁹ In some cases, the units negotiated separately from Ravna Gora, as in Montenegro, or even prior to coming under Ravna Gora's umbrella, as was the case with Dinara. In both Montenegro and Dinara, collaboration was directed against the Communists/Partisans. In Dinara, collaboration with Italy also emerged as a response to the NDH genocide, something which neither the Serbia-based Ravna Gora Movement nor the Lim-Sandžak Chetniks experienced firsthand. Thus, the two contextual factors which pushed the "Chetniks" into collaborating with Italy and Germany were the NDH genocide and the increasing threat of the Partisans.

In some cases, certainly in Dinara, the deals with the Italians came about from pre-existing relationships which extended to at least the interwar period. Whether the argument that Đujić was an Italian spy is accepted or not, at least he, Trifunović-Birčanin, and Jevđević had pre-existing relationships with the Italian authorities. These

⁶⁵⁸ See Chapter 1.

⁶⁵⁹ See, for example, Birčanin's explicit mention of power of attorney in Split: *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 76.

relationships helped to broker deals with the Italians who, considering the NDH, were seen as the much lesser of the two evils. When the Partisans are added into the equation, the Italians seem even more desirable for the Chetniks. Even Hudson, the British attaché to Mihailović, argued that perhaps some British toleration of collaboration with the Italians was necessary because it not only allowed the JVuO some semblance of territorial control, but it also helped to alleviate some of Britain's burden of supplying the resistance.⁶⁶⁰ Collaborating with Germany was an entirely different prospect.

For two of the regions, Dalmatia and Montenegro, collaborating with the Germans really only occurred from 1943. In the Ravna Gora area and in other parts of Bosnia, Hercegovina, Slovenia and Serbia, German collaboration occurred earlier but based on smaller scale agreements.⁶⁶¹ After Italy's capitulation in September 1943, German collaboration in the occupation zones previously under Italy manifested in different ways for Montenegro and Dinara. In Dinara, it was based more on attempting to maintain the status quo in the region. Dalmatia, western Bosnia, and Lika were already thrown into disarray by the NDH genocide, to say nothing of the Axis invasion more generally, and Dinara was afraid that their own reprisals would come back to haunt them. For some in the Dinara region, once Italy capitulated and the Partisans had seized their weapons, fleeing to the Germans seemed the only reasonable response.⁶⁶² Even when the Nazis threatened to arrest Đujić, the latter was able to convince the former of his use in defending the railway lines between Knin and the Adriatic coast.⁶⁶³ In Montenegro, collaboration with Germany only came to fruition after "Case White" ("*Fall Weiß*," "Fourth Enemy Offensive" for the Partisans), that is after January to March 1943.⁶⁶⁴ For Montenegro, and especially for Đurišić, the turning point was being captured by the Germans.

⁶⁶⁰ F.W.D. Deakin, *The Embattled Mountain* (New Haven and London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 151.

⁶⁶¹ For the Slovene example, see Gregor Joseph Kranjc, *To Walk with the Devil: Slovene Collaboration and Axis Occupation, 1941-1945* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

⁶⁶² *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 3, doc. 78.

⁶⁶³ Milazzo, *The Chetnik Movement and the Yugoslav Resistance*, 164.

⁶⁶⁴ Milazzo, *The Chetnik Movement and the Yugoslav Resistance*, Chapter 6 covers well the tension between the Chetniks, the Germans and the Italians surrounding both Case White and Case Black.

The German plan to capture Montenegrin Chetniks was “Case Black” (“*Fall Schwarz*,” “Fifth Enemy Offensive”). The operation was designed to disarm the Chetniks and to finally eliminate the Partisans.⁶⁶⁵ On 14 May 1943, German troops entered Kolašin with the intent to capture Đurišić and Mihailović in one fell swoop, but the latter had already escaped back to Serbia. No casualties occurred and for all we can tell nary a shot was fired. The Italian protests fell on deaf German ears.⁶⁶⁶ Đurišić and his 2000-men were transported to a camp in Galicia and held there.⁶⁶⁷ It was from there that Đurišić and some others escaped to Serbia, before being apprehended in October by the Nedić regime who in turn handed them over to the Nazis. He was held in a *Gestapo* prison near Belgrade before finally being released.⁶⁶⁸ The exact conditions of his release are unclear, but it came by way of direct intervention by Hermann Neubacher, Germany’s head diplomat in Yugoslavia.⁶⁶⁹ Đurišić was given arms by the Germans to combat the Partisans and Ljotić’s men soon joined him at his headquarters.⁶⁷⁰ Nedić, too, made contact and promoted him to lieutenant colonel and assistant to the commander of the Serbian Volunteer Corps (*Srpski dobrovoljački korpus*, SDK).⁶⁷¹ Hence, the circle between the Chetniks, Ljotić and Nedić was closed and any questions of collaboration were finally confirmed.

Mihailović, for his part, had a difficult relationship with the idea of collaboration but at the very least he abetted it.⁶⁷² Of his political triumvirate of Moljević, Vasić, and Žujović, the latter two were vocal opponents of collaboration at both initiating talks and certainly in continuing the agreements. Mihailović’s “collaboration” comes more through

⁶⁶⁵ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 252.

⁶⁶⁶ Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 124-125.

⁶⁶⁷ Dimitrijević, *Golgota Četnika*, 35; Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 349.

⁶⁶⁸ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 253.

⁶⁶⁹ Hermann Neubacher, *Specijalni Zadatak Balkan* (Beograd: Izdavač, 2004), 175-177.

⁶⁷⁰ The account of one such Ljotićite can be found in Parežanin, *Moja Misija u Crnoj Gori*.

⁶⁷¹ Karchmar, *Draža Mihailović and the Rise of the Četnik Movement*, 434; Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 350.

⁶⁷² For instance, with the deal that Đurišić made with the Germans, see Pajović, *Kontrarevolucija u Crnoj Gori*, 475. Ibid. also notes that “legalising” certain Chetnik units was bad optics given that Đurišić was a senior officer. See *ibid.*, 476. Contrast this sentiment with Mihailović’s approval of Gen. Đukanović’s “accommodations” with the Italians in Milazzo, *The Chetnik Movement and the Yugoslav Resistance*, 82. Đukanović had a greater distance, both operationally and ideologically, to Mihailović’s centre than many officers, especially Đurišić.

his officers closest to him and who commanded other units and detachments. Zaharije Ostojić, Petar Baćović, Trifunović-Bričanin, Đurišić and others negotiated on his behalf. Yet even tensions existed amongst the JVuO themselves over the amount of collaboration and resistance they should employ, especially by 1943 when the Axis had determined to crush both the JVuO and the Partisans.⁶⁷³ For their part, the Axis seemed to be under no misconception of what the JVuO's long game was. The Germans, for example, tolerated Baćović's presence around Trebinje, in Bosnia, because he fought the Partisans effectively despite knowing that he, and other JVuO detachments, would fight for the Allies and "for King Peter II" if they landed in the Balkans.⁶⁷⁴ The same sentiment was shared by Neubacher about Đurišić.⁶⁷⁵ This helps explain situations like "Case Black" and the continual price on Mihailović's head by the Nazis. On the Allied side, Hudson was convinced that "blood will not be spared" in the event that an Allied "victory is certain."⁶⁷⁶ Whether Mihailović's toleration of collaboration was based on a sound justification or whether he saw it as a *fait accompli*, as he argued in his 1946 war crimes trial, is debatable. But it is certain that Mihailović saw collaboration on a case-by-case basis, rather than as an overall strategy as such.⁶⁷⁷ However, it is worth considering whether collaboration would have been part of JVuO strategy if first the British and, later, the Americans followed through on their promises of supply drops.

Relations with Allies

The JVuO's relations with the Allies have been spelled out elsewhere, rather exhaustively, and yet we seem no closer to any solid conclusions. Yet it is still worth mentioning that the Allies played a key role in the overall plans of the JVuO. As the German note about Baćović shows, the Germans were well aware of the pretenses that the JVuO held even as late as 1944. By then, the JVuO had lost Allied support, Mihailović was removed from his cabinet post, and Tito and the Partisans replaced the

⁶⁷³ Milazzo, *The Chetnik Movement and the Yugoslav Resistance*, 119-120.

⁶⁷⁴ HR-HDA-1549-2, I-9, 795.

⁶⁷⁵ Neubacher, *Specijalni Zadatak Balkan*, 176.

⁶⁷⁶ Deakin, *The Embattled Mountain*, 153.

⁶⁷⁷ This sentiment emerges more through investigating the primary sources. In some instances, Mihailović speaks openly about collaboration with the Italians, for example, while in others he urges his subordinates to conclude relationships quickly to avoid being tainted as collaborators. See also n. 523.

JVuO as the Yugoslav *résistance du jour*. Part of the Germans' outlook is because the JVuO made no secret about its allegiances throughout the war. At the Ba Congress, for example, the assembly resolved that they were fighting for king and for country regardless of how the "captive king"⁶⁷⁸ viewed them or what the Allies' plans were.

This raises some important questions about the nature of collaboration and resistance. Certainly, the Partisan influence cannot be overstated. Without the Partisans, after all, the JVuO may not have collaborated at all. Or perhaps collaboration was part of the plan from the earliest days regardless of the strength of the Partisans. It certainly seems as though Mihailović's intention was to infiltrate as many branches of the invasion and collaborationist structures as possible. By October 1941, for example, Mihailović's headquarters were staffed with a minimal number of officers and soldiers. Most of his men had "joined" Nedić's regime army, Ljotić's SDK, Pećanac's collaborationist "Black Chetniks" and other armies that had ethnic Serbs in them. Mihailović maintained that all these people would rise against the collaborationist parties and join his movement at the moment of an Allied invasion. Of course, the Balkan D-Day never arrived, the Partisans won the civil war and Mihailović was shot for treason and war crimes. However, let us take Mihailović at his word for the time being.

Internal JVuO documents reveal a general hatred for the NDH, for the Germans and Muslims generally. While Hungary and Bulgaria are talked about as interlopers, Italy is most often viewed, at least in Ravna Gora and Lim-Sandžak documents, as a necessary partner in the fight against the Partisans but otherwise the Italians are not given much credit as good fighters, good partners, or anything beyond being Germany's lesser ally. The documents still speak of Germany and Italy as the invaders, as occupiers, and as enemies in the long-term. Only in Dinara are the Italians viewed as anything more than bumbling sidekicks to Germany which is important considering the NDH's presence and actions. Viewed this way, Mihailović's claim that the JVuO was an Allied army has credence. This construction also appears as though Mihailović is playing more than just a double game, but something closer to a multilayered, complex, and convoluted game of three-dimensional chess on a two-dimensional board; his plans do not match the possibilities afforded by reality. In other words, Mihailović's plans were too complex for the context: he over-estimated his and his army's ability to collaborate while

⁶⁷⁸ HR-HDA-495, kut. 3, 131-103.

still maintaining credibility as Allies, he failed to appreciate the Allies' likelihood of dropping support of him or of switching to the Partisans, and he underestimated the Partisans as both a political and fighting threat. Regardless, the JVuO at various levels appear to not have much faith in the Axis as partners beyond the immediate necessities as predicated by the local environments.

The Allies, on the other hand, are most often described as partners even when relationships soured in the latter-half of the war. It is unfortunate that perhaps Mihailović's worst verbal attack against Britain came during a public event, in front of many hundreds of civilians and in the presence of Hudson's successor as the British attaché, Bailey.⁶⁷⁹ Heather Williams paints the situation as coming out of frustration with Britain's failure to supply the Chetniks with what was promised or, often enough, anything at all.⁶⁸⁰ The relationship between Mihailović and Bailey had also deteriorated to such an extent that the two were no longer on speaking terms. Amongst themselves, the JVuO speak of the Allies in mostly positive terms, though there are references to not being able to trust the word of the British, an obvious allusion to the failed supply drops and perhaps much else.⁶⁸¹ Yet, even then, the JVuO maintained that their allegiance was to the Allies, and they reiterated this at the Ba Congress. Certainly, proposing a democratic Yugoslavia at Ba was not only an attempt to regain Allied support but also a clear nod to the Americans, but seeing it as mere rhetoric cynically, or perhaps superficially, ignores the primary source evidence.⁶⁸² Hudson, the other British attaché, was "convinced that the mood of the people, as well as the nature of Mihailović's organisation and personal ambition, will oblige him to undertake a 'grand finale' against the Axis."⁶⁸³ In the meantime, however, Hudson considered Mihailović "perfectly capable of coming to any secret understanding with either Italians or Germans, which he believes might serve his purposes without compromising him." Even so, any agreements "would

⁶⁷⁹ Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans*, 110-111.

⁶⁸⁰ Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans*, 179.

⁶⁸¹ Plećaš, *Ratne Godine*, 132.

⁶⁸² Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 403.

⁶⁸³ Deakin, *The Embattled Mountain*, 153.

be based on [Mihailović's] conviction of an Allied victory and would be directed to the purpose of smashing the hold of the Communists on the people."⁶⁸⁴

On the periphery, things are perhaps more complicated still. Part of this has to do with the dynamic situation within the NDH, the collapse of Italy, and the rise of the Partisans in the areas of Dinara and Montenegro. While the Partisans remained the stronger of the two groups in Dinara, they did not regain access to Montenegro until well into 1944. Even after final victory in 1945, the Partisans were still fighting Chetnik holdouts as late as 1956 in some parts of the country.⁶⁸⁵ Further removed from Mihailović's centre and surrounded by Ustashe and Partisans for much of the war, Dinara struggled to get the few British and American supplies that came, while Montenegro had a clear supply route through the Sandžak. Thus, everything that came from the Allies was first filtered through Ravna Gora, both information and supplies. For Dinara this meant another level of abstraction, as Montenegro acted as the intermediary between Ravna Gora and the coast. In other words, the closer we get to the Adriatic the more concerned the parties become with the local situation; there is little to no interest in the politics of the Allies aside from an obvious interest in how the war is decided and a seemingly eternal (and vain) hope that an Allied landing was imminent.

Perhaps part of the issue with the Allies, and specifically Britain, can be attributed to the way that communication flowed, or rather how it did not. Once radio contact was made between Mihailović and the British, in autumn 1941, the process of communicating even to the government in exile was convoluted. For Mihailović to send a message to his king, he first had to radio the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) base in Cairo, which would send it to the Special Operations Executive (SOE), who would forward it to the Foreign Office (FO), then to George Willian Rendel, His Majesty's Minister in Sofia, and then on to the Yugoslav government in exile. Often, messages were also first filtered through Churchill, Eden, or others in the British government, each adding his own note or marginalia, before forwarding it to their Yugoslav counterparts. Even then, messages

⁶⁸⁴ Deakin, *The Embattled Mountain*, 153-154.

⁶⁸⁵ Stevan Bozanich, "Tito's Chetnik Hunters: The Dynamics of Asymmetric Warfare in Yugoslavia," in *Violent Resistance. From the Baltics to Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe 1944-1956.*, ed. Michael Gehler and David Schriffel (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2020), 373–87, 378.

were only forwarded to the Yugoslav government “only if all parties agreed.”⁶⁸⁶ The same process would be reversed if the Yugoslav government wanted to reach its minister. Only in 1944, once Britain had already dropped Mihailović, did the Yugoslav government gain access to the general.⁶⁸⁷ Seeing the process unfold this way, it appears as the children’s game of “Telephone”: one message gets filtered and slightly altered at each level and throws off the entire message from start to finish.

Yet, communication is only one part of this equation. Telegrams sent between May and December 1942 by Mihailović to the government in exile, to intercede on his behalf with the Allies, is telling. The first of this series was sent 9 May:

It is necessary to bomb the following military objectives: the Sava bridge near Belgrade, the Bor mines, the Trepča mines, Metković harbour and the Omiš electric powerhouse. This will greatly help to raise the morale of our men. The wish of the population must be supported.⁶⁸⁸

A week later, he wrote that “[t]he Dalmatia Yugoslavians pray for the instant bombing of [...] Metković,” while on the 24th he wrote “I urgently plead once again to bomb the Sava railway bridge near Belgrade, the Bor mines, the Sipski canal [in Kladovo, along the Danube] and the other military objectives in Yugoslavia.” June 11: “The Germans are rebuilding the Petrovac-Zagubica-Bor railway; about 1,000 workers are employed in this work. I repeat, Bor must be bombed.” The increasing frustration continued throughout the summer until, finally, on 14 September Mihailović cabled

I have already asked many times that military objectives in Yugoslavia [sic] be bombed and especially the Bor and Trepča mines. Nowadays the Germans are rounding up workers from Belgrade and the inside of the country to send to work in the Bor and Trepča mines. The people are running away into the forests. The Bor and Trepča mines are working at full steam. If it is at all possible, they must be bombed. A few bombs dropped in the outskirts are enough to make the workers run away. I think it is for the benefit of the common Cause [sic] to prevent the Germans from utilising these mines.

⁶⁸⁶ Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans*, 75-76.

⁶⁸⁷ Williams, *Parachutes, Patriots, and Partisans*, 77.

⁶⁸⁸ All telegrams come from AJ-103-34, 455, 456 and 457. All emphases in original. Originals translated into English and all messages appear over three pages of text. They are mostly arranged in chronological order within the fund, but not entirely.

Mihailović even used the Ustasha genocide to invoke action on the part of the British.

From 13 October:

The Oustachis [sic] criminal, Eugene Kvaternik [sic],⁶⁸⁹ chief of the public security, has ordered the massacre of 10,000 Serbs in Srem. Please approach the Allies to bomb Zagreb by way of reprisal; first warn the inhabitants by threatening, that in the future for every massacred Serb the bombing will be continued. If the Allies wish to render even a little help to the Serbs, this must be done.

Two days later, 15 October, he wrote

The Oustachis [sic] have once again started the annihilation of the Serbs [...] Please demand the bombing of Zagreb, other Croatian cities and Oustachis [sic] Headquarters, by way of reprisal. It is apparent in this situation that it is a fact that the Allies are indifferent as to the extermination of the Serbs according to the [Ustasha] plan. The public protests because the government and the Allies say nothing by way of protest against the mass murder of the Serbs, and do nothing to prevent it.

Despite the great loss of Serb life at the hands of the NDH, Mihailović was sure on 22 October to stress the importance of both the military and humanitarian objectives: “All the transport to and from Germany passes by Zidani Most. Topčider and Zidani Most must be bombed; the people will demand it and will not complain of possible victims.”

Only three days later, Mihailović wrote

I was informed from Belgrade that many inhabitants desire that the English [sic] bomb Topčider and the Save [sic] bridge heavily. The inhabitants will undergo the inevitable sacrifices and will pardon them.

By 2 December, Mihailović’s exasperation is palpable: “I demand, if it is at all possible, TO EXECUTE the bombing.”

Assuming that the messages made it to the government in exile and that, in turn, the messages were conveyed to the British (who, of course, would have seen them before the government anyway), it is clear that Mihailović’s frustrations were exacerbated by Allied inability, or “indifference” as he called it, to help. While Britain was increasingly calling on Mihailović to cause some damage to the Axis, he was asking the Allies to do the same. If the telegrams are any indication, the Allied bombings never

⁶⁸⁹ Mihailović here means Eugen “Dido” Kvaternik.

came. Mihailović and Ravna Gora receded into the forests and infiltrated other parts of the collaborationist structure. Meanwhile, in the NDH the genocide continued.

Genocide

Looming large in this study, and still only fairly new in JVuO scholarship as reviewed in the Introduction, is the matter of its genocidal policies. All three units discussed in this thesis had genocidal plans for the non-Serb and non-JVuO supporting population. Beginning with Mihailović and Ravna Gora, the “Instructions” helped articulate an operational plan for carrying out Moljević’s framework of a “Homogeneous Serbia.” Even if Moljević’s program was not adopted wholesale, the “Instructions” are a clear indication of the intention to remove the non-Serbs of Yugoslavia. Slovenia was to remain for the Slovenes, Croats were to be pushed into a rump Croatia, and Serbia’s borders were to be extended across the Drina River, the non-Serb population killed and expelled along the way. It is significant, then, that Mihailović should look to connect with Montenegro and, from there, into Dalmatia and Lika to create a unified ethnic-Serb corridor. Not only does this make good tactical sense but also helped towards the realisation of the Greater Serbian state.

The greatest victims, in terms of sheer numbers, of this program were the Muslims. Both Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) and Albanians were the targets in Bosnia, Hercegovina, Montenegro, and Sandžak. Certainly, Bosniaks suffered the most at the hands of the JVuO in Bosnia. Whether real or imagined, the Bosniaks were blamed for their role in the NDH and Ustasha terror in Bosnia and became the scapegoats for JVuO violence.⁶⁹⁰ Around Ulog, Bosnia-Hercegovina between 9 and 13 January 1942, for example, the Chetniks of Boško Todorović set “Turkish” villages alight after “conquering” the area.⁶⁹¹ In the Sandžak, Kosovo, and Montenegro, the Albanian population also suffered at least as much as the Bosniaks in those areas. Similar to the Bosnian example, the Albanians were accused of being fifth columnists and blamed wholesale for the actions of Muslim units. Mihailović’s number two, Zaharije Ostojić, for example, reported that he was in favour of “liquidating the Turks” in these areas and cited

⁶⁹⁰ Emily Greble, *Muslims and the Making of Modern Europe* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 220.

⁶⁹¹ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 1, doc. 49.

specifically Đurišić and Vojislav Lukačević, the commander of Sandžak Chetniks, as capable of carrying out the tasks.⁶⁹²

In the Dinara region, the main victims of terror were ethnic Croats. Again, accused of aiding, abetting, and considered guilty by association based on (perceived) ethnic background, Croats were killed. The Dinara Chetniks killed, seized property, forcefully removed, and otherwise made the lives of Croats in the region difficult to sustain.⁶⁹³ The Chetnik terror around Šibenik was so bad that ethnic Serb civilians in Skradin cancelled their agreements with the Dinara Division. Apparently ethnic Croats had previously supported the Chetniks, but the commander reported that “there is none in Skradin at all” who supported the Chetniks by 1944.⁶⁹⁴ Whether it was the final straw or merely one in a series of horrors, it was reported that on 22 February 1944 that Chetniks invaded Dubrava and Rakovo Selo, within a few kilometres of both Šibenik and Skradin, where they “robbed and killed 25 people. There is great indignation amongst the people” for these acts.⁶⁹⁵ Just as targeting Muslim alienated them from the JVuO, Croats refused to join for much the same reasons.

Much of the genocidal actions were predicated on lumping the groups of Muslims and Croats together, either as “Ustashe” or as “Partisans,” or even both “Ustashe-Partisan” together, regardless of whether any of the victims were actually members of either group. For instance, while Chetnik documents speak of the victims from around Vrlička in early 1943 as “Ustashe,” both Partisan and Ustasha documents show that many of the victims were in fact civilians.⁶⁹⁶ The same can be said for the mass violence perpetrated in Prozor by Jevđević’s and Baćović’s troops against ethnic Croats and Muslims, and several other instances of similar acts of violence.⁶⁹⁷ Thus, regardless of

⁶⁹² *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 28.

⁶⁹³ *Zbornik*, vol. V, knjiga 11, doc. 107; *Zbornik*, vol. V, knjiga 5, doc. 109.

⁶⁹⁴ *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 3, doc. 81.

⁶⁹⁵ *Zbornik*, vol. V, knjiga 24, doc. 143.

⁶⁹⁶ For the Chetnik account, see *Zbornik*, vol. XIV, knjiga 2, doc. 28. For Partisan documents see *Zbornik*, vol. V, knjiga 11, doc. 107. For Ustasha documents, see *Zbornik*, vol. V, knjiga 11, doc. 209. Interestingly, the sender of the Chetnik telegram reporting on the killing of “Ustasas” was Neđeljko Plećaš, who was responsible for delivering radio sets to Split to link Birčanin and Mihailović, but also to connect the JVuO to the British and the Royal Yugoslav Government in exile. See Plećaš, *Ratne Godine*, 159 and 186.

⁶⁹⁷ For the Prozor massacres, see Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 232-233.

region, the genocide – “cleansing” – of non-Serbs and non-JVuO populations was part of the JVuO’s goals. One can take the Dinara context and replace the words “Croats/Ustashe” with “Muslims” in the Montenegrin context, just as both signified terms existed within Ravna Gora’s sphere of control: both signifieds played the same role in each unit’s politics, goals, and methods: ethnic descriptors worked to place entire groups of people into political and ethno-religious categories, regardless of how those people may have identified or, indeed, how strongly they identified with the descriptor(s).⁶⁹⁸ For all three units, “Communist/Partisan” worked in much the same way and if the other signifieds could not be applied, then certainly “Communist/Partisan” could be because understanding of those terms’ meanings was minimal and certainly malleable.⁶⁹⁹ Such conflations became evident in the usage of the “Ustasha-Communist” signified which is prevalent in many documents and cited previously. Conflating categories has the added effect of pushing certain people into identifying as those categories, as well. Even if no ideological or ethno-religious identification existed, colouring individuals, communities, and other social group identifiers in such a way necessarily closed individuals off from identifying with the JVuO.

⁶⁹⁸ By using signified I am loosely applying linguistic theory. Signified means that the usage of a term (“Muslim,” “Partisan,” etc.) brings about particular images and connotations within one’s mind of a certain object (the signifier, in this case people). Lumping together various categories (e.g., “Ustashe-Partisan”) brings about the connotations connected to both terms, while the usage of only one reveals meanings and connotations distinctly different than the usage of two or more. In order to have something signified it must first “be part of the collective unconsciousness of such a community rather than part of the material [i.e., physical] world.” Of course, over time the meaning of the terms may have changed; their meanings (signifieds) existed (collective unconsciousness) for ethnic Serb JVuO members (the community) as having particular qualities (signifiers). It is these meanings and qualities that I am trying to explicate. A good introduction can be found in Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (London & New York: Routledge, 2017), 13 while the quote comes from 26.

⁶⁹⁹ The malleability of certain descriptors, in this case in Indonesia’s 1965-1966 genocide, can motivate hatred and escalate into genocidal violence. See Geoffrey B. Robinson, *The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965-66* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 17-18. On the other end of the ideological spectrum was the Cambodian genocide. There, too, social categories were manipulated to justify attacks against segments of Cambodian society. As one example, “intellectuals” was one such category and led to the seemingly arbitrary targeting of people who wore glasses. See Alexander Laban Hinton, *Why Did They Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

Gendering the JVuO

So far, this thesis has taken the gender of its protagonists for granted.⁷⁰⁰ The JVuO were overwhelmingly male. Large parts of Yugoslav society were highly patriarchal, owing much to the tradition of the *zadruga* particularly in the areas in and around the Dinaric Alps which stretch from Slovenia and into Lika, Kordun, Dalmatia, western Bosnia, Hercegovina, and Montenegro; in other words, precisely in the regions where Chetnik support was strongest outside of Serbia proper.⁷⁰¹ From the leadership to the common foot soldier, men dominated the ranks.⁷⁰² It should still be said that some aspects of male violence in wartime are the result of over-masculine, martial societies dominated by male-centric and patriarchal societies.⁷⁰³ This relates to not only rape but also the destruction of communities, in whole or in part, towards the goal of creating an ethno-religiously homogeneous homeland.

What the male domination of the JVuO means is that women were virtually non-existent throughout its rank and file. There seems to be very little written in the primary sources about women, their roles, the expectations for them either as women or otherwise, or whether they would even have a place in either the JVuO or in a postwar

⁷⁰⁰ Clare Bielby, "Gendering the Perpetrator," in *The Routledge International Handbook of Perpetrator Studies*, ed. Susanne C. Knittel and Zachary J. Goldberg, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2019), 155–68, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315102887-14>: 155.

⁷⁰¹ For primary sources that helped to create the people and cultures of the Dinaric Alps into warrior-like traditions in popular nationalist thought, see Jovan Cvijić, *Cvijićeve Knjige* (Beograd: Srpska Književna Zadruga, 1927) and Jovan Cvijić, *Misli i Poruke Jovan Cvijića*, ed. Radmilo Grđić (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Kulturno-prosvetnog odbora udružena boraca KJV "Draža Mihailović," 1959). There has been some scholarship looking into Cvijić's work in terms of its relevance to nationalising the Balkans, especially Serb(ian) society. See Vedran Duančić, "Jovan Cvijić and the Anthropogeography of the Balkans," in *Geography and Nationalist Visions of Interwar Yugoslavia: Modernity, Memory and Identity in South-East Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). Engels wrote some on the *zadruga* and its efficacy within a socialist and communist society. See Friedrich Engels, "Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State," Marxists.org, (1884) 2000, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/origin_family.pdf.

⁷⁰² I have written elsewhere explaining the effects of combining extreme nationalism, masculinity, and warfare, and the results those had on both Serb warriors and their non-Serb victims. Bozanich, "Invented Warriors," 62-66.

⁷⁰³ Marko Živković, "Ex-Yugoslav Masculinities under Female Gaze, or Why Men Skin Cats, Beat up Gays and Go to War," *Nationalities Papers* 34, no. 3 (2006): 257–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990600768046>.

society. One can only assume, then, that women were expected to continue to be wives and mothers, playing only supporting roles to the warring men, and not fighters.

The one exception in the primary documents is in Dinara with the creation of the Serbian People's Liberation Movement (*Srpskog narodnog oslobodilačkog pokret*, SNOP) in September 1941 which outlined the detachment's organisation and some of its political program.⁷⁰⁴ The very last paragraph, "Organisation of girls (*devojaka*) and women (*žena*),"⁷⁰⁵ outlines the tasks, roles and potentials for girls and women within the SNOP, the forerunner to the DCD. Given both its significance and length, the section is worth quoting in full:

Each village and town has to choose the 6 best girls and women, they will choose amongst themselves the seniority, and work on training other women and girls, to provide first aid to the wounded, to clean and bandage wounds, to bring ammunition, to cook, wash and maintain cleanliness. These six must be trained quickly, there is a need to show their knowledge, [at which point] the priest and his wife (*popadija*) and the teacher and all the well-minded [*dobronamerni*] that these 6 women [are practiced and] will further prepare others. The women's section also has duties to provide the army with warm underwear, a uniform, etc. After the war, most of the rural practical courses for the education of Serbian women and girls will be taken into account, because that is what is most needed. A woman can become both a fighter and a political collaborator. All other unforeseen orders will be issued by Cmd. [Command] Headquarters. Read this order several times, remember and destroy it, and destroy everything else that is in writing.

As this section implies, there is further evidence that the DCD created a women's section which was apparently trained as fighters, but nothing to suggest that they actually took part in any of the fighting.⁷⁰⁶ The women's unit was the Women's Detachment of the Dinara Chetnik Division (*Ženskog odreda dinarske četničke divizije*) but information on the detachment is sparse even amongst the DCD's existing documents. The commander of the detachment was Milka Jelača and there are several Jelačas who appear amongst the rolls of the DCD brigades and battalions, but all of

⁷⁰⁴ HR-HDA-495, kut. 2, 124-2.

⁷⁰⁵ The word *devojaka* can be translated as girls but essentially means any female who is not or has never been married, something similar to a maiden in English. While *devojaka* most likely refers to what in English would be called "a girl," it does not necessarily mean that because of the connotation and implicit reference to marriage.

⁷⁰⁶ For example, see <https://bandenkampf.blogspot.com/2017/09/>.

whom are men.⁷⁰⁷ What the detachment did, whether they fought in any battles, and any other duties they may have had are unknown.

More prevalent in the DCD's documents is reference to the *Kolo srpskih sestara* (Circle of Serbian Sisters, KSS). This branch of the DCD was tasked with nationalist work, such as planning and organising cultural events, supporting the military in various ways such as providing food, cleaning and clothing, and recruitment into the KSS for women and girls, and the DCD for boys and men. The KSS had historical links to both the prewar KSS and other branches throughout JVuO territories,⁷⁰⁸ and should be seen within the context of Đujić bringing the Chetnik Association to Dalmatia. Since the KSS was attached to the DCD, the cultural events took on political importance as well. It was expected, for instance, that if a woman's husband was in the DCD that she would be in the KSS and vice versa, while children of both sexes would be groomed into one or the other branch. In other words, much of what was envisioned for girls and women in the SNOP came to fruition in the DCD through the KSS. For example, it was reported that in the territory of the 1st Lika Brigade, the KSS received 88-pairs of socks in April 1944. The commander reported that "the success in the work [of the KSS] is proving to be quite good."⁷⁰⁹ Later, in August, the same commander reported that the local KSS was meeting twice a month and were in the process of making both suits and *šajkače*, woolen peasant hats that came to be associated with the Serbian Army.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁷ HR-HDA-495, kut. 1, 122-18.

⁷⁰⁸ Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War*, 90-91.

⁷⁰⁹ HR-HDA-495, kut. 5, 131-298.

⁷¹⁰ HR-HDA-495, kut. 3, 131-90. The historiography of women's roles in the Chetniks is woefully under-researched. For an insightful study of women during the interwar period, see Isidora Grubački, "The Emergence of the Yugoslav Interwar Liberal Feminist Movement and the Little Entente of Women: An Entangled History Approach (1919-1924)," *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics* 4(2), no. 27 (September 8, 2020): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.20897/femenc/8515>. Grubački has also looked at "left feminism" during the interwar period in Isidora Grubački, "Communism, Left Feminism, and Generations in the 1930s: The Case of Yugoslavia," in *Gender, Generations, and Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond*, ed. Anna Artwińska and Agnieszka Mroziak (New York and London: Routledge, 2021), 45–65. Based on the former study, I want to tentatively suggest that the stream of liberal feminism which emphasised nation and family "and posited an ethnic understanding of the nation" (p. 3) has connections to the KSS of both the pre-Second World War period and during wartime. However, as I said, the gendered aspects of the Chetnik-supporting women require greater academic attention.

In Ravna Gora, women took part in fighting but only before the distinction between “Chetniks” and “Partisans” was made more prevalent. The evidence suggests that women who fought and later stayed with Ravna Gora ended up as couriers rather than fighters.⁷¹¹ Women who remained in the JVuO tended to be wives or relatives of the men who fought, and took on support roles such as nursing, cooking, and cleaning. JVuO women, besides familial connections, remained in the army for their nationalist and anti-communist sentiments rather than “as an aspiration for emancipation.”⁷¹² As such, women accepted the roles they were given in the JVuO without challenging the patriarchal structure of the JVuO or, indeed, the Yugoslav state in general. In many ways, then, the JVuO repeated many of the same patterns and traditions that were holdovers from the interwar period.⁷¹³

Only in 1944, that is after the JVuO was dropped by the King and the Allies, did they begin to formulate an outline for women throughout the organisation. The creation of the Yugoslav Organisation of Ravna Gora Women (*Jugoslovenska organizacija ravnagorki*, JUORA) in February that year marked the first attempt at matching inclusiveness as a result of the Partisan successes in that area, amongst many others.⁷¹⁴ Much like the KSS, JUORA was meant to educate children, “raising national consciousness,” and to provide “sisterly support.”⁷¹⁵ On a military basis, the JVuO also created the Women’s Ravna Gora Organisation of the Sanitet (*Ženska ravnogorska organizacija saniteta*, ŽROS) in the spring of 1942 which only extended women’s roles to nursing. Taken together, JUORA and ŽROS did precisely what the SNOP program and the KSS set out to do. The documentation beyond this is scant, but certainly including women into the Ravna Gora Movement only in 1944 was “too little, too late.”⁷¹⁶ Besides these few small examples, there is little else to suggest that the JVuO considered

⁷¹¹ Ljubinka Škodrić, “Položaj žene u okupiranoj Srbiji 1941-1944” (PhD, Belgrade, University of Belgrade, 2015), 249-250.

⁷¹² Škodrić, “Položaj žene u okupiranoj Srbiji 1941-1944,” 257.

⁷¹³ Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta*, vol. 1, 279.

⁷¹⁴ Jelena Batinić, *Women and Yugoslav Partisans: A History of World War II Resistance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 105-106.

⁷¹⁵ Batinić, *Women and Yugoslav Partisans*, 106.

⁷¹⁶ Batinić, *Women and Yugoslav Partisans*, 106.

women's roles at all. In other words, there needs to be more scholarship in Chetnik women's *Handlungsraum* (scope for action).⁷¹⁷

As it relates to "enemy" women, Hoare notes that the Hercegovina Chetniks issued a pamphlet in 1942 which claimed that amongst the Communists there were "fallen and unfortunate women and girls without morals." Just as anti-JVuO propaganda focused on Chetnik horrors, the Hercegovina Chetniks maintained that

the Communists have dishonoured over 40,000 Serb girls and women of whom many had committed suicide because they could not survive the shame; unhappy mothers together with their newly born children threw themselves into the rivers and chasms because they could not live with the shame.

Hoare astutely notices the juxtaposition of the "true, martyred Serb women" and the women amongst the Partisans.⁷¹⁸ Mihailović even reportedly said that "Communist women are recognisable by the fact that they are immoral; using free love they approach and seduce our men, particularly those who place fun above duty."⁷¹⁹ Mihailović's statement also fits with what others have said about violent actors, in this case members of the *Freikorps* in Weimar Germany:

The soldierly men therefore split women into virtuous, distantly supportive, asexual, physically unavailable, nonthreatening "white women" [i.e., nationalist] (mothers, sisters, white nurses, and abstract images of virtue) and immoral, threatening, erotic, sexually promiscuous, and potentially castrating "red women" [i.e., Communist]. They desired to reduce red women (sexual, working class, available women) to "bloody pulps."⁷²⁰

At least the DCD dealt with "enemy" women on a democratic basis. In April 1943, for example, Milica Mioković a 60-year-old mother of four from the village of Grab was accused by the Chetnik military court of aiding and abetting the Partisans. Mioković denied having any business with the Partisans other than that her son, Đuro, had joined

⁷¹⁷ Bielby, "Gendering the Perpetrator," 159.

⁷¹⁸ Hoare, *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler's Bosnia*, 202-203.

⁷¹⁹ Quoted in Hoare, *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler's Bosnia*, 203.

⁷²⁰ Kevin S. Amidon and Dan Krier, "On Rereading Klaus Theweleit's Male Fantasies," *Men and Masculinities* 11, no. 4 (June 2009): 488–96, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X08322611>: 490. On the use of "white" to signify nationalists in Hungary from around the same period, see Bela Bodo, "The White Terror in Hungary, 1919-1921: The Social Worlds of Paramilitary Groups," *Austrian History Yearbook* 42 (2011): 133–63.

them after leaving the Chetniks. Milica claimed she warned her son that she was going to tell the Chetniks about his desertion “thinking that I would dissuade him from doing so,” but he went anyway. Later, when she allegedly met with the Partisans, she spotted Captain Jevtić’s Chetnik patrol, at which point she allegedly said, “Go, Comrades, here come the Chetniks.” She was sentenced to death and shot soon after.⁷²¹ This is comparable to other similar events from the same area around Velebit. The same day, 7 April, Miloš Agbaba, 17-years-old, and Dane Jakšić, 35-years-old, were also brought in front of the same court for similar activity, though they personally joined the Partisans. Both men were also sentenced to death and shot.⁷²² Though Milica did not personally join the Partisans, her son did, while both Miloš and Dane joined in their own rights. This shows two important details. First, that the DCD dealt with people who had family members in the Partisans much the same way as they dealt with actual Partisans themselves. Second, that no distinction was made based on gender. At least within military courts, the DCD neither took leniency nor exacted inequitable punishment on women and men.

The Lim-Sandžak Chetniks, on the other hand, felt it necessary to make a list of women “who spend time with the Italians.”⁷²³ Amongst this group of sixteen women was a postal clerk, Desanka Uljarević, an actress, Desanka Ivanišević, law clerk Mileva Špadijer, and Danica Radulović next to whose name it is mentioned was born Lekić. This last note indicates that she was likely married, but whether she was widowed before “spending time” with the Italians is unknown. At any rate, this document is left without comment, thus its purpose is unknown. Looking at Serbia from the same period, one can begin to arrive at some conclusions, however. For instance, the youth branch of Ravna Gora from around Užiče compiled a list of 33-women in 1943 who were conducting “intimate relations” with the Germans. The youths created and disseminated pamphlets which named and shamed the women for their actions.⁷²⁴ Similarly, most famously in France during the Resistance but also in other parts of Europe, women who were

⁷²¹ HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131-140.

⁷²² HR-HDA-495, kut. 4, 131-141 and 131-142.

⁷²³ AOIRP-Podgorica, 8536/IX, 1b-106.

⁷²⁴ Ljubinka Škodrić, ““Horizontalna kolaboracija”: Intimne veze žena sa nemačkim okupatorom u Srbiji 1941-1944.,” *Istorija 20. veka* 31, no. 1/2013 (February 1, 2013): 105–22, <https://doi.org/10.29362/ist20veka.2013.1.sko.105-122>: 113.

accused of “horizontal collaboration” with the Germans had their heads shaved.⁷²⁵ In some cases, members of the Ravna Gora Movement even targeted women who refused their sexual advances.⁷²⁶ Whether the Lim-Sandžak list was intended as a record of potential spies and informants, or to monitor who had enemy sympathies, or both, or whether the Serbian example can stand as a correlative cannot be said for certain.⁷²⁷ Either way, the Montenegrin Chetniks felt it necessary to single out this list of women, something which does not appear to have occurred for men.

But all of this perhaps tells us more about what the JVuO thought of women amongst the Communist ranks and sympathisers than it does about women more generally or even about “Chetnik” women. Instead, the absence of women in the primary sources leaves a chasm in fully understanding women through Chetnik eyes, or indeed in how they understood their own masculinity. Within the ego documents of the German *Freikorps* from the interwar period, women as wives, mothers, sisters, civilians appear for a line or two and disappear just as quickly. For example, upon being released from jail for his role in the Kapp Putsch, one participant wrote:

“When I came home, I found my wife suffering from a severe nervous disorder. She died soon afterward.” Her name is never given, nor is she mentioned again. Two pages further on he writes: “The honeymoon with my second wife, an actress with Heinrich George’s Schiller Theatre, gave me the opportunity I needed.” He means the opportunity to travel outside the country. Rossbach introduces his second wife as a casual contributor to that main goal. She has no name either. The name that dominates the

⁷²⁵ Škodrić, ““Horizontalna kolaboracija,”” 116. The literature on “horizontal collaboration” is quite vast. For starters, see Julie Desmarais, *Femmes Tondues: France, Libération, Coupables, Amoureuses, Victimes* (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 2010). For an interesting discussion and to see the development of the discourse, see Claire Gorrara, “Fashion and the Femmes Tondues: Lee Miller, Vogue and Representing Liberation France,” *French Cultural Studies* 29, no. 4 (2018): 339–44, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957155818791889>. For other contexts in Europe, see specifically Benjamin Frommer, “Denouncers and Fraternizers: Gender, Collaboration, and Retribution in Bohemia and Moravia during World War II and After,” in *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*, ed. Nancy M. Wingfield and Mariateresa Bucur (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 111–32. For retributive practices more generally see Ute Frevert, *The Politics of Humiliation: A Modern History*, trans. Adam Bresnahan (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). And, for similar time periods but in different regions and contexts, see the cultural practices of hair cutting and forced marriage under colonialism recounted in Olatunji Ojo, ““Shaving of a Woman’s Head’: Isinmo and the Igbo Women’s War on Forced Marriages in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1936,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 47, no. 3 (2013): 519–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00083968.2014.898967>.

⁷²⁶ Škodrić, ““Horizontalna kolaboracija,”” 117.

⁷²⁷ On some of the roles of women as spies and informants, see Škodrić, “Položaj žene u okupiranoj Srbiji 1941-1944,” 252-253.

sentence is that of a man, Heinrich George, through whom the obscure wife gains a certain importance.⁷²⁸

Similarly, we only see women amongst the JVuO as mothers, teachers, nurses, wives, and sisters. Indeed, the most thorough scholarly study of the JVuO in Serbian only covers the role of women in a half-dozen pages of a three-volume work.⁷²⁹ Even in propaganda materials, when women do appear they are “locked in the confines of the home [...] of traditionalism and patriarchy.”⁷³⁰ Women were only spoken about in relation to historical women and female characters from the epic folk poetry who were used to glorify motherhood, raising sons as warriors and daughters as future mothers.⁷³¹ Beyond these few examples, women only appear in JVuO documents when referring to certain victim groups, as occurred in Đurišić’s report from February 1943 cited in Chapter 3.

To be sure, women were not the only victims of JVuO violence, but perhaps the majority of civilian deaths given that most “battle aged” men would have likely been in one militarised formation or another.⁷³² Yet, speaking of the JVuO and their victims should not be an exclusively gendered act, either.⁷³³ Rather, the JVuO and their victims should be viewed through various lenses – class, gender, ethnic, religious, and many others – to gain a clearer picture of the various aspects of both JVuO ideology and victim group dynamics. As the killing of Muslim civilians suggests, in the Balkan context as in many others, victim groups overlapped: Muslim men were more likely to be landowners in parts of Yugoslavia, most significantly in Bosnia, because of five centuries of overbearingly patriarchal Ottoman occupation and society. Though for either the victim or the perpetrator one identity may take precedence over another, say “man” over “landlord” but neither as significant as “Muslim,” they should be viewed in conjunction.

⁷²⁸ Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 4-5.

⁷²⁹ Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta*, vol. 1, 279-284.

⁷³⁰ Škodrić, “Položaj žene u okupiranoj Srbiji 1941-1944,” 239.

⁷³¹ Škodrić, “Položaj žene u okupiranoj Srbiji 1941-1944,” 240-241; Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta*, vol. 1, 280-281.

⁷³² For discussions of “battle aged” and questions of victim’s genders, see Adam Jones, “Straight as a Rule: Heteronormativity, Gendercide, and the Noncombatant Male,” *Men and Masculinities* 8, no. 4 (April 2006): 451–69.

⁷³³ Bielby, “Gendering the Perpetrator,” 155.

On the surface, it may appear to complicate the picture but viewed this way our understanding is made sharper.

Class

The Ravna Gora Movement was overwhelmingly populated by officers, reserve officers and professional soldiers. When they first took to the hills, the officer corps attracted others who had not been captured by the Germans in the initial sweep. For others, such as Dragiša Vasić, they were in the reserves and not yet mobilised by the time of the April War and so made their way to Ravna Gora once word got out. Across Yugoslavia, officers often began the resistance near their places of posting or close to their homes. This was certainly the case for what would become the Lim-Sandžak Chetnik Detachment, for example. As a socio-economic class, then, Ravna Gora and Lim-Sandžak were middle-class.⁷³⁴

The Dinara Chetnik Division, however, was populated by other classes. Most often, the regiments were led by lower middle-class members of society, such as Brane Bogunović who was a forester from Bosansko Grahovo (Gavrilo Princip Regiment). Mane Rokvić (King Aleksandar Regiment) in Drvar was a mechanic and the unit leader Uroš Drenović from Mrkonjić Grad was a teacher. Of course, Đujić was a priest as well as a member of the interwar Chetnik Association who had considerable social clout; he organised communities, gave impassioned speeches, and exerted considerable influence on the people of the Dinara region during the interwar period. Trifunović-Birčanin was the interwar head of the same association and long-time Chetnik commander, also embodying a significant reputation. Because he was not an officer as such, Trifunović-Birčanin, Jevđević and others like them made their living off plunder, donations, and at times off state pensions and salaries. However, the rank and file of Dinara were overwhelmingly peasants, just as they were from other parts of Yugoslavia.

With Yugoslavia's economy and society overwhelmingly agrarian, much of JVuO recruitment came from the peasantry. Some of this recruitment was forced, while at other times it was voluntary and came from a genuine belief in what the JVuO stood for,

⁷³⁴ Bjelajac notes that around two-thirds of officers were from the "tiny bourgeois class." See Mile Bjelajac, "The Military and Yugoslav Unity," in *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918-1992*, ed. Dejan Đokić (London: Hurst & Company, 2003), 208–21: 212.

or at least what the volunteers *thought* it stood for. Rejection of JVuO ideology partially explains why many recruits and volunteers later joined the Partisans, along with the overwhelming success of the Partisans in battle and the targeting of non-ethnic Serbs by the JVuO. As well, the Partisans were able to better articulate an ideology which spoke to the peasant classes of the country showing the influence of Lenin and even Tito's contemporary, Mao. The Partisans were better able to attract the urban bourgeoisie who, Hoare points out, was attracted by their cosmopolitanism, again a rejection of JVuO exclusionism, real and perceived.⁷³⁵

Many of the officers and those tasked with propaganda in the Ravna Gora Movement, namely Moljević, Žujović, and Vasić, were removed from understanding the struggles, needs and desires of the peasantry, alienating them along class lines. However abhorrent targeting peoples based on identity may seem, one must remember that there were adherents to the JVuO's nationalist, classist, sexist, patriarchal worldviews. Yet ideology only partially explains why some peasants stayed with the JVuO. Coercion is another element: some members were coerced, forced, or otherwise convinced to remain for various reasons. Severe punishment for desertion is one example of deterring people from leaving, while there is evidence which shows that allowing individuals to administer punishments and to perpetrate violence help to socialise them into the wider group.⁷³⁶ Conversely, Đujić's reasoning for allowing his younger brother, Boško, to remain in the DCD was so that he could personally keep an eye on him.⁷³⁷ We also saw in Chapter 4 that some members of the DCD were on lists

⁷³⁵ Hoare, *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler's Bosnia*, especially 46-51.

⁷³⁶ The literature on socialisation is vast. A good place to start is the special issue by Jeffrey T. Checkel, ed., *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 5: Special Issue on Socialization and Violence (September 2017). From this collection, I found the most helpful article to conceptualise socialisation to be Dara Kay Cohen, "The Ties That Bind: How Armed Groups Use Violence to Socialize Fighters," *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 5 (September 2017): 701–14. Similarly helpful is Christi Siver, *Military Interventions, War Crimes, and Protecting Civilians* (Cham: Palgrave, 2018), especially Chapter 2 "Exploring and Explaining Participation in War Crimes." For even more recent works, see Marc-Olivier Cantin, "Pathways to Violence in Civil Wars: Combatant Socialization and the Drivers of Participation in Civilian Targeting," *International Studies Review*, 2021, 1–29, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viab026>.

⁷³⁷ However, this should not be construed as Boško necessarily receiving favourable treatment or lesser roles. On the contrary, Boško was often assigned some of the more difficult tasks precisely because he was the DCD leader's brother, and he could be trusted. Boško is my uncle through marriage (*tetak*) and he has told me this personally.

for food allotments. This is yet another reason why one may choose to remain within a militarised formation.⁷³⁸

Certainly, many peasants actively remained in the JVuO because of a sincere belief in its ability at rectifying the failed agrarian reforms from the interwar period.⁷³⁹ From the Serb perspective, the reforms failed largely because they did not go far enough. The intention of the reforms was to equalise the distribution of land from the Muslim landowners to the Serb peasants. However, the process was uneven and left neither landowners nor peasants satisfied.⁷⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, the urban-rural divide and the economic strain on the peasant masses helped to radicalise interwar sentiments.⁷⁴¹ When the war arrived in Yugoslavia, many Serb peasants believed that joining the JVuO would be their best option at “safeguarding their property.”⁷⁴²

Conditions of war necessitated that the JVuO accept and recruit from various classes of Yugoslav society. However, there is no real indication to suggest that the JVuO formulated any kind of plan to deal with class issues. The only hint of such is the mention of ethnic Serbs requiring the conditions necessary to flourish economically which are mentioned across several documents which usually pertain to formulating a unit’s political program. For instance, both Ravna Gora and the DCD make mention of economic growth and sustainability for ethnic Serbs, but what that looks like, how it is achieved, or along what lines is not elaborated.⁷⁴³ In yet another aspect, the JVuO failed to articulate any lasting change.

⁷³⁸ For the various reasons why men stay in militarised formations, see the Polish context in Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, eBook (New York: HarperCollins, 2017).

⁷³⁹ Hoare, *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler’s Bosnia*, 43; John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 213.

⁷⁴⁰ For more on the land reform, see George Klein and Patricia V. Klein, “Land Reform in Yugoslavia: Two Models,” in *The Peasantry of Eastern Europe*, ed. Ivan Volgyes, vol. 2: 20th Century Developments (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979), 39–60.

⁷⁴¹ Klein and Klein, “Land Reform in Yugoslavia,” 42.

⁷⁴² Banac, *With Stalin Against Tito*, 81.

⁷⁴³ As one example, see HR-HDA-495, kut. 2, 124-2.

Non-Serbs in the JVuO

An interesting deviation to the overwhelming Serb nationalism of the JVuO is the presence of non-Serbs within the formations. Besides Serbs, Slovenes were probably the most represented ethnic group in the JVuO. Royal Yugoslav Army officers Ivan Fregl and Rudolf Perhinek joined Mihailović soon after hearing about his resistance in the mountains, for example, as did Jakov Avšič and Karlo Novak.⁷⁴⁴ While Avšič later joined what would become the Partisans, Novak stayed as part of Mihailović's Slovene detachment. Novak escaped with the Italian capitulation in 1943, but other Slovene officers and non-commissioned officers were arrested in March 1942 and sent to Italian prisoner-of-war camps.⁷⁴⁵ Much like in Montenegro, the Slovene nationalists were divided into two camps, one pro-Mihailović group under Novak and the other called Slovene Alliance. The latter was larger than the former and collaborated more openly than Novak's group. Novak's Chetniks were dubbed "Blue Guards" (*Plava garda*) by the Partisans while Alliance members were called "White Guards" (*Bela garda*).⁷⁴⁶ Thus, as in much of Italian-occupied Yugoslavia, the anti-Communist units were divided between "legal" and "illegal" units. Novak used the legality of the Alliance to gain certain concessions while the Alliance sought Novak's help in fighting the Partisans.⁷⁴⁷ This largely reflects the examples of Serbia, with Mihailović's cooperation with Nedić's legalised Chetniks, and Montenegro, with the legalised Chetniks there.

Slovenes were also represented in the Ba Congress in January 1944. The Slovene Anton Krejči was joined by notable Serb leaders and politicians such as Živko Topalović (Socialists) and Adam Pribičević (Independent Democrats), Croats Vladimir Predavec, Đuro Vilović, and Niko Bartulović, and one Bosnian Muslim, Mustafa Mulalić.⁷⁴⁸ Bartulović and Vilović supported the JVuO from early on, while Predavec

⁷⁴⁴ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 124 and 222 respectively. Perhinek would later become Vojislav Lukačević's chief of staff. See *ibid.*, 337.

⁷⁴⁵ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 222. Tomasevich also notes that Novak had a political following, at least in the person of Dr. Črtomir Nagode. See *ibid.*, note 74.

⁷⁴⁶ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 223.

⁷⁴⁷ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 224. The Slovene example is well explicated in Kranjc, *To Walk with the Devil*.

⁷⁴⁸ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 444 notes that Mulalić later defected to the Partisans when all else seemed lost and when Mihailović refused for the last time to subordinate himself and the JVuO to

gained some prestige amongst the JVuO over time. It is worth noting that Predavec had a connection through his father, Josip, with the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS, *Hrvatska seljačka stranka*).⁷⁴⁹ At least for Predavec, and perhaps others, class identity overrode ethnic ones and can partially explain their continued adherence to the JVuO.

Further adding to ethnic groupings in the JVuO was Mihailović's plan to divide the Yugoslav Army into ethno-centric units, as discussed in Chapter 2. Only in 1945 did he embark on the plan by bestowing ethnically symbolic codenames for each "ethnic" unit's commander: "General Đerđelez" for a Muslim unit commander, "General Gubec" for the Croatian and "General Andrej" for the Slovene commanders. There are a few pieces of significant information here. First, by 1945 Mihailović adapted his interwar plan to include a Muslim unit, something which was not considered in the prewar plan.⁷⁵⁰ Second, each unit's name came from epic folk poetry signifying the folkish elements of the JVuO's ideology. Third, the Croat Col. Matija Parac and the Slovene Col. Ivan Prezelj were selected to command their respective units. However, only Prezelj had a significant number of troops at his disposal, even with the Slovene *Domobrans* (Homeguardsmen) agreeing to put themselves under his command in case of an Allied landing.⁷⁵¹ None of the other ethnically based units had much support or, indeed, many fighters. To my knowledge, and indeed to Tomasevich's, there does not appear to have been an actual commander for the Muslim corps. This may be because by 1945 there was only one unit of Muslims in northeastern Bosnia and no more.⁷⁵² In light of the various massacres against Muslims by different detachments, it is hardly surprising that the JVuO should lack Muslim support. Nevertheless, Muslims did exist within the JVuO prior to 1945.

In this regard, Mustafa Mulalić perhaps represents the most intriguing non-Serb figure associated with the JVuO. Mulalić was a writer, parliamentarian in 1931 and 1935

the National Liberation Army. Compare Tomasevich's list of non-Serbs, cited here, with the additional name, Zvonimir Begić, cited in Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta*, vol. 2, 426.

⁷⁴⁹ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 400, n. 9. Recall from Chapter 1 the incident between the interwar Chetnik and Radical Party member Puniša Račić killing the HSS member Stjepan Radić in the parliament in 1928.

⁷⁵⁰ For the official creation of a Muslim unit in Bosnia and Hercegovina, see Dedijer and Miletić, *Genocid Nad Muslimanima*, 247-248.

⁷⁵¹ Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 436. See also *ibid.*, n. 25.

⁷⁵² Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, 436.

for the Yugoslav National Party (*Jugoslovenska nacionalna stranka*, JNS) and was active in various voluntary associations.⁷⁵³ Some of the associations Mulalić was involved in, and the ideas which they espoused, were typical amongst educated Bosnian Muslims of his time. His most famous book, *Orient na zapadu: Savremeni kulturni i socijalni problem muslimana Jugoslovena* (*The Orient in the West: Contemporary Cultural and Social Problems of Yugoslav Muslims*) was widely read by others like him: educated, Muslim and increasingly secular. His work argued that Muslims were impacted by “backwardness” due to low literacy rates, “economic marginalisation,” on top of “bigotry” and “fatalism” all of which were pervasive in Yugoslavia. Thus, eliminating certain practices like wearing fezzes for men and veils for women, as well as increasing secondary and post-secondary education and widespread reforms impacting Muslim communities, was necessary. In Mulalić’s view, doing so would allow Muslims to join the “civilised peoples” of Europe and give Muslims a clear ethnic identity. In many ways, Mulalić and other Yugoslav Muslims were influenced by Kemalism in Turkey.⁷⁵⁴ Mulalić’s role within the JVuO should be better investigated to reveal what influence Kemalism, most especially secularism and the nationalisation of Muslims, had on the JVuO, if any, considering both their plans for engaging Turkey in population exchanges and the role of former Committee of Union and Progress cadres in the Armenian genocide.⁷⁵⁵

Both Mulalić and his wife, Šemsa, were involved in the *Gajret* association. For her part, Šemsa argued for the improvement of Muslim women, both within the Islamic community, such as resistance against veil wearing, and in Yugoslavia more generally. Again, education and access to salaried work were two important elements to achieving women’s social improvement, as was removing the gendered segregationist practices which prevailed in Islamic communities.⁷⁵⁶ Together, Šemsa and Mustafa Mulalić

⁷⁵³ Much of this information comes from Fabio Giomi, “Domesticating Kemalism: Conflicting Muslim Narratives About Turkey in Interwar Yugoslavia,” in *Nostalgia, Loss and Creativity in South-East Europe: Political and Cultural Representations of the Past*, ed. Catharina Raudvere (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). Here: 152.

⁷⁵⁴ Giomi, “Domesticating Kemalism,” 152.

⁷⁵⁵ Much is written on the Armenian genocide. In my opinion, the two best newer works are Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide* and Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*.

⁷⁵⁶ Fabio Giomi, “Muslim, Educated and Well-Dressed: Gajret’s Self-Civilizing Mission in Interwar Yugoslavia,” *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d’histoire* 26, no. 1 (2019): 41–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2018.1471044>: 51–52.

represent the progressive movement which existed amongst Bosnian Muslims during the interwar period. Their writing and activism in *Gajret* reflect attempts to modernise Muslim society while also invoking Serbian and Yugoslav national identification.⁷⁵⁷

Some of Mulalić's ideology can be further revealed when interrogating *Gajret*.⁷⁵⁸ Besides advocating for a Serbian and Yugoslav national identity, *Gajret* also argued against the Ottoman Empire's practices. Part of this had to do with the modernisation plans of Kemalism, but not only that. *Gajret* was anti-imperial in general, as well. The association's main paper advocated for a Serbian national identity among Muslims. It lauded the victories of the Serbian armies of 1912/1913 and the First World War, while simultaneously condemning the lack of national identity in the old Ottoman Empire especially, and in empires in general.⁷⁵⁹ For some members of *Gajret*, Slavs converting to Islam helped save the Serbian nation: by converting, ethnic Serbs managed to stave off migration of Turks and other Muslim peoples to the Balkans.⁷⁶⁰ Despite the a-historical nature of this argument, it was "to their [Muslim Serbian] mothers, to Serbian women of Islamic faith" that the nation owed their gratitude.⁷⁶¹ It is significant, then, that Mulalić made it to Mihalović's headquarters in the fall of 1943 after hearing about the massacres of Muslims by Đurišić's detachment. Together with his Serb nationalist outlook, his progressive hopes for Islam in Yugoslavia, and the destruction of the best of nationalist Serbs – Serbs of the Muslim faith – Mulalić attempted to appeal to Mihailović to save his people.⁷⁶² As mentioned, Mulalić was part of the Ba Congress and stayed with Mihailović until 1945 at which point, he surrendered to the Partisans.

⁷⁵⁷ Giomi, "Domesticating Kemalism," 155.

⁷⁵⁸ For a detailed history of *Gajret*, see Giomi, "Muslim, Educated and Well-Dressed."

⁷⁵⁹ Giomi, "Domesticating Kemalism," 158.

⁷⁶⁰ Giomi, "Domesticating Kemalism," 159-160.

⁷⁶¹ Giomi, "Domesticating Kemalism," 160.

⁷⁶² Milovanović, *Kontrarevolucionarni pokret Draže Mihailovića*, vol. 2, 33. Perhaps ironically, the same sentiment – that Muslims were "the best" of the nation – was reflected in the NDH ideology. See Francim Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims: Denial of a Nation* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 122. See also Rory Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation: The Ustasha Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism, 1941-1945* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 38 and 69-70; and, Nada Kisić-Kolanović, "Envisioning the 'Other' East: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Muslims and Modernization in the Ustasha State," in Rory Yeomans, ed., *The Utopia of Terror: Life and Death in Wartime Croatia* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015), Chapter 7.

Yet Mulalić was not the only Muslim in the JVuO, though he was the only significant one to remain by the Ba Congress in January 1944. Dr. Ismet Popovac, the mayor of Konjica, the Sarajevan police chief Fuad Musakadić, the eastern Bosnian Hamdija Čengić, and the Hercegovinian Mustafa Pašić all formed Muslim units within the JVuO.⁷⁶³ Noel Malcolm estimates that by December 1943, as many as 4,000 Bosnian Muslims – or roughly 8% of the soldiers in Bosnia – were Muslim.⁷⁶⁴ Like Mulalić, Popovac certainly saw himself as both a Muslim and a Serb, and even addressed other Muslims in the Partisan ranks to think along national lines.⁷⁶⁵ The Ustasha and Partisans, Popovac argued, used the nationally ambiguous nature of the Muslims to help foment disagreement and hatred between Serbs of both Orthodox and Muslim faiths.⁷⁶⁶ At one point, the Italian General Roatta even tried to bring Popovac and Jevđević to the negotiating table after the latter targeted Muslim communities in Bosnia in retaliation for Muslim involvement in Ustasha massacres, but discussions failed to bring about a lasting peace.⁷⁶⁷ The targeting of Muslim communities by JVuO detachments only hurt recruitment of non-Serbs. Popovac even wrote to Mihailović requesting that he actively recruit more Bosnian Muslims into the JVuO.⁷⁶⁸ Furthermore, Popovac asked Mihailović that there be a Muslim representative in the Yugoslav government in exile who would remain on the ground “next to the general [Mihailović]” and who would be represented in London by a familiar figure to Muslims, any one of Milan Grol, Srđan Budisavljević or Miloš Trifunović.⁷⁶⁹ The hope was twofold: first, that including a Muslim voice in the government would offset communist propaganda that both Mihailović and the government were biased against Muslims. But more importantly for the long-term goal,

⁷⁶³ Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta*, vol. 2, 393. For more on the Muslim Chetnik units, see Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War*, 151-155.

⁷⁶⁴ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 188.

⁷⁶⁵ Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta*, vol. 1, 200-201.

⁷⁶⁶ Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta*, vol. 2, 393.

⁷⁶⁷ Burgwyn, *Empire on the Adriatic*, 180. For Jevđević’s views of the Muslim “national question,” see his quote in Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta*, vol. 1, 203. See Popovac’s letters to Mihailović in Dedijer and Miletić, *Genocid Nad Muslimanima*, 228 and 237-239.

⁷⁶⁸ For the letter to Mihailović, see it partially quoted in Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta*, vol. 1, 200. The entire letter can be read in Dedijer and Miletić, *Genocid Nad Muslimanima*, 169-171.

⁷⁶⁹ Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta*, vol. 1, 201. There were no Bosnian Muslims represented in the Yugoslav government in exile. See Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims*, 123. See the message from Zaharije Ostojić on the matter in Dedijer and Miletić, *Genocid Nad Muslimanima*, 295.

including Muslims in the government would help set the precedent for a future Yugoslav state. If Muslims could be represented in the government and actually have a voice and influence policies, then Muslims would be better off in the postwar Yugoslav state than they were during the interwar period.⁷⁷⁰ By the spring of 1944, the JVuO evidently formulated plans to create national Muslim committees centred in the main cities of districts with large Muslim populations: Banja Luka, Mostar, Tuzla, Belgrade, Novi Pazar, and Kosovska Mitrovica.⁷⁷¹ However, much like the rest of JVuO's positions, formulating a program for ethnic minorities, especially Muslims, was too little, too late.

Summary

This chapter has brought together some of the various elements of the JVuO army to understand it and the constituent parts of its ideology. Some areas have been better explored, for instance the political programs, than others, such as gender, in this thesis so far. However, this chapter has attempted to cover these areas to arrive at an even better understanding of the JVuO and its membership to see how they viewed themselves, the world, and the other peoples around them. Dividing the study into its regional components means that differences and nuances emerged to highlight the uniqueness of each detachment. However, this also means that we can arrive at certain conclusions about what it meant to be a member of the JVuO more generally.

Adherence to the prewar monarchy and state is a hallmark of the JVuO members. *Ravna Gora* documents conclude most often with "For King and Fatherland" and occasionally add other elements ("Freedom or Death," "Only Unity Saves Serbs," etc.), for example. Even the inclusion of people who were critical of the prewar regime, such as Vasić, seems to suggest that the JVuO was able to attract dissenters in the time of crisis. Yet, even throughout the war people like Vasić were still critical of the regime and, indeed, Mihailović himself. Whether choosing to side with Đurišić against Mihailović in 1945 was a late decision or whether it was the culmination of years of frustration is

⁷⁷⁰ See, for example, Popovac's statement regarding the state of Muslims during the war and the hopes for a future postwar state which openly included Muslim Serb voices in Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta*, vol. 1, 201-202.

⁷⁷¹ Nikolić, *Istrojia Ravnogorskog Pokreta*, vol. 2, 394.

debatable, however. But the mere fact that JVuO insignias carried the “KPII” (King Peter II) logo shows the ideological loyalty to king and country.

Programmatically, looking at the JVuO on a regional level reveals that the army represented exclusive Serb nationalism, even for all the rhetoric of Yugoslavism and ethno-religious inclusiveness. Operationally, the killing of tens of thousands of Muslims and other non-Serbs shows that even when a program is not articulated, as was the case in Lim-Sandžak, the JVuO represented ethnonationalist exclusionism. Though the presence of non-Serbs and Serbs of other faiths, such as Slovenes in the former and Muslims in the latter, may at first imply that exclusionary ethnonationalism does not apply quite so strongly to the JVuO, on the contrary such facts only prove the latter. The presence of Novak, Popovac, and others shows that ethnic Serbs of the Orthodox faith were not the only ones more inclined to the prewar *status quo* than the other alternatives of Fascism, Nazism and Communism. In this light, it is little wonder that Slovenes should be the next largest ethnic group represented in the JVuO, and that the non-Orthodox should still be Serb nationalists: ethno-religiously homogeneous Slovenia perhaps benefitted the most from the prewar state which was distracted by the Croat-Serb problem amongst much else, while Muslim Serbs were still nationalists regardless of their faith.

Collaboration, too, was a uniform strategy across the three detachments. However, the extent to which the leaders of each detachment collaborated differed. In this regard, Mihailović’s claim that his subordinates were most responsible for the collaboration agreements has truth to it, although this was by design. In some areas, such as in Dinara and Montenegro, collaboration was basically a *fait accompli* by the time they came under Ravna Gora’s command, yet Mihailović did little or nothing to change that fact and instead often encouraged it. Collaboration with the Germans was a different phenomenon, both in 1941 and after 1943 when the Nazis remained the only real occupational authority. The same can be said about the various acts of genocide committed by JVuO detachments: Mihailović may have disagreed on a case-by-case basis but did little or nothing to stop it and oftentimes encouraged it. If anything, by the time that appeals to ethnic Croats and Muslims increased in 1944 and 1945, that is towards the end of the war, the massacres against non-Serbs increased or continued unabated. The Drina River, the Velebit and Dinara mountain areas, and the Montenegrin karsts continued to see unprecedented violence and collaboration only encouraged it.

Likewise, by the time the JVuO realised it needed to formulate agendas for groups it had previously ignored, shunned, or otherwise failed to recognise, the Partisans were growing in numbers, the occupation regimes were weakening, and the JVuO was playing catchup in a game that was long lost. In many respects, such truths only show the revolutionary progressiveness of the Partisans and their leaders, but the fact remains that the JVuO failed to even consider some things that tipped the balance against them. Women, peasants, the urban poor, and non-Serbs saw the emancipatory possibilities that the Partisans offered while the JVuO represented decades of repression, patriarchy, and domination. The year 1943 represents the beginning of the end for the JVuO: Italy capitulated, the Partisans gained the bulk of the arms and turned them against the JVuO, and the JVuO lost Allied support. When the Ba Congress of January 1944 arrived, the JVuO decided it was time to correct the errors it made in the previous years of the conflict, once defeat was all but certain. Tito was effectively given the leadership of Yugoslavia in the summer, Belgrade was liberated by November, and the rout of the JVuO was on. Chetnik émigré writings like to point fingers at the Allies, the Partisans, the workings of “fifth columnists” and others for their defeat, but what one finds lacking most is a recognition of their own failures and misgivings. Within the context of total war with the Axis, a civil war against the Partisans, and internal struggles for power, the biggest enemy of the JVuO throughout was the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland itself.

Chapter 6. The End of the JVuO

Genocide is a process. It begins by defining the “other” and formulating a plan by which the genocide is to occur. Implementation of the plan is the next step, though genocide rarely unfolds in a linear fashion. Rather, its stages overlap and is a highly contingent process based on contexts and outcomes of various factors. The ways that genocidal plans become real vary across time and space and even within particular contexts. We may see patterns between certain genocidal events, but the details will differ. As this thesis makes clear, even within the same theatre, within the same wartime context, and even within the same perpetrator group, the details of genocide’s unfolding are different across the three regions under study. This is an important point because it shows the varied ways in which violent actors act and further disproves the thesis that the JVuO were a monolithic entity.

Many genocide scholars argue that a state apparatus is a necessary condition for the advent of genocide.⁷⁷² Though having the state’s capacity of and monopoly over violence makes its implementation easier, genocide can unfold even if the perpetrating party does not have the power of the state, but it is rare. Put another way, state control is not a necessary condition for the implementation of genocide. This is also shown by the JVuO’s ability to articulate enemy groups, plan and coordinate actions towards their destruction, and to implement the destruction on mass scales, albeit on scales far smaller than those of mass industrialised killing such as evidenced in the Holocaust by gas. Lacking state infrastructure, the JVuO’s patterns of destruction bear a closer resemblance to the “Holocaust by bullets” than they do to the industrial killing at sites such as Auschwitz or Chełmno.⁷⁷³ However, the JVuO still got aid and support from the Italian and, later, German occupation forces. Though Nedić headed occupied Serbia and the NDH controlled its state, the JVuO received state backing from the Axis powers. This helped to mitigate, but not entirely erase, the disadvantage provided by not controlling a state. For instance, the JVuO did not implement forced marches, at least not to any

⁷⁷² This is best articulated in Anton Weiss-Wendt, “The State and Genocide,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 81–101.

⁷⁷³ As a correlative, see Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, eBook (New York: HarperCollins, 2017).

great extent and not as part of policy, but their genocidal actions compare well to the Ottoman genocide against Armenians in 1915 and 1916.⁷⁷⁴ Yet, even then, the Ottomans had access to state infrastructure such as railways to better facilitate the Armenians' destruction. Similarly, the shooting of Jews and Slavs on the Eastern Front by the Nazis and their collaborators perhaps best aligns with the JVuO's methods of killing: direct, on the spot, simple.

What all these examples have in common is that they all occurred during wartime conditions. Many scholars have shown the connections that war and genocide have and that the totalising effect of "total war" provides the cover which makes genocide possible.⁷⁷⁵ In the words of Jay Winter, "In effect, total war did not produce genocide; it created the military, political, and cultural space in which it could occur, and occur again."⁷⁷⁶ Total war can be defined as the type of modern warfare which incorporates all of society, from the home front to the frontlines, from soldiers to wives, children, teachers, manufacturers, state leaders, and officers. As such, total war further allows for

⁷⁷⁴ See for example, Donald Bloxham, "The Armenian Genocide of 1915-1916: Cumulative Radicalization and the Development of a Destruction Policy," *Past & Present* 181 (November 2003): 141–92; and Ugur Ümit Üngör, "The Armenian Genocide, 1915," in *The Holocaust and Other Genocides: An Introduction*, ed. Barbara Boender and Wichert ten Have (Amsterdam: NIOD/Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 45–70.

⁷⁷⁵ Of course, one should not discount the role of states to manufacture conflict, or as Weiss-Wendt has said, their ability to "perpetuate the siege mentality." See, Anton Weiss-Wendt, "The State and Genocide," in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 81–101, 92. However, it should also be stated that genocides occur during peacetime, as well. In our contemporary period, one need only look to the current situations in Myanmar and the plight of the Rohingya or the Uyghur populations in China for examples. For examples from the previous century, see Paul Bartrop, "The Relationship between War and Genocide in the Twentieth Century: A Consideration," *Journal of Genocide Research* 4, no. 4 (2002): 519–32. The historiography of total war is quite large. For starters, see the following edited volumes, all of which emerged out of a conference dealing with total war, most especially for our purposes Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, eds., *A World at Total War: Global Conflict and the Politics of Destruction, 1937-1945* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); but also Stig Förster and Jörg Nagler, eds., *On the Road to Total War: The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861-1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Manfred Boemeke, Roger Chickering, and Stig Förster, eds., *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, eds., *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, eds., *The Shadows of Total War: Europe, East Asia, and the United States, 1919–1939* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁷⁷⁶ Jay Winter, "Under the Cover of War: The Armenian Genocide in the Context of Total War," in *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915*, ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 37–51, [doi: 10.1017/CBO9780511497605.004](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511497605.004), 39.

those who contribute to the war effort, in essence anyone, to be counted as a target of enemy fire.⁷⁷⁷ As evidenced by numerous events during the Second World War, the totalising nature of the conflict meant that entire cities were targeted for destruction, from Lidice as reprisal for the Nazi's Deputy Protector of Bohemia and Moravia Reinhard Heydrich's assassination to the Allied firebombing of Hamburg and Dresden, and the complete nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the Americans. All these examples are a result of total war, and it is against the backdrop of totality that the JVuO operated.

Aspects of total war, collaboration, and genocide existed in previous times, but it was the modernising effects that the 20th-century provided that allowed for the three to come together and contribute to the levels of violence and destruction exhibited in Europe between 1939 and 1945. Guerrilla warfare modernised, too, and helped to bring an age-old phenomenon into the age of complete destruction. Taken together, the JVuO could not have existed in the form it did without all these forces coming under the influence of modernity.

Past, Present, and Future

The JVuO can provide analogous examples for other contexts, theatres and studies not directly related to genocide or military studies, or even to political, cultural, social, and military history. The JVuO's essence is such that it can be looked at in various ways to help problematize, elucidate, and disentangle various studies. Much like the JVuO was able to adapt itself to various situations and occupational authorities, at least for a time, and just as its supporters today attempt to mold the JVuO into a strictly anti-fascist entity, studying the JVuO and their leaders provides insights into incalculable research nooks.

The JVuO's adaptability allowed it to endure well into the postwar world. The year 1943 was a major turning point in the war. In that year, the JVuO was all but obliterated after "Operation *Weiss*" on the Neretva River, the Italians capitulated in September and the Partisans got the bulk of the arms, the Allies dropped their support of

⁷⁷⁷ Stig Förster, "Total War and Genocide: Reflections on the Second World War," *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 53, no. 1 (2007): 68–83, 72.

the JVuO, and Mihailović was removed as minister of war and commander in chief. In September 1944, the JVuO also lost the king. On 12 September, broadcasts circulated of King Peter II's speech calling on all Yugoslavs to unite under Tito. Members of the JVuO were disillusioned by this about-face and many did not know how to interpret the speech. For example, the commander of the 1st Lika Corps reported to Dinara headquarters that the speech "caused a great deal of disappointment" amongst his men and "the people of Lika."⁷⁷⁸ After "three years of hard and bloody fight[ing] with communist bandits" to now be asked to submit to the command of the Partisans was "to spit on the holy and sublime sacrifices we made for the defence of the Fatherland, for the preservation of this faith, our name and for the good and majestic King and Mother Serbia." The commander vowed that "[t]he Chetniks of the corps entrusted to me are carrying out and will carry out the orders of the National Committee in the Fatherland and General Draža Mihailović and no one else." Despite this, the commander asked rhetorically, "[o]r maybe our King is a toy in the hands of the English and their captive?" The end of his report belies the previous vows:

For the sake of knowledge and action, I will ask for an urgent report: was it really HRH King Peter II who spoke on London radio on the 12 [of this month] at 8 p.m.? Did he speak according to his feelings and his free will, or was he compelled to do so as a prisoner? What explanation did Draža and the Supreme Headquarters in the Fatherland give for this speech? What and how should we do now?

The complete and utter hopelessness is palpable.

From the end of 1944, chaos seemed to rule in the JVuO ranks, causing major disagreements over how best to proceed, whether the war was effectively lost, whether the Allies would land in the Balkans, and other concerns. The leaders of the three units met vastly different fates. Đurišić was killed somewhere in Bosnia, whether at Jasenovac or on the battlefield is unclear, but it certainly was on his attempt to leave Yugoslavia in 1945 via the Ljubljana Gap, situated at the western edge of the country. Had he been successful, Đurišić would have met the Allies in Austria and Italy and, ultimately to freedom. Instead, he and tens of thousands of others met their doom in the closing year of the war, either by the Ustasha regime which ramped up its persecution or by the Partisans who attempted to consolidate control. Đujić and Jevđević, on the other hand,

⁷⁷⁸ HR-HDA-495, kut. 3, 131-103.

accomplished what Đurišić attempted. They ventured northwards along the Adriatic coast to Allied territory. There, they surrendered and were interned in prisoner of war camps throughout Italy, most notably in Eboli. Eventually, the two made it out along with hundreds of thousands of their supporters to the North American hubs of Toronto, Chicago, and Pittsburgh, to England in London, to Sydney, Buenos Aires, and Cape Town. Mihailović, for his part, was executed in 1946 after a war crimes trial by the new Yugoslav communist regime. Of course, the Partisans won the war and took control of the country. Tito died in 1980 and Yugoslavia devolved into another civil war in the 1990s.

Mihailović was made a martyr by the Chetnik diaspora; by the 1950s the emigres made no illusions that they were Chetniks and not professional soldiers. They established chapters of the “Ravna Gora Chetnik Association” in their new homelands and built a cult around Mihailović, his execution, and the demise of the royal Yugoslav state. The faint hope of reinstalling King Peter II as monarch grew dimmer with each year. As Tito increasingly consolidated control and as the rest of the world accepted and legitimised the communist regime, the hopes and dreams of a renewed Karađorđević dynasty disappeared. Still, the Chetniks continued to support their king. Narratives of treachery by the western Allies abounded and the Second World War emerged as part of Serb nationalist canon alongside the 1389 Battle of Kosovo myth, the “Golgotha” through Albania in 1915, and other nationalist tropes. The JVuO lost the war, they lost the state, and they lost the king. Cries of “For the King and Fatherland” persist to the present day but ultimately ring hollow. There is no king, only a pretender; no state, only seven independent republics. Royalist Yugoslavia, like the monarchy and the JVuO, is dead. And yet, the Chetniks live on.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁹ As only two examples, see <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/02/05/serb-chetniks-links-to-war-criminals-and-extremists-uncovered/> and <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/04/16/as-ukraine-conflict-intensifies-serb-volunteers-prepare-for-battle/>.

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