

Chetnik Serb crimes in Croatia in World War II (1941-1945)

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Chetnik associations in Croatia have their roots in the thirties of the 20th century, while the first association was founded in 1921 in Belgrade. They were part of a unique movement in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia both in terms of organizational structure and program objectives. The basic programmatic point of view of Chetnik associations in the 1930s was advocacy for the idea of "Yugoslav nationalism", i.e. of "uncompromising integral Yugoslavism and unitarism", advocacy for the rulers from the Karađorđević dynasty, which was vividly expressed in the motto "for the king and the fatherland".

However, the Great Serbian line was also noticeable in the movement from the beginning, especially among the extreme Serbian nationalists. Namely, they identified the largest part of the territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia with the Serbian ethnic area and advocated the creation of Greater Serbia.

In this regard, Chetnik associations mercilessly dealt with all their political opponents, and especially in Croatia with supporters of Croatian national parties, labeling them as "tribal" and "separatist movements" that were destroying and destroying the foundations of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Chetnik associations gathered people of dubious moral qualities from different social classes, primarily interested in personal gain and political influence in certain circles. The membership of Chetnik associations was mainly Serbs, and only a small number of Croats, and those from the ranks of "Yugoslav nationalists" (so-called "national Croats"), mainly Croats from the area of Croatian Adriatic cities.

Namely, there was a belief among a part of the public that these parts of Croatia were liberated from Italian occupation after World War I precisely thanks to the efforts of the Karađorđević dynasty and that they could be preserved only with the help of the military forces of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Chetnik associations were paramilitary organizations. Their members took an oath, wore uniforms with hats and cockades, a Chetnik badge on their chests, and were armed.

Chetnik flags were consecrated in Orthodox churches. The flags consisted of a black field, on which was a white skull and crossbones with the inscription "For the King and the Fatherland". Under this symbol, members of the Chetnik movement carried out a series of acts of violence and murders of Croats in the 1930s. However, the activities of Chetnik associations in Croatia were met with unanimous condemnation by broad sections of the Croatian population and a part of the Serbian population that advocated coexistence with Croats.

As a result, Chetnik terrorist activities brought unrest and discord to those areas where the population was mixed. Therefore, the administrative authorities of the Sava Banovina took a series of actions in 1935 and 1936 to ban the work of the most extreme Chetnik associations. These measures had a limited impact, as many Chetnik organizations continued to operate even after the ban.

This was possible for them because they had the support of the royal court and various Yugoslav political parties (Yugoslav Radical Community, Yugoslav National Party, "Zbor" of Dimitrija Ljotić), as well as national parties of Greater Serbia (e.g. Serbian National Youth – SRNAO).

The first Chetnik associations in Croatia were founded in Zagreb in 1927 (action committees), namely the “Association of Chetniks for Honor and Freedom for the King and the Fatherland “Petar Mrkonjić” and the “Association of Chetniks for Honor and Freedom for the Fatherland”, but they were dispersed with the introduction of the dictatorship of King Alexander on January 6, 1929.

Since the leaders of the Chetnik associations gave their unreserved support to the dictatorship of King Alexander, the previous associations were soon revived and numerous new associations were founded. In 1930, the work of the “Association of Chetniks for the Honor and Freedom of the Fatherland” by Kosta Pećanac was revived in Zagreb. K. Pećanac visited the Sava and Primorje banovina areas on several occasions, promoting the establishment of Chetnik associations and giving them instructions for their work.

Without going into more detail about the time when individual Chetnik associations were founded in Croatia, it should be noted that by the beginning of 1935, there were 114 Chetnik associations in the Sava banovina area. This process continued in 1936, and by May of that year alone, 63 Chetnik subcommittees with more than two thousand members had been founded in the same area.

However, from 1933 to 1936, 51 Chetnik subcommittees were prohibited from operating in the same area. Thus, Chetnik organizations in Zagreb, Jasenovac, Varaždin, Slav were founded and operated in the area of the Sava Banovina (only some larger places are mentioned). Brod, Pakrac, Duga Resa, Vrginmost, Topusko, Vinkovci, Vukovar, Srpski Moravice, Karlovac, Đurđevac, Dalje, Vojnić, Sušak, Plaško, Virovitica, Ogulin, Gomirje, Samobor, Bjelovar, Koprivnica, Gospić, Medko, Borovo and Nova Gradiška. Furthermore, Chetnik

associations operated in Strmica, Vrlica, Otric, Knin, Drniš, Kistanje, Šibenik, Split, Dubrovnik and other places in the area of Primorska Banovina.

Numerous Chetnik organizations on the territory of Croatia in the 1930s caused unrest among the Croatian population with their terrorist activities and violence. On the occasion of their various celebrations, the Chetniks dressed in Chetnik uniforms, issued ID cards to citizens, forcibly collected donations for their associations, got drunk and were the perpetrators of many incidents.

Chetnik terror increased especially after the assassination of King Alexander in Marseille in 1934. They considered themselves the guardians of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and its state order, and they threatened the Croats that “some of them will not have a lamp burning,” i.e. that they would be killed.

The president of the Main Board of the Chetnik Association in the Sava Banovina region, K. Pećanac, reacted particularly strongly against the ban on certain Chetnik associations in his petition to the Royal Banate Administration in Zagreb on 21 March 1935. In his petition, Pećanac points out that there are around 500 Chetnik subcommittees operating in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, that this organization is “nationally patriotic and chivalrous”, that its goal is to gather into its ranks “a healthy national element and through organizations to raise national pride, awareness of the state, patriotism and chivalry among the citizens, as well as to fight against anyone who undermines the foundations of our state and hinders progress.”

Serbs killed Nikol Kosanovic in Dreznik Grad on August 27 1935.

Local authorities sent numerous complaints about the terror and negative activities of the Chetnik associations. A characteristic complaint was the one from the District Office in Slunj sent on 12 September 1935 to the Royal Ban Administration in Zagreb, demanding the dissolution of the Chetnik association in Bogovolja. Namely, it was believed that Chetniks from this association had killed the municipal notary Nikola Kosanović in Drežnik Grad on 27 August 1935.

The complaint also stated the following: “The establishment of this Chetnik subcommittee disturbs the spirits of the Croatian people’s cause, and this is because the founders of this subcommittee have very poor moral qualifications, and in addition, they spread disturbing news such as, for example, that they will receive military rifles, bombs and other weapons, all because of the current political stance of the Croatian people’s cause. The subcommittee itself has around 30 members, all Serbs, and therefore the subcommittee itself has a purely tribal character...”.

Therefore, it is demanded that weapons be given to the Croatian people, in order to protect them from the arbitrariness and terror of the Chetniks.

Members of Chetnik associations carried out various violent acts: beating and murdering Croats, causing riots on Catholic religious holidays, disturbing the population in Croatian villages by shooting from weapons, breaking windows in Catholic churches and chapels, etc.

Armed conflict between Croatian peasants and Chetniks in Kerestinec in 1936

The climax of the showdown with Chetnik violence occurred on April 14, 1936, during a commemoration in Samobor for the

Chetnik murder of Karlo Brkljačić. On that occasion, an armed conflict broke out between Croatian peasants and Chetniks in Kerestinec, in which six Chetniks and three people in Rakitje were killed.

The constant violence of certain Chetnik groups against members of the Croatian Peasant Party also caused the establishment of this party's self-defense mechanism in the form of the Civil and Peasant Protection.

The agreement between D. Cvetković and V. Maček of 26 August 1939 on the formation of a joint government, with the aim of constituting the Banovina of Croatia and its autonomous and territorial determination, was met with opposition from extreme and nationalist forces among the Serbian population, both in the territory of the Banovina of Croatia and in other parts of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

This opposition to the constitution of the Banovina of Croatia was reflected in the creation of the Greater Serbian movement "Serbs to Gather" and the establishment of various committees for the alleged protection of the Serbian people, including the secret association "Serbian Defence". All of these groups acted politically from Greater Serbian positions, opposing the establishment and constitution of the Banovina of Croatia because, for them, it meant the splitting of Serbian forces in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the separation of "Serbian regions" from Serbia.

These views were presented in detail in the regulations of the secret association "Serbian Defence" and the Letters to the Serbs of the Banovina of Croatia in 1940 (No. I). In these Great Serbian intentions, to put it figuratively, Serbia is marked by a hen that needs to gather all her chickens, i.e. Serbs from the Banovina of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to

defend their national interests and preserve “national and state unity”.

The establishment of the Banovina of Croatia gave the groups gathered around the “Serbian Club” and others who were engaged in Greater Serbia ideas the reason to start the campaign for the creation of the so-called “Serbian banovina”. It was supposed to include all the remaining banovinas, except for the Drava, and the “separated Serbian districts from the Banovina of Croatia” under the common name of “Serbian Lands” with headquarters in Skopje.

With this goal, many public meetings were held in the summer and autumn of 1940. We will mention only those in Knin, Kistanje and Benkovac, and several places in the vicinity, where a special “Commission for the Salvation of the Serbs of Northern Dalmatia” was established, which collected signatures from the population and sent delegations and petitions to the Governors and the National Assembly in Belgrade with requests that the Benkovac and Knin districts be annexed to the Vrbas banovina, or “Serbian Lands”. However, due to internal and external political factors, this idea was not implemented.

All these processes favored the creation of new Chetnik associations (in 1938 there were about a thousand in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) and the activities of extreme nationalist currents in them that were carried away by the ideas of Greater Serbia. At the same time, efforts were made to revive the Chetnik units. Thus, in the second half of 1940, with the help of the army, the work of the Chetnik “Fifth Komita Detachment” was revived in Knin, led by Duke Vlado Novaković, a year later the commander of the Bukovica Chetnik Detachment.

Although the work of this detachment was officially banned on 11 November 1940, it continued its work as a police

paramilitary organization with the help of the Sokol elders and tried to establish platoons in Strmica, Kosovo, Kistanje, Tepljuh and Devrske. Some of its members, as well as members of other Greater Serbian organizations and societies in that area, would become “the germ of the Chetnik movement that emerged in the second half of 1941 under conditions of occupation.”

The war plans of the Ministry of the Army and Navy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia also envisaged the creation of Chetnik battalions on a voluntary basis, and they were to be used for guerrilla warfare. In April 1940, the Yugoslav government established a Chetnik command (six battalions and one partially manned), and one Chetnik battalion was assigned to each army (one was also in Karlovac).

Serb Chetniks killed 27 Croatian civilians in Bjelovar in 1941

There is no reliable information about the combat use of these Chetnik battalions in the April War of 1941. They most likely disbanded like other units of the Yugoslav army, and Duke K. Pećanac and his Chetniks immediately placed themselves in the service of the German occupation army. However, it is known that from April 9 to 29, 1941, Chetniks as part of the Yugoslav army killed 27 Croatian civilians in the Bjelovar area (11 of whom on April 10 near D. Mosti) and on April 11 in Siverić they killed 3 Croatian women, 1 of whom was a girl.

Atrocities in Derventa, Čapljina and Mostar by Serbs

There were also such cases in other places in Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially near Derventa, Čapljina and Mostar, where around 50 Croatian and Muslim civilians were killed.

These roots of the Chetnik movement in the interwar period should be kept in mind, because some of its members appeared and were the restorers of the Chetnik movement in World War II. Of course, they would not be the only ones in that movement at that time, because from the political and military points of view of the Chetnik movement, its ranks would also include members of Yugo-nationalist and Greater Serbian political parties and societies. The leading military structure of the Chetnik movement in World War II would consist of officers and non-commissioned officers of the former Yugoslav army.

The Chetnik movement started from the understanding that the Serbs had lost their state in the April War of 1941, but that they had not lost their state-legal capabilities. They blamed all other nations, especially the Croats, for the loss of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as if the structure of that state and the system of government in it were not based on the dominance of the Serbian population.

However, the Chetnik movement, both as a whole and in the territory of Croatia during World War II, did not have a single state-building concept. These concepts would be constantly developed during the war, and could essentially be reduced to the two most frequently mentioned concepts: a Greater Serbia within a Greater Yugoslavia or a Greater Serbia alone.

In certain periods and in certain areas, certain Chetnik groups will try to resolve the status of the Serbian population as part of special autonomy or by unification with other countries (Italy, Montenegro, Nedić's Serbia). Therefore, it is important to present the basic state-building aspirations of the Chetnik movement, because from them came the planned terror against all those who opposed the Chetnik ideas.

Other projects of ethnic cleansing of non-Serb peoples and genocide, mostly against Croats and Muslims, arose from Chetnik aspirations for the scope and character of the future state. The Chetnik movement in the Second World War shaped its state-building and general political aspirations in numerous documents.

The first in this series of program documents is undoubtedly the project of Dr. Stevan Moljević “HOMOGENEOUS SERBIA” of June 30, 1941. S. Moljević wrote this project in Nikšić at a time when he was not yet in direct contact with the leader of the Ravna Gora Chetnik movement, Draž Mihailović (he would become a member of the Chetnik Central National Council two months later). Challenged by the “trials of the Serbian people” in the April War of 1941, and in accordance with his pre-war Greater Serbian views, S. Moljević wrote the aforementioned project on a Greater Serbia in a restored Yugoslavia.

The project is based on the demands for the creation and organization of a homogeneous Serbia “which is to encompass the entire ethnic area where Serbs live.” S. Moljević emphasizes that the basic mistake of Serbia in 1918 was that it did not determine its borders in the new state (the Kingdom of SHS), and that this must be done now. Therefore, those borders must encompass the entire ethnic area where Serbs live “with free access to the sea for all Serbian areas that are close to the sea”.

From a territorial point of view, this meant the following areas: Serbia, “Southern Serbia” (Macedonia) – strengthened by Vidin and Ćustendil, Montenegro, Herzegovina, Dubrovnik with special status and the northern part of Albania, if it did not get autonomy. The western Serbian region of the future Greater Serbia would include, in addition to the Vrbaska Banovina, North Dalmatia, the Serbian part of Lika, Kordun and Banija, and part of Slavonia.

The Lika railway from Plaško to Šibenik and the northern railway from Okučani via Sunja to Hrvatska Kostajnica should have belonged to that area. Furthermore, the following should have entered that western Serbian region: Bugojno district, except for Gornji Vakuf; from the districts of Livno – Livno and donje Polje; from Šibenik – Šibenik and Skradin districts; from the district of Knin, the municipality of Knin and the part of the municipality of Drniš inhabited by Serbs with all the territory crossed by the railway line Knin – Šibenik and possibly the part of the municipality of Vrlika inhabited by Serbs, and the entire districts of Benkovac, Biograd na moru and Preko.

The borders of the Western Serbian region were supposed to go along the Velebit channel and include Zadar with all the islands in front of it, and the municipalities of Gospić, Lički Osik and Medak, the eastern part of the Perušić district, the municipalities of Dabar, Škare, Vrhovine, Drežnica, Gomirje, Gornje Dubrave and Plaški, the Vojnić district (except the Barilović municipality), the Glina district (except the Bučice and Stankovac municipalities), the municipalities of Blinja, Gradusa, Jabukovac and Sunja (Petrinja district), the Hrvatska Kostajnica district (except the Bobovac municipality), the municipalities of Jasenovac and Vanjska Novska (Novska district), the Okučane district, the Pakrac district (except the Antunovac, Gaj and Poljana municipalities), the Vilić Selo municipality (Požega district), the districts of Daruvar, Grubišno Polje and Slatina and the Bosnian districts of Derventa and Gradačac.

He further proposed that the northern Serbian region, in addition to the territory of the Danube banovina, also include the districts of Vukovar, Šid, Ilok, the entire district and city of Osijek and parts of the Vinkovci district (municipalities of Vinkovci, Laze, Mirkovci and Novi Jankovci). The central Serbian region – the Drina Banovina – was to be given back the districts of Brčko,

Travnik and Fojnica (which had become part of the Banovina of Croatia in 1939).

Moljević's Greater Serbia also included Dalmatia from Ploče to below Šibenik, and it would also include the Herzegovina districts (Prozor, Ljubuški and Duvno), the western parts of the Mostar and Livno districts, and parts of the Knin and Šibenik districts in the north. A special autonomous status was planned for the area of such Dalmatia.

Moljević attributes a first-class role to the Serbs and Greater Serbia in the future restored Yugoslavia and the Balkans, all because of Serbian "historical merits". The restored Yugoslavia was to be organized on a federal basis and with three federal units (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia). The creation of an ethnically pure and homogeneous Greater Serbia was envisaged to be carried out by the method of ethnic cleansing, resettlement and population exchange, especially Croats from Serbian territory and Serbs from Croatian territory.

According to Moljević's project for a Greater Serbia in a restored Yugoslavia, the Croatian federal unit would be territorially reduced to the "remnants of remnants", and in this, the Greater Serbian possessiveness for Croatian historical and national territories was brought to its peak in its two-century-old aspirations and plans. This aspiration of the Greater Serbian policy for Croatian territories remained constant until today, when efforts were again made to reduce the Croatian state territorially through the Greater Serbian aggression of 1991 and the bloody five-year war.

Emphasizing the thesis that all Serbs should live in one and the same state, that Greater Serbia should extend to all those territories where even one Serb lives, opened up processes of genocide or "ethnic cleansing" of non-Serb peoples and national

minorities from those territories. As early as the summer of 1941, such proposals were formulated by the Belgrade Chetnik Committee, and these proposals were also submitted to the Yugoslav government in exile in September of the same year.

Therefore, about 2,675,000 inhabitants were to be forcibly expelled from the imagined Greater Serbia, of which about a million Croats and half a million Germans. About 1,310,000 inhabitants would also be moved to Greater Serbia, of which about 300,000 Serbs from Croatia. Only about 200,000 Croats would be allowed to remain in the new Greater Serbia. The Belgrade Chetnik Committee advocated methods of forcibly liberating the non-Serb population from the area of the future Greater Serbia, both by emigration and by liquidation during the war.

Moljević later elaborated on some of his views on Homogeneous Serbia, especially with regard to the Croats. In this regard, his letter from December 1941 to Dragiša Vasić, then a member of Draža Mihailović's Staff, is characteristic. Moljević emphasizes that the borders with neighboring countries should be resolved through peace negotiations, but first that a "fait accompli" should be created, but that at that moment there were no strong Chetnik forces for that option.

However, as far as the demarcation with the Croats is concerned, he suggests that the aforementioned territories in Homogeneous Serbia should be occupied as soon as the opportunity arises and "cleansed before anyone can recover." Namely, the occupation of Croatian territories was planned to be carried out by taking larger Croatian cities (Osijek, Vinkovci, Slav. Brod, Sunja, Karlovac, Knin, Šibenik, Metković and Mostar), and then the "cleansing of the country of all non-Serb elements" would be initiated.

In this regard, the “culprits” (it is not specified who is meant by this) would be punished on the spot (meaning liquidations), and the remaining Croats from these areas would be expelled to Croatia, and the Muslims to Turkey or Albania.

All these projects and proposals became an integral part of the Ravna Gora Chetnik movement of D. Mihailović. This is best seen from his instructions of December 20, 1941, sent to the commanders of the Chetnik detachments in Montenegro and the commander of the Lim Chetnik detachments.

Drazha Mihajlovics dreams of a Greater Serbia

In these instructions, D. Mihailović linked the activities of the Chetnik units in the country with the diplomatic activity of King Peter II in exile and with the Western allies. These were to be the military forces that would expel the “enemy from our dear Fatherland” and fight for these goals: 1. for the freedom of the entire people under the scepter of King Peter II; 2. for the creation of a greater Yugoslavia and within it a greater Serbia, an ethnically pure greater Serbia within the borders of Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Srijem, Banat and Bačka; 3. for the inclusion in “our state life” of all the still unliberated Slavic territories under Italy and Germany (Trieste, Gorizia, Istria and Carinthia), as well as Bulgaria and northern Albania (with Shkodra); 4. to clean the state territory of all national minorities and non-national elements; 5. for the creation of immediate borders between Serbia and Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia by cleaning Sandžak from the Muslim point of view and Bosnia from the Muslim and Croatian population; 6. for punishing all those who are guilty of the April disaster; 7. for punishing all Ustasha and Muslims who were destroying “our people” and 8. for settling Montenegrins in areas cleansed of national minorities and non-national elements.

In this Chetnik document, as in the documents already mentioned, the state-building idea of Greater Serbia (regardless of whether it was within or outside the restored Yugoslavia) and Greater Serbian hegemony and chauvinism was formulated first of all. It is not at all clear from Draža Mihailović's instructions which territories were to remain with Croatia or which territories were to be inhabited by Croats, because he envisaged the immediate border between Greater Serbia and Slovenia.

He also considered Istria to be Slovenian territory, as well as Međimurje. In this regard, it is quite obvious that he intended the Croatian and Muslim people to fight until their extermination, and for the crimes committed by the Ustashi against the Serbs in the territory of the Independent State of Croatia, he attributed the blame to the entire Croatian and Muslim people.

The Chetnik concept of Greater Serbia, inside or outside Yugoslavia, was always built on the foundation and restoration of the monarchy of the Karađorđević dynasty. The struggle for the return of the monarchy and the social order in it, as it was until the establishment of the Banovina of Croatia, also influenced the Chetnik attitude towards the anti-fascist struggle led by the communists. In this regard, D. Mihailović emphasized that there could be no cooperation with the "communist-partisans" because they were fighting against the monarchy and for the "realization of a social revolution".

The highlighted concept of the future state and its social order was also supported by the circles around the émigré government, and in particular by the Serbian politicians who were in the majority. Furthermore, the constant complaints of the Serbian politicians in the émigré government to the Croatian politicians in it about the crimes of the Ustashi against the Serbian population in the territory of the Independent State of

Croatia (NDH) fueled anti-Croatian propaganda from the position of Greater Serbian tendencies.

The Serbian politicians in the émigré government (and they were in the majority compared to the Croatian and Slovenian ones) increasingly formed a concept of such a restored Yugoslavia in which Greater Serbian hegemony should be ensured. This was also a challenge to the policy of the representatives of the Croatian Peasant Party, who primarily defended the positions gained by the agreement between Cvetković and Maček, i.e. by establishing the Banovina of Croatia.

Similar Greater Serbian and nationalist programs were formed in the Chetnik movement and at certain regional levels, but they had their source in the basic political and military programs of the Chetnik movement of D. Mihailović and were only supplemented by certain regional specificities. In this regard, and especially for this work, the Elaborate on the formation, role and tasks of the Dinaric Chetnik Division, prepared from 8 to 12 March 1942 in Mostar, is of particular importance.

However, before pointing out the essential features of this Elaborate, it is necessary to highlight some earlier intentions of Greater Serbian elements from the Knin Krajina and Dalmatia regions. First of all, it is worth highlighting the request of Niko Novaković-Long (before the war, a non-member representative, a minister in the government of Milan Stojadinović and one of the leaders of the Yugoslav Radical Union) from May 1941, in the name of “10,000,000 Orthodox Serbs from Northern Dalmatia”, that the Knin region with Lika secede from the NDH and unite with the surveyed area of Dalmatia.

During July of the same year, this request was supplemented by a proposal to create a special “Roman dominion”, i.e. a special

autonomous unit, legally independent in administrative affairs, but without autonomy in legislation. In this regard, it was proposed that until the peace conference, the nominal authority of the NDH could remain in that area, and the royal authority in Rome would be represented through its delegate, authorized to pass and approve all regulations according to which people would work and live in northern Dalmatia.

However, these proposals of Greater Serbian elements to amputation of the aforementioned parts of Croatia in favor of Italy, or to establish a Serbian autonomous region, were not approved by the Italian occupation authorities. The authorities only promised them protection of the Serbian population, and the same rights in religion and education as they had in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The failure of the Greater Serbian autonomy movement in northern Dalmatia in 1941 forced the Chetnik leadership in that area to accept the state-building program of the Ravna Gora Chetnik movement of D. Mihailović. Therefore, the Elaborate on the Formation, Role and Tasks of the Dinaric Chetnik Division will insist on the creation of a “Serbian national state”.

The main task of this Division was to fight for these goals, and in order to achieve this, it should have been composed of a distinctly Serbian national element. Therefore, it was to fight for the establishment of a “purely national order in all countries where Serbs live, including those to which Serbs aspire.” The Dinaric Chetnik Division was primarily intended for the political task of fighting for Greater Serbian ideas in parts of Lika, northern Dalmatia, Herzegovina, Montenegro and Bosnia.

The entire process was to be directed towards the creation of a Greater Serbia that would encompass Serbia, Vojvodina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Dalmatia up to Šibenik and

Lika. According to this study, the main task was to strengthen Greater Serbia, and only then would the possibility of creating an alliance with other states, or the creation of a Balkan Confederation, be considered.

Greater Serbia was to be an ethnically pure area and only the Orthodox population was to live in it. Without going into other details of the study on the Dinaric Chetnik Division, I would only highlight the planned relationship towards the Croats. For tactical reasons, and in an effort to strengthen the Chetnik movement's military potential, the study advocates cooperation with "Croatian nationalists" (Yugoslav nationalists), in order to prevent some Croats from joining the partisans.

The Ustashi are claimed to find protection with the partisans (the thesis that the partisans are disguised Ustashi), so that under this new name they could continue to destroy the Serbian population in the territory of the Independent State of Croatia. The Dinaric Chetnik Division announced to the Ustashi and the Croatian army (home guards) a war "without mercy, pity and scruples", and to the partisans "a war to the utmost limits of life."

Although this study did not specify the fate of the remaining Croatian population, practice has shown that the Chetnik movement was determined from its very beginning to be extremely anti-Croatian, both against the Croatian state and against the Croatian population. Biological destruction was intended for the Croatian people, but these planned intentions could not be realized for several reasons, primarily because the Chetnik movement in Croatia did not have such military potential, and on the other hand because of the self-defense of the Croatian population, both against the military structures of the NDH and against the partisan military forces.

Depending on the military-political position of the Chetnik movement, the situation on the battlefields, the position of the émigré government, its relationship to the forces of the Western anti-fascist coalition and its relationship to the occupation forces in the country (the degree of collaboration achieved), this movement also declared itself in favor of the restoration of Yugoslavia.

However, it was always about such a state in which Greater Serbia would have hegemony and all Serbs would live in the same state. All other nations were denied the right to advocate for the restoration of Yugoslavia due to their previous hostility towards that state, and the Croats were directly accused of the collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the April War of 1941.

The peak of the vengeful mood of the Chetnik movement towards the Croats, when it came to the restoration of pre-war Yugoslavia, was expressed in the Chetnik newspaper “Glas Cera” from November 1943. In this newspaper, advocating for Yugoslavia, they emphasized that it should be such that as few Croats as possible live in it. First of all, it is demanded that 700,000 Croats be “rolled away” (allegedly, so many Serbs were killed in the territory of the NDH), and then that equal negotiations with the Croats be started.

The Chetnik movement only nominally declared itself in favor of the restoration of Yugoslavia, given its acceptance by the international community (Western Allied forces). Internally, the Chetniks almost always spoke of Greater Serbia, its leading role and hegemony. Thus, in their relations with the Western Allies, the Chetniks advocated a program for the restoration of Yugoslavia and criticized the quisling formations established on the ruins of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

In this regard, they agreed with the Yugoslav government-in-exile, which, despite the preponderance of Serbs in it, expressed the Yugoslav line. In this emphasis on Yugoslavism, the main focus was on the Serbs, their historical merits, their suffering and suffering, and that in this regard they must also be given a special position in the restored Yugoslavia.

In both cases, i.e. when the Chetnik movement advocated for Greater Serbia or for the restoration of Yugoslavia, it always had a chauvinist attitude towards all non-Serb peoples and national minorities, and Serbs, regardless of their number, could not be a minority in any part of the country.

How extreme and chauvinistic the Chetnik policy was is perhaps best shown by the statements made in the letter of the commander of the Ozren Chetnik detachment dated January 13, 1943, addressed to the commander of the Zenica military Chetnik detachment. It emphasizes that not a single Muslim will be able to survive among the Serbs, and that they have already achieved this in some parts of the assumed Greater Serbia.

Such is the case in the area of Foča, Čajnič, Višegrad, where Muslim “settlements and houses are no longer known”, and it is similar in the area of Stolac, where, “apart from a few families in Stolac itself and the entire county, there is not a single Catholic or Muslim. It started well and successfully, we just need to continue.”

Measures of extermination were proposed for the Croats. First, it was necessary to deal with those who had “sinned” against Serbian interests, that is, against the Serbian people in their “tragic days”, and then “destroy and kill” all Croatian intellectuals and those who were economically stronger. Furthermore, it was emphasized that only the peasantry and the smaller working class should be spared, but that they should be

made “real Serbs, whom we will convert to Orthodoxy by will or by force.”

In addition to all the repressive measures of the Chetnik movement against Croats that have been highlighted so far, this proposal introduces measures to denationalize a part of the Croatian population and convert it to Orthodox Christianity. The Chetniks’ efforts for a Greater Serbia did not hesitate to resort to the most brutal methods in achieving this goal. Accordingly, the genocide against the Croatian people was planned, not revengeful (Chetnik documentation is flooded with the terminology of revenge, and behind this the real reasons for the crimes committed against Croats were hidden).

In addition to the above documents, there are other Chetnik documents from which the Chetnik political and military efforts are evident, but they are essentially no different from those already mentioned. Here we will only point out the conclusions of the Chetnik congress held in the village of Ba, near Valjevo, at the end of January 1944, which show a certain deviation from the already highlighted Chetnik views.

This congress declared itself in favor of a trialist federation, believing that it did not accept the breakup of Serbian lands or the concentration of Croats. By holding this congress, D. Mihailović sought to give the Chetnik movement a seemingly general Yugoslav characteristic, in order, on the one hand, to strengthen the military and political foundations of the Chetnik movement in the country, and on the other hand, to let the Western Allied forces know that the Chetnik movement was not exclusively Greater Serbian and dictatorial.

Namely, this was a time when the British were putting pressure on Purić’s émigré government to remove D. Mihailović from the government due to his collaboration with the occupation forces.

Such and similar concepts of the Chetnik movement had less and less resonance, especially among non-Serb peoples, because by mid-1944, the process of a change of government in the state-building efforts of the national liberation movement was already noticeably evident after its recognition by the forces of the anti-Hitler coalition.

The Chetnik movement in Croatia during the Second World War constantly emphasized its attachment to the state structure of Greater Serbia, and considered its members exclusively fighters for the Serbian cause. Thus, in the letter of Mana Pešut, the commander of the Chetnik detachment in Josipdol, sent on July 1, 1943 to Gaja Bunjevac, then the commander of the Plašćan NOP detachment, and in an unsuccessful attempt to win him over to the Chetnik movement, it is stated, among other things, that the Chetniks are not fighting for “the old and corrupt Yugoslavia, but for the new Greater Serbia.”

Such claims were most often made by the chief organizer of the Chetnik movement in Croatia, Duke Momčilo Đujić. In his letter of July 16, 1943, addressed to the commander of the Bosnian Krajina Chetnik Corps, Uroš Drenović, he particularly emphasized: “We are late in relation to world events, so we must hurry so that events do not catch us unprepared and incapable of achieving our political goal, which is the creation of an ethnically pure Serbian state.”

A Chetnik report from late 1943, outlining the political situation in northern Dalmatia, assumes that Yugoslavia will be restored if the British win World War II. It also states that none of the Serbs want Yugoslavia, but only Serbia within its “ethnic borders, without union with the Croats.”

The achievement of the state-building and generally political goals of the Chetnik movement was not possible without the

simultaneous organization of the Chetnik military forces. They were shaped by the traditions of the Chetnik movement from the past, and by the traditions of the army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Chetnik military obedience to leaders was motivated by myths about Serbian freedom, loyalty to the homeland, Serbianness, the monarchy, the king and the defense of Orthodoxy. All command positions in the Chetnik military organization were held by former officers and non-commissioned officers of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, gendarmes, priests, various clerical and intellectual structures, wealthy individuals, village lords and members of earlier Chetnik associations and various Yugoslonationalist and extreme Serbian parties and associations.

The combatant corps was traditionally composed of peasants, and their patriarchal consciousness was used extensively. The leadership of the Chetnik movement feared the collapse of Serbdom if some other political and state-building option were to win in World War II. According to the national composition, the Chetnik ranks were mainly composed of Serbs and Montenegrins, with a negligible number of members of other nations (Croats, Slovenes and Muslims).

Immediately after the capitulation of Yugoslavia in the April War of 1941, D. Mihailović named his small group of officers and soldiers the “Chetnik detachments of the Yugoslav Army”, and soon after that only the “military-Chetnik detachments”. In October 1941, he issued a proclamation to all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, inviting them to join the “people’s army” that he led according to the oath “to the king and the fatherland”. D. Mihailović also established the “His Majesty the King’s Mountain Guard”.

When D. Mihailović was appointed Minister of the Army, Navy and Air Force in the government-in-exile in January 1942 by the emigrant government, his task in the country was completely legalised. In this connection, a new name was adopted for the Chetnik military units – the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland. When the Supreme Command of the Yugoslav Army was transferred from Cairo to the country in mid-1942, D.

Mihailović was given the position of Chief of Staff, which strengthened his influence even more. Thus, King Peter II and the government in emigration assigned him the role of leading military operations in the country, but also leading the possible landing of Western allies in the Balkans.

D. Mihailović established a more detailed military organization of the Chetnik movement in his instructions of 14 February 1942. According to these instructions, the Chetnik military organization consisted of three categories of military units: operational units (composed of fighters aged 20 to 30), military sabotage units (composed of fighters aged 30 to 40) and local units (composed of fighters aged 41 to 50). The basic military unit was a company, two to three companies made up a battalion, and two to five battalions made up a brigade.

The reorganization of Chetnik units in January 1943 was intended to increase their mobility. Namely, until then they had mostly been confined to certain narrow territories and were not capable of larger military operations. According to this reorganization, the basic unit was the troika, which was a revival of the traditional Serbian guerrilla unit. Fifteen to thirty troikas constituted a company, three companies a battalion, three battalions a brigade, and three to five brigades a corps. The Chetnik elite units, composed of the youngest and best fighters, were the so-called “flying brigades”.

The structures of Chetnik units in practice very often differed from the prescribed organizational scheme, and various other formation units appeared (fives, tens, detachments, “flying battalions”, “flying companies”, divisions, etc.). Legalized Chetnik units as part of cooperative relations with the Italian or German army were adapted to these units and under their direct command.

The first Chetnik units were mostly volunteers and consisted of people whose political and military interests coincided with the Chetnik ideology. The open split between D. Mihailović’s Chetnik movement and the Partisan movement in the fall of 1941 and the proclamation of the communists as the main opponents of the Chetnik movement caused a split and disintegration in many Partisan units (numerous Chetnik coups in Partisan units) and the transfer of some Partisans (by will or force) to the Chetnik ranks.

In this way, in many areas, and especially in Croatia, a military core of the Chetnik movement was established. In those areas where the Chetnik movement prevailed, it established its military and civil authority and introduced the recruitment of new fighters. These were those areas where the Serbian population lived in its entirety or in the majority. For tactical reasons only, they tried to include individual Yugoslav nationalists from among the non-Serb people in the Chetnik units, but they had little success in this.

Despite all the efforts of the Chetnik Supreme Command and personally D. Mihailović to create a single structure of the “Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland” on the entire territory of the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia, this was not achieved due to various factors. Namely, in certain areas there were Chetnik factions that tried to be as little dependent on D. Mihailović as possible, having their own special interests (territorial or

concluding agreements with the occupation forces or with the authorities of the NDH).

In this regard, one should also bear in mind the constant rivalries between individual Chetnik voivodes and commanders who tried to govern as independently as possible in the areas they controlled militarily and politically. In this regard, there were also various Chetnik commands: for Serbia with “Southern Serbia” (Macedonia), for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for Montenegro and Boka Kotorska, for Sandžak (“Stari Ras”), Dalmatia and Lika, Slavonia and Vojvodina, and Slovenia.

Bearing all this in mind, it is very difficult to estimate the actual Chetnik military forces in certain periods. On the one hand, in the Chetnik documents, these forces were glorified for propaganda reasons, and sometimes they stated in the lists that they could get as many meals and money as possible from the occupying military forces with whom they cooperated for a longer or shorter time.

Regardless of the colorful statements about the military strength of the Chetnik movement and the diverse knowledge about the fighting ability of Chetnik units, it must be stated that it is an important factor in the civil war on the soil of the former Yugoslavia. This is shown by numerous conflicts led by Chetnik units, both independently and in collaboration, both against the national liberation movement and against the NDH military forces.

These facts are often downplayed and contested in historiography. They particularly “distinguished themselves” in numerous individual and mass crimes against the Croatian and Muslim population, and against those Serbs who belonged to the national liberation movement or were loyal to the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia.

It is generally estimated that by the end of 1943, the Chetnik military forces numbered around 100,000 armed fighters, and during 1944 this number increased with the unification of D. Mihailović's Chetniks with Ljotić's volunteer corps and Nedić's military formations.

Chetnik units were supplied with weapons, food and other equipment in various ways: by exploiting local conditions, by capturing, looting, by receiving supplies from the occupying forces, occasionally from the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia, by delivering aid from the British (until the beginning of 1944), etc.

Without going into more detail about this general issue of the Chetnik movement from the perspective of its military component, for the purpose of this paper it is necessary to point out the military strength of the Chetnik movement in Croatia during World War II, as this was directly related to the multitude of victims and atrocities committed by this movement in Croatia. Of course, we will not specifically deal here with its origin and development in individual environments, as there is significant historical literature on this, but will only point out related facts about its military strength in individual periods.

Chetnik military groups in Croatia during World War II began to form gradually and at different times, and already in the summer of 1941 in the Knin Krajina and southern Lika. It was a process of separating Greater Serbian and pro-Chetnik elements from the insurgent Serbian groups, which had expressed their generally anti-Croatian intentions and goals earlier.

These Greater Serbian and pro-Chetnik groups placed themselves openly under the protection of the Italian army and gradually put themselves in their service in a joint fight against the partisan forces. They justified this act by preserving the

“biological substance of Serbism”, the policy of “the economy of Serbian blood”, saving Orthodoxy, etc., and armed Chetnik groups (marked with cockades and Chetnik symbols) were supposed to be a military force to defend these interests.

Placing the Chetnik movement in Croatia under the auspices of the Italian occupation army only accelerated the growth of Chetnik military units and improved their supply of war supplies. Towards the end of 1941 and in the first half of 1942, the Chetnik movement in Croatia was militarily strengthened by the tactic of breaking up from within, mostly those partisan units in which there were mainly Serb partisans.

These were the so-called Chetnik coups, very often called the “bloodless revolution”, although they usually ended with Chetnik crimes against prominent partisan leaders (commanders and political commissars). The Chetnik movement in Croatia would become more strongly linked to the motherland of D. Mihailović’s movement only from the beginning of 1942.

The first larger Chetnik units in Croatia would be formed in October 1941 in the Knin Krajina, and these were the Chetnik regiments “Petar Mrkonjić” and “Onisim Popović”, and the Chetnik detachment from the Bukovica area. All of these Chetnik units were founded on the territory of the Independent State of Croatia. In mid-November 1941, a Chetnik regiment was also formed in southern Lika, and was named after King Peter II.

Although these Chetnik units were not manned by formations, and had a territorial reach, they would still be a significant core in the further massification of the Chetnik military forces in Croatia, especially when they were united in March or April 1942 as part of the newly established Dinaric Chetnik Division. All these military Chetnik forces would soon be placed under

the direct command of the Headquarters of the Western Bosnian, Lika-Dalmatia and Herzegovina military Chetnik detachments.

From the report of this Headquarters dated 16 July 1942, one can get a complete picture of the military strength of the Chetnik movement in Croatia. The following Chetnik units were operating in Croatia at the time: the “Petar Mrkonjić” regiment with headquarters in Strmica and around 700 fighters (commander Momčilo Đujić); the “King Petar II” regiment with headquarters in Srb and around 500 fighters (commander Mirko Marić); Regiment “Onisim Popović” with headquarters in Biskupija and around 600 fighters (commander Pajo Popović until 18 June 1942, when he was killed, and then Vlado Novaković); the Bukovica Chetnik Detachment with headquarters in Pađeni with about 200 fighters (first commander Vlado Novaković, then Captain II Class Marko Crljenica); the Lika Chetnik Detachment (commander Lieutenant Colonel Ilija Mihić) and the unification of the Chetnik group from the area of Gračac, Medak and Plitvice Lakes with about 1500 fighters.

This last group of Chetniks was gathered by Major Radojlović (Mihajlo Jovanović). At that time, the military Chetnik forces in Croatia had about 3500 armed Chetniks. The numerical status of the Chetniks in Croatia would be quite variable, but despite all the defeats they suffered in conflicts with partisan units, their number would gradually grow.

However, the basic measure for the later numerical status of the Chetniks in Croatia would be based on the strength of the Dinaric Chetnik District, which had the task of unifying the Chetnik military forces in other areas of Croatia, with the exception of Slavonia. The main mass of Chetnik fighters was quite vacillating and susceptible to changing sides in the conflicting camps in the civil war, and usually sided with the stronger factor at the moment.

There are a number of examples of individual Chetniks switching sides several times, sometimes to the Partisan side, and then returning to the Chetnik ranks, depending on the current military and political relations. Such Chetniks were called “wanderers”, and in the Plaščanska Valley “locusts”. When Chetniks switched to the Partisan ranks, those who were found to have participated in crimes were sentenced to death.

However, defectors from the Chetnik ranks to the Partisans, who would return from the Partisans to the Chetnik ranks, were also punished by the Chetnik military authorities with beatings, imprisonment, hard physical labor, for betrayal of the Chetnik movement, and death. and usually sided with the stronger factor at the moment.

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In order to strengthen the weakened Chetnik positions in Croatia, around 3,200 Herzegovinian and eastern Bosnian Chetniks were transferred to the Knin Krajina and southern Lika regions at the end of 1942. These were Chetniks from the Trebinje and Nevesinje Corps (the Nevesinje, Rogatička, Trebinje, Ljubinje, Bilećka, Gatačka and Stolac Brigades and the independent Zlatibor Chetnik Detachment of Radomir Đekić Djedo).

These Chetnik units remained in these areas until March 1943, and the Zlatibor Chetnik Detachment remained there even later. Together with the “local” Chetniks, they committed a series of cruel crimes, primarily against the Croatian population, and destroyed its material base and cultural heritage.

The capitulation of Italy led to a certain disorganization of some Chetnik formations because they were left without the material support provided by the Italian occupation authorities. This was largely contributed to by the partisan units that were reinforced with men and weapons during the capitulation of Italy, and their combat activities in the area of Lika, parts of Dalmatia, Gorski Kotar and the Croatian Littoral decimated individual Chetnik units.

The Chetnik movement in Croatia would recover from these defeats by the end of 1943, after it had strengthened its cooperation with German occupation units. For their services in various operations as part of the German army, they received

appropriate assistance in the form of weapons, money and food supplies. In early February 1944, the Dinaric Chetnik District carried out a reorganization of its armed units, dividing the district into six corps (I. and II. Bosnian, I. and II. Lika, I. and II. Dalmatian Corps).

The First Lika Chetnik Corps covered the area of the Gračac, Lapac and Udbina districts, and the Second the remaining part of Lika, and then all the way to Sušak. The First Dalmatian Chetnik Corps covered the area between the Cetina and Krka rivers, and the Second between the Krka and Zrmanja rivers.

For 1944, there are a number of archival sources on the military strength of the Chetnik movement in Croatia. At the end of February 1944, the First Dalmatian Chetnik Corps had seven brigades (Kosovska, Vrlička, Mosečka, Prominska, Dinarica, Svilajska and “Leteća”) and 2,700 armed Chetniks, and the Second Dalmatian Corps had about 1,600 armed Chetniks (organized about 4,000). The Second Bosnian Corps included the Banija Chetnik Brigade with about 260 armed Chetniks. and the Lika Corps had about 3,200 armed Chetniks. At that time, there were around 7,760 Chetniks in Croatia, which was not a negligible military force, especially in their criminal activities against the Croatian population and its property.

By the end of 1944, only the motherland of the Chetnik movement in Croatia – the Dinaric Chetnik Division – maintained its human resources in military terms. In other parts of Croatia (Kordun, Banija, Gorski Kotar, Croatian Littoral), Chetnik forces were reduced to small groups, and they were not given any special attention in further Chetnik plans. At the beginning of May 1944, the Dinaric Chetnik Division had 6,240 fighters, 51 officers and 157 non-commissioned officers, and was armed with 5,678 rifles, 196 machine guns, 84 machine guns and 18 launchers.

The bulk of these forces, under the command of Momčilo Đujić, withdrew through Lika and the Croatian Littoral to the Rijeka-Opatija and Slovenian areas in December 1944, awaiting further developments in political and military events in the final military operations of World War II. It was the final collapse of their hopes that their military and political plans would be resolved with the help of the Western allies.

Chetnik propaganda gave the Chetniks almost mythical characteristics in their “historical role in the defense of Serbism, Orthodoxy and the establishment of an ethnically pure and homogeneous Greater Serbia”. The “qualities” of the Chetniks were most comprehensively listed in the newspaper “Vijesti” (the newspaper of the Velebit Chetnik Brigade), and here we highlight only some of them: 1. a Chetnik is “apostolically honest and dedicated to working for the king and the fatherland”; 2. for a Chetnik, only “freedom or death” is the answer; 3. in battle, he is always the first, “invincible and fearless”; 4. an irreconcilable fighter against “all enemies of Serbism”; 5. always a protector of “the afflicted and enslaved”, a fighter against all “violence and robbery”; 6. a Chetnik is the only one who knows only “love for freedom, the people, the native land”, and only that “Serb who carries all these virtues in his heart” may be called “the honorable name of a Serbian Chetnik”.

The crimes committed by the Chetnik movement in Croatia during World War II, primarily against members of the Croatian people, but also against Serbs who participated in the anti-fascist movement, truly confirm these Chetnik “qualities”.

The motives and forms of cooperation of the Chetnik movement with other military forces and movements on the territory of the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia during World War II were not identical in all areas, but were established at different times and

in a number of specific ways. D. Mihailović's indirect cooperation with the German military forces in Serbia began in the fall of 1941 through the mediation of his proxies Milan Aćimović and Milan Nedić, and after unsuccessful negotiations between D. Mihailović and the Supreme Commander of the General Staff of the Army of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, the anti-occupation front was weakened, thereby facilitating the action of the German army in destroying the partisan forces in Serbia.

The leadership of the Chetnik movement believed, taking into account the situation on the battlefields in World War II, that the current superiority of the Axis powers allowed them to deal with the partisan movement as their main opponent in the civil war with as little resistance as possible and away from the attention of the Western anti-fascist coalitions.

However, the Chetnik movement was not then, nor later, ready to wage war on two fronts, against the occupation and partisan forces. Admittedly, there was cooperation between the Chetnik movement and the national liberation movement (in Serbia in 1941, and in Bosnia in 1941 and the first half of 1942), but from the very beginning of this cooperation, D. Mihailović's Chetniks were not ready to equate the goals and means of a joint struggle with the anti-fascist movement.

The Chetnik movement postponed active struggle against the occupation forces for a possible future period, explaining this by the fact that the occupation forces were at the peak of their power, and the country was ruled by brutal occupation regimes. According to the Chetnik movement, any commitment to active struggle, independently or jointly with the communists, would represent a physical threat to the survival of the Serbian people.

Therefore, this movement advocated avoiding an active fight against the occupying forces until the moment, until the allied forces invade the Balkan Peninsula, marking that moment as “decisive”, “given moment”, “moment of favorable conditions”, “decisive moment” etc. The Chetnik movement, passive towards the occupying forces, advocated the fight against the Ustasha (meaning Croats and Muslims), accusing them of the downfall of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the crimes committed against the Serbian people in the territory of the NDH.

On the other hand, the Chetnik movement directed its fighting activities towards the Partisan movement as its main opponent on the internal political level and the main obstacle to the realization of the Great Serbian Chetnik program. The open struggle of the Chetnik forces against the partisan movement and the communists will be a decisive factor in the gradual establishment of cooperation between the occupying military forces and the Chetnik movement. Of course, the Chetnik movement also had its own interests in that cooperation, except for the joint struggle with the occupation forces against the partisan movement. This cooperation enabled its survival and gradual growth, as well as sources of all kinds of supplies.

The Chetnik movement in Croatia during World War II, both covertly and openly, of course, at certain times, established cooperative relations with the Italian and German occupation forces. and in certain areas with the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia. In establishing such cooperation with the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia, the Chetniks had to recognize its sovereignty and their loyalty to the authorities.

Even before the formation of their comprehensive political and military program, the Greater Serbian and Chetnik elements saw in the Italian occupier a factor that could be used for Greater

Serbian interests, especially since the Italian authorities accepted Serbian exiles from the Knin Krajina and Lika regions into the territories surveyed by the NDH and provided them with appropriate assistance in accommodation and food.

Accordingly, the Greater Serbian elements did not see the Italians only as a temporary protector of a part of the Serbs, but also sought to use this fact to obtain appropriate territorial autonomy and the separation of a part of the Serbian population from the NDH. In this process of convergence of interests between the Greater Serbian nationalist and pro-Chetnik elements and the interests of the Italian occupation authorities, and especially after the outbreak of an armed uprising at the tri-border of Bosnia, Lika and Dalmatia at the end of July 1941, which was directed against the military and civilian institutions of the NDH, the Italian occupier sought to neutralize and separate these insurgent forces, i.e. Greater Serbian nationalist forces from the forces led by the communists, and to direct them to the defense of their goals.

Namely, the insurrectionary process threatened the interests of fascist Italy in the surveyed Croatian territories because an insurrectionary movement could have broken out there as well. The Italian authorities considered the surveyed territory an integral part of the Italian state and were very sensitive to its destabilization. Accordingly, they sought to defend it in its hinterland, i.e. in the area of their second and third zones of interest.

Therefore, the Italian military authorities reoccupied these zones in September 1941, and in the Greater Serbian and pro-Chetnik movements they saw a shield for the surveyed parts of Croatian territory. On the one hand, they sought to weaken the positions of the NDH in the area of the second and third zones, and on the

other hand, they sought to use the Greater Serbian nationalist elements in the fight against the partisan movement.

In an effort to pacify the rebel area, the Italian authorities demanded that the NDH authorities stop the persecution of Serbs, return the exiles to their homes, return the confiscated property, open Orthodox churches, and form a government of Serbian representatives in the settlements where they were in the majority. In this way, according to the Italians, those elements in the rebel ranks who had not yet become communists would stop fighting, railway traffic along the Split-Karlovac line would be secured, and the Dalmatian communists from the surveyed areas would be prevented from connecting with communists from Lika, Bosnia, and the Knin area.

The contacts and mutual non-aggression between the Italian army and part of the insurgent forces in the Knin Krajina and southern Lika were also noticed by the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia during the summer of 1941. They noticed that the Italian occupier was allowing Greater Serbian elements to celebrate the birthday of King Peter II, hold events in favor of Serbia, display Italian and Serbian flags, and that they were using the most derogatory terms towards the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia and its leaders.

The Ustasha authorities were even more concerned about this situation, because the Chetnik groups under the protection of the Italian army were also carrying out minor combat activities against the armed forces and military units of the Independent State of Croatia, and especially because they were endangering the lives and property of the Croatian population.

From all this, it could be concluded that the Italian military forces were in a certain agreement with the Chetnik groups in the Knin Krajina and southern Lika, and the use of the military

forces of the Independent State of Croatia against these groups would lead to a worsening of relations with the Italian authorities. In an effort to resolve the misunderstandings between the authorities of the NDH and the Italian Second Army and to establish “allied cooperation”, the General Administrative Commission of the NDH under the Second Italian Army was established on 29 August 1941.

On the basis of this agreement, in the coastal zone (which is the area west, southwest and south of the line Resnik-Generalski Stol-Babina Gora-Slunj-Plješevica-Donji Lapac-Šator planina-Livno-Vran planina-Čvrstica-Prenj), public order was maintained by Italian military forces, and the authorities of the NDH were to cooperate with them in this. All armed forces of the NDH were to be disarmed, and Italian units were to disarm the “rebels” and Chetniks. Of the armed forces, only the constables at the constable stations remained.

During the demilitarization of the second zone, the Italian army actually disarmed only the armed forces of the NDH (except for the gunners), and tied the Chetnik forces even more tightly to its interests. The Chetniks pledged to participate together with the Italian army in the fight against the partisan movement, and then they were to be an important factor in disintegrating the territory of the NDH in the second and third Italian occupation zones and thus expanding the imperial demands of fascist Italy towards Croatian territories.

Although the NDH government remained active in the second zone, the Italian military authorities sought to break it up by creating a Chetnik civil government, especially in settlements with a Serbian and mixed population. Such circumstances forced the NDH authorities, despite the fact that they were aware of the ultimate goals of the Chetnik movement, to

cooperate with the Chetnik movement, and the Italians encouraged them in this.

The essence of this process was to create unity in the fight against the partisan movement because this opponent was the main opponent of all of them, collectively and individually. In doing so, each side in the alliance also had its own tactical options. The goal of the NDH in negotiations with the Chetniks in the spring of 1942 in the area of Kninska Krajina and southern Lika was to use the Chetniks to fight against the communists, but also to destroy them among themselves. Thus, the report of the Great Parish of Bribir and Sidraga of 27 June 1942 emphasizes the following when it comes to cooperation with the Chetniks: "To destroy the partisans together with the Chetniks – means to destroy the Serbs – their majority with the help of them" (it was based on the view that the majority of the partisans in these areas were Serbs).

The NDH authorities were clear that both the Partisan and Chetnik movements were their equal opponents. Collaboration with the Partisan movement was not possible, and the Chetniks were considered better off with them than against them. However, the Chetnik movement did not harbor any illusions that cooperation with the NDH could be more permanent. The Chetnik movement, in cooperation with the NDH authorities, saw immediate benefits (food, weapons, money, medical treatment). The general determination of the Home Guard General Staff was (order of 2 June 1942) to establish equal relations towards the Chetniks collaborating with the Italians as towards the Italians, i.e. as allies.

A new period in the development of the relationship between the NDH and Italy towards the Chetniks began in the second half of 1942. Namely, the Italian Supreme Military Command decided

to gradually withdraw its army from the area of the second and third occupation zones and to return them to the annexed area.

The reasons for this were the fact that Italian military units controlled a large area in the NDH with over 140 garrisons that were insufficiently connected to be able to defend them successfully. These units were significantly weakened in the battles with the partisan forces, which significantly undermined their fighting morale and faith in victory, and at the same time there were no possibilities of their significant replacement with new, stronger units.

This withdrawal of the Italian army from the area of the second and third occupation zones was agreed upon between the command of the Italian armed forces “Slovenia – Dalmatia” (Supersloda) and the government of the NDH (Zagreb Agreement of 19 June 1942, which came into force on 11 July of the same year).

That agreement, among other things, enabled the organization of the Chetnik movement under the name of “armed anti-communist groups”. It is about the Chetnik military formations of the Voluntary Anticommunist Militia (Milizia volontaria anticommunista-MVAC), which the Italians began to organize in the annexed area of northern Dalmatia (somewhat earlier they had organized it in Montenegro and eastern Herzegovina), and according to the Zagreb Agreement, it should have been organized outside that area as well. The anti-communist volunteer militia was organized not only from Serbs, but also from Croats.

There were a number of ambiguities in the implementation of the Zagreb Agreement, and each side interpreted them in a way that suited it. Therefore, on June 26, 1942, the General Staff issued instructions for negotiations with the Chetniks, which

emphasized that as long as there was a danger from partisan forces, it was necessary to cooperate with the Chetniks, but that the Chetniks could only have weapons under the control of the NDH authorities.

According to these instructions, collaborating Chetnik units would be issued weapons and ammunition, given awards, the wounded would be provided with treatment in NDH hospitals, and Chetnik families would be supplied with food. According to the order of the Supreme Ordnance Command of July 16, 1942, all Chetnik detachments must be called “Voluntary Anti-Communist Militia” in official communications, i.e. the same as they were called in the territory annexed by Italy.

Hitler did not look favorably on the cooperation of the Italians and the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia with the Chetnik movement, although German units were also involved in such cooperation. During a conversation between Hitler and A. Pavelić in Hitler’s headquarters “Werwolf” (Werewolf) near Vinica in Ukraine (conversations held on September 23, 1942), and after Pavelić informed him of the situation in the territory of the Independent State of Croatia and that Chetnik forces were fighting alongside the Italian units, Hitler noticed that this was dangerous. Because “those Serbian patriots, after all, represent Greater Serbian ideas. This is raising a snake that, although small now, may one day become dangerous.”

The cooperation of the Italian army with the Chetnik movement in Croatia continued until the capitulation of Italy in September 1943. Two types of Volunteer Anti-Communist Militia units were organized from registered persons in the annexed territories: 1. armed mobile units to fight against communists in the area of “Italian Dalmatia”, and 2. armed peasant-civilians who would participate in the defense of their villages.

These units were initially dressed in peasant uniforms, and the armed mobile units wore a metal emblem (a death's head with a dagger between their teeth). They were armed by the Italian army, supplied with provisions (and their families), and received daily allowances and awards for their activities (for captured partisans, confiscated weapons, and various special tasks).

To establish these units, about 250 Chetniks and a group of 60 members of the Volunteer Anti-Communist Militia from Boka Kotorska were sent to the territory of the annexed part of Dalmatia. By November 1942, the Italians had managed to organize only five companies of the Volunteer Anti-Communist Militia (about 690 fighters), of which three companies were composed of Croats and two of Serbs.

These units, in conjunction with the Italian army, failed to prevent the development of the national liberation struggle in the annexed areas of Dalmatia and only “distinguished” themselves in the looting and murder of the civilian population in Croatian and Serbian villages.

The Italian authorities had plenty of facts about the cooperation of Chetnik units in Croatia with the Ravna Gora movement of D. Mihailović, but they tolerated all of this, bearing in mind their benefit in the fight against the partisan forces.

In particular, Italian officers and soldiers themselves attended Chetnik Greater Serbian manifestations at which people drank and Serbed and called for reprisals against the Croats. They did not prevent them from wearing their uniforms, Chetnik symbols and flags (a death's head with crossed bones).

Serbian atrocities against Croatian old people, women and children

Furthermore, they only occasionally, and then formally, intervened when the Chetniks carried out mass murders of Croats and looted their property. On several occasions, they themselves facilitated and encouraged Chetnik crimes, blocking individual Croatian villages with the army, which the Chetniks then entered, slaughtering and killing helpless old people, women and children.

Therefore, Vjekoslav Vrančić, a minister in the government of the NDH, rightly wrote in 1943 that the Second Italian Army in Dalmatia had betrayed its alliance with the NDH from the very beginning and entered into an undeclared war against it, and the Chetnik movement and its assistance by the Italians were only prominent detachments in that war.

After the capitulation of Italy, the Chetnik movement in Croatia soon entered into cooperative relations with the German occupation army, similar to those with the Italian army. Thus, individual Chetnik units assisted the German army in disarming part of the Italian army in Dalmatia, their former allies.

The geostrategic importance of Dalmatia during World War II, and especially after the capitulation of Italy, when the possibility of landing the Allied army on the Croatian Adriatic coast became a real possibility, and the strengthened partisan movement at the time of the capitulation of Italy, also influenced the German military forces in that area to cooperate with the Chetnik movement.

During this entire cooperation, the Germans considered the Chetnik element in Croatia to be a more reliable and combative factor than the military forces of the Independent State of Croatia in the area of Dalmatia. However, the German forces, by associating themselves with the Chetnik forces against the national liberation movement, had clear knowledge of the

ultimate goals of the Chetnik movement and had in mind that they would use it only as long as it served to achieve German military and strategic goals.

The NDH authorities did not look favorably on German-Chetnik cooperation, but they were powerless to prevent it. Furthermore, they claimed that this cooperation was even more dangerous for the survival of the NDH because, during this period of World War II, they considered the Chetnik movement to be enemy number one in relation to the NDH.

In this regard, the NDH authorities sent constant protests to the German authorities about the behavior of the Chetnik movement in Croatia against the Croatian population and the institutions of the NDH government, but these protests were not heeded. Thus, in the study on the organization and activities of the 7th Ustasha Standing Group from October 5, 1943 to November 23, 1944, it was stated that the German policy towards the Chetnik movement did not differ from the policy of the previous “fake ally” (Italy) and that it was surpassed in many elements. In this regard, the following is also emphasized: “All Chetnik atrocities are being skillfully justified and covered up. Chetniks, under the protection of the Germans, plunder Croatian villages, slaughter, rob and kill.

Serbian massacre of Bičine in Skradin where 36 Croatian women and children and elderly were killed

A characteristic case is the village of Bičine near Skradin, where 36 Croats, mostly women, children and the elderly, were killed. To the protests of our authorities, the Germans responded, as usual, that those killed were partisans. Could it be that the 6-month-old child who was murdered on that occasion was already a partisan?”

The German army also benefited from its alliance with the Chetnik movement in Croatia. The Chetniks supplied the German army with meat from the livestock they plundered from Croatian peasants, and in addition, some Chetnik leaders, ingratiating themselves with them, lavishly rewarded some German officers with expensive gifts (gold, carpets, etc.).

It should be emphasized here that the German military forces in Croatia cooperated with all Chetnik groups, from Dubrovnik to Opatija. These were not small military forces, as in the fall of 1944, around 10,000 Chetniks were under arms. In this regard, the military authorities of the Independent State of Croatia, regardless of German-Chetnik cooperation, constantly had in mind the destruction of the Chetnik movement in Croatia.

This is particularly clear from the instructions of the Ministry of Armed Forces of the NDH (Main Headquarters) from September 11, 1944, which emphasized: "The Chetniks are our enemies just as much as the partisans. The homeland of the Chetniks is Serbia. Let them go where they came from. And the partisans were ultimately created by the Serbs, so that they could achieve Greater Serbia. The turn of the Chetniks will come."

So, the NDH authorities intended to disarm the Chetnik units at a convenient time, but they still thought they should be tolerated as long as they fought against the communists.

The cooperation of the Chetniks in Croatia with the Italian and German occupation forces, and occasionally with the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia, was widely used by the national liberation movement, both in domestic and foreign policy. In its propaganda, this movement influenced the disintegration of individual Chetnik groups, and on the basis of this, amnesties were announced and their partial inclusion in

partisan units. In this regard, the national liberation movement reached its peak when, in mid-1944, it managed to have the allies of the anti-fascist coalition and the Yugoslav government-in-exile in London simultaneously renounce the “service” of the Chetnik movement. This was a military and political defeat of the Chetnik movement and their overall goals long before the end of World War II.

From the previous text it is clear that the Chetnik terror and crimes were planned and an integral part of their military and political goals. It was not a question of any spontaneity and arbitrariness of individuals and individual Chetnik groups, but of such an ideology that used all methods and forms of terror and crimes to achieve its goals, both against the Croatian people as a whole and against its ideological opponents in the civil war. In this regard, real causes should be distinguished from formal reasons.

The Chetnik movement only wanted to justify its crimes with formal reasons and even cover them with “legal” regulations. Therefore, the essence of the criminal activity of the Chetnik movement is not to be found in religious and national differences in the “thousand-year antagonism of Orthodoxy and Catholicism”, as J. Tomasevich believes, nor in terror and counter-terror (the thesis that the Chetnik crimes against Croats were revenge for the Ustasha crimes against Serbs), but in the fact that this movement always advocated the establishment of Greater Serbia and an ethnically pure state.

The establishment of the planned Greater Serbia at the expense of the historical and national territories of the Croatian people (and some others) was the main cause of Chetnik terror and crimes. Of course, Chetnik terror and crimes were almost simultaneously directed at all other ideological factors that in

any way opposed the realization of this Greater Serbian ideology.

Chetnik terror and crimes in Croatia depended on a number of factors, on the distribution and strength of military camps in the conflict in individual areas, but above all on the strength and stability of the Chetnik military forces. Looking at this issue globally, it can be concluded that the terror and crimes of this movement were directed against three groups of people.

First of all, it was directed against the Croatian people as a whole, i.e. for their biological extermination. Therefore, wherever they had the opportunity, the Chetniks committed crimes against all Croats, regardless of their political orientation and encompassing all age groups (from children in their cradles to the elderly). Furthermore, the terror and crimes of the Chetnik movement were directed against the participants in the anti-fascist movement and their families, regardless of the national structure of the participants.

Within this group, the Chetnik movement was also directed against the Serbian population who participated in the anti-fascist movement, and such Serbs were classified as traitors to the Serbian people and Orthodoxy. It should be emphasized that the Chetniks tried to spare the lives of individual arrested Serb partisans and gave instructions about this.

Finally, the Chetnik terror and crimes were also directed against that group of Serbs and their families who showed loyalty to the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia, worked in its companies and institutions, were members of the Home Guard or supported the Croatian Orthodox Church.

They were not bothered by the fact that some Chetnik commanders also took an oath to the authorities of the

Independent State of Croatia. Responsibility for the Chetnik terror and crimes committed against the Croatian people also lies with other factors, primarily the Italian and German occupation forces.

They not only supplied the Chetnik military units with weapons, ammunition and food, but were also the cover for the largest number of mass crimes against the Croats. The exiled government of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in London and those circles in the countries of the Western Allied powers that supported D. Mihailović and his Chetnik movement cannot be amnestied from this responsibility.

Among other things, these factors enabled the Chetnik movement to announce over Radio London the names of those persons whom the Chetnik movement had sentenced to death, i.e. put them under the letter “Z”, which meant to be slaughtered. They had a well-developed strategy and repressive instruments for carrying out terror and crimes against all their opponents.

All Chetnik military units participated in the implementation of terror and crimes, but within them or separately there were such units that had special tasks (black threes, fives, dozens, flying battalions and brigades). Terror and crimes were carried out in the field and within institutions of repression (prisons and camps).

The methods and forms of Chetnik terror and crimes were diverse and can be classified into two basic groups: indirect methods of destroying people (threats, physical and psychological abuse, rape of girls and women) and direct methods (various ways of physically destroying people). Chetnik propaganda, with its threats of massacre of Croats and calls for revenge, satanization of the Croatian people, plundering

and destroying their material and cultural heritage, foreshadowed crimes and encouraged the emigration of the Croatian population from areas ruled by the Chetniks.

Chetnik terror in Croatia during World War II was reflected in numerous ways. They massively used psychological pressure on people during their deprivation of freedom. The aim was to achieve the moral destruction of a person, to force them to betray their friends and neighbors against their conscience or to admit their “guilt” (“break someone’s spine”).

Confession through violence was generally the most common form of Chetnik terror, and it was also used to achieve (collective and individual) Chetnik pleasures. As a rule, they were accompanied by laughter and mockery of the victims. In this connection, the Chetniks inflicted physical pain on their opponents. Physical violence was carried out in various ways and means: beating the victim (with a wooden club, special cords, steel chains, wet ropes), trampling the victim, tearing off certain parts of the body (nails, ears, fingers, hands and feet), stabbing the body with a knife, stoning, engraving Chetnik symbols on the victim’s forehead, etc.

Opponents of the Chetniks were also punished in other ways: cutting the girls’ hair, punishing them with hard forced labor, the punishment of “bread and water” (mostly applied to prisoners), torture with hunger and thirst, etc. All of this was aimed at the complete physical exhaustion of the tortured persons, until they became unable to control their body and spirit (“break a man”).

Chetnik murder methods used against Croatian civilians

In the physical destruction of people, the Chetniks used the most brutal methods, and the most common methods were the liquidation of victims by slaughter (“to finish them all off

without shooting – with a knife”), shooting, hanging, beheading, burning, stoning, throwing them into karst pits, killing them with a sledgehammer, a rifle butt, breaking their heads with various objects, and some victims also died from the consequences of torture.

Very often, Chetnik victims were disfigured by stab wounds, broken limbs, shattered heads, shattered jaws (they took out the victims’ gold teeth), gouged out eyes, slit bellies, and women had their breasts cut off. The largest number of Chetnik crimes were committed against individual victims and smaller groups, but there were also several mass crimes (against Croats, wounded and captured partisans).

Chetniks of Prisavlje looted and killed Croats

Terror and crimes in Croatia were not carried out only by “domestic” Chetniks, but Chetniks from eastern Bosnia and eastern Herzegovina, Montenegro, and even Serbia (the Zlatibor Chetnik Detachment) also came to their “help”. Chetniks from northern Bosnia very often raided the Croatian Prisavlje region, looting and killing Croats.

These Chetniks specialized in finding and looting gold ducats, which were owned by many Slavonian families. When committing these crimes, in order to leave no trace, the Chetniks disguised themselves in Partisan, Italian, German, and Ustasha uniforms and marked themselves with the military insignia of these armies.

During World War II, the Chetniks burned to the ground about a hundred Croatian villages and hamlets, not sparing even some settlements with Serb populations. They looted and desecrated dozens of Catholic churches, parish offices and apartments, and

set fire to a number of Croatian school buildings. This issue has yet to be explored by Croatian historiography.

Serb Chetniks boasted of their crimes and terror

The Chetniks often boasted about their terror and crimes, especially if the crimes were committed against the Croatian people. Thus, in the report of the commander of the Western Bosnian, Lika-Dalmatian and Herzegovina military Chetnik detachments from July 16, 1942, it is pointed out that the Dinaric Chetnik Division alone counted “over 500 partisan corpses, mostly Croats” in the battles with the partisans from May 25 to June 15, 1942.

Serbian atrocities in Vrgorac area of 1942

The same Chetnik commander (Ilija Trifunović Birčanin) boasted in his report of September 5, 1942 to Draža Mihailović that the Chetniks in the Vrgorac area “fleshed alive three Catholic priests. Our Chetniks killed all men aged 15 and over...” Furthermore, in a dispatch from M. Đujić dated December 15, 1943 to D. Mihailović, the duke boasted that his Chetniks had arrested 140 communists, including seven Serbs. The Serbs were let go, and everyone else was “slaughtered and thrown into pits.”

In an effort to shed more light on the important statements made, we point out individual groups of Chetnik atrocities.

1. Chetnik threats to massacre Croats

During World War II, the Chetniks in Croatia constantly exerted psychological pressure on the Croats with their threats of massacres of Croats. These threats were expressed in written and oral form. They were messages of a kind that they would be

physically destroyed if they did not move out of the areas under Chetnik rule in time. However, these were not threats aimed solely at intimidating the Croatian people, but rather were actually carried out.

Threats to the Croats appeared very early on, even during the period of political undifferentiation of the insurgent movement. Thus, the report of the Command of the 2nd Croatian Rifle Regiment in Knin of July 12, 1941, among other things, highlights the following: “Serbs in the occupied territory of northern Dalmatia (meaning the area annexed by Italy – author’s note) and Serb refugees from the territory of the Independent State of Croatia are gathering and arming themselves in Bukovica and the vicinity of Benkovac, and are threatening to massacre the Croatian population there and carry out attacks across a certain state border.”

Threats to generations of Croats increased especially in the late summer of 1941 and onwards, when the Chetnik movement began to take political and military shape in the Knin Krajina and southern Lika from what had previously been pro-Chetnik groups. At the end of August 1941, the Chetniks from Kosovo sent a message to the Croats in Knin that they would “soon attack Knin with greater force and kill the Croats”.

Croatian officials of the NDH who still survived in Gračac in the fall of 1942 (the place was held by Italian and Chetnik forces, and there were about 50 Croats in it) wrote on November 1, 1942 to the Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs in Zagreb that the Chetniks were threatening “that we Croats in Gračac should all be slaughtered and killed.”

Radovan Ivanišević, Chief of Staff of the Command of the Western Bosnian, Lika-Dalmatian and Herzegovina Military Chetnik Detachments, in a letter to Major Zaharij Ostojić dated

February 26, 1943, demanded from D. Mihailović to send new reinforcements of about 2,000 Chetniks to the area of Kninska Krajina and Lika, but preferably Montenegrins. They should complete the Chetnik “historic mission” in the aforementioned areas, and for this purpose an “elite army” should be sent, ready to “liquidate everything and everyone”.

After members of the anti-fascist movement attacked three Chetniks in Split in January 1943, the Split Chetniks gathered around the newspaper “Krik iz jame” told them that they accepted the “totalitarian struggle with the communists” and ended their message: “But we, who know how to die without immense misery, also know how to kill without any misery...”

When the Josipdol Chetniks occupied the Croatian village of Turkalje in mid-February 1943, in addition to looting, they threatened the villagers with the words “that the Italians told them to slaughter some of the soldiers, just so they wouldn’t see” and that “not a single Croatian child should be left in the cradle.”

During Chetnik recruitment drives in Serbian settlements, they threatened Serbs that they would be shot and their property would be confiscated if they did not respond, and that those Serbs who helped the partisans would be punished with imprisonment, beatings, and shooting.

The Chetniks made such and similar threats to individual families, villages and groups of people. Individual Chetnik commanders and national commissioners made lists of persons who should be punished for collaborating with the partisan movement. As an example, I cite the list that was made by the national commissioner of the 2nd battalion of the Cetina Chetnik Brigade, Bogdan Kovačević, and sent it to the national commissioner of the same brigade on April 8, 1944. The list

included 57 persons, the names and surnames of those who were to be liquidated were underlined (there were 11 such persons), and the rest were to be punished with a beating and part of their property was to be confiscated.

One of the most horrific threats was the one made by the commander of the Promin Chetnik Brigade, Simo Rodić, on September 14, 1944, to the Promin NOP detachment, accusing the partisans of allegedly arresting several Serbian Chetnik families. The threat stated, among other things, that “If the above-named families are not returned to their homes, I will personally descend into those Ustasha partisan villages and slaughter them, starting from a child in his bladder to an old man up to 100 years old, so that the Ustasha vermin will no longer think of slaughtering the innocent Serbian people.”

And then it is stated that it is difficult for every region “where the Serbian Chetnik army passes, because it has sworn to God and the Serbian king that the Serbian boot must trample all those who dare or try to harm the innocent Serbian people.”

All forms of Chetnik threats against the Croatian people were fully reflected in Chetnik songs. They most often expressed the following Chetnik goals: the creation of a Greater Serbia, possessiveness over Croatian territories, physical destruction of Croats, the desire to plunder Croatian property, the desire for revenge, etc. In the majority of Chetnik songs, the central figure was the poglavnik of the Independent State of Croatia, Dr. Ante Pavelić, and he was attributed the attributes of bloodthirsty animals.

Furthermore, in songs that were threats, the Chetniks equated the Ustashas with Croats, and they emphasized that the partisans were disguised Ustashas. The Chetniks sang their songs filled with threats against the Croatian people on various occasions,

most often when they were staying in or passing through settlements with a Croatian population.

We will highlight just a few that the Chetniks sang in Croatia, and which contained the threat: “Here is a mother who gave birth to a brother who will kill 500 Croats”. “My dear dear brother, when are we going to the Croats.” “Now that the Turks and Croats will, the Serbs will slaughter you, God willing.” “A Chetnik flag flies on the top of the Romanija hill, and it says in black letters that there are no more Croats.” “We Chetniks of Serbia and Lika will slaughter all Catholics.” “O Todor, my dear brother, the time has come to kill the Croats.” “O Croats, we will slaughter you when Petar returns from London.”

The Chetniks constantly reinforced their threats against the Croatian people by blaming the Croats for all the evils that allegedly befell them in World War II. In this regard, they constantly multiplied the number of Serbian victims caused by the Ustashi, or “Croats”. It started with the figure of 300,000 (summer 1941) and ended with the figure of more than a million killed Serbs.

The aim of inventing large figures about the suffering of the Serbian people in the territory of the NDH was to constantly motivate the Chetniks to commit atrocities against the Croatian people. These threats were accompanied by the Chetniks’ satanization of the Croatian people, and the Chetniks denied them any national and civilizational achievements (that they did not have their “pure language”, that they had lost “their racial and Slavic characteristics”, that they had been “ruined by Catholicism”, that Croatian soldiers were so brave that they could be attacked with bare hands, etc.).

The goal of these lies of the Chetnik movement towards the Croatian people was more than clear, namely that all means of genocide should be used against them.

2. Chetnik judiciary

The Chetniks in Croatia organized their judiciary quite late in relation to the political and military formation of the Chetnik movement. However, it was a formal legal institution and the rest an institution of the will of individuals or small groups. In the Elaborate on the formation, role and tasks of the Dinaric Chetnik Division from March 1942, the Chetnik judiciary is discussed in general.

It only points out that there is a court-martial for each Chetnik regiment, which consists of the regimental commander, his assistant and one Chetnik, and that this court pronounces only the death penalty for “various enemies”.

This court could not sentence the members of the Dinaric Chetnik Division, but referred them to the Division Headquarters for trial. Until then and after that, ever since June 1943, verdicts against arrested opponents of the Chetnik movement were pronounced by individual Chetnik commanders, and often they were only executors. With the formation of the Dinaric Chetnik District in the second half of 1942 and the establishment of Chetnik civilian authority, the intelligence department also carried out judicial affairs, and a “court investigator” was appointed to the headquarters of this district.

The main task of these court investigators was to obtain as much intelligence information as possible from the arrested partisans with the aim of revealing partisan political organizations, the strength of military forces and partisan collaborators who had

infiltrated the Chetnik ranks. The verdicts against these detainees were passed by the Dinaric Chetnik District Headquarters. At the beginning of 1943, the duty of investigator was also introduced in the headquarters of the Chetnik corps. However, the establishment of the Chetnik military courts was under the direct influence of the Supreme Command of D. Mihailović and his order of 2 January 1943. Based on this order and previous Chetnik judicial practice, on 24 June 1943, M. Đujić issued a decree on military-Chetnik courts for the Dinaric Chetnik District. On the basis of that decree, the “military-Chetnik court” is an extraordinary court, and it can be established in a mobile and state of war, and in exceptional circumstances in the preparatory period. It could be formed by a military senior in the position of regimental or brigade commander. That court imposed only the death penalty, and there was no legal remedy against the verdict. However, that “direct military-Chetnik court” had the initial task of trying Chetniks for these offenses: failure to perform duties on the battlefield, leaving the unit, surrendering to the enemy, failure to carry out orders, disclosure of secrets, dismemberment of enemy propaganda materials, appropriation of other people’s property, etc. That court consisted of five members and a recorder, but it did not have a prosecutor, and judged according to the “free judge’s opinion”. However, the powers of this court quickly outgrew the initial intentions, and the arrested partisans and their collaborators were tried on the basis of it.

The judiciary in the Dinaric Chetnik region was a political instrument in the hands of Duke M. Đujić in his crackdown on the participants in the partisan movement, and only in his crackdown on individual disobedient Chetnik leaders and treacherous Chetniks. This court rarely convicted Chetniks who committed numerous robberies and murders of innocent

Croatian civilians, and as a rule, it tried only those Chetniks who robbed the families of members of its own movement.

On January 1, 1944, M. Đujić issued a new decree on the military-Chetnik criminal court and the direct military-Chetnik court, which was based on the military-criminal law of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the law on the “protection of public order and state security”. This decree expanded the number of sentences in accordance with the gravity of the committed offense, and it could impose the death penalty, a suspended death sentence with strict imprisonment, strict imprisonment, imprisonment, and as an additional punishment a fine. However, this decree established the “direct military-Chetnik courts” only when necessary, so they were in a one-time function, and they only imposed death sentences.

With this decree, as with previous decrees, the Chetnik judicial bodies were only formal institutions, they judged based on assumptions and beliefs, without any legal protection for the persons being tried, and they were only a formal cover for the Chetnik arbitrariness and crimes.

3. Central Chetnik prison – camp in Kosovo, near Knin, called “the second Jasenovac”

The Chetnik movement in Croatia began to establish more permanent prisons and camps in early 1943. Until then, it had handed over arrested partisans and other prisoners to the Italian military authorities for further proceedings, and until their surrender, they were held in makeshift prisons.

In early 1943, M. Đujić issued an order to subordinate units not to hand over any more captured partisans to the Italian army, but to establish a central camp for them in Kosovo. Since some Chetnik commanders did not comply with these orders because

they received monetary rewards from the Italians for captured partisans, M. Đujić issued a new order on 8 April 1943 in which he warned subordinate units not to comply with his orders. In this regard, he reiterated that the prisoners must be “taken to the central prison in Kosovo”. The task of the Chetnik military units was only to interrogate the prisoners and hand them over together with the captured documents and archives to the Headquarters of the Dinaric Chetnik Region.

Although it is not possible to determine the exact time of the establishment of the central prison or camp in Kosovo, it received its first inmates in March 1943. Because of the life of the inmates there and the terror that the Chetniks carried out over the inmates, the people of the Knin region nicknamed it “the second Jasenovac”. Not only prisoners were brought to this camp, but also numerous civilians (children, women, elderly people) of Croatian and Serbian nationality.

The camp commander was gendarmerie sergeant Dušan (Stevana) Ilić, a native of Pađen, who, according to M. Đujić, carried out this job with “excellent success”. The inmates were guarded by gendarmes, and the Gendarmerie Brigade Headquarters was located in Kosovo (commanded by former arms sergeant Miloš Smilanić). “Thousands of mostly innocent people, often children and women”, passed through that camp, and “hundreds were taken straight to the shooting range in the Markovac and Topolje ravines” Camp inmates were most often tortured by hunger, beatings and rolling in the so-called “pop’s barrel”.

The “pop’s barrel” torture device was named after M. Đujić, and it was his invention – it was a large barrel, chained with steel hoops and studded with long nails from all sides so that the nail blades were on the inside. The inmate would be locked in a barrel and then rolled down the slope near the Lazarica church.

In this way, the nails pierced the camp inmate from all sides, and some of them bled to death during the rolling.

Although there is a modest amount of preserved original and other material about this Chetnik camp, there are still original traces about it. For example, the KPH District Committee for Knin, in its report of October 18, 1943, sent to the KPH Provincial Committee for Dalmatia, among other things, points out the following: “Đujić in the famous Jasenovac (Kosovo) does not stop killing. In recent days, he has killed 15 people. But that does not help either.”

On April 10, 1944, the police station in Oklaj reported on the deportation of the civilian population to that camp to the police regiment command in Split, emphasizing that the Chetniks had taken 35 people from Bobodol to the camp in Kosovo because they had family members in the partisans.

In addition to the camps in Kosovo, the Chetniks had a number of corps and other prisons, and one of the most difficult was the Chetnik Corps prison “Velebit” in Gračac. Due to the unhygienic conditions that prevailed in the prison during 1943-1944, several prisoners died of typhus.

4. Rape of women and girls

The rape of women and girls was not a novelty of the Second World War, and such atrocities were characteristic of many previous wars. However, the rape of women and girls carried out by certain actors in this war was primarily a method of terror because the victims were people from the opposing and enemy camp.

This issue and this form of Chetnik terror is one of the most unexplored topics in Croatian historiography of the Second

World War. This issue can be discussed from various perspectives, medical, legal, moral, etc., but we are interested here as a form of terror. There is relatively limited original documentation preserved about the Chetnik rape of girls and women, especially Croatian women, and no additional documentation has been collected.

The raped women rarely reported the rapes to government institutions because they were mostly from rural areas with patriarchal morals, so any disclosure to the public would have serious consequences for the woman's future and her psychophysical condition in general. The Chetnik rapes of Croatian women were aimed at national and religious humiliation of women, and very often at political humiliation (it was also applied to Serbian women participating in the anti-fascist struggle).

The rape of women was also an underestimation of women as individuals, which was characteristic of the backward civilizational environments from which the Chetniks were recruited. The armed forces at the disposal of the Chetniks also contributed to their collective power and the belief that they could do whatever they wanted with their opponents and victims.

Although it is not possible to carry out a complete quantification of this issue based on the available archival material, several examples of the rape of women can be pointed out, which sufficiently indicate this form of Chetnik terror. We cite some of these examples. For example, Chetniks in the Omiš area at the beginning of October 1942, among other things, as stated in the report of the KPH District Committee for Central Dalmatia dated October 4, 1942, committed the following atrocities: "Women and girls raped, breasts and other body parts cut off."

Chetniks raping and murdering Croatian women

This example shows that the Chetnik rape of girls and women was also connected to their torture and liquidation of the victims. This claim is also confirmed by this example. When the Chetniks of priest M. Đujić arrested the girl Milka Turudić on October 26, 1942, who was returning from Zagreb, via Vrlika to Knin, they not only raped her between Štikov and Miočić, but also killed her afterwards.

After the attack by the Herzegovinian Chetniks and the Chetniks of M. Đujić on Vrlika, Maovice and Kijevo at the end of January 1943, the Chetniks also raped girls. The Political Department of the 3rd Dalmatian NOB Brigade reported their crime on February 3, 1943 to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, emphasizing: “Two girls were raped. In Vrlika, one girl was raped, in Kijevo they stripped several girls naked, but they managed to avoid rape.”

Although the Chetniks carried out these crimes under the auspices of the Italian occupation army, it did not take any action to prevent them from doing so. Sometimes they only stated the facts. Thus, in the report of the 107th Italian Black Shirt Legion of 19 March 1943 to the Governorate of Dalmatia in Zadar, they only stated the forms of Chetnik terror, especially during their passage through the Imotski area on 3 and 4 March 1943.

This report emphasizes that the Chetniks, having entered the town of Imotski, “took up savage looting, threatening everyone regardless of whether they were Italians, Croats or Serbs, disrespecting no one or anything. They forcibly broke into houses, tearing clothes off women and men, robbing them of jewelry, money and anything else they found, raping women and girls in the villages. In order to increase the terror, they

sharpened knives in front of the eyes of the bare-armed and frightened women and men, threatening to slaughter them on the spot.”

During February 1944, Chetniks from Kašići, Bilice and Žitnići committed a series of atrocities in the surrounding Croatian villages, and on February 20 of that year, they attempted to rape girls and women in the village of Goriš. This was reported on February 29, 1944 by the Kotor district in Drniš, the head of the civil administration in Split: “On the aforementioned day, Radak Luca Marija, wife of Antina from Goriš, was in the house of Mandić Marija.

The Chetniks forcibly dragged her out of the house and took her about 500 meters, and Sekulić (Luka, a Chetnik from Bilice – author’s note) tried to rape her, and when Sekulić failed to do so, they beat and abused her. It is noted that Radak Luca was pregnant. While Radak Luca was fighting these Chetnik bandits, Mandić Marta, daughter of Lukin, a 22-year-old girl from the village of Goriša, came from Šibenik. When the Chetniks noticed her, they released Radak Luca and Sekulić Luka.

The Chetnik, with the help of two other Chetniks (Mileta Nikola from Kašić and Marko Lukin from Žitnić – author’s note), tried to rape Marta, but she resisted, and when they It didn’t work and she was beaten and abused, so it is doubtful that she will survive. The beaten Mandić Marta needed medical attention, but the Chetniks forbade and threatened that she should not go to the doctor either in Drniš or Šibenik.”

In June 1944, Chetniks from the “Konard – Einheit” group arrested a young woman from Šibenik, a collaborator in the anti-fascist struggle, Leposava Šarić, and in Zablaće she was “raped by the entire group” and then brutally murdered. The frequent Chetnik rapes of women and girls could not be hidden even by

the Chetnik side, and their atrocities are mentioned in a series of documents.

Chetnik crimes in 1944 in Skradin

Here we only highlight a letter from Chetnik Ante Kovač dated February 23, 1944, addressed to Captain Franc Kovač, then commander of the Skradin Chetnik Brigade, in which he points out that in the surrounding Skradin villages, the Chetniks “raped a girl, killed her boyfriend and another man who was present, who stood up against the rape on the spot.”

5. Chetnik crimes against the wounded

The Chetnik movement, as one of the factors in the civil war, did not adhere to any international conventions on the treatment of the civilian population, prisoners and wounded. In fact, the weaker and more helpless the opponent was, the more brutal the Chetnik atrocities were. Numerous archival sources have been preserved on the treatment of individual partisan wounded in Croatia, but here we will point out two of their crimes against larger groups of wounded.

Serbian Chetniks murdered even the wounded

After the unsuccessful attack of the 2nd Brigade of the 6th Lika Division of the National Liberation Army on the Chetnik stronghold in Gračac on 14/15 January 1943, the partisans failed to extract 41 wounded from the Chetnik encirclement in Gračac. The Chetniks slaughtered and killed all of these wounded in the most brutal way. Among these wounded Serb partisans was one Croat partisan – Stipe Špehar. As a Croat, the Chetniks took special pains with him. Seriously wounded, they dragged him through Gračac, mocking him and stabbing him with knives until he died.

Chetniks murdering the wounded in a hospital of Krčane

A similar crime against the wounded was committed by the Chetniks on June 2, 1944, when they attacked the Partisan hospital in Krčane (a hamlet southeast of Udbina). The attack on the hospital and the wounded was carried out by the Chetnik “Flying Detachment” of Lukica Popović Luna, which had begun with the massacres of Croats in Lika at the end of July 1941. There were about 90 wounded in the hospital, and the Chetniks slaughtered and killed 36 wounded and hospital staff. At that time, the Chetniks also slaughtered two doctors, Dr. Josip Kajfeš from Delnice and Dr. Antonio Suppa (who had defected from the Italian army to the Partisans).

6. Beheading the victims

The Italian occupation forces were convinced that the anti-fascist movement in the area of their sphere of interest could be destroyed by liquidating individual prominent figures of the anti-fascist movement. For this reason, they issued arrest warrants and blackmails for them, and the Chetniks were supposed to carry out these Italian demands. If they failed to arrest the person being blackmailed alive and hand him over to the Italians, they cut off the person’s head, brought it to the Italian command, and then received the promised reward.

For example, after the Chetnik coup carried out on November 21, 1941, at the Headquarters of the 3rd Battalion of the NOP Detachment “Velebit”, the Medak Chetniks cut off the head of Pekiša Vuksan, the commander of this battalion, and took it to the Italian command in Medak. There they threw it on the ground, “trampled on it, rolled it like a ball on a field, spat on it, in order to show their devotion and loyalty to the Italian occupiers.”

The same fate befell Bić Kvesić, political commissar in the “Gavrilo Princip” battalion after the Chetnik coup was carried out there (April 12/13, 1942). Namely, the Italians put a 100,000 lire price on his head, and a group of Chetniks constantly followed him until, with the help of the guards, they arrested him in Grab while he was sleeping. What they did with him next is evident from the confession of the Chetnik Đuro Kesić, who was arrested by members of the OZN on March 27, 1945 on Velebit.

He stated the following about the murder of Bićo Kesić, among other things: “We caught Bićo and took him to a pirate’s den (sitnogorica) in the Kokirna forest. We cut off his head and threw his body into a pit. His head was taken in a bag to Gračac by Đuro Radusin – Arambašica, Tomo Radusin and Mićo Senader. They sold it to the Italians. They left Grab in the morning and returned from Gračac only in the afternoon. They brought 100,000 lire from the Italians as a salary. We divided the money in Nikica Senader’s house. Each of us got ten thousand lire.”

The Italians, by publicly disclosing blackmails for individual participants in the anti-fascist struggle, constantly encouraged this type of Chetnik crime. Thus, the command of the Italian Zadar sector sent a letter on October 29, 1942 to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th companies of the Volunteer Anti-Communist Militia (Chetniks), stating the amounts of blackmail for 62 people (from 10,000 to 50,000 lire).

The Chetniks did not receive monetary and other rewards only for the blackmailed persons, but also for other participants in the anti-fascist movement, if they were captured alive or killed, and their bodies or heads brought to the Italian command. When the Chetniks from the Gračac Military Chetnik Detachment and the Krupa Chetnik Detachment arrested 23 Croatian partisans from

the “Bude Borjan” battalion near the village of Rujište in 1942, including the Šibenik communist Dano Rončević, they shot them all, and received 10,000 lire as a reward from the Italians.

For reward or without reward, the Chetniks beheaded many other victims. In the Vrgorac region at the end of August 1942, during the mass slaughter of the Croatian population, the Chetniks beheaded the parish priest of the Biokovo parish, Don Jozo Breanović.

The Chetniks carried out the cruel method of beheading their victims in early October 1942 in the village of Gatima, when they cut off the heads of murdered children and impaled them on stakes.

Serbs burning Croatian children alive

7. Burning people alive

This method of Chetnik crimes was mainly directed against the Croatian civilian population, but also against other national groups (Muslims and Roma). The Chetniks mainly used this method of torture and killing in mass pogroms involving the burning of residential and commercial buildings. People were thrown into the fire, either alive or already killed. By throwing living people into the fire, they tried to inflict as much pain as possible on their victims, and by throwing already killed people into the fire, they tried to cover up their crimes.

One of the most brutal examples of burning a group of people alive was carried out by the Moravian Chetniks (Gorski Kotar) on the night of 17/18 November 1942 in the village of Radigojni (near Vrbovsko). In that village, they arrested two Roma families (a total of 14 members, six of whom were children),

tied them up with wire, locked them in their wooden house and set them on fire.

This book, in the archival material we are publishing, contains many examples of the burning of victims, so we will not list them here. However, we will highlight one example of impaling a living man on a stake and then roasting him over a fire. This is how Đujić's Chetniks killed the old man Nikola Blažević (68 years old) from Maovici on January 26, 1943. They roasted him over a fire in the blacksmith shop of Ivan Herceg, also from Maovici.

8. Mass crimes committed by Chetniks against the Croatian population

The Chetniks' mass crimes against the Croatian population were committed throughout the war years, but most notably during 1942 and 1943, when the Chetnik movement in Croatia was militarily strongest, and had the support of the Chetniks of eastern Herzegovina and eastern Bosnia, as well as the Italian and German military occupation authorities.

The Chetniks justified the mass crimes against the Croatian people with various motives (previous Ustasha crimes against Serbs, partisan attacks on the Chetniks, the cooperation of individual individuals or entire villages with the partisan or Ustasha movement, the destruction of communications, etc.), but the essence of these crimes lay in the genocidal nature of the Chetnik movement towards the Croatian people, which has already been demonstrated in a number of examples.

Serbian crimes against the Ivezić family

The first mass crime committed by pro-Chetnik elements against members of the Croatian people in Croatia was committed in

Lika at the end of July 1941. At that time, pro-Chetnik elements from Brotnja (near the Serbs) killed 16 Croats from the Ivezić family and looted their property.

The remaining Chetnik massacres of Croats in Lika at that time were smaller in terms of the number of people killed, as the majority of Croats fled and emigrated from settlements that came under Chetnik rule. The wave of mass Chetnik crimes against Croats began in the Knin region in the autumn of 1941 and lasted throughout the war, spreading to other areas of Dalmatia.

During the days of the uprising in late July and early August 1941, in an effort to protect the Croats from the Knin region from possible atrocities by the insurgents, they retreated to Knin and placed themselves under the protection of the military forces of the Independent State of Croatia (around two thousand Croats). Such caution proved to be correct, as pro-Chetnik elements soon began terrorizing the remaining Croats, murdering them and plundering their property.

Serbian crimes in the village of Štikovo

Đujić's Chetniks carried out the first mass massacre of Croats on 7/8 October 1941, when they slaughtered seven people in Donji Ervenik and threw their bodies into a karst pit. The Italian army exhumed these victims and then buried them. Chetniks from the "Onisim Popović" regiment in the village of Štikovo slaughtered and killed 9 Croats. These two Chetnik crimes encouraged further migration of the Croatian population from the Knin region and the concentration of Croatian refugees in Knin (at the end of 1941, there were about 3,000 Croatian refugees in Knin).

The Chetniks constantly committed crimes against individuals and small groups of people in the areas they temporarily or

permanently held and in the areas where they stayed during military operations. It was during the military operations of the Chetnik forces with the Italian army in Dalmatia that the Chetniks committed the greatest crimes. In the Italian military operation “Albia” in the Biokovo area, the Italians also engaged about a thousand East-Herzegovinian Chetniks.

They were killed at the end of August 1942. In 1942, they were transferred from Nevesinje via Ljubuški and Vrgorac and, together with the Italian division “Bergamo”, participated in military operations in the Biokovo area against the partisan battalion “Jozo Jurčević”. However, the Chetniks focused their main activities on the Croatian population and the looting of their property.

Serbian crimes in Dragljane, Raščane, Kozice

Namely, while the Italian units were encircling the villages of Dragljane, Raščane, Kozice and some other hamlets in the area, the Chetniks entered these villages and “slaughtered every male”. The victims were also killed in other ways, and many were thrown into burning houses. On 29 and 30 August 1942, the Chetniks killed 137 Croats in various ways, including three priests (Josip Braenović, Ivan Čondić and Ladislav Ivanković).

Serbian Chetnik massacre of Croatian civilians in 1942

At the end of September 1942, the Italian division “Sassari” sent the Chetniks of Mano Rokvić (120 to 150 Chetniks) to the Split-Omiš region. From 1 to 5 October 1942, they massacred the Croatian population in the villages of Dugopolje, Kotlenice, Dubrava, Gata, Donji Dolac, Gornji Dolac, Ostrvica, Čisla, Zvečanje, Srijane, and brutally killed 120 women, children, and the elderly.

The Chetniks also killed Frano Babić, the parish priest from Srijane, and burned down more than 1,500 residential and farm buildings, looted livestock, and various movable property. The Chetniks were prevented from continuing their crimes by a platoon of the Solin Partisan Company, which managed to recover some of the looted property and bury some of the victims.

All the horrors of Chetnik atrocities in this area can be seen from numerous reports, and here we will quote only one small excerpt from the report of the KPH District Committee for Central Dalmatia, sent on October 4, 1942, to the KPH Provincial Committee for Dalmatia, which talks about the Chetnik massacre in the village of Gatima. In this regard, he points out: “On the first day (meaning October 1, 1942 – author’s note), around 150-200 Chetniks led by Italians came with trucks during the day.

The Chetniks started burning, looting and slaughtering everything they came across. The exact number of those slaughtered is not yet known, although ours buried them, but there were over 100 of them. The horrors are indescribable. Everything that could not affect the most highest way is killed.

Women and girls are raped, cut off tits. The elderly has a lot of tortured and children who are all of the row. The child in the arms of his mother. In some places of large piles of killed 10 – 15 expensive. The world is is everywhere sheltered, but who is caught where is there slaughtered.

All protests by the NDH authorities, and personally by the poglavnik Dr. A. Pavelić himself, were met with no response from the Italian military authorities. The perpetrators of these crimes against the Croatian population were not even called to

account, let alone punished. For the Chetniks, this was only a sign that they could continue with such atrocities.

The Italian army soon sent a new punitive unit with about 360 Đujić's Chetniks, which on October 21, 1942, invaded the village of Bitelić, which had a majority Croatian population. In this village, the Chetniks slaughtered 29 Croats, burned more than 200 houses and thoroughly looted the movable property of the Croats.

The mass massacres of Croats were carried out by the Chetniks of the Dinaric Chetnik Division and the Herzegovinian Chetniks in the Vrlika Krajina region at the end of January 1943. It was a Chetnik "bloody campaign towards Vrlika", under the slogan "burn and slaughter everything that is Catholic".

The aim of these Chetnik forces was to, with the help of the Italian "Bergamo" division, clear the area of Vrlika Krajina and Podinarje of partisan forces (two partisan battalions of the 3rd Dalmatian Brigade and the Knin partisan battalion were operating in that area at the time). The Chetnik-Italian forces encountered only minor resistance from the partisans, and from 25 to 27 January 1943, the Chetnik units directed their activities towards the Croatian population in Vrlika, Maovice, Kosore and Kijevo, killing around 60 people in the most brutal manner. The murders of the Croatian population were accompanied by the burning of houses and the looting of property. The remaining Croats from these villages fled to Ribarići and then to Sinj.

Regarding this Chetnik crime, the report of the Great Cetina Parish from February 4, 1943, sent to the Ministry of the Interior of the NDH, is significant, in which, among other things, the following is stated: "The Chetniks did not enter purely Orthodox villages at all, and in Catholic villages they slaughtered and burned mostly according to the testimony of local Serbs."

Chetniks from Hercegovina and their massacre in the Imotski area

The Herzegovinian Chetniks (around 2,500), retreating from the Knin region via Split, Dicma and Trilj, arrived on 3 and 4 March 1943 in the Imotski district, and from there they moved across western Herzegovina to eastern Herzegovina. During the above-mentioned days, in the Imotski area (Imotski, Grabovac, Zagvozd, Vinjani, etc.), they killed and slaughtered 32 Croats, looted property, burned houses, spilled wine and brandy in taverns, polluted wells with excrement (“they defecated heavily, then threw the excrement into the wells”), raped girls and women and took off the women’s clothes and jewellery.

Massacres of 1944

Later, the Chetniks carried out a number of mass massacres, including against Serbs and Croat partisans, and here we will highlight only three more examples. In February 1944, the Chetniks of the Dinaric Chetnik Division killed 30 people in the villages of Dubrava, Danilo Kraljica, Radonići and Goriša, and on April 4 of the same year, the Chetniks of the Kosovo Chetnik Brigade killed nine Croats in the village of Nečmen. One of the last major Chetnik crimes was carried out on September 12, 1944, in the Skradin area, when 27 Croats were killed.

Research into the human losses in Croatia caused by the Chetnik movement in World War II shows that around 3,000 people have been killed so far (of whom around two-thirds are Croats). See the special section in the third part of the book on this.

Furthermore, research shows that these were not the criminal tendencies of individuals, but a planned policy of the Chetnik movement to deal with all its opponents in the most brutal way for its planned goals (the establishment of a Greater Serbia).

In this context, the Croatian people in general were intended to fight until extermination. But the Chetnik movement could not carry out this intention for several reasons, primarily because the Chetnik movement did not have such a military potential that would threaten the physical survival of the Croatian people, and secondly because the Croatian people self-organized their defense and thus protected themselves from even more tragic Chetnik atrocities.

Reference

This is a work written by historian Dr. Sc. Mihael Sobolevski, and you can read more about this topic in the book by Dr. Sc. Zdravko Dizdar and M. Sobolevski “Silenced Chetnik Crimes in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina 1941-1945”, which was published in Zagreb in 1999 by the Croatian Institute of History.