

The Red Njegoš: Petar II Petrović in Yugoslav and Communist Ideology and Propaganda of Montenegrin Communists

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Abstract:

This paper analyzes different levels of use of the character and the work of a significant Montenegrin poet and ruler Petar II Petrović-Njegoš for the purpose of promoting the ideas of Montenegrin communists. By analyzing speeches from public celebrations in honour of Njegoš and by presenting the sources in the main communist media, this paper tries to present the key in which the communists interpreted Njegoš and his work. The canonization of Njegoš as Yugoslav national poet during the communist reign is observed from the aspect of the significance of that poet for authorities. This paper searches for narrative constructions and ideologemes that the Communist intellectuals and politicians constructed to promote their ideas through Njegoš and his character.

Keywords: Njegoš, Yugoslavia, Montenegro, Communists, Ideology, Propaganda

Introduction

Petar II Petrović-Njegoš (1813-1851) was a Montenegrin ruler, a bishop and a poet. He is one of the most important poets in the South Slavic area. He created during the era of romanticism and managed to express the collective identity or 'spirit of the people' through his most famous works such as *Gorski vijenac* (*The Mountain Wreath*) or *Lažni car Šćepan Mali* (*Fake emperor Šćepan Mali*), which made him very popular among the audience of that time. During his reign (1830-

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1851), he led an intense campaign for the liberation of the South Slavs, spending a lot of time in towns where a large number of Slavs lived, such as Trieste, Vienna, Zagreb and Belgrade. He associated with the leaders of 'Yugoslavian' idea and in every way promoted their communion and liberation through his work. That is why, after his death, he became very important to all Yugoslav and nationalist movements. In the symbolic sense, Njegoš played a very important role in the creation of the first South Slavic common state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918. In 1925, with the greatest state honors, he would in fact be canonized for the national poet of the 'nation with three names (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes)', when King Aleksandar Karađorđević buried him on the Montenegrin mountain Lovćen, which was celebrated throughout the country as the greatest state ceremony. In the interwar period, Njegoš was interpreted as the predecessor - messiah of the Yugoslav unification. His combative verses were celebrated as the most important sparks that sparked the national maturity and emancipation from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Since 1929., when Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes changed its name to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and when 'integral Yugoslavism' became propagated instead of 'nation with three names', Njegoš again became the symbol of communion, this time represented as one of the fathers of Yugoslavia, since on the cover of his final work printed in Trieste in 1851, it is imprinted that it was 'printed in Yugoslavia'. Nevertheless, Njegoš will become very important for the authorities, since his verses will often be quoted on public occasions and monuments to him will be erected throughout Yugoslavia. After communists took over the authority in 1945, they too were aware of the significance of Njegoš in the interwar period, so they also, only on the other grounds, canonized Njegoš as the national poet of Yugoslavia. In promoting their ideology, Njegoš became an important component, since his complete work began having a function of self-promotion.

After the end of the Second World War, the Communists managed to retain authority in Yugoslavia and eliminate their opposition. A new state was created on a federal basis, oriented towards the 'building of socialism'. Six republics got their constitutions and proclaimed equality. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Montenegro adopted on December 31, 1946, which symbolized the return of its historical individuality, will define, among other important provisions, its new coat-of-arms - Lovćen with

Njegoš's chapel surrounded by laurel wreath connected at the bottom to the Montenegrin flag.¹ The communist authorities were genuinely trying to fully adjust Njegoš's character and work to their ideological needs, although the linking of Njegoš and Communism seemed impossible, since Peter II was a representative of a dynasty, not a working class, an Orthodox bishop, a poet of romanticism without any expressed aspiration for social thought, and above all the archetype of the father of the nation in the greater state project interpretations of the previous authorities. With the extraordinary interpretative acrobatics, the new authorities will soon succeed in overcoming all the challenges of ideologizing. As noted by American Slavist Andrew B. Wachtel, the essential question posed before the communist authorities during creation of new Yugoslavia was which works can be used to divert the cultural focus of the country from synthetic multiculturalism to transnational internationalism proclaimed by the communists.² He believes that Yugoslav communists have learned from Soviet teachers more than just the tactics of governance, more precisely how most works from the past can be used in socialist reality with the appropriate deviation in interpretation - the canon had not had to be changed significantly, but only reinterpreted. 'Inconvenient interwar interpretations could be attributed to the ideological mistakes of that time, and not to the author and his work,'³ he claims, which bypassed the former setting of Njegoš into the center of multicultural Yugoslavian culture and the fondness of Petar II by King Aleksandar. Njegoš was interpreted as a forerunner of Yugoslavism in the socialist reality of Yugoslavia, and his role in 1848, which was taken as a turning point in Yugoslavism, was especially emphasized. Montenegrin historian Niko S. Martinović wrote in 1946 that even before the people's revolution, Njegoš prepared the Yugoslavians for major events, quoting his poem 'Pozdrav rodu iz Beča 1847' in which the poet noted that 'Lepo, lipo, lijepo i ljepo' (words for 'beautiful' in Serbian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Bosnian) are the petals of one flower.⁴ Njegoš's Yugoslavism was treated as the culmination of the liberating-unifying fight, as it relied on the aspirations of rebellion actions against two great empires, which fully fit into the communist exclusivity of dogmatic anti-

¹ Živko Andrijašević and Šerbo Rastoder, *Istorija Crne Gore - od najstarijih vremena do 2003*. (Podgorica: Zavod za iseljenike Crne Gore, 2003), 437.

² Endru Baruh Vahtel, *Stvaranje nacije, razaranje nacije: književnost i kulturna politika u Jugoslaviji*, (Beograd: Stubovi kulture, 2001), 174.

³ Vahtel, *Stvaranje nacije, razaranje nacije*, 177.

⁴ Niko S. Martinović, „Njegoš i 1848“, *Stvaranje*, br. 1, (1946): 43.

reactionarysm in theory and rebellion actions from the latter war in practice.

The first real opportunity for the Yugoslav authorities to celebrate a more significant cultural jubilee and to promote new values at that level happened in 1947 when the 100 years since the first edition of 'The Mountain Wreath' was marked, which also gave a chance to the creation of a centralized culture of Yugoslavian people. In the new political and ideological concepts Njegoš's ethnic root happened to be a lucky circumstance - aware of the fact that the main strife in the former Yugoslavia was between Serbs and Croats, Njegoš's ethnic origin as a Montenegrin, made it possible to circumvent the possible favors of the legacies of both sides.⁵ Since the Montenegrins were not accused of hegemonic aspirations, Petar II could be accepted by everyone.⁶ Since the authorities after the Second World War acknowledged the Montenegrins as an independent nation with the right to self-determination, this enabled the consideration of Njegoš as a Montenegrin and Yugoslav writer, thus avoiding earlier interpretations.

Jubilee of 'The Mountain Wreath' represented the canonization of Njegoš in a completely new way when it comes to all organization levels, the sent messages and the discourse that was present during the event in general.⁷ Like the construction of the chapel in 1925, this event had greatest importance in (well-controlled) state propaganda. Croatian newspaper *Hrvatski Vjesnik* has published a large Njegoš portrait on the cover with the message 'Celebration of the hundredth anniversary of 'The Mountain Wreath' is a holiday for all people of Yugoslavia', while the new editions of this work were printed in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the second translation was published in Slovenia, and for the first time 'The Mountain Wreath' was translated and published in Macedonia. In *Borba*, the organ of the ruling party, 'four of the six columns were dedicated to Njegoš, and his picture was five times larger than Tito's (...) Considering Tito's tendency to magnify his own pictures, this graphic

⁵ What supports the fact that Njegoš was the most suitable person for the first major promotion is the abstraction of Mažuranić's *The Death of Smail-aga Čengić* in 1946 at the state level.

⁶ Vahtel, *Stvaranje nacije, razaranje nacije*, 177.

⁷ Jubilee details processed in detail by Dragutin Papović, „Njegoš u socijalističkoj i nacionalnoj ideologiji 1945–1989“, *Matica*, (2013): 231-254.

solution really represents a rarity'.⁸ The central celebration was organized in Cetinje (Montenegro) in June 1947, with the presence of the most important figures of Montenegro and high representatives of other Yugoslav republics from the political and cultural life. Montenegrin President Blažo Jovanović said that Njegoš fought against the 'soullessness of Christian capitalist Europe' and that he was a great admirer of Russia, Yugoslavism and the freedom of Montenegro and Montenegrins, who fought against the Turkish occupiers and domestic traitors.⁹ Jovanović, like many before him, again reminded of a historical myth from Njegoš's work and determined that „istraga poturica“¹⁰ in *The Mountain Wreath* is represented unusually vivid and true. According to him, 'istraga' was an exemplar during National Liberation War and he stated that 'the truthfulness and lasting poetic value of the 'Mountain Wreath' were confirmed in the war stronger than ever before, that Njegoš's character fluttered on the flags of Tito's army and that Njegoš was a subordinate and a partisan teacher during the war.'¹¹ The main interpretator of Njegoš's work at the anniversary was the writer Radovan Zogović. He promoted the ideas seen by authorities in Njegoš's work. Zogović argued that Njegoš interpreted the revolutionary 1848 year just like Karl Marx, and that in 'The Mountain Wreath' Njegoš fought against Turkish feudalism and the Turkish exploiters and the Venetian capitalist world. Zogović interpreted Njegoš's work as a class struggle, and stated that beneath the main conflict in 'The Mountain Wreath' there was a conflict between the class of feudal lords and the class of enslaved and exploited peasantry. In 'The Mountain Wreath' he saw evidence that a new righteous social order can only be established on the ruins of the old one and can only be achieved with a revolutionary fight. Zogović stated that the entire 'The Mountain Wreath' was an anthem of revolutionary struggle for the destruction of unjust and unreasonable social relations and institutions. With the help of Njegoš's work, Zogović justified the goals of the socialist revolution in

⁸ Vahtel, *Stvaranje nacije, razaranje nacije*, 178.

⁹ Papović, „Njegoš u socijalističkoj i nacionalnoj ideologiji“, 236.

¹⁰ The myth about the slaughter of Muslims in the Cetinje region at the end of the 17th century, about which there is no mention in historical sources before the nineteenth century. More details: Vojislav P. Nikčević (2000), *Istraga poturica: mit ili stvarnost*. Podgorica, Almanah. 'Istraga' will later trigger vigorous controversy over Njegoš's view of the Muslims, and his work will be misused by the nationalists like Radovan Karadžić i Ratko Mladić during the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. About the use of 'The Mountain Wreath' by Radovan Karadžić see: Slavoj Žižek, „Notes on a poetic military complex“, *Third text*, Volume 23, Issue 5, (2009): 503–509.

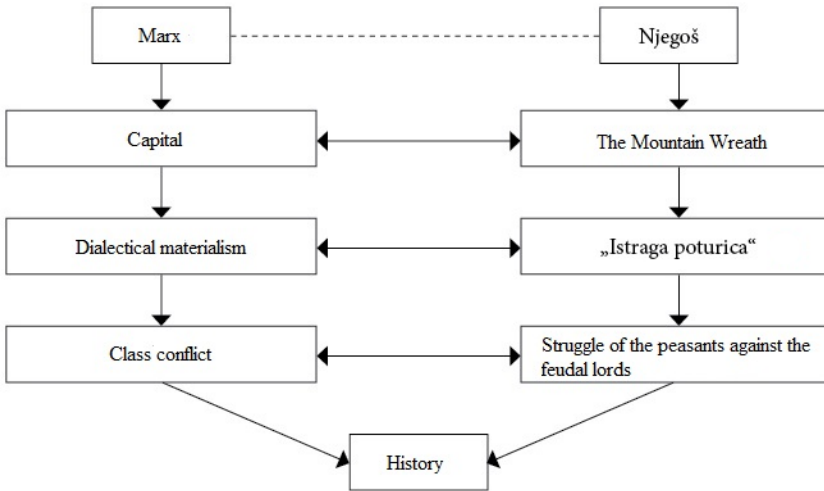
¹¹ Papović, „Njegoš u socijalističkoj i nacionalnoj ideologiji“, 236.

Montenegro. Zogović claimed that Njegoš considered himself both a Montenegrin and a Serb and that he belongs both to Serbian and Yugoslavian literature, but that his Montenegrin nationality is undeniable.¹²

Such maneuvers in the interpretation of Njegoš can be summarized in several analytical opinions: World War II Partisans are legitimized as a contemporary version of Njegoš's liberators from *The Mountain Wreath*; an unpleasant motive - the slaughter of Muslims, is removed by circumventing the religious connotation and using the very popular communist epithet of "domestic traitors"; representing him as a national poet, the communists addressed directly the workers and peasants who were the foundation of the newly established society, and Njegoš's work was well known to them - thus the receiving of communist slogans and proclamations among the people was easier. In addition to this, what should also be mentioned is the emphatic popularization of Njegoš's non-saintly life and non-compliance with the priestly regulations, which fully corresponded with the communist attitude towards faith.

It is also interesting to analyze the role 'The Mountain Wreath' had in the popularization of Marxist values. Undoubtedly, for most Montenegrins, 'dialectical materialism' was complicated to explain. To depict the history as seen by Karl Marx, it was necessary to find a Montenegrin counterpart, so that technological-economic phrases would be more receptive to the local audience. As we saw from the speech, the commentators tried to show 'The Mountain Wreath' more or less as an act describing the struggle of the peasants against the feudal lords; the Montenegrin-Turkish war and the 'Istraga poturica' are considered as a certain 'conflict of classes'. Since Marx sees the emergence of history in the class conflict, the hostile act of the Montenegrins towards Muslims from Njegoš's work was the beginning of Montenegrin history; and the Communists are the heirs of that Montenegro, the continuers and the guards of that tradition.

¹² Papović, „Njegoš u socijalističkoj i nacionalnoj ideologiji“, 236-237.



Scheme 1: Official interpretation of *The Mountain Wreath* during the centenary of its publishing

Neither Njegoš's new great anniversary will pass without actualization of the most tangible social and political issues through his character and work. Since that year the conflict between Yugoslavia and the USSR reached climax because of the Cominform, the jubilee will be used to criticize Stalin and his supporters in Yugoslavia. Speaking at the jubilee about Njegoš's attitude towards Russia, Blažo Jovanović represented that relationship in a negative context - he stated that the attitude of Russian diplomacy has always been utilitarian and assistance to Montenegro has always been measured in accordance with Russian interests.¹³ For every received rubble from Russia, Jovanović says, a big reproof followed. The Montenegrin conditions from the 19th century are presented as the current reality - which can be interpreted as the following - when the great Njegoš could turn his back on Russia, so can we. Thus, the past was again evoked to the extent that the split among the communists will be compared with the events from 'The Mountain Wreath'. The famous Njegoš's syntagm 'the slave of Petrograd (St. Petersburg) moods' was the informal motto of the entire celebration. Commentator Vladimir Kolar published the text with that title in *Pobjeda* for the 100th anniversary. In that text, he gave a historical review of Njegoš's political biography, with a special accent on relations between Russia

¹³ *Pobjeda*, September 6, 1951, 2-3.

and Montenegro since the time of Bishop Danilo Petrović, ruler of Montenegro (1696-1735). Below the text, on the same page, we find Stalin's caricature that stands on the imperial throne in front of the kneeling subjects with a message 'Consistent with the tradition of autocrats'.¹⁴ In his text Kolar presented the whole history of Russian-Montenegrin relations as deeply for interest. For him, Russia has never shown sincere love for the Montenegrins, but had been buying their combative strength with rubles in order to jeopardize the Ottoman Empire. Most of the text is devoted to the bitter experience of Petar II with imperial Russia and there is a detailed explication of the tendency towards the independence of the Yugoslav people from the ruling circles in Petrograd (St. Petersburg).

Conflicts between Italy and Yugoslavia regarding the city of Trieste after World War II and its surroundings have also been mentioned during Njegoš's celebration. Blažo Jovanović noted that he was very pleased that Trieste left a trace in the extensive Njegoš's heritage, and that the roads to strengthen the freedom of his own people led him through that city. 'He glorified Trieste and its future firmly convinced that Trieste will always serve its people, that Trieste will always be closely connected with its hinterland for which it originated and hence suffered its well-being, and that is mostly Slavic hinterland. Indications of the great spirit were always accomplished because they relied on deep knowledge. Therefore, the Italian occupation of Trieste was only a temporary interruption of the 'long progress', therefore neither the present situation will last forever.'¹⁵ The delegates of the 'free Territory of Trieste' (mostly Slovenians who lives there) were invited to the main celebration, and in the greeting speech they emphasized that the Slovenes from Trieste, despite spilled blood, could not achieve the aspirations implied a hundred years ago by Petar II and Slovenian national poet Franc Prešeren - unification with their people and other Yugoslav people.¹⁶

Isolation of Yugoslavia due to the conflict with the East concerning the Cominform and disagreements with the West due to the so-called Trieste crisis has reflected on the great manifestation and promotion of patriotism, heroism and fighting in the spirit of Njegoš. Commentator M. Zečević wrote about 'The Mountain Wreath' as a patriotic act, representing Njegoš as a very conscious 'people's

¹⁴ V. Kolar, „Rob petrogradskih ćudi“, *Pobjeda*, br. 209 (5. 9. 1951): 9.

¹⁵ *Pobjeda*, September 6, 1951, 2.

¹⁶ *Pobjeda*, September 6, 1951, 12.

liberator' whose epic heroes are true representatives of the Montenegrin people and patriotic values.¹⁷ Montenegrin historian Dimitrije Dimo Vujović wrote the work 'Njegoš's work and our National Liberation War' ('Njegoš's work and our National Liberation War') in which he interpreted *The Mountain Wreath* as the main drive of the anti-fascist struggle, contextualizing the partisan campaign of 1941-1945 with events and personalities from Njegoš's epic poem.¹⁸ That is why the author says that Njegoš's work is a textbook of patriotism and that young fighters in 1941 collectively read the most important Njegoš lines.

In 1951 Njegoš will get museum in the building of Biljarda in Cetinje, which was the first time in Montenegro to dedicate a museum to one person. The authorities did not miss the opportunity to announce on the cover of their propaganda newsletter that Tito, as the first man of Yugoslavia, and Blažo Jovanović, as the first man of Montenegro, donated artefacts to the Njegoš museum.¹⁹ A few years later there were suggestions that a special scientific institute should also be opened in Biljarda in Njegoš's honor.²⁰ The dimensions of the celebration are best illustrated by the fact that the Njegoš's centenary in Montenegro was marked in almost all towns, even villages, and special performance for this occasion was organized by students of the Agricultural Technical High School in Bijelo Polje.²¹

Since 1952, the so-called view of Njegoš will not be a priority since the communists at the VI Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia proclaimed the freedom of form in artistic expression, so so-called no longer imposed itself as a unique direction and method in the interpretation of literary works. Njegoš's character and work were slowly liberated from adjusting to socialist ideology, so the new interpretative fields were opened. During this gradual transition from the socialist to the national narrative, which would intensify in the 1960s, Njegoš mostly served the constant popularization of the interwar communist and NLW heritage. "The memories of the victors' were being refreshed by the insertion of Njegoš into anecdotal narrative of fame and struggle for a better and more advanced

¹⁷ M. Zečević, „Patriotizam u Gorskom vijencu“, *Omladinski pokret*, br. 22, (1951): 6.

¹⁸ Dimitrije Vujović, „Njegoš's work and our National Liberation War“, *Stvaranje*, br. 5–6, (1951): 303.

¹⁹ *Pobjeda*, September 5, 1951, 1.

²⁰ M. Kažić, „Institut za proučavanje Njegoša“, *Stvaranje*, br. 10, (1960): 860.

²¹ *Omladinski pokret*, May 5, 1951, 3.

society.²²

As the discourse on the identity of the Yugoslav people of the 1960s increasingly began to tackle the issue of primordial national identities, the Communist authorities increasingly adapted Njegoš to the official national ideology. The Montenegrin authorities maintained the opinion that Njegoš as a Montenegrin ruler and poet is a part of the Montenegrin cultural heritage, but considered that he could be referred to as a Yugoslav writer. At the first major jubilee in the new circumstances, 150 years after Njegoš's birth, the Montenegrin government organized a great celebration with new interpretative practices that primarily emphasized Yugoslavism. Blažo Jovanović saw the celebration of the 150 years since Njegoš's birth in 1963 as an assembling of the artistic and cultural values of the Yugoslav people in a unique socialist culture. Njegoš was interpreted as an integrative factor of Yugoslavism and a value that has always strived for progress.²³ *Pobjeda* described the celebration as the best way to achieve 'a more firm and systematic connection of all the people of Yugoslavia, all linguistic areas, especially more permanent and thorough rapprochement of cultural workers and artistic creators'.²⁴ One of the central moments of the whole event was the decision of the Montenegrin republic authorities to establish the Njegoš Prize for Literature. In the Law regulating the award, published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro for 1963, we find that the first article clearly states that the prize is established 'in the memory of the great Yugoslav writer Petar II Petrović Njegoš'.²⁵ On account of this decision, *Pobjeda* made a poll with well-known literary critics from all over Yugoslavia, and one of the questions was: what do you think about the Yugoslav character of Njegoš's award? All interlocutors made very positive judgments, believing that the Yugoslav character is a fundament of its strength. One of the critics pointed out: 'For us, Yugoslavism is a new material, moral, psychological and spiritual quality. It is actual and we know it, but those who already believe that it can be reduced to the actuality of the moment are mistaken. The more we become Yugoslavs, the more we will be men: free producers

²² See: Milo Kralj, „Gorski vijenac u zatvoru“, *Pobjeda*, br. 6 (5. 2. 1961): 16 and br. 7 (12. 2. 1961): 16; Puniša Perović, „Kako smo primali Njegoša“, *Stvaranje*, br. 5 (1952): 240–256.

²³ *Pobjeda*, September 8, 1963, 12.

²⁴ *Pobjeda*, September 1, 1963, 1.

²⁵ *Službeni list SR CG*, 1963, 489.

and managers - no matter where we are and what we do'.²⁶ The first winner of this highest Yugoslav literary award at that time was Montenegrin Mihailo Lalić, for the novel *Lelejska gora*. He thought that Njegoš's award symbolizes the bringing of Yugoslav people together, the unification of national literatures, and that its Yugoslav broadness should be a model for other awards.²⁷ When awarding the prize at a central celebration to the winner, the president of the Montenegrin Parliament, Andrija Mugoša, said that considering the spirit of the work and the aspirations of the great poet, the prize has a Yugoslav character, and that's why it is very firmly fixed and ranked among the top values of 'our socialist reality'.²⁸ Apart from the emphasis on integrative tendencies in the approaches to Yugoslav culture, the entire discourse of the celebration abounded by emphasizing the efforts to put Njegoš's work in the service of progress, primarily by promoting his humanism in the fight against tyranny. The actuality of Njegoš in the modern age was also mentioned. By the end of the 1960s, there were no major changes in the interpretation of Njegoš's identity. In the lexicographical and encyclopaedic editions, the universal value of his verses was highlighted, and the national characterization was moving in the direction of the Montenegrin / Yugoslavian poet. However, at the end of that decade, nationalisms will intensify within the Yugoslav community, which will be particularly reflected in the treatment of Njegoš's national and cultural qualification. His multilayered identity had again become topical. *Književne novine*, published by The Association of Serbian writers, started a debate on the question of whether Petar II Petrović is a Montenegrin or a Serb, to which culture he belongs, whose writer he is and what is the nature of his Montenegrin or Serbian nationality.²⁹ This created the first major field of disagreement between Serbian and Montenegrin intellectuals on the issues of national cultures and the characteristics of Montenegrin identity. Montenegrin authorities held a major symposium on roads and the development of Montenegrin culture in January 1968. Then, in the defense of Njegoš, the successor of Blažo Jovanović as the first man of the party and authorities in Montenegro - Veselin Đuranović, claimed that Njegoš is a Montenegrin and Yugoslav writer and that any serbianization of Njegoš means nationalism.³⁰ The additional heat to the conflicts surrounding Njegoš

²⁶ *Pobjeda*, July 13, 1963, 9.

²⁷ *Pobjeda*, September 1, 1963, 3.

²⁸ *Pobjeda*, September 8, 1963, 3.

²⁹ Papović, „Njegoš u socijalističkoj i nacionalnoj ideologiji“, 242.

³⁰ *Pobjeda*, February 4, 1968, 9.

will be caused by intensification of preparations and works on raising Njegoš's mausoleum at Lovćen and removing the chapel built by King Aleksandar Karađorđević. Although this project had been prepared for more than a decade and a half and its realization for 1963 was largely announced, the preparation of the mountainous terrain and the construction of the access road were delayed due to difficult geographical conditions and large financial expenditures.³¹ The well-known Croatian and Yugoslav sculptor Ivan Meštrović was responsible for the draft of the mausoleum and its artistic-conceptual look. This work was mostly completed before his death in 1962. The works were completely suspended for some time, but after the proclamation of the Cetinje authorities in January 1968 the works continued. Representatives of the communist authorities noted the general Yugoslav orientation of Njegoš's work and called for state solidarity in collecting money for the final realization of the construction of mausoleum.³² From that moment, all the official Montenegrin propaganda were organized in promoting the justification of this act, but the media also gave space to opponents of the removal of the chapel. Opponents also had a well-organized propaganda action, largely stating their views in the more liberal press in Serbia. Thus, after several years of quarrels in the pro et contra polemics of the new Njegoš's crypt, a real *polemos* began, which revealed the deep social conflict and the polarization of Montenegrin society over the issue of the ethnic identity of Montenegrins.

Nevertheless, despite the polemic, the Mausoleum was officially opened on July 28, 1974. Official propaganda emphasized that the new time requires a more modern approach to Njegoš and that a new monument should represent 'abortion of Orthodox and political misconceptions, romanticism and sentimentality' to a part of the Montenegrin society.³³ The main person at the ceremony was the first man of Montenegro, Veljko Milatović, the personification of more active Montenegrin identity emancipation, who greatly contributed to the strengthening of cultural and educational institutions in this regard. It is interesting to note that in the same year a new federal

³¹ About the chapel / mausoleum, the controversy and the problems it has produced, more detailed: František Šitek, *Narativi o identitetu - izabrane studije o crnogorskoj istoriji*, (Podgorica: Matica crnogorska, 2016), 126–132.

³² Blažo Kilibarda (ed.), *Lovćen, Njegoš, Meštrović, Projekt Njegoševa mauzoleja na Lovćenu i njegova realizacija (1952-1974)*, (Zagreb: Nacionalna zajednica Crnogoraca Hrvatske, Matica crnogorska, 2004), 48.

³³ Kilibarda (ed.), *Lovćen, Njegoš, Meštrović, Projekt Njegoševa*, 107.

constitution that guaranteed a greater degree of independence for the Yugoslav republics was adopted. Regarding Montenegrin situation, all of that reflected on the discourse on Njegoš. In his solemn speech, Milatović emphasized that the Mausoleum of 'Montenegrin struggle and freedom is not an endowment to the glory of throne and altar, a decoration of power and an addition that glorifies the investor' nor 'a cold marble case on top of the honoured mountain, nor a sanctuary isolated from mortals to provoke awe', but represents for him an inseparable part of Lovćen, and a symbol that connects the 'Njegoš-poet' with present and future generations.³⁴ Milatović recognized Njegoš's exclusivity in modern times in his fighting humanism, heroism, the ethics of verse, freedom, the necessity of the constant fight for humanity and dignity, the fight against enemy, darkness and disgrace. Special treatment was given to the emphasis of Njegoš's Montenegrin nationality - Njegoš's work was presented as 'a superb expression created in the Montenegrin area'. This made it clear that the Montenegrin authorities firmly reject any kind of appropriation of Njegoš and see him exclusively as a reflection of the Montenegrin spirit within the Yugoslav community. Milatović concluded that the Lovćen Mausoleum is a symbol of collective Yugoslav solidarity, and that the largest monument to Njegoš is 'free Montenegro in a free community' of equal Yugoslav people and nationalities of Yugoslavia. Montenegrin Njegoš was once again a link, which is what the daily press headlines about the opening of the mausoleum say: 'The manifestation of brotherhood and unity', 'Monument to the solidarity of all people of Yugoslavia', 'Contribution to mutual understanding and rapprochement'. In order for the whole ceremony of the mausoleum opening to be in the spirit of the Titoist propaganda, the organizers decided to finish the ceremony by giving a gold medal with Njegoš's character to Tito.³⁵ Njegoš's mausoleum will be widely used as a symbol on many logos. In accordance with the already mentioned new course in the direction of strengthening the national emancipation of Montenegrins, a number of cultural and scientific institutions that contain the Njegoš mausoleum in their emblem will be established, among which the University of Montenegro and the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts are especially important. The coat of arms of Montenegro will also experience the transformation in 1974, since the chapel surrounded by a wreath was replaced by a mausoleum.

³⁴ *Pobjeda*, August 1, 1974, 1.

³⁵ *Pobjeda*, August 1, 1974, 1.

From the mid-seventies of the 20th century until the beginning of the crisis of the Yugoslavia at the end of the next decade, interpretation of Njegoš did not change significantly. His Montenegrin nationality and belonging to Montenegrin culture and general-Yugoslav character were the main frames of interpretation. The emphasis on Montenegrin and Yugoslavian nationality was important because of the affirmation of the current state policy, while Njegoš's 'Serbian nationality' was reduced to some of the messages he promoted in his literature. Literary interpretations played a very important role in this field, since the interpreters of Njegoš's work obtained the arguments that were on the same path proclaimed by the Yugoslav authorities as well as by the Montenegrin Communist Party. This general climate was confirmed by Njegoš's award - in 1978 it was given to the Serbian writer Oskar Davičo, who in his speech spoke of the power of Njegoš's statement, which can not represent an expression of hatred, but a statement of freedom.³⁶ Davičo also spoke about the action of the Serbian Orthodox Church and like-minded against the raising of the mausoleum, pointing out that this 'noise' came from a patriarchy - 'whether in civilian clothes or mantia' - who, as prisoners of the past, 'out of the fridge of historical forgetfulness' pulled out the harmful construction how a Croat and a Catholic can not raise a monument to an Orthodox ruler and a bishop, and thus created an unpleasant atmosphere. Even more precise than Davičo in determining Njegoš's essence was the winner of this literary award for 1981, Slovenian writer Josip Vidmar. He considered that 'Njegoš is Montenegro and that Montenegro is Njegoš' and that this can hardly be said of other poets. He compared *The Mountain Wreath* with its 'wise and free instinct' with the national liberation struggle, and the fluctuations of Bishop Danilo from that epic poem were compared with the challenges they had during the war.³⁷

The awarding of Njegoš's award in 1981 is very important also from another angle - due to certain socio-national phenomena in post-Tito Yugoslavia (died in 1980) which announced the internal crisis. Among Serbian writers and intellectuals, the thesis about Njegoš's Serbian nationality and Njegoš as a part of Serbian culture was increasingly emphasized. In June 1980, a meeting on the valorization of the Montenegrin cultural heritage on Marxist grounds was held in the Marxist Center of the Central Committee of League of Communists

³⁶ Oskar Davičo, „O Njegošu, o pesništvu“, *Ovdje*, br. 14, (1978): 12.

³⁷ *Cetinjski list*, October 25, 1981, 9.

of Montenegro. The President of the Montenegrin Presidency Veljko Milatović claimed that the Montenegrins are a separate nation and that the appropriation and treatment of Montenegrin culture as a bi-national one can not be allowed and that Njegoš can only belong to the Montenegrin people.³⁸ The problems concerning national literature shook also the other republics on various issues, so the Commission of the Yugoslav Writers' Union in 1981 suggested a 'Proposal for a common minimum of program basis for teaching literature in secondary schools in Yugoslavia.'³⁹ Basically, this proposal was accepted by all literary associations in the country, except the Association of Serbian Writers. They considered that Serbian literature was damaged the most by this document and in their proposal, among other things, emphasized that Njegoš belongs to Serbian tradition and that along with national poetry he had the greatest influence on the formation of Serbian national consciousness.⁴⁰ The reaction from Montenegro came quickly - in the official newsletter of the Montenegrin authorities - *Pobjeda* - an anonymous text appeared, in which Veljko Milatović's view is repeated: that the thesis of the dual nationality of Njegoš is unsustainable: that he belongs to Montenegrin culture and the Montenegrin nation.⁴¹ Discussions regarding Njegoš's nationality and his affiliation to national culture were transferred into encyclopedias. When writing the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*, Montenegrin and Serbian editors had a misunderstanding, so the editor of the Montenegrin literature for the encyclopedia - writer Sreten Asanović, pointed out that the Montenegrin editorial staff at its meeting on November 3, 1981 rejected the proposal to classify Njegoš as Serbian writer, while, for the sake of interconnections and permeation, approved the processing of some Montenegrin writers in Serbian literature, but with the condition that their names have Montenegrin national definition.⁴² The Montenegrin editorial staff for the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia* met in April 1982 and officially discarded the dual characteristics of national culture and adopted the view that everything that emerged in the national history of the Montenegrin nation belongs to the Montenegrin people and that Njegoš's creativity expresses the historical reality of the Montenegrin people with its subject, ethics, worldview and lexical characteristics

³⁸ Papović, „Njegoš u socijalističkoj i nacionalnoj ideologiji“, 247.

³⁹ Papović, „Njegoš u socijalističkoj i nacionalnoj ideologiji“, 248.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *Pobjeda*, June 20, 1981, 11.

⁴² Papović, „Njegoš u socijalističkoj i nacionalnoj ideologiji“, 250.

and their aesthetic and artistic expression and that it strongly influenced the national and cultural constitution of the Montenegrins.⁴³ According to literary values, Njegoš's work is characterized as a heritage of world and Yugoslav culture, so it can be written about in other literatures, especially those from the Serbo-Croat linguistic area. Such an approach, according to the members of the editorial staff, enabled the politics of fraternity and unity and further consolidation of the Yugoslav communion.

The memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts of 1986 had big consequences regarding the interpretation of Njegoš in the near future. In addition to Serbian national problems, the signatories also mentioned the problem of dilution and disintegration of Serbian culture and literature - indicating that Njegoš is a Serbian writer.⁴⁴ Such allegations did not have a stronger impact on the current Montenegrin authority that maintained its established attitudes, but after its shift in 1989, the views expressed in the Memorandum became extremely actual in Montenegro. Strong nationalistic tones towards the Montenegrin cultural heritage came from Serbia and through some Montenegrins who lived and worked in Belgrade. In 1986, in Belgrade, historian Batrić Jovanović published a book called *Crnogorci o sebi (od vladike Danila do 1941) – prilog istoriji crnogorske nacije (Montenegrins about themselves (from Bishop Danilo until 1941) - a contribution to the history of the Montenegrin nation)*, in which, as the main motivation for its emergence, he indicates the presentation of evidence that all the Montenegrins' ancestors felt both like Serbs and Montenegrins and that the book affirms the thesis that Montenegrins are of Serbian ethnic origin.⁴⁵ 'The duality' of the Montenegrin nation in this setting undoubtedly places Njegoš in Serbian literature, for whom Jovanović directly says that he can also be considered a Serbian writer. The Presidency of the Central Committee of League of Communists of Montenegro criticized Jovanović's writing and stated that a member of League of Communists and a participant of the revolution with such conclusions harms the political situation in Montenegro and brings confusion among the members of League of Communists of Montenegro.⁴⁶ And this confusion (of course not

⁴³ *Pobjeda*, May 29, 1981, 9.

⁴⁴ The memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts available at: <http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/memorandum%20sanu.pdf> Visited on: 5. 12. 2017.

⁴⁵ Dragutin Papović, *Intelektualci i vlast u Crnoj Gori 1945-1990*. (Podgorica: Matica crnogorska, 2016), 381.

⁴⁶ Papović, *Intelektualci i vlast*, 382.

spurred by Jovanović's writing, but by the new climate in Yugoslavia) continued to grow in the coming years, since the Montenegrin Communists did not have monolithic national views.

Conclusion

As Montenegrin historian Dragutin Papović noticed, the designation of Njegoš as the dominantly Montenegrin writer and ruler, and then as the writer who, according to the messages from his work, belongs to Yugoslavism and Serbdom, was official in Montenegro from 1945 to 1989; when the entire proclaimed paradigm would be changed, which would fundamentally change the attitude towards Njegoš and put it into new ideological molds. What should be acknowledged to the communist authorities of that period is that in the official interpretation of Petar II they made a deviation from the nationalist-religious symbolism of his character and work, so he could not become an archetype of Serbian and Montenegrin nationalism, but, on the contrary, if we eliminate the communist phraseology, Njegoš became a symbol of combative humanism and Yugoslav communion. Nevertheless, we cannot say that Njegoš was not "misused" in some way by the Montenegrin communists. His popularity among the people was successfully used to promote communism and Yugoslavism. The official interpreters of Njegoš in the period from 1945 to 1989 tried to portray him as the forerunner of Marxism, social thought, revolutionism, Yugoslav idea. The communists will, similar as Kingdom SCS/Yugoslavia, make Njegoš a national poet of Yugoslavia, but on different grounds. The Communist authorities were genuinely trying to fully adjust Njegoš's character and work to their ideological needs, although the linking of Njegoš and Communism seemed impossible, since Petar II was a representative of a dynasty, not a working class, an Orthodox bishop, a romantic poet without any expressed aspirations for social thought, and above all the archetype of the father of the nation in the greater state project interpretations of the previous authorities. With the extraordinary interpretative acrobatics, the new authorities soon succeeded in overcoming all the challenges of ideologizing. World War II Partisans are legitimized as a contemporary version of Njegoš's liberators from *The Mountain Wreath*; an unpleasant motive - the slaughter of Muslims, is removed by circumventing the religious connotation and using the very popular communist epithet of "domestic traitors"; representing him as a national poet, the

communists addressed directly the workers and peasants who were the foundation of the newly established society, and Njegoš's work was well known to them – thus the receiving of communist slogans and proclamations among the people was easier. In addition to this, what should also be mentioned is the emphatic popularization of Njegoš's non-saintly life and non-compliance with the priestly regulations, which fully corresponded with the communist attitude towards faith. The Montenegrin communists especially emphasized Njegoš's Montenegrin and Yugoslavian interests, defending his legacy from the Greater Serbian interpretations. But after 1989, things would change. Overnight, after the Communist paradigm fell, Njegoš started to be celebrated as the "father" of Greater Serbian nationalism. In today's independent Montenegro, though, Njegoš is a symbol of Montenegro and its European road.

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