

# Nationalism, Identity and Statehood in Post-Yugoslav Montenegro

Kenneth Morrison



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*To Helen ... for the unstinting love and support*





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## List of Abbreviations

AA	<i>Albanska alternativa</i> (Albanian Alternative)
AEK	<i>Agencija za elektronske komunikacije</i> (Agency for Electronic Communications)
ANB	<i>Agencija za nacionalnu bezbjednost</i> (Montenegro's National Security Agency)
ANP	Annual National Programme
AVNOJ	<i>Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije</i> (Anti-Fascist National Liberation Council of Yugoslavia)
BAF	Balkan Air Force
BIA	<i>Bezbednosno-informativna agencija</i> (Serbian Security Information Agency)
BM	<i>Bokeljska mornarica</i> (Boka Mariner's Association)
BS	<i>Bošnjačka stranka</i> (Bosniak Party)
CANU	<i>Crnogorska akademija nauka i umjetnosti</i> (Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts)
CASNO	<i>Crnogorska antifašistička skupština narodnog oslobođenja</i> (Montenegrin Anti-Fascist Assembly of National Liberation).
CDNU	<i>Crnogorska društvo za nauka i umjetnost</i> (Montenegrin Society for Sciences and Arts)
CDT	Centre for Democratic Transition
CEAC	Central European Aluminium Company
CEDEM	Centre for Democracy and Human Rights
CEMI	Centre for Monitoring and Research
CKL	<i>Crnogorski književni list</i> (Montenegrin Literary Paper)
CLRAE	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe
COE	Council of Europe
COMINFORM	Communist Information Bureau
COP	<i>Crnogorski oslobodilački pokret</i> (Montenegrin Liberation Movement)
CPC	<i>Crnogorska pravoslavna crkva</i> (Montenegrin Orthodox Church)
CSCE	Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe
DANU	<i>Dukljanska akademija nauka i umjetnosti</i> (Dukljan Academy of Sciences and Arts)
DC	<i>Demokratski centar</i> (Democratic Centre)
DCG	Democratic Montenegro
DEMOS	<i>Demokratski savez</i> (Democratic Alliance)
DF	<i>Demokratski front</i> (Democratic Front)

DNP	<i>Demokratska narodna partija Crne Gore</i> (Democratic People's Party)
DOS	<i>Demokratska opozicija Srbije</i> (Democratic Opposition of Serbia)
DPS	<i>Demokratska partija socijalista</i> (Democratic Party of Socialists)
DS	<i>Demokratska stranka</i> (Democratic Party)
DSCG	<i>Demokratski savez u Crnoj Gori</i> (Democratic Alliance of Montenegro)
DSS	<i>Demokratska Srpska stranka</i> (Democratic Serbian Party)
DUA	<i>Demokratska unija Albanaca</i> (Democratic Union of Albanians)
DZB	<i>Da Živimo Bolje</i> ('For a Better Living' coalition)
ECM	European Commission
EC	European Community
ECDTL	European Commission for Democracy through Law
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
ECMM	European Community Monitoring Mission
EHF	European Handball Federation
EP	European Parliament
EPCG	<i>Elektroprivreda Crne Gore</i> (Montenegrin national electricity supplier)
ESI	European Stability Initiative
EU	European Union
EUDM	European Union Delegation to Montenegro
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GDP	Gross domestic product
GzP	<i>Grupa za promjene</i> (Group for Changes)
HGI	<i>Hrvatska građanska inicijativa</i> (Croatian Civic Initiative)
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
IFRM	International Federation for the Rights of Man
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IROM	International Referendum Observation Mission
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
IZCG	<i>Islamska zajednica Crne Gore</i> (Islamic Community of Montenegro)
IZJ	<i>Islamska zajednica Jugoslavije</i> (Islamic Community of Yugoslavia)
JAT	Yugoslav Air Transport (Yugoslav state airline)
JNA	<i>Jugoslovenska narodna armija</i> (Yugoslav People's Army)
JUL	<i>Jugoslovenska levica</i> ('Yugoslav Left' party)
KAP	<i>Kombinat aluminijuma Podgorica</i> (Podgorica Aluminium Plant)
KECG	<i>Koalicija za Evropsku Crnu Goru</i> (Coalition for a European Montenegro')
KFOR	Kosovo Protection Force

KSHS	<i>Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca</i> (Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes)
LDMZ	<i>Lidhja Demokratike në Mal të Zi</i> (Democratic Alliance of Montenegro)
LS	<i>Liberalna stranka</i> (Liberal Party)
LSCG	<i>Liberalni savez Crne Gore</i> (Liberal Alliance of Montenegro)
LZCG	<i>List za evropski Crnu Goru</i> (List for a European Montenegro)
MAP	Membership Action Plan
MFA	(Russian) Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MNVS	<i>Muslimansko nacionalno vijeće Sandžaka</i> (Muslim National Council of Sandžak)
MONSTAT	<i>Republički zavod za statistiku Crne Gore</i> (Republican Statistical Office of Montenegro).
MRC	Municipal Referendum Commissions
MUP	<i>Ministarstvo unutrašnjih poslova</i> (Interior Ministry)
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDH	<i>Nezavisna država Hrvatska</i> (Independent State of Croatia)
NDS	<i>Narodna demokratska stranka</i> (People's Democratic Party)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NOP	<i>Narodnooslobodilački pokret</i> (People's Liberation Movement)
NOVA	New Serb Democracy
NS	<i>Narodna stranka Crne Gore</i> (People's Party of Montenegro)
ONK	<i>Organizacija nezavisnih komunista</i> (Organisation of Independent Communists)
OOACPC	<i>Odbora za obnavljanje autokefalne crnogorske pravoslavne crkve</i> (Committee for the Restoration of the Autocephaly of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church)
ORA	<i>Omladinske radne akcije</i> (Youth Action Work)
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PBCG	<i>Prva banka Crne Gore</i> (First Bank of Montenegro)
PCG	<i>Pozitivna Crna Gora</i> (Positive Montenegro)
PfP	(NATO) Partnership for Peace
PNS	<i>Prava narodna stranka</i> (True People's Party)
PzP	<i>Pokret za promjeme</i> (Movement for Changes)
RAF	(British) Royal Air Force
REC	Republican Electoral Commission
ROM	Referendum Observation Mission
RRC	Republican Referendum Committee
RSK	<i>Republika Srpska Krajina</i> (Serb breakaway region within Croatia)
RTCG	<i>Radio Televizija Crne Gore</i> (Radio Television Montenegro)
RTS	<i>Radio Televizija Srbije</i> (Radio Television Serbia)
SAA	Stability and Association Agreement

SACEUR	(NATO) Supreme Allied Commander
SAJ	<i>Specijalni antiteroristička jedinica</i> (Special Anti-Terrorist Unit)
SANU	<i>Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti</i> (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts)
SAO	<i>Srpska autonomna oblast Krajina</i> (Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina)
SAS	British Special Air Service
SDA	<i>Stranka demokratske akcije</i> (Party of Democratic Action)
SDB	<i>Služba državni bezbednosti</i> (Montenegrin security services)
SDCG	<i>Socijaldemokrate Crne Gore</i> (Social Democrats)
SDG	<i>Srpska dobrovoljačka garda</i> ('Serbian Volunteer Guard')
SDPH	<i>Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske</i>
SDP	<i>Socijaldemokratska partija</i> (Social Democratic Party)
SDPR	<i>Socijaldemokratska partija reformatora</i> (Social Democratic Party of Reformers)
SDS	<i>Srpska demokratska stranka</i> (Serbian Democratic Party)
SFRJ	<i>Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija</i> (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)
SKCG	<i>Savez komunista Crne Gore</i> (Montenegrin League of Communists)
SKH	<i>Savez komunista Hrvatske</i> (Croatian League of Communists)
SKJ	<i>Savez komunista Jugoslavije</i> (Yugoslav League of Communists)
SKS	<i>Savez komunista Srbije</i> (Serbian League of Communists)
SPJ	<i>Savez pionira Jugoslavije</i> (Pioneers Union of Yugoslavia)
SL	<i>Srpska lista</i> (Serb List)
SNP	<i>Socijalističke narodne partije Crne Gore</i> (Socialist People's Party of Montenegro)
SNR	<i>Stranka nacionalne ravnopravnosti</i> (Party of National Equality)
SNS	<i>Srpska narodna stranka</i> (Serbian People's Party of Montenegro)
SOE	(British) Special Operations Executive
SPC	<i>Srpska pravoslavna crkva</i> (Serbian Orthodox Church)
SR	<i>Stranka ravnopravnost</i> (Party for Equality)
SRJ	<i>Savezna republika Jugoslavija</i> (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)
SRS	<i>Srpska radikalna stranka</i> (Serbian Radical Party)
SRSCG	<i>Stranka reformskih snaga za Crnu Goru</i> (Alliance of Reform Forces for Montenegro)
SSJ	<i>Stranka srpskog jedinstva</i> (Party of Serbian Unity)
RTCG	<i>Radio televizija Crne Gore</i> (Montenegrin State Television)
UCK/KLA	<i>Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës</i> (Kosovo Liberation Army)
UDSH	<i>Unioni Demokratik i Shqiptarëve</i> (Democratic Union of Albanians)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UOCG	<i>Udružena opozicija Crne Gore</i> ('The United Opposition of Montenegro')
URA	United Reformist Action
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VC	Venice Commission
VJ	<i>Vojska Jugoslavije</i> (Armed Forces of Yugoslavia)
VOPP	Vance-Owen Peace Plan
VRS	<i>Vojska Republike Srpske</i> (Army of Republika Srpska)
VZCIV	<i>Vjerska zajednica Crnogoraca istočnopravoslavne vjeroipovesti</i> (The Religious Community of Montenegrins of Eastern Orthodox Confession)
ZANVOCGB	<i>Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobodjenja Crne Gore i Boke</i> (National Anti-Fascist Council for the Liberation of Montenegro and Boka)
ZAVNOS	<i>Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobodjenja Sandžaka</i> (National Anti-Fascist Council for the Liberation of the Sandžak)
ZKS	<i>Zveza komunistov Slovenije</i> (Slovenian League of Communists)



**Map 1** The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.





**Map 2** The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.



**Map 3** Montenegro (municipalities), 2016.

# Introduction

On 21 May 2016 the culmination of celebrations marking ten years of Montenegro's independence was due to commence. Exactly a decade before, I had witnessed the simmering pre-referendum tensions and the subsequent celebrations in a hot, sticky Podgorica (Montenegro's capital city) as the initial results of the May 2006 independence referendum were announced, so it felt entirely appropriate to be here once again on the occasion of the ten-year anniversary of Montenegro's referendum (and thus a decade since the re-establishment of an independent status lost in 1918). In May 2006, the 'statehood question' was omnipresent and 'referendum fever' was all-encompassing; it felt to me, and I'm sure it did to others, as if Montenegro, at least for a short time, was the centre of the world. Back then, I was absolutely absorbed *in* it and entirely obsessed *with* it, to the detriment of almost everything else in my life. By the time of the independence referendum in 2006, I had already been following Montenegrin politics closely for years, had travelled widely throughout the republic, met many of the key political figures and had attended numerous political rallies throughout Montenegro prior to the referendum (including both of the large pro-independence and pro-union rallies in Podgorica), in an attempt to gauge, as best I could, the public mood. It was exhilarating to acquaint myself so intimately with Montenegro and to personally witness the potential birth (or, rather, rebirth) of an independent state.

While it had been a bitterly contested campaign and had turned out to be a close contest – and one which further widened the pre-existing cleavages that had become increasingly pronounced by the political and social flux of the late 1990s and early 2000s – Montenegro had, seemingly, made significant strides since 2006. The country had consolidated its statehood, become a member of numerous international organizations, performed respectably in sporting competitions and (in November 2015) received an invitation to join NATO while making steady progress towards European Union (EU) membership, though there was little public consensus regarding the latter. While I had visited the country many times since the independence referendum and knew the political situation wasn't entirely rosy, I was, nevertheless, quite sure that the ten-year anniversary celebrations in May 2016 would be marked with something memorable. Indeed, watching Montenegrin television and reading the local press (well, the pro-government press) in the days prior to the events, one could be excused for being in anticipation of something rather special, an event that would rekindle of the spirit and emotion so tangible, even visceral, a decade ago. It seemed fitting to be there to witness it all, but the subsequent celebrations were, frankly, a little disappointing. Perhaps the vast majority of ordinary Montenegrin citizens were now, ten years on, less interested and thus less engaged in matters political. Political stability,

after all, brings with it an inevitable public disengagement with the day-to-day cut and thrust of political life, an apathy of sorts.

Having followed the first ten years of the reinstatement of Montenegro's independence closely, I was intimately acquainted with post-independence political developments, though much of my research was focused on writing (with Elizabeth Roberts) a co-authored book on the history of the Sandžak region and then a book charting the fascinating history of Sarajevo's 'frontline hotel', the Holiday Inn. A decade on from the 2006 independence referendum, it seemed an opportune time to revisit the modern political history of Montenegro, viewed now with the benefit of hindsight, experience and, crucially, some objective distance. I also had personal reasons for doing so. My first book, *Montenegro: A Modern History*, was derived from my doctoral thesis and had been published very quickly after the May 2006 referendum; it was, from a personal perspective, both rushed and, upon publication, incomplete. I never came to terms with what I believed to be a work that was both underdeveloped and hastily executed, and had long ago committed to writing another book on Montenegro (if and when the opportunity presented itself). It was my great fortune that Bloomsbury Publishing offered me the chance to do just that back in 2014. Thus, it is my hope that my acquired knowledge of Montenegro, garnered over nearly two decades of studying the country, will make this book more comprehensive, informed and, ultimately, far superior.

This book, while covering some of the same historical periods (and events therein) as the first, is a more robust and complete analysis of Montenegrin politics between 1989 and 2016, with two chapters dedicated exclusively to political developments in the decade since the 2006 independence referendum. I have included only an introductory chapter on Montenegrin history before 1989, to contextualize the main body of the text that follows. The main purpose of the book, however, is to provide a detailed account of almost three decades during which Montenegro has experienced significant political, economic and social flux – from the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslav state to the independence referendum and towards the country's seemingly inexorable path towards EU and NATO membership. The 'post-Yugoslav' in the title refers to the period after the disintegration of the Yugoslav state in May 1992, which the majority of the book focuses on (though, of course, the smaller Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, comprising only Serbia and Montenegro, existed until 2002). The chapters are essentially chronological, with each based around a critical event (or series of events) that shaped Montenegro's modern political history. These chapters address these events and are framed within a wider context of the debates over statehood, nation and identity, these themes being weaved within the text.

## Montenegro's Twentieth Century: An Overview

On 29 December 1915, King Nikola I Petrović hastily departed the country he had led for over half a century. By then, Montenegro was embattled, close to collapse and, despite the valiant efforts of its army, facing defeat (and subsequent occupation) by the Austro-Hungarian army. He left the then Montenegrin capital, Cetinje, in the dead of night, doubtless expecting to return when circumstances allowed. Nikola, however, would never return to Montenegro and would die in exile in Antibes in France on 1 March 1921, though his remains would be reinterned in Cetinje, the capital of the Kingdom of Montenegro, in 1989. By the time of his death, Montenegro had ceased to exist as an independent country, becoming absorbed into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croat and Slovenes (*Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* – KSHS). It was a lugubrious end to the life of a man who had once sought to make Montenegro the 'Piedmont' of Serbdom, to forge a unified Serbian state with Montenegro at the core. Instead, he and his dynasty were swept away by the inexorable forces of history. By the time Nikola departed Montenegro, this small Balkan country had been an independent state for almost four decades, since the recognition of its independence formalized during the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Montenegro's trajectory towards statehood had been tumultuous and had been achieved only after centuries of struggle against Ottoman domination, during which Montenegro had remained largely (though not entirely) autonomous. Hitherto, Montenegro had essentially comprised only of four *nahije* (districts) – *Katunska, Riječka, Lješanska* and *Crminička* – of *Stara Crna Gora* (Old Montenegro).<sup>1</sup> These areas remained essentially free from Ottoman incursions, and within this space specific Montenegrin characteristics developed. In 1796, however, Old Montenegro was unified with the *Brda* (Mountains). In these peripheries, identification with Cetinje and its environs was significantly weaker, and its people had close ties to Serbia. By 1860, Montenegro was led by Prince Nikola I Petrović, the last in a long line of the Petrović-Njegoš dynasty that had ruled Montenegro since the *Vladike* (Prince-Bishops) had been invested with power in 1516 (Vladikas had, in fact, been elected until 1697, whereupon a hereditary system replaced the pre-existing elective one, with the Vladika emanating from the Petrović clan). Nikola's predecessors, particularly Petar II Petrović 'Njegoš', had forged the foundations of a state by uniting Montenegro's fractious *pleme* (clans), regulating laws and endeavouring to centralize power in Cetinje, the de facto capital of Montenegro. By the time Nikola ascended to become prince following the assassination of Danilo I Petrović in Kotor

in August 1860, Montenegro was essentially a secular principality. Nikola did much to consolidate and build upon the achievements of his predecessors and fought numerous wars of expansion, notably the Montenegrin war against the Ottoman Turks (1876–78) which included victories at Vučji Do and Fundina and led to significant territorial acquisitions.<sup>2</sup> In 1878, Montenegro was recognized as a sovereign and independent state at the Congress of Berlin.<sup>3</sup>

A long period of relative stability commenced, during which Nikola consolidated his power and Montenegro's relations with her neighbours and the Great Powers. The Petrović dynasty was based in the then Montenegrin capital, Cetinje – a small town established by Ivan Cronjević in 1482, it was graced, by the late nineteenth century, with a number of small but rather grand foreign embassies (Russian, French, British and Austro-Hungarian).<sup>4</sup> Nikola built a palace for himself in the town (a stone's throw away from the Cetinje monastery and the *Biljarda*) which included an adjoining royal garden.<sup>5</sup> The first hospital in Montenegro was built in Cetinje in 1873, while the Montenegrin state archive was created in 1895 and the town's first theatre *Zetski dom* was completed in 1898. Though achieving much in state building and being the recipient of foreign education (he had been educated in both Trieste and Paris), Nikola was an autocrat who ruled Montenegro in a markedly traditional way, dispensing 'his own personal justice under an ancient elm tree in Cetinje' and making it his business to acquaint himself with every Montenegrin of note, so that he could understand their strengths and weaknesses.<sup>6</sup> Nikola did much to ingratiate himself to the courts of Europe, marrying a number of his seven daughters to some of the continent's most illustrious royal families (among them his daughter Zorka to Petar Karadjordjević in 1883), earning him the title of the 'Father-in Law of Europe'. His opponents, while recognizing his endeavours and successes, regarded him as a man of the past: patriarchal, even backward. To them, Serbia, a constitutional democracy, made Nikola's Montenegro appear anachronistic. By the early 1900s, Nikola faced growing challenges from those Montenegrins who no longer regarded him as the 'First Serb' and instead supported Serbia and the Karadjordjević dynasty as the leaders of the Serb nation.<sup>7</sup>

He made necessary concessions when required, or as the times demanded. Indeed, after Tsar Nicholas had introduced a constitution in Russia in 1905, Nikola did likewise. However, the 1905 constitution allowed for the creation of a Montenegrin Assembly, though it had only limited powers. Within the membership of the assembly were those who opposed the autocratic rule of Prince Nikola I Petrović, who formed the *Klub narodnih poslanika* (Club of National Deputies), known more commonly as *Klubaši* (club members), who formed, in 1906, the People's Party (*Narodna stranka* – NS), which advocated greater levels of democratization and unification with Serbia. The *Klubaši* (the term was more commonly used than NS) was led by Šako Petrović and was one party which included young Montenegrins educated in Belgrade and who regarded Prince Nikola's rule as autocratic and backward.<sup>8</sup> There were two distinct strands within the NS: one committed to achieving their objectives through the embryonic democratic system, the other to more radical, revolutionary methods to attain their goal of Montenegro's unification with Serbia and the dethroning of the Petrović dynasty.<sup>9</sup> Animosity between the *Klubaši* and the Petrović dynasty was

heightened during the 'Cetinje Bomb Affair' of 1907, an apparent attempt by more radical elements within the *Klubaši* and members of the Serbian *Crna ruka* (Black Hand) organization to assassinate Nikola and initiate the unification of Serbia and Montenegro. Convinced of Belgrade's complicity in the plot (the weapons used had been traced to a Serbian military store in Kragujevac in Serbia), Nikola severed relations with Serbia, and a series of trials were held to bring to account a group of alleged conspirators (including leading members of the NS) whom Nikola believed were aiming to plant the seeds of insurrection.<sup>10</sup> The sentences were severe but deemed necessary, given the accusations that Serbian agents had conspired to undermine the Petrović dynasty and procured weapons for that very purpose.

The NS subsequently boycotted the 1907 elections, and, in response, Prince Nikola formed, in 1907, the True People's Party (*Prava narodna stranka* – PNS), known as *Pravaši*, which was led by Lazar Mijušković. Though containing some advocates of unification with Serbia (within a federal structure), they generally supported the maintenance of Montenegro's independence and the primacy of the Petrović dynasty.<sup>11</sup> The PNS were the only party contesting the elections, and once in control of the Montenegrin Assembly, they passed legislation allowing Prince Nikola to be declared king and Montenegro to become a kingdom in 1910. However, while it appeared that the PNS's (and Nikola's) control was unassailable, Nikola's relentless campaign against the *Klubaši* also strengthened opposition to his authoritarianism. Indeed, tensions again reached dangerous levels during the so-called 'Kolašin Conspiracy' in 1909, an attempted coup led by a small group of anti-monarchist revolutionaries (with assistance from Austria-Hungary).<sup>12</sup> From their base in Podgorica, they planned to foment an uprising which would topple Nikola and secure freedom for those still imprisoned over the 'Cetinje Bomb Affair' of 1907.<sup>13</sup> They were, ultimately, unsuccessful but the Kolašin affair only served to further damage Serbian–Montenegrin relations and radicalize the internal political situation within Montenegro.

Regional power politics soon took precedence over merely internal matters, however, with the outbreak of the First Balkan War in 1912. Joining an alliance with Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria against the Ottoman Empire, and, in the Second Balkan War, with Serbia against Bulgaria, Montenegro gained much of the Sandžak, Metohija (including the towns of Djakovica and Peć), and gained the towns of Bijelo Polje, Mojkovac, Berane and Pljevlja, among others.<sup>14</sup> As a consequence, Montenegro established a common border with Serbia (dividing the Sandžak between them) and expanded into areas where many did not identify with Montenegrin statehood or identity. As Ivo Banac notes, Montenegrins, following the Balkan Wars, 'ruled over a large body of hostile Muslims, many of them Albanians, but also over highland tribes with a tradition of strong ties to Serbia'.<sup>15</sup> A campaign to take the town of Skadar (Shkōder) in 1913, which would have incorporated a greater number of Albanians into Montenegrin territory, proved costly when the Great Powers ruled that Montenegro had to cede the town to the newly independent Albanian state.

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on *Vidovdan* (St Vitus's Day), 28 June 1914, by Gavrilo Princip, a member of *Mlada Bosna* (Young Bosnia), sparked a crisis of immense proportions, one which would soon envelope the entire European continent. In the wake of the assassination, the 'July Crisis' unfolded with

Austrian pressure coming to bear upon Serbia. Faced with war against one of the Great Powers, the Serbian government endeavoured to placate the Austrians, but were unable to do so. Upon the Austrian declaration of war, Montenegro declared its solidarity with Serbia, and on 6 August 1914 King Nikola immediately issued a decree of mobilization, despite an Austro-Hungarian inducement to cede Scutari to Montenegro if it declared neutrality. Despite early military successes throughout 1914, in particular the Montenegrin attack on the Austrians at Budva and the retaking of Pljevlja from the Austrian army, Bulgaria's entrance into the war (motivated by potential territorial gains in Macedonia, Greece and Romania) in the summer of 1915 dictated that the Serbian Army now faced further onslaughts from the east. With Bulgarian forces blocking the route to Salonika, the only option was a dangerous retreat through a hostile Albania.<sup>16</sup> By late 1915, Serbia had been overrun and Montenegrin forces were dangerously ill-equipped on the 'Lovćen front' and would soon be forced to make their last stand during the *Mojkovačka bitka* (Battle of Mojkovac). While Serbian troops moved in a column towards the Albanian coast where Allied transport would evacuate (to Corfu) those who survived the arduous and dangerous journey, the Montenegrin Army were increasingly pinned down by overwhelming Austrian firepower.<sup>17</sup> Yet their dogged determination dictated that they held their lines during fierce battles on 6 and 7 January 1916 – known as *krvavi božić* (Bloody Christmas) – and despite heavy losses asserted control over Mojkovac as the Austrians retreated. A subsequent counteroffensive by the Austrians again led to fierce fighting, and on 18 January 1916, unable to preserve their defensive lines, and faced with overwhelming Austrian military might, the Montenegrin Army had little choice but to retreat.<sup>18</sup> By this time, however, Cetinje and its environs had essentially fallen to the Austro-Hungarian army.

Despite attempts to sue for peace, the Montenegrin monarchy made preparations to flee. As Cetinje was encircled by Austrian troops, the royal family and the bulk of the Montenegrin government left Cetinje on 29 December 1915. After a brief time in Podgorica and Scutari, Nikola departed for Italy two days later, though he would subsequently move to France (first to Bordeaux and then Neuilly).<sup>19</sup> He would never return to Montenegro. The Montenegrin Army was formally dissolved on 25 January 1916, though many former soldiers waged a guerrilla conflict against the Austrian occupiers until the end of the war.<sup>20</sup> In the immediate period following the departure of the Montenegrin monarchy, the Austrians established a military administration, run by the Military General Governorship, which was in turn directly subordinate to the Austro-Hungarian high command.<sup>21</sup> Conditions were harsh under occupation, and, as a consequence of limited food supplies, death due to starvation was not uncommon.<sup>22</sup> Concentration camps were established, thousands were interned and the impoverished and undernourished population were expected to participate in public construction programmes (such as the construction of the Kotor-Njeguši-Cetinje road).<sup>23</sup> But despite the obvious superiority of the occupying forces, the Montenegrins did not simply resign themselves to passive acceptance. Opposition to Austrian occupation came in the form of *komiti*: guerrilla units who sought to inflict damage upon the Austrians whenever possible.<sup>24</sup>

The Austrian occupation of Montenegro ended in November 1918, but as their soldiers withdrew Serbian soldiers moved in. King Nikola, exiled in France, could do



little to influence events on the ground, and following the arrival of Serbian troops, elections for the national assembly proceeded. The *Velika narodna skupština Srpskog naroda u Crnoj Gori* (Great National Assembly of the Serb People in Montenegro), known more generally as the *Podgorička skupština* (Podgorica Assembly), culminated on 29 November 1918.<sup>25</sup> Those in favour of union with Serbia printed their list of candidates and their agenda on white paper, while supporters of continued Montenegrin independence printed theirs on green paper. Thus, the terms *Bijelaši* (Whites) and *Zelenaši* (Greens) came to symbolize those either in favour of union or those in favour of the preservation of Montenegro's independence, a loose union with Serbia or, at the very least, the preservation of a Montenegrin 'entity' within the KSHS. A slim majority, however, voted in favour of Montenegro unifying with Serbia (and, subsequently, other Yugoslav territories), under the Karadjordjević dynasty and to depose King Nikola I Petrović-Njegoš and his dynasty.<sup>26</sup> On 25 November 1918 (in the northern Serbian city of Novi Sad), the 'Great National Assembly' had already proclaimed the unification of Srem, Banat and Bačka with Serbia.<sup>27</sup> Thus, following the Assembly of Podgorica, the Great National Assembly announced the formal unification of Serbia and Montenegro. Following these proclamations, both Bosnia & Herzegovina and Croatia followed suit, with the National Council in Zagreb declaring that those South Slavs living in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire wished to unite with Serbia and Montenegro. Thus, KSHS, later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (*Kraljevina Jugoslavija* – KJ), was declared on 1 December 1918.

South Slav unity had finally been realized, but the seeds of its subsequent crisis were already sown. 'Yugoslavism' meant one thing to the Serbs and quite another to the Croats and Slovenes who headed the Yugoslav Committee. The former saw the new state as a fulfilment of the dream of a state for all Serbs, albeit along with a significant number of Croats, Slovenes and other minorities. For them, it was completely natural that Serbia, with its established state infrastructure, army and dynasty (not to mention their losses during the 1914–18 war), should lead the new state. The latter, however, envisaged that the new state would take the form of an equally balanced federation, a partnership of equals, within which the Croatian and Slovenian lands of the former Habsburg Empire would unite with Kingdom of Serbia. Such divergent expectations were to have a significant impact on the future of the KSHS.<sup>28</sup>

From his base in Neuilly, France, King Nikola I Petrović could do nothing to influence matters in Montenegro. He did, however, implore Montenegrins not to recognize the legitimacy of the outcome of the Podgorica Assembly. His supporters in Montenegro thereafter launched, on Orthodox Christmas Eve (6 January 1919), the *Božićna ustanak* (Christmas Uprising), during which the *Zelenaši* (Greens) besieged Cetinje and surrounding towns and villages and targeted those deemed guilty of crimes against Montenegro. Led by Krsto Popović<sup>29</sup> (who had led Montenegrin troops during the Battle of Mojkovac), their initial campaign was relatively successful, but the Greens were plagued by internecine divisions between factions which advocated full independence and those who merely wished to restore Montenegrin pride by achieving a more equal status within the KSHS.<sup>30</sup> Resistance to the new regime also emanated from the northern parts of Montenegro where there were significant Muslim populations. Indeed, in Plav and Gusinje local leaders sought some form of autonomy,

a development that elicited a strong reaction from the KSHS authorities. Their response was unforgiving, with approximately 450 (mainly Muslims) being killed after a small uprising against the unification of Serbia and Montenegro and the creation of the KSHS.<sup>31</sup> In addition to the Plav and Gusinje incidents, an estimated 700 Albanians were killed in a similar crackdown in nearby Rožaje.<sup>32</sup> According to Mehmedalija Bojić, similar reprisals took place in Bijelo Polje, Pljevlja and Berane, although these were relatively minor by comparison.<sup>33</sup>

After the uprising had been largely crushed, King Nikola requested that one of the key organizers of the uprising, Jovan Plamenac, leave Montenegro and join him in France where the Montenegrin government-in-exile would be formed. In January 1919, the government-in-exile was formed and led by Plamenac; the main objective of the government was to internationalize the issue of Montenegro, appeal to the Great Powers during the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, maintain links between the government-in-exile and armed resistance groups in Montenegro and create an army-in-exile (based in Gaeta in Italy). But the course of events undermined their cause. During the Paris Peace Conference, which opened in January 1919, Montenegro was 'the empty chair', treated, according to Warren Whitney, akin to a 'conquered nation instead of an ally that had entered the war at once and made every sacrifice for the common cause' and its exiled rulers (the Montenegrin government-in-exile, based in Italy) observing developments from a distance.<sup>34</sup> Montenegro had its advocates, including the *Engleski Crnogorac* (English Montenegrin), Alexander Devine, who became the London-based 'Honorary Consul General' to the Montenegrin government-in-exile, though his significant endeavours proved to be in vain.<sup>35</sup> France formally severed diplomatic relations with Montenegro in December 1920, the United States in January 1921 and Great Britain in March of the same year; all quickly closed their embassies in Cetinje.<sup>36</sup> Montenegro ceased to exist as an international subject. By the time of the Great Powers' recognition of the KSHS in 1922, King Nikola had died; his successor, Danilo, abdicated soon after and the Montenegrin government-in-exile was in disarray.<sup>37</sup> With Queen Milena now the head of the Montenegrin royal court, matters worsened; her relationship with Jovan Plamenac was strained and the Montenegrin community-in-exile began to fragment. In Montenegro, the uprising had largely stalled, though some Green *komiti* continued to a tenacious guerrilla campaign until 1924. As the rebellion faded, Jovan Plamenac, who had led the Montenegrin government-in-exile, returned to Montenegro in 1925, having been permitted to do so by the Serbian prime minister, Nikola Pašić. The Green rebellion may have been defeated and the 'Montenegrin Question' settled, though the nature of the unification of Montenegro and Serbia in 1918 and the brutality of the civil conflict that followed remained the source of antagonism. The Assembly of Podgorica, the Christmas Uprising and the loss of statehood had collectively caused significant trauma and left many nursing grievances that would periodically re-emerge throughout the twentieth century.

Montenegro, bereft of a government and state institutions, was now fully incorporated into the KSHS. Cetinje, once the capital of an independent state, with its palaces and diplomatic residencies, was relegated to the status of provincial irrelevance, while Montenegro remained a poor region with the lowest population density in the KSHS, with no industry, few crafts and little in the way of trade.<sup>38</sup> By 1922, much of

what was Montenegro was absorbed into the *oblast* (district) of Cetinje, one of thirty-three such districts within the KSHS. The 1920s were characterized by economic marginalization and a fragmented politics, with the Greens channelling their support towards the Montenegrin Federalist Party (*Crnogorska federalistička stranka* – CFP) and the emergent Montenegrin branch of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (*Komunistička partija Jugoslavije* – KPJ), led by Marko Mašanović.<sup>39</sup> The CFP were the only political party in Montenegro that did not have their base in Belgrade, and their political position was thus viewed with suspicion.<sup>40</sup> The party's theoretician, Sekula Drljević, posited that Montenegrins were of Illyrian (as opposed to Slavic) descent and that the Serb and Montenegrin mentalities were too divergent to be reconcilable.<sup>41</sup> It was, however, the KPJ that were making a more significant impact in Montenegro. The KPJ, unusual in the fact that they were intellectuals, students and educated youth, performed well in the 1920 elections, winning 37.99 per cent of the popular vote in Montenegro. They were, however, outlawed in 1921 by the KSHS authorities and unable to continue their political activities through democratic channels began to operate underground.<sup>42</sup>

The Croats and Slovenes argued that Yugoslavia should be a confederation of sorts, with power decentralized to the republican capitals. Increasingly, bitter arguments in the Yugoslav parliament between the Serbian Radical Party (*Srpska radikalna stranka* – SRS) and the Croat Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka* – HSS) led to violence, and, in June 1928, Puniša Račić, a Montenegrin (PNS) delegate in the assembly, shot and killed HSS delegates Pavle Radić and Djuro Basariček, and fatally wounded the party's leader, Stjepan Radić.<sup>43</sup> It was simply one in a series of grim incidents which led to King Aleksander Karadjordjević dissolving parliament and imposing of the '6 January dictatorship'. Intended to mitigate the intensifying political crisis, Aleksander abrogated the constitution, banned political parties, and essentially ruled by decree. Many opposition politicians were arrested and imprisoned, serving to further isolate Yugoslavia's non-Serbs. In an attempt to create a genuine Yugoslav identity, all nationalist sentiment was to be crushed and 'Yugoslavism' was to be imposed from above. As part of the Karadjordjević governments' efforts to stem the rising tide of Serb and Croat nationalism, Yugoslavia's internal borders were redrawn into nine *banovine* (districts), with Montenegro largely incorporated into the *Zetska banovina*.<sup>44</sup> Political parties in Montenegro (particularly the Communist Party) were targeted and brutally repressed by KSHS forces. King Aleksander's assassination in Marseille on 9 October 1934 by a Macedonian, Vlado Chernozemski (though the assassination was sponsored and organized by small group of *Ustaša*, a Croatian fascist organization that had fled Yugoslavia after the 6 January dictatorship), threw the KJ into crisis. Though the assassination did not bring forth the existential crisis that those who had planned it envisaged, on the whole it brought Yugoslavs together.<sup>45</sup> The new government of Milan Stojadinović did their best to build upon the unity expressed by many Yugoslavs in the wake of Aleksander's death, but faced both internal problems and a rising threat from fascism in Germany and Italy.

In Montenegro, opposition to the 6 January dictatorship (and, later, the Stojadinović government) and related political instability became more acute. Following actions taken against members of the CFP and the KPJ in Montenegro (during which there

were arrests and detentions), protestors gathered for a series of demonstrations. The largest of these took place in Belveder (near Cetinje) in June 1936, during which demonstrators were fired upon by the police (killing six people).<sup>46</sup> In the violence that accompanied these demonstrations, eleven people were killed and forty were injured. Further demonstrations took place the following year in Podgorica and then subsequently in Berane and Danilovgrad.<sup>47</sup>

In the immediate wake of Stojadinović's downfall in February 1939, solutions were sought to Yugoslavia's internal problems. These negotiations would be led by the Yugoslav Regent, Prince Paul, the president of the Yugoslav government, Dragiša Cvetković and the leader of the HSS, Vladko Maček. While they sought to solve the 'Croat Question', the latter also sought to address the issue of the status of Bosnia's Muslims (the intelligentsia of which, he claimed, considered itself of Croat ethnicity). Given that his own views corresponded to this, he concluded that if indeed Muslims were in essence Croats, then Croats represented the majority in Bosnia.<sup>48</sup> By extension, he argued, Bosnia should be given to Croatia. However, with the signing of the 1939 Cvetković-Maček pact, the so-called *Sporazum* (Agreement), Maček accepted a compromise which ceded Croatia significant levels of autonomy and a large *Hrvatska banovina*, while dividing Bosnia & Herzegovina between Croatia and Serbia. Montenegro remained within the *Zetska banovina* and firmly within the Serbian sphere of influence. The plan, however, was never fully implemented; and while it may have contributed to taking the heat out of the Croat question in Yugoslavia, it opened up the question of the Serb minority in Croatia (among other things). The *Sporazum* represented an attempt to forge better unity between Yugoslavia's national groups (particularly Serbs and Croats), but was the precursor to collapse of the state.

Externally, too, the storm clouds were gathering. A month after Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, Italy invaded and occupied neighbouring Albania; by September, Germany's invasion of Poland heralded the outbreak of war in Western Europe. In this dark international environment, Yugoslavia found herself in a precarious predicament. The KJ government, led by Dragiša Cvetković, attempted to remain neutral, hoping to maintain a distance between themselves and the fascist regimes in Italy and Germany. Indeed, both the Yugoslav government and the Prince Regent (Pavle) sought to consolidate the KJ's neutral stance and reach a level of understanding with their increasingly aggressive neighbours, a position that became increasingly tenuous. By 1940, retaining such a position became increasingly problematic. Yugoslavia was not only located in dangerously close proximity to the fascist powers, it was also surrounded by their satellites, and despite the KJ's previous efforts to placate their neighbours (such as the signing of the 'Pact of Eternal Friendship' with Bulgaria and the formation of the 'Yugoslav-Italian Friendship Society' with Italy), it was too little too late. Germany's determination to secure what (in the event of a failure to control Yugoslav territory and supply routes through it) would have represented something of a soft underbelly rendered the Yugoslav government's position untenable. Thus, the KJ leadership buckled under the strain, submitting to German demands and eventually agreeing to sign the 'Tripartite Pact' on 25 March 1941.

But while the leadership acquiesced to this agreement, many within the Yugoslav military and among wider society were outraged. Many Serbs and Montenegrins viewed the Germans as the old enemy from the First World War with whom no concessions should be given. The actions of the Yugoslav government were, therefore, essentially perceived as a betrayal. Two days later, in the early hours of 27 March 1941, a small group of embittered Yugoslav army officers executed a bloodless coup against the Cvetković government.<sup>49</sup> They proclaimed the young King Petar II to be Serbia's new monarch, and dismissed the Council of Regency and the Cvetković government.<sup>50</sup> The coup was widely supported by the citizens, who demonstrated their support on the streets of Belgrade, Cetinje, Podgorica, Split, Skopje, Kragujevac, Novi Pazar, Bijelo Polje and many other towns throughout Yugoslavia (albeit that these were concentrated predominantly in Serbia and Montenegro).<sup>51</sup> Defiant in the face of the imminent dangers, the crowds chanted *bolje rat nego pakt* (better war than a pact). On 27 March 1941, a few hours after the coup in Belgrade, Hitler summoned his generals and informed them of his desire to eliminate Yugoslavia as a state. 'Operation Punishment' began on 6 April 1941 with a heavy aerial bombardment of Belgrade in advance of a land-based pincer movement with troops approaching simultaneously from Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Italy. The new Yugoslav government capitulated under intense pressure on 17 April 1941, and the royal family, headed by King Petar II, fled the country to Greece, Jerusalem and British-controlled Palestine en route to London, where the Yugoslav government-in-exile was based for the duration of the war.<sup>52</sup>

### The war within a war (1941–45)

Following the capitulation of the army and the departure of the royal government, Yugoslavia was partitioned among Axis powers.<sup>53</sup> Montenegro was occupied by German forces advancing from Bosnia & Herzegovina and Italian forces stationed in Albania (although the former withdrew almost immediately). Italy's long-held territorial ambitions on the eastern side of the Adriatic made Montenegro a natural focus of their attention. They annexed the Bay of Kotor to Italy, occupied the majority of towns in the hinterland, but ceded the areas of Ulcinj, Plav, Gusinje and Rožaje to a nascent 'Greater Albanian' entity that comprised the aforementioned areas in Montenegro, the majority of Kosovo, parts of Western Macedonia and Albania proper. While Italian interest in Montenegro was primarily strategic (the Bay of Kotor would serve as an Italian naval base), it would prove problematic and costly to occupy the hinterland; indeed, the occupation of Montenegro was an economic burden from the outset.<sup>54</sup> Throughout the period of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, their army frequently avoided incursions into Montenegro; the principle was simple: in rocky and barren Montenegro, a small army would be defeated and a large army would starve. It was a lesson the Italians learnt to their cost. Although the Italians could generate limited food supplies from local sources, they had to import significant stocks of food (estimated to be between 1,200 and 1,500 metric tons of food monthly) from across the Adriatic.<sup>55</sup>