

member states shall be responsible for the unhindered operation of a common market, including the free flow of people, goods, services and capital. Harmonisation of the economic systems of the member states with the EU economic system shall overcome the existing differences, primarily in the spheres of trade and customs policies. In both regards, economic reforms that have already been carried out in the member states shall be taken into full account, while solutions that would provide for the quickest integration into the European Union shall be accepted. Transitional solutions in harmonising trade and customs policies should take into account the interests of the member states. The European Union shall assist in the accomplishment of these objectives and monitor the process on a regular basis. The modalities for the achievement of these objectives shall be elaborated in parallel with the Constitutional Charter. If one of the member states believes that the other does not live up to the commitments under this agreement concerning the operation of a common market and the harmonisation of trade and customs policies, it shall reserve the right to raise the matter with the EU in the context of the Stabilisation and Association Process with the view to the adoption of appropriate measures. The EU shall guarantee that, if other conditions and criteria for the Stabilisation and Association Process are fulfilled, the agreed principles of constitutional organisation shall not be an obstacle to a rapid conclusion of an Agreement on Association and Stabilisation.

President of the Federal Republic Yugoslavia Vojislav Koštunica

Deputy Federal Prime Minister Miroljub Labus

President of the Republic of Montenegro Milo Đukanović

Premier of the Republic of Serbia Zoran Đinđić

Premier of the Republic of Montenegro Filip Vujanović

Witnessed by EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana

Belgrade, March 14 2002

Srđa Pavlović

Who are Montenegrins? Statehood, identity, and civic society

Introduction

The last decade of the 20th century was a time of significant political, ideological and demographic changes in Eastern and 'Central' Europe.¹ We witnessed the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the disappearance of the Berlin Wall, as well as the rise of ethnic, local and regional aspirations that re-introduced the issues of nationality and nationalism to the European political scene. The over-optimistic prediction that the era of nationalism and nation states was approaching its final phase proved to be premature in discounting the nature and vitality of those concepts. Today, nationality and nationalism appear to be the most universal legitimate values in contemporary political life.

This chapter will elaborate on the historical continuity and some of the contemporary manifestations of the problems facing Montenegro in its struggle to re-negotiate its position in the region and to preserve distinct notions of national and cultural identity among its peoples. The primary objective of the chapter is to highlight the issue of identity construction in Montenegro over time. It should be kept in mind that the concept of identity and the process of identity construction are ever-changing phenomena. Accordingly, it is neither possible nor advisable to speak of identity in terms of finality, but rather in terms of an ongoing process of accommodation, adjustment and re-definition.

For scholars interested in Montenegro's past, writing about its history means probing through layers of mythologised yester-years and trying to shed more light on the question of the origins of Montenegrins. When was Montenegro first mentioned and in what sense? Was the Montenegrin state only a 'peripheral extension of Serbia' or was it an independent and recognisable entity?² Who are Montenegrins? Are they Serbs populating the area known as Montenegro, thus adopting the toponym as their ethnic name? Are they a South Slavic people with their own distinct identity, incorporating certain elements of the pre-Slavic inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula? Are they an integral part of a broader Serbian ethnic framework ('the best of the Serbs') that ended up isolated from the nation's nucleus due to an unfortunate historical circumstance? Is it possible to talk about the identities of peoples living in present-day Montenegro independent of an all-inclusive Serbian paradigm and outside the canonised binary opposition of Serb versus Montenegrin identity?

- 1 For more detailed discussions on the nature of the concept of 'Central Europe' from the Balkan perspective see Maria Todorova: *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 140-160; Tomislav Z. Longinović: *Borderline Culture: The Politics of Identity in Four Twentieth Century Slavic Novels* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993); K.E. Fleming: 'Orientalism, the Balkans and Balkan Historiography,' *American Historical Review* Vol. 105 No. 4 (October 2000), pp. 1218-1233. Also see Perry Anderson: 'A Ripple of the Polonaise', *London Review of Books*, November 1999. For some of my own thoughts on the subject, see Srđa Pavlović: 'Kako Sačuvati Staru Damu Evropu', *Matica* No. 7-8 (Autumn/Winter 2001), pp. 29-48, and Srđa Pavlović: *Iza Ogladala* (Podgorica: CID, 2001), pp. 53-80.
- 2 Christopher Boehm: *Montenegrin Social Organisation and Values: Political Ethnography of a Refugee Area Tribal Adaptation* (New York: AMS Press, 1983), p. 9.

All of the available historical sources do not provide a clear answer to these questions. The initial contact and, later, the mixing and intermarrying of Slavs with the indigenous population of the Balkans has blurred the lines and prevented a clear-cut ethnic distinction. From the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century onwards, it is possible to make a distinction between Montenegrins and Serbs in terms of their independent political histories, as well as their tradition, customs, moral codes and the elements that best define the social cultures of their respective societies. The issue of the contested identity of Montenegrins represents the starting point in every debate that evolves around the question of political relations between Montenegro and Serbia. From the Serbian perspective, Montenegrins were and still are ethnic Serbs living in Montenegro and their state is regarded as proof of the continuity of Serb presence in the region from the medieval times to present.

Methodological dilemma: tribal or national consciousness?

The case for the state's independence and sovereignty might be easier to argue, but resolving the issue of identity/identities in the Montenegro of the period is a daunting task.³ Examining this aspect of Montenegrin history should begin by addressing the issue of the national awareness of its population in the past. This is an important point of departure because it deals with the issues of 'ancestral land' and 'temporal continuity', and with the application of modern analytical categories such as nation and national identity to periods prior to the emergence of these concepts. Did the 17th and 18th century Montenegrin tribes think of themselves in national terms and were they aware of the existence of such a level of identification?

Even though Montenegrin history and tradition provide numerous examples of identification with Serbs, it would be safe to argue that such identification was of a general, non nation-specific nature and had more to do with the notion of shared religious beliefs than with ethnic/national awareness among the Montenegrin tribes of the period. However, many scholars are quick to include Montenegrins with Serbs and to point out that the region was, for centuries, a refuge for the remnants of a defeated Serb nation.⁴ This inclusion is rationalised by invoking the shared language and religious beliefs of Montenegrins and Serbs, and elevating the importance of certain common features of their respective traditional cultures.⁵ Others maintain that Montenegrins could and should call themselves a nation because they

3 On the development of Montenegrin statehood, see Šerbo Rastoder's *Short review of the history of Montenegro*, this volume.

4 'From the tenth to the twentieth century, the Zeta area preserved a nucleus of Serbian culture and nationalism at a time when Serbia was overrun by Bulgars or Ottomans.' Boehm: *Montenegrin Social Organisation*, p. 9. Barbara Jelavich wrote about Montenegro as 'the second Serbian state', in Jelavich: *History of the Balkans: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, Vol. 1. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 247. Also see R. W. Seton Watson: *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*, (New York: Howard Fertig, 1966), p. 31 and Adrian Hastings: *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 128, 142.

5 The argument about shared religious beliefs represents a contested territory because 'Orthodoxy alone can not for any length of time paper over other factors of division ... Montenegrin Orthodoxy has resisted, and still resists, incorporation within a Serb church.' Hastings: op. cit., p. 142.

have a different political history and because one could make a strong case for the long-standing existence of an apparent horizontal identification among Montenegrins.⁶

It appears that both approaches are coloured by opposing political views which support projecting the concept of national consciousness back in time in order to establish historical continuity for the presence of a particular nation in the region. Such methodology rationalises the concept of a lost 'ancestral land' that has to be reclaimed. In modern times, the urge to repossess the 'cradle' of one's civilisation from an unwanted 'other' has often resulted in significant demographic changes and forced population movements. Furthermore, projecting a modern concept back in time does not seem entirely appropriate because it is difficult to apply the logic of national belonging/awareness to periods before such concepts existed.⁷ However, with the advent of an ideology of national awakening in Montenegro during the last decades of the 19th century, the character, intensity and motives for the region's conflicts acquired a specific and new framework.⁸ Only with the emergence of a political project that called for nation-building and national homogenisation did the peoples in the region begin confronting each other in relation to their respective ethnic and religious prerogatives (Christians against the 'Turks' (Muslims); Serbs against Croats, or Serbs against Albanians, and vice versa). Prior to that, the various inhabitants of the Balkans fought each other for many reasons and on behalf of many empires, but the elements of ethnic/national animosity did not play a significant role (if any at all) in those confrontations.⁹

Montenegrin society at the time (17th and 18th century) was characterised by occasional and voluntary co-operation at the inter-tribal level. However, these temporary alliances had little to do with the modern concept of national identity but, rather, limited themselves to military aims, primarily fencing off Ottoman forces. There can be no question about the primacy of tribal autonomy in Old Montenegro and Brda over the powers of the central authority in Cetinje.¹⁰ Furthermore, almost all the Montenegrin tribes (with the exception of those from *Katunska Nahija*) assisted at one time or another the neighbouring Ottoman

6 Jozo Tomašević: *Peasants, Politics and Economic Change in Yugoslavia* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1955), p. 126 (footnote).

7 With regard to the timeframe of the emergence of nation-states and the concept of nationalism, I am more inclined to follow the so-called 'modernist view', advocated by scholars such as Eric Hobsbawm, John Breuilly, Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson than the views expressed by Adrian Hastings.

8 Ivo J. Lederer: 'Nationalism and the Yugoslavs', in Peter F. Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer (eds.): *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1969), pp. 399-403.

9 Noel Malcolm: *Kosovo: A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1998), Introduction, pp. xxviii-xxx. For an interesting analysis of the position of Catholic Albanians in Montenegro at the end of the nineteenth century, see: Šerbo Rastoder; *Janusovo lice istorije: odabrani članci i rasprave*, (Podgorica: Vijesti, 2000), pp. 105-125.

10 'Montenegro was divided into two parts - Montenegro and the Brda. The first was old Montenegro with some additions on the Herzegovinian side; the second, the mountain mass that borders on Albania.' Mary Edith Durham: *Some Tribal Origins, Laws and Customs of the Balkans* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928), p. 34. Brda is the name of the tribal land to the north and north-east of so-called Old Montenegro. The region of Brda encompassed tribes such as Bjelopavlići, Piperi, Kući, Vasojevići and others.

forces against other tribes from the area.¹¹ In the Montenegro of the 17th and 18th century, it was the tribe and not the state/central authority that nearly exclusively provided the mechanisms of horizontal identification for individuals. The central authority played a very limited role in this process since it was the tribe that always acted as safe harbour for the individual and constructed, and maintained the social poetics of the time.¹² With this in mind, it would be safe to conclude that the Montenegrin tribesmen of the 17th and 18th centuries valued their tribal allegiance highly and were much more aware of their belonging to a particular tribe than they were of thinking of themselves in terms of a national identity. New national demarcation lines within Montenegro and in respect to its neighbours came into existence only with the advent of the idea of national awakening and national homogenisation on a more general level.

Politics of identity: from Serbhood to Yugoslavism and back

The Montenegro of Prince (later King) Nikola I Petrović Njegoš (ruler from 1860 until 1918) was characterised by a trend in the modernisation of the country and the strengthening of its central authority, as well as the development of a much-needed infrastructure including roads, elementary and secondary schools, a postal service, banking and telephone services. These first steps in the development of the Montenegrin economy and the restructuring of the state apparatus produced some negative consequences. At the time when Prince Nikola was working on strengthening the central authority and elevating his own role in the country's affairs, some tribal leaders felt increasingly marginalised and saw their authority diminished. Nikola's departure from the traditional way of conducting politics (consulting with the tribal leaders) was seen as not only the abandonment of the 'old ways' but also as the first step in dissolving the traditional values of Montenegrin society.¹³ On 19 December 1905, the Constitutional Assembly, known as *Nikoljdanska Skupština* (the St. Nicholas Day Assembly), proclaimed the first Montenegrin Constitution. According to the new law of the land, Montenegro was a constitutional but not a parliamentary monarchy, since the Prince retained the ultimate say in matters of the state and in the decision-making process.¹⁴ What followed were a series of short-term political alli-

- 11 Mary Edith Durham, op. cit., p. 82. *Nahija* (Nahiya) was the smallest administrative unit in the Ottoman state. Katunska Nahija was the core of Old Montenegro. See Jelavich, op. cit., Vol. 1 p. 57.
- 12 Svetlana Boym views social poetics as the basis for cultural identity and as 'cultural intimacy that provides a glue in everyday life... Such identity involves everyday games of hide-and-seek that only 'natives' play, unwritten rules of behavior, jokes understood from half a word, a sense of complicity. State propaganda and official national memory build on this cultural intimacy, but there is also a discrepancy and tension between the two.' Svetlana Boym: *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), pp. 42-43. Also see Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 13-14.
- 13 Ivo Banac: *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 276.
- 14 The first Montenegrin Constitution was drafted jointly by Prince Nikola and his legal adviser and journalist from Belgrade, Stevan Ćurčić. It greatly resembled the Serbian Constitution of 1869. Jagoš Jovanović: *Istorija Crne Gore*, 2nd ed. (Cetinje: Izdavački Centar Cetinje & CID, 1995), pp. 337-38.

ances, a succession of more or less inefficient governments and the development of serious political rivalry in Montenegro.¹⁵

After fifty years of rule, Nikola decided in 1910 to proclaim Montenegro a Kingdom. The coronation represented an effort to strengthen Nikola's political position at home in addition to being an effort to internationalise the question of Montenegro's desired territorial expansion at the expense of the Ottoman state. For supporters of his decision, the coronation was a continuation of the tradition of Montenegrin independence and an important step forward in the process of the complete 'renewal' of the ancient Kingdom of Zeta from 1077. In emphasising his attachment to the Serbian nation, King Nikola I pointed out the importance of Montenegrin independence and sovereignty, effectively dividing Montenegro into two hostile political camps. Those opposing his policies argued that the coronation was nothing more than the act of a power-hungry despot. The new kingdom nevertheless proved to be a brief accomplishment because, at the end of World War I, Montenegro lost its independence and sovereignty, and found itself first as part of Serbia and then, later, of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.¹⁶

During this period, the contested nature of Montenegrin identity came to the political forefront and constituted a stumbling block in relations between Serbia and Montenegro. The issue of identities and loyalties gained prominence due to a number of factors, geography and politics being among the most important. The process of constructing the new geographical boundaries of Montenegro had a profound impact on how interchanges took place between local populations and the state authority concerned, and how the locals adapted to these new frontiers.¹⁷ The significant change in the country's size, which, in turn, was closely related to the economic state of affairs at the local level, affected the mechanisms of political and national identification (at the individual level and at that of the group). Different groups and individuals living in Montenegro at the time had very specific regional and local interests which could not easily be reduced to a universalised 'national' character or political unit, while the frontiers delineated by the European powers and by the educational and economic reforms, which had been thought to have solidified post-Ottoman identities, proved to be confusing at best.¹⁸ Moreover, the different groups within a given tribe (family, clan/*familija*, *bratstvo*) in Montenegro had very specific interests which did not always correspond with the interests of the tribe as a whole. These conflicting needs and aspirations at the micro level had rendered the process of national homogenisation in Montenegro even more difficult and had, furthermore, undermined the cohesiveness of the entire undertaking. The general perception of this process

- 15 See Jovan Đonović: *Ustavne i političke borbe u Crnoj Gori 1905-1910* (Beograd: K.J. Mihailović, 1939).
- 16 Jovan R. Bojović: *Podgorička skupština 1918: dokumenta* (Gornji Milanovac: Dečje novine, 1989).
- 17 During the reign of Prince (later king) Nikola I Petrović, Montenegro quadrupled its territory. As Ivo Banac points out, after the Balkan wars and for the first time 'Montenegrins ruled not only over a large body of hostile Muslims, many of them Albanians, but also over highland tribes with a tradition of strong ties to Serbia.' Banac, op. cit., p. 275.
- 18 This adaptation was particularly difficult for non-Christians and non-Slavs living in areas bordering Old Montenegro, some of which were later incorporated into the Montenegrin state.

in Montenegro goes along the lines of monocausal explanations of the phenomena of ethnic/national identity which are undergoing continuous modification but, in spite of the romanticism of national histories and the persistence of many nationalists, the process of forging a new Montenegrin identity was anything but a smooth ride. Indeed, remnants of that old tribal loyalty can still be detected today among the citizens of Montenegro. Many of them display a significantly high level of attachment and loyalty to their regional, local and tribal identities. In most cases, the first level of identification is either the region/nahiya (*Katunjanin, Crmničanin, Lješnjani, Bjelopavlić, Cuca, Bjelica, Malisor, Bokelj*), or the tribe whose geographic boundaries and name usually correspond with the region (*Vasojevići tribe, Drobnjak tribe, etc.*).¹⁹ Only then, and only in terms of a more general level of identification, which is, at present, heavily coloured by the ideologies of the day, does one come across national categories such as Montenegrin, Serb, Serb from Montenegro, Albanian, Muslim or Croat.

Political conflict during the first decades of the twentieth century also contributed to the formation of national identity. A growing parliamentary opposition characterised the Montenegrin political landscape of the period. The parliament became the arena for a bitter confrontation between the representatives of the so-called 'people's movement' and those representing the government and Prince/King Nikola I. The main political parties were the People's Party (*Narodna Stranka*), better known as Klubaši (their leader was Šako Petrović), and the True People's Party (*Prava Narodna Stranka*), known as Pravaši (led by Lazar Mijušković). Supporters of the People's Party not only opposed the policies of Prince (later King) Nikola I, but were also passionate advocates of the unification of Montenegro with Serbia. Most of them regarded Montenegro as a Serb state and Montenegrins as ethnic Serbs. Consequently, the majority of party members and supporters identified themselves as ethnic Serbs. The opposing political group consisted of members of the True People's Party who supported Nikola's policies and the concept of Montenegrin independence and sovereignty. However, no political group in the Montenegro of the time represented a uniform entity, particularly when it came to the issue of identity. The demand of the *Pravaši* for independence was heavily influenced by the politics of the time and most of its members did not dispute the perceived ethnic/national identity between Montenegrins and Serbs; they considered themselves to be Serbs from Montenegro. Prince Nikola was one of the principle advocates of such identity politics.²⁰ However, there were also those among the *Pravaši* who not only advocated Montenegrin independence but thought of themselves as distinctively Montenegrin.

From the turn of the twentieth century onwards, relations between Montenegro and Serbia were conditioned by the intensity of the dynastic struggle for prestige among the South Slavs, i.e. between the Montenegrin dynasty of Petrović-Njegoš and the Serbian dynasties

¹⁹ *Katunjanin* is a person from the *Katunska* Nahiya.

²⁰ Ivo Banac pointed out: 'The tradition of Montenegrin self-centeredness did not, however, prevent reciprocity with the Serbians, though on the basis of a veritable worship of Montenegro. On the contrary, the Serb tradition percolated down to the consciousness of most ordinary herdsmen by a system of mnemonic devices by which the church continually admonished the Montenegrins to remember the glories of the Nemanjić state. Time and again, Montenegrin rulers took the lead in attempting to restore the medieval Serbian empire.' Banac, op. cit., p. 247.

of Obrenović and Karađorđević. All three dynasties presented themselves as the rightful claimants of the ancient crown of Stefan Dušan, the medieval Serbian ruler. From as early as the 1870s, developments clearly indicate the main line of confrontation between Cetinje and Belgrade: namely, the struggle for power between these dynasties and the tendency of the Serbian dynasties (especially the Karađorđević) to dominate the region and to project Serbia as the South Slav version of Piedmont.²¹ This conflict was multi-faceted and incorporated the struggle for various contested territories, issues of dynastic prestige, and different nationalist visions of the future of the region, as well as the efforts of the elites to exercise absolute control over political life in the Balkans.²² Identity politics in Montenegro played a significant role in this process, which began in earnest in the early decades of the twentieth century and which has continued with varying intensity and in many forms until the present day.

Following the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, the struggle in Montenegro between those in favour of the union and those opposed became stronger. Many politicians and military leaders in Montenegro, as well as the exiled king and his government, were of the opinion that the decision of unconditional unification with Serbia should have been made by the legally-elected Montenegrin Parliament and in adherence to the Montenegrin Constitution of 1905. They argued that any union with neighbouring South Slav states should be based on the principles of equality and respect for Montenegrin sovereignty. In the event of union, they maintained, Montenegro could and should play a constitutive role, rather than a secondary one. The exiled king and his government argued that, in the future Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Montenegro should be one of its constituent elements and not just a province of Serbia. The advocates of such political views were

²¹ 'The comparison between Serbia and Piedmont regularly pressed in these years was fundamentally flawed because Piedmont was far too provincial a part of Italy to dominate and alienate the rest of a once united country. Serbia, on the other hand, was a country already gripped by an obsessive nationalism, basically of a Germanic sort, bent on the 'ethnic cleansing' of a 'Greater Serbia' long before the 1990s. Ethnic cleansing had been written into Serb nationalism from the early nineteenth century.' Hastings, op. cit., p. 143. Domination of the unwanted 'other' and the eventual 'cleansing' of desired territory have been common features in every case of expansionist nationalism throughout the world, and the case of Serbia should be seen as the rule rather than the exception. Even though my own views on this matter differ somewhat from those of Hastings, I trust that his assessment of the nature of Serbian nationalism carries certain validity to it. Also see Mirko Grmek, Marc Gjidana and Neven Šimac: *Le Nettoyage Ethnique: Documents Historiques sur une Ideologie Serbe* (Paris: Fayard, 1993); in spite of its one-sided approach to the issue of nationalisms in Yugoslavia, this volume provides essential documentation covering both the nineteenth and the twentieth century.

²² 'Serbia wants to liberate and unite the Yugoslavs and does not want to drown in the sea of some kind of Yugoslavia. Serbia does not want to drown in Yugoslavia, but to have Yugoslavia drown in her.' Letter by the Serbian Prime Minister, Nikola Pašić, to Jovan M. Jovanović-Pižon in London, 15 October 1918. Quoted from Dragovan Šepić: *Italija, saveznici i Jugoslavensko pitanje, 1914-1918* (Zagreb, 1970), p. 358. Also see Đorđe Đ. Stanković: *Nikola Pašić i Jugoslovensko pitanje*, Vols. 1-2 (Beograd: BIGZ, 1985), and Charles Jelavich: 'Nikola Pašić: Greater Serbia or Yugoslavia?' *Journal of Central European Affairs*, Vol. 11 (July 1951).

referred to at the time as 'Greens' (*zelenaši*). The other group of politicians and scholars advocated the unionist approach, interpreting the act of unification as the natural progression of a process that had acquired popular support through the years. Hence, the 'Whites' (*bjelaši*) based their argument on the assumption that Montenegrins and Serbs were but one people. The result of this political shift was that those Montenegrins who supported the Greens were seen as advocates of a separate Montenegrin identity, while the supporters of the Whites ascribed to the theory that Montenegrins had a Serb ethnic origin. These conflicting points of view and the assumption of ethnic and national 'oneness' between Montenegrins and Serbs proved to be the crucial point of conflict between the opposing ideologies in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, as well as in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), created at the end of World War II.²³

The confrontation between Greens and Whites reached a new level during the Second World War. After the capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1941, the Italians occupied Montenegro and were initially supported by the Greens, whose power base was in the southern and central parts of Old Montenegro. After the initial stage of collaboration with the occupying force, the Greens, together with partisan/communist forces, managed to defeat the Italians and liberate (for a short period of time) almost the entire territory of Montenegro. The Whites, on the other hand, predominated in the region of *Brda* and northern Montenegro (bordering Serbia) and their political and military allegiance was to the Serbian nationalist forces (*Četnici* or Chetniks) which were led by Nikola Bojović, Pavle Djurišić and Dragoslav-Dražo Mihailović.²⁴ As Christopher Boehm has pointed out, this geo-political differentiation portrays Old Montenegro as 'separatist,' while the other two regions favoured merger with a Serb-dominated state.²⁵

Socialist Yugoslavia inherited the unresolved issues of an incomplete process of national definition and unification among its constituent elements. The appearance of unity and tolerance in the former SFRY had primarily a representational character and was lacking in substance, it also had strong overtones of the communist ideological umbrella.²⁶ The communist authorities claimed that South Slavs and other nations living in the region

- 23 Referring to the process of state and nation-building among the South Slavs and the viability of the Yugoslav state created in 1918, Adrian Hastings concludes that: 'It is a case study of how not to construct a nation from a mix of closely-related ethnicities and proto-nations. Inter-war Yugoslavia was constructed as a Greater Serbia just as the heirs of Karadžić and Garašanin were determined it should be. Serbia was the only part which entered it as already politically independent.' Hastings, op. cit., pp. 142-143. Also see Ljubodrag Dimić: *Kulturna politika Kraljevine Jugoslavije, 1918-1941*, 3 Vols. (Beograd: Stubovi kulture, 1996-1997).
- 24 Valuable documents related to this period of Montenegrin history are available in Vlado Marković and Radoje Pajović: *Saradnja Četnika sa okupatorom u Crnoj Gori: dokumenti 1941-1945* (Podgorica & Cetinje: Republički Odbor SUBNOR-a Crne Gore, 1996).
- 25 It would seem that the Greens sided with Italy in hope that the post-war settlement might result in the renewal of an independent and sovereign Montenegro. Robert Lee Wolf rightly noted that the Greens rebelled against the Italian occupation when it became clear that Italy's intentions were to turn Montenegro into a puppet state. See Robert Lee Wolf: *The Balkans in Our Time* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 214-215.
- 26 For an interesting analysis of the relations between the communist authorities and peasants, see Melisa Bokovoy: *Peasants and Communists: Politics and Ideology in the Yugoslav Countryside 1941-1953* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998).

had united on a solid foundation only because of their political guidance and had done so under the communist ideological premises of brotherhood and unity. The rhetoric of such claims consisted of a curious mix of negative references to the past and a rather enthusiastic and positive prognosis for the future. National aspirations as a mode of cognition and perception of reality were characterised as negative and backwards, as aspirations that would jeopardise the further progress of society.

During the early 1950s, however, the communist rhetoric of a necessary change in society was intended to convey a message of hope and to have a soothing effect on the collective psyche. Above all, it was intended to grant more credibility to the efforts of the communist authorities in their alleged pursuit of a more just and humane society. Communist leaders attempted to create Yugoslav supranationality (Yugoslavism/*Jugoslovenstvo*). The new elite hoped such an achievement would make obsolete the nationalist claims of local oligarchies.²⁷ In the process of creating Yugoslav supranationality in the 1950s through to the mid-1960s, the communist authorities attempted to structure society so that it functioned according to the principle of unity in diversity. The six Yugoslav republics had been perceived as somewhat distinct but they remained constitutive elements of a larger and politically unified structure. Such unity in diversity served the purpose of sidelining, at least temporarily, the issue of nationalism in the former Yugoslavia.²⁸ The unsuccessful attempts of the communist elite to achieve supranational harmony in SFRY included suppressing the regional voices which were calling for the recognition of the national specificities of Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, Macedonians and the other nations living in the region. It also meant using the ideological paradigm to marginalise the elements of national distinctiveness, culture and tradition of all of the constitutive nations. This suppression and marginalisation was accomplished by positioning local and regional representations of national and cultural distinctiveness at the level of harmless folklore, popular festivities with strong ideological overtones and exotic museum exhibits. Parallel to that, the communists managed to silence, at least temporarily, local and regional hegemonic and chauvinistic nationalist claims.

- 27 In the sixties, Hugh Seton-Watson wrote: 'In Yugoslavia the official doctrine was Yugoslav nationalism. This was supposed to comprise, and to transform into a higher quality, the nationalism of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. But in practice it was interpreted as Serbian nationalism writ large.' Hugh Seton-Watson: *Nationalism - Old and New* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1965), p. 16. For a detailed account of a famous 1961 debate on the nature of Yugoslavism between the Slovenian philosopher Dušan Pirjevec and the Serbian writer and communist dignitary Dobrica Ćosić, see Andrey Helfant: *Serb Intellectuals and the National Question, 1961-1991*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University, 1998).
- 28 For a more comprehensive account, see Denison Russinow: 'Nationalities Policy and the National Question', in Pedro Ramet (ed.): *Yugoslavia in the 1980s* (Boulder, Co: Westview, 1985). Miron Rezun has also pointed out that Tito believed the final result of the party's efforts to be the establishment of one true nation (Miron Razun: *Europe and the War in the Balkans: Toward a New Yugoslav Identity* (Westport, Co: Praeger, 1995), p. 106. Also see Milovan Đilas: *Tito: The Story from Inside* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), p. 134; Paul Shop: *Communism and the Yugoslav National Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 119-198.

Identity issues in Montenegro were covered with the blanket of ideological uniformity while their manifestations were diverted into various cultural and social stereotypes.²⁹ It should be noted, however, that the expressions of Montenegrin identity per se were viewed as the manifestation of a retrograde ideology and that, in spite of the rhetoric of brotherhood and unity, it was generally assumed that Montenegrins and Serbs were but one nation.³⁰ The absence of voices arguing in favour of Montenegrin national and cultural distinctiveness on the public scene could be taken as proof of the above-mentioned general consensus on this issue. There was indeed some room for manoeuvre regarding the expression of identities other than Montenegrin, but such room was very limited. Ideological pressure along the lines of the adoption of the communist-promoted concept of Yugoslav supranationality was not eagerly embraced by everyone in Montenegro. This idyllic image of a country where everyone was equal was somewhat tarnished by the decision of many Albanians living in Montenegro to change their last names in order to fit into the prescribed mould. From the late 1960s through to the late 1980s, many Catholic Albanians from Montenegro added the Slav suffix *ić* to their last names and some even Slavicised their first names. This Slavicisation trend turned Albanian last names of *Arapaj* into *Arapović*, *Djakaj* into *Djokić*, *Ujkaj* into *Ujkić*, *Siništaj* into *Siništović*, *Nikaj* into *Nikić* and/or *Nikočević*, *Perkaj* into *Perković*, and so forth. Even though one could not easily point out a clear pattern of the state-sponsored modification of identity manifestations in Montenegro, examples of the aforementioned adjustments among Catholic Albanians could very well indicate the existence of considerable pressure. It is interesting to note that such a trend could be detected only among Catholic Albanians living in Montenegro; their fellow Albanians of the Islamic faith did not engage in the same process.³¹

Nationalist sentiments were on the rise in many regions of Yugoslavia in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. During this period, an intense campaign was conducted by many Albanian politicians, university professors and intellectuals living in Kosovo regarding greater autonomy and the establishment of a bilingual education system in the province. In Montenegro, Serb nationalist forces gained prominence for a short period of time (1970-1973) by publicly denouncing communist ideology and advocating the ideas of the

29 On the public scene in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Montenegrins have inhabited the realm of epic stereotypes. They have been thought of as intelligent, educated, brave, honest, trustworthy and proud, but also as lazy and power-loving individuals. Public perception rarely questioned their assumed ethnic, national and cultural closeness/oneness with Serbs. Such a perception was an integral part of a vocabulary of popular culture, while the lack of scholarly works on the subject might indicate that this stereotypical view of Montenegrins was taken for granted.

30 This assumption is visible in the works of Dimitrije Dimo Vujović: *Ujedinjenje Crne Gore i Srbije* (Titograd: Istorijski Institut NRCG, 1962) and *Crnogorski federalisti 1919-1929* (Titograd: CANU, 1981), as well as in Dimitrije Vujović: 'O etnogenezi Crnogoraca i marksističkom odredjenju Nacije', *Praksa* (1981).

31 From 1990 onwards, some Catholic Albanians in Montenegro switched back to their original last names. The author confirmed this trend of reversal to the original last names during his most recent stay in Montenegro in 2002; the particular cases mentioned in this text appear as the result of the author's personal communications with the individuals involved.

Četnik movement.³² In Croatia, the movement known as the Croatian Spring (*Hrvatsko Proljeće* or *Maspok*, 1972) represented the first serious test for the central government in Belgrade and the Yugoslav Communist Party.³³ In Serbia, the early 1970s were a time of the ideological and political cleansing of the communist elite and of intellectuals at the universities in Belgrade and Novi Sad, a process soon to be followed in the other republics.³⁴ The ideological aspect aside, what many activists in these movements had in common were their strong expressions of nationalist sentiment (Serbian, Croatian and Albanian), paired with demands for more power for the republics and a more open system of governance. With regard to the issue of national identification, the specificity of the post-World War II Yugoslav case lies partly in its proclaimed separate road to socialism and in the creation of sophisticated mechanisms of adoption and adaptation in dealing with the national question. The system allowed and controlled dissent along these lines in order to project the false impression of its strength and flexibility, as well as its democratic character. Adopting and adapting nationalist policies became the means of preserving communist power and, ultimately, resulted in the destruction of the country in the last decade of the twentieth century.

Back to the future: Montenegrins as the best of all Serbs

The disintegration of Yugoslavia resulted in Montenegro forming together with Serbia the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). The issue of the (in)equality between the two re-

32 Among the most vocal advocates of this ideology in Montenegro were several journalists from the Montenegrin daily *Pobjeda*, such as Jovan Dujović, Janko Vujisić, Luka Gojnić and Vitomir Nikolić, and the newspaper's Editor-in-Chief, Milo Kralj. Judging by the outcome of the whole affair, and that none of the above-mentioned individuals faced any charges (some were transferred to new posts in media organisations in Belgrade), it is reasonable to conclude that these nationalist-minded journalists enjoyed at least the limited support of the Montenegrin and Serbian political elites. On the other hand, those who argued against the revival of the Četnik ideology in Montenegro suffered serious professional and personal consequences, ranging from lost employment to having to serve prison terms. Journalists such as Milika Pavlović, Marko Đonović, Velimir Tasić, Đuro Đukić and Zaga Vujović lost their jobs or were forced to resign their posts, while Momčilo Jokić served a lengthy prison sentence. For a more detailed account of these events, see: 'Izveštaj Statutarne Komisije OK na Opštinskoj Konferenciji SK Titograd', *Titogradska Tribina*, 4.10.1972; 'Informacija Sekretarijata CK i OKSK Titograd', *Pobjeda*, 24.1.1973. Also see: Husein Bašić and Milika Pavlović: *Smrt duše/Podrum* (Podgorica: Montenegrin P.E.N. Centre & Damad, 1992), pp. 289-309.

33 Its leaders, Savka Dabčević-Kučar and Mika Tripalo were high-ranking communist party functionaries.

34 University professors Zagorka Pešić-Golubović, Ljubomir Tadić, Miladin Životić, Nebojša Popov, Svetozar Stojanović, Mihailo Marković and many other intellectuals (Mihailo Mjihalov, Miroslav Mandić, Slavko Bogdanović) lost their posts at universities and were banned from all public engagements. For a more comprehensive account of the political cleansing in the Serbia of the period, see: Aleksandar Nenadović and Mirko Tepavac: *Sjećanja i komentari* (Beograd: Radio B92, 1998). See also Nebojša Popov: 'Disidentska Skrivnica', *Republika* (August 2000), and *Contra fatum: slučaj grupe profesora filozofskog fakulteta 1968-1988* (Beograd: Mladost, 1989).

publics of FRY subsequently proved to be a matter of growing concern for many Montenegrins. Occasional exchanges of opposing political arguments and accusations between Belgrade and Podgorica over the nature of the common state and its future came close to breaking point in the late 1990s. In 1997, the Montenegrin leadership publicly distanced itself from the policies of Slobodan Milošević. The debate between Podgorica and Belgrade greatly resembled that of 1918, when the issue of the unification of Montenegro with Serbia was a hot political topic.³⁵

Until the early 1990s, conversations about Montenegrin sovereignty, independence and identity outside the Serb national and cultural paradigm were rare; people usually spoke about it sotto voce. Those who oppose Montenegrin independence and deny Montenegro's right to its own political expression (unitarists) are many and their political credos differ on more than one level. However, they all share a common thread: the perception of Montenegrins as an integral part of a larger Serbian ethnic and national framework.³⁶ Such a perception is based on a historical narrative that elevates the role of Montenegro in holding together and preserving the construction of the Serbian national mythos. This narrative consists of many elements that are interdependent and which display certain proto-scientific characteristics. The traditional culture and history, and the general cultural matrix ascribed to Montenegrins, have been analysed almost exclusively within the Serb national paradigm and have been seen as part of a larger, and presumably uniform, Serbian historical and cultural corpus. This methodological approach has characterised not only the works of many Serbian historians but can also be detected in the works of a number of western analysts of the South Slavic past.³⁷ More often than not, Montenegrins have been perceived as a rather exotic, albeit useful, element within the Serbian ethnic and historic matrix. Furthermore, this constructed historical narrative has been rationalised and represented through the Serbian national mythology. In this approach, the historical reality of relations between Montenegro and Serbia is reduced to a figure of memory. This collapsing of historical reality manifests itself in the form of a Grand Narrative: the myth of Montenegro as the *pinnacl*e of Eastern Orthodoxy; Montenegrins as the best of all Serbs; and

35 On these discussions, see Beáta Huszka's chapter on 'The Dispute over Montenegrin Independence', this volume.

36 Petar Vlahović, 'The Serbian Origins of the Montenegrins', available at: www.njegoss.org/vlahovic.html. For an interesting analysis of the duality of Montenegrin character, see Banac, op. cit., pp. 270-291, and Andrei Simić: 'Montenegro: Beyond the Myth', in Constantine P. Danopoulos and Kostas Messas (eds.): *Crises in the Balkans* (London & Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p. 122.

37 See Ferdo Čulinović: *Jugoslavija Između dva rata* (Zagreb: Izdavački Zavod JANU, 1961); Vladimir Dedijer et al: *History of Yugoslavia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974); Milovan Đilas: *Njegoš: Poet, Prince, Bishop* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966); Novica Rakočević: *Politički odnosi Crne Gore i Srbije 1903-1918* (Cetinje: Obod, 1981); John Treadway: *The Falcon and the Eagle: Montenegro and Austria-Hungary, 1908-1914* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1983); Jelavich, op. cit.; Charles and Barbara Jelavich: *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1977); Andrew B. Wachtel: *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Policies in Yugoslavia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

the capital Cetinje as *Little Zion*.³⁸ The history of Montenegro is often presented as the history of a remote army camp, whose swordsmen were guarding for posterity the spirit of the *Eastern Orthodox* faith and protecting it from falling under the cold shadow of the *Crescent*. This insistence upon the religious aspect in such interpretations, as well as the validity of the entire argument, is contestable, since Montenegrins have always displayed an unusual attitude towards religion and the Church institutions:

No matter how much a Montenegrin may love his church, he does not like to attend the service, and lately the church and state authorities are making an effort to ensure that church services are attended regularly. In earlier times there were those who never entered a church as long as they lived. ... In his absentmindedness, a Montenegrin enters the church with his cap on his head. I had an opportunity to see older priests do the same thing. ... This is why the religious beliefs of Montenegrins, regardless of how deep they may be, are either not expressed openly through rituals or are displayed in a very simple and sometimes even crude manner.³⁹

The Montenegrin state was often perceived not to have been a real state but only a historical sentiment (heavily coloured by the oral tradition); it was seen as a historical aberration that survived within the specific conditions of the permanent armed struggle against the Ottoman invader.⁴⁰ Those who ascribe to such a view argue that, once the Ottoman state had dissolved, there was no reason for a Montenegrin state to exist outside the all-inclusive Serbian national and political frameworks. Following the same argument, some contemporary Serbian nationalists argue that:

Montenegro had its own state before Serbia did, but Montenegro has always been a Serbian state – even under Njegoš and the Petrović dynasty. Bavaria, for example, was once the Kingdom and is now called the Free Bavarian State, but no one dreams of turning it into an independent state, let alone of denying it its German national identity.⁴¹

Within such a political and ideological equation, the independent Montenegrin state made sense only as long as it carried forward the torch of an undying spirit of *Serbhood*. The reference to Montenegrins as the *best of all Serbs* (still forcefully advocated by expo-

38 Analysing the process of the reduction of historical reality to a figure of memory is one of the primary tasks of the historical sub-discipline called Mnemohistory. 'Unlike history proper, mnemohistory is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered. It surveys the story lines of tradition, the webs of intertextuality, the diachronic continuities and discontinuities of reading the past... It concentrates exclusively on those aspects of significance and relevance which are the product of memory – that is, of a recourse to a past.' Jan Assmann: *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 7-9.

39 Pavel Apolonovich Rovinsky: *Etnografija Crne Gore*, Vol. 1 (Podgorica: CID, 1998), pp. 282-283. Original publication: St. Petersburg, 1897.

40 See Janko Spasojević, *Crna Gora i Srbija*, (Paris: Informativna Služba Ministarstva Inostranih Dela, 1919). Jovan Četković, *Ujedinjenje Crne Gore i Srbije* (Dubrovnik 1940) and *Omladinski pokret u Crnoj Gori* (Podgorica 1922); Novica Šaulić: *Crna Gora* (Beograd 1924); Pantelija Jovović: *Crnogorski političari* (Beograd, 1924); Svetozar Tomić: *Desetogodisnjica ujedinjenja Srbije i Crne Gore* (Beograd, 1929).

41 Ljubomir Tadić, Member of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (SANU) in *Glas Javnosti*, 10-11.2.2001. See also Vlahović, op. cit.; and Simić, op. cit., pp. 122-124.

nents of Serbian expansionist nationalism) is an example of how the ethnic factor is simplified and isolated, as well as hypertrophied, in the attempt to prove the ethnic purity of Montenegrin identity. This might be the deepest epistemological, ideological and political meaning of the thesis that Montenegrins are *racially pure* or even *the purest of Serbs*. The problem of the multi-layered character of Montenegrin identity has been, in most cases, interpreted as the relationship between the subordinate concept of 'Montenegrin', representing the notion of territoriality, and the superordinate concept of 'Serb', representing ethnic/national belonging. Thus, Montenegrins have been perceived as ethnic Serbs living in the geographical region known as Montenegro. It could be argued that such a view represents a simplification of the issue of a *Montenegrin Serbhood*.

Montenegrins preserved the notion of their distinctiveness with regard to other South Slavic groups and continuously reaffirmed it through history. The Montenegrin version of Serbhood differs from its manifestations in other areas of Yugoslavia which are populated by peoples of the Eastern Orthodox faith. A heroic attitude towards life, the notion of a messianic role in the historical process of the revival of the medieval Serbian empire and the prolonged armed struggle against the Ottoman invader, as well as the historical continuity of the Montenegrin state, are elements that distinguish the concept of Montenegrin Serbhood from similar concepts in Bosnia, Croatia or Serbia proper. Ultimately, the idea of Serbhood was understood to be an attribute of belonging to the Eastern Orthodox faith, and to Christianity in general, as well as to the larger South Slavic context. Based on such an understanding, many Montenegrins incorporated this idea in the building blocks of their national individuality. The result of such incorporation is the historical precedent of the notion of Montenegrin Serbhood which, because it was understood as the ideology of 'constant struggle', did not stand in opposition to a distinct character of Montenegrin national identity. It was used as a tool of pragmatic politics in order to achieve the final goal. Montenegrins used the terms Serbs and Serbhood whenever they referred to the South Slavic elements which were rallied in an anti-Ottoman coalition and around the Christian Cross. Moreover, it is true that identity construction is a long process of historical/cultural sedimentation and that the final product is perceived as a relatively long-lasting and stable phenomenon. However, it would be a mistake to regard it as static or unchangeable. Identity is a dynamic phenomenon whose manifestations can vary over time – even more so if such an identity is positioned on the periphery of a dominant cultural/political force.

If 'we are what we remember,' the truth of memory lies in the identity that it shapes. This truth is subject to time so that it changes with every new identity and every new present. It lies in the story, not as it happened but as it lives on and unfolds in collective memory.⁴²

With this in mind, it does not seem entirely appropriate either to contest or to deny contemporary expressions of the national identity of Montenegrins and their distinctiveness in regard to Serbs by invoking that, a century or so ago, many of their ancestors (some rulers from the Petrović dynasty included) declared themselves to be Serbs.⁴³ A more productive

42 Assmann, op. cit., p. 14.

43 Many leaders of the Montenegrin Federalist Movement, who were the most ardent advocates of an independent Montenegro during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, publicly declared themselves as 'the best of Serbs'.

approach might be to recognise the ongoing re-definition of identity on an individual level (living a *private narrative*) and to acknowledge this as a process whose contemporary manifestations should not be mummified within the strict limitations of the conceptual framework set by the national awakening of the nineteenth century. At present, it seems that a plurality of the Montenegrin population constructs and lives a narrative (on an individual level as well as on the level of collective experience) that is somewhat different from this earlier model. On the other hand, defending a distinct Montenegrin identity by vehemently negating its ever-changing nature, while seeking to establish a non-existent absolute continuity with the early inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula or with early state formations in the region, usually produces negative consequences.⁴⁴ Both strategies of dealing with the identity issue in Montenegro (advocating or denying their distinctiveness) are present in contemporary Montenegro and their prominence might indicate that many people are still wrestling with the significance of national identity. On a more general level, both approaches are based upon seemingly different myths: one about *purity*, the other about *temporal/historical continuity* with medieval state formations. Furthermore, the long-lasting debate over the identity of Montenegrins could be taken as a clear indication that their identity does have a distinct nature: that the notion of a distinct/separate Montenegrin identity is constantly being argued against proves the existence of such a level of identification.

Epic poetry and/or history: the appropriation of Montenegro

That which envelops this multi-layered character of Montenegrin identity and impedes a more complete understanding of Montenegrin history is, among other things, its tradition of epic poetry, the contents of which are open to various and often conflicting interpretations and which represent valuable material for myth-making. To adopt the metaphor of Slavoj Žižek, one could say that epic poetry in Montenegro, unlike the role it plays in other societies, is the stuff that *others'* dreams are made of.⁴⁵ The political dimension of Montenegrin identity is best illustrated by numerous and contradictory interpretations of the literary achievements of Petar II Petrović Njegoš.⁴⁶ His legacy serves as a telling example of how literature, religion and politics in the Balkans can be interwoven in the service of particular political agendas. His work has been appropriated by both supporters and opponents of a distinct Montenegrin national and cultural identity, while each group has managed to find enough evidence in Njegoš's literary work to advance their own political

44 An interesting example of this 'independentist oriented' methodology is the book by Radosav Rotković: *Odakle su došli preci Crnogoraca* (Podgorica: Matica Crnogorska, 1992).

45 This expression is borrowed from the title of Slavoj Žižek's lecture: 'Yugoslavia: The Burden of Being the Stuff OTHERS' Dreams are Made of', given at the conference *Construction, Deconstruction, Reconstruction of South Slavic Architecture*, Cornell University, New York, 27.3.2001.

46 Metropolitan Petar II Petrović Njegoš, the nineteenth-century ruler of Montenegro, and his poetic endeavours occupy a central stage in the South Slavic myth-making factory. Njegoš's *magnum opus* is his epic poem *The Mountain Wreath*, written in 1846 in Cetinje and published in Vienna in 1847. The poem appeared in print in the same year as Vuk Stefanović Karadžić's translation of the New Testament. P.P. Njegoš: *The Mountain Wreath*, transl. by Vasa D. Mihailović (Belgrade: Serbian Europe Publishing, 1997).

vision of Montenegro. By the end of the 19th century, the debate about Njegoš's sense of national identity had already developed into a debate about the national and cultural identity of Montenegrins.⁴⁷

The most famous of his poems, *The Mountain Wreath* (Gorski Vijenac) is set in 18th century Montenegro and describes the attempts of Njegoš's ancestor, Metropolitan Danilo, to regulate relations between the region's warring tribes. Njegoš constructed his poem around a single event that allegedly took place on a particular Christmas Day in the early 1700s, during the rule of Metropolitan Danilo: the mass execution of Montenegrins who had converted to Islam.⁴⁸ This work of literature is praised and criticised at the same time, and it has been used to support diametrically opposing political views. Many Serbian nationalists use it as historical justification of their attempt to keep alive a dream of Greater Serbia and as the ultimate proof of the Serb identity of Montenegrins:

The Mountain Wreath represents a synthesis in another sense as well. It is based on historical facts, thus it can be called a historical play. It epitomises the spirit of the Serbian people kept alive for centuries; indeed, there is no other literary work with which the Serbs identify more.⁴⁹

Some Croatian nationalists recognise in Njegoš's poetry the ultimate statement of the oriental nature of South Slavs living east of the Drina River, thus reinforcing the popular

47 On Njegoš and the appropriation of his work, see: Milan Bogdanović: 'Vratimo Njegoš a literaturi', Srpski Književni Glasnik Vol. 2. No. 16.7 (1925), pp. 577-79. See also Jaša M. Prodanović: 'Gorski Vijenac kao Vaspitno Delo', *Srpski Književni Glasnik* Vol. 2 No. 16.7 (1925), pp. 558-62; Nikola Škerović: 'Njegoš i jugoslovenstvo', *Nova Evropa*, Vol. 2.1 (1925), pp. 1-8; Ljubomir Đurković-Jakšić: *Njegoš i Lovćen* (Beograd: n.a., 1971); Savić Marković Štedimilija: 'Sto Godina Narodne Poezije', *Nova Evropa*, Vol. 28 Nos. 4-5 (1935), pp. 120-29; Srđa Pavlović: 'Poetry or the Blueprint for Genocide', *Spaces of Identity OnLine* Vol. 1 No. 1 (January 2001) available at: www.spacesofidentity.net.

48 The dating of the alleged event is a matter of some controversy. The sub-title of *The Mountain Wreath* tells us that the poem deals with a 'Historical Event from the End of the 17th Century' (Historičesko Sobotie pri Svršetky XVII vieka) (P.P. Njegoš: *The Mountain Wreath* (Vienna 1847), title page). The same dating of the event described in *The Mountain Wreath* appeared in a number of histories of Montenegro published during the nineteenth century, such as those by Sima Milutinović Sarajlija (Belgrade, 1835) and Dimitrije Milaković (Zadar, 1856). Later studies by Ilarion Ruvarac: *Montenegrina* 2nd ed. (1899) and Ljubomir Stojanović: *Zapisi* II (1903) based their dating of the event on a note allegedly written by Metropolitan Danilo Petrović himself. The note and its commentary by N. Musulin were published in *Glasnik*, XVII (1836). It is worth pointing out that Ruvarac expressed serious concerns regarding the genuine character of the note, but his concerns were quickly brushed aside by a number of local historians. The aforementioned authors offered three different dates for the 'Christmas Day Massacre' (1702, 1704 and 1707), while *The Mountain Wreath* positioned the event in the late seventeenth century. It is interesting to note that, in his earlier works, Njegoš dated the event as 1702. In his poem *Ogledalo Srpsko*, Njegoš wrote about the event and positioned it 'around the year 1702'. See: P.P. Njegoš: *Ogledalo Srpsko* (1845). A notable exception is Konstantin Jiriček, who, in his *Naučni Slovník*, stated that the event described in *The Mountain Wreath* never took place.

49 Njegoš's translator Vasa D. Mihailović, in his Introduction to the 1997 edition of *The Mountain Wreath*. See footnote 51.

notion of a stereotypical *other*.⁵⁰ Islamic radicals view *The Mountain Wreath* as a manual for ethnic cleansing and fratricidal murder, as a text whose ideas were brought back to life during the most recent nationalistic *dance macabre* in the former Yugoslavia.⁵¹ Montenegrin independentists largely shy away from any interpretation of Njegoš's poetry and only on occasion discuss its literary and linguistic merits.⁵² The myth of the *slaying of infidels* in early eighteenth-century Montenegro is a recurring theme in almost all analyses of the region's history and the mentality of its people. Its usage as the ultimate explanation for the recent historical developments in the region is apparent and particularly troubling. Apart from being a material mistake, the employment of this theme serves the purpose of further restraining Montenegro within the confines of the notions of the so-called 'ancient hatred', 'irrationalism' and 'barbarism'.

In spite of the openness of this work to various interpretations (or precisely because of it), one should not forget that what one is reading is a work of literature. Naturally, literature should be approached as a source and a litmus test for evaluating a particular historical period. But its exclusive usage as the primary and sole determining element in the process of historical evaluation across time is a questionable methodological approach.⁵³ More than anything else, *The Mountain Wreath* is the tale of a long-gone heroic tribal society that was poeticised in order to depict the state of affairs in Njegoš's Montenegro. From such a point of analytical departure, this work of literature can be approached as an additional source for assessing the conditions within a particular time frame in Montenegrin history, i.e. Njegoš's time: the first half of the 19th century. The long-gone Montenegro that Njegoš wrote about had little in common with the Montenegro of his time and has nothing in common with contemporary Montenegro. However, *The Mountain Wreath* does speak volumes about the political, social, cultural and economic conditions in Montenegro during the early 19th century and about Njegoš's efforts to advocate the ideas of pan-Slavism and unification.⁵⁴

Available sources point out that Njegoš did not base his poem on a historical event. However, he realised the potential significance of a reshaped myth and through literary poetics actualised its meanings. The myth of the *slaying of converts*, as an act of cleansing and the indication of a fresh start, meshed nicely with Njegoš's efforts to turn Montenegro into a modern state.⁵⁵ *The Mountain Wreath* represents an important literary achievement,

50 Branimir Anžulović: *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), pp. 61-67.

51 *ibid.*, pp. 61-76. See also Ivo Žanić: *Prevarena povijest: guslarska estrada, kult hajduka i rat u Hrvatskoj i Bosni i Hercegovini 1990-1995. godine* (Zagreb: Durieux, 1998), pp. 271-303.

52 See Božena Jelušić: 'Otvoreni za Njegoša', *Matica* Vol. 2 No. 6 (Summer 2001).

53 *ibid.*, pp. 97-106.

54 See Njegoš's letter written on 2 May 1848 to the Serbian Minister of the Interior, Ilija Garašanin, the author of *Načertanije*. P.P. Njegoš: *Izabrana pisma* (Beograd: Prosveta, 1967), p. 166. See also Njegoš to Josip Jelačić, letter written in Cetinje on December 20, 1848, *ibid.* pp. 173-174.

55 See *Istorija Crne Gore*, Vol. 3 No. 1 (Titograd, 1975). See also Slobodan Tomović: *Komentar Gorskog Vijenca* (Ljubljana, Beograd & Nikšić: Partizanska knjiga Univerzitetska riječ & Izdavačko publicistička djelatnost, 1986), pp.146-147; Vojislav P. Nikčević: 'Istrage Poturica Nije ni Bilo', *Ovde* No. 189 (1985), pp. 8-10; and *Cetinjski Ljetopis* (Cetinje: Fototipsko Izdanje Centralne Biblioteke NR Crne Gore, 1962).

and it should be analysed as a drama that confronts and challenges the concepts of *thought* and *action*, *morality* and *righteousness*, *religion* and *human nature*, and not as the poetised version of a historical event and an ultimate expression of Serb identity. It is a poetic tale written by a man who continuously deconstructs and questions the very world he lives in. Moreover, the character of Njegoš's work is far from one-dimensional and cannot, in good conscience, be viewed exclusively as *national literature* because it deals with issues much broader than the narrow margins of Montenegrin political and cultural space. Furthermore, *The Mountain Wreath* should not be read outside the context of the time of its inception, nor from the perspective of *one book*. As Danilo Kiš has pointed out: 'Many books are not dangerous, but one book is.'⁵⁶

Bearing in mind the distinct character of Montenegro's traditional culture, and the specificities of its historical, political and economic, as well as its cultural, development, one is intrigued by the persistent appropriation of Montenegrins by the Serbs and wonders about the reasons for this claim to ownership. New interpretations of these issues, which came to light in recent scholarly literature in Montenegro, and in support of the claim of Montenegrin cultural, linguistic and national distinctiveness, indicate the primacy of politics as a discourse in decoding the history of the region and in assessing the nature of relations between Montenegrins and Serbs.⁵⁷ The inclusion of Montenegrins in the Serbian national mythos can be identified as a way to establish and preserve the imagined historical/temporal and cultural continuity of the Serbian nation throughout the centuries of Ottoman rule in the region.

For some 400 years, Serbia proper was ruled by the Ottoman Empire. All aspects of life in the region were subject to regulations and laws imposed by the invader. On the other hand, Montenegro existed during this same period as a relatively independent entity that displayed a measurable temporal continuity of its own political and historical being. With the advent of the ideology of national homogenisation among Serbs, it became necessary to establish Serbian historical and cultural continuity in the area that was, within the national paradigm, perceived as an integral part of the Serbian medieval state. One of the ways to accomplish this task was the appropriation of Montenegro. This appropriation happened on many levels and included the positioning of Montenegrins within the Serbian mythos as a symbol of the undying spirit of Serbhood. Only then was the Serbian historical narrative able to bridge the gap of some four centuries during Ottoman rule and establish the temporal continuity needed for the process of national awakening.

The politics of identity – the identity of politics

At present, the differences between those opposed to Montenegro's independence and sovereignty have to do with the modalities for rationalising and justifying the inclusion of Montenegro and its population into a Serbian ethnic and political, as well as economic and

56 Danilo Kiš: *Grobnica za Borisa Davidoviča* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1990), p. 117.

57 See Senka Babović: 'Kulturna Politika u Zetskoj Banovini', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Podgorica: University of Montenegro, 1997). See also Vojislav Nikčević: *O Postanku Etnonima Dukljani, Zečani, Crnogorci* (Podgorica, 1987); V. Nikčević: *Crnogorski jezik* (Cetinje, 1993); V. Nikčević: *Pravopis Crnogorskog jezika* (Podgorica: Montenegrin PEN Centre, 1997); Dragoje Živković: *Istorija Crnogorskog naroda*, (Cetinje, 1989); Šerbo Ras-toder: *Skrivana strana istorije: Crnogorska buna i odmetnički pokret 1918 – 1929. Dokumenti*, Vols. 1-4 (Bar: Nidamentym Montenegro, 1997).

cultural, framework. Opponents of an independent and sovereign Montenegro have sought to discredit the concept in two ways: either they identify the discourse of independence with the old dynastic aspirations of the last Montenegrin King, Nikola I Petrović, or they associate it ideologically with the communist regime.⁵⁸ Dobrica Ćosić, the well-known Serbian writer and, briefly, President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, stated in a recent conversation with Timothy Garton Ash that 'Montenegrin-ness (Montenegrinity?) was the invention of the Stalinist national policy.'⁵⁹ On the other side of the political divide, advocates of Montenegrin independence repeatedly invoke the alleged continuity of statehood from the time of the medieval Balšić and Vojislavljević dynasties.⁶⁰

These competing claims and the emotionally charged rhetoric of their current advocates have managed to polarise (politically and ideologically, as well as in terms of identity construction) the population of Montenegro. Regardless of what the available statistical data might suggest, it remains so that the people of Montenegro are bitterly divided over the issue of Montenegro's independence and the referendum as an acceptable *modus* of achieving it.⁶¹ This division is primarily of a political nature and the identity issue is closely connected with political/party affiliation. Unlike their parliamentary predecessors from the turn of the century, modern political parties in Montenegro appear more uniform when it comes to identity politics. The majority of the supporters of the Socialist People's Party (*Socijalistička Narodna Partija*, SNP), the People's Party (*Narodna Stranka*, NS) and the Serbian People's Party (*Srpska Narodna Stranka*, SNS) take pride in their Serbian identity and advocate a unitary national state.⁶² Supporters of the Liberal Alliance of

58 See Srđa Pavlović: 'The Podgorica Assembly in 1918: Notes on the Yugoslav Historiography (1919-1970) about the Unification of Montenegro and Serbia', *Canadian Slavonic Papers* Vol. 41 No. 2 (June 1999), pp. 157-176.

59 Timothy Garton Ash: 'The Last Revolution', *The New York Review of Books* 16.11.2000. See also Slavenko Terzić: 'Ideološki Koreni Crnogorske Nacije i Crnogorskog Separatizma', available at www.njegos.org/idkor.html.

60 Rotković, op. cit.

61 At the traditional tribal gathering in Vasojevici (northern Montenegro) on St. Peter's Day (12 July) 1994, prominent individuals from Vasojevici decided that their region would join Serbia if Montenegro was to secede from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. See Zoran Marković: 'Zapad će Platiti Odštetu Srbiji', *Duga* 17.9.1994. For results and analysis of numerous opinion polls regarding the future of the Montenegrin state, its referendum on independence and the political affiliation of its citizens, see: Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM): *Parliamentary Elections in Montenegro. Opinion Poll, 27 March – 3 April 2001*, Podgorica, 2001; Vladimir Goati: *Izbori u SRJ od 1990 do 1998: volja građana ili izborna manipulacija* (Beograd: CeSID, 1999); International Crisis Group: *Montenegro: In the Shadow of the Volcano*, Podgorica/Brussels/Washington, 21.3.2000, p. 11; Zoran Radulović: 'Crnogorsko Javno Mnjenje na Prekretnici', AIM, 26.9.1999; European Stability Initiative: 'Politics, Interests and the Future of Yugoslavia: An Agenda for Dialogue', 26.11.2001; National Democratic Institute: *22 April Parlamentarni Izbori. Ključni Zaključci*, Podgorica, March 2001. NDI conducted this opinion poll between 15 and 19 March 2001. It is interesting to note that the majority of those in favour of independence were between the ages of 18 and 30, and were mostly students. Also, almost all of the interviewees preferring independence defined themselves as either Montenegrins or Albanians, or Muslims, not Serbs.

62 That some members of the SNP advocate a strong federal state instead of a unitary national state should not be taken as a sign of their insecurity in the prerogatives of their Serbian identity but rather as a manifestation of their political pragmatism.

Montenegro (*Liberalni Savez Crne Gore*, LSCG) identify themselves as Montenegrins and argue for independence and sovereignty. The strongest political party in Montenegro, the Democratic Party of Socialists (*Demokratska Partija Socijalista*, DPS) is a less uniform political body when it comes to identity politics. Some of its members and supporters express strong attachment to Montenegrin identity while others think of it as a more regional/territorial type of identification. It would seem that, for DPS leaders and members, political pragmatism plays a significant role in the matter of national identification.⁶³ Its coalition partner, the Social Democratic Party (*Socijal-Demokratska Partija*, SDP) is generally considered to represent those who wish to see the development of an independent and sovereign state in Montenegro and the introduction of elements of civic society.⁶⁴

The modern condition: identity, cultural concepts and civic society

Responsibility for the ferocity and depth of contemporary political and ideological division in Montenegro is born equally by all parties in this debate. To date, the unitarists have achieved their primary objective of marginalising efforts to establish the mechanisms and modalities of a civic society in Montenegro. These might be some of the reasons why a significant percentage of the population in Montenegro is not sure about the nature of the earlier promised referendum on independence.⁶⁵ Many wonder if such a referendum would represent an attempt to sever all links with Serbia and to establish a legal framework that would restrict or deny any expression of attachment (on a personal and a collective level) to Serbian ethnos, culture and tradition.

The solution to the current political and ideological stalemate between Montenegro and Serbia depends on the dynamics of both domestic and international political processes and on strengthening the local economy. However, it should be kept in mind that such stately prerogatives cannot be achieved solely through the formation of short-term political alliances or by the rhetoric of desired inclusion in the so-called European and transatlantic integration processes. What is being sidelined is the role that culture plays in this process. Montenegro's writers, artists, musicians and actors contribute through their artistic endeavours to finding an optimal solution to the current crisis much more than they are given credit for.⁶⁶ The activities of the Montenegrin PEN Centre and the continuing work on the

63 Milo Đukanović stated in 2001 that: 'Neither can we have anyone closer to us than Serbia is, nor can Serbia have anyone closer to her than Montenegro is.' Milo Đukanović: 'Referendum je Neminovan. Dogovaraćemo se o Datumu i Uslovima', *Pobjeda* 23.7.2001, p. 1.

64 For more on this issue, see the chapter 'The Dispute over Montenegrin Independence' by Beáta Huszka, this volume.

65 Even though Art. 3 of the Belgrade Agreement allows for the possibility of a referendum (defining it as a 'right' and not as an 'obligation'), it seems unlikely that such an act will take place in Montenegro. However, the leaders of the DPS and signatories of the Agreement (President Đukanović and Prime Minister Vujanović) were quick to reassure the general public that the referendum had not been forgotten but that it would take place under less hostile political conditions and if 'we come to the conclusion that such a move would best serve the interests of Montenegro's citizens.' PCNEN, 16.3.2002. See also Milka Tadić-Mijović and Draško Đuranović: 'Srećna Nova 1992?' [especially the section 'Predsjednikova Rijec'], *Monitor* 22.3.2002, pp. 10-15.

66 Aleš Debeljak: 'Varieties of National Experience: Resistance and Accommodation in Contemporary Slovenian Identity', *Spaces of Identity* Vol. 1 No. 1 (January 2001), available at www.spacesofidentity.net.

Montenegrin Encyclopaedia, as well as the contribution of scholarly journals such as *Almanah* and *Matica*, the magazines *Gest* and *Montenegrin Mobil Art*, and the publishing activities of *CID* and *Conteco* – to mention just a few – will have a greater long-term impact on the process of cultural identification and self-identification than any economically-minded effort of the elite.⁶⁷

Some independentists (though a small minority) would point out that what we see in Montenegro is not the final stage of the process of forming and defining the national identity of Montenegrins according to the late 19th century model, but the need for protecting and re-emphasising a long-existing and well-rounded notion of identity in a new environment.⁶⁸ Indeed, it is necessary to seek modalities for expressing and manoeuvring space for accommodating the different national and cultural identities within present-day Montenegro. The specificity of these identities in Montenegro makes this process even more important. When assessing the content of cultural concepts in the republics of the former Yugoslavia, and their internal dynamics, one could broadly characterise these as particular types of *multi-culturalism*. Such a categorisation could be applied to all regions in the former Yugoslavia, with the possible exception of Montenegro. Multi-culturalism presupposes the parallel existence of two or more different cultural frameworks within one region, but does not necessarily include any process of interaction. It is the process of *inter-culturalism* that is represented by and expressed through constant interaction between various cultural concepts. The historical, political and cultural matrix of Montenegro is the result of multi-layered borrowings that were, and still are, among the central features of Montenegrin society. What set Montenegro apart from other republics of the former Yugoslavia are the presence and high visibility of various and different cultural patterns upon

67 The aforementioned journals, publishing houses and magazines are slowly reintroducing previously marginalised aspects of the Montenegrin cultural scene and emphasise its inter-cultural character. *Conteco* and *CID* have embarked upon significant publishing undertakings in order to present previously unavailable documents, historical and literary analyses and other material relevant to Montenegrin history, culture, and society. Magazines such as *Gest* and *Montenegrin Mobil Art* are venues for the presentation of contemporary theatrical, literary and artistic trends in Montenegro. The editorial policy of the journal *Matica* is clearly tailored towards a reaffirmation of Montenegrin identity, but also pays close attention to various other aspects of identity construction in the region and devotes significant space to various discussions on many aspects of civic society. These efforts are aimed at informing the reading public in Montenegro and abroad about various aspects of life, scholarship and art in Montenegro, and serve as vehicles for internationalising its cultural space. However, it should be noted that these efforts in introducing concepts such as civic society and the inter-culturality of the Montenegrin space, and the departure from the traditional and mythologised perception of reality, are in their initial stages and are, to a certain extent, driven by the fear of marginalisation by Serbs as a dominant neighbouring group.

68 See: Ivan Čolović: 'Est Natio in Nobis', *Matica* Vol. 1 No. 3 (Autumn 2000), pp. 43-53; Srđa Pavlović: 'Gde je kuća', *Matica* Vol. 1 No. 3 (Autumn 2000), pp. 73-78; Dragan K. Vukčević: 'Crnogorska raskrsnica', *Matica* Vol. 2 No. 7-8 (Autumn/Winter 2001), pp. 7-19; Mato Jelušić: 'U traganju za civilnim društvom', *Matica* Vol. 3 No. 9-10 (Spring/Summer 2002), pp. 79-99; Šerbo Rastoder: 'Crna Gora multietnička država: sadržaj, stvarnost, iluzija, parola?' *Almanah* No. 13-14 (2000), pp. 11-21; Esad Kočan: 'Bošnjaci u Crnoj Gori: identitet i integracija', *Almanah* No. 13-14 (2000), pp. 29-37.

which its tradition and history grew and developed, as well as the existence of space provided for the expression of difference.

However, problems arise when seeking practical ways to revitalise the values of Montenegrin national and cultural identity. At that point, some *independentists* often resort to canonising the constitutive elements (real or imagined) of such an identity which, in turn, might manifest itself as representations of a somewhat distorted and totalising collective memory. Such distortion might be the result of a traumatic experience, but the memory of defeats from the past (either political or ideological) should not be used as justification for contemporary canonisations. The harshness and one-dimensional character of their approach are similar to the 19th century movement of national awakening, albeit from a different perspective: the position as victim. Despite efforts to gloss over this identity via a post-modernist discourse (as is the case in present-day Montenegro), it still mirrors the same old model. Insisting on the rhetoric of *Montenegrin identity*, *Montenegrin culture* and a *Montenegrin ethnic framework* could be misunderstood by many as an attempt to distance 'Montenegrins' from a stereotypical non-Montenegrin other, or as an initial phase in the political process of creating and marginalising new second class citizens in Montenegro.⁶⁹

In the case of Montenegro, one could follow a gradual separation between content (cultural identities and cultural politics) and *form* (the political rhetoric of cohabitation, multiculturalism and co-operation in the region) and the marginalisation of the former by the latter. The lack of attention to cultural content and the failure to acknowledge the relationship between the cultural identity of a nation and its state-institutional forms usually results in a questioning of both the identity and the viability of the state formation. Regardless of what might really be the case in Montenegro, the negative effects of the so-called 'active waiting' on the part of those in power promote a sense of confusion and insecurity, as well as frailty and the lack of a clear vision of Montenegro's future. An independent, sovereign and internationally recognised Montenegro can neither be achieved nor can it survive as an acceptable *modus vivendi* for all its citizens without prior redefinition and qualitative assessment, and a strengthening of its cultural cornerstones. Bearing this in mind, it seems necessary to redefine cultural politics in Montenegro.

The transparency of cultural politics can only be attained by means of a clearly delineated notion of identity: a notion whose elements cannot be easily deconstructed in the process of cultural exchange. Even though one can easily recognise the specificity of the national and cultural identity of Montenegrins, emphasising this specificity seems necessary. Naturally, the crucial aspect of the whole process is finding a good measure of things and establishing a necessary balance. Otherwise, one enters the realm of provincial xenophobia and ethnic exclusivism. One has to be conscious that the Montenegrin cultural heritage and its contemporary manifestations are also the product of a creative effort of individual intellectuals and groups that could not be positioned within the Montenegrin ethnic framework. Cultural borrowings are a common occurrence in many cultures and there is nothing wrong with them as long as their purpose is to interact with and learn about others, rather than simply to adopt or create a carbon copy of the outside model. The ability to

accept outside influences and filter them through the mechanisms of one's own artistic and creative sensibility is a sign of a well-rounded sense of identity and represents a qualitative departure from the rigid boundaries of one's ethnic mental landscape. An insistence on prioritising and canonising ethnic criteria inevitably produces a backlash since it constructs *others* (outsiders). These others are seen as foreign, unwanted and de-humanised. Finally, when representatives of a particular national group feel insecure about their own identity, others are viewed as enemies. As Robert Musil pointed out, ethnic biases are usually nothing more than manifestations of one's self-hatred and the products of an inner conflict that is projected on a convenient victim.⁷⁰

The political arena in Montenegro today is characterised by emotional outbursts which obscure the real issue at stake: the modern condition (political, social, economic and cultural). This calls for the introduction of a new discourse to assess and present the idea of Montenegrin independence and sovereignty: the discourse of civic society. Creative interaction between two or more different segments of broader/different cultural frameworks could best be achieved if the concept of *ethnic* identity is separated from that of *civic* identity. This separation should occur on the semantic level as well as on that of political and cultural activity. Such differentiation has to be initiated and maintained in public discourse in the Montenegrin state and should carry in itself the possibility and the right of an individual or a group to choose their own civic identity while not severing all ties with the original ethnic group.⁷¹

Despite the 'multi-cultural' rhetoric, it seems that a suitable climate for accepting and implementing this differentiation in Montenegro is still in the making and that the notion of the Montenegrin state is conditioned more by the ethnic principle rather than by that of the civic identity of its population. This regression to the *absolutism* of the pure usually produces various forms of cultural isolation which, in turn, feeds on the remnants of ethnic mimicry and rejects everything that does not come from within one's own ethnic circle. Instead of representing itself as a living and mobile experience, it is reduced to static self-representation. In the absence of a political agency able and ready to establish the mechanisms of a democratic civic society which is detached from the restrictive concept of a mythologised past, cultural identities and self-representations become imposed and internalised.⁷² Imposed processes and representations – the construction of stereotypes – could turn into mechanisms for controlling numerically smaller ethno-cultural groups (or could be perceived as such). This is the point at which the problem changes its character and becomes political. Many people in Montenegro perceive the long-promised referendum on independence as an imposition and as an attempt to force each individual to declare his or her own ethnic identity, instead of a way to create an optimal legal framework for the process of defining civic identity in Montenegro. Explaining to the electorate that the *modus vivendi* called an independent and sovereign Montenegro is needed in order 'to help us *be*, and not to simply *have*' might reduce some tension within society.⁷³

69 Examples of such attempts could be found on the pages of the *Crnogorski Književni List* (Montenegrin Literary Journal) published in Podgorica. Particularly striking examples of a one-dimensional approach to Montenegrin identity (from a radical independentist point of view) are articles written by the journal's Editor-in-Chief, Jevrem Brković.

70 Robert Musil: *The Man Without Qualities*, Vol. 1 (New York: First Vintage International Edition, 1996), p. 461.

71 Debeljak, op. cit.

72 William Anselmi and Kosta Gouliamos: *Elusive Margins: Consuming Media, Ethnicity and Culture* (Toronto, Buffalo, Lancaster: Guernica, 1998), p. 15.

73 Debeljak, op. cit.

The prioritisation of culture and cultural politics in the process of creating the conditions that will nourish elements of civic identity in Montenegro and establishing the mechanisms through which a civic society could function are also important in view of the relatively recent political/personnel changes in Serbia. Even though these changes are mainly of a representational character, they should be seen as an improvement. Namely, getting rid of Milošević lessened the likelihood of Montenegro being 'pacified' through military action, but it did not entirely remove the threat of the marginalisation and redefinition of the Montenegrin political and cultural space by Serbia. Recent political events and the ongoing debate over the structure of the future union between Serbia and Montenegro indicate that, once again, the issue of the modalities for achieving political goals (independent Montenegro versus unitary state) is the main stumbling block. It could be said that the political model that is being imposed upon Montenegro by Brussels (political and economic union with Serbia), paired with the persistent imposition of Serbian cultural patterns by Belgrade, constitutes a new version of an aggressive Serbian expansionism, which, time and again, is gaining international support. But this cosmetic improvement does not modify the aggressive nature of such expansionism. In the context of a post-modern model of domination, the pen has become more effective and dangerous than the sword. Overcoming such challenges presupposes a restructuring of Montenegro's economy and its political system. But such a process must include the revitalisation of the contemporary and multi-layered corpus of cultural activities in Montenegro, as well as the preservation of its traditional cultural values.

Šerbo Rastoder

A short review of the history of Montenegro

Introduction: the name

The oldest reference to the name *Montenegro* stems from a Papal epistle in Latin, from 9 November 1053, where the term *Monte nigro* is used to denote an area or region within the state of *Duklja*, or the Kingdom of Slavs.¹ In Cyrillic sources, *Montenegro* was mentioned for the first time in 1276, meaning 'black mount' or 'black hills'. According to legend, the previous forestland of today's Montenegro, when seen from the sea or Lake Skadar, looked like a chain of 'black hills' or 'black mounts (forests)'.² Whatever the case, all west European languages embraced the term *Montenegro* as the name of the country and state of Montenegro that has now been a historical subject for more than ten centuries, and where the majority of the population consists of Montenegrins, a people described, especially by 18th and 19th century authors writing about their travels to the Balkans, as bold warriors of unusual height and handsomeness and exceptional moral and knightly convictions.

This chapter will trace the political and social developments of Montenegro from the early Slav times in the 9th century to the end of World War Two. The focus will thus lie on the interaction between the episodes of independence, or autonomy, of Montenegro and outside rule, be it by the Ottoman Empire, Venice, the Habsburg Monarchy, Yugoslavia or Italy.

The emergence of Montenegrin statehood: Zeta

No records exist of the first centuries of Slavic presence in this region. Some scarce historical sources³ mention merely the *archon* Petar as the first ruler of *Duklja* in the 9th century. Moreover, there is a complete lack of data on the conversion of the Slavic population on the territory of *Duklja* to Christianity and, although there is no doubt that the influence of Rome was prevalent, the impact of Byzantium was not insignificant, particularly in the period of Basil I in the second half of the 9th century. Outlines of a state organisation in this region originated during the period of turmoil that swept over the Balkan Peninsula towards the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century.

Apart from Petar, who was mentioned by the earliest sources, further records relate to Duke Vladimir (997-1016), whose throne was in Skadar, from where he withdrew to the surrounding area after the 997 capture of Drač (Duessi) by the Macedonian Emperor Samuilo who, shortly afterwards, not only conquered *Duklja*, but imprisoned Vladimir as well. Vladimir returned to *Duklja* before long, following his marriage to Samuilo's daughter Kosara, and was tricked into death by his brother-in-law, Emperor Vladislav. Later,

1 Translated from the original by Ivana Prazić. Vojislav D. Nikčević (ed.): *Miscellanea Slavorum, Dokumenti o Slovenima, Pars prima* (Cetinje: Državni arhiv Crne Gore, 2002), p. 46.

2 See 'Crna Gora i Crnogorci', Vol. 2 & 3, 2nd Edition *Enciklopedije Jugoslavije* (Podgorica: DOB, 1999), p. 1.

3 In recent years, a voluminous publication on the historical origins and the early period of Montenegro was published, see Vojislav D. Nikčević: *Monumenta Montegrina, I-X* (Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore, 2001-2002).