

of both sides. Furthermore, by providing the general context in which it explains the transformation of religious communities' modes of operation on the eve of communism's collapse, the book allows the reader to understand how religious institutions acquired the opportunity to become consequential actors in subsequent developments. Through its scope, structure, and analytical additions—expressed in

two extra chapters devoted to the philosophical underpinnings of the SOC's approach to wartime developments—*The Speed of Darkness* reveals itself as a serious and mature scholarly work, one that is likely to retain weight in academic debates for a long time.

Predrag DRAGOVIĆ

Б. Оташевић, И. Крстић Мистрицеловић, Ф. Вучетић, Б. Оташевић,
Прећућани злочини. Муслиманска милиција у Андријевичком срезу 1941–1945.
Документи, Цетиње – Београд, 2024, 942.

In mid-2024, a collection of documents entitled *Prećutani zločini. Muslimanska milicija u Andrijevačkom srezu 1941–1945* was published by the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Institute for Recent History of Serbia. As stated in the Preface, the editors' intention was to publish archival documents concerning crimes committed during the Second World War against the Orthodox population in the specified area by Muslim collaborators, members of "vulnetari units, the Albanian gendarmerie, the regular Albanian army, Albanian units attached to the Italian army, German SS troops," as well as by "various outlaw bands owing allegiance to no one." According to the editors, the publication of archival documents "appears to be the best way to respond to recent attempts by revisionist-minded historians to relativize the cri-

mes committed against the Orthodox, Serbian, and Montenegrin population by individuals of another religion and/or nationality, while simultaneously seeking to substantiate the thesis of genocidal Serbian intentions toward Muslims by insisting on crimes that were undoubtedly committed against them by Serbs and Montenegrins."

The introductory study, entitled "Crimes of the Muslim Militia in the Andrijeva District, 1941–1945," first outlines the collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the brief April War of 1941, the partition of its territory among the Axis powers and their allies, the establishment of occupation regimes, and the creation of puppet states on Yugoslav territory. Particular attention is devoted to the formation of the so-called "Greater Albania" under Italian protection, whose territory—alongside other Yugoslav regions—included the Andrijeva district.

Seeking to emphasize the “continuity of the Greater Albanian idea,” the editors trace the main currents in the development of Albanian national consciousness, from the Great Eastern Crisis of 1875 and the first indications of political and national mobilization among Albanian tribal leaders, to the end of the Second World War seven decades later. Pointing out that the “Arbanasi Muslim elite, high officials within the administrative apparatus and major feudal landowners, regarded [...] Ottoman Turkey as their state,” the editors correctly conclude that sporadic Albanian armed resistance and uprisings against Ottoman rule were not aimed at the creation of an independent Albanian state. Although the activities of the Albanian League, founded in Prizren in 1878, undoubtedly indicate an awareness among representatives of various Albanian Muslim tribes of a shared interest in resisting an external enemy, its Statute did not constitute an Albanian national program, but rather testified solely to the religious (Islamic) and state (Ottoman) identity of its signatories. The majority of Albanian leaders sought to secure administrative autonomy and preserve tribal self-government within the Ottoman provinces inhabited, to a greater or lesser extent, by Albanian populations, without calling into question the supreme authority of the Sultan in Istanbul. At that time, this territory encompassed four Ottoman vilayets: Kosovo, Bitola, Ioannina, and Shkodra.

The authors also draw attention to the considerable geostrategic impor-

tance of the Plav and Gusinje region, particularly in relation to Metohija and northern Albania. In this light, they examine the actions of the Porte and the Albanian League immediately following the Congress of Berlin in 1878, whose provisions stipulated that these areas were to be ceded to Montenegro. Border incidents accompanied by incursions of Albanian bands into Montenegrin territory were intended to prevent the separation of Plav and Gusinje from the Kosovo vilayet. Ultimately, in 1880, it was decided that Montenegro would be granted Ulcinj as compensation for the disputed territories.

The Plav and Gusinje area became part of the Montenegrin state only during the collapse of Ottoman rule in the Balkans amid the military operations of 1912. The expansion of Montenegro and Serbia was accompanied by the outbreak of a mass Albanian uprising across the territory of the former Kosovo vilayet. Although the Albanian émigré community pointed to repression by the new authorities—primarily the Montenegrin army—in an effort to draw the attention of the Great Powers to the Albanian question, the actions of Albanian tribal leaders stemmed largely from religious fanaticism and resistance to the presence of any form of central authority.

A similar mindset prevailed among Albanian leaders after the First World War, during the formation of the Yugoslav state. The activities of Albanian outlaws were suppressed by force of arms only in the mid-1920s. Neverthe-

less, even in the subsequent period, up to the early 1930s, their actions in the Yugoslav south “tied down” as much as two-thirds of the total gendarmerie force to this area. Pervasive insecurity and the latent danger of an Albanian uprising testified both to the depth of the rift between the Albanian population and the Yugoslav polity, and to the inability of the state itself to suppress subversive elements and meaningfully integrate part of its territory. This social division in the Yugoslav south, burdened by the heavy legacy of Serbian–Albanian relations, reached its extreme during the Second World War.

Following the collapse of the Yugoslav army in the April War of 1941, the areas of Plav and Gusinje became a part of the Italian occupation zone. The authors note that the arrival of the occupation forces was greeted with enthusiasm by the Muslim population of these regions. Soon thereafter, Plav and Gusinje were incorporated into “Greater Albania” established under Italian protection, while the remainder of the Andrijevisa district remained within occupied Montenegro. Emphasizing the strong influence of Albanian leaders who returned from emigration immediately after the arrival of Italian forces, as well as the role of Muslim religious authorities who fomented hatred toward Christians, the authors state that the persecution of the Slavic population began in the very first days of the occupation. In July 1941, a camp was established in Plav in which, according to surviving inmates, “the

most numerous victims [...] were [...] children.” The authors stress that the exact number “has never been established, since not all detainees were registered and there were also unnamed, unbaptized infants,” with estimates ranging from 140 to 700 prisoners. According to their findings, it can be stated with certainty “that 120 civilians perished at the hands of Albanian–Muslim fascist bands and Italian occupation authorities in the period from early July to early October 1941” in the territory of the Andrijevisa district.

Although crimes committed by the Muslim militia against the Orthodox population were carried out continuously throughout the war beginning in July 1941, for the inhabitants of the Andrijevisa district all the horrors of the four-year occupation were, as the authors note, “overshadowed by the events of 28 July 1944, when one of the greatest crimes—not only of the Second World War, but of the modern history of Montenegro as a whole—was committed against innocent and defenseless civilians.” This refers to the massacre in the villages of Velika and Gornja Ržanica, perpetrated by members of the 7th SS Volunteer Mountain Division “Prinz Eugen” and the 21st SS Mountain Division “Skanderbeg,” as well as members of the Muslim militia from the Plav and Gusinje area. According to current data, during the course of just two hours the attackers “brutally” killed at least 521 people in these villages, including 174 children under the age of fifteen. Historiography re-

mains divided on the exact number of victims. In this regard, the authors draw attention to the indictment issued by the public prosecutor of the Bijelo Polje district against one of the perpetrators, Sait Hodža Šahmanović, which states that 564 civilians were killed on 28 July 1944. In their view, “this figure may be considered the most accurate, since it was established in the time period closest to the day the crime was committed,” namely “a year and a half after the massacre in Velika.”

At the conclusion of the introductory study, the authors discuss the establishment and activities of the State Commission for the Investigation of Crimes of the Occupiers and Their Collaborators, particularly with regard to the prosecution of war criminals in the Andrijevića district.

The second part of *Prećutani zločini. Muslimanska milicija u Andrijevačkom srežu 1941–1945* consists of 220 previously unpublished archival documents held in the Archives of Yugoslavia (holdings: State Commission for the Investigation of Crimes of the Occupiers and Their Collaborators) and the State Archives of Montenegro (holdings: Military Court of Berane and District Public Prosecutor’s Office of Bijelo Polje). All published documents are presented in full and in their original form, without subsequent editorial intervention, except in cases of obvious orthographic errors.

The archival materials collected in this volume are organized according

to the administrative-territorial structure of the Zeta Banovina. According to the editors, this approach was adopted primarily because the crimes committed within the prewar districts “bore the imprint of a specific historical legacy inherent to that area, which transcended the boundaries established by the new occupation-based division of Montenegro” during the Second World War.

The body of edited documents opens with a summary statistical overview of war crimes compiled immediately after the end of the Second World War by the Montenegrin Land Commission for the Investigation of Crimes of the Occupiers and Their Collaborators. This overview consists of four tables structured according to categories of war crimes: deprivation of life, bodily injury, violations of personal liberty, and property damage. The first three tables contain subcategories defining the age and gender structure of the victims (“men,” “women,” “elderly,” “children”), while perpetrators are classified by nationality (“Germans in the country,” “Germans in camps outside Yugoslavia,” “Hungarians,” “Italians,” “Albanians,” “Bulgarians”) or by military formation (“Ustaše,” “Domobranci,” “Ljotić followers,” “Rupnik followers,” “separatists,” “Chetniks of Draža Mihailović”). Alongside the summary overview for the entire territory of Montenegro, crimes committed in the Andrijevića district are presented in the same manner. It remains unclear, however, whether these figures derive from the war victim census conducted in

the summer of 1945 or from the spring of the following year, given that all land commissions—following instructions from the State Commission—carried out a second census after the initial collection and processing of material, the results of which deviated significantly from the earlier data and indicated a substantially higher number of war victims.

Following these tabular overviews, the volume presents monthly reports on the activities of the military court panel in Berane, orders and instructions concerning the work of the Military Court of the II Strike Corps Military Area addressed to the Judicial Council of the III Area Command in Berane, correspondence from the Montenegrin Land Commission requesting information on perpetrators from the Andrijevića district commissioner and district people's committee, as well as a list of prisoners sentenced to death submitted by the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Bijelo Polje District to the Public Prosecutor of Montenegro.

The majority of the documents included in this volume consist of court cases and accompanying materials related to the prosecution of war criminals. The editors sought to foreground the "personality of the perpetrator" and to enable readers to "draw independent conclusions both about each individual criminal and about all crimes and perpetrators as a whole." Accordingly, for each person convicted of war crimes a series of documents is presented "with due regard for the legal sequence of events."

This includes, first, the decision of the Montenegrin Land Commission establishing an individual as a war criminal, followed by documents generated during the investigative process and judicial proceedings: indictments issued by public prosecutors, records of interrogations of defendants and victims, certificates concerning the conduct and property status of the accused, verdicts of the competent military and civilian courts, appeals, petitions for clemency, and decisions of the relevant authorities regarding these matters.

The volume concludes with an extensive list of sources and literature, as well as a name index of war criminals from the Andrijevića district whose court cases are presented in this publication.

Although the issue of civilian suffering in the Andrijevića region during the Second World War is not unknown in academia, nor in the broader public, *Prećutani zločini. Muslimanska milicija u Andrijevačkom srezu 1941–1945* represents a welcome contribution to domestic historiography by bringing to light a large body of relevant and previously unpublished archival sources. This important undertaking is likely to be further enriched, as the editors indicate that all evidentiary material collected through the work of investigative bodies in the field will be published in a separate volume as a kind of supplement to the archival documents presented in this book.

Dušan BOJKOVIĆ