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Montenegro Old and New: History, Politics, Culture, and the People

The authors are focusing on how Montenegro today is coming to terms with the task of becoming a modern European nation, which implies recognition not only of democracy, the rule of law, and so forth, but also of a degree of ‘multiculturalism’, that is recognition of the existence of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities in a society that is dominated by a Slavic Orthodox majority. In his context they are analyzing the history of the struggle of the Montenegrin people against a host of foreign invaders – after they had ceased to be invaders themselves – and especially their apparently consistent refusal to accept Ottoman sovereignty over their homeland seemed to make them the most remarkable freedom fighters imaginable and led to the creation of a special Montenegrin image in Europe. This image of heroic stubbornness and unique martial bravery was even consciously cultivated in Western and Central Europe from the early nineteenth century onwards, as the Greeks, the Serbs, the Montenegrins and other Balkan peoples began to resist the Ottoman Empire in a more effective way and the force of Romantic nationalism began to influence the whole of Europe, from German historians to British politicians, and also including Montenegrin and Serbian poets themselves. And what about the present situation? The authors of this essay carried out an improvised piece of investigation into current conditions, attitudes, and feelings on both the Albanian and the Slavic-Montenegrin side (in September 2012).

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Montenegro (Crna Gora, Tsrna Gora, Tsernagora) is a small country in the Western Balkans region with some 625,000 inhabitants,¹ which became an independent nation in 2006 and a candidate-member of the EU in 2010. Its newly rediscovered European and Western orientation is not only expressed in the use of up-to-date politically correct terminology, including rule of law, democracy, and multiculturalism, and in increasing use of the Latin alongside the Cyrillic script, but even in declaring itself an ‘ecological state’, which is difficult to take seriously when walking around in this otherwise attractive country where garbage is lying all about but garbage-barrels are often non-existent.² Montenegro’s being part of the Western Balkans region means that the country belongs historically to the zone that is sometimes described as the Catholic-Orthodox ‘fault line’, marking the great religious divide and intra-Christian antithesis between the Western and Eastern Churches.³ Until the thirteenth century and even later Montenegro was influenced

¹ Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Montenegro 2011.

² The new Constitution of Montenegro (2007) describes the independent republic as a ‘civic, democratic, ecological state of social justice, based on the reign of Law’; see e.g. Wikipedia: ‘Montenegro’.

³ See for example Gale Stokes, *Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe* (New York/Oxford, 1997), chapter 1.

not only by Byzantium and Eastern Christianity but also by Catholic Italy and Dalmatia, while the rising power of Venice (and of Ragusa/Dubrovnik) made its influence felt in the coastal area and even farther inland, something which the Byzantine Empire was increasingly powerless to resist. Nevertheless, the majority of Slavic Montenegrins became closely associated with the Serbs and adopted the Orthodox faith, an orientation that seems to have become definitive shortly after 1200 when the Catholic influence among a major part of the Serbian and Montenegrin ruling strata was largely removed.⁴

Another 'fault line' influencing the historical destiny of the Montenegrins was the presence of a large Albanian population immediately to the south, probably descendants of the ancient Illyrians that had been pushed into the Albanian mountains by the invading Slavs, who gradually became the dominant population group in much of the Balkans after 700 even though the older non-Slavic ethnic groups held their own relatively well.⁵ Slav-Albanian antagonism became a remarkable factor in the history of the Western Balkans, especially when the majority of Albanians (some 70 percent) adopted Islam after the arrival of the Ottoman Turks in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. On the other hand both the Montenegrins and the Albanians would also fight among themselves along clan and tribal lines, and would sometimes even form temporary inter-ethnic alliances, or pragmatically change their confessional orientation, when the circumstances of tribal warfare and collective survival seemed to require this.⁶ But interestingly many of the northern Albanians (including many in present-day Montenegro) remained Catholics, so that the Slav-Albanian cleavage in Montenegro was not only an ethno-linguistic and proto-national one, or simply a question of Christians vs. Muslims, but also to some extent a continuation of the older Orthodox-Catholic fault line. The third fundamental issue that played a crucial role in the history of the Montenegrin people was the relationship with the Serbs living to the east and north. Although the Montenegrins and the Serbs were often closely allied in the struggle against the Turks and seen as religiously and ethnically similar, or even constituting one 'Greater Serbian' people, there were also differences between them in terms of national-historical, political-territorial, and cultural-linguistic identity. The mutual-identification aspect sometimes found expression in a Montenegrin tendency to be 'more Serbian than the Serbs' and to take the lead, almost in competition with Serbia, in the common struggle against their enemies

The significance of this confessional divide can also be relativised by arguing that on the level of popular culture the distinction was not so great; see e.g. Edgar Hösch, *Geschichte der Balkanländer. Von der Frühzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 1988), p. 27. But the rise of national Orthodox Churches meant that religious differences were politically consolidated and confirmed, and if Hösch's work had been written some years later his assessment of the meaning of the religious divide – which he says was mainly a question of *Hochkultur* – might have been somewhat different.

⁴ See for example Tim Judah, *The Serbs. History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven/London, 1997), pp. 8-9, 18-20; Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (London, 1998), pp. 42-4, 52. Even the founder of the Serbian Nemanjić dynasty, Stefan Nemanja, who was born in Montenegro (Dioclea), had received a Catholic baptism, and in 1217 his son Stefan the younger was crowned King of Serbia by a papal legate. But the new king's brother Sava, who was intensely angered by this, managed to create an autocephalic Serbian Orthodox Church, which subsequently became the dominant factor in Serbian and Montenegrin religious life. Even so, Catholicism did not entirely remain without influence in Old Serbia (Kosovo) and Montenegro, and in northern Albania and among the Kosovo and Montenegro Albanians the Catholic faith even became a major influence.

⁵ Dennis P. Hupchick, *The Balkans: from Constantinople to Communism* (New York, 2002) pp. 6-8.

⁶ In this connection Malcolm speaks of patterns of 'ethnic osmosis' between Montenegrin and Albanian clans; see Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 10.

(Turks, Austrians, Albanians).⁷ ‘In customs and habits’, however, ‘in morals and behaviour, they differ from the Serbs in Serbia’,⁸ and after 1918 there emerged a remarkable degree of direct conflict between a section of the Montenegrins and the newly dominant Serbs as a result of the resentment about the Serbian-imposed suppression of Montenegrin autonomy in the new Yugoslav State. This reawakened Montenegrin consciousness of its separate political and national-historical identity came finally to fruition in today’s independent republic, which also began to re-emphasise Montenegro’s individual culture and national language.

The history of the struggle of the Montenegrin people against a host of foreign invaders – after they had ceased to be invaders themselves – and especially their apparently consistent refusal to accept Ottoman sovereignty over their homeland seemed to make them the most remarkable freedom fighters imaginable and led to the creation of a special Montenegrin image in Europe. This image of heroic stubbornness and unique martial bravery was even consciously cultivated in Western and Central Europe from the early nineteenth century onwards, as the Greeks, the Serbs, the Montenegrins and other Balkan peoples began to resist the Ottoman Empire in a more effective way and the force of Romantic nationalism began to influence the whole of Europe, from German historians to British politicians, and also including Montenegrin and Serbian poets themselves. Indeed, the rise of the ‘Balkan image’ was rather contradictory, with European fantasies, deliberate national propaganda, and remarkable Balkan realities all playing a part in it. Although the notion of Balkan cultural primitivism and the Balkan tendency to engage in extreme forms of cruelty and bloodshed negatively influenced the image of the region as a whole, the attraction of projecting a positive if primitive Montenegrin heroism could not be resisted at this time of incipient national liberation. This image of Montenegrin cultural ‘purity’ and primitive ‘heroism’ has even remained a significant political and psychological factor down to the 1990s, when the darker side of ‘Balkan conditions’ was again made apparent in an unexpectedly horrifying way. The current Montenegrin tourist industry understandably tries to rescue the positive side of the ‘wild beauty’ image of both the country’s natural environment and its colourful inhabitants. Until the 1970s and 1980s, however, Western European tourists themselves actively participated in portraying the Montenegrins as a remarkable and unique people.

In 1972, for example, a professional author of travellers’ guides from the Netherlands, J. Dominicus, described historical Montenegro as ‘the land of professional heroes’, while these heroes themselves, until recently supposedly existing in a natural state, were described as follows. ‘The men with their aquiline noses, fierce dark eyes and martial moustaches excelled in their sense of honour and patriotism. As born fighters they would rather fight till death than leave an insult unavenged.’ Of course there was also another side to the picture: ‘Working was beneath the dignity of a fighter; this should be done by the women.’ But the author did not forget to mention that in recent years many Montenegrins had gone to work in modern industry,

⁷ Hupchick (*The Balkans*, p. 258) describes this phenomenon rather well for the nineteenth century: ‘Small, poor, inaccessible Montenegro played a role in Serbian national affairs disproportionate to its size and resources. To the lowland Serbs, it represented a beacon of Serbian independence and anti-Ottoman resistance ... Closeness also fed an undercurrent of rivalry over leadership in Serbian and South Slav affairs ... Montenegro’s leaders were cognizant of the Romantic argument and often subtly exerted the validity of their claim to preeminence...’

⁸ P.D. Ostović, *The Truth about Yugoslavia* (With an Introduction by Ivan Meštrović; New York, 1952), p.33. The author also writes: ‘The Montenegrins are a very proud people, who still cultivate the knightly and the heroic, more than any other Southern Slavs.’

however unnatural this might seem.⁹ The old Montenegrin image was cultivated even more by a famous Dutch author of novels and stories about the Balkans, A. den Doollaard, who in 1956 had published a work entitled *The Land behind God's Back*. The title referred to the mountains and table lands of northern Montenegro, the part of the country to which the old legend referred of how Montenegro originated almost by chance: when God had created the world and now was busy distributing earth, seeds and stones across the different lands, carrying three separate bags with these creationist essentials, the devil suddenly cut open the bag with stones when He passed over Montenegro, thus causing them to drop down with a rattling peal of thunder on what became a unique mountainous land. Den Doollaard was an expert at romanticising the rough life and the bloody and tragic history of the Montenegrin people, who he says waged about eighty wars against foreign invaders, including Turks, Austrians, and indeed Albanians. The cult of the warrior made Montenegro famous in Europe and according to the author, 'the race survived thanks to its armed men', even if 'they were better marksmen than thinkers' and had a greater esteem for their rifle, their horse and their home than for their wives, who sadly were treated as utterly inferior to the men.¹⁰

After a first period of Montenegrin political autonomy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (the age of the realm of Dioclea, Doclea, or Duklja) and of a second period when the territory (now known as Zeta) was part of the expanding Serbian Empire, which ended with the historic Battle of Kosovo in 1389, the country reverted to a period of small-scale autonomy under different local families (Balšić, Crnojević) and would-be dynasties, which reaffirmed the aspect of separate Montenegrin political history and independence. In the early fifteenth century, when Venice had become a power to reckon with, the name 'Montenegro' came into general use, being the translation of Crna Gora, a name that was either derived from the dark appearance of Mount Lovćen near the Montenegrin capital of Cetinje or from the family name of Crnojević (Black), the local dynasty that ruled the country between the early fifteenth and the early sixteenth century. From the 1480s – when Serbia, Bosnia, Hercegovina, Albania and part of Montenegro itself had all been incorporated in the Ottoman Empire – the Montenegrins continued to fight the Ottomans from highly located and almost inaccessible Cetinje. The precise nature or degree of their autonomy vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire is unclear or disputed, and some historians have argued that Montenegro was actually (regarded as) part of the empire for most of the period between the 16th and 19th centuries, even if the Montenegrin tribes would frequently cause trouble or refuse to pay tribute. But if so, it was a matter of nominal Ottoman suzerainty rather than direct rule or effective sovereignty, and even the status of nominal suzerainty was often contested by the Montenegrins.¹¹ They tried to ally themselves with the Venetians, who had settled in the Bay of Kotor below the 'Black Mountain', but the relationship between the two Christian entities was always complex as well and often ambiguous. A notable event occurred in 1493 when a printing press from Venice was imported and installed at Obod near Cetinje. Although it did not function for long, this proved that Montenegro was by no means just a primitive principality, and indeed some of the earliest printed books in Cyrillic script in the Slavic Orthodox world

⁹ J. Dominicus, *Portret van Joegoslavië* (Haarlem, 1972), p. 36.

¹⁰ A. den Doollaard, *Het land achter Gods rug* (Amsterdam, 1956), esp. pp. 9-10. The book's popularity in the Netherlands and Belgium is shown by the fact that in 1979 it saw already a ninth impression.

¹¹ See e.g. Hupchick, *The Balkans*, pp. 122, 257-8.

were produced here.¹² The historical importance of this event was stressed again when in 1893 the four-hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Obod printing press was celebrated, attended by representatives from various foreign universities. In 1516 Montenegro became what seemed to amount to a theocratic state as the Orthodox monks and the bishop of Cetinje took political power into their hands during the absence of the last Crnojević ruler in Venice (he may have fled to Venice after the Turks had conquered a major part of the country). The bishop of Cetinje became known as 'vladika' (ruler, prince), and the period of rule by the Montenegrin prince-bishops would last until 1851. They were elected by local assemblies of monks and after 1557 they were also consecrated by the Serbian patriarch of Peć in nearby Kosovo (Old Serbia), which confirmed not only the close association, or rather the union, of clerical and temporal power, but also the alliance of the Montenegrins and the Serbs. While this clerical political structure undoubtedly served to strengthen the anti-Ottoman and national-Orthodox cause, it also created a tradition in which the idea of existence of non-Orthodox or non-Slavic Montenegrins beside the Orthodox mainstream seemed an impossibility. This became clear when around or shortly after 1700 massacres were committed of Muslim Slavs and others.¹³

In the seventeenth century the Turks twice occupied Cetinje, and for some time the Montenegrins were forced to pay tribute to the Ottoman Empire. But the Ottomans decided to leave again and tolerate the existence in the mountains of a minor independent principality whose permanent occupation would cause more trouble and expense than advantages. Part of the territory of Montenegro – along the southern coast and in the east – was annexed to the Ottoman Empire however, and it was here, but also to some extent in the autonomous Montenegro itself, that part of the Slavic population, in addition to many Albanians, had adopted Islam. In 1696 the reign of vladika Danilo I Petrović-Njegoš began, who ruled until 1737 and who turned out to be the first in a series of hereditary prince-bishops from the renowned family Petrović-Njegoš, the arrangement being that the vladika, who was himself celibate, appointed as his successor one of his nephews. Perhaps this was a unique Montenegrin contribution (a 'hereditary-theocratic' one) to constitutional history. The system lasted until 1851 and may have strengthened the stability and resolve of the petty state, which among other things had to deal with a threat to its religious cohesion. Indeed, the (probably true) story goes that on Christmas Eve 1702 drastic action was taken against Montenegrin Muslim renegades, who were accused of aiding the Turks, who were obviously not without influence in the country. A large-scale massacre (the 'Montenegrin Vespers') was carried out of all Muslim men that the Montenegrins could lay their hands on, in particular Slavs (the actual renegades), but probably also Turks, Albanians and others, an action whose aim was to 'cleanse' the country of real or potential enemies and affirm its confessional homogeneity. Almost 150 years later this bloodbath was celebrated in a famous and controversial poem written by the last hereditary vladika Petar II Petrović-Njegoš (who ruled from 1830-1851), *Gorski*

¹² The first printing press in the Yugoslav lands was apparently installed at Senj on the Croatian coast a few years earlier; see Ostović, *The Truth about Yugoslavia*, p. 34.

¹³ See for this early political and cultural history, e.g., H.C. Darby, 'Montenegro', in Stephen Clissold (ed.), *A Short History of Yugoslavia. From Early Times to 1966* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 73-5, 84-5; Adnan Čirgić, *Montenegrin Language in the Past and Present* (Podgorica, 2011), p. 30. Darby's essay is a useful synthesis of Montenegrin history, but a bit idealising. A more recent and comprehensive history is Elizabeth Roberts, *Realm of the Black Mountain: A History of Montenegro* (London, 2007).

vijenac ('The Mountain Wreath'), which some recent commentators have interpreted as a call for committing genocide.

The remarkable rule of Danilo I was marked by long years of war with the Turks, who at one point occupied Cetinje for a third time but again decided to evacuate the town because of the hopeless conditions of guerrilla warfare and lack of provisions. At least as remarkable was the fact that Danilo succeeded in drawing Russia into the Western Balkans theatre. In 1711 Peter the Great, hailed as the champion of Montenegrin liberty, sent envoys to Montenegro and other Balkan political centres and in 1715 Danilo himself even travelled to Russia to meet with Peter, who apparently recognised the independence of Montenegro and decided to give financial support. Thus Montenegro entered the arena of international politics, and anti-Ottoman rebellions in Montenegro after 1715, which were incited by Peter the Great, had an influence on the outbreak of the Ottoman-Venetian War in the Peloponnese (1715-17). Danilo's successors made a habit of visiting the Russian Tsar, which meant that in addition to the Venetians Montenegro could now rely on a second (and perhaps more reliable) ally in its struggle against the Ottoman Empire. It is also noteworthy that already in 1698 Russian cadets had been sent to the Bay of Kotor to be taught nautical skills by a local captain, Marko Martinović, one of a number of well-known humanists, scientists and artists in Kotor, Perast and other towns in the Bay of Kotor region,¹⁴ a policy that was apparently supported or tolerated by the Venetians. Danilo's successor Sava (1737 – 1782) was not as successful a ruler as Danilo, and around 1770 Montenegro came under the influence of an adventurer (one Stephen Mali) who claimed to be the Russian Tsar Peter III, the murdered husband of Catherine the Great, and who managed for some years to take the effective power into his hands behind the façade of Sava's rule. He started a new offensive against the Turks, in response to which Catherine herself sent envoys to Montenegro to proclaim her support for an uprising on a large scale. The next prince-bishop Petar I Petrović-Njegoš ruled from 1782 until 1830 and proved a successful ruler, who was later referred to as 'the great and holy vladika'. During his rule Montenegro experienced a degree of modernisation, with the law and administration being reorganised and the effectiveness of the central power over the clans and tribes being strengthened. He also enlarged Montenegrin territory and even forced the Turks – for what it was worth – to declare in 1799 that they formally recognised the independence of Montenegro and that the Montenegrins had never been subjects of the Ottoman Empire. Between 1806 and 1814 the Montenegrins twice occupied the Bay of Kotor, obviously an important position with a view to external communication, but Russia persuaded them to hand it over to Austria after the Congress of Vienna. Only in 1878 did Montenegro succeed in incorporating a part of the coastal area (Bar and Ulcinj) further to the south.¹⁵

The period 1830 – 1851 saw the reign of the last of the traditional vladikas Petar II Petrović-Njegoš, who became famous as a warrior, a reformer of sorts and especially as a Montenegrin and Serbian national poet: he was the author of the notorious epic work 'The Mountain Wreath', published in 1847. He set up a new printing press in Cetinje, but his political and administrative measures were somewhat contradictory (constitutional modernisation vs. strengthening of the clerical-political power). He was probably more consistent in his war policy against the Turks and refused to make a deal with the Ottoman Empire, which offered the northern Albanian city of

¹⁴ Branislav Strugar, Borislav Uskoković and Milenko Pasinović, *Montenegro* (Belgrade, 2010), pp. 22-3.

¹⁵ Darby, 'Montenegro', pp. 75-8; Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1923* (London, 2005), p. 336; Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: From the End of Byzantium to the Present Day* (London, 2001), p. 78.

Skutari (Shkodra, Shkodër, Skadar), a part of the Adriatic littoral, and an eastern section of Hercegovina in exchange for recognition of Ottoman suzerainty over Montenegro. Petar II rejected this bargain and in the 1830s the Montenegrins invaded parts of Albania and Hercegovina to seize these areas unilaterally, but they were unable to keep and incorporate them.¹⁶ It was a foretaste of the persistent Montenegrin desire to expand their state territory and even to annex lands that were largely inhabited by Albanians. This was not necessarily a problem if the non-Slavic or non-Orthodox population was either expelled, killed, or kept in subjection, and perhaps it was even possible to force people to change their religious or ethnic affiliation, notably from Islam or Catholicism to Orthodox Christianity. We have seen above that some Slavic Montenegrins were willing to adopt Islam and Ottoman rule, and that one way of resolving this problem was to exterminate these renegades, as happened apparently in 1702 – according to the Montenegrin folk song ‘Serbian Christmas Eve around 1702’ and other sources – or already some years earlier. It has been argued that some Montenegrin tribal lineages pragmatically shifted their allegiance between different faiths and ethno-linguistic identities, depending on shifts in local power structure, thus keeping their options open with a view to collective survival. (This did not change the fact that other groups remained more consistently loyal to either Christian or Muslim identity, and the Montenegrin clerical government more than any.) It has also been observed by a Montenegrin scholar that in the Montenegrin Slavic-Orthodox world national saints were hardly a religious but rather an ethno-political phenomenon. They were ‘national liberation symbols, under which Montenegrin tribes obtain[ed] moral cleansing and motivation for new ventures.’¹⁷ There was in fact a good deal of religious indifference among the people, aside from popular customs and superstitions and being ‘Christians’ in the sense of adhering to the ethno-national collective or the state tradition, the role of the Church being to make the political sphere quasi-sacral. Under these circumstances uncertainty about some people’s loyalty, in combination with the (both symbolical and real) religious fanaticism of the ruling clerical-political elite, could lead to extreme violence and mass murder with the aim of creating a more homogeneous and reliable population able to continue the struggle against their enemies, in particular the Turks and other Muslims. This ‘unifying policy’ could also be a matter of rational political calculation, serving to suppress internal disunity and inter-tribal warfare and to bolster the position and legitimacy of the Montenegro vladika and the political centre. At all events, the ‘Montenegrin Vespers’, ‘Christmas Eve’, or ‘Extermination of the Turks’ (but in fact of Muslim Slavs) was passed on in oral culture and writing after the early eighteenth century. Petar II’s teacher Sima Milutinović, for example, had written a drama which included an episode describing it; this undoubtedly inspired the prince-bishop to add his own literary version, which he did with great success.¹⁸

The historian Branimir Anzulovic has argued that *The Mountain Wreath* of Petar II Petrović-Njegoš (usually referred to as Njegoš), a self-styled ‘song of horror’, is a ‘glorification of genocide’ probably ‘unparalleled in world literature’. The poem was long regarded as perhaps the most important literary creation in Montenegrin and Serbian cultural history, which – quite apart from its bloody contents – has to do with its undeniable artistic qualities. It describes the conflict between Christian and Muslim Montenegrins, which is resolved through the massacre of the lat-

¹⁶ Darby, ‘Montenegro’, pp. 78-9.

¹⁷ Rajko Cerović, *Svjatlosti i sjenke jedne tradicije* (Nikšić, 1986), quoted by Branimir Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (New York, 1999), p. 24.

¹⁸ Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, pp. 24-9, 51, 188 n5, 189 n25, with our own points of emphasis and interpretation.

ter, the most drastic way to achieve the aim of a pure and unified homeland. In the poem vladika Danilo I first curses the Turks, calling them devils, ‘degenerates’, ‘accursed litter’ and so on, and announces that these blasphemers of Christ’s name will be forcibly baptised with water ‘or with blood’: ‘Let the song of horror ring forth, / a true altar on a blood-stained rock.’ Two assemblies of Christian Montenegrin chieftains then decide ‘to cleanse the country of infidels.’ It is decided that those of the ‘infidels’ who refuse to change their faith shall be killed, which happens indeed on Christmas Eve. The next day, Christmas Day, a student expresses his delight about the slaughter and the smoke of burning villages and an abbot exclaims: ‘How can a national sacrifice / be made without clouds of smoke?’ Blood-spattered people appear and tell the vladika that the tidings are good. ‘As large as Cetinje Valley is, / not a single witness escaped / to tell what happened there. / We put under our sabres all those / who did not want to be baptised / ... / We burned all Turkish houses, / that there might be no abode nor trace / of our infidel domestic enemy.’ The prince-bishop is delighted and exclaims: ‘What a joy, my falcons, / what a joy, heroic liberty! / This morning you’ve marvellously resurrected / from the tombs of our forefathers!’ The abbot invites the slayers, his ‘brothers’, to receive the sacrament and take the Holy Communion, ‘without fast and without confession’. Then on New Year’s Day the vladika and the abbot receive the news of more slaughter of Muslims in another district, which lasted one day and one night. A river was filled with dead ‘Turks’, and now there were only ‘headless corpses or ruins’. The vladika weeps for the Christians that perished in the fighting, but the abbot laughs from joy and his ‘soul is singing’. Another blood-spattered warrior arrives and vows that their struggle will not end ‘until the extermination, Turkish or ours.’ According to Anzulovic, the depiction of the massacres as a baptism in blood that leads to the nation’s rebirth makes the poem ‘a hymn to genocide’, and Petar II is willing to make a pact with the devil to ‘mow down’ their enemies, of which future generations will enjoy the flowers. The poem also displays a strong contempt for the West, expressed by negative comments on Venice made by various characters who depict the Venetians as sickly, effeminate, sly, cowardly, and fearful of their own oppressive police state. That Petar’s regime was probably worse is concealed behind the cliché of heroic, healthy and freedom-loving Montenegrins. The struggle for a homogeneous Orthodox theocracy, celebrated as the supreme good, was an end – in the poem if not in nineteenth-century reality – towards which all means were permitted. Anzulovic speaks of ‘the spirit of a primitive tribal religion in which the neighbour of a different faith is the devil and must be annihilated.’¹⁹ It is difficult to say, however, how far this world-view was primitive – Anzulovic also speaks of nihilism and necrophilia – or rather the expression of a modern Romantic nationalism tinged by a kind of cultural totalitarianism.

The ‘pagan cult of revenge’ in tribal societies, the revival of folk poetry from the late eighteenth century onwards, and the ‘demonisation of the enemy in the teachings of the Serbian Orthodox Church’ are mentioned by Anzulovic as causes of the genocidal mind, whether ata-

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 51-6. Another prominent motif in *The Mountain Wreath* is the glorification of Miloš Obilić, the hero of the Battle of Kosovo who was said to have killed the Ottoman Sultan but who could not thereby change the outcome of the battle. See Judah, *The Serbs*, pp. 63-5, 76-8, who also observes that ‘it is not known exactly when and to what extent Muslims were killed or simply driven out’ during Danilo’s rule in the early eighteenth century. In 1930 *The Mountain Wreath* was published in English translation in London with a preface by the Serb Vladeta Popović, who noted among other things that ‘[t]he racial instinct of the Montenegrins was in mortal opposition to Mohammedanism’; quoted in Judah, *The Serbs*, p. 78.

vistic or modern. The influence of Njegoš's *Mountain Wreath* is generally seen as having been great in Montenegro and Serbia, which is shown by the fact that between 1847 and 1913 there were twenty editions of this remarkable poetic work. According to Anzulovic, its influence 'is comparable to that of the Bible in Protestant countries or the Qur'an in the Islamic world, but its message is very different.'²⁰ The work was positively valued by later writers, political figures, and academics, but there were also critical voices. One admirer of Njegoš was Milovan Djilas (1911 – 1995), the communist-turned-dissident who in his later life became more nationalistic again and who was born in Montenegro where his father had been one of the leaders of a raid in 1924 in which about 350 Muslims were killed. (Because of massacres like this many Muslims left Montenegro and Yugoslavia and were replaced by Orthodox settlers.) After having written already three shorter studies on Njegoš, Djilas published his extensive *Njegoš: Poet, Prince, Bishop* (English edition, 1966) in his post-communist period. Perhaps it was a tribute to Njegoš, perhaps not, when he described him as 'the poet of massacres in which the cutting off of heads was a sacred and heroic act.' According to Anzulovic, Djilas justified Njegoš's advocacy of violence because he found its use in the service of national goals permissible: 'Serbianism is a concrete form of the human desire for good, for freedom', Djilas wrote. Although Njegoš's 'humanism' was 'dark and bloody', his motif of massacre was 'poetic' and even 'humanistic' and the massacre itself inevitable and an act of 'justice': 'Njegoš was the first to experience passionately and to give expression to a massacre as an aspect of human destiny, as a higher ordinance. Herein lies its originality and its greatness.' It may sound incomprehensible, but Djilas was not alone. The author Ivo Andrić wrote an essay on 'Njegoš's Humaneness', and Orthodox Church leaders, Serbian nationalists, and communists alike have praised Njegoš as a humane, noble and just man, because his struggle against Turkish evil and injustice with both deeds and words had to be conducted with all possible means. In 1985 the Bosnian literary historian Muhsin Rizvić attributed Njegoš's violent tendency to Western (i.e. German) influences and argued that 'the romantic motif of a general massacre connected with the idea of national liberation was alive in German literary life' at the time when Njegoš's tutor, the writer Sima Milutinović, lived in Germany. As for reactions in the English-speaking world to Djilas's *Njegoš*, which contained long quotations from *The Mountain Wreath*, Anzulovic has shown that – at least in the United States – non-academic reviewers were generally more critical of both Djilas and Njegoš than were academic specialists. While the former rejected Djilas's tendency to hold Njegoš up for admiration, a man like Albert B. Lord, a professor of Slavic literature at Harvard University, found Djilas's book and its interpretative tendency 'superb', 'extraordinary', and so on. Interestingly, Lord was decorated by the Serbian Orthodox Church with the Order of Saint Sava. According to Anzulovic, the first writer seriously addressing the criminal aspect of Njegoš's *Mountain Wreath* was the Montenegrin author Stanko Cerović (*Njegoševe tajne staze*, 1996).²¹

²⁰ Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, p. 61. In his book *Land without Justice* (English edition, 1958) the Montenegrin-born Milovan Djilas relates how in his youth he used to read *The Mountain Wreath* to local peasants, many of whom knew it by heart, while hardly any one knew the Bible, but for them 'The Mountain Wreath might have served as such a book.' Quoted in Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, p. 192 n65.

²¹ Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, pp. 60-67, 192 n69. Another critical voice on Njegoš's poetry and its impact is S. Pavlović, 'The Mountain Wreath: Poetry or a Blueprint for the Final Solution?', *spacesofidentity.net*, 1/3 (October 2001), cited in Norman Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-Forgotten Europe* (London, 2012), pp. 777-8 n24.

Western glorification of the Serbs and Montenegrins had its roots in early nineteenth-century Romanticism and was continued through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was a question of accepting the Montenegrin and Serbian myths, but also of political interests and constructing additional ideological notions which idealised a people like the Montenegrins (e.g., postulating their innocence and victimisation instead of their aggressiveness and guilt, or depicting them as representatives of the West against the Ottoman East). In 1877 the British prime minister William Gladstone, the man who raised the outcry over the 'Bulgarian atrocities' committed by the Turks in response to a Bulgarian uprising, praised the Montenegrins when they succeeded in conquering part of the Adriatic littoral and expelling the Turks. He called the Montenegrins 'heroes ... whose braveries surpass those of the ancient Hellenes at Thermopylae and Marathon.' Gladstone was one of those who were involved in 'the crusade in defence of the Ottoman Empire's Slav and Christian subjects', as Norman Davies phrased it. In May 1877 he wrote a highly romantic article about the history of Montenegro ('or Tsernagora') in the journal *Nineteenth Century*, stressing her centuries-old record of resistance against the Turks and the 'gratitude' owed by Western nations. Of the Montenegrins he wrote: 'To the Koran or slavery, they preferred a life of cold, want, hardship and perpetual peril. Such is their Magna Charta; and without reproach to others, it is, as far as I know, the noblest in the world.' They maintained their 'covenant' of unconditional struggle 'through an unbroken series of trials and exploits, to which it is hard to find a parallel in the annals of Europe, perhaps even of mankind.' It was a virtual canonisation of the Montenegrins by an archetypal Liberal politician. Gladstone was especially impressed by the story of the late fifteenth-century printing press, but the practices of publicly displaying severed Turkish heads and mutilating prisoners he felt obliged to condemn as uncivilised. Alfred, Lord Tennyson was another Englishman deeply impressed by the Montenegrins. In 1880 he wrote a poem on Montenegro: 'O smallest among peoples! Rough rock-throne / Of Freedom! warriors beating back the swarm / Of Turkish Islam for five hundred years, / Great Tsernagora! ...'²² The years 1876-80 were a high point in European admiration for the Montenegrins, even though they (and the Albanians) were practically ignored during the negotiations at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. By this time Montenegro had reached the stage where further expansion of the state territory was a realistic proposition. In 1851 the poet-bishop Petar II had been succeeded by Danilo II, another member of the Petrović-Njegoš family, but one who wished to marry and therefore decided to end the constitutional era of prince-bishops. The civil and ecclesiastical offices were separated and in 1852 Danilo II became prince or 'gospodar' of Montenegro, the office of bishop now being held by a member of the local aristocracy. The new ruler introduced a more European-style legal code and sought support both in Austria and in Russia. In 1856 he denied in a memorandum the Ottoman claim that Montenegro was an integral part of the empire, pointing out that 'for 466 years [since the Battle of Kosovo] the Montenegrin people has never been subjected to any power' and that 'for four and a half centuries it has waged continual warfare with Turkey.' Such claims were good material for romanticisers in Europe. Danilo's memorandum further demanded official recognition of Montenegrin independence and extension of the state frontiers into Albania and Hercegovina, including annexation of the port city of Bar. The Montenegrins had to

²² Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, pp. 146-9; Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms*, pp. 587-9, quoting Gladstone and Tennyson.

wait for another twenty years to see at least part of these territorial demands implemented. When Danilo died in 1860 he was succeeded by the nineteen-year-old Nikola I, who ruled until 1918.²³

In 1876, following an anti-Ottoman revolt in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Nikola, in concert with the Serbs, declared war on the empire, and the following year the Montenegrins renewed their offensive after Russia had come to the aid of Bulgaria and defeated the Turks. The Montenegrins occupied part of Hercegovina, the coastal towns of Bar and Ulcinj and the area south of Lake Skutari, and some districts in inland northern Albania, thus incorporating a territory with a substantial Albanian population. This spectacular near-trebling of the Montenegrin state was recognised by the Russian-imposed Treaty of San Stefano of March 1878. But the Treaty dictated at the Congress of Berlin later that year considerably reduced these territorial gains (as well as those of other Balkan states, especially Bulgaria), although Montenegrin independence was now officially proclaimed. In 1880 Montenegro had to give up most of the occupied northern Albanian territory, notably Gusinje, where the Albanians were putting up heavy and successful resistance. In compensation it was allowed by the Great Powers to annex Ulcinj, which meant an extension of the Montenegrin coastline around Bar further to the south. An important feature of the fighting during the years 1876-80 was this escalating Montenegrin-Albanian conflict. At this time the Albanians began to form a modern national movement and also a rather effective 'people's army', which managed to mobilise tens of thousands of armed men in the north. The new Albanian leadership organised the defensive war against the Montenegrins, the Serbs and the Greeks, and thousands of lives were lost until the moment when, in 1880, the Montenegrins were forced to evacuate some of the occupied Albanian districts through a combination of military and diplomatic pressure.²⁴

The period between 1880 and 1912 was relatively peaceful, but only an interlude. Prince Nikola became a king in 1910 and cemented his diplomatic relations and international standing by marrying off his many children to the royal families of Russia, Italy, Germany and Serbia. There was some constitutional modernisation including the introduction of a parliament in 1905, while education was improved to the point where in 1906 there were 112 primary schools and at least two secondary schools (in Cetinje and Podgorica). Higher education was usually sought at the University of Belgrade, which bolstered the Serbian-Montenegrin link on a new political, ideological and democratic level. In October 1912 Montenegro felt strong enough to declare war on Turkey again and start the First Balkan War. Its military forces occupied once more several areas inhabited by a large Albanian population, including the territory that had to be given up in 1880, the area around the historic Serbian city of Peć in Kosovo, and indeed the northern Albanian city of Skutari (Shkodër). Although Skutari was eventually evacuated under international pressure and through the armed resistance of the Albanians themselves, who now proclaimed an independent Albanian State, the Second Balkan War of 1913 ensured that Montenegro could annex most of the other occupied territories. This included part of the Sandžak of

²³ Darby, 'Montenegro', pp. 80-1.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 82-4; Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (Seattle/London, 1977), pp. 141-57; Hupchick, *The Balkans*, pp. 255-67, 302-5; Misha Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (London, 2000), pp. 148-9, 152-5. The worst part of the 'Balkan crisis of the 1870s' was undoubtedly what happened in Bulgaria, where some 260,000 Muslims were killed by Bulgarian (and Russian) troops, volunteers, and civilians, more than ten times as many as the number of Bulgarian victims of the 'atrocities' or 'horrors' committed by the Turks. See Hupchick, *The Balkans*, pp. 264-5.

Novi Pazar between Serbia and Montenegro and some Albanian areas to the east and south-east of Podgorica, which added a large number of non-Orthodox and non-Slavic people to the state. Montenegro, with a population of perhaps 320,000, now included about 25,000 Catholics and 105,000 Muslims, 80,000 of whom had been incorporated in 1913, including Albanians and Bosniaks. This demonstrated the dangerous character of the inter-ethnic problems of the Balkans and the difficulty of ‘sorting them out’, since all emerging Balkan ‘national states’ tried to enlarge themselves and not just ‘liberate’ their ethnic kin. In the two short but bloody Balkan wars, which together lasted only ten weeks, some 200,000 people were killed, which clearly showed the scale of the fighting and the intensity of the killing. Many of the victims were innocent civilians massacred by armed men of another side, including (and perhaps in particular) many Albanians in Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro. The Skutari war theatre was bloody and pathetic. King Nikola explained to the Great Powers that he wanted the Albanian (but also largely Catholic) city because one of his ancestors was buried there (one of the Balšić family). Austria-Hungary and Italy told the Serbs and Montenegrins to withdraw from Albanian territory and end the siege of Skutari, arguing that they had no business in a region overwhelmingly inhabited by Albanians. The Slavic brothers wished to know why this argument was used when it was not applied in the case of a territory like Bosnia, which had been annexed by Austria. The Skutari siege was a prestige project of Nikola, but it brought Montenegro enormous losses in terms of lives and resources. The city fell after more than six months when its Turkish commander accepted a bribe from Nikola, who could enter a place whose inhabitants were starving but who was then bribed himself when international mediators paid him off with a loan of 6 million francs. This happened to end the dangerous tension between Russia and Austria over the issue.²⁵

In 1912 Lev Bronshtein (Trotsky), who covered the Balkan wars as Vienna correspondent of the Ukrainian newspaper *Kievskaiia Mysl*, had the following to say of Serbian and Montenegrin war policy towards the Albanians in Kosovo and elsewhere: ‘The Serbs in Old Serbia, in their national endeavour to correct data in the ethnographical statistics that are not quite favourable to them, are engaged quite simply in systematic extermination of the Muslim population.’ Among those who protested were Serbian and Austrian social democrats. The total number of Albanians killed in Kosovo alone in 1912-13 has been estimated as 20,000 to 25,000. The perpetrators were mainly Serbs, but Montenegrins were involved as well, and especially Montenegrins were keen to engage in forced conversion of Muslims and Catholics to Orthodoxy, as happened in the Peć region of Kosovo, which had been occupied by Montenegro. Those who refused to convert, including some Catholics, were tortured or shot, for example a well-known Catholic priest who was killed for refusing to make the Orthodox sign of the cross. A report from 1914 of an international commission of enquiry set up by the Carnegie Endowment described how in 1913 the Albanians were crushed in Kosovo and how ‘unarmed and innocent populations were massacred

²⁵ Darby, ‘Montenegro’, pp. 84-6; Wikipedia: ‘Montenegro’ for population figures; Glenny, *The Balkans*, pp. 228-43. Glenny comments (p. 243) that the Skutari episode ‘demonstrated alarmingly how the idiosyncratic behaviour of the shrewd, if unappealing ruler of the least significant country in the Balkans could lock the great powers on to a course leading to general European war.’ Equally alarming was another aspect of the crisis. According to Mark Mazower, in 1912, ‘for the first time in the history of the region, modern states took advantage of a military conflict to pursue long-range demographic goals’, although despite ‘some Serb officers’ careless talk of “exterminating” the Albanian population, this was killing prompted more by revenge than genocide’; see Mazower, *The Balkans*, p. 118. See for the establishment of independent Albania in 1912-13 C. and B. Jelavich, *Establishment of the Balkan National States*, pp. 222-34.

... by the Serbo-Montenegrin soldiery, with a view to the entire transformation of the ethnic character of regions inhabited exclusively by Albanians.' When Plav in northern Albania was occupied by the Montenegrins, 500 Muslims who refused to convert to Christianity were shot.²⁶

The bloody Balkan Wars were followed by the inferno of the First World War, which did not help to improve the relations between different Balkan nations either, with Montenegro, Serbia and Greece seizing parts of Albania. In late 1918, when the war was all but over, the Serbian army laid waste to large parts of northern Albania in the apparent hope (encouraged by the French) that Albania could be definitively partitioned and part of the country incorporated in a new Greater Serbian or Yugoslav State. However, President Wilson and the United States disagreed and recognised a re-established independent Albania.²⁷ In Montenegro two opposing political camps were forming: a pan-Serbian camp (embracing Serbian royalists and others) and an autonomist (but not anti-Yugoslav) camp supported by the Montenegrin royalists and, probably, the majority of the traditionalist Montenegrin population. The better-organised and military-supported pan-Serbian camp managed to seize power using the dirty tactics of political manipulation, smear campaigns against the Montenegrin royalists, and downright intimidation and terror. 'Agitators' criticising the pan-Serbianists were arrested, and the orchestrated 'Grand National Assembly' congregating in Podgorica (Cetinje was a royalist and autonomist centre) stated that 'the Serbian people of Montenegro share one blood, language, religion and tradition with the people of Serbia.' Prince Aleksandar of Serbia was allowed to assume power in Montenegro, too, and the country was annexed to Serbia by royal decree. A minor uprising in Cetinje of Montenegrin royalists (known as 'Greens' or *zelenasi*) in December 1918 was suppressed, and Montenegro was pacified even before the beginning of the Peace Conference in Paris. Protests of King Nikola addressed to the Allied Powers had no effect, and in January 1919 another uprising led to a civil war which divided the different tribes of the country. Atrocities were perpetrated on both sides, some of which were quite horrific. A British diplomat, Sir John De Salis-Soglio, who was sent to Montenegro to make enquiries, wrote a report which the British government refused to publish. In April 1920 the *New York Times* published a sensational article disclosing that the Serbs had arrested De Salis and that his report described how the Serbian Army 'which overran Montenegro after the armistice terrorised the population' and that the reign of terror continued. However, the details of the De Salis report were kept secret by the British and the Allied Powers in order not to upset the Yugoslav government, but as Norman Davies writes, 'historians now know how damning it was' (it was published in the 1990s).

Montenegro was said by the report to be 'under occupation' by the Serbian Army; Montenegrin officials had been replaced by Serbs; elections were a farce; the prisons were full and the pro-Serbian regime was hated. The army organised expeditions into the mountains to round up 'rebels', which involved the torching of villages, the beating of local people, and the torture and execution of prisoners. A Canadian Allied staff officer resident in the Balkans gave details of Serbian Army war crimes, and reports from Montenegro spoke of the burning and pillaging of many thousands of houses and estimated that the damage caused by the Serbs in Montenegro was more extensive than that inflicted by the Austrians during the war. More than 5,000 civilians were held in Serbian internment camps and another Canadian, who had been running a war hospital

²⁶ Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pp. 253-5; Judah, *The Serbs*, pp. 85-6.

²⁷ See C. and B. Jelavich, *Establishment of the Balkan National States*, pp. 316-8 for the expansionist behaviour of Montenegro and others towards Albania from the start of the First World War onwards.

in Ulcinj, wrote to the British government in July 1920 that they could no longer do their work because the Serbs would not allow Montenegrins to be treated there. J.S. Plamenatz, premier and foreign minister of the Montenegrin government in exile, continued to protest and reminded the Americans in 1922 of ‘the annexation of Allied Montenegro by force and bloodshed’ and of President Wilson’s assurances about the Montenegrin people’s right to self-determination. A League of Montenegrin Emigrants published a brochure entitled ‘The Greatest Crime of the World War’, which contained a large number of noteworthy quotations including a statement by a Norwegian minister, Hugo Mowinkel, who declared in August 1920 that the crime committed by Serbia against Montenegro ‘still enjoys the support of the Powers.’ The Genoa Conference of April–May 1922, which discussed the post-war reconstruction of Eastern Europe, ignored a well-documented plea on behalf of Montenegro, which gave also details on Serbian atrocities. On 16 April 1922 the *New York Times* published a long article, headed ‘Annihilation of a Nation’, recounting the events of the last four years in Montenegro. As Norman Davies stresses, King Nikola himself had become the victim of his life-long support for the pan-Serbian cause.²⁸ This cause – or at least that of a Serbian-led Yugoslavia – continued to be supported by the West, notwithstanding all the romantic notions about the Montenegrins as an independent-minded people.

It is important to mention in some detail this evidence – so patiently collected by Norman Davies in his recent *Vanished Kingdoms* – on what happened in post-World War One Montenegro, because it reminds us that the national identity of the Montenegrins was and is a complex issue and that the Montenegrin-Serbian relationship was by no means just a ‘brotherly’ one. It also shows us that at some later stage – indeed this happened after the 1990s – the Montenegrins might be tempted to fall back on their old-established traditions and their separate national-political consciousness. Meanwhile the Montenegrin-Albanian and Orthodox-Muslim antagonisms persisted in the new Yugoslavia as well – we mentioned already one incident in 1924 in which Milovan Djilas’s father was involved and in which 350 Muslims were killed. Under the Treaty for the Protection of Minorities of 1919, Yugoslavia had reluctantly promised to supply primary education in the local language in areas where ‘a considerable proportion’ of the population had a language other than Serbo-Croat. This was especially significant with regard to the Albanians, but at least in Kosovo, the region with the largest number of Albanians in Yugoslavia, the government promises had little or no effect.²⁹ In 1937 Vasa Čubrilović gave a lecture in Belgrade outlining a programme for the expulsion of the Albanians from Serbia/Yugoslavia, arguing that ‘the only method and the only means is the brutal force of an organised governmental power, and we have always been above them in this.’³⁰ When Rebecca West visited Montenegro in the mid-1930s she met Albanians who were full of hatred against ‘the Serbs’ and who said they would enjoy another war in which they would have ‘the chance of shooting a lot of Serbs.’ They explained that ‘[a]fter the war they ill-treated us and took our land from us’, and the otherwise

²⁸ See for the internal post-war situation in Montenegro especially Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms*, pp. 601–14, 778–9 notes, where an extensive literature and some original sources are quoted, including Djilas, *Land without Justice*; Roberts, *Realm of the Black Mountain*; and the contemporary publications of Whitney Warren, *Montenegro: The Crime of the Peace Conference* (New York, 1922) and Alex Devine, *The Martyred Nation: A Plea for Montenegro* (London, 1924). The text of the De Salis report was finally published in R.L. Jarman (ed.), *Yugoslavia Political Diaries, 1918–65* (Cambridge, 1997), vol. I.

²⁹ Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 267.

³⁰ Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*, p. 93.

rather pro-Serbian West knew that there was ‘some justification for this’.³¹ During the Second World War the Albanians got the chance to take revenge on the Serbs in Kosovo (including on Montenegrin settlers), in western Macedonia, and elsewhere, which of course prompted Serbian reprisals with tens of thousands being killed or fleeing on both sides.³²

After the war Montenegro was given autonomy in communist Yugoslavia, as was Macedonia and even, to some extent, Kosovo, where the cultural conditions of the Albanian population improved (the same happened in the Albanian areas in Montenegro). Nevertheless, after the death of Tito Montenegro followed at first the Serbian nationalist line of the 1980s, and in the early 1990s Montenegrin forces participated in the war effort in Hercegovina and Croatia. Especially bad for their image was the attack on Dubrovnik in 1991. ‘The Montenegrins went to war in the firm belief that this was something that you did once a generation and that as soon as the fighting was done you went on a looting spree and returned home’, thus the comment of Tim Judah on what he evidently believed to be a form of (relatively innocent?) primitivism. But there was more to it than that. In the emotions generated by the new war young Montenegrins ‘remembered’ that in 1913 their army had been forced by the British Navy to abandon Skutari (Shkodër), and this time they were faced with a naval blockade again and in addition UN-imposed sanctions. A third of the officers of the Yugoslav army were Montenegrins, as were large numbers of Yugoslav political officials and Party leaders. But later in the 1990s resentment towards Milošević and Belgrade began to get the upper hand and in 1997 Milo Djukanović, who criticised the war-mongering Serbian leader, was elected President of Montenegro, supported by a broad and increasingly reform-minded political coalition. Milošević seems to have toyed with the idea of provoking civil war in Montenegro in order to bring Djukanović down, but the country escaped this fate. Another important development was the re-establishment of an autonomous Montenegrin Orthodox Church. In 1997 the elderly Archbishop Mikhailo of Cetinje, who had returned from exile in Italy, assumed the position of metropolitan of Montenegro, thereby challenging the hierarchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its archbishop Amfilohije, metropolitan of Montenegro too. In 1992, while the war in Bosnia was going from bad to worse, Amfilohije had declared that Orthodox Europe was ‘the last island of holiness and undefiled truth’ and was threatened by a conspiracy of ‘all demonic powers’. In 2007 the situation had drastically changed. Montenegro banned the Serbian Orthodox Church leader Bishop Filaret from entering the country and relations between Serbia and Montenegro deteriorated when an adviser to the Serbian prime minister called Montenegro a ‘quasi-state’. A growing percentage of Montenegrins were giving their allegiance to Mikhailo, and a parallel process is the differentiation between those who regard themselves as ‘Serbs’ and the growing number who call themselves ‘Montenegrins’ in an ethnic and political sense. Even the language is re-nationalised as on both an official or academic and an unofficial or spontaneous level the term ‘Montenegrin language’ is used alongside ‘Serbian’, ‘Bosnian’ or ‘Croatian’ language. In recent census-taking people had the choice between defining themselves as speaking the Montenegrin or the Serbian language; in the same manner they could opt for the Montenegrin or the Serbian ethnicity, in addition, of course, to other languages and other ethnic identities. In 2004 a new Montenegrin state anthem was introduced in reaction to Serbia’s reintroduction of its old royal anthem. Even more impor-

³¹ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia* (New York/London, 1994; first published 1941), pp. 1000-1.

³² Judah, *The Serbs*, p. 131.

tant was the emergence of a new historical consciousness. A textbook published in Podgorica in 2006 presents an interpretation of Montenegrin history that is distinctly different from the old pan-Serbian perspective and Greater Serbian ideology.³³

It is interesting to look for a moment at how Montenegrin literature and the Montenegrin language are re-conceptualised these days, arguably the most significant aspect of national identity beside politics itself. A recent publication on the subject informs us indignantly that Serbian linguists deny the separate linguistic and ‘standardological’ identity of the Montenegrin language. ‘They believe that the Montenegrin language is only a variant of the Serbian language. Not one Serbian linguist has ever been able to offer compelling and scientifically proven linguistic arguments for that view.’ There was – and perhaps still is – a political motive behind this. ‘Creating such false ideas about the Montenegrin language ... was part of a broader political strategy to impose Serbian linguistic identity and Serbian national identity on Montenegrins, after which, based on that identification, the political doctrine of annexation of Montenegro by Serbia would be carried out.’ But despite a high degree of similarity the differences between the two languages ‘are easy to show’, and in 2009-10 a standardisation of the Montenegrin language was carried out for the first time in history, following a model developed by the Montenegrin linguist Josip Silić. The claim that nineteenth-century Montenegrin authors like Njegoš and others were in fact Serbian authors must be ‘rejected’, and is in fact now rejected. (One would be inclined to add that at the time itself men like Njegoš would not have denied that they were Serbian writers, the question being as much a political and sentimental as a purely linguistic, cultural or literary one.) It is observed with relief in Montenegro that the ‘long history of denying the existence of the Montenegrin language’ has finally ended. In 2010 the Commission for the Standardisation of the Montenegrin Language developed ‘a complete standardological body of material’, including orthography, grammar, etc.³⁴

The Montenegrin linguist Adnan Čirgić has recently published a work on the history of the Montenegrin language and Montenegrin literature showing that they have a long and distinct history. The period when it was ‘taboo’ to speak of a separate Montenegrin language (notably between the mid-nineteenth and the late twentieth century) is over. Now it is possible to write a history of the written and literary Montenegrin language, which encompasses the Doclea (Dioclea) period from the mid-ninth century to the 1180s; the Zeta period from the 1180s to the end of the fifteenth century; the ‘Written Language Period’ from the end of the fifteenth to the mid-eighteenth century; the ‘Uncodified Literary Language Period’ from the mid-eighteenth century to the 1830s; the ‘Transitional Period’ from the 1830s to the First World War; and the ‘Vuk Period’ (so named after the nineteenth-century Serbian language reformer Vuk Karadžić, whose standardised Serbian language was finally imposed on Montenegro after 1918). During the Doclea period there was a strong Latin and Catholic influence – the Pope granted the principality recognition and also an archdiocese in Bar – and much of the contemporary Slavic literature was probably written in the Latin script. At all events, only seventeenth-century Latin transcriptions of Doclea

³³ Judah, *The Serbs*, pp. 182-4; Glenny, *The Balkans*, p. 655; Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms*, pp. 614-6, 618; Victoria Clark, *Why Angels Fall* (London, 2000), p. 117; also Wikipedia: ‘Montenegro’. In 1999 Victoria Clark had an interview with Archbishop Amfilohije, who continued to display a strong suspicion of Roman Catholics and the West; he once declared that the term ‘Montenegro’ was an invention of the Vatican.

³⁴ Prof. Dr. Milenko A. Perović, ‘Editor’s Foreword’ to Adnan Čirgić, *Montenegrin Language in the Past and Present* (Podgorica, 2011), esp. pp. 7-8, 14-6.

literary and historical works have survived. During the Zeta period Montenegro became part of Serbia (Raška), which had religious, cultural and linguistic consequences. The Orthodox religion, the Old Church Slavonic language, and the Cyrillic script became more influential and finally dominant (the older Glagolitic script disappeared), but the bi-confessional (Orthodox and Catholic) situation continued to exist to some degree. From the late fifteenth century the written language was increasingly influenced by the local Slavic spoken language, while in the Bay of Kotor area Latin and Italian became predominant. From the second half of the eighteenth century the written Slavic language was spontaneously transformed into an uncodified but factually standard literary language. Čirgić stresses that this process ‘made the development of the Montenegrin language unique’, because its basis was ‘the naturally formed *koiné* layer, previously established in the language of oral literature.’ The vernacular and the literary language were already largely homogenised and Montenegrin writers wrote in accordance with ‘speech norms’: in 1768 Ivan-Antun Nenadić from Perast defended the principle that the language ‘can be written as it is spoken’ and vice versa. From the 1830s the language reform introduced by the Serb Vuk Karadžić led to significant changes in the Montenegrin literary language, which was now officially called ‘Serbian’. Certain typical Montenegrin language features were omitted from this general Serbian literary language. But especially in the field of fiction Montenegrin literary language features managed to survive, even during the inter-war period, and then after World War Two. The years after 1918 were especially difficult, because the Montenegrin language was ‘degraded’ and represented as ‘archaic’, while the subject of Montenegrin history was banned from primary schools. In the late 1960s a group of writers appeared who advocated a return to Montenegrin cultural values and reaffirmed the existence of a separate Montenegrin people, nation, language, and political entity. In 1994 the Montenegrin PEN Centre issued a declaration on the ‘Constitutional Status of the Montenegrin Language’. There now exists a ‘Doclean Academy of Sciences and Arts’ and a journal called *Doclea* – apparently expressing the desire to initiate a new era of (or a quasi-‘return’ to) Montenegrin political and cultural autonomy, as *Doclea* was arguably the first independent Montenegrin principality. The Montenegrin Constitution of 2007 granted the ‘Montenegrin language’ official-language status for the first time in history.³⁵

These ‘autonomising’ cultural developments are interrelated with the process of political ‘Europeanisation’, even if it is still in its incipient stages. From the late 1990s a ‘silent consensus’³⁶ has been growing on the goal of European integration and EU-membership. This was mainly a question of general rhetoric, with political attitudes in Montenegrin society remaining rather vague and contradictory and a pro-active European posture among the different political parties rare. By 2007 over 90 percent of Montenegrin MPs and 74% of the population were in favour of EU-membership, and it must be admitted that despite the persistent ‘Putinesque’ character of Montenegro’s political system,³⁷ the country had made some post-communist progress. The process of political change had started early in 1989 with a first phase of transition to multiparty democracy lasting until 1996-7. The post-communist Democratic Party of Socialism (DPS)

³⁵ Čirgić, *Montenegrin Language in the Past and Present*, pp. 23-47, 109-10; also pp. 181-211 on Montenegrin language policy since the nineteenth century, which finally led to the new policy officially adopted in 2010 and which provided for a Latin alongside a Cyrillic-script version of the Montenegrin language.

³⁶ Olivera Komar, ‘The Europeanization of national political parties and party systems – case study – Montenegro’ (Research paper, 2007).

³⁷ Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms*, p. 580.

emerged as the dominant force and established a kind of semi-authoritarian regime that was supported by a majority of voters. Between 1997 and the fall of Milošević in October 2000 a second phase of transition occurred after the DPS split in 1997 into an anti-Milošević party (the successor DPS led by prime minister Đukanović) and a pro-Milošević party (the Social People's Party). The struggle between them was purely a struggle for power and not about ideology (apart from attitudes to Serbia). The DPS reached an agreement with opposition parties on 'principles' for further democratic development, and Đukanović was elected president in 1997. From October 2000 until the referendum on independence in May 2006 there were two political 'blocks' in Montenegro: one in favour of independence from Serbia/Yugoslavia, and another in favour of union with Serbia. The first block won the referendum, and the first parliamentary elections in independent Montenegro later in 2006 resulted in a coalition government of the DPS and the new Social Democratic Party. Meanwhile the growth of pro-EU attitudes had led in 2005 to the Montenegrin Parliament adopting a 'Declaration on Association with the EU', a step initiated by a number of NGO's. But support for NATO-membership was not as strong as for the EU (which had played a crucial role in the successful organisation of the referendum, headed by a Slovak who presided over the Referendum Commission). This is understandable given the role that NATO played in the Kosovo conflict, but there are also a number of other problems with Montenegro's path to European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Are Europe's values accepted and understood by a majority of the population? Is the desire for EU-membership more than just political pragmatism or a vague vision of material benefits? Some people close to the still-dominant DPS with a considerable informal economic power seem to be slowing down the integration and accession process, which they fear may threaten their monopolistic economic position and corrupt practices. There is a strong link between party politics and the 'grey economy', both the cause and the result of clientelism and corruption. As for Montenegro's political parties, they are rather unprofessional in terms of modern European parties and passive and inert with regard to the European political scene. Their European orientation is a question of rhetoric and visionary perspectives rather than concrete political action. There is as yet no Europeanisation of the political parties, which remain oligarchic instead of reform-minded.³⁸ But optimists would say that even so, the process of democratisation and modernisation of the political system is unstoppable.

Montenegro today is coming to terms with the task of becoming a modern European nation, which implies recognition not only of democracy, the rule of law, and so forth, but also of a degree of 'multiculturalism', that is recognition of the existence of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities in a society that is dominated by a Slavic Orthodox majority. Perhaps this should not be too difficult for the country to accomplish, because its history and in particular its southern and eastern regions are de facto quite multicultural indeed. The presence of a Roman Catholic population dates from the eleventh century at least, and towns like Kotor or Budva are witnesses to the significance of the Catholic influence and that of the Venetians. Kotor has a medieval Catholic cathedral consecrated in 1166, and a second Catholic church from 1195 which was given in the seventeenth century to the Orthodox citizens of the town. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century this Church of St. Lucas had two altars, a Catholic and an Orthodox one, and thereafter only an Orthodox altar for a growing Orthodox population. Budva displays a good deal of historical religious co-existence as well. In this town Catholic and Orthodox

³⁸ Komar, 'Europeanization', for this section on political developments and the political system.

churches stand side by side and the co-existence of both forms of Christian faith seems to have been possible notwithstanding the many ‘regime changes’ in its history: from Byzantine rule to a succession of South Slav rulers (Doclea, the Serbian Nemanjić, then Balšić and Crnojević) to Venetian rule (1442 – 1797) to Austrian rule and then Yugoslavia. The town of Bar (Antibarum, Antivari) has its Slav name alongside its Latin and Italian names since the twelfth century. It was the seat of an early Orthodox archbishop, in the ninth century of a Catholic bishop, and from 1089 of a Catholic archbishop whose archdiocese now includes the major part of Montenegro (a second Catholic diocese is that of Kotor). In Bar the famous ‘Annals of the priest Dukljanin’ (twelfth century) were written, which contain the history of the early Slavs and the legend of King Vladimir who presumably ruled the region around the year 1000. The town is thus important for both the Orthodox and the Catholic cultural traditions. Not far from Bar, near the town of Sutomore, is another church with two altars, Catholic and Orthodox. The Venetian-Montenegrin relationship is also illustrated by the fact that since the sixteenth century Cyrillic books were printed in Venice at the request of local Montenegrin rulers and leading Orthodox families.³⁹ The ethno-linguistic aspect of multicultural realities can be illustrated through the question of the Albanian minority, an issue that has been frequently mentioned above and which constitutes perhaps the principal ‘problem’ of Montenegrin multiculturalism. Other ethnic (but hardly ethno-linguistic) groups are the Bosniaks and the Muslims. The first group are Slavic-speaking Muslims who identify with Bosnia as their original or actual homeland; the second are Slavic-speaking Muslims with a broader South Slav (ex-Yugoslav) ethno-national orientation.

The composition of the multicultural (multi-ethnic, multilingual, or multi-religious) population of some of the major southern and south-eastern municipalities clearly illustrates the structural features of the issue. In Montenegro as a whole – more than 620,000 people according to the census of 2011, which distinguishes three aspects of collective cultural identity: ethnicity, mother tongue, and religion – almost 45% defined their ethnic identity as ‘Montenegrin’; more than 28% as ‘Serbian’; 8.6% as ‘Bosniak’; almost 5% as ‘Albanian’; 3.3% as ‘Muslim’; almost 1% as ‘Croatian’; and more than 8% as other or unspecified. It is obvious that among the Orthodox Slavs the idea of Montenegrin ethno-national identity is on the rise, while the old idea of Montenegrins being Serbs is declining. In some of the individual municipalities the proportions are different. In Kotor (population 22,601) there is a larger percentage of Croats, while in Herceg Novi (30,864) near the border with the Serb part of Hercegovina, there is a remarkable percentage of ethnic Serbs (almost half of the total population). This shows that in some parts of Montenegro the idea of Serbian ethnicity is still much alive. In Bar (42,048), and especially in Ulcinj (19,921) at the southern end of the coast near the border with Albania, the situation is different again. Here there is a large number of Albanians but also a considerable number of Bosniaks, although Bosnia is relatively far away and most Montenegrin Bosniaks live in the northern part of the country (the old Sandžak of Novi Pazar). The situation in Ulcinj is rather unique: the municipality has an ethnic Albanian majority (14,076 people, or more than 70%) while in addition there are 2,468 Montenegrins, 1,145 Serbs, 770 Muslims, 449 Bosniaks and 45 Croats.

When we look at the second aspect of cultural identity mentioned in the 2011 census, mother tongue, we see that the idea of the Montenegrin language being Serbian still predominates to

³⁹ Strugar et al., *Montenegro*, pp. 24-9, 34-7, 44-7, 54; also Wikipedia: ‘Bay of Kotor’, ‘Venetian Albania’, ‘Bar’, ‘Ulcinj’, ‘Religion in Montenegro’, ‘Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bar’, ‘Albanians in Montenegro’, etc.

some extent, which contradicts the increasingly popular idea of Montenegrin ethnicity. In Montenegro as a whole almost 43% defined their mother tongue as 'Serbian'; almost 37% as 'Montenegrin'; 5.33% as 'Bosnian'; 5.27% as 'Albanian'; and only 2.03% as 'Serbo-Croatian' (the old Yugoslav notion). In Herceg Novi the Serbian predominance was even greater, but in Bar there were more 'Montenegrin-speakers' than Serb-speakers. Religion, the third aspect of cultural identity, is interesting too, because the census figures enable us precisely to establish the size of the Muslim and Catholic minorities in Montenegro. More than 72% of the total population of the country are Eastern Orthodox; 3.44% are Catholics; and 19.11% are Muslims, with almost 16% defining themselves as adhering to 'Islam' and 3.14% as 'Muslims'. The latter roughly coincide with the ethnic (South Slavic) Muslims we already have encountered above, while the former are the great majority of Muslims in a purely religious sense, their ethnicity being predominantly Bosniak (the largest single group of Muslims in Montenegro) or Albanian. Not surprisingly, in Kotor there is a much larger percentage of Catholics (almost 12%), while in Bar the percentage is 7.25% and in Ulcinj more than 11%. The percentage of Muslims in Bar is more than 30%, and in Ulcinj (with 14,308 Muslims) almost 72%. Most of the latter are Albanians, but among the Montenegrin Albanians there is also a significant Catholic minority (some 26%) and the Catholic archbishop of Bar, Zef Gashi, is an Albanian. Another concentration of Albanians, including the largest single group of Albanian Catholics in Montenegro, can be found in the municipality of Podgorica, especially in its south-eastern section just outside the capital city. The census of 2011 shows 185,937 people in this largest municipality of the country, including 106,642 ethnic Montenegrins, 43,248 ethnic Serbs, 9,538 Albanians, 4,122 ethnic Muslims, and 3,687 Bosniaks. But in terms of mother tongue the number of Albanians is 10,276, while there are 7,947 Catholics and 20,883 Muslims. It is clear that the majority of Catholics in the municipality are Albanians, among whom a very high percentage are Catholic. The south-eastern Podgorica district is part of the historical Albanian region 'Malesija' (Malësia), which is known for its Catholic Albanian tradition. The Albanians in Podgorica municipality thus represent an important minority in both an ethno-linguistic (or ethno-national) and a religious sense.⁴⁰

These statistical data give us a good impression of the multicultural and ethnic-minority problematic that Montenegro has to face. The political and intellectual elites of the country are well aware of its significance, and of the relationship between the issue of the rule of law and the way in which multicultural questions are addressed. As yet those who belong to the intellectual elite live between hope and fear, with some stressing the need for (a perhaps more conscious) internalising of democratic norms and values through multicultural awareness, institutional reform and social change, and others voicing criticism of Montenegrin political and institutional realities. A special workshop on the rule of law and multiculturalism held in Podgorica in 2011 reflects these concerns. One of the participants, Ivana Jelić, rather idealistically explained that multiculturalism 'is an essential feature of Montenegro, which determines not only the content of human rights, but also the rule of law, through limitation of arbitrariness of the majority and domination of groups or individuals, institutions and entities over the law. Accordingly, it is inevitable to encompass all relevant issues concerning national, ethnic and cultural minorities.' In decision-making it is necessary to show 'respect for diversity' and strive for 'integration of minorities, prohibition of discrimination and assimilation' and 'participation of all segments of

⁴⁰ Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Montenegro 2011; also Wikipedia: 'Montenegro'.

the society.⁴¹ Another participant, Olivera Komar, argued that the political system and the new Constitution exhibit ‘constructional errors’ and that some of the ‘legal provisions normatively framing the political participation of the citizens demonstrate that the rule of law concept is not implemented in Montenegro.’⁴² Yet another participant in the workshop quite correctly stressed that ‘the rule of law not only resides in formal laws and institutions, but in the hearts and minds of ordinary people.’⁴³ Thus we see that the most crucial challenges of political, social and multicultural transformation in Montenegro are subjects of close attention for the country’s reform-minded academic community. As is always the case with such matters, different individuals tend to stress different aspects of the situation and some are more optimistic than others.

It is difficult to say how successful is ‘the new Montenegro’ in following the new direction of liberal democracy and the rule of law, and of tolerating a degree of multiculturalism and respect for minorities like the Albanians. Perhaps the Montenegrin-Albanian relationship is the most critical test case for assessing the nature of the multicultural problematic, which in this case comprises an ethno-linguistic aspect (Montenegrin Slavs vs. Albanian-speakers), a religious aspect (Orthodox vs. Muslims or Catholics), and a national-political or national-historical aspect (Slavic-national vs. Albanian-autonomist aspirations). Perhaps not the worst way of investigating the issue in its present state is to experience life in the municipality and town of Ulcinj (Albanian: Ulqin), which is regarded as ‘the centre of the Albanian community in Montenegro.’⁴⁴ Indeed, of the total number of 30,439 ethnic Albanians living in Montenegro according to the census of 2011 (the number of ‘linguistic Albanians’ is somewhat higher: 32,671), 14,076 are located in Ulcinj Municipality, that is almost half of them. Before looking briefly at the present situation something needs to be said about the local historical background, because the modern history of Ulcinj has its peculiarities. After the incorporation of Ulcinj by Montenegro in 1880 and the occupation by Montenegrin troops, ‘[n]ot knowing how the new authority would treat the citizens of Ulcinj, 413 families, or 3,000 inhabitants left the city...’, thus a more or less ‘official’ Montenegrin publication tells us. Most of them settled in northern Albania, and the population of the city declined from about 8,000 to 5,000. ‘Montenegrin warriors that participated in the liberation of Ulcinj [!] were granted land formally owned by the fleeing population’, mainly at the outskirts of the town. In the 1880s 142 Montenegrin families settled in the area around the town and this process continued through the early 1890s. But the Albanian and Muslim majority remained a feature that was not fundamentally changed, and at the end of the nineteenth century, of 5,500 inhabitants of the town of Ulcinj and surroundings, 3,500 were Muslims, 1,500 Catholics, and only 500 Orthodox. The Muslim population ‘expressed loyalty to the government’ but refused to send their children to state schools or the military. The attempts of the Montenegrin authorities to force them into submission were unsuccessful, and apparently the government and indeed Prince Nikola himself wanted to avoid that the Muslim population would leave the area. This might lead

⁴¹ Ivana Jelić, ‘Vladavina prava u multikulturalnim državama’, in *Vladavina prava u multikulturalnoj Crnoj Gori. Radovi sa okruglog stola. Podgorica, 21. april 2011* [Crnogorska Akademija Nauka i Umjetnosti, Centar mladih naučnika: Naučni skupovi, Knjiga 114; Odjeljenje društvenih nauka, Knjiga 41], ed. Dragan K. Vukčević, Ivana Jelić, Maja Drakić and Marko Dokić (Podgorica, 2012), pp. 7-20, with an English summary.

⁴² Olivera Komar, ‘Vladavina prava i politički sistem u Crnoj Gori’, in *ibid.*, pp. 77-90, with an English summary.

⁴³ Vladimir Savković, ‘Vladavina prava u multikulturalnoj Crnoj Gori – kroz prizmu sistema zaštite prava manjinskih akcionara’, in *ibid.*, pp. 129-38, with an English summary.

⁴⁴ Wikipedia: ‘Ulcinj’.

to a further destabilisation of local conditions, not in the last place from an economic point of view; there was a need for labour, especially in connection with the project of reclaiming Lake Zogaj in Ulcinj's hinterland. 'Soon the Montenegrin authority, through its tolerant religious and national politics, managed to ensure mainly stable inter-religious and ethnic relations', thus the publication already mentioned. By the end of the nineteenth century Ulcinj seems to have had two Orthodox churches, one Roman Catholic church, and some eight mosques. By the 1920s the total population had declined to less than 4,000, and it is clear that the inter-war period was not the best one for Ulcinj either, possibly for political as well as economic factors. But after the Second World War it began to grow again, and by the early 1980s the total population of Ulcinj Municipality was more than 9,000.⁴⁵

And what about the present situation? The authors of this essay carried out an improvised piece of investigation into current conditions, attitudes, and feelings on both the Albanian and the Slavic-Montenegrin side (in September 2012). Although the atmosphere is quiet and pleasant, especially in the town, there are certainly some negative feelings in the air. Several ethnic Albanians, shopkeepers and others, assured us that they felt they were not regarded as equal citizens by the other Montenegrins. On the other hand none of them had any fear to express this opinion, so that it is difficult to say what is true (or acutely serious) about this apart from long-standing personal and ethnic-community feelings. At least one person, a Slav-speaker involved in the tourist industry, told us that the large number of Albanian visitors from Kosovo – who are hardly recognisable, in contrast to the many groups of rather loud Russians and Serbs – keep to themselves in large family groups in small apartments and do not spend much money when going out. They are therefore not very attractive as a market segment, but it also sounded like a classical piece of contempt for a poorer and ethnically subordinate group of people. One Albanian told us that under socialism his life was better than at present, because at the time he had jobs in the construction industry whereas now the building contractors bring their own people from outside. It is not clear how far there is an ethnic aspect to this, with Albanians being possibly excluded from certain sectors of the labour market. But it would seem that the best way for Albanians to survive is by being petty entrepreneurs, including shopkeepers, 'water-taxi' owners, etc. As for Ulcinj Albanian students, some of them go to Priština in Kosovo to study at the Albanian-language university there. But others go to Podgorica, perhaps especially those that pursue technical studies and whose knowledge of the Slavic language is good enough. We were informed that there is a network of Albanian-language primary and secondary schools, which means that the Albanians have the opportunity not only to use their own language but to remain to some degree within their own community. It seems that some Albanians do not speak the Montenegrin language well, while others would proudly say they do. Apart from Orthodox Montenegrins and Muslim or Catholic Albanians, we also met some Bosnian Serbs and Bosniaks or Slavic Muslims. They seemed somewhat to fall in between the two culturally dominant sides: the Orthodox Montenegrins on the one hand and the Albanians on the other, but none of them gave the impression of having much sympathy for the latter.

The multicultural reality of Ulcinj is obviously a complex one, and the further evolution of inter-ethnic relations deserves more systematic attention. So does the historical context, whose

⁴⁵ *Ulcinj: History, Culture, Nowadays, Guide book, Maps... [Edition 'Vijesti' – Cities of Montenegro]*, eds. Prof. Dr. Zivko Andrijasevic, Radmilo Tadic and Samir Adrovic (Podgorica, 2009), esp. pp. 30-3, 38, 41. See also Wikipedia: 'Ulcinj'.

significance cannot be overestimated. All of the people we spoke to are conscious of the force of history in the background, and Albanians reminded us how in 1878-80 Ulcinj was against the will of the local population handed over to Montenegro, while even more unpleasant historical episodes (including cases of genocide) were related as well. But then there was also the sympathetic Albanian owner of an improvised 'water-taxi' who brought us from one place to the next and who told us: 'yes, I am an Albanian, but also a citizen of Montenegro.' People like him gave us the feeling that it would be worth visiting Ulcinj again, and to probe somewhat deeper into both the historical dimension of the place and its current evolution. Those who wish to be researchers on Montenegro have to be historians and political analysts at the same time.