

**Research Project: New and Ambiguous Nation-Building Processes  
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**Working Paper Series**

**FOLLOWING THE LEADER: MONTENEGRIN INTERNALIZATION OF  
NATION-BUILDING PROCESSES IN YUGOSLAVIA (1944-1980)**

Vladimir Dulović

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The project is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation and the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).



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## Following the Leader: Montenegrin Internalization of Nation-building Processes in Yugoslavia (1944-1980)

Vladimir Dulović

To anyone dealing with the history of socialist Yugoslavia it comes as more than obvious how closely interknit were the relationships between the key subjects in politics of this state – the Communist Party (renamed from 1952 into the League of Communists), the federal government and the party leaderships of each of the six constituent republics. In the period following the end of World War Two the key actor was the Party (CPY) and especially its top leadership in Belgrade who through its strictly controlled executive councils and other subordinate party organs in each of the republics guided the political, economical and social life of the country; later on, starting from the period of the economical reform of 1964, the trend was set towards the decentralization and soon the state was governed by the consensual decisions of republican leaderships who became spokesmen of their titular nationalities, though still guided by the party discipline and the highest arbiter - Tito himself. The political clashes and bargains struck between the republics (and from 1971-74 also the two autonomous provinces) in this period were studied in detail by Sabrina P. Ramet (*Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia 1962-1991*, Indiana University Press 1992<sup>2</sup>) revealing the internal „power politics“ of federal Yugoslavia. Partnership or opposition between one or more republics was based on political and economic rationale, but social and cultural tendencies played also an important role. One is often struck how dependent these were from general tendencies in Yugoslav politics and from „a delicate balance of power among the federal republics“ (Ramet 1992: xv). Among the features that varied very much depending on the state of affairs between the republics were all the national developments and thus the nation-building processes as well. Observing the appearance and gradual rise of the national question in socialist Montenegro from mid 1960s to the 1980s it is fascinating how dependent

this process was from the general trends set in Yugoslavia and from the achievements in other republics.

Post-WWII federal Yugoslavia was made up of six republics populated with five nations. The „old“ constituent nations, i.e. those officially acknowledged already in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, were the Serbs, the Croats and the Slovenes, while the „new“ ones, those who got their recognition after the communist reshaping of the country, were the Macedonians and the Montenegrins. These latter two were joined in 1969 also by Muslims „in terms of national affiliation“. Whilst the „old“ nations/republics already possessed national institutions such as universities or academies of sciences, the „new“ ones had still to develop them. This aim was nourished by the communist authorities in their strive towards the national equality – one of their standard demands and points on which they built their popularity. Each of the three „new“ nations had its own particularities and its own way of nation-building, but the experiences of each of them effected also the other two.

The changes of attitude towards nation and nation-building in Montenegro changed drastically between 1945 and 1980. At the beginning of this period there seems to be little to none willingness at all to get involved in characterizing the peculiarities of the Montenegrin nation or defining the boundaries of its „nationess“ towards the neighbouring ones. With the appearance of the inter-republican debates involving the national sentiment in the 1960s and the decision of the Party towards the strengthening of the „political periphery“ from the middle of the same decade, an impetus was given to the urge of Montenegro to start promoting its nation, to distance itself from the cultural and political influence of its neighbors and eventually also to step on the path of building a new, Montenegrin ethnicity. The twists and turns of this process were heavily dependent on what was happening between the other Yugoslav republics and - even more importantly - on the stands of its nations. Due to their parallel lines of development and the same problems they faced, it is most interesting to observe how the changes in nations newly forged in socialist Yugoslavia - Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina - reflected on Montenegro. The nation-building processes in these two republics cleared the way for Montenegro and plunged it into the same dynamics.

Having in mind the decisions that effected all the republics of Yugoslavia and keeping a broader perspective on the inter-republican relations and parallel

developments, in this paper I will try to show how important were the general conditions in Yugoslavia as well as events in other republics for the decisions about the forging of a new nation/ethnicity in Montenegro. Not even the AVNOJ decisions and the establishment of a federal republic of Montenegro effected the rise of the national (and eventually ethnic sentiment) as much as the victory of the anti-centralist forces and the decentralization leading to the constitution of 1974. Plunged into the game of national republics competing between each other and the need of the self-assessment of the republican elites, these sentiments were firstly boosted institutionally (shaping the national sentiment) and then, in the 1980s, in a growing need for popular support (shaping the feeling of ethnic existence of Montenegrins). I will try to link the processes outside of Montenegro, especially the symptomatic clashes between the linguists (in most cases supported by their republics), and the effects they had on the „domestic“ affairs inside the smallest of Yugoslav republics. I will do this by analyzing the changing concepts of the internal order in socialist Yugoslavia and by observing some of the key events that shook the Yugoslav nations, the events that made them question their self-perspective and the boundaries of their nationness. The latter analysis will focus predominantly on the era of late 1960s and early 1970s, the events of which are held to be the turning point concerning the national stance and in which the internal national policies of Montenegro were radically reshaped.

During my archival work I was often frustrated by how little there was said on nationality in Montenegro in the first two decades of its existence as a federal republic in Yugoslavia. The documents were numb: no one addressed the national question and without uttering a word everyone seemed to be aware of what being a Montenegrin meant. Further on, the national question seemed to be at the lower end on the scale of important matters both for the Montenegrin communists as well as for the Yugoslav leadership in general. Eventually it came to me that this silence and denial are pregnant with meaning, especially when compared to period after the late 1960s. Put in the perspective of the political developments in Yugoslavia this silence can portray the atmosphere towards the nation and nation-building in Montenegro. Secondly, I have observed the pattern how the nationalisms of the “old” Yugoslav nations and their mutual conflicts instigated (in a sort of self-defense) a similar kind of behavior with the “new” nations, which demanded the same instruments of nationhood and the

same rights as their “old” neighbors. In the order of things as they were set in Yugoslavia and the balance of power between the republics one nationalism produced the nationalistic answer from the other, gradually opening the same question in each of the republics (and later also in the autonomous provinces as well). The developments in one of the republics were carefully observed by the others, ready to suppress or follow them, in line with their current preferences. In terms of nationhood this meant a gradual winning of the full-fledged rights for all of the republics/nations. Owing to the state system promoted and activated between 1964 and 1974, the process of turning republics into nations and their titular nationalities into ethnicities was unstoppable. It was therefore important to notice how the developments in other republics towards broader national autonomy instigated the same needs for Montenegro. We will see that until this process got well under way in late 1970s, the nation-building was taking root forced from above, supported by the core of the intellectuals living in Montenegro, with its source in the needs of the republican leadership to strengthen its positions and of intellectuals to establish better positions in society, and had little to do with the willingness of the broader public.

### **The Dogmatic Boundaries - Yugoslav Communists and the National Question**

The conceptual system in which the Yugoslav communists perceived national problems was always the one of Marxism-Leninism. These theoretical concepts and its vocabulary were considered an obligatory reference system in dealing with all the major questions in society and thus also with the nationhood. Denying it or even speaking outside of these references was considered reactionary and chauvinistic while the usage of its terms and phrases made possible the ushering of many things which would otherwise be impossible to speak about. However, the teachings of the “Classics of Marxist thought”, as they are often referred to during this era, was very much bent in order to be applicable to the state of things as they were on the ground.

Between the two World Wars the communists had a very ambivalent standpoint concerning Yugoslavia. Directed by the interests of the Cominterne they perceived Yugoslavia as a “creation of the Versailles”, a reactionary strongpoint against the advancement of revolution and as a Serbian hegemony over other nations living in it. The last point was in line with Stalin’s view that the nationalisms were the

weak point of all capitalist states that needs to be exploited and the overall parallels between Russians in their Empire and Serbs in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, though this latter reflection had little to do with reality on the ground and was launched for pure propaganda reasons. Therefore for a period (1924-1934) during its underground activities the CPY was orientated towards the dismantlement of Yugoslavia and the creation of independent soviet republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro (Gligorijević 1990: 160ff, Ramet 1992: 48). Since the Marxists viewed the solution of the national question as a step towards the way into communism, these states were seen as transitory but necessary phase of development. With the advancement of the Nazi threat in late 1930s, the negative view towards Yugoslavia was somewhat modified and the CPY now based its work on the hypothesis of the future remodeling of Yugoslavia by which the national liberation of all its nations would be achieved.

A few years later the civil war in what used to be Yugoslavia, and with it the revolutionary fight of the CPY, was in full swing. In November of 1943 the communists decided to institutionalize their growing power and importance. They gathered around them a coalition of sympathizers of various alignments who were willing to back them up in their fight against the occupiers (but equally importantly also in fight against the old system) to the historic 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ). The delegates re-affirmed the will of all peoples to continue living in a united Yugoslavia, taking it as their goal to re-establish it on federal bases in order to achieve the sovereignty of its peoples. This system will implement “the full national equality of Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians and Montenegrins i.e. the peoples of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina” (Nešović-Petranović 1982: 452). This definition is of specific importance since it brings us closer to how the nationhood was perceived by the Yugoslav communists at the moment. Here we see that the national question will be solved by instigating a system of six republics that, with the exception of Bosnia-Herzegovina, are seen as the national states of their most numerous nations. This system was created at the expense of the largest nations (there were 1/3 of Serbs and 1/5 of Croats living outside their federal republics in 1948) but the Macedonian and Montenegrin federal units were made to fit their new nations perfectly, so perfectly that we see that it was the new boundaries that defined

the nations and not vice-versa. Thus, in case of these two, we have a perfect situation where all is set for the classical nation-building from top to the above, where a state creates a nation, not the other way round.

This decision laid out the foundation for the reshaping of Yugoslavia after the communist victory in 1944/45. However, the federalism of the state remained only formal as all the power was vested in the Party who controlled all the economic and social life in a strict centralist manner. These practices were in accordance with those in USSR, whose model of development CPY followed closely until the split with Stalin in 1948. The break from Stalinist idolatry opened up the possibilities for re-thinking of the postulates on which the state was organized. The national question was deemed settled and, since the Marxist standpoint was that the nations are products of capitalism, it was assumed that a new socialist nation was in the process of being created (Ramet 1992: 50). Secondly, the emphasis in the development of the society was put on the class struggle by which both the remains of the bourgeoisie could be wiped out and, in the process, communist orthodoxy proven in face of the Stalinist propaganda.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of CPY in 1952 saw the Party taking a new ideological course: instead of the dictatorship of the proletariat the course of self-management was set. Symbolically the new line was reflected in the changing of the name “Communist Party of Yugoslavia” into the “League of Communists”, which implied a less directed and centralized governing of the state. Perhaps of greatest importance was the fact that this was the first among the reforms instigated in order to separate the Party from the state (Sekelj 1990: 92), the process that have started weakening the Party but has never been led to its full implications. Seen as a basic mechanism for decentralization and de-etatization, self-management was regarded as essential for good nationalities policy (Ramet 1992: 57).

Nonetheless, in terms of national development this was the heyday of Yugoslavism (cp. Grandits 2007). In 1958 the 7<sup>th</sup> congress of the LCY adopted the concept of a “Yugoslav culture” and in the 1961 census the category “Yugoslav” was introduced (Ramet 1992: 50-51). The same period also saw the founding of many institutions and projects with a Yugoslav prefix – Yugoslav historian association, Yugoslav historical journal, Yugoslav Encyclopedia etc. (Grandits 2007: 98). In the discussions of the members of the Commission for the ideological work of the Central

Committee in 1960 we see a viewpoint that in many of the forms and questionnaires produced by various state organs, political and social organizations there is a question on the nationality even when there is no need for it and that this practice should be reconsidered (AJ, 507/VIII, II/2-b, K-8, *Zapisnik sa sednice Komisije za ideološki rad*, 23.9.1960).

The poor economic results led to internal wrestling between the republics who struggled for funding and investment allocated by the federal government. This discord and the seemingly unsolvable problems of distribution were the key points in the case by the anti-centralists. By 1963 Tito was won over by these arguments (Lamp 2000: 285); the result was the new constitution in which the power of the central hierarchy was reduced to the benefit of republics and regions; the right of the republic to secede (if all the others agreed) was restored (ibidem). More importantly the 8<sup>th</sup> congress of the LCY in December of 1964 authorized republican and regional party meetings before the one of the LCY and thus brought the “lowering of democratic centralism for one level - the republicanization of the Party” (Sekelj 1990: 92) or, put differently, “the confederation of the LCY” (Lamp 2000: 286). The newly instituted pluralism was reflected only as republican/national pluralism. The political decisions were followed by the 1965 market reform that withered the centralist planning and instigated the market as the regulator of economy. The most important figure who opposed the reform was Aleksandar Ranković, vice-president of the state and the strongman of the State Security. His silent clash with the anti-centralists ended in 1966 when he was accused of misuses of power and consequently stripped of his position and ousted from the Party. This event meant not only the downfall of the centralist wing in the Party but also a serious blow to Yugoslavism for which Ranković firmly stood. Judging on the large number of the people from Montenegro prosecuted together with Ranković (Zečević 1998: 24) we see how strongly the idea of Yugoslavism influenced Montenegro. The victory of the decentralist camp was crowned in 1968 when, in accordance with the new policy, the congresses of the republics for the first time met before the congress of the LCY; additionally a parity was introduced in constituting the bodies of the LCY (Sekelj 1990: 93). One of the biggest changes that the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress brought was the drastic introduction of the new and younger people to the structures of the LCY (69% of new members!); this was

due not only to the change of generations but also to the redistribution of power within the Party elite (ibidem).

The period between 1964 and 1968 brought remarkable changes in the view of LCY on the national question. Its 8<sup>th</sup> congress disassociated itself from promoting Yugoslavism since, in words of Veljko Vlahović “it reflected narrow-minded chauvinism and creeping crypto-unitarism” (Ramet 1992: 51). Tito himself condemned the “confused idea that the unity of our peoples means the elimination of nationalities and the creation of something new and artificial” (ibidem). These words clearly reflect how the political change brought a radical turn in the view on nationhood. From now on it was nations and ethnicities who are going to be carefully tended and promoted while Yugoslavism was ousted to the point where any initiative towards it would be labeled as “etatic-bureaucratism”, “unitarist-pseudo-Yugoslavism”, “creation of a new nation by eliminating the existing ones” etc. (AJ, CKSKJ, IV/11, XI *sednica IK CK SKJ*, 11. 4. 1967.). As an obvious result of this policy the census of 1971 recorded 14% less Yugoslavs less than the one ten years earlier. The term “national” no longer implied thinking about Yugoslavia but about one of its constituent republics. The country was divided into national economies, national cultures, national needs etc. Though nominally the Constitution defined Yugoslavia as the “union of working people and citizens” its workers and citizens were represented by their republic negotiating with other republics; moreover the citizens were becoming unable to express themselves differently than through their republics. Simply put - “the class was subjugated to the national” (Mirić 1984: 71). Seeing things from a broader perspective L. Sekelj concludes that Yugoslav citizens have probably the widest rights as the members of their nations but lowest individual and human rights (Sekelj 1990: 206ff).

The amendments to the constitution of 1968 by which the republics got the sovereignty as well as the further system changes (such as the establishment of the inter-republican committees) continued the process of the decentralization of power. The situation in which the interests were based on the levels of the republics meant that the “the bearers of the renewed nationalism were not the remains of the bourgeoisie but in fact the communists themselves” (Vuchinich Wayne, *Nationalism and Communism* 1969, quoted from Sekelj 1990: 95). The eruption of nationalism that followed in the years 1969-72 ended in the centralist backlash supported by Tito.

Nevertheless, the 1974 constitution was another, final victory of the anti-centralist forces; although the state was nominally ruled by the LCY the new constitution transformed it into a union of eight national states.

### **The Frail Nation – Montenegro from 1944 up to the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress**

The decision to form Montenegro as a separate federal republic came as a result of CPY's pre-WWII reasoning along the lines of crippling the Great-Serb hegemony and of cooperation with the factors of society in Montenegro who were unsatisfied with its status, that is the Federalist Party. Both the Communists and the Federalists called for the re-establishment of Montenegro as one of the units of Yugoslavia in which the specific traits of Montenegrin development and character could develop. The idea behind their reasoning for the re-establishment of autonomous Montenegro was based on specific traditions that emerged there and the need for more local thinking that could not be managed from Belgrade. Neither of the two parties went as far as to note among its ideas the one of separate ethnicity. It is also important to note that except on the first elections in 1919 when Communists did incredibly good, neither of the two parties won the majority of votes in Montenegro which would make their cause legitimate.

In 1941 the call on arms in Montenegro came as a direct reaction to the proclaiming of independent Montenegro under Italian tutorship and led by Sekula Drljević, the most prominent ideologist of a separate Montenegrin nation and ethnicity. The two most prominent movements in Montenegro during the 1941-45 civil war were the communist partisans and the četnik Serb-unitarists who had a very strong position in Montenegro. Yet the support that the communists enjoyed did not come from promoting Montenegrinhood, on the contrary, it did a lot of evil to their cause since it scared a lot of people that the Montenegrinhood was built in opposition to the Serbhood (ibidem: 124). By the end of the war this ambiguous situation was well grasped by the partizan leadership who on numerous occasions in 1944 and 1945 stated out that being Montenegrin does not imply not being a Serb<sup>1</sup>. The theoretical

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<sup>1</sup> As Ivan Milutinović, one of the highest ranking officers of CPY from Montenegro, elaborated on the III session of the Anti-fascist Council of People's Liberation of Montenegro and Boka Kotorska on 14. 8. 1944 in Kolašin: "A question arises: does Montenegrinhood diminishes or excludes Serbhood? Comrades, the one who is not a Montenegrin is not a good Serb either... Montenegrins and Serbians

frame for this reasoning came in 1946 when M. Djilas, the highest Party official from Montenegro, gave the definition of what being Montenegrin implies (cp. Djilas 1947).

In comparison to Macedonia where nation-building was fully underway by the means of establishing a new language, national history and ethnographic traditions, settling the national question in Montenegro seems to have only implied a re-establishment of a Montenegrin state. The most notable symbol of nationhood, the name was undeniably there – the nation was Montenegrin, the republic was populated by the Montenegrins, and nobody disputed that. As we will see later the equation of the republic and the nation proved itself to be problematic. The second most recognizable symbol of nationhood, the language, gives a different perspective since in the first post war constitution of Montenegro it was defined as “Serbian” (Jezik u BiH: 422). Even the symbolic aspects of the new republic were similar to those in Serbia, as was the case with the flag. How was it possible that even these gravest requirements for nationhood seemed to be enough?

The survey of the reports sent to the Central Committee of the CPY from Montenegro from 1946 to 1949<sup>2</sup> reveal a chaotic post-war situation in which there were dozens of questions to be dealt with first. The most important one was the instigating the party mechanisms; though Montenegro was one of the most pro-partizan areas of the country, the ideological level of the Party membership was very low and its work was often erroneous, if there was any at all. The other burning issues that the Party took control of were doing equally poorly: cooperatives were not functioning properly, land collectivization met with lots of uproar, the transport and supply system were almost non existent.

None of the reports reveal any notions of Montenegrin nationalism or nationhood. Apparently, the problems concerning national differences appeared only in relation to the Muslims and Albanians, primarily for the reasons of their backwardness and problem of accepting novelties of any kind. Since there is no mention of Serbs, though they were recorded in the census of 1948, we can deduce that this behavior was in line with the policy of naming all the Orthodox Slavs in the republic “Montenegrins” but also that the local population made no distinction

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are a people /descending/ of one tribe...” (Zbornik gradje za istoriju radničkog pokreta Crne Gore, vol. 2, Titograd 1960, quoted from Jovanović 1990: 334)

<sup>2</sup> AJ, (A) CKSKJ, V, K-V/1-25 and AJ, (A) CKSKJ, V-K-XXI/1-29

between the two<sup>3</sup>. The “others” in the documents are only Muslims and Albanians. Though at the time – in accordance with the Party rhetoric that the national question has been well settled - there is little word on nationalisms in other republics as well, we can see in them that the national groups can be distinguished and that the sporadic chauvinist outbursts are directed between the known groups. The only nationalistic agenda within the Montenegrin population were the problems with the bands of local četniks who were attacking the villages and the new authorities. Interestingly, the attacks were most pronounced in the area around the old capital Cetinje, generally considered the stronghold of Montenegrinhood, and around Podgorica. These sporadic attacks were to protract all the way to 1947. The “četnik groups” were discovered also in the Teachers’ School in Nikšić. From these two examples we see that Montenegro faced the same problem as any other neighboring area populated by the Serbs. The school program of the People’s University in Cetinje was made of lectures on the partisan fight, Montenegrin subjects – most of which were quite conventional (Marko Miljanov, the Sutjeska Battle, How Montenegrin forests were brought, destroyed and re-sold, Grahovo Battle) and curiously the one on Serbian 19<sup>th</sup> c. socialist Svetozar Marković. The last one was probably present as there were no socialist theoreticians in Montenegro at the time and also as he criticized the Great-Serbian policies of the Serbian bourgeoisie (though he supported unification of Serbia and Montenegro!). Some of the debate circles organized by the party worked according to the programme sent by the Central Committee of the People’s Youth of Montenegro which included the discussion on the Montenegrin national question. There was no Party magazine issued in the republic so they were using the one from Serbia, probably because it was printed in Cyrillic letters. From 1948 the primary focus of the Party in Montenegro was shifted to the reactions on the resolution of the Inform Bureau and to the shaken party discipline.

The first major celebration that the new republic of Montenegro organized was the so-called “Njegoš celebration” in 1953 (cp. Dulović 2007). Centered on the personality of the national hero (both pan-Serb and specifically Montenegrin!) Petar II Petrović Njegoš, the celebration combined the old national symbols with those of the

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<sup>3</sup> This problem is also notable later. When speaking about minorities in Montenegro, in all but the most precise and nation-oriented reports, the documents mention Albanians, Muslims and Croats and almost never the Serbs though they always presented a couple of percents of the overall population of the Republic. It seems as if the Montenegrins and the Serbs were considered mutually variable and their differences indistinguishable.

new authorities. It was also envisioned as the display of the cultural heritage of the republic. However, no matter how nationalist in its points it was, the manifestation made no effort at all to distancing itself from Serbia and Serbhood whose reflections were freely incorporated in the celebration.

Traditionally close ties with Serbia were evident throughout the period, even to an extent which seems patronizing to the smaller partner. After finishing high school the Montenegrins would in most of the cases continue their schooling in Belgrade University. Almost all of the Montenegrin intellectuals, including some of the most notable promoters of Montenegrin individuality, got their diplomas here. The first initiatives at forming some of the faculties in Montenegro came only in 1958 and even then were liberated from the notions of national/republican needs; instead of that their neediness was explained by the “general intentions of the Reform”, and that their establishing would “ease the pressure on the bulky university centre such as Belgrade” (AJ, 507/VIII, II/2-b, Ideološka komisija, K-6, *Zapisnik sa sastanka Komisije za ideološki rad*, 12. 12. 1958). In 1969 there were 1194 budget students from Montenegro in Belgrade whose schooling presented a large burden on the thin republican budget (ACG, 99-1-1). As akin to the local Serb population all the colonized Montenegrins were settled in the Serbian province of Vojvodina and none in Croatia.<sup>4</sup> The small railway system in Montenegro was run by the Serbian railways all the way until the finishing of the Belgrade-Bar railway in 1972. The budget deficit of the small republic was regularly filled from Serbia. The same kind of cordial relations were also visible in the highest circles where Serbian and Montenegrin officials were joking about the Montenegrin distinctions and its possible joining with Serbia<sup>5</sup> (Djorgović 154).

No matter how young and still undefined their republic and nationality were, Montenegrin republic and Montenegrins were a reality that was respected in Yugoslav frames as one of the five constituent nations. They have newly found their “full national freedom, brotherhood with Yugoslav peoples, renewal of ancient ties to

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<sup>4</sup> This fact is interesting for the reason that the colonization was seen also as a way of homogenization of population, thus in the Croatian region of Baranja were settled Croat families Dalmatia, Zagorje and other parts of Croatia (Djilas 1991: 329)

<sup>5</sup> M. Djilas records that “Between Montenegrins and Serbs one could often hear jokingly ‘What are you Montenegrins, you are Serbs, why don’t you join us? – And they would answer back ‘Well, fine, if you insist.’”, but he also adds: “Among the Montenegrin state officials there were also those who were leaning more towards the idea of Montenegrin nation.”

Russia” (“Crna Gora i njena sloboda”, *Borba*, 2. 1. 1945). Montenegrin nation was always counted alongside with Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and Macedonians.

The gradual disembarking of Yugoslavia along republican lines started with the first signs of decentralization. The communists themselves perceived it starting already from the 4<sup>th</sup> congress in 1952 (AJ, CKSKJ, IV/11, *XI sednica IK CK SKJ*, 11. 4. 1967, p. 120); many of the top officials were already then worried about the future of the Party and of Yugoslavia (Djorgović: 158). The practice of republics and municipalities competing amongst each other for federal funding and of building the same industries in each of the republics was broadly present during the 1950s. In 1956 the largest factory in Montenegro, the steelworks in Nikšić, was proudly opened. In the next few years it became obvious that the factory is hardly going to produce any surplus and that in most years it was actually loosing money and was subsidized from above (Zečević 1998, 222). The same year saw the start of the ambitious project of hydroelectric power plants to be built in Montenegro but the planning protracted due to the inter-republican clashes with Bosnia-Herzegovina (*ibidem*: 74-75). Due to this delay the leadership of Montenegro felt that their republic was in an inferior position because of its small size; they felt that for the same reasons the „regionalism and chauvinism“ were on the rise in their republic (*ibidem*). But it wasn't only inter-republican clashes that marked the economical rationale. Local initiatives also produced envy and disagreement amongst municipalities and as A. Ranković noted in 1962 the Executive Board of the LC of Montenegro was divided on the concepts of the economical development of their republic and in disagreement about the development of certain municipalities instead of others (Zečević 1998: 105). The local board in Titograd had broadly envisioned the development of the „Radoje Dakić“ factory but the funds obtained from the government were not enough (*ibidem*: 123). The main reason for the inefficiency of Montenegrin factories was seen in the bad transport network that made it hard to send goods from and in the republic. Therefore, immediately after the war the strategic planning started for the railway line that would connect Bar in the littoral and Belgrade. The works were started in 1951 but were halted the next year because of the lack of funding. The first section of the proposed railway in Montenegro, the one from Titograd to Bar, was put into use in 1959 but this was still far from the envisioned plans that would take two more decades to come true (Nikolić 1980: 385). The new, large port in Bar was started, but without the trains

comming it seemed as a project that is not making any sense. The leadership of the republic urged the federal bodies dealing with transport to most urgently continue with the works (Zečević 1998: 150, 222). Considering all of this, Montenegro is an excellent example of the problems of unequal development that Yugoslavia faced. With almost no industry and very little roads and railways Montenegro was lagging behind the Yugoslav average in all aspects of economical development while the investments in it seemed to make no difference and were continuing only for the reason of the equal development of all the regions.

The equity between the terms „republic“ and „nation“ have been pronounced since the forming of federal Yugoslavia. We have noticed before that this notion was problematic for larger nations, especially the Serbs, and also for Bosnia-Herzegovina which was a nation forged out of two (later three) constituent peoples. As long as the, in the words of Tito, the unity of Yugoslav nations was „as strong as granite“ and the republican lines were just thin lines in that granite, the situation was taken for granted and the formulation did not absorb too much attention. The „nation“ that everybody was speaking about was the Yugoslav one. From late 1950s, however, the term „nation“ was getting a new meaning. An early (and quite mild) example of this can be seen in the guidelines for the writing of the third book of the „History of Yugoslav nations“ (*Istorija naroda Jugoslavije*) where it is said that „the historians in every *republic* should prepare a thorough text on the historical development of each of the *nations*“ (AJ, 507/VIII, II/2-b, K-8, 24. 6. 1960). Though the term used here is *narod* („people“) it is obvious that the discutant used the term in the meaning of a „nation“ since he links it with each of the republics. Ten years later Branko Mikulić speaks about the development of the territorial militia (*teritorijalna odbrana*) units that were under the control of each of the republics and says: „It would be politically opportune for the units of the territorial army to wear any emblems, to be known from where they are from, *from which republic, from which nation*. (...) Up till now we shared the Yugoslav flag, that is the war flag of the territorial army (...) it would be opportune to adopt *a national, that is republican flag*.“ (AJ, Kancelarija maršala Jugoslavije, II-2, Prijem delegacije BiH, Brioni, 26. 6. 1970). As we see from these excerpts the republics were required to have a national history and a national flag, to note just these two.

## **The Push for Montenegrin Language and Culture as the Basis of National Independence**

The first constitutions of the Yugoslav republics defined the official language in 1946 as “Serbian” in Serbia and in Montenegro, as “Croatian or Serbian” in Croatia and “Serbian or Croatian” in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thus the name of the language was adapted to the specific national situation in each of the republics (Jezik u BiH: 422). This was, however, of little significance since both the common people and the linguists agreed that it is one and the same language only with different names (*ibidem*). The federal constitution was published in two variants, Eastern/Serbian and Western/Croatian, as well as in Slovenian and Macedonian. Though this practice was somewhat neglectful to certain linguistic points in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Montenegro it could be defended on the basis that the number of versions of public documents had to be limited, as well as by the fact that “literary language in these republics doesn’t have major peculiarities which would be unknown in one or other of the polarized versions and that all types of our literary language are fully understandable for all of its bearers” (Ivić 1971: 207).

One of the most noticeable achievements of the Yugoslavism policy led in the 1950s - but also an achievement in mending the differences of the two variants of Serbian/Croatian language - came in 1954 with the signing of the Novi Sad Agreement (*Novosadski sporazum*). The agreement denoted that the “Literary language of Serbs, Croats and Montenegrins is one”, that both scripts (Latin and Cyrillic) are equal as are both of the pronunciations (ekavian and ijekavian). The “new” language was named “Serbo-Croatian/Croato-Serbian<sup>6</sup>”, the variants of which were going to be used depending from the majority of its users in specific situations. The agreement also called for a need of a common dictionary, orthography and terminology (Jezik u BiH: 423) and against the “putting of artificial obstacles to the natural and normal development of Croato-Serbian literary language” (Ivić 1971: 208). The agreement started from the idea of merging and reconciling the notions of Belgrade and Zagreb as the two most developed, yet in some points very distant centers of literary formation and writing. As a consequence of this kind of view, out of many linguists, writers and other public figures who signed the Agreement there were only three from Bosnia-Herzegovina and none from Montenegro. The absence

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<sup>6</sup> From here forth this will be referred to as SC/CS for practical reasons.

of signatories from Montenegro came as a result of a lack of relevant scientists from the republic, but the fact that not even any of the Montenegrin writers found their way to the list shows also that the question of the SC/CS language was considered to be solved between the Serbs and the Croats, with a side role for Bosnians and even lesser one allotted to the Bosnian Muslims.

Despite the several successful steps, most notable of which was the new common orthography published in 1960, the surge of the republican particularities in the 1960s ruined the united language policy. The newly won freedoms in speech and writing were quickly misused for underlining the differences and problems between the republics and these in turn quickly developed into disputes over the language politics and the provisions of the Novi Sad Agreement. The first sparks appeared at the 5<sup>th</sup> congress of Yugoslavists in Sarajevo in 1965 when the ideas appeared that Serbian and Croatian are functionally separate languages; there were also mention of a Bosnian-Herzegovinian, Vojvodinian and Montenegrin variants (Jezik, 4, 1965-66, p. 106-107). As more and more emphasis was put on the differences between the two, the linguists quickly adopted the role of the bearers of the national ideas. In March of 1967 in Zagreb press appeared the “Declaration on the name and position of Croatian literary language”, signed by 19 prominent scientific and cultural institutions of Croatia. The Declaration demanded that the Croatian and Serbian be officially denominated in the Constitution as two separate languages in order to avoid the cases of inequality of the Croatian literary language. Further on, it demanded “a consistent use of Croatian literary language in schools, newspapers, public and political life, on radio and TV whenever the Croat population is in case”. Soon afterwards, reacting to the Declaration, there came an answer from Belgrade – “A proposal for deliberation” signed by a group of 42 writers (among them 19 members of the LC). Judging from the fact that the Declaration was signed by “the most competent institutions for the question of Croatian literary language”, the Proposal fully supported their demands while adding that the same standards should be adopted for all the Serbs as well. Milan Šipka sharply concludes: “Instead of living *with* each other, as they did up till now, sharing everything including the common language (...), the Serbs and Croats would now have to live one *next to* the other, completely separated, with their separated educational, cultural and other institutions” (Jezik u BiH: 427).

Both the Declaration and the Proposal were immediately condemned by the LCY as “nationalist outbursts” and “diversions” (XI sednica IK CK SKJ 11. aprila 1967..... ). The implications of the separate languages for Serbs and Croats affected especially Bosnia-Herzegovina where such a practice would be almost impossible. In a spontaneous outburst of reactions from party meetings, factories and by other citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina we read about a distinct fear of the rise of the chauvinism similar to the one from 1941 mixed with the mock of the Declaration. The workers were pointing out that the source of such acts is in the „overforced role and significance of the republics“ and that „this will lead to the confederacy“. They were against the policy by which „a natural integration /of languages/ is slowed down or even prevented by political actions“. “If this is so” – a report from Stolac notices regarding the points of the Declaration – “a question arises which language is then intended for the peoples<sup>7</sup> in Social Republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro?” (AJ, Kancelarija maršala Jugoslavije, II-4b). Another report from Mostar concludes that “there arose, although sometimes in a humorous tone, opinions that it is now possible that Montenegrins will also start ‘their question’ and that they will also ask for an independent language” (AJ, Kancelarija maršala Jugoslavije, II-4b)<sup>8</sup>. For the ordinary people and low-ranking Party officials concern and consternation at the developments mixed with a dose of humor when considering where all of it was heading. Similar reactions were noted in other republics as well. This spontaneous outburst of unity and protests was not at all to the liking of the top ranking officials of the LC. The executive committee of the Central Committee of the LCY noted that these reactions were too “extreme” and that they had to react “hitting the breaks”. Though politically naïve, these reactions had in themselves a dangerous tone of unitarism and artificial Yugoslavism, which is even more dangerous to the development of self-management and socialism (...:123ff).

Once the linguistic status quo and the virtual unity based on the Novi Sad Agreement were disturbed, a dangerous void was open instigating many questions. If

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<sup>7</sup> Here we should additionally note that the author of the report did not say to Montenegrins or Muslims or Bosnians but to the peoples of these republics, uncertain of how to denote them.

<sup>8</sup> How absurd the thesis that Montenegrins are a separate ethnic group from the Serbs sounded even to the people who were running the country can be observed from one conversation Tito had with Montenegrin political leadership in 1969; commenting on the situation on Kosovo, Tito says: “It also depends a lot on the other national minorities and ‘ethnic groups’, the Serb and the Montenegrin one – it sounds like these are ethnic groups. /laughter/” (AJ, Kancelarija maršala Jugoslavije, II-2, Prijem predstavnika CK SK CG, Brioni, 17. 1. 1969.)

the SC/CS language was to be substituted with Serbian and Croatian respectively there appeared a question which was to be the language of the Muslim population in Bosnia-Herzegovina and how is it going to be named? As M. Šipka later concluded, “the two-variant or two-language (that is two national) concept of solving of the standard language problems on the Serbo-Croatian linguistic area means a direct negation of their /Bosnian Muslim and Montenegrin/ sovereignty (*samobitnosti*)” (Sveske 5-6, 1984: 17). The initiation of the question of the name and status of the language in Bosnia-Herzegovina opened doors for the nationalist forces unsatisfied with the status of their nation not only in Bosnia-Herzegovina but also in Montenegro. This was also an important step for further self-promotion of republican leaderships and republican sovereignty: a separate language or a separate variant required certain knowledge that the outsiders could not achieve and so the monopoly of the republic on education and culture would be introduced. This coincides with the idea that horizontal mobility in Yugoslavia was virtually non-existent, equally for the politicians, experts or workers, with one exception – migration to the republic in which one’s own nation presented a majority.

Until mid 1960s the Montenegrin development as a separate republic could be relatively well controlled by Serbia due to the traditional ties, backward cultural and infrastructural state of Montenegro and the relatively low level of federalization. Once the tide changed and the republicanization of Yugoslavia started, the political leaders in Montenegro saw that the only way of achieving a full political independence from Serbia (or, hypothetically, from any other republic) was, amongst other needed actions, to distance itself from it in terms of culture, a common feature that they shared. This was possible due to two conditions: (1) the abovementioned identification of the republics with their titular nations and (2) the notion of the Party that the “important characteristics of the development of cultural and creative capabilities of peoples are a free development of *national cultures* based on the equality and a creative cooperation between them (...)” (Komunist, Beograd 1972, p. 151, quoted from Kurtović 1979: 134). In accordance with these points the republic started to invent, adapt and promote its own, independent cultural concept. The first step in defining it was the symposium “Montenegrin culture and the paths of its development” held in 1967 in Titograd under the auspices of the new, younger leadership of the republic. The symposium gathered mostly scientists from within the

republic willing to promote the features that distinguished Montenegrin from Serb – Mirko Banjević, Vojislav Nikčević, Slobodan Vujačić, Radoje Radojević etc. Since the most prominent scientists from Montenegro were working outside of their republic they were viewed as non-reliable – once again the national was equated with the republican. The boldness of the conjectures presented at the symposium were equally disproportionate to the academic credentials of the gathered. The nationalists enjoyed the support of a wing of the party, made up mostly of the younger cadre and led by Veljko Milatović, but a part of the LC (amongst them opposed such radical views and was more inclined to stay on the positions of a republican/national then ethnic sovereignty. Amongst them was Veselin Djuranović, the secretary of the Central Committee of the LC of Montenegro, who stood against the views that nations (and thus also the national languages) were formed before 19<sup>th</sup> c. and that the works of Njegoš or any other poet from that epoch must be viewed in a broader context (Jovanović 1989: 55).

The most ardent supporters of the Montenegrin language and its equality found their way of expressing themselves through the magazines “Jezik” and “Kritika” in Zagreb. “Kritika” dealt with linguistics and culture but mostly in a nationalistic manner whose toleration was symptomatic for Croatia between 1968 and 1972, the exact dates of the magazine’s start and the end. Rarely there was a number of it that didn’t deal with some Montenegrin theme or problem, all of them discussed by a small number of younger and not very known scholars (amongst them Radoje and Danilo Radojević and Vojislav Nikčević, the future father of “Montegrenistic” were the most active). In one of the issues R. Radojević argues that the name “Serbo-Croatian” for the common language is unsustainable since it does not mention a separate Montenegrin language that can be traced back to 11<sup>th</sup> c and which did not develop around Belgrade or Zagreb but around Cetinje (Kritika 5, 1969, p. 227). It is interesting that the author separates “Montenegrin philologists” from those of Montenegrin origin but working in Matica srpska, the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences or the Belgrade University, illustrating the notion that Montenegrin interests have to be articulated separately, from their own republic. Following this trait, the author demands that “if we treat our language as one with different variants, then its name must include national designations of all the nations that use it.” If this name would be too impractical to use, the qualified representatives of “all peoples” should

come up with some new name since the Montenegrins want to be the ones who will be giving up on the name of their language – “Why would Montenegrins (and who can make them do that?) call their own language by the names of other peoples, suppress it and forget it, and in that way impoverish their culture and injure their national integrity?” (ibidem, p. 228). In the argumentation of his thesis that the Montenegrin language is an established fact of science Radojević quotes a number of authors, none of whose works are older than 1967 that is then the abovementioned Symposium on Montenegrin culture. A further step was taken in 1969 by writer Radoslav Rotković who sued the Belgrade publishers Matica srpska and Srpska književna zadruga who included the works of authors from Montenegro (Njegoš, S. M. Ljubiša, M. Miljanov and M. Lalić) in their edition “100 Serb Writers”, since “by negation of the existence of Montenegrin literature one also negates the existence of Montenegrin nation”. Commenting further on this, the author of the article in Zagreb-based “Vijesnik u srijedu” says that “it is a sad fact that one nation, after all the proclamations on equality and self-managing rights still needs to prove that it exists and has its literature” (Vijesnik u srijedu, 16. 4. 1969).

The bearers of these thesis remained active through Zagreb nationalistic press until its suppression in 1972 where (similar to other “extreme” linguists at the time) they attracted a lot of attention. Though their position in Montenegro was still far from strong or established their thesis were gradually institutionalized by awarding them positions in schools and the newly founded university from where they continued their debate and their positions were gradually introduced by some of the political leaders of the republic. The lobbying on the highest level, supported by scientific explanations, brought good results during the mid 1970s that were characterized by further federalization. The distinctiveness of the Montenegrin language was beginning to be appreciated even on the highest level: when in 1978 Vladimir Bakarić, one of the most distinguished party members, visited Titograd he, amongst other things, concluded that “until now we believed that Montenegrins speak Serbian, but now we can see that they actually speak Montenegrin” (Jovanović 1989: 55).

The demand for a separate language implied a demand of a separate culture defined by constructing boundaries between Montenegrin and other Yugoslav cultures and by demands that the personalities from the past be viewed and treated as

Montenegrin, i.e. equal to writers, painters, scientists etc from other nations. Writer and promoter of Montenegrin ethnic distinctiveness Sreten Asanović elaborates: “I am sure that nobody needs to be assured that it is an anachronism that in contemporary programs of republics and autonomous provinces of our self-managing community Montenegrin writers do not have any belonging (*pripadnost*) and the Montenegrin literature is thus as good as inexistent” (Kulturni život 1-2, Beograd 1978, quoted according to Kurtović 1978: 141). This of course would mean the formation of the institutions in the SR of Montenegro that would classify, judge and present to the broader public who and in which way should be considered Montenegrin. It was, of course, completely in accordance to the logic of republican/national identity that the new generation of writers from Montenegro demanded to be considered and listed as Montenegrin writers. On the other hand, it was highly problematic to list the personages from previous times as Montenegrin only on the basis of present existence of the republic of Montenegro. The view that anything from the territory of (present-day) Montenegro belonged to the Serb culture was deemed as “burdened by centuries long illusions, the remains of unitarist views, (...) anachronistic, romanticist, unscientific (...)” (Kritika 5, 1969, p. 339). This appropriation of culture is, of course, one of the basic traits of national cultures but the problem lied in the fact that these personalities from the spheres of culture and history needed firstly to be extracted from Serb culture where they were highly praised, that is to build a wall between Montenegrin and Serbian cultures. Since it was impossible to deny the existence of Montenegrin nation from the base of socialist national equality, the battle was already won by the promoters of its language and culture; the only problem they faced was how to distract their culture from the Serb culture and how to persuade the Montenegrins in their republic and especially those in Serbia that they should opt for a separate nation and national culture.

The linguistic demands of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian side were articulated through the Sarajevo’s Language Institute (*Institut za jezik*). An equal status of Bosnian-Herzegovinian standard language expression was demanded in all federal institutions: “in the Commission for the establishing the texts in the languages of the Yugoslav nations there should be formed a section for Serbo-Croatian with *four subdivisions* that will be named according to the republican constitutions” (Šipka 2005: 407). These demands were met in 1975, at least for the Bosnian-Herzegovinian

side since the section for Montenegro was missing – only three, not four were formed. This republic was joined with Serbia in the “Section for Serbo-Croatian language”. The name of the section is however misleading since in its work it was publishing the text only in ekavian variant of SC/CS thus totally neglecting the Montenegrin linguistic situation. Such state of affairs was explained by the pointlessness of publishing the texts in two variants within one section, especially so that the number of ijekavian speakers was ten times smaller than those of ijekavian (Književne novine, no. 299, 25. 4. 1987, p. 4-5). This was an obvious attempt of “majorisation” and a blatant disregard of the proclaimed policy of the equality of all the languages of the nations. It was obvious that within this section the Montenegrins were not considered a nation and that the ekavian pronunciation was forced upon them. It seems that the decision to put Montenegro and Serbia in the same section was a result of bad management by the leadership of Montenegro and its divided opinions on the question of Montenegrin language. Within this section their work could continue under the name “Serbo-Croatian”, while moving away from it they would have to make a further step for which there was no willingness. This is also obvious from the reaction of the CANU where they were unwilling to speak about this issue to the newspapers demanding first to hear the view of the politicians on the subject (*Danas*, no. 252, 16. 12. 1986). A problem was existent but nobody wanted to speak of it aloud. Extreme demands from Montenegro met a harsh answer from Belgrade where the intellectuals and the public who opposed the ideas of Montenegrin ethnic distinctiveness were willing to act against all the additional rights Montenegrin side could ask for.

The dividing lines between the national and the nationalistic were becoming invisible and they needed to be additionally explained from the top. Party official Todo Kurtović explains in 1978: “Is nationalism on the rise? We need to answer straightforwardly – no! And very decisively – no! There is an ever more free expression of socialist flows, and with this there is an unbinding of positive national and negative nationalistic (...) but this does not mean that that we essentially have more of nationalistic now. It is a different matter that its manifestations are still present and that they are very aggressive. But where there is a appearance of nationalistic, it is appearing in the shadow of an offensive of truly national and socialist that is coming as its slayer” (Kurtović 1978: 142). The public is calmed down since the nationalism is only a by-product of rising national emancipation in the

conditions of democratic socialism. The self-deceiving that one can produce nations without nationalism and that this nationalism can be tamed was soon to prove itself as fatal to the Communists engaged not in class but in national struggle between themselves.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper we have seen how the gradual evolution of Montenegrin nationality was suddenly revolutionized in late 1960s and turned into a political question of utmost importance. From the time of its defining (both theoretical and geographical) in 1945 up to the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress we see the Montenegrin nation still and preoccupied with its daily problems, living in the framework of nation equated with the republic – a framework which seemed like a amicable settlement for all the nations within it as well as for the Serbs. The political decision to strain the much too cordial relations of “peripheral” Montenegro towards “central” Serbia opened up the space to raise Montenegrin nationness on a higher level. Similar to how the spontaneous development of Yugoslavism was suppressed so was the abrupt redefining of the then existent notion that Montenegrins are a politically different nation but not an ethnic group unto themselves. A fraction of Montenegrin political leadership, led by the cadre freshly installed on the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress, started promoting the new vision of Montenegrinhood through its support for historians, linguists, writers etc. who were willing to open up new viewpoints and call for the injured rights of an “equal and self-managing” nation. These groups were tolerated to question the borders of “decent” nationalism and were functioning as a sort of reconnaissance of the politicians whose support they enjoyed. However, all of this could not be possible without the new constellation of power in Yugoslavia in which more and more power was invested in the hands of the republics. Most of the demands set by Montenegrin nationalists were actually only repeating the stands laid out in other republics as was the use of the same rhetoric. The nationalists were using the positions already achieved by other nations and demanded equality with them, the equality that stemmed from the existence of a separate republic and were as a consequence viewed benevolently and was in due time attained. However, the view that since Croatia is a national republic of Croats, Serbia of Serbs and so on, one could also demand that the Montenegro becomes a national republic of Montenegrins (or, more precisely, ethnic

Montenegrins, as opposed to the Muslims, Serbs and others living in it) remained highly controversial during the observed period and did not meet broad support from the politicians, not even from all of the Montenegrin ones, who stood heavily divided on the subject.

In the latter part of this paper I have turned my attention to two major prerequisites of any nation – a language and a national culture. The dividing of the common SC/CS language used in four central Yugoslav republics into four languages could not be explained by the linguistic rationale but was, however, to the liking of the republics and was therefore taking shape. Instead of the “politically incorrect” and “politically useless” dialects that transgressed the borderlines and nations, the Yugoslav power holders forged a new concept of a Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian and Montenegrin variant/language. This concept was eager on promoting differences where needed to underline the nationness of the variant/language, raising the linguistic differences from either individual or local/regional, to the differences between the nations within their republican borders and as defined by their cultural elite, that is to the differences between the nationally proscribed idioms that were seen as correct for public use. Instead on strengthening the bounds that were forged through everyday contact between the people living in the same country the political will was set on supporting the differences in order to have four nations with all the prerequisites they needed. The urge for a national culture was equally hollow in light of the rights achieved in socialist Yugoslavia. The protagonists of the national culture were calling for the constituting of institutions that would produce works that could be easily labeled as belonging to one of the nations; without these labels the cultural produce could not be distinguished and were in danger of falling into a pit of some other more relevant cultural centre that belonged to the “other”, i.e. that was used by the “other”.

Such radical means in promoting differences and the apparent self-sufficiency of the republics presents probably the most important stage in Montenegrin nation-building. The dispute that it raised within the Montenegrins themselves resulted in the pan-Serb backlash of 1989 and is to a great extent the root of the national division present in the Republic of Montenegro.

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