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**MT LOVČEN AND NJEKOŠ BETWEEN “ALEXANDER’S CHAPEL” AND
“MEŠTROVIĆ’S MAUSOLEUM”: SYMBOLIC ORIENTATION AND RE-
ORIENTATION OF MONTENEGRO IN SOCIALIST ERA**

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Mt Lovćen and Njegoš between “Alexander’s Chapel” and “Meštrović’s Mausoleum”: Symbolic Orientation and Re-Orientation of Montenegro in Socialist Era

Vladimir Dulović

It is almost impossible to overemphasize the symbolic value that Mount Lovćen holds for every Montenegrin and every Serb. The imposing stone giant seen from afar was the last stronghold of Montenegrin defense, with its forests a place of refuge even when the capital Cetinje was looted by Ottoman soldiers; it was the first sighting of their homeland from the Adriatic, and the last thing the Montenegrins saw as they left to work in the American mines. For a warrior people, with their back protected by the mountains, it was easy to establish it as a symbol when Montenegro appeared as a state formation in the course of the nineteenth century. After Njegoš’s glorification of Lovćen as the metaphor for Montenegrin freedom, it became known in all Serb lands and further across the Balkans. The strength of mountains as incarnations of capitals, and indeed of the whole state, is clearly seen in the parallel between Belgrade-Mt Avala and Cetinje-Mt Lovćen, which was used often throughout the nineteenth century. With its Jezerski vrh mountain-top as the final resting place of Njegoš, its symbolism was completed, thus making it the most important place in all Montenegro - an imagined vertical holding the entire state (“The hill /sic!/ Lovćen is the Serb Olymp, a monument built by divine hand to Freedom and its defenders” – King Nicholas of Montenegro, *Glas Crnogorca*, 16 February 1913). The sight on top of the mountain (although there was also a *chapel*) became so important for the image of the Montenegrin struggle for freedom that it even made it into the communist era’s coat-of-arms in 1945. When in the 1960s the discussion over the demolition of the chapel and the building of the mausoleum erupted, the emotional charge concerning this symbol was so strong that there was rarely a person that didn’t wish to express his opinion on the matter. People wrote to the state officials and many, inspired by the memory of Njegoš the poet, and the epic traditions, expressed themselves through verse.

The History of the Chapel

Despite the great number of articles and data documented about it, the history of Jezerski vrh and human interventions on it is relatively simple. While still in full strength and health, Njegoš had the unusual idea to build a small, modest stone church at Jezerski vrh, which was to become his final resting place. This was, by all means, a strange choice for a bishop. Harsh weather conditions in the winter of his death (1851) followed by the war with the Ottomans that came after the succession of Prince Danilo to the throne, delayed the fulfillment of his wish until 1855. Apart from the occasional damage inflicted by weather conditions, the church/chapel stood unchanged, playing out its symbolic role, and receiving the rare visitor up until 1916.

This was when the Austro-Hungarian occupying forces decided to tear the chapel down and in its place build a giant figure, the symbol of their victory over Montenegro. Njegoš's remains were transported to the Cetinje monastery but the demolition was never completed due to the wartime circumstances. The first idea of the victorious King Alexander of Yugoslavia was to build a more impressive tomb for Njegoš on this spot, according to the plans presented to him by Ivan Meštrović. This was one of the King's favorite artists and probably also one of the best known artists Yugoslavia had at that time. He envisioned the tomb in his usual eclectic style, as reminiscent of ancient temples. However, the metropolitan of Montenegro, Mitrofan Ban and other church leaders managed to persuade the king to settle for the renovation of the chapel. The restoration work was assigned to the Russian émigré Nikolay Krasnov, a favorite with the king and architect of many government edifices. Krasnov designed the chapel to be the same shape and size and tried to use all the original stone blocks that could still be recovered. However, a combination of the poor conservational knowledge and principles of the era, as well as the architect's own will to embellish the original edifice, prevented the Spartan simplicity of the original church from being reproduced. The *Potkrovni Verac*, a decorated portal and a round base encircling it, were his own additions. Though still modest, the interior was now decorated with icons of the saints of Montenegro, the inscription under the dome, and a new marble sarcophagus for Njegoš. Also, the road leading up to this inhospitable mountain was widened, on which in 1926, the king, church leaders, many politicians, and high ranking officers of the army arrived. The restoration work was not widely discussed at the time – there weren't that many people who had ever seen the original and from far away it seemed the same as it did before 1916. The idea of the Ital-

ian army, during the Second World War, to demolish the chapel while using it as a practice target, stirred such anger and disapproval that the insecure occupiers gave up immediately.

Pillars of the New Republic

The first major celebrations in the People's Republic of Montenegro were the sentinel of the publishing of "Mountain Wreath" (1947) and the sentinel of Njegoš's death (1951), usually referred to as just "The Njegoš Celebration" (*Njegoševa proslava*). The first celebration failed to meet its ambitious goals due to a lack of funding and generally difficult conditions. The preparations for the latter event were more successful and they managed to see it through. The celebration was envisioned "not only as the apotheosis of Njegoš but also as a manifestation of our cultural heritage and the display of the cultural revolution which has taken place in our country from 1941 to this day" (ACG, 254-1, 2 December 1950)¹. Therefore the organizing committee tried to organize the arrival of people in national costumes from as many regions of Montenegro as possible, as well as the dramatization of the "Mountain Wreath", the first draft for forming the future National Museum, and the popularization of Njegoš's "patriotism and the spirit of his works" by holding lectures in every village. The chapel was also included in the program of the celebration and therefore the minor damage to it was mended. A picture of the chapel was included in the album dealing with persons and places of Njegoš's life, and even featured on the poster - by the famous painter Milo Milunović - announcing the celebration (ACG, 254-7, 29 January 1951). When it was suggested that a new road to the chapel should to be constructed, Milunović answered: "We should not interfere with something that has already been done so well. If we were to do so, we would change the appearance of Lovćen. The original chapel (sic!) should be taken care of and we should not embark upon building another thing" (ACG, 254-1, 22 September 1950). Here one finds a very strong discrepancy between the views towards the chapel in the early 1950s and a decade later. Analyzing the documents on Njegoš's celebration we see that the chapel is popularized and ranked as one of the important places linked with Njegoš's life. It was

¹ Another reason that 1951 was appropriate for the celebration is that it was the final year of the first five-year plan in Yugoslavia. Also, Njegoš and his works were seen as patriotic and connected with the partisans' fight in the Second World War. The comment on the commissioned "Heroic Oratorio" by V. Vučković, composed on the verses of "Mountain Wreath" says: "Through words and music breaks through the same protest against violence, same hatred towards the traitors of the people, same call to fighting and insurrection of the enslaved people which motivated for battle heroes from the popular uprisings of the last century and heroes of the recent National-liberation War" (ACG, 254-8-990). The committee also emphasized that this will also be "a political manifestation" (ACG, 254-7-513)

not once mentioned as “Alexander’s chapel” or at all in any negative context, the most fascinating thing being that its religious component is completely shunned by its national importance. It is also interesting to note that the place on the top of Lovćen where the chapel lies is always referred to as Crkvine - the name it spontaneously received after the church (*arkva*) was built there - and never as Jezerski vrh.

During the preparations for the celebration there was also an initiative to erect a monument to Njegoš in Cetinje². The most eminent sculptors from Yugoslavia were informed about this and sent in their works. None were met with approval from the committee, among them also the work by Meštrović, which one of the committee members (Vlado Četković) thought to be especially feeble, considering that “when he (Meštrović) finished it, he said that it was his weakest work” (ACG, 254-1, 14 September 1950).

In general, during the preparations there were a lot of signs that the “Montenegrin” was not distinguished from the “Serb” and that there was no animosity between the two. It was the contrary. The plan for the celebration included the re-printing of books from Njegoš’s era to be distributed to the visiting scientists, amongst these also the Serb Grammar Book (*Srbski bukvar*). Amid the many busts and portraits that were to be displayed in all of the city’s window shops, we find a combination of Montenegrin heroes (Marko Miljanov, Jole Piletić, Peko Pavlović etc.), political leaders from that period (Tito, Blažo Jovanović and Djilas) and, most curiously, great Serbian personages from Njegoš’s era, in some way or other related to him (Simo Milutinović-Sarajlija, Vuk Karadžić, Milica Stojadinović and Matija Ban). The numbers of the delegates from each of the republics to attend the celebration speak for themselves – from Serbia there are eighty-four people on the list, more than from all republics (excluding Montenegro) together! (ACG, 254-8, *Spisak lica i ustanova koje treba pozvati na Njegoševu proslavu*)

When using the terms “Montenegrin” and “Serb” the people from the documents always “politically correctly” use the term “Montenegrin(s)” when speaking about themselves and the people of the Republic, but don’t seem to mind if someone calls their art of previous centuries or Njegoš’s poetry Serbian (ACG, 254-7, Milan Kašanin to the Committee, 15 December 1950). Obviously, one was allowed to say a thing in two different ways, depending on the situation and as long as one remained correctly orientated for the current situation; there is still no will to put the two terms in an “either-or” context.

² One of the members of the organizing committee (Ratko Djurović) suggested that the monument to Njegoš should be simultaneously unveiled in Belgrade as well (ACG, 254-1. 22 September 1950)

A Problematic Start

The initiative for building a mausoleum on Lovćen came surprisingly quickly after the end of Celebration, already in 1952, considering that it wasn't mentioned during the preparations. The Montenegrin government contacted Meštrović, proposing that he should make drafts for the monument and the architectural structure, which the sculptor gladly accepted. The need for the mausoleum can be seen in the letter of Blažo Jovanović to Meštrović: "We hold that such a monument as a great work of art glorifying Njegoš would fit best the motives from Njegoš's and folk epic and not church and religious motives"³ (Umetnost 1971, p. 36, 41). Meštrović was chosen as a world renowned sculptor "who had already thought about this problem". The choice of an artist could hardly be more problematic: though a first class artist, Meštrović's political engagement was always controversial. His early years were marked by themes from Serb epic poetry and he was seen as one of the key figures in forming the so-called "Vidovdan ideology", a sort of a new pan-religion of southern Slavs that was promoted at the beginning of the twentieth century. Between the two World Wars he remained an intimate friend of King Alexander and created several important monuments, of which the monument to the Unknown Soldier on Avala is very similar to his Lovćen mausoleum project. During the war he was imprisoned by the Croatian Ustaša-regime, but was later released and left for the US. After the war he criticized the communist regime in words and in works of art, such as with the relief of the archbishop Stepinac (who was convicted as a war criminal) and became tied with the Croatian nationalist and fascist emigration. After one of his positive statements on Stepinac, the Montenegrin leadership decided to end their collaboration with Meštrović (Cable of M. Djilas to B. Jovanović, 13 May 1953, quoted from Vuković 1991, p. 62). Meštrović was, however kept on the assignment, probably based on the argumentation of the ambassador to the US Vlado Popović, stating that it would be more beneficial for Yugoslavia to keep Meštrović for the regime's purposes than to lose him completely to the "emigration" (ibidem).

The committee for the erection of the mausoleum was founded in 1954 and set as its aim to finish the work by 1963. Then the mausoleum should be ready for the celebration of 150 years of Njegoš's birth (ACG, 99-11-351, doc. nr. 4). Meštrović finished the monumental sculpture in 1957 but the works on Lovćen were lagging behind from the very beginning and were then completely abandoned due to the lack of funds. In the mean-

³ Interestingly, Meštrović did not follow these wishes and did exactly the opposite creating a new temple instead of the old one.

time, Meštrović died in 1962, as did the president of the committee, and most of its members were not in Montenegro anymore. After the project's conception was attacked by an eminent art historian, Lazar Trifunović (*Danas*, 30 August 1961), it was decided in 1962 to abandon it. This, despite the fact that the project had already consumed a lot of money, work on the tunnel to the top of Lovćen had been started, building material stood underneath the top, and Njegoš's sculpture and caryatids were already in Cetinje (ACG, 99-11-351, doc. nr. 5). The discussion on the project only started in 1963 in the newspapers, although the report of 1964 states that everything was ready for the assembling of the mausoleum, the only things to do were to dismantle the chapel and drill the tunnel (ibidem). In 1966 came the Report from the Commission for the Reorganization of Cetinje Museums, formed by the Department for Education and Culture of Montenegro, which was led again by Lazar Trifunović and made up of eminent scientists, most of whom were from Montenegro, with others from Serbia. The commission gave a very negative opinion about the mausoleum and unanimously voted against having it on Lovćen (*Umetnost* 1971, 59-60). This report fueled the discussion in newspapers; among the opponents of its reflections was also the Collegium of the Cetinje Museums (*Stručni kolegijum muzeja Cetinja*). After this even the Serb Orthodox Church joined the discussion, loudly advocating against the mausoleum for the first time since the start of the discussion. The last person working on the mausoleum, the guard of the marble parts, was let off in June 1966 (ACG, 99-11-351, doc. nr. 8).

Over the course of several years (1961-66) parties for and against the mausoleum were formed, both with an array of different arguments. The discussion was unusually fierce, open and full of critique – which made it very different from the bureaucratic matter of dealing with things silently, which was seen in this case in the period before 1961. Discussing the importance, meaning and symbolism of Lovćen made it possible to grasp the views of the participants on the history, on the present and future course of Montenegro, on Njegoš's (and therefore also Montenegrin) nationhood and even ethnicity. Here are the arguments of both sides⁴:

The party in favor of the mausoleum and its placing onto Lovćen considered that Njegoš's chapel had been partially torn down in 1916 and then in its entirety in 1925, and that the present one is actually a chapel for King Alexander, a work from the time of the

⁴ The arguments are grouped in logical wholes and are not presented chronologically. Some of the opinions have been proved wrong but are listed nonetheless since they played an equally important role with the heads of the party that promoted them. Most of the false arguments were never renounced, as can be seen from the later discussions.

monarchy and supported by the Church. As such it can only be a symbol of the Karadjordjević dynasty that occupied and abolished independent Montenegro, a symbol of Alexander's dictatorship, and Great Serbian hegemony. Although nobody mentioned it out loud, this view was projected on the present-day situation and protests against the mausoleum were presented by some as the doing of Serbia, which was trying to subdue Montenegro and belittle Njegoš (Politika, 9 April 1990). The work of the great sculptor Meštrović would adequately honor Njegoš ("the existing chapel, built in 1925, is not appropriate for the greatness of Njegos" – Savo J. Orović, *Borba*, 24 February 1966). The imposing mausoleum has been specifically modeled to stand on Lovćen where it will make a harmonious whole ("in contrast with the present one /chapel/, this monument will be a low quadrangle which will blend with the natural line of Lovćen" – I. Meštrović, *Umetnost* 1971, 46) and it is not suitable for Cetinje, neither from an aesthetic nor from the symbolic point of view ("Lovćen, not Cetinje is the symbol of Montenegrin resistance and struggle" - Department for Education and Culture of Montenegro, ACG, 99-11-351, doc. nr. 5). There it will be admired by a large number of visitors and tourists who will easily ascend it by the new road and tunnel, which will bring Njegoš closer to the masses of Yugoslavs. Njegoš should be praised above all as a ruler and a poet, while his role as a bishop was only of minor importance for his personality and work ("Rade Tomov⁵ was not only a bishop but above all a leader of a brave nation and a poet-philosopher" – K. Čakić, *Vjesnik*, 26 March 1969). Njegoš was above all a Montenegrin and Yugoslav and in particular the greatest Montenegrin national hero; for these reasons Montenegrins have a right above all to decide what to do with Lovćen and their memory of him ("The building of the mausoleum is a sovereign right of Montenegrin people" – *NIN*, 30 March 1969; "since Njegoš grew from the people it is the right of the people to pay their dues to him in a best possible way" – from the session of the local council of Cetinje, *Politika*, 18 March 1969). The chapel is not at all adequate for the top of Lovćen, which is the symbol of Montenegro ("A Christian chapel on Lovćen is not in accordance with Lovćen as a symbol of the armed fight for freedom. Furthermore, the chapel is not in accordance with the spirit and content of the 'Mountain Wreath' since it is well known that the 'Mountain Wreath' is not a Christian ode but a glorification of the heroic armed struggle - the wreath of glory of heroic Montenegro and the expression of free philosophy of Njegoš." – V. Džaković, *Umetnost* 1971, 118). The last of the statements is especially remarkable and indicative to many others similar to it, as it speaks in contemporary

⁵ Njegoš's secular name was Radivoj (Rade) Tomov Petrović

terms, dealing with Njegoš as if he was one of Second World War partisans, transposing the situation of the present day to the past. This is specific for this party which stood in favor of modern, in other words, socialist principles, against traditionalism and the church.

The party in favor of the preservation of the chapel emphasized that a modest chapel and not a mausoleum is what Njegoš built himself and that was where he wanted to be buried; building the mausoleum would be the rewriting of history. Even if the chapel is Alexander's, it is also Njegoš's. Its seclusion on the unspoiled top of the mountain is also a constituent part of Njegoš's will. The chapel is a religious monument in the possession of the Church and is moreover listed as a cultural heritage monument under the protection of the state. The mausoleum can be built in any place and even Cetinje doesn't have a Njegoš's monument ("it can ruin Lovćen, but can add a lot to Cetinje" – T. Djukić, *Danas*, 8 November 1961.). The mausoleum is too bulky, unharmonious with the mountain top that will need to be "pruned", not to mention the drilling of Lovćen, which will all desecrate this holy place ("The Lovćen mountaintop is the symbol of Montenegro as it is now, part of its coat-of-arms and the memory of a visitor" – O. Perović, *Pobjeda*, 13 May 1963). This expensive project will be paid for by the poor Montenegro and its citizens. Meštrović's mausoleum is a dark and mystical tomb suited for a pharaoh or a tyrant which doesn't suit Njegoš, his historical role and his personality ("the sculpture represents Njegoš more as a master and a ruler than as a poet and a symbol of freedom" – Commission for the reorganization of Cetinje Museums, *Umetnost* 1971, 59-60) and its conception is foreign, "directly opposite to all the ideas born in this /Yugoslav/ society (Lazar Trifunović, *Danas*, 30 August 1961). Meštrović's work is done in style that is old-fashioned and his glorification of cardinal Stepinac makes him unworthy to mould Njegoš.

The compromise offered by the Church and the chapel party, when they were pressed against the wall, was to incorporate the chapel into/beside the mausoleum but this never met approval with the mausoleum party who seemed to be decisively against the chapel as a religious monument.

The Fresh Initiative

For two years the discussion melted down and the question was set aside, which seemed a victory of the "chapel party". Then suddenly, on 9 December 1968, the local council (*opština*) of Cetinje, in one of its sessions, reached the decision to take the building of the

mausoleum upon itself, forming a commission to deal with the question. The decision of the local council was based, as it is said, on “interpreting the wishes of Yugoslavs, and especially of Montenegrins and the citizens of Cetinje” (ACG, 99-11-351, doc. nr. 5). Funding, the main obstacle for the finishing of the mausoleum, was to be gathered by voluntary donations of companies and ordinary people – “As Njegoš and his work belong to all nations of Yugoslavia, the local council of Cetinje expects that it will find understanding and support of all Yugoslavs in this venture” (ibidem). A year later, the project again gained support from the state, that is, from the executive council of the parliament of Montenegro (ACG, 99-11, p. 141).

Immediately after reaching the decision, the council launched a fierce campaign, obviously with the support of some higher powers. This was felt in the media reporting, which was now much more in favor of the mausoleum than before; the reporter from the streets of Cetinje and in Njeguši village⁶ finds only one supporter of the decision of the council – no opinions against it, only a silent one: “There are also those who claim that they already stated their opinion and stick to it” (*Pobjeda*, 10 May 1969.). After the protest by the Church Synod on 21 May 1969, the Cetinje local council was enraged, demanding the resignation of bishop Danilo of Montenegro and the Littoral and threatening to sue the Synod. There were threats with “spontaneous” demonstrations of high school pupils⁷ against the interference of the Church into state business (In the words of the president of the local youth committee: “I think that the metropolitan of Cetinje has his work to do and should not interfere with our self-managing /*samoupravna*/ rights” –, *Politika*, 18. 3. 1969) and “work strikes” (extension of work hours for one hour more) were launched as well. The opinion of the Synod was matched by the Organization of Orthodox priests of Montenegro, a state tutored institution that presented itself as a true voice of ordinary parish priests. It gave support for the mausoleum and even gathered a donation for its building (*Pobjeda*, 24 May 1969).

The Committee for the building of the Mausoleum was formed on 7 July 1969 and among its members were many prominent party officials (such as Filip Bajković, S. Vukmanović-Tempo, Peko Dapčević, Veselin Djuranović, Vidoje Zarković, Veljko Milatović, Vlado Popović – namely all the top officials of Montenegro as well as those of them now on service in the organs of the Federation). This of course, meant also the

⁶ Where Njegoš was born.

⁷ The inscriptions worn by the pupils, obviously made by the same person, read “The decision about the building of the monument must be carried out!”, “Only a monument like this is worthy” (with a picture of Meštrović’s sculpture), “Honest citizens think like us” etc.

support of the elite of the other republics (Politika, 6. 5. 1970, 15 May 1970). The success of the media campaign which the Committee launched is described in its report from April 1970 to the Executive Council: “With the aim of propaganda and support for the action from that time on /from the first meeting of the Committee/ over 200 shorter and longer news articles were published, over 150 radio reports, two long TV shows (...) It is important to emphasize that in this period only a small number of articles (*napisa*) which were opposed to the building of the mausoleum appeared. (...) 50,000 copies of the proclamation from the first meeting of the Committee were printed”. Further on they reported that “from the donations of the companies from all over the country, half of the total sum of money needed for the construction has already been collected.” (ACG, 99-11-142)

A well-directed state action was underway but the opposing party still thought that they could appeal to the common sense of the power holders, responsible institutions and of the ordinary people. This fight was led by intellectuals and the group against the mausoleum now gathered an impressive list of names that supported its cause; mainly writers, painters, architects and university professors⁸. They were Montenegrins interested both professionally and nationally in this issue, Serbs with no connection with Montenegro who mostly protested from the position of their profession (but some also as concerned for the Serbian side of the Montenegrin identity), and then there were those whose voice counted only because they came from Montenegro, like the Montenegrin students studying in Belgrade. Some of the articles aspire to achieve its cause with friendliness, others are quite bitter. Most of the protesters ask questions but hesitate to give answers, and the only institution that is attacked is the lowest of them all – the local council in Cetinje. However, the silence that came from the higher powers of the state spoke louder than words. Professor Mihailo Djurić noted that the mausoleum is much more intended to divide than to unite: “Who could be interested that much in a monument that obviously contradicts its own purpose, that divides and sets people against each other, under which it will by no means possible to gather all the true admirers of the great poet, to which obviously won’t come many of the important representatives of Serbian culture (...)?” (Umetnost 1971, 187) Their attempts and protests were attacked by newspapers as anti-self-managing or spurred by the Church (*Vijesnik u srijedu* from Zagreb held that the

⁸ These among others included Ivo Andrić, Miroslav Krleža (who was later accused for his anti-Serb positions), Risto Stijović, Milo Milunović, Meša Selimović, Pedja Milosavljević, Oto Bihalji-Merin, Petar Lubarda, Pavle Ivić, Vasko Popa, Stevan Raičković, Matija Bečković, Aleksandar Deroko and many others, among them prince Mihailo Petrović-Njegoš, grandson of King Nicholas of Montenegro.

“loud campaign” and “growingly unpleasant atmosphere” is created against the will of the “only ones who are socially qualified (*društveno kvalifikovani*) to make it – the Montenegrins themselves” ending with a conclusion that the protest follows the one of the Serbian Orthodox Church (Umetnost 1971, 114). Newspapers even reported that in Hamburg a bomb was found with a letter threatening bombing attacks on Yugoslav embassies if the action of demolition of the chapel was not stopped (*Politika*, 21 July 1969). The action for collecting the signatures against the mausoleum in the Philological Faculty in Belgrade was stopped and designated as a “nationalist outburst” since it “directly meddles in what is an inalienable right of People’s Republic of Montenegro and its people” (*Politika*, 19 June 1970). The article against the mausoleum in the magazine of Novi Sad students “Indeks” entitled “You can and God gave you the power” (*Vi možete i bog vam je dao*) and signed by 161 Montenegrins was banned for its “insults against the highest self-managing organs of the People’s Republic of Montenegro” (*Politika*, 3i May 1971). On the other hand, a convicted war criminal, close associate of Ante Pavelić and his Ustaša-regime and an ideologist of a separate Montenegrin ethnicity, Savić Marković Štedimlija, was allowed to write from Zagreb an article in the reputable daily “Vjesnik” (in the section “Readers write”) entitled “We know who is waging the campaign against Njegoš’s mausoleum”! This “mistake” was said to be a consequence of the author not using his full name (Umetnost 1971, 141-143). The cooperation between the officials working for the mausoleum and the officials and institutions in Croatia, which was at the moment living its nationalist revival of MASPOK and “Croatian Spring”, was witnessed on several occasions. In May 1971 Matica Hrvatska, one of the leaders of the nationalist revival, formed a commission for gathering help for the Njegoš mausoleum since it “symbolizes the centuries-old struggle of Montenegrin people for freedom, as well as the cooperation between our two nations.” (Umetnost 1971, 176)

Another pinnacle of the clash and a very suggestive source is the suit filed by the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) against the Republic of Montenegro and the Cetinje local council because of the destruction of the chapel, which the Church argued to be one of its places of worship. That the chances of winning were low was obvious and seen well from the statement of Petar Tomanović, president of the local council and one of the leaders of the mausoleum initiative about the witnesses (sic!) for the accused: “The Republic of Montenegro, which originally ordered the monument, and whose president at the time is the present day president of the Constitutional Court, then the Local Council of Cetinje and the whole of Montenegrin people” (Novosti, 6 May 1970). At the trial, the

answer of the defense (the Republic) argued that the SOC can't be a representative of the legitimate interests of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church (MOC), reaching in the detailed historical and canonical analysis of the claim that the MOC was illegitimately subdued by the SOC after the end of Montenegrin statehood in 1918. Thus, the "Macedonian Scenario" was put to work as an ultimate threat, raised on several occasions against the SOC in Montenegro (Folić, *Izbor...*). Here we have a socialist government (that was constantly attacking the church from the position of a secular state) advocating the restoration of another church for which there was no one interested but itself. In conclusion, the defense said: "Insisting that Njegoš should stay in the existing Alexander's chapel in Lovćen means nothing else but a means for fighting against Montenegrin national equality, an attempt to bring the spirit of present-day generation of Montenegrin nation back to nineteenth century of Serbian-orthodox and wrongly directed national-romanticism existence" (Umetnost 1971, 172). The court decided that the chapel is not a place of worship but a funerary and cultural monument and as such it can according to the law be transferred to another place.

The whole discussion waged in hundreds of articles is not so much about socialist against religious, new versus old or even Serb against Montenegrin, but is above all a discussion on the destruction of the original and the construction of the new national symbol according to the plans of the power holders, and therefore it is also about the reinvention of tradition. The party in favor of the chapel defends it as a testament of the time, as the witness of the supposed "wrongly directed national-romanticism". The opposing party, led by the Communists who saw it as a fight against reactionary forces and a reason to strengthen their lines, saw it as a progressive move, a right of the new age to build a monument to the other side of Njegoš's personality, the one of ruler, disregarding the one of a bishop (in as much as the chapel did the opposite, and since the chapel is not Njegoš's but Alexander's – the argumentation follows – the mausoleum is also a fight against monarchist Great Serbian dictatorship that tortured Communists and Montenegrins. The chapel could not be a symbol of the new Montenegrin nation and it stood in such prominent place that it had to go. The mausoleum is a new start for a new nation, and this is exactly what many from the chapel party feared: the rooting out of Njegoš from his Christianity leads to his rooting out of Serbdom as well. Although this was not mentioned openly, on several occasions it was felt by many that this stubbornness against the chapel and a new identity of Njegoš leaves an open door to further interventions in the reconsiderations of his work and all of Montenegrin history. One more impression a

historian has after reading the documents is that, from the beginning of the 1970s and in light of the happenings concerning Lovćen, it seems that the uncertain positions from the previous twenty-five years of development in socialism have been left, and that from now on we have many people who have taken firm positions on nationality and its further cause in Montenegro. From now on the promoting of Montenegrin differences from (the rest of) the Serbs gains strength from year to year giving, on the other side, rise to a growing willingness to defend the Serb identity of the Montenegrins. After a long period of total ambiguity now we have people who can be clearly identified with one idea or the other. Most of the people are still somewhere between or can shift their loyalties fast, but as the time passes there will be less and less of them.

After the start of the final phase of work, a special edition of the magazine “Umetnost” (Art) appeared 1971, wholly dedicated to the discussion on the mausoleum. It remained aloof from the discussion by printing both pro and contra arguments, though it was obvious which side it took (it was edited by Lazar Trifunović, one of the leading figures in the pro-chapel camp). In its second part it also listed poems and paintings on this problematic subject from many important artists. Viewed as a criticism of the ruling structures, the magazine was withdrawn from sale and all of its copies were destroyed (Vuković 1991, 5).

A Petty Victory

After the construction of the tunnel and the securing of the needed money, the chapel was finally demolished in 1972. The promises that the chapel was going to be dismantled and then put up again in Njeguši village were never fulfilled and its stones were disgracefully thrown in a field near the village, unmarked and unattended.

Announcing the opening, Titograd’s only newspaper “Pobjeda” editorial comments that the “Njegoš mausoleum is a work that has grown from the feeling of national debt to the great poet and his presence in our time”; Njegoš’s work should not be limited by Orthodoxy or romanticism allowing misinterpretations – “Our time requires a more modern approach to Njegoš and his work”. The article continues “Maybe that the monument /the Mausoleum/ will for a number of our compatriots bring soberness from orthodox and political errors (...) Maybe some will not like it, but the future will add to its beauty and necessity” and concluding that, “With this monument we bring Njegoš closer to our time” (Pobjeda, 28 July 1974).

The mausoleum was opened on 29 July 1974. The president of the presidency of Montenegro, Veljko Milatović⁹, in his speech emphasized that “The road to this act wasn’t easy”, that “the biggest monument to Njegoš, his creative self-willingness (*stvaralačkoj samovolji*) and aspirations for freedom is a free Montenegro in a free union of equal nations and nationalities (*naroda i narodnosti*) of socialist and non-aligned Yugoslavia” adding that “(...) in order to build up and prolong the life of his truths it is necessary to bring him back to his authenticity; we are obliged to release the interpretation of his work, as a poet and as a stamen, from the ballast of romanticism and folklore naivety, of orthodox and bourgeois mythomania (...)”. In Milatović’s speech Njegoš’s role was kept strictly to Montenegrins and Yugoslavs, without any mentioning of the Serbs – “We today view Njegoš’s contemplation-poetic work as the highest expression that emerged on Montenegrin grounds (...)”, “Montenegrin nation in whose literature his /Njegoš’s/ poetic work (...)” etc. (Pobjeda, 1 August 1974). In the same manner, the recital from his works was left without any mentioning of his Serb feelings (Jovanović 2003, 281).

It is interesting to note that the chapel continued to live in the Montenegrin coat-of-arms until 1992 but that the badge of the newly founded (in 1973) Montenegrin Academy of Arts and Sciences (CANU) represents Lovćen with the Mausoleum.

Dawning of the New Problems

In the years following the opening of the Mausoleum there was little new happening and there was even less discussion on the subject. However, as soon as the political situation was shaken up Lovćen was affected. Immediately after the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucratic leadership of Montenegro in 1989 the re-print edition of the “Umetnost” magazine¹⁰ appeared, this time published by the SOC. Its reappearance and availability to the public stirred up the new debate. Now the initiative was in the hands of the pro-Serbian forces in Montenegro and their causes were diametrically different from those the builders of the mausoleum had earlier, culminating in the initiative of poet Komnen Bećirović from the end of the same year for the razing of the mausoleum and rebuilding of the chapel (*NIN*, 10 December 1989), which was supported by the Poets’ Association of Montenegro. Similar to this one was the statement of SOC that it won’t

⁹ The ceremony was attended by the highest state officials but also by figures such as Savo Brković (noted down just as “an official”) who was just finishing his “On Becoming and Development of Montenegrin Nation” or Filaret Koprivica, the president of the Society of Priests

¹⁰ By now known as the “Twilight of Lovćen” (Sumrak Lovćena) by a picture of the same name by Petar Lubarda

allow the chapel to be built in any other place but Lovćen and only when there is no mausoleum anymore (*Večernje novosti*, 3. February 1990). CANU stood on a position that the chapel should be incorporated into the mausoleum. The tables have turned and the newly found power of Serb nationalism was against any compromises and eager to take revenge on the mausoleum party. Such destructive annunciations were used by the newly formed Liberal Alliance of Montenegro (LSCG) who took in its hands the defense of the mausoleum, organizing its members and sympathizers to form guards around the mausoleum in order to defend “its own statehood and nationality” (Vuković 1991, 78). The new discussion continued from where it was ended in 1972, but now with much more fierceness, made possible by the new freedom of press and expression that at moments equaled chaos. In addition to the old arguments there appeared also the new ones such as the one that the call for the razing of the mausoleum endangers the cultural and historical heritage of the Montenegrin nation, that the Njegoš’s and Meštrović’s mausoleum symbolizes unity and tolerance, that it is an attack on the “sacredness of the Montenegrin nation” and that these are all “*četnik* manipulations and Great Serbian occupational threats (*Saopštenje crnogorskog federalističkog pokreta povodom formiranja odbora za povratak Aleksandrove kapele na Lovćen*, 2. 10. 1990, quoted by Vuković 1991.). The other side responded that the return of the chapel on Lovćen would “heal one of the deepest Serb wounds” and that the mausoleum was and is an “anti-civilization and anti-Serb project”. These events heralded the new epoch of pro-Serb history that characterized Montenegro at the beginning of its post-socialist development, and which gradually strengthened the opposition to the alliance with Serbia and the denial of any connections with Serbs whatsoever.

From the analysis of the happenings from the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s one may observe that the Montenegrin nationalists grabbed the Mausoleum as their dearest national monument on whose existence their history depended and that its defense from the return of the chapel (in whatever form! – no one thought about the possibility of the reconstruction of the original one) is the ultimate defense from “Great Serbia”. Its cosmopolitan character should be cherished since Montenegro is not only Orthodox but also equally turned towards the West. The problem of the interaction between the new Montenegrin identity and Njegoš was best summed up by Slobodan Vujošević, by saying “Njegoš is for some of them /ethnic Montenegrins/ too much of a burden. We are not Njegoš’s people anymore, we have gone astray (*odrodili smo se*). All in

all, that what stands today on Lovćen, that is what we deserve. One thing is certain, there is no Njegoš on Lovćen and there is no Njegoš in us either” (Vuković 1990, 73).

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