

Expose of Research Project

Problem definition

During the formation of the sovereignty of Montenegro in 19th c. two identities were developed side by side: the traditional ethnic Serb identity and the national identity of the emerging state. Since the former had an overall prevalence, national symbols (such as its flag, coat-of-arms, anthem etc.) were almost entirely pan-Serbian. With the loss of independence in 1918, an air of discontent appeared in Montenegro and in the interwar period it gained strength through the Federalist Party. Within this process, perceptions of Montenegrin dissimilarities from the rest of the Serbs and first adherents of the specific Montenegrin ethnicity appeared. The 1945 victory of the communists (who were eager on promoting federalist concept in the interwar period) opened an era of renewed Montenegrin statehood in federal Yugoslavia. Moreover a new nation was formed and it needed its symbols. These were constructed of a hazy mixture of traditional (i.e. Serb), new nationalist and overall communist. In the next 45 years these symbols met with more or less approval and structured ordinary people's perspectives.

Aims, Problems, Objectives

In this research I would like to explore the following research questions:

- How did the national symbols (the so-called “national paraphernalia” – flag, anthem, national day etc.) in communist period emerge and what did they mean to the political leaders? In particular, did they make a clear break with the legacy of the monarchy, both of Karadjordjevićs and of Petrovićs, wiping out monarchist and Christian features from the national symbols and instituting a new, communist look to them (for instance “badges” instead of shields in coats-of-arms)? How was traditionalism dealt with? Were other symbols just rearranged and reinterpreted: for instance, the hero of the nation, Njegoš, was promoted as a poet and people's leader rather than a prince-bishop?
- Was there a consensus on the national symbols and how were they adopted? It is very likely that, same as the other major decisions reached in the years following Second World War, these were a product of the top ranking communist officials and that they were imposed to the ordinary people. But were the symbols created just by power holders or was it also artists, poets or even some general sentiment involved?
- How did the people perceive the new symbols and what did they mean to them? In this section I will explore the relation between the desired course and the adoption of symbols in everyday living. How did the new symbols relate with the old and how were they used to shape the new dialectical relationship between past and present?
- How were the meanings of these symbols transformed and reshaped during the period? During the half a century on which the work focuses several generations grew up and arguably their views differed. While many of the older were still silently sympathetic with pre-communism symbols, younger generations saw them differently, as their *diferentia specifica* in relation to the neighboring nations, primarily Serbians. Can we establish a relation between the age and nationhood?

- Can we link transformations of meanings of the symbols with political decisions or were they spontaneous? Maneuvers of the communist decision makers were often predetermined and reached behind closed doors but one should also take into account the agency of ordinary men which was traditionally strong in Montenegro.
- How did the new symbols relate to the old ones and how easily were the latter (most interestingly Serb Orthodoxy and its traditions) renounced? Following these two questions we must first explore the pressures on the Serb Orthodox Church in Montenegro and the origins and development of what later emerged as the Montenegrin Orthodox Church. During the 1945-1990 period church and religion were marginalized or even persecuted and so the Montenegrin nation emerged as an almost secular. However, some of the centuries old traditions which included rituals performed by priests such as the “krsno ime” (family protector saint) endured. Did the people celebrate Christian rituals disregarding the official church? If not, how did they perceive the relation between the Serb Orthodox Church and Montenegrin ethnicity? Second field in which the new clashed with the old is the one of personal names: is it possible to track changes in personal names which reflect the views on nationhood i.e. Lazar, Dušan, Uroš that follow the Serb traditions and Bodin or Balša which evoke the continuity with the statehood of Duklja and Zeta?
- Were these symbols projected to shape Montenegrin or Communist ideals? How did the two interact and what was the result? In 1945 Yugoslavia was an almost unitary country controlled from one centre with Montenegro as one of the strongholds of the Party. During the next three decades the country would be reshaped into a loose federacy in which republics challenged the authority of the federal state and sided one against the other. We will try to find if these transformations can be observed in the decisions reached and in the press. Also we will explore how the everyday people witnessed them and if they felt afflicted by them.
- Which of the symbols of the 1945-1990 era were adopted and which were later cast away? Special attention will be paid to the symbolic meaning of the Lovćen Chapel which found itself also on the socialist coat-of-arms of Montenegro. Lovćen was of uttermost symbolic value to Montenegro as the barren and inhospitable mountain around which the freedom from the Turks was first won. In this respect the identification between national history, national character and landscape was established. Furthermore, the grave of Petar II Petrović Njegoš, the ruler and the greatest poet of Montenegro, located at its top implicated still greater meaning. The tearing down of the Lovćen chapel and the construction of the Njegoš Mausoleum in 1971 was one of the turning points in the history of the period, producing a wide-range discussion and open criticism of narrow-mindedness of the communist elite on one side and the nationalistic behaviour of Serbian Orthodox Church on the other.
- How did these symbols mould the new nation and how successful were they? Seemingly successful and recognized by other nations in socialist Yugoslavia, the Montenegrin national rationale was questioned sharply at the beginning of the 1990s. Though it survived, it underwent various changes during the period of the post-socialist transformation and the break of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the first half of the 1990s. The latter half of the decade is marked by an ever clearer split between the adherents of ethnic Montenegrin and Montenegrin-Serb factions.

The general objective of this inquiry would be to assess the impact of symbols on creating the new nation, their relevance in perceiving self-identity in Montenegro and the scope of implications that appeared in post-communist era in light of present-day identity crisis and national disintegration. We will follow the shifting of identities from Serb, via federalist and Montenegrin in national sense to ethnic Montenegrin viewed through the symbolic level and as witnessed and recollected by common people.

The preliminary hypothesis would be that the communist period tore down a good deal of traditions, not least on the symbolic level, and opened possibilities of divergent assessments of what “Montenegrin” meant. This was done to undermine the Serb identity in the face of the “Serb hegemony” (as seen by the Comintern and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia) and to promote the identity of the newly formed nation that lacked uniformity (other than that of being Serb). The new “imagined community” could not build its identity on sources different from the traditional ones but tried to pin down their broader Serb scope. The outcome of these actions throughout this period and later is a fluctuating national identity varying from Yugoslav to Montenegrin and to Serb, which will be reflected as well in the symbolic representation of public symbols in private spaces.

| Methodology

Starting from the works of Benedict Anderson, Ernst Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm and the like, I will implement the definitions and terms used in the research and furthermore explore which of the theories can be applied to the Montenegrin case.

In order to establish conditions previous to 1945 the candidate will use a broad scope of general historical works on the subject. Unfortunately, both the socialist Yugoslavia and Montenegro in specific lack a sound history spared from the intrusions of the communist weltanschauung. Therefore our work to establish preliminary conclusions about nationhood and ethnicity before 1945 will be somewhat more diversified. Basic information combined with some remarks on nationhood is to be found in general works such as *Istorija srpske državnosti* (volumes II and III), Novi Sad 2001 or Bataković D. (ed.), *Nova istorija srpskog naroda*, Beograd 2000 both of which hold the Montenegrins to be part of the Serb ethnos. The views opposite to many of those by the Serbian authors can be found in Živković D., *Istorija crnogorskog naroda* or even in the articles from the *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, Zagreb 1984. More light on the subject is cast by Banac I, *The National Question in Yugoslavia* (...), Ithaca-London 1984, Ramet S., *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia 1962-91*, Bloomington 1992², Vujović D, *Crnogorski federalisti*, Titograd 1981, Gligorijević B., *Kominternu, jugoslovensko i srpsko pitanje*, Beograd 1992, Aleksa Djilas, *Srpsko pitanje*, Beograd 1991 et cetera.

Next phase would be to identify political and state decisions on new symbols and their meanings and this will be done by means of archival research (most importantly the one of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in Belgrade and the State archives of the Republic of Montenegro in Cetinje) and relevant literature.

The question of how the symbols were promoted will be examined through archival work, newspapers from the period and especially through the analysis of contemporary history and geography textbooks to be found in libraries in Belgrade and in Podgorica.

The adoption of symbols amongst ordinary people, their perception and recollections of nation formation will be viewed through oral history interviews, memoirs and open questionnaires. Here I will try to assess which of the symbolic values active in present have been selected to construct relationship between past and present. In the preparatory work on interviews a detailed ethnic, political and geographical structuring work

will be needed in order to get accurate results. The first criteria will be to interview only people who had their own home at least five years prior to 1990. Furthermore, we will need to interview of all ethnicities of Montenegro. In case of interlocutors of orthodox Slavs ancestry I will need to speak with those from all three distinctive regions of Montenegro – Littoral, Old Montenegro and North-east of the country. It will also be important to speak with people who were in the Communist Party, with its supporters, as well as with those who opposed it in WWII and those who stayed on the side.

As most of the fieldwork will establish *post hoc* perceptions of events, a comparative analysis of the recollections and historical sources will be needed in order to view which of the perceptions of the past are true and which are constructed with regard of the present situation. Thus separating these processes we will gain insight in both historical occurrences and in the utilizations that are shaping people's perceptions of past.

Time-plan

January-March 2007: Getting acquainted with the archives and literature; probe interviews which will allow structuring of suitable questions; forming of additional questions and problems to be explored

March-October 2007: Field-trips to Montenegro, Forming of the questionnaires and interviewing; work in local archives

October-December 2007: In light of these answers and their correlation with the theoretical basis, introductory captions will be written

January-July 2008: Continuation of work in the archives and questioning

July-December 2008: End of field work; data evaluation and comparison of results with other project members; classification and quantification of the gathered material

January-March 2009: Writing up research results; drafts of thesis

March-December 2009: Conclusion of the writing; completing of work and its presentation

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