

ARSO JOVANOVIĆ – AN ERASED BIOGRAPHY

VLATKA VUKELIĆ, VLADIMIR ŠUMANOVIĆ

ABSTRACT. *Arso Jovanović – an erased biography.*

The article presents a basic overview of the war record of the chief of the Supreme Staff of the Partisan army Arso Jovanović. Jovanović's war biography is described in relation to three social groups in which he had operated. The first social group was the Piper clan, or the local Montenegrin context in which he was born and grew up. The other social group was the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) with which he cooperated during the war. The third social group was the circle of Montenegrin generals of the Yugoslav army (JA) which Jovanović belonged to until his unexplained death in the summer of 1948. This paper describes how all these groups were interlinked through Jovanović, how they affected each other creating the preconditions for the events of World War II and the post-war period in Yugoslavia.

Authors:

Vlatka Vukelić, University of Zagreb, Department of Croatian Studies, Borongajska cesta 83d, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia, vvukelic@hrstud.hr, ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7831-9343>

Vladimir Šumanović, University of Zagreb, Department of Croatian Studies, Borongajska cesta 83d, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia, vsumanovic@hrstud.hr, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2502-0959>

Keywords: Arso Jovanović, Partisan movement, the Supreme Staff, Montenegro, socialist Yugoslavia

Balcanica Posnaniensia. Acta et studia, XXV, Poznań 2018, Wydawnictwo Instytutu Historii UAM, pp. 161–180, ISBN 978-83-65663-94-8, ISSN 0239-4278. English text with summary in English.

doi.org/10.14746/bp.2018.25.10

Following the end of World War II, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) took power in the entire restored Yugoslav state. Until its first post-war congress, the 5th Congress of the KPJ held in Belgrade in mid-July 1948, the KPJ operated illegally, under the auspices of the multi-party National Front.¹ Accordingly, the KPJ emphasized its key role in the liberation of the country from occupation rather than its ideology. In addition, the regime press did not mention the KPJ as the key political organization running the state, but emphasized the National Front.

¹ D. Bilandžić, *Hrvatska moderna povijest*, Zagreb 1999, p. 204–205.; Branko Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu*, Beograd 1992, p. 297.

Consequently, it was emphasized that Yugoslavia was restored as a result of the uprising and struggle of all its peoples and not the decisions of great powers. According to contemporary newspapers, this made the new Yugoslavia different from the old “Versailles” Yugoslavia, which was created *at the green table after the war*.² The following quote is a typical example of such propaganda narratives:

*In two years of fierce clashes, without any help, with weapons taken from the enemy, our army has killed 100.000 Italian fascists. These strikes and the Allied strikes led to the capitulation of fascist Italy in August of 1943.*³

The author of this statement was Arso Jovanović, a pre-war Montenegrin officer of the Yugoslav royal army who had served as the chief of the Supreme Staff of the Partisan Army during the war. Although Josip Broz Tito, in addition to his function as the Secretary General of the KPJ, also held the position of Supreme Military Commander (Supreme Comandant), Jovanović had de facto conducted all military operations which was apparent from the published war records. In fact, most of the orders were signed by Jovanović and not by Tito.⁴

In accordance with his wartime position, in the immediate post-war years Jovanović was one of the most influential and most quoted figures of the restored Yugoslav state. His statements were quoted as proof of a new social order and his articles formed the basis of the official interpretation of the war period.⁵ However, his position changed in the summer of 1948. when he was killed in, as yet, unexplained circumstances without a court verdict or a published autopsy report. According to the official narrative, Jovanović had accepted the Informbiro resolution written on behalf of the Soviet union which was aimed principally against the KPJ leadership led by Tito, thus becoming an *enemy of the state*.⁶ After the Informbiro resolution acceptance, Jovanović attempted to escape to Romania, but was *illed by the border guard while trying to flee across the Yugoslav-Romanian border in the night of August 11. 1948.*⁷

THE METHOD AND GOAL OF IGNORING JOVANOVIĆ’S ROLE

After being declared *an enemy of socialist Yugoslavia*, Jovanović was literally cut out of the official Yugoslav account of World War II. In other words, after 1948 Jovanović

² [J. Broz] Tito, *Nacionalno pitanje u Jugoslaviji u svjetlosti narodno-oslobodilačke borbe*, Zagreb 1945, p. 4–5.

³ Arso Jovanović, *Šesta i sedma neprijateljska ofanziva*, Beograd 1945, p. 3.

⁴ This conclusion was made based on the research of the Partisan war documentation published in the book: *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu jugoslovenskih naroda*. The key vols relevant for this paper are II, III and IV, and the books contained therein.

⁵ M. Najbar-Agičić, *U skladu s marksizmom ili činjenicama? Hrvatska historiografija 1945–1960*, Zagreb 2013, p. 227.

⁶ J. Broz Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. 9, Beograd 1982, p. 315.

⁷ V. Kljaković, *Arso Jovanović*, in: *Vojna enciklopedija*, vol. 4, Beograd 1972, p. 75.

was largely ignored, and any brief mention of him only served to emphasize his negative qualities. Distinguished Partisan commanders and post-war generals of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) Peko Dapčević, Kosta Nađ and Koča Popović, who were Jovanović's subordinates during the war, especially stood out in such behavior. Dapčević wrote of Jovanović as a *weak military leader, who lost a number of battles*.⁸ Nađ blamed the partisan defeat in Kupres in August of 1942 on Jovanović claiming that he insisted on an assault on Kupres which Nađ allegedly opposed because, as he later recounted in his memoirs, he was *taught by experience that Kupres was not to be attacked*.⁹ Compared to the two aforementioned generals, Popović went the farthest declaring that Jovanović didn't understand guerilla warfare and that Dapčević and he (Popović) used to hide when Jovanović appeared.¹⁰ Popović's critique made the least sense, because the first two, regardless of their veracity, at least admitted that it was indeed Jovanović who commanded the military operations undertaken by the Partisan Movement and that he was, besides Josip Broz Tito, the key figure which decided whether they would be undertaken at all. On the other hand, by criticizing Jovanović, Popović had called into question not only the entire undisputed military hierarchy of the war period (which clearly put Jovanović in a position of authority over Dapčević and him, so hiding couldn't have served any purpose) but also the whole official account of the Partisan movement as a highly successful military organisation. Popović's allegations were meaningless because he ignored the context to which he himself referred in his recollections: if Jovanović did not understand guerilla warfare then it was questionable how he could have commanded military operations and why he was put in a position to do so. More accurately, the claim of Jovanović's misunderstanding of guerilla warfare would imply that the entire Partisan movement was also dysfunctional in a military sense (which Popović negated citing himself and Dabčević as an example).¹¹

The removal of Jovanović from official historical accounts can be methodologically compared to the way in which the role of Lav Trotsky, the founder and first commander of the Red Army, was removed from the official Soviet version of the civil war in Russia.¹² However, in an ideological sense, Jovanović's removal had a twofold meaning. On the one hand, it represented a withdrawal from the dominant discourse of the Soviet union as the liberator of Yugoslavia and in the context of expressing distance to anything associated with the Soviet union (or which was regarded as such

⁸ I. Banac, *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita: Informbirovski rascjepi u jugoslavenskom komunističkom pokretu*, Zagreb 1990, p. 146.

⁹ K. Nađ, *Raine uspomene: Četrdesetdruga*, Zagreb 1979, p. 335–336.; D. Marijan, *Borbe za Kupres 1942*, Zagreb 1999, p. 61.

¹⁰ A. Nenadović, *Razgovori s Kočom*, Zagreb 1989, p. 69–71.

¹¹ A. Nenadović, *Razgovori*, p. 53, 69–71.

¹² I. Deutscher, *Staljin: Politička biografija*, Zagreb 1977, p. 156–157.; R. Overy, *Diktatori: Hitlerova Njemačka i Staljinova Rusija*, Zagreb 2005, p. 26.

for any reason) Jovanović was erased from the collective memory.¹³ In later historical publications, of which the most important and most quoted one was the biography of Josip Broz Tito published in 1953, the Soviet Union was presented extremely negatively as an aggressive imperialistic power that wanted to use Tito's partisan movement for its own political aims.¹⁴ In this interpretation, which later became an integral part of the official Yugoslav narrative of the World War II, the Soviet role in KPJ's ascent to power was greatly diminished to the level of *support for our divisions* in the battle for Belgrade.¹⁵ In parallel, all distinguished members of the Partisan movement who were publicly marked as pro-Soviet factors or, regardless of their actual role, used by the Soviet propaganda as victims of the Yugoslav authorities, were left out or negatively interpreted.¹⁶ Jovanović was mentioned in this context in Tito's biography only once by name only in a description of the German assault on the Supreme staff headquarters in Drvar on May 25 1944. According to Tito's account in the book, he expected the attack, while Jovanović (whose role in the Supreme Staff or identity was entirely unclear from the book) was surprised by this event. The abovementioned part of Tito's description of the German assault, in which Jovanović was mentioned by his first name only, read as follows.

I was expecting an air assault on Drvar and ordered trenches to be dug by the lake. I assumed that there was a possibility of a paratrooper drop and combat and I

¹³ The most obvious example of the distancing oneself from the Soviet Union on a symbolic level was the renaming of streets in Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia, which was liberated by the Soviet army together with Tito's Partisans. After the war, Soviet influenced names were removed and the streets received new names. In this way, the boulevard of the Red Army became the South boulevard, the street of marshal Tolbuhin became the War invalids' street, and general Zhdanov street was renamed as the Street of May 1. These names were restored in 1965 under completely different international circumstances after relations between the Soviet Union and socialist Yugoslavia thawed. J. Pirjevec, *Tito i drugovi*, Zagreb 2012, p. 534.

¹⁴ V. Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito: Prilozi za biografiju*, Beograd 1953, p. 400.

¹⁵ V. Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito*, p. 386.

¹⁶ A distinguished wartime Partisan commander from Bosnian Krajina, Slavko Rodić, who died in unexplained circumstances in 1949, was not mentioned at all in Tito's biography, probably because Soviet propaganda accused Yugoslav authorities of liquidating him. I. Banac, *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita*, p. 160. As opposed to Rodić, Andrija Hebrang and Sreten „Black“ Žujović were given a significant role in Tito's biography as exceptionally negative personalities who the Soviet Union tried to use to *break the unity of the CK*. (V. Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito*, p. 368.) The different treatment of Jovanović and Rodić on the one hand and Hebrang and Žujović on the other indicates an attempt to omit or remove military figures symbolically linked with the Soviet Union from collective memory, while distinguished politicians, publically considered as pro Soviet, were shown in a negative light, probably because it was considered that it would have been counter-productive for the intended audience (middle class police, army, the administration and the press) to remove them from the record. It is important to note the attention that Hebrang received after his political marginalization and liquidation (the date of which is still unclear). A year before the publishing of Tito's biography in 1952, the same publisher (Kultura) printed Hebrang's biography where it was stated, without evidence, that he was a high ranking spy of the enemy, infiltrated into the leadership of the Partisan movement and that he committed suicide in prison shortly after the start of the investigation into his wartime role. M. Milatović, *Slučaj Andrije Hebranga*, Beograd 1952.

*had intelligence from our sources that the Germans were preparing for such an attack in Serbia. But Arso wouldn't listen to me.*¹⁷

This quote from Tito's biography is remarkable not only for its uncritical emphasis of his own role and citing memories as an argument for an important historical event, but also as a characteristic example of distancing himself from all figures and symbols related to the Soviet Union, which in this case included Jovanović.

On the other hand, the removal of Jovanović represented a shift in importance from military to political structures. More accurately, ignoring Jovanović's role in the official accounts of the war led to an interpretation according to which the political organization (The Communist Party of Yugoslavia) was superior to the military organization (the Supreme Staff). The importance of Jovanović was after his death gradually replaced by the importance of political figures like Vladimir Bakarić, Edvar Kardelj, Moše Pijade and Ivo Lola Ribar whose objective contribution to the planning of war operations of the Partisan movement was, even according to the official narrative, very limited.¹⁸

In accordance with similar interpretations, an impression of the Partisan movement as a homogenous force in the service of the KPJ was created, whose goal was, from the moment of the uprising in the summer of 1941 until the end of the war, the creation of a one-party system modelled on the Soviet Union (a socialist social order).¹⁹ The outlined process of the shift from military to political institutions in the official historical accounts of the war reflected also on the interpretation of the national composition of the Partisan movement. The emphasis on figures which had a key role in the post war interpretation of the war period gave the Partisan movement a more „international“ character than it really had.

¹⁷ V. Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito*, p. 368.

¹⁸ As opposed to Bakarić and Kardelj, who spent most of the war outside the main Partisan formation around the Supreme Staff, Pijade had spent the whole war along side the Supreme Staff, but his importance in making key decisions was relatively small. He (Pijade), together with Milovan Đilas, was mostly concerned with writing propaganda materials. Ribar was, on the other hand, working illegally in the big cities as an external associate of the Supreme Staff. Although, despite their actual importance in the war, Tito gave a lot of attention in his biography to all four men. Bakarić's name was mentioned on ten pages, Kardelj's on 63, Pijade's on 17 and Ribar on 13 pages. V. Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito*, p. 509–515.

¹⁹ The author of the abovementioned biography recorded Tito's thoughts concerning the Soviet Union: *We shouldn't hide or be ashamed of the fact that we looked at the USSR until 1948 with so much faith and love. We are not ashamed of our illusions, on the contrary, we are proud of them. They were positive and demonstrated our deep faith in progress and socialism.* (V. Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito*, p. 501.) These words are an important illustration of the way the Soviet Union was perceived in the Yugoslav press after 1948. According to the value system of socialist Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union was a role model that failed, or rather a state that never managed to fulfill the revolutionary ideals it was founded on.

JOVANOVIĆ AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE PARTISAN MOVEMENT

Contrary to post-war interpretations, the Partisan movement was, until the arrival of British aid and the disarming of the Italian army in the summer of 1943²⁰, a military organization consisting of several thousand people which moved in the inaccessible mountain areas of western Montenegro, Sandžak, eastern Bosnia, eastern Herzegovina and the Bosnian Krajina.²¹ The territory described, with the exception of Bosnian Krajina, comprised an interconnected area which, according to the administration of the time, was overlaid with several borders: the border of the German and Italian spheres of interest (which was demarcated by the northwest-southeast line) and the border of the Croatian state (The Independent State of Croatia) with Serbia and Montenegro.

In both areas, including the Bosnian Krajina, and the whole area of western Montenegro, Eastern Herzegovina, Sandžak and Eastern Bosnia, the Serbian (and Orthodox) population was a large, in many places the predominant, part of the local population. The population of these two areas which had joined the Partisan movement lived a rural lifestyle, i.e. beyond the contemporary modernization processes, which meant that family traditions, religious affiliations and relatively isolated geographical position that exacerbated the weak communication lines with the surrounding areas played a key role in their socialization.²²

This population had mostly been politically unaffiliated and did not belong to any political party (in the sense of a closer connection over a longer period of time), and for this reason the KPJ, which was officially banned since 1920, was largely unheard of. The paradox of the development of the Partisan movement was that it was the strongest in the aforementioned area in which until 1941 the political organizations of the KPJ had not existed, but were created during the war within the partisan military units. Until 1941 two Partisan strongholds in the Bosnian Krajina, Glamoč and Ključ did not have a single member of the KPJ, with a similar situation in Foča which was during the first half of 1942 the heart of the Partisan territory.²³

²⁰ These two facts were apparent from Tito's letter to Svetozar Vukmanović Tempo from October 19 1943. *Zbornik*, II/10, Beograd 1962, p. 361.

²¹ At its maximum strength, from summer 1942 until summer 1943, the operative group of the Supreme Staff had 12 thousand fighters. *Zbornik*, XIV/2, Beograd 1983, p. 222.

²² Two main thoroughfares crosses the territory of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) Zagreb–Brod na Savi–Zemun and Brod na Savi–Doboj–Sarajevo–Konjic–Mostar–Metković–Dubrovnik. None of these roads passed through the area discussed here. At the time, both of these areas represented the periphery, not just for the NDH, but for other neighbouring states.

²³ Such was the case with Glamoč and Ključ in the Bosnian Krajina, and with almost the entire eastern part of Bosnia. V. Dedijer, *Dnevnik: Od 6 aprila 1941 do 27 novembra 1942*, vol. 1, Beograd – Sarajevo 1970, p. 163.; *Genocid nad Muslimanima, 1941–1945: Zbornik dokumenata i svjedočenja*, eds. V. Dedijer, A. Miletić, Sarajevo 1990, p. 157.; N. Piljak, *Ustanak u Glamoču*, „Ustanak naroda Jugoslavije 1941“, vol. 2, Beograd 1964, p. 400.; M. Zorić, *XIII krajiška brigada*, Beograd 1968, p. 7. In Foča and its immediate area, the Party's influence was very weak, and the Party organization on the ground „never

However, even in the minor parts of this territory where KPJ organizations existed in 1941, they operated illegally. Such was the case in western Montenegro where social life was much different than in the large cities of Yugoslavia like Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb and conducted on a largely tribal or clan basis. Consequently, the local population regarded the central KPJ institution in this area (Provincial KPJ committee for Montenegro) as a primarily illegal organization which certain distinguished members of one clan (in this example the Piper clan) used to influence other clans in the area.²⁴

The post-war interpretation of the Partisan movement as a unified army subordinated to the KPJ with a goal of achieving “socialist revolution“ and the establishment of a social order based on “brotherhood and unity“, structured into “regions and republics“, was an entirely incorrect description of the motives of Montenegrin and Serbian peasants for joining the Partisan movement. In their minds, the Soviet Union was not perceived as the “premier socialist state“ (as it was for the leadership of the, until then illegal, KPJ), but as a powerful Orthodox Christian and Slavic state fighting against those that have occupied (and subdivided) their state. This value system, widespread among the rank and file members of the Partisan movement, was observed by the commander of the British military mission with the General staff, brigadier Fitzroy Maclean. In his report dated November 6, 1943. Maclean noted that *Russian songs were preferred to Yugoslav ones, Soviet institutions and jargon were copied and the Red Army and „great Russian people“ praised [the term „great Russian people“ was originally written by Maclean in Croatian/Serbian], all of which could lead someone „familiar with the Soviet Union to think that he was in one of the [Soviet] Union republics.*²⁵

In the context of the described collective consciousness of the Montenegrin (and to a lesser degree Serbian) peasants of the connection between Russia and their country, an idealized image was formed of the Soviet leader Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, whose name was *on the lips of dying Partisans.*²⁶ However, the affectionate feelings towards the Soviet Union among the members of the Partisan movement was not the result of a carefully elaborated and massively present communist ideology (or rather, in communist parlance, *a high degree of class consciousness*), but rather a collec-

even existed“. R. Bulatović, *Titov borbeni put (1941–1943): Posebni osvrt na objekte u kojima je boravio i radio*, vol. 1, Sarajevo 1988, p. 146.

²⁴ M. Đilas, *Revolucionarni rat*, Beograd 1990, p. 47.; T. Nikčević, *Goli otoci Jova Kapičića*, Zagreb 2010, p. 35–36.

²⁵ D. Biber, *Tito – Churchill: Strogo tajno*, Beograd – Zagreb 1981, p. 35. Maclean’s account was later confirmed by Đilas’ memoirs where he recalled a story told by Jovanović: *Arsa Jovanović said: There, on the Eastern front, is where the real war is happening: divisions burning up like matches. – A peasant, upon hearing that Kiev had fallen, asked me: Is Kiev - Kijevo? – In fact, Montenegrins had in earlier times called Kiev Kijevo, and when I had confirmed that it was indeed the same city, he exclaimed: It’s no joke, it’s coming to your home as it is to ours! Kijevo is a holy city, in the middle of Russia, a bit smaller than Moscow!*; M. Đilas, *Revolucionarni rat*, p. 99.

²⁶ V. Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito*, p. 500.

tive need, borne out of wartime necessity, for an image of the powerful Russian state which was an ally of the *armed people* who *liberated Yugoslavia*. A typical example of this idealized image of Stalin is found in Đilas' article, significantly named *A meeting with Stalin* which represents the personality cult raised to the extreme. The key part of the article reads as follows:

Stalin's head wasn't only agreeable for its strangely gentle firmness, its folk expressiveness, but also its intelligent, lively, smiling, strict but caring, dark-yellow eyes, it is also beautiful in its harmony, its simplicity and ever animated peacefulness and distinctiveness. All of this is missing from photographs which also lack Stalin's body, head and hand movements which are never still, but also never sudden or surprising, they lack Stalin's index finger rising from time to time when making a point.²⁷

Although this article says as much about the author himself (Đilas) as it does about the leadership of the Partisan movement which published these materials in large editions (after the war), it is also a reflection of the social consciousness of the part of the population that Đilas was addressing in his articles. This population had limited education and couldn't understand complex concepts of communist ideology, but was ready to accept communist symbols under the condition that they were also symbols of the Russian state. Therefore, Đilas wrote his article in this way as a sort of message to the rank and file partisans that he, a member of the movement, established immediate (physical) contact with Stalin and thus symbolically conveyed that they can expect Soviet (military) help. However, texts like the quoted Đilas article wouldn't have been a proper instrument to mobilize new recruits and to create cohesion among the older members of the movement if the Partisan organization had not been a primarily military organization. More accurately, due to the social structure of the area discussed which had been part of Partisan held territory during the war, the KPJ's influence on the local population was possible exclusively through the military organization which, by its composition and its nominal slogans, reflected the mindset of the local populace. Accepting this circumstance, the KPJ as a political institution of the Partisan movement could not have had authority over the Supreme Staff as its military institution. After all, Popović had confirmed this in a statement after the war:

When the war ended, it became, so to say, normal that the Politburo was above everything and everyone, which wasn't the case in wartime conditions. Besides, the KPJ didn't even convene during the war. At that time, the Supreme command was at the head of everything and it acted independently.²⁸

²⁷ M. Đilas, *Članci 1941–1946*, Beograd 1947, p. 170.

²⁸ A. Nenadović, *Razgovori*, p. 106. Popović's statement was confirmed by another distinguished member of the KPJ, Milovan Đilas, who wrote the following lines on the activity of the leading party organizations during the war: *But what is the CK? The CK plenum, elected in the 5. Conference in 1940 never convened until Stalin's condemnation of the Yugoslav leadership in 1948, and even then hadn't been complete owing to the fact that several members were killed. The CK Politburo, however, did meet often until the war, and more rarely during the war: we were together, or at least most of us, so all pressing matters were solved along the way, and during the meetings on more important matters, members of the Plenum who were with us or close by joined us (Pijade, Žujović). The CK was, in fact, the group around Tito, in*

According to the data of official Yugoslav historiography *the supreme Staff as a whole hardly convened during the war* because the course of war led to some of the members of this military body being separated spatially. It is for this reason that the key decisions were generally made by

the members of the inner operative circle with marshal Tito at its head. This group included for the most part general-liutenant Arso Jovanović, his deputy general-liutenant Velimir Terzić (from April 1944 until the end of that year he was situated in Moscow as chief of the military mission of NOVJ) and general-major Rade Hamović, chief of the operative department of the Supreme Staff. These decisions occasionally included the deputy of the Supreme commander general-liutenant Aleksandar Ranković who was the chief of the security department of the people of Yugoslavia (OZNA) and the head of the personnel department of the Supreme Staff.²⁹

These two quotes make it clear that the military arm of the Partisan movement (the Supreme Staff) was clearly dominant over the political structures (Politbiro), but also that Jovanović was second in command and present in Tito's inner circle throughout most of the war.

The importance of Jovanović in the leadership of the Partisan movement is especially notable if we take into account the fact that he was not a member of the KPJ. It is not possible to determine when Jovanović joined the KPJ based on the official Yugoslav historiography, and it is unclear whether he was a member at all since this fact was not mentioned in his chronology.³⁰ This circumstance is especially indicative with regard to the fact that the year of becoming a member of KPJ was recorded in the short biographies of all distinguished military members of the Partisan movement. However, while it is certainly possible that this omission was due to him being killed as a political opponent of the KPJ after the war, it is still worth noting in this context that he was not the only important Partisan commander for which the official historical account does not record becoming a member of the KPJ. Except him, this fact wasn't recorded for Sava Orović, who, unlike Jovanović, was not removed for political reasons, but was a distinguished member of the Yugoslav state elite until his death in 1974.³¹ The fact that Jovanović (like Orović) had not joined the KPJ seems likely considering the fact that he was an army officer during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia attaining the rank of captain just before the breakup of the kingdom.³² An important characteristic of nearly all officers of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia who

which the most distinguished members were Kardelj, Ranković and myself – largely because we grew up with time and had been with Tito from his arrival at the head of the Party...; M. Đilas, *Revolucionarni rat*, p. 144.

²⁹ M. Dželebdžić, *Druga jugoslovenska armija*, Beograd 1989, p. 17–18.

³⁰ J. Broz Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. 9, p. 315.; V. Kljaković, *Arso Jovanović*, in: *Vojna enciklopedija*, vol. 4, p. 75.

³¹ J. Broz Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. 9, p. 325.

³² J. Broz Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. 9, p. 315.; V. Kljaković, *Arso Jovanović*, in: *Vojna enciklopedija*, vol. 4, p. 75. In his memoirs Đilas erroneously mentions that in 1941 Jovanović was a major in the royal Yugoslav army and not a captain. M. Đilas, *Revolucionarni rat*, p. 50.

joined the Partisan movement was the fact that they were not members of the KPJ prior to the war, but only after they had joined the Partisans. Examples include Pavle Ilić Veljko, Radivoje Jovanović, Vaso Jovanović, Mirko Šćepanović and Velimir Terzić.³³ In accordance with this, it is obvious that Arso Jovanović was just one among many former royal army officers who had joined the Partisan movement, but unlike most of them, he never joined the KPJ.

From this viewpoint, the degree of influence that Jovanović attained in the Partisan movement, having become second in command after Tito is particularly impressive, bearing in mind that he, unlike other former officers of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, never fulfilled the minimum criteria (joining the KPJ).

The most likely reason that he was so highly ranked, despite not joining the communist party, was probably his origin from the same locale as the KPJ leadership in Montenegro. Jovanović was born on March 24, 1907 in the village of Zavala which was itself a part of a larger settlement called Gornji Piperi³⁴ near Podgorica³⁵. According to the dominant social structure of Montenegrin society at the time, which was excluded from modernising influences well into the twentieth century, the country was subdivided according to tribal boundaries which resulted in the first Partisan units being constituted as *tribal-territorial battalions*.³⁶ The highest political body of the Partisan movement in Montenegro acted in a similar manner, the regional KPJ committee (PK KPJ) was called *the "Piper committee" amongst the members of the KPJ because four out of six of its members were from the Piper tribe: the political secretary Božo Ljumović, Blažo Jovanović, Savo Brković and Budo Tomović*.³⁷

Arso Jovanović was related to Božo Jovanović, one of these four members which explains his rapid advance. Milovan Đilas, the KPJ representative for Montenegro, who had authority over the entire PK KPJ, recorded this fact. In his memoirs Đilas mentioned how Arso Jovanović had been recommended by Božo Jovanović. The conversation with Božo Jovanović was described as follows: "Arso wasn't the only officer whom the PK [Montenegro KPJ] could count on: in all the counties there were at least a few officers who met with communists. But Arso was close and, according to Božo's judgement, very suitable. I needed to make my own judgement, all the more because Blažo and Arso were distant relatives. Blažo had established contact with him already, before the occupation, although Arso wasn't yet a member of the Party...It was getting dark when me and Blažo set out for Arso. I remember that we travelled during a warm night for over an hour on a steep rocky slope. (...) Arso's rise in the new, yet unestablished army began then and there: first he would become the chief of the Montenegro command, and already by the end of 1941. the chief of the Supreme Staff of Yugoslavia."³⁸

³³ J. Broz Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. 9, p. 314, 315, 332–333.

³⁴ M. Đilas, *Revolucionarni rat*, p. 50.

³⁵ V. Kljaković, *Arso Jovanović*, in: *Vojna enciklopedija*, vol. 4, p. 75.

³⁶ O. Cicmil, *Durmitorski odred*, in: *Vojna enciklopedija*, vol. 2, Beograd 1971, p. 585. Obrad Cicmil was the wartime commander of the Durmitor squad, one of the strongest units of Montenegrin partisans in the first half of 1942.

³⁷ T. Nikčević, *Goli otoci Jova Kapičića*, p. 35–36.

³⁸ M. Đilas, *Revolucionarni rat*, p. 50–51.

It can be deduced from the quoted data concerning Arso Jovanović's joining the Partisan movement and his rapid rise through the ranks, that the KPJ, although acting on behalf of the revolution understood as a violent attempt to change the entire social structure, still drew part of its strength from an already established system of relationships inherited from traditional society. In other words, even though the creation of the Partisan movement was directly conditional upon the dissolution of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and its occupation by the Axis powers, the fact that Jovanović rose to the top position in the movement was the result of the character of Montenegrin society i.e. the leadership of Montenegrin KPJ, despite its revolutionary attitude, still retained traditional patterns of behavior. The above-mentioned conclusion is all the more important if we take into account that during the creation of the Partisan movement in Montenegro, a number of former officers had joined, one of which (Savo Orović) even held the rank of colonel in the army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia,³⁹ but in spite of his much lower rank Jovanović became second in command of the Partisan movement. Accordingly, the key reason for Jovanović's influence in the movement, which during the war meant the military structures, was the tribal character of Montenegrin society.

The state of emergency that had existed in the territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after the German assault in April 1941 had contributed to the cited reasons.

Due to a complete change of context, or a redefinition of the whole social structure caused by the German and Italian onslaught, what seemed logical, normal and regular less than a year ago during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, disappeared in less than two weeks. The command structures of the Yugoslav army disappeared as an important subject of social trends (the majority were taken into captivity by the Germans, a part of them managed to escape to the British controlled areas while some of them accepted the new German-Italian social model and became a part of it).⁴⁰ This is how a pre-war Yugoslav army officer found himself closely collaborating with figures who had been, less than a year earlier, in prisons (both domestic and abroad) and were from the point of view of the Yugoslav royal army "enemies", "outlaws" and "traitors". Close cooperation between people who were practically "worlds apart" would not have been possible if the conditions had not been this extraordinary.

³⁹ Republic of Croatia, The Croatian National Archive: Velika župa Dubrava, box 6, 456/1942.; J. Broz Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. 9, p. 325.

⁴⁰ Four Yugoslav generals joined the new power structures after the collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in April 1941. Blažo Đukanović commanded the Montenegrin Chetniks who controlled central Montenegro together with the Italian army, August Marić became a general of the NDH, Milan Nedić joined the Serbian government and Leon Rupnik organized the Slovenian home guard (White Guard) after the capitulation of Italy. N. Barić, *General August Marić: životopis jednog hrvatskog časnika*, „Časopis za suvremenu povijest“, 2001, no. 2.; M. Borković, *Milan Nedić*, Zagreb 1985.; T. Nikčević, *Goli otoci*, p. 75.; A. Vojinović, *Leon Rupnik*, Zagreb 1988.

But even this partnership had its limits: Jovanović never became a part of the “inner circle” of the Party (demonstrated by his unexplained death in 1948). On the other hand, in wartime conditions where long marches, finding food and recruiting new staff were a primary preoccupation, the post-war social system was not an important concern for Jovanović.

Consequently, due to the conditions in which the Partisan movement developed during 1942 and 1943, Jovanović did not consider the pre-war KPJ members around him as being in a situation that allowed them to impose their will on others. His whole life experience taught him this: in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia they were almost invisible, and now they were part of the movement the he was leading or thought he did (viewed from the context of 1948 this was evidently a mistake).⁴¹

In all the key developmental stages of the Partisan movement, Jovanović was at least second in command, not only as a planner of military operations, but as their immediate executor. Before meeting a group of Serbian partisans headed by Tito in December of 1941, Jovanović led the Montenegro partisans who attacked the headquarters of an Italian division in Pljevlja. Although the assault failed and the attackers suffered heavy losses,⁴² this event had important consequences. Psychologically, the Italian army became even more passive in dealing with the Partisans and rarely confronted them directly⁴³ which inevitably affected the further spread of Partisan influence. Fearing another assault, the command of the attacked division withdrew their units from neighbouring areas in Sandžak and eastern Bosnia. These areas were taken by the Partisans either immediately or in under a month and a half and made into strongholds.⁴⁴

⁴¹ The issue was not only the differences between Jovanović and pre-war KPJ members, but also a generation gap among the pre-war Party leadership. An example of this is given by Đilas describing the relationship between him and Moše Pijade: *There was a generational chasm between me and Moše: having finished his prison sentence he encountered a Party comprised of dogmatic practitioners who had little patience for delays or long discussions and familial relationships.* (M. Đilas, *Revolucionarni rat*, p. 67.) The difference between Jovanović and Pijade, given their divergent life paths prior to 1941 could have been much greater because there was not only an age difference, but also a much different understanding of communist ideology and a completely different way of life until 1941.

⁴² According to the participants of this battle and a political commissar of one of the battalions involved, Jova Kapičić, Partisan losses were extremely high. His battalion lost 178 members out of a force of 341, with 82 killed in action. (T. Nikčević, *Goli otoci*, p. 49–50.) According to Đilas, Pljevlja was attacked with 3690 Montenegrin Partisans with total casualties amounting to *about 300 dead and 2–3 times as much wounded.* M. Đilas, *Revolucionarni rat*, p. 143.

⁴³ This was noted in a report written by Walter Kunze, a German general of the southeast command, dated January 21 1942. A German division under his command, together with Italian units, took part in a military operation against Partisan forces in eastern Bosnia. *Zbornik*, XII/2, Beograd 1976, p. 58.

⁴⁴ In order to reinforce the defense of Pljevlja, the Italian units had abandoned Nova Varoš, Čajniče, Goražde and Foča. Nova Varoš was taken by the Partisans a few days later, while the other three towns were captured by the end of January 1942 after the local Chetniks were driven out. J. Broz Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. 8, Beograd 1983, p. 226–227.; J. Marjanović, *Dražo Mihailović između Britanaca i Nemaca*, Zagreb 1979, p. 195.; Lj. Đurić, *Sećanja na ljude i događaje*, Beograd 1989, p. 58.; B. Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu*, p. 296.; *Zbornik*, II/2, Beograd 1954, p. 261–262, 361–362, 378–381.

Following this event, Jovanović met Tito and took over as chief of the Supreme Staff.⁴⁵ Simultaneously, he assumed command over the first mobile unit of the Partisan movement (the First Proletarian Brigade) which he commanded for less than a month until this role was entrusted to Koča Popović.⁴⁶ Thereafter, until the end of the war, Jovanović was mostly tied to the Supreme Staff except a short stay with the Slovenian Partisans from the fall of 1942 until spring 1943.⁴⁷ The reason for his trip to Slovenia was to convince the Partisan leadership of the character of the Slovenian Partisan force (which developed separately from the Supreme Staff due to geographical reasons) through one of its leading figures. Jovanović left the Supreme Staff once more at the end of the war when he was sent to command the 4th Yugoslav army during its entry into Trieste (which it subsequently left under pressure from the British and American armies).⁴⁸ These two facts from his wartime biography point to the fact that Jovanović was not only entrusted with planning the most complex war operations of the Partisan movement, but also, when it was necessary, to personally inspect isolated Partisan units which Tito himself chose to monitor. This was proof of the great degree of confidence not only in his loyalty, but also his organizational skills.

The important role that Jovanović had in the Partisan movement is apparent from the already mentioned facts and the way he was perceived by the opposing guerilla movement, The Ravnogora chetnik organization led by Dragoljub Mihailović. In internal Chetnik documents, the role of Jovanović was clearly noted, as can be seen in

⁴⁵ During his dissident period Đilas had, as a contemporary, stated that *no one had criticized Arso Jovanović for Pljevlja during the war, or even in the first post-war years, but only after 1948.* (M. Đilas, *Revolucionarni rat*, p. 143.) Đilas' interpretation, at odds with the official Yugoslav historical account according to which Tito had been angered by the outcome of this battle, seems logical because otherwise, Jovanović would not have been made the chief of the Supreme Staff by Tito immediately after Pljevlja. In his recollections, a participant of the battle, Jovo Kapičić, recounted his supposed conversation with Tito, who was angry about the Partisan losses. (T. Nikčević, *Goli otoci*, p. 50–51.) Kapičić's memories were not supported by any written sources, and his version of events seems to be disputed by Jovanović's promotion. Kapičić had, most likely, fabricated this conversation because he had been the post-war commander of Goli otok, a prison camp for Soviet aligned former members of the Partisan movement with whom he was constantly in conflict. For these men, Jovanović was a one of the main symbols of the war. It is worth mentioning in this context that Kapičić claimed that he was *the greatest victim of Goli otok* and that there was no mistreatment of prisoners there. T. Nikčević, *Goli otoci*, p. 144, 149.

⁴⁶ This fact is apparent from the order of the Supreme Staff from December 25 1941. (*Zbornik*, II/2, 125-126.), and it was mentioned in a report of the Chetnik commander of eastern Bosnia Manojlo Pejić. (*Zbornik*, XIV/2, p. 772.) The accuracy of these two documents was partially confirmed by a statement of Koča Popović that he took over command of the First Proletarian Brigade after its formation. (A. Nenadović, *Razgovori*, p. 47, 50, 53.) However, Popović did not say who had led the unit before him, and there is little chance that he did not know this, largely because after being made commander he was in constant contact with Jovanović.

⁴⁷ *Zbornik*, II/6, Beograd 1957, p. 484–485.; *Zbornik*, II/7, Beograd 1959, p. 45–47.; *Zbornik*, II/9, Beograd 1960, p. 61, 68, 158.

⁴⁸ Jovanović's presence in the headquarters of the 4th army is apparent from radio messages that he sent to the General Staff in Belgrade (the name of the supreme Staff after March 2, 1945). *Zbornik*, XI/4, Beograd 1975, p. 608, 609, 990, 991, 1010.

a report precisely recording his name and surname.⁴⁹ Similarly, his name was recorded together with Tito's, as a synonym for the duo commanding the Partisan forces when describing the direction of movement of Partisan units in the spring of 1943.⁵⁰

All the quoted facts indicate that a safe and promising future awaited Jovanović after the war. However, the social processes went in a direction unexpected by him. After the war, out of which he emerged as one of the leading members of the new government, Jovanović's position had objectively weakened because the time in which his role as a military leader was decisive came to an end. The aforementioned process of the weakening of military structures, typical in all post-war states, was especially pronounced in countries modelled after the Soviet Union in which the key fulcrum of the state became the internal security organs which, among other parts of the society, particularly surveilled the army.⁵¹ In the new, peacetime, conditions Jovanović lost his influence, though it could not be noticed on a formal level because the new government drew its legitimacy from the war when his role, together with Tito, was the most prominent.

JOVANOVIĆ AS A DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE NEW YUGOSLAV ELITE

The importance of Jovanović is evident in the reconstructed national composition of the new elites, especially in the military command. Although this question was, according to the slogan of „brotherhood and unity“, considered taboo in socialist Yugoslavia, similar to the question of Jovanović's importance in the Partisan hierarchy, it was answered precisely based on thorough statistical research and confirmed by contemporary authorities. Considering the population numbers in proportion to the total Yugoslav population in the post war period, the new elite consisted largely of of-

⁴⁹ Radivoje Milošević, lieutenant colonel of the Yugoslav army and one of the Chetnik commanders in Montenegro in his report dated January 22, 1943 mentions Arso Jovanović by his full name as the only distinguished Partisan commander in Montenegro in 1941. As the commander of the First Proletarian Brigade that carried out an attack on Chetnik units in eastern Bosnia in the end of 1941, Jovanović was recorded by name and surname in a report by Manojlo Pejić, a local Chetnik commander. *Zbornik*, XIV/2, p. 104, 772.

⁵⁰ The commander of Mihailović's units sent to fight Partisan forces in Herzegovina and eastern Bosnia, Zaharije Ostojić, wrote in his report to Mihailović on February 23, 1943 that the Partisan *general staff with Tito and Arso were in the direction of the left main column*. Similarly, in a radio message from February 27, 1943 it was estimated that *Tito and Arso are coming towards us*. (*Zbornik*, XIV/2, p. 222, 422.) Mentioning Jovanović in Chetnik reports is especially revealing, since he wasn't yet together with Tito in the Supreme Staff.

⁵¹ Viewed in this context, one could draw a parallel between Jovanović and the most famous Soviet World War II commander marshal Georgi Zhukov whose influence had greatly diminished after the war. I. Deutscher, *Staljin*, p. 483–484.

ficials with Montenegrin origins.⁵² The high percentage of Montenegrins was especially pronounced in the military and the police forces at the highest (so called federal) levels.⁵³ From the perspective of the largest Yugoslav urban centres, both before and after the war, this situation could be considered as a sort of domination of the periphery over the centre.⁵⁴

This occurrence was first noted by the second secretary of the British embassy in Yugoslavia John Henniker-Major. He had travelled throughout Yugoslavia from October the 5th until the 16th in 1945 and got the impression that *there was still ethnic hatred* and that the main centres of resistance were cities, richer areas, regions less affected by the war and areas with monarchist traditions. According to his interpretation, the strongest opposition was felt in central Serbia and southern Dalmatia, while actual armed resistance against the new government occurred only in Bosnia and Kosovo. In contrast to this, the only part of Yugoslavia where the rule of KPJ was universally accepted was Montenegro, from which thirty thousand people had left to go to Serbia to do “soft jobs“ i.e. administrative positions.⁵⁵ To British eyes, the apparent Montenegrin mark on the new Yugoslavia, exceedingly obvious in the first months after the war, was a clear indication of the new political balance of power where the political and administrative centre of the state, Belgrade, was to a large degree colonised by the new social elite. Due to his wartime role, Jovanović held the position of one of its leaders and, on a symbolic level, its main representative. This situation changed suddenly after his liquidation and subsequent confrontation with the military structures who were loyal to him.

Although Jovanović never organized any resistance against Tito or his closest associates, his influence among certain political and military officials of socialist Yugoslavia most likely proved decisive in their aligning with the Soviet Union and against the Yugoslav leadership (which was called out by the Soviets). The fact that Montenegro, the smallest republic in Yugoslavia, had proportionally the largest number of Soviet advocates (or rather Informbiro supporters), almost four times the Yugoslav average, points to this conclusion.⁵⁶ In a sociological sense, the phenomenon of aligning with the Soviet Union against their own leadership was *a problem of the elites, not the wider society*,⁵⁷ and that is why we need to take into account the character of the leadership, rather than just the statistical total number. However, the Montenegrin element was significantly more prevalent in the leadership given that the

⁵² *Zapovjedni vrh JNA siječanj 1990. – svibanj 1992*, Zagreb 2010, p. 126–127.

⁵³ T. Nikčević, *Goli otoci Jova Kapičića*, p. 88–89.

⁵⁴ B. Dimitrijević, *Pobuna jugoslovenske periferije: Generalski kor Jugoslovenske armije 1945–1953. godine*, in: *Dijalog povjesničara / istoričara* 7, Beograd 2002, p. 295–296.

⁵⁵ K. Spehnjak, *Britanski pogled na Hrvatsku 1945–1948*, Zagreb 2006, p. 254–255.

⁵⁶ I. Banac, *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita*, p. 161.

⁵⁷ I. Banac, *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita*, p. 150.

main representatives of the Informbiro emigration were Montenegrins: brothers Pero and Vlado Popivoda and Radonja Golubović.⁵⁸

The grassroots support for the Informbiro option was cited as an undisputable historic fact by the distinguished Montenegrin member of the Partisan movement and Yugoslav state leadership Jovo Kapičić, who openly defied his fellow Montenegrins on this issue. The aligning of the greater part of Montenegro with the Soviet Union and against Tito in 1948 was listed by Kapičić as one of the three key mistakes of the Montenegrins in the twentieth century:

The three biggest mistakes of recent Montenegrin history were the assembly in Podgorica in 1918, Informbiro in 1948 and the Antibureaucratic revolution of 1989. To be clear: the Montenegrins had themselves voted to abolish their state in 1918 and not the Serbian soldiers; also, by opposing Tito in 1948, they turned their backs on the one person who had restored their state; at the end of the twentieth century they rushed to plunder and burn one of Europe's most beautiful cities!...Who could explain that?! The Montenegrins always associated themselves with stronger and bigger (states), and identified with them in all things, but mostly in evil deeds. Maybe it is a case of an inferiority complex of a small people.⁵⁹

Following Jovanović's death and the removal of people loyal to him from positions of power, the percentage of Montenegrin representatives in the Yugoslav elites gradually diminished,⁶⁰ although they represented the largest ethnic component in the military leadership until 1954.⁶¹

Although he was removed from official historical accounts, Jovanović did not disappear completely from the collective memory of his native circle, the Montenegrin part of the social elite of Yugoslavia. This fact is apparent from the publication of

⁵⁸ I. Banac, *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita*, p. 159–160, 162. Statistical data on Informbiro supporters listed in: I. Banac, *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita*, p. 147–149.

⁵⁹ T. Nikčević, *Goli otoci Jova Kapičića*, p. 243. However, what Kapičić did not see in this description was the circumstance that the key reason for this sequence of events and the decision of a large part of Montenegrin population to join the Partisan insurrection (and to a smaller degree the Chetniks) was a mass desire to restore a common state with Serbia after the collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. It is important to note that the key leaders of the Montenegrin Partisans in 1941 and the supporters of the Soviet Union among the Yugoslav leadership in 1948 were practically the same group of people with the exception of Milovan Đilas and Kapičić. For this reason, it would be wrong on a symbolic level to separate, in the context of Montenegrin history of the twentieth century, the year 1941 from 1918, 1948 and 1989, because they comprise a common identity which Kapičić was not willing to accept because of his life path and family heritage. To better understand Kapičić's interpretation of Montenegro in the twentieth century it is worth mentioning that he grew up in a „usurer“ family, and that his parents were advocates of Montenegrin independence in 1918, and thus against the “whites“, i.e. the political movement in Montenegro which supported a common state with Serbia. However, Kapičić joined the KPJ in his youth, and after the declaration of independence of Montenegro in 1941 found himself on the side of its opponents, the “whites“ but for (figuratively speaking) “red“ motives because of the decision of the KPJ to start an armed insurrection. T. Nikčević, *Goli otoci Jova Kapičića*, p. 15, 39–40.

⁶⁰ T. Nikčević, *Goli otoci Jova Kapičića*, p. 127–130.

⁶¹ B. Dimitrijević, *Pobuna jugoslovenske periferije*, in: *Dijalog povjesničara / istoričara* 7, p. 302–303.

Jovanović's biography soon after the collapse of communism in Europe and the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia. This biography tellingly named *The commander with a martyr's halo* reinterpreted his wartime role in a way that placed him alongside some of the biggest military figures of the Allied coalition such as the Soviet marshal Georgi Zhukov. Although this book was not a scholarly study and it did not make any lasting influence, it is important nevertheless as an example of repressed collective memory which has, due to the lack of censorship after the fall of communism, made public an alternative interpretation of World War II. Jovanović's fictionalized biography is important as a sort of antipode to the much earlier biography of Tito, because it describes the Partisan movement positively, but in a way that gave Jovanović primacy while significantly reducing Tito's role.

It is especially telling that the author of this book was a long time employee of the Military history institute of the Yugoslav People's Army (VII JNA) Ivan Matović. A person who was an important member of an institution in charge of producing the official (sanctioned by Yugoslav authorities) account of the war, written in conformity with the set framework and modelled on Tito's biography. In that sense, Matović's book can be regarded as either a clearing of conscience, or an attempt to create a new official version of history under new political circumstances.⁶²

Concluding with Jovanović's character, we can mention that he was one of the key figures of the Partisan movement and Yugoslav government in the first post-war years. In the light of the events of 1941 to 1948 we can deduce that he was one of the most important figures of ex Yugoslavia in this period. His unexplained death raises several questions and demands further research of the actions of the political elites of post-war Yugoslavia not only towards their enemies, but also toward their own members.

⁶² With regard to the publishing house that published the book and Matović's career until then, the other option seems more plausible. Additionally, the book was published in 2001, when the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (comprised of two ex Yugoslav republics, Serbia and Montenegro) was at a political crossroads. Less than a year before, in the fall of 2000, Slobodan Milošević was removed from power. Milošević had been in conflict with NATO and was emphatically oriented towards cooperation with Russia in matters of foreign policy. However, after street protests, the removal of Milošević and his subsequent extradition to the The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), this foreign policy avenue was closed. This is probably the reason why Matović's book never achieved any significant success. (I. Matović, *Vojskovođa s oreolom mučenika: Povest o generalu Arsu R. Jovanoviću načelniku Vrhovnog štaba NOVJ i njegovoj tragičnoj sudbini*, Beograd 2001.) Under these circumstances, former distinguished Partisan military commanders in Montenegro were divided on this issue. Peko Dapčević expressed his support for Milošević, while Jovo Kapičić renounced him. T. Nikčević, *Goli otoci*, p. 229, 236, 240.

CONCLUSION

With the collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the war of April 1941, the entire social structure was suddenly dissolved. The communist party (KPJ) tried to exploit the disappearance of the political hierarchy. The KPJ had, in accordance with the new political structures built in place of the old Kingdom of Yugoslavia, started to build its own armed forces (the Partisans). The role of organizing of this armed force was taken over by a pre-war officer of the Yugoslav Royal Army Arso Jovanović. Jovanović had origins in the Piper clan in Montenegro, and was recognized through his family connections as a competent and reliable man. He was appointed as the chief of the Supreme Staff on the recommendation of the Montenegrin KPJ leadership (the Montenegro provincial KPJ committee) which was comprised to a large degree of members of the Piper clan. Because of this fact, the KPJ organization in Montenegro was regarded as a tool of the Piper clan to achieve its goals. During the war, the Partisan movement grew stronger continuously, developing especially in rural areas that had no party organizations until then. As a consequence, the KPJ organizations were built up in these areas through the military structures in which the second in command (after Josip Broz Tito) was Jovanović. His role in the war seems all the more significant if we take into account that he was not a member of the KPJ. Due to his role in the war, Jovanović became a member of the new post-war elites which were composed to a large degree of Montenegrins, especially in the military hierarchy. Three years after the war, in 1948, Jovanović was killed in, as yet, unexplained circumstances. At the same time, officers who were considered to be loyal to him were removed from their posts. Following his death, the importance of his role in the war began to gradually diminish and he was mostly removed from the official party accounts of the war. Reducing Jovanović's role was directly linked to the historical interpretation in which the KPJ organization was considered as the creator of social trends, while the military members, personified by Jovanović, were perceived as mere executors of KPJ directives.

For this reason, marginalising Jovanović was a key prerequisite for the creation of Tito's personality cult and the image of KPJ leadership as a group of visionaries who had foreseen and thoroughly planned all war operations which led to their rise to power. Given that KPJ and Tito as its leading figure and key symbol drew their legitimacy from the outcome of the war, it was necessary to emphasize their military prowess in post-war interpretations. By constructing the narrative of Tito as a great military leader, it became necessary to omit or, at the very least, to marginalise Jovanović who had actually played this role as chief of the Supreme Staff.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sources:**Archival sources**

Republic of Croatia, The Croatian National Archive: Velika župa Dubrava, box 6

Published sources:

D. Biber, *Tito – Churchill: Strogo tajno*, Beograd-Zagreb, 1981.

[J. Broz] Tito, *Nacionalno pitanje u Jugoslaviji u svjetlosti narodno-oslobodilačke borbe*, Zagreb 1945.

J. Broz Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. 8, Beograd 1983.

J. Broz Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. 9, Beograd 1982.

V. Dedijer, *Dnevnik: Od 6 aprila 1941 do 27 novembra 1942*, vol. 1, Beograd-Sarajevo 1970.

V. Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito: Prilozi za biografiju*, Beograd 1953.

M. Dželebdžić, *Druga jugoslovenska armija*, Beograd 1989.

M. Đilas, *Članci 1941–1946*, Beograd 1947.

M. Đilas, *Revolucionarni rat*, Beograd 1990.

L. Đurić, *Sećanja na ljude i događaje*, Beograd 1989.

Genocid nad Muslimanima, 1941–1945: Zbornik dokumenata i svjedočenja, eds. V. Dedijer, A. Miletić, Sarajevo 1990.

A. Jovanović, *Šesta i sedma neprijateljska ofanziva*, Beograd 1945.

M. Milatović, *Slučaj Andrije Hebranga*, Beograd 1952.

K. Nađ, *Ratne uspomene: Četrdesetdruga*, Zagreb 1979.

A. Nenadović, *Razgovori s Kočom*, Zagreb 1989.

T. Nikčević, *Goli otoci Jova Kapičića*, Zagreb 2010.

N. Piljak, *Ustanak u Glamoču*, „Ustanak naroda Jugoslavije 1941“, vol. 2, Beograd 1964.

Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu jugoslovenskih naroda, II/2, Beograd 1954.

Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu jugoslovenskih naroda, II/6, Beograd 1957.

Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu jugoslovenskih naroda, II/7, Beograd 1959.

Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu jugoslovenskih naroda, II/9, Beograd 1960.

Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu jugoslovenskih naroda, II/10, Beograd 1962.

Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda Jugoslavije, XI/4, Beograd 1975.

Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda Jugoslavije, XII/2, Beograd 1976.

Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda Jugoslavije, XIV/2, Beograd 1983.

Publications:

I. Banac, *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita: Informbirovski rascjepi u jugoslavenskom komunističkom pokretu*, Zagreb 1990.

N. Barić, *General August Marić: životopis jednog hrvatskog časnika*, „Časopis za suvremenu povijest“, 2001, no 2.

D. Bilandžić, *Hrvatska moderna povijest*, Zagreb 1999.

M. Borković, *Milan Nedić*, Zagreb 1985.

R. Bulatović, *Titov borbeni put (1941–1943): Posebni osvrt na objekte u kojima je boravio i radio*, vol. 1, Sarajevo 1988.

O. Cicmil, *Durmitorski odred*, in: *Vojna enciklopedija*, vol. 2, Beograd 1971.

- I. Deutscher, *Staljin: Politička biografija*, Zagreb 1977.
- B. Dimitrijević, *Pobuna jugoslovenske periferije: Generalski kor Jugoslovenske armije 1945–1953. godine*, in: *Dijalog povjesničara / istoričara* 7, Beograd 2002.
- V. Kljaković, *Arso Jovanović*, in: *Vojna enciklopedija*, vol. 4, Beograd 1972.
- D. Marijan, *Borbe za Kupres 1942*, Zagreb 1999.
- J. Marjanović, *Draž Mihailović između Britanaca i Nemaca*, Zagreb 1979.
- I. Matović, *Vojskovođa s oreolom mučenika: Povest o generalu Arsu R. Jovanoviću načelniku Vrhovnog štaba NOVJ i njegovoj tragičnoj sudbini*, Beograd 2001.
- M. Najbar-Agičić, *U skladu s marksizmom ili činjenicama? Hrvatska historiografija 1945–1960*, Zagreb 2013.
- R. Overy, *Diktatori: Hitlerova Njemačka i Staljinova Rusija*, Zagreb 2005.
- B. Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, Beograd 1992.
- J. Pirjevec, *Tito i drugovi*, Zagreb 2012.
- K. Spehnjak, *Britanski pogled na Hrvatsku 1945–1948*, Zagreb 2006.
- A. Vojinović, *Leon Rupnik*, Zagreb 1988.
- Zapovjedni vrh JNA siječanj 1990. – svibanj 1992*, Zagreb 2010.
- M. Zorić, *XIII krajiška brigada*, Beograd 1968.