


SERBIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS  
INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

LIII



2022

# BALCANICA

*D. NIKOLIĆ, Three Votive Plaques from Upper Moesia • I. Komatina, A Hypothesis about the Origin of Závaš's Cross • J. HENDERSON & V. ŽIVKOVIĆ, Experiencing Disease and Medical Treatment in Renaissance Italy • F. GUIDA, The Second Eastern Crisis (1875–1878) • A. D'ALESSANDRI, The Opening of the Italian Legation in Belgrade in 1879 • J. I. TOMAŠEVIĆ, Movies about the First World War • M. RISTOVIĆ, The March on Rome and its Consequences • B. MILOSAVLJEVIĆ, Italy in the Writings of Slobodan Jovanović • J. RAFILOVIĆ, Yugoslav-Italian Foreign Trade Relations 1919–1939 • M. T. MRAOVIĆ, Creation of an Alternate Reality • A. EREŠ, The Venice Biennale and Art in Belgrade in the 1950s • E. COSTANTINI, Relations between the PCI and the League of Communists from the Second Post-War Period to the Mid-1960 • M. DOGO, Belgrade 1969–1972 • B. ŽIVKOVIĆ, The Two Last Encounters between Broz and Berlinguer • P. DRAGIŠIĆ, The Yugoslav Perspective on Italian Eurocommunism in the Second Half of the 1970s* 

ANNUAL OF THE INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

UDC 930.85(4-12)

BELGRADE 2022

ISSN 0350-7653  
eISSN 2406-0801

**Marijana T. Mraović\***

*Military Archive, Strategic Research Institute,  
University of Defense,  
Belgrade, Serbia*

## **Creation of an Alternate Reality: The Organization and Propaganda Activities of the Government of National Salvation from 1941 until 1944**

**Abstract:** The complexity and rise of the awareness of the importance of propaganda in the Second World War, alongside improvements in the means of mass communication, influenced the emergence of institutional propaganda actions of the wartime collaborationist regime in the territory of occupied Serbia. The paper is primarily based on archive material from the Military Archives of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Serbia. It also includes an analysis of the methods and models of the propaganda collaborationist administration and its representatives in the period of the Council of Commissars, as well as the "Government of National Salvation" during the entire period of occupation. It describes the formation and work of the Section for State Propaganda and its connection with the German propaganda machine, in addition to highlighting some peculiarities of the propaganda placed in the public of the occupied Serbia.

**Keywords:** Second World War, Serbia, collaboration, Council of Commissars, "Government of National Salvation", propaganda

### *Introduction*

The forms and methods of propaganda in the Second World War<sup>1</sup> were considerably modified and made more complex compared to the First

---

\* [marijanamraovic@gmail.com](mailto:marijanamraovic@gmail.com)

<sup>1</sup> The most comprehensive monographs on the Second World War include: P. Kalvokarezi, G. Vint, *Totalni rat*, [Summary: Total War] (Belgrade: RAD, 1987); G. P. Megargee, *War of Annihilation: Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front 1941* (Plymouth: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007); R. Holmes, *The World at War; The Landmark Oral History from Previously Unpublished Archives* (Dunfermline: Ebury Press, 2007); A. Roberts, *The Storm of War* (London: Penguin Books, 2009); A. Beevor, *The Second World War* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2012); M. Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: World at War 1939–1945* (Harper Collins, 2011).

World War and the interwar period.<sup>2</sup> Alongside improvements in the methods of mass communication, there was a noticeable rise in the awareness of the importance of organized propaganda,<sup>3</sup> as well as the fact that a propaganda war, or rather a propaganda-psychological war, from that moment on, required the use of all available resources of a given country.<sup>4</sup> The distinctive feature of propaganda during the Second World War was reflected in its absolute subservience to the principles of war and the needs of warfare and strategy. Closed societies saw their ability to force people to make judgment calls without an appropriate assessment of reality as their greatest success.<sup>5</sup> “During the rise of Fascists and Nazis in the interwar period and the Second World War, propaganda became a powerful and irreplaceable tool in the battle for supremacy and hegemony, equalization of thought, stirring religious intolerance, intoxication by doctrines

<sup>2</sup> The modern use of the term “war propaganda” often implies two different meanings, which in time developed in the military terminology of USA and Europe. The criterion for determining the meaning of the term military propaganda is warfare as a type of activity. In European terminology, war propaganda is defined as “political propaganda contrary to pacifist propaganda, namely propaganda led by those social forces or countries that see war as the best way of solving international issues and whose goal is to impose their will, way of thinking and interests onto others through violent military action”. *Enciklopedijski leksikon*, T.27 [Summary: Encyclopedic Lexicon, Vol.27] (Belgrade: Interpress, 1969), 371. Among American authors, the content of war propaganda is always determined by military goals and means, while most of their European colleagues start from the fact that the meaning of military propaganda is always political, and its goal a political goal; J. Ellul, *Propaganda, Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 8.; N. J. Cull, D. Culbert & D. Welch, *Propaganda and mass persuasion, A historical encyclopedia, 1500 to present* (Santa Barbara, 2003), 322; J. Garth, V. O' Donnell, *Propaganda and persuasion* (London, New Delhi: Newbery Park, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Most theorists of communication agree that propaganda as a form of human communication differs from other forms of the spoken or written word in that it is always a premeditated act, associated with the social system as a pre-defined controversy, namely a conflicting situation in principle, a given fact. D. H. Laswell, D. Lerner & H. Speier, *Propaganda and Communication in World History*, vol. I-III (USA: East-West Center by University Press of Hawaii, 1979).

<sup>4</sup> M. Mraović, *Od surove stvarnosti do alternativne realnosti. Propaganda vlade Milana Nedića 1941–1944* [Summary: From reality of war to alternative reality. Propaganda of Milan Nedić's government (1941–1944)] (Belgrade: Media Center “Odbrana”, 2019), 48–49; M. Mraović, “Propaganda vlade Milana Nedića 1941–1944”, doktorska disertacija [Summary: Propaganda of Milan Nedić's government (1941–1944)] (Doctoral Dissertation, Belgrade: University of Belgrade, History Department, 2015), 57–58.

<sup>5</sup> K. Nikolić, *Nemački ratni plakati u Srbiji 1941–1944*. [Summary: German War Posters in Serbia 1941–1944] (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2012), 89.

and spreading ideological single-mindedness.”<sup>6</sup> The Axis Powers entered the Second World War with a complex propaganda machine and significant experience from the interwar period and the First World War. At the beginning of the war, the enemies of the Axis Powers didn't have a coordinated propaganda system suitable for wartime use. However, the new needs led to a change in the previous views and interpretations of the role of the propaganda machine and propaganda as a phenomenon, resulting in the formation of new half-military, official and unofficial, propaganda institutions.<sup>7</sup> General Eisenhower wrote, at the end of the European operations, that psychological warfare had developed as a specific and effective weapon of war.<sup>8</sup> The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was one of the countries in the epicenter of these dramatic developments as a target of the political-propaganda machinery of the Third Reich.<sup>9</sup>

Propaganda in the Second World War was planned, conceived and organized, on one hand, but, on the other hand, historical sources offer numerous examples of spontaneous propaganda reflecting the developments on the frontlines and its dissemination via rumors and hearsay.<sup>10</sup> The importance assigned to it is attested by the fact that the Germans called it the Third Front and the Americans the fourth branch of the military.<sup>11</sup> In the propaganda war, the opposing forces employed different means of psychological warfare, one of them being sharp criticism of enemy propaganda.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, propaganda warfare was the last theater to “go quiet”.

---

<sup>6</sup> A. Mitrović, “Drugi svetski rat. Istorijsko mesto i značaj” [Summary: World War II. Historical meaning and significance] *Marksistička misao*, I 3 (1975), 105–127.

<sup>7</sup> The leading powers in the anti-Axis coalition created various institutions for maximizing the effectiveness of their propaganda towards the enemy, but also towards other, neutral or allied.

<sup>8</sup> P. M. A. Lineberger, *Psychological Warfare*, (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948), 56.

<sup>9</sup> At a conference held in Vienna on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1941, it was decided that Serbia, as the main culprit for the policy pursued by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, should “stay as small as possible and that all measures should be undertaken in order to forever disenable a repeat of the recent betrayal of the conspirator clique”. *Zbornik dokumenata o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu*, vol XII, num. 1 (Belgrade: Military History Institute of the Yugoslav People's Army, 1973), 72.

<sup>10</sup> “Wartime propaganda is rough, direct, full of preconceptions; it does not strive for the truth and cares even less about accurate wording; its judgments are arbitrary and its language vulgar.” B. Petranović, *Istoričar i savremena epoha* [Summary: The Historian and the Modern Era] (Belgrade: Stručna knjiga, 1997), 88.

<sup>11</sup> V. Mihailović, *Propaganda i rat* [Summary: Propaganda and War] (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački zavod, 1984), 24.

<sup>12</sup> Military Archive, Group of funds Nedić's Archive (later in the text MA, Group of funds Nda), K 10, num. of register 4/1–2.

*Organization of propaganda actions of the collaborationist government in the territory of occupied Serbia during the Council of Commissars (April - August 1941)*

Collaboration with the occupying forces in Serbia in the Second World War had two institutional phases: the Council of Commissars and the "Government of National Salvation". Alongside the formation of the German occupational apparatus in Serbia, a commissar regime was set up to provide mostly technical and administrative support to the occupiers.<sup>13</sup> In the paper *Novo vreme* the commissars were presented to the public as "the elite recruited from the ranks of the most prestigious bureaucrats and politicians".<sup>14</sup> At the beginning of the occupation, there was no official ministry or department of propaganda. A press bureau was formed with Đorđe Perić as its head as a temporary department in charge of propaganda during the Council of Commissars,<sup>15</sup> with its first assignment being to "bolster and maintain the premise of the continuity of the commissar regime with the prewar organs of the state".<sup>16</sup>

Besides propaganda, the ministries headed by commissars worked on the gradual stabilization of the situation, first in Belgrade and then in other cities in occupied Serbia. At first, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had a decisive role in the organization of life and work and the direction of propaganda activities.<sup>17</sup> The majority of newspapers published in the first occupation months included news about the normalization of the situation and appeals for social solidarity. The commissar of the City of Belgrade, Dragi Jovanović, called on the citizens to participate in the government's efforts to normalize the living conditions in the country.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in an official statement, the commissar of the Ministry of the Post, Telegraph and Telephone, Dr. Dušan Pantić, stressed that it was

<sup>13</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 53, num. of register 15/2-12., MA, Microfilmed structure of the archive from the National archive Washington, NAV-N- T-75, 69/1012-271. Proclamation of the appointment of the commissars to previous ministries was announced in the Belgrade paper *Opštinske novine* (at the time the only daily paper) on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1941. The same text was published in the Collection of Orders and Laws from the German and local government for the period of April-May 1941 in an edition of the Economic register., B. Božović, *Beograd pod komesarskom upravom 1941* [Summary: Belgrade under the Council of Commissars] (Belgrade: Institute for Contemporary History, 1988), 89.

<sup>14</sup> *Novo vreme*, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1941.

<sup>15</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 3, num. of register 1/3-1.

<sup>16</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 3, num. of register 1/3-2.

<sup>17</sup> R. Ristanović, *Akcije komunističkih ilegalaca u Beogradu 1941-1942* [Summary: Actions of communist undercover agents in Belgrade 1941-1944] (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 2013), 48-49; MA, Group of funds Nda, K 59, num. of register 2/7-2.

<sup>18</sup> "Apel Beograđanima izvanrednog komesara grada Beograda", *Zbirka naredaba i uputstava* 1, History Archive of Belgrade, Б-4, II-1/29, inv. num. 998.

necessary to work with the German authorities on restoring the country.<sup>19</sup> The report of Milan Aćimović for the Military Command in Serbia for May of 1941 is important for understanding the effectiveness of the propaganda efforts of the Council of Commissars.<sup>20</sup> During the commissar regime, the emphasis was on the ability of the people to actively participate in the renewal of the country and internal affairs.<sup>21</sup> At a conference of the Department of State Security of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1941, it was estimated that there was intense communist activity in the country, especially rural areas, leading to an initiative to arrest communists with the goal of imprisoning dangerous communist actors and disabling any form of organized propaganda. Regardless of new reprisals, the propaganda work of the Council of Commissars and new retaliations, acts of sabotage were increasingly common and were followed by the first armed operations of members of the resistance. Assessments of the effectiveness of propaganda efforts were initially based on the reports of the *Abwehr* and Gestapo analyses, according to which “German propaganda isn’t well adjusted for the mentality of Serbs and isn’t accomplishing the desired effect”. Local government institutions were presented as centers of enemy “whisper propaganda”, in which German supporters were supposedly being fired from duty.

After the explosion of an ammunition depot in Smederevo on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1941, which caused many civilian casualties and significant material damage,<sup>22</sup> the Rudnik news agency reported that the German administration had rapidly responded to alleviate the effects of the explosion and stressed their readiness to help the citizens of Smederevo, especially the families of the deceased.<sup>23</sup> A

---

<sup>19</sup> “The Serbian nation is aware that only with persistent labor and wholehearted collaboration with German war authorities can they raise the country out of the rubble”, *Novo vreme*, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1941, “The railroad bridge over Sava has been fixed after 37 days and with traffic allowed on 31<sup>st</sup> of May”, *Novo vreme*, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1941, 1.

<sup>20</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 19, num. of register 6/1–12.

<sup>21</sup> M. Mraović, “Nova Srbija u Novoj Evropi” na stranicama kolaboracionističke štampe Vlade narodnog spasa”. In *Društvene nauke pred izazovima savremenog društva*, [Summary: “New Serbia in New Europe” on the pages of the Collaborationist Press of the Government of National Salvation] (Niš: University of Niš, 2017), 127–150.

<sup>22</sup> D. Milošević, *Izbrisani grad*, [Summary: Erased city], (Smederevo: Historical Archive of Smederevo, 2021), 16.

<sup>23</sup> After the ammunition explosion in the Smederevo fort, the Rudnik agency informed the public about the explosion, emphasizing that it happened “...at 14:20 due to self-ignition caused by the great heat”. It was stated in the news that the executive general Ludwig von Schröder was transferred by plane to Smederevo where he recruited the German army, the Red Cross, National Socialist action for social care, as well as active Serbian authorities in order to provide aid. “Explosion in Smederevo”, *Novo vreme*, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1941, 2, “Proclamation from the commissioner of the Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone Mr. Dr. Dušan Pantić, The Serbian people are aware that only with persistent labor and wholehearted col-

letter of gratitude from Milan Aćimović to the German army for helping the suffering Smederevo was also published.<sup>24</sup> The role of the Council of Commissars in the action to restore Smederevo was used as a local propaganda motif and also became a general symbol of the campaign to rebuild the entire occupied territory.<sup>25</sup> The Council of Commissars and later Milan Nedić's "Government of National Salvation" dedicated a lot of attention to organizing the care and employment of Serbian refugees, with regular reports to the public regarding the successes of the local administration in resolving the refugee issue.<sup>26</sup> To solve the position of refugees and repair the damage of the explosion in Smederevo, they established the Central committee for Serbian refugee care,<sup>27</sup> and Irregular commissariat for the renewal of Smederevo. An article titled "The Serbian Press" stressed that the goal of the local governments was to find jobs for all refugees, or rather, ensure "the[ir] right to work, allow them to share in the responsibility and pleasure of having an opportunity to participate in the renewal of a ravaged country".<sup>28</sup>

It was at this time that Milan Aćimović, after receiving instructions from the German administrative apparatus, established the Committee for investigating the events that had led the country into the war. After a thorough examination, the committee published on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1941 its final report, in which it accused those who had caused the coup.<sup>29</sup> The German authorities used the aforementioned results for propaganda purposes to accuse and degrade the royal government and General Simović. One of the German experts for Southeastern Europe created a study on the causes that had led to the incidents of 27<sup>th</sup> March.<sup>30</sup> Considering that the "main culprits for dragging the country into the

---

laboration with German war authorities, they can raise the country out of the rubble", *Novo vreme*, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1941, 1, 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Novo vreme*, 25<sup>th</sup> June 1941.

<sup>25</sup> "The very first day of charity drive for refugees and renewal of Smederevo gave excellent results", *Novo vreme*, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1941, 1, "Actions from Obrenovac to help refugees and for the rebuilding of Smederevo", *ibid.*, 3, "Charity drive for refugees and the rebuilding of Smederevo", *Novo vreme*, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1941, 3, "Yesterday 100.000 people from Belgrade gave donations for Serbian refugees", *Novo vreme*, 29<sup>th</sup> June 1941, 1, 3.

<sup>26</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 19, num. of register 8/1.

<sup>27</sup> Ђ. С., "There are around 40,000 refugees in Serbia from all regions of former Yugoslavia", *Novo vreme*, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1941, p. 2.; Ђ. С., Central committee for refugee care and the rebuilding of Smederevo is formed in Belgrade", *Novo vreme*, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1941, 1, 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Obnova*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1941.

<sup>29</sup> Historical archive of Belgrade, Administration of the city of Belgrade, K 588, Ф. 7.

<sup>30</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 3, num. of register 34/4-7.

war” were no longer on Serbian soil, the “results of the investigation” were later used by the “Government of National Salvation” in propaganda campaigns.<sup>31</sup>

The German occupation authorities, during the period of the Council of Commissars, launched a security-intelligence analysis of the activities of the Serbian Orthodox Church, whose actions were treated as a political problem, given its influence on the citizens and its role in the events of 27<sup>th</sup> March. The governor of Belgrade instructed the Special Police Department to solve the “case of Patriarch Gavriilo”.<sup>32</sup> Based on a surviving “Action Note” by Karl Kraus, it’s possible to determine the actions taken by the security services and propaganda machine of the Council of Commissars. In the aforementioned note, Kraus emphasized that “Patriarch Gavriilo should not be made into a martyr” and that the measures against him “had to be very well-prepared through propaganda”, so that the widest Serbian public would declare him guilty.<sup>33</sup> Under the pressure of the occupation regime and the local administration, the remaining church dignitaries were forced to “continue their holy mission without interruptions” and acknowledge the occupational regime, which was announced in a Proclamation by the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1941.<sup>34</sup> That was followed by their official visit to the Command of the Head Military Commander and a meeting with General von Schröder and state counselor Dr. Turner.<sup>35</sup>

In the first occupation months, the local press regularly wrote about the socio-political situation in the Independent State of Croatia, the activities of the Croatian national leadership and its relations with Germany and Italy. Many of those reports were reprinted from the German press.<sup>36</sup> For example, less than a

---

<sup>31</sup> B. Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939–1945*, [Summary: Serbia in WWII] (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1992), 134.

<sup>32</sup> Historical Archive of Belgrade, Source documents from dossier of the archive from SLA Belgrade and Section of Special Police from the Government of city of Belgrade referring to the monitoring of the activities of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

<sup>33</sup> Božović, Belgrade, 144. Department for external politics of the Nazi party lead by the party ideologist Alfred Rosenberg analyzed the activity of the Serbian Orthodox Church from an ideological standpoint.

<sup>34</sup> *Novo vreme*, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1941.

<sup>35</sup> *Novo vreme*, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1941.

<sup>36</sup> M. Mraović, “Pisanje kolaboracionističkog lista *Novo vreme* o vojnoj i političkoj situaciji u NDH 1941–1944. godine”, [Summary: Writings of the Collaborationist Paper *Novo vreme* about the military and political situation in the Independent State of Croatia 1941–1944] *Vojno-istorijski glasnik*, 2 (2017), 131–146; M. Mraović, Z. Vignjević, “Značaj i uloga propagande u zločinima ustaških i u odnosu klerikalnih vlasti prema srpskom stanovništvu u NDH” [Summary: Importance and role of propaganda in the crimes of the Ustasha and in the attitude of the church authorities towards the Serbian population in the Independent State of Croatia] *Zapisi* 7 (2018), 221–233.



month after the proclamation of ISC, *Novo vreme* published an article about the establishment of the new Croatian state, including a speech by General Slavko Kvaternik, a statement from Poglavnik Pavelić about the political orientation of the new Croatian polity and Hitler's telegram to the Croatian leadership.<sup>37</sup> The first article in the capital's press regarding the race laws promulgated in ISC was published in mid-May 1941.<sup>38</sup> In this article, the responsibility for the racial measures was ascribed to the Ustasha.<sup>39</sup> Immediately after the establishment of the Council of Commissars, Milan Aćimović sent a request to the German authorities to stop the prosecution and killing of Serbs in ISC, as well as in Bačka, and then, in early June 1941, a memorandum to General Schröder asking him to protect the local Serbian population from Croatian, Bulgarian, Hungarian and Albanian terror. The Serbian Orthodox Church submitted an exposé on the suffering of the clergy and laity in ISC to General Schröder on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1941. The exposé mentioned that 100,000 Serbs had been killed in ISC since its foundation. The propagandists saw the questions regarding the attitude of ISC towards the local Serbian population, its persecution, suffering and forced catholicization exclusively in the context of Croatian blame, while any public remarks about German culpability were interpreted as malicious propaganda and slander.<sup>40</sup> News and articles about the situation in the Croatian territory contained a certain amount of hope in the all-powerful German supervising authorities and their readiness to help the Serbian population.<sup>41</sup> The memorandum of the Serbian Orthodox Church submitted in late August of 1941 to General Danckelmann contains data about 180,000 killed Serbs up until that moment.<sup>42</sup> Amidst the obvious increase of violence and atrocities in Croatia, all of the above could not yield the expected results and foster a climate of reconciliation. Testimonies of those who had managed to survive, fleeing for their lives, shattered every propaganda attempt to prove the opposite or dilute the truth.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>37</sup> "How the Croatian country was formed. Poglavnik Dr. Ante Pavelić on the missions and program for Croatia," *Novo vreme*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 1941, 3.

<sup>38</sup> *Novo vreme*, 17<sup>th</sup> May 1941, 5.

<sup>39</sup> *Novo vreme*, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1941, 1., Text of the "Law on the protection of state and people" named "extraordinary measures for reduction of violence in Croatia", 3.

<sup>40</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 19, num. of register 28/1.

<sup>41</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 19, num. of register 30/1.

<sup>42</sup> S. Kerkez, *Društvo Srbije u Drugom svetskom ratu* [Summary: Society of Serbia during WWII] (Niš: Center for Balkan Studies, 2004), 238; R. Radić, *Država i verske zajednice 1945–1970, I* [Summary: The State and Religious Communities] (Belgrade: Institute for Recent History of Serbia, 2002), 59.

<sup>43</sup> *Zbornik odabranih dokumenata Zločini Nezavisne države Hrvatske 1941–1942. godine*, [Summary: Collection of documents Crimes of the Independent State of Croatia 1941–

During the Council of Commissars regime, one of the first complex propaganda actions was launched: the “Appeal to the Serbian People”, published via the press and radio on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1941.<sup>44</sup> The text of the appeal, condemning the communist movement as the cause of German retaliations and calling on the citizens to stop supporting the movement, was offered to intellectuals from political, educational, cultural, business, religious and other circles to be signed. A certain number of signatures were collected. The “Appeal” claimed that the communist movement was isolated from the people and that it was necessary to maintain order and peace, alongside cooperation with the German authorities, so the great feat of national renewal could be achieved.<sup>45</sup> The echo of the “Appeal”, according to an assessment of the commissar and gendarmerie authorities, didn’t accomplish the desired effect in the public.<sup>46</sup> On the contrary, it became a propaganda weapon in the hands of the communists. In a report submitted to Milan Aćimović after a tour, the acting commander of the gendarmerie, Colonel Jovan Tršić, stated that the “...communists are using the very same appeal to convince the people that it was signed by ministers, generals, bank directors, action groups and that they all sold their souls to the Germans in order to keep their wealth”.

The uprising that spread to a large part of the occupied Serbian territory in August 1941 led to further oppressive measures of the German authorities. The command of the military commander in Belgrade considered organized oppressive measures, as well as planned use of retaliation, alongside constant propaganda directed at the population in order to make the resistance cease. The ruthlessness and cruelty of the German authorities, especially in the field, caused a deep crisis among the commissars. Especially cruel retaliations were carried out in the village of Skela and in Terazije Square in Belgrade on 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1941.<sup>47</sup> General Danckelmann was convinced that the repression was going to seem frightening to the citizens of Belgrade and the rest of occu-

---

1942] (Novi Sad: Historical archive of the City of Novi Sad & Military Archive of Serbia, vol 1, 2020).

<sup>44</sup> A list of those who had signed the appeal was published in *Novo vreme* on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1941. “Miloš Đurić, Ivo Andrić, Isidora Sekulić, Milivoje Kostić and other distinguished individuals refused to sign the Appeal.

<sup>45</sup> *Novo vreme* published an article on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1941 named “Echo of the Appeal among Serbian people. In Belgrade the Appeal was received with utmost understanding and resolution to keeping peace in the country”.

<sup>46</sup> MA, Group of funds Chetnik Archive, K 269, num. of register. 3–17.

<sup>47</sup> “Proclamation: Village Skela burned to the ground”, Rudnik Agency, *Novo vreme*, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1941, Collection of NOR, vol I, num. 1, 365., “Proclamation: Public execution of communist terrorists in Belgrade”, *Novo vreme*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 1941, article “Public execution at Terazije”, *Ponedeljak*, 18<sup>th</sup> August 1941.

pied Serbia, but as an air force general and a “man from the sidelines”, as German officers from the land forces called him, he misjudged the mentality and history of the Serbian people. The German reports from the field mentioned an increase of revanchism and resistance among the population after the reprisals in Skela and Terazije. The police reports from that time attest to a generally negative response of the population and local government.

The replacement of the Council of Commissars was popularized by promoting the need to establish a stable system of internal government in Serbia, worthy of the new German order.<sup>48</sup> In a memorandum addressed by Dimitrije Ljotić to Heinrich Danckelmann on 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1941, it was suggested to appoint a more authoritative person than Milan Aćimović to the position of prime minister, in addition to securing a more autonomous position and broader powers for the new government. Three days later, Ljotić’s representatives in the Council of Commissars handed in their resignations.<sup>49</sup> The resigning commissars indicated that there was a need to form a new government which would have more autonomy in its administration of the country, while respecting the legitimate and political rights and economic interests of the Reich.<sup>50</sup> The combination of the military-political environment, the inability of the commissar regime to solve the issues important to the German occupation administration, primarily economical difficulties and the problems caused by the uprising in Serbia in August of 1941, led to the solving of the crisis of the Council of Commissars through its disbandment on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1941.

### *Representatives of the “Government of National Salvation” as the bearers of propaganda*

The formation of the “Government of National Salvation”<sup>51</sup> represented an attempt of the German occupation administration, due to its inability to engage additional German troops through the local administration, to disable the spreading of the uprising in the latter half of 1941.<sup>52</sup> In the moment of the

<sup>48</sup> M. S. Jovanović, “Serbia land of logic”, *Obnova*, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1941, 5.; P. I., “Against chaos for the new order!”, *Obnova*, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1941, 5.

<sup>49</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 1 A, num. of register 2/3–1., MA, Group of funds Nda K 27, num. of register 3/5, Records of the hearing of dr. Georg Kisel from 25<sup>th</sup> October 1946.

<sup>50</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 1 A, num. of register 2/3.

<sup>51</sup> Formation of the “Government of National Salvation” was approved by a decree of General Danckelmann on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1941.

<sup>52</sup> On the beginnings of the civil war in Serbia: Petranović, 264–265; K. Nikolić, “O uzrocima izbijanja građanskog rata u Srbiji 1941”, 307–323. For a bibliography of the civil war in Serbia see: M. Bjelajac, “Istoriografija o građanskom ratu u Jugoslaviji 1941–1945”, *Istorija 20. veka*, 1/1997, 129–144; M. Bjelajac, “Istoriografija o građanskom ratu u Jugoslaviji

formation of the Government, General Milan Nedić<sup>53</sup> had an organized local and occupation propaganda machine, but faced a mass of displeased citizens burdened by the war situation, drastic German repression, the activities of the resistance movement, and a sea of refugees that arrived in Serbia in waves.<sup>54</sup> The formation of the Government was presented to the people as an event of far-reaching importance, a historical necessity, and the only logical and possible solution.<sup>55</sup>

The “Government of National Salvation” was not politically homogeneous.<sup>56</sup> The original composition of the “Government of National Salvation” during the occupation changed several times, with the replacement of several ministers or its reconstruction.<sup>57</sup> The name “Government of National Salvation”

1941–1945 – komparativna istraživanja”, *Suočavanje sa prošlošću – put ka budućnosti: istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1991*, 283–296.

<sup>53</sup> MA, Group of funds Army of the Yugoslav Kingdom, Personnel files of the officers, non-commissioned officers and military personnel of the Army of the Yugoslav Kingdom, Milan Dj. Nedić’s personal file, K 1187, num. 332. For more details on General Nedić’s military career see M. Bjelajac: *Generals and admirals of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1918–1941*, Belgrade 2004, 224–225.

<sup>54</sup> A day after Nedić’s appointment, *Obnova* published a speech by General Harald Turner, in which he stated the following: “When people stood up against the occupation forces, following directions from Lenin about an armed rebellion... it will be followed by the collective annihilation of Serbian people if Serbian executives don’t manage to destroy the communists in the entire country”, unsigned article: “The task of the new Serbian government. Speech from the state councilor Mr. Dr. Turner.”, *Obnova*, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1941, 5.

<sup>55</sup> The *Novo vreme* paper published several articles on the formation of the “government, which will, in the best interests of its homeland and out of its own volition, keep peace, order and safety” and about General Nedić, who was “willing to form a government in this dire moment and take responsibility for maintaining public order, peace and safety.” Unauthorized article, “A new Serbian government is formed”, “Reception of the new Serbian government at the military commander”, *Novo vreme*, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1941, 1, “Reception of the new Serbian government by the military commander in Serbia”, “Biographies of the new Ministers”, “The speech of Mr. Milan Nedić”, 3,4. *Obnova* wrote about the big turnaround in Serbia’s internal political life and about the priority tasks of the new Government. Of course, there was a photograph and the speech of General Danckelmann on the front page, unauthorized article, “Great turnaround in our internal political life. Serbian government is formed with Army General Mr. Milan Nedić at its head. The new government has a duty to gather all constructive forces, bring order and peace and lead the country toward improvement and progress”, *Obnova*, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1941, 1, The new Serbian government assumes duty. Speech from the military commander of Serbia, Air Force General Mr. Danckelmann.”, *Obnova*, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1941, 3.

<sup>56</sup> B. Božović, *Specijalna policija u Beogradu 1941–1944* [Summary: Special Police in Belgrade 1941–1944] (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2014).

<sup>57</sup> About the work and projects of the “Government of National Salvation” see also: A. Stojanović, “Planning a Social Transformation: a Contribution to the Research of WWII

was supposed to instill confidence in the newly formed institution as a vassal alternative that wanted to stop the bleeding of the Serbian people and provide for them a better resolution in “New Europe”.<sup>58</sup> Influencing the propaganda work of the representatives of the central and local government, in the form of speeches and lectures and holding assemblies and conferences were some of the ways in which the German authorities tried to popularize their political and economic goals.<sup>59</sup> In-person conversations were surely the most appropriate channel for exerting propaganda influence on the wider masses, many of whom were illiterate and receptive only to audio-visual content. Based on the way in which the members of the Government presented their ideological and political beliefs and views, we can conclude that they were, to a certain extent, instructed by the German authorities. At the same time, there was a certain propaganda component directed towards the Germans themselves, which was supposed to convince the occupiers that nothing could be said without their approval or done outside the established propaganda framework. Propaganda was not devised only in the German center and the Department of State Propaganda but was also, to a cer-

---

Collaboration in Serbia”, *Tokovi istorije*, 1/2013, 135–152; A. Stojanović, “*Ideje, politički projekti i praksa vlade Milana Nedića 1941–1944*”, (doctoral dissertation, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, History Department), 2014; A. Stojanović, *Ideje, politički projekti i praksa vlade Milana Nedića*, Beograd, 2015.

<sup>58</sup> The Declaration of the Government of National Salvation to the Serbian people was published in *Novo vreme* on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1941. The Rulebook of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers was also passed, with special regulations for managing the operations of every single ministry. Declaration of the Government of National Salvation to the Serbian people, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1941, Speeches of General Milan Nedić-Prime Minister of the Government of National Salvation, Belgrade 2006, 4,5. During the hearings, Nedić proclaimed that the primary goals of the Government in the Declaration referred to: pacifying the country, preventing a civil war and stabilization of the order: “On 1<sup>st</sup> September, on radio, I told the people in the form of a declaration that a new government was formed. That declaration was printed, if I remember correctly, in *Novo Vreme*, *Službeni list*, and was also plastered all over Belgrade and the interior in many places”, MA, Group of funds Chetnik Archive, K 269, num. of register 38/1–19.

<sup>59</sup> Speeches from the prime minister, ministers and other “noteworthy people” were announced via radio and press, and their contents were published without fail, Dr. M. M., “Painful reality”, *Novo vreme*, 4<sup>th</sup> October 1941. The author of the article states that the people “seduced by Moscow and London radio-propaganda, paid agents and misled sons” didn’t understand that they were going in the wrong direction until “the first warnings of the sober public, when the words were heard from our most notable people, the words of Milan Aćimović, Milan Nedić and our other sensible sons, who in the most difficult moment of our fateful history took upon themselves the greatest responsibility to the people, when those words were heard and when the people understood their difficult existence, a great change came forth in the soul of our man.”

tain extent, the result of the actions of the ideologues and members of the *Zbor* movement amongst the youth and the people.

The prime minister was aware of the importance of organized propaganda and his own role in the popularization of the domestic regime and pacification of the population.<sup>60</sup> In his propaganda activities, in most cases, he did not change the form or substance of the speeches he held<sup>61</sup> if what he stated reflected the balance of power in theaters and the concrete needs conditioned by the requests of the occupying administration.<sup>62</sup> He pursued anticommunist propaganda from the moment he became prime minister until his last days in power, even after leaving the country.<sup>63</sup> The double standards he used to propagate the protection of Serbdom and the Serbian nation were, in his view, completely justified in order to “remove communist chaff from the Serbian wheat”. His attitude to the government in exile and the Ravna Gora movement varied depending on the situation on the frontlines and the relations of the western Allies with General Mihailović, and so since the latter half of 1943 he turned to anticommunist propaganda and criticizing the western Allies after the bombings.<sup>64</sup> He appealed

---

<sup>60</sup> The Prime Minister in his speeches asserted the motto “building a future for the Serbian people in loyal cooperation with the German Reich and its representatives in Serbia.” Govor predsednika srpske vlade generala g. Milana Đ. Nedića: ‘Srpski narod neće nikada zaboraviti da se nemački vojnici i ako pobedilac, po svršenim ratnim operacijama nikome nije svetio i korektno se ponašao prema srpskom narodu.’, photo: “Predsednik vlade g. Nedić, za vreme govora, juče u dvorani Narodne skupštine”, *Obnova*, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1941, 3.

<sup>61</sup> By analyzing Nedić’s influence on the “political scene” of occupied Serbia, Branko Petrović emphasized the importance of his public performances, describing the prime minister’s speeches to the average Serbian citizen as “simplified political and national philosophy”: “He presented himself as the ‘father of Serbia’, the man who enabled the Serbian people to survive the cataclysm it was facing. His simple, curt, military appeals echoed theatrically in the country where nobody had a say, but they stuck to average people. Serbs were a small people who needed to survive... Order, peace and ensuring food supply were the real messages that reached the common man, who was tired, scared and starving”, Petranović, *Srbija*, 223.

<sup>62</sup> The post-war Communist authorities were aware of the great importance of the Nedić administration’s propaganda, and so the Indictment against Milan Nedić from 1946 (point 3) included his propaganda work immediately after the formation of the Government of National Salvation. MA, Group of funds Nda, K 1, num. of register 26/1-5.

<sup>63</sup> Speech of the Prime Minister, General Mr. Nedić, to the regional officers: “Today is a historic day in the life of our country. Reforms that must be undertaken must come from the root; a new era must come, with new people who will replace the old, because things cannot go back to the way they were. Communism in Serbia has been rooted out!”, *Obnova*, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1942, p. 6.

<sup>64</sup> One of the most characteristic brochures about the Allied bombing was published with the title: “Bloody Easter in Belgrade, documents on the Anglo-American Air Strike Terror”, with an afterword by M. Spaljković, “Beograd opet u crno zavijen. Srpska vlada u ime celog našeg naroda protestuje zbog varvarskog bombardovanja srpskih gradova.”, “Moramo stegnuti svoja

to the leaders of civil parties to “stop interfering in politics and form a unified national Serbian bloc” in order to confront the armed communist movement and ideology.<sup>65</sup> An appeal was directed toward the wider population too, especially educational institutions and Serbian intellectuals, who were informed that they should work on weeding out every ideology that did not conform to the idea of creating Greater Serbia and the traditions of the Serbian people. During his hearings in the post-war investigation, Nedić claimed that the fundamental goals of the “Government of National Salvation” stated in the Declaration were: pacification of the country, stopping the civil war and stabilization of the order.<sup>66</sup> Nedić had a particular way of speaking to the masses, which in a certain way differentiated him from the other representatives of the national government and made it possible for him to influence the masses. He was exceedingly suggestive and capable of conveying the desired message in an extremely simplified, appealing way. He spoke in a “popular” way.<sup>67</sup> The reality of war caused great difficulties in the channels for disseminating propaganda materials.<sup>68</sup> Propaganda aimed

---

srca radi života i budućnosti srpskog naroda”, “Neka niko ne naseda lažnim glasovima”, “Proglaš vlade Narodnog spasa srpskom narodu”, “Saučešće Vojnog zapovednika Srbije”, “Beograd posle bombardovanja”, “Proglaš vladinog komesara” by Dragi Lj. Jovanović, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1944, p. 1., “Prva izjava Dragog Lj. Jovanovića posle bombardovanja 16 aprila”, *Obnova*, 20th April 1944, p. 2. Nedić’s “Poslanica Srpskom narodu na Vaskrs 1944 godine”: “Juče je izvršen četvrti najteži teroristički napad na Niš”, “Uskrsnja “jaja saveznika” mirnom gradu Nikšiću”, *Novo vreme*, 16th and 17th April 1944, pg. 1., Nedić’s speech via radio: “Ove uskrsnje žrtve biće osvećene jer za to vapije božija pravda.”, “Dižem glas protivu onih prosvećenih vandala što su za ovak zločin izabrali najveći hrišćanski praznik u godini”, *Novo vreme, Obnova*, 25<sup>th</sup> April 1944, pg. 1.

<sup>65</sup> The Communist authorities were aware of the great importance of the Nedić administration’s propaganda, and so the Indictment against Milan Nedić from 1946 (point 3) includes his propaganda work immediately after the formation of the Government of National Salvation. MA, Group of funds Nda, K 1, num. of register 26/1–5.

<sup>66</sup> MA, Group of funds Chetnik Archive, K 269, num. of register 38/1–19.

<sup>67</sup> “Danas govori preko radija predsednik Vlade g. Milan Nedić”, *Novo vreme*, 12th October 1941, 1., “Govor predsednika vlade generala g. Nedića. Ustaj i brani svoje ognjište od komunističkih pljačkaša, razbojnika i odmetnika. Znaj da je ovo sveta borba za odbranu Srbije i srpstva”, *Ponedeljak*, 13th October 1941, 1. Speech of the Serbian Prime Minister Nedić via radio: “Kroz rad i bratsku slogu, krenimo u novu, srećniju Srbiju”, *Novo vreme*, 11<sup>th</sup> February 1943, 1. The speech that Nedić delivered on 10<sup>th</sup> of February was broadcast again via radio as part of a program for farmers on 11<sup>th</sup> February. “Ja hoću da preporodim naše selo, jer kad je selo zdravo, pošteno i radno, srećan je narod, srećna je država”, *Obnova*, 18<sup>th</sup> April 1943; “Seljak je snova i snaga srpskog naroda”, *Srpsko selo*, 29th May 1943; “Preporođeno selo biće temelj nove države i nove Srbije” a nova Srbija zvaće se ‘Srpska seljačka zadrudna država’ rekao je general Nedić našim omladincima”, *Srpsko selo*, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1943.

<sup>68</sup> At the end of 1941, the Department of State Propaganda published Nedić’s speeches in the publication titled “Osnovi pravog srpskog rodoljublja” in the series Nacionalni spisi., MA, Group of funds Nda, K 49, num. of register 4/1–2.

at the peasantry, the largest social group in occupied Serbia, was an important segment of Nedić's political-ideological work. Based on the intensity and frequency of Nedić's public appearances, we can conclude that, in the segment of propaganda geared toward the peasantry, he accomplished considerable success despite the German Reich's excessive demands to deliver agricultural products and the taxes on selling grain.<sup>69</sup>

The Minister of Education, Velibor Jonić, was one of the most productive ministers when it came to political-educational propaganda, especially holding speeches, lectures, assemblies, and conferences, as well as writing articles.<sup>70</sup> He supported the government's policy of renewal and rebirth, and, in accordance with the established goals, he launched and edited the paper *Srpski narod*. He accused the Allied forces of using and sacrificing Serbian people, while praising the role of Milan Nedić. He often portrayed the ministers of the "Government of National Salvation" as people who endured the greatest burden of suffering of their people and condemned everyone who did not cooperate with the government.<sup>71</sup> From the beginning of his propaganda activities, Jonić had a carefully prepared method for presenting his speeches and their content. Also, every time he held a speech, after the end of the gathering, he got into the practice of sending a telegram of support to the prime minister (a so-called greetings telegram). He devoted a lot of attention to "educating" other members of the government about the goals that were supposed to be achieved using certain means of propaganda, placing great emphasis on the personal responsibility of every bearer of propaganda. He offered suggestions to the prime minister about the means of realizing certain German directives. He made blueprints for field work, which he passed on to the chief of the Department of State Propaganda, Đorđe Perić, to be finalized and implemented. Similarly, during a conference of the central authorities with regional governors in February 1942, he stressed the importance of implementing propaganda at all times and the use of every means available: "We cannot stop at assemblies and those propaganda brochures and flyers; every

---

<sup>69</sup> In 1943, one of Nedić's leading propagandists, Dr. Miroslav Spaljoković, published a book titled *The Speeches of Milan Nedić, Prime Minister of the Serbian Government – Savior of Serbia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century* ("Govori generala Milana Nedića, predsednika srpske vlade—Spasilac Srbije u XX veku"). The book was published in Belgrade without stating its publisher.

<sup>70</sup> Jonić's lectures were published in the form of brochures and in the press. As the Minister of Education, he was simultaneously the publisher of *Prosvetni glasnik* (1942–1944), editor-in-chief of the paper *Srpski narod* (1942–1944) and a contributor to the paper *Naša borba* (1941–1942). During the occupation, Jonić published 54 articles in *Novo vreme* and 42 articles in *Srpski narod*.

<sup>71</sup> V. Jonić, "Zašto smo optimisti", text from an article in *Srpski narod, Novo vreme*, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1943, 3.



gesture is propaganda.”<sup>72</sup> According to Jonić’s testimony (during the post-war hearings), his speeches and statements were not published in their original form by the Department of State Propaganda, his statements and elaborations on collaboration with Germany were especially embellished, along with his thoughts on how the Serbian people were supposed to fight for a place in the “new order”. Based on the sources available now, we cannot determine whether his claims were true or reflected the historical moment in which he was interrogated. Jonić mentioned during the hearings that, in his original speeches, the chief premise was the need of the Serbian nation to find itself and choose its own place in the world.<sup>73</sup> We can assess Jonić’s public statements, speeches and appearances through the prism of his work in the government propaganda campaign for the people and in the framework of the cultural-educational propaganda efforts of the Ministry of Education and Faith (directed at the cultural and educational elite, with a part of the campaign involving work with students and their parents). Within the propaganda campaign directed at counties, organized by the Department of State Propaganda, Jonić held a series of speeches at meetings and conferences.<sup>74</sup> He assigned great importance to educational propaganda and insisted on unifying the educational system and raising children in the national spirit. Together with Milan Aćimović, after his suggestion to get the youth imprisoned in camps out and save them from German reprisals, with the excuse of placing them in correctional facilities, he managed to bring about the establishment of the Institution for the Forced Education of Youth in Smederevska

---

<sup>72</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 1, num. of register 21/2–130.

<sup>73</sup> MA, Group of funds Chetnik Archive, K 269, num. of register 3–17.

<sup>74</sup> The subject of the speeches was popularizing the government’s social and economic policies, as well as “elaborating” the socio-political situation in the world, the events on the frontlines and the harmful influence of propaganda of London and Moscow on common people, unsigned article, “Ministri u narodu”, *Novo vreme*, 17<sup>th</sup> February 1942, 1; “We serve our people,” asserted minister Mr. Velibor Jonić at a large national assembly in Čačak, *Novo vreme*, 24<sup>th</sup> February 1942, 3. “Ministar prosvete g. Velibor Jonić u Šapcu i Loznicu: “Nestaće nas sa lica zemlje ako poremetimo red i mir!”, *Novo vreme*, 10<sup>th</sup> March 1942, 3., “Strana propaganda sigurno neće hraniti Srbiju! rekao je ministar prosvete V. Jonić”, Assembly in Mladenovac and in Kragujevac, *Novo vreme*, 21<sup>st</sup> April 1942, 3., “Narodni zbor u Aranđelovcu: “Iz ovoga rata izaći ćemo preporođeni” rekao je ministar prosvete Velibor Jonić”, *Novo vreme*, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1942, 3., “Jonić je u Jagodini održao veliki narodni zbor zajedno sa ministrom socijalne politike i narodnog zdravlja. Sumirao je rezultate rada Vlade tokom protekle godine uz upozorenje narodu na agitaciju koju vrše ljudi Draže Mihailovića i ‘londonska jugoslovenska vlada”, *Novo vreme*, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1942, 4., “Velika narodna manifestacija u Nišu. Titova paklena namera-uništenje srpskog naroda. Ministar Velibor Jonić govorio je pred 10. 000 građana”, *Novo vreme*, 29<sup>th</sup> December 1943, 3.

Palanka.<sup>75</sup> As part of the propaganda activities of the Ministry of Education and Faith, with his assistant Vladimir Velmar-Janković, he held a series of speeches and lectures for professors, teachers and youth at the Kolarac University, as well as in cities and towns in the interior of the country.<sup>76</sup>

The governor of the City of Belgrade, Dragi Jovanović, was one of the leading advocates of the anticommunist struggle. During his post-war hearings, he said that he “both with speeches and proclamations tried to mobilize the masses in the fight against the communists and prevent sabotage”. He popularized the role of the “Government of National Salvation” in governing the country and the “responsibility and ability of the Serbian people to govern itself in all branches of state and county administration”,<sup>77</sup> which he regarded as “proof of the Serbs’ racial capabilities”. He also contributed to the propaganda campaign of the Government of National Salvation in western Serbia. He also took part in organizing the reception of war prisoners and held speeches for groups of returnees.

Mihailo Olčan, Minister of the Economy and later Minister without Portfolio, was one of the leading representatives of the home administration in the field of propaganda for economic renewal.<sup>78</sup> He became more involved in propaganda work after he assumed duty. The topics tackled in his public appearances reflected the main propaganda line of the domestic government, directed

---

<sup>75</sup> For more details on the Institution for the Forced Education of Youth in Smederevska Palanka in: A. Stojanović, *Ideje, politički projekti i praksa vlade Milana Nedića*, Beograd, 2015, 378–389.

<sup>76</sup> A lecture delivered by Velibor Jonić at the Kolarac University on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1942 on the “Problems of our spiritual orientation” caught the attention of the Belgrade public. The said lecture, which will be discussed in more detail later, was the introduction into an anticommunist course for teachers at Belgrade high schools. He approved of getting educators involved in the efforts of the Department of Propaganda, and there were times when he ordered particular teachers to cooperate with the said department. As part of the efforts to implement educational reforms, he held a series of speeches to professors and teachers about the purpose of educational work, to the parents about raising children and to school pupils about the importance of the struggle for the national being. He delivered to the school principals lists of subjects that should be covered in these anticommunist courses and brochures with titles such as *Our Peasantry and Communism*, *Patriarch Varnava against Communism*, *The Soviet Union Is Not Russia* and *The Bloody List of Communist Atrocities*.

<sup>77</sup> The speech by the president of the city council of Belgrade: “Beograd je bio i ostao najmirniji grad!”, “Sami ćemo sebe sopstvenim snagama odbraniti”- Govor Dragog Jovanovića radnicima, službenicima i činovnicima Direkcije tramvaja i osvetljenja o potrebi”, *Novo vreme*, 3rd March 1942, 3. “Predsednik beogradske opštine obilazi gradske ustanove: “Moramo obezbediti sebi mesto u Novoj Evropi” izjavio je g. Dragi Jovanović”, *Novo vreme*, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1942, 3.

<sup>78</sup> For more details see: M. Mraović, “Kolaboracionistička štampa ‘Vlade narodnog spasa’ o ciljevima nove privredne politike”, *Vojno-istorijski glasnik*, 2 (2016), 126–155.

at the general population and the peasantry as the dominant social group. In his numerous analyses of the country's economic situation, he instructed the people to follow the German leadership in their renewal efforts. Anticommunism, anti-Semitism, assigning blame for dragging the Kingdom of Yugoslavia into the war, glorification of the Government of National Salvation and German aid to the Serbian people, and the encouragement of agricultural production made up the bulk propaganda work in most of Olčan's public speeches and proclamations published in the press. Minister Olčan was particularly active in national meetings, together with the Minister of National Economy, Dr. Milorad Nedeljković.

### *Formation and work of the Department for State Propaganda and its relationship with the German propaganda apparatus in occupied Serbia*

The Department of State Propaganda was formed after the "Government of National Salvation" within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.<sup>79</sup> There was some continuity with the prewar Central Press Bureau, from which it inherited its organization, operational methods and some of the capable personnel. Since a part of the Central Press Bureau continued to operate during the war in emigration, as part of the exiled government, we cannot confirm the existence of complete continuity.

### *Organization and funding*

The Department of State Propaganda undergo any major organizational changes in the entire occupation period, excluding the expansion of the jurisdiction and office of certain departments in accordance with the needs of the Department and German instructions. The prime minister headed the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.<sup>80</sup> Organizational sections within the Presidency were:

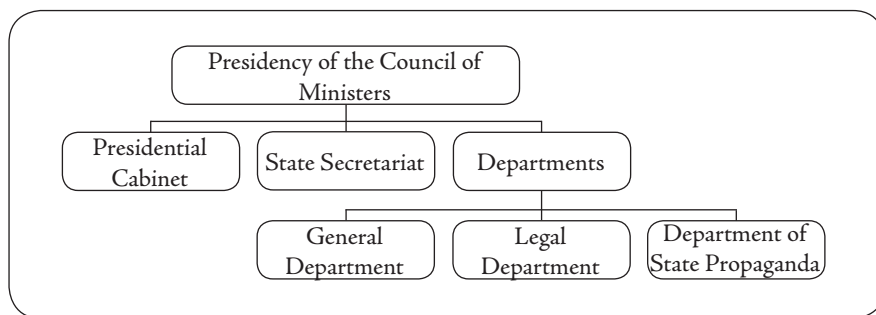
---

<sup>79</sup> Dr. Lazar Prokić, chief of the Department of General Propaganda, in a report to the Extraordinary Commissar for Personnel regarding problems in the work of the Department of Propaganda, stated the motives of the Government behind its establishment: "...The need for such a department, under the direct command of the Prime Minister, showed the psychological state of the Serbian people after the recent events. Namely, it showed the need for a well thought-out, professionally executed and efficiently implemented propaganda behind the operational actions of the armed squads in the field in order to firstly make Serbian people come back to their senses, and later, to push it in the direction best suited for the contemporary geopolitical state of Serbia and its occupational status." MA, Group of funds Nda, K 72, num. of register 1/2-1, 2,3,4, Report of Dr. Lazar Prokić to the Extraordinary Commissar for Personnel regarding problems in the work of the Department of Propaganda, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1942.

<sup>80</sup> The rulebook about the jurisdiction and workings of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, *Službene novine*, Vol. 90 of 16<sup>th</sup> November 1943. The rulebook was passed based

the Presidential Cabinet, State Secretariat and three departments: the General, Legal and the Department of State Propaganda.<sup>81</sup>

*Diagram showing the organization  
of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in 1943*



In the autumn of 1941, the Department of State Propaganda<sup>82</sup> was composed of: the General Secretariat, Administrative Section, Section for General (Field) Propaganda, Section for Press, Radio and Film and the Section for Theater and Performances.<sup>83</sup> At the end of 1941, preparations were made for the formation of the institution “Zemlja i rad” intended to popularize the policies of the “Government of National Salvation” and Prime Minister Nedić among the peasantry. The mentioned institution was organizationally a part of the Section for General (Field) Propaganda. After the establishment of the Montenegro Section at the end of 1943, there were no further large-scale expansions of jurisdictions and offices of the individual sections.

---

on Article 14 of the Regulation regarding the organization of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers M. s. num. 1009 from 15<sup>th</sup> April 1943.

<sup>81</sup> According to Article 19 of the rulebook about the jurisdiction and workings within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the head of the Department of Propaganda signed all acts and resolutions as “Chief of State Propaganda”, and the decisions he passed on the special orders or authorization of the President of the Council of Ministers with: “On the orders (authorization) of the President of the Council of Ministers – Chief of State Propaganda”.

<sup>82</sup> Mraović, *Propaganda*, A. Stojanović, M. Mraović, “Uvodna studija” In *Kolaboracionistička štampa u Srbiji 1941–1944* [Summary: Collaborationist press in Serbia 1941–1944] (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 2015), 10–84.

<sup>83</sup> By the decision of the Council of Commissioners of 16<sup>th</sup> August 1941, the Department of Propaganda was assigned tasks related to the press, radio, film, theater and sports. The Section for Physical Education was briefly within the jurisdiction of the Department of Propaganda in the beginning of the occupation, after which it was incorporated into the Ministry of Social Policy and Public Health, and from January 1942 it was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education.

*Diagram showing the organization of the Section for State Propaganda  
(with section duties) in 1943*

<b>Section for State Propaganda</b>	
General secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Implementation of internal work organization of all sections.</li> <li>-Collection of documents concerning the national issue.</li> <li>-Collection of documents and data concerning the position of the Serbian population.</li> <li>-Maintaining a relationship with distinguished experts from all areas of national life.</li> </ul>
Administrative Section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Directing the entire administration.</li> <li>-Records of staff from the Department of State Propaganda and handling personnel matters.</li> <li>-Managing the library that included books, magazines, papers and other materials used for propaganda purposes.</li> <li>-Control of supplies and expenses for the special needs of the Department of State Propaganda.</li> </ul>
Section for General (Field), Social and Rural Propaganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Oral propaganda via public lectures and their organization in the country.</li> <li>-Maintaining a relationship with county and district educational institutions.</li> <li>-Dissemination of propaganda materials among the population.</li> <li>-Gathering information about potential foreign propaganda within the population and its suppression.</li> <li>-Giving instructions to correspondents from the Department of State Propaganda in county principalities and to correspondents abroad and receiving their reports about important events.</li> <li>-Economic-collective, hygienic and national propaganda in rural areas.</li> <li>-Informing the peasantry about all important issues regarding public life, organizing courses and educational lectures for agricultural workers – the institution “Zemlja i rad”.</li> </ul>
Section for Press, Radio and Film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Monitoring the domestic and foreign press</li> <li>-Creating and publishing the “Foreign Press Review”.</li> <li>-Preparing materials for the domestic press.</li> <li>-Working on creating journalistic materials: printing books, brochures, posters and other materials.</li> <li>-Preparing the necessary materials and managing all tasks related to national and cultural propaganda via radio and film.</li> </ul>
Section for Theater and Peagantry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Implementing national and cultural propaganda through theater.</li> <li>-Keeping records of the entire staff of the National theater in Belgrade and local theaters in the country.</li> <li>-Supervising the work of public and private theaters.</li> <li>-Reviewing and selecting theater literature.</li> <li>-Monitoring the holding and organizing of all public functions and concerts of artistic nature.</li> </ul>
Montenegro Section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Organizing lectures, popularizing the Government of National Salvation and implementing anticommunist propaganda in Montenegro.</li> </ul>

The Ministry of Finance, with the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, made decisions on making changes to the state budget and adoption of projects.<sup>84</sup> Loans for the Section were approved by the president of the Council of Ministers at the suggestion of the chief of State Propaganda.<sup>85</sup> Traces of all loans were burned on the written order of the Prime Minister on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1944, under the control of the chief of staff, General Damjanović, acting chief of propaganda Ljubomir Todorović and propaganda officer Dr. Tihomir Marković.

### *Personnel policy and the legal and material status of public servants*

In the beginning of the occupation, the German authorities were faced with the existence of an extensive apparatus of state administration, which was not well suited to the newly established situation and shrunken Serbian territory. Passing legal regulations to manage the status of state officials and systematize the state apparatus were high on the German priority list, in order to reduce expenses and legally regulate the new system. Loyalty toward the official government was propagated and any form of activity directed against state interests was condemned. The Directive for the Systematization of Jobs in State and Self-Government Administration and the Directive for Removing Nationally Unreliable Employees from Public Service were announced in August 1941. The Council of Ministers made the final decision to lay off some public servants, with the consent of the German authorities. The first in line were the public servants that the committees formed for this purpose found to be members, helpers or sympathizers of the communists and masons. The ones who spread fake news and, by word or deed, caused confusion were also punished, followed by public servants prone to corruption, saboteurs and “those who didn’t care about healing and renewing Serbia as soon as possible”. Other vulnerable categories of public servants included pensioners, on-call public servants and the family members of interned war prisoners, and everyone could lose their monthly income if proven to have a connection to masons and communists or having transmitted mis-

---

<sup>84</sup> Regulation regarding administrative division of land, article 20, *Službene novine*, number 136–A, 26<sup>th</sup> December 1941.

<sup>85</sup> The Council of Commissars approved the loan for the Section. For the needs of implementing particular projects, funding was secured from so-called “open loans”, while for the need of paying out and rewarding individuals “loans for oral propaganda” were brought in. The first loan for the institution “Zemlja i rad” of five million dinars was approved by the government at the end of 1941. The Prime Minister at the end of February 1942 formed the Commission for Purchases in the said institution, which would control spending. During its entire operational time, according to the statements from the report of the Section for State Propaganda, the institution was approved loans amounting to 21 million dinars.

information.<sup>86</sup> During the occupation, the domestic government passed many decrees dismissing “nationally unreliable officials” from public service.<sup>87</sup> Systematization was a form of constant pressure that the German authorities exerted on ministry departments and public servants, who could lose their jobs at any time and, consequently, their family’s livelihood. In August 1941, the Directive on Amending the Decisions on Regulating the Personal Relations of State and Self-Government Public Servants was passed.<sup>88</sup> In the autumn of 1941, all public servants had to fill out forms stating their racial identity (they were supposed to declare whether they were “Arian”) and the racial identity of their ancestors of the first and second degree (in other words, they were asked whether any of their ancestors had been Romani or Jewish). They had to provide the same information for the parents of the spouses of public servants, while the second half of the form concerned membership in Masonic lodges. Submitting these statements was related to giving out passes. Department chiefs were required to confirm the statements of their public servants, which further increased the pressure on the managing staff.

The public servants employed in the Department of State Propaganda were also subject to personnel changes. The employees of the mentioned section were categorized into decree-appointed, full-time, and part-time workers. Also, there was an unofficial division into public servants from the prewar period, which retained their positions in the new Department of Propaganda, and their newly appointed colleagues. Thanks to a preserved report by Svetislav Šumarević (chief of the Administrative Section for propaganda from prewar CPB and chief of the Administrative Section from February 1942 until the liberation), we can form a clear picture of how difficult the position of prewar civil servants who stayed in service during the occupation was. Svetislav Šumarević stated that the vast majority of civil servants “behaved properly and didn’t receive any benefits from the German authorities”. The above suggests that most civil servants, who sorely needed their jobs to secure a livelihood in the wartime situation showed passive resistance, masked by disinterest, slacking, and avoiding contacts with German authorities.

An excellent example of the regime’s attitude toward “old” and “new” civil servants cites the aforementioned report by the chief of the Section for Active

---

<sup>86</sup> *Službene novine*, num. 95, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1941.

<sup>87</sup> Some of the cited decrees were published in *Službene novine*: 12<sup>th</sup> December 1941, 16<sup>th</sup> January 1942, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1942, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1942, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1942, 27<sup>th</sup> March 1942, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1943, 9<sup>th</sup> March 1943, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1943, 27<sup>th</sup> July 1943, 28<sup>th</sup> September 1943, 12<sup>th</sup> October 1943, 12<sup>th</sup> October 1943 and 16<sup>th</sup> June 1944. According to the estimates by Tanasije Dimić, around 10.000 public servants lost their jobs.

<sup>88</sup> *Službene novine*, num. 95, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1941.

(General) Propaganda, Dr. Lazar Prokić.<sup>89</sup> According to Prokić's explanation for the Special Commissar for personnel issues, the need to hire new employees revealed the Government's intention to "purge" the entire administrative apparatus: removing unwanted and unusable elements, employing a sufficient number of unemployed intellectuals, civil workers and journalists "worthy of attention", and removing saboteur elements.

In early 1942, the *Regulation for ending contracts in extraordinary circumstances*<sup>90</sup> was passed, which allowed employers to end their employees' contracts on account of the extraordinary situation. The authorities also passed the *Regulation for appointing of civil servants that had served as volunteers or in Chetnik detachments of the Serbian government*, ensuring a more favorable position for those civil servants, thereby encouraging them to enlist in these units.<sup>91</sup> Based on the surviving "List of staff of the Department of State Propaganda of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers" from the first half of 1942, we can see to what extent the Government's systematization measures impacted the number, composition and financial position of the Department's employees.<sup>92</sup> We can conclude that the Government trusted the newly appointed civil servants more than to the prewar officials, which allowed them to have a better standard of living during the war. In the spirit of creating a new profile of civil servants and the "new order", the Government issued another directive, demanding "unity of thought among civil servants for renewal of Serbia in the spirit of the intentions, decisions and orders of the Government of National Salvation".<sup>93</sup> This was followed by in the Prime Minister's orders of February and March of 1943 to reduce the number of civil servants and lay off those who were not of Serbian nationality.

---

<sup>89</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 72, num. of register 1/2-1, 2,3,4, Report by Dr. Lazar Prokić to the Extraordinary Commissar for Personnel regarding problems in the work of the Department of Propaganda, 1<sup>st</sup> September 1942. Analyzing the reasons for the inefficiency of the Department, a few months after its establishment, Prokić came to the conclusion that "the personnel of the Department of Propaganda were not up to par. Namely, the current personnel of the Department are 100% composed of employees of the previous Press Bureau. That meant that, with a few exceptions /4-5 new people and 2-3 imprisoned civil servants/ its staff was completely unchanged: in personnel, their habits, mentality, work ethics, etc. The democrat and leftist elements in it, Anglophiles, bureaucrats, slackers and saboteurs continue their activities, often with the knowledge of the department chief."

<sup>90</sup> *Službene novine*, num. 17, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1942, p.1.

<sup>91</sup> *Službene novine*, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1943.

<sup>92</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 72, num. of register 29/2-10,11,12., MA, Group of funds Nda, K 1, num. of register 23/2-1, A letter by an unnamed civil servant of the Department of Propaganda for the President of the Council of Ministers from 10<sup>th</sup> April 1942.

<sup>93</sup> *Službene novine*, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1942.



The “Government of National Salvation” didn’t manage to completely reform and adjust the administrative apparatus to its needs until the end of the occupation, even though the Prime Minister personally sent appeals to the ministers on multiple occasions. In addition to repressive measures against civil servants, the Government also applied motivational measures, especially during 1944.<sup>94</sup> The Government professed itself to be in favor of the German demands in order to gain German trust, but also to ease the position of many civil servants who would have otherwise lost their jobs, so they wouldn’t join resistance movements.

*“Propaganda teams” and collaboration with representatives of the German propaganda apparatus*

The organizational sections of the Department of State Propaganda were a type of “propaganda team” headed by section chiefs. It’s evident that the differences in the structure of these teams and the status of prewar and wartime civil servants impacted the quality of their work and their propaganda results. The head of the Department was Đorđe Perić, who was active during the entire occupation period until September 1944, when he was replaced by Ljubomir Todorović. Perić’s credibility was brought into question only a few months after he came into office. The board of the Anticommunist League filed a complaint to the Department of Special Police, stating that it doubted the ability of Dr. Đorđe Perić to support the realization of the loans from the Anticommunist League and implement the anticommunist program in the field, also accusing him of abetting the obstruction of the league. These allegations must have originated from Ljotić’s supporters and been motivated by prewar clashes between Perić and Ljotić, after the members of the Yugoslav Action (Jugoslovenska akcija) left the Zbor movement. The fact that the complaint, filed on 26<sup>th</sup> January, wasn’t taken into consideration until 4<sup>th</sup> June 1942 testifies to the importance that the Department of Special Police attached to these allegations; however, the German Security Police (Sicherheitspolizei) insisted on this.<sup>95</sup>

At first, a key figure in the Department was Perić’s Chief of Staff, Jovan Popović, who was replaced by Slobodan Katić. Katić would stay in this office until he was killed in the Allied bombing on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1944.

Throughout the occupation, the General Secretariat was in charge of organizing the operations of all sections, gathering data about the position of the Serbian population and maintaining relations with prominent experts from all areas of national life. Miloš Milošević served as Secretary General from Oc-

---

<sup>94</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 90, num. of register 43/1-1.

<sup>95</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 131, Φ 1, num. of register 19/1-2.

tober 1941 until the autumn of 1942.<sup>96</sup> The duty of the secretary general was later performed by Ljubomir Todorović for some time (appointed at the end of 1943). Rudolf Pečnik, a Slovene, was the secretary of the Department. Most civil servants in the Department were prewar employees. Miloš Milošević began propaganda work as secretary general. In the spring of 1942, he set up the editorial office of the *Srpski narod* newspaper.<sup>97</sup> He presented himself as the deputy editor-in-chief, even though he single-handedly edited and published the paper with an independent editorial office consisting of part-time propaganda officers and freelance and temporary associates. The Administrative Section performed administrative duties, carried out all orders and directives issued by the Prime Minister and the Chief of the Department of State Propaganda and delivered them to the people in charge, handed office supplies and other needs via office administrators, and organized the library inherited from the CPB. These administrative duties were carried out by Dušan Milojević (retired after three months), Dr. Danilo Pavlović and Svetislav Šumarević from February of 1942 until the end of the occupation. Most civil servants in the section were prewar staff. The Section for General (Field), Social and Rural Propaganda was, with the Section for Press, Radio and Film, the most productive during the entire occupation period. In the first occupation, Dr. Lazar Prokić served as the chief of the Section for General Propaganda.<sup>98</sup> Dr. Lazar Prokić was one of the most active members of the Department of State Propaganda in 1941 and 1942. He wrote newspaper articles signed without an alias and published daily texts with anticommunist, anti-Masonic, and anti-Semitic contents.<sup>99</sup> In the autumn of 1941, he handled preparations and organization of an anti-mason exhibit in col-

---

<sup>96</sup> In the autumn of 1942, Miloš Milošević was appointed Chief of Section for Press.

<sup>97</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 1, num. of register 27/2–5. Miloš Milošević in a letter to the chief of the Section for Propaganda of 25<sup>th</sup> September 1942 mentions his duties as chief secretary and deputy editor-in-chief of *Srpski narod*.

<sup>98</sup> This section was also called the Section for Journalism and the Section for Field and Active Propaganda.

<sup>99</sup> AJ, 110, Φ.num. 1706. Indictment against Lazar Prokić. It read: "Dr. Lazar Prokić - chief of propaganda in the Prime Ministry – organized and gave directives to his subordinates for greatest possible success in the fight against NLM; in Valjevo he held on 23<sup>th</sup> May 1942 the lecture "Tri rata u Srbiji"; "Dr. Lazar Prokić was the most prominent collaborator with German occupiers and was directly under their command. Even before the fall of Yugoslavia, he was a member of the Anti-Comintern movement, member of NSDAP, and a Gestapo secret agent, so he systematically undermined the foundations of Yugoslavia in preparation for its downfall. When Yugoslavia's surrender was complete, Dr. Lazar Prokić was already a prominent figure in the fascist bloc. Not only did he direct others towards those actions, he also, through many articles in the contemporary papers *Obnova*, *Novo vreme*, *Ponedeljnik* and other publications, stated clearly and unambiguously his sympathy and love for the Germans, and hatred and antagonism for the national movement and the United Nations".

laboration with Đorđe Perić, Steva Klujčić and German propaganda authorities. He chose and published brochures, printed various flyers and posters, and made deals with the press. According to the mentioned Svetislav Šumarević's report, the original idea of forming a center for farmers in Belgrade where he would occasionally bring householders from various parts of Serbia to get to know the president and members of the government, their politics and the entire newly formed situation originated from Prokić. Prokić was taken down from his position right before finishing preparations for the new anti-mason exhibit in summer of 1942. He was soon dismissed from the Section for General Propaganda in autumn of 1942. Svetislav Šumarević suggests that he was taken down likely due to Klujčić's complaints to the German authorities.<sup>100</sup>

After the dismissal of Prokić, Živojin Ranković briefly served as the chief of the Section for General Propaganda, and was later replaced by Ljubomir Todorović. Todorović continued publishing brochures and dispersing flyers. He organized many lectures in the interior of the country, especially agricultural courses in villages and small towns in February and March 1943. During the summer of 1943, he moved the Belgrade anticommunist exhibition to Kragujevac and Požarevac. At the end of the same year, Vojin Drvendžija was appointed the chief of the Department of General Propaganda.<sup>101</sup> Together with Dr. Tihomir Marković, a propaganda officer, he organized a Serbian anticommunist exhibition as part of a larger exhibition organized by the Germans in Belgrade. After the bombings of Belgrade on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> April 1944, the management of field propaganda installed a small printing press in the village of Jajinci for printing flyers and shorter publications in case of a new bombardment. Vojin Drvendžija oversaw its installation and managed the printing operations.

The Section for Field Propaganda was regularly instructed to collaborate with German propaganda institutions. Besides the attaché Otto Mitterhammer,<sup>102</sup> a regular visitor of the section was the German officer Hengster, an associate of *Novo vreme*. In every county in Serbia, the propaganda section had a correspondent attached to the county authorities, who received direc-

---

<sup>100</sup> Soon after his dismissal, Prokić regained influence with the German administration. He spent some time in Berlin editing a Serbian paper together with Boža Z. Marković. After Nedić's visit to Hitler, he regained his monthly paycheck and monthly support for the paper. In the middle of November of 1943, he brought to Belgrade John Emery, who held lectures against Churchill's England.

<sup>101</sup> Vojin Drvendžija served as the chief of the Section for General Propaganda up until September 1944, when he left the country. He was replaced by Velibor Protić, a correspondent from Užice. Protić remained in that position for less than a month.

<sup>102</sup> Otto Mitterhammer, the press attaché of the German embassy in Belgrade stayed for the entire duration of the occupation at the position of an attaché and left Serbia a few days before the liberation.

tives from the chief of general or field propaganda. The number of prewar civil servants employed in the Section for General Propaganda, proportional to the number of employees during the occupation, was quite low compared to other sections. This shows that the local authorities tended to trust more the civil servants they had hired themselves and how much importance they assigned to propaganda fieldwork and propaganda activities in rural areas .

The institution “Zemlja i rad”, as part of the Section for General (Field), Social and Rural propaganda, was very active during the entire period of the occupation. According to the already mentioned report by Svetislav Šumarević, it was Otto Mitterhammer who suggested to Dr. Lazar Prokić to create a center for the peasantry. “Mitterhammer’s exponent Stevo Klujčić was appointed the director of this center, but that didn’t reduce the scope of Prokić’s involvement in this organization.<sup>103</sup> The institution “Zemlja i rad” compiled files with data about all persons who visited Belgrade, and the files, besides personal information, included photographs of the visits at the time of arrival, departure, walking in the city, any audiences with the Prime Minister and so on. Some of these photographs were published in the press.<sup>104</sup> Stevan Klujčić was also in charge of a special segment of implementing propaganda among the rural youth and sending groups of young men from the countryside to agricultural courses in Germany from the autumn of 1942. Keeping in mind that the institution “Zemlja i rad”, in accordance with its duties, had great expenses because it had to pay for the accommodation of these visiting groups of farmers, organize propaganda programs and print propaganda material, the Commission for purchases in this institution constantly struggled to control loan spending.<sup>105</sup> Problems in the Commission’s work and its unsolved relations with the managing staff led to the need request more financial recourses to fund the elaborate propaganda network of “Zemlja i rad”.

---

<sup>103</sup> The selection of farmers was done, in agreement with the presidents of rural municipalities and district authorities, by an officer from the organization “Zemlja i rad” called Aleksandar Dačić. The first group of “guests of the Prime Minister” was brought to Belgrade on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1942, on the anniversary of the signing of the Tripartite Pact. Around 80 farmers were selected, one from every village in one district in Mačva. After this first group, Prokić held lectures for every other arriving group in a small hall at the Kolarac University. The lectures were deemed very important, as attested by the fact that the lecturing duties were taken over by none other than Đorđe Perić after the dismissal of Prokić. Also, it was mandatory to show movies of cultural and economic content and visit certain institutions in Belgrade, including the cinema and the National Theater. MA, Group of funds Nda, K 3, num. of register 1/3–8.

<sup>104</sup> MA, Group of funds Chetnic Archive, K 269, num. of register 38/1–28.

<sup>105</sup> The board consisted of three members: Svetislav Šumarević, Dr. Alojz Berce and Dr. Dušan Lekić.

### *The Section for Press, Radio and Film*

The regime invested significant resources in propaganda via the press, radio and film, reflecting the needs of the German propaganda apparatus. The Section for press was in regular contact with the German authorities and received instructions and assignments from them. The first chief of the Section for press was Miloš Mladenović, who served quite briefly before becoming the editor of the *Novo vreme* newspaper. He was replaced by Dr. Velimir Dimić.<sup>106</sup> Velimir Dimić's assistant was Naum Simić. The press section prepared the printing notifications from the Prime Minister's Cabinet, various ministries and the offices of public institutions, in addition to preparing articles and other materials.<sup>107</sup> The Chief of the Press Section kept a correspondence with the institutions and personnel who worked with the Department of State Propaganda. Besides his regular duties, he visited the *Rudnik* agency to gather more detailed news, the press department at the German embassy and, sometimes, the editorial offices of the papers to which the propaganda material was delivered every day.<sup>108</sup> He had an everyday obligation, at noon, to attend press conferences together with the representatives of German authorities.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Dr. Vladimir Dimić was, in addition to being the chief of the Section for Press, a member of the High Education Council of the Ministry of Education, High Sports Council and Administration of the Kolarac Foundation. He occasionally visited the meetings of the Administration and held propaganda lectures at the Kolarac Public University. He also attended conferences dedicated to propaganda in the press and in certain institutions. He regularly contributed to *Novo vreme* and *Srpski narod*, publishing articles under his full name. MA, Group of funds Nda, K 1, num. of register 28/2-1, Letter from Dr. Vladimir Dimić to the chief of the Section for State Propaganda of 25<sup>th</sup> September 1942.

<sup>107</sup> News from the German organization *DNB* and overviews of German papers were published in: *Das Reich*, *Berliner Börsenzeitung*, *Südost-Echo*, *Völkischer Beobachter*, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Tagepost* from Graz, *Pariser Zeitung*, *Deutsches Volksblatt* from Novi Sad, *Der Neue Tag* from Prague, weekly paper *Deutschland Post*, reviews *Die Woche*, *Deutsche Zeitung in Croatien*, *Neue Ordnung* from Zagreb, *Gernzwacht* from Osijek and Belgrade *Donnauzeitung*. News from the Italian agencies "Steffani" and "La Corrispondenza" were published and overviews from papers: *Il Popolo d'Italia*, *Resto Del Carlino*, *Corriere Della Sera*, *Il Giornale d'Italia* and *Piccolo* from Trieste. Overviews from Slovenian *Jympa*, Bulgarian *Вечеру* and *Нове вечеру*, French paper *Echo d'Nansi*, Turkish *Tasviri Efkar*, papers from Czech protectors: *Народна политика*, *Чешке слово*, *Лудове новини*, Hungarian papers: *Magyar Nemzet*, *Regeli Magyarssag*, *Magyarorzag*, *Esti Usjag*, *Regeli Usjag* and *Figet Lenseg* were regularly published.

<sup>108</sup> Original articles were published with the full signatures of their authors, as were the articles translated from German newspapers.

<sup>109</sup> The press conferences were held in the National Assembly building until 1944. The conferences were led by a special officer – the Sonderführer from the German propaganda division, and they were often attended by officer Tangel, president of the German organization "DNB", and Hengster, the Sonderführer for theater.

The German authorities banned the work of independent journalists and news agencies and started publishing strictly censored papers and publications. The main pillar of the pro-German propaganda policy was the Serbian Association of Journalists (“Srpsko novinarsko udruženje”). One needed permission of the Military Commander for printing any kind of product with words or pictures, like brochures, posters, flyers, and cards. New editions of books of any kind (novels, academic writings, and schoolbooks) were submitted to the military commander for approval; the authorization to proceed with publishing could be valid for a limited time and could also be rescinded at any moment. People of Jewish or Romani nationality and their spouses were banned from publishing and printing propaganda books and texts.

After the promotion of Velimir Dimić into the head of the Legal Department of the government, in autumn of 1942, Miloš Milošević was appointed as chief of the Press Section. During that period, Naum Simić attended the press conferences with the representatives of the German authorities as a representative of the section. He transmitted the directives and notifications that he received at these conferences to the chief of the Section for Propaganda and the chief for the Press Section.

The Section for Radio, headed by Omer Kajmaković, worked independently in the initial period of the occupation. At the beginning of 1942, Aleksandar Stojković, a part-time propaganda associate, publisher of a few pro-German brochures before the occupation and previously the secretary of the editorial office of the *Novo vreme*, was appointed the Section chief. The Press section was expanded in the autumn of 1942 with the sections for film and radio, or rather, it continued doing the work of the previous Section for radio. As the chief of the radio service and the connection between the Section for State Propaganda and the radio station of Belgrade, Aleksandar Stojković, from the beginning of 1942 until May 1944 and during the entire time of service in Belgrade, oversaw radio lectures in the Serbian language which he procured from various people, mainly civil servants. The general order for all lectures was issued by Velibor Jonić on behalf of the prime minister on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1942, who invited all civil servants from Belgrade who he thought should hold lectures to a meeting in the hall of the Kolarac Foundation and gave them specific guidelines for work. Many of those lectures Stojković published in press. It's interesting to note that most civil servants in the Section for press and radio were prewar employees and had been hired in the period between 1937 and 1940.

The Section for Film monitored and organized cinematographic work as part of the Section for Press, Radio and Film.<sup>110</sup> In mid-March 1943, the

---

<sup>110</sup> The country's cultural life, primarily theater and film, were placed under the full control of the German and domestic government on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1941, by transferring the jurisdiction

section began cooperating with the Section for Spiritual Culture of the Section for Higher education and National Culture of the Ministry of Education and Faith on the censorship of movies intended for students. Propaganda in the realm of movie production, distribution and screening was regulated and followed by a few German occupation institutions: a substation of the Main Administration for Film of the National Socialist Party branch in Belgrade, the Section for Propaganda Jugoistok and the Propaganda Department (Section) Serbia.<sup>111</sup> The Propaganda Section of Serbia with its headquarters in Belgrade had subdivisions for: radio, press, theater, night bars and active propaganda. The Subdivision IIIc of the Third Department of the Security Police Commander and the Security Service did intelligence work in the fields of culture, education and publishing. Its purview included: high and vocational schools, theater, art and film, museums, libraries, press and radio, general publications and other.<sup>112</sup>

### *Section for Theater and Public Events*

Given that the occupiers put a premium on reviving theater life in Serbia, jurisdiction over the National Theater and other theaters in Serbia was transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Department of State Propaganda at the end of 1941 and absorbed into the Section for Theater and Public Events. Jovan Popović, who was also the director of the National Theater, was the head of the said section. The Ministry of Education lost a great deal of influence on cultural life in such a move, having only the final word in appointing the director of drama and opera, choosing the theater repertoire and the evaluation of the

---

over the National Theater from the Ministry of Education and Faith to the Department of State Propaganda.

<sup>111</sup> The Propaganda Department (Section) Serbia later became an independent institution under the Section for Propaganda of the High Command of the Armed Forces. The section was managed by Captain Julius Lippert, who answered to the military commander in Serbia. He received professional advice and orders about enforcing propaganda from the Ministry of Propaganda in the Reich or the Section for Propaganda of the High Command of the Armed Forces, MA, microfilmed archive of the structure of the National archive in, NAV-N-T-501, 264/196–420.

<sup>112</sup> SD was led by the deputy chief of the central command, Colonel Ludwig Teichmann. The head of the Third Section was SS Major Hans Rexeisen, who was replaced in July 1943 by Josef Heintschel. The Subdivision IIIc was handled by Second Lieutenant and later Lieutenant Heinz Schröter. The activities of SD in the National Theater consisted of following its operations and certain individuals, as well as interfering with career politics in the management of the National Theater.

artistic value of the chosen pieces.<sup>113</sup> The Department for theater and artistry of the German Section for propaganda Jugoistok was in charge of regulating, organizing and following theater life in occupied Serbia. On behalf of the German authorities, control over the National Theater and its work was done by Dr. Hans Krämer as the head of the Propaganda Section "S". The Subdivision IIIc of the Third Department of the Security Police Commander and Security Service were also involved in controlling theater life.

### *Montenegro Section*

The Montenegro Section was formed at the end of 1943 as part of the Department of State Propaganda. At the time, more precisely in September of 1943, after the arrival of the German authorities, preparations were made to expand the authority of the "Government of National Salvation" to include Montenegro.<sup>114</sup> Veliša Domazetović was appointed as the section chief and given Mirko Vlahović as an associate because the latter was an experienced propagandist who had held lectures about Montenegro in various towns in Serbia. There is a surviving order from the Prime Minister authorizing Mirko Vlahović to be paid 40.000 dinars for holding twenty lectures on "Montenegro from Occupation until Today" in thirteen towns in Serbia.<sup>115</sup> The staff of the section consisted of freelance associates of the Department of State Propaganda, from which they received instructions. The editor of *Cetinjski vjesnik*, Miroslav Dubok, was also hired as an associate. Šumarević stresses the connection between this section and the followers of Ljotić, and states that Domazetović and Vlahović were directed to work with Mihajlo Olčan and that the followers of Ljotić bought from the section all photo and text material concerning the campaign against the communists. That material was used for setting up an anticommunist exhibition, opened in Belgrade on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1944, which was organized by the Department of State Propaganda. Ratko Parežanin, an official in the volunteer staff, was paid more than half a million dinars for their actions in Sandžak.

---

<sup>113</sup> AC, Г-3, ф. 62, 35-186-41.

<sup>114</sup> MA, Group of funds Chetnic Archive, K 146, Ф 2, Д 50/1; K 146, Ф 3, Д 2; Reports from the command of YViH, Gorska headquarters number 148 from 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> September 1943.

<sup>115</sup> According to the cited receipt from 25<sup>th</sup> February 1944, Mirko Vlahović's compensation was determined "on the suggestion of the Chief of State Propaganda, and also based on the evident need to explain to the people of Serbia the political situation in Montenegro, as well as the suffering endured by those Serbian people at the hands of the communists". MA, Group of funds Nda, K 90, num. of register 8/1-1.



### *Anticommunist League*

“To supplement its anticommunist fieldwork, the Department of State Propaganda formed a league of “experienced anticommunist fighters” known as the Anticommunist League.<sup>116</sup> The Anticommunist League was given the special task of mobilizing educators in the anticommunist struggle.<sup>117</sup> The means of propaganda that the Anticommunist League used in its work varied. Its members regularly expressed their views on communism in the press. In addition to “firsthand” portrayals of the life of Partisans by members of the movement, they also published testimonies of surviving members of the volunteer squads<sup>118</sup> and the citizens who had survived torture in Partisan camps. These efforts to “expose” the ideology and organization of the communist movement were supplemented with recruiting members of the volunteer command and league members from the interior of the country.<sup>119</sup> The Anticommunist League played a vital role in preparing the exhibition dedicated to the struggle against communism. The opening of the anticommunist exhibition took place on the anniversary of the “Government of National Salvation” on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1942 in Belgrade, in order to refute, primarily in the capital, the claims of communist propaganda that the communists were fighters for the national cause.<sup>120</sup> The anticommunist exhibi-

<sup>116</sup> M. Babić, “Osnivačka skupština Antikomunističke lige u Beogradu”, *Novo vreme*, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1941, 5. The founding assembly held on 30<sup>th</sup> of November was attended by: the vice-chancellor of the University Dr. Nikola Popović, Mr. Bogdanović, assistant to the Minister of Education in retirement, Dr. Dimitrije Najdanović, editor of *Naša Borba*, Dr. Miloš Mladenović, editor of *Novo vreme* and Dr. Nikola Marinović, editor of *Obnova*. The members of the Assembly were selected, and the secretary to the assistant of the Minister of Education, Sava Milutinović, was appointed its head. Telegrams were sent to Nedić and the Volunteer Command. The management of the League was chosen, led by Milovan Popović, as well as members of administrative committee: legal intern Hrvoje Magazinović, Sava Milutinović, Dr. Tihomir Marković, journalist Mladen Babić, student Veselin Kesić, Dr. Đoko Slijepčević – assistant professor at the University, Al. Andrić – senate councilor, student Vladan Bijelić, officer of the National Bank Obrad Radičević and officer of the county administration Ljuba Marković. The supervising board consisted of Đorđe Perić, Boško Bogdanović, Dr. Miloš Mladenović, Dr. Najdanović, Dr. N. Marinković and Branimir Maleš, officer of the Ministry of Education.

<sup>117</sup> M. Đ. Popović, “Povodom zbora prosvetnih radnika”, “Pitanje mobilisanja prosvetnih radnika i rad na borbi protiv komunizma”, *Novo vreme*, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1941, 3.

<sup>118</sup> “Dobrovoljci osuđeni na streljanje pobjegli ispred komunističkih mitraljeza”, *Novo vreme*, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1941, 3.

<sup>119</sup> *Novo vreme*, 10<sup>th</sup> February 1942, 3.

<sup>120</sup> “Otvaranje Antikomunističke izložbe: “Još jednom je životna snaga srpskog naroda došla do svog punog izražaja”, *Novo vreme*, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1942, 3. The opening was attended by a representative of the Military Commander of Serbia, representatives of the Administrative Command of the Section for Propaganda SO, representatives of the German police and the

tion remained in Belgrade until the end of November 1942, and then the exhibition committee decided to move it into the interior of the country to reach wide national masses. The plan was to, in all bigger towns, organize group visits of peasants and citizens from the surrounding areas: in Niš, Leskovac, Kragujevac and Užice, and in all bigger counties and districts in Serbia. At the closing of the exhibition, the chief of the Department of State Propaganda received journalists to explain to them the success of the exhibition and the benefits of its tour in the towns in the interior for informing the population.<sup>121</sup>

### *Work environment of the Department of State Propaganda*

The first problem the management of the Department faced was finding adequate premises and sorting out the archives of the Central Press Bureau from the prewar period and the archives compiled during the work of the Press Bureau during the Council of Commissars. At the beginning of September 1941, the German authorities gave the Department of State Propaganda the former offices of the Central Press Bureau in the building of the Ministry of Agriculture (14–16 Kneza Miloša Velikog Street), which included a library, file archive and photo archive. On the orders of Đorđe Perić, the Department's staff gathered and sorted out the material that had remained scattered and in disorder after the German raid: books, negatives from the photo archive, an extensive document collection, clippings from foreign and domestic papers, and the bulletins of various intelligence agencies.<sup>122</sup> Immediately after assuming duty, Đorđe Perić moved his office of the Invalids' Center to the premises of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was followed by organized constant relocations and finding offices for the civil servants. After it was organized, the entire archive was moved in November 1941 into the building of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The offices of the institution of "Zemlja i rad" were at 34 Knjeginja Ljubica Street.<sup>123</sup>

---

German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, most leaders of the Government of National Salvation and the chiefs of the editorial offices of domestic papers.

<sup>121</sup> "Zatvaranje Antikomunističke izložbe u Beogradu. Komunisti nisu bili nacionalni borci. Izložba odlazi u unutrašnjost zemlje." *Novo vreme*, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1942, 3.

<sup>122</sup> Svetislav Šumarević, Đorđe Đorđević and Anton Tiran handled the collection and organization of the Archive.

<sup>123</sup> The director of the institution rented these premises from the German authorities, which managed confiscated Jewish real estate.

*Cooperation of the Department of State Propaganda with other institutions in the domestic government system and with German institutions*

The Department of State Propaganda cooperated most closely with the Ministry of Education and Faith. The joint propaganda efforts of these two institutions and the realization of the established ideological-political goals were sometimes difficult due to the overlapping jurisdictions and powers in some areas of cultural-educational life. Oftentimes the implementation of “educational” goals boiled down to indoctrination. Occasional conflicts impeded the Government’s effective operation and also had an impact on the struggle to secure some privileges and prerogatives from the German authorities. In propagating the fight against communism, the Department of State Propaganda and the Ministry of Education and Faith collaborated with the Special Police of the Administration of the City of Belgrade, as well as with the Serbian State Guard.

An obligatory factor in the propaganda activity of Nedić’s administration was the Ministry of Economy subordinated to the Office of the High Representative for Economy in Serbia. Based on the German example, the National Renewal Service was established; efforts were made to devise a national economy plan, favoring the agricultural cooperative concept, return to the countryside and the creation of a state rooted in farmers’ co-ops. The dissemination of economic propaganda was coordinated with the German plans for the economic exploitation of Serbian resources. Great importance was given to economic policies and propagating investments in economic development, as well as establishing cooperative organizations.<sup>124</sup>

The propaganda section of Jugoistok worked directly with the Department of State Propaganda, checked and censored all materials intended for further distribution, redacted and censored articles and speeches intended for the representatives of domestic government and propaganda officers. The publishing company of A.D. “Jugoistok” prepared printed materials: brochures, publications, and posters and passed them on to the Department of State Propaganda for further use. The occupation propaganda network also worked with other government departments and individuals hired, as needed, for various propaganda jobs. According to the preserved data from the “Jugoistok” propaganda section of the Serbian Command from 1943, there were 117 collaborators from

---

<sup>124</sup> For more details see: M. Ristović, “Izopačeni grad u ideologiji srpskih kolaboracionista, 1941–1945” [Summary: A perverted city in the ideology of Serbian collaborators] *Nova srpska politička misao*, XI, 1–4, (2005); Z. Janjetović, *U skladu sa nastalom potrebom...Prinudni rad u okupiranoj Srbiji* [Summary: In accordance with the emerging need...Forced Labor in Occupied Serbia 1941–1944] (Belgrade: Institute for Recent History of Serbia, 2012), Mraović, *Collaborationist press*, 126–155.

the German Group for Active Propaganda.<sup>125</sup> The compensation paid out to those individuals from the Jugoistok propaganda section of the Serbian Command were high compared to others, especially compared to the salaries of the public servants employed at the Department of State Propaganda. Their duties were diverse: translation and proofreading propaganda materials, delivering confidential reports to German authorities, creation of school curricula and book censorship, writing and composing political articles, flyers and brochures, printing, implementing field propaganda by holding lectures in various places in Serbia and radio propaganda, pasting posters, etc.

### *Members of Zbor who influenced the creation propaganda contents and their distribution*

Even though the occupiers officially banned all political parties and movements in the territory of occupied Serbia, the *Zbor* movement was excluded from this rule. Besides Dimitrije Ljotić, other *Zbor* ideologues involved in propaganda efforts included engineer Milosav Vasiljević, Dr. Dimitrije Najdanović and Dr. Đoko Slijepčević. Members of *Zbor* assigned great importance to propaganda amongst the people. General points in their ideology were negation of parliamentary democracy, liberal politics and economic doctrines from the West, individualism, and glorifying traditional values, the way of Saint Sava, Serbian farmer, collectivism and the cult of the leader. Dimitrije Ljotić, as the main ideologist and spiritual leader of *Zbor*, led a well-built propaganda campaign through his organization and the Department of State Propaganda. In most domestic papers, as well as in the foreign press, he was often portrayed as a pillar of support to the prime minister and his advisor. “Beli orlovi”, an educational-propaganda unit within *Zbor*, also spread propaganda through oral and written word, disseminated propaganda brochures and through articles by the youth or citizens who were not members.<sup>126</sup> Ljotić saw the “European duty” of safeguarding the German state as a Serbian duty.<sup>127</sup> At the same time, in the battle against the “tough and very

---

<sup>125</sup> MA, Group of funds German Archive, K 60, Φ 5, num. of register 2/1–52. Description of work done for the German government was given for everyone, as well as the monetary compensation they were paid after having completed their tasks. Listed as special associates were Dr. Vladimir Vujić (his file included a transcript of the flyer titled “Srbi”), Dr. Đoko Slijepčević (listing the brochures he had written on the orders of the section) and Eugen Mesner, professor from Belgrade (he did translation work and led the Russian editorial, reported on the sessions in Vienna, and made propaganda brochures).

<sup>126</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 3, num. of register 8/3–1, “Raspis br. 17 mesnim organizacijama i povereništvima Belih orlova u zemlji”.

<sup>127</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 50 A, num. of register 19/4–1 Memoir of Dimitrije Ljotić to the Military Commander in Serbia.

aggressive communist organization” in, Serbian territory he popularized helping the German state in its struggle against “barbaric bolshevism”. In one of the interviews he gave to László Hory, a correspondent for the Budapest-based paper of *Esti Kurir*, the leader of *Zbor* was depicted as a “mysterious man, a friend of Nedić’s and a man for the Serbian future”, and his party as a “solid foundation for Prime Minister Nedić”.<sup>128</sup> As the special commissar for the rebuilding of Smederevo, Ljotić held a series of ideologically colored speeches in this capacity and in his propaganda work with Serbian volunteer squads and the youth.<sup>129</sup> During the occupation, the *Naša borba* paper published the greatest number of Ljotić’s speeches and also promoted his writings and books, with the usual anti-Semitic, anti-Masonic, anticommunist and pro-German contents of most of the published contributions (which was also the case with the paper *Zapisi*).

Engineer Milosav Vasiljević, commissar for the Ministry of Economy, wrote numerous propaganda texts and brochures in the interwar period and during the occupation, criticizing Yugoslavia’s interwar policies, democracy and international Judaism.<sup>130</sup> He was also a contributor to the *Prosvetni glasnik* paper. In the first months of the occupation, he also published a brochure titled “How our nation was informed about Soviet rule and communism”.<sup>131</sup> Vasiljević’s book “*Truth about the USSR*” was serialized in *Novo vreme*.<sup>132</sup> He argued for a com-

<sup>128</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 50 A, num. of register 10/4–1. Ljotić’s interview to the correspondent of the Budapest *Esti Kurir* paper László Hory on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1942.

<sup>129</sup> Dimitrije Ljotić never had an official function in the domestic government during the occupation, except serving as the extraordinary commissar for the rebuilding of Smederevo. During the entire occupation, he was an *éminence grise* and used his influence on the *Zbor* members “who worked in domestic institutions, as well as his personal contacts with some functionaries in the occupation administration. Ljotić’s followers in the refugee camp in Ebola began collecting and publishing his papers and works after his death. In emigration, they edited his texts for publication by the Munich publishing house Iskra. The first volume of Ljotić’s writings, *Govori i članci*, was published in April 1948. The published collections of Ljotić’s texts or excerpts include: *Svetska revolucija* (1949), *Iz moga života. Govori i članci* (1952), *U revoluciji i ratu* (1961), *Zakoni života* (1963), *Videlo u tami. Odabrana dela* Vol. 1 (1976), and *Odabrana dela* Vol. 2 in multiple editions. The publisher Nova iskra from New Belgrade published in 2003 Dimitrije Ljotić’s *Sabrana dela* (Collected Works) in 8 volumes, with 701 titles in total, including Ljotić’s personal writings, published columns and texts in the press, lectures, memorandums, dispatches and brochures.

<sup>130</sup> At a public gathering in Valjevo on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1942, Vasiljević spoke to the crowd about the role of international Judaism in world politics. MA, Group of funds Nda, K 50, num. of register 19/1–1.

<sup>131</sup> MA, Group of funds Nda, K 50, num. of register 13/1.

<sup>132</sup> At the end of June 1941, to publicize the book with the same name written by Vasiljević, an excerpt from the Afterword by Dimitrije Ljotić was published: “Istina o Sovjetskoj Rusiji”, *Novo vreme*, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1941, 3. After that, excerpts were published about external politics,

plete change of the work habits and views of the entire people, calling for a “new spirit which must permeate the people and their life”.<sup>133</sup> In Miloslav Vasiljević’s correspondence with Adam Lazarević, a professor at the University of Belgrade, in May of 1943, his analysis of the ideology of the Ravna Gora movement has survived.<sup>134</sup> Miloslav Vasiljević, as an exceptionally active member of *Zbor*, held a series of lectures for at the inmates of the Institution for Forced Education in Smederevska Palanka.<sup>135</sup> The management of the Institution saw the support of prominent Serbian public figures crucial for exerting “deeper political pressure” on their charges.<sup>136</sup>

One of the *Zbor* ideologists, Dr. Đoko Slijepčević, a contributor to the *Naša borba* paper and member of the Board of Directors of the Anticommunist League, was one of the “special” associates of the German Group for Active Propaganda of the “Jugoistok” propaganda section.<sup>137</sup> In one of his articles, Slijepčević analyzed the importance of propaganda and the prerequisites that domestic government had to fulfill to be as effective as possible – talent for propaganda, life and ideological conviction in the truth of what is being propagated, openness, or rather, non-anonymity of the propaganda. Also, behind every pro-

---

industry and work, life in Moscow and the organization of Jews in Moscow: “Spoljna politika SSSR”, excerpts of passages from: M. Vasiljević, *Novo vreme*, 25<sup>th</sup> June 1941, 3; Continuation of publishing of excerpts from Vasiljević’s book, published chapters: “Život u Moskvi” and “Jevreji drže najbolje plaćene položaje u Moskvi”, *Novo vreme*, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1941, 2.; “Industrija i radništvo u SSSR”, *Novo vreme*, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1941, 2.

<sup>133</sup> “Govor g. Milosava Vasiljevića komesara za privredu. Nov duh mora da prožme naš narod i njegov život. ‘Da bismo mogli da organizujemo rad za sve, a to moramo, neophodno je da izmenimo izvesna svoja shvatanja’”, *Novo vreme*, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1941, 1.

<sup>134</sup> In this period, the support of this *Zbor* ideologist for the Chetnik movement was apparent, especially after the gradual shift of the Allied policy and the Allies’ turn to Tito. This movement, according to Vasiljević, could have become a unified Serbian national movement if it resisted the attacks of foreign and internal enemies. MA, Group of funds Nda, K 50, num. of register 4/2–5, Letter from Miroslav Vasiljević to Adam Lazarević, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1943.

<sup>135</sup> Miroslav Vasiljević’s book *Istina o SSSR* (The Truth about the USSR) was mandatory reading, regularly read and interpreted in class. MA, Group of funds Nda, K 169, Φ 3, num. of register 3–2. State commission for determining the crimes of the occupiers and their helpers, Record from the hearing of the former inmate Vesna Butijer, 8<sup>th</sup> February 1945.

<sup>136</sup> During the entire work of the Institution, regular surveys were done to determine the effectiveness of the lectures. Every inmate was asked to state his or her opinion on controversial issues to gauge whether their feelings about the communist ideology had changed. All inmates wrote a report on the subject “My thoughts on the lectures from the Ministry of Education” regarding the lectures held by Velibor Jonić at the Institution on “Materialist and idealist understanding of the world and life”. MA, Group of funds Nda, K 155, Φ 2, num. of register 1–18.

<sup>137</sup> MA, Group of funds German Archive, K 60, Φ 5, num. of register 2/1–52.

paganda campaign, a person of authority had to stand as a guarantor of the truthfulness of what was being propagated. Slijepčević points out the organic development of propaganda as the last prerequisite.<sup>138</sup> He saw Serbia as the key for conquering the Balkans, or rather the “heart of the Balkans”, without which Tito’s attempts to launch a total revolution on the Balkan Peninsula would be pointless.<sup>139</sup>

### *Peculiarities of the content of propaganda*

When analyzing the segments of the propaganda of Nedić’s regime, it can be difficult to distinguish between German propaganda and the local administration’s propaganda because the Department of State Propaganda received guidelines and instructions from the Germans. German propaganda played an important role in the creation of an alternate image of the war reality in Serbia, which was molded to suit the mentality, views and psychological profile of the average Serbian citizen by limiting the propaganda recipients’ possibilities to be informed and creating a distorted image of the ongoing events. The primary goal of all propaganda about the situation in the war theaters was to shift the population’s focus from their everyday problems and the horrors of war in their own backyard. Moving the objects of propaganda away from the reality of war in the occupied Serbia resulted in their susceptibility to influences from other quarters. Those reports were launched when the citizens had to be distracted from the behavior of the occupying army. Obscuring the reality of war decreased the possibility of the citizens joining the resistance movements en masse.

Analyzing the creation of the war image by the domestic propagandists, we mustn’t ignore the fact that most of the population in the occupied Serbia was illiterate and that the literate part of the citizenship was usually concentrated in cities and small towns. This meant that this category of the population had to be reached through radio-propaganda, lectures, assemblies, conferences, posters, and other propaganda methods available to the Department of State Propaganda.

The territory of occupied Serbia, ravaged by the war, a popular uprising and civil war, were painted in a very different light in propaganda. The period of occupation was described as “with the post-war period when the enemies of the new order had to be dealt with”. The premise that the war ended for Serbia in 1941 and that peace, prosperity and the time for the implementation of the so-

---

<sup>138</sup> *Obnova*, 27<sup>th</sup> April 1942,7.

<sup>139</sup> Article by Dr. Đoko Slijepčević: “Poruka dobrovoljaca”, *Novo vreme, Obnova*, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1944, 2.

cial program had come was popularized by the prime minister. The only threats to the living space of New Serbia were the supporters of the “Anglo-American plutocracy” and the “Judeo-Masonic international”. The successes of the Serbian armed forces in joint operations with the German army to destroy communist elements and Partisan units were highlighted. It was also claimed that Germany had won on the Eastern Front and Japan in the Far East. There were reports that the end of the war was near. The Serbian nation was being prepared to enter into New Europe, with the everyday glorification of the German army and the idea of National Socialism. News that could possibly undermine this fabricated image were either not published or conveyed in changed form.

In the eyes of the bearers of propaganda, the war landscape gradually gained a completely different form compared to the original, real situation. Their primary task and final goal was to transmit the vision that they had, or that was imposed upon them, as well as images they had been creating during the entire period of occupation, onto as many recipients of propaganda content as possible, to as many citizens of occupied Serbia as possible. The style of propaganda messages, their language and content were susceptible to change depending on the developments of the war situation.

The image of of this landscape was supplemented with images of the friends and foes of the Serbian people. The support of the Third Reich for Serbia, justification of their allies’ fight for the Lebensraum and attempts to get the people to believe that the victory of the Tripartite Pact was inevitable, writing about everyday progress by the German troops and losses of the Allies were an inevitable part of the front and opening pages in most Belgrade-based papers. To add nuance to the image of the space, there were reports of the work done by the “Government of National Salvation” and its representatives, writings about the actions of the Serbian State Guard against members of the Partisan movement, Kosta Pećinac’s Chetniks, followers of Ljotić, holding meetings, conferences, offering aid to the refugees and the poor, solving economic problems and showing cultural events in Belgrade and Serbia. A certain amount of space was dedicated to the happenings in ISC, mainly in the context of analyzing the politics of the new Ustasha government and their relations with Germany, as well as solving the refugee problem. Providing help to Germany by mobilizing the work services in Serbia and sending workers to Germany was highlighted. In stark contrast to the regular praises of the policies of the German and domestic government and the tendentious portrayal of the situation in the theaters of war, a Crime & Courts section was regularly published in a local newspaper allowing us to track the effects of wartime everyday life on a regular person, who often-times couldn’t cope with the gravity of the situation. At the same time, these crime reports provided evidence to the readers that “life went on as normal”.



The prime minister tried to emphasize cooperation with the Germans to secure as much autonomy as possible for the "Government of National Salvation". The Government professed to be in favor of the German demands in order to gain German trust and to ease the position of public servants as potential members of the resistance movement. Mihailo Olćan also actively participated in the propaganda of the domestic government directed at Germany, especially because his statements carried a genuine conviction in the connection between the German and the Serbian people.

### *Conclusion*

The local administration's propaganda efforts were largely dependent on the direction of German propaganda and the German political apparatus, which to a certain extent diminished its role in society and its creative possibilities and impacted the results of the set goals. The characteristics of propaganda activities were mostly a product of the interwar ideological-political underpinnings that the main ideological postulates used by the government rested on. Keeping in mind that part of the political right wing and Serbian intellectual elite of a national orientation had also been involved in politics and culture in the interwar period, including during the beginning of the occupation cooperation with the German authorities, we can conclude that their prewar dissemination of certain opinions directly affected the political division and contradiction within the later Council of Commissars and the "Government of National Salvation". The propaganda results were heavily dependent on the relations between the members of the Government, who, notwithstanding German directives, often slipped out of control. In this case, propaganda and its effects depended on several factors, but mostly came down to the ability of propaganda agents to justify their view of the socio-political situation and the position of some social categories, as well as the way in which the recipients of propaganda could best be influenced if it was not harmful to German interests. Propaganda contents were censored on a daily basis. All written content intended for publishing in the press or radio-speeches, lectures, national meetings, and various cultural and political events were all tightly controlled.

The local administration's propaganda can be seen as a directed, planned and synchronized activity, partially original and flexible, depending on the circumstances. Some originality can be seen in its direction toward German authorities when there was a need to convince them that some "political maneuvers of the government" were justified or assure them in the Government's unwavering loyalty. Adjustments of propaganda postulates to the given historical circumstances were to an extent successful. Even though the road of Nedić's propaganda was outlined at the beginning of the war, there were occasional di-

vergences from the main direction or changes in opinions, and so some military and political moves of the participants in the war in the Yugoslavian territory that were previously criticized became justified. This doesn't take away from the fact that German influence on the main propaganda streams was constant during the entire period of occupation.

The "Government of National Salvation" continued its propaganda even in the decisive and uncertain moments when its survival was at stake. When it comes to the propaganda of the "Government of National Salvation", it bears repeating that, in the entire period of occupation, the Department of State Propaganda, as well as the entire propaganda activity of the local administration, was dependent on German direction, dictate and censorship.

## Bibliography

### Newspapers and periodicals

- *Novo vreme*
- *Naša borba*
- *Obnova*
- *Srpski narod*

### Unpublished historical sources:

#### Archives

Military archive, Belgrade

- Foundation group: Srpska vlada Milana Nedića (Nedićeva arhiva).
- Foundation group: Nemačka okupatorska vojska (Nemačka arhiva).
- Collection of dossiers with personal information on officers, non-commissioned officers and military officers from the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.
- Microfilm library: microfilmed archived evidence in the National Archives in Washington, DC.

Historical archive of Belgrade

### Published historical sources

- Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o Narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda i narodnosti Jugoslavije, tom XII, knj. 1, Beograd: 1973.
- Zbornik odabranih dokumenata Zločini Nezavisne države Hrvatske 1941–1945 godine, knjiga 1 (1941–1942), Novi Sad: Istorijski arhiv grada Novog Sada i Vojni arhiv Ministarstva odbrane Republike Srbije, 2020.

### Literature

Božović, B. *Beograd pod komesarskom upravom 1941*. Belgrade: Institute for Contemporary History, 1988.

Kerkez, S. *Društvo Srbije u Drugom svetskom ratu*. Niš: Center for Balkan Studies, 2004.

- Lineberger, P. *Psychological Warfare*. Washington DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1948.
- Milošević, D. *Izbrisani grad*. Smederevo: Historical Archives of Smederevo, 2021.
- Mitrović, A. "Drugi svetski rat. Istorijsko mesto i značaj". *Marksistička misao* I 3 (1975), 105–127.
- Mihailović, V. *Propaganda i rat*. Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački zavod, 1984.
- Mraović, M. *Propaganda vlade Milana Nedića 1941–1944*, doktorska disertacija. Belgrade: University of Belgrade, History Department, 2015.
- "Pisanje kolaboracionističkog lista *Novo vreme* o vojnoj i političkoj situaciji u NDH 1941–1944. godine". *Vojno-istorijski glasnik* 2 (2017), 131–146.
- "Nova Srbija u Novoj Evropi" na stranicama kolaboracionističke štampe Vlade narodnog spasa". In *Društvene nauke pred izazovima savremenog društva*. Niš: University of Niš, 2017, 127–150.
- *Od surove stvarnosti do alternativne realnosti. Propaganda vlade Milana Nedića 1941–1944*. Belgrade: Media Center "Obrana", 2019.
- Mraović, M., Vignjević Z. "Značaj i uloga propagande u zločinima ustaških i u odnosu klerikalnih vlasti prema srpskom stanovništvu u NDH". *Zapisi* 7 (2018), 221–233.
- Nikolić, K. *Nemački ratni plakat u Srbiji 1941–1944*. Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2012.
- Petranović, B. *Istoričar i savremena epoha*. Belgrade: Stručna knjiga, 1997.
- *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939–1945*. Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1992.
- Radić, R. *Država i verske zajednice 1945–1970*, I. Belgrade: Institute for Recent History of Serbia, 2002.
- Ristanović, R. *Akcije komunističkih ilegalaca u Beogradu 1941–1942*. Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 2013.
- Stojanović, A. "Planning a Social Transformation: a Contribution to the Research of WWII Collaboration in Serbia". *Tokovi istorije* 1 (2013), 135–152.
- *Kolaboracionistička štampa u Srbiji 1941–1944*. Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 2015.

ISSN 0350-7653



9 770350 765003 >