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Dr. Djura Djurović
A Lifelong Opponent of Yugoslav Communist Totalitarianism

Abstract: The paper deals with the life story of Dr. Djura Djurović (1900–1983), one of key targets of Yugoslav communist totalitarianism. He was a Belgrade lawyer who worked in the Administration of the City of Belgrade before WWII. In 1943 he joined the Yugoslav Home Army (YHA) of General Mihailović, and held high positions in the YHA press and propaganda departments. His duties included running the Radio-telegraphic agency Democratic Yugoslavia. He accompanied General Mihailović on his meetings with OSS Colonel McDowell, and with Captain Raković he established successful co-operation with Red Army units in October 1944. He was arrested by Tito's partisans in 1945, given a show-trial and sentenced to twenty years in prison. In his writings he described horrible conditions, sufferings and various types of torture used against political prisoners in Yugoslav communist prisons. He himself spent more than two years in solitary confinement, and on several occasions nearly died in prison. He was released in 1962, and was able to establish a circle of former political convicts from the ranks of the YHA and other anticommunists in Belgrade and Serbia. He maintained this network, advocated pro-American policies and hoped that at some point the United States might intervene against communism in Yugoslavia. Gradually he came to the conclusion that Tito was an American ally, and was satisfied to maintain his network of likeminded anticommunists and prepare reports on the situation in Yugoslavia. As a pre-war freemason, he sent one such report to Luther Smith, Grand Commander of AAFM of Southern Jurisdiction of American masons, describing the ghastly conditions in Yugoslav communist prisons. He was rearrested in 1973 on account of his relations with a Serbian émigré in Paris, Andra Lončarić, and spent another four years in prison. Thus, the almost twenty-one years he spent in communist prisons qualify him for the top of the list of political prisoners in Yugoslav communism. In 1962–1973 he was spied on by a network of informers and operatives of the Yugoslav secret service. The paper is based on Djurović's personal files preserved in the penitentiaries in Sremska Mitrovica and Zabela, and his personal file from the archive of the Yugoslav secret service (UDBA/SDB). This is the first paper based on personal files of "political enemies" compiled by the Yugoslav communist secret service, disclosing the latter's activities and methods against anti-communist circles in Belgrade.

Keywords: Djura Djurović, Yugoslav communist prisons, Yugoslav totalitarianism, Yugoslav communist courts

Under the shadow of Western press coverage, papers and studies on Yugoslav communist dissidents such as Milovan Djilas and Mihailo Mihailov, and semi-dissidents such as Dobrica Ćosić and Vladimir Dedijer, the fact has been neglected that there were also open lifelong opponents of communist totalitarianism in Yugoslavia. One of the most committed of

them was Dr. Djura Djurović.¹ The memoirs of Milan L. Rajić, Dimitrije Djordjević and Radomir Milošević, all three former convicts in Yugoslav communist prisons, draw the attention of their readers to the fact that there were individuals who fiercely opposed communist monism. Among such opponents was a group of pre-WWII Belgrade lawyers, including Dragić Joksimović, Nikola Djonović and Dr. Djura Djurović. All three of them continued to oppose communism until their deaths. The first died in a communist prison, while the last spent almost twenty-one years in prison as a political convict. Thanks to a possibility to use the archives of the penitentiaries in Sremska Mitrovica and Zabela, and because members of the Serbian Committee for Establishing the Circumstances of Execution and Burial Place of General Mihailović were allowed to see secret police files of the arrested members of the Yugoslav Home Army (YHA) of General Mihailović, it is possible today to reconstruct Djurović's biography.²

Djurica Djurović, son of Čedomir Djurović and Natalija Djurović née Vujović, was born on 11 January 1900, in the village of Gornja Gorevnica, central Serbia.³ He finished primary school with top marks.⁴ The school was seven kilometres away from his home. In 1912, he enrolled in the grammar school in the town of Čačak, and finished it with very good

¹ His full name was Djurica (also spelled Đurica), but he was known by his nickname Djuro. The area from which Djurović originated used Serbo-Croatian jekavian speech at that time. His nickname was later adjusted to dominant ekavian speech used in Belgrade and central and northern Serbia, and he became Djura. Both versions of his nickname (Djuro and Djura, also spelled Đuro and Đura) were alternatively used in various documents as his official name.

² I would like to thank Mr. Milan Obradović, former director of the Administration for the Execution of Penitentiary Sanctions of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia for granting me permission to visit the archives of the penitentiaries in Sremska Mitrovica and Zabela and to see and copy files of Djura Djurović. I would also like to express my special gratitude to Dr. Miroslav Perišić, Director of the Archives of Serbia, and Mr. Miladin Milošević, Director of the Archives of Yugoslavia, for their kind and dedicated co-operation and support. Special thanks should also go to Marija Nenadić, archivist in the Archives of Serbia, for her assistance. I owe special thanks to the late Mr. Života Lazić, a Belgrade barrister, who preserved some of Djurović's manuscripts that would otherwise have been confiscated and destroyed by the SDB. I am very thankful to Prof. Dragoljub Živojinović for establishing contact with relatives of Dr. Djurović's wife, Ana, and to Mr. Milan Maksimović, son of the sister of Ana Djurović, for providing various materials on Dr. Djura Djurović from his family.

³ Transcript from the Registry of Births of the Municipality of Čačak for the community of Gornja Gorevnica, No. 3 for 1900.

⁴ Dr. Djura Č. Djurović, "Autobiografija" (4-page handwritten autobiography), Arhiva Kazneno-popravnog doma Zabela [Archive of the Penitentiary in Zabela, Požarevac; hereafter: AKPDZ], Pers. file no. 14.591.

marks after the First World War. He received support for his studies from his parents, but also gave private lessons to earn pocket money. Djurović selected jurisprudence for his BA studies. He began as a student at the Law School in Subotica, hoping to get a scholarship, but when his hopes were not met he moved to the Law School of the University of Belgrade, in the academic year 1921/22. He took his LLB degree in October 1924.⁵ As a student, he worked in Belgrade's leading liberal daily *Politika*. The owner of Resava Mines, Nikola Jocić, noticed his qualities and decided to fund his trip to France, Britain and Germany. He was in these countries from November 1924 to April 1928, and he also spent one month in Geneva in September 1925. He spent most of these three and a half years in Britain and France since he stayed only four months in Germany. Djurović had a task to learn how dailies in the Western world operate in order to be able to help his patron Jocić and his associates to launch a new daily in Belgrade. He used this opportunity to advance his knowledge in law. In March 1928, he earned a doctoral degree at the University of Paris with the thesis *La protocole de Genève devant l'opinion anglaise*.⁶

Upon his return to Belgrade, he did his military service in the 3rd Artillery Regiment in Kragujevac in 1928/29, and passed exams for the rank of artillery lieutenant. At last, in 1929, he was free to start his career. That, however, was the year when King Alexander of Yugoslavia, in the wake of interethnic tensions, established his personal rule, suspending certain rights and freedoms. Obviously, it was not the best time to launch a new daily. Instead of becoming a journalist, Djurović began working in the Belgrade City Administration from 1929, holding various posts in the 1930s. In 1941 he was head of the Directorate of Supplies.⁷ In 1932 he married Ana Paligorić (1907–1994), a daughter of Ilija Paligorić and Kaliopa Paligorić née Dada. Her family was wealthy, and she proved to be as loyal a companion throughout Djurović's life as one can imagine.

Djurović was not politically active until 1935. In May that year he was an MP candidate on the list of Prime Minister Bogoljub Jeftić, the leader of the Yugoslav National Party. Jeftić personified a policy of Yugoslav national unity that was greatly shaken by the assassination of King Alexander Karadjordjević (Karageorgevich) in Marseilles in October 1934. How-

⁵ Copy of his diploma issued 19 May 1962 by Prof. B. Blagojević, Rector of the University of Belgrade, No. 2440/2.

⁶ *Le Protocole de Genève devant l'opinion anglaise*. Thèse pour le doctorat présentée et soutenue le samedi 10 mars 1928 à 11 heures par Djura Djourovitch (Paris: Jouve & Cie, éditeurs, 1928).

⁷ Djura Djurović, "Izveštaj Luteru Smitu" [Report to Luther Smith; hereafter: "Izveštaj"], in the author's collection.

ever, Djurović failed to become an MP. He obviously followed the political stream of integral Yugoslavism. In 1939 he joined the Democratic Party, but he never had any official duty in the party.⁸

Activities during the Second World War

At the time of the German invasion of Yugoslavia and occupation of Belgrade (April 1941), he performed duties in the city administration as director of the newly-established Directorate of Supplies. In April 1941, as a pre-war French and Yugoslav freemason, he was asked by German authorities to fill in a questionnaire on his links with freemasonry. Not surprisingly, he was soon retired (19 May 1941). He continued to live in Belgrade in the modern apartment block owned by the family of his wife at 8 Kapetan Mišina Street in the heart of downtown Belgrade.

On 7 May 1942, he was ordered by an extraordinary commissioner for personal affairs to put together a more detailed report on his involvement with freemasonry. Like other Serbian freemasons living in the areas under the German Military Command in Serbia, he was affected by the Order on Removal of Nationally Unreliable Officials from Public Offices. He got a list containing thirty-three questions and was requested to answer all of them within three days. As it follows from his replies, he became a freemason in 1925, in Général Paigné lodge in Paris. His guarantor before the lodge was Dušan Tomić, a member of the Yugoslav Legation in Paris.⁹ Djurović wrote that he had joined freemasonry with two aims in mind: 1) moral education; and 2) to get to know the French spirit and people through this organisation. In Belgrade he was affiliated to "Dositej Obradović" lodge in 1929, where he was also a secretary in 1933. Among other distinguished members of this lodge were leading Belgrade historians Vladimir Ćorović, Viktor Novak and Vasilj Popović, writer Lujo Bakotić, etc.¹⁰ The growing influence of the Third Reich in Yugoslavia in the late 1930s had put freemasonry under great pressure. In a kind of political response to this pressure, pro-Western Anglophiles, outnumbered among Serbian freemasons only by Francophiles, planned to establish an Anglo-Yugoslav lodge that would operate in English. According to his own testimony, Djurović was very much

⁸ Dr. Djura Djurović's handwritten answers to 33 questions on his membership in freemasonry, Arhiv Jugoslavije [The Archives of Yugoslavia; hereafter: AJ], Fond 100, folder 16, "Djuro Djurović".

⁹ Tomić was a prominent Serbian and Yugoslav freemason who was a delegate of the Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia to the Executive Committee of the International Masonic Association at Geneva.

¹⁰ AJ, Fond 100, folder 16, "Djuro Djurović".

involved in these efforts.¹¹ However, Italian and German pressure on the Yugoslav government eventually forced the Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia to suspend itself on 1 August 1940. The next day all freemasonic organisations in Yugoslavia were officially banned.

The attitude of German authorities toward freemasonry in occupied Serbia was extremely hostile, just as it was in all other areas occupied by the Third Reich. Moreover, German intelligence had begun collecting data on Yugoslav freemasons in 1938, soon after Austria was annexed and Yugoslavia became a neighbour of the Third Reich. Therefore, German authorities had had lists of Yugoslav freemasons even before Yugoslavia was invaded.¹² In Belgrade, German authorities encouraged, organised and financed an anti-Masonic exhibition directed against freemasonry, Jewry, Great Britain and communism. It was opened on 22 October 1941 by the German commander of Belgrade von Keyserberg, and was available to visitors until 19 January 1942, and during all these months anti-Masonic publications flourished. Members of pro-fascist Zbor took an active part in the organisation of the exhibition and German authorities encouraged members of Nedić's pseudo-government to take part in it in order to create the impression that the exhibition was domestically organised. According to official reports, the exhibition had some 90,000 visitors.¹³ The fact that Belgrade was the third former capital where the German occupying authorities mounted such an exhibition (before Belgrade, similar exhibitions were held in Paris, in October 1940, and in Brussels, in February 1941) shows that they assessed that freemasonry had been particularly strong in interwar Yugoslavia, and this assessment was to a certain degree correct.

In November 1941, 190 intellectuals were arrested in Belgrade and confined as hostages in the notorious Banjica concentration camp. Approximately two-thirds of them, or about 130 persons, were freemasons. Most were released in late 1941 or early 1942.¹⁴ Therefore, it was very desirable for the questioned Serbian freemasons to demonstrate in their answers that their attitude to freemasonry changed and became at least less than favour-

¹¹ Djurović, "Izveštaj". Members of his lodge, "Dositej Obradović", were also very active in publishing a pro-British journal *Britanija* in 1940, and Djurović was involved in the publication of another pro-British journal *Vidici* (published in 1938–40). Both journals were banned in 1940.

¹² Nadežda Jovanović, "Odnos okupatora i kvislinga prema masoneriji u Srbiji", *Godišnjak grada Beograda* 18 (1971), 85.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ B. Stamenković and S. G. Markovich, *A Brief History of Freemasonry in Serbia* (Belgrade: Cicero, 2009), 122–124.

able. Yet, Djurović assumed a rather courageous attitude in assessing his membership of this association:

The first thing that I want to emphasise is my deep conviction that I have no reason to be ashamed of the fact that I was a freemason. In that organisation I have never heard a word or seen any gesture by freemasons, either as an organised body or as individuals, directed against the interests of the state or the nation ... Perhaps in the ranks of freemasons in general and my lodge in particular there were people who differed by their qualities, but I do not think that there was in such a divided Yugoslavia any private organisation with more idealism and honour than Yugoslav freemasonry, and especially the Dositej Obradović Lodge.¹⁵

He joined the Yugoslav Home Army on 10 July 1943.¹⁶ By this time the Yugoslav Home Army (or the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland, also popularly but incorrectly known as chetniks)¹⁷ was already deeply engaged in a civil war with a rival guerrilla movement — communist-led partisans. The civil war between the two movements began in the autumn of 1941 in Serbia, and by the beginning of December 1941 both movements were decimated by an effective German offensive. In the summer and autumn of 1941, Serbian civilians in Serbia were subjected to horrible reprisals. Based on the order of Adolf Hitler signed on 16 September 1941, one hundred Serbs were to be executed for every German officer or soldier killed, and fif-

¹⁵ Handwritten answers by Dr. Djura Djurović to 33 questions concerning his membership of freemasonry.

¹⁶ In an interrogation conducted by the Yugoslav communist secret police in March 1949, Djurović said that he had joined the YHA on 10 July 1943. Interrogated by the secret police on another occasion, in December 1952, he stated that he had “actively participated in the DM [Draža Mihailović] movement from May 1943 until the end of 1944”, Arhiv Srbije [The Archives of Serbia; hereafter: AS], Fond OZNA/UDBA, file no. 720-01-16556 (Pers. file of Dj. Djurović), pp. 72 and 81.

¹⁷ Chetnik is a name that originated in the early twentieth century to refer to a member of a cheta (company). These chetas were irregular Serbian units that operated in Old Serbia and Macedonia while these areas were still a part of the Ottoman Empire. The name was popular among the common people and was immediately applied to Mihailović’s movement. However, there were several groups of “chetniks”, including one that was under the direct control of German authorities (the chetniks of Kosta Pećanac), and there were also Bosnian, Croatian and Montenegrin chetniks. Mihailović and the YHA were involved in disputes and bitter fight with the chetniks of Kosta Pećanac, and some other “chetniks” recognised Mihailović’s authority only nominally. Thus, in 1942–44 the YHA and Mihailović effectively controlled only some areas of central, western and eastern Serbia, whereas in other “chetnik” areas their authority was recognised either only nominally or not at all. To complicate things further, many former YHA officers tended to refer to themselves as “chetniks”, rather than as YHA, in their memoirs and other writings.

ty for every wounded one. Consequently, German troops killed 11,522 Serb insurgents and 21,809 Serb hostages. At the same time, only 203 German soldiers were killed.¹⁸ From that moment, fearing further German reprisals, the leader of the YHA, General Mihailović, adopted a more cautious tactics and avoided large-scale operations against the Germans.

The partisans, however, continued their previous tactics and also worked seriously, although not always overtly, on setting the stage for a social revolution and introduction of communism. From the end of 1942 there was a rising tension between Mihailović and the British liaison officers over Mihailović's approach. More importantly, the Soviet Union began acting against the YHA as early as spring 1942, and openly favoured the communist-led partisans, who were given directives from Moscow on a regular basis. The combination of British tactical considerations and Soviet opposition to and effective propaganda against the YHA gradually led to the decision that the Allies should abandon Mihailović and support the partisans instead. This indeed happened at the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944.

Thus, Djurović joined the YHA when this guerrilla movement had already taken a declining direction. His motives for joining the YHA probably included his Anglophilia and his respect for the United States of America, his commitment to democratic values and his opposition to the Soviet polity. His own Democratic Party was a coalition partner in the London-based Yugoslav government. This government recognised the YHA as the only legal army in Yugoslavia and appointed General Mihailović minister of War, Navy and Air-Force in four successive cabinets (from January 1942 to June 1944). He explained his motives for joining the YHA in his report to Luther Smith written in or immediately after 1967:

For me as well as for any convinced democrat, and especially for me as a freemason, there was no choice. I could not join a resistance which aimed, in accordance with the example of the Soviet Union, to introduce into our country a totalitarian polity and a collectivist mode of production. I enlisted under the banner of General Mihailović, convinced that I was doing not only my patriotic but also my Masonic duty.¹⁹

After joining the YHA Djurović immediately became head for foreign propaganda directed to the Anglo-Saxon world running a radio-telegraphic station known as "Democratic Yugoslavia". The station operated

¹⁸ Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder: The Second World War in Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst and Co., 2008), 61 and 67.

¹⁹ Dr. Djura Djurović, "Izveštaj", AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 136. The same report was in the collection of Ž. Lazić, now in the author's collection, p. vi.

from Kablar in Ljubici District and Djurović was in charge of it continually from July 1943 to August/September 1944.²⁰

Involvement with the Central National Committee of the YHA

Later on, he got a political function within the YHA. He became a member and secretary of the Central National Committee (CNK). The Committee was set up at the end of August 1941 as a political body within the YHA. However, it operated only through its Executive Board headed by Dragiša Vasić, a well-known writer, and Mladen Žujović. From the spring of 1942, Stevan Moljević, a barrister from Banja Luka, also played a prominent role in the Executive Board of the Central National Committee. At the end of November 1943, the rival communist-led National Liberation Movement, popularly known as partisans, formed its supreme body, the Antifascist Council of National Liberation, as “the supreme representative legislative and executive body”. This prompted General Mihailović to activate his connections with pre-war leaders of political parties, and to organise a congress at the end of January.

A Preparatory Committee had its meeting on 26 January. It included Živko Topalović and Branislav Ivković on behalf of political parties, and Dragiša Vasić, Stevan Moljević and Djura Djurović on behalf of the Ravna Gora Movement (essentially another name for the YHA with an emphasis on its nation-wide character). The meeting witnessed a sharp disagreement between Moljević and Topalović. The former argued that the CNK on behalf of the Ravna Gora Movement should represent political interests of various political parties, while Topalović thought that the Ravna Gora Movement was nothing more than an idea and that it lacked capacities of a political organisation. Therefore he advocated the creation of a new organisation, which he named the Yugoslav Democratic National Union. The Congress in the village Ba was held on a significant national holiday for Orthodox Serbs — St. Sava’s Day.²¹ Mihailović succeeded in mediating between the two opposite streams, but demonstrated preference for Topalović’s attitudes and Topalović was elected president of the Congress.²²

²⁰ Official minutes from the interrogation of Djura Djurović conducted on 30 March 1949 at the Penitentiary of Sremska Mitrovica. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 73.

²¹ Kosta Nikolić, *Istorija Ravnogorskog pokreta*, 3 vols. (Belgrade: Srpska reč, 1999), vol. 2, 425–436; Kosta Nikolić & Bojan Dimitrijević, *General Dragoljub Mihailović. Biografija* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2011), 370–376.

²² Pawlowitch, *Hitler’s New Disorder*, 223–225.

The Congress attended by 274 delegates, only six of whom were not Serbs, adopted a resolution, with Article 4 proclaiming that Yugoslavia should be renewed and that it should be a federal state and a parliamentary monarchy. The Resolution stated that “our people ... notwithstanding the highest possible price ... joined the great Western democracies in fighting for freedom and equality of all peoples, both small and great, against Nazism and Fascism and all sorts of dictatorships.” Any idea of collective retaliation in case of the YHA’s victory was rejected. The whole Serbian people should be gathered in one unit and the same should apply to Croats and Slovenes. However, the reorganisation of 1938, which had created a special Croatian unit within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, was rejected. The Congress condemned actions of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the establishment of the political body at the end of November 1943. In conclusion, the Resolution expressed faith in the Allied nations, headed by America, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, and invited people to join the Yugoslav Democratic National Union.²³

The organs of the Union were: the National Congress and the Central National Committee with its Executive Board. The CNK was supposed to be expanded to include members of democratic parties and to operate within the Supreme Headquarters. The changes did not take place until the end of May or the beginning of June 1944. On its session of 30 June, a statute was adopted. Mihailo Kujundžić, a prominent member of the Democratic Party, became president of the CNK and Dr. Djura Djurović became its secretary-general.²⁴ Apparently Djurović was both secretary-general of the CNK and secretary of the CNK Executive Board.²⁵ Djurović claimed that the new CNK was set up on 28 June 1944, and that it operated until 10 September 1944, when he, “due to operational circumstances broke away from it and stayed in Serbia, while a part of the members of the Committee went home, and the smallest third part went to Bosnia with Draža Mihailović.”²⁶

The reformed CNK had various boards as well, and Djurović was president of the Political and Organisational Board. Since Djurović was in charge of propaganda, it is interesting to note that a Croatian writer,

²³ *Odluke Svetosavskog kongresa u slobodnim srpskim planinama* [Decisions of the St. Sava’s Day Congress in free Serbian mountains] (the Executive Board of the Central National Committee, 1944), 28–32.

²⁴ Nikolić, *Istorija Ravnogorskog pokreta*, vol. 2, 425–436.

²⁵ Djurović, “Izveštaj”.

²⁶ AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 72.

Dr. Djura Vilović, became president of the CNK Propaganda Board.²⁷ The CNK issued orders to local “Ravna Gora committees”. They were in charge of overseeing local government and organising propaganda, the latter being their main activity.²⁸ In such circumstances Djurović, who was in charge of a very important segment of propaganda, gained prominence.

A wartime journalist

The most important of several printing presses in the territories controlled by YHA units was the one at the Supreme Headquarters. According to an order dated 6 May 1944, the printing press was to be transferred to the territory of the 2nd Ravna Gora Corps. The same order placed the printing of all journals, brochures, leaflets and other propaganda materials under the control of Dr. Djura Djurović, “to whom all manuscripts will be handed, and who can appoint a suitable person as an assistant for the purposes of this job”. Director of the printing facility was required to meet Djurović’s requests “in every regard”.²⁹

In the spring of 1944 Djurović also acted as editor of a very important journal called *Ujedinjeno Srpstvo* (United Serbdom). It was started as an “unofficial Serbian journal” with the aim to “represent interests of the Serbian Federal unit and the whole Serbian people”.³⁰ Only four issues are known to have been published and most of the articles were written by Djurović. This activity finally made him a newspaper editor, though under very peculiar circumstances. The journal became a kind of the unofficial organ of the Ravna Gora movement. According to Djurović’s statement given to the Yugoslav communist secret police, it was printed in 10,000 copies in an illegal printing facility in Ljubić District. Since the journal was an “organ of the political leadership” of the YHA, it was supposed to be distributed throughout Serbia. But it could not reach even areas around Valjevo, Kruševac and Užice, and the reason was that the YHA postal service showed no understanding for propaganda materials. A special courier was responsible for its transportation to occupied Belgrade.³¹

²⁷ Djurović, “Izveštaj”. Apart from Djurović and Vilović, a third freemason in charge of a CNK board was Dr. Aleksandar Popović, President of the Judicial Board.

²⁸ Pavlowitch, *Hitler’s New Disorder*, 225.

²⁹ Milan B. Matić, *Ravnogorska ideja u štampi i propagandi* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1995), 64–65.

³⁰ Letter of Dragiša Vasić and Stevan Moljević to General Mihailović, dated 12 Feb. 1944. Quoted from Matić, *Ravnogorska ideja*, 73.

³¹ Statement of Djura Djurović given to UDBA on 18 Dec. 1952. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, pp. 81–82.

The YHA leaders desperately sought to regain the support of Britain and the United States, and propaganda was again a key tool to achieve that goal. Domestically, new propaganda measures were aimed at counterbalancing successful communist propaganda. With this aim in mind, a “congress of the underground democratic press” was planned for 8 August 1944, and was held 21–23 August on Mt Jelica. It was attended by some forty representatives of propaganda headquarters and editors of newspapers and journals associated with the YHA. The CNK was represented by Dr. Djura Djurović, Dr. Stevan Moljević, Dr. Djura Vilović, Aleksandar Aksentijević, Mustafa Mulalić, Josip Cvetić and Aleksandar Pavlović. The Congress was presided over by Dr. Vilović, Dr. Moljević submitted a report on the “Ideas and development of the Ravna Gora movement”, and Dr. Djurović spoke of the means, methods and aims of propaganda. Although at least sixty-two journals were associated with the Ravna Gora movement, lack of co-ordination and central planning sometimes led to confusing and conflicting lines published in different journals. The Congress therefore concluded that “stronger organisation and full harmonisation of propaganda services” had to be undertaken.³²

Co-operation with the Red Army and the Office of Strategic Services

The conclusion, however, came too late, since the combined advance of partisan forces from the south-west and Soviet troops through eastern Serbia decided the winner of the civil war in Serbia. As the historian Stevan Pavlowitch remarked, “Serbia had not seen much of the partisans since 1941, and was rather confused by their reappearance”.³³ Yet, in September/October 1944, the partisan and Soviet troops “liberated” or “conquered” Serbia (depending on one’s standpoint). On 8–9 September, the last meeting of the CNK had been held in the village of Milićevci near Čačak. On that occasion Mihailović ordered that “Russians should under no circumstances be attacked”, but welcomed as allies and friends.³⁴ Soviet troops entered Serbia on 22 September. YHA troops collaborated fully with the advancing Soviet forces against German forces, until Soviet troops began to demobilise them, and to hand them over to partisans.

In line with the orders of General Mihailović from the last meeting of the CNK, Djurović participated in the co-operation of the YHA troops led by Predrag Raković, commander of the 2nd Ravna Gora Corps, and

³² Matić, *Ravnogorska ideja*, 45–48.

³³ Pavlowitch, *Hitler’s New Disorder*, 228.

³⁴ Nikolić & Dimitrijević, *General Dragoljub Mihailović*, 398.

the Soviet troops under the command of Colonel Salichev. In June 1953, Djurović was interrogated about this co-operation by the communist secret service, UDBA. From the preserved interrogation records, the following is clear: Soviet advanced troops were in Gornji Milanovac after 14 October 1944. At the same time, YHA units were attacking German troops in Čačak. At a meeting attended by Djurović and other YHA officials, they agreed to co-operate in liberating Čačak and attacking the German Valjevo–Čačak–Požega communication lines. They also signed a written agreement on co-operation and exchanged liaison officers.³⁵ The YHA liaison officers were Captain Čeković and another one whose name Djurović forgot. Russian demands were sent by radio through liaison officers. A Russian liaison officer was attached directly to Raković. At first, the co-operation was very good, and some units were even mixed in their operations. However, when the partisan units under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Mesić appeared, the co-operation stopped. Raković sent a protest letter at the end of October or the beginning of November.³⁶

From a report published in the YHA journal *Poklič* in late November 1944, one learns that in some cases Soviet officers even threatened to open fire on local partisan units to force them to comply with their agreement with Captain Raković. Co-operation between the Red Army and Captain Raković's troops exceeded all expectations. The YHA claimed to have handed over to the Soviets more than 300 captured Germans and members of the White Guard over to the Soviets. The cessation of the co-operation after the appearance of Lieutenant-Colonel Mesić and his partisan troops was attributed to the fact that Mesić was a former ustasha officer who had been captured at Stalingrad and then recruited by the Soviets and, along with other former ustasha soldiers, trained as a partisan. These people had crossed the Danube together with Soviet troops.³⁷

Djurović was not in contact with the British military missions at Mihailović's headquarters until the end of May 1944, since Mihailović

³⁵ From an official communiqué of the YHA 1st Storm Corps it follows that the agreement was signed on 18 October and expanded by an oral agreement two days later. Under the agreement all captured Germans and members of pro-German White Guard (recruited from Russian White emigration) were to be handed over to Soviet troops. Commander during the operations in the Kraljevo and Čačak areas was to be Lieutenant-Colonel Gadelshin and commander of the 93rd division Colonel Salichev. No partisans were to participate in operations around Čačak. The communiqué originally published in the YHA journal *Poklič* on 27 Nov. 1944 is reproduced in Matić, *Ravnogorska ideja*, 286–290.

³⁶ AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, pp. 85–87. Interrogation was conducted at the Penitentiary of Sremska Mitrovica on 15 June 1953.

³⁷ Matić, *Ravnogorska ideja*, 288–290.

wished to conceal Djurović's function in the radio-telegraph station known as "Democratic Yugoslavia." However, Djurović was asked to find out the purpose of the mission of US Colonel Robert McDowell of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), who had landed in Yugoslavia in August 1944. The OSS wanted a separate mission that would establish facts independently of the British Special Operation Executive (SOE). Since in February 1944 Britain had publicly abandoned her support to the YHA, Djurović was supposed to find out if McDowell's arrival indicated any shift in Western policy toward the YHA.

In this capacity he also took part in a rescue mission in which more than 500 airmen, mostly American, were rescued by members of the YHA, and then safely evacuated to Italy. Djurović's task was to send the names of the rescued American airmen to the Americans through this radio station. This practice was later "forbidden by the American command in order to prevent the enemy from discovering certain data from my information on the rescued airmen."³⁸

In October, Djurović did not join General Mihailović who went to Bosnia with his troops. He stayed in Serbia, and in the spring of 1945, hid in a bunker specially built by a friend of his. He was arrested in the village of Srezojevci, Takovo District, on 8 June 1945. *Politika* reported on his arrest on 21 June, claiming that he had been hiding in Srezojevci since 25 December 1944. The purpose of this lengthy article was to convince the readers that some very important figures of the Yugoslav Home Army had been captured: "This dark freak — whose name on Boston radio is 'Fanfan', 'Stefan', and 'Gregor' — is too bloody not to be revealed, too closely connected with international and émigré reactionary circles to be handed over to a people's court without any comment."³⁹ The article claimed that after the Congress in the village of Ba, Djurović had become "the 'political fuehrer' of the chetnik movement". Another person who became available to communist authorities was Colonel Dragutin R. Keserović, characterised by *Politika* as "the bloodiest and most faithful dagger of Draža Mihailović". In this way, the reader was under the impression that two most important associates of General Mihailović had been arrested.

³⁸ Minutes of the interrogation of Djurović conducted at the Penitentiary of Sremska Mitrovica on 30 March 1949. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 75-76.

³⁹ "Organi narodne vlasti uhvatili su 'političkog ideologa' četnika dr Djuru Djurovića i 'pukovnika' Dragutina Keserovića, ubicu i 'komandanta rasinsko-topličke grupe korpusa'" [Organs of people's authorities caught "political ideologue" of chetniks, Dr. Djura Djurović, and "Colonel" Dragutin Keserović, murderer and "commander of Rasina-Toplica corps group"], *Politika*, 21 June 1945, p. 4.

The first show-trial

On 28 July, in the main hall of the Faculty of Law in Belgrade, court proceedings against twenty-five members of the Yugoslav Home Army began before the High Military Court of the Yugoslav Army. The authorities announced loudly that the proceedings were brought against “members of the so-called Central National Committee of Draža Mihailović and commanders of his military formations”. The atmosphere in the hall was far from orderly. It speaks much of general social conditions that the strictly state-controlled daily *Politika* found no reason to hide the fact that the proceedings resembled a lynching. A reporter of the leading newspapers of the Yugoslav capital noticed that the appearance in the hall of the accused headed by Dr. Djuro Djurović provoked “great alarm and indignation”. Before the judges entered, the hall resonated with the cries: Death to Djura Djurović! To the gallows with murderers! Down with cutthroats! Down with murderers! Blood for blood! A head for a head!⁴⁰

The show-trial took place from 28 July to 6 August 1945. The Office of the Public Prosecutor was represented by Colonel Miloš Minić, a most reliable communist hardliner. In the second half of 1945, he sent a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CC CPY), denouncing the Yugoslav provincial prosecutors and particularly the prosecutor of Croatia, Jakov Blažević, for their non-communist attitude toward the notorious Yugoslav military secret service, the OZNA. Minić himself was one of the heads of the most prominent OZNA department — OZNA for Belgrade — from November 1944 to March 1945. The OZNA was a Yugoslav communist version of the Soviet secret service, the NKVD, created with the help of Soviet instructors in 1944.⁴¹ In the letter Minić concluded: “It is my impression that the ideas of comrade Blažević as regards this question are non-communist, that they are based on their forgetting that our Party administers both the public prosecutor’s office and the OZNA, and all other state institutions as well.” The proof that the CC CPY took Minić’s suggestions seriously may be found in a handwritten remark in the upper left corner of the first page of his letter: “measures have been taken and this

⁴⁰ “Juče je otpočelo sudjenje pred Višim vojnim sudom članovima takozvanog Centralnog nacionalnog komiteta Draže Mihailovića” [Trial of members of so-called Central National Committee before High Military Court began yesterday], *Politika*, 29 July 1945, p. 3.

⁴¹ OZNA – *Odeljenje za zaštitu naroda* [Department for the People’s Protection] changed name to UDBA – *Uprava državne bezbednosti* [Administration of State Security] in 1946. In 1964 UDBA was renamed SDB – *Služba državne bezbednosti* [State Security Service]. So the three different abbreviations used in this paper (OZNA, UDBA and SDB) refer to the same Yugoslav communist secret service but at different periods.

has been settled.”⁴² The remark is written in Latin script, and in the ekavian dialect used only in Serbia. Among members of the Politburo, this combination of script and dialect was used by Aleksandar Ranković. It is characteristic of the communist legal system of that time that Minić addressed the Central Committee of the Communist Party on this matter, and not the Ministry of Justice. In other words, as he put it himself, the Communist Party stood above all state institutions.

Another vivid impression of the character of early Yugoslav communist courts may be gained from the memoirs of Dr. Josip Hrnčević (1901–1994). He was a judge in the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In 1945–46 he was President of the Military Panel of the Supreme Court of Yugoslavia. In February 1946 he became Federal Public Prosecutor of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia. As one of the highest officials of the early communist Yugoslav judiciary, he admits that one thing was clear to him from the beginning: that the office of the public prosecutor, in spite of its huge powers, was “under the ‘hat’ of the party and the government”. The other thing that became clear to him right away was that he had to co-operate closely with the organs of public security: “Investigation in all criminal cases of some relevance was then in the hands of the Administration of State Security [UDBA], and our real chief was organisational secretary of the Central Committee of the CPY and Minister of Interior Aleksandar Ranković.”⁴³

The trial was organised for “members of the political and military leadership of the organisation of Draža Mihailović”. Here a novelty was added to the standard pattern of Stalinist show-trials. Four commanders of the Yugoslav Home Army and nine members of its Central National Committee were charged together with twelve other persons from three different groups labelled by Yugoslav authorities and the Yugoslav press as being “a connection with the occupation command” (one of the accused), “Gestapo members and terrorists” (three of the accused), and “terrorists and spies” (eight of the accused). In truth, some from these groups had been a part of the apparatus of various German secret services and agencies that had operated in Serbia during the German occupation. By grouping real collaborators together with political and military leaders of the Yugoslav

⁴² AJ, Fond No. 507, unit X-I/3.

⁴³ Josip Hrnčević, *Svjedočanstva* (Zagreb: Globus, 1986), 121–122. On the huge influence of the OZNA in Yugoslav society, see Monty Radulovic, *Tito’s Republic* (London and Brussels: Coldharbour Press Ltd., 1948), 118–128. On its influence on the Public Prosecutor’s Office, see Slobodan G. Marković, “Rehabilitacija ideološki progonjenih kao jedan od stubova vladavine prava u posttotalitarnim društvima”, *Izazovi evropskih integracija* 20 (2012), 74–77.

Home Army, a clear message was sent that all anticommunists belonged into the same category of “enemies of the people”. The foreword to the published version of the “stenographic notes” of the trial reveals the aim of the trial:

The trial untangled a repulsive fascist bunch that was created in our country during the first days of the People’s Liberation War and was preserved until the collapse of the German occupiers. One could see at the trial that in the bunch one could find together German fascist occupiers, Nedić, Ljotić, Pavelić and Draža Mihailović, then almost all officers of the former Yugoslav Army who stayed in the country during the occupation and did not take part in the People’s Liberation Movement, then a larger part of emigration abroad, then a larger part of the leadership of former political parties. All of them had a common aim: to destroy the People’s Liberation Movement of our peoples.⁴⁴

In other words, almost all non-communists of any significance, who represented the views of the vast majority of the population in Serbia, were “fascist collaborators”, or simply “fascists”. The court in Belgrade only followed the pattern established by the communist show-trial of the heads of the Polish Home Army and Polish political leaders staged one month earlier (18–21 June) in Moscow.

Secret proceedings: questioning on Djurović’s relations with the OSS

This trial had another aspect that remains obscured if the published “stenographic notes” are all that historians consult. The personal file of the first person accused, Dr. Djuro Djurović, preserved in the archive of the Yugoslav secret police, reveals that secret proceedings by the Higher Military Court were held in the evening hours of 2 August 1945. Djurović was interrogated about the meeting of General Mihailović and OSS Colonel Robert McDowell with Rudolf Stärker, who represented the German envoy Hermann Neubacher, on 6 September 1944. Djurović explained that McDowell had anticipated the possibility of the German surrender in the Balkans, and wanted to see Neubacher who, being an Austrian and aware that the Reich had already lost the war, would be given a chance “to make exceptional gains for his homeland, Austria”. McDowell spoke openly to Djurović and Mihailović about the fact that Germany wanted to capitulate in the Balkans. As Djurović put it:

Therefore the purpose of this meeting, which was supposed to be with Neubacher, was on the following basis and with an aim to discuss how

⁴⁴ *Sudjenje članovima političkog i vojnog rukovodstva organizacije Draže Mihailovića* (Belgrade 1945), 5.

McDowell understood German capitulation in the Balkans. He wanted to conduct the capitulation in agreement with Neubacher and in agreement with Draža Mihailović.

Instead of coming in person, Neubacher sent Stärker to represent him at the meeting. According to Djurović, he was against the meeting with Stärker, and General Mihailović agreed with him, but McDowell insisted “that it would be a stupid thing not to meet with that Jerry and see what he had to say”.⁴⁵ Needless to say, the contents of these proceedings could not be presented during the open part of the trial. A year later, in the case against General Mihailović (the second Belgrade trial), neither Mihailović, nor his defence, nor any subsequent historian, could know about this part of the trial. These details did not become known until 2009, when the members of the Committee for Establishing the Circumstances of the Execution and Burial Place of General Mihailović, set up by the Office of the Public Prosecutor of Serbia, were allowed to see the secret police files of the YHA members, and the contents have been publicly revealed only recently.⁴⁶

Djurović revealed additional details in the interrogation in 1949. He repeated what McDowell’s plan had been. It was essentially to suggest to Neubacher to surrender his troops to the Americans and General Mihailović. “Had this, what McDowell planned, been realised, had Germans capitulated in the Balkans to the Americans and Draža Mihailović, the situation of the chetniks and the attitude of the Western Allies to them, McDowell thought, would certainly have radically changed in favour of the chetniks.”⁴⁷ Yet, Yugoslav communist propaganda claimed that on the third day of the trial, 30 July, Djurović alleged that at the meeting Mihailović had been promised rifles by the Germans. Reuter took the news from the Yugoslav News Agency and it appeared in the Western media.⁴⁸ The conduct of the communist court and the communist Yugoslav press prompted Colonel McDowell to speak with a British diplomat in Washington, Peter Solly-Flood, in the second half of February 1946. By this time McDowell was a chief of Balkan Intelligence in the US War Department. He said to Solly-

⁴⁵ AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Djura Djurović, pp. 31–37.

⁴⁶ Slobodan G. Markovich, “New and Old Evidence on the Show-trial of General Dragoljub Mihailovich”, *The South Slav Journal* 31/1–2 (2012), 113–114.

⁴⁷ AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 75. McDowell’s mission remains a mystery, and S. K. Pavlowitch, *Hitler’s New Disorder*, 230, raised two questions regarding this mission: “Did McDowell explore the possibility of an anticipated German capitulation to stop the Russians from entering Yugoslavia? Did he in any way encourage Mihailović to expect a change in his favour?” Judging by Djurović’s testimonies, the answer to both questions is affirmative.

⁴⁸ “Mihailovitch and the Germans. Alleged Arms Talks”, *The Times*, 31 July 1945, p. 3D.

Flood essentially the same thing that Djurović had said during the secret proceedings. Solly-Flood passed the information to the British ambassador in Washington, Lord Halifax, and he sent it on to the Foreign Office. The British embassy received additional confirmation of the story from Barbour, head of the US Southern Department Division. Referring to the trial of Djurović, Barbour said:

When the trials of “war criminals” were beginning in Yugoslavia, considerable play was made of this story about Staerker’s visit to Mihailovic both at the trials and by the Yugoslav press and radio. State Department thereupon instructed the United States Embassy at Belgrade to inform the Yugoslav Government that a) McDowell accepted full and sole responsibility for arranging the interview between Staerker and Mihailovic...⁴⁹

First sentence

Djurović was lucky, since he was sentenced to twenty years in prison. Others were not so “lucky”. On 14 August 1945, three of the four commanders of the YHA were executed (Vojislav Lukačević, Dragutin Keserović and Vojin Vojinović). So that they could still be labelled as “fascists”, they were shot together with Anton Schwartz of the Prince Eugen SS division, and a specially trained SS Captain for special operations, Branko Gašparević. During the trial, both of the latter had been portrayed as “close collaborators of Draža Mihailović”.

From the outset, the leading Belgrade daily *Politika* made it more than clear how the trial would end. Its first report from the trial had the following headline: “Traitors, political and military leaders of Draža Mihailović before the People’s court.”⁵⁰ Unsurprisingly, the headline after the pronouncement of the verdict was: “Seven terrorists and commanders of traitorous military formations of Draža Mihailović were proclaimed by the Court war criminals and sentenced to death.”⁵¹ Conspicuously, the list opened with “terrorists”.

The Higher Court pronounced the verdict on 9 August 1945. Djurović was found guilty of being a member of the Ravna Gora Movement, to-

⁴⁹ Ambassador Halifax to the Foreign Office, 27 March 1946. PRO, FO 115/4266.

⁵⁰ “Izdajnici, politički i vojni rukovodioci Draže Mihailovića pred narodnim sudom” [Traitors, political and military leaders of Draža Mihailović before the people’s court], *Politika*, 29 July 1945, p. 3.

⁵¹ “Sedam terorista i komandanata izdajničkih vojničkih formacija Draže Mihailovića sud je proglasio za ratne zločince i osudio ih na smrt” [Seven terrorists and commanders of traitorous military formations of Draža Mihailović found guilty and sentenced to death], *Politika*, 10 Aug. 1945, p. 3.

gether with eight other members of the CNK (Aleksandar Aksentijević, Mustafa Mulalić, Aleksandar Pavlović, Dr. Božidar Popadić, Aleksandar Popović, Branislav Ivković, Ljubiša Trifunović and Nikola Raspopović). They were guilty because they had joined the Ravna Gora Movement: “Although they knew that the chetnik organisation of Draža Mihailović is anti-people, traitorous and in the service of the occupiers, they became members of the so-called Central National Committee, the leading political body of that organisation.” They helped Draža Mihailović “to present his traitorous work and service for the occupiers to the global democratic public as a movement of national liberation against the occupiers...” Djurović was specifically found guilty of four charges: 1) For reorganising propaganda for foreign countries by “establishing radio contact with Fotić⁵² in the United States and by sending radiograms and radio broadcasts in which he falsely presented the situation in the country. He popularised the occupier’s servant Draža Mihailović and he presented the chetnik organisation as the only organisation fighting against the occupier in Yugoslavia. He slandered the National Liberation Movement, its leadership, and the Army of National Liberation and Partisan Units in Yugoslavia in all possible ways — and all that with an aim to deceive the public in democratic countries and thus to demolish the morale and political credits that the Movement of National Liberation gained by its ferocious fight against the occupiers”; 2) For editing the journal *Ujedinjeno srpstvo* in which he “instigated hatred against the Movement of National Liberation and popularised the chetnik organisation of Draža Mihailović”; 3) For giving propaganda instructions at various meetings directed “to break the people’s unity in its struggle against the occupiers”; 4) For meeting General Trifunović near Varvarin, where he advocated “gathering and uniting of broken chetnik, Nedić’s and volunteers’ [units of Dimitrije Ljotić] units under chetnik command in order to fight the Army of National Liberation.”⁵³ As one can see, there was not a single serious accusation against Djurović, apart from the fact that he had participated in a defeated movement.

Djurović expected a death penalty. His wife prepared poison in case he was sentenced to death. Another opponent of communism who joined the Ravna Gora Movement at a very young age was Dimitrije Djordjević,

⁵² Konstantin Fotić served as Royal Yugoslav minister in Washington during the Second World War (as ambassador from October 1942). He was known for his loyalty to Mihailović and opposition to communism. Therefore, the leadership of the partisan movement insisted that he be replaced, and he was on 9 June 1944.

⁵³ Arhiva Kazneno-popravnog doma u Sremskoj Mitrovici [Archive of the Penitentiary in Sremska Mitrovica; hereafter: AKPDSM], Pers. file of Djura Djurović. The verdict on 14 typewritten pages encompasses all twenty-four accused.

who later became professor of Balkan history at Santa Barbara University in California. Djordjević himself underwent a similar trial in May 1946 as a member of the anticommunist youth. His view of the first Belgrade trial is therefore very valuable. On the attitude of the accused during the trial, Djordjević assessed: "Apart from Djura Djurović and Vojin Vojinović, all others were broken... It was another proof of ideological dissolution of the Ravna Gora Movement."⁵⁴

Djurović gave his closing statement on 6 August 1945. It apparently made a very strong impression and might have played a role in the decision of the court to sentence him to 20 years instead of sentencing him to death. On 10 August, the judge, Major Nikola Stanković, a member of the Panel of the Higher Military Court that tried Djurović, came to his cell together with Josip Malović, deputy public prosecutor of Yugoslavia. Major Stanković told Djurović that he was lucky since: "had I been tried only two or three months earlier, I would certainly have been put to death."⁵⁵

On 15 September 1945, Djurović was sent to the notorious communist dungeon of Sremska Mitrovica to serve his sentence. Before that he spent several weeks in Zabela and Niš. The prisons in Sremska Mitrovica and Zabela essentially were a Yugoslav version of the gulag, a concentration camp for undesirable members of the bourgeois class, for captured YHA members, and other real and imagined enemies of Yugoslav communism. Apart from these two prisons in Serbia, there were similar ones in other Yugoslav republics.

The communist prison in Sremska Mitrovica

Several eye-witnesses have written about the two terrifying Serbian communist prisons for political enemies. Dimitrije Djordjević claims that there were 12,000 prisoners in Zabela in March 1947,⁵⁶ and Milan Rajić estimated that Sremska Mitrovica held more than 3,500 prisoners in 1951.⁵⁷ Djura Djurović mentions 3,000 prisoners in Sremska Mitrovica, estimating that

⁵⁴ Dimitrije Djordjević, *Ožiljci i opomene*, 2 vols. (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1995), vol. 2, 51.

⁵⁵ Djura Djurović, "Razmišljanje o smrti", 33. His closing statement was published in *Sudjenje članovima političkog i vojnog rukovodstva organizacije Draže Mihailovića* (Belgrade 1945), 481–500.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 212.

⁵⁷ Milan L. Rajić, *Srpski pakao u komunističkoj Jugoslaviji. Trilogija komunističkih zločina* (Belgrade: Evro, 1991), 72. The third part of his trilogy on Tito's dungeons was originally published in Chicago under pseudonym: Jastreblaković, *Titovi kazamati u Jugoslaviji* (Chicago: Pokret srpskih četnika "Ravne Gore", 1960).

around three-fourths of them were ex-members of the YHA.⁵⁸ Convicts were sentenced as “deserters”, “collaborators”, and harbourers of what was left of the YHA forces. With the so-called *kukuruzari* (from Serb. *kukuruz*, “corn”), peasants who opposed the enforced requisition of grains, added to the number of convicts in Sremska Mitrovica, the total number would be much greater than Rajić and Djurović estimated.⁵⁹

Both prisons had special sections for prisoners held as top enemies of the state, and Djurović and Dr. Stevan Moljević were certainly the top two at Sremska Mitrovica. Djurović kept this high status among “enemies of the state” throughout his prison term and was considered prone to organise resistance to communist authorities. Originally, convicts were placed in big dorms, and Djurović shared room with 200 inmates. At first he was strictly supervised, then put in isolation, and then in solitary confinement. A special terror ensued after the announcement of the resolution of Information Bureau of 28 June 1948 that expelled the Communist Party of Yugoslavia from the family of Soviet-controlled communist parties. Five days later, the warden personally selected the political convicts who were to be given “special treatment”. This group was divided into two subgroups: those who would be isolated collectively, and those who would be isolated individually. The terror lasted some six months in the second half of 1948. The individually isolated convicts were deprived of walking and of the previous possibility of having a shower once in fifteen days. Strict group isolation continued until September 1953, while individual isolation ended in June 1950, when the most distinguished political convicts rejoined other convicts in group rooms.⁶⁰

In a report submitted in December 1959 by Radovan Marković, some sort of assistant warden, one can read that in the course of 1947 and 1948 Djurović, together with Stevan Moljević, Slavoljub Vranešević, Sava Banković and others, was “a centre of chetnik headmen and hostile activity in the circle of convicts”. Marković also assessed that Vranešević, Banković and Moljević caused the main problem in the penitentiary in the period of 1953–58.⁶¹ However, the former YHA members drew a clear distinction between those who had belonged to the YHA headed by General Mihailović and those who had supported either the Serbian fascist Dimitrije Ljotić

⁵⁸ Djura Djurović, “Sećanja iz komunističke robijašnice u Sremskoj Mitrovici”, 10.

⁵⁹ Cf. Srdjan Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića. Represija u Srbiji 1944–1953* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2006), 421; Srdjan Cvetković, “Struktura političkih zatvorenika u Srbiji i Jugoslaviji”, *Hereticus* VII/1–2 (2009), 72–73.

⁶⁰ Djura Djurović, “Sećanja iz robijašnice u Sremskoj Mitrovici”, 30–31, 35 and 125.

⁶¹ Report on Djura Djurović by Radovan Marković dated 25 Nov. 1958. AKPDMS, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović.

or the marionette pseudo-government of General Nedić. Accordingly, Banković was never considered as part of the YHA circle in the prison.

As noted above, political prisoners were divided into two groups: those put in collective isolation and those isolated individually. Djurović provided a list of those who had been isolated. From the ranks of the YHA (or Ravna Gora Movement, as Djurović preferred to call it) the following persons were isolated individually: Dr. Djura Djurović; Dr. Aleksandar Popović; a CNK member, Vojin Andrić; Mihailo Mandić of the YHA Belgrade branch; Colonel Petar Simić; and Rade Bojović, YHA commander in Dragačevo District. From the “Nedić-Ljotić group” the only individually isolated person was the priest Sava Banković. Two more persons were isolated in the same way: engineer Zdravković and Dr. Dragoljub Jovanović, pre-war leader of the Agrarian Party.⁶² Among collectively isolated prisoners who belonged to the YHA were: Dr. Stevan Moljević, former president of the Executive Board of the CNK; two other CNK members, Dr. Djura Vilović and Aleksandar Pavlović; Colonel Slavoljub Vranešević and Captain Radomir Milošević – Čeda, of the YHA Avala Corps. Among the collectively isolated were also: Dr. Laza Marković, leader of the Radical Party; Vlada Ilić, a well-known Belgrade industrialist; three Teokarević brothers (Vlada, Lazar and Slavko), also industrialists; and Dragi Stojadinović, brother of the former PM of the Royal Government Milan Stojadinović. Individual isolation lasted some twenty-three months, until 3 June 1950. According to his own testimony, Djurović was the only one who was kept in solitary confinement during this entire period of twenty-three months, while the others were kept in isolation for several months. Dr. Moljević was among those kept in solitary cells for several months. Djurović vividly described his experience of solitary confinement:

In those endlessly long days and nights, tormented by hunger and deprived of any human contact, and any distraction, all the time in a solitary with locked doors with a small window opening for delivery of food, and when the bucket is taken to be slopped out, there is not a single person apart from oafs [guards] at any floor, the individually isolated felt lost in a bleak world deprived of any sense of human, humane, a world where a man is thrown below the level of an animal.

Yet, in that gloomy and senseless world even the individually isolated could sense some signs of life outside the cell. Alas, these were screams of other convicts.

This ghastly dark atmosphere was raised to Shakespearean heights by the signs of distressing human suffering. From the first floor, almost after each tattoo, one could hear horrible screams of human beings, moans that tore

⁶² Djurović, “Sećanja iz robijašnice”, 30.

one's heart. As if coming from hell, they rent dead silence of murky night in a spacious chasm stretching from the concrete floor in the basement up to the glass roof separating rows of solitaires from one side and the other. It was as if humankind had returned to the dayspring of civilisation, as if human pain had been the ultimate enjoyment for those who caused it.

In the murky nights, screams and moans could be heard for hours. "These were really the darkest, the most distressing hours in the history of imprisonment of political convicts on the second floor isolated under the strictest terms."⁶³

All the isolated were stripped of all personal belongings, they had bans on visits and were systematically kept undernourished. Previously, prisoners were allowed a monthly 14-kilo package from their families. From the moment the campaign of terror was introduced the weight of packages was reduced to five kilos per month. Prison food amounted to 200 grams of corn bread and some sort of dishwater food. Since some individually isolated convicts also had monthly bans on receiving packages, some lost up to one third of their body weight. The first victim of the terror and isolation was Colonel Petar Simić. He committed suicide. Throwing himself out of a window, he said: "I am innocent."⁶⁴ The August and September of 1948 were the worst for Djurović. At the beginning of his isolation Djurović was given a one-month ban on receiving packages and thus the package for September was handed to him at the end of that month instead of at the beginning. He suffered from haemorrhoids that were bleeding. With bleedings and the daily allocation of 200 grams of bread and some sort of dishwater food, his condition reached the point where he could barely stand up. When he was finally allowed to receive the food provided for patients of the penitentiary infirmary, he was on the verge of utter exhaustion.⁶⁵ Fortunately for the convicts, the terror ended at the end of that year.

At the beginning of his prison term, Djurović believed in the imminent fall of the communist regime. Therefore, he wrote, in 1947 or 1948, a leaflet entitled "Ideological foundations of the Ravna Gora Movement", which was copied and distributed among prisoners. Apparently, the text referred to the organisation of a new state that would replace the communist Yugoslavia. He was also an informal leader of the convicts originating from the YHA.⁶⁶ The penitentiary kept a personal file for each prisoner. From Djurović's file one can find that during his time in isolation he was addi-

⁶³ Djurović, "Sećanja iz robijašnice", 32–33.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 30–37.

⁶⁵ Djurović, "Razmišljanje o smrti", 19–20.

⁶⁶ Opinion on Djurović by Dušan Milenović dispatched to the Administration of State Security (UDB) of Serbia, 18 Dec. 1959. AKPDMSM, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović.

tionally punished seven times by bans on visits and food packages, and four times more sent to a solitary cell for a period of 7–14 days. Since he received three out of the eleven punishments in 1948, it is clear that it was the year of his most intensive activity and, also, that the administration of the penitentiary was particularly sensitive to all his undertakings in that period.

Life under special punitive conditions and isolation in the penitentiary seriously affected Djurović's health. From the end of 1948 he faced cardiac problems, and from 1950 he had serious problems with haemorrhoids and also suffered from chronic intestinal catarrh. His wife Ana appealed to all possible authorities, including President Josip Broz Tito, to permit her husband to have a haemorrhoids operation. By the time he underwent the operation, in 1951, his condition had deteriorated badly, causing a severe blood loss. The penitentiary administration obstructed the surgery for a long while, but Djurović was finally sent to a civilian hospital in Sremska Mitrovica, and this probably saved his life. He also suffered from cardiac arrhythmia, but the administration repeatedly refused to grant the appeal of his wife from January 1955 to give permission to a physician from Belgrade to examine Djurović. In May, the warden refused again to grant the appeal, and stated that in case the Ministry of Interior's had an opposite opinion, a doctor would be permitted to come from Belgrade to examine Djurović, albeit at his wife's expense.⁶⁷ Finally, in October 1955, a prison doctor suggested that Djurović should be examined in Belgrade.

In January 1960, the Penitentiary allowed another haemorrhoids operation in the hospital of the Central Prison in Belgrade. He was operated and treated in that hospital from 18 January until 11 February 1960. As his health deteriorated further, he was sent to the Central Prison hospital again in December 1960 for the treatment of haemorrhoids and cardiac problems, with a word of caution in capital letters by the person in charge of keeping his personal file in Sremska Mitrovica, warning that Djurović was inclined to escape.⁶⁸ Djurović remained in hospital from 28 December 1960 to 15 February 1961. He was sent to the same hospital for two more treatments, in April and May 1960, and with the same warning.⁶⁹ These sudden repeated permissions for the medical treatment of Djura Djurović should be attributed to international pressure exerted through the Red Cross and other international actors. They also show that Djurović's health severely

⁶⁷ Letter of Dušan Milenović to the Ministry of Interior of Serbia, 23 May 1955. AKPDSM, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović.

⁶⁸ Letter of Zvonko Renčelj, officer for personal files, to the Central Prison hospital, dated 27 Dec. 1960, AKPDSM, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović.

⁶⁹ Letters of Zvonko Renčelj, officer for personal files, to the Central Prison hospital, dated 4 Apr. and 9 May 1961. AKPDSM, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović.

deteriorated as a result of years of neglect. International pressure also forced Yugoslav communist authorities in 1959 and 1960 to temporarily end the practice in Sremska Mitrovica of mixing political prisoners and criminals, although political prisoners could still be mixed with criminals as a punishment.⁷⁰

From 22 September 1953 until 14 June 1959, he worked in a group room and he worked in limited scope in the building department. He was again under everyday observation both by the penitentiary administration and by the secret services. In order to humiliate him after his collective isolation ended in 1953, Djurović was given a task to straighten up nails in an open shed. Many convicts found an excuse to pass by the shed to see Djurović and greet him, and noses noted down every one of them.⁷¹

The warden of the penitentiary at Sremska Mitrovica, Dušan Milenović, noted in his report of 9 December 1958 that Djurović's activities "abated" after 1953; but he also added that, "he remains strongly hostile to socialism even today."⁷² After a break in the almost six years of ruthless maltreatment, Djurović was singled out, in June 1959, as one of a special group of convicts "for his hostile stance and for his active hostile activities." In a report by a UDBA official dated 10 July 1959, Djurović is assessed as a person who belongs "among the organisers and initiators of hostile activity, especially among convicts-chetniks", with a remark that a whole book in dozens of pages could be written on his hostile activities. It is stated that upon his arrival to the prison he formed a close circle of chetniks that he personally headed, and also that he "headed hostile activities among other chetniks".⁷³

He was particularly reprimanded for his role as the organiser of a two-day hunger strike on 28–29 March 1959. Djurović and the Ravna Gora Centre organised the hunger strike as a reaction to the treatment of Dušan Glumac, a convict who was beaten by a guard. Warden Milenović did not hide in his report to the UDBA of Serbia of December 1959 that Dušan Glumac, "convicted as a Western spy was beaten with a club by an officer."⁷⁴ On 28 March, the strikers turned back bread with a note that they were on strike. On the first day of strike, 117 political convicts returned food, and

⁷⁰ Djurović, "Sećanja iz robijašnice", 9.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 54.

⁷² Warden of the Penitentiary of Sremska Mitrovica to the Supreme Military Court, 9 Dec. 1958, No. 6343/58.

⁷³ Assessment of Dj. Djurović by UDBA officer Dragoljub Perić, written 10 July 1959. AKPDSM, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović.

⁷⁴ Opinion on Djurović by Dušan Milenović dispatched to the Administration of State Security (UDBA) of Serbia, dated 18 Dec. 1959. AKPDSM, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović.

on the second day, 127. Most of them were former YHA members. On this occasion, Moljević's group joined Djurović in this hunger strike. All the persons considered as organisers of the strike were punished by solitary confinement, and they included: Dr. Djurović, Bogdan Krekić, Vojin Andrić, Andra Lončarić, Bogoljub Tatarović and Ilija Stefanović.⁷⁵

The hunger strike again singled out Djurović as the informal leader of resistance of the YHA group in the penitentiary. Therefore the UDBA officer concluded: "On the basis of what we have reported above and on the basis of the other materials that we have on Djurović, we assert that Djuro still remains an unshaken enemy element and that he will fight against the achievements of our Revolution at every opportunity."⁷⁶

The hunger strike incident of 1959 was particularly upsetting for the administration of the penitentiary. There is a note in Djurović's personal file that he incited convicts not to receive food, and did it both personally and through other convicts. Therefore, on 5 April, he was punished by two-week solitary confinement, and by a two-month ban on visits and a three-month ban on receiving packages. This was the first and only case during his imprisonment that he was forbidden from receiving packages and having visits for a period longer than a month. Altogether, Djurović spent twenty-four and a half months in solitary confinement, of which twenty-three months continuously (1948–1950), once for two weeks (March 1959), once for twelve days (April 1948), and twice for one week (September 1953 and January 1955). The last disciplinary punishment was imposed on him in June 1960. He got a one-month ban on receiving mails and packages because "he supported a group of Albanians that were making trouble while walking laps."

During his imprisonment in Sremska Mitrovica he was one of key figures to all convicts that came from the ranks of the YHA. Another was Dr. Stevan Moljević. The two of them created two subgroups of former YHA members. Moljević believed in the imminent fall of communism and arrival of Western allies who would liberate Yugoslavia. Djurović grew more realistic with time and no longer expected drastic changes. In accordance with his expectations, Moljević suggested to all convicts to sabotage all activities organised by the penitentiary, such as film screenings, prison theatre performances, prison school etc. Djurović had the opposite opinion.⁷⁷ He thought that convicts should use their time in the penitentiary to acquire all kinds of knowledge and skills they could get. Dr. Moljević also underwent a terrible ordeal in prison and various forms of humiliations. He had serious

⁷⁵ Djurović, "Sećanja iz robijašnice", 85–86.

⁷⁶ Assessment of Dj. Djurović by UDBA officer Dragoljub Perić, written 10 July 1959.

⁷⁷ Radomir Milošević Čeda, *Zakasneli raport kapetana Čede. Hronika jedne srpske sudbine* (Belgrade: Interprint, 1996), 146–148.

health problems in 1956, was diagnosed with a colon cancer the following year, operated in Belgrade and promptly returned to the prison in Sremska Mitrovica. He died on 15 November 1959.⁷⁸ After Moljević's death, Djurović remained the uncontested informal leader of all prisoners related to the YHA.

The construction of the new communist man

Djurović observed that, contrary to the prison practice of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, where sentenced communists were treated as political prisoners and were allowed to read, translate, paint and buy food from nearby villages, in communist prisons nothing of the kind was allowed. Furthermore, the prisons of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had no intention to change the prisoners' political convictions. The practice of communist prisons was quite different. As Djurović observed: "The construction of the new man was not only the job of prisons, since not only convicts were opponents of the new order; a huge mass of the population throughout Yugoslavia was in opposition."⁷⁹ Milovan Djilas, in his Stalinist period, called this practice, in the style of Nikolai Ostrovski, "the forging of the new man". In the penitentiary at Sremska Mitrovica, this forging was carried out by two highest-ranking persons: the warden (during the entire period of Djurović's incarceration, it was Dušan Milenović) and his deputy. Djurović was in a particularly unfavourable position since the long-time deputy warden was Miloljub Toroman, a teacher before the Second World War. Most of his family members had been killed in the clashes with the YHA, and he came from the same village as Djurović. The two of them knew each other and had spoken on many occasions before the war.

With this background, it is hardly surprising that Toroman either was given the task or arrived himself at the idea to gather evidence on Djurović that would lead to his second trial. He was particularly irritated by the fact that Djurović was a major organiser of various activities among convicts in 1947 and 1948. Both Milošević and Djurović claim that Toroman tried to recruit the hairdresser Milovan Djurdjević for his plan. Djurdjević had a little daughter and was threatened with not being able to see her ever again if he refused to co-operate by placing the blame for the organisation of all sabotages and strikes in the prison on Djurović. Djurdjević, however, held Djurović in high esteem and they had become quite close, which threw him into a great moral dilemma. He accepted to co-operate with the prison administration, but he could not bring himself to betray Djurović. He found

⁷⁸ Rajić, *Srpski pakao*, 367–380.

⁷⁹ Djurović, "Sećanja iz robijašnice", 10.

the only way out by committing suicide. Toroman boasted that Djurović saved his head once but that he would not be able to do it again. Yet, the whole plan failed in the end.⁸⁰ Perhaps Toroman would have continued in the same direction, but the shift in Yugoslav foreign policy, increasingly pro-Western in the early 1950s, made a new trial politically inconvenient.

After this failure, there were other plans to crush the resistance of convicts and force them into accepting the communist order. In Djurović's view, Toroman's plan was to recruit spies from the ranks of political convicts while they still were serving their sentences. Upon their release, they would enjoy the status of martyrs in anticommunist circles, and as such would be in a position to collect information from unsuspecting "reactionary elements". One of the noses, however, confided to other convicts that he had had to sign a written obligation that he would be a lifelong informer of the UDBA, informing on everyone, including his family. The word spread fast and made it more difficult for Toroman to recruit new spies. To counter Toroman's effort, in the autumn of 1945 the former YHA members around Djurović set up the so-called Ravna Gora Centre in the penitentiary.⁸¹ The centre helped fellow sufferers in an organised way, especially those who could not receive packages. Those who received packages agreed to share a part of what they received with those who received nothing. Djurović remembered solidarity "as one of the best pages of the history of our imprisonment."⁸² Since Milan L. Rajić belonged to Moljević's group, he made no mention of this centre in his memoirs.

Toroman's plan did not work well and he resorted to a new method. Djurović claims that this new method of Toroman's was as follows: a convict ordered to strip down to his underwear would be left for two, three or four days in a unheated solitary cell during cold months; the cold prevented him from falling asleep and after two or three days of such torture, he would be faced with another such exposure and consequent pneumonia or tuberculosis. The fear induced by general terror led several convicts to commit suicide.⁸³ Yet, optimism "and strongly emphasised faithfulness to old ideals" was the dominant note among the political convicts.⁸⁴ In another place Djurović remarked: "to be so crushed and yet to believe that it all was temporary is really incomprehensible. Perhaps it is our Kosovo [Battle]

⁸⁰ Milošević, *Zakasneli raport*, 133–135.

⁸¹ Djurović, "Sećanja iz robijašnice", 26–29.

⁸² *Ibid.* 94.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 41–44.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 46.

commitment that makes a victory out of defeat and endures hoping not for a decade but for centuries.”⁸⁵

Upon the end of isolation in 1953, the penitentiary administration planned to stir up division among the convicts. In June 1954, all political convicts (i.e. not only former YHA members, but also former supporters of Stalin), were summoned to the prison cultural centre. In front of them, a convict who had accepted to work for the UDBA attacked Dr. Djurović and Dr. Moljević. He claimed that it was their responsibility that political convicts were still in prison, because these two headmen lulled themselves into a false hope that actions of the United States and Yugoslav emigration would cause the existing order to collapse. When the convict-informer asked the other convicts to shout after him “Long live the leader of our people Comrade Tito!”, only an ex-Stalinist joined, and the show soon ended with no result.⁸⁶

The next method was to find what they called “reformed persons” (Serb. *revidirci*) among the convicts. Those who chose to “improve” themselves by revising their stance would become “reformed persons”. They were allocated a room in each building where they could meet and discuss plans for the future. A convict who was close to becoming “reformed,” but eventually refused to carry it through, revealed to the others that the “reformed persons” had to write down a confession that would include hitherto unknown details of their wartime past; in other words, they had to make some self-accusations that would prove their “reformed status”. Djurović claims that these self-accusations led to further arrests, because they had disclosed some new details to the UDBA. The “reformed” enjoyed some privileges. They were given new clothes, and became labour overseers and inmate overseers. However, the Ravna Gora Centre, in Djurović’s words, was able to resist this action. Radomir Milošević adds in his memoirs that noses and “reformed persons” were often very useful for the convicts as well, since they were willing to do small favours to other convicts. Milošević also remarked that there were almost no “reformed persons” among peasants and workers, but mostly among intellectuals.⁸⁷

Release and surveillance by the UDBA/SDB

His wife Ana Djurović née Paligorić (1907–1994) proved to be a person of great determination and dedication. She committed herself fully to the ef-

⁸⁵ Ibid. 124.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 61–64.

⁸⁷ Milošević, *Zakasneli raport*, 156.

fort to alleviate the hardship of her husband's imprisonment, and she went through an ordeal herself. When she refused to sign divorce papers presented to her by the OZNA and to become an informer, her name was removed from the list of persons with the right to vote by court decision. Subsequently, the UDBA attempted to drive her out of Belgrade, to Svrlijig, a small place in south-east Serbia. Encouraging wives to divorce their imprisoned husbands was not an exception, but the routine practice of the OZNA, which wanted to make the life of all political convicts as bad as possible.

The UDBA's plan was to be realised through the Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the 1st District of Belgrade. This body decided on 31 August 1949 to sentence Ana Djurović to five days in prison and six-month exile in Svrlijig. The decision was justified by the claim that Mrs. Djurović was "jobless" and allegedly avoiding work. From her appeal, one finds out that she worked in the trade company "Vetserum" from December 1948 until 31 July 1949, when she was notified of dismissal as of 31 August.⁸⁸

Her appeal was eventually granted and a new battle began, since the UDBA could always expel her under the same pretext of her being jobless, and she could find no employment exactly because the UDBA saw that she did not. Fortunately, the wife of Radomir Milošević, Olga, gave her a job at her fashion tailor shop in Hilandarska St., and she later worked in a bookstore. Ana could barely eke out a living for herself, but still she managed to send packages to her husband regularly.⁸⁹

She also fought a long and persistent legal battle by sending appeals to various state bodies requesting a reduction of her husband's sentence. By decision of the Federal Executive Council of Yugoslavia (Yugoslav Federal Government) No. 2255, on the Day of the Republic, 29 November 1958, after thirteen years in prison, Djurović was granted two years' sentence reduction, from twenty to eighteen years. Even after fourteen and a half years of serving his sentence, the administration of the penitentiary, particularly the warden, were convinced that Djurović's sentence should not be reduced any further: "Djurović has remained an unswerving enemy of all results of our revolution. Therefore he does not deserve to be released."⁹⁰ Her last appeal for her husband to be released on probation was rejected in January

⁸⁸ Appeal of Ana Djurović to the Commissariat of Internal Affairs dated 7 September. A copy is in the author's possession.

⁸⁹ Djurović, "Razmišljanje o smrti", 10; Milošević, *Zakasneli raport*, 140.

⁹⁰ Opinion on Djurović by Dušan Milenović dispatched to the Administration of Public Security (UDBA) of Serbia, 18 Dec. 1959. AKPDSM, 02 No. 6343/59.

1962 by the Supreme Military Court.⁹¹ Fortunately for Djurović, amnesty was soon implemented. The State Commission of the People's Republic of Serbia for the implementation of the Amnesty Law enacted on 13 March 1962 unanimously decided, at its session of 30 March, that in the case of Dr. Djura Djurović all conditions for amnesty were fulfilled.

Djurović had been arrested on 8 June 1945 and was released on 2 April 1962, almost seventeen years later. He again became an inhabitant of Belgrade, a communist capital with a well-organised secret service network. During this period of freedom under surveillance, from April 1962 until November 1973, he continued to advocate values of Western democracies, to criticise the Yugoslav communist regime within the circle of friends that he still had, and to maintain contact with YHA-related former convicts, with political emigrants in France and the United States, and with likeminded individuals in Belgrade. He also had contacts with some circles in the West through the remnants of Belgrade Masonic lodges that continued to organise gatherings. Djurović's martyrdom in the prison was a well-known fact in Belgrade bourgeois circles where Djurović where was looked upon with respect and admiration. His opposition to communism and his pro-Western and pro-American stance were also well known. Therefore, meeting with Djurović, or even only greeting him in public could have been interpreted as an act hostile to Yugoslav communism. Yet, the Yugoslav communist regime created such a wide range of real and imagined enemies that "non-reformed" former convicts, pre-war politicians and anticommunist members of pre-war Belgrade freemasonry immediately gathered around Djurović in spite of all challenges that their contact with him could cause.

A UDBA report to the minister of Interior of the People's Republic Serbia, dated 2 November 1962, lists his main friends. Among them were: the prominent freemason and barrister Boža Pavlović, the lawyer Dr. Vojin Andrić and the engineer Živojin Veličković (both released together with Djurović), the pre-war socialist journalist Bogdan Krekić (pre-war MP for the Democratic Party), the barristers Ljubiša Trifunović and Aleksandar Popović, ex-Captain of the YHA Miodrag Stojanović, YHA Major Miloš Radojlović, YHA Captains Radomir Milošević and Živojin Lazić, the lawyer Dr. Todor Perović, the theologian Dobrivoje Ušević, and the former cabinet minister Kosta Kumanudi. All of them, apart from Pavlović, were former convicts. He also kept contact with Dr. Milan Protić, former director of the National Bank of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and minister in the government of Dragiša Cvetković. Djurović was also in contact with persons from the Patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church and with

⁹¹ Decision by Colonel Miloje Topisirović KVL No. 1/62, 31 Jan. 1962. A copy is in the author's possession.

persons outside the capital, particularly from Novi Sad, Čačak, Kragujevac, Sombor etc. He also kept close contact with Serbs employed with the US embassy in Belgrade and also had contacts in the French, US and some other embassies. A UDBA officer observed that Djurović was able, in a very short time, to establish contacts “with his acquaintances from the ranks of Belgrade bourgeoisie, intellectuals, and especially from the ranks of former convicts.”⁹²

The personal file of Djurović preserved in the UDBA and SDB was in 2010 transferred to the Archives of Serbia. It contains some 424 pages. Only five days after his release the first report was submitted to the UDBA by “Ćosić”, and as soon as 3 July the head of the 2nd Department of the UDBA Belgrade branch placed a ban on issuance of a passport to Djurović. This ban was extended on 1 November 1968, upon a note by the SDB officer B. Nedeljković of September 1967 assessing that Djurović would not return to the country in case he was granted a passport. He was under surveillance during his private conversations, and in many of his visits to restaurants. His correspondence was under constant surveillance that began immediately after his release and was renewed in October 1967 by the decision of the Secretariat (Ministry) of Interior of the Socialist Republic of Serbia.⁹³ His flat was bugged and he seemed to be aware of it since he made all important conversations outside of his apartment.⁹⁴ He was also aware that his correspondence was under surveillance since some letters were sent but never reached him.

From the personal file of Djurović one finds out that the Yugoslav secret service was able to recruit a considerable number of informers from the ranks of former convicts. Obviously, the original idea to recruit noses in the penitentiary who would become informers once they were set free bore fruit. Four persons spied on Djurović and submitted written reports to the UDBA. Their code names are “Ćosić”, “Kuzman” (UDBA No. 572), “Oskar” (UDBA No. 596), and “Lale” (UDBA No. 611). It is obvious from the reports that “Ćosić”, “Kuzman” and “Oskar” were former convicts of the Sremska Mitrovica penitentiary who enjoyed Djurović’s trust, since he saw them as his fellow sufferers. “Oskar” is also known to have been born in the village of Velika Drenova, and a plumber by occupation.⁹⁵ “Oskar” became

⁹² AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, pp. 96–99.

⁹³ AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, pp. 89, 95, 220 and 226.

⁹⁴ Report by “Oskar”, 23 May 1967. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 200.

⁹⁵ AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, pp. 128 and 210. Djurović also thought of asking his friends from the US Embassy in Belgrade to employ “Oskar” as a plumber at the Embassy. Report by “Oskar”, 21 Nov. 1966.

so close to Djurović that Djurović invited him to spend summer vacations with him in 1967, and insisted that he would not go unless “Oskar” agreed to come with him.⁹⁶

Djurović’s confidence in “Oskar” was fatal. It led to his second arrest six years later, since “Oskar” gathered valuable information for the SDB that was later used to construct Djurović’s second trial. On 29 April 1967, “Oskar” informed Djurović that he had been issued a passport, and Djurović decided to send him to Paris to visit Andra Lončarić, a person who had been close to Djurović during his imprisonment in Sremska Mitrovica. Lončarić was known to be inclined to organise violent actions against Yugoslav communists. Djurović provided “Oskar” with a password that would convince Lončarić that he had been sent by Djurović. He also advised him to be very careful in Paris, since the UDBA had infiltrated into many émigré circles. Then Djurović sent a letter to Lončarić, pretending to be a female acquaintance of his, announcing that Lončarić would have a visitor in mid-June. The letter came into the possession of the SDB.⁹⁷ There is no information in Djurović’s file on what exactly happened in Paris, but “Oskar” remained his “friend” and, after a short break in the second half of 1967, he continued to submit reports on Djurović.

Djurović’s activities were observed also by UDBA local branches and even by the UDBA for Macedonia in January 1968. Overall, there are three reports by “Čosić” (two from April 1962, and one from December 1963), fourteen by “Kuzman” (from February 1964 to January 1969), twenty by “Oskar” (from November 1964 to May 1971), and three by “Lale” (two from April 1968, and one from April 1971). In other words, some forty reports submitted in a nine-year period. There are also dozens of reports by UDBA officials based on the information supplied by these four informers, reports by other informers and the recorded conversations he had in his flat.

Like other former convicts, Djurović tried to find employment, but the UDBA made sure that it did not happen. The experience of his friend and associate, former YHA Captain, Radomir Milošević nicknamed Čeda, was very much the same. He was released from Sremska Mitrovica on 30 December 1958, after fourteen years of imprisonment. He spoke three foreign languages, a skill that was quite sought-after in Belgrade at the time. Yet, no one dared employ him. He finally applied to a job as a translator for the US embassy in Belgrade and was admitted in 1959. Since Djurović had the same problem, Milošević arranged for him to translate for the US embassy, but under his wife’s or someone else’s name, which was approved

⁹⁶ Report by “Oskar” to SDB, 12 Apr. 1967. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, pp. 190–192.

⁹⁷ AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, pp. 193 and 200–201.

by Milošević's chief at the embassy, Benson. Djurović was also engaged as a translator by many of his friends. It is known from Milošević's memoirs that Djurović translated four books from the Dr. Dolittle series for a well-known Serbian publisher (Dečje novine). The publisher's legal representative was Života Lazić, an YHA sympathiser,⁹⁸ and he arranged for Djurović to translate Dr. Dolittle, but under Milošević's name.⁹⁹ Also, considered the informal leader of the YHA in Serbia, Djurović received occasional financial support from several emigrants.

During the period of eleven and a half years between two imprisonments, the UDBA (renamed SDB/State Security Agency, in 1964) surrounded not only Djurović but also his associates and friends with a network of agents. It was less than sympathetic to the affection that some of his friends had for him. Therefore, its agents openly told Radomir Milošević that he would get a passport if he stopped socialising with Djurović. However, they remained friends, and Milošević mentions that they and their wives travelled together around the country and went to the seaside once.¹⁰⁰

The UDBA also infiltrated into the circles of freemasons in Belgrade through the "Belgrade lodge" and the "Yugoslav lodge". These were the surviving remnants of pre-war Belgrade freemasonry. As early as the mid 1950s, members of these lodges began to send reports to freemasons and distinguished emigrants in the West, with the aim to criticise Yugoslav authorities in political circles of Western democracies. From 1956, the "Yugoslav lodge" took the lead, headed by Vojislav Paljić, a pre-war judge, and Božidar Pavlović, a barrister. The two of them kept contact with American freemasons. On the recommendation of Paljić and Pavlović, Dr. Djurović prepared a special report addressed to Luther Smith, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite Southern Jurisdic-

⁹⁸ Belgrade barrister and bibliophile Života Lazić (1927–2010) kept at his home five typewritten works of Dr. Djurović. One of these, "Reflections on Death", ends with Djurović's handwritten dedication to Lazić and his heirs "to use it when circumstances permit". "Advokat koji je poklonio sedam kamiona knjiga" [A barrister who donated seven trucks of books], *Politika*, 5 Nov. 2011.

⁹⁹ Milošević, *Zakasneli raport*, 168–274, mentions that Djurović translated four books from Hugh Lofting's Dr. Dolittle series under his name. I have been able to find three: Hju Lofting, *Doktor Dulitl ZOO* [trans. Radomir Milošević] (Gornji Milanovac: Dečje novine, 1979); *Doktor Dulitl vrt* [tr. Radomir Milošević] (Gornji Milanovac: Dečje novine, 1979); and *Putovanje doktora Dulitla* [tr. Radomir Milošević] (Gornji Milanovac: Dečje novine, 1981). There is yet another book with "the nicest true stories from the Wild West" translated for Dečje novine under Milošević's name: *Najlepše istinite priče Divljeg Zapada* (Gornji Milanovac: Dečje novine, 1981).

¹⁰⁰ Milošević, *Zakasneli raport*, 173.

tion in Washington.¹⁰¹ Pavlović died in early 1967, before Djurović completed the report. At least two versions of the report have survived.¹⁰² It was written in or immediately after 1967, since Božidar Pavlović is referred to as “late”, and it also mentions the text accompanying the Order of Merit awarded posthumously to General Mihailović by US president Harry Truman in April 1948. Since the United States did not disclose the existence of this award and text until 1967, this is the earliest date the report could have been written.¹⁰³ The report came into the possession of the SDB, and was used as evidence against Djurović in 1973.

In spite of its well-developed network surrounding Djurović, the UDBA/SDB was only partially successful. Namely, some of Djurović’s reports did reach the Western world, including the report to Luther Smith, other reports reached Paris, and some of his writings were preserved by his friends in Serbia. However, the UDBA/SDB’s greatest failure in coping with Djurović was its complete inability to undermine his considerable influence on former convicts from the YHA ranks.

Djurović’s tactical and political considerations

Reports by SDB informers reveal only a part of Djurović’s tactical and political considerations. It should be borne in mind that he was very careful and that he kept even the most “successful” among informers, “Kuzman” and “Oskar”, only partially informed. Besides, the main informer, “Oskar”, was certainly far below Djurović’s education and it is highly unlikely that Djurović shared complicated concepts with him. Therefore, the preserved reports certainly offer a somewhat distorted picture of Djurović’s activities and considerations, but they still provide some insights.

Djurović believed that ex-convicts and other anticommunists should stay in Yugoslavia and organise activities rather than leave the country. He apparently had channels to leave through emigration and was encouraged

¹⁰¹ In 1983 Boško Matic’s article titled “Masons” in the journal published by the Ministry of Interior of Serbia demonstrates how deep was the coverage of both Masonic lodges in Belgrade by UDBA/SDB. At the same time it shows that the SDB did not have quite reliable data. For instance, Matic attributes the authorship of the book *Tito’s dungeons in Yugoslavia* to Djura Djurović. This book was published under a pseudonym, Jastreb Oblaković, but its real author was Milan L. Rajić, another ex-prisoner of Sremska Mitrovica. Boško Matic, “Masoni”, *Bezbednost* 1 (1983), 70–92.

¹⁰² One was in the late Života Lazić’s private collection and now is in the author’s possession, and the other is in Djurović’s personal file of UDBA/SDB. They slightly differ in detail.

¹⁰³ Gregory A. Freeman, *The Forgotten 500: the untold story of the men who risked all for the greatest rescue mission of World War II* (New York: Nal Caliber, 2008), 271.

by some Americans to do that, but he never tried to use these channels. He spoke along these lines with his friends and succeeded in dissuading engineer Veličković from leaving,¹⁰⁴ and certainly influenced the decision of some other hesitant anticommunists to stay in Yugoslavia. From his friends and associates who stayed in the country he formed some sort of a new Ravna Gora circle. He thought that it was very important to keep this circle vigilant and prepared in case of a favourable twist of circumstances. He expected that he would be consulted on the new government if communism began to collapse.¹⁰⁵

To make some of his less educated associates more operative, he spared no time clarifying to them the meaning of terms such as democracy, dictatorship and totalitarianism. For instance, he gave such lessons to his associate Zagorka Kojić-Stojanović, who was his typist and whose apartment was apparently also wired.¹⁰⁶

He was encouraged in his expectations by some political developments in communist Yugoslavia, such as, for instance, the downfall of Aleksandar Ranković in 1966. Ranković had been in charge of the Yugoslav secret service network since its inception in 1944 and therefore was particularly disliked by political convicts. Moreover, Djurović thought of him as being a pro-Soviet man and of Josip Broz as pro-American and, therefore, although an opponent of both, he preferred Yugoslav dictator Josip Broz. From 1968, when Josip Broz turned seventy-six, he expected that he would die within a year or two and that his death would cause chaos.¹⁰⁷ Djurović and other ex-convicts carefully followed occasional activities of former Yugoslav supporters of Stalin and were fearful of what might happen if they came to power in Yugoslavia. In this regard, Djurović considered the Yugoslav breakaway from the Russians in 1948/49 as "the life achievement" of Josip Broz.¹⁰⁸

He carefully followed Cold-War disputes between the Soviet Union and the United States, hoping that the US would break with the Soviets. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Djurović and some other followers of the

¹⁰⁴ Report by "Kuzman", 7 Feb. 1967. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 186.

¹⁰⁵ Report by "Kuzman", 19 Sept. 1967. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 224.

¹⁰⁶ Official minutes by SDB officer Lj. Ljubičić, dated 21 March 1968. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 248.

¹⁰⁷ Report by "Oskar", 8 Apr. 1968. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 253.

¹⁰⁸ Report by "Oskar", 14 May 1970. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, pp. 287-288.

YHA thought of moving to Topola, a town in central Serbia, to the house of the former military judge from the YHA ranks Gradimir Ciganović, in order to hide themselves there until circumstances permit them to renew their activities.¹⁰⁹

Djurović saw the United States of America as the only possible foreign-policy ally of Ravna Gora and other anticommunist circles. In May 1967, encouraged by the April events in Greece, where a military junta took power, Djurović expected that American military bases could be used to help the downfall of communism in Yugoslavia.¹¹⁰ He also had hopes that major changes would happen in Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1968, and he noticed a rise of nationalism in the countries of the Soviet bloc and hoped this would open possibilities for more action. In April 1968, however, he became aware that there was no Western (American) support for any big action against the Yugoslav regime.¹¹¹ Student protests in 1968 encouraged him to contemplate organising a formal opposition group, but he was not fully confident that its potential members would be loyal.¹¹² He also came to believe that there was an agreement between the United States and communist Yugoslavia, particularly in case of Soviet invasion, and that the Americans would defend Yugoslavia if such scenario happened.¹¹³

His most prominent activities included writing his own report for American freemasons in 1967, and helping Bogdan Krekić to compile “a socialist report” for French and Belgian socialists, and particularly for Guy Mollet, former Prime Minister of France. At the beginning of 1969, the SDB undertook “all security measures aimed at identifying channels by which Djurović sent materials abroad”,¹¹⁴ but was not fully successful in this endeavour. Djurović carefully followed the economic situation in Yugoslavia, statistical data, and the disposition of young people, and he continued to write reports until the moment he was arrested for the second time.

¹⁰⁹ Official minutes by SDB officer B. Nedeljko, 23 May 1967. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, pp. 202–203.

¹¹⁰ Report by “Kuzman”, 6 May 1967. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 195.

¹¹¹ Report by “Lale”, 12 Apr. 1968. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 255.

¹¹² Report by “Oskar”, 10 June 1968. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 263.

¹¹³ Reports by “Oskar”, 14 May 1970 and 3 Nov. 1970. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, pp. 288 and 296.

¹¹⁴ Official minutes by Lj. Ljubičić, SDB officer, 19 Feb. 1969. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, p. 276.

New arrest and new trial

In September 1974, the Yugoslav communist regime staged a new trial of Dr. Djura Djurović. The trial is important for the analysis of the state of the judiciary in the communist Yugoslavia of the time, and it is also a good indicator of the increased level of authoritarianism of the Yugoslav state in the 1970s. Lack of legal knowledge and insufficiently careful analysis of the preserved documents may lead historians dealing with repression to unreliable conclusions.¹¹⁵ Criticism of legal sources is not possible without knowledge of both Yugoslav communist penal law and practices implemented in proceedings in the field of penal law in the SFRY. The trial of Djura Djurović offers a valuable insight into legal practice, since the text of the verdict may be compared with an independent report prepared for the Amnesty International by Prof. Christiaan Frederik Rüter from Amsterdam.

In early November 1973, the District Court of Belgrade received “anonymously” mailed texts attributed to Dr. Djura Djurović. They were passed on to the UDBA. On 22 November 1973, Dr. Djurović and Zagorka Stojanović were arrested. The Secretary for Internal Affairs (Minister of Interior) of Serbia sent a letter mentioning Djurović’s and Stojanović’s connections with the SOPO (*Srpski omladinski pokret oslobodjenja*/Serbian Youth Liberation Movement)¹¹⁶ and with Andrija Lončarić, a Serbian emigrant who had served his sentence and was pardoned at the same time as Djurović. On 10 March 1969, Lončarić was killed in Paris, in an SDB-organised action. He is widely believed to have been an organiser of the SOPO, although not even today is there a clear picture of how big and operative this organisation was, and Prof. Rüter was not even sure if the SOPO had ever existed.

There indeed was some secret communication between Djurović and Lončarić, particularly in 1967–68 and, as we have seen, Djurović even sent his “friend”, the ex-political convict “Oskar”, to meet with Lončarić in 1967. However, Djurović was essentially opposed to Lončarić’s strategy, since the latter believed that the struggle against the communist regime should be led by emigrants, whereas Djurović gave preference to the building and maintenance of an anticommunist network in Yugoslavia, which should be used to take power in Yugoslavia once the United States entered into an open conflict with the Yugoslav regime. Djurović was also opposed to any violent action against Yugoslav communists and considered that the remnants of the Ravna Gora Movement had to differ in this respect from ustasha émi-

¹¹⁵ An obvious exception is the memoirs of Dimitrije Djordjević, who was well aware of the perverted practice of Yugoslav communist courts and who vividly described how justice was ridiculed in these courts.

¹¹⁶ SOPO is believed to have been established in late 1966.

grés, who amply used terrorist methods. This means that Djurović's position was moderate and actually opposed to what Lončarić was doing. The SDB had information on all of this.¹¹⁷ Therefore, the charges against him were fabricated. They concerned something that the SDB had been fully aware of for some six years, and "Oskar" must have submitted oral and written reports to the SDB on his visit to Paris in June 1967. Besides, by the time the prosecutor pressed charges against Djurović, Lončarić had already been dead for more than four years. Therefore, Djurović's contact with Lončarić was only a pretext for a case against him. The real reason was the crisis of Yugoslav communism, the rise of nationalism in Croatia and elsewhere in Yugoslavia, and the resulting fear of the Yugoslav dictator Josip Broz and some of his associates in 1972–74 that their position might be jeopardised. As a result, in that period all possible "enemies" were arrested and tried.

The Office of the Public Prosecutor waited for the maximum duration of detention to expire, including permitted extensions. Only on the day when the detention had to be terminated legally (21 May 1974 or, in other words, six months after the arrest) did the Prosecutor's Office press charges. Djurović and Stojanović were incriminated for "participating in hostile activities against Yugoslavia" under Article 109 of the Penal Code.

The trial took place between 16 September and 21 October 1974. The Panel presided by judge Dragomir Nikolić, comprised judge Djuro Svorcan and three lay members-jurymen (*porotnici*), Draga Kovačević, Momir Popović and Marija Tomić. Dr. Djurović was defended by barristers Vitomir Knežević from Belgrade,¹¹⁸ and Vladimir Ivković from Zagreb. The Prosecutor's Office was represented by Deputy District Attorney Stojan Miletić.¹¹⁹

The verdict includes "statements" given by Djura Djurović. However, Yugoslav communist courts tended to use typists only exceptionally. This practice has continued in Serbia even after the fall of communism. Therefore a serious researcher must take "statements" given by the accused with caution, since the typist only typed down the summary made by the presiding judge. This means that the "statements" attributed to Djurović were dictated by the judge who presided the panel, and this inevitably means that the judge made various abridgements, shortenings and unavoidable simpli-

¹¹⁷ Reports by "Oskar", 3 May 1967, and "Kuzman", 6 May 1967; official minutes by Lj. Ljubičić, SDB officer, 21 Mar. 1968. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, pp. 194, 196 and 248.

¹¹⁸ Vitomir Knežević, a well-known Belgrade barrister who defended the accused in many politically motivated cases in communist Yugoslavia in the 1970s and 1980s.

¹¹⁹ Data have been taken from the verdict of the District Court of Belgrade, No. 485/74, 23 Oct. 1974.

fications that were self-evident to the persons present, but that make it difficult for a researcher to understand them several decades later. Therefore, this and other verdicts of Yugoslav communist courts may provide a blurred and distorted picture of what the participants in the proceedings really said.

Fortunately, the proceedings were attended by Prof. Rüter,¹²⁰ who put together a wider report for the Research Department of the Amnesty International in London, dated 28 October. On 15 November 1974, he sent an abridged version of the report to Secretary-General, marking it as confidential and with a remark to show it first to Yugoslav authorities in order to try to influence them, and to publish it only later. Prof. Rüter first approached the Yugoslav embassy at The Hague, and then was in Belgrade from 13 to 19 October 1974. In the Yugoslav capital, he was in contact with a colleague, Dimitrijević, professor of penal law at the University of Belgrade,¹²¹ and with “a Belgrade correspondent of a Dutch newspaper”. Upon his arrival in Belgrade, Rüter had to face the fact that Western embassies refused to give him anything that was likely to cause strained relations with Yugoslavia. Even the Dutch embassy refused to help him.

Still, “officials” appeared in the court, but “officials” of the SDB. It was not too difficult for Rüter to guess that the persons who introduced themselves as “law students”, but who knew nothing about Yugoslav penal law, were actually SDB agents. His assumption was only strengthened when there appeared a woman who spoke English and said that she was also a “law student”. These “students” showed great interest in the Amnesty International, and even wanted to see Rüter’s Dutch passport.

Amnesty International’s observer places the proceedings in the context of decisions made by the 20th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia held in May 1974, which announced a showdown with all who opposed the official party line. The list included political opponents (pro-Soviet elements, chetniks, scholars who supported a critical socialist approach advocated by the journal *Praxis*, and ustashas), and opponents who advocated separatism in the member republics. Rüter assessed Djurović’s activities as harmless for the Yugoslav regime and, therefore, saw his arrest as the “result of increased measures, and criminal proceedings, against all dissidents”. He characterised Djurović as “a strong personality of great erudition and substantial courage”. What made a particular impression on him

¹²⁰ Christiaan Frederik Rüter (b. 1938), lecturer and professor of penal law at the University of Amsterdam (1972–2003).

¹²¹ This is probably Dr. Dragoljub Dimitrijević who was professor at the Belgrade University Law School, chair of the Department for Penal Law, and director of Law School’s Institute for Criminology. Cf. *Ko je ko u Jugoslaviji* [Who’s who in Yugoslavia] (Belgrade: Hronometar, 1970), 205.

was Djurović's statement given at the beginning of the trial, "that he was old and therefore feared neither death nor prison".¹²²

On 13 March 1975, the Federal Secretariat for Internal Affairs entered a translation of this report into its records, and the SDB for Serbia did the same a day later. Rüter noticed a peculiar fact. Although the state security possessed a document considered by the Prosecutor's Office as key evidence against Djurović (the document concerned contacts of the accused with Lončarić), the detention of Djurović was prolonged up to the maximum allowed period, and the prosecutor pressed charges only one day before the legal deadline for release of the detainees. Rüter compiled a chronology of the trial covering pre-trial proceedings. The chronology clearly demonstrates that the written evidence whose authorship was attributed to Djurović reached the District Court of Belgrade in early November 1973. The District Court forwarded it to the organs of the state security, and Dr. Djurović and Zagorka Stojanović were arrested on 22 November. The prosecutor submitted the indictment on 21 May 1974. Such a long detention, in Rüter's opinion, was meant to "reduce resistance of Mrs. Stojanović and to obtain her statements that would incriminate Dr. Djurović". Rüter believed that this was the only reason why Mrs. Stojanović had been accused at all.

Although Rüter had no previous experience with court proceedings in Yugoslavia, he easily noticed two key bizarre elements in Yugoslav judicial procedure. The first was that there were in the five-man panel three jurymen who just sat there, and that there was no stenographer, but instead the presiding judge dictated the statements both of the prosecutor and of the accused to a typist. Rüter observed that the three jurymen did not say a word during the entire trial, and the second professional judge said something only once. "The president of the panel directed proceedings in a very superficial way. It was obvious that he was in a hurry." Rüter also noticed that: "the presiding judge dictated into the record the decisions of the court, the speeches of the Defence and the Prosecution, the statements of the accused and experts' statements." Rüter assumed that the presiding judge, Nikolić, acted "on Party orders".

The most relevant observations of Prof. Rüter were summarised in Section 9 of his report. He had objections to preliminary procedures and to the circumstances under which Dr. Djurović was arrested. From what he witnessed and from what information he was able to gather, Rüter concluded "that there is a justifiable doubt that the decision on Djurović's guilt had

¹²² Since I had at my disposal only a Serbian translation of Rüter's report, I was compelled to translate certain quotations back into English. Therefore, the original report sent to the Amnesty International was certainly phrased somewhat differently, but the quotations have the same meaning.

been made long before the proceedings began.” Djurović was not given the chance to organise his defence properly. The court and the presiding judge in particular acted with bias. The issue of Djurović’s health was not sufficiently taken into consideration. The way in which the court had obtained evidence (publications and letters) increased his fears. The evidence had been sent to the court in November 1973 in an anonymous letter (signed “an old Yugoslav”) from Paris. During the trial the prosecutor presented letters that had not been presented before.

Rüter specified five problems:

1. There were threats the prosecutor made against the barristers, and the presiding judge did not even give him a warning. Previously, Rüter clarified that, on the session of 18 October 1974 which he had attended, barrister Knežević accused the presiding judge of partiality. Reacting to this, the prosecutor, who was very annoyed, said that Knežević had made several insinuations against state organs. Therefore it was not only the right of the court but also its duty to initiate proceedings against barrister Knežević before a disciplinary panel of the Bar Association. The prosecutor also said that he himself would check if such proceedings were initiated and in case of a negative finding he would carry it through himself.

2. The presiding judge took on to a great extent the role of the prosecutor (the prosecutor hardly participated in discussions with the barristers since the presiding judge did it).

3. Motion to terminate detention was rejected on the grounds that there was a danger that similar criminal acts might be repeated (in spite of the fact that Lončarić was dead and that the act for which Djurović was accused had been committed five years earlier).

4. The court ignored the fact that barrister Ivković had to be absent on 18 October 1974, with an explanation that the court did not have the available time after 18 October. Later, it became obvious that there had been the available time.

5. No attention was paid to medical reports and the proceedings continued in spite of Djurović’s requests.¹²³

The trial was covered not only by Western observers, but also by Western analysts. In a 33-page typewritten report by Slobodan Stanković on the happenings in communist Yugoslavia in 1974, a summary of the trial of Djurović covers half a page. Stanković was an analyst of a Radio Free Europe research unit and he prepared the report “for the use of editors and

¹²³ C. F. Rüter, *Izveštaj o sudjenju Djuri Djuroviću i drugima pred Okružnim sudom u Beogradu* [Report on the trial of Djura Djurović and others before the District Court in Belgrade], 15 Nov. 1974. AS, Fond OZNA/UDBA, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, pp. 403–423.

policy staff of Radio Free Europe”. Djurović was described as a “leading member of the wartime National Committee of the Anti-Axis and Anti-communist Resistance movement led by General Dragoljub Mihailovic.”¹²⁴

The verdict was pronounced on 23 October 1974, and both of the accused were found guilty:

For coming into contact, in the period from 1964 to the end of 1969, with the foreign-based chetnik organisation SOPO, through Andrija Lončarić, one of the officials of this chetnik organisation, otherwise an acquaintance of the accused, Djura Djurović and Zagorka Stojanović. Because all are participants in the notorious chetnik movement, they maintained contacts with it by sending various pamphlets and letters jointly prepared in Belgrade. They also helped its work in conducting hostile activities, and to this end they did the following:

- On an undetermined date in the period from 1964 to the end of 1969 they wrote, typed and delivered the following pamphlets: “Forwards – a general insight”, “Andrija’s imprisonment – the testimony of a fellow sufferer”, “Tito’s prisons”, “How to destroy corruption”, “After 20 years of experience”, “Fight of the tillers for land and freedom”, with an aim to publish them abroad in journals of chetnik organisations, and also

- By maintaining contact with the chetnik Andrija Lončarić, an official of the chetnik organisation SOPO, they sent him several letters delivered by Zagorka Stojanović informing him that the prepared pamphlets were sent on activities of the accused Djurović, and that he received help sent to him. They organised meetings in such a way that Zagorka Stojanović went to Paris, had meetings there with Lončarić and passed to him messages of Djura Djurović regarding a plan for activities of the chetnik organisation and its operational tactics. They were receiving letters from him and in that way were in contact with him until he was killed in Paris, in an internal clash of various chetnik groups,

- Thereby they committed the criminal act of PARTICIPATING IN HOSTILE ACTIVITIES AGAINST YUGOSLAVIA under Article 109 of the Penal Code.¹²⁵

A day after the verdict was read out, *Politika* informed its readers that Dr. Djura Djurović was sentenced to five years of severe imprisonment, and that the same day the writer Ivan Ivanović was sentenced to two years in prison by the District Court in Prokuplje.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Slobodan Stankovic, “Yugoslavia 1974”, 23 Dec. 1974, Open Society Archives, No. 81-3-1.

¹²⁵ Verdict of the District Court of Belgrade, K 485/74, AKPDZ, Pers. file of Djura (Čedomir) Djurović, No. 14.591.

¹²⁶ “Dr Djuri Djuroviću pet godina strogog zatvora” [Five years of severe prison to Dr. Djura Djurović], *Politika*, 24 Oct. 1974, p. 12.

In the Penitentiary of Zabela

On 19 June 1975, nineteen months after his arrest, Djurović was transferred to the Penitentiary of Zabela to serve his sentence. This must have evoked bitter memories of his first imprisonment. One of the most despised persons in his life, the warden of his former prison in Sremska Mitrovica, still held the post. Milenović sent a letter to Zabela with a characterisation of Djurović, mentioning that he had been an “initiator and organiser of hostile activities in the penitentiary”, and that for such activities he had been “isolated in special premises with a group of the most reactionary elements, and separated from other convicts until 1953. Later he did not expose himself openly, but kept to himself and to a circle of the closest likeminded persons.”¹²⁷

Djurović considered his second sentence as profoundly unjust. In a short handwritten autobiography sketched in Zabela, he claims that he took his first sentence in 1945 as a normal thing, and would have taken as normal even capital punishment: “I belonged to a movement that was defeated in the revolution. The winner had the right to settle accounts with the defeated as it saw fit.” In contrast, he considered his second sentence as “the greatest injustice inflicted on me by the court, since I did not commit the crime for which I was sentenced under article 109 of the Penal Code.”¹²⁸

Although he was in his mid seventies, he was still considered an enemy of communism. In June 1975, Svetislav Mitić, an official of the Penitentiary of Zabela, wrote a report on Djurović: “It is quite certain that the convict still has an utterly hostile attitude towards our state and social system. It is quite possible that he may try to spread his ideas among the convicts during his prison term. Therefore maximum attention should be paid to his behaviour, and especially to his behaviour in this area. It would be an illusion to undertake anything in the way of re-education.”¹²⁹ Being considered a potential threat, he was sent to a closed part of the penitentiary by the decision of the warden Aleksandar Stefanović.¹³⁰

His personal file includes information on his wife and a handwritten remark that all of his mails “should be given to Marko”. This means that his entire correspondence was under strict surveillance. Thus, one can find in his file a handwritten letter he addressed to his barrister Ivković, which

¹²⁷ Letter of Dušan Milenović, warden of the Penitentiary of Sremska Mitrovica, to the Penitentiary Zabela, 10 July 1975. AKPDZ, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović, No. 27/12.

¹²⁸ Djuro Djurović, “Autobiografija”, AKPDZ, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović.

¹²⁹ Report on conversations with the sentenced persons compiled by Svetislav Mitić, 30 June 1975. AKPDZ, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović.

¹³⁰ Decision of the Warden, 3 July 1975, AKPDZ, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović.

probably never left the penitentiary. There was a special printed form that the administration of the penitentiary kept on all visits, received packages, and sent and received letters using a kind of codes. Codes related to two of his sent letters are encircled, probably meaning that these particular two deserved some special attention or treatment.

From the opinion of his instructor Živko Jovanović, who was in charge of “re-education”, one finds out that he soon gained the trust of other convicts. The instructor thought that this should be attributed to his “bribes” given to other convicts. What was certainly more important was his previous experience of harshest imprisonment, where he was mixed with criminals and had to learn how to behave under such circumstances. In the instructor’s opinion, his attitude to his “criminal act” represented “a group of his intellectual and emotional ideas against the socialist polity in our country”. Therefore, the instructor concluded that there were no conditions for granting him a pardon, since “the punishment has no educational effect on him”.¹³¹ The opinion submitted by another instructor was similar. His intellectual abilities were assessed as above average despite his age, and his “practical intelligence” as “the best dimension of his general mental abilities”. Yet, his attitude to the “committed criminal act” was “totally negative”. It was assessed again that no “educational treatment” would prove effective since “his intellectual ideas are directed against the socialist polity of our country”.¹³²

His main act of rebellion during his stay in Zabela took place when he obtained a cap that resembled the traditional Serbian cap called *šajkača*, which was interpreted by the administration of the penitentiary as a chetnik symbol, and in January 1976 Dr. Djurović was punished with a one-month ban on using money and ten days in solitary confinement.

He had already been suffering from several illnesses before his second imprisonment and they continued during prison days in Zabela. They included cardiomyopathy, arterial hypertension and emphysema. There was a lack of medicines, and Dr. Djurović lost nine kilos during the first months of his imprisonment. Therefore, his wife Ana sent an appeal to the prison warden reminding him of “socialist humanism of which I have heard so much on television”. She requested that Dr. Djurović should be allowed to receive dietetic packages and that she should be allowed to bring medicines, given that her husband had had a cardiac attack with absolute arrhythmia which lasted for thirty hours since there were no medicines in the prison infirmary. On the back side of the letter is a handwritten remark that pack-

¹³¹ Opinion of the instructor, 21 Jan. 1976, AKPDZ, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović.

¹³² Opinion of Ž. Jovanović, 8 Mar. 1977, AKPDZ, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović.

ages are allowed, but that there is no need for his family to bring medicines “since our pharmacy has them”.¹³³

Although the report the instructor in charge of him submitted in March 1977 was negative, he was pardoned by the Presidency of the SFRY on 22 November 1977. A telegram with this decision arrived in Požarevac on 25 November and he was released the same day.¹³⁴ Previously, the Federal Council for the Protection of Constitutional Order, on its session of 6 April 1977, discussed the pros and cons of amnesty and pardon. The Council concluded that “foreign factors” undertook actions and exerted pressures aimed at liberating political convicts, and they all referred to six persons: Mihajlo Mihajlov, Sava Banković, Djuro Djurović, Marko Veselica, Vladimir Dapčević and Franc Miklavčič. The President of Yugoslavia received some 10,300 appeals. Of these, more than 5,000 were for Miklavčič, more than 4,000 for Djura Djurović, and 595 for Mihajlov.¹³⁵ A number of foreign appeals for Djurović is impressive indeed and testifies to an increasing Western interest in the violation of human rights in communist Yugoslavia in the 1970s. US President Jimmy Carter also insisted on amnesty for political prisoners in communist Yugoslavia, and the organisation of sessions of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in Belgrade (October 1977 – March 1978) exposed Yugoslavia to the Western eyes. Besides, Yugoslavia was very much dependent on Western loans at the time.

The amnesty also included communist dissident Mihailo Mihailov, Croat professor Marko Veselica, Slovene judge Franc Miklavčič, and more than two hundred other political prisoners. Each member republic made a list of persons proposed to be pardoned and Djurović was on the list of the Socialist Republic of Serbia. The text that accompanies this proposal ends with the following assessment of Djurović: “He has not changed his political convictions and therefore there are no results in this regard.”¹³⁶ After

¹³³ Letter of 23 Oct. 1975, AKPDZ, Pers. file of Dj. Djurović.

¹³⁴ AKPDZ, Pers. file of Djura Djurović.

¹³⁵ AJ, Fond 803 (Presidency of SFRY), f. 46, “Informacija o amnestiji i pomilovanju lica osuđenih za politička krivična dela” (75. sednica Saveznog saveta za zaštitu ustavnog poretka održana 12. aprila 1977) [Information on amnesty and pardon for persons sentenced for political crimes (75th session of the Federal Council for the Protection of Constitutional Order held on 12 Apr. 1977)], p. 3. The document was tagged as “strictly confidential.”

¹³⁶ Report titled: “Socijalistička Republika Srbija. Spisak osuđenih za krivična dela iz glave XV i XVI KZ SFRJ i krivičnih dela iz člana 157. KZ SFRJ koji se nalaze na izdržavanju izrečene kazne a predlažu se za pomilovanje povodom 29 novembra – Dana Republike”, AJ, Fond 803 (Presidency of SFRY), f. 648.

twenty-one years of keeping Djurović in various prisons, the communist authorities had to recognise their complete inability to “reform” Djurović, even on the occasion of his pardoning.

The decision on amnesty for 724 prisoners, including 218 political prisoners, was brought by Yugoslav authorities with much reluctance and against their intimate wishes. In April 1977, the President of the SFRY, Josip Broz Tito, stated that no foreign pressure would force Yugoslav authorities to grant amnesty. Yet, three months later, on 1 July 1977, the Law on Pardon was enacted. A researcher of Radio Free Europe, Slobodan Stanković, devoted most of his report to the release of Mihailo Mihailov and shortlisted Djurović among the most prominent persons who were released, describing him as “a wartime political advisor of the nationalist guerilla leader General Draza Mihailovic”.¹³⁷

The action of the Amnesty International was also of key importance and in May 1976 the readers of *The Times* were informed on two political convicts as two exemplary cases covered by Amnesty International: Dr. Djuro Djurović from Yugoslavia and Carlos Alvariza from Uruguay.¹³⁸

Overall, Djurović spent twenty years, nine months and twenty-eight days in Yugoslav communist prisons. His first prison term lasted sixteen years, nine months and twenty-five days (8 June 1945 – 2 April 1962). His second term lasted four years and three days (22 November 1973 – 25 November 1977). Among the convicts in Yugoslav prisons designated as members of the “DM movement” (the movement of General Dragoljub Mihailović) Djurović holds a record together with Captain Slavoljub Vranješević, who served his first prison sentence together with Djurović in Sremska Mitrovica until 1963, was rearrested in 1976 and died in prison in Sremska Mitrovica in 1979.¹³⁹

Djurović's contribution to the dismantlement of Yugoslav communist dictatorship

Although one might conclude that Djurović's activities, particularly those performed in prisons, were harmless, and that his systematic activity, nota-

¹³⁷ Slobodan Stankovic, “Yugoslav Amnesty Assessed”, Radio Free Europe, RAD Background Report/233 (Yugoslavia), 29 Nov. 1977, No. 82-5094, Open Society Archives.

¹³⁸ Caroline Moorehead, “The power of shame as a weapon”, *The Times*, 24 May 1976, p. 16A.

¹³⁹ Cvetković, *Između srpa i čekića* 2, 238–239, made a list of political prisoners in communist Yugoslavia based on the duration of their imprisonment. Djurović ranks as second with “22 years” in prison. Even though Cvetković's calculation is not quite accurate, Djurović certainly holds the top of the list.

bly during his first imprisonment, was undertaken in vain, some findings of political anthropology seem to suggest otherwise. James S. Scott observes that apart from bloody peasant uprisings, villagers in authoritarian countries deprived of their rights may and usually do employ different tactics. It is an ongoing and everyday process in which peasants struggle against exploitation by pilfering, lying, foot-dragging, slander, minor sabotage and arson. He calls this sort of opposition to oppression “weapons of the weak”.¹⁴⁰ The political convicts in Sremska Mitrovica and elsewhere under Yugoslav communist dictatorship employed similar tactics and used the “weapons of the weak”. By doing this, they kept hundreds, possibly thousands, of the personnel of Sremska Mitrovica and other communist prisons tied down; moreover, they kept members of the state security apparatus and various state analysts engaged in controlling, monitoring and covering their activities.

Once they were pardoned, ex-convicts were able to organise more substantial and better synchronised activities. Again, the amount of energy, paperwork, and maintenance of a developed network of spies working for the UDBA/SDB, required substantial organisation and means on the part of the Yugoslav communist state in order to control and monitor Djurović and his network, other ex-convicts and other political opponents of Yugoslav communism, including communist dissidents. By keeping substantial portions of the state apparatus busy following its activities, Djurović’s group made the Yugoslav state more vulnerable. However, its main contribution to dismantling the Yugoslav communist regime was probably the way it affected the image of Yugoslavia abroad. By maintaining links with émigrés and Western embassies, this group kept foreign diplomats informed on the Yugoslav type of dictatorship and on the persecution of political opponents. In this way, they counterbalanced Yugoslav official propaganda that sought to portray the Yugoslav type of communism as a more humane socialism, essentially different from the Soviet model. This probably was the most important achievement of Djurović’s circle and other similar groups. In the 1970s, as a result of their efforts, a considerable number of articles critical of Yugoslav communism appeared in the Western press for the first time after 1946–49. Djurović, a former journalist, was particularly skilful in activating a network of friends which included many persons connected to the diplomatic community, and providing them with data and analyses detrimental to Yugoslav communism.

¹⁴⁰ James S. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasants’ Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

Last years

He died on 2 April 1983, in A Section of the Hospital for Internal Medicine in Belgrade, from respiratory insufficiency and general languidness caused by *leucosis lymphocytica*. He had been treated for leukaemia in the same hospital since 1980.¹⁴¹

Some of his writings were confiscated by the UDBA on the occasion of his second arrest. He wanted to write memoirs, but his health problems prevented him from doing so in the period after his release. Djurović wrote his last work, “Reflections on death”, in 1982. It includes many autobiographical elements. Djurović spoke of his various encounters with death and human suffering, and revealed a part of his inner world and his thoughts on facing death from a severe illness:

Man is a great mystery of the world. Death is a no smaller human mystery. Is it the ultimate end or a new beginning? No matter what answer will be given to this question, the very act of reflecting on death, be it by a theist or by an atheist, makes him nobler, more humane, more just, more responsible to himself and his kin and any other human. There is no doubt that an affirmative answer to the second part of the alternative will have more intense and more enduring effects than an affirmative answer to its first part. It is for this reason that a religious man finds it easier to reconcile himself with death.¹⁴²

He was buried at a central Belgrade cemetery (Novo Groblje), in his wife’s family sepulchre. He felt that the fall of communism was near, and this made him very satisfied. In accordance with his wishes, a wreath made of thorns, symbolising his life experience, was laid on the sepulchre. The wreath of thorns was indeed a symbol of his bitter life, but it was also a symbol of thousands of life stories of other former YHA members in communist Yugoslavia.

*UDC 329.15.058.2(497.1):323.28
323.22:929 Djurović, Djura*

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¹⁴¹ Hospital for Internal Medicine—A Section, Belgrade, Discharge Summary signed by Dr. Milan Petrović (without date).

¹⁴² Dr. Djura Djurović, “Razmišljanje o smrti”, p. 48 (typescript in the author’s collection). A slightly different version of the same text was published in a Belgrade journal: Djura Djurović, “Razmišljanje o smrti”, *Hereticus* VII/1-2 (2009), 236.

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Private papers and documents of Dr. Djura Djurović in the author’s collection

Unpublished works by Dr. Djura Djurović from the private collection of his friend, barrister Života Lazić, especially:

— “Izveštaj Luteru Smitu o stanju političkih zatvorenika u komunističkoj robijašnici u Sremskoj Mitrovici” [Report to Luther Smith on the condition of political convicts in the communist dungeon in Sremska Mitrovica] (a slightly different version of the report has been preserved in the OZNA/UDBA personal file of Djura Djurović in the Archives of Serbia, No. 720-01-16556, pp. 132–185)

— “Sećanja iz komunističke robijašnice u Sremskoj Mitrovici” [Memories from the communist dungeon in Sremska Mitrovica] (136 typewritten pages with few handwritten corrections), essentially an enlarged version of the report to Luther Smith. It is not signed and Djurović speaks of himself in the third person obviously fearing that the text might fall into UDBA/SDB hands.

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