VII
THE CRISIS
OF THE CHETNIK
LEADERSHIP

The events of the spring not only demonstrated that the Chetnik rank and file did not represent a solid military force but also pointed to serious inadequacies at the top of Mihailović's fragile organization. During Operation Weiss the officers and civilian spokesmen never had a firm hold on their followings, and through the summer of 1943 a series of factors conspired to isolate and discredit the leadership until, on the eve of Italy's capitulation, there was neither coherent direction nor agreement on future action. The entire period from the close of "Weiss" to Italy's exit from the war marked the definitive collapse of the non-Communist resistance in Yugoslavia. Significantly enough, the Serb armed groups, whether Italian-sponsored or not, were never really overwhelmed militarily and were probably about as numerous in late 1943 as they were in the early part of the year. What failed was the leadership. Officers lost control of their detachments and turned against each other over questions of authority and strategy. At the same time, the officers could no longer exercise predominant influence over the civilian unit leaders and spokesmen. Finally, Mihailović lost the effective support, through one means or another, of practically all his major subordinates.
and by the end of the summer found himself almost totally isolated from the remains of the movement in the western half of Yugoslavia.

A good deal of the responsibility for the crisis belonged to Mihailović from the very beginning. Unlike the Partisans, the Chetniks never, with the exception of the early months of 1943, organized their main forces as a fairly compact unit, and, unlike Tito, Mihailović stayed away from the troops. During the culminating phase of Weiss and immediately after, he did move north from his headquarters in southern Montenegro but returned in mid-April and never assumed a firm direction of the military operations. Even more significant, as he admitted at his trial in 1946, Mihailović was moving about so frequently that he had to let his chief of staff, Ostojić, give all the orders. Available evidence suggests that by mid-March not even Ostojić was in constant contact with the officers in the field.

Major Ostojić, while ostensibly in direct command of operations, proved unable to cope with the confusing and rapidly shifting situation. At first, he insisted on an unpopular, basically defensive strategy, violently attacked Jevdjević's right to get involved in military matters, and then blamed practically all of the officers for the defeats. Jevdjević, on the other hand, tended to support the Italian strategy and finally, without approval from Mihailović, tried to negotiate for military collaboration with the Germans. Mihailović was unable to impose a firm political line on his civilian supporters or to direct through Ostojić the tactics of the officers. At his trial he admitted as much when he criticized Đurišić's slow movement to Kalinovik and the whole behavior of Jevdjević, "an unbalanced sort of man whom nobody could restrain." The outbursts of charges and countercharges and the disputes over strategy and tactics probably tell us very little about who was least competent to direct the Chetnik troops but do illustrate in a striking way the basic fact that no one in the officers' camp exercised compelling authority over the armed detachments. Mihailović failed to take charge personally and did not distribute authority clearly among his subordinates; Ostojić's actions exacerbated rather than directed the officers. Jevdjević,

1 Mihailović left his headquarters at Lipovo and moved to Kalinovik on 17 March, then went to Konjić, had transferred his staff to Foća by 6 April, and returned to Lipovo on 13 April. He left his headquarters on 19 April. See F. W. Deakin, *The Embattled Mountain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 190-94.
2 *The Trial of Dragoljub Draša Mihailović*, p. 171.
3 An examination of the Chetnik messages intercepted and decoded by the Germans and Italians shows that after the Partisans crossed the Neretva there was a sudden decline in the amount of communication between Ostojić and the unit commanders. The headquarters of the Chetnik chief of staff at Nevesinje was taken by the Partisans on 23 March.
4 *The Trial of Dragoljub Draša Mihailović*, pp. 167-68.
whose influence was more or less confined to Herzegovina and rested in large measure on his ties with Italians, fared worst of all.

The crisis of leadership among the Herzegovinian and Dalmatian anti-Communist Serbs was the most open and immediately became evident. In addition to their military reverses, the Chetnik leaders, both officers and civilians, were compelled after February to decide on the succession to the nominal leadership of the recently deceased Birčanin. Mihailović apparently could not or did not resolve the matter immediately, and throughout the spring a struggle took place between two groups, one led by Jakša Račić, a familiar figure at the court in the prewar years, Professor S. Alfierević, the Orthodox priest Sergije Urukalo, and another combination dominated by Jevdjević and Major Baćović. Indicative of the strained relations between Chetnik headquarters in Montenegro and Jevdjević is the fact that, although Jevdjević was easily the dominant civilian figure among the Serb nationalists in the Italian zone, Mihailović finally sided with the Račić group. Challenged politically by other civilians and more uncertain than ever of Mihailović’s support, Jevdjević had little alternative but to rely on the Italians; when in early April Robotti consented to a German plan for a visit to Mostar by the notorious Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Jevdjević’s reputation among the Serb nationalists suffered an irreparable blow.

Jevdjević’s loss of standing, probably stemming ultimately from his feud with Major Ostojić, was symptomatic of the growing difficulties between the officers and civilians. In Dalmatia and the adjoining Dinaric area, two leading Chetnik clergymen, Urukalo and Djujić, both strongly collaborationist, were sharply ordered by Mihailović’s delegate-officer Ivanisević to avoid any contacts with the Italians not previously approved by Chetnik headquarters. In Bosnia, where the officers never succeeded in bringing all the Serb armed bands under Mihailović’s direction, the situation was totally anarchic. Some formations broke up, while others simply deserted to return home; whatever the local leaders and their

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6 See the letter of the Split Chetnik Djuro Vilović to Mihailović of I March, 1943, cited in *ibid.*, entry for March 1, 1943.


9 Djujić’s collaboration with the Italians went back to the summer of 1941. Urukalo had recently tried to reconstitute the Chetnik formations by having new detachments “legalized” by Robotti’s command. Ivanisević to Mihailović, 23 March 1943, in Der Deutsche General b. Hauptquartier der ital. Wehrmacht zu Comando Supremo, “Abgehörte Funksprüche der Bewegung Mihailović,” 30 March 1943, T-821, roll 356, frame 127.

rank and file did, Mihailović’s delegates could not stop them. In the Ozren sector of eastern Bosnia, the Serb bands, contrary to the overall trend, fought a bitter struggle with the Germans, Croats, and armed Muslim groups throughout April and rejected proposals of the chief Chetnik delegate, Rade Radić, “to stop the pillage of civilians, restore order and discipline in the ranks and avoid all hostile acts against the Croatian and Muslim civilian populations.”

Indeed, in Bosnia the local Serb leaders, almost all of whom were civilians, opted for short-term strategies of resistance or collaboration independently, according to local circumstances and without any endorsement from Mihailović’s representatives.

Shortly after Operation Weiss, then, Montenegro was the only part of western Yugoslavia where the officer leadership remained relatively intact, but even here Mihailović had already used up the best formations and had to contend with an immediate struggle with the nearby main body of Partisans and the almost certain prospect of a German action. Whatever doubts the officers had about the German plans were swept away as early as mid-April, when they received information from the Italians that Hitler had ordered the invasion of Montenegro.

Operation Schwarz was actually a very hasty effort on the part of the Germans to revive the final, culminating phase of the original Weiss strategy and to clear the Adriatic coast and hinterland of the badly mauled Partisans and Chetniks. With German resistance crumbling in Tunisia, Berlin was more frightened than ever of an imminent Allied action in the Balkans, and called for an anti-rebel drive which their troops were barely able to carry out and with which the Italians refused from the beginning to cooperate. Therefore, more than ever before, the officers found themselves caught between the conflicting occupation policies of the Axis Powers; with little immediate alternative, they braced themselves for the inevitable German raid and kept negotiating with the Italians for supplies and protection.

Despite all the warnings coming from the Italians, the Montenegrin Chetniks were in no position to offer serious resistance to the German

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11 Command of Bosnian Chetnik Detachments, 15 April 1943, Dokumenti o Izdajstvu Draže Mihailovića, no. 199.
units and had all they could do to avoid capture. In the Foča sector small Chetnik groups, some with papers proving their "legal" status in Serbia, were easily arrested in early May. Virtually everywhere the officers were completely paralyzed, lacked specific instructions from Mihailović, and sought out Italian protection if they could. Lukačević, one of the arrested leaders at Foča, was released only when the Italian authorities protested, but he had no armed following thereafter. Major Bačović, after hearing about the German raid on Foča, tried to move his troops to nearby Kalinovik, was stopped by the Italians, who wanted to avoid Chetnik-German clashes, and finally had to ask Mihailović what to do if the Germans attacked him. Jevdjević moved quickly from the sensitive Mostar area to Italian-annexed Dubrovnik.

In mid-May the Germans, without announcing their specific plans to the Italians, entered the Sandžak and eastern Montenegro. Djurišić pushed back to Kolašin with about five hundred men and joined forces with a recently arrived Serb group led by Keserović; at Kolašin on 12 May he called for an assembly of the officers, but only a few days later Djurišić was seized by units of the German First Mountain Division. When the Italians again protested the capture of their supposed ally, O.K.W. intervened and ordered that Djurišić be removed immediately to a P.O.W. camp in Germany.

Almost immediately after Schwarz had begun, the entire Chetnik leadership in Montenegro was broken up and immobilized. Djurišić was a German prisoner; Stanišić became ill and had to turn over his command temporarily to Major Djordje Lašić, and Mihailović himself was almost captured during the Kolašin raid and had to flee toward western Serbia in June. The remainder of their armed detachments were

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15 Commander of Zlatibor Chetnik Formation (Captain Dušan Radović), 4 May 1943, Dokumenti o Izdajstvu Draže Mihailovića, no. 664; KTB/OKW, III, entry for 5 May 1943.
19 OB Südost/Ia to OKW/WFSt, "Tagesmeldung," 14 May 1943, T-311, roll 175, frame 1440.
20 KTB/OKW, III, entry for 14 May 1943.
21 OB Südost/Ia to OKW/WFSt, "Tagesmeldung," 14 May 1943, T-311, roll 175, frame 1440; Milan Bandović, Knjiga o Draži, 2: 300.
22 OB Südost/Ia, "Kriegstagebuch (Mai 1943)," 18 May 1943 (Anlage 87), T-311, roll 175, frame 43.
thoroughly disorganized and scattered. The Germans, despite repeated efforts, never did encounter a large body of Chetniks and succeeded in capturing only a few thousand of Mihailović's followers in Montenegro.²³

Without any effective military leadership, the Mihailović movement in Montenegro was probably saved from total destruction only by the difficult mountainous and woody terrain and the Italians' steadfast refusal to cooperate with the Germans. South of Mostar, Italian Sixth Army Corps units evacuated Chetniks in lorries,²⁶ and, in some instances, Pirzio-Biroli's officers warned them of impending German attacks.²⁷ Toward the end of May, Sixth Army Corps headquarters even ordered its troops not to cooperate with the Germans against the Chetniks.²⁸

For a short while several of Mihailović's supporters thought that the Italians could be used once more to obstruct politically the German penetration of the Italian occupation sphere. Jevdjević predicted that Rome could force the Germans to release captured Chetniks and to withdraw from Foća.²⁹ Bačović reported that the Italians somehow were going to stop the German drive into southern Montenegro.³⁰

These and similar calculations were actually the products of desperation rather than a realistic assessment of the course of events. Almost immediately the S.S. "Prinz Eugen" Division easily penetrated the line that the Italians had promised would constitute the southern limit of the German advance,³¹ and both Jevdjević and Bačović lost their illusions about Italian support.³² At this point, almost all of Mihailović's supporters were overcome with a sense of futility and demoralization. Bačović finally informed Mihailović that he had changed his plans to avoid

²³ A report in late May from the German minister at Zagreb to Berlin placed the number of hitherto disarmed Chetniks in Montenegro at only sixteen hundred. Deutsche Gesandtschaft in Agram to Aus. Amt./Pol. IV, "Telegramm N. 2153 vom 24.5.1943," 24 May 1943, T-120, roll 212, frame 245/162557. A recent Yugoslav source, however, doubles that figure. Zbornik, vol. 2, bk. 9, p. 248, n. 4.
“a fight with the Germans so as to preserve our strength’’; 33 Jevdjević, who had always inclined toward a collaborationist solution, suddenly advocated that the Chetniks “attack . . . for reasons of prestige or else the people will go over to the Partisans.” 31 Jevdjević was completely out of touch with reality: by now even the officers’ detachments in Montenegro could do little more than break up into small groups to avoid capture. By 20 May, for instance, Major Radulović, reporting to Mihailović from the area around Nikšić where the Germans had just attacked, said that the Chetniks there were “completely destroyed” and had “no more striking power”; “the people” he said, “were dominated by a terrible sense of defeat.” 35

The remainder of the Montenegrin Chetnik leaders tried to fend for themselves. Lašić was no more able than Radulović to risk suicidal attacks, and one of his subordinates still proposed that they negotiate the liberation of the captured Chetniks “by intervening immediately with [Pirzio-]Biroli.” 36 In western Montenegro, the troops of the federalist leader Krsto Popović were withdrawing rapidly toward the coast “out of fear that they would be mistaken for [Mihailović’s] Chetniks and disarmed by the Germans.” 37

During the summer of 1943 the tenuous alliance between the Mihailović-dominated National Committee and the Montenegrin separatist leaders broke down completely. Popović’s detachments made no contribution to the campaign in Herzegovina, 38 and his political followers showed more interest in propagandizing for an independent Montenegro than supporting Yugoslav unity under a Serb dynasty. 39 In May one of Popović’s leading civilian spokesmen, Sekula Drljević, even went to Zagreb to promise Pavelić the allegiance of six thousand federalist troops if Zagreb annexed Montenegro as “an autonomous unit” as soon as the Italians left the war. 40

37 Sixth Army Corps to Command of Second Army, 22 May 1943, ibid., no. 195.
38 General Djukanović, 10 April 1943, Dokumenti o Izdajstvu Draže Mihailovića, no. 202.
Most of the Montenegrin Chetniks were captured, disappeared into the woods, or joined the Partisans. Those who remained loyal to Mihailović, perhaps a few thousand, broke up into a half a dozen groups and moved into the Sandžak in June.\textsuperscript{11} This last group escaped repeated German efforts to disarm them but found themselves surrounded by a firmly hostile Sandžak Muslim population\textsuperscript{12} and were defeated in just about every other sense. In Montenegro proper the situation was so chaotic that General Löhr and Pirzio-Biroli, in a meeting at Saloniki on 2 June, could not establish whether the German figure of twelve thousand or the Italian estimate of seven thousand represented the number of still uncaptured Chetniks.\textsuperscript{13}

General Djukanović’s staff made several efforts to replenish the Chetnik ranks and issued instructions to constitute new units on a local, clan basis, but these attempts proved futile.\textsuperscript{14} The civilian population was war-weary and unwilling to be mobilized forcibly by Djukanović’s agents, and the officer leadership had almost completely disappeared or been immobilized as a result of the German raids. Mihailović himself spent a short time in the nearby Sandžak but only for the purpose of moving his staff to Serbia in June. His most trusted unit leader, Djurišić, had been removed, the federalist allies led by Popović had proven useless, and the remaining officers were in no position to reorganize the scattered bands. Italian intelligence rated Lašić’s following in late June at about six hundred.\textsuperscript{45} Even more telling proof of the internal disintegration is the evidence from Italian sources that, in addition to the falling out between the pro-Mihailović and separatist officers, some of the remaining Chetnik leaders complained openly about Mihailović’s leadership and even resorted to threats against the lives of his agents.\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{12} Deutsche Gesandtschaft in Agram to Aus. Amt./Pol. IV, “Telegramm N. 2087 vom 19.5.1943,” 19 May 1943, T-120, roll 212, frame 245/162553.

\textsuperscript{13} Governatorato del Montenegro, “Riassunto del colloquio di Salonicco,” 2 June 1943, T-821, roll 31, frame 237.


\textsuperscript{16} By the end of June, the Italians at Cetinje noticed increasingly frequent “internal disputes and squabbles” among the remains of the Chetniks, “due in part . . . to an as yet not clearly identified anti-Mihailović trend.” Rumors were widespread that the Serb Chetnik Masan Djiurović, who had recently come to Montenegro, had been murdered by Keserović’s people. Soon another delegate, Nikola Kjanović, was threatened by “Chetnik elements of the Zlatar region.” Governatorato del Montenegro/
The dissolution of the officers’ movement in Montenegro and Mihailović’s flight to Serbia nullified the efforts to build up the Chetnik organization in the western half of Yugoslavia. Virtually everywhere, the armed formations broke up or pursued independent courses of action. Former leaders of the first rank, both civilian and military, lost influence over these bands, and a new group emerged, usually local civilian notables, who tended to drift toward collaboration. The “old” collaborationists, especially Djukanović, Jevdjević, and Djujić, saw their entire program of short-term understandings with the Italians collapse in late May when Mussolini finally gave in to German pressure and ordered General Robotti “to cooperate as quickly as possible with the Germans in the disarmament of the Chetnik formations.”\(^{47}\) The Italians immediately placed Jevdjević under house arrest,\(^{18}\) agreed to the German 373rd Division’s permanent occupation of Mostar,\(^{19}\) and, on 1 June, officially ceased all aid to the remaining Herzegovinian Chetniks.\(^{50}\)

General Piazzoni of the Sixth Army Corps summed up the situation in Herzegovina at the end of June with the remark that the Chetniks occupied “a more or less intermediary territory [between the Germans and the Italians] which one might call No Man’s Land.”\(^{51}\) Perhaps six to seven thousand of the officers’ troops remained uncaptured in the hills, but they were powerless to resist the Germans, to collaborate further with the Italians, or to compete successfully with the Partisans for the sympathy of the anti-Axis elements in the civilian population. Moreover, they were almost leaderless. Major Baćović, the only remaining officer of some significance, was probably fleeing toward the east, was believed by Pirzio-Biroli to have run out of supplies,\(^{52}\) and in early June asked Mihailović for an immediate meeting in eastern Bosnia.\(^{53}\)


\(^{52}\) Governatorato del Montenegro (Pirzio-Biroli), “Riassunto del Colloquio di Salonicco, 2 June 1! 43T-821, roll 31, frame 328.

\(^{53}\) Baćović to Mihailović, 8 June 1943, in Der Deutsche General b. ital. Wehrmacht
In some instances, local leaders emerged to fill the gap, but their behavior was so inconsistent that, if anything, they further disrupted what remained of the Chetniks' political cohesion. In the Nevesinje sector, for example, the politician and long-standing collaborator Petar Samardžić probably established ties with the Partisans and actually threw his men against the Germans in a brief clash of mid-June; he soon agreed to turn over his arms provided that the Germans promise not to permit the return of the Ustaši. Even more striking was the sudden turn of events in the Ozren Mountains sector of eastern Bosnia: there the armed Serb bands, who fought pitched battles with Germans and Ustaši in April, by July were engaged in a desperate struggle with the Partisans and by the end of the month were receiving arms and supplies from the 369th Croat Legion Division.

Although the overall trend was toward collaboration, enough Chetnik groups made deals with, went over to the Partisans, or continued the old pattern of raids on nearby Croat and Muslim civilians to keep the occupation authorities permanently suspicious of all Serb leaders. As already indicated, the local heads often chose collaboration or made an armistice of sorts with the Germans only after they were forced to. Furthermore, although many individual armed groups came to terms with the occupation regime, collaborators of long standing, like Uroš Drenović, failed to reassert any sort of central direction. Many armed detachments simply dissolved or pursued independent courses of action. In the vicinity of the Romanije Mountains, the Chetniks split up into pro- and anti-Partisan groups; in the Kalinovik sector evidence suggests that a former Chetnik officer who had just gone over to the Partisans was responsible for the murder of other still loyal supporters of Mihailović. In other areas, like the extreme southeastern parts of Bosnia, the bands remained in contact to Comando Supremo, “Abgehörte Funksprüche der Mihailović-Bewegung,” 5 July 1943, T-821, roll 356, frame 242.


57 Drenović once more attempted to create a unified Bosnian Chetnik command in early June. Minutes of meeting of Drenović, Vukasim Marčetić, and Jovo Mišić, 3 June 1943, Dokumenti o Isdajstvu Draže Mihailovića, no. 130.


59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.
with Chetniks in Serbia and continued to fight the anti-Muslim civil war. Although none of the major Chetnik leaders in western Yugoslavia joined Tito in 1943, some of their former followers had, which put them in an impossible position. Baćović, for instance, although proposing to the Italians joint operations against the Partisans at Kotor and Split in July, had been recently suspected of establishing ties of "toleration and indirect collaboration with the Partisans." Jevdjević also aroused suspicion when he smuggled out a letter to some of his Hercegovinian supporters warning them not to follow Samardžić's example of collaboration with the Germans.

Pop Djujić, whose long record of cooperation with the Italians and clerical status enabled him to avoid reprisals from the occupation authorities in the early summer, nonetheless saw his position deteriorate steadily. Although he fought the west Bosnian Partisans all summer, he had to work hard to win Italian backing against German proposals for the disarmament of the Dinaric Chetniks. In early June the best General Robotti could do was convince Lühr that it would be better to disarm Djujić's formations "progressively," or after a respite of a few months. At the same time, though, the Italian Eighteenth Army Corps was instructed to reduce gradually their supply of foodstuffs to the Dinaric Chetniks, and a month later, when Djujić's troops had to withdraw after suffering heavy losses at the hands of the Partisans near Bos Grahovo, Robotti demanded an explanation.

Toward the end of the summer a combination of German pressure, con-

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60 OB/Südost/Ia to OKW/WFSt, "N. 4578/43 vom 2.7.1943," 2 July 1943, T-311, roll 175, frame 1259; OB Südost/Ia to OKW/WFSt, "Tagesmeldung," 22 August 1943, T-311, roll 175, frame 1147.
tracting Italian supplies, and a long, costly struggle with the Partisans was wearing down the Dinaric Chetniks and undermining Djujić’s authority. Persistent rumors and information from captured Partisans pointed to a noticeable defection from Djujić’s ranks to Tito; another Chetnik, Djuro Plečas, whom Mihailović had appointed as a delegate for western Bosnia and who was apparently on bad terms with Djujić, was suddenly and mysteriously killed in August. On the eve of Italy’s capitulation Djujić tried once more to assure some support or at least toleration in his rear by going to Knin to promise the headquarters of the Eighteenth Army Corps his “sincere friendship and cooperation with the Italian people.” By this time, however, the Italians were barely the masters of the situation in their own occupation zone and, with so much conflicting intelligence, were in no position to pursue any policy toward Dinaric Chetniks with confidence. In fact, Djujić’s detachments were exhausted and of little use to anyone as an effective striking force. One of Mihailović’s remaining representatives in the area, the former Belgrade attorney Lieutenant Colonel Mladen Žujević, reported in early August that the “Dinaric division was poorly formed, badly armed and disciplined,” lacked “accurate registers of officers and troops,” and could not field more than three thousand men. Djujić’s “military command,” he concluded, “which we read about this winter, is a pure figment of the imagination.”

In the extreme western part of Yugoslavia, Mihailović’s delegate officers, the old collaborationists Jevdjević and Djujić, and the new group of civilian leaders who had succeeded Birčanin were all unable to revive the Chetniks. The Chetnik military formations were routed and scattered or, in the case of Djujić, rapidly declined, and almost all of Mihailović’s efforts in 1943 to establish a solid political organization in the Dalmatian and Adriatic coast areas proved unsuccessful. For obvious reasons, the Italians were most suspicious of Chetnik political activities here. Moreover, since the spring military disasters, the recurrent tensions between

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70 A letter of Djujić to the Italian command at Knin appears in Gizdić, Dalmacija, p. 522. It was dated sometime in early September.
71 One report of early August even gave the Dinaric Chetniks a strength of twenty thousand and claimed they were increasing their strength rapidly with new recruits from Knin and Sibenik. Comando Div. “Zara”/Sezione Informazione to Comando 2. Armata, “N. 04/2895 del 9 agosto 1943,” 9 August 1943, T-821, roll 290, frame 995.
72 Mladen Žujević to Mihailović, 6 August 1943, in Gizdić, Dalmacija, entry for 6 August 1943.
the collaborationist local civilians, especially Jevdjević and Djurić, and Mihailović's agents came increasingly into the open.

Toward the end of the summer, in fact, nominal political leadership had passed almost by default to the anti-Jevdjević group of Professor Račić and the Orthodox cleric Urukalo. In August they took over the Chetnik political base, the Split National Committee, and, with the support of a few Montenegrin officers from General Djukanović's staff, began a blatantly Pan-Serb propaganda campaign. The Split Chetniks apparently devoted the greater part of their brief activity to political squabbles with the pro-Maček Split Catholic Bloc and the Ustaša-dominated Croatian National Committee. They lacked a military following and were not even supported by all pro-Mihailović elements in the area. Žujević, in his letter to Mihailović of 6 August, called the Račić-Urukalo group "a disgrace" and denounced the whole Split Chetnik organization as "a fatigued forum" and as "Greater Serbian politics which, in any other Yugoslav city, would be disgusting." Needless to say, the Italians saw little use in the Split Chetniks and arrested the recently arrived Montenegrin officers in mid-August; almost simultaneously, the Split Partisans succeeded, "despite all sorts of precautionary measures," in assassinating Račić. The Split Chetnik political leadership in Dalmatia thus collapsed almost as soon as it was formed. Indicative of the state of Mihailović's organization in this crucial sector on the eve of Italy's exit from the war is the fact that Račić's temporary successor was Mladen Žujević, a fierce critic of almost all the local Chetnik leaders and during most of the summer an Italian prisoner.

Virtually everywhere in the western half of former Yugoslavia, the Chetnik rank and file, although not usually defeated militarily, were hopelessly dispersed, and the unit leaders, both officers and civilian, had lost control over their followings. The reverses suffered in Montenegro and Herzegovina were especially decisive. They upset the Chetniks' ef-

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25 Mladen Žujević to Mihailović, 6 August 1943, Gizdić, Dalmacija, entry for 6 August 1943.
27 Gizdić, Dalmacija, entry for 23 August 1943.
28 Žujević, also called Acimović, had been arrested by the Italians at Split on 1 June. Comando XVIII. Corpo d'Armata to Comando 2. Armata, "N. 9325/1 del 7.8.1943," 7 August 1943, T-821, roll 289, frame 242.
forts, which went back to Mihailović's arrival in Montenegro in June of 1942, to utilize Italian toleration and protection in order to put together a unified movement capable of dealing with both the Ustaši and Partisans before preparing for the expected Allied landing and guerrilla operations against the Axis occupation forces. Their foothold in Montenegro, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia lost, the Chetniks could no longer use their formations behind the central and southern parts of the Adriatic coast in conjunction with an Anglo-American operation in that sector.

After June of 1943 Mihailović was forced to fall back on the support of the civilian population of rump Serbia, which was militarily insignificant. Over the short term the prospects for reviving the organization with recruits from Serbia were hopeless. The few battle-worthy formations had already been brought to Montenegro, and most of the Chetniks in Serbia refused to violate what amounted to a truce with the Nedić administration. Those armed bands which continued to carry out “resistance” activities usually contained only a few hundred followers and could do little more than carry out individual acts of violence against uncooperative village heads, a certain amount of outright looting, and some agricultural sabotage.79

As a result of Partisan offensives, German raids, and shifts in Italian occupation policies, Mihailović on the eve of Italy's capitulation lost any chance to compete successfully with Tito for the allegiance of the anti-Axis civilians in western Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was effectively divided into guerrilla spheres; Tito prevailed in the west, and Mihailović had to function as best he could in Serbia. This state of affairs was forced on Mihailović by internal events in Yugoslavia during the first half of 1943, but it was also sanctioned by the British in the course of their shift of support from the Chetniks to Tito.

The change in British policies toward the Yugoslav resistance reflected their new relationship with Russia after Stalingrad and their growing annoyance at the Chetniks' persistent collaboration with the Italians. Mihailović's attitude toward the British was somewhat like Tito's toward the Russians: he obviously felt that London had given him only symbolic support, and his anti-British remarks of 28 February at Kolašin, which Colonel Bailey immediately relayed to his superiors, bore that out. By the end of March Churchill was ready to send a note to the Jovanović émigré government threatening to withdraw British support from Mihailović if the Chetniks did not cease collaboration immediately. The Yugoslav prime minister, in turn, broadcast these demands over Radio London in early April. Intercepted and deciphered Chetnik messages make it clear that Mihailović was fully aware of Churchill's strong reaction but that for certain reasons, including faulty intelligence from Chetnik sympathizers in Belgrade, he chose not to take the ultimatum seriously. Eden delivered another note to Jovanović on 7 May, this time using even more forceful language, and at the end of the month, or toward the close of Operation Schwarz, brought up the whole issue with Molotov. On 28 May the matter reached its first climax: the Deakin-Stuart group arrived at Tito's hard-pressed headquarters, and Bailey told Mihailović to move his forces to the Kapaonik Mountains in southwestern Serbia and to confine all further Chetnik operations to the area east of the Ibar River. He further informed Mihailović that henceforth the Allies would support him with supplies only in Serbia. The spheres-of-influence arrangement was now a diplomatic as well as a military fact and had Churchill's blessing.

This arrangement was at best a temporary expedient resulting from the civil war between Tito and Mihailović and the failure of the British to bring the two together. What is all the more striking is the fact that the Germans, and to some degree the Italians, were more impressed by London's efforts to bring about a Chetnik-Partisan truce than by the obvious

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91 High Command to Mihailović, 11 April 1943, in Oberkommando/1 Abteilung/Operationsburo der Streitkräfte im Ostrau, "Abgehörte Funksprüche der Cetniks," 26 April 1943, T-821, roll 356, frame 168.


fact that the Chetnik organization in western Yugoslavia had been all but destroyed. The spheres-of-influence proposal was therefore taken by the occupation authorities to be the prelude to an alliance between Tito and Mihailović. A high-level intelligence report to Rome of late May, for example, warned, “it is certain that if London insists the efforts to unite all the anti-Axis forces will succeed.”

By the end of the summer rumors were widespread that Mihailović and Tito were on the verge of joining forces in a general uprising.

This misperception of events was typical rather than exceptional. The Axis Powers always tended to overestimate the influence of the Allies, especially the British, over the Yugoslav resistance, largely because their view of the situation in Yugoslavia was a function of their understanding of the probable course of events in the entire Mediterranean theater. Their attitude toward Mihailović was shaped far more by their persistent fear that the Allies would open up a second front in the Balkans than by their knowledge of the Chetniks’ weakness and failure. During May, Hitler began to think seriously of the occupation of the entire Balkan coastline by German troops, and after the Allied invasion of Sicily the Germans hastened to prepare to protect the Adriatic.

Seen in this context, even the shattered remains of the Chetnik organization in western Yugoslavia were a potentially dangerous resistance force which would revive as soon as the Allies arrived in the Balkans, either independently or in league with Tito. This assessment was not confined to German intelligence reports but was shared by Mihailović, who also dramatically overestimated the capabilities of the few officers and civilian supporters in the west. After the middle of July, therefore, Mihailović encouraged the fears and suspicions of the occupation authorities by sending out a whole series of directives calling for a coordination

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of strategy between the Chetniks and the Allies to prepare for an imminent Allied amphibious invasion.

According to Italian sources in late May Mihailović began to expect a major Allied action in the Balkans and was led to believe, although how is not certain, that the invasion would come in a month or two. In June the date became more firm—1 August—and after the invasion of Sicily Chetnik headquarters in Serbia began calling for acts of sabotage against specific targets.

Thus Mihailović took his ostensibly most aggressive anti-Axis stand at a time when his subordinates were least capable of carrying out his directives. Moreover, almost all these orders went to the officers in the west, where, according to the "spheres" arrangement dictated by the British, only Tito was to receive Allied support. Chetnik headquarters in Serbia was out of touch with the situation in the area behind the Adriatic coast and clearly did not believe, as subsequent events would demonstrate, that the British were in the process of abandoning them.

If anything, Mihailović's actions had the effect of compromising rather than strengthening the position of the officers. Italian Second Army intelligence intercepted several of these directives, and on the day of the Sicilian invasion Robotti ordered all units to intensify vigilance and prepare for possible hostilities against the Chetniks. On 19 July at Belluno Hitler took special care to impress on Mussolini and Ambrosio that Axis policies in the Balkans had to be based on a total struggle against all the armed bands. On the same day O.K.W. ordered Belgrade to start a poster campaign offering a hundred thousand marks for information leading to Mihailović's arrest.

Toward the end of July, immediately after Mussolini's fall, Mihailović, like everyone else, began to expect an Italian capitulation and issued instructions calling on his subordinates to prepare for attacks against Second Army garrisons. More firmly convinced than ever that the Allied
Balkan action was forthcoming and that the Italian troops would turn against their German allies, perhaps even before the capitulation, he went so far as to order Stanisic and Bačović to move their units close to the Adriatic and to proceed immediately to disarm the smaller Second Army garrisons.94

These instructions not only demonstrated that Chetnik headquarters in Serbia was making plans which were unrealistic and based on wishful thinking but also triggered a virtual revolt against Mihailović’s command by the officers and civilian spokesmen in the west. The Chetniks who were supposed to disarm the Italians and sabotage the Germans' defensive measures in conjunction with an Allied landing were barely a factor in the confusing swirl of events between Mussolini’s fall and the Italian capitulation. Bačović had practically no effective armed following; in late July Stanisic’s troops numbered no more than three thousand; 95 the rest of the Montenegrin organization hardly existed. Jevdjević and Djujić barely escaped arrest by the Italians late in August,96 and if General Robotti had not changed his mind at the last minute, Djujić probably would have been arrested by the Germans.97

With both the Germans and the Partisans moving up to the Adriatic, the Chetniks had all they could do to ensure their own survival. In mid-August Robotti ordered the Second Army command posts to inform the Chetniks that the Italians had full knowledge of Mihailović’s plans and would resist any attempt by the officers’ formations to approach Italian units.98 At this point the Chetniks were trapped and revolted against Mihailović. Bačović, the leading officer outside of Montenegro, had been objecting since early August to Mihailović’s orders for the disarmament. Bačović to Mihailović, 28 July 1943, in Der Deutsche General b. ital. Wehrmacht to Comando Supremo, “Abgehörte Funksprüche der Mihailović-Bewegung,” 2 August 1943, T-821, roll 356, frame 256.


and Đujić in admitting to the Italians that Mihailović had indeed given such directives and to promise that they would never carry them out.99

It is interesting to note that they disagreed with Mihailović over what their small units could do against the Italian garrisons but not over the prospect of the Allied Balkan landing. Baćović, for instance, although resolutely opposed to Mihailović’s plan for beginning operations against the Italians before the capitulation, let it be known that he would turn against the Axis as soon as the British arrived in the Balkans.100 Others even proposed collaboration with the Italians, believing that as soon as Italy capitulated the Second Army units would fight the Germans. In each instance, though, the key assumption was that the Allies would soon make a large commitment to the Balkan Peninsula. Thus Jevdjević, under Second Army house arrest until late August, proposed to the Italians earlier in the month that the Chetniks join the Italians to defend the Second Army occupation zone against the Germans until the Allies arrived.101 Žujević argued for the same strategy in his letter to Mihailović of 6 August, in which he predicted that their “salvation will be the arrival of the Allies, because they will stop a fratricidal war in which we would be the weaker party.”102 Typically, the civilians were far more aware of the Chetniks’ military weakness than were most of the officers and Mihailović and therefore were more inclined to rely on external support and diplomatic solutions. However, when Žujević speculated to Mihailović that “perhaps it is possible that the Allies will order the Italians to use their forces to maintain peace and order in the cities before their own arrival,” he was as unrealistic as the Chetnik headquarters in Serbia.

On the eve of Italy’s capitulation the Chetniks were still divided over whether they should seek the protection of the Second Army or disarm its units. Finding themselves caught between the Italians on the coast and the approaching Germans and Partisans to the east, their confusion and indecision was hardly surprising. The most uncertain factor, of course, was what the Italians would do when the capitulation was announced.

Comando Supremo, however, did virtually nothing to prepare their armed forces in Yugoslavia for the capitulation. During August they took measures for the removal of three divisions from the Second Army to Italy103 but left Robotti in the dark about Rome’s negotiations with

102 Gidžić, Dalmacija, entry for 6 August 1943.
the Allies and how to deal with the Germans and both rebel groups when the armistice was announced.\textsuperscript{101} This fact accounts for a good deal of the uncertainty of everyone else, Germans, Partisans, and Chetniks, about General Robotti’s plans. As far as the Chetniks were concerned, Robotti had information on all their plans\textsuperscript{105} but, because of the far more dangerous menace posed by the Germans and Tito, elected to use threats to keep the officers away from the coast without antagonizing them by resorting to severe reprisals.

Without specific instructions from Comando Supremo, the Second Army and Fourteenth Army Corps in Montenegro, with few exceptions, were overwhelmed by the Germans almost immediately after Eisenhower announced Italy’s capitulation on 8 September.\textsuperscript{106} Even army headquarters in Rome did not know about Badoglio’s armistice talks until 3 September, and the only set of instructions intended to prepare the field commanders for hostilities against the Germans, General Roatta’s “Memoria O. P. 44,” was not written in final form until 2 September and probably did not reach the army commanders until a few hours before the proclamation of the armistice.\textsuperscript{107} Rome’s failure to prepare the Italians in Yugoslavia for the armistice\textsuperscript{108} not only made things easier for the Germans but thwarted whatever small hopes the officers still had of obtaining even a temporary ally, some badly needed arms, and perhaps a few footholds along the coast.

Within about a week after the capitulation, almost the entire Italian command structure in Yugoslavia was broken up, and the Germans occupied most of the eastern shore of the Adriatic.\textsuperscript{109} In some areas, like parts of Istria, the Croatian coastal region (Primorje), and parts of Dalmatia, Partisan formations, supported at times by popular uprisings, succeeded in disarming, according to current Yugoslav accounts, the lion’s

\textsuperscript{104} The best works dealing with Italy’s negotiations with the Allies in August 1943 and the capitulation of the armed forces still operating outside of he peninsula are the volumes by Smyth and Garland in the American official history and Ruggero Zan­grandi, \textit{1943 25 luglio–8 settembre} (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1964).

\textsuperscript{105} For example, Comando Supremo, “Nuovi aspetti del movimento cetnico,” 19 August 1943, T-821, roll 347, frames 617–18.

\textsuperscript{106} Zan­grandi, \textit{1943}, p. 455.

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 457-66.

\textsuperscript{108} Zan­grandi shows, for example, largely on the basis of interviews with former Italian generals in 1963 and 1964, that until the days of the capitulation Italian units in Albania, Montenegro, and Herzegovina had orders to turn over the airfields to the Germans in the event of an Allied attack on the Balkans. The command of Army Group East (Greece, Albania, Montenegro) also had instructions from Comando Su­premo to defend Durazzo against the Allies in conjunction with the Germans.

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{KTBl/OKW}, vol. 3, entries for 9 and 16 September 1943; Radoje Pajović, “Političke Prilike u Crnoj Gori u Vrijeme Kapitulacije Italije 1943” (The political situation in Montenegro at the time of Italy’s capitulation in 1943), \textit{Jugoslovenski Istorijski Casopis} 1 (1962), p. 54; Zan­grandi, \textit{1943}, pp. 527. 564–79.
share of four divisions.\textsuperscript{110} Outnumbered by the Partisans and, of course, ineffective against German motorized units, the Chetniks lost out almost completely in the scramble for arms and strategic positions.

Only in the Sandžak and parts of Montenegro, and there only for a short while, were the officers' formations a competing factor. In the Sandžak, where the Chetniks had, according to Partisan sources, about three thousand men, the officers were able to "neutralize" and almost win over parts of the division "Venezia" and in early October came close to retaking Kolašin from the Montenegrin Partisans.\textsuperscript{111} At nearby Priboj part of the Italian garrison joined and fought as temporary allies of the Chetniks.\textsuperscript{112} These, however, were only local and temporary successes. In Montenegro and the Sandžak, the real contenders were the Germans and Partisans.

Only in those areas where the Chetniks were able to win over or somehow coerce isolated Italian units into a temporary alliance did the officers' bands achieve any results. Elsewhere in Montenegro Tito was clearly getting the upper hand by mid-October. In western Montenegro the federalist Popović's group completed its break with Mihailović by joining the German side almost immediately. General Djukanović, head of the Montenegrin National Committee, was given command of the Chetniks in Montenegro by Mihailović on 10 September but remained in Cetinje until the end of the month.\textsuperscript{113} By the middle of October, Djukanović and a few hundred demoralized troops of Colonel Stanisić had moved to the Ostrog monastery near Nikšić, where they were surrounded and killed by the Partisans.\textsuperscript{114} With Djukanović and Stanisić dead, the entire officer leadership in Montenegro had been removed one way or another, and Tito had completed what he set out to do during the anti-Chetnik offensive of March and April.

In the rest of western Yugoslavia the Chetniks played almost no role. Captain Ivanisević, Mihailović's former chief delegate in Dalmatia, some-
how escaped to Italy on the eve of the armistice.\textsuperscript{115} Shortly thereafter Jevdjević fled to Rijeka.\textsuperscript{116} Djujić tried to delay through sabotage actions the German troop movements to the coast but with no success, and in late September he fled to evade arrest.\textsuperscript{117} Major Baćović, the leading officer in the field, made brief contact with an Italian regiment in late September but dropped out of sight after that.\textsuperscript{118}

The events of the fall were in a real sense anticlimactic for the officers’ movement, for since the first military reversals in Herzegovina in March Mihailović’s organization had been worn down steadily, although in different ways, by Tito, the Germans, and Robotti’s headquarters. During the summer months, the Chetniks’ enemies succeeded in eliminating or at least immobilizing the large bulk of the leadership cadres, so that by September, although the rank and file of the non-Communist Serb armed movement was probably about as numerous as in the spring, it lacked political cohesion and was totally ineffective as a military force.

Viewed from another perspective, the Mihailović movement had disintegrated not only because its headquarters and officers either lost control of the bands or were themselves removed but also because in a relatively short period of time the strength of their enemies increased dramatically. Between April and September the number of German divisions in former Yugoslavia went from six to thirteen,\textsuperscript{119} and after the Italian capitulation the Partisans gained a large stock of arms and supplies and added perhaps as many as 80,000 troops to their ranks.\textsuperscript{120} After May, when the Italians cut off aid to the officers, Mihailović had no way of coping with the German occupation or with Tito except through massive external support The Chetniks’ persistent conviction that an Allied Balkan landing was imminent and that the British would back them politically, although unfounded and contrary to the obvious direction of London’s policies, was psychologically understandable. In September, when the British announced a policy of equal support for both Tito and Mihailović, the illusion of exclusive Allied backing also collapsed.

\textsuperscript{115} See the biographical note on Ivanisević in Gizdić, Dalmacija, entry for 25 April 1943.
\textsuperscript{116} Ministero degli Affari Esteri to Sottosegretario di Stato agli Esteri, “Rapporto sintetico sul movimento cetnico e suoi emissari in Italia,” 25 April 1944, T-586, roll 412, frame 005425.
\textsuperscript{118} Dušan Živković, Boka Kotorška i Paštrovici u Narodnooslobodilačkoj Borbi (Kotor and Pastrovici in the national liberation struggle) (Belgrade: Vojno Delo, 1964), p. 278.
\textsuperscript{119} Marinović and Morača, Naš Oslobodilački Rat i Narodna Revolucije, p. 224.