

## **THE ROLE OF MONTENEGRO IN THE WARS OF THE 1990s: "FROM A CONSISTENT WARRIOR TO AN (UN)WILLING ALLY"**

PhD Šerbo Rastoder and MSc Novak Adžić

### **MONTENEGRO AND THE WAR IN SLOVENIA (1991)**

**At the end of 1990 and 1991, the authorities in the Socialist Republic of Montenegro (SRM) were antipodal to the policy of the leadership of SR Slovenia, and at the beginning were not at all in favour of Slovenia's decision to proclaim independence. They condemned it as an act of 'unilateral secessionism' and 'hostility' towards Yugoslavia which would cause its 'unconstitutional disintegration'. On 28 June 1991, the Assembly of the SRM concluded that the above decision, being 'unlawful', would not be able to produce any legal consequences.**

Politically and operationally, the attitude of the leadership of the SRM and its representative in the Presidency of the SFRY towards the official declaration of independence of the Republic of Slovenia (of June 25, 1991) - and immediately afterwards, towards the *ten-day war* in Slovenia (June 27 - July 7, 1991) - was the same as that of the top leadership of the Republic of Serbia and its respective representative in the Presidency of the SFRY. The intervention of YNA, which was under the jurisdiction of the Presidency of the SFRY, i.e. the Supreme Command, took place based on the decision which was not made by this body, although it was the only one that was constitutionally competent. According to Momir Bulatović and Slobodan Milošević, the decision to engage the YNA in Slovenia was made by the Federal Government (SIV SFRY), led by Ante Marković. Marković however denied this, claiming that the Federal Executive Council (SIV) neither made the decision, nor had the constitutional authority to do so. According to the President of the Federal Executive Council Ante Marković, he and the Government did not make the decision to use the the YNA in Slovenia. He claimed that it was done by the army leadership, without authorisation, without his knowledge and without any consultations with him, but also without the decision of the Council. According to Marković, the decision was made by Army General and SFRY Federal Secretary of Defence Veljko Kadijević and the YNA General Staff headed by General Blagoje Adžić, in agreement with Slobodan Milošević and Borislav Jović, then President of the Republic of Serbia and erbia's representative in the SFRY Presidency.<sup>1</sup>

In relation to the war in Slovenia, on 4 July 1991 the Assembly of the SR Montenegro and its executive bodies (the Presidency and the Government) demanded from the competent authorities of the SFRY and the Republics of Croatia and Slovenia to "*fully comply with the*

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<sup>1</sup> **For additional information about this, see:** Prof. Dr. Šerbo Rastoder and M.Sc. Novak Adžić, "Modern History of Montenegro 1988-2017 - From the Coup to the NATO pact", Volume II, "Vijesti", Podgorica, 2020, pp. 493-502.

*three-month moratorium, with a full guarantee of the implementation of decisions relating to secession from Yugoslavia as unilateral acts”.*<sup>2</sup>

In its adopted conclusions, the Assembly of SR Montenegro demanded that “*armed conflicts in Slovenia be stopped immediately and unconditionally, that the units of the so-called Territorial Defence of Slovenia be withdrawn, and that all captured persons be released and provided with necessary assistance*”.<sup>3</sup> It also supported the measures of the Staff of the Supreme Command of the YNA, assessing that “*at the moment, there is no need for the return of soldiers from Montenegro who are serving in the YNA. Montenegro is committed to Yugoslavia, as a state union of the peoples who want and intend to live in it, and is requesting that related necessary changes be made in the federal bodies. As a sovereign state, Montenegro will independently decide on the forms of cooperation and connection with other nations of the future union*”.<sup>4</sup> It was also stated that the Parliament of Montenegro, however, “*believes that no nation, or parts of any nation, should be forcibly kept in Yugoslavia and that those who want to leave it should be allowed to do so*”.<sup>5</sup>

So, during the war in Slovenia, the leaderships of Montenegro and Serbia, as well as their representatives in the Presidency of the SFRY, were of the opinion that Slovenia should not be kept in Yugoslavia by force and that it should instead be allowed to ‘secede’. They were also convinced that Yugoslavia would be able to exist without Slovenia and that the YNA should withdraw to the borders of the future projected, ‘reduced’ Yugoslavia. Many researchers emphasise that the opinion that ‘Slovenia should be allowed to leave’ was a clear indicator that defending Yugoslavia was not the primary goal. This can explain the short duration of the war that ensued in this republic, in which Montenegro participated because its soldiers were serving in the YNA.

According to the available data, one YNA officer (pilot) from Montenegro was killed, one officer and two soldiers were wounded, and 30 soldiers were captured during the short war. On 6 July 1991, 21 YNA soldiers from Montenegro returned to Titograd from captivity in Slovenia. Other captured soldiers from Montenegro were also released. In total, the war in Slovenia took the lives of 44 members of the YNA: six officers, six non-commissioned officers, 30 soldiers and cadets, one civilian serving in the army and one unidentified person. 184 YNA soldiers were wounded. Eight members of the Territorial Defence of Slovenia, four police officers, six Slovenian civilians and six foreigners who happened to be in Slovenia at the time were also killed during the armed conflict.

The war ended on 7 July 1991, by a political agreement which was reached between the parties to the conflict as a result of pressure and mediation by the European Community. The Presidency of the SFRY made the decision to withdraw the YNA from Slovenia on 5 July 1991 and decided to implement it in full within a period of three months. The last YNA soldier left Slovenia on 26 October 1991. The Montenegrin leadership stood behind this plan, and its representative in the Presidency of the SFRY voted for the withdrawal of the YNA.

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<sup>2</sup> According to “Pobjeda”, Titograd, no. 9191, of 5 July 1991, pp. 1 and 7. See more about this in: Prof. Dr. Šerbo Rastoder and M.Sc. Novak Adžić, “Modern History of Montenegro 1988-2017 - From the Coup to the NATO pact”, Volume II, “Vijesti”, Podgorica, 2020, pp. 506-507.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

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