

Milovan Djilas: Unsong Bard of Montenegro*)

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Milovan Djilas, the political theorist, overshadows *Milovan Djilas*, the writer of literature. This is hardly surprising, given his dramatic appearance on the stage of international politics. He will, perhaps, be best remembered as “the heretic within the Yugoslav heresy”, considering the ideas he expressed in “The New Class” (a communist criticism of the Communist system) and in “The Unperfect Society” (a social critique of democratic humanist orientation).

It must not be forgotten, however, that *Djilas* has played numerous roles throughout the course of his career — youthful activist, Partisan commander, Yugoslav Party leader, and political prisoner. Through all of these, *Djilas* has been a writer. His place in modern Yugoslav literature is unique. Much of the literature that has come out of Yugoslavia since the end of World War II has dealt with social criticism, surrealist genres and the depiction of war as a dehumanizing experience. By contrast, his rational approach to political problems notwithstanding, *Djilas* follows the old romantic mode, and stresses a heroic outlook on life. Perhaps it would not be too much to say that he epitomizes the traditional Balkan bard but an undated one.

To understand *Djilas*, it is necessary to have an understanding of Montenegro, the land of *Djilas*' birth. For Montenegro is not simply an historically embattled region, it is a myth. And the headstrong, unruly *Djilas* is, in large part, the product of that myth.

The Montenegrin national mystique is itself an extension of the Kosovo mystique — transcendence of defeat through adherence to an abstract ideal. After the fateful battle (June 28, 1389), defeated but still unsubmissive, Serbian clans took shelter in the impenetrable mountains north of present-day Albania. Here the clans came to form the nucleus of Serbian resistance to Ottoman domination until

*) This article is based on *Djilas*' publications: “Anatomy of a Moral”, New York: Praeger 1959, “Conversations With Stalin”, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. 1962, “Land without Justice”, ibidem 1958, “The Leper and Other Stories”, ibidem 1964, “Montenegro”, ibidem 1961, “The New Class. An Analysis of the Communist System”, New York: Praeger 1965 (first published in USA 1957 by the same), “Njegoš Poet-Prince-Bishop”, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967, “Parts of a Lifetime”, Ed. Michael and Deborah Milenkovitch, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich 1975, “The Stone and the Violets”, ibidem 1971.

well into the nineteenth century. The terrain of Montenegro is marvellously suited to such an independent unvariably harsh existence. As *Djilas* himself describes it:

“The land is one of utter destitution and forlorn silence. Its billowing crags engulf all that is alive and all that human hand has built and cultivated. Every sound is dashed against the jagged rocks, and every ray of light is ground into gravel . . . Marko Miljanov (the Montenegrin sage of the 19th century) blurted out just the right expression *a crucified wilderness*. That is Montenegro . . . a wilderness and a sea of stone, but one lifted high upon a confusion of peaks, gashed by canyons and gorges, and gouged by gaping precipices burrowing into stone cracked by heat and frost.

It lacks the serenity of the desert or the spaciousness of the sea. It has some of both — but the silence is stony and the spaciousness is overhead in the endless heavens¹.”

After centuries of perpetual guerilla war, Montenegro's independence was at last recognized in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877—1878. Montenegro's emergence into the modern world was perverse and uneven. Originally Montenegro had had a unique system which served as a government — a patriarchal system under a *Vladika*, a prince-bishop whose successor (usually a nephew) was voted for among the various clans. After the death of the great poet-prince *Njegoš* (1851), the ruling *Petrović* dynasty became secularized. Its last ruler, *Prince Nikola*, made himself King in 1910 and ruled corruptly until 1918. Montenegro became an autocratic state without ever becoming a modern nation.

For all its repressiveness, the Montenegrin government could not end the custom of vendetta, and the clans remained independent and unmanageable. For them, the blood feud was a way of life. As *Djilas* views this national obsession:

“There is not a trace of non-resistance to evil. The Montenegrin can understand and can do everything except turn the other cheek. Montenegrins are the only Christians who not only act out of revenge, but also believe in revenge as if it were the most consummate joy and the highest justice . . . The Montenegrin is a god of vengeance — not just that, but that above all else².”

The ancestors of *Milovan Djilas* were themselves participants in and victims of blood feud. Speaking of his roots in “Land Without Justice”, *Djilas* states that “the story of a family can also portray the soul of a land. This is especially so in Montenegro, where the people are divided into clans and tribes to which each family is indissolubly bound³). Of the *Djilas* family, his grandfather's uncle, *Marko*, was a *hajduk*⁴) who defied the Turks and Prince-Bishop *Njegoš* alike. He was brutally murdered by members of a rival clan. Grandfather *Aleksa*, then a young lad, shot his Uncle *Marko*'s killer from off his horse and cut out the assassin's heart. *Aleksa*, too, took up the life of a brigand. He in turn was treacher-

1) “Njegoš”, pp. 13—14.

2) *Ibidem*, pp. 28—29.

3) “Land without Justice”, p. 3.

4) *hajduk*, an outlaw.

ously murdered at a wedding. *Djilas*' father, *Nikola*, then a babe in the cradle, narrowly escaped knifing when *Aleksa*'s murderers attacked the homestead. When grown, *Nikola Djilas* himself was to spend a year and a day chained in a dungeon — suspect of plotting against the royal house of *Petrović*.

In World War I, Montenegro collapsed as a state, not due to lack of resistance, but to internal corruption. More will be said about this in due course. Montenegro was then united with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, while the allegiance of its people remained divided. Many Montenegrins had long been accustomed to a life of banditry. Since the *hajduk* tradition sanctified banditry in service of the liberation struggle, many had been regarded as popular heroes. But with the union of the South Slavs after World War I, the *hajduks* became superfluous. Unable to change their way of life, many Montenegrins persisted in an outlaw existence. Nearly all of these were hunted down and destroyed.

The nature of the “superfluous man” in post-World War I Montenegro is peculiarly Balkan, but the existential dilemma of outliving one's own time is universal. In “Land Without Justice” *Djilas* poses an answer to this problem: “The strongest are those who renounce their own times and become a living part of those yet to come. The strongest, and the rarest⁵).“

Describing his childhood, *Djilas* records his first impressions of awareness of the existing societal problems: poverty, political corruption, massacre of the Moslems and a populace becoming immersed in wanton savagery. This savagery even extended to his own family. His own father participated in the looting of Moslem property, and the uncles led lives of the wildest debauchery. Large numbers of Montenegrins continued supporting the defunct *Petrović* dynasty, and, labelled as “Greens”, fought against the transformation as guerilla bands. Other Montenegrins known as the “Whites” were just as militantly in favor of Serbian union and became Belgrade's fists in smashing the opposition (the Greens).

There also arose in Montenegro the “Reds” — at this time, a label loosely applied to those Montenegrins whose primary grievances were social and economic. The effects of the Russian Revolution, along with the postwar chaos and depression, were felt by many Montenegrins. The first communist movement arose during *Djilas*' boyhood. *Djilas* became influenced by radicalized workers and by young leftist intellectuals. He became one of the new generation of South Slavic youth who thought in terms of a unified Yugoslavia on one hand, and who provided the impetus for socialist opposition to the royal dictatorship on the other. “Land Without Justice” ends with young *Djilas* enrolling in the University of Belgrade, an idealistic convert to Communism but as yet unskilled in the arts of political struggle.

Karl Marx was not the only thinker who influenced *Djilas* and his future outlook on life. Two other models — *Njegoš* and *Marko Miljanov* — were to exert much influence upon his thoughts.

⁵) “Land without Justice”, p. 182.

The influence of the great sage *Marko Miljanov* is best expressed in the story "About Marko Miljanov", one of a collection of tales entitled "The Stone and the Violets". It would be difficult to imagine *Marko Miljanov* as not being an influence upon *Djilas*. Both had years of experience as guerilla fighters. Like *Djilas*, *Marko* passes the time in writing and removed from public life. He remains loyal to his sense of ethics throughout. Thus, it could be said that his literature is an expression of heroism in the name of humanity.

Marko Miljanov grew up in the Montenegrin border regions during Turkish times, and his youth was devoted to raiding. He played a prominent role among the Montenegrin fighters during the 1877—1878 war. When the Moslems of Plav and Gusinje refused to accept being transferred to Montenegro (this had been agreed upon by the Berlin Congress), *Marko* was sent to fight them. At the ill-fated battle of Novšić, the Prince's *camarilla* at Cetinje did not send *Marko* sufficient reinforcements. This was rumored by many to be a deliberate act of neglect. As *Djilas* expresses it:

"In their account, the battle lived again as something fateful, and Voivode Marko played the role of a knight, vainly striving to turn destiny to our, the Serb, side. There was something in him, in that battle and especially in that betrayal, that terribly recalled — in my eyes and in those of men living at the time — the Serb tragedy at Kosovo⁶).

This betrayal — and the increasing absolutism of Prince *Nikola* — caused *Marko* to go into self-imposed exile in the Kuči wilderness. He exchanged the sword for the pen, and though being a functional illiterate, produced three works of literature: "Examples of Manliness and Heroism", "The Kuči Tribe in National Song and Story", and "The Life and Customs of the Albanians". The subjects are anecdotal, but these anecdotes are outstanding as examples of moral philosophy. *Marko Miljanov* believed he had a duty to preserve the heroic exploits of upright men from oblivion. In these anecdotes *Marko* praises acts of heroism — acts of Serbian, Albanian and even Turkish heroism.

Marko Miljanov believed that all things in the universe are transitory save man's integrity, which must be fought for and preserved. When confronted with the choice of the ethical and the feasible, man should invariably choose the ethical. (This makes *Marko* an heir of Kosovo.) *Marko Miljanov*'s outlook, which he termed "manliness", may be summed up in his famous statement: "The powers of darkness are not worthy of humanity⁷)." Good and evil are eternally locked in struggle, while man is forced to choose. He must resist evil to the end, for only in such ways can he be a man.

When this remarkable vojvoda died in 1901, his coffin was borne across Montenegro, and past the Prince's palace at Cetinje. Prince *Nikola* came out on the balcony and cried: "Montenegro was too strait for him!⁸)" This judgment can be interpreted a number of ways.

⁶) "The Stone and the Violets", p. 215.

⁷) Ibidem, p. 236.

⁸) Ibidem, p. 237.

At least as great as *Marko Miljanov*, Prince-Bishop *Njegoš* has been another major influence upon *Milovan Djilas*. *Djilas*' massive biography of the Montenegrin poet-ruler is the largest study of *Njegoš* to date. At first glance, this would seem unlikely. Both are Serbs and Montenegrins, but there are substantial differences. *Njegoš* was an Orthodox bishop; *Djilas* is an atheist. *Njegoš* was a ruler; *Djilas* has long been a revolutionary. *Njegoš* is the greatest Romantic Serb writer; *Djilas* is noted for analytical studies of Marxism. Yet there are more similarities than differences. Both are heretics to the ideas of the times. Yet both are, in a sense, religious, each searching for a type of "god consciousness" beyond the realm of material conditions. Both are revolutionaries, each seeking to transform society. Both battled foreign and domestic enemies. Lastly, both are outstanding writers of Montenegro.

The roots of *Petar Petrović Njegoš*, originally simply known as *Rade of Njeguši*, go back to the fourteenth century, at the time when the clans of Katuni were becoming the nucleus of Montenegro. *Njegoš*' ancestors were not the first highland clans to rise against the Turks. The Katuni, however, were the most persistent in maintaining the struggle. Even in the most warlike of times, the men of Katuni adhered rigidly to a standard of ethics: they neither looted their enemies' property nor raped their women. They cared for wounded prisoners and war orphans alike, and they were lavish in their hospitality. These examples of *manliness* were a source of inspiration to *Petar Petrović Njegoš* — and later to *Marko Miljanov* and *Milovan Djilas*.

Young *Rade Petrović* wanted to be neither priest nor ruler. The joy of his youth was to descend from the rugged crags of Montenegro to the blue waters of the Adriatic, a separate realm in which he could give full vent to his dreams. His earliest poems hint strongly of romantic love and sensuality. Circumstances, however, were to terminate his youth. His uncle, Bishop *Petar I*, had sent another nephew to Russia to study, and it was assumed that this youth (*Mitar Stijepov*) would succeed him. *Mitar* sickened and died on the damp steppes, and *Rade* was chosen to fulfill the post of *Petar I* and maintain peace among the clans.

From the serenity of the seacoast *Rade* was to return to Cetinje, where he was clad in a monk's cassock, after some dispute elected and then packed off to Russia to be consecrated. After his return to Montenegro he forsook the priestly garb forever, seldom said Mass, and lived a free and easy life. He was almost invariably clad in the costume of a Montenegrin highlander. Eastern Orthodoxy (particularly in the Balkans) is flexible in its interpretation of Christian dogma, but *Njegoš*' writings indicate that he philosophically digressed even more. His God was a largely pagan god — and above all, quite his own.

A few words must be said about the teacher of his youth — *Sima Milutinović-Sarajlija*. *Sarajlija*'s life story is so wild a tale as to astound the imagination. In his youth he was a student at Karlovci, a tailor in Zemun, and a fighter in the Serbian uprising of Karageorge. His first love, a Turkish girl named Fatima, was killed in the revolt and *Sarajlija* spent several years roaming the Balkans. He participated again in revolt in 1815 in Serbia, vanished, ended up in a Turkish

dungeon, and then vanished again. *Sarajlija* went to Russia, dabbled in political intrigue, and then went to Germany. He enrolled in the University of Leipzig, and at this time met such men as *Grimm* and *Goethe*. (*Goethe* was so impressed with *Sarajlija*, he wrote two pages about him.)

Sarajlija did not stay in Germany long. He returned to the Balkans, fled into Montenegro (with the Austrian police chasing him) and remained as *Rade*'s tutor for three years. He later made three additional trips to Montenegro. Meanwhile, he continued roaming the Balkans and taking part in the political conspiracies of the day. He was married briefly in Budapest — having proposed to a girl the day after he met her — before taking to the hills again. Before he died he said that if he had his life to live over he would change nothing. *Sarajlija* died at the height of his vigor in 1847 in Belgrade — appropriately drinking a cup of coffee. This was the man of whom *Rade*'s uncle said: "I do not know whether any other Serb would be willing to live in Montenegro⁹⁾."

As tutor for *Rade*, *Sarajlija* himself participated in the boy's Spartan training, running barefoot and half naked over snow and rocks. His intellectual teaching was unstructured; he talked with his student, provided him with companionship, and encouraged him to read all he could. More than any other single individual, *Sarajlija* provided the spark for *Njegoš*' creative fires.

Just as *Djilas* fought the German and Italian occupiers of Yugoslavia, so did *Njegoš* have to fight the Turkish occupation. Actually, to describe the Montenegrins' foes as "Turks" is not quite accurate. Rather, they consisted of Slavs whose ancestors had embraced Islam. The expansion of Serbia and Montenegro in the nineteenth century became a threat to their very existence, and the Moslem nobles continued to struggle against the Christian Serbs as the Ottoman Empire was crumbling. They formed a formidable threat to *Njegoš* and Montenegro. Moreover, while the Montenegrins could hold their own in the mountains, they were no match for the cavalry of the Bosnian spahis on the plains.

Njegoš had two powerful neighbors to contend with — *Ali Pasha* and *Smail Aga Čengić*. Both were carving out small empires of their own in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and were at war with each other. *Smail Aga* is the subject of the Croatian poet *Mažuranić* ("The Death of *Smail Aga Čengić*") whom *Mažuranić* depicted as a bloodthirsty monster. In the epic poem, a company of Montenegrin heroes descend from the mountains on *Smail Aga*'s camp and take righteous revenge. *Novica*, the *Aga*'s killer, is portrayed as a renegade Turk.

Legend and fact are not necessarily synonymous. In "Njegoš", *Djilas* tells the real story of *Smail Aga Čengić*. Neither *Smail Aga* nor *Ali Pasha* were particularly repressive rulers. *Smail Aga*, though conservative, was benevolent to his serfs in a paternal sort of way. Nevertheless, taxes had risen, and along the border with Montenegro a chieftan named *Novica* had stirred up a revolt. The Montenegrins were quick to intervene. A company of *Uskoks*¹⁰⁾ was sent into Herzegovina to kill *Smail Aga Čengić*.

⁹⁾ "Njegoš", p. 38.

¹⁰⁾ *Uskoks*, Serb rebels who had fled to Montenegro.

A cunning hajduk named *Šujo* set a trap for *Smail Aga*. This *Šujo* had alternately made war and peace with the Turks for the last twelve years. When *Smail Aga* announced his willingness to discuss grievances, *Šujo* invited him to his camp. While *Šujo* entertained his guests, his sons hobbled the Moslems' horses. Then the *Uskoks* appeared on the cliffs. Unable to escape on horseback, *Smail Aga Čengiĉ* and his men perished under a hail of bullets. The head was delivered to *Njegoš*. Progressive though he might have been, *Njegoš* was enough of a Montenegrin to toss it in his hand, saying, "At last, even you have come my way, poor Smail!¹¹⁾"

Smail Aga's removal ended a serious threat to *Ali Pasha's* position. He and *Njegoš* concluded a truce that lasted throughout the *Vladika's* lifetime, and gave Montenegro a much-needed respite.

Prince-Bishop *Njegoš* often had more success dealing with the Turks than with his own people. A believer in social progress, he was almost always at odds with the clans. He strove vigorously to stamp out the vendetta, to collect taxes, and to make Montenegro a modern state. Frequently he damned his "accursed" land and unruly people. As *Djilas* views the character of the Montenegrins:

They are a ragged and poor lot who are capable the most exalted exploits and the darkest misdeeds. Some are proud of their heroic poverty: The bare man leaps higher. Others will trample everything underfoot in order to grasp power and wealth. The purest spirituality and the coarsest avarice exist side by side and clash¹²⁾.

Njegoš's call to end blood feud had some response among the Montenegrin people: they felt it necessary to remain united against the Turks. The chieftains, however, were less easily persuaded. All were opposed, in principle, to any taxation, and some rebelled openly. *Njegoš's* methods of dealing with recalcitrants seems both primitive and autocratic. He would attempt to persuade the miscreant to return to the fold and, failing, would order his assassination.

During his reign the clans of Crmnica and Piperi rose against taxation. They were aided, significantly enough, by the Vizier of Scutari, who encouraged their secession from Montenegro. This lay Montenegro open to Turkish invasion. *Markiša Plamenac*, leader of the Crmnica, was eventually ambushed and shot — probably on Cetinje's orders. *Todor Mušikin*, leader of the Piperi, was lured to Cetinje along with his officers and there he was shot. After the suppression of these rebellions, however, *Njegoš* was generous in granting pardons.

In addition to giving detailed study to *Njegoš* as a statesman, *Djilas* writes a great deal about *Njegoš* as a writer of epic poetry. Both *Njegoš* and *Djilas* are obsessed by the duality of good and evil in the universe — a preoccupation that has been strong in the Balkans since the days of the Bogomil heresy. Speaking of *Njegoš* as a philosopher, *Djilas* argues that:

¹¹⁾ "Njegoš", p. 180.

¹²⁾ Ibidem, p. 208.

Njegoš was deeply religious, not so much by inheritance, much less by way of mystical rapture, as out of the knowledge that man's destiny is determined by some higher order. This was the religion of the sage, and it came from penetrating into the mysteries of man and the universe. It is not essential here whether that knowledge was scientifically correct or what form it took — in this case a religious form — but whether it was sincere and in what measure it admits us into the mysteries, or at least brings us emotionally closer to them¹³).

This spirituality is eloquently expressed in *Njegoš*'s greatest works — “The Rays of Microcosm” and “The Mountain Wreath”. *Rays* shows the obvious influence of *John Milton*. *Milton*'s Adam, however, is the violator of God's commandments as the first man of earth. *Njegoš*'s Adam has heavenly origins and defies God from the ranks of *Satan* and the insurgent angels.

The poem begins with *Njegoš* pondering the universe, and he experiences a “spark of divinity”. This enables him to explore the universe in all its infinity. The reader is taken to the gates of heaven and the descriptions are rich and flowery. It must be pointed out that it is likely that *Njegoš* himself did not believe literally in this story. Undoubtedly he used mythology as a means of translating his metaphysics into understandable terms.

Satan defies God's absolute rule. He claims that previously five universes existed, each ruled by its own god. Four of these had crashed into a cosmic abyss, and the remaining God had extended his domain over all infinity. Satan wishes to divide the universe into five once more. *Adam*, commander of the legions of Man, initially supports Satan, but deserts on the eve of battle. On the day of battle, a wrathful God of vengeance rides out on a blazing chariot. From a diamond bow he fires an arrow of lightening that smites *Satan*'s legions. The loyal angels finish up by casting the rebels down into the cosmic abyss, where *Satan* will henceforth rule as tsar of the underworld. *Adam* and the men are dealt with less severity: they are banished from heaven and lose every memory of their divine origins. On earth, man must be continually caught in the struggle between good and evil.

That *Njegoš* sides with God is obvious: for him, *Satan* symbolizes the rebellious chieftain. But despite his own admiration for *Njegoš*, *Djilas* admits that “*Njegoš*'s Satan is the most democratic in all literature”¹⁴).

“The Rays of Microcosm” deals with destiny on a cosmic level. “The Mountain Wreath”, *Njegoš*'s supreme masterpiece, deals with destiny in the purely Serb and Montenegrin tradition. The subject of “The Mountain Wreath” is a massacre that is supposed to have taken place at the end of the seventeenth century, when *Njegoš*'s ancestor, Vladika *Danilo* ruled Montenegro. Numerous clans had converted to Islam, and now formed a threat to the very existence of Montenegro. *Danilo* attempted reconciliations, and when this failed ordered extermination. This intolerance may shock the modern reader, but here two ways of life were locked in irreconcilable conflict, and each saw its survival determined only by the extinction of the other. *Djilas* thus implies that such a massacre was a historical inevitability.

¹³) Ibidem, p. 277.

¹⁴) Ibidem, p. 345.

Even so, *Danilo* broods and suffers and deliberates through much of the epic before the die is cast. As in the case of *Rays*, the characters are representative of ideologies. *Djilas* sees *Danilo* as having about him "the tragedy of the skeptical intellectual"¹⁵). *Mandušić*, one Montenegro hero, is a patriot by passion and inclination. *Mičunović* is a patriot by reason and conviction. Vojvoda *Draško* is the personification of native wit and common sense. The "Turks", or Islamicized Slavs, are seen as cunning, sensuous and subtle. Yet they too, are equally convinced of the justice of their demands. It is to *Njegoš*' credit that he handles them objectively.

In the end of "The Mountain Wreath", good is seen as having emerged out of evil. The threat to Montenegrin existence has been crushed and the martyrdom at Kosovo has been partially avenged. The way is now open for a reemergence of the Serb people.

Having analyzed the epics of his Montenegrin predecessors, it would have seemed less than true to form had not *Djilas* written an epic of his own. This he accomplished with the historical novel "Montenegro". Actually, to describe "Montenegro" as a novel is hardly accurate; half of the story is fact, and throughout the novel, truth and fact are intermingled. The story deals with the fall of Montenegro during and after World War I. "Montenegro" is divided into three parts, and is unique in that none of the characters in each part appear in any other.

The first part, "The Battle", deals with the last and greatest battle of Montenegrin history, that of Mojkovac. At Mojkovac, the Montenegrin highlanders, without any real hope of winning, held their own against a numerically superior Austrian force. Though the heights and the valleys on which the battle raged changed hands several times throughout, the Montenegrins continued holding the line. They remained unconquered on the battlefield at the time when the house of *Petrović* capitulated and the Montenegrin government collapsed. As *Djilas* expresses it: "At Mojkovac the Montenegrin state collapsed while the Montenegrin arms flashed in their final brilliance¹⁶."

Part I deals with two authentic historical personalities: *Serdar Janko Vukotić*, commander of the Montenegrin military, and Colonel *Miloš Medenica*, commander of the troops at Mojkovac itself. Both are depicted as men who subordinate all else to duty. *Vukotić*, for instance, personally opposes capitulation, but when the crumbling government at Cetinje ordered the army disbanded, *Serdar* obeyed. There are also four noteworthy fictitious characters: Captain *Stojan Stanković*, Captain *Mašan Janković*, Lieutenant *Petar Žurić* and Commander *Mališa Petrović*.

These officers have all been affected by opposing political currents existing in Montenegro at this time. Montenegrin statehood under the *Petrovićs* was seen as opposed to the union of all the Serbs. *Stojan Stanković* and *Mašan Janković* had been old friends, but were divided on this political issue. To *Stojan*, the *Petrović* Dynasty is corrupt, and he is an advocate of Serb unity. *Mašan*, no less a Serb, sees the Montenegrin government as the one lawful government for the country.

¹⁵) Ibidem, p. 345.

¹⁶) "Land without Justice", p. 165.

The execution of a group of conspirators by King *Nikola's* government created a rift between the two men.

Petar Žurić, a young officer, is democratic-minded and believes the union of all Yugoslavia to be a necessity. His commander, *Mališa Petrović*, is a middle-aged Montenegrin "of the old stamp". Initially distrustful of each other, they soon learn that the other is still a Serbian patriot.

Despite their differences, all four men agree that the Austrians should be resisted to the end. *Stojan* asks whether their sacrifice will be used as a shabby bargain, yet is still determined to prove his worth on the battlefield. *Mašan* feels that the Montenegrin government cannot betray the Serbian Ideal and is himself prepared to die for that idea. *Petar* feels the battle is necessary to further the cause of South Slav liberation. *Mališa*, cursing Montenegro for its evil, will still only live and die a Montenegrin.

Stojan and *Mašan* are reconciled on the eve of battle. Before the fighting has ended, *Mašan* is killed. *Petar Žurić* also falls in the fighting, and his commander grieves over him as for a dead son. When the Austrians are finally checked, the government in Cetinje surrenders. King *Nikola* ignominiously flees into exile and Montenegro comes under Austrian occupation.

Part II, "The Gallows", deals with the occupation and its effects on three condemned patriots. The three men are of different generations: Captain *Draško Dragović*, a middle-aged Montenegrin officer, *Miloš Milošević*, a youthful student of philosophy; and *Vuk Rovčanin*, an elderly but spry peasant. All have a different "Weltanschauung", but these barriers are broken down as they await hanging in prison. Even when given the chance of being spared (the price being cooperation with Austria), they still choose death over dishonor.

Particular attention is devoted to *Miloš Milošević*. Awaiting death, he dreams of the three women who were most important in his life — the dearest, the most desired, and the most alluring. He is continually pressured by the occupation of Commissioner *Ljeskovac*, himself a Serb, though an Austrian official. During philosophical exchanges between the two, it is *Ljeskovac* who is depicted as a rationalist. *Miloš* proudly declares himself in favor of the Serbian Ideal — even in the face of all reason. Part II ends with the three men marching resolutely to the gallows.

While Parts I and II stress the noble, heroic side of the Montenegrin character, Part III, "The End", deals with the other side. Cruelty, avarice and guile — of peculiarly Montenegrin type — prevail. The two major characters are military and provincial governors named *Boško* and *Blagota*. Both support the "Whites" in Montenegro, yet both are old-style Montenegrin chieftains at heart. Each sustains himself on sexual lust and the desire for power. *Blagota* is attempting to undermine *Boško's* position by gaining the support of the Moslems, and *Boško* allies himself with elements of the "Greens". At one point reconciliation seems possible, but this is foiled by the machinations of a corrupt official from Belgrade. A confrontation between the two men ends in gunfire and bloodshed. In closing, *Djilas* addresses Montenegro itself:

“You, Montenegro, land and state, and you, chiefs, had to fall. Perhaps, Montenegro, this was the only way for something of you to survive — that which made you what you were, which your children will inherit, and which will be grafted onto other countries and other peoples¹⁷).”

In “Montenegro”, *Djilas*' characters are representatives of ideologies as are those of *Njegoš*. The ethical themes closely follow those of *Marko Miljanov*. The story clearly reveals *Djilas*' debt to both men.

Kosovo, *Njegoš*, *Marko Miljanov* and *Djilas* — they represent different times of history but the same essential idea. For this reason it is difficult to judge *Djilas* from a modern point of view. *Milovan Djilas* has been criticized — possibly with some justification — for being too much of a Romantic. As *Djilas* himself admits:

It seems impossible in life to have something both useful and beautiful. So men are divided. Some are for the useful, some for the beautiful. I placed myself on the side of beauty¹⁸).

Yet it must be pointed out that *Djilas* spends much effort shattering myths. He has come to terms with his own roots in a decisive and brutally forthright manner.

Inconsistencies are evident in his writings. A democratic humanist himself, he admires a man who was an autocratic ruler. In purely polemical matters, much of *Djilas*' writing appears to have a “see-saw” effect. But all this can be ascribed to levels of multiplicity in *Djilas*' views — and no one can deny that *Djilas* is a very eclectic thinker.

To be sure, *Milovan Djilas* is a Montenegrin, a Serb and a Yugoslav, and his flavor is unmistakable. Many of the questions and dilemmas he and his characters face, however, are not bound by nationality and have a timeless quality about them. In this respect, *Milovan Djilas* is truly a universal man.

¹⁷) “Montenegro”, p. 367.

¹⁸) “Land Without Justice”, p. 23.