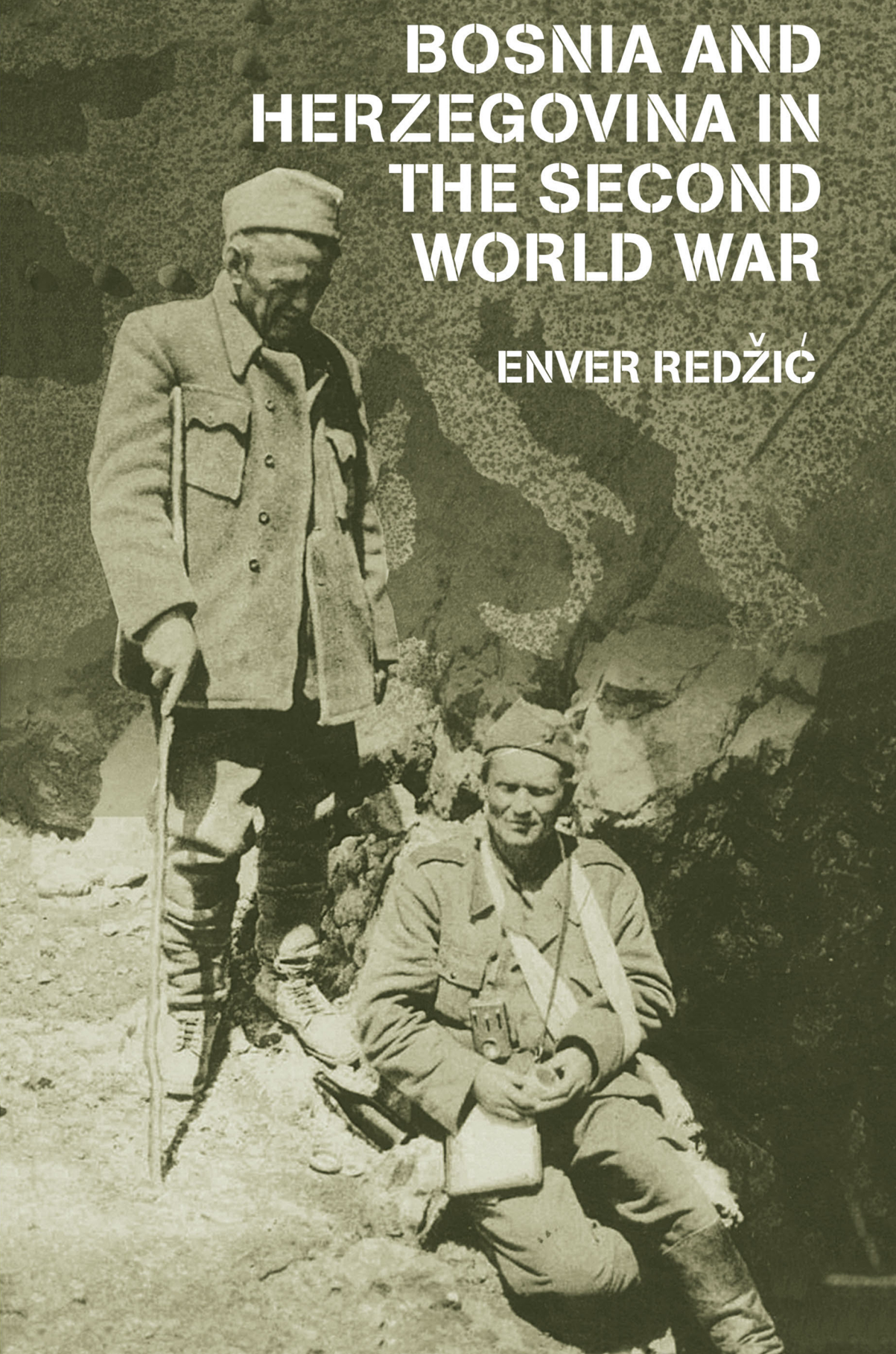
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

ENVER REDŽIĆ



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Five major groups fought one another in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Second World War: German and Italian occupiers, Ustasha of the 'Independent State of Croatia', Chetniks led by Draža Mihailović, a pro-German faction of Bosnian Muslims, and the Tito-led Partisans. The aims, policies and actions of each group are examined in light of their own documents and those of rival groups. This work shows how the Partisans prevailed over other groups because of their superior strategy, their commitment to the country's full liberation from fascist occupation, their pledges of equality among Serbs, Moslems and Croats and their support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's equal status within the Yugoslav Federation.

Enver Redžić, born in 1915, joined the Partisans during the Second World War and attended key wartime Partisan political councils. After retiring from other work, he earned his doctorate in history in 1975 and has since written 15 books regarding nationality issues in Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Enver Redžić

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADAP	German foreign policy documents, 1918–45 (Series E) [Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik]
AIRPH	Archives of the Institute for the Workers' Movement in Croatia, Zagreb [Arhiv Instituta radničkog pokreta Hrvatske]
AIHRPH	Archives of the Institute for the History of the Workers' Movement in Croatia, Zagreb [Arhiv Instituta za historiju radničkog pokreta Hrvatske]
AJ	Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade [Arhiv Jugoslavije]
AMRS	Archives of the Museum of the Revolution, Sarajevo [Arhiv Muzeja revolucije Sarajevo]
ARSUP	Archives of the Republic Secretariat for Internal Affairs, Sarajevo [Arhiv Republičkog sekretarijata unutrašnjih poslova]
ASKBiH	Archives of the League of Communists of Bosnia and Herzevogovina, Sarajevo [Arhiv Savez Kommunista Bosne i Hercegovine]
AVII	Archives of the Military Historical Institute, Belgrade [Arhiv Vojno-istorijskog instituta]
AVNOJ	Anti-Fascist Council for the Peoples' Liberation of Yugoslavia [Antifašticke vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije]
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina [Bosne i Hercegovine]
HNZ	Croatian People's Community [Hrvatska narodna zajednica]
HSP	Croatian Party of Rights [Hrvatska stranka pravaša]
JMO	Yugoslav Muslim Organization [Jugoslavenska muslimanska organizacija]
KPJ	Communist Party of Yugoslavia [Komunistička partija Jugoslavije]
KTB	War Diary [Kriegstagebuch]
NDH	Independent State of Croatia [Nezavisna Država Hrvatska]
NG	Enemy Materials [Neprijateljska građa]
NOB	National Liberation War [Narodnooslobodilačka borba]
NOP	National Liberation Movement [Narodnooslobodilački pokret]
PA/AA	Political Archives, Foreign Ministry, Bonn [Politisches Archiv, Auswärtigen Amt]
SS	Nazi Special Police Force [Schutzstaffel]

ZAVNOBiH	Regional Anti-Fascist Council for the People's Liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina [Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Bosne i Hercegovine]
ZstA	Central State Archives, Potsdam [Zentrales Staatsarchiv]
ZNOR	Collection of documents and information about the Peoples' Liberation War of the Yugoslav Peoples, Belgrade, Military History Institute of the Yugoslav Army [Zbornik documenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu jugoslovenskih naroda]

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INTRODUCTION

Geography alone made Bosnia and Herzegovina a land likely to be heavily contested in the Second World War. Shaped as an interior triangle, it is sandwiched between Serbia and Montenegro to the east and Croatia to the north, west and south, and all those lands had harboured ambitions since the nineteenth century to annex it in whole or in part. Throughout history it has been a source of precious metals, industrial minerals and timber, and therefore coveted by neighbours near and far. To the conquering fascist Germans and Italians in the 1930s and 1940s, it was a geostrategic gem inviting conquest and exploitation in support of greater victories on other battlefields.

But in the end it was the people who were both the central objective and the principal protagonists in the struggle for Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1941–45. Without the loyal submission of at least some of them, the task of governance presented more risks than benefits to the occupiers. The Germans and Italians required subservient local supporters to keep the peace and facilitate exploitation of the area's economic potential. Instead, they provoked the worst internecine conflict in Bosnian history up to that time, and the occupiers continually exacerbated it despite their overriding interest in restoring local tranquility. After conquering Yugoslavia in early April 1941, the Germans and Italians gave power to the Ustasha [insurgents], a small group of Croatian extreme nationalists who had previously been forced to nurse their grievances against Yugoslavia in exile. The Ustasha could not wait to start slaughtering Serbs, Jews and Roma, and in a matter of weeks their brutality evoked a violent and largely spontaneous uprising of rural Serbs. Part of that rebellion was soon co-opted by Serbian nationalists who named themselves Chetniks after the guerilla units that fought against the Ottoman occupation in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The remaining part was subsumed by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the institutional backbone of the movement known in the West (and in the following pages) as the Partisans. By summer 1941 Bosnia and Herzegovina was home to a five-way power struggle among the Ustasha, Partisans, Chetniks, Germans and Italians, each with its own armed formations, strategic objectives and ideological vision.

As victims multiplied, the war turned into a contest for the support and loyalty of the local population. But in addition to favouring one ethno-national group over others, the occupiers emboldened the most despicable nationalists to seize the moment and realize their messianic dreams of a land cleansed of rivals and 'racial inferiors'. Within each group, fissures developed along pre-existing ideological fault lines and in response to the brutality of other group members. By 1944 the extremists in each group were

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largely marginalized, and a small group of tenacious and ideologically-fired communists emerged triumphant at the head of a widely popular resistance movement. It was an outcome that few would have dared predict in the first dark days of German and Italian occupation.

Each domestic protagonist – the Partisans, Ustasha and Chetniks – had a revolutionary vision. The Ustasha and Chetniks dreamed of a unified, ethnically homogenous state purged of all rival ethno-national groups through horrific variants of ethnic cleansing and social engineering. Their respective visions were wholly incompatible, but their ideological aims motivated or justified acts that alienated first their enemies, then their friends and eventually their own supporters. Unlike the quiet, efficient wholesale murder of Jews by German specialists in mass killing, Ustasha and Chetniks often engaged in public terror to intimidate as much as to exterminate their victims. The tragic extermination of thousands of Bosnian Jews, however, was carried out largely with the same ruthless methods applied against Jews elsewhere in the Reich's territories. Many German commanders objected vociferously to the Ustasha excesses. They deplored not brutality per se but its messy aftermath, the Serbian uprising and the attendant evaporation of popular support for their local clients. But as the brutality and slaughter continued, resistance became more widespread and more effective. By the end of the war neither the Ustasha nor the Chetniks retained much support from those people in whose name they had promulgated their projects of ethnic purification.

The Bosnian Muslims, typically, found themselves in an ambivalent middle position during the Second World War. The author's exposition of their role in the following pages may be his most significant original contribution to our understanding of the war. In the minds of many Serbs, Muslims were identified with the Ustasha as well as the historically detested Turks, so Muslims often found themselves the target of Serbian reprisals against the Ustasha. As Ustasha and Chetnik influence waned during the course of the war, Muslims shifted from being targets of violence to being objects of recruitment, and their relative neutrality turned them into an important resource in the constituency of any prospective victor. Many of them joined the Partisans later in the war.

The Partisans, led by the Communist Party and Josip Broz Tito, emerged triumphant from the conflict. Although they received plentiful outside assistance from the western Allies and the critical participation of the Soviet Army in liberating Belgrade and other cities, the Partisans were an authentic indigenous movement with deep roots that inexorably gained broad support during the war. Their victory was due more than anything to their extraordinary regenerative power despite crushing battlefield defeats at the hands of superior German arms. Until the very end, the Partisans were incapable of achieving battlefield victories over main-line German units, but they were specialists at harassment, sabotage, evasion and escape. The Communist Party leaders perceived from the outset that their major challenge lay in transforming their almost exclusively Serbian insurgent bands into a multi-ethnic armed force. They demanded, but did not always receive, abstinence on the part of their soldiers from reprisal killings and uncontrolled looting that other armed formations either tolerated or encouraged. Discipline, however, was an essential ingredient in their ultimate success.

The leaders of each contending force generated reams of documents, albeit of unequal quantity and uneven quality. Enver Redžić summarizes the most revealing documents and uses the insights of each protagonist to illuminate the strategy and status

of the others. The present work is a product of the author's prodigious research, but more significant is his expository method in telling the tale from the viewpoints of the primary participants. This work, then, is neither a military history nor a narrative of events, but rather a procession of perceptions and assessments. The protagonists certainly saw things differently, but their observations on major issues overlap and come together to produce something approaching consensus on the causes, course and consequences of the war.

Still, this book should not be read primarily as an effort to sort out what really happened. Jozo Tomasevich's seminal work, *The Chetniks: War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945* (Stanford: 1975), stands out among many works that have undertaken an empirical study of the Second World War in Yugoslavia in pursuit of a narrative of events. His contribution is liberally acknowledged by Redžić. Interestingly, Tomasevich conceived his book as the first of a trilogy. He planned to devote the other two volumes to the Ustasha and Partisans. His intent attests to the importance of comprehending each movement as a product of its historical evolution and ideological engine.

In the present work, Redžić has added the Bosnian Muslims and the Axis occupiers to the Ustasha, Chetniks and Partisans as subjects for separate examination. Each of these groups faced internal factional disputes and saw developments through the prism of its own preferences and priorities, and each had a pressing need to comprehend local developments in order to determine its future course of action. That unquenchable thirst to understand one's rivals, the urgent need that drives every armed formation to gather intelligence, lies behind this book's innovative methodology and organization.

Historiography and propaganda in post-war socialist Yugoslavia cast the conflict as a struggle by heroic revolutionaries to achieve national liberation from foreign occupiers. To avoid alienating any of Yugoslavia's constituent nations, socialist-era opinion makers obscured the internecine dimensions of the conflict by portraying the Ustasha and Chetniks as isolated collaborationists with malice toward the working classes of all Yugoslav nations. The war was encapsulated as seven 'Enemy Offensives', each evoking heroic Partisan resistance in defence of the homeland. The socialist propaganda machine developed a series of acronyms with meanings that are almost universally understood in the former Yugoslav lands: NOB, the National Liberation War [Narodnooslobodilačka borba], and NOP, the National Liberation Movement [Narodnooslobodilački pokret], being the most commonly used. While this book may be read as an antidote to such a bipolar rendition of the struggle, the author directed his original text to an audience schooled in the legends and nomenclature of the socialist years and presupposed that his readers had considerable anecdotal knowledge of the war. For the English-language edition, editorial footnotes have been added to identify certain events, groups, individuals and places.

Certain editorial changes have been made for the English-language edition. Some material has been regrouped in the interest of topical cohesion, some repetitive items have been edited for clarity of presentation and dates have been added to ground events in the chronological narrative. The editor wishes to thank Dr Aida Vidan for her translation and Dr Ellen Elias-Bursac for her able editorial review of the English translation.

Robert J. Donia
August 2002

1

GERMAN AND ITALIAN OCCUPIERS

Introduction

As the First World War came to an end, the 'Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes' was proclaimed in Belgrade on 1 December 1918.[1] To ensure Serbian hegemony within the central-unitarist Yugoslav state, an expansionist Serbian policy of 'national and state unity', developed during the First World War, was inaugurated from the very beginning. Its function was to subordinate the non-Serbian people and historical provinces that in 1918–19 became a part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a government of the National Council of the Serbs, Croats and Muslims was formed as a part of the new Yugoslav state; it took office on 3 January 1919. The Belgrade regime temporarily respected the territorial and political integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.[2] However, this lasted only until 1924, when the regional government was abolished.[3] When royal dictatorship was established in 1929 and *banovinas* [administrative units] were subsequently formed, the territorial–political integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina was abolished.[4] The era of national and state unity fortified the expansionist Serbian hegemony, which was enforced in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the other historical provinces by police rule.[5]

All the national political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina were working toward its political disintegration, and too few political forces were committed to establishing the state's internal democratic stabilization. As was the case with other parliamentary parties, the Yugoslav Muslim Organization [Jugoslavenska muslimanska organizacija] (JMO) was banned and consequently forced to postpone its programme of autonomy.[6] Focused on the Muslim ethnic base, the JMO succeeded in achieving Muslim political homogeneity but it did not attempt to move beyond its ethno-political base toward a broader Bosnian orientation. In this respect the party abetted the continued strength of Serbian and Croatian political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, each of which was tied by organization and programme to parties in their national centres.[7]

External political forces were also moving against a cohesive Yugoslav state. The ideology and politics of integral Yugoslavism, promoted by the monarch and the leading military elements, was unsuccessful because of the resistance from national political parties and movements outside Serbia. Within the ranks of these forces, Yugoslavism was considered to be a type of expansionist Serbian hegemony and an instrument for eliminating national rights, which was in fact the case. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia [Komunistička partija Jugoslavije] (KPJ), as a part of the Third

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Communist International, opposed integral Yugoslavism because of its expansionist, Serbian hegemonistic, character.

Yugoslavia's revisionist neighbours – the countries that in the First World War had belonged to the Central Powers – had a particularly corrosive effect upon Yugoslav internal stability. There was hardly a country among them without territorial claims on Yugoslavia. No sooner was the Treaty of Versailles signed than demands arose for its revision.[8] The principal advocates of revision were the European states defeated in the First World War and the government of the Soviet Union as it pursued the strategy of the Third Communist International.

The revisionist course gained momentum in Europe with the ascent to power of Adolf Hitler, the leader of the German National Socialist (Nazi) Party. In its political programme, the Nazi Party explicitly demanded an annulment of the Treaty of Versailles. Consistent in his anti-Versailles stance, Hitler prepared to strike against those central-eastern and south-eastern European states whose formation was based on decisions reached at Versailles. He also prepared for war against France and Britain, the leading powers of the Entente, since they, along with the United States, had dictated the conditions of peace and thus formed the new order in Europe. Hitler's allies in the countries of the Little Entente were primarily German national minorities and national separatist movements, each of which sought support from Hitler's Third Reich for separation from the states formed at Versailles.[9] From the viewpoint of the revisionists, the Yugoslav state was a typical example of the Versailles system, for it allowed for ethno-national inequality, violence and exploitation. Hitler's ascent to power in Germany triggered a vehement campaign against the Versailles order in Europe. Powerful impetus was given to the demand that all Germans be united in the Third Reich, paving the way for German hegemony in Europe. With the annexation of Austria in 1938, Hitler's Germany arrived at the Yugoslav border.

Events in Germany unavoidably caused changes in Yugoslavia's international position and they also influenced its internal politics. During the period of royal dictatorship in Yugoslavia (1929–39), the main opposition force was the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) led by Vlatko Maček. He formulated his views on the position of Bosnia and Herzegovina during his talks with the Royal Regent, Prince Paul, and the President of the Yugoslav government, Dragiša Cvetković, concerning the Croatian question, but he had already considered the significance of the Bosnian Muslims much earlier in his investigation of the state crisis. At that time Maček did not consider them to be a formed nation but he claimed that the Muslim intelligentsia 'admits their Croatian ethnicity', a view which later led him to the widely accepted Croatian position that the Bosnian Muslims were a part of the Croatian people.[10] He oscillated with regard to the autonomy of Bosnia and Herzegovina within Yugoslavia but he accepted the possibility of its autonomy within Croatia. By counting the Muslims as Croats, he concluded that the Croats were in the majority in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, on this basis, sought all of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Croatia.[11]

In the end, however, Maček satisfied himself with the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina between Croatia and Serbia in signing the Cvetković–Maček Agreement of 26 August 1939. Rather than resolve the internal national and state crisis of the Yugoslav Kingdom, the Cvetković–Maček Agreement 1939 instigated political movements that further aggravated the crisis.

Toward the end of his rule, even King Aleksandar aspired to establish closer economic relations with Germany. The pro-German course developed considerably during the regime of Milan Stojadinović.[12] On the eve of the Second World War, with Hitler's attack on Poland, Germany formulated an elaborate strategy of economic penetration into south-east Europe as outlined in the memorandum, 'Possibilities of Great Economic Reach under the German Leadership'. According to this programme, south-east Europe was to become a 'supplier of agrarian products and raw materials for Germany'. In addition to exporting agricultural goods, Yugoslavia was to become an important source for the German 'supplemental economy' in ores such as iron, bauxite, lead, copper, chromium and antimony. Rich in iron and bauxite, Bosnia and Herzegovina drew the attention of the leading German economic minds, and German capitalists showed an interest in investing in the Bosnian iron industry.

In the period from 1939 to 1941, Yugoslavia became increasingly subordinated to Germany, as evidenced by its excessive participation in the German supplemental economy. This economic connection with the Third Reich was accompanied by changes in Yugoslav foreign relations, in which Germany occupied an increasingly influential role. As in other countries with German minorities, in Yugoslavia the ethnic Germans [*Volksdeutsche*] and their primary cultural society, the *Kulturbund*, became intensely active. The German minority numbered only 15,000 people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their activity was most pronounced in Zenica, but there it was suppressed by measures of the regime.

Political relations in Yugoslavia in 1940 and 1941 were charged with national contention. The regime of Prince Paul, under pressure from the Third Reich, imposed discriminatory measures against the Jews, of whom there were some 14,500 in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a total of 82,000 in all of Yugoslavia. These Jews were primarily Sephardim. The Sephardim had been expelled from Spain in 1492 by order of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella and had found their way to the Balkans, arriving in Sarajevo in the mid sixteenth century. Many remained in Sarajevo, but some moved to other Bosnian towns where they built synagogues and various cultural institutions.

The fascist Axis powers and their allies, poised at Yugoslavia's borders, made no effort to hide their revisionist aspirations towards Yugoslavia. The Cvetković–Maček government attempted to steer a neutral course in hopes of keeping the country out of war. In Vienna on 25 March 1941, Yugoslav diplomats signed a protocol to adhere to the Tripartite Pact.[13] In this agreement, the Axis countries guaranteed Yugoslavia's sovereignty and integrity and promised that their troops would not traverse Yugoslav territory during the war. But the agreement was greeted by a storm of protest in Belgrade, and too little time was left, however, for Yugoslavia to remain an independent state. Two days after the protocol was signed, on 27 March 1941, a group of Yugoslav generals staged a putsch that brought down the Cvetković–Maček government. A new pro-British government was formed by General Dušan Simović.

The putsch of 27 March has been interpreted and assessed in various ways in the political and historical literature. For Prime Minister General Simović, who led the coup, March 27 represented a 'revolution' provoked by internal policies, among which Croatian separatism held first place.[14] Others perceived it as a national tragedy and catastrophe for the Yugoslav state. Believing that adherence to the Tripartite Pact might keep the country out of war, opponents viewed the putsch of 27 March as a 'national misfortune' because it

dragged the country into a war in which it incurred vast human and material losses. They further attributed the suffering and destruction of the Serbs in the NDH and the subsequent spread of the communist movement to the revolt against the Tripartite Pact treaty. Some also thought that joining the Tripartite Pact was a complex diplomatic manoeuvre by Prince Paul aimed at saving Yugoslavia from the Nazis until Germany was fully engaged in Russia. Certain critics thought that the coup of 27 March helped delay the German attack on Russia, providing time for the 'great winter' to save the Soviet Union. According to this view, the putsch was not merely a thoughtless act, but a 'crime against the state'.[15]

This military putsch effectively nullified Yugoslavia's adherence to the Tripartite Pact.[16] Hitler responded to the generals' putsch with an order to destroy Yugoslavia 'at both the military and state levels'. On 6 April German and Italian military forces, aided by Axis allies, attacked Yugoslavia.[17] In ten days, Yugoslavia was conquered by Axis forces. It surrendered on 17 April 1941.

On 10 April 1941, as German troops were moving towards Zagreb and the Yugoslav Army was disintegrating, retired Colonel Slavko Kvaternik proclaimed the Independent State of Croatia [Nezavisna Država Hrvatska] (NDH) in Zagreb. Although it became increasingly dependent upon German support over time, the NDH ruled Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Croatia for the duration of the Second World War.

German and Italian interests in the NDH

Although each came from distinct historical circumstances, Germany and Italy both entered Yugoslavia in April 1941 through the doors of Croatia and of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For most of the First World War the Germans and the Italians had belonged to opposing blocs (the Central Forces and the Entente), but they entered the Second World War as allies. The aggression on Yugoslavia and the disbanding of the Yugoslav state showed that they had both shared, and opposing, interests in this region. They shared a sense of victory, for their occupation of Yugoslavia allowed each of them to realize long-standing aspirations that had been frustrated by the Versailles treaty: the German 'Drang nach Südosten' and the Italian aspirations to include the Adriatic east coast within the Italian state [mare nostro].

The creation of the NDH was motivated by German and Italian historical expansionist programmes and the war goals of the Berlin–Rome Axis. But it remained for the two Axis powers to define precisely their spheres of interest on Yugoslav territory by means of agreements between their respective military–political authorities. In the NDH as a whole, and particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Germans and Italians espoused their separate military, political and economic interests from the beginning.

Following tradition, the Germans built their position in Bosnia and Herzegovina on collaboration with the Croats and the Muslims. Confessional differences represented no obstacle to Germany's military and political interests or wartime goals. The internal religious–ethnic fronts within Bosnia and Herzegovina constituted an important element of the German war strategy, motivated by the Reich's aspirations for domination in the south-east, a region in which Bosnia and Herzegovina was by no means a marginal territory.

Although the Italians entered Bosnia and Herzegovina with a large military force for the first time in the Second World War, the Germans arrived as experienced and knowledgeable occupiers. It was no coincidence that the German occupied zone

encompassed the more developed part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Germans attempted to establish the Ustasha regime of the NDH in order to free their forces for needs elsewhere and to obtain units made up of local recruits from Croatia and from Bosnia and Herzegovina for the war on the eastern front. Hitler particularly expressed appreciation for the Bosnian-Herzegovinian regiments that fought for the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in the First World War. However, the emergence of the insurgent movement made things much more complex, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where already in the summer of 1941 Ustasha rule was seriously shaken and vulnerable to being overturned.

The objects of Italian expansionist polities were the eastern Adriatic territories. With the outbreak of war, Italy was in the position to annex more territory than it had been awarded in the London Pact of 1915, which had been its price for joining the Entente bloc during the First World War. In contrast to the Germans, who relied on NDH military troops and political organs, the Italians were inclined toward the enemies of the NDH, the Serbian nationalist insurrectionaries who made up the Chetnik uprising. The Italians and Chetniks shared a common antipathy to the NDH.

Italy, although a predominantly Catholic country, established military and political connections with the Orthodox Serbian element, which had been placed outside the law by the Ustasha regime and subjected to genocide. If the NDH had been engaged in a religious war, one would have predicted that Catholic Italy would have sought support in the Catholic base of the NDH. But confessional differences between fascist Italy and the Chetnik movement in the NDH did not prevent them from becoming allies. Italy followed its state expansionist interests rather than its Catholic religious base, even to the point of endangering the survival of the NDH. Oriented toward destroying the NDH, the Chetnik movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina supported establishing an Italian protectorate. Italy also made every effort to take Bosnia and Herzegovina out of the framework of the NDH, and in this it received strong support from the Chetniks. The Italian collaboration with the Chetniks was, in fact, in the interest of strengthening and expanding Italian domination in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where from the very beginning the insurgent movement endangered the NDH position. Italian–Chetnik collaboration was also grounded in their uncompromising hostility to the communist Partisan movement, which in Bosnia and Herzegovina proved to be durable and resilient. While fascist Italy was a firm opponent of Yugoslavia, the Chetniks supported a Serbian expansionist Yugoslavia. But neither the Chetniks nor the Italians allowed these differences on the Yugoslav question to reach the point of outright confrontation. The Italians were relying on the Chetniks with the goal of expanding their domination in the NDH; the Chetniks received Italian military and material aid with the goal of reviving an expansionist Serbian Yugoslavia.

Occupation

The proclamation of the NDH did not definitively resolve the future political status of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Specifically, in the 'Temporary Guidelines' issued on 3 April (before the attack on Yugoslavia), Hitler declared that the 'political resolution of the

Bosnian question will be left to Italy'.[18] This view of Hitler, as stated in 'The Secret Archives of Count Ciano', was in accord with the agreement between Berlin and Rome to cede to Italy the authority to handle all aspects of Axis policy pertaining to the Mediterranean. This agreement placed Yugoslavia in the Italian sphere of interest, while Germany was to have only economic interests in the area.[19]

But as the country most responsible for the rapid military conquest of Yugoslavia, Germany had first say in the military–political organization of the occupied lands. On 12 April, even before the end of the April war, Hitler issued a decision that divided the occupied territory into German and Italian zones. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the line of demarcation went through Bosanski Novi, Prijedor, Banja Luka, Jajce, Travnik and south of Sarajevo to Rudo. The German occupation zone comprised the territory north of this line, while the Italian zone was on its southern side. The Germans and Italians were each to maintain military garrisons in larger towns within their occupation areas. The demarcation line underlined Germany's unwillingness to relinquish entirely its presence in the Mediterranean zone.

Hitler's demarcation line resulted from his previous study and analysis of the economic power of the occupied territory. It is therefore no coincidence that the Bosnia's primary resources in agriculture, mining and industry were located in the German zone.[20] German logistical forces controlled the most important Bosnian industrial plants such as the Military Technical Works [*Vojno-tehnički zavod*] in Vogošča near Sarajevo, industrial plants in Ilijaš and Zenica, the Ljubija iron mines and bauxite deposits near Mostar. The entire production of these plants was exported from Bosnia to meet the needs of the German army.[21]

Exploitation of Bosnia's natural resources required an armed force, especially until the NDH was able to establish its own police and military units. In those 31 pre-war districts of Bosnia and Herzegovina occupied by the Germans, the civilian government of the NDH had to rely on the authority of the occupier's troops. In the early months of occupation there were three occupying soldiers per square kilometre, or approximately 5 enemy soldiers per 100 citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was five times the European average during the Second World War. With the withdrawal of some German divisions to the eastern front, 1 enemy soldier was left per 100 citizens, 1 soldier per square kilometre.[22]

While the Germans collaborated with the Ustasha movement in preparing the proclamation of the NDH, through the agency of Standantenführer Edmund Wesenmeier, special representative of the SS (Nazi Special Police Force),[23] the proclamation of the NDH proceeded with no Italian participation. The Germans took the initiative in all phases of establishing the NDH as well as in defining its territorial–political scope. German General Edmund Glaise von Horstenau had arrived in Zagreb by 15 April, even before the Usasha leader Ante Pavelić, to establish ties between the German Supreme Command and the NDH and to help the new state organize its army. Immediately after General Horstenau, SS General Siegfried Kasche arrived in Zagreb as the envoy of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs to establish the Reich's second deputation to the NDH. Their common task was to direct affairs in the NDH to meet the military–economic needs of the Reich. In the NDH no important decisions could be reached without these two German representatives. Despite Germany's highly

influential role in Zagreb, its military and political leaders still insisted that Bosnia and Herzegovina belonged to the Italian sphere of influence.[24]

The German military presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina served to maintain among the Muslims an illusion of autonomy. The Germans were not concerned with this as along as the political plans of those who wanted autonomy did not endanger their wartime creation, the NDH. Hitler's Supreme Headquarters was never ready to abandon the sovereignty of the NDH, even though demands to that effect were emanating from some very influential generals. In Hitler's interpretation, political ties with the Croats acquired the significance of destiny. Hitler's compliments regarding the military qualities of the Bosnian Muslims were unconvincing to many around him.

The German war game with the Chetniks was of a different nature. The Germans considered the Chetniks an enemy against whom only one solution was valid – eradication. At the same time, the Chetniks' own anti-Communist orientation led them to avoid battles with the Germans or to seek an alliance with them against the Partisans. The stronger the Partisan movement became, the more ready the Germans were to accept and approve operational collaboration with Chetnik units in joint actions against the Communists. The war ruthlessly bent the firmest of stances: the German intention to oppose expansionist Serbian Chetniks and the Chetnik intention to maintain the Serbian national tradition in defiance of the Germans.

The Vienna conference and Rome agreements

German government views on the status of Bosnia and Herzegovina changed gradually. At a conference held in Vienna on 21 and 22 April 1941, the ministers of foreign affairs of the Reich (Joachim von Ribbentropp) and Italy (Count Galeazzo Ciano) sought a solution for Bosnia and Herzegovina in the broader context of how to divide Yugoslav territory. On behalf of the Reich, Ribbentropp took the stance that the eastern border of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be the eastern border of the NDH.[25] His view prevailed, so the inclusion of Bosnia and Herzegovina within the NDH was accomplished thanks to German involvement.

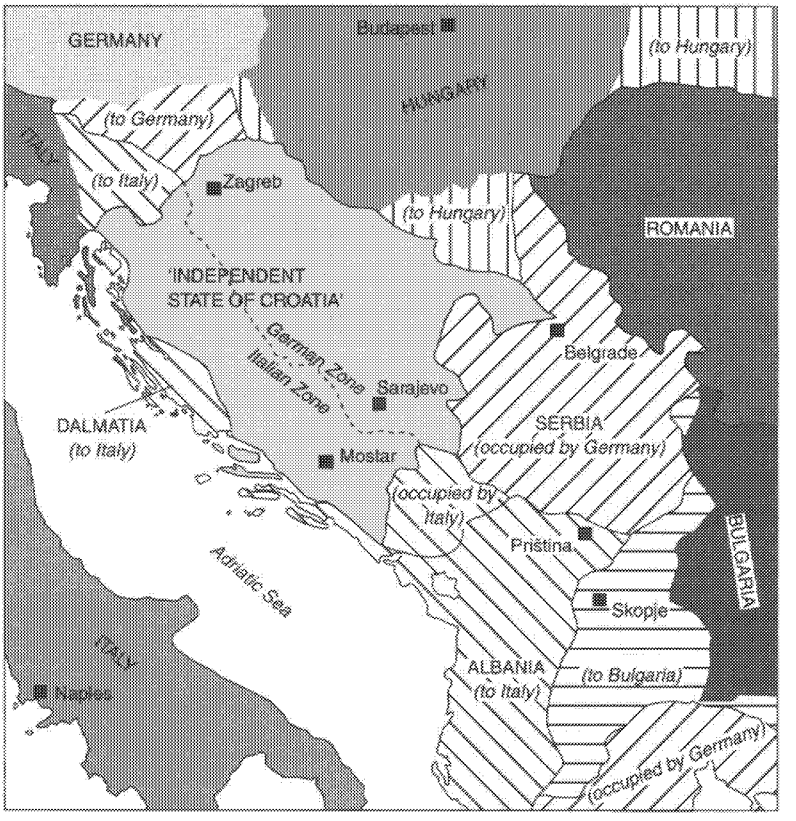
Italy was given control over that part of Bosnia and Herzegovina within its zone of occupation.[26] Responsibilities were divided between the occupying troops, who were stationed in garrisons, and the diplomatic corps, which operated out of consulates. Italy opened consulates in Sarajevo and Mostar and a vice-consulate in Banja Luka. Consuls kept the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome informed of events in Bosnia and Herzegovina that concerned the Italian occupation policies in all of the NDH. Italy made no effort to conceal its desire to wrest the region from the NDH and to exercise there absolute military–political control.[27]

Without neglecting the importance of providing consulates in Bosnia and Herzegovina, located in Sarajevo, Dubrovnik and Vinkovci, the Germans focused primarily on the task of forming the NDH armed forces. With this goal in mind General von Horstenau and the minister of the Croatian Home Guard, Commander-in-Chief Slavko Kvaternik, met in Sarajevo on 24 April 1941. The German general used his stay in Sarajevo to organize the Home Guard and gendarme units, which were under his command in all the NDH. At the same time, Kvaternik tried to convince the citizens of Sarajevo that the Ustasha had come to Bosnia and Herzegovina as liberators.

He emphasized that there was no Croatian state without Bosnia and Herzegovina, which he called the 'most precious gem' in the NDH, and that the Muslims were the 'most radical part of the Croatian nation'.[28]

To the dissatisfaction of the NDH government, the Italians kept looking for ways to strengthen their influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to make the region as dependent as possible. Italy recognized that the NDH territory extended to Montenegro and that all of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be included in the NDH. In addition, the Rome agreements established a demilitarized zone that stretched north over the mountain range of Šator, Cincar, Prenj and Bjelašnica and in the south reached the Italian border on the Dalmatian Coast (see Map 1). Within this territory the NDH was forbidden from stationing army and navy troops and building any military facilities. In this way the Rome agreements ended the sovereignty of the NDH in formal terms, reducing it to a fiction while the Italian occupying authorities received expanded legal powers. The Italians sent experts to their occupied zone to begin the exploitation of ores and other natural resources.[29]

However, the Rome agreements failed to stabilize the borders of the NDH. While submitting credentials to the government in Zagreb, the deputy Antonio Kasertano



Map 1 Division of Yugoslavia by the Occupying Powers, 1941. Map by John Hamer. (Courtesy of C. Hurst & Co.)

informed Pavelić that Italy intended to keep control of parts of south-eastern Bosnia (the area of the upper Drina to the Višegrad-Foča railroad) and eastern Herzegovina (Gacko, Avtovac, Bileća). In the resulting dispute between the governments of Italy and the NDH, Germany supported the Italian position, and Pavelić was forced to back down. With the uprising in Herzegovina and Montenegro, the significance of this border dispute receded for all the participants. Both sides found themselves faced with an unexpected common adversary who respected neither borders nor zones of occupation.

Surprised by the uprising

In its first two months in existence, the NDH turned its territory into a site for the eradication of Serbs, Jews, Roma and their political opponents among the Croats and Muslims. In the course of April and May 1941, Ante Pavelić, Croatian *Poglavnik*, announced several fascist legal regulations placing Serbs, Jews and Roma in the NDH outside the law. These regulations were a precursor of the Ustasha practices of ethnic homogenization in the NDH through relocation, conversion to Catholicism and biological eradication of the Serbs. The goal of these measures was extermination of the non-Croatian population and creation of an ethnically, racially pure NDH, a homogenous state of Aryan Croats.

The NDH repressive measures began under the guise of taking hostages to prevent a supposed 'great Serb rebellion' on Vidovdan.[30] Dozens of distinguished Serbs were arrested in Sarajevo, Kalinovik, Srebrenica, Zvornik, Tuzla, Bijeljina, Olovo, Vlasenica, Bosanski Šamac, Lopare and many other places in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[31] These actions triggered a Serbian uprising. Serbs rose in opposition to Ustasha terror, first in June in eastern Herzegovina, and then in western and eastern Bosnia in late July and early August. Surprised by the uprising, the Germans and the Italians responded differently, conditioned by their different positions regarding the NDH. While the Germans showed an understanding for the NDH and its 'sovereignty', the Italians took the role of 'protectors' of the endangered Serbian population.

The Germans followed the situation in Herzegovina very closely. They noted that the population of this area was not responding to the appeal of the NDH authorities to surrender their arms and that the authorities were failing to recruit soldiers. On 12 July 1941, Field Marshal Maximilian von Weichs, commander of German forces in south-east Europe, informed subordinates that an insurgent group of 3,000 people had been formed in the Nevesinje area consisting of 'Chetniks, Serbs, and Communists' and that it had been fighting primarily 'against the Croats and the Muslims, but also against the Italians'. In the judgment of the commander of the south-east, these insurgents included a substantial number of Communists.[32] The German and Italian generals agreed in their assessment that the uprisings in their respective zones were the result of the Ustasha terrorizing the Serbian population, and that the insurgents' goal was to overthrow Ustasha rule. At the same time, the generals were trying to determine whether national elements or Communist influences prevailed among the leaders of the uprising.

The suppression of the June uprising in eastern Herzegovina did not bring peace to the occupied territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the contrary, the establishment of the NDH under the protection of the German and Italian occupying forces was

accompanied by systematic pogroms of the Serbian and Jewish populations throughout the NDH. Bosnia and Herzegovina became a killing field where unchecked hatred raged against Serbs and Jews. Reports reaching Berlin and Rome left no doubt that the uprising had spread in the occupied territories.

The uprising spread to western Bosnia in late July 1941. Only one day apart, reports of an uprising in western Bosnia were sent to their governments by Italian and German observers. In the report by the Italian legion of *carabinieri* dated 30 July there is mention, with no precise corroboration, that all the towns north of Knin to Bosanski Petrovac were in the hands of insurgents, some of whom were marching from Bosansko Grahovo to Bihać, Livno and Banja Luka. The report accurately determined the area of the uprising, but it also shows that the Italians had not predicted this course of events and that they were taken by surprise. From the data contained in this report it is possible to conclude that its source was not entirely reliable, since there is no mention that the uprising began in Drvar on 27 July. The report writer's assumption, that the insurgents plan was to take control of Bosnia and Herzegovina, also suggests that it was not fully reliable.[33]

On 31 July 1941 the General von Horstenau sent a comparable report to his superiors in the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht on the situation in western Bosnia after the uprising in Drvar. He stated that NDH armed forces had encircled Drvar but lacked the artillery to push into town. He further reported that the Banja Luka–Prijedor railroad had been sabotaged. In his assessment, the Croatian General Staff feared the uprising might spread to new areas but had also admitted that they were unable to suppress it using only their own troops. The General agreed with the Croatian General Staff's view that a 'spread of the Serbian-Communist upheavals' was to be expected. The Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht reported, without citing a source, that the '21 August was to be the signal for a Balkan-wide uprising'.[34]

Neither report discussed the causes of the uprising. It may have been too early to determine these causes. On the other hand, the Italian and German authors of the two reports were aware that the uprising could spread and that the NDH armed forces alone would be unable to suppress it. Both reports contained the hypothesis of a possible Communist infiltration of the uprising, and each author noted that such infiltration could change its character and make fighting it more complex. Whereas the German report does not venture into such speculations, the Italian writer mentions the ethno-national character of the uprising.[35]

The daily report for 5 August 1941 of the Italian Military Intelligence Service noted that the uprising began 'on 26 July in the village of Drvar on account of dismissal of Serbian workers from the local cellulose factory'. This information is only partly correct. The dismissal of the workers constituted only one element in the uprising, and hardly the decisive one. Serbian workers from the cellulose factory were the main force behind the uprising because the area was populated almost exclusively by Serbs. Organized preparations for the uprising were an important factor and these were mostly completed in the month of July. The headquarters of the guerilla units were already functioning and had at their disposal combat units which attacked and destroyed the Ustasha Home Guard garrison in Drvar on 27 July 1941.[36]

The Italian report further stated that the uprising began with isolated attacks on gendarmerie stations, railroads and telegraph/telephone lines, and soon thereafter acquired the character of a coordinated movement. From 27 July until 5 August, the

uprising's organization improved. With the goal of putting down the uprising, NDH authorities sent out eight battalions and several batteries from Zagreb to the Drvar area, where the Italian command estimated there were 4,000 armed insurgents.[37]

On 5 August 1941, the same day as the Italian Military Intelligence daily report, the SS Reichsführer received a German report on the military–political situation in Lower Styria and the NDH. In the segment pertaining to the Drvar uprising it stated that the 'Communist Serbian uprising movement is still in progress' and that NDH Ustasha units were fighting against the insurgents in Bosnia and eastern Herzegovina. Local uprisings, according to this report, were invariably preceded by intense Communist propaganda. The gravity of the situation was indicated by the dispatch, mostly to eastern Herzegovina, of NDH army units normally reserved for the Croatian legion. Special Ustasha troops under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Jure Francetić were among those dispatched.[38]

These documents show that the Italian and German intelligence services agreed that the Drvar uprising was 'Communist and Serbian' in character and that it was gaining ground. Their views were confirmed by the size and number of NDH armed units, both Ustasha and Home Guard, that were sent to quell the uprising and that those units were unsuccessful.

As the uprising spread, the German analysis of its characteristics and development became more thorough. The report by the command of the Abwehr in Belgrade, of 8 August 1941, tied the phenomenon of the uprising to the German–Russian war, but in terms of its organization it distinguished among three directions within it: (a) Chetnik (rebel); (b) Communist (politically motivated); and (c) pillaging (non-politically motivated). This report emphasized that the uprising represented a 'reaction of the Serbian population to the bloody and inhumane measures of extermination employed by Croatian Ustasha'; this was an uprising 'against the Croatian Ustasha government'. According to this report, the uprising in the region of Sisak, Dubica, Prijedor, Banja Luka, Jajce, Livno and Vrlika enjoyed the support of the Italians both politically and in arms.[39]

While explaining that the uprising was the result of Ustasha terror against the Serbian population, German reports failed to mention that the NDH and Ustasha rule had been established on the initiative of the German and Italian occupiers. In the German interpretation, the uprising was not linked to the occupation but rather to the traditional animosity and clashes between Croats and Serbs, the roots of which were in those peoples' distant history and national character. Obviously, it was difficult for the Germans to admit their responsibility for the consequences of occupation, so they attributed the uprising exclusively to Ustasha pogroms of Serbs. They claimed that they, with the Italians, were the liberators of the Croatian people from expansionist Serbian oppression in Yugoslavia, only to accuse in turn the NDH regime, which they themselves had created, of measures to exterminate the Serbs.

Efforts to suppress the uprising

The Italians considered the German–Italian demarcation line to be an obstacle to pacifying the country. Only a few months after determining the occupation-zone boundaries, the Italians proposed revising them. Their suggestion was to expand Montenegro with the 'Herzegovina belt' (Bileća, Gacko, Foča, Čajniče, a part of Sandžak, with Novi