

= Ismet Popovac =

Dr. Ismet Popovac (died 21 August 1943) was a Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak) military commander who led a Muslim Chetnik militia known as the Muslim People 's Military Organization (Serbo @-@ Croatian : Muslimanska nacionalna vojna organizacija , MNVO) in Bosnia and Herzegovina during World War II . A physician and lawyer by profession , he was a member of a cultural society known as Gajret prior to the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941 . He was also the mayor of the town of Konjic prior to the invasion and was allegedly a candidate for Vladko Ma?ek 's electoral list , but was left without a job in the Yugoslav state government after the creation of the Banovina of Croatia in 1939 .

In 1941 , Popovac joined the Chetnik movement of Dra?a Mihailovi? . As a proponent of Bosnian Muslim collaboration with the Chetniks , he suggested that the Chetniks recruit Muslims into their ranks . In October 1942 , he enlisted Italian aid in fighting the Yugoslav Partisans , and later visited Prozor to discourage further bloodshed after a Chetnik massacre took the lives of 543 ? 2 @ , @ 500 Muslim and Croat civilians . In early 1943 he led an attack against a Muslim village , before being killed by either the Partisans , Chetniks , or an assassin in the vicinity of the town of Trebinje later that year .

= = Early life = =

From the Herzegovinian town of Nevesinje , Ismet Popovac was a physician and lawyer by profession . He finished medical school in Belgrade and was a vocal supporter of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during this time . Prior to the outbreak of World War II he was a member of the pro @-@ Serb and pro @-@ monarchy cultural society known as Gajret , whose members were often persecuted by non @-@ Serbs because of their political inclinations . Popovac was also the mayor of the Bosnian town of Konjic , and allegedly a candidate for Vladko Ma?ek 's electoral list , but was left without a job in the state government after the creation of the Banovina of Croatia in 1939 .

= = Joining the Chetniks = =

On 6 April 1941 , Axis forces invaded Yugoslavia . Poorly equipped and poorly trained , the Royal Yugoslav Army was quickly defeated . Afterwards , Yugoslavia was dismembered , with Serbia being reduced to its pre @-@ 1912 borders and placed under a government of German military occupation . Milan Nedi? , a pre @-@ war politician who was known to have pro @-@ Axis leanings , was then selected by the Germans to lead the collaborationist Government of National Salvation in the Territory of the Military Commander in Serbia . Meanwhile , the extreme Croat nationalist and fascist Ante Paveli? , who had been in exile in Benito Mussolini 's Italy , was appointed Poglavnik (leader) of an Usta?e @-@ led Croatian state ? the Independent State of Croatia (often called the NDH , from the Croatian : Nezavisna Dr?ava Hrvatska) . The NDH combined almost all of modern @-@ day Croatia , all of modern @-@ day Bosnia and Herzegovina and parts of modern @-@ day Serbia into an " Italian @-@ German quasi @-@ protectorate . " NDH authorities , led by the Usta?e militia , subsequently implemented genocidal policies against the Serb , Jewish and Romani population living within the borders of the new state . As a result , two resistance movements emerged ? the royalist and Serb Chetniks , led by Colonel Dra?a Mihailovi? , and the multi @-@ ethnic , Communist Yugoslav Partisans , led by Josip Broz Tito .

That year , Popovac and fellow Muslim leader Mustafa Pa?i? joined the Chetniks . Popovac hoped to achieve independence for Bosnia and Herzegovina through his cooperation and , according to one Serb Chetnik , his " main goal was to protect the Muslims , rather than to struggle for the Serb nation and Serb affairs . " He later wrote to Mihailovi? , suggesting that Bosnian Muslims be recruited into the Chetnik ranks . This proposal was met with support from pro @-@ Serb , anti @-@ Communist Muslim leaders in several Bosnian towns . However , as more Muslims began joining the Partisans , the Chetniks increasingly began considering Muslims to be their enemies . Chetnik atrocities against Muslim civilians subsequently increased in the late spring of 1941 . Due to

these actions , and due to Muslims , especially those in eastern Bosnia , being branded by the Chetniks as " Turks " and " Usta?e cronies , " the Chetniks found few Muslim recruits .

= = Muslim People 's Military Organization = =

In late 1942 , a Muslim Chetnik militia known as the Muslim People 's Military Organization (Serbo @-@ Croatian : Muslimanska nacionalna vojna organizacija , MNVO) was formed in Herzegovina following a meeting between Popovac and Bosnian Serb Chetnik leaders Dobroslav Jev?evi? and Petar Ba?ovi? . The militia was placed under the control of Popovac , Fehim Musakadi? and Mustafa Pa?i? . It was part of a greater Muslim autonomist circle and in September 1942 an assembly of Herzegovinian Muslim notables in Mostar declared : " We Herzegovinians and Bosnians are nobody 's property and we recognize the right of nobody to persecute us ; so , insofar as our brothers in Zagreb do not wish to accede to our demands , we shall seek protection of our interests from other big powers from the ranks of our allies . " In October of that year , Popovac enlisted Italian aid in fighting the Yugoslav Partisans . This resulted in the establishment of a Bosnian Muslim quisling force that operated as part of the Anti @-@ Communist Volunteer Militia . It was reported that Popovac had " won the majority of the Muslims to his purpose " in the Mostar , Konjic , Nevesinje and Gacko districts . Eventually , he came to be seen as one of " the principal representatives of the pro @-@ Chetnik Muslim current " in Bosnia .

That October , during Operation Alfa , a joint Chetnik ? Italian attack against the Partisans , the Chetniks massacred 543 ? 2 @,@ 500 Muslim and Croat civilians in Prozor . Several days later , Popovac arrived in the town to console the Bosnian Muslim population and to advise the Chetniks there against committing further atrocities . While there , he also attempted to convince local Muslims to join the Chetnik ranks , but was unsuccessful due to the extent of Chetnik atrocities against the Muslim population . On 31 December , in face of widespread Muslim opposition to the Chetniks ' genocidal nature , Popovac and his MNVO declared a resolution in Kalinovik , vowing allegiance to King Petar II and Mihailovi? , and claiming Bosnian Muslims as " an integral part of Serbdom " and the MNVO as " part of the Chetnik movement led by Dra?a Mihailovi? , Minister of the Army , Navy and Air Forces . "

In January 1943 , Popovac led an attack which resulted in the capture of a Muslim village that was guarded by a large force of Muslim volunteers . That same month more Chetnik massacres against Bosnian Muslims were carried out , especially in east Bosnia in the areas of Koraj , Bijeljina , Srebrenica , Vi?egrad , Fo?a , Gora?de , Vlasenica , and around the Drina river . His militia cooperated with Chetnik units in fighting the Partisans during the Axis @-@ led Case White operation in January to March 1943 , but did not distinguish itself . During the operation itself Chetniks continued their efforts to exterminate the Muslims . Nonetheless , Popovac and Pa?i? continued seeking Muslim recruits . They declared in their " Address to the Brethren Muslims of ?ajni?e and Other Nearby Districts " that the main goal of the Chetniks was " the intelligent and honest protection of Muslim interests " and " securing a safe future for our people with the highest principles of Islam : freedom of religion , holiness of the family , respect for private property , social justice , and democratic political freedom . " Furthermore , they dismissed the claim that Muslims were collectively responsible for Usta?e crimes and said " Muslims are bound to the brethren of the Orthodox religion by blood and land . "

= = Death and legacy = =

Popovac was killed on 21 August 1943 . Sources vary on the circumstances of his death . Historian Marko Attila Hoare states that he was killed by members of the Partisan 10th Herzegovinian Brigade , Professor Jozo Tomasevich writes that he was killed by an assassin and Zdravko Dizdar and Mihael Sobolevski claim that he was killed by the Chetniks in the vicinity of Trebinje after objecting to the killing of Muslims .

By December 1943 , it is estimated that 4 @,@ 000 of Mihailovi? 's Chetniks were Bosnian Muslims . This number accounted for eight percent of all of Mihailovi? 's soldiers . In 1944 , Mihailovi?

appealed to the Muslims to fight against the Communists , citing the example of Popovac and other Muslim Chetniks .