

= Petar Ba?ovi? =

Petar Ba?ovi? (Serbian Cyrillic : ????? ??????? ; 1898 ? April 1945) was a Bosnian Serb reserve army officer , lawyer , and then a Chetnik commander (vojvoda , ?o?????) within occupied Yugoslavia during World War II . From the summer of 1941 until April 1942 , he headed the cabinet of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for Milan Nedi? 's puppet Government of National Salvation in Belgrade . In July 1942 , Ba?ovi? was appointed by the Chetnik leader Dra?a Mihailovi? and his Supreme Command as the commander of the " Chetnik Operational Units in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina " during which he collaborated with the Italians and Germans in actions against the Yugoslav Partisans .

Along with other Chetnik commanders , Ba?ovi? carried out numerous massacres of Bosnian Muslim and Catholic civilians and those sympathetic to the Partisan movement . In April 1945 , he was captured near Banja Luka by elements of the Armed Forces of the Independent State of Croatia (HOS) along with Chetnik leaders Pavle ?uri?i? and Zaharije Ostoji? , and Chetnik ideologue Dragi?a Vasi? in what was apparently a trap . According to some sources , Ba?ovi? and the others were taken to the area of the Jasenovac concentration camp , where they were killed .

= = Early life = =

Petar Ba?ovi? was born in 1898 in Kalinovik , a village within the Bosnia Vilayet , a province of the Ottoman Empire that was occupied by Austria @-@ Hungary in 1878 . His father Maksim was a Chetnik commander (Serbo @-@ Croatian : vojvoda , ?o?????) . Prior to World War II , Ba?ovi? was a major in the Royal Yugoslav Army reserve . He also studied law , did with legal work , and was a governor 's notary immediately prior to the outbreak of war .

= = World War II = =

= = = Ministry of Internal Affairs under Nedi? = = =

From the summer of 1941 , Ba?ovi? headed the cabinet of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for Milan Nedi? 's German @-@ installed puppet Government of National Salvation in the German @-@ occupied Territory of the Military Commander in Serbia . Chetnik leader Dra?a Mihailovi? , with no direct control over the many independent Chetnik bands throughout partitioned and occupied Yugoslavia , had been corresponding with some of their leaders via letter and courier . Following an agreement between Nedi? and Mihailovi? , in April 1942 Ba?ovi? left Belgrade and went to join the Chetniks operating in eastern Bosnia , then part of the Axis puppet state , the Independent State of Croatia (Croatian : Nezavisna Dr?ava Hrvatska , NDH) . He was sent as Mihailovi? 's permanent representative to Dobroslav Jev?evi? and Ilija Trifunovi? @-@ Bir?anin , the main spokesmen for the Chetnik bands in Herzegovina .

= = = 1942 Montenegro offensive = = =

From mid @-@ May to early June 1942 , Ba?ovi? took part in the joint Italian @-@ Chetnik 1942 Montenegro offensive against the Partisans , which also included operations in eastern Herzegovina . Ba?ovi? led Chetnik forces fighting against the Partisans in the Sand?ak region that straddled the border between Italian @-@ occupied Montenegro and German @-@ occupied Serbia . His troops fought alongside Sand?ak Chetniks led by Zdravko Kasalovi? and Vojislav Luka?evi? , and the Po?ega Chetnik detachment led by Vu?ko Ignjatovi? and Milo? Gli?i? . The Po?ega Chetniks had been " legalised " as auxiliaries by the Nedi? puppet government with the approval of the Germans . These forces also fought alongside the Italian 19th Infantry Division Venezia and 5th Alpine Division Pusteria , and were one of three main Chetnik formations involved in the joint offensive , the others being led by the Montenegrin Serbs Pavle ?uri?i? and Bajo Stani?i? . In the face of the three @-@

pronged assault , the outnumbered Partisan forces withdrew from Montenegro and eastern Herzegovina into southeastern Bosnia , and then undertook the Partisan Long March to western Bosnia . At the end of May , Ba?ovi? submitted a report to Mihailovi? on ?uri?i? 's troops and the significant amounts of weapons and equipment he had received from the Italians .

= = = Legalization by the Italians = = =

In the summer of 1942 , after order had been established in significant parts of the Italian occupation zone of the NDH , Chetnik detachment leaders including Petar Samard?i? , Mom?ilo ?uji? , Uro? Drenovi? , Jev?evi? , Trifunovi? @-@ Bir?anin , and their principal political spokesmen with Italian Second Army headquarters were recognized as auxiliaries by the Italians . Early in that summer , the commander of the Italian Second Army , Generale Mario Roatta agreed to the delivery of arms , munitions , and supplies to the Chetniks . On 16 July 1942 , Ba?ovi? , acting as one of Jev?evi? 's military organizers , informed Mihailovi? that the vast majority of the 7 @, @ 000 Chetniks in Herzegovina were well equipped with small arms and had been " legalized " by the Italians . Combined with ?uji? 's group , the number of " legalized " Chetniks in the Italian zone of the NDH stood at 10 @, @ 000 or more .

From March 1942 on , Mihailovi? had been looking for opportunities to create a " national corridor " connecting all the Chetnik groups operating in the Italian @-@ occupied areas of the NDH , from Montenegro , Herzegovina , Dalmatia , to Lika and western Bosnia . In June , to advance Mihailovi? 's aim of creating a " national corridor " , Jev?evi? offered to send 2 @, @ 000 Herzegovinian Chetniks to Dalmatia , where they would be placed under the control of Trifunovi? @-@ Bir?anin . Transfer of Chetnik forces to Dalmatia also created an opportunity to strike at the major concentration of Partisan strength at that time , in western Bosnia .

= = = Zimonji? Kula conference = = =

On 22 and 23 July 1942 , Mihailovi? held a conference at Zimonji? Kula , near Avtovac in eastern Herzegovina , which was attended by Trifunovi? @-@ Bir?anin , ?uri?i? , Jev?evi? , Zaharije Ostoji? , Radovan Ivani?evi? , Milan Santi? and a group of Chetnik commanders from Herzegovina . The purpose of the meeting was to establish co @-@ operation between the Herzegovinian and Montenegrin Chetnik leaders . Ba?ovi? was appointed as the Chetnik commander for eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina , replacing Bo?ko Todorovi? , who had been captured and executed by the Partisans in late February 1942 . Trifunovi? @-@ Bir?anin was appointed the Chetnik commander for Dalmatia , Lika and western Bosnia .

The historian Fikreta Jeli? @-@ Buti? believes that the idea of an anti @-@ Partisan offensive was also discussed at the conference as a potential response to the Zagreb agreement concluded between Italy and the NDH in June . The Zagreb agreement heralded a major drawdown of Italian occupation forces from large areas of the NDH , including areas of Bosnia south of the Italian @-@ German demarcation line , as well as Kordun , Lika and Dalmatia , and the Chetnik leaders believed that this would reduce the area in which they could operate with Italian consent . On the second day of the conference , Jev?evi? and Trifunovi? @-@ Bir?anin travelled to nearby Trebinje and conferred with two other Chetnik commanders , Radmilo Gr?i? and Milan ?anti? , who agreed on a set of goals and a strategy to achieve them :

- the creation of Greater Serbia ;
- the destruction of the Partisans ;
- the removal of the Catholics and Muslims ;
- non @-@ recognition of the NDH ;
- no collaboration with the Germans ; and
- temporary collaboration with the Italians for weapons , munitions and food .

The Chetniks addressed a crowd in Trebinje , announcing that they had cells in every village in eastern Herzegovina , and were establishing a Greater Serbia . Only five days after Ba?ovi? 's appointment , the commander of the Mountain Staff of the Bosnian Chetnik Detachments , Stevan

Botić , demanded Bačić be replaced . Botić had appointed himself as commander of the Mountain Staff after the previous commander , Jezdimir Dangić had been arrested in Belgrade in April 1942 . Botić and his allies opposed Mihailović 's control because they favoured a political rather than strictly military organisation , wanted to continue the alliance with the Nedić regime that Dangić had forged , and opposed the control of Bosnian Chetniks by non @-@ Bosnians . Botić also wanted to remain independent of Mihailović so that he could freely kill Muslims and Bosnian Croats without damaging Mihailović 's standing with the Serb people through close association with Botić 's activities . Soon after the conference , both Bačić and Trifunović @-@ Birćanin were negotiating with Italian VI Corps and XVIII Corps headquarters staff regarding the proposed offensive against the Partisans in western Bosnia .

By August , Bačić was advocating the " liquidation " of Botić 's Mountain Staff because they were creating disunity , and trying to politicise the Chetnik movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the model of the League of Farmers , which had defended the interests of Bosnian Serb peasants against Muslim landowners during the interwar period . On 6 August 1942 , in a continued Chetnik effort to eliminate external enemies and purge their own ranks , Bačić ordered the subordinate commanders of all corps and brigades to submit lists of such individuals with suggestions on how to deal with them . Brigade commanders were required to send three assassins to kill any person whom they labelled with the letter " Z " (from the Serbo @-@ Croatian : zakolji , meaning " murder ") within 24 hours of receiving the name . Bačić demanded that " the killing has to be done exclusively through the use of slaughtering knife " .

= = = Capture of Foča and massacres of Muslims and Croats = = =

On 19 August , Chetniks commanded by Ostojić , but drawn mainly from Đurić 's Lim @-@ Sandžak Chetnik Detachment and acting on the orders of Mihailović , attacked and captured the eastern Bosnian town of Foča , which had been abandoned by the Partisans in June and had then been occupied by NDH forces . After a two @-@ hour battle , Chetnik units entered Foča and began massacring the Muslim population of the town , regardless of gender and age . According to the initial Chetnik reports , a total of 1 @, @ 000 people were killed , including about 450 members of the Croatian Home Guard and Ustaše Militia , as well as around 300 women and children . Later Chetnik reports stated that between 2 @, @ 000 and 3 @, @ 000 were killed in Foča after its capture . A few days after they seized Foča , Bačić and Jevčević reported to Mihailović that all traces of the massacre had been removed and they had formally announced that those responsible for looting and killing had been shot . Eight days after the capture of Foča , Bačić wrote , " on that occasion 1 @, @ 200 Ustaše in uniform and about 1 @, @ 000 compromised Muslims perished , while we suffered only four dead and five wounded " .

On a field near Ustikolina and Jahorina in eastern Bosnia , the Chetniks of Bačić and Ostojić massacred about 2 @, @ 500 Muslims and burned a number of villages . Bačić also killed a number of Partisan sympathizers elsewhere . In September 1942 , Bačić completed a tour of Chetnik units in Herzegovina , and reported that the morale of the population was excellent and that the actions of the Ustaše and Partisans were drawing the populace to the Chetniks . That same month , his Chetniks killed 900 Croats in the coastal town of Makarska . Bačić 's reports made it plain that his forces were conducting planned operations to kill or drive out the Muslim and Catholic population of Herzegovina . One of these reports stated that during reprisal attacks against the towns of Ljubuqi in western Herzegovina and Imotski in the Dalmatian hinterland , his Chetniks had skinned alive three Catholic priests , killed all men over fifteen , and razed 17 villages .

= = = Operation Alfa and subsequent massacres = = =

Towards the end of August 1942 , Mihailović issued directives to Chetnik units ordering them to prepare for a large scale anti @-@ Partisan operation alongside Italian and NDH troops . In September 1942 , aware that they were unable to defeat the Partisans alone , the Chetniks tried to persuade the Italians to undertake a large operation against the Partisans in western Bosnia .

Trifunovi? @-@ Bir?anin met with Roatta on 10 and 21 September and urged him to undertake this operation as soon as possible to clear the Partisans from the Prozor ? Livno area and offered 7 @, @ 500 Chetniks as aid on the condition that they be provided with the necessary arms and supplies . He was successful in obtaining some arms and promises of action . The proposed operation , faced with opposition from Usta?e leader Ante Paveli? and a cautious Italian high command , was nearly cancelled , but after Jev?evi? and Trifunovi? @-@ Bir?anin promised to cooperate with Croat and Muslim anti @-@ Partisan units , it went ahead , with less Chetnik involvement .

Ba?ovi? and Jev?evi? , with 3 @, @ 000 Herzegovinian Chetniks , participated in the Italian @-@ led Operation Alfa , which involved a two @-@ pronged thrust towards Prozor . The Chetniks fought alongside the Italian 18th Infantry Division Messina as they advanced from the line of the Neretva River , while the German 714th and 718th Infantry Divisions , and NDH forces drove from the north . Before the offensive Ba?ovi? had openly announced his plans to destroy entire Muslim villages . Prozor and some smaller towns were captured by the combined Italian ? Chetnik force . Chetniks under Ba?ovi? and Jev?evi? 's command participated enthusiastically in the operation , burning Croat and Muslim villages and killing civilians . Between 14 and 15 October , the Herzegovinian Chetniks massacred over 500 Muslims and Croats and razed several villages , alleging that they had " harbored and aided the Partisans " . On 23 October , Ba?ovi? reported to Mihailovi? that " in the operation in Prozor we slaughtered more than 2 @, @ 000 Croats and Muslims . Our soldiers returned enthusiastic " . According to the historian Jozo Tomasevich , incomplete data shows that 543 civilians were massacred . At least 656 victims have been listed by name , while another source states that about 848 people were killed , mainly " children , women , and the elderly " . Historian Ivo Goldstein also mentions an estimate of 1 @, @ 500 victims , and attributes the discrepancy " to the fact that the estimates refer to different territories " .

Roatta objected to these " massive slaughters " of noncombatant civilians and threatened to halt Italian aid to the Chetniks if they did not end . He requested that " Trifunovi? be apprised that if the Chetnik violence against the Croatian and Muslim population is not immediately stopped , we will stop supplying food and daily wages to those formations whose members are perpetrators of the violence . If this criminal situation continues , more severe measures will be undertaken " . The massacre angered the NDH government and the Italians had to order the Chetniks to withdraw from Prozor . Some were discharged altogether while others were later sent to northern Dalmatia to aid ?uji? 's forces . Operation Beta later followed in the same month in which the Italians and NDH forces captured Livno and surrounding localities . A month after the massacre , Jev?evi? and Ba?ovi? wrote a self @-@ critical report on Prozor to Mihailovi? , hoping to distance themselves from the actions of their troops .

In October 1942 , Ba?ovi? issued an appeal to Serb Partisans which blamed the establishment of the Partisan movement on Jews and " the scum of the earth " . He blamed the Partisans for the destruction of traditional Serb society , religion and morals , claiming that they were corrupting women and the young , and promoting incest and immorality . He further deplored to Serb Partisans that they were being led by " Jews , Muslims , Croats , Magyars , Bulgarians " . In the same month , his staff issued a further appeal , claiming that the Serb Chetniks controlled all of Serbia , Montenegro , Sand?ak , Herzegovina and most of Bosnia , and that Serb Partisans were to be found only in a few places in Bosnia . He urged them to defect to the Chetniks so that they could return to being " good Serbs " and contribute to the creation of a " free and Great Serb state " . Ba?ovi? 's bands committed further atrocities against Croats and Muslims in Mostar and Konjic in November .

= = = Operations in northern Dalmatia and Lika = = =

In late September or early October 1942 , Ba?ovi? and Jev?evi? held talks with Muslim leader Ismet Popovac and agreed to recruit Muslims into the Chetnik ranks . Popovac 's Muslim Chetnik militia later fought the Partisans during the Axis @-@ led Case White offensive in early 1943 , but did not distinguish itself . By December 1943 , an estimated 4 @, @ 000 (or eight percent) of

Mihailovi? 's Chetniks were Muslim . In November and December 1942 , the Italians helped about 4 @, @ 000 of Ba?ovi? 's Chetniks in Herzegovina relocate to northern Dalmatia and Lika with another 4 @, @ 000 to be relocated later . On 8 January , Ba?ovi? was conferred the title of vojvoda by the ailing Trifunovi? @-@ Bir?anin .

In late January 1943 , Ba?ovi? 's forces in northern Dalmatia committed a massacre of Croat civilians in the town of Vrlika , near Split . Following Trifunovi? @-@ Bir?anin 's death in February 1943 , Ba?ovi? , Jev?evi? , ?uji? and Ba?ovi? 's chief of staff Radovan Ivani?evi? vowed to continue his policy of closely collaborating with the Italians against the Partisans . On 10 February 1943 , a proclamation signed by Ba?ovi? , ?uji? , Ivani?evi? and Ilija Mihi? was issued . It declared to the people of Bosnia , Lika and Dalmatia that the Chetniks had cleansed Serbia , Montenegro , and Herzegovina of the Partisans , and were about to do the same in their areas . The declaration denounced the Partisans as the " criminal band of Tito , Mo?e Pijade , Levi Vajnert , and other paid Jews " . The declaration also called upon the Partisan rank and file to kill their political commissars and join the Chetniks , and claimed that hundreds of their comrades were surrendering to the Chetniks every day because they realised that they had been " betrayed and swindled by the Communist Jews " .

By 28 February 1943 , 2 @, @ 807 of the 8 @, @ 137 Chetniks operating in northern Dalmatia as part of the Italian Anti @-@ Communist Volunteer Militia (MVAC) XVIIth Corps were under Ba?ovi? 's command . In July 1943 , Montenegrin Partisan leader Milovan ?ilas contacted both Ba?ovi? and Ostoji? to establish their willingness to work jointly against the Germans and Italians , given that a new Yugoslav government @-@ in @-@ exile was about to be established in London without Mihailovi? . Ba?ovi? and Ostoji? reported this contact to Mihailovi? who threatened to exclude them from his Chetnik organization if they maintained contact with the Partisans .

= = = Cairo , London and return to Yugoslavia = = =

In mid @-@ February 1944 , Ba?ovi? and Luka?evi? accompanied Special Operations Executive (SOE) Colonel Bill Bailey to the coast south of Dubrovnik and were evacuated from Cavtat by a Royal Navy gunboat . They then travelled via Cairo to London , where Luka?evi? represented Mihailovi? at King Peter 's wedding on 20 March 1944 . After the British government decided to withdraw support from Mihailovi? , Ba?ovi? and Luka?evi? were not allowed to return to Yugoslavia until the British mission to Mihailovi? headed by Brigadier Charles Armstrong had been safely evacuated from occupied territory . The two were detained by the British in Bari and thoroughly searched by local authorities , who suspected them of a robbery that had occurred in the Yugoslav consulate in Cairo . Most of the money , jewelry and uncensored letters that they were carrying were impounded . The two were flown out of Bari on 30 May , and landed on an airfield at Pranjani northwest of ?a?ak shortly after . Because their landing at Pranjani coincided with Armstrong 's departure , Ba?ovi? and Luka?evi? demanded that Armstrong be held as a hostage until their impounded belongings could be returned from Bari . The Chetnik personnel at the airfield refused to keep Armstrong any further , and he was allowed to depart without incident .

Later that month , Ba?ovi? helped organize a Chetnik " Independent Group of National Resistance " and wanted to contact British forces who they expected to land in the southern Adriatic coast . On 11 September 1944 , Ba?ovi? and Ostoji? warned Chetnik headquarters that Muslims and Croats were joining the Partisans in large numbers and that Chetniks in Bosnia and Herzegovina lacked food and ammunition . They suggested that Mihailovi? request an Allied occupation of Yugoslavia or risk losing the war both politically and militarily . They assessed that the population had sensed that the Partisans were now supported by the three major Allied Powers , but that the Chetniks had now been abandoned by them . Ba?ovi? had always urged Mihailovi? to show restraint in his dealings with the Germans and Italians , and often warned Mihailovi? that he must never be seen openly cooperating with the occupiers . On 20 October 1944 , Partisan and Soviet Red Army troops took Belgrade from the Germans . Soon after the Chetniks lost Serbia , the center of their movement . After the breakdown of the Chetnik movement in early 1945 , Ba?ovi? was no longer loyal to Mihailovi? .

= = = Withdrawal and death = = =

Ba?ovi? joined ?uri?i? 's forces in their trek towards Slovenia , alongside Chetnik ideologue Dragi?a Vasi? , detachments commanded by Ostoji? , and a large number of refugees , totaling around 10 @, @ 000 . This force was formed into the Chetnik 8th Montenegrin Army , consisting of the 1st , 5th , 8th and 9th (Herzegovina) divisions . Earlier , ?uri?i? and Mihailovi? had argued over the best course of action . ?uri?i? had wanted to withdraw through Albania to Greece , but Mihailovi? had told him to prepare for an Allied landing , the return of the king and the establishment of a national government . From the time ?uri?i? joined Mihailovi? in northeastern Bosnia , he was very critical of Mihailovi? 's leadership and argued strongly for all remaining Chetnik troops to move to Slovenia . When Mihailovi? remained unconvinced , ?uri?i? decided to move to Slovenia independently of him , and arranged for Dimitrije Ljoti? 's Serbian Volunteer Corps already in Slovenia to meet him near Biha? in western Bosnia to assist his movement .

In order to get to Biha? , ?uri?i? made a safe @-@ conduct agreement with elements of the Armed Forces of the NDH and with the Montenegrin separatist Sekula Drljevi? . The details of the agreement are not known , but it appears that he and his troops were meant to cross the Sava River into Slavonia where they would be aligned with Drljevi? as the " Montenegrin National Army " with ?uri?i? retaining operational command . ?uri?i? apparently tried to outsmart them and sent only his sick and wounded across the river , keeping his fit troops south of the river . He began moving his command westwards and , harassed by both the NDH troops and Partisans , reached the Vrbas River . In the Battle of Lijev?e Field , north of Banja Luka , the combined Chetnik force was defeated by a strong NDH force which was armed with German @-@ supplied tanks .

Following this defeat and the defection of one of his sub @-@ units to Drljevi? , ?uri?i? was induced to negotiate directly with the leaders of the NDH forces about the further movement of his Chetniks towards Slovenia . However , this appears to have been a trap , as he was attacked and captured by them on his way to the meeting . According to Tomasevich , exactly what occurred after his capture is not clear , but Ba?ovi? , ?uri?i? , Vasi? and Ostoji? were subsequently killed , along with some Serbian Orthodox priests and others . According to some sources , on 20 April , ?uri?i? , Ba?ovi? , Vasi? and Ostoji? were taken to the Stara Gradi?ka prison , near Jasenovac . The Usta?e gathered them in a field alongside 5 @, @ 000 other Chetnik prisoners and arranged for Drljevi? and his followers to select 150 Chetnik officers and non @-@ combatant intellectuals for execution . ?uri?i? , Ba?ovi? , Vasi? and Ostoji? were amongst those selected . They and the others were loaded onto boats by the Usta?e and taken across the Sava River , never to be seen again . It is reported that they were killed either in the Jasenovac concentration camp itself , or in a marsh in its vicinity . The website of the Jasenovac Memorial Site lists Ba?ovi? as having been killed at the camp by the Usta?e in 1945 . Both the NDH forces and Drljevi? had reasons for ensnaring ?uri?i? . The NDH forces were motivated by the mass terror committed by ?uri?i? on the Muslim population in Sand?ak and southeastern Bosnia while Drljevi? was opposed to ?uri?i? 's support of a union of Serbia and Montenegro which ran counter to Drljevi? 's separatism .