

THE CROATS

Fourteen Centuries of Perseverance



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The Croats under the Rulers of the Croatian National Dynasty

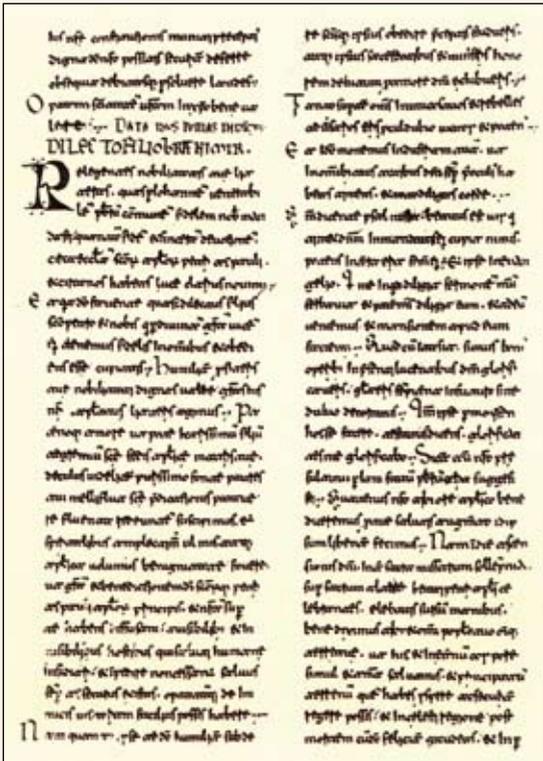
The Croats are one of the oldest European peoples. They arrived in an organized manner to the eastern Adriatic coast and the region bordered by the Drina, Drava and Danube rivers in the first half of the seventh century, during the time of major Avar-Byzantine Wars and general upheavals in Europe.

In the territory where they settled, they organized themselves into three political entities, based on the previous Roman administrative organizations: White (western) Croatia, commonly referred to as Dalmatian Croatia, and Red (southern) Croatia, both of which were under Byzantine supremacy, and Pannonian Croatia, which was under Avar supremacy. The Croats in Pannonian Croatia became Frankish vassals at the end of the eighth century, while those in Dalmatia came under Frankish rule at the beginning of the ninth century, and those in Red Croatia remained under Byzantine supremacy. The three administrative divisions were united only during the tenth and eleventh centuries. **By accepting Christianity, the Croats entered the great Christian community of European nations and became a part of Western European civilization. With the introduction of the vernacular language into the Croatian liturgy in the ninth century, the foundations for the Croatian national Christian culture were established, which contributed to the consolidation of a national identity.**

In the Croats' new land, they occupied a very important geostrategic position, between Western and Eastern Europe as well as Central and Southern Europe. The territory, with its numerous river and mountain systems, was not uniform in terms of relief, climate or modes of transportation, which in those times influenced the general development of the Croatian nation and its political unity. Attacks by the Franks, Byzantines, Venetians, Bulgarians and other peoples during the Croats' early centuries in these lands contributed to the situa-

During the reign of Prince Branimir, Pope John VIII, the universal authority at the time, granted Croatia international recognition.

VII-XI cent.



In a letter from Pope John VIII to Prince Branimir, dated June 7, 879, Croatia was granted international recognition for the first time.

tion where Croats did not find themselves in a single state entity and certain border territories were often separated from central Croatia. The unification of Dalmatian Croatia and Pannonian Croatia occurred during the first half of the tenth century. The Neretva Principality, Zahumlje, Duklja and Dubrovnik developed in Red Croatia, which was under Byzantine supremacy. During the rule of the powerful Croatian rulers in the tenth and eleventh centuries, Zahumlje and later Dubrovnik became a part of unified Croatia. The unification of the Croatian lands during the coming centuries depended on the unity and strength of the Croatian people, due to which certain border areas were often outside the whole.

Dalmatian Croatia became fully independent around the year 850 A.D. **In 852, this central Croatian state is referred to as the “Kingdom of the Croats” (Regnum Chroatorum). In 879, during the reign of Prince Branimir, Pope John VIII, the universal authority at the time, granted Croatia international**

recognition. By this act, the Croats became independent of the Franks and the Byzantines. According to the *Geography of Europe*, written by King Alfred the Great, who reigned from 871 to 899, Croatia bordered Bulgaria along the Danube River, Byzantium to the southeast and Frankish territory to the west.

Most of the territory settled by the Croats, from the Adriatic Sea to the Drava River and Danube River, from the Raša River in Istria to the Drina River to the east, and to what is now northern Albania, found themselves in a unified state only during the reign of the powerful ruler Prince and King Tomislav, from 910 to 928. At the time, Croatian territory covered 120,000 square kilometers.

King Tomislav’s contemporary, the Byzantine author Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, wrote in the first half of the tenth century that Croatia at the time could raise 60,000 cavalry, 100,000 infantry and man 80 large ships, *sagenas*, on the sea with 40-man crews, and 100 smaller ships, *conduras*, with 10 to 20-man crews. It is estimated that Croatia had a population of approximately 2,000,000 people at the time. Among the most significant Croatian rulers who succeeded King Tomislav during the eleventh century were Petar Krešimir IV (1058–1074)



Croatia during the reign of Prince Trpimir I, 845–864

and his successor, Demetrius Zvonimir (1075–1089). In October 1075, on the occasion of the coronation of King Demetrius Zvonimir in Solin, an envoy from Pope Gregory VII presented the new king with a royal scepter, sword and flag. Thus, the Holy See confirmed the integrity of the Kingdom of Croatia by virtue of its authority and once again stood behind its sovereignty. This was still another confirmation of the international recognition and stable international position of the Kingdom of the Croats. The might of Croatia at the time is testified by the fact that, in February 1082, Croatian armed forces together with the Normans liberated Drač, the southernmost city in Red Croatia, one of the most developed cities on the southeastern Adriatic coast, which was held by the Byzantines. The period from the seventh century, when Croats arrived on the

eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, until the late eleventh century, when they had rulers of Croatian blood, is known as the "period of national rulers."

With time, the Croats built their Church, which was firmly bound to Rome, established the basics of schooling, coexisted with the indigenous population and its cultural heritage, and became participants in all the civilizational currents of the western cultural circle, particularly the Carolingian heritage, as particularly reflected in the way of building cathedrals, basilicas, churches and chapels. Benedictine monasteries were important centers of culture among the Croats. Fifty of them were built during the period from the ninth to the eleventh centuries throughout Croatia, where, among other things, there were workshops for copying and illuminating books and manuscripts. The high rate of literacy in Croatia at the time is evidenced by the use of the Glagolitic alphabet and national language in Church and secular life and the use of the Latin language and alphabet in public life. Some of these texts are very important in Croatian state and legal history. In the following centuries, up to our times, in spite of numerous misfortunes, the Croats developed their culture, economy and civilization in accordance with the circumstances in their surroundings.

The death of the last king of Croatia, Petar Svačić, on Mt. Gvozd in 1097, painting by Oton Iveković



The Croats in a State and Dynastic Union with the Hungarians

In 1102, when the Croats were left without a ruler from their own national dynasties, in accordance with the feudal practices of the time, they recognized King Coloman of the Árpád dynasty as their ruler. He had familial ties to the previous Croatian ruling dynasty, so in return he recognized the laws and integrity of the Kingdom of Croatia from the Drava River to the Adriatic Sea. So the Croats, by the *Pacta Conventa*, entered (into) a state entity, i.e., personal union, with the Hungarians, with whom they shared a common ruler until 1526.

Although the Croats incorporated their international subjectivity in the union with the Hungarians, they preserved all the features of their nationhood and the distinct identity of the Kingdom of Croatia throughout the duration of the union.

As previously, during the period of the establishment of independence and during the period of the union with Hungary, the lands of the Kingdom of Croatia were frequently targeted for conquest by neighboring peoples and states. For centuries, the Venetians and Byzantines sought to control the coasts and eastern regions of the Kingdom of Croatia. These regions were also threatened by the Serbs from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, who were Byzantine subjects until the beginning of the thirteenth century. Territorial defense was the reason for the many wars that Croats had to wage to protect their land and common state. Of particular significance was the Treaty of Zadar, dated February 18, 1358, between the Croats and Venetians, by which the Venetians relinquished all the cities and islands on the eastern Adriatic coast, "from the midpoint of the Bay of Kvarner to the



The Pacta Conventa was concluded between twelve members of the Croatian nobility and King Coloman of Hungary in 1102.

1102-1526

border of the city of Drač." Thus, six centuries after the Croats arrived on the eastern Adriatic coast, the right of the Kingdom of Croatia to all the lands settled by the Croats in the seventh century was confirmed. Only in 1409, taking advantage of the political disorder in the Croatian-Hungarian state, did the Venetians begin to recon- solidate on the eastern Adriatic coast.

In addition to Duklja around Lake Skadar, known as Zeta after the ninth century and known as Montenegro after the late fifteenth century, a state entity in the ter- ritory of Red Croatia, three more traditional Croatian states formed in the southern and eastern region of the Kingdom of Croatia.

From the medieval Croatian administrative state of the Ba- nate of Bosnia (around the upper Bosna River, from the Vranica mountain range and Mt. Vlačić to the Drina River, from Goražde to below Zvornik, from Ivan Planina [Mt. Ivan] to Zavidovići



The coat-of-arms of Duke Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić

The Kingdom of Croatia after the Treaty of Zadar in 1358



Vrata), Donji Kraji and the Drina Valley (until 1373 part of the old Serbian state of Raška), the Kingdom of Bosnia was born in the year 1377. Its first king, Stjepan Tvrtko I Kotromanić, who had been named the Ban of Bosnia in 1353, took advantage of the political circumstances in the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom and consolidated the region of the Kingdom of Croatia under his authority: the western regions or Tropolje (Duvno, Livno and Glamoč), the area between the Cetina and the Neretva rivers, then at the end of 1390s the area between the Cetina and the Zrmanja rivers, i.e., the region from Boka Kotorska to the Velebit mountain range, then the islands of Brač, Hvar, Vis and Korčula, except the cities of Zadar and Dubrovnik, which remained faithful to the Croatian-Hungarian King Sigismund (1387–1437). In accordance with all that, in 1390 Tvrtko was called “by the grace of God, the king of Raša, Bosnia, Dalmatia, Croatia and Primorje.” The possibility that Bosnia would become the center of the independent Croatian state was ended by Tvrtko’s death in 1391. **The political situation in the Kingdom of Bosnia, torn by religious differences and conflicts among the aristocracy, contributed, in 1448, to the emergence of a new state entity in its southern part, Herzegovina (in the territory from Pljevlja, Prijepolje and Boka Kotorska to the Cetina River, the upper Vrbas River and in the north toward the source of the Bosna River and Mt. Jahorina).**

The Ottomans in the end, by a sudden and fierce attack, conquered the Kingdom of Bosnia in the spring of 1463, after nearly eight decades of systematic devastation, and conquered Herzegovina in 1482. From these lands, they established the administrative territories of the Sanjak of Bosnia and the Sanjak of Herzegovina.

The Republic of Dubrovnik was created in the southeastern coastal part of Croatia during the first half of the sixteenth century. By fostering trade and maritime affairs with the surrounding countries, the Mediterranean and beyond, it maintained its sovereignty until 1808, when the French General Marmont dissolved the government and senate of Dubrovnik.

After 1352, when the Ottomans established themselves in Europe on the Gallipoli Peninsula, they relatively quickly, after having conquered many important cities, regions and states in the southeastern part of the Balkan Peninsula, also threatened Croatian lands. With these successful conquests, the Ottomans created all the prerequisites for further military operations and conquests toward Western and Central Europe. The Ottomans first penetrated the area of the Kingdom of Bosnia, west of the Drina River, in the year 1386, later penetrating the Kingdom of Croatia in 1391. Conflicts between the Croats and the Ottoman invaders became increasingly frequent with time. After the Ottomans conquered the Kingdom of Bosnia in the year 1463, Croatia established defenses on the Vrbas River and the Spreča River, as well as in the Neretva Valley.

In the fifteenth century, a particular threat to Croats was posed by Ottoman raids on Croatian lands and beyond, all the way to Italy, Kranjska and Styria. **It is estimated that from 1463 to 1516, Ottomans took approximately 400,000 Croats into captivity. This was the beginning of an unequal struggle with the Ottoman invaders known in Croatian history as “two centuries of Croatian mourning–plorantis Croatiae saecula duo” (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries).** In the late fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth century, during those hard times and under the constant Ottoman threat, Croats from the endangered areas west of the Vrbas, the Una River Valley (Pounje), Lika, Krbava and elsewhere fled and settled in Austria (Burgenland), Slovakia, Moravia, Hungary, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Southern Italy (Molise), where their descendants still live today. **The Ottomans populated the devastated and conquered territories in the Kingdom of Bosnia and the Kingdom of Croatia with Orthodox Vlachs, thereby changing the demographic, religious and every other aspect of these regions. Croatian Catholics remaining in the territories conquered by the Ottomans were systematically persecuted and converted to Islam, especially from the beginning of the sixteenth century.**

At the end of the fifteenth century, the Ottomans conquered the Neretva Valley and the territory east of the Cetina River, penetrating Croatian defenses at the Spreča River in 1512, at the Cetina River in 1513 and at the Sava River in 1521, and continued to conquer Croatian territories in Srijem, Slavonia, toward Velebit and the Una River Valley. Due to Croatia's daily resistance to the Ottoman invaders during those decades, Croatia was called *Antemurale Christianitatis* (the bulward of Christianity) by Pope Leo X.



The Battle of Mohács, 1526

Croatia as Part of the Habsburg Empire

After King Louis II of Bohemia, Croatia and Hungary was killed at the Battle of Mohács fighting the Ottomans in the year 1526, which ended the ruling Jagiellon dynasty, the Bohemians and Magyars chose Archduke Ferdinand I von Habsburg as king. Following three months of negotiations, on January 1, 1527, in Cetingrad, the Croats “completely freely and without duress” chose the same ruler for their king, who promised to respect all the laws in Croatia and defend the country. Although the Croats were dissatisfied with the rule of the Habsburgs, who failed to meet their obligations, Croatia remained part of the Habsburg Monarchy until 1918.

In the Croatian lands, art and literature followed the main trends of the rest of Europe. In the sixteenth century, Croatian Renaissance literature was enriched by the works of M. Marulić and the Croatian Petrarchists (Š. Menčetić, Dž. Držić, H. Lucić, D. Ranjina and D. Zlatarić). Comedies were written by N. Nalješković and M. Držić, pastoral prose, *Mountains (Planine)* by P. Zoranić, the pastoral *Fishing and Fishermen’s Grumbling (Ribanje i ribarsko prigovaranje)* by P. Hektorović and the dialogue tractates by N. V. Gučetić and F. Petrić.

The languages of Croatian literature and culture during the sixteenth century were the national language, Latin and sometimes Italian. After 1600, the European Renaissance gave way to the baroque. Romantic and fabulous epics were replaced by poetry in which historical themes predominated. A celebrated baroque epic poem in Croatian literature, *Osman*, was written by I. Gundulić. Between the Renaissance and classicism, a significant share of the literature was of a religious orientation (J. Habdelić, I. Belostenec).

1527–1918



Negotiations in Cetinograd, 1527, painting by Dragutin Weingartner

In the Croatian baroque literature of the time, Dubrovnik baroque drama has a special place (I. Gundulić, J. Palmotić, A. Gleđević). The play *Dubravka* by I. Gundulić represents the height of the baroque on the Dubrovnik stage.

In the constant warfare with the Ottomans, Croats lost cities, regions and entire provinces. Much of the population perished or was taken captive. According to the Venetian historian M. Sanudo, by 1553 the Ottomans took 600,000 Croats into captivity. In 1566, Sultan Suleiman I set out on his sixth attempt to capture Vienna and all of Europe with more than 100,000 soldiers and 300 cannons. In Szigetvár (Hungary) they were awaited by Nikola Šubić Zrinski (Zrin, 1508–Szigetvár, September 7, 1566), a Croatian nobleman, statesman and military leader, one of the most celebrated figures in Croatian and Hungarian history. Zrinski, whose possessions included Međimurje and significant parts of western Hungary, was the Captain General of Southern Transdanubia, on the right bank of the Danube River. Prior to the fateful battle, he thoroughly prepared his “two thousand three hundred and a few more” soldiers, who were mainly Croats. **He swore the following oath before them: “I, Prince Nikola Zrinski, first of all promise God Almighty, then His Majesty, our glorious ruler, our afflicted homeland and you knights that I shall never leave you, but that I shall live and die with you, endure good and evil, so help me God!” After the Turks burned down the city with flaming arrows and explosives on September 7, 1566, they expected surrender but Zrinski and the surviving defenders stormed out of their final stronghold, the oldest part of**



Croatia in the late nineteenth century (1883)



Nikola Zrinski at the fortress of Szigetvár

the town, and died heroically. Their sacrifice made a profound impression on both their contemporaries and subsequent generations.

In order to further the war effort, in 1579 the defense forces of the Kingdom of Croatia (the military districts of Koprivnica, Križevci, Ivanić Grad, Petrinja, Bihać, Slunj and Senj) were removed from the authority of the Croatian ban in the Croatian-Slavonian Military Frontier and placed under the direct command of the War Council in Graz. As the warfare continued, the "Croatian Kingdom" was reduced in the year 1594 to "the remnants of the remnants," an area of 16,800 square kilometers. The liberation of much of the Croatian territory from Ottoman rule occurred in wars that, with varying degrees of success, were waged against the Ottomans by the Venetian Republic and the Habsburg Monarchy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which the Croatian people did much of the fighting. By the year 1718, the territories of Slavonia and Srijem, and all those up to the present Croatian border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Boka Kotorska and southward from Budva, which is currently part of Montenegro, were liberated. **Thus, the battles with the Ottoman invaders from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries contributed to the loss of a large part of the territory of the Croatian state and the present unnatural shape of the Republic of Croatia.**

Croats, like the other non-Germanic nations in the Habsburg Monarchy, from 17th century on, were subjected to royal absolutism, the centralism of the Viennese court and Germanization. Croatian attempts of gaining independence from Habsburg absolutism, led by the brothers Nikola and Petar Zrinski and by Fran Krsto Frankopan, in cooperation with the Hungarian nobility, ended in 1670 with grave consequences for the entire Croatian nation.

The Croatian National Revival (1835–1848) was part of the process of the formation of the European nations in the nineteenth century. As a national, cultural and political movement, it contributed to the national integration of the Croatian people and was also known as the Illyrian Movement. The beginning was marked by the publication of the first newspaper in the Croatian language in Zagreb, *Novine horvatzke* (Croatian Newspaper), and *Danica* (Morning Star) in 1835, which was initiated by Lj. Gaj. By 1848, the movement had achieved its basic task of reviving national consciousness and many important national institutions were established. Feudal forms of life were transformed into the new order and a civil society was established. At the beginning of this period, Croatia was divided within the borders of the Habsburg Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Venice and the independent Republic of Dubrovnik.

When the Hungarian nobility responded to the Habsburg absolutism and Germanization in the first half of the nineteenth century with a national program, the creation of Greater Hungary from the Carpathians to the Adriatic, negating all the other peoples in that territory, during the 1830s and 1840s the Croats found them-

selves threatened by this Greater Hungarian program. This conflict culminated during the “Spring of Peoples” of 1848, when nearly all the peoples in Europe were convinced that only as subjects of the international community with the rights of full sovereignty and equality, mainly by gathering and unifying into united national states, could they define and resolve their national problems. In 1848, Croats presented their political program, which, among other things, advocated unification, albeit in a state of administratively divided Croatian lands (Croatia and Slavonia under a ban and Parliament, Istria and Dalmatia from the mouth of the Zrmanja River to Boka Kotorska and Budva, and the Military Frontier from the Zrmanja Valley to Zemun under the Imperial Council and the government in Vienna) in the entire Monarchy and the states of all its equal peoples. Since the negotiations with the Hungarian leadership concerning Croatian autonomy did not contribute to a peaceful solution (and due to the issue of Serbian autonomy in Banat and Bačka, which the Croatian politicians of the time in Pan-Slavic solidarity considered as their own), and since the Hungarian armed threats were increasingly evident and effective, pursuant to a decision by the Croatian Parliament, as well as the request of the Viennese Court and the endangered Serbs in Banat and Bačka, the Croats mounted an armed rebellion under the leadership of Ban Josip Jelačić in defense of the homeland, crossed the Drava River in early September of 1848 and brought the war to the enemy territory. **In early October 1848, when insurrection broke out among the proponents of Greater Germany and Greater Hungary, the Croatian armed forces under the command of Ban Josip Jelačić, together with the Habsburg Imperial-Royal forces, participated in the suppression of this rebellion, and then in 1848/1849 in the crushing of the anti-Habsburg rebellion of the Hungarian liberal government, which did not recognize the national rights of the Croats, Serbs, Slovaks, Poles, Romanians and others in the lands considered by Hungarians integral parts of Hungary.**

In the second half of the nineteenth century, when the modern nations were formed in Europe, the Croatian people on their path to the formation of their nation in Croatia were subjected to the pressures of Habsburg absolutism, Hungarian hegemony and Greater Serbian ideas. Although the octroyed constitution of March 4, 1849, and the establishing of absolutism and centralism were a blow to all the national movements in the Habsburg Monarchy and the Croatian movement of 1848, the Croats, led by the legendary Ban Jelačić (whose mandate as ban was 1848–1859), established all the political, cultural, Church and economic relations that served as the basis for the development of the modern Croatian nation in the second half of the nineteenth century. Pursuant to the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, by which the Habsburg Monarchy was transformed into a dual state, among the Croatian lands, Croatia and Slavonia were placed under Hungarian jurisdiction, while Istria and Dalmatia were placed under Austrian jurisdiction. The

Croatian-Slavonian Military Frontier was demilitarized and returned to the authority of the Croatian Parliament and ban in 1881. Although the new political relations led to the Croatian-Hungarian Settlement of 1868, which afforded political recognition to the Croatian nation and allowed Croatia to continue to retain complete autonomy (independence) with its own parliament and ban as the head of the government, as well as education, worship and judiciary in the Croatian language, the Croatian people continued to be subjected to Hungarian hegemony, particularly during the banship of Count Károly Khuen-Héderváry de Hédervár (1883–1903), who exerted absolutist authority with all nondemocratic means and favored the Serbs in Croatia. **All of this occurred at the time of the Greater Serbian idea, that all the Slavic peoples between Thessaloniki, Trieste and Szentendre were Serbs, and that the Serbian state should be created wherever Serbs lived. In Croatia, this idea was manifested in political activity and in the declaration of a genocidal war against the Croats (“to the extermination ours or yours”) in 1902.**

During the First World War (1914–1918), when the fates of European and other nations in the world were decided, Croats found themselves divided in administrative, political, economic, cultural, religious and in every other aspect. In late 1918, at the end of the war, they were targeted by both Italian imperialism and the Greater Serbian program.

In Monarchist Yugoslavia

In November 1918, when Italian units were occupying Croatian coastal areas, pursuant to the secret Treaty of London of 1915, Croatian political life was dominated by a process that on December 1, 1918, contributed to the rapid and unparliamentary entry of the Croatian and other non-Serbian nations into the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, from 1921 (renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929).

Thus, despite the principles of self-determination and full national equality, by happenstance the Croats found themselves in a new, untraditional monarchist state, which was quickly recognized as not being a community of nations with equal rights. During nearly the entire



In 1918, while Croats were advocating the unification of all the Yugoslav states by democratic means, Serbian representatives in the Croatian Parliament proposed reducing Croatian territory by altering the borders, which would have extended from Virovitica to the mouth of the Una River, west of Knin and west of Šibenik.

existence of this multi-national and multi-state community, unitarist circles used every means to promote Greater Serbian centralism.

In the newly created state, Serbian nationalism and hegemony became increasingly evident. In 1928, the assassinations of Croatian political leaders Stjepan Radić and others were organized at the Parliament in Belgrade. To counterbalance the situation, Croatian radical nationalists, the Ustasha, began to organize in Croatia, especially following the proclamation of the dictatorship of King Alexander I Karađorđević. Ideologically and organizationally, the Ustasha had

1918-1941

roots in the political turmoil even prior to the introduction of the dictatorship, particularly following the assassination of Croatian representatives in the Parliament in Belgrade. A. Pavelić had a leading role. The Ustasha organization was formally constituted in 1930 and in 1932 was renamed the Ustasha Croatian Revolutionary Organization (UHRO). Ustasha ideology was connected with the program of the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP) and the teachings of A. Starčević.

In the late 1930s, when the Serbian leadership, pressured by the very intricate political relations in Europe, especially the rise of the Third Reich, began to accede to Croatian demands for the reorganization of the country, in which the Croatian nation would be a somewhat equal political factor, there was opposition by Greater Serbian circles, who also resisted the creation of the autonomous province of the Banovina of Croatia, in territory that had a Croatian majority, within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1939 and responded with their Greater Serbian projects of Krajina (1939), Serbs Come Together (1940) and Homogeneous Serbia (1941), in which all the Greater Serbian programs in the Second World War were established, as well as after the war ended, in communist Yugoslavia, especially during the 1990s, when the Croatian nation voted for democracy and national sovereignty.

The Banovina of Croatia, 1939–1941



Amidst the Turmoil of the Second World War

In 1941, during the Second World War, when the German and Axis forces attacked the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Croatian nationalists, opponents of Yugoslavia, which was de facto Greater Serbia, and supporters of an independent Croatia, with German support, proclaimed the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). All of Croatia was occupied and divided between the German and Italian spheres of interest. The most vital coastal region and the territory where the medieval Croatian state had existed were appropriated by Italy, while Međimurje and Baranja were occupied by Hungary. Proponents of Greater Serbian ideas and ultranationalists, known as Chetniks, started to attack and kill the Croatian, Muslim and other non-Serbian inhabitants, looting and burning their property as soon as the war broke out, especially after the Independent State of Croatia was proclaimed. Such attacks were answered by similar ones committed by the endangered Croatian and Muslim populations, and then by the institutions of the Independent State of Croatia.

Since the Independent State of Croatia was in fact dependent on Hitler's Germany, it passed racial laws which discriminated Jews and Roma. Dr. Esther Gitman has documented that thousands of ordinary people living in the Independent State of Croatia risked their lives in order to save their endangered fellow citizens.

At the beginning of World War Two, when the Pact between Hitler and Stalin was in power, Yugoslav communists, very much like the communists in other European countries, kept silent and did not undertake any activities. They even sided and cooperated with the Ustasha. But when Hitler attacked The Soviet Union, they immediately began their quest for power over the entire territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia through an armed struggle, siding with the Allies during the whirlwind of the Second World War. Under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito, they began to create a new Yugoslavia, although now a communist state. During the war, they organized their political bodies, organizations and the armed units of the National Liberation Army (NOV).

Throughout the Second World War, the Croatian people were divided ideologically, politically and militarily. The war brought great suffering to the entire population of Croatia. Although the Yugoslav communists heralded a new Yugoslavia as a democratic state of free

Most of the military and civilian refugees were captured and killed in Slovenia by members of the Yugoslav Army.

1941-1945

and equal peoples, they dealt very cruelly during the war with all their actual and potential ideological opponents. Their dealing was especially cruel with them during the spring and summer of 1945, when the war was over, on the death marches and other atrocities referred to collectively as "The Way of the Cross." **Most of the hundreds of thousands of members of the armed forces of the Independent State of Croatia and civilians who were fleeing toward Austria, with the intention of surrendering to the Allied forces in order to escape the Yugoslav Army and communist authorities, were captured in Slovenia and killed by members of the Yugoslav Army. The same fate was met by those whom the Allied forces at the Austrian-Slovenian border, in Bleiburg, refused to accept as prisoners of war and instead handed over to units of the Yugoslav Army, as well as by those who had crossed into Austria in mid-May 1945 and whom the British forces sent back to Yugoslavia. The survivors were sent on death marches throughout Yugoslavia, all the way to the Romanian, Bulgarian and Greek borders, during which many were brutally liquidated.**

The Independent State of Croatia, 1941-1945



In Communist Yugoslavia

After the end of the Second World War, Croats and the Federal Republic of Croatia, with the present territory, found themselves in communist Yugoslavia with formal autonomy. All the power was held by a single-party communist system based on the Bolshevik-Stalinist Soviet Union. The communist rulers nationalized all the private property. They abolished private ownership and the free market economy. All enterprises, factories, mines, buildings and similar properties were expropriated from their owners. Opponents of the regime and communist ideology, as well as those believed to be, were persecuted in various ways and many were liquidated.

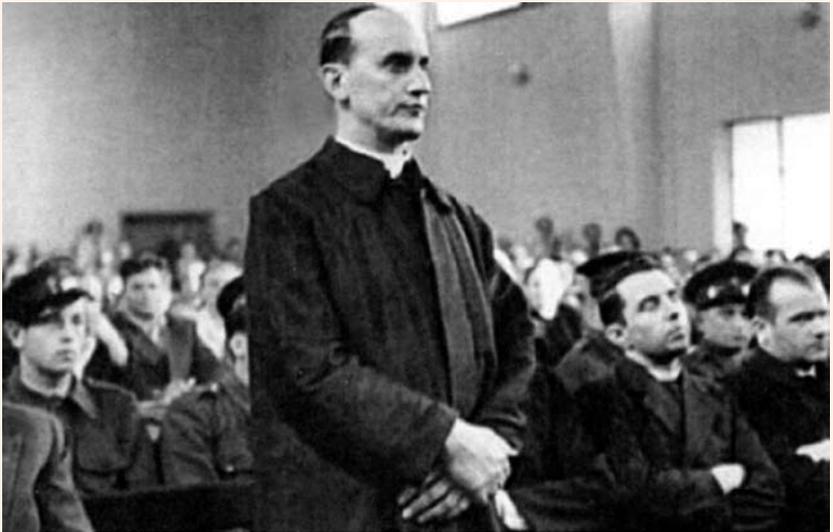
During and after the Second World War, the communists particularly persecuted the Catholic Church and other religious communities among the Croats that were considered to be opposed to the undemocratic communist system. Among the earliest **targets of the communist authorities immediately after the end of the war was the Archbishop of Zagreb, Alojzije Stepinac, Ph.D. (1898–1960), a well-known humanist and opponent of every violent and undemocratic system.** He had publically condemned the racist ideologies and programs of the Independent State of Croatia and saved or interceded for many of its victims, at great personal risk.

The attitude of the communist authorities toward the Catholic Church became significantly more antagonistic following the publication of Archbishop Stepinac's Pastoral Letter on Violence by the Communist Authorities, dated September 22, 1945. Archbishop Stepinac was arrested on September 18, 1946. Following a show trial, on October 11, 1946, he was sentenced to sixteen years of imprisonment. After spending a little over five years in the penitentiary in Lepoglava, he was conditionally released and held under house arrest in the presbytery in his native Krašić. Due to serious illnesses (caused by his being poisoned in prison) he died in Krašić on February 10, 1960. He was buried in a crypt in the Cathedral of the Assumption in Zagreb.

Hundreds of thousands of Croats were persecuted by the police and judiciary. Many were sentenced to death or long prison terms.

1945–1991

The successor of Alojzije Stepinac, Archbishop and Croatian Cardinal Franjo Kuharić (1919–2002), as a priest and parish priest, at the time of harshest prosecution and killing of the faithful and priests by the communist rulers, also experienced



Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac during his show trial, 1946

a “blood bath”. Cardinal Kuharić fearlessly refuted the communist lies about Alojzije Stepinac. He was a patriot, critical towards the government when they did not respect human rights. Stepinac and Kuharić permanently marked the history of the Croatian people and of the Croatian Church. Regarding faith and spirituality, they are symbolically and literally the guidepost to the Croatian people and future.

Although many of the Croatian people participated in the anti-fascist movement, in terms of percentage more than any other people in Yugoslavia, their position in the new Yugoslavia was highly unfavorable. Hundreds of thousands of Croats (and members of other peoples) were subjected to police and judicial persecution. Many were sentenced to death or long prison terms. In communist Yugoslavia, 1,300,000 Croats had secret police dossiers in the year 1966. Under such circumstances, many illegally or legally left the country, so that every fourth Croat was living outside the homeland by the late 1960s. Croatia was economically exploited in various ways. In 1966, when Aleksandar Ranković, the minister of internal affairs and deputy premier of the Yugoslav government, was removed from his positions, a reform movement began in Croatia and other parts of the Yugoslav federation, which would have given greater equality to all the constituent nations. This movement was crushed by Tito’s cronies in late 1971 through the political

and judicial persecution of tens of thousands of Croats. Many were arrested and received long prison sentences, while some were dismissed from their positions, and some were denied the right to work. According to one estimate, at the time 32,000 people—students, university professors, politicians, writers and others—were persecuted in various ways, 11,800 of whom were brought to court, sentenced to prison and banned from public life. According to some estimates, that number was much higher. Throughout the world, Croatian emigrants were persecuted and killed by the Yugoslav political police.

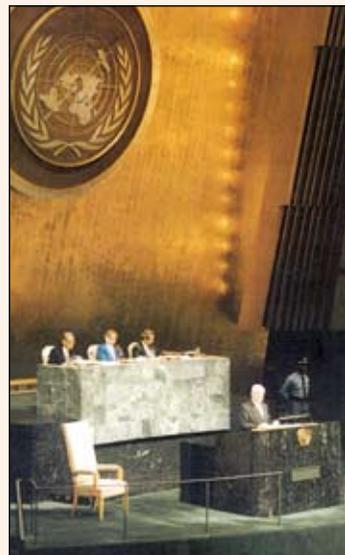
In communist Yugoslavia (1945–1991), Croats were subjected to various baseless accusations in order to subjugate them. One of the most abhorrent was the creation of the Jasenovac myth, i.d. the inflation of the number of people who perished in that labor camp. According to that myth, the number of people perished in that camp was between 700,000 and 1,500,000. In mid 1960s, historian dr. Franjo Tuđman specially warned of a complete absurdity of that myth, and of the inexistence of any evidence or proof which might corroborate those numbers. Those who tried to speak about the Jasenovac camp on the bases of arguments and facts, were fiercely attacked by the promoters of a “genocidal nature” of Croats. Many documents and reports testify that Jasenovac was primarily a work and industrial camp. The inmates labored in trade workshops and on the surrounding farms. Jasenovac was also a relocation camp for work force that was then sent to work in Germany. There is no evidence that there were any mass executions in Jasenovac camp. Group executions were conducted in retaliation for the killing of guards, escapes, attempted uprisings, and some disciplinary infractions and in retaliation for communist military campaigns, on orders from those responsible in Zagreb. Ustasha guards were also shot for disobedience and disciplinary infractions. The numbers, from eight hundred (1941) to approximately two thousand (1944) and names of the camp inmates can be followed for the entire existence of the camp. There were many pardons and releases (a total of 1,600 inmates). In March and April of 1945, Allied and partisan aircraft bombed the camp, killing many of the prisoners. A commission of Yugoslav forensic experts (Alojz Šercelj, Vida Brodar and others) spent the year 1964 conducting extensive exhumations in the area of the Jasenovac camp. In several graves, the remains of a total of 469 people were found. Even after the end of the war, until 1951, the Jasenovac camp was in operation for imprisoning members of the Croatian armed forces, civilians and German prisoners of war. Today, historians organized in “The Society for Researching the Triple Camp of Jasenovac” (Društvo za istraživanje trostrukog logora Jasenovac) are giving a considerable contribution to the unmasking of Jasenovac myth.



The Socialist Republic of Croatia in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1945- 1990

The Sovereign Republic of Croatia

Following the fall of the communist regimes throughout Europe in the late 1980s, the communist regime in Yugoslavia met the same fate. **In the spring of 1990, after 45 years of communist totalitarianism, the winner of the first multi-party elections in Croatia was the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), led by Dr. Franjo Tuđman. Tuđman's platform was for a sovereign Croatia, market economy, multi-party democracy.** On May 30, 1990, parliamentarism was revived, when authority in the Croatian Parliament was assumed by the parties that won the elections. On December 22, 1990, the Croatian Parliament adopted the new democratic Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, in compliance with the legal standards of democratic Europe at the time. According to this constitution, Croatia is a state that accepts democracy, the protection of human rights, minority rights, free markets, various forms of ownership and the rule of law. Under pressure from the international community to preserve Yugoslavia, in the negotiations on reorganization of Yugoslavia, which was still existing, the Croatian leadership advocated a confederation of sovereign states, while the Serbian leadership wanted Yugoslavia as a strong federation under Serbian leadership. **On May 19, 1991, a referendum was held in the Republic of Croatia on the Croatian political future. Based upon the results, on June 25, 1991, the Croatian Parliament adopted the Constitutional Decision on the Sovereignty and Independence of the Republic of Croatia, the Charter on the Rights of Serbs and Other Nationalities in the Republic of Croatia, and the Declaration on the Establishment of the Sovereign and Independent Republic of Croatia.** At the Brioni Conference, held on July 7, 1991, the presidents of the former Yugoslav republics, in the presence of representatives of the European Community, agreed to a peaceful solution to the Yugoslav crisis and the

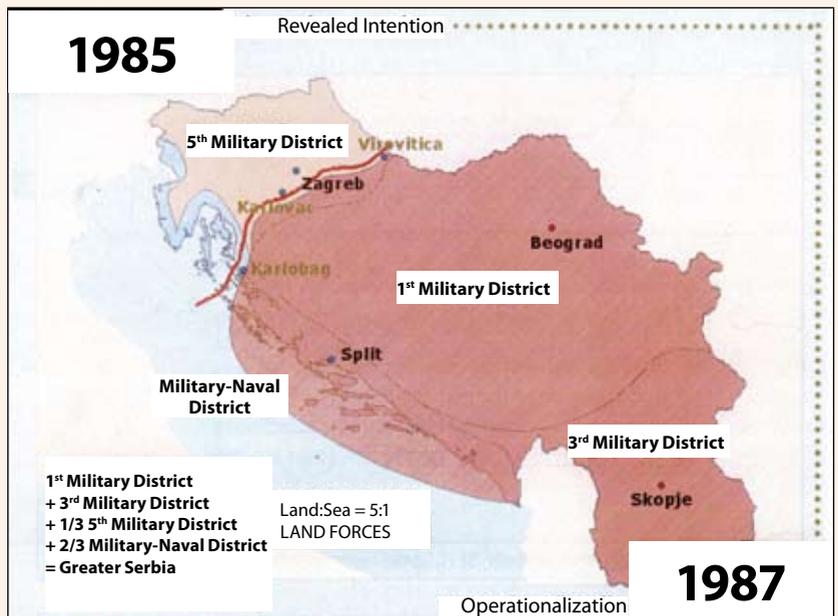


President Franjo Tuđman addressed the United Nations General Assembly in New York on the occasion the Republic of Croatia entering the United Nations, May 22, 1992.

1991

postponement of the declaration on Croatian sovereignty for three months. On October 8, 1991, the day after Yugoslav Army aircraft bombed the headquarters of the Croatian political leadership and the symbol of Croatian statehood, the Palace of the Ban (Banski dvori), the Croatian Parliament severed all ties with the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and declared the sovereignty of the Republic of Croatia. In the struggle for international recognition, Croatia participated in the Peace Conference on Yugoslavia, which began at The Hague in September 1991 under the chairmanship of Lord Peter Carrington. The Arbitration Commission of the Peace Conference on Yugoslavia, chaired by Robert Badinter, concluded on December 7, 1991, "that there is no question of secession, but the question is one of a disintegration" of Yugoslavia and that the former Yugoslav republics that want this can form new associations. The Vatican recognized the Republic of Croatia on January 13, 1992, and two days later, on January 15, the Republic of Croatia was recognized by the member states of the European Community. Subsequently, the majority of other countries followed suit. The Republic of Croatia was accepted for membership in the United Nations on May 22, 1992.

Military-territorial districts of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after the reorganization of the Yugoslav National Army in 1987—preparations for Serbian conquest up to the Virovitica–Karlovac–Karlobag border in order to create Greater Serbia



On July 1, 2013, Croatia became the twenty-eighth member state of the European Union, thereby fulfilling the aspirations of the first Croatian President, Dr. Franjo Tuđman, who already in 1968, during the time when the Soviet Union was occupying Czechoslovakia, was among the very few historians who wrote about the need for a united Europe. Two decades later, in 1990, the American general Jacque Klein said that he knew that Tuđman “passionately believed in a European Croatia...” (Jacques Klein, 2000). Croatia applied for membership in the European Union in February 21, 2003, and was accorded the status of a candidate country on June 18, 2004. Negotiations were officially inaugurated on October 3, 2005. The Treaty of the Accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union was signed in Brussels on December 9, 2011.

The Republic of Croatia has been a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, an international military-political organization founded in 1949 for mutual assistance in defense, whereby the members agree to mutual defense in response to attack by any third party) since April 1, 2009. Today, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia, created during the Homeland War, are rapidly adaptable and mobile, prepared to respond to all threats together with the other members of the NATO alliance. Croatia participated in a NATO summit meeting for the first time as a member state on April 3–4, 2009. The Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia have participated in the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Kosovo, and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Resolute Support (RS) in Afghanistan.

Since Croatia’s accession to the European Union, it has been bound by the decisions of the European Parliament, the largest representative and legislative body of the European Union, and “recognizes Nazism, Stalinism and fascist and communist regimes as a common legacy,” and “condemns strongly and unequivocally all crimes against humanity and the massive human rights violations committed by all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes.” Croatia has committed itself to implement and comply with the overall legislative and legal system of the European Union, including the implementation of European standards on the rights and protection of the victims of the totalitarian systems in the Republic of Croatia. The European Parliament has also adopted the following resolutions and declarations condemning totalitarianism: Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe No. 1096 on Measures to Dismantle the Heritage of Former Communist Totalitarian Systems (1996); Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe No. 1481 on the Need for International Condemnation of Crimes of Totalitarian Communist Regimes (2006); Resolution of the European Parliament on European Conscience and Totalitarianism (April 2, 2009); Declaration of the European Parliament on the Proclamation of Au-

gust 23 as the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism (which recalls the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 23, 1939, between the Soviet Union and Germany, that divided Europe into two spheres of interest by means of secret additional protocols) (September 23, 2008). On June 30, 2006, the Croatian Parliament adopted the Declaration on the Condemnation of Crimes Perpetrated during the Totalitarian Communist Movement in Croatia, 1945–1990. However, formal condemnation of the repressive communist system was not accompanied by appropriate action on the part of the Croatian political, civil or state structures.

The Serbian War of Aggression on Croatia, and the Croatian Homeland War

Democratic Croatia, after the harsh experiences of the totalitarian systems, soon found itself under attack by the Serbian imperialist policies through the state institutions of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Socialist Republic of Serbia and the Socialist Republic of Montenegro, and through various unitary Yugoslav political organizations and Serbian nationalistic organizations.

For decades, the creators of these policies in communist Yugoslavia prepared for their implementation. With that purpose, they reorganized and Serbianized the armed forces of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1985–1987). The territorial defense of all the republics, previously under the jurisdiction of the individual republics, became subordinate to the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) and the Federal Department/Ministry for the National Defense of the SFRY. The Serbianization of the Yugoslav National Army, with Serbian as the official language, was particularly evident in the representation of the Yugoslav peoples in the command structure: 63.2 percent Serbs, 6.2 percent Montenegrins, 6.3 percent Macedonians, 12.6 percent Croats, 2.8 percent Slovenes, 2.4 percent Muslims, 3.6 percent Yugoslavs, 0.6 percent Albanians, 0.7 percent Hungarians and 1.6 percent others. At the same time, with the reorganization of the Yugoslav National Army, a strategy was formulated for its activity and the political starting point was defined (Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1986). The election of Slobodan Milošević as the president of the Serbian Communist Party in 1986 determined the executor of the Serbian imperial plan.

Although Franjo Tuđman, in leading the Croatian democratic movement toward independence and deliverance from communist dictatorship, tried everything to avoid armed conflict and offered various solutions to the crisis in Yugoslavia, including the creation of a confederation of Yugoslav republics, the Serbs, convinced that their numerical superiority and the strong Serbianized armed forces of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia gave them an insurmountable advantage over the unarmed Croats, rejected all such proposals. The Serbian battles, including the “armed battles” mentioned by Slobodan Milošević on June 15, 1989, in Gazimestan, Kosovo, were begun by the Serbs living

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Territory of the Republic of Croatia occupied by Serbian extremists (1991-1995)

in Croatia immediately following the democratic changes in the republic, when they established their para-state institutions. They organized their “parliament” on July 25, 1990, established the so-called Serbian National Council and adopted the Declaration on the Autonomy and Sovereignty of the Serbian People in the Republic of Croatia. **In August 1990, they set up barricades on the roads around Knin (August 17), stationed armed guards in villages and on roads and proclaimed a state of war in the territory of “Krajina.”** The synchronization of the activity by the rebel Serbs in Croatia and the Yugoslav National Army is evidenced by the fact that **on August 18, 1990, aircraft of the Airforce of the Yugoslav National Army intercepted three helicopters of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia and prevented the police from coming to the area of Knin in order to open the blocked roads.** Then the rebel Serbs held a referendum on their autonomy in Croatia and in December 1990 proclaimed the “Serbian Autonomous Region (Oblast) of Krajina” for the territories of the municipalities of Knin, Obrovac, Benkovac, Gračac, Korenica, Dvor na Uni, Glina, Vojnić and Hrvatska Kostajnica. On

March 1, 1991, the so-called “Serbian National Council” adopted the decision to separate the self-proclaimed Krajina from the Republic of Croatia and a month later adopted a decision on the unification of Krajina with the Republic of Serbia.

At the outbreak of the Serbian rebellion, the Croats were unarmed and had no army, diplomacy, security services or the basic institutions of a democratic state. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in which the Croats would not and could not continue to live, had the support of the most powerful countries in the world. Few countries at the time supported Croatia’s aspirations for independence.

Serbian propaganda, with the help of countries who supported the preservation of Yugoslavia, did everything to portray the Croats to the world in the worst possible light. They placed all the evil that the Serbs inflicted upon Croats during the brutal aggression of 1991 in the context of revenge for alleged events during the Second World War.

One of those allegations was their myth of 700,000 Serbs liquidated in the Jasenovac camp. Although the Croatian authorities patiently negotiated with the rebels, who were well supplied with weapons and everything else from Belgrade, they rejected all Croatian proposals for their equality according to international law.

During the first half of 1991, they extended their rebellion to the majority of the territories where Serbs were living: in early March to Pakrac, in late March to Plitvice, in early May to Borovo Selo and elsewhere, expelling and killing Croats and other non-Serbian population.

During battles between the Croatian police and terrorists in Pakrac (March 2–3), Plitvice (March 31), when the first Croatian defender was killed, Police Officer Josip Jović, in Borovo Selo (May 2), when Serbian terrorists ambushed and killed twelve Croatian police officers and elsewhere, Yugoslav Army tanks and armored vehicles were placed between the Croatian police force and the terrorists, and actually took up strategic positions and contributed to the occupation of these Croatian territories.

The essence of the entire Serbian plan of aggression during the war against Croatia was to create the illusion that the Croats were the aggressors (in their own homeland and country) and that the Yugoslav National Army was defending the Serbian people. Therefore, the Serbianized Yugoslav National Army, the main protagonist in the Serbian program of conquest, generally did not act directly but used an indirect strategy and the strategy of attrition, closely connected with conflicts of low and less frequently medium intensity, which were supposed to reinforce the impression of spontaneous resistance by the “unarmed Serbian people” defending themselves from the “genocidal” Croatian people.

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In the referendum on Croatian independence of May 19, 1991, the citizens decided about the future of Croatia. They had to answer two questions: “Are

you in favor of the Republic of Croatia, as a sovereign and independent state that guarantees cultural autonomy and all civil rights to Serbs and members of other peoples in Croatia, free to form an association of sovereign states with other former Yugoslav republics (according to the proposal by the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Slovenia for resolving the state crisis of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)?” and the second, “Are you in favor of

The Serbian side, as previously, did not honor the agreement but continued what was at times very heavy shelling and the destruction of Croatian cities and villages.

the Republic of Croatia remaining in Yugoslavia as a unified federal state (according to the proposal by the Republic of Serbia and the Socialist Republic of Montenegro for resolving the state crisis in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)?” The turnout for the referendum was 83.56 percent of the voters, of whom 94.17 per-

cent voted for an independent and sovereign state, while 1.2 percent voted to remain in Yugoslavia.

After minor armed clashes in Slovenia with the Territorial Defense of Slovenia (June 27–July 7), the main objectives of the Yugoslav National Army during the summer and autumn of 1991 were to establish the complete military organization of the Serbian rebels and make it possible for the remaining Yugoslav troops to withdraw from the Republic of Slovenia. **In the autumn of 1991, the Yugoslav National Army also had to withdraw from the Republic of Croatia, leaving their military commanders and large quantities of weapons with the rebels. Taking into account that the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina would have a key role in the Greater Serbian program, the main Yugoslav Army forces that had left the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia were deployed throughout these territories.**

In July 1991, the Yugoslav National Army, in close cooperation with the rebels it had organized and guided through military and civilian security structures, launched open aggression against Croatia. The operational deployment of the armored mechanized units of the Twelfth Novi Sad Corps (July 3) in Baranja and the artillery and rocket attack from Bogojevo in Vojvodina across the Danube River on the town of Erdut in the Republic of Croatia (August 3) were acts of open aggression by the Yugoslav National Army from the standpoint of the international law of war. Then the Yugoslav National Army and rebel Serbs resumed attacks using all means of combat in the Croatian Danube region (Podunavlje), Banovina, Kordun, Lika, northern Dalmatia, western Slavonia and elsewhere. Around-the-clock attacks by Serbian terrorists and the Yugoslav National Army on Vukovar, which has since become a symbol of Croatian resistance to the Serbian aggressor, began on August 24, 1991. In September, the Yugoslav National Army intensified actions on all fronts, occupied the Una River Valley and began the attack on southern Croatia (Konavle, Župa

Dubrovačka and Dubrovnik). From the sea, the Yugoslav National Army blocked the entire Adriatic coast and the Peruča Dam on the Cetina River was occupied. During the fiercest fighting in Croatia, on September 25, 1991, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution on Yugoslavia No. 713, “a general and complete embargo on all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Yugoslavia,” which also applied to the unarmed Croats who were forced to defend themselves from Serbian aggression. There was also an appeal to “all parties to settle their disputes peacefully and through negotiation at the Conference on Yugoslavia.” United Nations peacekeeping forces were to be engaged to help implement this resolution in the Republic of Croatia and former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was appointed as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Croatia.

In October 1991, the aggressor blockaded Dubrovnik and Zadar, occupied Ilok, and bombed the Palace of the Ban in Zagreb. On November 18, following a three-month siege in which the defenders were vastly outnumbered by the forces of the aggressor, the city of Vukovar fell. In Vukovar, 2,000 defenders and civilians perished, 800 were missing, 3,000 ended up in concentration camps in Serbia, approximately 42,000 citizens were driven out of their homes, and 260 of the seriously wounded were removed from the Vukovar Hospital and slaughtered in nearby Ovčara.

Among the wounded removed by the Serbian aggressors from the hospital and taken to Ovčara and killed was a 25-year-old French volunteer, Jean-Michel Nicollier,

Serbian-Montenegrin attack on Dubrovnik, 1991



who had joined the Croatian Defense Council (HOS) in Vukovar in August 1991 and had been wounded during the defense of the city on November 9.

On November 18–19, 1991, Serbian troops massacred sixty-two Croatian civilians and five prisoners of war in Škabrnja, near Zadar. On November 21, the Maslenica Bridge was demolished, thereby severing the last land link between northern and southern Croatia left intact within the territory still controlled by the government of the Republic of Croatia. On December 6, 1991, the Yugoslav Army bombarded Dubrovnik for twelve hours with shelling and rocket fire. On December 13, forty-three civilians, all but one Croatian, were tortured and then killed by the Serbian White Eagles paramilitary unit in the Slavonian village of Voćin. By the autumn of 1991, the Serbian aggressor had occupied over one fourth of the Republic of Croatia and severed the direct land link in the Zadar hinterland between northern and southern Croatia, thereby devastating the Croatian economy. Nevertheless, the desired Virovitica-Karlovac-Karlobag boundary claimed by Serbian ideology as the westernmost boundary of Greater Serbia had not been achieved. As of October 22, 1991, approximately 320,000 Croats and other non-Serbs had to leave their homes in order to escape Serbian atrocities and violence. Owing to a resolute desire for freedom, the Republic of Croatia was able to stop the enemy, already liberating part of the occupied areas in western Slavonia in the autumn of 1991.

On November 23, 1991, a peace plan for Croatia was negotiated in Geneva known as the Vance Plan, which provided for the implementation of a ceasefire, the arrival of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and the establishment of safe zones under the protection of UN forces (UNPA), which were to be demilitarized, in order to safeguard the population from violence. **On that day, 500,000 displaced persons were registered in Croatia, and there were 700,000 at the end of 1991 (as well as refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina). Through the mediation of Special Envoy Cyrus Vance, on January 2, 1992, in Sarajevo, an agreement was signed for a complete ceasefire on land, sea and air, thereby suspending further Croatian campaigns to liberate Croatian territory. The Serbian side, as previously, did not honor the agreement but continued what was at times very heavy shelling and the destruction of the Croatian cities and villages in the vicinity of the demarcation line (the official Serbian strategy consisting of attacks from a distance, a strategy of real threats). Serbs also attacked and destroyed Croatia from the areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina they had occupied.**

Although international forces (UNPROFOR) had arrived from early April to early June 1992 in the occupied Croatian territories with the objective of achieving peace and protecting the population, during their mandate nearly all the remaining Croatian and other non-Serbian population, approximately

12,000 persons, were driven from their homes in the occupied territories, more than 1,000 persons were killed, and great damage was inflicted on the economy, cultural heritage and properties of the Republic of Croatia.

Since the UNPROFOR was not fulfilling its mission, Croatia had to gradually liberate its occupied territories: the Miljevci Plateau and Dubrovnik area in 1992, the Maslenica area in 1993, thereby reinstating direct traffic between northern and southern Croatia; the Peruča Dam on the course of the Cetina River, at the moment when the Serbian aggressor mined and attempted to demolish it in order to endanger the tens of thousands of Croats living downstream; and Medak Pocket (Divoselo, Čitluk and Počitelj), from where the Serbian aggressor shelled the Gospić area daily. Western Slavonia was completely liberated in early May of 1995. Croats continued to try to liberate their occupied territory in a peaceful manner. Rebels in Knin were offered an international peace plan known as Z-4, which provided for the creation of an autonomous Serbian region. **However, the Serbs refused it. Northern Dalmatia, Lika, Kordun and Banovina were liberated in the military-police Operation Storm (August 4–7, 1995). The Erdut Agreement of November, 12, 1995, between the authorities of the Republic of Croatia and the local Serbian authorities, paved the way for the peaceful reintegration of the Croatian Danube region (Podunavlje) into the constitutional-legal system of the Republic of Croatia.** This agreement was acknowledged by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1023 (November 23, 1995). Reintegration was successfully concluded on January 15, 1998.

During the war in Croatia, 14,154 Croatian soldiers and civilians were either killed or went missing, while 32,679 were wounded and over 700,000 were forced to flee their homes. **In the great Operation Storm (August 4–7, 1995), the Croatian army and police liberated occupied territories of the Republic of Croatia that had been under the control of the rebel Serbs since 1991, and from which the Serbs had either killed or expelled all the Croatian population, thereby returning all the occupied territory to the Croatian constitutional-legal system, except for eastern Slavonia. Operation Storm and Operation Flash were crucial in bringing an end to the Serbian war of aggression and thereby ending the Homeland War. Operation Storm liberated 10,400 square kilometers or 18.4 percent of the total area of Croatia. Eastern Slavonia was returned to the constitutional-legal system of the Republic of Croatia through peaceful reintegration, which was concluded on January 15, 1998.** During the period of Serbian aggression, 7,600 Croats were held in Serbian concentration camps, 64 of which were in Serbia and 14 were in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Two hundred ninety-five Croats were liquidated in these camps. So far, 139 mass graves have been discovered and 4,000 victims have been exhumed, while the fate of another 1,214 persons who went missing during Serbian aggression is still unknown. The brutality of the aggressor is evident from

the fact that in addition to many schools, apartments and family homes (217,000 residences), commercial objects and 2,423 cultural landmarks, 495 houses of worship were destroyed, of which 437 were Catholic churches and 22 were convents or monasteries. In September 1999, the Croatian government estimated that the total damages caused by the aggression against Croatia amounted to 37.1 billion American dollars.

“Belgrade thus incited and armed Croatian Serbs to rise up against Zagreb and then sent in the Yugoslav army to ‘restore order’—which meant assisting the rebels and driving all non-Serbs from their land. Faced with this challenge, Western leaders made, as I have mentioned, three errors. First, they tried to keep Yugoslavia together when it was clearly no longer possible to do so. Second, the international community imposed an arms embargo on all the component parts of the former Yugoslavia. This deprived the Slovenes, Croats and Bosnians of the means to defend themselves and left them heavily outgunned by the aggressor. Third, the attempt at even-handedness in assessing blame for what was occurring, when the truth was that one side was the aggressor and the other the victim, led the West into something approaching complicity with the crimes being committed. Far from being ‘the hour of Europe’, (...) it was the hour of Europe’s shame” (Margaret Thatcher, *Statecraft: Strategies for a Changing World*, pp. 228–229).

The Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina

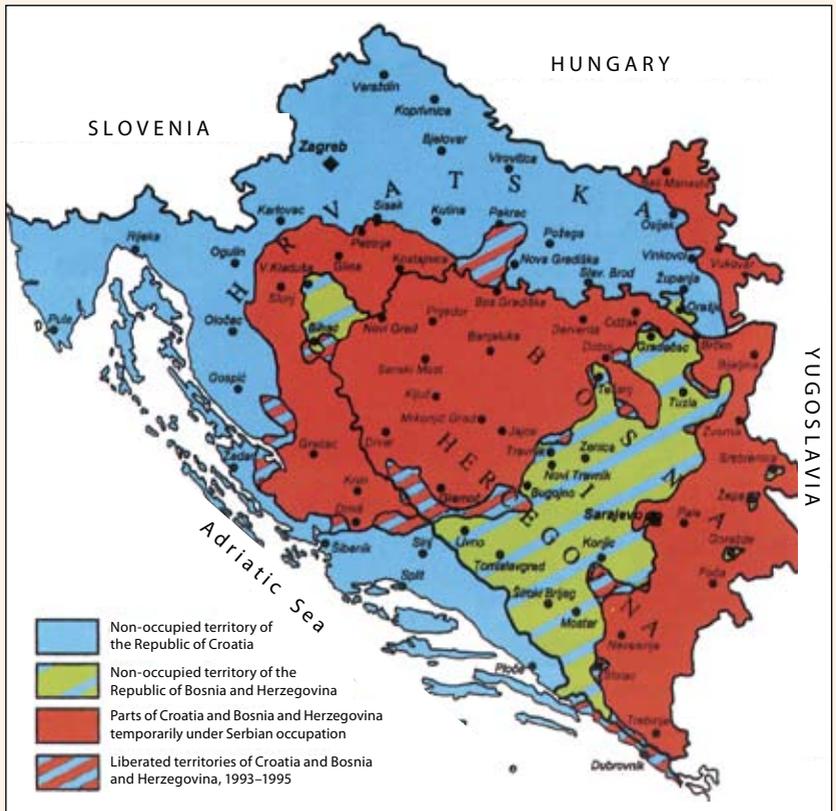
Political pluralism began to develop in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the summer of 1990, with the founding of ethnically-based political parties: first the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), which was predominantly Muslim (Bosniak), followed by the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). Democratic elections were held at the end of 1990. Alija Izetbegović, representing the Muslim majority, was elected as the first president of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, while the Muslims and Croats sought to preserve Bosnia and Herzegovina as a state of three equal peoples, Serbs created their own local authorities. This was all part of the plan for the creation of a Serbian state extending up to the Virovitica–Karlovac–Karlobag boundary, as desired by proponents of Ser-

Following the war in Croatia, in which the Yugoslav National Army failed to achieve its strategic objectives, Serbian aggression spread to Bosnia and Herzegovina in early 1992.



Bosnian-Herzegovian theater of operations, autumn 1993

1990–1995



The Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina prior to Operation Storm in 1995

bian nationalist and irredentist ideology, with the support of the Yugoslav National Army, which, after withdrawing from the occupied territory of Croatia, left most of their weapons with the occupation forces in order to equip the “Serbian Army of Krajina,” and the rest in Bosnia and Herzegovina. **Following the war in Croatia, in which the Yugoslav National Army failed to achieve its strategic objective, Serbian aggression was spread to Bosnia and Herzegovina in early 1992. After Yugoslav Army Forces were withdrawn from Slovenia and Croatia, a total of 83,000 soldiers of that army, equipped with 460–500 tanks, 400–420 armored vehicles and 950–1,000 artillery pieces, were deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, the number of local volunteer Serbian forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina ranged from 80,000 to 120,000.** Already on December 23, 1991, the “Serbian National Assembly” in Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the decision that the so-called “Serbian Bosnia and Herzegovina” would be formed by the Orthodox

Christian New Year, January 14, 1992, which was only one day before the European Community was to recognize the independence of the republics of the former Yugoslavia. The formation of the “Serbian Bosnia and Herzegovina” was the de facto beginning of armed conflict in that republic. **At the same time, the Serbian aggressor also had the objective of retaining the occupied territories of the Republic of Croatia with the “assistance” of the international forces (UNPROFOR) and, after occupying Bosnia and Herzegovina, annexing the occupied territories of the Republic of Croatia in order to achieve the goal of the creation of “Greater Serbia.”**

The Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who were the oldest constituent nation in that former Yugoslav Republic, as they are now in the sovereign Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, have always, despite many centuries of historical disunity and the

The Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina after Operation Storm and the Dayton Peace Agreement, March 21, 1996



diversity of the political systems in which they found themselves, been connected to Croatia. When the Serbian aggressor attacked the democratically established Republic of Croatia, large numbers of Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia and resisted the Serbian aggressor in their homeland. On May 7, 1991, Croats in Prolog, Herzegovina, stood unarmed in front of two battalions of Yugoslav National Army tanks headed for Široki Brijeg. In the spring of 1992, when Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina found themselves confronted by the Serbian aggressor, their compatriots from around the world and Croatia whose ancestors had originated from those regions participated in their defense.

On February 29, 1992, in a referendum concerning the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Muslim and Croatian population voted for an independent state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On April 7, 1992, the same day that the members of the European Union and the Republic of Croatia recognized this state, Serbs responded by proclaiming the Republika Srpska, boycotting the state institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and attacking areas where Muslims and Croats made up the majority of the population. On March 2, 1992, they set up barricades in Sarajevo and on March 18 of that year, rejected the Cutileiro Plan for the cantonization of Bosnia and Herzegovina, whereby each constituent nation would have greater authority in cantons throughout a unified Bosnia and Herzegovina. **Serbian paramilitaries killed many people in Bijeljina, Zvornik, Foča, Prijedor, Višegrad and elsewhere, drove out the Muslim and Croatian inhabitants, raped, looted, destroyed cultural and material goods, and with the help of the Yugoslav National Army occupied the eastern part of Mostar (April 3), Kupres (April 9), Stolac (April 10), Doboј (May 3), Bosanski Šamac and Brčko (May 4–7), Bosanski Novi and Kalesija (May 12) and Sanski Most (May 31). On April 21, 1992, they completely besieged Sarajevo (until February 29, 1996). They also established concentration camps for the non-Serbian population (Omarska, Keraterm, Brčko, Bijeljina and many others).**

Croats in Bosnia paid a heavy price for resisting Serbian aggression and later Muslim aggression: 9,909 killed or missing and 20,649 wounded.

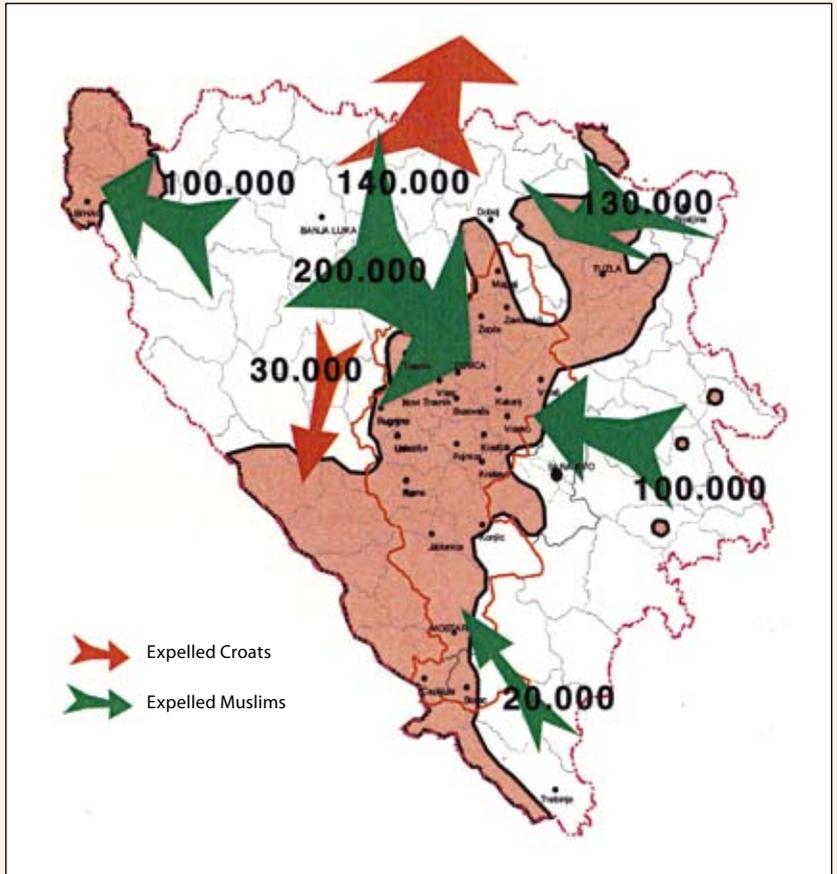
Resistance of Bosnian-Herzegovinian Croats and Muslims to Serbian Aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina

Although the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina were the first to establish security and military institutions (Muslim Defense Council and National Defense Council in June 1991, the secret military force of the Patriotic League in September 1991 in 9 regions and 103 districts, with approximately 120,000 members), the Croats, organized into the Croatian Defense Council (HVO), established on April 8, 1992, were the first to rise up in defense against the Serbian aggressor. The Croatian Defense Union was established in July 1991. On April 15, 1992, the Muslims named their defense force the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Croats first found themselves targeted by Serbian aggression on October 1, 1991, in southeastern Herzegovina, and in the spring of 1992 when the Serbian aggressor amassed forces in Mostar, Čapljina around Stolac and on the Dubrava Plateau (Dubravska visoravan), in preparation for a new offensive, in order to take the Neretva Valley eventually and join forces in western Herzegovina and southern Dalmatia with their troops from Knin. Daily shelling of the Croatian villages in Herzegovina, on the western bank of the Neretva River, caused the local inhabitants to flee to the Republic of Croatia. Under such circumstances, on April 8, 1992, the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia was established, a community of thirty municipalities in which the majority of the population was Croatian. The Croatian Defense Council (HVO) was also established in order to defend the territory of the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia, a multiethnic military formation in the 1990s made up of Croats, Muslims and others. An agreement between the Muslim and Croatian leadership made it possible for the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia to mount a successful defense in the territory of Herzegovina. **Although outnumbered in weapons and soldiers, in April 1992 the Croats were able to stop the Serbian advance toward Dalmatia in the area of the Kupres Highlands–Duvno–Livno and the Neretva Valley (Stolovi). This was the first time during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina that a Serbian attack operation had failed.**

Although outnumbered in weapons and soldiers, in April 1992 the Croats were able to stop the Serbian advance toward Dalmatia.

1992



The displacement of the non-Serbian population of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war in 1992

The Croatian forces in the Neretva Valley soon started pushing back the enemy from the western part of Mostar, on the left bank of the Neretva River on May 25, and then, on June 6, the Croatian forces launched a successful campaign to liberate the Neretva Valley, Dubrava Plateau, Stolac and Mostar. In mid-1992, a very hard battle was fought with the Serbs for Bosnian Posavina. Diplomatic demands and threats to Croatia, in addition to the Croats being greatly outnumbered by the Serbian forces, created the conditions for the fall of Bosnian Posavina. Serbian forces conquered Bosanski Brod on October 6, 1992. From the military standpoint, the reason for the occupation of Bosnian Posavina was that the Croatian defense forces were at a great numerical disadvantage.

The Conflict between Muslims and Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Greater Serbian politics and Serbian aggression undermined the traditionally good relations between the Muslims and the Croats living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Central Bosnia and the Neretva Valley, while in other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatian-Muslim relations continued to remain good or at least tolerable. Muslims fought in the ranks of the Croatian Defense Council, where the majority of them remained until July 1992, when relations between Croats and Muslims began to deteriorate, although even then some Muslims stayed.



The Croat-Muslim Federation Peace Agreement was signed in Washington, D.C., on March 18, 1994.

Although President Dr. Franjo Tuđman had offered to work together with Alija Izetbegović, who was then the chairman of the Party of Democratic Action, on the reorganization of Yugoslavia into a confederate state, Izetbegović supported the Serbian proposal of a strong united Yugoslavia, hoping in that way to have a total of six million Muslims from Macedonia to Bosnia. **When a referendum was held in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the territorial integrity of the state, Dr. Franjo Tuđman urged the Croats living there to support the referendum, which contributed the existence of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an integral country. The Republic of Croatia was the first to recognize the sovereign state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.** The Muslim-Croatian conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992–1994, was accompanied, and still is, by various types of manipulation. Already in 1991, the Government of the Republic of Croatia made it possible for police officers sent from Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Party of Democratic Action to be trained in Croatia, for entire units of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina to be trained and equipped and for pilots in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina to be trained. Throughout the entire period of resistance to Serbian aggres-

1992–1994

sion and the Muslim-Croatian conflict, regular logistics centers of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina operated in Zagreb, Rijeka, Split, Samobor and elsewhere, and it was made possible for arms to be supplied to the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina through Croatia. Ammunition, fuel, food, medicine and all the war supplies for the

Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina came through the Republic of Croatia. Thousands of volunteers from Islamic countries were allowed to enter Bosnia and Herzegovina through Croatia. During this period, over 10,000 wounded members of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina were treated at Croatian hospitals. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims were cared for in hotels and other facilities in the Republic of Croatia at Croatian expense.

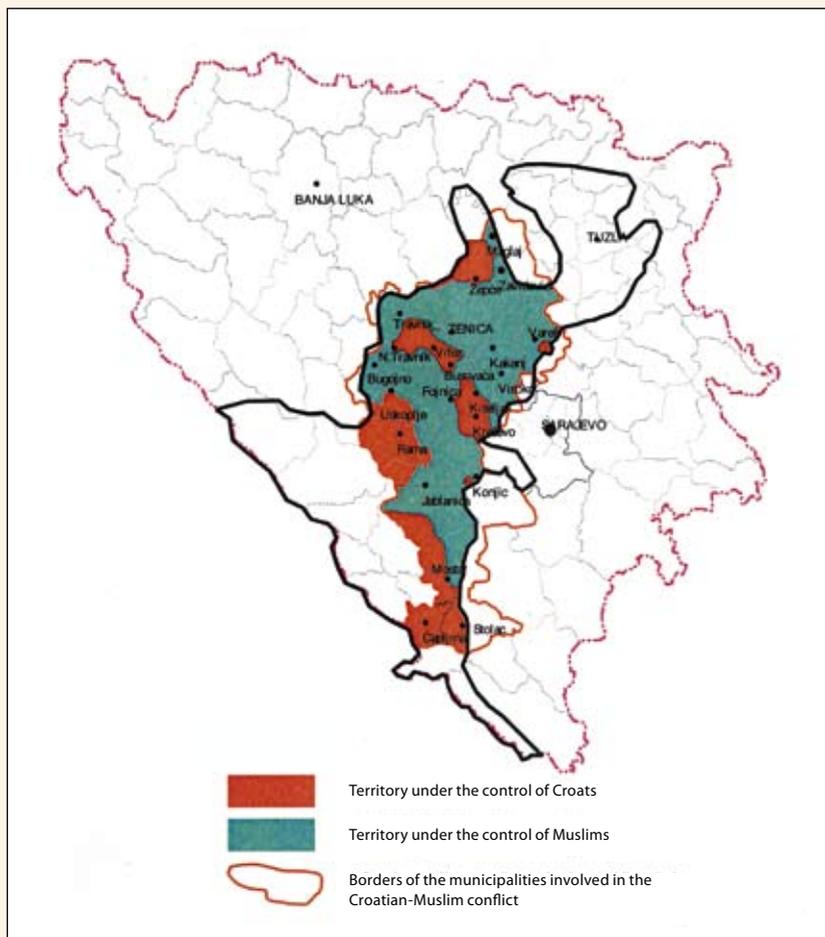


Meeting between President Franjo Tuđman of the Republic of Croatia and President Bill Clinton of the United States, on March 18, 1994, in Washington, D.C.

Repeated proposals by President Franjo Tuđman of the Republic of Croatia to President Alija Izetbegović of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina concerning the formation of a military alliance in defense against the Serbian aggressor

were not accepted until 1995, when it became clear that the Muslim-Croatian enclave of Bihać was in danger of becoming a new Srebrenica, where Serbs had captured and subsequently executed almost 8,000 Muslim civilians in July 1995. On October 1, 1991, when the Serbian-Montenegrin forces attacked Croatia and eastern Herzegovina, President Izetbegović of Bosnia and Herzegovina had said: "This is not our war!"

Tensions between Muslims and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina were particularly evident in the autumn of 1992, when the Muslim population that had been expelled from eastern and western Bosnia and from eastern Herzegovina found themselves in Central Bosnia and the Neretva Valley, which disrupted the previous demographic situation but also spurred Muslims to seek new places to live, to the detriment of Croats, instead of liberating the areas from which they had been driven by Serbs. In April 1993, the Muslim-Croatian incidents of 1992 escalated into Muslim attacks on the Croatian population in Central Bosnia and the Neretva Valley. At the time, 30 percent of the Croatian Defense Council was composed of Muslims. In certain territories, units of the Croatian Defense Council and the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina coordinated their operations, acknowledging the command of the stronger component: the Croatian Defense Council was subordinate in Sarajevo, Bihać and Tuzla, while the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina was subordinate in Mostar and Stolac. During the entire period of cooperation between the Croatian Defense Council and the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Croatian side insisted on the establishment of a joint command.



Division of territories after the signing of the Croatian-Muslim Federation Peace Agreement in Washington, D.C. (1994)

On April 16, 1993, after isolating units of the Croatian Defense Council, setting up checkpoints on roads and establishing battle positions in the vicinity of important objects, the forces of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina attacked the Croatian population in Central Bosnia. **During these conflicts (in Grab and Bilivode near Zenica, Orlište, Buščak and Trusina near Konjic, Orahovo, Miletići, Mehurići near Travnik, Drenovik near Kakanj, the vicinity of Busovača, in Doljani, in Kiseljak near Žepče, Uzdol in Rama, Grabovica near Mostar, Vinište near Zavidovići, Križančevo Selo, Sarajevo, the vicinity of Novi Travnik, Zenica and Vitez, on Dubrava Plateau and elsewhere), 1,041 Croats were murdered: old people, women, children, the sick and the wounded. Six hundred forty-four**

defenders were killed, 60 persons were raped, 9,303 persons were held in 70 Muslim concentration camps, mostly Croats, and 152,950 were driven from their homes. It is unfortunate that many of these crimes were committed in the presence of the UNPROFOR (Ivica Mlivić, *Zločin s pečatom* [The Crime with the Seal], Second Expanded Edition, Mostar, 2001). The religious objects and property of all the sides were destroyed during Serbian aggression and the Muslim-Croatian conflict: 182 Catholic churches, 1,024 Muslim mosques, 27 Serbian Orthodox churches and 5 Jewish synagogues. There were Muslim victims in the armed conflicts with Croats but they were not as numerous as the Croatian victims. The number of Muslims driven from their homes during armed conflicts with Croats was approximately 50,000. There are indications that this conflict was provoked and directed by intelligence services of some European countries wishing to minimize the Serbian crimes and to show to the world that all the sides were the same. The mainstream of the international community and public were deaf and blind to the far more numerous crimes committed by Muslims against Croats, while they systematically and consciously inflated the crimes committed by Croats against Muslims. The crime committed by Croats in Ahmići, against Muslims, in a military action which was to prevent the surge of the Muslim forces though Ahmići in order to cut the road from Travnik to Busovača (a very important road for the Croatian forces), was repeatedly reported by numerous world media, as well as the Hague Tribunal, while they showed no interest for the equally horrible Muslim crime against Croats, committed on the same day in the Croat village of Trusina, near Konjic. The repercussions of the conflicts between Muslims and Croats were tragic for both sides.

The Croat-Muslim Federation Peace Agreement signing ceremony was held in Washington, D.C., on March 18, 1994. Negotiations on the General Framework Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina were conducted from November 1 to 21, 1995, at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base not far from Dayton, Ohio, after which the agreement was formally signed in Paris on December 14 of the same year, which provided for one state and two entities. The Serbian entity (Republika Srpska) was given 49 percent of the total area, although the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina was 31 percent Serbian according to the 1991 census, while the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Muslims and Croats) were given 51 percent.

Some false accusations aimed to harm Croats

1.

In accusing Croats, along with their crime against Muslims in Ahmići (and less in Stupni Dol near Vareš), the international public made special use of the destruction of the Old Bridge in Mostar as a means to slander Croats. During Operation June Dawns (Operacija Lipanjske Zore), waged in June 1992 by the Croatian Defense Council for the liberation of Herzegovina, Serbs demolished the bridges on the Neretva River, with the exception of the Old Bridge, which they were unable to destroy because members of the Croatian Defense Council had protected it with thick planks after taking the surrounding area. Nevertheless, the bridge was demolished at the conclusion of Muslim-Croatian hostilities on November 9, 1993, at 10:16 a.m., when the bridge was shot at from a tank on the Croatian side. The following questions remained open: Why were more than 70 rounds fired at the bridge when it could have been taken down with a maximum of three strikes? Why did the shelling last for hours and why were so many cameras filming it? On the films, it is visible that the shooting did not only come from the Croatian side. The report of an expert team confirms that the bridge, which was controlled by the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Muslim Army), was destroyed during intensive town fighting when explosive was activated in the structure of the bridge, and it was evident that the explosive had been planted there before the fighting took place. The above mentioned films show that the bridge was not shot at from the Croatian side alone. Although it is still not known who destroyed the Old Bridge in Mostar, it is indisputable that its destruction compromised the Croats, and that it was quite suitable for someone's goals, because it happened at the time when the conflict between the Croats and Muslims was subsiding.

2.

The behavior of the British and French Rapid Reaction Force during Operation Summer '95, a military campaign by the Croatian Army and Croatian Defense Council in the area of Grahovo and Glamoč to draw away the Serbian forces besieging the Muslim-Croatian enclave of Bihać, was indicative. The Serbs were not able to block this operation but the British and French Rapid Reaction Force attempted to do so. Namely, after their arrival in Bosnia and Herzegovina, they kept trying to deploy to the Dinara-Livno front instead of the Muslim zones threatened by Serbian aggression. Their deployment and role were solely for the purpose of blocking the advance of Croatian forces on Mt. Dinara toward Bihać and shielding the Serbs in Knin from possible defeat. Since the true intentions of the Rapid Reaction Force were evident, the Croatian and Muslim political leadership did not permit their presence on Mt. Dinara, Livanjsko Field or the Kupres Highlands.

3.

Croats are accused of launching Operation Storm (August 4–7, 1995), allegedly for the purpose of ethnically cleansing Serbs from the occupied territories. However, such an assertion fails to take the failure of four years of negotiations into account, as well as the Croatian side's very patient acceptance of the failed UNPROFOR and UNCRO missions, the threat to the strategic interests of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the occupation of over a fourth (26.5 percent) of Croatian territory, and the possibility that the population of the Bihać enclave would meet the same fate as that of Srebrenica, where Serbs had slaughtered approximately 8,000 Muslims twenty days earlier. When the Croatian Operation Storm was successfully ended, the world was surprised by the might and strength of the Croatian army, as well as by the level of its strategic performance in that lightning war operation which was led in a very modern manner.

After Operation Storm, Serbian analysts, among other things, wrote the following: "Time will tell whether the decisions by the Supreme Command of the Serbian Army of Krajina to evacuate the population from Knin and abandon its defense were correct. It is known that after the abandonment of Knin, the population from other towns and villages in Krajina, actually the entire [Serbian] population, embarked on an exodus, as if commanded to do so" (Vojska [Army], Belgrade, August 10, 1995, p. 7). There is considerable other evidence that the departure of the Serbian population had been organized in advance, despite Croatian President Tuđman's urgings via the mass media for them to remain in their homes. This is particularly confirmed in the book *Knin je pao u Beogradu* (Knin Fell in Belgrade), by the Serbian General Milisav Sekulić, (Belgrade, 2000), in which the order of the High Defense Council of the Republic of Serbian Krajina, dated August 4, 1995 (No. 12-3113-11959) on the "evacuation of the civilian population" "according to prepared plans" was published. Most Serbs had already followed the order to evacuate on the afternoon of August 4, 1995, prior to the arrival of the Croatian Army units, as corroborated by the American ambassador at the time, Peter Galbraith, in his testimony before the tribunal in The Hague.

4.

In Operation Mistral [Maestral], a military offensive by the Croatian forces and the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina on September 8–15, 1995, launched pursuant to the Split Agreement on mutual defense between President Tuđman of the Republic of Croatia and President Izetbegović of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to liberate the area around Drvar and Jajce, for the first time two independent operations were conducted simultaneously, one by land and the other by air. Specifically, during an attack by Croatian and Muslim land forces, NATO forces were attacking Serbian aerial defenses from the air over several days. Operation Mistral was successful and left Serbs in control of less than 45 percent of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Negotiations on ending the war could begin.

On October 8–15, 1995, Croatian forces located 23 kilometers from Banja Luka would have been able to enter that city in less than 48 hours from both the southwest and southeast. However, NATO issued an ultimatum to the Croatian Army: either the Croatian forces would halt or they would be targeted by air strikes. The Croatian forces could go no further and, thus, the “Republika Srpska,” together with Slobodan Milošević, was saved.

5.

Did Croatia “divide” Bosnia and Herzegovina? Was Croatia the aggressor in Bosnia and Herzegovina? The answers to these questions can only be negative. **Croatia repeat-**

edly saved Bosnia and Herzegovina from total Serbian occupation. The first time it did so politically, as there would not have been a referendum on the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina if the Croatian president had not urged the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina to participate in it and vote for independence. If they had joined the Serbs, who boycotted the referendum, the vote for the establishment of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina would not have occurred. The second time Croatia did so militarily, when Croatian forces stopped Serbian tanks before Duvno and on Livanjsko Field in the spring of



After the city of Vukovar fell to Serbian forces, all the Croats living there were expelled from their homes, while the world did nothing.

1992. The third time was the breaking of the siege of Bihać, which was in danger of suffering the same fate as Srebrenica (where Serbs massacred thousands of Bosniak civilians, despite this area being a so-called UN-protected zone). The fourth time was in the autumn of 1995, when Croatian forces, liberating Bosnia together with the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, came within 23 kilometers of Banja Luka, thus making it possible for the peace processes to begin.

Fifth, Croatia received hundreds of thousands of Bosnian refugees fleeing the Serbian army, who continued to remain in Croatia during the Muslim-Croatian military conflict, including members of Alija Izetbegović’s immediate family.

Many major world powers had (and continue to have) interests in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where they have sent their armies and intelligence agents. As for the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina, besides the baseless and malicious assertion that Tuđman divided Bosnia and Herzegovina with Milošević, as refuted by the aforementioned arguments, the international community had many plans for the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina, by which the results of Serbian ethnic cleansing, genocide and the sta-

tus established by the Serbian aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina would be recognized (the Cutileiro Plan of March 1992, the Vance-Owen Plan of January 1993, and the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan of August 1993, by which Herzeg-Bosnia was created, which Croats accepted under duress from the international community).

Bosnia and Herzegovina was divided by Serbian occupation, which was subsequently recognized in Dayton by the international community and thereby imposed as the final solution.

6.

In 1992, Muslims started turning their backs on their Croatian allies, using staged incidents in an attempt to incite Croats to attack them first. The Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina had the motive and the people, according to Charles R. Shrader, an American military historian from West Point, in his book *The Muslim-Croat Civil War in Central Bosnia*, and was already well armed to attack the Croats in Central Bosnia, which it did according to a pre-existing plan. However, everything was done to portray the Croats as the instigators of the conflict with the Muslims.

There are many who have been concealing the fact that the first crimes against Croats in Central Bosnia, aside from those in Rama, were perpetrated by the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Seventh Muslim Brigade, on January 26, 1993, in the Zenica village of Dusina and the Busovača village of Gusti Grab.

In connection with the wartime conflict between the Croats and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is often asserted that it occurred after the minister of defense of

For three months, 1,500 to 2,000 Croatian defenders courageously protected the besieged city of Vukovar from the numerically superior and better armed rebel Serbs and forces of the Yugoslav National Army (45,000 to 60,000 soldiers and approximately 1,000 tanks). When the Serbian forces took Vukovar on November 18, 1991, the city was in ruins.



Bosnia and Herzegovina issued a directive on January 15, 1993, subordinating units of the Army of Bosnia Herzegovina in the provinces with Croatian majorities (3, 8 and 10) to the headquarters of the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) according to the Vance-

Owen Plan. At the same time, the same perpetrators never mention the second part of this directive, which subordinates the units of the Croatian Defense Council in the territories of the provinces with Muslim majorities (1, 5 and 9), which were proclaimed Muslim provinces according to the Joint Declaration signed in Geneva, to the headquarters of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

7.

In 2001, indictments were issued in The Hague by the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 (ICTY) against the Croatian generals Ante Gotovina, Ivan Čermak and Mladen Markač. In 2011, the tribunal acquitted General Čermak of all charges but sentenced General Gotovina to 24 years of prison and General Markač to 18 years for alleged crimes committed during and after Operation Storm. On November 16, 2012, General Gotovina and General Markač were acquitted by the Appeals Chamber of the ICTY and released from custody.

On November 29, 2017, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) reached final verdicts in the cases of six Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina: Jadranko Prlić, Milivoj Petković, Bruno Stojić, Valentin Ćorić, Berislav Pušić and Slobodan Praljak. Despite numerous documents which could have proved their innocence, and rejecting to hear a number of people who wanted to give evidence about their innocence, they were convicted by the Hague Tribunal. The chronology of their accusation, indictment, and the origin of the Tribunal's sources point

to illegal intervention of some NATO member states into these cases with the goal of fulfilling their own political, diplomatic and geostrategic interests. After revealing these wrongdoings the Croatian General Slobodan Praljak, at the moment the verdicts were being pronounced, committed suicide by drinking poison, after he uttered these last words to the Court Council: "Justices, Slobodan Praljak is not a war criminal".

8.

In 1995, with the Dayton Peace Agreement, the great powers, which had participated in the establishment of the UN tribunal, gave Serbs territory in Bosnia and Herzegovina that had not previously belonged to them but that they had occupied through ethnic cleansing (the Serbian population, constituting 31 percent of the total population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, received 49 percent of the territory). Moreover, the indecision of the international community and the belated Vance–Owen Plan were responsible for the conflict between



In the autumn of 1991, the famous shrine of Our Lady of Voćin was destroyed by Serbian shelling, as were many other Catholic holy sites and churches.

the Muslim and Croatian forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The international community did not indict the architect and progenitor of the war, Slobodan Milošević, President of the Socialist Republic of Serbia within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1989 to 1997 and then President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1997 to 2000, until May 1999, two months after the start of NATO military operations against Serbia. No charges were ever brought against the Yugoslav minister of defense, Veljko Kadijević; the chief of staff of the Yugoslav National Army, Blagoje Adžić or other members of the Yugoslav presidency who planned and conducted this war of aggression. On the contrary, in addition to constant accusations against Croats for the Ustasha crimes during the Second World War and the unjustified and tendentious depiction of the Republic of Croatia as the successor to the Independent State of Croatia, Chetniks are being rehabilitated in today's Serbia, including their leader, Draža Mihailović, and other Chetnik leaders. **The president of the Croatian Academy of Legal Sciences, Professor Željko Horvatić has stated that the Security Council should not have permitted the former prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Carla Del Ponte, to resign from her position without determining her responsibility for the incompetence, abuse of power and lasting damage to the confidence of the members states of the United Nations and the world public in the international criminal law and justice system.**

9.

In Croatia, some claim that there would have been no indictments against Croatian generals by the tribunal in The Hague if Croatia had prosecuted the crimes. The facts speak otherwise. According to a Croatian report sent to The Hague, criminal charges had been brought in 3,978 cases, 1,949 Croats were tried in Croatian courts, 1,492 persons were convicted (27 for murder), and 13 persons were given long prison sentences.

On October 10, 2002, the center-left coalition government sent "an Initiative to the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia, (...) to render an opinion on the individual constitutional aspects of the liberating operations of the Homeland War and the powers and duties of the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia connected with them." On November 12, the Constitutional Court responded with a report containing, among other things, the following: "13) The armed forces of the Republic of Croatia had a constitutional duty to protect the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Croatia and defend its territorial integrity, which is prescribed in Article 7(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. Pursuant thereto, and in response to the first question posed by the Initiative of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the Constitutional Court hereby declares the following: The actions undertaken by the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia with the objective of liberating the parts of the occupied territories of the Republic of Croatia—including the elimination of the clear and present danger to the lives of the population and the prevention of property destruction caused by the armed (military and paramilitary, para-police and/or terrorist) attacks by occupying units launched from the occupied territories—were in accordance

with the constitutional obligation of the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia to protect the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Croatia and defend its territorial integrity. **In the liberation of the occupied territories of the Republic of Croatia, the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia acted on behalf and under the authorization of a sovereign state with the status of a subject of international law. In liberating the territory of the Republic of Croatia—in which an unconstitutional entity was organized without democratic legitimacy or the status of an international legal subject—the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia suppressed an armed rebellion and alleviated the consequences of external armed aggression.** They simultaneously instituted the national (constitutional) and thereby also the international legal order, as its part, in this territory, with all rights, obligations and responsibilities which ensue for them from the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Croatia and from the international legal acts accepted and ratified by the Republic of Croatia.”

In the years following the war, little by little, the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina have lost many civil rights enjoyed by other European peoples, which had been guaranteed to them by the Dayton Peace Agreement of 1995. Paradoxically, this has occurred under the patronage of the European Union, since Bosnia and Herzegovina is a European protectorate. The Croatian nation has been deprived of its guaranteed equality, the right to proportional participation in all the bodies of the state and public authorities, and the ability to inform its national corpus via Croatian media (television station) in the Croatian language throughout the entire territory of the ancient homeland of the Croats in their Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Such inequality in the protection and representation of vital national interests has led to major political and social tensions between Croats and Muslims/Bosniaks in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Besides, the Croats driven by Serbs from the area now called Republika Srpska (Serbian Republic) have been and still are deprived of a possibility to return to that part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs) form an unstable society in which the Croatian people, who are fewest in number, are discriminated against, despite all the codes of equality and democracy of the European peoples.

Unfortunately, the European mission to introduce equality among all three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina was defeated politically and in practice. The Croatian people are still discriminated against, so that the armed aggression against the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina of 1992–1995 has continued through political means and under the protectorate of the European Union.

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