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PROPAGANDA IN THE PRESS AND THE FORMATION OF PUBLIC OPINION: POLITICAL AND WARTIME GOALS OF THE USTASHA GOVERNMENT AND THE THIRD REICH IN THE PRESS OF THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF CROATIA AT THE END OF WORLD WAR 2

NOVINSKA PROMIDŽBA I FORMIRANJE JAVNOG MNIJENJA: POLITIČKI I RATNI CILJEVI USTAŠKIH VLASTI I TREĆEG REICHA U TISKU NEZAVISNE DRŽAVE HRVATSKE NA KRAJU DRUGOG SVJETSKOG RATA

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Abstract

Based on the primary documentary sources of the Croatian State Archives (CSA), the Fonds of the Foreign Ministry of the Independent State of Croatia (ISC) and the Croatian Information Bureau "Croatia", as well as information found in daily and periodical newspapers printed from late 1944 to May 1945, the author analyzes the content of the ISC press regarding foreign and domestic politics and war issues. Comparing political orders and dictations to newspaper editors with a large number of articles and the actual situation at the European battlefronts of that time, the author concludes that Ustasha propaganda, supported by the Third Reich, significantly influenced the formation of public opinion in the ISC at the end of World War II. From the sources available, it is now obvious that the majority of the ISC population was fully aware that the Third Reich, as well as its satellite states, had lost the war but the atmosphere which was deliberately created by the Ustasha authorities in the ISC caused a mass exodus in early May 1945 nevertheless.

Introduction

In the period between the Battle of Stalingrad (1942-1943) and the fall of Berlin on 2 May 1945, which marked the end of World War II in Europe, the ISC press served the political and war goals of Germans and the Ustashas. A unified model of circulating information in the ISC was supported by a complex political control of the media, especially the newspapers, through the State Investi-

Sažetak

Na temelju izvorne građe fondova Ministarstva vanjski poslova Nezavisne Države Hrvatske (NDH) i Hrvatskog dojavnog ureda „Croatia“ kao i novinske građe dnevnih i periodičnih izdanja s kraja 1944 i prvih pet mjeseci 1945., autor analizira sadržaj vanjskopoličkih, unutrašnjopoličkih i ratnih tema u tisku NDH. Povezujući naputke ustaških vlasti s većim brojem članaka u novinama i stvarnu situaciju na brojnim europski bojištima, autor zaključuje kako je ustaška promidžba, potpomognuta njemačkom imala značajan utjecaj na formiranje javnog mnijenja u NDH na kraju Drugog svjetskog rata. Iz autoru dostupne građe razvidno je da je većini građana NDH bilo jasno kako je Treći Reich, a onda i njeni sateliti, izgubio rat, no flagrantno stvarana atmosfera straha od komunističke odmazde doprinijela je masovnom egzodusu hrvatskih građana u svibnju 1945.

gative and Propaganda Bureau (Državni izvještajni i promičbeni ured – DIPU), the Head Office for Propaganda (Glavno ravnateljstvo za promičbu – GRP), the Press Department of the Foreign Ministry and the Home Supervisory Service (Unutrašnja nadzorna služba – UNS). Following the guidelines of the DIPU/GRP Press Department, war and foreign policy topics were allotted as many as five pages per issue by the

most influential daily newspapers – *Hrvatski narod* (The Croatian People) *Nova Hrvatska* (The New Croatia), *Hrvatski list* (The Croatian Post) and *Novi list* from Sarajevo (The New Post); two or three pages were dedicated to these issues by the weeklies *Spremnost* (The Willingness) and *Novine* (The Newspapers), as well as cartoons on the front pages of the humorous weeklies *Vrabac* (The Sparrow) and *Šilo* (The Awl).

War reports in the ISC newspapers used to contain only the information approved by the German press agency DNB, while news about the Allies were a selection of German, Italian, French, Bulgarian, Romanian and Finnish press releases. With the aim of increasing the credibility of newspapers, a selection of politically appropriate news was not infrequently made from the newspapers of both neutral countries – such as Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, Turkey, or Portugal – and the enemy ones, such as the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union. Foreign content of the ISC press largely reflected the Ustasha views of the Allies, of the relation between the Allies and the People’s Liberation Movement (Narodnooslobodilački pokret – NOP), and of the consequences that agreements between the “Big Three” had on the ISC and the Axis forces. Editors-in-chief, newspaper directors and columnists for *Spremnost*, *Hrvatski narod* and *Nova Hrvatska* – Ivo Bogdan, Tijas Mortigi, Milivoj Magdić, Franjo Nevistić, Petar Bareza, Vilko Rieger, Ivo Vučičević and others – attempted to prove the necessity of the military and political alliance between the Ustashas and Germany. They also tried to present the Ustasha “revolution” as the struggle for a Croatian state, and the NOP as the Greater Serbia rebellion against it, allegedly led by communists with Soviet support.

The alliance between the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States in the ISC press was defined as an unnatural collaboration of *plutocracy* and *communism*. Its creation was said to have the sole purpose of enslaving the “smaller nations” and usurping each other’s colonies. In the ISC press, issues surrounding Poland and Finland were presented as crucial evidence that proved the imperial politics of the Allies, supported by resolutions passed at the Allies’ conferences in Casablanca, Quebec, Moscow, Tehran, Dumbarton Oaks, Yalta and San Francisco. Bordering on the absurd, the Ustasha press often

referred to the principles delineated in the Atlantic Charter when criticizing the policies of the Allies.

Unlike other newspapers in the ISC, *Spremnost* adopted a more benevolent view of Western democracies after the Tehran conference, which corresponded with the political shifts in the ISC. This was especially prominent in the editorials of *Spremnost* from summer and autumn issues of 1944 – when a part of Ustasha leadership was weighing the option of the ISC leaning towards the United Kingdom and the USA – and those from the spring of 1945, when the highest state officials planned go into exile and surrender to the Western Allies, as far from Tito’s Partisans as possible. The plans of the Ustasha leadership were revealed on 6 May 1945, the day German troops retreated from Zagreb, in articles printed by *Spremnost*, *Hrvatski narod* and *Nova Hrvatska*. Therein, similar to the *Memorandum* sent by the ISC government to the Western Allies, the ISC was included among the democratic states.

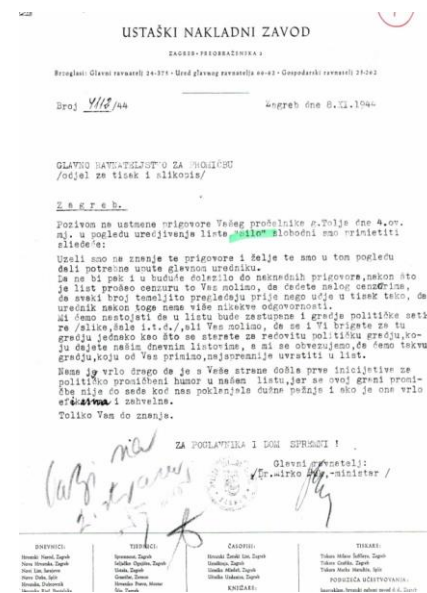


Figure 1: An example of how the Ustasha Publishing House influenced the choice of content for *Šilo*, a humorous weekly.

The Independent State of Croatia press materials on the 1945 European battlefronts

A highly unfavorable military and strategic position, in which Germany and its allies found themselves after the Allies had invaded Normandy and opened the Western Front, implied that war in

Europe might end in the course of 1944. It continued, however, into the first days of May 1945, with the bloody epilogue that took place in Berlin. Due to Germany's fanatical determination, war in Europe was prolonged for six full months, although it had long become obvious which was the winning side. Among other consequences, this would also extend the rule of the Ustasha government in the ISC. The English stance on the prolonged warfare in Europe was presented in a report of the Foreign Ministry of the ISC, dated 16 August 1944, which might explain why the Ustasha regime decided to tie the fate of the ISC to that of the Third Reich:

It is openly admitted in London that the hopeless position of several thousand Germans in the field is the primary reason for the continuation of war. The personal mortal danger in which the leading troops have found itself is the main impediment for the vassal states to sign a special peace treaty, since there is no doubt that the Allies are prepared to sign a compromise peace with these countries./1/

German wartime propaganda, led by J. Goebbels, focused on the war against the Soviets. It is highly significant that it was exceedingly successful, despite the hopeless situation that Germany faced. German formula for prolonging the war coupled efficient concealment of the huge losses suffered in human and material resources /2/ with drafting the part of the male population which had up to then been a crucial part of the workforce. Of the 4.2 million German soldiers who had died prior to 1 January 1945, when the war was transferred to the German soil, 1.83 million had died in combat against the Red Army. In the mere four months that were to follow, prior to 9 May 1945 and the capitulation before the Soviet army, 1.4 million Germans more would die. These numbers testify to the success of German propaganda and the persistence of German defense /3/.

The first news that the preparations for the defense of Berlin had begun appeared in *Novine* and *Novi list* from Sarajevo. It was the midst of the great Soviet offensive on the Oder River in early February 1945, which was marked by the siege of the Silesian city Braslau (Wroclaw)/4/ and the Soviet attacks on Frankfurt (am-Oder) and Küstrin /5/. In the far north of the East Prussian front, main battles were still fought around Königsberg /6/, while the German front in Podunavlje fell apart. The last news from Buda-

pest was published by *Novi list* on 14 February 1945 – *The Budapest squad broke through, taking down three Soviet regiments* – which confirmed that Germans had lost Budapest /7/ and that the Soviets could now march to Vienna unhindered. Using tested propaganda means, Germans cast the long and trying defense of Budapest in a positive light from a moral and strategic perspective:

The Soviets did not accomplish their goal in Hungary, namely a forceful westward breach. They were also frustrated in their attempts to thwart the retreat of German armies stationed in Greece and on the Balkans. Regarding the heroic defense of Budapest, it has to be said that it denotes a victory of a kind – the moral victory of the National Socialist Hungarian worldview./8/

By early March 1945, in the western part of the German battlefield, the Allies had already reached the line of Lower Rhine, from Düsseldorf to Köln, where the fiercest battles were fought. Numerous German towns – Dresden, Magdeburg, Linz, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Ulm – suffered daily air-raids by the Allies /9/. Berlin was also heavily bombed, an issue which *Hrvatski list* covered in the following words: *Superhuman efforts of the Berlin people – From reports in the Daily Telegraph on the terrorist attacks on Berlin it is evident that people, not military aims, were targeted.* The same article testified to the scale of the Allied air-raids in the following calculus, though it may not be fully accurate: *a ton of bombs to every 60 people is cast upon Berlin /10/.*

German cities on the Rhine fell, one after the other, on more or less daily basis – Köln /11/, Bonn, /12/ Mainz – but the newspaper coverage in the ISC was poor and indifferent. Even the first bridgehead over the western bank of the Rhine, which was established near Oppenheim by the Allies in late March 1945, was given close to no attention by *Hrvatski list*. /13/ The ISC newspapers reported on the events in the Western Front as if they did not concern the population of the ISC at all. Keeping their documentary stance, in news flashes and without any additional comments, the newspapers continued to report on the progress made by the western Allies in this manner throughout March and April of 1945.

The news of the great Allied parachute landing on the Lower Rhine and their disembarkment between Bocholt and Wesel was reported by the Zagreb weekly *Novine* on 26 March as

the beginning of an extensive struggle for the entire battlefield on the Rhine /14/. The fiercest offensive by the Allies, the ardor of which managed to surpass even the first days of the invasion of Normandy, took place in the Lower Rhine, the operational domain of the US Ninth and the British Third Armies /15/, while the battle for Frankfurt was fought in the Lower Main /16/. In early April, as *Hrvatski narod* reported, German forces had already managed to reach Kassel and Münster in the middle part of the Western Front in Germany /17/, Bremen and Hannover in the north /18/, and Nürnberg in the south /19/. The complete breakdown of the German battlefield was reported in *Hrvatski narod* on 15 April, which confirmed that the Western Allies had managed to penetrate deep into the central part of the Reich, crossing the Elbe River near the city of Magdeburg /20/.

According to *Hrvatski narod*, during March there was limited combat on the Italian front – south of Imola and outside Bologna /21/. British forces would wait for early April to begin their decisive breakthrough in the Adriatic section of the battlefield, over Comacchio and towards the Po Valley /22/, and the subsequent attack on Bologna /23/. An extensive report on the execution by the firing squad of Mussolini was published in *Novine* on 30 April 1945:

Italian communists execute Mussolini by shooting – Radio Milan reports that earlier today, just prior to the arrival of Anglo-American forces, a group of alleged Italian patriots captured Benito Mussolini, the president of the neo-fascist Social Republic, along with several of his closest associates, and had them brought before the so called Revolutionary Court. After a short pseudo-discussion, the Revolutionary Court, which consisted solely of communists, sentenced Benito Mussolini and his comrades to death by shooting. The execution was carried out immediately. The mutilated corpses of Benito Mussolini and his comrades were exposed at the Piazzale Loreto in Milan /24/.

It was a message to the ISC citizens about what they could expect after the imminent victory of Tito's communists. In this way, an atmosphere of fear and panic was being created, in the hope of prolonging the military resistance to the advancing forces of the Yugoslav Army (Jugoslavenska armija – JA). This would secure the retreat of the Ustasha authorities, army and a part of the people to the West. Naturally, the idea was neither feasi-

ble nor rational. From the viewpoint of the Ustasha leadership, the flight to the West was the only viable solution after the German defeat.

The ISC newspapers reported that in early March 1945 the Soviets concentrated the main impact of their attacks in East Prussia, in the region between the Oder and Vistula rivers. The force of the Red Army attack targeted two German camps, Stettin and Danzig, while the street fighting continued in the middle part of the Eastern Front in Silesia, for the Silesian city of Braslaw (Wroclaw). /25/ By late March, the Soviet forces in the south of the Eastern Front directed their attacks towards Vienna, while advancing from Hungary over the Danube and Raba rivers /26/, and from Slovakia over the Hron /27/. In the middle part of Silesia, along the Neisse River, they struck towards Sudetenland /28/, whereas the strongest concentrated attack, according to *Hrvatski list*, fell on Küstrin and Frankfurt-am-Oder, the last German strongholds before Berlin. In East Prussia, in the northern part of the battlefield, the same fate befell Gdynia and Danzig (Gdańsk). /29/

Hrvatski list reported that in the midst of the great Allied offensive in the West, which forced the Germans to retreat to the right bank of the Rhine, the German military leadership opted for a bitter defense in the East, considering the outcome in the Eastern Front crucial /30/. This was confirmed by the Führer's visit in late March to the Oder battlefield, the closest one to the capital of the Third Reich, Berlin /31/, where the last German strongholds – Breslau, Glogau (Głogów), Kolberg, Stettin (Szczecin) and Divna – were under severe attack by the Soviet forces /32/.

On 27 March 1945, when no air-raids were expected over Berlin, Hitler traveled to the closest battlefield on the Oder. At the time, the German-Soviet front extended along the Stettin-Küstrin-Frankfurt-Guben line. Hitler's journey was mentioned in the ISC press with the same aim as in the Third Reich, namely to strengthen the soldiers' morale.

In the crucial moments for the survival of the Third Reich, and the Ustasha regime connected with it, *Hrvatski narod* printed a statement by Minister Goebbels.

I am certain that Führer will find a way out of these troubles. The decisive moment in the war will come at one second before twelve. The war cannot go on much further. We must overcome and we shall over-

come the greatest difficulties /33/. The same newspapers also printed an appeal to the soldiers on the Eastern Front by the Leader of the German Reich: Assault units, new battalions and civil troops are strengthening the German front in the East. The final Asian attack will be frustrated, just as the pressure of our adversaries in the West will be curbed at last. Our mortal enemy, the Jewish-Bolshevik and their masses have begun their assaults for the last time. They are trying to destroy Germany and exterminate our people. The greatest part of you, soldiers in the East, realize today what sort of destiny threatens our people, especially German women, girls and children. While the men and the elderly will be killed, women and girls will be downgraded as barrack sluts. The rest will go to Siberia. /34/

Such propaganda was contrived by Goebbels, who supported Hitler in his attempt to keep resisting the Soviets until Germany and Berlin were utterly destroyed. As the Commissioner for the defense of Berlin and the commanding officer of the Berlin Volkssturm (the "People's Army"), he threatened citizens with severe retribution if they did not join the defense of the city. People were also made to fortify the defense posts and Goebbels ordered to shoot down anyone who carried a white or red flag when the Red Army units marched into the city.

In the final days of the war, Goebbels tried to convince Berliners that it was honorable to die in the defense of one's city, so he ordered a film be made about the unsuccessful conquest by Napoleon of Kolberg in Pomerania, a town whose citizens fought valiantly against him. The film was never publicly shown, either to the citizens or the soldiers in Berlin, because the Red Army managed to thwart Goebbels's active propaganda. The defense of Berlin held until 2 May 1945, when General Helmuth Weidling, the commanding officer of the city's defense, signed the capitulation order to German troops in Berlin. Both Goebbels and Hitler were dead by the time. /35/

At the German front, the second half of April was marked by the crucial Battle of Berlin, the capital of the Third Reich. According to information in *Hrvatska gruda* (The Croatian Soil), the forceful German resistance blocked the decisive advancement of Western Allies across the Elbe River, with the exception of several bridgeheads. The brunt of the defense of Berlin was, therefore, moved eastward. /36/ As late as 16

April, *Novine*, a Zagreb weekly, tried to soothe its readership:

The effects of warfare on two fronts, which has brought the events to the very gates of the Reich's capital, are beginning to show. German defense now forms a double funnel in the narrowest place, where it needs to be strongest. According to the principles of the modern art of war, the main part of defense is located at that precise spot – the fortified Berlin. Battles are still far away, at the forefront of the fortified belt. /37/

However, as soon as 25 April, *Hrvatski narod* reported that the battle was raging just outside of Berlin, and that the Soviets were exerting strong pressure on the Havel River. /38/ Just two days later, they published the news of bitter fights in Pankow, the working class borough of Berlin./39/ Unlike the reports on the combats along the Elbe, *Novine* now gave dramatic descriptions of how Germans defended Berlin against the Red Army: *By day, fanatical strife rages in different buildings for central Berlin. The courageous crews have valiantly fought against the incessant attacks by the Bolshevik masses. Unfortunately, they have been unable to stop the further penetration of the enemy into separate parts of the city. /40/*

The Soviets advanced in all sections of the Eastern Front, and the ISC newspapers no longer tried to hide the fact. A war report from 30 April in *Novine* revealed the successful advance of the Red Army in the direction of Augsburg in Upper Swabia, west of Ostrava and Brno in Moravia, as well as in the north part of the Eastern Front, in the area of Mecklenburg–Pomerania and the direction of Neubrandenburg and Templin. /41/

In such circumstances of utter military and political havoc, the news of Adolf Hitler's death was published by the weekly Zagreb newspaper *Novine* on 2 May 1945 in a rather stark and subdued tone. Several sentences described the leader of the Reich as the greatest European champion against Bolshevism,

Adolf Hitler dead and succeeded by Grand Admiral Dönitz. German military headquarters have issued breaking news; today afternoon Adolf Hitler, Führer of the Great German Reich, fell in battle. In the written decree of 30 April he named the Grand Admiral Dönitz his successor on the post of the Head of State and the Chancellor of the Reich, as well as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. Our Führer, Adolf Hitler, has fallen. German people bow down before him in deepest grief and respect. He recognized

the deadly peril of Bolshevism early on and dedicated his life to opposing it. The end of his struggles, and of his impeccable life, is marked by the heroic death in the capital of the German Reich. His entire life was dedicated to serving Germany. He has indebted not only Europe, but the entire cultured world by his contribution to the struggle against the Bolshevik invasion. /42/

The analysis of warfare at the European battlefronts in the weekly *Novine* ended with the conclusion that German forces were in a hopeless situation: The final part of the great and crucial battle is nearing its end. German armies are still tightly pressed between the Elbe and the Oder, as well as in Berlin itself, the focus of the Battle of Berlin, and in both the Czech–Moravia region and South Silesia. A portion of German forces is situated in the hilly regions of Upper and Lower Austria, and in the mountainous Bavaria. They are retreating from parts of Italy towards the Tyrol and Carinthia borders, in the general direction of Slovenia, and holding up in the toughest battles, which have escalated in the heart of Berlin. Germans are still trying to hold their enemies back. They have been successful only around the Czech regions and Moravia, in the eastern parts of mountain ranges located in the former Austria and its neighboring countries, as well as in the western part of Austrian battlefields where the Soviets have attacked. /43/

The last issue of *Hrvatski narod* was published on 6 May, when its editorial coolly said of the international circumstances:

It may be said that World War II has just ended in Europe. Foundations have been laid for the creation of new international forces over a lengthy future period. There is some discussion in San Francisco about the world peace organization, while a new map of Europe will be made at the peace conference. Two short pieces followed, which were published on the front pages of both *Hrvatski narod* and *Nova Hrvatska*, and which confirmed the breakdown of the Third Reich: *Cessation of resistance in North-West Germany – The headquarters of the expeditionary Allied forces informed (on 5 May) that all resistance had ceased in North Germany. Montgomery reported to Eisenhower that all German forces in the Netherlands, North-West Germany and Denmark had surrendered to the 21st Army Group. The battle for the capital of the Reich is over as well – in an unprecedentedly heroic battle, and true to their oath, various units along with civil troops resisted to their final breath – a symbol of the finest military demeanor.* /44/

German war propaganda in the newspapers of the Independent State of Croatia

In early March 1945, *Hrvatski list*, a weekly newspaper from Osijek, printed the radio speech given by the Reich Minister J. Goebbels,

We may conclude that all adversities and misfortunes that have befallen the German people, although exceedingly painful, do not necessarily mean we shall not emerge victorious, or that we shall suffer ruin and biological extinction. We have built new defense positions in the east, which are of temporary importance both for the present cause and our future operations. Clearly, we shall have to win back the lost areas. However, the war has not ended nor will it be ended so. I am aware that there is a number of individuals among us, and not the worst ones either, who would inquire of me how a new prospect for victory could ever be discerned from the troubled position we currently hold. Let me not hesitate in uttering sober statements. We have suffered great losses in food and weapon supplies. Nevertheless, it does not mean the losses are of such magnitude that we are able to continue the war in a limited scope only. /45/

In lieu with Goebbels's unfounded optimism, the readers were continually persuaded that Germany had hidden reserves and potentials to turn the tide of war to their own favor. *German weapons are becoming deadlier by the day – Its production has not peaked yet.* /46/

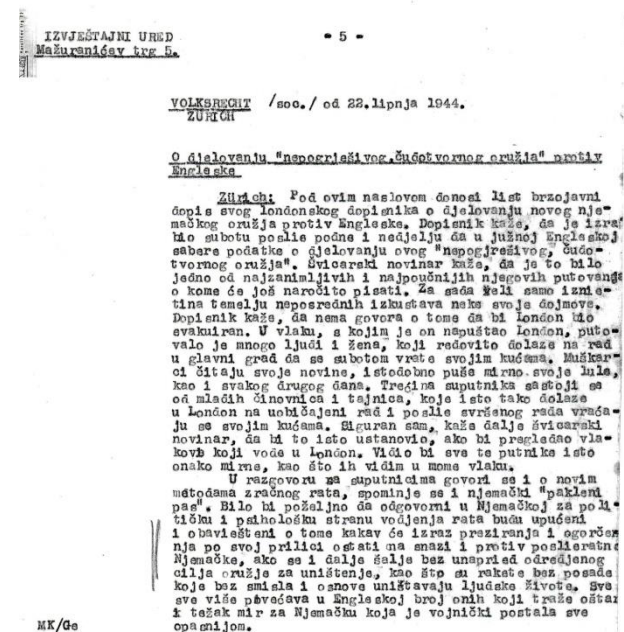


Figure 2: An example of a text glorifying new German missile weapons, which the Investigative Bureau of the

ISC's Foreign Ministry chose from the neutral Swiss newspapers Volksrecht to be published in the ISC newspapers.

According to information in *Novi list* from Sarajevo, Germans prepared to develop new long range V-weapons, since launch ramps were being moved further away from the main aim, London. /47/ There was an increased propaganda regarding the force and range of German missile weapons – *V-bombs on New York* /48/ – with the aim of strengthening the combat spirit among Germans and their allies, but which also served to increase fear among their enemies. For added credibility, public addresses of the enemy side were often used. Such was the case on 4 April when *Hrvatski list*, on the basis of news reports from Lisbon, published an article titled *Eisenhower on the strength of German resistance*, which said, *I do not want you to think that I consider this war to be over. Nobody knows what Germans are capable of within their borders* /49/. This thesis needed support, so in order to be more convincing information was circulated that in the occupied eastern and western parts of the Reich there existed a movement of “German freedom fighters”,

On Easter Sunday, for the first time ever, the call sign of a new radio transmitter, called the “Werewolf” (Werwolf), was released in ether. It operates in public as a limb of the National Socialist movement led by freedom fighters, and has originated in the occupied western and eastern regions of the Reich. The movement's headquarters addressed German people through the radio, emphatically proclaiming the will of German men and women, both young and old, to continue fighting for freedom and honor in the occupied territory, behind the enemy's back, and to pay them back in blood for atrocities against the German people. /50/ Croatian public was being persuaded that the Allies are nowhere close to winning the war, and that there was a valid chance that the tide of war would turn in favor of the Germans. This expectation was, however, highly unreasonable, and the *Werwolf* organization was an utter fiction.

The *Werwolf* project was designed in the SS headquarters, under the direction of H. Himmler, and was led by Hans Pruetzmann. The idea of guerilla resistance in the German area was born in late 1944, at the time of German retreat from both Western and Eastern Europe. The underground Nazi group – which stood by Hitler's declaration

of *We shall never capitulate* – was supposed to begin its work after the defeat of Germany, or at least such messages were dispatched through *Radio-Werwolf* from 1 April 1945 onward. This did not occur, however, since the name of *Werwolf* had no substance to it. The existence of *Radio-Werwolf* was independent from the headquarters of H. Pruetzmann, who, we might add, never believed the project would be realized, and so criticized it often in Himmler's presence. The lack of serious commitment by the Nazi leadership is obvious from the fact that Pruetzmann himself, who was supposed to organize the post-war guerilla, attempted twice to personally enter negotiations with the Allies, in the hope of securing the optimal conditions of surrender. Although J. Goebbels used *Radio-Werwolf* for propaganda since its inception, this not only had little to do with the actual goals of the phantom *Werwolf* organization, but stood in stark contrast to them. In the declaration of German capitulation on 9 May 1945, Grand Admiral Dönitz invited all *Werwolfs* in West Germany to cease their resistance. They obeyed his order. The fact that Germany was the only European country occupied during World War II which did not have organized resistance, is a paradox of a sort. It closely mirrored Hitler's own attitude of “world domination or destruction”, which was additionally supported by J. Goebbels's propaganda. /51/

A special point of interest covered by German propaganda was the economy of states which the Western Allies controlled. To this end, information was often collected from the news of neutral or enemy countries. The foreign press overviews issued by the Information Bureau of the Foreign Ministry insisted on conveying articles that covered social topics. They wanted to prove how pointless the Allies' war was, and what damage the allegedly freed countries had to suffer. In late 1944, therefore, special attention was given to the difficult economic situation in areas south of Rome, which were directly affected by the war and where over 200 thousand people were exposed to starvation and hunger. *Poverty is such*, the Foreign Ministry's “Overview” said based on information gathered from the Swiss, *that the bodies of the dead are undressed before the burial, and their clothes given to those in need. The United States and the Great Britain do not care for the economic situation and slowly leave Italy to Soviet*

influence, which is confirmed by the growing political power of the Communist Party on the Apennine Peninsula. /52/

Similar problems arising in the war-ravaged countries were covered by nearly all newspapers, following dictations of the regime in power. Thus in early 1945 the Sarajevo *Novi list* brings alarming news from Western Europe.

Appalling conditions in Italy, France and Belgium – The majority of Italian people do not have regular jobs. Workers earn 50-100 lira per day... However, the simplest meal in a third-class inn costs 200... The result of such situation is poverty. /53/ In this context, on 21 February *Novi list* put a rhetorical question before its readers: *What would become of us, and what would become of Europe, if we capitulated? Even if we lacked everything else, do you think we would have enough to eat? Can the United States of America help the hungry peoples of Europe?* It then used an article from a North-American newspaper, *The Saturday Evening Post*, to answer its own question: *Millions must starve. /54/*



Figure 3: One of the many captions in *Hrvatski list* devoted to the difficult economic situation in countries controlled by the Allies.

The importance of allegedly significant German strongholds in the far west of France was over-exaggerated for propaganda purposes as well. Based on the writings in the Swiss weekly *L'illustrate*, an article titled *The Forgotten Front* from *Hrvatski narod* reminded that Germans still had many strongholds in the Atlantic – along with Saint-Nazaire, a quarter of the department in the Lower Loire, including La Baule, Guerande, Le Croisic, La Roche-Bernard, Pontchateau, Savenay, Paimboeuf, Saint-Previn etc. This meant Germans controlled about 115 thousand people north of the Loire and 25 thousand south of the river, in the 350 km² area /55/, yet the style of writing suggested it could, somehow, be a turning point in the war.

In early April 1945, *Hrvatski narod* published an article titled *Latest rise in defensive power of German divisions*, which said Germany still controlled the main strongholds of the European bat-

tlefront that included the Upper Rhine, French Alps, North Italy, Croatia, Vienna, West Hungary, Courland and Norway. /56/ The style was not meant to keep up the fighting spirit or the readers' belief in the final victory, for it was clear by then that Germany had lost the war, and with it the ISC as well. The irrational propaganda was the result of the decision made by the political establishment of the ISC to share in the destiny of their German allies. The decision was neither an act of heroism, nor can it be characterized as the moral persistence of the leading Ustasha regime. It was brought about by German duress, or the overall military and political circumstances prevalent in Europe at the end of the war.

Ustasha propaganda against the NOP and leaning towards the Western Allies on the pages of *Hrvatski narod* and *Spremnost*

In late 1944, when it became clear that Germany was defeated, editorials of the most circulated daily in the ISC, *Hrvatski narod*, ceased to advocate German victory. Instead, they attempted to prove by vague wording how pointless the Allied success was when compared to the unbreakable and unbowed spirit of the "fighting nations of Europe".

In the editorial titled *Who shall win*, from early December 1944, Milan Ilinić /57/ claimed that the era of the Versailles Europe had ended forever and that, regardless of the outcome of the war, the nations of Europe would not accept peace conditions that were against the people's will and national interests. Justifying the war, or, more precisely, the European national movements in the struggle against the Versailles order, Ilinić recalled the slogan *We shan't yield our own, nor ask for another's*, in the context of alleged Croatian interest. Ilinić downplayed the outcome of the war regardless of who won, for, according to him, victory meant nothing if the spirit of the defeated was "unbreakable":

It has already been proven that nations, and especially big ones, can not be eradicated. If they are led by politicians who will not capitulate, their future is guaranteed. The enemy can not be defeated in war if his every house is a fortress, and every bush and tree a cover for a rifle or a machine-gun /58/. The message to the readers was clear – the war may have been lost, but there was no need to give up the holy

purpose, the Croatian state. On such a thorny path, the author implied, one should follow wise politicians, or the Ustasha leadership headed by Pavelić.

Marko Čović also wrote about the “wise people”, reminding his readers of the sacred duty that each Croat had towards homeland in the uncertain war circumstances: *Wise people live and apply their wisdom with the help of guns, at work and in combat*. The author went on to say that the situation of the ISC in late 1944 was simple to understand. Enemy armies were on the country’s borders, and there was no alternative to being brave and following those who knew what to do and how to act on 10 April, the first “birthday” of the Croatian state. /59/

The fear that the Ustasha regime had of Tito’s communists, or Stalin’s agency as they called the newly formed Yugoslav leadership in Belgrade, would best be described by the content of editorials in *Spremnost* during January, February and March of 1945. Columnists such as Milivoj Magdić /60/, Franjo Nevistić /61/, Stanko Vitković /62/, Vilko Rieger /63/ and Petar Bareza /64/ were given the assignment to explain what awaited Croatia after the Allies’ victory, or the arrival of the People’s Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (Narodnooslobodilačka vojska Jugoslavije – NOVJ). There was a fictitious belief, however, which arose as a phenomenon of the Hitler’s military and political strategy at the end of the war, that the Ustasha Croatia might be acceptable to the Western Allies. In this project concocted by the Ustashes, they would politically remain faithful to their German allies in the struggle against Bolshevism, while seeking common ground for negotiations with the Western Allies. To make the paradox even greater, Poglavnik himself made the attempt of joining the Western Allies impossible in September 1944, when he decided to side with his German ally.

A more benevolent instance of criticizing Western Allies appeared in an article by Franjo Nevistić, *Our way*, published on 21 January 1945. In it he described England as the best of democracies, comparing it to the Roman Republic and the Greek *poleis*, though resenting the imposition of democratic principles outside its own borders. Nevistić put the question of whether or not the right to self-determination was a fundamental democratic one, and if it was, why it was disputed

when the Ustasha authorities exercised it in 1941. In other words, he wondered why the English would not lend a hand to the Croatian struggle for their own state against communism as the common enemy. /65/

Employing the same reasoning, Milivoj Magdić wrote his article from 4 February 1945 titled *Facing a decision? – Relations within the Anglo-Saxon–Soviet military coalition have entered a phase in which they can no longer delay the resolution of political issues*. In it he spoke of the English as of the last barrier to Bolshevism in the Balkans. He based his rationale on one of Churchill’s speeches in which he had condemned Greek partisans, and left out NOVJ when enumerating anti-fascist movements in Europe. Churchill’s attitudes were interpreted by Magdić as an attempt to oppose the Bolshevik goals in Southeastern Europe. Magdić considered Tito and the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (Nacionalni komitet oslobođenja Jugoslavije – NKOJ) in Belgrade the long arm of Moscow in the former Yugoslavia, an anti-democratic element which refused to cooperate with other parties in the formation of government. /66/ Magdić believed that the English and the Americans would not idly observe the realization of Soviet plans, and he explained their attitudes stood in direct opposition: *It is wrong to presume, he concluded, that their coalition represents a firm alliance with an already formed opinion on how post-war issues will be settled*. /67/

The differences between the Western Allies and the Soviets would grow as the war drew to its close. They were a prelude to the division of Europe and the world in the times of the Cold War. Ustasha propaganda, however, disregarded the fact that the alliance between the Western Allies and the Soviets was formed to wage war against Germany and its allies until the final victory. Nothing could jeopardize this goal; it was firmly set both in late 1941, when the USA entered the war, and especially after Tehran, when the alliance was consolidated, and military and political goals set. The liberation march of the Red Army in Southeastern Europe – in Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia – met with approval of the Western Allies. It was welcomed as a significant success and a part of the joint military strategy of the allied armies. /68/ Since the areas of influence were settled in Eastern and Southeastern Europe at the same time, it was logical that both sides

would promote their own political goals. The Soviets supported Tito and the communists (which was confirmed by an agreement that granted the Red Army units temporary entrance into Yugoslav territory, along with NKOJ, in October 1944), while the British supported the government-in-exile led by N. Šubašić, hoping to thwart the formation of communist Yugoslavia. /69/ British fear of communist dominance in Southeastern Europe was compensated by a military intervention in Greece, where they interfered with the take-over by EAM. /70/ However, the British did not intend to undertake a similar venture in Yugoslavia, as Churchill unambiguously told King Peter II in early 1945, warning him of the necessity to accept the Tito-Šubašić agreement and the formation of the provisional government /71/. Ustasha hopes of an intervention by the Western Allies on Yugoslav territory, once the communist victory was imminent, were utterly unfounded.



Figure 4: In early February 1944, Novine published on its front page bombastic news of another pending world war, which was in accordance with the propaganda guidelines by the Ustasha authorities at the end of World War II.

In another place, Petar Bareza tried to prove in his article *The Yugoslav issue* that resolutions passed by the Big Three in Crimea actually supported the interests of the Greater Serbia and the formation of another Yugoslav unity in which Serbia would hold supremacy. By subscribing to the false Serbian struggle against occupation, Bareza said, London and Moscow were impelled to prolong the fiction called Yugoslavia. They were not interested in Yugoslavia itself, but the destruction of the Croatian state and the creation of a new Yugoslav unity under Serbian supremacy. /72/

In his article *Enemy basis – The artificial creation known as Yugoslavia cannot be established against the will of the entire Croatian people*, Vilko Rieger reviewed the Crimea conclusions in the

same light, as a new concession by the British politics to Serbia. The decision to form the Provisional government of the Democratic Federation of Yugoslavia (Demokratska federacija Jugoslavije – DFJ), which was created by the agreement between Tito and Šubašić, was supported in Yalta by Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, Rieger said. The same was true of including in the Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije – AVNOJ), a temporary legislative body, those members of the final Yugoslav parliament who were not compromised by cooperating with the enemy. Rieger had no doubts as to why the Anglo-Americans and the Soviets agreed to form the provisional legislature of Yugoslavia on completely undemocratic terms. Their goal was to ensure Serbian dominance in the restored parliament in Belgrade, or the new Yugoslavia. He concluded that reasons for King Peter's sudden cooperation regarding the formation of Regency and the common government were clear, just as was Šubašić's urgent trip to Belgrade in mid-February 1945. Nevertheless, Rieger warned, it was not certain King Peter II would manage to restore the monarchy because Tito firmly decided to retain power. For Rieger, the King was the exponent of English policy in former Yugoslavia, and Tito of the Soviet one; in other words, both Tito and the King were pawns in the hands of the Allies. Although he claimed the realization of a new Yugoslavia would be fatal for Croats, he offered no alternative, except the usual, unrealistic slogans about the necessity of a persistent struggle for the conservation of the Croatian state. /73/

It is absurd that Ustasha propaganda in the pages of *Spremnost* referred to democratic principles, the Atlantic Charter and the resolutions from Dumbarton Oaks, while criticizing communist intentions of a single-party leadership in the new Yugoslavia, when the very same Ustasha authorities abolished Croatian parliamentary structure. /74/

The ISC press sent a straightforward message to the citizens of Croatia on what they could expect after the communist government was formed, and what the destiny of the Croatian state would be when the political program from Yalta was realized. All newspapers had to cast Ustashes as patriots fighting for their own state, and the Ustasha struggle as defensive and anti-Bolshevik

in nature, the evidence of which is found in the aforementioned editorials by Milan Ilinić and Marko Čović in *Hrvatski narod*. In the final months of the war, *Hrvatski narod*, as the most widely circulated daily in the ISC, and *Spremnost*, as the most important weekly newspaper, had the task of building up a fighting spirit of a kind, as well as creating the atmosphere of fear from communist retribution, to which testify articles by Milan Ilinić, Ivan Oršanić and Marko Čović, but also those of Milivoj Magdić, Petar Bareza, Tijas Mortigi, Vilko Rieger and others. /75/

The first goal of Ustasha leadership was not reached, since global war circumstances dictated the fate of Ustasha regime and the ISC, while the anti-communist propaganda was partly successful, the testimony to which are some 115-120 thousand members of the Croatian armed forces and civilians who fled to the West in early May 1945. /76/

Spremnost had another task, namely to secure the surrender of Ustasha leadership in the West. There is no other viable explanation for its moderately Anglophile character in times when newspaper editorial staff was "Ustasha-ized", which meant that journalists who declined to join the Ustasha ranks were fired, persecuted and incarcerated.

To fulfill its mission as the war drew to its end, Ustasha propaganda had to simulate the change in values which supported Ustasha ideology. On the pages of *Spremnost*, plutocrats were no longer the bitterest of enemies, since by the end of the war the ISC government secretly tried to find common ground with the Western Allies, at least as far as it concerned the terms of surrender, which necessarily affected the choice of language in the newspapers. The Ustasha regime considered Soviets a more dangerous enemy than Western democracies, and therefore opted for the lesser of the "two evils". When this is viewed in the light of the *Memorandum* sent on 4 May 1945 to General Harold Alexander, the commanding officer of the Allied forces on the Mediterranean, the intention of the Ustasha leadership was clear. /77/

Conclusion

In late 1944 and early 1945, the ISC newspapers tried to prove the existence of discord between the Allies, and the absurdity of shared war goals between the USA, the United Kingdom and the

USSR. It was an important task for the Ustasha regime. In February, March and April of 1945, daily newspapers *Hrvatski narod*, *Novi list* from Sarajevo and *Hrvatski list* would devote a large number of articles to disputes in the Allied ranks. *Hrvatski narod* used to publish articles that discussed this topic either on the front or the last page (pages six or four). In exactly one hundred issues – from issue number 1225 of 3 January 1945, to issue number 1325 of 5 May 1945 – there were 44 such articles published. This means that the editorial staff devoted a significant amount of space to the Allies and their conflicts nearly every other day. *Hrvatski list* from Osijek, which was in print until mid-April 1945, published 24 articles on the same topic from 3 January to 7 April (issues 1 through 73), mostly on pages 1 or 2. *Novi list* from Sarajevo published 17 articles, usually on pages 2 or 3, from 6 January to 28 March, or issues 1119 through 1188. These articles predicted the imminent collapse of the Alliance, World War III, and an apocalyptic global future. There was an attempt to create a public impression that the Alliance was collapsing and that all human and material resources should be drafted in the strife against communists. In Ustasha ranks there was a belief that such a development in the ISC would secure, in the foreign policy sense, a possibility of negotiations with the Western Allies, which was an important argument in favor of the post-war future of the ISC. This was, quite naturally, an impossible mission, since Germany and its satellites had lost the war. Another utopia in the ISC was an imaginary separate peace, for the Allies had already agreed in Moscow, prior to the Tehran conference, that the Ustasha would be persecuted in the courts of the restored DFJ.

There was also a significant amount of propaganda material in the pages of Ustasha newspapers in favor of the Third Reich, which was dedicated to the poor economic status of the countries that had been claimed by the Allies. According to the ISC press, famine, poverty and utter anarchy described Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy and France well. Through articles that irrationally extolled the power of German resistance behind the ranks of Allied armies in France, the readers were continually assured that Germany had hidden reserves and potentials to turn the tide of war to its own favor. Special significance was given to the new V-weapons and long-range missiles. The

obviously absurd thing about the German, and consequentially the Ustasha propaganda were texts that in all earnest covered the National Socialist movement in western and eastern parts of the Reich, which allegedly fought for freedom and honor behind the enemy's back.

In the spring of 1945 there was an obvious shift toward a more neutral view of the Allied war operations in the Ustasha newspapers, because in the disintegration phase of the *Neue Europa* dream, the final goal of the Ustasha propaganda was to draw the ISC closer to the Western Allies, securing surrender at the "green-topped table". In accordance with the said aim, Ustasha authorities tried to create an impression that the Ustasha organization was a national movement for the liberation of the Croatian people. It was, therefore, to be released from the shared guilt for the New Europe project, and the implementation of policies that awaited the Nazi and fascist regimes. This was partially reflected in the printed word, and was especially prominent in articles by Mili-voj Magdić, Ivo Bogdan and Vilko Rieger in the pages of *Hrvatski narod*, *Spremnost* and *Nova Hrvatska*, when the ISC was suddenly ranked among the Western democracies on 6 May 1945.

The Ustasha propaganda considered the communist government established in the fall of 1945 in Belgrade an inappropriate pact between the Allies, the royal government in London and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije – KPJ) against the ISC. Accordingly, the international recognition of the Democratic Federation of Yugoslavia in Yalta was proclaimed the victory of Soviet politics in South-eastern Europe. Tito and King Peter II were described as promoters of Soviet and British policies, mere pawns in the hands of the Allies who fought for the restoration of Yugoslavia at Croatia's expense. Apart from the usual slogans about the necessity of a persistent struggle for the preservation of the Croatian state, which was unfounded, neither the ISC press nor the Ustasha authorities offered an alternative, for there could be none. The Ustasha press persisted on the promotion of the incorrect fact that the Croatian people had no alternative to Ustasha politics, and that any policies which opposed them would mean the return of Croatia to the Greater Serbia union.

Notes

- /1/ CSA, Fonds of the Foreign Ministry – Investigative Bureau, Box 25, An overview of the Swiss press, No. 704, *Kako treba postupati s Nijemcima poslije rata* (How to treat Germans after the war, in Croatian).
- /2/ Eberle, Henrik & Uhl, Mathias, *Knjiga o Hitleru* (The Book of Hitler, in Croatian), Rijeka 2005.
- /3/ Eberle-Uhl, *op. cit.*, pp 492-493.
- /4/ *Novine*, No. 173, 5 February 1945, p 2. SNL, No. 1149, 10 February 1945, p 1.
- /5/ *Novine*, No. 173, 5 February 1945, p 2. SNL, No. 1143, 4 February 1945, p 1. SNL, No. 1147, 8 February 1945, p 1.
- /6/ SNL, No. 1144, 5 February 1945, p 1.
- /7/ SNL, No. 1152, 14 February 1945, p 1.
- /8/ *Obrana Budimpešte imala je strateško i moralno značenje* (The strategic and moral significance of the defense of Budapest, in Croatian), *Novine*, No. 175, 19 February 1945, p 1.
- /9/ HL, No. 47, 6 March 1945, p 1. HG, No. 236, 10 March 1945, p 3. In the final months of the war, the Allies cruelly revenged themselves in German cities. The most blatant example is definitely the destruction of Dresden. After an unsuccessful offensive in the Ardennes, and in order to save Vienna and secure the defense of Hungary, Hitler sent in the 6th Army from the Western Front. The Allies believed the transport would pass through Dresden, so during the night between 13 and 14 February 1945, they carried out an air-raid with over 1,200 bombarding planes, which took between 24,000 and 40,000 lives, while the actual transportation routes and industrial goals were not particularly harmed. *Povijest, knjiga 17*. (History, Book 17, in Croatian), p 300. Calva-coressi, Peter & Vint, Guy, *Totalni rat* (The total war, in Serbo-Croatian), Belgrade, 1987, p 430. Hart says that the heavy bombardment, carried out by the Western Allies at the insistence of the Soviets, in addition to the military and strategic reasons also served to demoralize German population. H. Liddell Hart, Basil, *History of the Second World War*, New York 1970, p 610.
- /10/ HL, No. 47, 6 March 1945, p 2.
- /11/ HL, No. 51, 10 March 1945, p 1.
- /12/ HL, No. 52, 11 March 1945, p 1.
- /13/ HL, No. 64, 25 March 1945, p 1.
- /14/ *Novine*, No. 180, 26 March 1945, p 8.
- /15/ HL, No. 66, 27 March 1945, p 1.
- /16/ HL, No. 67, 28 March 1945, p 1.
- /17/ HN, No. 1301, 5 April 1945, p 4.
- /18/ HN, No. 1304, 8 April 1945, p 1.
- /19/ HN, No. 1304, 8 April 1945, p 4.
- /20/ HN, No. 1309, 15 April 1945, p 4.
- /21/ HL, No. 52, 11 March 1944., p 1. HL, No. 56, 16 March 1945, p 2.
- /22/ HL, No. 70, 4 April 1945, p 1.

- /23/ HN, No. 1309, 15 April 1945, p 4.
- /24/ *Novine*, No. 186, 30 April 1945, p 1. On Mussolini's execution see: Hart, B, *op. cit.*, p 674, and Rothberg, Abraham, *Eyewitness History of World War II, Counterattack, Vol. 3*, New York 1966. *Victory*, p 137.
- /25/ HL, No. 47, 6 March 1945, p 1. HG, No. 236, 10 March 1945, p 3.
- /26/ HL, No. 67, 29 March 1945, p 1.
- /27/ HL, No. 67, 29 March 1945, p 1.
- /28/ HL, No. 59, 20 March 1945, p 1.
- /29/ HL, No. 67, 29 March 1945, p 1. HG, No. 240, 7 April 1945, p 5. On the fall of Danzig see: Werth, Alexander, *Rusija u ratu 1941.-1945. (Russia in the war 1941-1945, in Croatian)*, Rijeka 1979, p 274. Hart, B, *op. cit.*, p 667. Rothberg, A, *op. cit.*, *Victory*, p 119.
- /30/ HL, No. 49, 8 March 1945, p 1.
- /31/ HL, No. 52, 11 March 1945, p 1.
- /32/ HL, No. 56, 16 March 1945, p 2.
- /33/ HN, No. 1309, 15 April 1945, p 1.
- /34/ HN, No. 1311, 18 April 1945, p 1.
- /35/ Eberle-Uhl, *op. cit.*, pp 342-343, p 442.
- /36/ HG, No. 242, 21 April 1945, p 3.
- /37/ *Novine*, No. 184, 16 April 1945, p 2.
- /38/ HN, No. 1317, 25 April 1945, p 4.
- /39/ HN, No. 1319, 27 April 1945, p 1.
- /40/ *Fanatična borba za Berlin (Fanatical struggle for Berlin, in Croatian)*, *Novine*, No. 186, 30 April 1945, p 8.
- /41/ *Op. cit.*
- /42/ *Novine*, No. 187, 2 May 1945, p 1.
- /43/ *Novine*, No. 187, 2 May 1945, p 3.
- /44/ HN, No. 1326, 6 May 1945, p 1. NH, No. 103, 6 May 1945, p 1.
- /45/ HL, No. 44, 2 March 1945, p 1.
- /46/ *Op. cit.*
- /47/ SNL, No. 1133, 23 January 1945, p 2.
- /48/ SNL, No. 1121, 11 January 1945, p 1. The importance of V-1, V-2 and V-3 weapons for the further course of the war was particularly dealt with by the Investigative Bureau of the Foreign Ministry and the Croatian Information Bureau *Croatia*. Fonds of the CIB, Box 94, Press work material. Fonds of the Foreign Ministry – Investigative Bureau, Box 26, German press overview, No. 577, *Revolucionarni značaj V2 (Revolutionary significance of V-2, in Croatian)*. On V-weapons see: Murray, Williamson & Millett, Allan R, *A War to be Won*, Harvard University 2001, pp 599-600. Calvacoressi, Peter & Vint, Guy, *Totalni rat (The total war, in Serbo-Croatian)*, Belgrade 1987. Redwald Trevor-Roper, Hugh, *Posljednji dani Hitlera (Hitler's final days, in Croatian)*, Zagreb 1951, pp 426-427. Rothberg, A, *op. cit.*, *Victory*, pp 28-32.
- /49/ HL, No. 70, 4 April 1945, p 1.
- /50/ HL, No. 70, 4 April 1945, p 2.
- /51/ H. R. Trevor-Roper, *op. cit.*, pp 40-45.
- /52/ CSA, Foreign Ministry – Investigative Bureau, Box 27, Swiss press overview, No. 787, *Bieda u Italiji (Poverty in Italy, in Croatian)*.
- /53/ SNL, No. 1120, 8 January 1945, p 2
- /54/ SNL, No. 1158, 21 February 1945, p 2. The state of Italian economy was indeed poor, as confirmed by the Reuter reports from early February 1945: *It is true that Italy is in a difficult position. The economic recovery is nearly impossible as long as the war goes on and Italy is deprived of all means of transport and raw materials*. The main reasons, however, were the slow retreat by the Germans and a strong resistance – not the Allied intentional starvation of Italy, as suggested by the propaganda of the ISC. CSA, CIB *Croatia*, Box 94, Press work material, «*Manchester Guardian*» o položaju u Italiji (*Manchester Guardian on the situation in Italy, in Croatian*).
- /55/ HN, No. 1301, 5 April 1945, p 1. The Germans did have several strongholds even after the Allied breach in France towards Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. Brest, for example, fell as late as 19 September 1944, and several places were occupied until the end of the war (8 May 1945), such as Saint-Nazaire, Saint-Lô, Lorient, or the Channel Islands. Hart, B, *op. cit.*, p 557. Calvacoressi-Vint, *op. cit.*, p 421. Murray-Millett, *op. cit.*, p 428.
- /56/ HN, No. 1304, 8 April 1945, p 4.
- /57/ Milan Ilinić was the author of several books during and after the war: *Čudni ljudi (Strange people, in Croatian)* from 1944 and *Beogradski protokol i Hrvati (Belgrade protocol and Croats, in Croatian)* from 1966. He also wrote *Utajena istina (Appropriated truth, in Croatian)*, Berlin 1970, in which he uses the aforementioned apologetic stance to explicate the usual disputes considering the ISC. The book has four chapters, namely: *Kako su Hitler i Mussolini osnovali NDH ?, Povlačenje u smrt, Likvidacija hrvatskog generaliteta and Narodni heroji (How Hitler and Mussolini Formed the ISC, Retreat into Death, Liquidation of Croatian Generals and National Heroes)*. Already in Chapter One, the author tries to refute the communist theses of Croatia being a planned product of the Axis.
- /58/ HN, No. 1201, 1 December 1944, p 1.
- /59/ HN, No. 1152, 4 October 1944, p 1.
- /60/ Milivoj Magdić, journalist (Koprivnica, 1900 – Zagreb, 1948). In his many articles, he tried to tie the principles of social democracy with the idea of a Croatian state. He welcomed the creation of the ISC, but was critical of the regime and its methods. Magdić became an associate journalist for *Spremnost*, where he published brochures *Intelektualci prema marksizmu i liberalizmu, Najstrašnije razdoblje života seljačtva u Sovjetskoj Uniji and Slučaj Vere Wagnerove (Intellectuals according to Marxism and liberalism, The most difficult times for peasants in the Sovi-*

- et Union and The case of Vera Wagner*, in Croatian). *Tko je tko u NDH (Who is Who in the ISC*, in Croatian), pp 249-250.
- /61/ Franjo Nevistić, lawyer and journalist (Šuica, 1913 – Buenos Aires, 1984). After the formation of the ISC, he worked as a secretary in the office of the Minister of Justice. In early December 1941, he went to Rome as a Ministry of Education grantee. Nevistić worked for the ISC embassy in Rome until the capitulation of Italy. Several days before Christmas 1944, he was named the head of the University Department, and in early 1945 the main editor of the weekly *Spremnost*. In May 1945 he escaped to Austria, then via Italy to Argentina. *Tko je tko u NDH* (in Croatian), p 293.
- /62/ Stanko Vitković, poet (1913 – 1945). During the ISC, he was the director of the Education Department in the Ministry of Armed Forces (Ministarstvo oružanih snaga – MINORS). From March to May 1945 he acted as the head of the Ustasha Propaganda Office. He wrote articles for several newspapers and journals. In July 1945 he was sentenced to death by the Court-martial.
- /63/ Vilko Rieger was an intellectual with a broad education, who wrote extensively on economy and cooperatives, his fields of expertise. Before the war, he regularly wrote for journals *Hrvatska revija*, *Hrvatska smotra* and *Omladina*. He was educated in Germany. During his directorship in DIPU, a large number of intellectuals were employed, with no Ustasha orientation whatsoever. For example, he employed Vladimir Ružđak, the world famous baritone, as well as Dragutin Mitić and Josip Palada, successful tennis-players, among others. An anonymous source, who also worked for DIPU, says Rieger saved DIPU officials from the persecution by Ustashas, citing the example of Professor Rude Petrović, whom Rieger released from prison and employed at a gymnasium. CSA, Fonds of RSUP SRH SDS (1561), 0131.18.
- /64/ Petar Bareza, in the ISC a journalist for the weekly *Spremnost*, found refuge after the war in Rome, and later in Argentina. He was published in *Hrvatska revija*, and his most quoted article is *Bleiburška katastrofa (The Bleiberg disaster*, in Croatian), *Hrvatska revija*, 1 (37) (1960).
- /65/ *Spremnost*, No. 153, 21 January 1945, p 1.
- /66/ Refers to the joint government of NKOJ and the royal government-in-exile, which was formed on 7 March 1945 as the Provisional government of DFJ.
- /67/ *Spremnost*, No. 155, 4 February 1945, p 1.
- /68/ Mackintosh, Malcolm, "Soviet Policy on the Balkans" in *1944: A British View, British Political and Military strategy, Eastern and Southern Europe in 1944*, London 1988, p 250.
- /69/ On the Tito–Churchill letters and their agreement, see Petranović, B & Zečević, M, pp 678-688.
- /70/ Baerentzen, Lars, "British strategy towards Greece", in *1944: British Political and Military Strategy in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe in 1944*, London 1988, pp 130-146.
- /71/ Bilandžić, Dušan, *Hrvatska moderna povijest (Modern Croatian history*, in Croatian), Zagreb 1999, p 181.
- /72/ *Spremnost*, No. 161, 18 March 1945.
- /73/ *Spremnost*, No. 157, 18 February 1945, p 1. In his article *Snaga državne misli (The force of the state thought*, in Croatian) from 18 February 1945, S Vitković explained the stance that should be adopted by Croats in the fateful war circumstances that threatened the ISC. Surrender, for him, was unacceptable, and the conservation of the state a sacred national goal: *We have remained a community bound by blood, nationality and state, with real prospects for a better future; we stand indivisible and indestructible precisely due to the cohesive strength that exists in the thought of the Croatian state. Spremnost*, No. 157, 18 February 1945, p 1.
- /74/ On the powers of Poglavnik and the totalitarian regime of the ISC, see Landikušić, Rafael, *Priručnik o političkoj i sudbenoj podjeli Nezavisne Države Hrvatske (A manual on the political and judicial division of the Independent State of Croatia*, in Croatian), Zagreb 1942, pp 4-14, and Jelić-Butić, Fikreta, *Ustaše i NDH 1941-1945 (Ustashas and the ISC 1941-1945*, in Croatian), Zagreb 1977, p 107, p 147.
- /75/ An article published in *Nova Hrvatska* on 11 June 1944, titled *People hate and avoid us – A former Partisan tells about the bloody tragedy of the misled*, in which an allegedly former member of the NOP and the KPJ describes her life as a Partisan, is the finest example of what the Ustasha regime intended: *She feels disgust when remembering the commanding officers and the commissars; she hates the rebels and wishes to fight against this severe wound on the gorgeous body of our beautiful and free Homeland... I admit that the communist literature left an impression on me, but what I experienced is far from any ideology, far from the life worthy of man. In a word – horror and barbarism... We were all frantic beasts who rushed from one battle into another. People rejected us. This sparked our hatred. Violence which took place afterwards makes my hair stand on end even as I speak... The rest of those fighting by my side were wretched. Infected with all kinds of diseases, exhausted, of the lowest sort of intelligence... I realize that their lifestyle, their ideology, is foreign to any Croat. Free love brought different diseases, which nobody cured. Trouble and distress. The most important thing is that I have escaped that hell. Many lady comrades feel like this girl, but they have still not found the wit or the courage to return to a healthy and dignified life. Mothers are forgiving; our Croatian mothers will certainly forgive them if they return timely. After a while, all the painful wounds on the body of our Homeland will disappear;*

there will remain only the remembrance of the rubble, and of the wild mob that wanted to steal our freedom. NH, No. 134, 11 June 1944, p 4.

/76/ Szabo, Agneza & Labus, Alan, *Hrvatska povijest* (Croatian history, in Croatian), B A Krčelić College of Business and Management, Zaprešić 2012, p 300.

/77/ All decisions made by the Ustasha authorities from late 1944 on, and the attempt to create an Ustasha society, testify to the fact that Ante Pavelić tied the ISC to the war fate of the Third Reich. However, similar to the German political and military leaders, many highly ranked members of the Ustasha leadership were plotting a retreat, so they could surrender in the West. See Vojinović, Aleksandar, *Zločin je bježao na zapad* (Crime fled West, in Croatian), Zagreb 1987, p 74 and Eberle-Uhl, *op. cit.*, pp 287, pp 324-325, 572. Ciliga thinks that, as World War II drew to its close, Pavelić anticipated the post-war conflict between Western democracies and the Soviets. At the same time, he took into account the fact that Germans, although facing certain defeat, had military control over a large portion of the ISC. Therefore, Ciliga says, he opted to passively wait for the arrival of Anglo-American forces, and the treaty in the West, and did not execute Maček, like he had Lorković and Vokić, relying on his help and the support of the Croatian Peasant Party (Hrvatska seljačka stranka – HSS) in negotiations with the Western Allies. Ciliga, Ante, *Sam kroz Europu u ratu* (Alone in Europe during the war, in Croatian), Pula 1998, pp 367-368.

Abbreviations used:

AVNOJ – Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia
DFJ – the Democratic Federation of Yugoslavia
DIPU – State Investigative and Propaganda Bureau
EAM – Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo (National Liberation Front of Greece)
GRP – Head Office for Propaganda
CIB "Croatia" – Croatian Information Bureau "Croatia"
HG – *Hrvatska gruda*
HL – *Hrvatski list*
HN – *Hrvatski narod*
KPJ – the Communist Party of Yugoslavia
NH – *Nova Hrvatska*
ISC – the Independent State of Croatia
USA – the United States of America
SNL – *Novi list* from Sarajevo
USSR – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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3. CSA, Republic Office of Foreign Affairs, the Socialist Republic of Croatia, National Safety Bureau (RSUP-SRH-SDS)

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5. *Spremnost* – Zagreb
6. *Hrvatska gruda* – Zagreb
7. *Novine* – Zagreb
8. *Šilo* – Zagreb
9. *Vrabac* – Zagreb

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