
Nation-building in Franjo Tuđman's Political Writings

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Summary

Detecting the gap in the existing literature of Franjo Tuđman's political thought, this article comprehensively analyzes Tuđman's nationalist ideology prior to the 1990s. Using a morphological approach to ideology, the article presents three main clusters of concepts regarding Tuđman's ideology: the narrative on the nature of humankind as teleological struggle to achieve independent national states; the narrative of supranational ideologies – such as liberalism and communism – acting as a pure geopolitical means used by the great nations to subjugate small ones; and finally the narrative of the Croatian thousand-year long struggle to achieve an independent national state. Moreover, the article exposes how Tuđman already by the 1970s created the idea of an all-embracing national movement grounded in the synthesis of abovementioned teleological concept on Croatian history, which would eventually bring about a national reconciliation of Ustaša and the Croatian partisans in a final struggle for the independent state.

Keywords: Franjo Tuđman, Nation-building, Croatian National Identity, National Reconciliation, Historical and Natural Borders

Introduction

The majority of scholarship dealing with Franjo Tuđman's nationalist ideas mostly focus on depicting how his ideas were operationalized in the 1990s.¹ Assuming Tuđmanism to represent an exclusivist Croatian ethnic nationalism, Tuđman's ide-

¹ This article stems from research done in the scope of my PhD dissertation *The Politics of History in Croatia and Slovakia in the 1990s*. I completed my dissertation while working on the project "Politics of National Identity and Historical Breaks" at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Zagreb, under the mentorship of Professor Tihomir Cipek. The project was financed by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

ational system was dealt with mostly in a way to comprehend the various aspects of his nationalist politics. Scholars analyzed the main concepts of “Tudmanism” and his central concept of national reconciliation (*nacionalno pomirenje*) conceptualized as a peculiar “forgetting of the (Second World War) past” with the goal of reconciling the descendants of the Ustaše and the Partisans in order to unify around the struggle for an independent state. This resulted in the downplaying of the Partisan antifascist legacy and a toleration of historical revisionism regarding Ustaša collaboration with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The core of the revisionism centered around the interpretation of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH – *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*) as the manifestation of the Croatian people’s historic aspirations to establish its own independent state, and in respect to the reinterpretation of the nature and number of victims of the notorious Jasenovac death camp (Radonic, 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Denich, 1994; Pavlaković, 2008, 2010; Bing, 2008, 2012; Goldstein, I., 1993, 1995; Čulić, 1999). James Sadkovich provides a different interpretation of Tudmanism, denying claims of Tudman’s exclusivist nationalism. Instead he perceives the first Croatian president as a kind of Croatian George Washington, and Tudmanism as a centrist political ideology “proposing that Croats finally bury their dead and get on with the future” (Sadkovich, 2008: 63); the claim also supported by Davor Pauković (2012).

However, a comprehensive elaboration on Tudman’s political ideas was given by Alex Bellamy (2003) and Gordana Uzelac (1998, 2006), who also dealt with his intellectual production before he became the first Croatian president. Besides commenting on the abovementioned concepts present in Tudman’s work, both Uzelac and Bellamy elaborated on his subsequent nationalist ideology, such as the teleological narrative of Croatia’s historical aspirations of statehood, obsessions with Croatia’s position within Western civilization (in contrast to the “Eastern” Orthodox Serbs), and historical roots of territorial expansionism. However, both Bellamy and Uzelac did not offer comprehensive analyses of Tudman’s ideas as elaborated in his pre-1990s writings, especially in his seminal books *Great Ideas and Small Nations* (1969), *Nationalism in Contemporary Europe* (1981), and *Wastelands of Historical Reality* (1989).² Since the subtle nationalist political thought which Tudman developed in the course of the three decades from 1960-1990 represents the ideological background of his national identity-building politics and policies in the 1990s, this article will offer concise analyses of Tudman’s national political thought as forged

² Here it is important to mention the work of Ivo Goldstein (2001) and Tomislav Dulic (2009) regarding the controversies in Tudman’s *Wastelands of Historical Reality*, especially regarding the revisionist interpretations of the Jasenovac death camp, and the anti-Semitic parts of this book. This was also discussed by journalist Marinko Čulić (1999), who elaborated the nexus between Tudman’s arguments in *Wastelands of Historical Reality* and his politics in the 1990s.

in his pre-1990 writings.³ This analysis is important since it exposes the backdrop of Tuđman's politics and provides an opportunity to compare his intellectual reflections prior to gaining power with the policies he implemented after becoming president. Using a content analysis method, Uzelac argues Tuđman's main concepts are his ideas on the Croatian nation and its external and internal enemies. However, this article argues that Tuđman's political thought – as exposed in his writings – was based on three main clusters of concepts: the history of humankind and adjacent claims on “great ideas and small nations”, Croatian history and national identity, and political action.

Tuđman's political thought will be approached by the conceptual analyses of ideologies as developed by Michael Freeden and Cass Mudde, since both authors offer a more dynamic approach to the morphology of intellectual ideological narratives than discourse and content analyses. Freeden defines concepts as “complex ideas that inject order and meaning into observed and anticipated sets of political phenomena” (1996: 52), where ideology turns out to be “an ideational formation through which specific meanings, from a potentially unlimited and essentially contestable universe of meanings, are imparted to the widest range of political concepts they inevitably employ” (ibid.: 54). Furthermore, Freeden elaborates how concepts are arranged in specific clusters, where the most fundamental concepts of a particular ideology represent its core. This core is supported and clarified by adjacent and peripheral concepts, which, according to Cass Mudde, are arranged in a causal chain of “discovering the hierarchy of the various features that are found to be part of the ideology. This is done by following the direction of the argumentation and assessing what the prime and secondary arguments are” (Mudde, 2000: 23).

1950s-1960s: Croatizing the Partisan Antifascist Struggle

Franjo Tuđman became a communist in the late 1930s after being inspired by the writings of Croatia's most renowned 20th century novelist, Miroslav Krleža, who eventually convinced him that only Leninism can offer a solution to both the national and social questions.⁴ During the Second World War, Tuđman joined Tito's Partisan movement and served as a political officer in his home region of Zagorje in central Croatia. After ending the war with the rank of major, he served in the General Staff of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) in Belgrade, where he was finally retired

³ An overview of Tuđman's writings is given in Darko Hudelist's biography of Tuđman (2004).

⁴ Hudelist, 2004: 47-53; Sadkovich, 2010: 48. The influence of his father on young Tuđman's political orientation should not be overlooked, since the former was a prominent member of the Croatian Peasant Party with open left-wing sympathies (Hudelist, 2004: 14-15; Sadkovich, 2010: 47).

in 1960 with the rank of major-general (Hudelst, 2004: ch. 1-7; Sadkovich, 2010: ch. 1).

As an army officer and military historian, Tudman was obliged to uphold socialist Yugoslavia's founding myths, in particular those associated with the antifascist struggle, referred to as the People's Liberation Struggle (NOB – *Narodnooslobodilačka borba*). The founding myth of the NOB was flawed from the very beginning by its "Manichean" conceptualization, where an equal share of merit and guilt was ascribed to each Yugoslav nation (Sundhaussen, 2004/2006; Petrungraro, 2006/2009: 89-93). The myth intended to hinder any further discussion of the mutual wartime atrocities by both Croats and Serbs by identifying victims and perpetrators "in the abstract, without specific ethnic identities or other personal characteristics" (Denich, 1994: 370). As a way to cement political and ideological hegemony, the Communist Party commemorated the war as the struggle of the peoples of Yugoslavia against fascism, while all commemorations which could stir up interethnic discord were stifled. According to Bette Denich, these politics resulted in the suppression of local memories of these mass scale killings, especially the ones perpetrated by the Ustaše against the Serb population in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (1994). As Denich subsequently observes, these suppressed traumatic memories only reinforced preexisting national sentiments, which were only fueled by the regime's rather flippant politics of dealing with the crimes of the Ustaša regime, especially in respect to the victims of the notorious Jasenovac death camp, thus making way for the emergence of an unofficial narrative on the "Croatian guilt".⁵

The official communist narrative on the war and related questions regarding the Ustaša genocide started to disintegrate in the 1960 dispute between some Croat and Serb historians, specifically when the former tried to remove the stigma of collective guilt from Croats burdened by the legacy of the Ustaša crimes (see Boban, 1987: part III). Interestingly enough, the first clash over the founding myth of the NOB emerged in the late 1950s during a dispute over the intended reorganization of the JNA, which sought to introduce Territorial Defense Units (TO) as a kind of

⁵ The concept of Croatian collective guilt stemmed from the controversial methods used to calculate the number of war victims in socialist Yugoslavia. Namely, the demographic calculation of the number of victims amounting to 1.7 million was immediately turned into the number of actual human losses for the purposes of reparations. Automatically, the number between half a million and 700,000 was derived as the number of victims of the Jasenovac death camp symbolizing the Ustaša mass-scale terror. Due to the symbolism of Jasenovac, the communist authorities hesitated to downplay the number of the victims. The first (incomplete) exhumation undertaken by the authorities in 1964 and the subsequent revision of the number of victims resulted in a figure of about 60,000 victims. The results of this exhumation were immediately banned from public release (Žerjavić, 1992; Škiljan, 2009).

national guard in each individual republic. The reorganization of the Army was to be conducted within the scope of the aimed overall decentralization of the political and economic system by the large-scale introduction of workers' self-management (Bilandžić, 1999: 396-416). The TO issue eventually triggered a clash between Army centralists resisting the introduction of the TO and decentralists pushing for it. The clash eventually resulted in a peculiar *Historikerstreit* of military historians over the interpretation of the NOB founding myth, which was quite significant since the JNA was conceptualized as one of the foundations of the SFRJ stemming directly from the Partisan movement. Without entering into the details of this dispute, the consequences were that the centralist faction eventually went so far as to minimize the significance of ethnic Croat and Slovene participation in the NOB, and even characterized the Croats as being resistant towards the very idea of Yugoslavia as a polity.⁶

Early on, Tuđman distinguished himself as the most ardent proponent of the Army's decentralization. In his books *War against the War* (1957) and *The Creation of Socialist Yugoslavia* (1960), Tuđman challenged the official myth of the NOB by noting the unavoidable peculiarities of the Partisan movement in each individual republic stemming from the particular historical contexts in which each nation found itself at the outbreak of the war. He justified the gradual and slow rise of ethnic Croat participation in the NOB not only by the fact that Croats were generally not directly threatened by the Ustaša terror, but also that they were hesitant to support the renewal of Yugoslavia considering their negative experience under Serb domination during the inter-war period. Describing how ethnic Croats quickly distanced themselves from the Ustaša fascist government, Tuđman subsequently insinuated that a majority of the drafted Home Guards (*Domobrani*, the NDH's regular army) were not fascists since they had defected in large numbers to the Partisans. At the

⁶ The centralist faction in fact sustained a hegemonic narrative of a unified People's Liberation Struggle, which was forged and maintained during the 1945-1960 period when socialist Yugoslavia functioned as a highly centralized country. That narrative overly emphasized the massive army-like troops gathered around Tito and the Partisan general staff (Koren, 2012: ch. 5), essentially devaluating the guerilla warfare conducted on a smaller scale by Partisan units in Croatia and Slovenia. Moreover, the troops around Tito consisted to a great extent of Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Montenegrins. The supporting argument of the centralists was that large-scale Partisan uprisings already took place in Serbia and Montenegro by mid-1941, unlike in Croatia, where the first units appeared only later and were dominated by Croatian Serbs. The centralist arguments were explicitly expressed in the book *Yugoslavia in the April War (Jugoslavija u aprilskom ratu)*, written by the director of the Military Institute in Belgrade, General Velimir Terzić, in 1963. Although the factions were not entirely grouped according to national lines, the centralist faction consisted mostly of Serb and Montenegrin military historians (Koren, 2012: ch. 5).

time, this argument verged on being unacceptable for the regime (Hudelst, 2004: ch. 9; Radonic, 2013: 239).⁷

Although Tuđman did not suffer any immediate penalties from these publications, a year later he was retired. He subsequently took over the leadership of the newly founded Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement. The Institute was created by the most powerful member of the Croatian Communist Party, Vladimir Bakarić, in the course of the ongoing federalization of the state in the 1960s. The federalization did not only mean the gradual transfer of federal power to the individual republics, but also, in the words of Rogers Brubaker, the "institutionalization of nationhood and nationality" (Brubaker, 1996: ch. 2). In the case of Croatia, it meant that the political leadership in Croatia under Bakarić undertook the process of Croatian state- and nation-building within a socialist framework. During this nation-building, however, Croatian nationality was understood primarily not in ethnic, but rather in civic terms (Jović, 2011). Thus the authorities founded the Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement with the political aim to legitimize the authenticity of the Croatian communist movement, which was occasionally contested by the historical burden of the NDH (Mujadžević, 2011).

Bakarić placed Tuđman in charge of the Institute in the midst of the dispute over the Army decentralization. However, in the course of the 1960s, Tuđman gradually developed his own interpretation of the Second World War in Croatia, going far beyond what the regime was able to accept. In sum, Tuđman's "guilt" was that he inverted the primacy of the class-based concept at the expense of the national one. Assuming class and nation to be one and the very same in socialist society (a concept publicly promoted by the Party reformist movement known as Maspok, or the Croatian Spring),⁸ Tuđman went far beyond the permitted scope of official historical narratives. Firstly, Tuđman considered the 1939 Croat-Serb agreement (*Sporazum*) to have been a positive step towards the solution of the Croatian national question, which challenged its condemnation in communist historiography.⁹

⁷ Here it is important to stress that both books were harshly attacked as plagiarisms by outstanding historian Ljubo Boban, and by military historian Fabjan Trgo (Sadkovich, 2010: 65-68). However, the issue of plagiarism is not important for the scope of this article, since it examines Tuđman not as a professional historian, but as a national identity-builder.

⁸ On the Croatian reform movement 1966-1972 see Rusinow, 2008.

⁹ The Cvetković-Maček Agreement (*Sporazum*), signed on 26 August 1939, is named after its signatories, former Yugoslav royal prime minister Dragiša Cvetković and the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, Vlatko Maček. The agreement brought about a Croatian autonomous political unit called the *Banovina Hrvatska*. The *Banovina* got its name after the historical role of the Ban (Viceroy), representing the post of the governor of autonomous Croatia in the Habsburg Monarchy. The *Banovina* included most of the territory of present-day Croatia along with western Herzegovina. The Agreement was condemned by the communists as an agreement of the Croa-

Secondly, he further nationalized the Croatian Partisan movement by emphasizing its autonomous character in regards to the wartime central institutions headed by Tito, and claimed that the NDH regular Home Guard troops functioned as a recruitment base for Partisan combatants (Tuđman, 1995: 80-110; Tuđman, 1996 (1969): 201-217, 285-293). This narrative, supported by the argument that King Aleksandar's repressive dictatorship caused the emergence of the Croatian fascist Ustaša movement, represented a milestone in Tuđman's later nationalization of the antifascist struggle. However, the ultimate point which triggered Tuđman's ousting from the Party was his downplaying of the official number of victims of the Jasenovac concentration camp from 700,000 to the vague sum of "tens of thousands", backing his claim quite rightly by stating that the official numbers served as a political tool to impose the stigma of collective guilt on the entire Croatian nation.¹⁰ Although Tuđman's narrative was partly supported by the League of Croatian Communists highest echelons, especially regarding the number of victims, it represented a harsh challenge to the Party's official legitimizing narratives and forced Bakarić to not only remove Tuđman from the post of director of the Institute, but also to expel him from the Party in 1967.¹¹

1970s-1990: From the Nationalist Communism to the National Reconciliation

The abovementioned narrative of Tuđman's "Croatization" of the Partisan movement was completed while he was acting as head of the historic committee of *Matica Hrvatska*, the cultural institution which imposed itself as a kind of parallel nationalist party counter to the reformist Croatian communist leadership during the Croatian Spring (Irvine, 2008). It was during the last two decades of the communist regime that Tuđman fully developed his subtle nationalist political thought.¹² His

tian and Serbian bourgeoisies at the expense of the Serb and Croat peoples. Making a de facto Croatian autonomous state within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the 1939 agreement represented a serious challenge to the communist federal project, which politically offered much less to Croatia in comparison to the *Banovina* (Stančić, 2002: 211-226).

¹⁰ Tuđman was acquainted with the 1964 exhumation results from Jasenovac, and based his calculation of the number of victims on these findings (Tuđman, 1995: 73-121).

¹¹ The claims regarding the number of Jasenovac victims were supported by most of the members of the central committee of the League of Croatian Communists, including Bakarić. The top Party members saw the numbers of the 1964 excavation as a powerful means to get rid of the stigma of the Ustaša legacy. However, Bakarić did not consider Tuđman's claims to be politically lucrative enough to be publicly released. Since he was consternated by Tuđman's latest nationalist historical narratives, he was far from prone to let Tuđman publicly declare his thesis on the Jasenovac victims (Mujadžević, 2011).

¹² During his dissident years, the authorities jailed Tuđman twice. In 1971, he was sentenced to two years in prison for his nationalist writings during the Croatian Spring. However, he was

ideological interests developed towards a narrative on the nature of the history of humankind, on the interrelation between the national and international, finally on the entire span of Croatian history and national identity-building. Even more important, Tuđman simultaneously created a kind of prospective political program aiming to operationalize his ideational system. Tuđman's departure from Yugoslavism was already laid out in his book *Great Ideas and Small Nations* (1969), and later expanded upon in *Nationalism in Contemporary Europe* (1981), where he argued:

In contemporary times small European nations have been threatened by denationalization and assimilation; their national independence has been endangered by... the hegemonism and imperialism of bigger nations which use ideologies in various kinds to mask their domination, whether in the name of Catholic Universalism, enlightened cosmopolitanism, bourgeois democracy, Nazism, Fascism, or socialism (Tuđman, 1981: 1).

Hence, according to Tuđman, the political and intellectual elites of small nations should throw away the illusions of the aforementioned supranational ideas and devote themselves wholly to nation- and state-building (Tuđman, 1981: 3). As he emphasized elsewhere, the concept of nationhood was one of emancipating small nations from both capitalist and socialist exploitation in Western and Eastern Europe respectively, as shown in the case of socialist Yugoslavia (Tuđman, 1989: 10). Far from legitimizing Yugoslav constitutionalism, this narrative served to develop Tuđman's concept of the Croatian nation based on an organic teleology, where he appropriated the concepts of a pre-communist Croatian national identity and master narrative.

Beginning with the narrative of the federal Yugoslav government's political and economic exploitation of Croatia, as well as the suppression of the Croatian language and culture (both launched during the Croatian Spring period), Tuđman constructed the teleological concept of Croatian history as a thousand-year search for statehood in the 1970s. The concept was nothing new; it represented the bulwark of the entire nineteenth-twentieth century modern Croatian national identity-building process. Assuming Croats to be one of the oldest nations of Europe based on the alleged centuries-long continuity of its historical statehood, Tuđman marked 1918 to represent a kind of "black hole" in the national history (Tuđman, 1995: 351). Such a historical break was not only related to the 1918 abolition of Croatian autonomy by the Serb-dominated royalist Yugoslav regime, but also to the claimed continuance

released after nine months spent in prison. The second time, in 1981, he was sentenced to three years in prison and five years of house arrest for giving compromising interviews to some German and Swedish journalists. However, he served only eleven months of the sentence, but was practically banned from publishing and speaking in public.

of the Greater-Serbian hegemony in socialist Yugoslavia now simply cloaked under the “bureaucratic centralism” of the federal government (Tuđman, 1981: 103-138). He argued the fact that the leading Serb communists hindered the earliest wartime attempts of the Croatian communists to achieve national autonomy in the future Yugoslav socialist federation was proof of Greater-Serbian tendencies. Here Tuđman especially canonized the leading wartime Croatian communist Andrija Hebrang, whose purge during the 1948 Tito-Stalin break was interpreted as not being due to his alleged Stalinism, but exclusively to his Croatian nationalism in opposition to the regime’s Greater-Serbian centralism (Tuđman, 1981: 117, 159; Irvine, 2008).¹³ Tuđman found additional proof of alleged Serbian hegemony over Croatia in socialist Yugoslavia in the neglect of both the historic and natural-right principles in determining the borders of socialist Croatia in the aftermath of the war.¹⁴ Finally, Tuđman concluded that Yugoslavia as a polity can be sustained solely in the form of a loose alliance of independent republics due to the inevitable competing character of Croat and Serb national identity-building processes. According to him, the Serb elites used Croatian Yugoslavism to achieve and subsequently maintain dominance over Croatia. Tuđman also saw the impossibility of preserving a unified Yugoslav state due to the intransigent cultural differences stemming from Croatia’s historical ties to Western and Catholic civilization in opposition to the Byzantine and Orthodox character of the Serbs (Tuđman, 1981: 140). This East-West narrative was nothing new; Tuđman appropriated it from the Catholic Church in Croatia, which was widely disseminating it in the late 1970s and early 1980s as part of an ideological offensive against the communist regime (Perica, 2002; Spremić, 2011; Hudelist,

¹³ Under Hebrang’s leadership the Croatian branch of the Partisan movement built various institutions which were almost entirely autonomous from the central Partisan governance headed by Tito. Moreover, Hebrang pushed for reduction of the political dominance of the Serbs in the Partisan movement in Croatia. As the Croatian Partisan movement had a large number of Serbs, particularly those who had joined early in the war to defend themselves from the Ustaša terror, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia’s politburo became worried about the possible negative effects of Hebrang’s policies. Hebrang was replaced as the head of the Croatian communists in late 1944 and was subsequently appointed as Minister of Industry in the post-war government. In 1948 Tito had him arrested for allegedly siding with Stalin, and while in prison he died under suspicious circumstances (Banac, 1988/1990: 90-102, 113-117, 120-126).

¹⁴ In the case of Serbia, Tuđman argued that historic and natural-right principles were taken into account by assigning Kosovo and Vojvodina, respectively, to the Socialist Republic of Serbia in 1945. The Croatian historic principle was embodied by the so-called Triune Kingdom, which had once included eastern Sylvania and the Bay of Kotor, regions which were assigned to Serbia and Montenegro after the war. The natural-right principle was applicable to the parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Vojvodina with Croat majorities. Thus, the territories Tuđman claimed for Croatia approximately encompassed the territories assigned to the *Banovina Hrvatska* in 1939 (Tuđman, 1981: 110-117).

2008a, 2008b).¹⁵ The narrative of Western Croats suffering at the hands of Eastern-Orthodox-Byzantine Serbs was already conceptualized by early 20th century Croatian clerical intellectuals, most notably Ivo Pilar.¹⁶ Adopting this narrative, Tuđman constructed a Manichean concept of Croatian history, whereas he condemned nineteenth and twentieth century Croatian Yugoslavism, which he claimed stemmed from “the abortiveness of national consciousness due to the trendy adoption of contemporary ideas”. He counterposed (anti)national Croatian Yugoslavism with nation- and state-building historical forces, starting with the early medieval Croatian princes. In his view of Croatian history, Tuđman also drew attention to the concepts of statehood posited by nineteenth century Croatian Party of Rights, the twentieth century ideas of the Croatian Peasant Party with its program of both national and social issues, and the role of the nationally conscious Croatian communists, represented most notably by Andrija Hebrang (Tuđman, 1995: 335-336).¹⁷

¹⁵ In 1976 the Catholic Church in Croatia celebrated “Thirteen Centuries of Christianity in the Croat People”, organizing every subsequent year large-scale manifestations devoted to praising early medieval Croatian princes and kings important for the history of the Catholic Church in Croatia. These rulers were conceptualized as the earliest Croatian state-builders in the secular Croatian national-identity building cannon (Stančić, 2002). By disseminating the concepts of the oneness of the national and religious history intertwined with the historical continuity of Croatian victimhood, the Church ultimately contested the regime. The final congress of the religious jubilee in 1984 gathered nearly half a million believers (Hudelst, 2008a). The success of the jubilee was a sign of the ideological delegitimizing of the regime, as well as a sign of the new dominant national identity-building narrative, which, in the words of Nikša Spremić, paved the way for the later Croatian secular nationalists, most notably Franjo Tuđman (Spremić, 2011: 52; Hudelist, 2008a, 2008b).

¹⁶ Ivo Pilar (1874-1933) was a Croatian clerical intellectual and politician from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Being an ardent opponent of the creation of a South Slav state, in 1918 he wrote the book *Die südslawische Frage und der Weltkrieg. Übersichtliche Darstellung des Gesamt-Problems [The South Slav Question and the World War: The Presentation of the Entire Problem]* under the pseudonym L.W. Sütland. In the book Pilar elaborated on the incommensurability between Croats belonging to Western Catholic culture and Serbs belonging to the Eastern-Orthodox one, characterizing the latter as representing a kind of “kingdom of darkness”. Besides warning of a forthcoming hegemony of Serbs over Croats in the frame of the common state, Pilar interestingly labeled Lenin’s Bolshevik revolution as a cunning penetration of the Orthodox civilization into the West (Pilar, 1918/1990; Matijević, 2002). It is obvious that Pilar was highly influenced by contemporary thought on the decline of Western civilization, most notably by Oswald Spengler, whose work on the decline of the West was published simultaneously with Pilar’s book. The impact Pilar left on Tuđman could be seen by the fact that an institute for social sciences founded in Zagreb in 1992 was named after Pilar.

¹⁷ Ante Starčević was the charismatic founder the Party of the (State) Rights in the second half of the nineteenth century. He formulated the first modern theory of Croatian national identity, challenging the proponents of Croatian Yugoslavism propagated by his contemporaries. Starčević’s central concept of Croatian national identity was Croatian historical statehood, or more precisely,

Tuđman translated this Manichean teleological concept of Croatian national identity and history into politics in his “Draft of The Programmatic Thesis on the Croatian National and Socialist Movement” (1977). The Movement was imagined to embody the synthesis of “all positive factions in the social development of the nation” present in his abovementioned statehood teleology. The document especially emphasized the inclusion of “those who in the vortex of the Second World War sided with the opposition [then the Croatian Peasant Party, but also with the NDH apparatus – S. Đ.], but from the standpoint of the same struggle for national emancipation”, excluding, however, followers of the Ustaša ideology (Tuđman, 1995: 335-341). This narrative represents the earliest elaboration on the subsequent concept of Croatian national reconciliation, which in the course of the 1990s became the core concept of Tuđman’s political party, the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ – *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*). The idea of national reconciliation was not entirely a new concept; both Hudelist and Slavko Goldstein already traced the origin of reconciliation in the writings of the notorious wartime commander of the Ustaša concentration camp system, Vjekoslav-Maks Luburić. After Luburić fled Croatia in 1945, he began advocating reconciliation between the Ustaše and Croatian communists in order to unite for the common struggle for statehood (Goldstein, 1993). It is especially important to emphasize that Luburić forged the reconciliation concept following his ideas on the continual historical Greater-Serb hegemony over Croatia starting in 1918, the one Tuđman appropriated some two decades later.

Tuđman’s 1977 Program also stressed the concept of “Croatia’s historical and natural borders”, which he had reflected upon in his earlier writings. Although Tuđman’s concept of borders did not resemble Luburić’s, both used very similar terminology.¹⁸ Thus, the 1977 Program turns out to be especially significant in re-

feudal state right. However, Starčević was not a conservative; quite the contrary, he was an ardent proponent of French republican thought, and thus also perceiving the nation not as an ethnic, but a civic community (see Gross, 2000). Stjepan Radić (1889-1928) was a charismatic leader of the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), which in the first half of the twentieth century merged the national and social program of Croatian national- and state-building in the scope of ideology of agrarianism. In 1928, a Serb deputy from Montenegro shot Radić and several other HSS members in the Yugoslav parliament, convincing many Croats that any Yugoslav state was anti-Croat after Radić succumbed to his wounds a few months later (see Cipek, 2001). For the history of the communist movement in Croatia until 1945, see Jelić, 1977.

¹⁸ Luburić stressed that the fight for Croatian statehood undertaken under the auspices of a national reconciliation should seek to encompass Croatia’s “historical and ethnic borders” which he perceived to be the borders of the NDH plus the Sandžak region of southern Serbia (Hockenos, 2003: 69-70). In contrast, Tuđman’s ultimate aim was to restore the borders of the *Banovina Hrvatska*.

presenting a platform for Tuđman's political activity starting in 1988-1989. By the late 1980s the communist regime in Yugoslavia loosened its travel ban and permitted Tuđman, as well as some other Croatian oppositional intellectuals, to visit Croatian émigré communities in Canada and the United States. Assuming a forthcoming democratization of the communist regime, both Tuđman and the liberals visited the émigrés in order to seek support for their competing future Croatian nation- and state-building projects. Tuđman eventually received the greatest amount of support, especially from the right-wing faction whose sympathies tended to be pro-NDH. The faction was gathered around the powerful stronghold of Herzegovina Franciscans in Norval, near Ontario, Canada, and in Chicago (Hudelist, 2004: 581-633).¹⁹ While traveling to the US and Canada, Tuđman fully outlined his nationalist ideology in the book *Wastelands of Historical Reality* (1989).

The book was published in a moment when the ongoing offensive of Serb nationalist intellectuals reached its peak, using the over-exaggerated numbers of Jasenovac victims in a way to push for their political goals of redressing the existing (con)federal constitution of socialist Yugoslavia (Jović, 2003: 340-344). Tuđman's book immediately caused huge controversies due to parts reflecting certain anti-Semitic claims, most notably due to his interpretation that anti-Semitism as one stemmed from the alleged Jewish "anti-nationality" and his argument that current Israeli politics represented a kind of "Judeo-fascism". Indeed, the parts of the book dealing with the issues of the Jewish nation and the fate of Croatian Jews in the Jasenovac death camp truly verged on anti-Semitism.²⁰ However, Tuđman's controversial claims about Jews were to an extent overshadowed by the challenges to

¹⁹ Before and during the Second World War, western Herzegovina was the most notable stronghold of far-right Croatian nationalism. Certain Franciscans became notorious for being open advocates of the Ustaša regime. After the war they established communities in Chicago and in Norval, which functioned as centers of far-right political activity (Perica, 2002: ch. 7).

²⁰ Tuđman not only depicted the Jewish prisoners of the Jasenovac camp as collaborators (Tuđman, 1989: 128-167, 309-327), but also used very tendentious and false sources to corroborate his claim, as shown by Ivo Goldstein (2001) and Tomislav Dulic (2009). The anti-Semitic parts of the book raised protests both in Croatia and abroad; therefore the English translation of the book published in 1996 under the title *Horrors of War: Historical Reality and Philosophy* was revised by dropping out the controversial parts. Journalist Marinko Čulić considers Tuđman's book almost as a fascist pamphlet (Čulić, 1999: 33-55), which in my opinion is too radical of a condemnation. Slavko Goldstein, one of the most outspoken critics of Tuđman's *Wastelands* and a well-respected Croatian public intellectual, observed that "Tuđman was not an Ustaša or an anti-Semite, nor was he a radical Serbophobe. He was fervently obsessed with the ambition to become the creator of an independent Croatia, to expand its borders as far as possible, and to serve as its absolute leader" (Goldstein in Pavlaković, 2008: 128). For a different, far more positive-perspective reading of *Wastelands*, see Sadkovich, 2010: 264-273.

the Serb nationalist exaggerations of Jasenovac victims.²¹ However, neither the response to Serb nationalism nor debating the Jewish issue was the true message of *Wastelands*; the real aim was to expose the final elaboration of the author's political project. Starting with the conceptualization of the history of humankind as an inevitable continuance of interethnic violence over dominance and territory, Tuđman concluded that while ethnic conflicts incite interethnic hatred, they simultaneously "lead to the ethnic homogenization of certain nations, to a greater harmony between the ethnic composition of the population and the state borders of certain countries. That can minimize the reasons for new acts of violence and provocation" (Tuđman, 1996: 125).²² If this narrative on violence is related to Tuđman's interpretation of Croatian Serbs as a historical "factor of disorder" in regards to the Croatian state-building process,²³ the conclusion is self-evident: the precondition to harmonic mutual relations between Serbs and Croats would require future exchanges of populations. Of course, Tuđman did not state such a claim directly; however, his praising of the Greco-Turkish population exchange in the early 1920s, which he stated represented the preconditions for "the normal national development of both countries", leads one to conclude that in fact such an idea is implied (Tuđman, 1989: 147). As Darko Hudelist quite convincingly argues in his biography of Tuđman, the first Croatian president appropriated the concept of population exchange from Dominik Mandić, the founder of the previously mentioned émigré community of Herzegovina Franciscans in North America.²⁴ Basing his arguments on Pilar's con-

²¹ The main issue of the historical revisionism undertaken in the 1980s by the Serb nationalist intellectuals was to (re)construct the concept of Serb historical victimization by claiming alleged anti-Serb policies in Tito's Yugoslavia, and then re-launching the debate over the genocidal crimes committed by the Ustaše against the Serbs. This revisionism gained its political expression in the Memorandum of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1986. The Memorandum and its use of the victimhood narrative represented a powerful legitimization tool for the political rise of Slobodan Milošević in 1987 (Dragovic-Soso, 2002; Ramet, 2002/2005: ch. 3; also Jović, 2003: ch. 6, 7).

²² Already in his book *Nationalism in Contemporary Europe* Tuđman warned about the "... hardships of those legacies arising from mixed populations and the existence of cases of smaller and larger national minorities, all of which is a result of the distant conquest campaigns and migrations of the population, and also the long term denationalization rule of foreign parts" (Tuđman, 1981: 244).

²³ Tuđman claimed that from the very beginning of their settlement on Croatian territory in the fifteenth century, Croatian Serbs opposed the authority of the Croatian feudal diet and continued to contest the processes of Croatian state-building up until the present (Tuđman, 1989: 358-363). This narrative also represented a counterargument to the Serb nationalist narrative about the centuries-long oppression of Croatian Serbs by Croatian authorities, from the feudal period up to the communist regime (Dragovic-Soso, 2002: ch. 2).

²⁴ Dominik Mandić (1889-1973) served as the head of the Franciscan Province in Herzegovina during the inter-war period, and was subsequently appointed in Rome as the chief representative

cepts of Croats, Serbs, and the very nature of the Yugoslav state, Mandić, in the context of the 1939 Croat-Serb agreement, published the book *Croats and Serbs: Two Ancient Nations* in which he advocated the foundation of independent Croat and Serb states which would agree to the partition of disputed territories and carry out a consensual exchange of populations (Hudelist, 2004: 506-515). Hudelist's claim seems quite plausible, since Tuđman developed the concept of population exchange simultaneously with the establishment of close contacts with the right-wing émigré circles.

However, the most controversial part of the book turned out to be the one dealing with the nature of the Second World War in Croatia. Although primarily consisting of a response to the revisionist positions of Serbian nationalist intellectuals, much more relevant from the perspective of Tuđman's ideology was his interpretation of the nature of the NDH and the related issue of wartime crimes. Tuđman laid the groundwork for his interpretation in his earlier book *Nationalism in Contemporary Europe*, where he suggested that "the declaration of an independent Croatia following the collapse of Yugoslavia meant the realization of the goals held dear not only by the radical, separatist current in Croatian political life, but also by the majority of the Croatian people" (Tuđman, 1981: 106). In *Wastelands*, Tuđman incorporated the NDH's wartime statehood into the broader narrative on historical causality by pointing out "that the declaration of an independent and free Croatian state initially meant the realization of the 'centuries-old dream', dreamt not only by national, but also class revolutionaries". However, he subsequently balanced this claim by emphasizing the "growing and resolute" distancing of Croats from the Ustaša regime due to its "pro-Fascist, discriminatory methods of rule and the handing of Dalmatia over to Italy" (Tuđman, 1996: 349-350). In developing this formulation in which he presented the desire for statehood in a positive light while at the same time condemning the regime, Tuđman emphasized that the Croatian Peasant Party also accepted the proclamation of Croatian independence by the Ustaše on 10 April 1941.²⁵

of all the Franciscan provinces in Slavic countries in 1939. He spent the war in Rome, where he spoke out strongly against the Ustaša regime but advocated preserving an independent Croatian state. In 1945 Mandić helped several hundred individuals, including some high-ranking NDH officials, escape the new socialist government. He moved to Chicago in 1952, where he became the head of the Herzegovina Franciscans in North America (Budak, 1990).

²⁵ After invading Yugoslavia in April 1941, the Germans offered HSS president Vlatko Maček to take over the leadership of Croatia, but he refused and instead publicly called for cooperation with the new Ustaša regime. During the war Maček chose the politics of passivity while staying loyal to the Western Allies. He was initially interned by the Ustaše in the Jasenovac concentration camp and later placed under house arrest together with his family at his estate near Zagreb. Being distrustful of Tito's Partisans, he fled to the United States in 1945 (Maček, 1957).

Finally, Tuđman also discussed the wartime role of Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac, who has remained a controversial figure up to the present.²⁶ Tuđman appropriated not only the Church's narrative on the archbishop, but also the archbishop's interpretation of the wartime annihilations as a mutual Ustaša-Četnik-Partisan bloodshed perpetrated on an equal scale in the course of the war (Tuđman, 1989: 375-388).²⁷ Departing from the far-right interpretations of the Ustaša crimes as a radical reaction to the alleged Serb rebellion against the NDH and crimes committed against Croats (Škiljan, 2009), Tuđman nevertheless used Stepinac's narrative in rejecting the uniqueness of the atrocities perpetrated by the Ustaše. He not only emphasized that the Ustaša movement's genocidal politics were a result of the inter-war dictatorship, but also labeled the wartime Serb Četnik movement to have been even more ideologically radical than the Ustaše (Tuđman, 1989: 372-375). To this interpretation he added his claim of "tens of thousands" of Jasenovac camp victims, which actually sounds plausible in light of the current demographic research which has established approximately 80,000 victims (Tuđman, 1989: 335-341).²⁸ As Bette Denich has noted, Tuđman offered a revisionist interpretation of the Second World War similar to the one constructed by conservative historian Ernst Nolte during the mid-1980s *Historikerstreit* in Germany (1994: 376). During the *Historikerstreit*, conservative German historians tended to reinterpret the Nazi crimes in a way to neglect their uniqueness and thus release the German national identity from the burden of guilt stemming from the accusations that the Holocaust was in-

²⁶ The role of Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac (1898-1960), who acted as head of the Catholic Church in Croatia from 1938 until his death, is still highly contested. The communist government sentenced Stepinac in 1946 to a sixteen-year prison term for the alleged collaboration with the Ustaša regime. In 1951, the authorities reduced his sentence to house arrest, which Stepinac served in his hometown near Zagreb until his death. In the 1990s he was rehabilitated and reinterpreted as a fervent opponent of both the fascist Ustaše and the communists (Perica, 2002; Despot et al., 2012). In 1999, Stepinac was even beatified by Pope John Paul II for his suffering after 1945. For the most balanced perspective on Stepinac's wartime role, see Biondich, 2005, 2006.

²⁷ To support the righteousness of Stepinac's person, Tuđman furthermore elaborated on the archbishop's numerous wartime condemnations of the Ustaše during various ceremonies, his tense relations with the radical factions of the regime, and finally the numerous examples of saving Jews and Serbs from the Ustaša terror. These claims were already conceptualized by the moderate faction of the Croatian political emigration. See Meštrović, 1969.

²⁸ In the late 1980s two demographers, Serb Bogoljub Kočović and Croat Vladimir Žerjavić, independently calculated that the number of Jasenovac victims was around 80,000 (Škiljan, 2009). This number was generally accepted by non-partisan members of both the Croatian and Serbian scientific community, and was corroborated by the recently published individual list of victims compiled by the Jasenovac Memorial Center that features the names of 83,145 victims (*List of Individual Victims of Jasenovac Concentration Camp*, 2013).

variably a product of German culture.²⁹ In a similar manner Tuđman's intentions were to release the Croatian nation from the collective guilt stemming from the accusations of the genocidal nature of Croats which was manifested in the Ustaša crimes.³⁰ Or, as James Sadkovich put it in a more Tuđmanist way, Tuđman's intention was "to relieve his nation of the burden of collective guilt Tito's regime and scholarly world had imposed on it after 1945" (Sadkovich, 2008: 69). Here I would add that Tuđman's ultimate goal was not only to remove the guilt from the wartime Ustaše, including far-right émigrés, but also to rehabilitate the families and children of Ustaše members in Croatia (Cipek, 2009: 159-160), since both presented the *condition sine qua non* to achieve the envisioned national reconciliation. As is shown by all authors writing on Tuđman, the concept of national reconciliation turned out to be the core ideological concept of Croatian politics in the 1990s. This "nationalizing nationalism" (Rogers Brubaker) led not only to the exclusion of Serbs from the Croatian political community, but also resulted in the suppression of civil society as well as other manifestations of various democratic deficits, as nicely summarized by Sabrina P. Ramet (2008).

Conclusions

To conclude, this article explained how Franjo Tuđman gradually developed his synthetic and subtle nationalist political thought, based on three key clusters of concepts, during the three decades of his intellectual career preceding his political one. The first one comprises the narrative on the history of humankind as a history of unavoidable inter-ethnic wars that will last until the formation of ethnically homogenous polities. Accompanying this vision of human history is the interpretation of supranational ideas as pure ideological tools used by great powers in an attempt to subjugate smaller nations. Thus, according to Tuđman, the national elites of small nations should abandon universal ideas and devote themselves unanimously to organic nationalist causes.

²⁹ On the *Historikerstreit*, see Eley, 1988 and Cipek, 2006. Tuđman was also compared to Nolte by German historian Max Ehrenreich (Sadkovich, 2010: 267).

³⁰ As mentioned before, Tuđman interpreted both the nature of the Ustaše as political movement as well as the terror of their regime as being partly caused by the harshness of the inter-war hegemony of the Yugoslav royal regime over the Croats. Tuđman subsequently attributed the mass-scale Ustaša terror not exclusively, but to a great extent, as a reaction to earlier crimes committed by the Četniks. Hence, similarly to Nolte, Tuđman tried to contextualize, and moreover depict as a copy, the crimes committed by the Ustaše. However, as Fikreta Jelić-Butić showed in the most comprehensive work on the Ustaše to date, the first wave of the mass-scale crimes were triggered practically a few days after the NDH was declared, months before any kind of significant resistance movement emerged (Jelić-Butić, 1977: 163-187). For an interesting explanation on the causes of the cruelty of the Ustaša regime, see Payne, 2006.

The second cluster comprises Tuđman's view of Croatian history as a teleological thousand-year process in achieving statehood. He locates the crucial historical rupture in 1918, which represents a break in the continuity of the Croatian state-building process that had begun with the first early Croatian medieval feudal polities. Thus, Tuđman conceptualized the twentieth century as a kind of dark ages for the Croatian people, marked by the continuous Greater-Serbian hegemony over Croatia in the frame of both royal and socialist Yugoslavia. The dark ages reached its peak during the Croatian fraternal bloodshed during the Second World War, when the establishment of the NDH was considered to represent the Croatian desire for statehood. Without neglecting the criminal fascist character of the Ustaša regime, Tuđman nevertheless relativized Ustaša crimes, labeling them as merely part of a long list of mutual Croat-Serb mass atrocities. The bottom line of Tuđman's intentions was to provide a picture of a usable Croatian ethnic past.

Taking the abovementioned clusters of concepts as a starting point, Tuđman developed his political program as an all-embracing Croatian national movement which would bring about a historical national reconciliation. For Tuđman, the conceptualized reconciliation was necessary as a precondition to achieve Croatian independence. He imagined the movement to represent the synthesis of the entire historical Croatian nation- and state-building thought. The synthesis would include the legacies of the nineteenth century Croatian Party of Rights, the twentieth century Croatian Peasant Party, and the nationally conscious faction of Croatian communists. Finally, once achieved, the Croatian independent polity should strive to encompass the "historic and natural borders" of the Croatian nation, which would be as ethnically homogenous as possible and achieved by a Croat-Serb future exchange of populations.

Tuđman's ideology, as morphologically exposed in this article, provides a good background to further examination of its operationalization in the 1990s through political practice. Also, the article provides a good starting point to examine how in the course of the 1990s Tuđman's ideology morphologically changed, according to the dynamics of overall political context. Taking into respect the findings of the previously mentioned studies on Tuđman, as well as some other writings such as Chip Gagnon's seminal book *The Myth of Ethnic War* (2004), it can be tentatively claimed that if one had read Tuđman's ideological writings prior to 1990, one could roughly predict what Tuđman's politics would look like when implemented.

Finally, there is the issue of how to label Tuđman's political thought, as developed prior to his political career. Gordana Uzelac claims that Tuđman's "theoretical approach was very much Marxist, and based on ideas of historical materialism", in which the Marxist concept of history is subverted to the concept of a nation existing as a "historical product and as distinctive living organism" (2006: 197). How-

ever, as Michael Freeden has shown, “an appeal to and extra-human legitimation of order and orderly change” has been a core concept of conservatism (Freeden, 1996: 409). Taking into consideration Tuđman’s organic vision of the concept of the nation, as well as his appropriation of the Catholic Church’s organic narrative on Croatian national-identity building processes, his nationalist thought falls into the scope of conservatism. However, taking into consideration Tuđman’s idea on the very nature of the nation and nation-states, as well as his narrative on Croatian nation- and state-building, it can be claimed that Tuđman’s political thought reflects much of the modern radical right nativism, which Cas Mudde defines as “*an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that nonnative elements... are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state*” (Mudde, 2007: 19 – italics in original).

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