

DR FRANJO TUĐMAN AND 1989: THE BEGINNING OF THE POLITICAL PATH TOWARDS AN INDEPENDENT CROATIA

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In collective human memory, there have always been years that are remembered for the major political and social changes that took place during them. Thus, 1918 and 1945 were the years when the two world wars ended, and their outcomes shaped the political architecture of the world for many years. We can consider 1989 another such historical year, because it marked the collapse of a decades-long bipolar political world order. In 1989, the democratisation process began in communist Croatia, during which Franjo Tuđman became the key personality of the newly established non-Communist opposition. Tuđman's political ascent can today be reconstructed very easily with the help of the available documents from the former State Security Service of the Republican Secretariat of the Interior of the Socialist Republic of Croatia and the relevant literature. The main chronological divide in this paper is 17 June 1989, when the Croatian Democratic Union was established in a non-public space, and Franjo Tuđman was elected its first president.

Keywords: Franjo Tuđman, communism, Yugoslavia, Croatia

Introduction

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world for many years. We can consider 1989 another such historical year because it marked the collapse of a decades-long bipolar political world order that had arisen as a result of World War II. There were two opposed political-military blocs in this order. One was led by the United States of America (USA) and its members were democratic states, while the other was led by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and its members were Communist states. In addition, the historical significance of 1989 is evident in the fact that the current international order still reflects the changes that took place in that year.¹

The first signs of possible tectonic changes in a world divided into blocks appeared when, as part of his political reforms, the general secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, gave up on the Brezhnev Doctrine, i.e. the possibility of Soviet intervention in the supposedly sovereign Communist states that were members of the bloc. As expected, Gorbachev's reforms resulted in the quickening of the democratic process in these politically dependent states. In May 1989, Hungary opened up its fortified border towards Austria and thus took down the 'Iron Curtain'. In June 1989, free elections were held in Poland, and were won by the non-Communist opposition. In November 1989, the Berlin Wall fell, marking the beginning of the process of German reunification. At the same time, the Velvet Revolution began in Czechoslovakia. Events culminated in the bloody revolution of December 1989 in Romania.²

But what was the situation like in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in early 1989? The SFRY had by then been a Communist state for over 40 years. Furthermore, it was a state in which the long-time leader of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and Marshal of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, held absolute power until his death in May 1980. It was also a state of certain contradictions. Tito's Yugoslavia was expelled from the camp of Communist states after the Tito-Stalin split in 1948, becoming a 'Communist dissident' that the USA and other Western democracies financially and politically supported for their own purposes. The overall political position of the SFRY was, therefore, significantly more favourable compared to other Communist states in Europe. Despite this, by 1989, the political and economic cri-

¹ For more information, see: David Stevenson, *1914. – 1918.: Povijest Prvog svjetskog rata [1914–1918: The History of the First World War]* (Zagreb: Fraktura, 2014); Margaret MacMillan, *Mirotnorci: Šest mjeseci koji su promijenili svijet [Peacemakers: Six Months that Changed the World]* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2008); Victor Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (London Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009); Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989: the struggle to create post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

² For more information, see: Robert Service, *The End of the Cold War: 1985-1991*. (New York Public Affairs, 2015); Jerzy Holzer, *Komunizam u Europi: povijest pokreta i sustava vlasti [Communism in Europe: The History of the Movement and Government System]* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2002), pp. 153-187.

sis had been a fact of life in the SFRY for years. It had become fully clear that a planned economy cannot secure the desired progress, but also that the reality of the inter-national relations in Yugoslavia did not reflect the Communist authorities' official claims that 'brotherhood and unity of the Yugoslav nations and ethnicities' reigned in the SFRY. Due to their histories, inter-national relations between Croats and Serbs, and also between Albanians and Serbs, were especially delicate. There is no doubt that the federal Constitution of 1974 respected the fact that the SFRY was a multinational state. It comprised six socialist republics (SRs): SR Slovenia, SR Croatia, SR Bosnia and Herzegovina, SR Montenegro, SR Macedonia, and SR Serbia. Within SR Serbia's borders were two socialist autonomous provinces: Vojvodina and Kosovo. It should be noted that the constitutionally defined relationship of Serbia with its provinces was a cause of intense dissatisfaction among those Serbs who believed the provinces were a solution made at the expense of the Serbian people. In addition, the mentioned 1974 Constitution adopted approaches that pointed towards the partial establishment of a confederal system, because all decisions made on a federal level had to be adopted by consensus. However, there still remained three guarantors of the survival and alleged unity of the communist state: Tito, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, and the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA). Tito's death marked the beginning of a process of political changes. By 1989, these changes had given rise to three main actors on the Yugoslav political scene: SR Serbia, SR Slovenia, and the YPA leadership. There is no doubt that their goals were diametrically opposed. Serbia, led by its new national leader, Slobodan Milošević, expected the eventual fulfilment of its long-term strategic goal: the abolishment of provincial autonomy. This goal was successfully achieved in March 1989, after a series of staged protests, nicknamed the 'anti-bureaucratic revolution'. It then sought to fulfil another strategic political goal: the reformation of the SFRY in line with Serbian interests. In SR Slovenia, however, the ideological surveillance of society began to weaken, which pointed towards a desire for real democratisation. Slovenia soon found itself in a conflict not only with the ideologically dogmatic YPA leadership, but also with the leadership of SR Serbia, due to Slovenian support of the resistance of the Kosovo Albanians towards the forced abolishment of Kosovo's autonomy. Having understood that the survival of Communist Yugoslavia is becoming increasingly threatened, the Army made several attempts to impose itself as the main political factor in the country, from Tito's death to 1989. Its only successes in these attempts were the centralisation of the military organisation and limiting the influence of republican leaderships on the Territorial Defence. The YPA's actions concerning the Territorial Defence violated the federal Constitution of 1974, but went unpunished.³

³ For more information, see: Zdenko Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji: od zajedništva do razlaza 1945. – 1991. [Croatia in Yugoslavia: From Unity to Separation 1945–1991]* (Zagreb:

What was the political climate like in Croatia at the beginning of 1989? It was undoubtedly a result of the violent quelling of the Croatian Spring in 1971, i.e. the collapse of the national movement whose main goal had been to reform Yugoslavia into a state of truly independent nations and to validate the national interests of the Croatian people. Therefore, after the collapse of the Croatian Spring, all the imposed political leaderships of SR Croatia were strongly unitarist and supported maintaining the status founded on the federal Constitution of 1974. This period became known as “the Croatian silence”, which is an apt description of the real state of affairs. Besides this, the political issues that had led to the Croatian Spring were still active in SR Croatia: the economic exploitation of Croatia, the fact that Croatia had the largest number of emigrants, and the political criminalisation of Croatian émigrés. The greatest political issue, however, was that of the factual sovereignty of the Croatian people, i.e. the clearly measurable privileged social and political status of Serbs in Croatia, who were, as a political decision, defined as a constituent nation in the Constitution of SR Croatia of 1974. Although this definition was not fully clear in its contents, its effects in the field were very clear indeed. Serbs were disproportionately represented in the public, administrative, police, and military structures of SR Croatia, and also had the social and political power of a constitutive nation. Their influence is apparent in the fact that the constitutional status of the Croatian language remained unresolved until 1989 due to the opposition of Serbian political representatives, who were against the formulation according to which the Croatian literary language would be defined as the official language of SR Croatia.⁴ In an interview recorded by the State Security Service of the Republican Secretariat of the Interior of SR Croatia (further: Croatian State Security Service) in summer 1989, Franjo Tuđman accurately and directly stated who was responsible for this situation in Croatia, claiming that: “Croatia would not be in such a situation as it is today if the Croatian communists were Croats first and communists second”.⁵

Školska knjiga, 2006); Dušan Bilandžić, *Hrvatska moderna povijest [Croatian Modern History]* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing, 1999); The political positions of the YPA are described in detail in: Davor Marijan, *Slom Titove armije: JNA i raspad Jugoslavije 1987. – 1992. [The Collapse of Tito's Army: The YPA and the Collapse of Yugoslavia 1987–1992]* (Zagreb: Golden marketing-Tehnička knjiga; Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2008).

⁴ Davor Marijan, *Hrvatska 1989. – 1992.: Rađanje države [Croatia 1989–1992: The Birth of a Country]* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2017), pp. 125–169.

⁵ Služba državne sigurnosti Republičkog Sekretarijata unutrašnjih poslova Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske [State Security Service of the Republican Secretariat of the Interior of the Socialist Republic of Croatia] (further: SDS RSUP SRH), Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1265., Klasni neprijatelj u zemlji – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO), daljnja aktivnost u vezi Hrvatske demokratske zajednice (HDZ) i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1265, Class Enemy in the Country – Political and Other

The situation in the then Croatian opposition circles was conditioned by the described political context. For example, the annual report of the Republican Secretariat of the Interior of SR Croatia for 1987 claimed that the Croatian opposition was the only one in the SFRY that lacked a political programme.⁶ And this is no great surprise, as the Croats had been a majority among the political prisoner population in the SFRY for many years.⁷ An accusation of being a Croatian nationalist was one of the gravest political crimes in the SFRY, and the main goal of such constructions was to threaten with repression any who dared to ask for the protection of Croatian national interests.⁸

Therefore, the first larger opposition initiatives in Croatia were launched only in late 1988 and were undoubtedly an echo of global political changes. In one such initiative, a group of Croatian dissidents petitioned the Parliament of SR Croatia, requesting the return of their seized passports. Next, a broader opposition initiative was launched with the goal of finally constitutionally determining the status of Croatian as the official language in SR Croatia.⁹ Of course, the years-long political struggle for national interests in Communist Yugoslavia produced within the ranks of the opposition persons with interesting backgrounds, such as: Marko Veselica, Vlado Gotovac, Dražen Budiša, Ivan Zvonimir Čičak, Šime Đodan, and Franjo Tuđman.¹⁰

However, a deeper analysis of the biographies of the mentioned dissidents shows that Franjo Tuđman's is particularly interesting. He became a member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in his youth and joined the Partisan movement in World War II. After the end of the war and the establishment of Communist Yugoslavia, he lived in Belgrade as a so-called Croatian cadre. He held a series of high military positions and attained the rank of

Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO), further activity regarding the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) etc.], 4 September 1989. The documents whose location is not noted are in the author's possession.

⁶ Franjo Tuđman, *Osobni dnevnik: 1973. – 1989.: Knjiga III.: 1984. – 1989.* [Personal Diary 1973–1989: Book III: 1984–1989], A. Tuđman, ed. (Zagreb: Večernji list, Zagreb, 2011), p. 218.

⁷ For more on the issue of political persecution in Communist Yugoslavia, see: Rajko Daničević, *Upotreba neprijatelja: Politička suđenja u Jugoslaviji 1945. – 1991.* [Using the Enemy: Political Trials in Yugoslavia 1945–1991] (Belgrade: JP Zavod za udžbenike, 2010).

⁸ Miroslav Tuđman, *Programiranje istine: Rasprava o preraspodjelama društvenih zaliha znanja* [Programming the Truth: Discussion on Reallocations of Social Stocks of Knowledge] (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2012), pp. 19–33.

⁹ For more information on the mentioned initiatives of Croatian dissidents, see: Hrvoje Šošić, *Hrvatski politički leksikon: Dio 1: A-O* [Croatian Political Dictionary, Part 1: A–O] (Rijeka: Tiskara Rijeka, 1993), pp. 88, 101–106, 237–239, 329–342.

¹⁰ More in: *Prekinuta šutnja: ljudi iz 1971.* [Broken Silence: The People of 1971], Milovan Baletić, ed. (Zagreb: Vjesnik, 1990).

general. In the mid-1950s, he also became invested in scholarly work. It was this work that brought him into conflict with a powerful unitarist group of senior officers of Serbian and Montenegrin nationality in the YPA's General Staff. Tuđman thus effectively became involved in one of the fundamental intra-Party conflicts that had existed since the creation of Communist Yugoslavia. It was a conflict between those who consistently advocated federalism and the equality of all Yugoslav nations and those who advocated unitarism, which was merely a cover for the domination of the Serbs as the most numerous nation. It was precisely Tuđman's background and his political views that led to his appointment as the first director of the Institute of the History of the Workers' Movement in Zagreb in 1961. Tuđman could only have achieved this with the blessing of the head of the League of Communists of Croatia, Vladimir Bakarić. Despite this, he quickly came at odds with Bakarić as well. Namely, in his work Tuđman uncompromisingly defended Croatian interests (the Institute's participation in the deconstruction of the "Jasenovac Myth", which had served to politically discredit Croats, is particularly noteworthy). Tuđman also strongly supported the "Declaration on the Name and Status of the Croatian Literary Language" of 1967, which demanded the sovereignty of the Croatian language and a departure from covert Serbisation through imposed linguistic unity. The Declaration was declared a nationalist document, and Croatian cultural and science institutions that supported it were accused of having allowed it to appear through their activities. In the political purges that followed, Tuđman was removed from the position of the Institute's director, retired, and effectively expelled from the League of Communists of Croatia. The extent of the purges is apparent from the fact that they encompassed Većeslav Holjevac, the long-time mayor of Zagreb, and Miroslav Krleža, writer and the greatest authority in the field of Croatian culture. Tuđman soon became a subject of interest to the Communist secret services, which opened a file on him in 1969. Despite this, Tuđman continued to be active through the Heritage Foundation and the Matica Hrvatska. He also participated in the Croatian Spring through these institutions. Although he was not highlighted as one of its leaders in later analyses of this movement, he did give it a significant contribution as a member of the Matica hrvatska's leadership, and this was directly confirmed after the collapse of the Croatian Spring. Tuđman was arrested in early 1972 and sentenced for Croatian nationalism and anti-state activities in a show trial. After leaving prison, he was expelled from public life, but continued an intense scholarly and political work as a political dissident. Therefore, it is no surprise that Tuđman was again arrested and sentenced for anti-state activities in 1981. Tuđman's second trial was the first political trial in the country after Tito's death. Tuđman then became a political convict once again, but eventually managed to reduce his sentence. What conclusion can be drawn from this brief biography

of Tuđman? It can be viewed as a cross-section of the history of the Croatian people during their time in both Yugoslav states.¹¹

But what were the personal conditions of Franjo Tuđman on the eve of this pivotal year, 1989? There is no doubt that his social position had improved. His passport was eventually returned in 1987, which later became the subject of critical inquiry among Tuđman's political opponents.¹² However, by then passports had already been returned to Miko Tripalo, Savka Dabčević-Kučar, Ivan Šibl, and Stjepan Mesić, and the order in which this had been done actually showed the level of these individuals' political crimes after the collapse of the Croatian Spring.¹³ After obtaining travel documents, Tuđman began visiting the Croatian diaspora in the USA, Canada, and the countries of western Europe. During these visits, he participated in the public gatherings organised by émigré organisations and spoke mostly about historical topics. However, he also used his participation at these gatherings to promote his political platform, which was based on the ideological reconciliation of the Croatian people so that they could achieve their most important national goals. He thus won the support of the Croatian diaspora for his political thoughts. The political value of this was soon proven in the democratisation process.¹⁴ In early 1988, Tuđman became a member of the Croatian Writers' Association and participated in public discussions on the constitutional status of the Croatian language. However, prompted by the political changes on the global level, but also in Slovenia, Tuđman and some individuals who shared his political beliefs began to consider the possibility of founding their own democratic association.¹⁵

¹¹ James J. Sadkovich, *Tuđman: Prva politička biografija [Tuđman: The First Political Biography]*, (Zagreb: Večernji posebni proizvodi, 2010). Sadkovich's book is undoubtedly the best biography of Tuđman because it is mostly free of emotional bias; Darko Hudelist, *Tuđman: biografija [Tuđman: A Biography]* (Zagreb: Profil International, 2004); Željko Krušelj, *Tuđman: biografija [Tuđman: A Biography]* (Zagreb: Globus, 1991).

¹² Croatia – Croatian State Archives in Zagreb, fund 1561 (further: HR-HDA-1561), SDS RSUP SRH, Dossier no. 229562. A copy of Tuđman's letter to the head of the Republican Secretariat of the Interior of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, Vilim Mulc, is found in Tuđman's dossier. Mulc sent the letter to the highest-ranking members of SR Croatia's political leadership: Stanko Stojčević, Ante Marković, and Tomislav Kovač.

¹³ Sadkovich, *Tuđman*, pp. 244–245.

¹⁴ HR-HDA-1561, SDS RSUP SRH, Dossier no. 229562. Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1457., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman, Franjo – rezultati informativnog razgovora [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1457, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman, Franjo – Interview Results], 3 November 1988.

¹⁵ Tuđman, *Osobni dnevnik: 1973. – 1989.: Knjiga III.: 1984. – 1989.*, pp. 251, 290-291.

The Beginning of Democratisation and the Period before the Non-Public Founding of the Croatian Democratic Union

At the beginning of the pivotal year 1989, it appeared that Serbia, led by Slobodan Milošević and openly supported by the YPA leadership, could not be stopped in its intention to restructure Communist Yugoslavia in line with its own interests. All opponents of this Serbian policy became aware that the only way to stop it was through the genuine democratisation of society. In line with his years-long political and social engagements, Tuđman was more than ready for such political changes. Therefore, he participated at the meeting of an opposition circle held in the vacation home of Ante Ledić on the Plešivica on 19 January 1989, under the pretext of the Veselica brothers' birthday celebration. Tuđman was informed about this gathering by his lawyer, Vlado Marić, who also drove him to the mentioned meeting.¹⁶ A participant at the meeting, church historian and priest Juraj Kolarić, wrote a detailed account of it. As expected, the main topic of discussion at such a gathering was the possibility of democratisation in Croatia. After the discussion, the participants adopted some concrete decisions. They decided to establish a democratic association and, as a first step towards this, formed an Initiative Circle. They elected Franjo Tuđman as its president and Drago Stipac as its secretary. This was an unexpected choice because Tuđman was not a regular member of this opposition circle. He was elected to this position after it had been refused by Marko Veselica, who was undoubtedly the most famous name from the circle, but who was still on probation after leaving prison. According to Kolarić, Tuđman was chosen for his background, but also because the links he had built up with Croatian émigrés were considered a great political boon. However, there were also certain disagreements between the participants about the potential name of the future democratic association and the possible political strategy towards Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁷

In the end, the Plešivica meeting passed without direct Croatian State Security Service surveillance. The Service learned of it only a few days later, by eavesdropping on a conversation between M. Veselica and Hrvoje Šošić. This information was significant for future relations within the Initiative Circle. Šošić was dissatisfied with the final outcome of events, i.e. Tuđman's election as president, and so demanded that M. Veselica remove him from this position

¹⁶ Hrvoje Šošić, *Istine o dr. Franji Tuđmanu, prvi dio [Truths about Dr Franjo Tuđman, Part One]* (Samobor – Zagreb A.G. Matoš, 2002), p. 67.

¹⁷ For more information, see: Juraj Kolarić, "Doprinos skupine iz Stošinca na Plešivici stvaranju hrvatske demokracije" ["The Contribution of the Group from Stošinac on the Plešivica to the Creation of Croatian Democracy"], *Kolo* (2010), No. 3/4.

as soon as possible.¹⁸ But what really happened at the Plešivica meeting? There is no doubt that the Croatian Democratic Union was not founded then, despite later public claims to the contrary. In fact, it was a meeting that brought together numerous members of the opposition in Croatia, most of whom later founded their own democratic parties.¹⁹ For Tuđman, however, the Plešivica meeting was primarily proof that his political thinking and activities had found a good reception and that they had a certain political weight in opposition circles. Namely, a conversation between Tuđman and Drago Stipac recorded by the State Security Service ten days after the meeting indisputably shows that the former saw himself as the leader of a democratic association, and his platform as a political solution for the Croatian people and Croatia.²⁰

Tuđman's next political move was prompted by a political event. The "Croatian Silence" was finally broken in early February 1989, when the Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative was presented in public in Zagreb. The members of this association and their political programme were clearly of a pro-Yugoslav orientation. Tuđman's political answer to this was at the end of his political document, "Draft Proposal for Launching a Croatian Democratic Assembly". The "Croatian Democratic Assembly" was for a long time Tuđman's choice for the name of his democratic initiative. This political document clearly laid out the future Croatian political priorities: unconditional sovereignty of the Croatian people and Croatia, the general democratisation of society, and free and institutional cooperation with the Croatian diaspora. However, its contents remained within the existing legal framework, so as not to give the authorities a pretext for political persecution. Soon after that, the circle of Tuđman's close associates made a final decision on the name for their democratic initiative: they called it the Croatian Democratic Union, after the Croatian Fraternal Union. This name was a good choice, and the speed at which it became popular in public is proof of this.²¹ In addition, Tuđman's

¹⁸ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 103., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Šošić Hrvoje (OO), Veselica Marko (OO), rascjep u užoj grupaciji koja je radila na formiranju Hrvatskog demokratskog saveza [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 103, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Šošić Hrvoje (OO), Veselica Marko (OO), split in the inner group that worked on forming the Croatian Democratic Union], 25 January 1989.

¹⁹ Domagoj Knežević, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, od osnivanja do raskida s Jugoslavijom* [The Croatian Democratic Union From its Founding to the Rupture with Yugoslavia] (Zagreb Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2020), p. 34.

²⁰ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 191., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO) – kontakt sa Stipcem Dragom (OO) [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 191, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO) – contact with Stipac Drago (OO)], 6 February 1989.

²¹ Knežević, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, pp. 31, 47-49.

Preliminary Draft quickly achieved significant success and won the support of many distinguished persons. This was undoubtedly the result of Tuđman's personal initiative, because he normally sent it personally to all who were interested. In addition, in the final version of this text, entitled 'Preliminary Draft of the Croatian Democratic Union Party Programme',²² Tuđman inserted all those suggestions he considered politically useful.²³

This was followed by another of Tuđman's logical initiatives. Despite the obstructions of the official authorities, in mid-February 1989, he personally arranged with the Croatian Writers' Association leadership for them to organise a forum, so that he could publicly present his 'Preliminary Draft of the Croatian Democratic Union Party Programme' and his initiative to establish a party. The forum in the Croatian Writers' Association was held in Zagreb on 28 February 1989 in an exceptionally interesting political context. On that day, the first meeting of the anti-bureaucratic revolution was held in Croatia, i.e. the political destabilisation of Croatia began in Knin, sponsored by Serbia. The Knin meeting was attended by numerous local Serbs who unconditionally supported the politics of S. Milošević and Serbia, also claiming that their national rights were being threatened. The final list of presenters at the forum in the Croatian Writers' Association was truly respectable. Among the speakers were: linguist Dalibor Brozović, attorney Ivan Gabelica, writers Dubravko Horvatić, Stjepan Šešelj, Hrvoje Hitrec, and Neven Jurica, physician Ante Korljan, engineer Drago Stipac, lawyer Vladimir Šeks. The meeting was also attended by guests from Slovenian democratic associations: Branko Hofman, Tone Remc, and France Tomšič. The major points of all presenters were clear: they demanded the unconditional democratisation of society and the true sovereignty of the Croatian people.²⁴ Of course, from the contents of the fo-

²² During Tuđman's work on the Preliminary Draft, he made several versions with the name Croatian Democratic Assembly and several with the name Croatian Democratic Union, which were signed by many distinguished persons from various fields of social activity.

²³ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Osijek, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 110., Klasni neprijatelj u zemlji, Šeks Vladimir (OO) [Centre Osijek, Highly Confidential, Information 110, Class Enemy in the Country, Šeks Vladimir (OO)], 27 February 1989; SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Split, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 104., Subverzivna – politička djelatnost, Akcija Vir, Korljan Ante (OO), Marković Zvonimir (OO), Terzić Velimir (OO), Veselica Marko (OO) i drugi – kontakti i aktivnosti u stvaranju Hrvatske demokratske zajednice [Centre Split, Highly Confidential, Information 104, Subversive – Political Activity, Operation Vir, Korljan Ante (OO), Marković Zvonimir (OO), Terzić Velimir (OO), Veselica Marko (OO) and others – contacts and activities in creating the Croatian Democratic Union], 7 March 1989.

²⁴ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 351., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Saznanja o održanom inicijativnom sastanku "Hrvatske demokratske zajednice" [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 351, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, information on the initiative meeting of the 'Croatian Democratic Union'], 1 March 1989.

rum, it was clear who its main initiator was, and who was the most responsible for it taking place: Franjo Tuđman opened and closed the forum with his presentations. He spoke clearly about the current political crisis and presented the solutions that had first been proposed in his Preliminary Draft.²⁵

The forum achieved its goal, as evidenced by the events that followed. The Communist authorities and the media under their control strongly attacked the forum, by repeating the same constructs that had served through the years to discredit all demands for the protection of Croatian national interests. For example, the forum participants were directly proclaimed to be followers of Ustasha ideology and the politics of the Croatian Spring, and their statements thus became politically problematic. Of course, this prompted fears of possible persecution among opposition circles. In contrast, the forum caused positive reactions among those parts of the public that wished for the eventual democratisation of Croatian society, and also among the numerous Croatian diaspora.²⁶

However, in addition to their exceptional contribution to the beginning of the democratisation process, the mentioned successes of Tuđman's initiatives regarding the Preliminary Draft and the forum in the Croatian Writers' Association had a major role in another political process that had been initiated: the forming of political leaders within the ranks of the Croatian opposition. There were many legitimate pretenders in that context, and the political and personal disagreements between Franjo Tuđman, Marko Veselica, Vlado Gotovac, and Slavko Goldstein were already apparent.²⁷

²⁵ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 412., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Saznanja oko priprema toka sastanka inicijative za osnivanje HDZ-a [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 412, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, information regarding preparations for the founding meeting of the HDZ], 7 March 1989; SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Split, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 111., Unutrašnji neprijatelj – hrvatski nacionalizam, Kontakti i razgovori, te aktivno učešće našeg izvora s bivšim nosiocima masovnog pokreta u Zagrebu na planu formiranja različitih demokratski asocijacija [Centre Split, Highly Confidential, Information 111, Internal Enemy – Croatian Nationalism, contacts and conversations, and the active involvement of our source with former mass movement leaders in Zagreb in the plan to form various democratic associations], 9 March 1989.

²⁶ Knežević, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, p. 55; see also: SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Split, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 109., Subverzivna – politička djelatnost, Akcija Vir, Korljan Ante (OO), Marković Zvonimir (OO) i drugi – kontakti i aktivnosti [Centre Split, Highly Confidential, Information 109, Subversive – Political Activity, Operation Vir, Korljan Ante (OO), Marković Zvonimir (OO) and others – contacts and activities], 13 March 1989.

²⁷ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Split, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 102., Šale Petar (OO), – prisustvovanje misi za kardinala Stepinca, polaganje pravosudnog ispita, neslaganje s vrhuškom iz Zagreba, kontaktiranje I. Z. Čička i M. Veselice, sudjelovanje u osnivanju Hrvatske

Despite the publicly visible displeasure of the authorities due to the forum in the Croatian Writers' Association, Franjo Tuđman and his associates continued to prepare the founding of the Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, HDZ). Therefore, in March 1989, they established contact with the Socialist Union of the Working People of Croatia (*Socijalistički Savez Radnog Naroda Hrvatske*, SSRNH), a socio-political organisation under the control of the League of Communists of Croatia, which was at that time legally responsible for the founding of democratic associations. Next, two meetings were held between the HDZ and the SSRNH, at which Dalibor Brozović was the main negotiator of the HDZ Initiative Circle. These meetings again showed that the Communist authorities saw the political engagement of Franjo Tuđman and his political programme as the main problem. Tuđman's assessment was that their comments demanded only minor changes to his programme. However, the SSRNH ultimately demanded that the official founding of the HDZ be postponed until autumn 1989. Next, a clear message to the main members of the HDZ Initiative Circle was sent, as the Zagreb Municipal Prosecutor's Office charged M. Veselica and F. Tuđman with alleged public political activities while the court injunctions issued at their political trials were still in effect.²⁸

In the threatening atmosphere of these undoubtedly political indictments, a meeting of the HDZ Initiative Circle was scheduled for 3 April 1989 in Zagreb. At first, the official founding of the HDZ had been planned, but Tuđman postponed this due to the SSRNH's official stance. In addition, he believed they could actually be arrested if they went through with the founding.²⁹ The

demokratske stranke [Centre Split, Highly Confidential, Information 102, Šale Petar (OO) – attending a mass for Cardinal Stepinac, bar exam, disagreements with the leadership from Zagreb, contacting I. Z. Čičak and M. Veselica, participation in the founding of the Croatian Democratic Party], 2 March 1989; SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Split, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 111., Unutrašnji neprijatelj – hrvatski nacionalizam, Kontakti i razgovori, te aktivno učešće našeg izvora s bivšim nosiocima masovnog pokreta u Zagrebu na planu formiranja različitih demokratski asocijacija [Centre Split, Highly Confidential, Information 111, Internal Enemy – Croatian Nationalism, contacts and conversations, and the active involvement of our source with the former leaders of the mass movement in Zagreb in the plan to form various democratic associations], 9 March 1989.

²⁸ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 564., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Veselica Marko (OO), kontakti i komentari na temu Hrvatske demokratske zajednice i podnešenih prekršajnih prijava [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 564, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Veselica Marko (OO), contacts and comments on the topic of the Croatian Democratic Union and the filed misdemeanour charges], 27 March 1989.

²⁹ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 591., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO), kontakti i komentari u vezi prekršajnog postupka protiv Tuđmana i daljne aktivnosti HDZ-a [Centre Zagreb, Highly

meeting was nonetheless held on 3 April 1989 in the Society of University Teachers building. It was attended by 56 people, and there exists a thorough report of the Croatian State Security Service about it, which was produced based on informant information. First, Franjo Tuđman addressed the attendees, presenting his assessment of the preceding events linked to the Initiative Circle. Important agreements about the future organisation of activities were reached at the meeting. For example, it was agreed to establish internal topical committees for: the political programme, statute, economic issues, civil society and human rights, and demographic-emigration issues. The establishment of an internal communications centre headed by Drago Stipac was also agreed upon. In addition, the mentioned report stated that over twenty members of the Initiative Circle were being constantly monitored by the Croatian State Security Service and that Tuđman had asked Šeks to write the HDZ's Statute. Conflicts within the Initiative Circle were also registered, as were the first disagreements with the Croatian Social Liberal Alliance (*Hrvatski socijalno liberalni savez*, HSLŠ). The mentioned information was seen as an ideal groundwork for intelligence operations, i.e. for attempts to sow discord among the ranks of the opposition.³⁰ The conflicts within the Initiative Circle are understandable. Firstly, the events of the meeting with the SSRNH representatives had a negative effect on certain members of the Initiative Circle due to the well-known stance of the Communist authorities towards political opponents. Furthermore, the new political indictment against Tuđman also caused unease among many. For example, Neven Jurica asked Tuđman to accept the SSRNH's demand and postpone the founding until autumn 1989. However, Tuđman refused and the majority of the present members supported him, but he saw all this as an act aimed directly against him.³¹ In addition, a serious opposition to Tuđman's leadership had begun to form within the Initiative Circle. Namely, some members had various complaints about his work, some of which were of a personal, and others of an ideological nature. Some claimed that Tuđman was deliberately not informing them about events regarding the Initiative Circle. Others claimed that he was deliberately obstructing the activities of Marko Veselica and arbitrarily introducing into the Initiative Circle

Confidential, Information 591, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO), contacts and comments regarding the misdemeanour charges against Tuđman and the further activities of the HDZ], 29 March 1989.

³⁰ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 619., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO), Neven Jurica (PO), Perica Jurić (PO), Hološ Rene i dr. – inicijativni sastanak Hrvatske demokratske zajednice (HDZ) [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 619, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO), Neven Jurica (PO), Perica Jurić (PO), Hološ Rene and Others – initiative meeting of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)], 4 April 1989.

³¹ Tuđman, *Osobni dnevnik: 1973. – 1989., Knjiga III.: 1984. – 1989.*, pp. 301-303.

members who had family ties with the Communist political elite, such as Ivan Šibl and Janko Bobetko, sons of YPA generals. Further, some of them were unhappy with Tuđman's appeal to the heritage of Communist Yugoslavia in his programme, which he considered positive for national interests, especially the federalism in the decisions of the Land Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (ZAVNOH) and the Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ).³²

After this meeting, Tuđman went on a multi-day tour that included visits to the Croatian diaspora in Switzerland and Germany. According to Tuđman's account, the tour was politically successful, especially in regard to attracting émigré support for his political programme and for the possible founding of HDZ organisations. Numerous émigrés were interested in the possibility of founding their own HDZ organisations, but Tuđman still considered this problematic due to the possible compromising of the HDZ.³³ In mid-May 1989, Tuđman returned to Croatia and, with his closest associates, arranged the most important technical details for holding a legal inaugural gathering of the HDZ. At the same time, he personally finished writing the Party Programme, which was factually an expansion of the programme presented in the Preliminary Draft.³⁴ However, opposition to Tuđman's leadership within the Initiative Circle had grown in the meantime. After returning from his tour of Western Europe, Tuđman immediately entered into a sharp conflict with chief secretary Drago Stipac because of the latter's independent actions regarding the working of the Initiative Circle.³⁵ In addition, Marko Veselica and Hrvoje Šošić increasingly considered the option of removing Tuđman from the position of president of the Initiative Circle.³⁶

³² Knežević, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, p. 58.

³³ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Split, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 258., Boravak Tuđman dr. Franje, u inozemstvu, aktivnosti i raskol u okviru Hrvatske demokratske zajednice [Centre Split, Highly Confidential, Information 258, Dr Tuđman Franjo's stay abroad, activities and split within the Croatian Democratic Union], 15 June 1989.

³⁴ Tuđman, *Osobni dnevnik: 1973. – 1989., Knjiga III.: 1984. – 1989.*, pp. 306-307.

³⁵ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 914., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO), Veselica Marko (OO), Šošić Hrvoje (OO) – komentari o Hrvatskoj demokratskoj zajednici (HDZ), Hrvatsko socijalno liberalnom savezu (HSL) i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 914, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO), Veselica Marko (OO), Šošić Hrvoje (OO) – comments on the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), Croatian Social Liberal Alliance (HSL), etc.], 1 June 1989.

³⁶ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 964., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Šošić Hrvoje (OO), Veselica Marko (OO), Paradžik Ante (OO), Vučić Petar (OO) – komentari o Hrvatskoj demokratskoj zajednici (HDZ), Hrvatsko socijalno liberalnom savezu (HSL) i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Infor-

After the Initiative Circle leadership decided to found the HDZ on 17 June 1989, it was agreed that the Initiative Circle would hold two further meetings, at which all the details would be agreed upon. Those who were dissatisfied with Tuđman's work also prepared for these meetings. This dissatisfaction brought together a larger group of malcontents under the leadership of the Veselica brothers and Hrvoje Šošić. This group would later become known as Veselica's Fraction. The first meeting of the Initiative Circle was held on 2 June 1989, and the second on 11 June. Both were marked by the harsh disagreements between members of Veselica's Fraction and Tuđman's supporters as well as strong personal attacks on Tuđman and his political programme. In these attacks, a number of Fraction members expressed their dissatisfaction with the contents of Tuđman's programme, claiming that it had inherited too much from the Communists, while others claimed that Tuđman was leading the Initiative Circle in an undemocratic manner due to his previous affiliation with the Communist elite. Others still complained that he was unnecessarily insisting on the speedy execution of the founding and thus coming into conflict with the authorities, and yet others simply wanted one of the Veselica brothers as president. Faced with such powerful attacks, at one point at the second meeting, Tuđman resigned as president of the Initiative Circle. However, he immediately withdrew the resignation. Despite all this, at these meetings he received the support of most attending members and his opponents failed in their intent. It is likely that Tuđman's belief that the Fraction members were inadvertently participating in the Communist authorities' efforts to stop the founding of the HDZ also contributed to this.³⁷

At the same time as members of Veselica's Fraction were trying to remove Tuđman and take over the Initiative Circle, the legal founding of the HDZ, scheduled at the Zagreb hotel Panorama for 17 June 1989, was deliberately, institutionally halted. This began in early June 1989, after the HDZ Initiative Circle requested permission from the City Secretariat of the Interior to publicly found a party. This request was denied due to the alleged fear of disturbing the public due to the HDZ programme's contents and the possible statements of those present, but also because of problems related to founding the HDZ as a socio-political organisation. After this, the Initiative Circle attempted to remedy these complaints, but a days-long correspondence ended with a ban on the public founding. The main stated reason for the ban was that the SSRNH had not offered a positive opinion of the act. In contrast, by

mation 964, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Šošić Hrvoje (OO), Veselica Marko (OO), Paradžik Ante (OO), Vučić Petar (OO) – comments on the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), Croatian Social Liberal Alliance (HSL), etc.], 12 June 1989.

³⁷ Knežević, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, pp. 61-69.

then the SSRNH had already given its support for the public founding of the Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative and the HSLŠ.³⁸

Taking into account the described circumstances of the relations with the authorities and Veselica's Fraction in the Initiative Circle, Tuđman and his closest associates decided to found the HDZ non-publicly, i.e. to perform an act that was then allowed by law. This was legally justified by Vladimir Šeks and Josip Manolić, and it was decided only a day before the non-public founding that it would be done without the supporters of Veselica's Fraction. Still, all members of Veselica's Fraction were offered the opportunity to join them at the non-public founding.³⁹

On that 17 June 1989, a mass of people interested in the founding of the HDZ gathered in front of the Zagreb hotel Panorama. However, Slobodan Praljak informed them about the ban on the public founding and asked them to disperse peacefully. Meanwhile, Tuđman and his collaborators went to the stadium of the Borac football club in the Zagreb Jarun district in order to found the HDZ in a non-public place. In line with the circumstances, the non-public founding had its specificities. For example, the founding was proclaimed legal immediately at the beginning of the assembly due to fears that police organs would break it up. In addition, among the 48 present delegates, the majority were delegates from the Osijek area who were close to Vladimir Šeks. Leaders were elected immediately. Franjo Tuđman was elected as the first president, while Dalibor Brozović, Krešimir Balenović, and Vladimir Šeks became vice presidents. Ivan Bobetko was elected as the chief secretary, Milivoj Slaviček as the president of the Central Committee, and Josip Manolić as the president of the Executive Committee. Petar Šegedin and Šime Balen were elected as honorary presidents. In addition, the core founding documents were adopted: the 'Statement of the HDZ Founding Committee', the 'Programme Declaration of the HDZ Founding Committee', and the 'Statute of the HDZ'. The founding assembly was again opened and closed by the main initiator, Franjo Tuđman,

³⁸ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1052., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO) – dogovor za Osnivačku skupštinu Hrvatske demokratske zajednice (HDZ), i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1052, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO) – agreement regarding the Founding Assembly of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) etc.], 22 June 1989.

³⁹ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1063., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO) – reakcija na zabranu Osnivačke skupštine Hrvatske demokratske zajednice (HDZ), i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1063, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO) – reaction to the ban on the Founding Assembly of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) etc.], 23 June 1989.

who presented the most important points of his programme. It was ideologically based on the positive traditions of Ante Starčević's Rightism, Stjepan Radić's republicanism, and the Croatian left; the unconditional sovereignty of the Croatian people and Croatia was demanded, as were the speedy implementation of the democratisation of society as a whole and an unobstructed institutional cooperation with the Croatian diaspora.⁴⁰ The Croatian State Security Service learned of the founding committee through a recorded conversation of Hrvoje Šošić and Dragan Lalić, the latter being the only member of Veselica's Fraction who attended the non-public founding. Lalić, however, left the founding after he judged it shameful due to the way it avoided the members of Veselica's Fraction.⁴¹

This was not the end of the conflict between the members of the former HDZ Initiative Circle. After they learned of the circumstances of the non-public founding, the members of Veselica's Fraction made a public statement claiming that they did not consider the founding legal or legitimate and that they did not recognise it. As expected, Tuđman was unhappy with this and again saw them as the unwitting tools used by the authorities to stop the founding of the HDZ. Despite this, he was very happy that the HDZ was finally established and that he was elected as the leader of a democratic initiative.⁴²

⁴⁰ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1054., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO) – komentari Osnivačke skupštine Hrvatske demokratske zajednice (HDZ), i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1054, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO) – comments of the Founding Assembly of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) etc.], 23 June 1989; SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1058., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO) – komentari Osnivačke skupštine Hrvatske demokratske zajednice (HDZ), i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1058, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO) – comments of the Founding Assembly of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) etc.], 23 June 1989.

⁴¹ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1055., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Šošić Hrvoje (OO) – komentari Osnivačke skupštine Hrvatske demokratske zajednice (HDZ), i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1055, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Šošić Hrvoje (OO) – Comments of the Founding Assembly of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) etc.], 23 June 1989.

⁴² SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Split, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 271., Unutrašnji neprijatelj – hrvatski nacionalizam, Osnovana Hrvatska demokratska zajednica s predsjednikom Tuđman dr. Franjom na čelu [Centre Split, Highly Confidential, Information 271, Subject: Internal Enemy – Croatian Nationalism, Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) founded under the leadership of Tuđman Dr Franjo], 29 June 1989; Tuđman, *Osobni dnevnik: 1973. – 1989., Knjiga III.: 1984. – 1989.*, pp. 309-312.

The Growth of the Croatian Democratic Union into the Main Political Opponent of the League of Communists of Croatia

After the successful non-public founding of the HDZ, Tuđman again visited the Croatian diaspora in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, and Sweden, but this time as the elected president of a democratic initiative. The positive reception this had among the Croatian diaspora is obvious from the huge interest for the founding of the HDZ. There is no doubt that the final results of this tour clearly showed that the decision to found the HDZ was a good one, and that Tuđman's previous visits to the diaspora had made him into a recognised political figure among this numerous part of the Croatian people.⁴³

At the same time, SR Serbia, led by Slobodan Milošević, continued to implement its reconstruction of Communist Yugoslavia. After they forcibly installed a pro-Serb leadership in SR Montenegro and violated the federal Constitution by abolishing provincial autonomy, it appeared that nobody could stop them. Therefore, on 28 June 1989 (St Vitus' Day according to the Julian Calendar), a mass gathering took place on Kosovo Field, a commemoration of the famous medieval battle against the Ottoman invaders. The commemoration was marked by Milošević's message to the current and future opponents of Serbia's politics. He claimed that the Serbs were '...again facing battles and fighting them. They are not armed, though such are still not out of the question.'⁴⁴ Of course, these circumstances prompted the supporters of such politics among the Serbs in Croatia to become more active. Only two weeks later, they organised their own Battle of Kosovo celebration at the Dalmatian Kosovo Field near Knin. The celebration was sponsored by the SR Croatia authorities, but despite this turned into an open manifestation of Greater Serbian nationalism and open negation of the—factually non-existent—Croatian republican sovereignty. After this, even the SR Croatia authorities were forced to respond and detain some of the organisers. However, so as not to diverge too far from their years-long policy, they immediately began to appeal to Croats to restrain themselves in order to stop the further escalation of Serbian nationalism.⁴⁵ Some of the HDZ Initiative Circle members were also afraid of Serbia's policies and the further expansion of Serbian nationalism. They believed that the founding of the HDZ should be postponed due to the Battle of Kosovo anniversary. In contrast, Tuđman and his closest associates believed that it would be good to have an established democratic initiative and organised political force in Croatia because they expected further political

⁴³ Tuđman, *Osobni dnevnik: 1973. – 1989., Knjiga III.: 1984. – 1989.*, pp. 311-314.

⁴⁴ Slavoljub Đukić, *Političko groblje [Political Cemetery]*, Službeni glasnik, Beograd, 2010, pp. 289-293.

⁴⁵ Marijan, *Hrvatska 1989. – 1992.*, pp. 146-148.

radicalisation after the Kosovo Battle celebration. It later turned out that this had been a good political assessment.⁴⁶

The summer of 1989 was marked by key events for the future of Tuđman's HDZ. The disagreement with Veselica's Fraction about the legitimacy and legality of a non-public founding grew. There has already been word about how the members of Veselica's Fraction had publicly declared that they consider the non-public founding of the HDZ illegitimate and illegal. They continued to insist on this in all public appearances in July and August 1989. The HDZ leadership headed by Tuđman, of course, denied these claims as incorrect. The Croatian émigrés were the most insistent on the reconciliation of the opposing sides, which was understandable due to the political circumstances. Therefore, several meetings of various forms were held in order to discuss possible reconciliation, but without success. Veselica's Fraction insisted that another founding assembly should be held, this time with both sides sending an equal number of delegates; i.e. they demanded the annulment of the non-public founding. As expected, Tuđman refused and offered them the opportunity to continue their political activities through the HDZ after recognising the legality and legitimacy of the non-public founding, or to establish their own initiative. This dispute was finally resolved at a session of the HDZ Central Committee on 30 September 1989.⁴⁷ Veselica's Fraction had the obvious support of the Communist authorities in this, not because of any special affinity, but because of the assessment that Tuđman was a much more dangerous political opponent.⁴⁸ At the same time as this dispute, a struggle with

⁴⁶ Knežević, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, pp. 64-65.

⁴⁷ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1194., Klasni neprijatelj u zemlji – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO), komentari u vezi Hrvatske demokratske zajednice (HDZ) i boravka u Švedskoj [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1194, Class Enemy in the Country – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO), comments regarding the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and stay in Sweden], 31 July 1989; SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1266., Klasni neprijatelj u zemlji – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO), komentari u vezi Hrvatske demokratske zajednice (HDZ) i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1266, Class Enemy in the Country – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO), comments regarding the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) etc.], 4 September 1989; SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1346., Klasni neprijatelj u zemlji – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO), pokušaj izmirenja dvije grupacije unutar Hrvatske demokratske zajednice (HDZ) [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1346, Class Enemy in the Country – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO), attempt to reconcile two groups within the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)], 26 September 1989.

⁴⁸ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1246., Klasni neprijatelj u zemlji – politička i druga aktivnost, Kušan Jakša (OO), saznanja [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1246, Class Enemy in the Country – Political and Other Activity, Kušan Jakša (OO), information], 25 August 1989.

the government authorities regarding the legal registration of the HDZ was taking place. In the summer months of 1989, there was a correspondence of the HDZ leadership with the Republican Secretariat of Administration and Justice, due to the latter's refusal to register the HDZ. They justified this by claiming that they cannot perform the registration without the opinion of the SSRNH, which still refused to offer a positive opinion of the HDZ. The then effective legal deadline for registration was three months, and there was a justified fear among the HDZ leadership that legal registration would be deliberately blocked. Therefore, they decided to continue focusing on organisational strengthening and work in case that the HDZ's registration was not achieved within the legal deadline.⁴⁹

However, this sort of civil disobedience was not necessary because events on the global political scene were clearly pointing towards the imminent end of the Communist dictatorships in Europe. And this was reflected on the internal political conditions in the SFRY. Namely, on 27 September 1989, the Assembly of SR Slovenia adopted Constitutional amendments that further strengthened its republican sovereignty. As expected, the YPA and SR Serbia leaderships were against this because it indirectly strengthened the sovereignty of the other Yugoslav republics, which interfered with the possibility of achieving their political goals, such as the recentralisation of the common state.⁵⁰ In this, much more favourable, political context, the first session of the HDZ Central Committee, the main party body in the period between the two election assemblies, was held on 30 September 1989. There is no doubt that this

⁴⁹ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1230., Klasni neprijatelj u zemlji – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO), Manolić Josip (PO), komentari na temu održane sjednice CK SKJ, aktivnosti HDZ-a itd. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1230, Class Enemy in the Country – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO), Manolić Josip (PO), comments on the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia meeting, HDZ activities, etc.], 21 August 1989; SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1265., Klasni neprijatelj u zemlji – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO), daljnja aktivnost u vezi Hrvatske demokratske zajednice (HDZ) i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1265, Class Enemy in the Country – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO), further activity regarding the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) etc.], 4 September 1989; SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1500., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo – zakup poslovnog prostora za HDZ, boravak Šeks Vladimira u Australiji i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1500, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO) – renting of commercial premises for the HDZ, stay of Šeks Vladimir in Australia, etc.], 30 October 1989.

⁵⁰ Božo Repe, *Viri o demokratizaciji in osamosvojitvi Slovenije. Opozicija in oblast, Del 2. [Sources on the Democratisation and Independence of Slovenia: Opposition and Government, Part 2]*, Documents no. 5 to no. 10; see in: Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ: izvodi iz dnevnika [The Last Days of the SFRY: Diary Extracts]*, pp. 48-59.

session showed the public that the HDZ had achieved a respectable level of organisation. The main speaker was the president, Franjo Tuđman, who spoke about the conflict with the authorities regarding the registration, the conflict with members of Veselica's Fraction, and the main points from the HDZ's programme: general democratisation of society, securing the sovereignty of the Croatian people, and free cooperation with the Croatian diaspora. In addition, a large number of the problems that had burdened the working of the HDZ for months were resolved at this session. First of all, the conflict with Veselica's Fraction was finally resolved. This happened after members of the Fraction freely addressed the members of the Central Committee, who refused all their demands by a majority of the votes cast. Another proof of the real, growing political power of the HDZ was the fact that it refused to found a joint Coordination Committee of the Croatian opposition, because it sought to avoid anyone else representing or dictating HDZ policy. Also resolved was the problem of legally funding the work of the HDZ because it had not yet been legally registered. An appeal was sent to all sympathisers at home and abroad to make a financial donation, and all those who did so were to be recorded in the 'Golden Book of the HDZ Founders'. This appeal achieved an exceptional success among the diaspora over the next days; Tuđman personally took a hand in everything. In addition, statements with very clear political connotations were adopted at this session; they were a clear reminder of the years-long national politics of the League of Communists of Croatia. These were: 'Support for the Assembly of SR Slovenia in adopting Constitutional amendments', 'Appeal to restore the Matica hrvatska', and 'Demand to the Zagreb City Assembly to return the Ban Jelačić monument to Republic Square'. Furthermore, there was talk about another successful political initiative of the HDZ in early September 1989. Namely, the HDZ Executive Committee then harshly condemned the claims of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts academicians Dobrica Ćosić and Antonije Isaković, who had claimed in an Italian daily newspaper that Dalmatia and Istria had never in their history been Croatian ethnic territory. The League of Communists of Croatia eventually also reacted to this obvious provocation, but the HDZ believed that their own statement had prompted this response.⁵¹

October 1989 brought further intensification of political work on the Croatian opposition scene. In early October, a political initiative of the HDZ

⁵¹ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1440., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, saznanja o istupima pojedinih hrvatskih nacionalista na sastanku Središnjeg odbora Hrvatske demokratske zajednice (HDZ) [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1440, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, information on the statements of Croatian nationalists at the meeting of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) Central Committee], 9 October 1989.

achieved great success: they demanded the return of the Ban Jelačić monument, which had been removed by the Communist regime, to Zagreb's central square, and this was granted following a political decision by the Communist authorities. The circumstances of this initiative prompted a fairly nervous reaction of the Communist authorities, upon whose orders the City Secretariat of the Interior sent agents who broke into the HDZ headquarters. The initiative also caused an intense political conflict between the HDZ and the HSLŠ, because the HSLŠ had been conducting a similar political initiative at the same time. A public dispute about the identity of the true initiator of this initiative developed, with the HSLŠ accusing the HDZ of stealing their idea, while the HDZ accused the HSLŠ of conducting their initiative in cooperation with the authorities. Of course, no opposition party liked to be accused of collaborating with the Communist authorities. The end result of all this was a new, strong political affirmation of the HDZ, and what Tuđman judged was the party's entry onto the political scene in Zagreb in earnest.⁵²

Parallel with the mentioned events, the HDZ's infrastructure continued to grow, i.e., its organisations in the field were being established at a greater pace. The main role in this was played by Franjo Tuđman and his associates, because they understood that well-developed and organised organisation networks in the field are necessary for achieving the desired political success. Considering the mentioned problems of legal registration in Croatia, the first HDZ organisation was established by Croatian émigrés in Zurich on 9 July 1989. Next, numerous organisations were established in Australia in September and October 1989, with Vladimir Šeks playing the leading role in this. The first HDZ local committee in Croatia was officially established on 18 October 1989 in Kardeljevo (today Ploče). Next, a committee for the Biograd na Moru municipality was established in Sveti Filip i Jakov on 19 October, followed by a committee in Metković on 30 October. Josip Manolić was personally active in this series of foundings in Dalmatia. The founding of committees in continental Croatia followed. The Sisak committee was established on 28 October 1989, followed by the HDZ committee in Bjelovar on 9 November 1989. Extensive preparations for establishing committees in Zagreb began, while the HDZ already had 10,000 members in the Osijek and Vinkovci area. The

⁵² SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1446., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO), dogovor za konferenciju za štampu HDZ i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1446, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO), agreement regarding a HDZ press conference etc.], 18 October 1989; SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1449., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo (OO), dogovor za konferenciju za štampu HDZ i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1449, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo (OO), agreement regarding a HDZ press conference etc.], 19 October 1989.

level of this organisational concept's success is apparent in the fact that the HDZ had gathered over 30,000 members in Croatia and abroad by the end of October 1989, which was a respectable number even compared to the ruling League of Communists.⁵³

Another larger meeting, held in Otočec ob Krki in Slovenia on 8 October 1989, produced a clear answer of the HDZ to another exceptionally important political issue—the possibility of forming a common opposition bloc on the level of Yugoslavia as a whole. This meeting was attended by members of Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian opposition initiatives. The HDZ delegation was led by Franjo Tuđman, which caused some disagreements among the participants of the meeting. Namely, representatives of Serbian opposition initiatives demanded that Tuđman and the HDZ delegation do not participate at the meeting due to their alleged nationalist politics. However, the representatives of the Slovenian initiatives explicitly denied this but, among all other Croatian initiatives, only Dražen Budiša from the HSLs supported the HDZ. This stance of the other Croatian representatives was seen by the HDZ as a lack of solidarity among the Croatian opposition. Eventually, a joint statement was adopted at the meeting, which included only general political points; it therefore became clear that there would be no common opposition bloc on the level of Yugoslavia. Tuđman was satisfied with this turn of events because one of the HDZ's main political goals was to achieve the sovereignty of Croatia, if possible through a reform of the federation into a loose confederation of sovereign states, with few joint affairs. Despite this, for tactical reasons, Tuđman still wanted to be present at such a meeting of opposition representatives, mostly because the members of Veselica's Fraction were also present.⁵⁴ However, Tuđman's worries that they would influence the status of the HDZ were unfounded. Even the opponents of Tuđman's leadership in the Initiative Circle understood this. One of them, Anto Matković, who had left the Initiative Circle because of Tuđman and then joined Veselica's Fraction in mid-October 1989, told Vladimir Veselica that 'Tuđman can make do without us, but we cannot make do without Tuđman'. Therefore, it was clear to Tuđman's political opponents who had become the leader of the Croatian opposition.⁵⁵

⁵³ Knežević, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, pp. 116-117.

⁵⁴ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1453., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Veselica Marko kontakti s Hološ Reneom u vezi Izjave sa sastanka u Otočcu i tekst izjave [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1453, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Veselica Marko, contacts with Hološ Rene regarding the Statement at the Otočac meeting and the text of the statement], 20 October 1989.

⁵⁵ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1520., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Matković Anto – komentari u vezi odnosa u HDZ, postupka koji se protiv njega kod Savezne devizne inspekcije (SDI) i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly

Even though everybody already saw that the political changes in the Communist states of Europe were unstoppable, it was still fairly dangerous for the Croatian political opposition in October 1989. A Croatian State Security Service document from early October attests to this. Some members of the Communist secret service were still prepared to use force to defend the undemocratic Communist regime. This document spoke of initiating an operation with the goal of stopping the supposed sabotage-terrorist actions of 'Croatian nationalists'. This included putting Franjo Tuđman, the brothers Marko and Vladimir Veselica, Hrvoje Šošić, Vlado Gotovac, and Ivan Zvonimir Čičak under surveillance. But all of this was, in fact, an obvious attempt by the intelligence service to discredit them and create a basis for their prosecution in more favourable political circumstances. Tuđman's crimes in this document included contacts with Croatian émigrés Ante Beljo, Vinko Grubišić, Anton Kikaš, Branko Salaj, and Zdenko Babić. These Croatian émigrés were respectable citizens of the democratic states in which they lived, but were considered enemies of Communist Yugoslavia due to their social and political activities.⁵⁶

A new attempt to discredit Tuđman followed in late October 1989, just before his trip to Canada and the USA. Tuđman was then accused of anti-Semitism because he had cited in his book *Horrors of War: Historical Reality and Philosophy* the testimonies of Serbian concentration camp inmates that criticised the behaviour of certain Jewish inmates in the Jasenovac concentration camp. For a part of the Jewish community, this was clear proof of Tuđman's anti-Semitism, and a public letter with such accusations was prepared with the open support of Slavko Goldstein, president of the Zagreb Jewish Community, and the HSLS. This accusation presented a major problem for Tuđman and the HDZ due to the regime media campaign that had been launched against them. The mentioned letter was published only after Tuđman's return from Canada and the USA to Croatia.⁵⁷ Despite the mentioned problems, the political results of the trip to Canada and the USA were respectable. Support for the political programme of the HDZ was gathered at numerous meetings

Confidential, Information 1520, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Matković Anto – comments regarding relations within the HDZ, the Federal Foreign Currency Inspection's process against him, etc.], 31 October 1989.

⁵⁶ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1351., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Plan mjera i radnji Centra SDS Zagreb oko najave za pripremanje i izvođenje diverzantsko-terorističkih akcija i u vezi već izvršenih akcija [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1351, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Plan of the measures and activities of the State Security Service Centre Zagreb regarding the announced preparations and conducting of diversion-terrorist actions and regarding the already conducted actions], 3 October 1989.

⁵⁷ Tuđman, *Osobni dnevnik: 1973. – 1989., Knjiga III.: 1984. – 1989.*, pp. 335-336.

with Croatian émigrés, and the establishment of new HDZ organisations was initiated. Dalibor Brozović joined Tuđman on this tour and prompted the separation of the joint Serbian-Croatian editorial board of the Voice of America. However, the greatest result was Tuđman's speech in the Congress of the United States, where he spoke about the political situation in the SFRY and presented his thoughts about the possible resolution of the years-long Yugoslav political crisis.⁵⁸

At the time when Tuđman was in North America, a new conflict developed on the Yugoslav political scene. Namely, the political leadership of SR Serbia decided to destabilise SR Slovenia. As part of this plan, veterans of the 'anti-bureaucratic revolution' decided to hold a grand meeting in Ljubljana on 1 December 1989. Aware of the situation, the Slovenian republican authorities immediately banned it and closed the republic's borders to any possible organised arrival of Serbs from other parts of Yugoslavia. One such group of Serbs included those who had organised the Battle of Kosovo commemoration on the Dalmatian Kosovo Field.⁵⁹ The intention of the 'anti-bureaucratic revolution' veterans prompted a strong political response from Franjo Tuđman and the HDZ leadership. After the events of summer, the HDZ in the Knin area became aware that the unitarist leadership of the League of Communists of Croatia will not be able to answer this threat in an adequate manner. The mentioned political response of the HDZ was symbolically presented in public on the birthday of Communist Yugoslavia, 29 November 1989, in a document entitled 'Declaration to the Citizens and Parliament of SR Croatia and the Entire Croatian People'. There is no doubt that it contained a clear defence of Croatian interests and a demand for the introduction of a democratic social system. In addition, it considered the policy of SR Serbia as the main cause of the then current political instability and expressed support for the leadership of SR Slovenia in defending Slovenian sovereignty. Similarly, as an answer to increasingly common claims about the need to establish Serbian ethnic borders, it contained a demand for the 'territorial integrity of the entire Croatian people within [Croatian] historical and natural borders'. Also demanded was that all Croatian émigrés be allowed to return regardless of

⁵⁸ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1724., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Tuđman Franjo, Šeks Vladimir – intervju za Australiju [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1724, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Tuđman Franjo, Šeks Vladimir – Interview for Australia], 11 December 1989.

⁵⁹ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1637., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Saznanja o organiziranju odlaska na miting u Ljubljani s područja Dalmacije i Zagreba [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1637, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, information regarding the organised departure for the meeting in Ljubljana from Dalmatia and Zagreb], 29 November 1989.

their political beliefs, and that all political prisoners be immediately released. Further, it was highlighted that the 'Declaration' was created 'on the basis of the Croatian people's right to self-determination to separation, which is guaranteed to all nations by the UN Charter and the extant Constitution'. Finally, the League of Communists leadership was directly called out for failing to defend Croatian interests in the current political turmoil. These contents of the Declaration caused panic among the League of Communists of Croatia leadership. In addition to clearly showing the bad political situation in Croatia, it also signified that political forces willing to resist the increasingly aggressive politics of Serbia do exist there.⁶⁰ Further, the mentioned definition of Croatia within its 'historical and natural borders' caused strong public reactions. Such a statement had been inconceivable on the Croatian political scene for many years because it spoke of the historical right of the Croatian people to parts of the territory outside the borders of SR Croatia. For a long time, there was controversy about its authorship. Manolić first claimed that it was his, but has recently admitted that it was in fact Tuđman's. There is no doubt about this, because Tuđman had the last word in these strategic political matters. Still, not everyone in the HDZ was happy with the insertion of this definition into the Declaration, because some of the members considered that it put the current Croatian borders in question.⁶¹ In the end, the Declaration achieved an exceptional political success and thus contributed to the further growth of public interest for the HDZ, while the decisive role in its successful distribution was played by the by then already powerful and well-organised network of HDZ organisations in Croatia and abroad.⁶²

⁶⁰ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1667., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Proglas HDZ građanima i Saboru SRH i cijelom hrvatskom narodu [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1667, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Announcement of the HDZ to the citizens and Parliament of SR Croatia and the entire Croatian people], 30 November 1989.

⁶¹ Knežević, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, p. 121.

⁶² SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1671., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Reakcije i komentari na situaciju nakon odgađanja Mitinga istine u Ljubljani [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1671, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, reactions and comments on the situation after the postponing of the Meeting of Truth in Ljubljana], 1 December 1989; SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1716., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Grubišić Vinko (OO) – kontakti s vezama u zemlji [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1716, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Grubišić Vinko (OO) – contacts with connections in the country], 11 December 1989; SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Split, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 467., Unutrašnji neprijatelj – hrvatski nacionalizam, Marković Zvonimir (OO), Terzić Velimir, Gojak Alen, Lozo Tomislav i dr., Međusobni kontakti i aktivnosti HDZ i dr na području Dalmacije, Akcija Vir, Dogovor o rasparčavanju Proglasa... Hrvatske demokratske zajednice, prijem kod nadbiskupa Kuharića i američkog

As expected, the very announcement that an ‘anti-bureaucratic revolution’ meeting would be held in Ljubljana caused political unrest in Croatia. In these circumstances, a part of the Croatian opposition organised a joint initiative in which the public signing of a demand for the speedy democratisation of society and free elections was scheduled for 10 December 1989. This initiative was eventually led by Ivan Zvonimir Čičak, but was boycotted by the HSLs and HDZ due to mutual disagreements. However, a historical reversal took place precisely on 10 December: by a narrow majority, the Presidency of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia adopted a decision to hold the first democratic elections. The statement of grounds of this historical decision clearly showed that they were aware that they could no longer maintain their illegitimate rule. Interestingly, after so many years of their rule without democratic elections, they suddenly decided that parliamentary elections should be held within one month, while local elections would be held later. It should be noted that this decision of the Central Committee surprised the Croatian public. Tuđman publicly commented its enactment in the name of the HDZ. He saw it primarily as a desire of the League of Communists’ leadership to stay in power, but also as an indicator of their internal turmoil. As opposed to other opposition initiatives, Tuđman nonetheless criticised the League of Communists for its intention to hold elections within a month or as soon as possible. He also criticised certain opposition associations who supported that intention and judged their actions as a direct support of League of Communists interests and a repeat of the case regarding the initiative to return the Ban Jelačić monument. The HDZ’s main complaint was that the elections would not be truly free and democratic due to the social control held by the League of Communists.⁶³

The decision to hold elections prompted a quick reaction of the already numerous HDZ membership. In late November 1989, the HDZ already had a large network of organisations, established a firm link with the most important members of Croatian communities, and had the continued financial support of the Croatian diaspora.⁶⁴ Thus, organisational preparations began

ambasadora [Centre Split, Highly Confidential, Information 467, Internal Enemy – Croatian Nationalism, Marković Zvonimir (OO), Terzić Velimir, Gojak Alen, Lozo Tomislav and others, contacts and activities of the HDZ and others in Dalmatia, Operation Vir, Agreement to distribute the Announcement... of the Croatian Democratic Union, reception by Archbishop Kuharić and the American ambassador], 26 December 1989.

⁶³ Knežević, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, pp. 121-123.

⁶⁴ SDS RSUP SRH, Centar Zagreb, Strogo povjerljivo, Informacija 1778., Predmet: Klasni neprijatelj – politička i druga aktivnost, Šošić Hrvoje – komentari sastanka Društva hrvatskih političkih osuđenika, kontakt s Denglerom Johanom iz Beča i dr. [Centre Zagreb, Highly Confidential, Information 1778, Subject: Class Enemy – Political and Other Activity, Šošić

on all levels, so as to secure as good election results as possible for the HDZ. In addition, political questions important to the HDZ were opened. Thus, the matter of allowing Croatian emigrants to vote in their countries of residence was brought up in an official letter to the Speaker of the Parliament of SR Croatia. Next, the willingness of the Communist authorities for true deideologisation and democratisation of society was put to the test again. Namely, the HDZ Executive Committee sent a request to the SR Croatia authorities to recognise Catholic Christmas as a state holiday. In addition, it was requested that they allow the free celebration of the most important religious holidays of other religious confessions. There is no doubt that such political demands had increasing weight, because the HDZ had over 100,000 members by the end of this historical and pivotal year, 1989. It had therefore become larger than the League of Communists. Furthermore, its founder and ideologue, Franjo Tuđman, had without a doubt become the most important political figure among the ranks of the opposition. All this was a clear confirmation that the political development of the HDZ was going according to plan, despite all attempts by the authorities to stop it.⁶⁵

Conclusion

There is no doubt that 1989 was one of those years that remain inscribed in human collective memory due to the historical events that took place during them. Namely, the collapse of the extant bipolar and bloc-divided world created the international order that we have inherited today. The Communist ideology suffered its final defeat, and many European nations finally established a democratic system and the related values. The democratisation process that swept through Eastern Europe in 1989 could not circumvent Croatia as a republic within the frame of Communist Yugoslavia. In the 20th century, the Croatian people experienced life under both right-wing and left-wing totalitarian governments, and the establishment of a democratic system was surely the wish of the majority of Croatian society. Political dissidents, many of whom had very interesting backgrounds, immediately got involved in the democratisation process. Among them, Franjo Tuđman had a particularly interesting background. He entered 1989 as a person who had for many years been a member of the Communist political elite, but also as a person who had been politically sentenced in 1972 and 1983 for his legitimate political de-

Hrvoje – comments from the Association of Croatian Political Convicts meeting, contact with Dengler Johann from Vienna, etc.], 25 December 1989.

⁶⁵ Knežević, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, p. 123.

mands to protect the national interests of the Croatian people in Communist Yugoslavia. In addition, Tuđman had been literally ostracised from society after the collapse of the Croatian Spring in 1971. This did not stop him from continuing his intense social and scholarly activities, which were noted in numerous reports of Communist services. Tuđman also entered 1989 as a person who had a clear political platform based on national political reconciliation, the factual sovereignty of the Croatian people, and cooperation between Croatia and its diaspora. This political platform passed its first test in 1988, during Tuđman's visits to Croatian émigrés in countries of the democratic world. This background was the deciding factor that resulted in Tuđman being elected president of the Initiative Circle founded by the democratic initiatives at the Plešivica meeting in January 1989. This was followed by Tuđman's initiatives, which clearly showed his understanding of political processes. He quickly presented his programme in his Preliminary Draft, after which he—acting in the name of the Croatian Democratic Union's Initiative Circle—organised an exceptionally successful forum in the Croatian Writers' Association, but at the same time successfully broadened his circle of politically like-minded people, who supported the main goals of his politics. After the success of these initiatives, he continued to organise the Croatian Democratic Union's founding despite the obvious dissatisfaction of the Communist authorities with his activities. In addition to the problems with the Communist authorities, a major problem for Tuđman was the dissatisfaction of a part of the Initiative Circle membership led by the charismatic Veselica brothers. Tuđman and his closest political associates then made another important political decision: to found the HDZ in a non-public space without the presence of the Fraction members and without permission from the government authorities; Tuđman became the party's first president.

Tuđman and his closest associates spent the summer of 1989 in a political conflict with members of Veselica's Fraction and the Communist authorities over the legitimacy and legality of founding the HDZ. They did not compromise, which eventually resulted in a political victory. At the same time, the development of a network of HDZ organisations was successfully initiated among the Croatian diaspora. Furthermore, links with the Croatian diaspora were established and strengthened, and it provided the HDZ with vital financial aid.

In the autumn of 1989, it became clear to everyone that the world that had existed for over 40 years was disappearing. In this context, Tuđman and his closest associates continued to organisationally strengthen the HDZ. They also conducted HDZ political initiatives that had a major impact on the Croatian public. The most important among them were the ones related to the return of the Ban Jelačić monument, promoting the Declaration among the

Croatian and foreign public, and the request that the Communist authorities proclaim Christmas a state holiday. The fact that, despite the opposition of the Communist authorities, the HDZ had 100,000 members when the League of Communists of Croatia decided to hold democratic elections at the end of 1989 attests to the political skill and organisational capabilities of Franjo Tuđman and his closest associates. There is no doubt that Tuđman's political activities in 1989 were the political basis, i.e. the start of the road leading towards the establishment of a sovereign and democratic Croatia.

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