
REVIEW OF DAVOR MARIJAN'S BOOK THE WAR FOR BOSANSKA POSAVINA IN 1992. (2020)

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Davor Marijan's book *War for Bosanska Posavina* was published by the Croatian Institute of History in 2020. The book has 357 pages. Davor Marijan deals with military history, and his scientific work abounds in military themes and the Homeland War: *The Battle of Kupres in 1942*. (1999), *Death of the Armored Brigade* (2002), *The Battle of Vukovar* (2004), *Border Guards: a contribution to the warpath of the 108th Brigade of the National Guard of the Republic of Croatia* (2006), *The Creation of the Croatian State and the Homeland War* (co-authors Zdenko Radelić, Nikica Barić, Albert Bing and Dražen Živić, 2006), *Storm* (2007), *The Collapse of Tito's Army* (2008) and the *144th Brigade of the HV Sesvete: 1991-1995*. (2008). In addition, he has published several scientific articles on these topics, primarily in the *Journal of Contemporary History*. Consequently, he continued his research by elaborating on the 1992 war in Bosanska Posavina.

The book contains the following sections: *Preface* (pp. 9–11), *Basic Features of the Political Situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991–1992* (pp. 13–24; with subchapters *Characteristics of the 1992 War*, pp. 20–22 and *Croat-Muslim Relations*, pp. 22–24), *International Aspect of the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (pp. 25–31; with the subchapter *Plans for Internal Restructuring*, pp. 25–31), *Battlefield* (pp. 33–35), *Participants* (p. 37–48, with subchapters *Serbian Force*, pp. 37, *Yugoslav People's Army*, pp. 37–39, *Army of the Republika Srpska*, pp. 39–41, *Croatian Forces*, pp. 42 and *Operational Group "Eastern*

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Posavina”, p. 42-48), *The Beginnings of the War* (pp. 49-73; with sub-sections *Bosanska Posavina during the War in Croatia*, pp. 49-54; *Drina Plan and the First Serbian Attempt to Conquer Bosanska Posavina*, pp. 54-55; *Battles for Bosanski Brod*, pp. 55-67 ; *Derventa*, pp. 67-69; *Modriča*, pp. 70-72 and *Odžak*, pp. 72-73), *May 1992 - the month of great Croatian successes* (pp. 75-81; with subchapters *Bosanski Brod-Derventa part of the battlefield*, p. 76-79 and *Battles for Modriča*, pp. 79-81), *Reversal: 1-23 June 1992* (pp. 83-92; with subchapters *Preparations of the Serbian Army for Operation Corridor*, pp. 84-87 and *Introduction to Operation*, pp. 87-92), *Breakthrough and Expansion of the Corridor* (pp. 93-127; with subchapters *Plan of Attack and Concentration of Forces of the 1st Krajina Corps of the Republika Srpska Army*, pp. 93-95; *First Stage of Operation Corridor-92*, p. 95-96;

Occupying Modriča, p. 96-98; *Fights for Jakeš and Pećnik*, p. 98-99; *The fall of Derventa*, p. 99-106; *Croatian countermeasures to stop Serb attacks*, p. 106-112; *The second stage of the Corridor-92 operation - the Serbian army breaking through on the Sava*, p. 112-113; *Lines Podnovlje - Velika Brusnica and Modriča - Odžak - Sava*, p. 113 - 124; *Lines Derventa - Bosanski Brod*, p. 124-126; *An attempt to relieve Croatian forces during Operation Corridor-92*, p. 126 and *Instead of a conclusion*, p. 126-127), *Battles for Bosanski Brod from mid-July to 6 October 1992* (pp. 129-168; with subchapters *Engaged Forces on the Bosansko Brod-Derventa Bridgehead*, pp. 129-131; *Course of fighting from mid-July to mid-August 1992* , pp. 131-138; *Battles for Kostreš and Bijelo Brdo from 19 August to 7 September 1992*, p. 138-145; *Continuation of Serb attacks in September 1992*, p. 146-156 and *The Fall of Bosanski Brod*, p. 156-168), *Orašje-Domaljevac part of the battlefield* (pp. 169-188; with subchapters *Occupation of Bosanski Šamac and attack on Orašje*, pp. 170-173; *Orašje-Domaljevac battlefield during Operation Corridor*, pp. 173-180 and *Autumn battles 1992* ., pp. 181-188), *Bat-*

tlefield of Brčko and Gradačac (pp. 189–197; with subchapters *the Struggle in the Brčko Municipality*, pp. 190–192 and *the Struggle in the Gradačac Municipality*, pp. 193–197), *Slavonski Brod - Air Force attacks and long-range artillery terror* (pp. 199–203), *Comparison of belligerents* (pp. 205–249; with subsections *Organization of Forces and the Human Factor*, pp. 206–214; *Morality and (un) motivation for the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, pp. 214–229, *Command*, pp. 229–235; *Intelligence judgments*, p. 235–239; *Logistics insurance*, p. 239–242; *Sanitary care*, p. 242–243; *Tactical features of combat*, p. 244–248 and *Losses*, p. 248–249), *Some features of the war in Bosanska Posavina*, pp. 251–275; with subchapters *Bosanska Posavina as “Pale alone in the world”*, pp. 251–259; *Serbian war goal in Bosanska Posavina*, pp. 259–260; *Everyday life and civil military relations*, pp. 260–272 and *The Serbian side of the war*, pp. 272–275), *Controversies, concerns, and contributions to conspiracy theories* (pp. 277–311; with subchapters *“Agreement” in Graz and Corridor in Bosanska Posavina*, pp. 279–286; *The background of Croatian military successes in May 1992!?*, Pp. 286–289; *“With each entry of the Croatian army, the territory was lost,”* pp. 289–298; *“Were the promotions a reward for withdrawing, for successfully completing a task?”*, pp. 299–307; *Slavonski Brod lobby or power struggles in Bosanska Posavina*, pp. 308–310 and *Death of 12 Banja Luka babies*, pp. 310–311), *The culprit for the fall of Bosanski Brod* (pp. 313–329), *Conclusion* (pp. 331–333), *Summary* (pp. 334–337), *List of abbreviations* (pp. 338–340), *Sources and literature* (pp. 341–349), *Index of personal names* (pp. 351–352) and the *Index of important geographical terms* (p. 353–357). At the end of the book, there are also contributions from 26 maps.

In the very preface of the book, the author indirectly reveals the book's purpose in the first paragraph. Namely, starting from the thesis that already during the war, the opinion was established that

Bosanska Posavina was not lost due to the supremacy of Serbian forces, but “conspiracy games” of the first Croatian president, Dr. Franjo Tuđman, and his closest associates, starting with Defense Minister Gojko Šušak, the author announces how, through the analysis of archival documents, he will show that the mentioned “witch hunt” has mostly no basis in the sources (cf. p. 9). In his recognizable style, with an abundance of archival documents, Marijan provides a historical overview of the war in Bosanska Posavina in 1992, since March, an attempt to implement the Drina plan by the JNA, which Marijan considers the first Serbian attempt to conquer Bosanska Posavina (cf. pp. 54–55), until October or the fall of Bosanski Brod. The book focuses on the events in the six municipalities where the Croatian Operational Group Eastern Posavina (OGIP, see details pp. 42–48) had effective command, namely Bosanski Brod, Bosanski Šamac, Derventa, Modriča, Odžak, and Orašje (cf. page 11). They also touch on the municipalities of Brčko and Gradačac, where Muslims had a majority because, without an understanding of Croat-Muslim relations, it is impossible to understand the war in Bosanska Posavina fully. Among the archival documents, the book is based on articles for the monograph on the 108th HV Brigade, which was also the longest in the area of Bosanska Posavina, and documents of the Operational Group East Posavina, Operational Zone Osijek, Slavonian Battlefield Command, and HV General Staff. In addition, Marijan was given a part of the document testifying to the 1st CC of the Army of the Republika Srpska (cf. pp. 9–10). It can be said that with the archival corpus, the author provided a quality basis for considering the issue, trying to show the Serbian side as well.

The book is also of great importance for the biography of General Slobodan Praljak, who is also often accused of the fall of Bosanska Posavina, and who, during a lengthy trial in The Hague, publi-

shed a booklet in 2007 in which, in addition to several text cards in facsimiles, he gave about forty documents that he believed would significantly contribute to the understanding of the war. In addition to the booklet, a CD with about 700 documents was distributed, available on his website until September 2018, all in support of his defense, but the site has since been shut down (cf. p. 9). According to Marijan's very harsh assessment, "Croatian activities in Bosanska Posavina were not of interest to Hague prosecutors, which is not surprising because they did not fit into the one-sided picture of the war they constructed" (p. 9). Most of the published documents from Praljak's website were finally published in another book on Bosanska Posavina, of almost identical title (*War in Bosanska Posavina 1992*, 2009), written and written by Jerko Zovko, a lower-ranking officer in the 108th HV Brigade, which Marijan has already reviewed (2010).² Although Zovak's book preserved Praljak's documents, according to Marijan, Zovak did not overly deal with the dilemma of why the person accused of the fall of Bosanska Posavina (Praljak, cf. p. 300) would publish those documents, given that in Zovak's book the dominating claim is that Bosanska Posavina fell due to political agreements between Croatia and Serbia, concretized on May 6, 1992, by an agreement between the head of the Croatian Defense Council Mate Boban and the leader of the Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina Radovan Karadžić in Graz, in certain elements Marijan also sees it as a representative example of "conspiracy theory so widespread in Croatia and prevalent in some circles" (cf. p. 9).³ In addition to Jerka Zovko's book, Novica Simić, Commander of the General Staff of the Army of Republika Srpska, published a monograph on Bosanska Posavina (Operation Corridor-92, 2011), which Marijan considers extremely useful, except for its "unsustainable" political introduction (cf. p. 11). Consequently, the new book of Marian can therefore be understood as their critique, but also as a supplement.

² Journal of Contemporary History, no. 3, 2010, p. 906–908.

³ Cf. Marijan's Review in the Journal of Contemporary History, no. 3, 2010, p. 907.

Recently, interviews with Generals Peter Stipetic, Anton Tus, and Vinko Begic, one of the wartime political leaders of Posavina Croats, have been published, and one of the motives that certainly prompted Marijan to write a monograph on Bosanska Posavina lies in the fact that memoirs given in interviews do not entirely coincide with the data from archival sources (cf. p. 10). Marijan thus indirectly revealed to young and interested historians on the topics of the Homeland War the abundance of space for future research - comparing allegations from archival documentation with allegations made by prominent war figures in later interviews. In addition to the primary factual value that Davor Marijan's book provides, the book also provides a number of perspectives through which it is possible to look at the Homeland War, and which then entail a number of unexplored territories that may entice someone of the younger generations to deal with, in the near future.

The book can be divided into two parts - in the first part, the chapter *Comparison of belligerents*, in chronological order the course of the war and facts, largely supported by archival allegations, and the second part the author devoted to a thorough analysis of the war, but also to answer some highly controversial questions. In short, the course of the war can be retold as follows. The war began in March 1992 when the JNA, relying on Doboje, tried to break out on the Sava River, however, in April, it suffered a heavy defeat near Gornje Kolibe. May is the month of Croatian success in which the JNA was pushed back to the Bosna River, and the Croats also conquered Modriča, thus severing the link between the Serbian Krajina and Semberija. Croatia's success was "disrupted" by a warning from the international community, i.e., the UN Security Council (May 15), and Marijan's valuable thesis is that the Croatian army, given that Sarajevo did not want to make an agreement with Croats and thus legalizing the

presence of the HV on the territory of BiH, on the territory of BiH was *de facto* illegal. The Serbian counterattack came soon, in June, since then the Serbs have occupied Modriča, Derventa, and Odžak, and the fall of Bosanski Brod (October 6, 1992) is taken as the fall of the western part of Bosanska Posavina, not the whole of Bosanska Posavina, given to the fact that the eastern part managed to resist the attacks (cf. pp. 331–332). Finally, in his *Conclusion*, Marijan states that Serbian supremacy was based on the part of the organizational units inherited from the JNA, minor changes in the position on the battlefield, rest periods, and a clear goal of the fight, which undoubtedly influenced the motivation of soldiers (cf. p. 332).

Although there are some other monographs on the war in Bosanska Posavina, I can say that I would recommend Davor Marijan's book to any interested individual, primarily because of the abundant archival material with which the author substantiates his allegations. Marijan's book, above all, draws attention to a number of other factors that affect the outcome of the war, of which an interested researcher might not have taken notice before. Although there are still several items through which the book exudes its value, I believe that even through these most basic of this review, the reader saw the importance of writing about the Homeland War and how much space it still opens. I believe that Marijan's book will provoke several reactions, maybe another monograph with dissenting opinions will be published soon, but I think that Marijan's arguments will hardly be refuted in the near or distant future.