

# GOJKO ŠUŠAK (1945-1998) – THE VICTORIOUS MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND HIS ROLE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CROATIAN STATE

## Abstract

*The article presents the most important events in the life of Gojko Šušak. In Croatian historiography, there is still not a single scientific paper written about the life and work of Croatian Minister of Defense Gojko Šušak in the Homeland War, not to mention a complete synthesis. The article is based mainly on scientific literature and on the basis of that literature a research basis was made to study Šušak's contribution to the establishment of the Republic of Croatia, the structure of the Croatian army and finally the victory in the Homeland War and the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The article is conceived in such a way that it chronologically deals with the most important events from Šušak's life, which include the period of his youth, activities and life in Canada, and finally the political duty he performed as Minister of Defense during the Homeland War. Consequently, we present a chapter in which the media-intelligence war against Šušak is analyzed, who was the target of journalistic-intelligence attacks at the time of his duty, and these attacks have not stopped even today. He is criticized for his attitude towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, ie towards Croats and the Croatian Republic of Herceg Bosna. Precisely because of these accusations by political opponents in the Republic of Croatia, Šušak was targeted by the Hague Tribunal in 1997, but this legal battle was lost by the Hague Tribunal in a short period of time. The article emphasizes Šušak's formation of the Croatian Army and the legacy he left as Minister of Defense.*

**Keywords:** *Gojko Šušak; Franjo Tuđman; Široki Brijeg; Canada; Croatian army; Ministry of Defense.*

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## Review of previous research

There is still no complete synthesis in Croatian historiography about Gojko Šušak, who served as Croatian Minister of Defense from September 1991 until his death on May 3, 1998 in Zagreb. Browsing the websites of the Croatian Scientific Bibliography (CROSBİ) and the Portal of Croatian Scientific and Professional Journals (HRČAK), there is not a single scientific article about Gojko Šušak and his role in the Homeland War and the creation of the Croatian state. In contemporary Croatian historiography, Gojko Šušak is only slightly mentioned in the context of the Homeland War, regarding the creation of the Croatian state. The most important foundation for researching the role and activities of Gojko Šušak in recent Croatian history was laid by the historian Davor Marijan in his works *Oluja*,<sup>1</sup> *Hrvatska 1989.-1992. Rađanje države*,<sup>2</sup> *Rat Hrvata i Muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1992. do 1994.*,<sup>3</sup> *Raspad Jugoslavije i stvaranje hrvatske države*,<sup>4</sup> i *Rat za Bosansku Posavinu 1992. godine*.<sup>5</sup> Marijan also published „Rat za opstojnost Hrvata, 1991.-1995. Pregled političkih i vojnih događaja u Domovinskom ratu, s posebnim osvrtom na muslimansko-hrvatski sukob u BiH“ in the monograph *Domovinski rat i zločini nad Hrvatima u Bosni i Hercegovini 1991.-1995., Volume I*.<sup>6</sup>

Historian Ivica Lučić published the monographs *Uzroci rata. Bosna i Hercegovina od 1980. do 1992. godine*<sup>7</sup>, *Vukovarska bolnica – svjetionik u povijesnim olujama hrvatskoga istoka*,<sup>8</sup> *Od vila ilirskih do bijelog puta - stranputicama*

<sup>1</sup> Davor Marijan, *Oluja*. Zagreb: Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> D. Marijan, *Hrvatska 1989.-1992. Rađanje države*. Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Davor Marijan, *Rat Hrvata i Muslimana u Bosni u Hercegovini od 1992. do 1994.* Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> D. Marijan – Nikica Barić, *Raspad Jugoslavije i stvaranje hrvatske države*. Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest i AGM, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> D. Marijan, *Rat za Bosansku Posavinu 1992. godine*. Zagreb – Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest, Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> D. Marijan, „Rat za opstojnost Hrvata, 1991.-1995. Pregled političkih i vojnih događaja u Domovinskom ratu, s posebnim osvrtom na muslimansko-hrvatski sukob u BiH“. U: *Domovinski rat i zločini nad Hrvatima u Bosni i Hercegovini 1991.-1995.*, Vol. I., Zlatan Mijo Jelić – Ante Nazor (eds.) Zagreb: Udruga Hrvatska zvona, Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ivica (Ivo) Lučić, *Uzroci rata. Bosna i Hercegovina od 1980. do 1992. godine*. Zagreb: Despot infitius, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> I. Lučić, *Vukovarska bolnica – svjetionik u povijesnim olujama hrvatskoga istoka*. Zagreb: Hrvatska liječnička komora i Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2017.

*bosanske i hercegovačke povijesti*<sup>9</sup> that are useful for this research. Miroslav Tuđman has published several books that are useful for this topic: *Vrijeme krivokletnika*,<sup>10</sup> *Druga strana Rubikona. Politička strategija Alije Izetbegovića*,<sup>11</sup> i *Haški krivolov. Analiza dokaza o ciljevima zajedničkoga zločinačkog pothvata u predmetu IT-04-74*.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, historian Domagoj Knežević in his doctoral dissertation *Croatian Democratic Union from its founding to its break-up with Yugoslavia* analyzed in several chapters of dissertation the role that Gojko Šušak played in the HDZ at the beginnings of Croatian Democratic Union.<sup>13</sup> The dissertation is useful for the topic of this research. Accordingly, historian Ante Nazor published the monograph *Domovinski rat. Pregled političke i diplomatske povijesti* that is also useful for this research.<sup>14</sup> An unavoidable book for understanding the background of the causes and causes of the Muslim-Croat war is the book *Muslimansko-hrvatski građanski rat u Srednjoj Bosni. Vojna povijest 1992.-1994.* by military historian Charles R. Shrader.<sup>15</sup> This work actually amnesties President Franjo Tuđman and Defense Minister Gojko Šušak from the guilt of “eastern sin”, that is, the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the blame for the Muslim-Croat war. Shrader proves that the sole culprit for that war is the Muslim political and military leadership led by Alija Izetbegović.

Gojko Šušak and his life were an inspiration to only a few writers and journalists who sympathized with his role in the creation of the Croatian state. Thus, one of the most prominent writers, academician Ivan Aralica, published a memoir-political work, *I tu je kraj. Ogledi o naciji i globalizaciji, stranci i pokretu, razgovor o urbanom rasizmu, zapisi o mostu i Gojku Šušku* which is also

<sup>9</sup> I. Lučić, *Od vila ilirskih do bijelog puta – stranputicama bosanske i hercegovačke povijesti*. Zagreb: Hrvatska liječnička komora – Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Miroslav Tuđman, *Vrijeme krivokletnika*. Zagreb: Detecta, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> M. Tuđman, *Druga strana Rubikona. Politička strategija Alije Izetbegovića*. Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> M. Tuđman, *Haški krivolov. Analiza dokaza o ciljevima zajedničkoga zločinačkog pothvata u predmetu IT-04-74*. Zagreb – Mostar: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada – Hrvatski dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata u BiH, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Domagoj Knežević, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica od osnivanja do raskida s Jugoslavijom*, doktorska disertacija, Hrvatski studiji – Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Zagreb, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Ante Nazor – Tomislav Pušek, *Domovinski rat. Pregled političke i diplomatske povijesti*. Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Globus – Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Charles R. Shrader, *Muslimansko-hrvatski građanski rat u Srednjoj Bosni. Vojna povijest 1992.-1994.* Zagreb: Golden marketing – Tehnička knjiga, 2004.

useful for this research.<sup>16</sup> Then, journalist Dunja Ujević published *Ministar obrane. Jedno sjećanje na Gojka Šuška* that brings an affirmative view of the role and activities of Minister Gojko Šušak at the time of the creation of the Croatian state.<sup>17</sup>

It should be noted that Šušak was the target of journalistic-intelligence attacks during his career. According to journalist Ujević, Defense Minister Šušak was falsely accused from the time he took office, and after his death, the “defamation” campaign continued.<sup>18</sup> If we analyse all these targeted media-intelligence constructions of reality aimed at Minister of Defense Gojko Šušak, that would exceed the already given scope of this research. This topic requires an extensive research project that would certainly exceed the scope of a doctoral dissertation.

In this paper we shall use book *Gojko Šušak 1945.-1998. Spomenica uz petu obljetnicu smrti*,<sup>19</sup> as well as the documentary *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene*,<sup>20</sup> produced by HRT, released in 2018 on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Gojko Šušak’s death. In addition, *Sjećanje na ratnog ministra obrane Gojka Šuška* published by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Croatia will also be useful for this article.<sup>21</sup>

## Gojko Šušak – the period from birth to emigration

All events important for Gojko Šušak took place in Široki Brijeg, more precisely in the area of one square kilometer where his birth house is located, then in the vicinity of the Franciscan monastery church, monastery and grammar school in Široki Brijeg. Gojko’s mother Stana Šušak was eight months pregnant and sought refuge on February 7, 1945, with a group of civilians

<sup>16</sup> Ivan Aralica, *I tu je kraj. Oglеди o naciji i globalizaciji, stranci i pokretu, razgovor o urbanom rasizmu, zapisi o mostu i Gojku Šušku*. Zagreb: Znanje, 1999.

<sup>17</sup> Dunja Ujević, *Ministar obrane. Jedno sjećanje na Gojka Šuška*. Zagreb: Alfa, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> D. Ujević, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), Zagreb: Hrvatska radio televizija, 2018., 36:38-36:49., <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOt2CzeZO70>> (7. IV. 2021.).

<sup>19</sup> *Gojko Šušak 1945.-1998. Spomenica uz petu obljetnicu smrti*, Ivan Bekavac (ed.). Zagreb: Udruga za promicanje hrvatskog identiteta i prosperiteta UHIP, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), Zagreb: Hrvatska radio televizija, 2018., <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOt2CzeZO70>> (7. IV. 2021.).

<sup>21</sup> *Sjećanje na ratnog ministra obrane Gojka Šuška*, Radovi objavljeni s okruglog stola, ur. Dario Matika, Ministarstvo obrane Republike Hrvatske, Glavni stožer oružanih snaga Republike Hrvatske, Hrvatsko vojno učilište „Dr. Franjo Tuđman“, Zagreb, 2018.

and a group of Franciscans from Široki Brijeg, in the Franciscan war shelter below the monastery in Široki Brijeg during the fighting for Široki Brijeg.<sup>22</sup> The partisans ordered the civilians to leave the shelter, and one of them “joked” and told the pregnant Stana Šušak that he could kill two Ustashas with one bullet.<sup>23</sup> Gojko was born only a month later in a family house not far from the Franciscan monastery and the church in Široki Brijeg, received the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of confirmation in that church, and attended the grammar school in Široki Brijeg.<sup>24</sup> Gojko’s father Ante Šušak was beaten to death by partisans in the spring of 1945 after he helped the partisans carry the wounded. Gojko never met his father, nor his eldest brother Ivan, because Ivan disappeared at the age of less than eighteen in Bleiburg, or later on the *Križni put*.<sup>25</sup> The partisans burned down their family house, and Stana Šušak raised Gojko together with the other four children.<sup>26</sup>

In the period when he attended primary school, Gojko Šušak was an active athlete, and he was also a member of the scouts from Široki Brijeg.<sup>27</sup> In the second grade of the grammar school in 1961, Gojko Šušak met Ante Beljo, Vinko Grubišić and OFM Ljubo Krasić in Široki Brijeg. Their collaboration continued in the 1970s in Canada.<sup>28</sup> Šušak’s childhood and youth were marked by the family tragedy, defeat and guilt imposed by the communist regime. In the third grade of Široki Brijeg grammar school, at the beginning of 1962, he was detained by the communist authorities and marked as a class enemy of the Communist Party and Yugoslavia. “After a series of brutal interrogations at the SUP premises in Lištica (as Široki Brijeg was renamed in the 1950s), police officers read him an ‘official warning’ on 2 June 1962 in front of Tito’s photo. It states that during that and the previous year, he permanently and systematically carried out hostile propaganda and carried out such actions that caused national intolerance, hatred and discord among citizens - through

<sup>22</sup> Vladimir Šoljić, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 4:30.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:40.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:45-5:00.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:37-5:55.

<sup>26</sup> Franjo Tuđman, „Gojko Šušak, jedan od najzaslužnijih – nepokolebljivi i razboriti hrvatski vitez“. U: *Gojko Šušak 1945.-1998. Spomenica...*, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Jozo Čavar on December 10, 2017. Čavar was one of the scout instructors and also a photographer. He showed me a photograph from 1959 in which Gojko Šušak is in the scouts.

<sup>28</sup> These are Gojko’s closest associates who were politically, culturally, sportsically and scientifically engaged in emigration in the promotion of Croatian culture and politically engaged in the creation of the Croatian state. Ante Beljo, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 5:02-5:34.

the propaganda of national inequality of Croats in the FPRY, chauvinism against Serbs and ‘Serbo-communism’. Police officer Spasoje Dursum was a Serb from Trebinje, and the recorder Duda Žugor was a Muslim from Nevesinje, and the accused and warned Gojko Šušak was a (local) Croat from Široki Brijeg - so that all three constituent peoples from SR BiH participated in the official process.<sup>29</sup>

Gojko Šušak, along with a group of his high school colleagues, left Široki Brijeg and enrolled in 1963 to study mathematics and physics at the Pedagogical Academy in Rijeka. In order to avoid the constant harassment of the UDB and the call to serve in the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA), he left Yugoslavia on August 15, 1968. Šušak’s friend and religious teacher, OFM Ferdo Vlašić, helped him cross the border and settle in the Franciscan monastery in Frohnleiten. He stayed with the Herzegovinian Franciscans for six months in that monastery and after that he went to his brothers in Canada.<sup>30</sup>

## Gojko Šušak – life in Canada

In Ottawa he graduated entrepreneurship, informatics and accounting at Algonquin College.<sup>31</sup> Parallel with his studies, he started a private business in 1972 and founded the company Susak Enterprises, Ltd and GG Decor and Interior Design with one Frenchman. Šušak had his own pizzeria called “Top pizza”.<sup>32</sup> A year later, he married Đurđa, with whom he had three children, Katarina, Jelena and Tomislav. Later, during the Homeland War, political opponents sought to discredit him for this and mockingly called him by the nicknames “flour man” and “pizza man.”<sup>33</sup>

After the collapse of the Croatian Spring and the imprisonment of leading Croatian politicians and intellectuals, Šušak and a group of Croats in Ottawa organized a hunger strike in front of the Canadian Parliament.<sup>34</sup> Educated

<sup>29</sup> I. Lučić, „Kako je hrvatski idealist pobijedio diktatora“, <<https://www.jutarnji.hr/globus/za-globus-pise-ivo-lucic-kako-je-hrvatski-idealist-pobijedio-diktatora-7352205>> (7. IV. 2021.).

<sup>30</sup> D. Ujević, *Ministar obrane...*, 51. Cf. F. Tuđman, „Gojko Šušak, jedan od najzaslužnijih...“, 14.

<sup>31</sup> Vinko Grubišić, „Kulturno i političko djelovanje Gojka Šuška u egzilu“. U: *Gojko Šušak 1945.-1998. Spomenica...*, 49.

<sup>32</sup> F. Tuđman, „Gojko Šušak, jedan od najzaslužnijih...“, 14.

<sup>33</sup> Mediji i jugoslavenska obavještajna agentura će mu to itekako zamjerati u vrijeme 1990-ih. V. Grubišić, „Kulturno i političko djelovanje Gojka Šuška u egzilu“, 33. Cf. D. Ujević, *Ministar obrane...*, 53.

<sup>34</sup> V. Grubišić, „Kulturno i političko djelovanje Gojka Šuška u egzilu“, 37.

systematically in Canada, he read many works from history, political science, philosophy and religion. “A few Croatian politicians have armed themselves with such a thorough study of historical-political, religious and philosophical literature.”<sup>35</sup> Šušak was modeled on St. Francis of Assisi, and he shaped his Franciscan spiritual formation throughout his life.

With a group of his closest friends OFM Ljubo Krasić, Vinko Grubišić PhD, Ante Beljo, Marijan Petrović and others, Šušak worked on the creation and unification of Croatian cultural, sports, economic societies and associations. He was the founder and president of the Foundation for Croatian Studies at the world’s first established Department of Croatian Language and Culture, at the Canadian University of Waterloo.<sup>36</sup> Gojko Šušak was the initiator and the first president of the Croatian-Canadian Cultural Federation 1989 - 1990 and a member of the Board of Croatian Emigrant Schools of America, Australia and Canada.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, Šušak, together with like-minded people, founded the football club “Jadran” in the seventies and became most involved in the club.<sup>38</sup> He followed the political events in Croatia and often discussed current events in Yugoslavia with like-minded people.

In Ottawa, he met Franjo Tuđman, who visited the North America for the first time in 1987 because of his programmatic appeal to the unity of homeland and emigrant Croatia. Shortly afterwards, Tuđman and Šušak became collaborators.<sup>39</sup> A few months later, Šušak, together with Ante Beljo and OFM Ljubo Krasić, engaged in translating Tuđman’s book *Bespuća povijesne zbiljnosti* into English in Canada.<sup>40</sup> With the help of Ante Beljo and his associates, Šušak organized a tour of eleven of Tuđman’s lectures in the USA and Canada in 1988 in less than half a month. When the lectures ended, Tuđman landed in Ottawa and, at Šušak’s invitation, came to visit his family home. In Gojko’s cellar, Ante Beljo, OFM Ljubo Krasić, Vinko Grubišić, Gojko Šušak

<sup>35</sup> F. Tuđman, „Gojko Šušak, jedan od najzaslužnijih...“, 14.

<sup>36</sup> Together with Ante Kikaš, Ivica Zdunić, OFM Ljubo Krasić, Ante Beljo, Janko Perić and others, Gojko was the main initiator of the Foundation for Croatian Studies, which is an offshoot of the Department of Croatian Language and Culture at the University of Waterloo. V. Grubišić, „Kulturno i političko djelovanje Gojka Šuška u egzilu“, 42.

<sup>37</sup> F. Tuđman, „Gojko Šušak, jedan od najzaslužnijih...“, 14.

<sup>38</sup> V. Grubišić, „Kulturno i političko djelovanje Gojka Šuška u egzilu“, 40.

<sup>39</sup> F. Tuđman, „Gojko Šušak, jedan od najzaslužnijih...“, 15.

<sup>40</sup> V. Grubišić, „Kulturno i političko djelovanje Gojka Šuška u egzilu“, 43.

and Franjo Tuđman, the so-called “Norval group”, gave birth to the idea of making the state of Croatia.<sup>41</sup>

## Gojko Šušak – political thought and entry into the Croatian Democratic Union

When it comes to political affiliation, historiographical sources do not mention that Gojko Šušak was a member of a political party. The facts indicate that his uncles in Canada were members of the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS).<sup>42</sup> Through his cultural activities in Canada, he accepted and helped every person who was ready to work for the creation of the Croatian state. Šušak's closest associates testify that he often used to say “if a dog barks for Croatia, we should help the dog”.<sup>43</sup> He advocated and believed in the possibility of reconciliation long before Tuđman arrived in Canada. “There was reconciliation at the level of the idea of state-building - Gojko Šušak personalizes this idea with his life and work.”<sup>44</sup> After several conversations with Tuđman, he “recognized him as the man the historical moment was looking for.”<sup>45</sup> Prominent scholars such as Miroslav Tuđman believe that Šušak was different from most people because he had that emotional charge and recognized the moment of the creation of the Croatian state. “Šušak went to the end and exposed himself to the end in order to create a Croatian state. That made him similar to the first president Franjo Tuđman.”<sup>46</sup>

The first convention for the United States and Canada was held on January 20 and 21, 1990, in Cleveland, Canada. Along with Franjo Tuđman, the convention was attended by many sympathizers and members of the HDZ in exile. At that convention, the topics were diverse, from the upcoming elections, mutual coordination with the homeland, and the First General Parliament in Zagreb. The leaders of the three HDZ committees were also elected. Mijo Primorac was elected head of the US committee, Tefko Saračević and Josip Sovulj were elected his deputies, and Berislav Čuvalo was elected secretary.

<sup>41</sup> D. Ujević, *Ministar obrane...*, 57. Cf. V. Grubišić, „Kulturno i političko djelovanje Gojka Šuška u egzilu“, 44-45.

<sup>42</sup> V. Grubišić, „Kulturno i političko djelovanje Gojka Šuška u egzilu“, 36.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>44</sup> I. Aralica, *I tu je kraj...*, 112.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 110-111.

<sup>46</sup> M. Tuđman, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 9:15-9:30.

John Zdunic was elected head of the committee for Canada, Gojko Šušak vice president, while Ante Beljo became secretary. The adopted documents were sent to the authorities of the USA and Canada, but also to the entire Croatian diaspora. “President Franjo Tuđman invited the present delegates to come to the First General Assembly of the HDZ, despite many still valid legal restrictions on „political emigration“, and regardless of personal status in the prosecuting authorities of the SFRJ.”<sup>47</sup>

Gojko Šušak landed at Pleso Airport on February 23, 1990, in the eve of the First General Assembly of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) together with the first group of Croatian political emigrants.<sup>48</sup> Šušak immediately became involved in organizing the first free and democratic elections. At the First General Assembly of the HDZ in 1990, he was elected a member of the Central Committee, and at the Second General Assembly from 15 to 16 October 1993 for the vice-president of the HDZ, gaining the reputation of the most prominent party leader. It also became evident at the Third and at the Fourth General Assembly of the HDZ when he was re-elected vice-president with the greatest confidence of the membership.<sup>49</sup> Šušak, after the first multi-party and democratic elections in the Republic of Croatia, was appointed Minister of Emigration in the first two Governments of the Republic of Croatia from 31 May 1990 to 17 July 1991. Šušak became Deputy Minister of Defense on March 4, and shortly afterwards, on September 18, 1991, he was appointed Minister of Defense.<sup>50</sup>

In the same year, the HDZ organized the second delegation of the Republic of Croatia in the USA and Canada, because the HDZ's pre-election program was to strengthen its independent policy. The delegation included member of the Presidency of the SRH Josip Manolić, vice-president for the economy Mate Babić and member for emigration Gojko Šušak. They had meetings with representatives of the State Department, with the leaders of the Democratic and Republican parties in the US Congress, and with members of the Canadian Parliament. The main topic of conversation was the political situation in Yugoslavia and the possibilities of economic cooperation.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> D. Knežević, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica...*, 94; 227.

<sup>48</sup> D. Ujević, *Ministar obrane...*, 45.

<sup>49</sup> F. Tuđman, „Gojko Šušak, jedan od najzaslužnijih...“, 15.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>51</sup> D. Knežević, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica...*, 309.

Gojko Šušak “understood politics as a sacrifice for a certain goal, as the fulfillment of a given vow, and that is why he practiced it ascetically and selflessly.”<sup>52</sup> It is important to emphasize that Šušak symbolizes three important components of Croatian politics. “On one hand, it symbolizes the reconciliation of left and right options, but not at the level of ideologies but at the level of state-building ideas, then symbolizes the unity of emigrants and Homeland Croatia and finally defense against aggression, liberation of occupied territories and protection of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”<sup>53</sup> At the level of symbolism, I believe that Minister Gojko Šušak represents a combination of the Homeland and the emigration of Croatia and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thanks to this connection, the Croatian state was created.

At the time of the JNA attack on the territory of the Republic of Croatia, Minister of Defense Gojko Šušak stated that “four and a half million Croats in this territory are ready to live and die for what we are looking for. We agree. No one has ever won the will of the people and no armored vehicles or iron machines will stop us. We have been waiting for this for not eight days, but for eight centuries, and gentlemen, there is no army that is falling apart, there is no army that will stop us.”<sup>54</sup>

Šušak’s political role during the Homeland War was difficult and ungrateful because he had to keep under control Croatian emigrants who came to the Republic of Croatia to fight against communist Yugoslavia and all its supporters among the Croatian people.<sup>55</sup> The emigrants considered it ideologically and natively their own, while Šušak was essentially loyal to President Tuđman, and helped the Americans end the war on the territory of Yugoslavia. Historian Ivo Lucić states that President Tuđman gave a review and assessment of Defense Minister Gojko Šušak, against whom a media-intelligence war was waged, and who was called a political extremist in the Croatian public. At the session of the Representative council of HDZ held on April 7, 1994, Tuđman referred to Josip Manolić’s statement and said that he had talked to him and told him that he was threatening Croatia, calling for the removal of Minister Gojko Šušak, “who was the man who HDZ’s policy in Bosnia and Herzego-

<sup>52</sup> I. Aralica, *I tu je kraj...*, 92.

<sup>53</sup> M. Tuđman, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 24:00-25:07.

<sup>54</sup> Gojko Šušak, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 13:37-14:00.

<sup>55</sup> I. Aralica, *I tu je kraj...*, 92-113.

vina, through which I had to implement HDZ's policy so that Herzegovina would not go to our HOS, to extremes. " Lučić believes that Šušak, a Herzegovinian by birth and a political emigrant, managed to compensate for the lack of political authority, and had the ability to curb the extreme views that some Croats in Herzegovina had due to historical and socio-political circumstances. According to President Tuđman, it is obvious that Šušak, who was called an extremist, had the task of suppressing extremism, and in Tuđman's opinion, he did well.<sup>56</sup>

I believe that Gojko Šušak accepted the policy of reconciliation at the level of the idea of state-building and lived while still in exile in Canada. Thanks to this idea, mutual relations and respect in the ideologically divided Croatian society were preserved, which was key to achieving victory in the Homeland War. Since the first meeting in Canada, President Franjo Tuđman and Gojko Šušak have nurtured cooperation, which later grew into the most loyal friendship and mutual trust. Tuđman saw in Šušak his most loyal and capable man who, together with him, was responsible for the creation of the Croatian state.

## Media and intelligence war against Gojko Šušak

When it comes to the issue of Šušak's relations with members of the political, military and intelligence structures of the former state, it is necessary to say that this is a topic that exceeds the given scope of this article. To understand the larger picture, it is enough to say that Šušak, when he came to the Republic of Croatia in December 1990, and his rapid rise in the state hierarchy, became the target of intelligence services working for Yugoslavia.

His personal enemies and political opponents, of which there were a handful in Croatia, attacked Šušak for being a "pizza man" and for taking part in the propaganda and political action of the Croatian emigration when the name of the Yugoslav dictator was written on an indigenous Canadian pig.<sup>57</sup> According to some journalists, Šušak was falsely accused and forged for many things during the entire Homeland War and is therefore "the most forged political person in Croatia".<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> I. Lučić, *Uzroci rata...*, 468.

<sup>57</sup> I. Lučić, „Kako je hrvatski idealist pobijedio diktatora“, <<https://www.jutarnji.hr/globus/za-globus-pise-ivo-lucic-kako-je-hrvatski-idealista-pobijedio-diktatora-7352205>> (7. IV. 2021.).

<sup>58</sup> D. Ujević, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 36:38-36:49.

Ante Beljo points out that Gojko Šušak was accused by political opponents of being an associate of the UDB before he returned to Croatia. Such allegations are totally unfounded and deliberately falsely constructed. The Yugoslav services carried out an operation to try to compromise Gojko Šušak because there were three people named Gojko Šušak who lived in exile. Two of them came to the territory of the former Yugoslavia and visited relatives, and a false profile of Gojko Šušak was invented from those three, which had nothing to do with Minister Gojko Šušak.<sup>59</sup>

Even while he was the Minister of Emigration and Deputy Minister of Defense, Šušak became the target of propaganda hoaxes under the accusation that he allegedly fired a rocket launcher at Borovo selo in Vukovar during the night. After the change of government in January 2000, the media accused Šušak of redirecting weapons intended for the defense of Vukovar and Dubrovnik to Herzegovina. The campaign to target the construction of reality against Šušak and Herzegovina began in 1991 and lasted after his and Tuđman's deaths in the period of "de-Tuđmanization".<sup>60</sup>

Accordingly, they blamed him for being the main culprit for the fall of Bosanska Posavina in the summer and autumn of 1992, along with the first president, Franjo Tuđman.<sup>61</sup> "Such opinions have been fully expressed since 2000 as part of the media and political assault on Tuđman's legacy."<sup>62</sup> Martin Špegelj, a former defense minister, was one of those who accused Šušak of "using thousands and thousands of Croatian army soldiers in another country".<sup>63</sup> According to the research by historian Davor Marijan, such claims have no basis in the sources, and the Serbian forces that had military supremacy are the main culprits for the fall of the western part of Bosanska Posavina.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, an even more important factor is that these forces fought on their territory, which they knew well against Croatian forces, the majority of which were the Croatian Army, that was de facto illegal on the territory of BiH. Alija Izetbegović did not want to form a military alliance with Croatia

<sup>59</sup> A. Beljo, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 35:57-36:38.

<sup>60</sup> I. Lučić, *Vukovarska bolnica...*, 226-227.

<sup>61</sup> I. Lučić, *Uzroci rata...*, 420.

<sup>62</sup> D. Marijan, *Rat za Bosansku Posavinu 1992. godine...*, 9.

<sup>63</sup> D. Marijan, *Smrt oklopne brigade. Prilozi za istraživanje rata za Hrvatsku i Bosnu i Hercegovinu 1990.-1992.*, Zagreb – Sarajevo: Naklada ZORO, 2002., 225.

<sup>64</sup> D. Marijan, *Rat za Bosansku Posavinu 1992. godine...*, 331.

and legalize the presence of Croatian army (HV) in Bosnia and Herzegovina in front of the international community.<sup>65</sup>

## **Gojko Šušak and the attitude towards Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Muslim - Croat war**

In order to fully understand the cause and motive of the Muslim - Croat war, it is necessary to present the military situation in Central Bosnia and point out the strategic goals of the Army of BiH. The facts indicate that political and military intolerance between Muslims and Croats, conditioned by different views on the future internal structure of BiH, ie low - intensity armed conflicts between the BiH Army and the HVO, turned into a bloody war during the Vance-Owen peace talks. On 6 May 1993, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution no. 824 which, as well as Resolution no. 819, required all parties to the conflict to treat Srebrenica, Goražde, Žepa, Sarajevo and Bihać as protected zones. Precisely this decision of the UN Security Council was used by the Muslim political and military leadership to direct the majority of BiH Army forces from that area to the area of Central Bosnia and Northern Herzegovina. If we add to that the fact that after the fall of Jajce, BiH Army units from the area also ended up in Central Bosnia, as well as a large number of civilians expelled from the Banja Luka region, it was obvious that war would break out.<sup>66</sup>

Regardless of the fact that Central Bosnia was completely surrounded by the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the thesis on the alleged aggression of the Republic of Croatia was already made public in the late 1990s. Analyzing the available documentation and respecting the profession, I believe that the Muslim military and political leadership had five strategic goals: absolute military and political control over the geographical center of the country, absolute military and political control over the capital Sarajevo, securing traffic routes along the Neretva Valley to the Adriatic sea, securing access to the Sava River, and securing horizontal communication between Sarajevo and Bihać.<sup>67</sup>

Looking at it this way, as many as three of the five strategic goals of the Army of BiH are directly related to the area of Central Bosnia and one to

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 332.

<sup>66</sup> M. Tuđman, *Druga strana Rubikona...*, 355.

<sup>67</sup> C. R. Shrader, *Muslimansko-brvatski građanski rat u Srednjoj Bosni...*, 44-48.

the area of Northern Herzegovina. As a reminder, most military operations were conducted in that area during the Bosniak-Croat conflict. And it is in this area that the largest number of crimes were committed. The problem is that the investigation and sanctioning of these crimes is not approached in the same way today. In addition to control over the capital, as a fundamental requirement directly dictated by geopolitics and geostrategy, control over the center of the state and access to the open sea are logical geopolitical goals, which would be set by any government with aspirations similar to those of Alija Izetbegović. It was these two hidden subjective reasons that functioned as the only objective cause of the Muslim-Croat war and political conflict in the first half of the 1990s. The most important area for the Muslim wartime political leadership was the area between Travnik and Sarajevo. It is an area in almost the very center of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which stretches around the road from Travnik along the valley of the river Lašva over the Kobiljača pass leading to Sarajevo. It is a logical conclusion why this area in the war proved to be the focus of the Muslim-Croat military and political conflict. It was crucial for the Muslim political leadership to secure the center of the state, and then try to secure access to the open sea in Ploče or Neum. “The existence of a strong, homogeneous and resilient Croatian core in the center of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which survived there even during the Ottoman rule, is geopolitically extremely unfavorable for Bosniaks.”<sup>68</sup> I support the position of those scientists, primarily Charles R. Shrader and Miroslav Tuđman, who claim that the causes of the Muslim-Croat war are strategic and have different views on the future structure of BiH, which is still the dominant topic in relations between Bosniaks and Croats in BiH.

Historiographical facts show that the Bosniak political leadership only partially accepted Cutilier’s plan, which provided for a plan to federalize the state and its international recognition. It is similar with Vance-Owen’s plan, which Alija Izetbegović accepted in principle, but was rejected by the top of the BiH Army, allegedly on his own initiative, and launched a military option of attacking Croats in Central Bosnia. Everything indicates that the reason for the outbreak of the Bosniak-Croat conflict is precisely in the Vance-Owen plan. The fact that this conflict took place exclusively in the geographical center

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 61-62.

of the country and in the so-called the Neretva direction is quite a sufficient indicator for drawing many conclusions.<sup>69</sup>

The area of Central Bosnia was interesting for the warring parties because of a number of purpose-built factories of the former JNA, namely the factories “Slavko Rodić” in Bugojno, “Bratstvo” in Novi Travnik and “Vitezit”, ie the explosives factory Slobodan Princip Seljo (SPS) in Vitez, and “Igman” in Konjic were of strategic importance for the survival of the Army of BiH. Therefore, in the late spring and summer of 1993, we have the strongest conflicts between the HVO and the BiH Army in these areas, and a number of eminent experts warn against this. At the consultation of the General Staff of the Army of BiH with the corps commanders on August 21, 1993 in Zenica, Sefer Halilović said “that with Vitez they complete the system of military industry in our country” Then we have a complete chain in our hands ... burning, do you put out the house or take Vitez? I would have opted for Vitez sooner. With Vitez, we are completing dedicated production”? The facts again indicate that none of the ABiH commanders proposed offensive actions against the Republika Srpska Army (VRS), but that their priority targets were Croatian enclaves in Central Bosnia and the communication route along the Neretva Valley towards Mostar and the Adriatic Sea. By removing Croats from Central Bosnia, the ABiH would control military-industrial complexes, and by ethnically cleansing Croats from Central Bosnia, an entire province under Vance-Owen’s plan must belong to Muslims, resulting in their territory not only larger but also nationally and strategically more compact. The consequences of this bloody war were as follows: 152,950 Croats fled and were expelled to ABiH-controlled territory, 1,051 civilians were killed, including 121 children, and 644 captured HVO soldiers were killed, bringing 1,695 killed Croatian civilians and soldiers according to available historiographical documentation.<sup>70</sup>

When we keep in mind these historiographical facts, it is clear to us why during the Muslim-Croat war (from 1992 to spring 1994) Gojko Šušak was accused by Muslim Sarajevo of establishing the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia together with the first president Franjo Tuđman, and then allegedly divided Bosnia and Herzegovina and ultimately was responsible for the war

<sup>69</sup> I. Zlopaša, *Politička sudbina Hrvata u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 41-55.

<sup>70</sup> M. Tuđman, *Druga strana Rubikona...*, 375-400.

between Muslims and Croats.<sup>71</sup> During the Muslim-Croat war, the Muslim side, led by Alija Izetbegović, accused the Republic of Croatia of engaging the Croatian Army in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>72</sup> On May 17, Šušak rejected these allegations as untrue: "... To be completely precise, we will point out: a negligibly small part of the Croatian Army units is located in the border area of BiH (on the Croatian border) in the area of Dubrovnik. These units were deployed in accordance with the principles of international law and with the knowledge of international organizations, and in order to protect the city of Dubrovnik and surrounding areas from possible attacks by a common enemy of the Serbian aggressor. We are ready, as soon as peace and security prevails in the territory of the Republic of BiH, to withdraw these units to the territory of the Republic of Croatia."<sup>73</sup> He also pointed out that the crimes were not denied, but that the Muslim side was called to cover up the crimes in the Croatian villages around Konjic and the detention of "more than a thousand Croats in the vicinity of Zenica". Regarding the accusations of confederalization of BiH due to its dismemberment, he said that it was not advocated by any of the official representatives, but by its division into provinces based on the Vance-Owen plan.<sup>74</sup>

A session of the Council for Defense and National Security of the Republic of Croatia (VONS) was held in Zagreb on July 2, 1993. At that session, Tuđman summarized Croatian politics and tried to reach an agreement on action due to the great disagreement between VONS members. "This was necessary also because of the rumors about the dismissal of Minister Gojko Šušak and the rumors about the reduction of the influence of Croats from Herzegovina, as evidenced by the questioning of the ambassadors of Croatia-inclined countries. At the same time, some opposition parties, such as the Croatian Social Liberal Party and the Croatian Peasants' Party, asked Tuđman to take steps to abolish the HZHB. Their demands testify to the conclusion that they are to blame for the problems between Croats and Muslims in Mostar, not in Sarajevo."<sup>75</sup> Historical facts indicate that Šušak did most to harmonize the goals of

<sup>71</sup> I. Lučić, *Od vila ilirskih do bijelog puta...*, 267. Cf. I. Aralica, *I tu je kraj...*, 98. Cf. D. Hude-list, „Gojko Šušak, 20. obljetnica smrti“, <<http://www.darkohudelist.eu/det.php?id=126>> (8. IV. 2021.).

<sup>72</sup> D. Marijan, *Rat Hrvata i Muslimana...*, 120.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

Croat and Bosniak politics, which was a precondition for ending the conflict, preserving a united Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was finally achieved by signing the Washington Agreement in the spring of 1994.<sup>76</sup> A meeting was held in Zagreb on January 15, 1993 in Banski dvori, and among the participants were President Franjo Tuđman, Minister of Defense Gojko Šušak, President of HZ-HB Mate Boban, war leader of Muslims (later Bosniaks) Alija Izetbegović, co-chairs Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen. At that meeting, Tuđman and Šušak called for talks and an agreement between Muslims, Serbs and Croats on participation. That is, the Croatian leadership, led by Tuđman and Šušak, called for representatives of all three nations in the governing bodies and the joint government war and then to enable a political solution. At the meeting, Šušak told Alija Izetbegović the following: "(...) I spoke with you, Mr. President Izetbegović, here in Zagreb, and we talked about that before the co-chairs in Geneva, and because of the efficiency of the war, and we are already at a disadvantage. Muslim forces, and this is now divided into provinces, - the command of the army will be in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and where there are mostly HVO sagas to be the command of the HVO. I cannot understand what is at issue now in defending ourselves against a common enemy out of a common interest. Isn't that the part we've achieved. I was sitting with you in a room, in a hotel here, in the Esplanade, when we agreed to work on it. I do not see now what is disputable about coming to Gornji Vakuf now, regardless of the fact that there are more Muslims or fewer Croats there, but in that territory controlled by the HVO, orders are coming from Sarajevo, which contradict the orders from Mostar. Well, you kill yourself, then the Serbs no longer need to go to war with you. Thank you very much".<sup>77</sup> According to Miroslav Tuđman, Izetbegović and the co-chairs did not contradict each other because Šušak referred to the gentleman's agreement because he was given an oral agreement and given the word of obligation, just like the signed contract. Alija Izetbegović belongs to that civilization that does not nurture the agreement, the given word or even the documents on which his signature is.

Ševko Omerbašić, Mufti of the Republic of Croatia in the period from 1990 to 2012, points out that Šušak helped Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bosniaks a lot. «He used to halve weapons, half went to the Army of BiH, and half to the HVO. When there was a conflict between Bosniaks and Croats,

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 229. Cf. A. Nazor – T. Pušek, *Domovinski rat...*, 196-199.; I. Aralica, *I tu je kraj...*, 98.

<sup>77</sup> M. Tuđman, *Haški krivolov...*, 297.

the culprits were sought, that is, those responsible for that conflict. Gojko Šušak is not to blame for this conflict, he has always remained fair to Bosniaks.”<sup>78</sup> Then, Omerbašić points out that at the end of 1993, he tried to break the arms embargo with General Ljubo Ćesić Rojs. Then we went to Šušak and asked him to help calm down that situation and for the BiH Army to get some weapons in some way. Then Šušak said that the weapons that they had, and which were controlled by UNPROFOR, would be sent to Bosnia and Herzegovina. There were those in the ranks of the Croatian people who criticized Šušak and did it unfairly.”<sup>79</sup>

Ivan Aralica believes that Gojko Šušak was resilient in interpreting Herceg Bosna in the sense that it is a transitional creation, albeit a parastate, that protects the interests of Croats in a disintegrated country, which aims to preserve the strategic interests of the Croatian state and will serve as a base for the creation of a Croat-Bosniak federation. “If it were not for Herceg-Bosna, there would be no Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina, whatever it is, an independent state or a protectorate of European powers and the Atlantic Pact.”<sup>80</sup>

According to Davor Marijan, Franjo Tuđman’s policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina “changed in accordance with the situation in the wider environment and the question is how constant it was and how much it was a consequence of current events.”<sup>81</sup> Mate Boban remained President of the Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna for a very short time. He withdrew at the insistence of Franjo Tuđman and Gojko Šušak, and his position and function were replaced by Krešimir Zubak, who was elected President of the HRHB Presidential Council on 17 February 1994. The Council was established on the same day as a body tasked with “monitoring and coordinating strategic, political and defense issues, and in extraordinary circumstances performing the rights and duties of the President of the HRHB.”<sup>82</sup>

The policy of the then Croatian leadership towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, towards other peoples in BiH, without which Bosnia and Herzegovina would not have survived as a state, can be shown through the speech of War Minister Gojko Šušak to Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina at a rally in Livno after the war. Herzegovina: “You have not helped the Croatian people

<sup>78</sup> Ševko Omerbašić, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 25:44-25:56.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 26:05-27:13.

<sup>80</sup> I. Aralica, *I tu je kraj...*, 99.

<sup>81</sup> D. Marijan, *Rat Hrvata i Muslimana...*, 42.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

in Herceg-Bosna, nor the Croatian Republic, which is the motherland of all Croats, if a Muslim in Livno and a Serb in Mostar do not have the same rights as a Croat, because it is only a guarantee that a Croat in Sarajevo and a Croat in Banja Luka and a Croat in Zenica have their rights. And if they commit a crime against us, then we will prove that neither religion nor the heritage of civilization instructed us to do so and will not allow us to retaliate with the same measure. “ That was the policy of the Croatian leadership towards BiH.<sup>83</sup> Retired US General Jacques Paul Klein gave his famous statement about Šušak as an irreplaceable man and a man of his word, as well as a practical creator of Dayton agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>84</sup>

Furthermore, Šušak was the target of an intra-party war in the HDZ that ended in 1992 in the Republic of Croatia, and the main political factor was President Tuđman.<sup>85</sup> At the Second General Assembly of the HDZ held on October 15, 1993, Josip Manolić failed to defeat President Franjo Tuđman, after which they parted ways politically and in every other respect.<sup>86</sup> Manolić did not accept defeat, but in the spring of 1994, together with Stjepan Mesić, they tried to stage a coup d’etat and take power in the country through Parliament. The cause of the coup was their dissatisfaction with the growing importance of Defense Minister Gojko Šušak, who until his death was the second most important political figure in the country.<sup>87</sup> The attempt failed and since then there have been no political crises of this magnitude in the HDZ.<sup>88</sup> Šušak once stated that there are people in the Government of the Republic of Croatia with whom he would never drink coffee in private, “but we are on the same task at the invitation of President Franjo Tuđman and we perform these duties. We have to gather our heads and that is the only way we will succeed.”<sup>89</sup>

<sup>83</sup> D. Marijan, „Rat za opstojnost Hrvata, 1991.-1995. ...“, 559.

<sup>84</sup> D. Hudelist, „Gojko Šušak, 20. obljetnica smrti“, <<http://www.darkohudelist.eu/det.php?id=126>> (8. IV. 2021.).

<sup>85</sup> D. Marijan, „Rat za opstojnost Hrvata, 1991.-1995....“, 59-60.

<sup>86</sup> M. Tuđman, *Haški krivolov...*, 329.

<sup>87</sup> Vladimir Šeks, *Državni udar. Kako su Manolić i Mesić rušili Tuđmana i Hrvatska politika prema BiH*, Vol. 2. Zagreb: Večernji list, 2017., 125-314.

<sup>88</sup> D. Marijan, „Rat za opstojnost Hrvata, 1991.-1995....“, 60.

<sup>89</sup> Ljubo Ćesić „Rojs“, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 21:20-21:31.

## Gojko Šušak – Minister of Defense and Organization of the Croatian Army

In order to understand Šušak's importance and his role in the organization of Croatia, it is necessary to emphasize the historical context of the organization of the Ministry of Defense. At the time the Ministry of Defense was being formed, communist cadres predominated. Thus, the first Minister of Defense was Petar Kriste, who took over from the communist predecessor, the Republic Secretary General Ivan Pleša. "Petar Kriste was a civilian, which was a short-term break with the long-standing practice of a JNA general performing this duty. Kriste has started the rationalization of the sector and the preparation for Croatia to take over the entire competence in the field of defense in the foreseeable future and to have its own armed forces."<sup>90</sup>

Shortly afterwards, Kriste was removed and in August 1990, President Tuđman appointed retired JNA General Martin Špegelj Minister of Defense. According to historian Davor Marijan, Minister of Defense Špegelj was at the center of a scandal over the documentary "Zastava", which was broadcast on January 25, 1991 on TV Belgrade. "This film brought the unprepared Republic of Croatia to the brink of war with the JNA and should be considered as a welcome gift from the JNA to try to overthrow the legally elected Croatian government through extraordinary opportunities. The film is also the most compromised part of Croatian politics at the strategic level."<sup>91</sup>

"Špegelj tried to reorganize the Ministry of Defense, in which in the summer of 1990 most of the 307 employees were members of the League of Communists (SK), and according to the ethnic composition there were 147 Croats or 48 percent, 96 Serbs or 31 percent, 38 Yugoslavs or 12 percent and 26 others or 9 percent."<sup>92</sup> In August 1991, President Tuđman appointed Špegelj the first commander of the Croatian National Guard (ZNG), which gave Špegelj an administrative and command function in the defense department. Martin Špegelj was dismissed on July 2, 1991, due to the need for the Minister of Defense to be a civilian, not a soldier. Historian Marijan believes that this was due to several factors, and above all "Špegelj's indictment for poor selection of associates, no security and an example of nepotism (Captain Vladimir Jagar)

<sup>90</sup> D. Marijan, *Hrvatska 1989.-1992....*, 225.

<sup>91</sup> D. Marijan, *Smrt oklopne brigade....*, 212.

<sup>92</sup> D. Marijan, *Hrvatska 1989.-1992....*, 225.

that he is so happy to point out to others. The national composition of the NA, ie the reduction of the percentage of Serbs in the command structure, is one of the basic points in Špegelj's plans against the JNA, which he adhered to and based his strategy on.<sup>93</sup>

Šime Đodan was appointed the new minister, and like Martin Špegelj, he was once an officer of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), who replaced his military career with a career as a professor of economics.<sup>94</sup> After only a month, he was replaced by Luka Bebić, also a former communist cadre, and was replaced by the only non-communist cadre, Gojko Šušak, on September 18, 1991.<sup>95</sup>

The Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia were difficult to create, primarily due to the JNA aggression against the Republic of Croatia, but also due to a number of other circumstances. Mostly cadres of the old system who joined the Croatian side were appointed to command positions. Former JNA cadres were at the helm of the General Staff of the Croatian Armed Forces. The commanders of the Air Force, the Croatian Navy and the operational zones were also cadres of the former JNA and Territorial Defense (TO) system. The commanders of the lower-ranked operational groups and sectors were also former JNA cadres.<sup>96</sup> However, at the level of brigades or independent HV battalions, there were commanders without formal education, which was not a disadvantage.<sup>97</sup>

The roof level of the ZNG was the ZNG Command, which by the beginning of August was directly in command of all ZNG units. At the beginning of August 1991, the ZNG was given an operational level by the establishment of regional commands, which were renamed the command of operational zones in October of the same year. From then on, the HV was organized into: the General Staff with sub-staff units, six operational zones of the Land Army, the Croatian Navy with three naval commands and the Croatian Air Force with air defense. On September 21, the ZNG Command was renamed the HV General Staff, ie on that day the chiefs of staff, the chief

<sup>93</sup> D. Marijan, *Smrt oklopne brigade...*, 212-217.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>95</sup> D. Marijan – N. Barić, *Raspad Jugoslavije i stvaranje hrvatske države*, 47-48. Cf. D. Marijan, *Hrvatska 1989.-1992....*, 201; A. Nazor – T. Pušek, *Domovinski rat...*, 119; D. Ujević, *Ministar obrane...*, 84.

<sup>96</sup> D. Marijan, *Hrvatska 1989.-1992....*, 201.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

and two assistants were appointed. Historian Marijan believes that this change was formal and did not improve the quality of strategic action because the tradition of TO was present, while the General Staff was from the tradition of the operational army, home guard and JNA.<sup>98</sup> On 26 August 1991, the Croatian Government concluded that its defense strategy was based on “the engagement of the whole of Croatia and the establishment of a unified command of all the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia”. In November 1991, President Tuđman appointed former Defense Minister Martin Špegelj Chief Inspector of the Croatian Army, and a month later, on December 24, 1991, he wrote a report stating that the Croatian Army was not ready for offensive operations in the wider area to win the war.<sup>99</sup>

In such circumstances, Šušak took over the Ministry of Defense, and in the opinion of Dunja Ujević, he was appointed in the wrong place as a link with the Croatian diaspora through which the procurement of weapons and preparations for defense would take place.<sup>100</sup> Gojko Šušak knew nothing about military doctrines, but he had a sense of military and political organization.<sup>101</sup> He insisted on strict discipline in the Ministry of Defense, in his vision of the army, the team was the key concept “Without a team, with me or someone else, there would be nothing. The team was created without prejudice, based on trust among people and an understanding of a common goal.”<sup>102</sup> They had confidence in the commander-in-chief and in me and I had confidence in them. And there was zeal, patriotism, defiance and pride for everything that has been done to us as a nation. That we are a team that plays together, that was not lost even in the most difficult days.”<sup>103</sup> In the autumn of 1991, the war for barracks began, in which the Croatian army conquered numerous barracks, warehouses and other facilities, and poorly armed Croatian defenders came into possession of large quantities of weapons, ammunition and other war material. Thanks to this, the tactics of waging a defensive war are

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>100</sup> D. Ujević, *Ministar obrane...*, 93.

<sup>101</sup> I. Aralica, *I tu je kraj...*, 93.

<sup>102</sup> D. Ujević, *Ministar obrane...*, 115.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 116.

changing and the defense is moving from organized, unified and coordinated operations to liberate wider areas.<sup>104</sup>

At the moment when the procurement of weapons from the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia (MUP RH) was transferred to the Ministry of Defense, this resulted in a media intelligence war on the Ministry of Defense and on the Minister of Defense Gojko Šušak himself.<sup>105</sup> Due to the UN arms embargo on September 25, 1991, the Croatian state had to procure weapons in various ways.<sup>106</sup> President Tuđman appointed a special commission to approve the procurement of weapons, which included: Luka Bebić, Hrvoje Sarinić, Gojko Šušak and later Ivan Vekić.<sup>107</sup> At the beginning of the Homeland War, he helped collect economic aid from Croatian emigrants to buy weapons. According to his close associates, Šušak had a great deal of suspicion and insecurity towards people from the communist state. He formed a command staff of three diametrically opposed components: Croatian emigrants, officers of the Yugoslav army and members of the Foreign Legion, ie soldiers who became officers during the war.<sup>108</sup>

Furthermore, Šušak's close associates point out that the development of the armed forces was based on logistics and engineering because he believed that in the history of warfare it is known to what extent war success or failure depends on quality and timely logistical support. "On the supply of troops on the battlefield, all types and calibers of ammunition, fuel, lubricants and other materials, transport, maintenance of weapons, military equipment and other equipment, accommodation, clothing, food and water, warehouses, medical and veterinary support. Also, without good and quality engineering support, the probability of survival on the battlefield is significantly reduced, losses increase, the mobility of units decreases."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> G. Šušak, „Hrvatska vojska i iskustvo Domovinskog rata“. U: *Gojko Šušak 1945.-1998. Spomenica...*, 132.

<sup>105</sup> D. Ujević, *Ministar obrane...*, 88.

<sup>106</sup> At the end of 1995, the debt of the Ministry of Defense was 4.5 billion kuna. Before his death, Šušak left the Ministry of Defense with clean bills so that his successors would have an orderly financial situation. *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>108</sup> I. Aralica, *I tu je kraj...*, 113-114. Cf. Miljenko Filipović, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 20:42-21:18.

<sup>109</sup> Krešimir Ćosić, „Hrvatska vojska i iskustvo Domovinskog rata“. U: *Gojko Šušak 1945.-1998. Spomenica...*, 128.

Minister Šušak supported the idea of organizing a training center for non-commissioned officers in Šepurine, which is the foundation of every army. The organization of a training center for non-commissioned officers in Šepurine proved to be important for the organization of guard brigades.<sup>110</sup> He gave young officers the opportunity to advance to the level of battalions, and later the most capable of them advanced to the level of HV brigades. The HV Guards Brigades, when reinforced with platoon commanders from the Šepurine unit, would receive a strike force on the ground against the Serb forces.<sup>111</sup> Gojko Šušak reiterated that the creation of an operational, combat-ready and trained army in the war, out of practically nothing, was our most important and most difficult task.<sup>112</sup> “The people of Zagorje, Podravina and Slavonia fought on the Dalmatian karst and stone, the hills and cliffs of Velebit and Dinara, the Dalmatians and Herzegovinians in flat Slavonia, the Primorje and Istrians in Lika. Croatia has never and nowhere been so strongly integrated, connected and united as in the Croatian Army.”<sup>113</sup>

Šušak is most responsible for the preparation of Operation Storm in the logistical, conceptual and organizational sense. He is most credited for achieving a strategic partnership with the United States. He convinced the State Department of the importance of resolving the Bihać crisis in November 1994, when he came to Washington together with the Croatian delegation.<sup>114</sup> It was during the negotiations in Washington that he gained US support for the preparation of the final operations for the liberation of the occupied territory of the Republic of Croatia. Shortly afterwards, Šušak went to the Pentagon where he met with US Secretary of Defense William Perry, General Wesley Clark, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, representatives of the CIA, DIA and NSC.<sup>115</sup> Minister Šušak set out Croatia’s position, stressing that Croatia does not require any military assistance, but wants understanding if it is forced to attack in order to protect its internationally recognized borders. US Secretary of Defense William Perry expressed “full understanding of the US government for all the problems facing Croatia, from hundreds of thousands of refugees to the fact that rebel Serbs in more than a quarter of Croatian state

<sup>110</sup> Damir Krstičević, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 17:20-17:54.

<sup>111</sup> K. Čosić, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 17:55-18:12.

<sup>112</sup> K. Čosić, „Hrvatska vojska i iskustvo Domovinskog rata“, 128.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>114</sup> D. Marijan, *Oluja*, 235-236.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

territory do not recognize Croatian rule, and the fact that in those times of war, Croatia faced the very difficult challenge of establishing and creating its own armed forces.”<sup>116</sup>

The fruit of the strategic alliance between the USA and Croatia are, in the formal-legal sense, the services of the American non-governmental company MPRI, which helped to establish the Croatian Army on the model of NATO's concept of combat operations.<sup>117</sup> It is the program of the American non-governmental company MPRI combined with the organization of the Guards Brigades that is the key to organizing the Croatian army and winning the final operations when the Croatian army liberated most of its occupied territory and created the preconditions for a quick end to the war.<sup>118</sup> For merits and contributions in the Homeland War, on March 1, 1993, he was awarded the rank of reserve colonel general, then on May 23, 1995, he was promoted to the rank of reserve general. He was posthumously promoted to the rank of reserve staff general on May 5, 1998.

## Legacy of Defense Minister Gojko Šušak

Minister of Defense Gojko Šušak was a visionary in terms of the structure and development of the Croatian Army, emphasizing that the Croatian Army should preserve its identity, but also be open for the coming time of involvement in international integration.<sup>119</sup> Šušak pointed out that the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia emerged from the Homeland War, but from the very beginning sought to become part of Western European integration: “In the name of defending their sovereignty, freedom and rights, the Croatian people and the Croatian state created the Croatian Army.” Creating and shaping the Croatian Army through war and on the basis of democratic principles is a particularly difficult task, because in war operational-tactical, tactical-technical and other challenges and priorities are imposed as the most urgent and significant... As Minister of Defense I believe that the development of

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>117</sup> D. Hudelist, „Gojko Šušak, 20. obljetnica smrti“, <<http://www.darkohudelist.eu/det.php?id=126>> (8. IV. 2021.).

<sup>118</sup> D. Marijan, *Oluja*, 134. Cf. A. Nazor – T. Pušek, *Domovinski rat...*, 252-260.

<sup>119</sup> Davor Domazet Lošo, „Gojko Šušak i ustroj Hrvatske vojske“. U: *Gojko Šušak 1945.-1998. Spomenica...*, 143.

defense systems principles of Western democracies is extremely important for the development of overall democratic processes in the countries of Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe where the one-party system ruled”.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, he pointed out that “The position of the current, future security and interest environment of the Republic of Croatia is not in a position to build and develop its national security and defense strategy solely on the basis of partnership through various international agreements and the pooling of international military forces and all forms of international military cooperation are extremely important to us. It is of special military importance for the Republic of Croatia to have at its disposal the current readiness of its own Armed Forces under its direct command, which it will use purposefully with regard to the protection and defense of its vital interests.<sup>121</sup> Also, from the political aspect, it is important for the Republic of Croatia and for the Croatian Army to participate in all joint international operations, and that it is connected to the relevant international alliances that promote global security and stability”.<sup>122</sup> He emphasized that the quality of the army was ahead of its quantity because feeding and dressing too many soldiers to the detriment of the quality of training soldiers and equipping the army with modern equipment and defense systems became unproductive and jeopardized the country’s national security. He encouraged and sent young Croatian officers from the Croatian Navy, the Croatian Air Force, the Army and the Military Police to the United States for training.<sup>123</sup> He made an active contribution not only to the signing of the Washington and Dayton Agreements in December 1995, but also to the 1998 Agreement on the Peaceful Reintegration of the Croatian Danube Region into Croatia.<sup>124</sup>

Back in 1996, Šušak initiated the reorganization of the Armed Forces with the aim of joining the Republic of Croatia to Western security alliances and organizations, primarily NATO. Thanks primarily to Šušak’s vision and the foundations he built into the Croatian Army, the Republic of Croatia has been a full member of NATO since April 1, 2009. He died in Zagreb on May 3, 1998, at the age of 53. Former US Secretary of Defense Willam Perry said the following at the funeral of Gojko Šušak at the Mirogoj Cemetery:

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 142-143.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 145-146.

<sup>124</sup> K. Ćosić, „Hrvatska vojska i iskustvo Domovinskog rata“, 130.

“As I established on the occasion of our first meeting in 1994, Gojko Šušak was a man of truly great qualities. He was, of course, stubborn, but above all he was a patriot. He was a visionary in military matters and it is his legacy that one day the Croatian Armed Forces will become a valuable stakeholder in Western security organizations. And perhaps most importantly, it forged especially our close personal relationship. He was a whole man, a man of his word. There is no greater compliment for Americans (...) The death of Gojko Šušak is a great loss not only for his family and friends; it is a great loss for Croatia. What Shakespeare said in his play about a great Roman, I say today about a great Croat: “A man is gone, we will never see him like that again!”<sup>125</sup>

Šušak’s associates believe that he knew how to recognize character and people, his assessment was, as a rule, infallible. In addition to that inner instinct, he possessed intellectual and physical courage.<sup>126</sup> In political negotiations he was an extremely stubborn and tough negotiator, he kept his word when he once decided something. Gojko Šušak approached the problems analytically and once he decided something, he stuck to it. If he told you he was going to do something, he would do it.<sup>127</sup> “In war, there is usually mud and loopholes, but Šušak did not do that. Keeping his word is a distinct virtue, which he had in his character ... But Šušak was also loyal to President Tuđman; and only then to everyone else. He was loyal to him even in those rare things and situations when he disagreed with him.”<sup>128</sup>

According to US lawyer Rivkin, the only thing Šušak cared about was being a great defense minister and building a new army literally from scratch, cooperating with friends and allies in the West and winning the war and making Croatia great again.<sup>129</sup> “When Gojko Šušak was in treatment in Boston in 1997, I realized that he belonged to a few people who didn’t just want to think too much about personal pain and grief but just want to work until the last minute.”<sup>130</sup>

<sup>125</sup> William Perry, „Gojko Šušak – čovjek od riječi“. U: *Gojko Šušak 1945.-1998. Spomenica...*, 23-24.

<sup>126</sup> M. Tuđman, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 14:00-14:40.

<sup>127</sup> David Rivkin, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 29:00-29:30.

<sup>128</sup> Darko Hudelist, „Gojko Šušak, 20. obljetnica smrti“, <<http://www.darkohudelist.eu/det.php?id=126>> (8. IV. 2021.).

<sup>129</sup> D. Rivkin, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 20:00-20:42.; Ibid., 44:10-44:28.

<sup>130</sup> Luka Mišetić, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 38:40-38:48.

## Gojko Šušak and the Hague Tribunal

The International Criminal Court (ICTY) was established in 1993 in The Hague by the UN Security Council with the aim of punishing those responsible for imposing war on the territory of the former Yugoslavia and imposing peace. It should be noted that this court was established with the support of the Republic of Croatia, which insisted that this court be formed.<sup>131</sup> According to Miroslav Tuđman, the ICTY began operations after the end of the war in the former Yugoslavia “in circumstances where international factors, due to their own conflicting interests, were equally at odds over the past and future of the newly formed states in the former Yugoslavia.” (...) They only agreed to use the ICTY to provide an alibi for their inefficiency. The International Criminal Court in The Hague has become an unprincipled beating in the hands of the international community... that is why that court was ordered to find all parties guilty, and determine the differences and guilt by the number of indictments and the amount of the indictment.”<sup>132</sup>

The Hague tribunal has begun indicting the Croatian political leadership, led by Franjo Tuđman, Gojko Šušak and Janko Bobetko, for alleged criminal enterprise and aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>133</sup> Such an indictment was based on the testimony of Stjepan Mesić, the crown witness for the prosecution against General Tihomir Blaškić. Mesić submitted his written testimony to Hague investigators on April 17, 1997, and testified before the court from March 16 to 19, 1998, undermining Tuđman, Šušak, Bobetko and the political and military leadership of the Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna.<sup>134</sup> A few years later, in 2006, the Hague Prosecution managed to engage five key witnesses, Josip Manolic, Robert Donia, Ciril Ribicic, Herbert Okun and Peter Galbraith, to prove the reality of a joint criminal enterprise aimed at creating a Croat ethnicity in BiH. Of the Republic of Croatia into the international armed conflict in BiH, with the intention of joining that Croatian ethnic group of the Republic of Croatia.<sup>135</sup>

In 1997, the Hague Tribunal’s Prosecution requested that Defense Minister Gojko Šušak appear before the Court on a binding warrant. The Republic

<sup>131</sup> L. Mišetić, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 38:40-38:48.

<sup>132</sup> M. Tuđman, *Vrijeme krivokletnika...*, 13.

<sup>133</sup> M. Tuđman, *Haški krivolov...*, 16.

<sup>134</sup> M. Tuđman, *Vrijeme krivokletnika...*, 25-36.

<sup>135</sup> M. Tuđman, *Haški krivolov...*, 328.

of Croatia reacted by initiating a dispute before the Hague Tribunal, which ended with the following Decision of 3 March 2000 in the first-instance judgment against General Tihomir Blaškić (Blaškić IT-95-14): “In its decision, the Appeals Chamber found that neither the state nor the responsible state officials acting in that capacity may issue subpoena-type orders, specifying the conditions under which a binding order may be issued to a state for the presentation of documents, etc., as well as the rights and obligations of the state in that respect.” In translation, this decision means that Croatian officials cannot be called to the Court as witnesses by binding orders, which implies that Croatian officials do not have to respond to testify, because neither the Croatian state nor Croatian politics are being tried.<sup>136</sup> Lawyer Rivkin points out that he represented Croatia before the ICTY and the International Court of Justice in The Hague, and that his first major case was Defense Minister Gojko Šušak because the International Criminal Court in The Hague tried to obtain documents containing a number of data concerning the state security. Rivkin pointed out “instead of forcing the state, they decided to force Defense Minister Šušak. We refuted that indictment and eventually the Appeals Chamber acknowledged that it was illogical for the state to be subject to ICTY coercion and that the ICTY could coerce state officials in an official capacity. “Both cannot be true.”<sup>137</sup>

The fact is that the ICTY has no jurisdiction to try states and therefore the Hague Prosecution could not prove in case IT-04-74, six senior officials of the Croatian Republic of Herceg Bosna, that Tuđman planned a joint criminal enterprise with Šušak.<sup>138</sup> Lawyer Luka Misić points out that, as far as the Republic of Croatia is concerned, the International Criminal Court has determined that the Croatian political and military leadership, led by President Tuđman and Defense Minister Šušak, has not pursued a criminal policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, Misić points out that President Tuđman would not end up as an indictee at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Furthermore, he points out that Gojko Šušak has never been extreme in terms of his political stance towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, nor has he ever stated anything ambiguous that could be interpreted as a

<sup>136</sup> M. Tuđman, *Vrijeme krivokletnika...*, 58, 67-68.

<sup>137</sup> D. Rivkin, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 37:50-38:39.

<sup>138</sup> Jadranko Prlić, Slobodan Praljak, Milivoj Petković, Valentin Ćorić, Bruno Stojić and Berislav Pušić were convicted in that case. M. Tuđman, *Haški krivolov...*, 490-491.

criminal intent against Serbs or Muslims. “We know that this verdict is disputable to the Croatian six in the Prlić case, but reading the verdict in detail, it is clear that President Tuđman and Minister Šušak, although mentioned in that verdict, do not cite any evidence against them that they had any criminal intent in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In its decisions, the Hague Tribunal emphasized that President Tuđman, Minister Šušak and General Bobetko are legally innocent.”<sup>139</sup>

## Conclusion

Gojko Šušak was born in Široki Brijeg in March 1945 in the turbulent events of that area when partisans committed many crimes against the local population and against the Franciscans of Široki Brijeg. His youth was marked by warnings from the repressive apparatus of the CPY in the then Lištica (Široki Brijeg). He left Široki Brijeg to study in Rijeka and finally in 1968 in Canada because he did not want to serve in the JNA. In Canada, he worked with a group of like-minded people to promote Croatian national identity and politically advocated the creation of a Croatian state. In Canada in 1987 and 1988, he met Franjo Tuđman and his political program and recognized him as the future president of the Republic of Croatia. At Tuđman’s invitation, Šušak came to Croatia in December 1990 with his group of like-minded people from the Croatian diaspora.

He returned to Croatia in February 1990 and helped organize the first free and democratic elections. After the establishment of the new government formed by the Croatian Democratic Union after the parliamentary elections, Gojko Šušak held a number of the highest party and state positions, from 1990 he served as Minister of Emigration, and from September 1991 as Minister of Defense. Šušak worked on establishing a strong Croatian army in the first phase of the war to defend against attacks by insurgent Serbs and the JNA, and in the later phase of the war for liberation operations. Minister Gojko Šušak is credited with creating the victorious Croatian Army that broke the JNA and led to the end of the Homeland War. During the Homeland War, Šušak was the most powerful man in the Republic of Croatia after President Tuđman. In addition to his duties in the executive branch, he was

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<sup>139</sup> L. Mišetić, *Gojko Šušak – pobjednik iz sjene* (dokumentarni film), 38:40-40:29.

appointed to a number of state commissions and advisory bodies, such as: a member of the Crisis Staff as an advisory body to the President of the Republic (July 17, 1991); member of the Supreme State Council of the Republic of Croatia (November 18, 1991); member of the Military Council (16 June 1992 and 31 January 1996); member of the National Defense Council of the Republic of Croatia (September 10, 1992); member of the Presidential Council (10 September 1992 and 30 November 1995); member of the Defense and National Security Council (20 January 1993; 24 November 1995 and 11 November 1996); Deputy President and member of the Coordination Committee for the Activities of State Ministries for National Security (June 4, 1993); member of the Presidential Council for Defense and National Security (November 16, 1993 and October 13, 1994); President of the State Commission for Military Decorations (May 11, 1995 and April 8, 1997) and a member of the Council for Strategic Decisions (July 8, 1997). Gojko Šušak died on May 3, 1998 and was buried with the highest state honors at the Mirogoj Cemetery in Zagreb.

On March 1, 1993, he was awarded the rank of reserve colonel general for his services and contributions to the Homeland War. He was promoted to the rank of reserve general of the corps on May 23, 1995. He was posthumously promoted to the rank of Staff General on May 5, 1998. For his merits and contribution to the creation of the Croatian state he was awarded: the Homeland War Memorial (1993), the Order of King Petar Krešimir IV with a ribbon and Danica (1995), the Order of Prince Domagoj with a necklace (1995), the Order of Ante Starčević (1995). ), The Order of the Croatian Trefoil (1995), the Memorial of Homeland Gratitude (1995), the medal “Flash” (1995), the medal “Summer-95” (1995), the medal “Storm” (1995), the Medal for Outstanding ventures (1995), the Order of Ban Jelačić (1997), the Memorial Medal of Vukovar (1998), the Order of King Dmitri Zvonimir with a ribbon and Danica (1998), the Order of Nikola Šubić Zrinski (1998), the Order of Stjepan Radić (1998). ) and a gold plaque of the Military Ordinariate (1999). In addition, he received a number of accolades from home and abroad.

With the change of government in 2000 during the period of “de-Germanization”, Šušak tried to compromise and impose guilt on him through the International Criminal Court in The Hague in the “Prlić et al.” All these attempts failed. Back in 1996, Šušak initiated the reorganization of the

Armed Forces with the aim of joining the Republic of Croatia to Western security alliances and organizations, primarily NATO. Šušak is credited with establishing a strategic partnership between Croatia and the United States. Consequently, his greatest legacy is the creation of a victorious Croatian army, which ten years after his death became a full member of NATO on 1 April 2009.

## **GOJKO ŠUŠAK (1945. – 1998.) – POBJEDNIČKI MINISTAR OBRANE I NJEGOVA ULOGA U STVARANJU HRVATSKE DRŽAVE**

### **Sažetak**

*U članku se iznose najvažniji događaji iz života Gojka Šuška. U hrvatskoj historiografiji još uvijek ne postoji niti jedan znanstveni rad napisan o životu i djelovanju hrvatskoga ministra obrane Gojka Šuška u Domovinskome ratu, a o cjelovitoj sintezi da ni ne govorimo. Članak se temelji pretežno na znanstvenoj literaturi i na osnovi te literature napravljen je jedan istraživački temelj za proučavanje Šuškovina doprinosa uspostavi Republike Hrvatske, ustroju hrvatske vojske i na kraju pobjede u Domovinskome ratu te okončana rata na teritoriju Bosne i Hercegovine. Članak je koncipiran tako da su kronološki obrađeni najvažniji događaji iz Šuškovina života koji obuhvaćaju razdoblje mladenaštva, djelovanje i život u Kanadi te, naposljetku, političku dužnost koju je obavljao kao ministar obrane u razdoblju Domovinskoga rata. Slijedom toga obrađeno je poglavlje u kojemu se analizira medijsko-obavještajni rat protiv Šuška, koji je u vrijeme obnašanja dužnosti bio na meti novinarsko-obavještajnih napada, a ti napadi ni dandanas nisu prestali. Zamjera mu se odnos prema Bosni i Hercegovini, odnosno prema Hrvatima i Hrvatskoj zajednici (Republici) Herceg-Bosni. Upravo zbog tih optužbi političkih protivnika u Republici Hrvatskoj Šušak se našao na meti Haškoga suda 1997. godine, no ta pravna bitka bila je izgubljena za Haški sud u kratkome vremenskom roku. U članku je stavljen naglasak na Šuškovu ustrojavanje Hrvatske vojske te naslijeđe koje je ostavio kao ministar obrane.*

*Ključne riječi: Gojko Šušak; Franjo Tuđman; Široki Brijeg; Kanada; Hrvatska vojska; Ministarstvo obrane.*