

## COMMUNIST PENETRATION OF CROATIAN AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS DURING WORLD WAR II<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Lately, the problem of Communist penetration of American institutions during World War II and the period of the "Cold War" has assumed a prominent place.<sup>2</sup> Although authors do not single out Croatian Americans, it is clear that several of them were members of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) and active in intelligence gathering for the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> American agencies became aware of that fact during the war. Surprisingly, the Federal Bureau of Investigations and other government agencies first engaged in the surveillance of Croatian Americans for their alleged involvement in supporting the Pavelić government in the Independent State of Croatia,<sup>4</sup> but gradually they came under the surveillance for their Communist activities in the States.

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on similar archival material used in writing "Čuvari svoje braće: policijsko nadgledanje američkih Hrvata tijekom Drugoga svjetskog rata", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 35/2003., br. 2, 407-430, by the author.

<sup>2</sup> John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona. Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999); Jerrold and Leona Schecter, *Sacred Secrets: How Soviet Intelligence Operations Changed American History* (New York: Potomac Books, Inc., 2003); excerpts available at: [http://books.google.hr/books?id=M2pbieYYHrYC&dq=Leona+SCHECTER&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=f9ixnVTsni&sig=Wh8v6sXPUGGD-TJe5dyN56P7SK0&hl=hr&ei=QInkSq7cMJTimgPt5YGjCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CA8Q6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=&f=false](http://books.google.hr/books?id=M2pbieYYHrYC&dq=Leona+SCHECTER&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=f9ixnVTsni&sig=Wh8v6sXPUGGD-TJe5dyN56P7SK0&hl=hr&ei=QInkSq7cMJTimgPt5YGjCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CA8Q6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=&f=false)

<sup>3</sup> John Kraljic, "The Croatian Section of the Communist Party of the United States and the 'United Front': 1934 1939", this issue of *Review of Croatian History*.

<sup>4</sup> See Jure Krišto, "Čuvari svoje braće: policijsko nadgledanje američkih Hrvata tijekom Drugoga svjetskog rata", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 35 (2003), no. 2: 407-430.

The introductory section of this article is devoted to a description of the political situation in Yugoslavia prior to WWII and the American Croat community.

## The Independent State of Croatia and Croatian Americans

Following the attack of Axis forces on Yugoslavia on April 6 1941, King Petar II and his government fled Belgrade, and ten days later the Yugoslav army surrendered. The quick demise of the state was a sign that a substantial portion of the population was deeply dissatisfied with it and did not consider that state worthy of defending. That was undoubtedly the case with a good portion of Croats. On the crest of accumulated dissatisfaction, various segments of political forces in Croatia began to work on the proclamation of Croatian independence as soon as the Yugoslav state was threatened. Indeed, Slavko Kvaternik, a colonel from the time of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the domestic leader of the Home defender (Domobran) or *Ustaša* (Insurgent) revolutionary organization,<sup>5</sup> read the radio message that declared the existence of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH – *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*) on April 10 1941.<sup>6</sup> The first German military units were just marching into the outskirts of Zagreb, while Ante Pavelić, the founding father of the *Ustaše*,<sup>7</sup> was still in Italy negotiating the terms of the relationship of the Croatian state and fascist Italy. Pavelić entered Zagreb on April 15, with a group numbering less than a couple of hundred of the most faithful *Ustaše*.<sup>8</sup> The next day, Pavelić organized the government, making himself the head of it and reserving for himself the Ministry of foreign affairs. That was a sign that the government was going to be authoritarian, even totalitarian in nature. The new state was immediately recognized by the countries of the Axis alliance.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Slavko Kvaternik was born on August 25, 1878 in Komorske Moravice, but he grew up in Vučinić Selo, district of Vrbovsko. After forfeiting his estate, his father Ljudevit became a postman. After his mandatory schooling, S. Kvaternik enrolled in the infantry military academy in Karlovac, and in 1904 enrolled in the military academy for higher officers in Vienna. He married Olga, the daughter of Josip Frank, a controversial Jewish leader of the Pure Party of (State) Right. Pursuing his military career, in 1916 Kvaternik became a wing adjutant of general Svetozar Borojević, the commander of the Third Army. During the First World War he was part of the army command at the Soča front. In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, Kvaternik's military career was inhibited and in 1920 he was retired. He joined the Croat Party of (State) Right, and in 1938 he became a member of the nationalist group "Uzdanica," which in 1939 began publishing the newspaper *Hrvatski narod*.

<sup>6</sup> *Narodne novine*, no. 1, April 11, 1941.

<sup>7</sup> This is a plural form of the Croatian noun *Ustaša*. I use this form, even though *Ustaši*, the form in Serbian, is frequently encountered in literature.

<sup>8</sup> Ante Moškov, *Pavelićevo doba* (Split, 1999), p. 212, writes that Pavelić arrived "before dawn" and reports that the *Ustaše* were discontent with such a conspirative entrance into the capital.

<sup>9</sup> F. Čulinović, *Dokumenti o Jugoslaviji. Historijat od osnutka zajedničke države do danas* (Zagreb, 1968), pp. 391-392; *Ante Pavelić. 100 godina*, p. 26. For a discussion on whether Hungary recog-

Most Croats were elated when they heard the proclamation of the NDH. The Catholic Church hierarchy and the lower clergy concurred with the people.<sup>10</sup> The reason for the Croats' joy was their separation from Serbia and the establishment of a state of their own, a dream of many generations fulfilled. However, disappointments soon crept in and squeezed out the satisfaction. The Germans and Italians defined their political and territorial interests within Croatia, thus dividing the country in half and placing the government of "independent" Croatia under their control, especially regarding military and other security matters. The Italians, moreover, immediately annexed a good portion of the Adriatic littoral and most of the islands, and later imposed their military rule over a major portion of "their" part of the NDH.<sup>11</sup> These arrangements were agreed upon by the treaties signed in Rome on May 18, 1941.

If that was not a sufficient source of frustration, the Orthodox Serbs mounted an armed revolt against the NDH and joined the Chetnik formations of Draža Mihailović to fight for the restitution of the Monarchy (actually for the creation of Great Serbia). In addition, on June 22, 1941, the day that Hitler attacked the Soviet Russia, the Croatian Communists began their uprising, and also fought against the NDH. They also wanted the renewal of Yugoslavia, but modelled after the Communist Soviet Union. The Croat Communists were, therefore, interested in a Soviet style revolution that would be achieved on the entire territory of Yugoslavia. Thus, the entire territory of the NDH was engulfed in civil war, in which the fighting sides forged alliances and just as easily broke them. In addition to the presence of German and Italian military forces, both Communist-led Partisans and Chetniks fought the Croatian regular army, while at the same time Partisans and Chetniks tried to eliminate each other.

On top of everything, Pavelić's regime introduced extremely bad policies in the areas and domains in which it was allowed to operate. The Serbs were excluded from practically all government employment and from work in some

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nized Croatia before Germany see: Milan Blažeković, "Proces protiv nadbiskupa Stepinca i međunarodni status Nezavisne Države Hrvatske (1941.-1945.," *Stepinac mu je ime. Zbornik uspomena, svjedočanstava i dokumenata*, ed. by Vinko Nikolić (Barcelona: Hrvatska revija, 1978), pp. 323-367 (335).

<sup>10</sup> Jure Krišto, *Sukob simbola. Politika, vjere i ideologije u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Globus, 2001), pp. 38-39.

<sup>11</sup> Zdravko Dizdar, "Italian Policies toward Croats in Occupied Territories during the Second World War," *Review of Croatian History* 1 (2005) no. 1: 179-210; Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. The Chetniks* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), p. 100; Frank P. Verna, "Notes on Italian Rule on Dalmatia under Bastianini, 1941-1943," *The International History Review* 12 (1990): 528-529; see also the Proceedings of a conference on the subject: *Talijanska uprava na hrvatskom prostoru i egzodus Hrvata* (Pula – Zagreb, 2001).

professions, especially the mass media.<sup>12</sup> At the end of June the government began organizing detention and work-camps to which it sent Serbs and other opponents of the regime. On April 30, 1941 racial laws were proclaimed laying the foundation for the anti-Jewish measures that ensued. The Jews were ordered to wear yellow armbands, forbidden to sign business contracts, while their property was seized. Two weeks earlier, on April 14, 1941 the synagogue in Osijek had been burnt down; later the synagogue of Zagreb and other towns were destroyed.<sup>13</sup> Many Jews (especially members and sympathizers of the Communist party) and Gypsies were sent to the labour camps.<sup>14</sup>

American Croats found themselves in a very difficult situation and it worsened when on December 14, 1941 the head of the Independent State of Croatia declared war on the United States, three days after Germany and Italy had done the same, and certainly under their pressure. American Croats had strong organizations committed to the idea of Croatian independence. In 1928 they founded *Hrvatsko kolo* (Croatian Circle), which supported the Croatian movement for independence.<sup>15</sup> The Circle had branches throughout the United States while the New York-based newspaper, *Hrvatski list i Danica hrvatska* (Croatian Newspaper and the Croatian Morning Star), edited by the Circle's first president Ivan Krešić, became the Circle's organ.<sup>16</sup> In 1933, a splinter group sided with the European Domobran-Ustaša movement,<sup>17</sup> which voiced its political goals through the newspaper *Nezavisna Hrvatska Država* (Independent Croatian State). The monthly was published in Berlin, and five hundred copies were sent to Ante Došen in New York, into which he inserted an American section and sent them to final destinations.<sup>18</sup> When the Nazis banned the paper in Germany in 1934, it was decided that the paper of the

<sup>12</sup> Independent State of Croatia, Ministry of Justice and Religion, *Zbornik zakona i naredaba Nezavisne Države Hrvatske – 1941*; Jozo Tomasevich, *The Chetniks*, p. 106.

<sup>13</sup> Surprisingly, the Jewish Religious Congregation was active during the entire duration of the NDH, see: Harriet Pass Freidenreich, *The Jews in Yugoslavia. A Quest for Community* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), p. 191. See also: J. Kristo, "The Catholic Church and the Jews in the Independent State of Croatia," *Review of Croatian History*, 3 (2007), no. 1:13-47.

<sup>14</sup> Narcisa Lengel Krizman, "Camps for Jews in the Independent State of Croatia," *Anti-Semitism, Holocaust, Anti-Fascism* (Zagreb: Zagreb Jewish Community, 1997), pp. 89-101.

<sup>15</sup> Membership of that organization included several Croatian Catholic priests: Davorin Krmpotić, Mirko Kaić, Bosiljko Bekavac, Ilija Severović, Milan Hranilović, Ivan Stipanović, Oskar Šuster, and Leon Medić.

<sup>16</sup> See Josip Kraja, "The Croatian Circle, 1928-1946: Chronology and Reminiscences," *Journal of Croatian Studies* 5-6 (1964-65): 145-204. Among members of the Circle were mons. Ivan Stipanović, Ivan Krešić, Josip Kraja, Kuzma Kuharić, Davorin Krmpotić, Milan Bilić, Ante Došen, etc.

<sup>17</sup> Jere Jareb, ed., *Političke uspomene i rad dra Branimira Jelića* (Cleveland: Mirko Šamija, 1982), p. 88; cf. Ivan Čizmić, *Hrvati u životu Sjedinjenih Američkih Država* (Zagreb: Globus, 1982), pp. 293-95.

<sup>18</sup> Jere Jareb, ed., *Političke uspomene i rad dra Branimira Jelića*, p. 66. Other sympathizers of the *Domobran* (Home defender) in New York were Lucian Reicherzer and Levar, *ibid.*, p. 71.

same name, but of a larger format, should be published in the United States.<sup>19</sup> The weekly *Nezavisna Hrvatska Država – the Independent State of Croatia* was indeed founded in Pittsburgh in 1934. Its first editor was Luka Grbić.<sup>20</sup>

The very existence of the Independent State of Croatia and, even more so, its policies, were problems in themselves. In addition, the Serb anti-Croatian propaganda in the United States and elsewhere portrayed the Croats and the NDH in a very unfavorable light and thus put them in a defensive position. At the instigation of the Yugoslav legation, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) began surveying Croatian newspapers, prominent individuals, and organizations.<sup>21</sup>

Accordingly, American Croats excelled in an overt expression of American patriotism. On October 25, 1941, the Croatian Circle issued a Manifest in which they condemned the creators of the Independent State of Croatia, the “Yugoslav fighters” and their “Communists counselors,” the “official Yugoslav propaganda under the sponsorship of the Serbs,” but also the followers of *Domobran*. They urged the Croats in the United States to “follow our President Roosevelt and our adopted homeland.”<sup>22</sup> When the United States of America entered the war on December 8, 1941, the President of the CFU, J. D. Butković, sent a telegram to President Roosevelt declaring loyalty and promising support of all American Croats for the war effort.<sup>23</sup> That did not stop the FBI from undertaking the surveillance of Croatian organizations and newspapers.<sup>24</sup> The office of the editor of the *Sloga Hrvata*, L. Grbić, was even raided in the beginning of 1942, while many issues of that Croatian newspaper were confiscated.<sup>25</sup>

### From Pan-Slavism and Yugoslavism to the Support of Communism

The war in Europe, in which the United States was an active participant and by which most Americans of Slavic origin were in one way or another affected,

<sup>19</sup> Jere Jareb, ed., *Političke uspomene i rad dra Branimira Jelića*, p. 85.

<sup>20</sup> George J. Prpic, *The Croatian Immigrants in America* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1971), Here, I cite its Croatian translation *Hrvati u Americi* (Zagreb: Hrvatska matica iseljenika, 1997), p. 216.

<sup>21</sup> See: J. Krišto, “Čuvari svoje braće.”

<sup>22</sup> The President Ivan Krešić and the Board members Ivan Šipak, Stjepan Klinger, Kuzma Kuharić, Ana Grgurić, and Josip Kraja signed the Manifest, G. J. Prpic, *Hrvati u Americi*, pp. 232-233.

<sup>23</sup> G. J. Prpic, *Hrvati u Americi*, p. 233.

<sup>24</sup> See the report on CFU of February 10, 1942, Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Archives (hereafter: NA) MP 660H.20211/17 PS/HM.

<sup>25</sup> G. J. Prpic, *Hrvati u Americi*, 234.

evoked in those Slavic Americans “Pan-Slavic” feelings. The fact that the United States considered the Soviet Union an ally was not the least contributing factor to that disposition. It was, of course, in the interest of the Soviet Union to mobilize all Slavs in the campaign that could only strengthen its fight against Germany and eventual dominance in the “Slavic” part of Europe.

Parallel to those developments was the growing influence of the Communist Party of the United States, and among Croats and Slovenes a growing predilection for the struggle of the “Yugoslav Partisans.” This situation provided the right atmosphere for the organizing of the *Pan Slavic Congress of the United States* on April 25 and 26, 1942 in Detroit, Michigan. The Croats contributed greatly to the Congress; J. D. Butković, the President of the CFU, was the head of the Preparation Committee for the Congress.<sup>26</sup>

Soon after, preparations for a Congress of American Croats began - a gathering that was planned for February 1943. The *American Croatian Congress*, the biggest gathering of American Croats, was indeed held in Chicago on February 20 to 21, 1943.

The FBI chief J. E. Hoover sent a report to A. A. Berle of a confidential informant on the proceedings of the Congress.<sup>27</sup> The general tone of the Congress was provided, according to Hoover’s informants, by its President John D. Butković in his opening statement, which contained all traditional Croatian ideological themes with a bent toward concrete historical circumstances. He left no doubt that the American Croatian Congress was wholeheartedly for the “reestablishment of an independent Yugoslavia” and that it condemned “the acts of the Nazi dominated Ustashi’s.”<sup>28</sup> He also claimed that “Croats are entitled to exist as a national group,” but not necessarily “as an independent state” and praised “Mother Russia,” “the great leader among the Slav people of Europe.”<sup>29</sup> There was no doubt in Butković’s mind that Mihailovich’s *Chetniks* were “fighting for the reestablishment of a “greater Serbia” rather than the reestablishment of the former Yugoslav state.”<sup>30</sup> Butković also condemned the accusations against the Croatian people as being saboteurs, fifth columnists, and so on, which were emanating from the Yugoslav government in exile and propagated by the organ of the Serbian National Defense Organization, *Srbobran*.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> G. J. Prpic, *Hrvati u Americi*, 236.

<sup>27</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, not dated, NA 660H.20211/29 PS/TL, with the Enclosure: “American Croatian Congress, Chicago, Illinois, February 20 and 21, 1943”. J. E. Hoover sent another report to A. A. Berle in October 1944, see Federal Bureau of Investigation, File No. 100-5699, NA MP 860H.00/10-1744.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, American Croatian Congress, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1-2.

The first speaker at the Congress was Dr. Ivan Šubašić (Subasic), the Viceroy of Croatia and a member of the Yugoslav government in exile. The FBI's informant pointed to the conclusion of his speech as the most important point: "the only government which would effectively function in the reestablished Yugoslav State ... would be a federal system composed of representatives of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, with equal rights for these various national groups."<sup>32</sup> Being a follower of the Yugoslav ideology, Šubašić could not even imagine an independent Croatian state with a democratic government, and different from the one established by Pavelić. In the manner of a typical representative of Croatian minimalists, he advocated "the incorporation of Croatia into a Yugoslav State which will assure the Croatian people fair treatment and equal opportunities."<sup>33</sup> He was, one might say, begging others to give him what he refused to take himself.

Rev. Vorslov Kačinović (Kachinovich) - a Serbian Orthodox priest and, obviously, a sympathizer of the Communists who led the Yugoslav Partisans - pleaded that "Yugoslavs" not believe that all Partisans are Communists.<sup>34</sup> His admission that Croats were not treated as equals in Yugoslavia was seconded by another Serb, Dr. Sava Kosanović (Kosanovich), a former Yugoslav Minister.

Speaker after speaker expanded on more or less the same line of arguments from the condemnation of the present day Croatian government to the expression of the hope that Yugoslavia would be reestablished as a democratic state. More than one speaker also praised the Partisans, while the final speaker, Dr. Zlatko Baloković (Balokovich), a successful Croatian violinist, read a resolution calling for greetings to be sent from the Congress to the Yugoslav National Liberation Army, which was accepted "with a thunderous ovation by the audience which rose to its feet as a gesture of support."<sup>35</sup>

The informant felt the need to point out that "no priests were present among the delegates," even though Croats are predominately Roman Catholics.<sup>36</sup> That note is very significant. The representatives of the Catholic Church in Croatia, just as the Catholic Church in general, knew that the victory of Communism anywhere would create a situation of persecution for the Church, such as it existed in Communist Russia. The Catholic Church in Croatia also knew that the organizing force behind the "Yugoslav Partisans" were Communists, whose aim was the creation of a Communist Yugoslavia, modeled after the Soviet Union, and that Croats would be in an even worse situation than in monarchical Yugoslavia. Obviously, the Church's general feeling was shared by the Catholic priests working with the Catholic American Croats. Catholic priests did not

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

attend the Congress of American Croats because they felt that the Communist forces were behind its organization and that it was being planned as support for the “Yugoslav Partisans” led by the Communists. Indeed, the Congress founded the *Council of American Croats*, headed by Zlatko Baloković, whose task it was, among other things, to gather support for the National Liberation Front, i.e., fighting units of the Partisans led by the Communists.<sup>37</sup>

The representatives of the Catholic Church were not the only ones suspicious of Croatian activities in support of Tito’s Partisans. On February 6, 1943, Ohio Senator William M. Boyd drew A. A. Berle’s attention to the fact that Vinko Vuk, the Treasurer of the CFU, and Mark Vinsky, the Secretary of the Sponsoring Committee of the Croatian Congress, were signatories of a statement that appeared in the official organ of the Communist Party *Narodni Glasnik*.<sup>38</sup> Boyd bolstered his claims by enclosing a copy of that statement as well as a copy of the resolution issued by the CFU at its Supreme Board meeting in Gary, Indiana.

The CFU gathered in Chicago on its sixth convention that lasted for twelve days beginning on August 31, 1943. There was strong support from the Congress of American Croats, which also meant support for the “Yugoslav Partisans” and their Communist leadership.

In May 1943, American Croats from the state of Michigan, organized in the Croatian-American Alliance of Michigan, sent a memorandum to President F. D. Roosevelt in which they called for a joint American-British-Russian mission to Yugoslavia to investigate who was fighting against the Nazis and “striving for national unity of the Yugoslav people – Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.”<sup>39</sup> The signatories left no doubt, however, that they were in favor of the Peoples’ Liberation Movement led by Ribar and Tito, who “will gladly help the American Invasion Army ... in order to hasten the joint Victory over the Nazis.” They obviously disregarded information that Tito’s Liberation Movement was primarily a struggle for the establishment of a Soviet-type state.

## **Reexamination of American Policy towards the Belligerent Sides in Yugoslavia**

Alongside the developments in the community of American Croats, there were similar developments in the community of American Serbs and, most importantly, changes in official policy towards those groups of American

<sup>37</sup> See G. J. Prpic, *Hrvati u Americi*, 238.

<sup>38</sup> W. M. Boyd to A. A. Berle, Cleveland, February 6, 1943, NA MP 860H.00 CROATIAN ACTIVITIES IN U. S./143 PS.BMB

<sup>39</sup> NA MP 860H.00/1478 with the attached Memorandum I/2. The Memorandum was signed by Matt Goretta, President, Mark Kramarich, Secretary, and Slavko Barkovich, Vice President.

citizens. From the beginning of war, the State Department was under the constant barrage of the Yugoslav Ambassador Konstantin Fotitch who did not hesitate to present to American officials falsehoods against Croats and their American organizations.<sup>40</sup> The *American Srbobran* was Fotitch's mouthpiece and a propagator of anti-Croatian rhetoric.

In the first part of 1942, the Department of State began to suspect Fotić and was considering investigating his activities. Even earlier, the Assistant Secretary, A. A. Berle, received a translation of an article in "a Yugoslav newspaper" entitled "Who is Minister Fotitch Representing Today," which he forwarded to J. E. Hoover. On May 13, 1942, the Coordinator of Information in the State Department DeWitt C. Poole wrote to Harold Hoskins that "well informed persons" accused Fotić of being behind Serb agitations in the States and that he should be required to be more cooperative.<sup>41</sup>

One of the most interesting documents in that respect is the report, probably from the first part of 1942, compiled by an official of the Red Cross to the Executive Committee regarding the "Yugoslav situation."<sup>42</sup> The Red Cross officials became concerned that "American Yugoslavs" could not collect a sufficient amount of money in the war relief campaign because of the fact that "there is a growing element that no longer supports the idea of a future 'Yugoslavia' but urges a post-war independent Croatia."<sup>43</sup> The report estimates that responsibility for this lies in the "anti-Croatian propaganda being carried out in the Serbian press in this country."<sup>44</sup> The problem also lies in the fact that although there is a minority of Serbs among "Yugoslavs," "practically every Yugoslav government post in this country is held by a Serb."<sup>45</sup> The consequence of that situation is that Croats were not giving money any longer to the Yugoslav relief fund because they were increasingly convinced that it was nothing but a front for the Yugoslav Legation in Washington and its advocator for a Greater Serbia, Fotitch. The situation was getting so bad, according to this report, that a leading Croatian newspaper *Hrvatski svijet* (Croatian World) expressed sorrow for those "well intentioned American Friends" who have become "'dupes' of Serbian politicians."<sup>46</sup> As some wealthy Croats argued, put bluntly, Americans "were definitely pro-Serb."<sup>47</sup>

We do not know whether the Serbian People's Club was instrumental in changes in American domestic policy, but there are indications that some

<sup>40</sup> For details, see: J. Krišto, "Čuvari svoje braće", passim.

<sup>41</sup> NA MP 860H.00 CROATIAN ACTIVITIES IN UNITED STATES/122½ PS/MEL

<sup>42</sup> There are no signatures on the document in the Microfilm Publications of the NA, Roll 24.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

changes in American policy were taking place. On June 19, 1942, Jovan Duchich of the Yugoslav Embassy requested that June 28, the Vidovdan, be declared *Chetniks Day* in America.<sup>48</sup> The Department of State gave a negative response to the initiative.

In 1942, even some Serbian groups in the USA began to realize the extent of the negative role of some Serbian anti-Croat propaganda. At a meeting on December 20, 1942 in New York City, the Serbian People's Club adopted a Declaration by which it denounced "the disruptive work of certain Serbian elements in this country, under the leadership of Konstantin Fotitch, the Executive Board of the Serbian National Federation, and the Serbian Defense Committee."<sup>49</sup> The Club emphasized the negative writing of the *American Srbobran*, which was again done under the auspices of the Yugoslav Ambassador K. Fotitch, and has become "the center of deliberate falsehoods."<sup>50</sup> This Serbian club called the people around *Srbobran* the "pro-fascist gang" "faithful servants of the Axis," the "pro Hitler paper" and invited the USA government "to once and for all take a position against the treasonable activities of the American Srbobran and its editors."<sup>51</sup>

In 1943 American agencies looked closer at the activities of several Serbian groups and individuals in the United States and realized that they were propagating ideas of "Greater Serbia," which could be detrimental to American interests. Probably one of the most thorough examinations of those groups was the 12-page long report by the Foreign Nationality Groups of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) dated June 3, 1943.<sup>52</sup>

The concerns of American officials were multiple: the advocates of Greater Serbia did not envisage the reconstitution of Yugoslavia after the war, in fact, they envisaged a substantially enlarged Serbia that would include all territories where Serbs reside, with King Peter at its head, and they could not envisage union with Croats again. They supported Mihailovich's campaign, which put them "into a position that is not only anti-Partisan but also anti-Soviet Union."<sup>53</sup> The officer identified the propagators of Greater Serbia as a fraternal organization of the Serb National Federation and Serbian National Defense

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<sup>48</sup> I have a copy of the document.

<sup>49</sup> George Jovicevich to Cordell Hull, January 5, 1943, NA 860H.20211/23 PS/TL.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, Enclosure: Resolution, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2. Almost at the same time, the Serbian National Defense Organization of Ecorse, Michigan issued a Resolution "against the Croatian Congress" which was planned to be held in Chicago. That Serbian group accused Croatia of being a "puppet state," which was "assisting the Axis - Germans and Italians" and declared "war against the United States and the Allied Nations."

<sup>52</sup> Foreign Nationality Groups in the United States to the Director of Office of Strategic Services, NA MP 860H.20211/32 PS/TL. The principal author of that report was Sava Kosanovich, former Minister of State of Yugoslavia, see: Office of Strategic Services, S-25, June 5, 1943, signed by DeWitt C. Poole, NA MP 860H.20211/33 PS/TL.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Council, with the daily *Amerikanski Srbobran* acting as their mouthpiece.<sup>54</sup> The report noted that “the Serb community in the United States stems almost exclusively from Croatian territories.”<sup>55</sup> One of the individuals most involved in that propaganda was Branko Pekich, the very person who previously served as a “Yugoslav” informer to the FBI agents, and the other was L. C. Christopher (Luka Kristoforović). Behind the entire endeavor was the Yugoslav Ambassador in Washington, K. Fotić and the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States Bishop Dionisije, “an official on the payroll of the Yugoslav Government.” Jovan Dučić (Yovan Duchich), diplomatic official of the Yugoslav Government, was also part of the team before his death in May 1943.<sup>56</sup>

With the help of the Special War Policies Unit of the Department of Justice, the analyst of the above report noted two phases in Greater Serbian propaganda reflected in the writings of *Srbobran*. The first, from November 1941 to the reorganization of the Yugoslav Government in exile in London during January 1943, was marked by efforts “to discredit the Croats and exalt the Serbs.”<sup>57</sup> The second phase extended from January 1943 to the time of writing the report, and was marked by an emphasis on the impossibility of Yugoslavia and by a “justification for a post-war Greater Serbia.”<sup>58</sup> The centerpiece of the first phase was the Memorandum of the Serbian Orthodox Church to General Dankelmann, German military representative in Serbia, in which Orthodox Bishops accused the Croats of the massacre of 800.000 Serbs. Since then, Serbs had began promoting the idea that they “must be rewarded for their sufferings and that the Croats must bear the consequences of their crimes.”<sup>59</sup> Expectedly, the malignment of Croats did not stop during this second phase, because “the current effort apparently aims to discredit all Croat leadership in the United States and abroad.” Given Kosanovich’s advocacy of the renewal of Yugoslavia, he added that Serbs around *Srbobran*, principally K. Fotitch, are also opposed to “all who favor the restoration of Yugoslavia.”<sup>60</sup>

As far as the program of the creation of Greater Serbia is concerned, *Srbobran* envisaged a country that is “about one-third smaller than Yugoslavia” and would include all Serbs in one state, which would practically mean inclusion of the following regions: Bosnia, Herzegovina, South Serbia (Macedonia), Dalmatia, Banovina, Banat, Bačka, Kordun, Srijem, Lika, and Slavonia. In any

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2. Dučić was the author of the pamphlet “Federalizam i centralizam”, published late in 1942, in which a program of Great Serbia was presented, along with accusations against Croats.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

event, Greater Serbia would be “without a Croat.”<sup>61</sup> If any Croats should remain in the future Greater Serbia, they will, like other minorities such as “Slovenes, Jews and Mohammedans,” receive as much rights as “they show themselves capable of enjoying.”<sup>62</sup> *Srbobran* did not miss the opportunity to emphasize that Serbs are “the most democratic people in the Balkans,” but it also advocated the exchange of people in “mixed areas,”<sup>63</sup> another idea that proponents of Greater Serbia toyed with when the program of “ethnic cleansing” could not secure “clean areas”. *Srbobran* envisaged the possibility of the federalization of Greater Serbia and Greece.<sup>64</sup>

The analyst (Kosanović) pointed out that American Serbs also attacked Croats on religious grounds by claiming that the Croats were aiming to create a Greater Croatia out of territories on which “there are some Catholic elements in those territories.”<sup>65</sup> He pointed out that Serbian Orthodox priests accused Catholic priests of hating the Orthodox religion and having participated in massacres of Orthodox Serbs. Thus, Rev. Danilo Kozomara considered the situation in the NDH as a religious war. It was *Srbobran* that published Prvislav Grisogono’s supposed letter to the Zagreb Archbishop A. Stepinac, in which a Catholic supposedly accuses Catholic priests of participating in crimes against Orthodox Serbs in Croatia. That “letter” was later proved to be a forgery.<sup>66</sup>

## The American Policy and the Threat of Communism

All the activities of Croatian and Serbian communities raised suspicions of United States Government agencies, especially the FBI. These agencies, therefore, continued the surveillance of various organizations of American Croats in spite of their declarations of loyalty and effective actions in collecting money for the war effort. The FBI reported on attempts by the Communist elements to gain control of the Croatian Fraternal Union<sup>67</sup> and on the violation of various statutes by the Croatian Home Defenders.<sup>68</sup> The American Consulate

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>66</sup> Ljubo BOBAN, *Kontroverze iz povijesti Jugoslavije*, vol. II, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Zagreb, 1989), pp. 301-311.

<sup>67</sup> Department of Justice, September 14, 1943, NA, 860H.20211/36. The State Department had a detailed report of the proceedings of the CFU Convention, which indicates that American officials knew about the penetration of the Communists into the CFU, but they estimated that the Communists “achieved a mixed victory.” See OSS, Foreign Nationality Groups in the United States, NA MP FW 860H.00/1542½.

<sup>68</sup> Department of Justice, October 13, 1943, NA, 860H.20211/46.

in Fort William-Port Arthur of Ontario, Canada requested information on whether Walter Grgurich, John Krznaric, and Mato Raguz, who attended the sixth convention of the CFU in Chicago had Communist affiliations.<sup>69</sup> The Consulate in Windsor, Canada informed the Secretary of State that Victor Filipich, who attended the same convention, had Communist connections.<sup>70</sup> There were other similar requests and reports.

American officials had, of course, plenty of information about the situation in Croatia. An illustrative type of information is the conversation with a Croatian professor at the University of Zagreb and a member of the Peasant Party, which had reached the State Department via the American Consulate General in Istanbul, Turkey.<sup>71</sup> The unnamed professor described the composition and the activities of the Partisans and the very negative disposition of the population towards them. He also described communist propagandism, which was successful with the youth.

In spite of such information, towards the end of 1943 the American Government officially declared, at the Teheran Conference (November 28 to December 1, 1943), that it would stop supporting Mihailovich's *Chetniks* and begin assisting Josip Broz Tito's Partisans. Tito, for his part, planned the second conference of the Antifascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) at the time of the Teheran Conference (November 29, 1943). Tito's conference in the Bosnian town of Jajce proclaimed the founding of Yugoslavia as a federation in which the rights of its composing nations (Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Montenegrins) would be guaranteed.<sup>72</sup> The conference did not announce, of course, that it was completely manipulated by the Communists, who hid their intentions under democratic rhetoric.

Such a political development had a great impact on American Croats. The Council of American Croats (CAC) held its first conference on January 23, 1944 in Pittsburgh, where it was decided to establish a Croatian Committee for War Assistance, to collect \$1,000,000 as assistance to Yugoslavia, and to send food, clothing, and medicine to the war-torn country.<sup>73</sup>

Towards the end of 1944, the FBI and other American agencies began paying closer attention to the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), the Communists, and their mutual relationship. The reason was the position and activity of

<sup>69</sup> H. T. Goodier to Secretary of State, Fort William, December 29, 1943, NA, 860H.20211/50 PS/LH.

<sup>70</sup> G. K. Donald to Secretary of State, No. 1259, Windsor, Ontario, January 4, 1944, NA 860H.20211/50 PS/LH.

<sup>71</sup> American Consulate General, Istanbul, Turkey, May 26, 1943, NA MP 860H.00/1487 and 860.H.00/1498 PS/HWL.

<sup>72</sup> See Jill Irvine, *The Croat Question: Partisan Politics in the Formation of the Yugoslav Socialist State* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993).

<sup>73</sup> G. J. Prpic, *Hrvati u Americi*, 239.

former Croatian Viceroy Ivan Šubašić. Affiliated with the HSS, Šubašić was a member of the Yugoslav Government in exile and the choice of British and American politicians for the premiership of Yugoslavia in a compromise deal with the Communist Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito. Šubašić was chosen by the Allies in order to secure a democratic system in post-war Yugoslavia. On September 9, 1944, the Chicago FBI agent Charles J. Prelisnik wrote a report on I. Šubašić and his HSS.<sup>74</sup> His informants attributed Šubašić's recent successes to the strength of the HSS and minimized the infiltration of the Communists into the party. Prelisnik's informant "CGO-5353" told him that the followers of the HSS "recognize Marshal TITO as their military leader, but would not be satisfied to live under a Communist rule in Croatia."<sup>75</sup> The informant did not believe that the leader of the Chicago Croatian Communists, Mato Brzovich, was very influential among the followers of the Croatian Peasant Party. Another informant confirmed that assessment and admitted that Communists were attempting to smear the "Peasants" in order to have a leading role among Croats.<sup>76</sup>

### Supreme Council of American Croats

The Croats who still hoped for an independent Croatia apparently did not disappear, and those in the United States were likewise under the watchful eye of the FBI. On November 11, 1944 Howard A. King sent a report from Indianapolis, Indiana on the Supreme Council of American Croats - SCAC (*Vrhovno vijeće Američkih Hrvata*), also known as the Supreme Council of Croats.<sup>77</sup> His informant "T-1" did not know much about that new organization of American Croats, but he knew that an organization of an identical name already existed in Gary, Indiana, around the newspaper *Naša nada* - *Our Hope*, the organ of the Croatian Catholic Union. The informant supplied some information, however, about the editor of *Naša nada*. Although the editorship was in the name of Helen Borić, her husband Stanislav Borić was the actual editor of the newspaper, but his name could not appear as editor since he was not an American citizen. The informant was sure "that STANISLAV BORIC was sent by PAVELICH to the United States to stir up trouble and that he has been a troublemaker ever since" and that "he was in favor of Hitler and not favorable to the policies of the United States."<sup>78</sup> King emphasized, however, that the Cleveland and Indianapolis FBI Offices conducted a "considerable investigation" on S. Borić and found out that he was "a representative of the

<sup>74</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, File No. 100-15088, September 9, 1944, NA, 860H.01/10-2644 CS/D; cf. J. E. Hoover to A. A. Berle, October 25, 1944, *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, File No. 105-46, NA 860H.01/11-3044.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

Hrvatski Radisa<sup>[79]</sup> until October, 1940 when he became an organizer with the Croatian Catholic Union in Gary, Indiana.”<sup>80</sup> King also wrote: “Prior to October of 1940, he is known to have collected funds on two occasions in Pittsburgh for the express purpose of sending these funds to Dr. ANTON PAVELICH. He is also alleged to have stated to informants that Adolf Hitler is a great leader.”<sup>81</sup>

If H. A. King from Indianapolis did not know much about the Supreme Council of American Croats, Robert E. Abbe of Pittsburgh had more information. On November 13, 1944, Abbe sent a twenty-page report on, among other things, the name change of the organization (Supreme Croatian National Council).<sup>82</sup> Abbe also indicated that his informant stated that the majority of the delegates at the founding convention were “members of the Croatian Catholic Clergy.”<sup>83</sup> Interestingly, Abbe’s informant, apparently the same “T-1” informant used by King in a report from Indianapolis, confused this organization of American Croats with the *Council of American Croats* founded by the Congress of American Croats held in Chicago in February 1943. Actually, the said convention gave strong support to the Council of American Croats, but the motivation was the support of the latter for the “Yugoslav Partisans” and the creation of a new Yugoslavia, and not because of the alleged support for an independent Croatia. It should be pointed out that the convention of the Congress of American Croats that founded the Council of American Croats was attended by no Catholic priests, while the Supreme Croatian National Council was supposedly backed and even organized by Croatian Catholic priests.

Abbe’s informant “T-3” made some useful clarification. At the CFU convention in Chicago a group of CFU prominent members, dissatisfied with the influence of Communists in the CFU, met secretly and formed the Supreme Committee of American Croats (SCAC).<sup>84</sup> This information is confirmed by Rev. I. Stipanović, the President, who published an article about the foundation of the SCAC in *Hrvatski list* of January 8, 1944.<sup>85</sup> The elected members of the SCAC were: Rev. I. Stipanović, of Youngstown, Pennsylvania, President; Rev. Silvije Grubišić, of Chicago, Secretary; Kuzma Kuharić of Campbell, Ohio; Filip Pauli of Milwaukee; Wm. Piškulić of St. Louis; Mrs. F. Skukan of Chicago, Florijan Tumbri of Cleveland; and Rev. Dr. V. Vančik of Cleveland.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>79</sup> The FBI investigation indicated that “Hrvatski Radisa was ... an organization in Croatia to promote the well-being of youths by providing fields for their education, particularly in the skilled trades and in craftsmanship.” (*Ibid.*, p. 3).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>82</sup> Department of Justice, FBI, File No. 105-23, no ref..

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>85</sup> The article is reproduced in the same report, pp. 4-6.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

The informant "T-1" stated that this new organization of American Croats "is the same as the HRVATSKI DOMOBRAN and [that] they will operate underground."<sup>87</sup> He also mentioned some men from the October 18, 1944 founding meeting as being elected officials even though they were not actually elected then: Father Ljubo Čuvalo of Ambridge, Pennsylvania, President; Rudolf Erić of Akron, Ohio, vice-president; and J. J. Miller of Barberton, Ohio, Member of the Board. The informant noted that Father Čuvalo, in a long telephone conversation with Father David Zrno, the Provincial of the Croatian Franciscans in the United States, asked for permission to accept the Presidency.<sup>88</sup> The informant "T-2" named these priests as actual or potential members of the subject organization: I. Stipanović, [Mijo] Domlodovac, Dobroslav [Božić], B. Sorić, and [Franjo] Čuturić. The Board of Trustees comprised Most Rev. Milan Hranilović of Akron, Ohio, President; John Mose of McKeesport, Pennsylvania, Director; Nikola (Maar ? – illegible), Director; and Ivan Bakšić of Detroit, Michigan, Substitute.<sup>89</sup> The informant stated that "the program of the organization is the same as that of ANTE PAVELICH, with the exception that the leaders are against PAVELICH due to his collaboration with the Nazis."<sup>90</sup> He also claimed that the new organization "will work through the Croatian Catholic Union" and that "none of the officers, members or directors of the SUPREME CROATIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL were pro-Fascist or against the United States government in any manner."<sup>91</sup>

It appears that the above-mentioned Abbe informants were influenced by the propaganda writings of the Communists who surrounded the CFU in Pittsburgh and its local chapters. This is, in fact, what George Ramušćak, National Secretary of the Croatian Catholic Union expressly stated. He thought that the FBI agents confused the Supreme Council of American Croats with the *Hrvatski Domobran*.<sup>92</sup> Contrary to those informants, he said that "this organization [SCAC], while completely loyal to the United States and while working for the United States, has for its main purpose the presentation of facts to responsible people in order that Croatia will not end up after the present world war under the yoke of Serbia or under Communist rule."<sup>93</sup> Ramušćak also said that the organization prefers an independent Croatia, but it advocates a plebiscite after the war, and if Croats decided to live under Serbia, then that is all right for the organization.

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Abbe included reports of other special agents from several different cities in the United States who interviewed prominent Croats or individuals close to them, such as; Vincent Ujčić, Vlaho Vlahović, and John Krešić of New York City, Vincent L. Knaus, Josip Baždarić, Father Bojanić, and Stjepan Vrančić of Chicago, and Francis S. Kollander of Gary, Indiana. All of them confirmed, with relative accuracy, that *Hrvatski Domobran* had not been renewed and that the SCAC did not represent its continuation, although many individuals who once belonged to the former organization were active members of the latter.

At the end, R. E. Abbe provided the most basic information on the leading members of the SCAC: Father David Zrno, Father Boniface D. Sorić, Rudolf Erić, and J. P. Miller.

On November 18, 1944, John S. P. Wilson from Pittsburgh sent a report made in Cleveland on *Hrvatski Domobran* (Croatian Defenders), even though the report dealt with the Supreme Council of American Croats that was recently organized in Cleveland with Father Ivan Stipanović of Youngstown, Ohio as President.<sup>94</sup> Other officers were Silvije Grubišić, Secretary, Ivan Krešić, President of the Croatian Circle, and Josip Kraja, Treasurer of the Croatian Circle.<sup>95</sup> Besides confusing “Slovakians” and “Slavs”, the agent reported that most Croats in the Summer County in Ohio were “pro-Russian and very much in accord with the Teheran Agreement.”<sup>96</sup> He also conveyed that most people who belonged to the Croatian Home Defenders have become inactive since the organization dissolved nationally in 1941. The organizers of the new organization were former members of the Croatian Home Defenders and the Croatian Circle, the two organizations that were formerly opposed to each other on the grounds of divergent stances toward the Independent State of Croatia.

### **The Movement of American Croats for the Democratic freedom of Croatia**

By the end of 1944, American policy-makers had long decided the post-war world order. The most significant American Croat organization, the CFU, greatly influenced by the Communists, had also decided which side they would support. They had for some time backed the Communist-led Partisans in former Yugoslavia and they did not have any reason to switch sides, especially when the United States Government had also backed the same side.

Nonetheless, some American Croats deeply distrusted the Communists and hoped to be able to change the minds of American policy-makers. Most

<sup>94</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, File No. 97-82, NA 860H.01/11-illegible OS/0.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

of them were either members of the Catholic clergy in America or their close associates and friends. These Croats had founded another organization of American Croats, the Movement of American Croats for the Democratic Freedom of Croatia.<sup>97</sup> On December 9, 1944, they sent a Memorandum to the United States President F. D. Roosevelt and his Secretary of State R. Stettinius.<sup>98</sup>

The Memorandum stated from the beginning that its reason for writing was “the serious problems which, at this time, face their motherland – CROATIA.”<sup>99</sup> After a lengthy survey of Croatian history, the signatories tried to depict the forces that were struggling against each other in the present war: the Fascists, Nazis, Mihailovich’s *Chetnicks*, and finally the Partisans, led by an obscure figure, Josip Broz, who called himself Tito, “an agent of the Third Internationale.”<sup>100</sup> The signatories of the Memorandum pointed out that Tito’s units had killed hundreds of Catholic priests in the most atrocious ways, yet he was praised in the United States as a hero and an ally. They pleaded for help so that the Croatian people would be protected from “destruction and extermination”<sup>101</sup> and concluded with demands stated in six points: 1. “That the *Atlantic Charter* be applied to the Croatian People” and that it becomes “the foundation upon which the sovereignty of Croatia be re-established.” 2. “That no new ideology ... be imposed upon the Croatian People against their will.” 3. That no new dictatorship be imposed upon Croats. 4. “That the United States, Great Britain and other World leaders take into their confidence those Croatian leaders who are not communist.” 5. That those who emigrated “may not be turned into communist legions”. 6. They “condemn all those who wish to promote, or who are promoting the communist cause upon our people here and abroad.”<sup>102</sup>

Even if the Memorandum had been more skillfully composed, it would have served no useful purpose, because those who, on a daily basis, were getting closer to complete victory had decided the course of history. A minor bureaucrat at the State Department politely acknowledged the reception of the Memorandum.<sup>103</sup> The official Croatian government (NDH) was on the side of the losers, while the Communists, who had proclaimed the founding of a new

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<sup>97</sup> Rev. Fr. I. Čuvalo of Ambridge, Ohio was the president, Nick Filipovich of Farrel, Pennsylvania, Vice-president, Rudolph Erich of Akron, Ohio the Secretary, and Mary Janich of Youngstown, Ohio the Treasurer.

<sup>98</sup> Memorandum to Governments, leading Statesmen and Religious Leaders, Publicists and News Agencies of the World regarding the true Status of Croatia and its People, together with their Struggle for Independence, NA MP 860H.01/1- illegible, Roll, 23.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>103</sup> J. M. Colton Hand to Rev. Ljubo Cuvalo, NA MP 860h.01/12-944.

federal Yugoslavia, also had a clear idea as to what the fate of Croats in the new Yugoslavia would be.

## **Conclusion**

It is not surprising that governments in wartime situations consider some of their citizens a danger for national security and that they watch over their activities. It is a matter for speculation as to whether the government of the United States of America would have considered Croatian Americans such a danger during WWII had it not accepted the urgings of the Yugoslav Legation in the USA to watch over its citizens of Croatian descent. Once the FBI and other government institutions accepted the possibility that Croats may represent such a danger, they applied a strict scrutiny of prominent leaders in the Croatian community, Croatian journals, and institutions, even after repeated reports suggested that accusations against Croats were the result of Serbian propaganda and that further surveillance was not necessary.

It is also a matter for speculation as to whether the anti-Croatian frenzy contributed to the Communist penetration of organizations of Croatian Americans and to the support of Croatian Americans for the Communist-led Partisans in Croatia, which ultimately helped the renewal of Yugoslavia, ruled for 45 years by Communists. American agencies responsible for national security reacted, of course, to dangers regardless of their ideological colors, but they were, it seems, much more sensitive to the "Fascist" than "Communist" threats. By the time they became aware of the Communist onslaught on organizations of Croatian Americans, those organizations were almost completely permeated by Communist agents. Those who warned of the Communist menace, primarily Catholic priests and their close collaborators, were considered not only conservative and backward oriented individuals, but also themselves sympathizers of the Nazis and of their collaborators in Europe.

## **Kommunistische Penetration in kroatisch-amerikanische Vereine in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika während des Zweiten Weltkrieges**

### **Zusammenfassung**

Auf Initiative der jugoslawischen Botschaft in Washington und auf persönliche Initiative des Ministers Konstantin Fotić untersuchten amerikanische Sicherheitsdienste, vor allem FBI, Benehmen und Schreiben von angesehenen Bürgern kroatischer Herkunft und kroatischen Vereinen, sowie Zeitungen, die in kroatischer Sprache erschienen, und überwachten sie. Diese Beaufsichtigungen dauerten weiter sogar auch nach wiederholten Berichten, in denen suggeriert wurde, dass die Klagen gegen Kroaten eigentlich Resultat serbischer Propaganda waren und dass weitere Aufsicht dieser Subjekte nicht notwendig ist.

Es ist nicht ganz klar, ob die antikroatische Hysterie dem Eindringen der Kommunisten in die Organisationen amerikanischer Kroaten beigetragen hatte und die Unterstützung der Partisanen in Kroatien angeregt hatte, was endlich zur Wiederaufbau Jugoslawiens geholfen hat, das die Kommunisten 45 Jahre lang unter ihrer totalitärer Kontrolle hatten. Die amerikanischen für nationale Sicherheit verantwortlichen Agenturen reagierten natürlich auf Gefahren ohne Rücksicht auf ihre ideologischen Färbungen. Es scheint aber, dass sie doch größeren Wert auf "faschistische" als auf "kommunistische" Drohungen legten. Bis zum Moment als sie der kommunistischen Angriffe auf die Vereine amerikanischer Kroaten gewahr wurden, wurden diese Organisationen fast vollständig von kommunistischen Agenten überflutet. Hier zeigte sich noch einmal, dass praktische Politik von Schließung bedingungsloser Allianzen ihren Preis hat, der manchmal sogar zu hoch sein kann.

Die amerikanischen Agenturen, verantwortlich für innere Sicherheit und Sammeln von Angaben, vor allem das FBI, waren nicht immer genug vorsichtig in Auswahl seiner Zuträger, was ernsthafte Folgen für amerikanische Kroaten haben könnte und häufig auch hatte. Es ist ziemlich klar, dass die Zuträger serbischer Herkunft meistens die Möglichkeit ausgenützt haben, um unter den amerikanischen Agenten die gegen Kroaten gerichtete Propaganda zu treiben. Unglückselige Natur einer solchen Praxis ist am leichtesten in dauernder Implementierung gewisser propagandistischen Elemente in Kreierung der Politik Kroatien gegenüber seitens späterer amerikanischer Administrationen und dafür verantwortlicher Einzelner zu sehen.